

To: Council
Date: 22 March 2021
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

Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing and Housing the Homeless

1. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Rowley – SWEP access

Question

I welcome the more recent opening of COVID-safe SWEP provision during cold weather and understand that most rough sleepers are allocated a SWEP room in advance.

However, would the Portfolio Holder agree that expecting those still requiring a room to turn up

Written Response

We believe the process is the best way to provide covid-safe emergency shelter at short notice. SWEP is basic accommodation to provide people a place to sleep inside during adverse weather conditions. At present, because of the risk of infection we are providing SWEP in individual rooms across a number of sites. Volunteers are used to staff it who may have been working that day.

When SWEP is triggered for a night, this is notified to the Council's partners by 10am that morning. The St Mungo's Outreach Team then spend the day attempting to make all rough sleepers aware, and allocate them into rooms. This process continues until 5pm when a list of

1. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Rowley – SWEP access

at O’Hanlon House between 11pm and midnight is an unreasonable requirement in freezing weather?
Will he agree to re-considering this?

people who are anticipated to access SWEP is produced, called the “Anticipated List”. This list is shared with the Council’s Rough Sleeping Team, and Aspire and Homeless Oxfordshire, who are providing SWEP accommodation this year, along with St Mungo’s. This allows the providers to make arrangements for that evening, and understand any particular needs people may have, or risks posed.

The venues are accessible to people on the Anticipated List from 9pm until 11pm. It is only at 11pm when it is known what spaces remain available at the venues. This is why people who were not on the Anticipated List are directed to approach O’Hanlon House at 11pm so they can be directed to a space at one of the venues, or be allocated the room available at O’Hanlon House. In practice, organisations providing SWEP venues try to operate flexibly. If someone turns up at one of the venues between 9pm and 11pm, who is not on the Anticipated List and all spaces haven’t been allocated, they may be accommodated if after assessing any risks, the provider is satisfied that the venue is appropriate for the individual. SWEP accommodation is not accessible after midnight.

Pushing the times back would mean having large numbers of people in venues earlier in the evening without any structured activities or recreation opportunities available which could be challenging for SWEP staff to manage.

The SWEP policy is reviewed annually in conjunction with partners early in autumn, so access arrangements will be considered again at this point.

Cabinet Member for City Centre, Covered Market and Culture

2. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson - Investigation into tourist coach management

Question
The 21/22 Budget provided a sum of £20,000 for this project as part of the General Fund Capital

Written Response
The budget was originally drafted with the anticipation that an effective survey and engagement could happen in Summer 2021 with a key element being a survey of coaches.

2. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson - Investigation into tourist coach management

programme. Would the Cabinet member confirm the start date for this work and when the final report can be expected?

However, due to the additional national lockdown and Government Roadmap we do not think we will be able to gather the information needed to inform an effective strategy. We have not yet fixed a start date for the work but we hope that early work and engagement can happen towards the end of 2021/22 running into 2022/23.

In the interim we are exploring temporary solutions with the county council.

Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services

3. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Chapman – Parks maintenance contractors

Question

Why won't the City Council allow local Oxfordshire landscape contractors an opportunity to undertake some of the City's parks maintenance

Written Response

ODS (Oxford Direct Services) are a wholly-owned company of Oxford City Council, and it is therefore entirely consistent that ODS are used first for any works for which they have the skills and capacity. It is vital to maintain and grow that in house capacity because that is what gives ODS credibility to undertake external commercial work, which builds non council income and the company dividend.

