

**To: Council**

**Date: 5 October 2020**

**Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members**

## **Introduction**

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

## **Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda.**

1. Address by Clare Robertson – in support of motion 17a on Designated Bathing Water Status for the River Thames
2. Address by Liz Sawyer - Oxfordshire Liveable Streets in support of motions 17d and 17j
3. Address by Tim Jones and Dwayne John, Oxford African Caribbean MultiCultural Association
4. (a) Address by Tim Bearder – Oxford Green Belt and the Liberal Democrat motion at item 17h
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## **1. Address by Clare Robertson – in support of motion 17a on Designated Bathing Water Status for the River Thames**

Good evening chair and councillors. I'm speaking on behalf of over 3,300 people, mainly local residents, who support granting Designated Bathing Water Status for a stretch of the Thames through Oxford.

Why? Well, here in Oxford, we love our rivers: the Thames, or the Isis, the Cherwell, and the numerous streams that encircle and flow through our beautiful, ancient city.

These rivers are part of our daily lives. Residents of all ages, students, and visitors, walk, run and picnic alongside them, punt, paddle and row on them, and swim, play and fish in them. The river is the beating heart of our summer and provides exercise, fresh air, beauty and reflection throughout the whole year. During lockdown they have been a great source of solace and freedom.

Clean and healthy rivers provide humans and the wider ecosystem with numerous benefits, including much of the water we drink and wash with. This is especially true of the Thames Valley, where 80% of our tap water comes from rivers. Healthy rivers also fertilise the land and help prevent flooding, as well as being home to thousands of other species, from the kingfisher, otter and trout to dragonflies and water lilies.

Sadly, across England, our rivers are in a terrible state. A few weeks ago, Environment Agency figures showed that only 14% of rivers across the nation are in good ecological condition, and not a single river passed the chemical pollution standards [1]. This makes us one of the worst countries for water quality in Europe.

The major culprit for this national failure is raw sewage pollution. Data leaked to the Guardian newspaper revealed that in 2019 raw sewage was released into rivers over 200,000 times for over 1.5 million hours across England.

Locally, untreated sewage overflowed from four Oxford treatment works for nearly 2,000 hours in 2019. This is equivalent to 82 days of continuous overflow, or over 5 hours a day for every day of the year [3].

That is a national and local scandal. Legally, raw sewage overflow into rivers is only allowed at times of exceptionally heavy rainfall: otherwise, the sewage should go through at least three rounds of treatment to remove plastics and other solid waste, and micro-organisms harmful to human health. However, sewage treatment works are already overcapacity due to decades of underinvestment, so water companies ignore the law and regularly release sewage into rivers untreated [4]. The problem is worsened by lack of funding for, and enforcement by, the Environment Agency. There is also lack of transparency from the water companies: for instance, Thames Water has sensors installed on their sewage overflows and could provide real-time alerts of sewage pollution, but do not.

This is unacceptable. We deserve a healthy, clean river, safe for all to use and enjoy and for other species to live in. It's high time we ended sewage pollution in rivers.

Designated Bathing Water Status is an initial step towards this. It will enable the Environment Agency to carry out weekly water quality testing during the summer bathing season (between 15th May and 30th September) for harmful bacteria. The water quality will be rated from "excellent" to "poor", both annually and weekly. The information will be publicly available, with the council compelled to display it online and on signs, and give alerts when pollution levels are high.

This system is already in place for over 600 bathing waters around the UK - almost all are beaches, some are lakes, but there are no designated rivers. If we move quickly,

the Thames in Oxford could be one of the first three designated bathing rivers in the UK.

Designated Bathing Water Status will:

1. Enable swimmers and other river users to avoid river pollution and stay safe;
2. Pressure Thames Water to invest in upgrading the sewage system and treatment works upstream, increasing capacity so they no longer overflow during heavy rainfall. Making them fit for the 21st Century.

