

To: Council
Date: 30 November 2020
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet members and Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included where available.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.
5. Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

1. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – ONS data on homelessness

Question	Written Response
<p>Data published by the ONS in October 2019 showed Oxford to consistently have the highest number of homeless deaths per head of population outside of three London Boroughs and Blackburn (data was averaged over six years). On 11 November 2020, the Portfolio Holder reported another three deaths – a tragedy that I am sure touched many people and I join Cllr Rowley in expressing my condolences to the victim’s friends and family.</p> <p>Can the Portfolio Holder provide any explanation as to why homeless deaths in Oxford are so high as a proportion of the population?</p>	<p>Every death of a homeless person is a tragedy and even a single death is one too many.</p> <p>There can be no single definitive answer to the question, but the sad truth is that people with experience of rough sleeping die young – the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports the average age of death for a homeless person is 45 for men and 43 for women, compared with 76 and 81 in the general population.</p> <p>The ONS also reports that 95% of homeless people who died in England and Wales in 2018 were in urban areas, and we know that Oxford has historically attracted a number of homeless people from our rural neighbouring districts and further afield. For example, one of the people identified in the recent Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board review had only been in Oxford for a day or two before he sadly died.</p> <p>The council is working towards not just ending deaths of people who are homeless, but ending the need for anyone to sleep rough in the city. Following the “everyone in” initiative in spring we are accommodating up to 118 people at any one time who may otherwise need to sleep rough. So far we have housed 261 people in total under "everyone in" arrangements, with 112 of these now having been supported into more permanent housing. This includes a number of people who had previously been sleeping rough on a long-term basis.</p> <p>Interim housing also means we can continue to offer help to everyone sleeping on our streets this winter. We have recently been successful in winning £2m in short-term and long-term funding from the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP). The short-term funding will help with the cost of interim housing, provide deposits and rent in advance for people to move into private rented housing, and help Aspire to refurbish empty properties and bring them back into use as move-on accommodation. The long-term funding will help us to buy five one-bedroom properties as part of a programme to deliver 20 Housing First homes as permanent social housing by March 2021, along with three years of support costs.</p>

1. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – ONS data on homelessness

The ONS data involves very small numbers overall, and as such one or two fewer or additional deaths would significantly change the proportion of deaths overall. We believe homelessness cannot be dealt with in Oxford alone, and a countywide steering group is in the process of developing a strategy for tackling homelessness, with a focus on single people and rough sleepers. We have taken the lead in bringing together the County Council, District Councils and health services together with Oxford City Council to address the systemic issues which lead to homelessness. We will also continue to press national Government for the funding and co-ordinated policies needed to end the need for people to sleep rough.

2. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Rowley – Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Question

Government has recently invited bids for its £50m Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund from local authorities or consortia led by Local Authorities. Applications closed on Nov 12, for schemes to be completed by December 2021.

Can the Cabinet member update council on any action taken by this council in respect of this initiative?

Written Response

Officers considered this when it came out in early October, the expression of interest was 16/10, so a very short period to think about and a submission deadline of 12/11. Schemes would need to be completed and reported on by December 2021. It is essentially an initial pot of money for 9-16 projects nationally (so sizeable projects) that will be used to inform approaches to the use of the larger Social Housing decarbonisation fund announced previously at headline level only. The launch of the latter is subject to the spending review but it is expected to be sometime during 2021/22. The objective of this initial funding pot is to test a range of issues related to whole property retrofit and is meant to look at how to upscale the Whole House Retrofit Innovation Competition that has been running at Sutton, Nottingham and Cornwall. So things to be explored are both technical, supply chain development (skills/capacity) and how to drive down unit cost. As we haven't got 'oven ready' whole retrofit schemes ready, the size of the project, the tight timescale given we would be starting from scratch; we were not in a position to put in a credible bid. We will however be tracking this and are actively preparing for a range of Government funding opportunities to try and lever in more money to support our carbon reduction agenda.

3. From Councillor Garden to Councillor Clarkson – Restarting tourism in the city

Question

Tourism is a main source of income for Oxford. What proposals are in place to re-start the tourist trade and protect the local jobs that rely on that trade?

Written Response

The impact of the pandemic on this sector is something that we are taking very seriously. In 2019 around 17,000 jobs in Oxford were in the visitor economy.

The City Council has been facilitating Government grants throughout the coronavirus pandemic, and has established quick turnarounds while still carrying out robust counter-fraud checks. We have already provided £26.6m of Government funding to almost 1,800 businesses in the city to support them through the coronavirus pandemic. While we don't have specific data, a significant amount of these grants and reliefs were to retail and visitor economy businesses. Most recently are taking applications for the most recent "Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed)" and "Additional Restrictions Grant".

In addition, we have to date allocated £100,000 from our capital programme and secured around £135,000 of other grant funding to support the reopening of the city. Examples of some of the work so far includes:

- Additional staff resource to work closely with businesses and other stakeholders to support them through the pandemic
- Public Realm interventions throughout the city centre including George Street, Cornmarket, Broad Street, St Michaels Street to support businesses and allow visitors to enjoy the city as it reopened.
- Signage and marketing to support the city to reopen and support visitors safely e.g. promoting the "We are Good to Go" campaign and funding the England Originals campaign. This also included launching the City Council led "Rediscover Oxford" Campaign. This was very successful in promoting the city and supporting increased footfall working with local partners such as Experience Oxfordshire and Oxford Bus Company.