It does use sub-contractors where necessary, but that is only where in house capacity cannot do the job. ODS are by their very nature a 'local' contractor, thereby benefitting Oxford through the circular economy and supporting essential council services through any dividends delivered

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; statutory Deputy Leader

4. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Turner – Park and Ride revenues

Question	Written Response
<p>What does the Portfolio Holder think the impact will be on the City Council's Park and Ride revenues now that the Eynsham Park and Ride has been given the go ahead?</p>	<p>Included within the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021-22 is around £5.3 million gross income from car parks, including £1.3 million from park and rides and more specifically £390k from Peartree Park and Ride. The impact of the Eynsham Park and Ride on the Peartree facility is likely to depend on a number of factors. These include: the fee for the bus fare, whether customers are required to pay for their parking, the terms and conditions of the site, the frequency of the bus service and the overall journey time. Without knowing these elements, it is difficult to predict how many customers will opt to use this facility. That having been said, the parking service is modelling a number of scenarios and these will be refined once further information is known.</p>

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

5. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Local Electricity Bill/ community renewable energy

Question	Written Response
<p>Community-scale renewable energy offers huge potential to accelerate the low-carbon transition but in the UK, it is being blocked by wildly disproportionate costs and unfair regulations.</p> <p>Power for People is campaigning for the Local Electricity Bill which, if made law, would empower community energy groups to start up and sell their clean electricity to local people. This would simultaneously strengthen local economies</p>	<p>I wrote to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in July 2020 to confirm the Council's support for the Bill and to ask for the Government's backing.</p> <p>In the same month I also wrote to both Oxford MPs and asked for their support for the Bill. Both expressed their support for the principles the Bill was seeking to achieve; however the MP for Oxford East wanted its wording clarified to prioritise <i>renewable</i> generation.</p> <p>Indeed, I have been linking up with the campaign group Power for People and only last week I took part in a roundtable with Anneliese Dodds MP about community energy generation and supply.</p> <p>The Council's position is also that provision should be made in the Bill to ensure that it only applies to</p>

5. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Local Electricity Bill/ community renewable energy	
<p>and tackle climate change. Places like Oxford, with strong community engagement around renewable energy, would see enormous benefit.</p> <p>Will the Portfolio Holder write to the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and local MPs expressing support for the Local Electricity Bill and asking them to lobby for the Bill to become law?</p>	<p>renewable energy and excludes fossil fuel projects.</p> <p>Oxford City Council has a strong track record on renewable energy and supports measures that would make deployment less challenging.</p> <p>The equivalent of over 10% of the Council’s electricity demand is met by rooftop solar installed across the estate, with ambitions to go further in line with the Council’s net zero goals.</p> <p>Oxford City Council has supported a number of community renewable energy projects across the City and was instrumental in setting up the Low Carbon Hub.</p>

6. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Hydrogen fuel	
<p>Question</p> <p>The City Council (along with other owners of commercial and residential property) faces an enormous challenge in reducing carbon dioxide emissions from the use of natural gas for space heating in its buildings (especially historic and hard-to-treat properties).</p> <p>Up until the early 1970’s hydrogen (in those days produced from fossil fuels) formed 50% of the UK’s domestic ‘coal gas’ supply and there is no technical reason why hydrogen (made from renewable sources which, when burned, create no carbon dioxide) cannot entirely replace natural gas. The EU recently made hydrogen a central part of its Green Deal and the UK Government has recently declared its intention to create a £240m ‘Net Zero</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Council will monitor developments in hydrogen infrastructure and consider its use in the delivery of the Council’s plans to net zero.</p> <p>Small hydrogen fuel cells are being trialled at a couple of Oxford City Council housing blocks to produce electricity and heat. These use natural gas to create the hydrogen but use the fossil fuel more efficiently and do not create air pollution that arises from combustion of gas.</p> <p>At the moment it is not viable to start generating our own green hydrogen for use in a specific Council building.</p> <p>Zero carbon hydrogen can be made from renewable electricity (electrolysis of water). This technology is developing albeit currently with high costs. Hydrogen could be produced at a larger scale from existing industrial processes to split fossil gas, where the carbon produced in the process is captured and stored in geological features such as north sea oil/gas fields. UK trials and studies to date are focussed in the north east of England and Scotland for this reason.</p> <p>It is likely that hydrogen may be best used, initially, to decarbonise energy intensive industries like cement and steel, or large scale vehicles production where it is very difficult to electrify.</p> <p>Hydrogen could be an appropriate technology for</p>

6. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Hydrogen fuel

Hydrogen Fund’ and introduce local neighbourhood hydrogen heating trials in 2023.