Back in the 90s, only 27% of beaches passed the minimum bathing water quality standards. A concerted effort by campaigners and local government forced the water companies to invest in improving their infrastructure. Now, 98% pass the minimum standards [5].

The same can, and should, happen for rivers. It's time to start treating our rivers as what they are - a beautiful and precious natural gift and resource, rather than an open sewer.

#### **References:**

1. Full dataset here <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/>, and article here <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/17/rivers-in-england-fail-pollution-tests-due-to-sewage-and-chemicals>

2. Environment Agency, Catchment Data Explorer, Thames (Evenlode to Thame) <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB106039030334>

3. Data extracted from the Rivers Trust "is your river fit to swim in?" map <https://www.riverstrust.org/what-we-do/is-your-river-fit-to-swim-in/>

Dataset for upper Thames here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Dd5drRA7e7FtXQpVcZJY6prc6aDloVrwBJhwoyJUIzc/edit?usp=sharing>

4. "Flushed Away: How sewage is still pollution the rivers of England and Wales" Report, WWF 2017 [https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-12/Flushed%20Away\\_Nov2017.pdf](https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-12/Flushed%20Away_Nov2017.pdf)

5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/bathing-water-quality-statistics>

**The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks, Cllr Linda Smith, will give a verbal response**

## **2. Address by Liz Sawyer - Oxfordshire Liveable Streets in support of motions 17d and 17j**

Councillors, I am speaking to you today on behalf of Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, in support of motions 17d and 17j, about the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and the Liveable Streets Initiative.

What exactly is the problem that these motions are addressing? Let me give you an example. We have all done it at some point. Stuck in immobile traffic, and running late to get to your meeting, appointment, or your mother, you reach for your phone and let Google solve your problem. And it does work, you leave the main road and are soon pootling along back streets and past people's houses until you re-join the main road, and you make it to your destination just about on time. No problem, huh?

Except that there is a problem. That secret solution that Google gave to you, Google also gave to every other person sitting in that traffic who reached for their phone in frustration. And whereas perhaps 10 years ago, only a few people had satnav and could make that spontaneous detour, today almost everyone with a phone will try it. And there are so many more cars now because of the growth of the city, those traffic jams are daily as opposed to occasional. So instead of turning smoothly back onto the main road at the end of your detour, you are now sitting in a line of 20 other cars along the length of that neighbourhood street, perhaps with local residents trying to cross the road in front of you or squeeze a bike past, waiting increasingly impatiently to turn back onto the main road and more likely to make a slightly dangerous manoeuvre to do so. And when you do turn back out, you are sitting behind the same car that you were when you left the main road, understandably more frustrated about being thwarted.

And this is the problem. That neighbourhood street now is blocked at rush hour most days with people trying to rush their cars through, the residents can't get their own cars out to get to work, and because of the traffic they feel the road is too dangerous to cross, especially if they are taking children to school or are elderly or disabled. And the street is noisy, polluted, and squashed, so who would want to walk or ride a bike along it? People who would otherwise choose to walk or cycle are forced to drive because it is too dangerous and unpleasant not to. It's a vicious cycle. It's caused by people who do not mean to cause a nuisance, but are simply trying to solve a problem not of their making. But the cumulative impact causes very real problems – ironically, more traffic: remember those people who can't walk through their neighbourhoods anymore? And this is before we mention those who live elsewhere, but used to walk or cycle through those quiet streets rather than drive, and who now can't find a safe, quiet unpolluted route any more. That neighbourhood street now has more air pollution, more noise, less space, which all make people less inclined to use it for walking, cycling, exercise, and even stopping for a chat with their neighbours. This contributes to rising social isolation, obesity, and decreased social mobility.

The solution is Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. They have already been employed in many areas around Oxford for decades, albeit not under that name. You will all know of grouped cul-de-sacs joined by alleyways, or streets with bollards or a gate at one end, or even just a street that leads straight onto a path, in your wards. These roads provide not just residents, but all others who need to pass through the area, with alternatives to the noisy, clogged main road. And if done right, if there are enough of these routes that they provide an attractive and safe continuous path from A to B around the city, they will actually tempt people out of their cars and into a more sustainable way of travelling, such as walking, running, riding a bike, or scooting. Each single car taken off the roads this way starts to slow that vicious circle and build a virtuous one instead, which truly does benefit everyone.