Moving forward the work in this area continues to evolve. Some commitments already made for next

3. From Councillor Garden to Councillor Clarkson – Restarting tourism in the city

stages of work include:

- Allocated funding for a visitor coach parking strategy.
- Promotion of overnight stays, most directly through the work on Boswells.
- Working closely with Experience Oxfordshire on how we can support them in future years
- Further marketing campaigns e.g. we are about to launch the Experience Oxford at Christmas campaign in partnership with Experience Oxfordshire.

Officers are also working with neighbouring authorities and OxLEP on options to support tourism in Oxfordshire as a whole as part of the countywide economic recovery plan.

More specifically in the city officers are working with local business closely to understand the issues they face to inform an Oxford specific economic recovery plan. This will cover a range of sectors within the economy but will include measures relating to the visitor economy. This will be embedded into our economic strategy to be launched in the New Year. A key part of this work is to not only encourage visitors to return but to also improve visitor expenditure whilst in the city which can be low for those visiting as part of wider coach tours.

In summary some of the workstreams being explored include:

- Business support/survival – promotion of what is available so our businesses understand what support is out there to support through the crisis, but also to help businesses pivot their models to a new normal
- Competitiveness – broadly promotion and marketing to ensure we are well placed to attract visitors back, both tourists, but also conferences etc.
- Destination management – when visitors to come back, how are we co-ordinating and managing this. This ranges from the practical (e.g. coaches and crowds) to more place-based responses such as culture, events and public realm improvements.

4. From Councillor Garden to Councillor Chapman – Enforcement activity

Question	Written Response
<p>Oxford has experienced a tremendous increase in car journeys resulting in significant congestion, illegal parking and speeding. Enforcement seems inadequate.</p> <p>How many enforcement officers are employed by Oxford City Council per area of responsibility (e.g. housing, traffic, PSPO's etc.)?</p> <p>How are they deployed across the city? What more can be done?</p>	<p>Traffic enforcement such as parking and speeding is carried out by the police and the County Council. The Council cannot use those enforcement powers because the legislation reserves them to the police and the County Council.</p> <p>The Council's vehicle enforcement role is limited to the legislation that we can enforce that is relevant such as taxi licensing, abandoned vehicles, parking enforcement in council operated car parks and idling engines.</p> <p>The resource per area of enforcement responsibility is listed below:</p> <p>Building Control 0.5FTE</p> <p>Food safety 4.3FTE</p> <p>Health & safety 0.5FTE</p> <p>Environmental Protection (commercial noise, environmental permitting etc) 3.3FTE</p> <p>Licensing: Alcohol, taxi licensing, animal welfare, street trading, skin piercing etc 9.8FTE</p> <p>Planning enforcement 2FTE</p> <p>Tree Officers 2FTE</p> <p>Private rented sector enforcement 15.4FTE</p> <p>Anti Social Behaviour and community safety: 7.7FTE</p> <p>Community response, e.g. domestic noise, enviro crime, flytipping, litter, idling engines, PSPOs, domestic and commercial waste 12FTE</p> <p>Abandoned vehicles 1FTE</p> <p>Car parks 6FTE</p> <p>Resources are deployed so that the Council meets national requirements, deals with local priorities including any reactive work and ensures that ongoing work programmes are fulfilled.</p> <p>Enforcement is a specialised and complicated function that often demands evidence of officer competency, with some legislation being reserved to specific officers. Lower level enforcement activity across a wide range of areas has been concentrated in the Community Response Team which has enabled an efficient and effective service to be provided in a flexible manner, with more complicated cases being passed to other</p>

4. From Councillor Garden to Councillor Chapman – Enforcement activity

smaller specialist teams after the first response has been made.

5. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Chapman - social distancing road signs

Question

The initial joint City/County response to encourage social distancing in certain areas of the City through the use of painted arrows on the pavement and limited lamppost signs has had very limited impact. In addition, the signs are now disappearing and the paint fading.

Are there any other plans in the pipeline to refresh/improve upon the current arrangement?

Written Response

The City Council's response to encourage social distancing in the city centre and Cowley involved a broad suite of measures, including symbols on pavements, signage within the city centre as well as at bus stops and Park & Rides, city centre ambassadors, significant media coverage, and repeated social media messaging. Other than a few instances of larger gatherings of young people, overall public behaviour within the city centre appears to have been very responsible. Therefore I would question what evidence sits behind the Member's assertion that the measures have had 'very limited impact'.

The introduction of the Government's New National Restrictions came just one week after the introduction of Tier 2 restrictions and so overtook our plans for new signage that were being prepared for that purpose. We are now awaiting more detailed confirmation of the arrangements post 2 December such that new signage and other appropriate measures to help encourage safe social distancing can be commissioned.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; statutory Deputy Leader

6. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Turner – closure of Boswells

Question

Does the Cabinet Member think that the closure of Boswells is attributable to unfair competition with the Westgate centre and its cheap car parking?

Written Response

No. The closure of Boswells reflects the much reported difficulties faced by retailers and particularly department stores across the country. This was recognised by the Board of Boswells and reported in the Oxford Mail in November 2019, when it stated '*The Board has been intensively pursuing all options for preserving the business but due to prevailing adverse retail conditions has concluded that the store is likely to close in 2020.*' Pressed further by the BBC, one of the Directors said that Westgate was not to blame .

Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford; non-statutory Deputy Leader

7. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Active travel priorities and proposed schemes

Question

The award of £2.98m to the County Council as part of Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Grant (125% of allocated funding) is, I am sure the Portfolio Holder will agree, a good result. Even better is the news that all of this will now be spent in Oxford as the LEP has agreed to fund the schemes in Bicester and Witney. However, this sum still falls slightly short of the estimate for the full

Written Response

Financial investment in Oxford to meet our transportation, environmental, and economic goals is welcome. When our local government sector is so unfairly underfunded, we rely increasingly on external funding to meet our aims. The 125% Tranche 2 allocation is positive for Oxford, especially bearing in mind the 50% allocation for Tranche 1.

We will continue to be a trusted and engaged stakeholder in the delivery phase of Tranche 2 through regular officer and member meetings.

As we were not involved in the planning work to date and there is a lot of detail to be discussed and finalised, we are not yet in a position to say whether there are specific elements we do or do not wish to see

7. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Active travel priorities and proposed schemes

list of proposed schemes for Oxford (total cost: £3.18m).

- Can the Portfolio Holder provide us with an indication of his Active Travel priorities and how the City Council is planning to work with the County during the forthcoming delivery phase?
- Do the Portfolio Holder support all elements of the £3.18m bid?
- If not, can they say which schemes he does not wish to see progressed?

progressed. As we have also seen the County Council's current Conservative administration demonstrate a lack of leadership, consistency, and courage on recent emergency transport plans, we are also establishing the strength of their commitment.

Our Active Travel priorities are below, and as such we support the broad principles of the Tranche 2 bid:

- reducing the car congestion that clogs up Oxford's narrow roads, harms our local economy, and pollutes our air and climate
- delivering infrastructure which enables safe cycling and walking
- developing low traffic neighbourhoods as a way to create the people's streets, so that children from different homes can play in the streets they share, and neighbours can meet in the street to build friendships
- We believe that traffic filters, school streets and new segregated cycleways can be effective tools for achieving these goals
- We are also clear that consultation must precede the introduction of radical changes, so that the people who know their streets better than anyone else are able to shape their own communities.

8. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Use of Active Travel (Tranche 2) funds

Question

Does the Portfolio Holder know whether any of the money recently granted to the County Council for Active Travel (Tranche 2) works with Oxford will be used for repairs & renovation of existing cycle track marking, or transport initiatives which do not directly support Active Travel?

Will it press the County Council to ensure these resources are not used for routine maintenance?

Written Response

It is our understanding that the Tranche 2 bid explicitly excluded any routine maintenance of existing infrastructure. The Government's guidance was clear that they were funding, "meaningful plans to reallocate roadspace to active travel. Anything that did not meaningfully alter the status quo on the road would not be funded." (Grant Shapps MP letter to Cllr Ian Hudspeth 13 November 2020)

Yes, the City Council will use its role as stakeholder in order to strongly endorse the most impactful use of the Tranche 2 funds in Oxford.

9. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Zero Emission Zone timetable

Question	Written Response
<p>Can the Portfolio Holder update us on the timetable for the introduction of the ZEZ (Zero Emission Zone) including the consultation and later expansion of the initial air quality zone.</p>	<p>The timetable for the ZEZ Pilot and wider ZEZ is set out in consultations documents available via: www.oxford.gov.uk/zez</p> <p>The consultation was delayed by just a few days this month because of the Government's introduction of a second lockdown. We felt that it was appropriate for consultation to take place when businesses were not immediately and urgently adapting to a suddenly announced lockdown by the Government. For consultation to be effective, it needs to truly enable people to take part and listen to what they say.</p> <p>I regret that the member opted to rush out a press notice expressing 'dismay' at the slight delay. Effective scrutiny could have been performed by directly requesting an explanation. With time running out to achieve effective climate action, environmentalists urgently need to build widespread public confidence in the possibility of change. It is unhelpful to that cause, which I think we agree is important, to have members express concern, seemingly for party political gains. Opposition and scrutiny are helpful for ensuring Council policies get into a better place, but I know that Oxford climate campaigners (who raised these exaggerated concerns with me only to see them overtaken by the launch of the consultation) do not feel this rush for press attention to be examples of effective opposition and scrutiny. I agree and would encourage the member to listen to climate campaigners who want parties to put down their narrow partisan differences to work closely together wherever possible.</p>

10. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hayes – ZEZ and CONNECT traffic modelling

Question	Written Response
<p>Can the Portfolio Holder advise what traffic modelling work they are privy to in formulating ZEZ proposals and the CONNECT proposals, either undertaken by themselves or provided by the County Council and how they can come to any serious recommendations without this information?</p>	<p>Traffic data for the ZEZ Pilot is available on our website here</p> <p>For the wider ZEZ and Connecting Oxford, traffic modelling is being developed by Oxfordshire County Council which will inform consultation on the wider ZEZ due to be launched next year.</p>

11. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hayes – enforcing the ZEZ

Question	Written Response
<p>How will the City Council enforce the ZEZ and what cost estimates have they received for new ANPR cameras, and are these cost estimates good value?</p>	<p>The ZEZ will be enforced with the use of ANPR cameras. Further details of enforcement is available in the formal consultation document on www.oxford.gov.uk/zez</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council will be responsible for procurement and operation of ANPR cameras which will be funded in part by grant funding secured by Oxford City Council.</p>

12. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – Electronic Road Pricing trial