As far as I can see, hydrogen does not feature in any of the Council’s carbon reduction plans.

Can the Portfolio Holder reassure Council that developments in hydrogen infrastructure will be monitored and the use of hydrogen considered in the Council’s own plans?

some larger vehicles, where EV battery technology works less well - such as trucks, RCVs, buses, or constant duty vehicles like ambulances.

Use of the national gas network is a route to wider use of hydrogen with existing infrastructure and appliances. If mixed with fossil methane, up to 20% hydrogen could be introduced. The majority of Oxford’s buildings currently fitted with gas boilers would be able to take advantage of any national approaches to increase the amount of hydrogen in the gas blend.

7. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – ‘net zero carbon’

Question

Following the Portfolio Holders refusal to follow the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee to adopt standard carbon accounting and target-setting practices, and the Portfolio Holder’s refusal to subject any carbon claims to independent audit (as we do with our financial accounts), how can members of the public be confident that any claims of ‘net zero carbon’ are legitimate?

Written Response

The City Council has appointed Professor Nick Eyre of the Environmental Change Institute as Scientific Advisor to provide independent, expert advice relating to its goal of tackling the climate emergency, including target setting. This will strengthen the Council’s evidence-based decision making and approach to net zero.

The definition of net zero is an emerging field and the Council will be guided by best practice and Professor Eyre’s scientific advice.

8. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Incineration of recycling

Question

A recent Channel 4 Dispatches Report (broadcast 8th March) uncovered the ‘dirty secret’ that some of the recycling collected by local authorities (as high as 45% in the case of Southend-

Written Response

Oxford City Council in partnership with ODS are committed to recycling. We work with recycling and waste outlets that track waste all the way through the process, and we are provided with regular data. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring the quality of the recycling we collect, and the overwhelming majority is reprocessed through the recycling streams.

When the wrong items are put into the mixed recycling

8. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Incineration of recycling

on-Sea) ends up being incinerated.

Will the Portfolio Holder let members know what the figure is for Oxford?

collections these are considered contamination. That waste that cannot be recycled is removed and disposed of, usually through incineration. As Councillors will note from the table below, we are doing a lot better than Southend-on-Sea. Our incineration figures are in the low single digits.

We positive encourage citizens through active communication to recycling well, by placing items in clean, loose and squashed.

Oxford City recycling data

	Total Weight	Rejected Weight	% Incinerated
Sep-20	1298.16	25.54	1.97%
Oct-20	1387.16	48.06	3.46%
Nov-20	1168.74	43.18	3.69%
Dec-20	1325.94	25.40	1.92%
Jan-21	1382.30	22.76	1.65%
Feb-21	1050.56	47.18	4.49%
YTD	7612.86	212.12	2.79%

9. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Sustainability Strategy review

Question

The Local Government Association (LGA) and the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development recently launched a guide to help councils engage with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a time when many are starting to re-think the role of local government in leading places and empowering people. Councils such as Newcastle, Liverpool and Bristol have already sought to embed the SDGs in their wider sustainability planning with Bristol producing a 'City Playbook' to share their experiences with other local authorities.

Will the Portfolio Holder agree to review the Council's wider sustainability strategy in the light of these new LGA/SDG resources?

<https://local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change/climate-action-council-plans>

<https://www.bristoloncity.com/sdgs/reports-and-documents/>

Written Response

The Council is in the process of updating its Sustainability Strategy. As part of this process it will consider LGA resources on the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Maps of LTNs in Cowley area

Question

Even for a keen campaigner such as myself, I am finding it difficult to source detailed maps of the current and planned low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Cowley, Church Cowley and Temple Cowley. It is not surprising therefore that when I visited Church Cowley recently (by bike!) and spoke to residents and businesses they had no idea of the preferred car and lorry routes in and out of the area.

It is possible for the City Council to coordinate with the County Council and provide links to suitable maps on the City Council's website?