This problem of unusable residential streets is not the fault of any one person. It is simply a situation that has developed when normal people are faced with a lack of viable choices. It is your job as Councillors to face up to this situation, and take responsibility for creating the solution – low traffic neighbourhoods, or everyday roads with simple adaptations such as planters or bollards so that they meet the 10 very straightforward criteria of the Healthy Streets Indicators. That way you give people choice again, in this crowded but essential beautiful city, to travel in a way that has minimal impact on others. Because after all, people don't want to be a nuisance.

On behalf of Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, and all the ordinary people who simply want a choice about how to travel, I ask you to support these two motions. Thank you.

**Written Response from the Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford, Cllr Tom Hayes**

Thank you for joining Full Council today.

This City Council supports the creation of a new network of low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) through the reallocation of road space away from the private car. We believe that LTNs are one tool in the transportation toolbox to address three challenges: the historic challenge of air pollution and road safety, the present pandemic, and the future impacts of the climate emergency.

We believe in LTNs because they facilitate healthy place-shaping, which we are committed to as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. 'Healthy streets' is a valuable tool in implementing and monitoring effectiveness of LTNs – we look forward to working with County public health colleagues on this and we will seek to learn best practice from TfL colleagues

LTNs are in development in Temple Cowley, Church Cowley, Florence Park (these are the schemes which were intended as part of Tranche 1) and the County Council has included further LTNs in Jericho & Walton Manor, Quarry Village, Headington, Old Headington, Divinity Road, St Clements, St Mary's as part of its Tranche 2 bid, which we are waiting to hear news about.

As highways schemes, the County Council are the only authority which can implement them. The City Council supports LTNs in principle, believes they can address key challenges, and seeks to work with colleagues at the County Council to ensure that LTNs can be a success. We seek to encourage the implementation of LTNs in the right places at the right time after consultation with the right people.

LTNs may create differences of views. That is fine. In a democracy, we can all air our views and, through dialogue, seek to reach a consensus position. With the introduction of an LTN, there would clearly be a period of adjustment as rat-running drivers discover they have lost the ability to take their favoured routes through previously high traffic neighbourhood.

The City Council believes that consistent and extensive engagement and consultation with the public and all stakeholders is essential for the success of transport schemes, including LTNs. We will continue to emphasise this message to the County Council, and in recent months, we have secured a temporary city centre bus gates consultation from the County Council.

We want to listen to local people's concerns. People know their streets better than anyone else. Of all level of government, councillors are most in touch with ordinary people's lives. We are well-placed to listen to our neighbours and local people and

explain the ways in which we all stand to gain most from reducing car use, air pollution, and carbon emissions.

To date the City Council has not been formally involved by the County Council in LTN developments, however we are seeking to support their implementation in the best way possible for residents and businesses. We regret this lack of consultation and engagement. The City Council is well placed to play a role regarding consultation, including through our inclusive transport and movement focus group, to which the County and City Councils have received excellent input on transport plans.

The overall success of LTNs relies on simultaneous traffic management and active travel improvements to arterial and radial routes. Otherwise the short-term impact of the LTNs will be increased congestion on the main roads. Therefore, we believe the city centre bus gates are important as well as the Tranche 2 measures.

### **3. Address by Tim Jones and Dwayne John, Oxford African Caribbean MultiCultural Association**

Dear Oxford City Councillors,

As you are aware, sadly Oxford no longer has the Afro Caribbean Club, and as a group of mainly African Caribbeans, we have come together to form the Oxford African Caribbean Multicultural Association (OACMA), as we believe it was absolutely critical for Oxford to have its own multicultural hub in the community.