Question	Written Response
<p>Since the Treasury is now investigating Electronic Road Pricing as an alternative to fuel duties, due to the roll out of electric vehicles for which no fuel duties are paid, would the PH be supportive of EPR trial in Oxford?</p> <p>[Note that one local group, the Cowley Area Transport Group, has already suggested this].</p>	<p>We would need to understand the details of any proposal in more detail, which of course depends upon the conclusion of the investigation referenced. We would need to understand how it would interplay with other initiatives in the city that we are actively pursuing e.g. the Zero Emission Zone before considering it further. For example, we would want to understand more about the emerging national proposals. What we would not want to inadvertently do through a trial would be to deter people in the coming years from moving from petrol and diesel engines to electric by introducing a pricing scheme that could be perceived as a deterrent. We have communicated with the Department for Transport for a detailed outline of their investigation and their planned timetable for conclusion.</p> <p>I will contact the one local group you mention, Cowley Area Transport Group. A glance at their website shows a large photograph of the group's organisers Hazel and Steve Dawe, who, happily, I know from their time as Green Party council candidates, so I can simply discuss this with them.</p>

13. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hayes – Shops offering car park discounts

Question	Written Response
<p>Debenhams department store in Oxford has recently been advertising a promotion to attract shoppers, in the form of a sign in-store saying "2 hours free parking when you spend £50". Shoppers are asked to photograph their parking</p>	<p>Unfortunately, we do not have any specific powers to stop this from happening. However, I have asked that the City Centre Management team to contact the manager of Debenhams to see if their approach can be rebalanced</p>

13. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hayes – Shops offering car park discounts

ticket and present it at the checkout for a refund up to the value of £10.00. Like the decision to allow the Westgate centre to set its own parking charges, this clearly undermines council’s ability to use policy to encourage the kind of travel choices we all wish to see in our city.

Does the Cabinet member have a view on this initiative by Debenhams, and are there any mechanisms by which the council can engage with them on the matter?

to also include reimbursing bus tickets and park and ride parking so as not to encourage car travel over public transport to the city.

14. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hayes – free parking at Park and Ride

Question

Can the Portfolio Holder provide a report on the success or otherwise of free parking at the park and rides over the summer period and what it cost in terms of lost revenue?

Written Response

As set out in the published decisions notice for 07/08/2020, the Council worked in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council to provide free parking at all of Oxford’s five park and ride sites 7-days per week for the month of August, to make it easier for people to visit the city centre, rediscover Oxford, spend money in the local economy, and so support business and protect jobs. It was a supportive initiative at a challenging time for all retail, hospitality, and leisure businesses, when city centre footfall was still heavily down on last year (circa 60%) and the number of vacant units was rising. It was also a measure of support for Park & Ride services which have suffered from the guidance being to avoid public transport unless necessary (they were at the time of this decision running at 15% of usual capacity), and so support a return to use of a vital travel mode into the city centre.

Officers received information from Oxford Bus Company, which operates the park & ride services, that the free parking offer for August had a significant and much needed impact in assisting the city centre with its recovery at this difficult time. They have advised they would have anticipated only a modest increase in the absence of the scheme based on the trajectory they were seeing from June through to July. However, with the scheme, they saw 30% more passengers on Mondays to Fridays than they would have expected to see, with 34% more on Saturdays and 27% on Sundays.

14. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hayes – free parking at Park and Ride

The impact on parking revenue is not a straightforward calculation because COVID impacts meant no previous year data could be used, and the only basis was usage figures in the months from March to early-July which were also severely impacted. Within these limitations, officers estimated the potential revenue loss for the 3 City Council sites at circa £30-35k.

15. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hayes – Aristotle bridge repairs

Question

Would the Cabinet Member confirm whether an inspection of Aristotle bridge has now been carried out by County, and whether liaison with Network Rail has taken place with a view to repairing the collapsing ramp?

Written Response

We understand from County Council colleagues that repairs have been carried out to the ramp but following an assessment some further work is required to mitigate local concerns raised.

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

16. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Linda Smith – community groups' tree planting

Question

At the last Council, the Portfolio Holder helpfully clarified the situation regarding the Council's willingness and interest in planting more trees and supporting community groups to do likewise. Given the Council's limited resources, will she agree to provide to responsible community groups the information (location, tree species, planting instructions etc) they need to galvanise volunteers to scale up tree planting in the City?

Written Response

More community group interest in tree planting is always welcomed. Groups need to register their interest with ODS's Park Service. In doing this the service can engage with the groups to guide them, and see if a site is viable along with other formalities such as on-going maintenance after planting has taken place.

17. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Linda Smith – signs for Cutteslowe Horticultural Therapy Nursery and Garden Centre

Question

Can the Cabinet Member advise whether the installation of signs has now been agreed for the Cutteslowe Horticultural Therapy Nursery and Garden Centre and, if so, the timescale for their installation?

Written Response

Yes the signs have been agreed with the Nursery and they are part of a programme of works which will be completed before the end of the financial year (March 2021).

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

18. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hollingsworth – Reconsidering land use planning

Question

In view of the Government's intention to revise its housing algorithms and place a renewed emphasis on housing within urban areas, coupled with the changes in work and travel patterns as a result of COVID (which look set to persist), will the City Council begin a review of its housing plans?

In particular, will it re-consider the use of land currently used for low density car parking and consider whether some of the land, or space above, could be released for affordable housing.

Written Response

It is far from clear what the Government is currently doing in relation to planning, whether it is the highly damaging proposals contained in the planning White Paper, or the proposed revisions to the formula for the Standard Methodology for calculating minimum levels of housing need. In any case if and when revised figures for the Standard Methodology are produced, they would be used as the starting point for a new Local Plan, and would not be relevant to an existing Local Plan.