Written Response

Officers have spoken to the County Council and asked that these maps relating to the County's proposals are more widely publicised on this matter and will arrange for links to be made available on the City Council website.

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

11. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Linda Smith – Park maintenance monitoring

Question

How is the Cabinet Member monitoring the performance of ODS with Park maintenance?

Written Response

The Head of Service for Communities sits on the Council's strategic client board for ODS.

The Council's Active Communities Manager and Green Space Development Manager meet regularly as a client function with ODS to talk through operational performance.

The Council's two Green Space Officers also undertake regular spot checks and patrols of our Parks and Open Spaces.

Information gathered through these inspections and those undertaken by ODS is used to inform future maintenance programmes, which are agreed upon with the OCC Green Space Development Manager.

In addition to this, the Council, through the Green Space team, undertake an annual external audit of the Council's play areas through ROSPA to ensure that they are safe and appropriate maintenance action undertaken.

ODS carry out routine maintenance inspections, including those of compliance such as ROSPA and Legionella and Legionella records are monitored by OCC through a specialist contractor.

12. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Linda Smith – Green Flag scheme

Question

Will the City Council be adopting Green Flag in 2021-2022?

Written Response

The Green Flag scheme is no longer being adopted within 2021-2022. This was identified as a saving for this year onwards in the 2019-20 budget setting process.

We are confident that the relevant maintenance standards will continue to be maintained.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

13. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hollingsworth – Seacourt Park and Ride value for money

Question

Does the Portfolio Holder still think that the £6m+ spent extending Seacourt Park and Ride represented good value for the taxpayer money now that the Eynsham P&R has been given the go ahead?

Written Response

There has been no change in the payback period since I last answered a question on this subject, and so there is no change in my opinion on the value for money of the project. The aim of the expansion of the Seacourt Park and Ride, as explained in considerable detail during the feasibility, project planning and planning application stages, is to provide additional capacity for park and ride parking at a site where spaces are at a premium. The main access route to Seacourt is either along the A34 or the A420. The proposed new Eynsham site is along the A40 corridor, is designed to deliver modal shift from car to park and ride along that corridor. Moreover the planning process for the Seacourt extension took into account the Eynsham Park and Ride, which had been proposed originally in the Oxfordshire LTP4 published in 2016. The two schemes are therefore not in competition, but complementary to one another, as they serve different catchment areas.

14. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Live music venues

Question

Although I would not expect the Portfolio Holder to comment on a particular planning application, what is the Council doing more generally to protect the diminishing number of live performance venues in the City Centre (such as The Wheatsheaf) - already hard hit by COVID - from closure?

Written Response

For the avoidance of doubt I want to take this opportunity to make clear that I will not be able to sit on the planning committee if and when this application comes before it. My personal support for the retention of music venues of all types and sizes is long-standing and well known. Indeed I think I feature in the very first issue of Nightshift speaking in support of a planning application to ensure that a music venue could continue to operate at a viable capacity. I have provided advice to a range of individuals and organisations leading the campaign to prevent the Wheatsheaf from closing, and given that and my known position on any planning application to close music venues I think on this issue my ship of pre-determination sailed many years ago! Nonetheless I concur with the councillor's advice that others should not preclude themselves from sitting on the relevant planning committee.

In policy terms, Local Plan Policy V6 encourages the development of new venues for music, and Policy V7 was written specifically to protect cultural venues from changes of use. The new Local Plan also introduces an 'Agent of Change' principle in policy RE8, meaning that any new development that is sensitive to noise proposed near a noise generating existing facility like a music venue has to take responsibility for noise and vibration attenuation, rather than having that responsibility fall on the venue.