Having spoken with countless people in Oxford the need for a community hub is very clear. Thus, we write to you appealing for your support to help OACMA acquire Cowley Marsh Pavilion building as a social and community hub for our association.

#### **The “Windrush Hub” would exist to:**

1. Provide adults, parents, carers, and children a space to gain support from each other through various groups.
2. Provide assistance for anyone suffering from domestic violence.
3. Provide low cost meals at the “Windrush Hub Cafe”.
4. Provide a legal advisory service for youths/adults subjected to stop and search etc.
5. Assist isolated members of the community, and provide them with a social hub.
6. Provide activities and classes for social, mental, and physical well being.
7. Give recognition to talent in community through, exhibitions and display, talent shows and plays, etc.
8. Set up an advisory service to deal with financial and housing issues.
9. Mentor and support young people with continuing education and career paths.
10. To set up a health and wellbeing hub in partnership with other health organisations.
11. Work with charities and the local authorities to provide a food bank/food larder for those struggling in the community.
12. Provide a space for learning of all ages and abilities such as homework clubs, training, adult learning, and multicultural history, etc.
13. Put on various events around cultural diversity such as social gatherings, yoga festival, art therapy classes, dance classes, and music lessons, etc.
14. Provide highly experienced exercise and fitness instructors to run classes and workshops for the different age groups.

OACMA has started fundraising with a view to covering running costs for the hub (CMP building) and are in the process of applying for sponsorship and charitable funds.

In addition we have submitted to the Cabinet Member and Head of Service projected figures from potential income from yoga classes and the dominoes club, which will be a major part of what we hope the association will be able to offer the community on a ongoing basis through what we'd like to call the “Windrush Hub”, a community venture based at the CMP on a long term “peppercorn rate” lease. We can only begin to generate these revenues once we have access to the Cowley Marsh Pavilion (CMP) building.

We are well aware that there are other Afro Caribbean, multi-cultural, and LGBT groups that we are personally connected to that could also benefit from having access to the Windrush Hub, whilst also contributing additional revenues to the charity, and we have initiated discussions with them, but were not able to give more specific details in time for the next City Council meeting on October 5th 2020.

However, we can continue to keep you updated on progress from these discussions as they evolve.

We appeal to Oxford City and County Councils to consider this request and the detailed proposal that we have submitted to the Cabinet Member and Head of Service. It would be fantastic if we could gain access to the building at a peppercorn rate in time to host some specific events during 'Black History Month', so we would very much appreciate a speedy and positive response on this.

**The Cabinet Member for Supporting Communities, Cllr Tidball, will give a verbal response**



#### **4. (a) Address by Tim Bearder – Oxford Green Belt and the Liberal Democrat motion at item 17h**

Last week Sir David Attenborough called on world leaders to do more to protect nature. He made his plea as 65 heads of state and government, including the UK's, signed a global pledge to reverse losses in the natural world by 2030.

They were doing this because a UN report found that around one million species are now threatened with extinction.

This often sounds like an abstract problem that is having an impact on the Amazon but not here in the UK and yet a quarter of our native mammals now at risk of extinction here in the UK.

Our own MP made an impassioned speech to the House of Commons last year in which she said: “.... we also need to make sure we are protecting Wildlife in every single new development and that particularly includes those between Oxford and Cambridge.”

Yet when the Sydlings Copse nature reserve is threatened by over 1,100 new houses, Anneliese Dodds has remained deafening silent. The Wildlife Trust have said this new development would be a disaster for rare species in our local woods but Ms Dodds has (so far) refused to challenge developers or her Labour city councillors who support them. Isn't it time she spoke out?

I know that members of this council, of all stripes, want to see more houses built, as we should! But as Anneliese pointed out, it must be done with the environment at the heart of everything we do. We can't just keep saying these things and then doing the opposite.

So when you back the Lib Dem motion before you today, and I sincerely hope that you will, please also act to condemn the destruction of sensitive Green Belt land that the Wild Life Trust have said will have a seriously negative impact on rare and endangered species close to Barton Sandhills and Risinghurst.