All Councils are required to review their Local Plans at least every five years and as the current Local Plan process has shown to do so properly, with meaningful public consultation and engagement, takes around four years. I have already made clear in responses to previous questions that the City Council will in this municipal year begin the preliminary steps towards a new Local Plan, probably to 2040, and that will be confirmed in the new Statement of Community Involvement, due to be reported to Cabinet in the New Year.

As with the current Local Plan, it seems highly likely that the quantum of housing need for Oxford will be driven by the need for affordable housing rather than the baseline set by the Governments Standard Methodology.

18. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hollingsworth – Reconsidering land use planning

In the meantime the councillor may wish to take the opportunity to refresh himself about the policies in the current Local Plan for Union Street, the West End – including the Oxpens and Beckett Street car parks - and the SPD for Diamond Place, all of which already propose exactly the redevelopment principles which he wants to see.

19. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Oxford Living Rent

Question

Can the Portfolio Holder update Council on the work being done to introduce an Oxford Living Rent?

Written Response

The officer team responsible for the City Council’s work in the private rented sector have been focussing this year on the renewal of the HMO licensing scheme and the promotion of the selective licensing scheme currently out for consultation, and of course have been further prioritising work with tenants and landlords relating to the current health crisis. Work on the longer-term project of formulating and developing an Oxford Living Wage project will begin during the next municipal year.

20. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – development of Iffley Meadows

Question

Aside from their role as a Planning Authority, is the Council or any of its companies involved in any way in the controversial development of Iffley Meadows (the area of land in Iffley Village bounded by Meadow Lane and Church Way).

Written Response

The site in question, some of which has been allocated for development in the recently approved Oxford Local Plan 2036, has been acquired by Oxford City Homes Limited with the intention of developing the allocated site at Meadow Lane (the adjacent Memorial Field site has also been acquired because the vendor sold the sites together, but this is not allocated for development in the Local Plan).

The development of 29 homes, will include at least 12 homes for social rent, and another three will be expected to be shared ownership or another affordable tenure, in line with the Council’s planning policies.

The site has been allocated for housing in the Local Plan, a Plan which made clear the desperate need for more homes for Oxford’s current and future citizens, in

20. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – development of Iffley Meadows

particular affordable housing. What would be controversial would be to pay lip service to that need but then do nothing to bring forward sites and homes that address it. This site makes a small but important contribution to meeting the need for new homes, and was subject to full and robust examination during the Local Plan making process

21. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – ‘Right to co-op’ campaign (private sector renting)

Question

I would like to draw Cllr Hollingsworth's attention to the ['Right to Co-op' campaign](#)

If successful, this would enable renters who have occupied a shared property for 3 years or more to take control of their homes by transferring ownership from the private landlord to a cooperative. They could either run the home as a co-op themselves, optionally contracting a secondary co-op to provide them with governance, management and maintenance services. Or they could opt for an existing co-op to take over their home. The proposals include measures to prevent property speculation, and financial protections for existing landlords. Although an actual "right to coop" would require primary legislation, there are things that a local council could do to encourage this, e.g.

- Promote the Community-Led Housing Hub to renters for support in setting up a co-operative and buying a suitable home.
- Provide 5-year loans to help co-ops buy properties. After those 5 years the co-op would have gained sufficient equity in the property, and have a financial track record, to be able to secure better deals from ethical and other lenders.
- Work with existing housing co-operatives in London to leverage their considerable asset base (worth hundreds of millions of pounds) and their cash holdings to support new co-operatives.

Written Response

A 'Right to Co-op' is an interesting proposal, but as the Councillor says, one that would require primary legislation and a complex system of valuation systems that would need to be set at a national level, and of course a willingness by national government to proceed in such a direction. As such it is probably best until such time as the Council might realistically be able to shape such a policy, rather than divert limited officer resources away from issues where we can make an immediate difference, such as the selective and HMO licensing schemes.

The Council is already working closely with local community-led housing groups, and reported on that work in some detail to Scrutiny, the Cabinet and to Council in 2019.

21. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – ‘Right to co-op’ campaign (private sector renting)

• Provide loan and grant funding through his Innovation Fund and the Community Housing Fund for property improvements and extensions.

Is this something he would be willing to investigate, given the unaffordability and insecurity of much accommodation in the private rented sector?

22. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt P&R

Question

The Seacourt Park & Ride extension was to be completed in mid-October. It is still unfinished. Would the Cabinet Member advise the new completion date and whether the payback period, estimated at 17 years in January 2020, will now be extended?

Written Response

First, I must apologise that the answer I gave at the last Council meeting has turned out to be wrong. The answer was both given to me and in turn given by me in good faith, but relied on over optimistic assumptions that there would be no further disruptions to the supply chain for building materials caused by Covid. That I gave a wrong answer to Council is a matter of considerable personal regret, and I am sorry to have done so.

Latterly the effects of Covid-19 have impacted on the labour force in the supply chain for a number of products that are incorporated in the works both from the United Kingdom and continental Europe, with both permeable paving blocks and specialist lighting components having suffered increased lead in time due to manufacturing levels being reduced and in some cases stopped – most recently by concerns over mink farms in Denmark.

Nonetheless the team managing the contract for the Council have identified a solution that will enable the phased opening of car parking space from the end of this month utilising temporary lighting and access options. The final completion of the building and all landscaping are ongoing but are expected to be completed and into use early in the New Year, subject to there being no further unpredicted supply chain disruptions.

However there is no change to the estimated payback period.

23. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Educational provision in Littlemore

Question	Written Response
<p>The 2011 census states Littlemore’s population was 5,646 (2011 Census) living in 2759 dwellings, this has grown to a population of 6,580 in 2019 (source OCC Localinsight) and the number of dwellings has increased by a similar ratio. New developments approved after 2019 in Littlemore will evidence further a population increase.</p> <p>During this time Littlemore has also seen a reduction in the number of schools to housing developments and a shrinkage in size or existing schools also due to new housing developments.</p> <p>The tipping point for a new primary school is 450 new dwellings.</p> <p>Can the portfolio holder reassure Littlemore residents that Littlemore’s educational needs will be addressed in this area of high deprivation?</p> <p>And how the educational needs of this rapidly expanding population will be met?</p>	<p>Oxfordshire County Council is the Local Education Authority and has the statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all children of statutory school age living in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>The most up-to-date assessment is the 2019-2023 Pupil Place Plan which was published in November 2019 and can be found on County Council’s website. The Pupil Place Plan shows how the County Council expects school provision to change throughout its duration. It brings together information from a wide range of sources and sets out the issues the County Council will face in meeting its statutory duties for providing nursery and school places up to 2023 and beyond.</p> <p>The County Council provided the following evidence to support the Oxford Local Plan 2036, a statement which is reported in the Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP):</p> <p><i>“Current pupil forecasts indicate that sufficient primary and secondary school places to meet Oxford’s growth can be provided through existing school, including some further intensification of use, and the new schools already planned, i.e. the new primary school at Barton West and the new Swan secondary school. However it may be that particular concentrations of growth will require additional school provision. Therefore the County Council requests that land be available adjacent to or very close to, an existing school site. In particular the County welcomes the identification of land in the Osney Mead/ Oxpens area to facilitate the expansion of school capacity.”</i></p> <p>These requirements were then embedded by the City Council in the Local Plan 2036.</p> <p>The City Council’s IDP is currently being updated and will take full account of forecast population growth and the distribution of sites (within and on the edges of Oxford), and will be informed by the latest Pupil Place Plan, as will the update to the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) being developed by all the county’s local authorities working together under the co-ordination of the County Council.</p>

24. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Liaison with County Council over infrastructure in Littlemore

24. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Liaison with County Council over infrastructure in Littlemore

Question	Written Response
Will the portfolio holder responsible for planning reassure Littlemore residents he will liaise with county council counterparts to ensure that infrastructure including transport and education will be addressed in Littlemore’s rapid expansion, and will kindly address the need for a new primary school?	I refer the Councillor to the answer to question 23, which explains the process by which this process is already ongoing.

Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford

25. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Upton – University COVID case numbers

Question	Written Response
There is lots of confusion around the inclusion, or not, of University COVID case numbers in the Oxford-wide figure. Can the Portfolio Holder clarify the situation and what is going to happen going forward?	Up until the week ending 13th November, the University of Oxford’s case numbers were not being included in the nationally reported figures. This was due to the University having a separate testing facility for their students which was being reported in to the national system but not registering as Oxford cases. This issue was recognised in September when the weekly reporting commenced and was raised with government a number of times. The Health Protection Board and the Oxfordshire System’s Leaders Group have been considering this data alongside the national data when making decisions. The university’s data is publicly available on its website. The situation was finally rectified and the University data included in the nationally reported figures for the week ending 13th November and this will continue to be the case moving forward.

26. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Upton – Oxford Safer Streets Bids

Question	Written Response
I am sure the Portfolio Holder will join me in welcoming funding being directed into East Oxford as a result of the successful Oxford Safer Streets Bids (Project	City Council officers are working with the police and other partners on implementation of the bids deliverables. In particular, CCTV

26. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Upton – Oxford Safer Streets Bids

Breakaway and East Oxford Safer Home Zones) and thank Thames Valley Police for making the applications. As with a lot of Government funding at the moment, the money has to be spent quickly.

How/what can the City Council do to help expedite the work?

improvements involves possible extensions to the Council's existing public space CCTV cameras. Community engagement is another important element, with the local Hub offering to assist in this area - we have assigned an officer to liaise with police. In addition ODS have done the technical drawings for siting secure cycle parking on streets to be used for the Traffic Regulation Order applications by Oxfordshire County Council.

27. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Upton cycling infrastructure improvements

Question

What improvements for cyclists, in the form of cycleways or other bike infrastructure, has the City Council achieved this year?

Written Response

The city council's remit is limited as we are not the highways authority. Nonetheless, this financial year we have:

- installed 54 bike racks (108 spaces) in the city centre, on Speedwell Street, Ship Street, New Road and North Parade as part of an ongoing commitment to increase the amount of city centre and district centre bike parking spaces
- installed 130 additional bike parking spaces at Park & Ride sites (Redbridge, Peartree and Seacourt), in order to help commuters to cycle the last miles of their journey into the city
- created a temporary bicycle lane through the pedestrianised section of George Street, which meant that a successful scheme for hospitality businesses did not affect a key cycle route in the city
- committed to the Oxford Greenways Project, alongside Oxfordshire County Council and the University of Oxford, which will fund the creation of a concept masterplan for new cycle and walking routes from nearby towns and villages to key employment, transport and retail sites in the city.

We also intend to install additional city centre and localities bike parking, some of which has been delayed by the need for increased pavement space to allow social distancing, and to progress a feasibility study for cycling infrastructure in Shotover

28. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tidball – Syrian refugee families resettlement

Question

Can the Cabinet Member advise how many Syrian refugee families were rehoused in Oxford in 19/20 and in the current financial year, and how many refugees the City hopes to rehouse in the year 21/22 under the new Global Resettlement Scheme?