Warm words followed by inaction is no longer an option.

#### **4. (b)Address by Andrew Heaver – Oxford Green Belt and the Liberal Democrat motion at item 17h**

The evidence is mounting: access to clean air, and to green spaces, and to nature, is essential for public health. Take a look at the website of the government-funded NHS Forest project, and you'll see an enormous list of scientific reports, documenting peer-reviewed confirmation that being able to spend time amongst trees and greenery has real and detectable benefits on our respiratory health, and our cardiac health, and our mental health. Starkly, the evidence tells us that when all other factors are equal, citizens with access to trees and greenspace tend to live longer than those without.

The last few months have made all of this data very 'real'. Many of us know from our own personal experience that being able to get out into breathable air, and wild countryside, has made the fear and claustrophobia of lockdown easier to survive. More than ever before in our lifetimes, we know how important trees, wildlife and countryside are for our wellbeing.

This knowledge, however, is tempered by the sad reality that people in less wealthy communities can often have poorer access to trees and greenspace than their wealthier counterparts. Driving to a National Park or to a National Trust property is difficult, when you don't have a car. National Trust membership is hard to pay for when you're struggling to work out how to pay your gas bills and your food bills.

Oxford's answer to this social justice problem has long been its green belt. Oxford's green belt has made it possible for those of us who have grown up, and lived, and worked in some of the city's least wealthy wards, such as Barton and Sandhills, to escape into the countryside, to enjoy the clean air and the trees. Even if our means have been limited. It has made it possible for us to live healthier lives, even if we can't afford the privileges available to Oxford's wealthier residents.

In tough times, when we have struggled with anxieties, or with financial worries, or with poor health, we have been able to find peace and solace in the countryside. Without delay, and without cost.

In this toughest of all years, that access has mattered as much as ever before. And yet, in this toughest of years, residents of Barton, Sandhills and other communities have had to face up to the grim reality that this access is about to be snatched away. A thousand new houses are to be built on the countryside and wildlife habitats next to Barton and Sandhills. Thousands more are to be built elsewhere. The planning inspector is allowing this destruction to proceed. Even though the developers were not able to tell him clearly, in the hearings, how they will provide safe road access to the urban extensions proposed for Barton and Sandhills. Even though the developers could not clarify how they will actually deliver the affordable houses they say they will build. Even though the developers were not able to clarify how deliverable their schemes will actually prove to be, once they have addressed matters of topography, hydrology, archaeology and road access.

The planning inspector, however, was able to reassure himself with a firm statement from this city council's planning officers, who told him that this council fully supports the proposals.

Residents in Barton, Sandhills, and other communities understand the need for more housing, and for better housing, in Oxford. What is not acceptable, however, is the decision by the city council to trash our air quality, and our access to countryside, and our road safety, for a scheme that doesn't actually offer any guarantees of affordable housing. For a scheme that can't even confirm where the thousands of extra cars will access the existing road network. Much will be destroyed, in return for few guarantees of any real improvement to life in our neighbourhoods. In this toughest of years, people who depend on the green belt for their health and wellbeing have been taught a bitter lesson: trees, wildlife and countryside might be essential for our health, but Oxford's Labour administration seems to prioritise the profits of the few ahead of the health of the many. I urge the administration to take a look into their hearts, and think about where their priorities should lie. I urge this council to ensure that local voices are listened to, and that local democracy prevails over imposed plans, whose spurious benefits will not be enjoyed by the local people whose quality of life is being sacrificed.

### **Written Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, Cllr Hollingsworth**

The shortage of housing, in particular affordable housing, in Oxford is something that is clear to all of us. That need was quantified in detailed work done for Oxford's Local Plan 2036, and has been rigorously tested over and over again in public hearings for Local Plans across the whole of Oxfordshire. As the Local Plan makes clear, the primary driver – indeed the overwhelming driver - for overall housing need in Oxford is the need for affordable housing for the city's current and future citizens.