Written Response

Oxford is a City of Sanctuary and shares the vision that the UK must be a welcoming place of safety and is proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.

The City Council has accommodated 30 families, a total of 129 people through the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme. Oxford is in the top 3 of districts in the South East in terms of number of people accommodated under the scheme. These families arrived between December 2015 and October 2018. The experience of the programme demonstrated that families required considerable support to settle into their communities, access healthcare, learn English and access jobs to enable them to support themselves. A number of families have needed continued support since 2015.

Families need to move into full time employment or have access to long term disability benefits in order to be able to build a sustainable future in Oxford and in particular to be able to afford their private rented housing beyond the period of subsidy provided under the programme. The refugee resettlement programme works with refugees who are particularly vulnerable, and the large number of complex barriers they face, including trauma, physical health difficulties and lack of qualifications, mean accessing employment can be exceptionally challenging. *The employment rate for adults in our programme is low, which has resulted in a number of families needing continued support beyond that funded by the government scheme.*

This challenge has been reflected nationwide in the delivery of the SVPRS. In addition, in Oxford's housing market, finding homes for families in the Private Rented sector is increasingly a challenge.

Accordingly, in 2019/20 the council's focus was on supporting those families who had arrived under the scheme towards independence. We have successfully bid for additional funding to increase support for English Language Training and continue to work closely with partners to identify gaps and develop support initiatives. This includes convening a Refugee Employer Group

28. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tidball – Syrian refugee families resettlement

	<p>Meeting to explore and share volunteering, training and work opportunities; development and delivery of a series of Work Based ESOL courses to include, Customer Service, Self-Employment and Construction Skills; a Social Recruitment Charter to encourage employers to offer opportunities to the vulnerable including the migrant community, and mapping of ESOL provision across the city to help the migrant community to have better access to what is on offer.</p> <p>The SVPRS scheme was due to be replaced by the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) in April 2020, but the schemes were paused in March due to the COVID 10 pandemic.</p> <p>Government have recently announced that to fulfil its' original commitment of 20,000 232 families will be resettled to complete SVPRS commitment, early in the New Year. A decision is still awaited as to when the new UKRS scheme will restart.</p> <p>Officers are currently undertaking work to inform consideration of the council's future participation in the scheme. This includes looking at options for how families can be adequately supported and routes to employment / access to affordable housing might be improved given that the funding provided by government under the scheme is insufficient to cover the medium to long term costs of resettling families in Oxford.</p>
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29. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Tidball – capital spend on the fabric and structure of community centres

Question	Written Response
<p>Could the Cabinet member clarify the council's approach to capital spend on the fabric and structure of community centres?</p> <p>At the moment, the position appears to be that the council will directly fund build costs (though under this administration</p>	<p>The Council's Community Centre Lease approach was agreed in the 2016 Community Centres Strategy. It is based on two approaches in respect of the different legal status of the Associations at that time.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For those Associations who held a lease with security of tenure under the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act the Council agreed to grant new 25 year leases with a right for either party to break on the 10th and 20th anniversary and with the tenant again benefiting from security of tenure. The leases were to be otherwise substantially on the same terms as

29. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Tidball – capital spend on the fabric and structure of community centres

this has been spread extremely unevenly across the city). For any further structural maintenance or upgrade, there appears to be a wholly artificial division between works to the exterior of the buildings, which are paid for by the council, and works inside, which fall on the tenant. However, in both cases the benefit in terms of enhancing and maintaining the value of the asset accrues to the council as building owner. In addition, facilities within centres such as toilets are often used by a far wider constituency of external groups and the general public than just those engaging in formal organised activities run by the centre.

Would it not be fairer for all capital costs for building works on its own buildings to be funded by the council?

previously. Under the 1954 Act on renewal a tenant is entitled to a market rent lease. Notwithstanding this the Council agreed not to charge rent and to continue to fund external and structural repairs and buildings insurance.

2. The remainder of the Associations held a licence to occupy. Most of these were terminable at any time on 12 months' notice. The Council agreed to grant these Associations 25 year leases with a right for either party to break at regular fixed points (on 12 months' notice) and excluded from the security of tenure provisions of the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act. This arrangement put these Associations onto a leasehold footing with a length of term which would enable them to apply for external funding. The repairing obligations under the lease were offered on the same basis as under the licence and again the Council agreed not to charge rent and to continue to fund external and structural repairs and buildings insurance.

The majority of the Associations have now completed their new leases with the Council. Most of the Associations have, in negotiating these leases, instructed independent solicitors who would have fully explained to their clients the implications of the leases they were proposing to enter.

All the new leases included a schedule of responsibilities for both the landlord (OCC) and the tenant (Community Association). This was to ensure that all parties fully understood their repairing and health and safety responsibilities.

It is common landlord and tenant practice for repairs to be shared between parties and often the landlord wishes to keep control of repairs to the structure and exterior. Usually if the landlord repairs elements, the tenant reimburses all those repair costs via a service charge. For the community centres, the Council has agreed to take on responsibility for repairs to the external and structural elements and buildings insurance without any recharge to the tenant in recognition of the value to each community that the Associations deliver which is in line the Council's corporate objectives. So far as internal non-structural elements and fixtures are concerned, the Council continues to require the Associations to take on responsibility where these items are in disrepair.

All associations have now been offered 25 year leases

29. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Tidball – capital spend on the fabric and structure of community centres

which importantly means they are able to apply for and obtain grant funding from external sources for the enhancement of facilities for each community. Once a lease has been granted to an Association, it has exclusive occupation of its premises and therefore will be able to control who uses its facilities.

30. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tidball – Supporting families during holiday season

Question

Food poverty and free school meals have been a big part of the pandemic response.

What measures are in place to support families during the upcoming holiday season?

Written Response

The Council has already put in place the food supply infrastructure to ensure that anyone subject to food poverty or that is eligible for free school meals during the upcoming holiday season can have their needs met.

Following the pandemic response during the Spring and Summer, we began to transition people from the Council providing services relating to food poverty, to a more self-sustainable model. To aide this we supported people to access food vouchers via the Council support helpline – in total over a 1000 vouchers were distributed to individuals, households and to those young people eligible for free school meals. In between September and October approximately 465 families transitioned.

Recently, during the half term, the Council issued 316 food vouchers for children that would be eligible for free school meals – this is to protect children from food poverty.

The work we have undertaken thus far and the intelligence we have collated from the support we have provided has put the Council in a strong position to gauge the level of demand that we will need to cater for during the holiday season.

It is essential to note the Council was pro-active in securing food pipelines and put in place a contract with SOFEA to ensure this is sustainable till the end of this financial year.

We also have a comprehensive community food infrastructure in place, ranging from food larders, distribution infrastructure and a whole food network in place. We have been working with Good Food Oxford and the Community Food system to start to map out what community food services are being provided and potentially where any gaps may be within the system

30. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tidball – Supporting families during holiday season

so that we are able to tackle these. As a precaution we also have a stock over around a 1000 non-perishable emergency food parcels should we need to either use these or supply these into the system.

Recently, the Government has announced a £170m budget allocation for food and fuel poverty. We are now scoping out a detailed needs analysis in preparedness for the winter based on the work we have already taken, and the infrastructure we have in place. We will be submitting our proposal to the County Council on behalf of the residents of this city so that we can draw down the sufficient funding/resource needed to protect people and children from food, and fuel poverty.

We already have the infrastructure/voucher system in place; it is merely a matter of ensuring the funding matches the needs we are trying to meet. Officers are working on making this happen.

Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships

31. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Brown – Oxford Living Wage (OWL) adoption

Question

Will the Leader join me in taking this further opportunity, following Living Wage Week, to recognise and congratulate the organisations in Oxford that have adopted the Oxford Living Wage.

Written Response

I was delighted we were able to recognise so many new OLW Employers at our Living Wage Week event last week. We have been working towards that day for some time and my only regret was that I wasn't able to shake their hands in person! It was a great opportunity to bring good local employers together to discuss a shared agenda. I found the event inspiring.

We agreed with those present that we will be producing new case studies and promotional material with our Network of OLW Employers to promote them as businesses and the benefits of OLW. We are aiming to grow a network of OLW Employers that work together not just on the OLW but other aspects of being an ethical and inclusive employer.

28 new employers were recognised and I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank them once more.

32. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Brown – Oxford Living Wage and University of Oxford

Question

Is there any pressure that the Leader can apply, following the very welcome adoption of the Oxford Living Wage by the University of Oxford to apply pressure to the individual Colleges to do the same?

Written Response

I never stop raising this issue with individual colleges, the Conference of Colleges, and also with the University of Oxford. I have also written to each individual college that does not yet pay the Oxford Living Wage more than once. We do plan to hold further discussions with the colleges. We had conversations, pre-pandemic, with the Conference of Colleges, alongside the University, and we know that a group of colleges have been considering adopting OLW. There are some complexities around the wider benefits that colleges offer to their employees. This has been part of those discussions, but we think the scheme should be kept simple and needs to focus on hourly pay in line with the Living Wage Foundation's criteria. In light of the University being officially recognised as an OLW employer, we will take the opportunity to pursue further discussions with the colleges as part of our Strategy to grow OLW through this difficult financial period.

33. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Brown – Oriel College Rhodes working party

Question

Can we have an update on the Rhodes statue at Oriel college?
How many times has the working party met, and can we see the minutes of the meetings?

Written Response

The Council has not received any formal submissions or updates from the college.
As you know, Oriel College has set up an independent commission to consider submissions and seek evidence and Cllr Shaista Aziz is sitting on that commission. One of the Council's heritage planners has recently attended a meeting of the commission by invitation.
The decisions, remit and management of the meetings of the working group is, entirely properly, a matter for Oriel College and not for this council, so I have no further information to offer.

34. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Brown – Oriol College Rhodes working party 2

Question

I have written to Oriol College asking the Dean to acknowledge, on the university's website, that a working group is working towards the removal of the Rhodes statue and to publish the meetings on their website.

Can the Leader of the Council also encourage the university to publish the working groups' minutes, along with publishing the minutes on the city council's website?

Written Response

While I would of course support maximum transparency in Oriol College's decision making on the future of the Rhodes statue, I repeat that the decisions, remit and management of the meetings of the working group is, entirely properly, a matter for Oriol College and not for this council. I suggest that if Councillor Henwood seeks information about the workings of Oriol College he should ask them directly.

35. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown –

Question

Will the Leader join me in welcoming in the warmest possible terms the election of President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice-President-Elect Kamala Harris in the US, in expressing the hope that this marks a turn away from the kind of divisive, demonising, mendacious, bigoted, centralising political discourse represented by the outgoing president and, sadly, in some aspects of the policy of his friend our own Prime Minister, and in pledging to keep Oxford the open, tolerant, free, inclusive, cosmopolitan city we are all proud to call home?

Written Response

Yes

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