The Oxford Local Plan 2036 also established that even with exhaustive searches for new sites, releases of Green Belt land in Oxford for housing development, increases in density and height of buildings and the establishment of car-free development as the

norm across much of the city, there was a substantial gap between the need for housing in Oxford and the capacity to provide it.

It is because of that gap that all the councils in Oxfordshire agreed to help to identify sites in their control that could be assigned to meet Oxford's unmet need for housing. Beyond assuming that the housing need that has been confirmed must be met, and proposing a principle that sites close to the city were preferable for both transport and community connectivity reasons, the City Council – other than for the Grenoble Road site where it is a landowner – has always left it to the best judgement of the four district councils to decide where best these sites could be found. Where sites have been proposed that meet that principle, the City Council as a formal consultee has been supportive, but again left the final decision to the relevant district council and the process of their local plan examination. That is as true of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan as it has been of the Local Plans of the other three district councils.

South Oxfordshire's affordable housing policy for sites close to Oxford is to require 50% affordable housing, of which 40% should be affordable rented, 35% social rented and 25% other affordable routes to home ownership. While different to the policy of the City Council, which requires a greater proportion of social rented properties, it is nonetheless in line with the basis for the housing need figure for Oxford, which assumes that 50% of all new housing is affordable under the Government definition.

As Cllr Bearder says, 'warm words followed by inaction is no longer an option'. For years the need for more, and more affordable, housing in Oxford has been obvious, and the result of the current round of Local Plans across Oxfordshire is that that need is finally being recognised and met. To say "we want more houses built" to meet the needs of Oxford's current and future citizens, but then to do absolutely nothing about it is the very definition of warm words followed by inaction.

Balancing the needs of past, current and future generations, and the needs for homes, jobs, communities and the environment is difficult, and involves difficult decisions and compromises. The Local Plans put forward and adopted across Oxfordshire by councillors of all political stripes have faced up to those challenges and put forward policies to meet them. Pretending that they don't exist, and shying away from having to address them – 'cake-ism' as our Prime Minister would have it – is simply dishonest.

## **5. Address in support of motion 17k on Domestic abuse and Covid 19 workplace and community safety**

I am here to speak to you as a previous victim of domestic violence to explain some of the issues we victims of domestic violence face in escaping abuse and starting again

- trying numerous times to seek help and leave the relationship, and even separating several times, but each time encountering different obstacles.
- difficulties such as having moved to the UK due to an arranged marriage and having no one around for support, immigration status, still on a spouse visa.
- when working part-time and with a mortgage, not entitled to any benefits.
- advised by Women's Aid to go to a hotel if the victim finds the home environment unbearable, but unable to afford this.
- even after fleeing to a women's refuge, with children, after an attempt on her life, not qualifying for benefits and after a week advised to get a private rented property as the refuge fees were much higher.
- every time, being forced to return to the abusive relationship, as it is hard to survive on a part-time job with no support for victims and their children.

However, the situation can be different.

- Working full-time means the ability to support yourself.
- Good employers, such as Oxford Health, have a fantastic employee support scheme in place.
- The support victims receive at work, from their team, their managers and the occupational health, allowing the time off work whenever needed it, or to work flexibly and so deal with any problems.

### **Written Response from the Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford, Cllr Upton**

We thank you for your bravery in coming to speak to us today about your experience and those of others. Domestic Abuse is deeply traumatic for all those suffering from it and is made worse if proper help is not available when someone has the courage to reach out for it. In Oxford we have a range of support available and we welcome your help in ensuring that more people know about it.

- Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service offers a helpline which will make a safety plan, assess risk and provide a listening service and access to a range of support, which includes:
  - 1-2-1 with an outreach worker who will provide both practical and emotional support
  - Group work to understand abuse and that it is never the victim's fault
  - Refuge provision for women and children who have had no option but to escape to a safe place (women only)
- 'Reducing the Risk' provide crisis support with an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor for victims who are at high risk of significant harm. In addition they deliver training and manage a network of over 1000 frontline specially trained Domestic Abuse Champions in both statutory and voluntary agencies across Oxfordshire.
- SAFE! offers support to children from aged 5 to young adults who have witnessed domestic abuse and a programme for families where there is child on parent violence.
- Oxford City Council, Sanctuary Hosting and Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service have developed a pathway for women on spousal visas who are being

abused to ensure they have safe accommodation when fleeing until they are granted leave to remain (women only).

- Oxford Against Cutting are holding Web Café's to raise awareness of Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation

**These existing services will be added to in the very near future:**

- A Black, Asian and Ethnically Diverse Support Worker will be working with victims and with community groups.
- SAFE! will be starting a programme for children aged 11 to 15 who have witnessed domestic abuse in the home.
- Elmore will have 10 Domestic Abuse Case Workers, 5 working with victims and 5 with perpetrators, assisting in the new Children's Social Care Family Solutions Model.

We can always do more, and we are actively looking for ways to improve our offer to people experiencing domestic abuse. No one should have to suffer this alone.

## 6. Address by Colin Aldridge - Vagrancy act of 1824

I come here today to speak about the Vagrancy act of 1824 which is still in force in England and Wales to this day. Even when first agreed this act was criticized. William Wilberforce was a British politician, philanthropist, and a leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade. He condemned the Act for being a catch-all offence because it did not consider the circumstances as to why an individual had found themselves in such a predicament.

See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vagrancy\\_Act\\_1824](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vagrancy_Act_1824)

The law was enacted to deal with the increasing numbers of homeless and penniless urban poor in England and Wales following the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. Nine years after the Battle of Waterloo the British Army and Navy had undergone a massive reduction in size, leaving large numbers of discharged military personnel without jobs or accommodation. Many were living rough on the streets or in makeshift camps. At the same time a massive influx of economic migrants from Ireland and Scotland arrived in England, especially London, in search of work.

The act promotes and legitimises an attitude of dehumanisation of homeless people. Before the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex (Harry and Megan) the leader of Windsor and Maidenhead council encouraged police to use the act to clear the streets of Windsor so the town was prepared for the considerable influx of tourists.

<http://www.oxfordstudent.com/2091/03/03/the-vagrancy-act-is-a-blight-on-the-homeless-and-must-be-repealed/>

The Act was used to prosecute 1,320 people during 2018 and is most employed by police as a threat to force rough sleepers to relocate. Fines levied under the Act are often deducted from weekly benefit payments.

<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/08/02/vagr-a02.html>

I could list many facts and figures to prove this act deserves to be repealed but the reality is people who find themselves homeless are not criminals through being homeless. They do not deserve criminalising but do need a home and help.

There is many cross-party MP's working to deal with this act, why not give them a helping hand. I feel Oxford should make a firm statement let's make Oxford a city which asks our police not to use this law and then encourage other places to do the same. It's time for action let's make a difference.

This act has gone through several change including implementation in Scotland and Ireland which was later removed.

Finally, after almost 200 years this act is still adopted (which was discriminating against mainly British servicemen) and still using it. Having moved on from the last 200 years ask yourself if this was a new act today would you vote for it?

If you would like to see a small insight to homelessness, I would urge you to volunteer at one of the homeless shelters or establishments feeding them.

Thank you for your attention.

### **Written Response from the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing and Housing the Homeless, Cllr Rowley**

Thank you for your address. The City Council does not have police powers, but supports repeal of the Vagrancy Act and there is cross-party endorsement for this position. I'm also proud to support the Labour Homelessness Campaign, of which Cllr

Shaista Aziz is one of the founders, which had its beginnings here in Oxford and has done valuable campaigning to draw attention to the effect of this obsolete legislation.

The City Council and its partners have reaffirmed our aim that nobody should be forced to sleep rough in Oxford. We believe that rough sleeping and begging can only be eliminated by offering individual tailored support to rough sleepers across the full range of their needs, not just housing but mental and physical health, employment and education too.

This year in particular, we've seen how the certainty of a safe bed during lockdown gave many people the bit of stability they needed to start having conversations about leaving the streets behind for good. Since lockdown started in March we've already helped 93 people to move on into more sustainable housing, and this is something we're going to keep on doing, together with excellent organisations such as Oxford Homeless Pathways, St. Mungo's, Crisis and Aspire.

It's an outrage that in one of the wealthiest cities in the world so many people are forced to sleep rough on our streets. We would welcome your support in framing policies and practices which will give real support to the street homeless and steadily reduce the numbers of people forced to sleep on the streets. Thank you once again for your continuing contribution.

## 7. Address by Magdalene Sacranie - The Charter for Compassion

Good Evening Lord Mayor, Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Magdalene Sacranie.

Thank you for this opportunity of speaking to you again about The Charter for Compassion and the suggestion that Oxford declares and celebrates being a City of Compassion by signing this Charter.

Perhaps some of you visited < [www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org) > following my address to the chamber in January 2020. Back then, none of us could have predicted that Covid19 was going to have such an extended and global impact on our lives.

We have just passed the 1million mark of people who have sadly lost their life due to the pandemic. The challenge for the world is how can we all live safely alongside this virus. The Oxford research scientists are working hard on a vaccine which could then provide part of the answer. But for many of us considering this existential threat, we are talking about pre- and post-Covid19, and using and hearing words such as re-set and re-think.

Many of us have witnessed the outpouring of kindness, thoughtfulness and neighbourliness in our communities. We are all learning that to keep ourselves safe and our lives moving ahead, we must abide by simple directives that are designed to keep everyone well and the “other” safe.

In our world we have around 2million cities that all have struggles with poverty, homelessness, inadequate education and growing inequalities.

We have the technology, the people, the money, the volunteers...but the world is not working.

Could the missing piece be Compassion?

The collective wisdom at the core of all cultures, philosophies and religions, from 1500 BC to the present day, has never gone beyond the advice, or The Golden Rule, to de-throne self and place the other at the centre.

Archbishop Rowan Williams says that we need to make the transition from self-centredness to other-centeredness.

A compassionate City such as Oxford is uncomfortable when there are still residents whose lives are not thriving and flourishing or allowing each one to reach their potential.

By signing The Charter for Compassion, Oxford will join the 430+ cities around the world who have declared themselves Compassionate Cities. The Charter, a kind of indeterminate vision statement is meant to galvanize, connect and encourage actions that will create a more compassionate world.

In these challenging times, there is a real need to develop a ground of Compassion to regulate and re-set new ways of executing, planning, reforming and building our lives.

It is time now, to celebrate goodness and kindness.

The Charter for Compassion invites communities of all sizes to integrate and bring Compassion to life in practical and specific ways: in businesses, schools, environmental projects and faith congregations etc. And on the website there are suggested steps for a city to take on that compassion journey and the C4C Community Tool Box has “tools” to help.

If the City of Oxford decides to sign the Charter for Compassion, these steps might include a core group identifying, for example, Oxford's discomforts: (This might be,



shall we say, the happiness and well-being of our children); and then analysing the challenges and opportunities and choosing an initial focus for short and long term objectives: (In our example, this may be embedding compassion-based education in our schools); other steps would include working towards a public resolution and affirmation of The Charter for Compassion in a launch event and sharing as a Charter Partner, Oxford's experiences with the global network.

In conclusion, as a Charter Partner, Oxford would be working towards a more compassionate world and also to achieving the United Nation's 17 SDG's which are all interdependent and centred around people, the planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

Oxford's twinned city Leiden signed The Charter for Compassion over 10 years ago and hopefully the Mayor of Leiden has communicated the benefits of Charter partnership to our Lord Mayor.

I humbly urge you to consider this proposal most seriously.

Thankyou.

**The Leader of the Council, Cllr Susan Brown, will give a verbal response**

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