Live music venues have been among the worst hit by Pandemic related restrictions, unable to open for the last year. We have supported them through 'Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants' of up to £25k and then following the second and third lockdowns by offering grants for 'National Restrictions Grants' for Closed businesses with both monthly and larger top up payments. Smaller 'Sector' grants for any eligible businesses have been offered by seeking out eligible licensed premises. Officers are also now looking into the use of 'Additional Restrictions Grant', which is more discretionary in nature, to specifically target those businesses worst affected in the next round of grants offered in this fund. Many of the available grant schemes for Closed businesses have a 31st March deadline so we are sending reminders to businesses on this. Culture Fund Grants are also available

15. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Tesco, Cowley Road closure during construction

Question

During the planning application process for 19/01821/FUL (Tesco, Cowley Road) residents were assured that the store would remain open during construction. Paragraph 4.2 of the Planning Statement confirms this intent; “At present, the building is two storeys in height with a Tesco store at ground floor level and associated retail storage and staff facilities at first floor. This proposal will retain the operation of Tesco at ground floor (throughout construction) and construct 4 floors above.”

Understandably, residents were therefore concerned to hear – via the press - that the store will now be closing for 30 weeks.

Were Council officers consulted on this change?

Written Response

Although the Planning Statement said that it was the applicant’s intention for the store to remain open during the construction, it is not possible to use the planning process to compel the store to remain open during the construction phase. It may have been the intention at the time of the application for the store to remain open, but changes are often needed once contractors are appointed and methods of construction are reviewed in more detail. The decision to close the store for the duration of the construction period is a matter for the owner of the property to decide themselves. Whether or not the store remained open during the construction period would not have formed a material planning reason against which the application could be approved or refused, or a condition imposed.

16. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Castle Mill Stream enforcement

Question

Will the City Council explain why the Council’s planning department is seeking enforcement action against the boaters on Castle Mill Stream, when the City Council could be working with them to develop low cost sustainable moorings - in accordance with City Council policy?

Written Response

The City Council spent many years establishing that the owners of the land in question are Network Rail, so that long-standing concerns about anti-social behaviour and a number of fatalities associated with the land could be addressed. Now that Network Rail have accepted that they are responsible for the land, they have the responsibility for regularising use of it. As part of that process they need to ensure that any moorings are suitable, and are safe; at present they are not suitable, and are not safe. The Council has provided early advice which has made clear the significant investment in infrastructure and services are required along with the need to meet the relevant planning criteria set out in the Local Plan for the site to be considered suitable for residential mooring.

Once and only once that has been done the Council, the landowner, the Canal and Rivers Trust and other interested parties can then begin to consider and potentially develop proposals for permanent moorings, seek permission from the Environment Agency for the

16. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Castle Mill Stream enforcement

necessary works and the funding to pay for it. Any planning application for residential moorings in the city must demonstrate how it will meet criteria such as adequate water supply, power, sewage and rubbish disposal, access for the emergency services and must not harm the character of the area. It must also deliver mooring infrastructure which does not impact on the navigation and minimises the impact on the environment with particular regard to policy H13 in the Oxford local plan. Early discussions suggest that this site should be able to provide moorings, but that investment and careful work with the Environment Agency will be required.

17. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document

Question

Given the major changes proposed for the west of the City will the City Council be preparing a new Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to help guide development?

Or will the design of this part of the city be left to Nuffield College and consultants to decide?

Written Response

The Oxpens site is owned by Oxford West End Developments (OxWED), which is in turn jointly and equally owned by the City Council and Nuffield College. OxWED is responsible for designing the scheme in line with the wishes of the shareholders as expressed through shareholder meetings and the Directors appointed by the two shareholders to the company's Board. Numerous reports to the Council over a prolonged period have discussed this, so I am slightly at a loss to understand how the councillor thinks otherwise.

As reported to Scrutiny Committee on 6th July 2020 and to Cabinet on 15th July 2020 the Local Development Scheme (2020-2025) set out that the Council is developing a new SPD for the broader West End Area. The SPD will contain guidance for developers on matters such as urban design, transport and movement, and public realm. At the start of March we appointed a consultancy team lead by Levitt Bernstein to support the policy team in preparing this document. They will bring urban design and viability skills to the project, and will develop our proposals in consultation with landowners, stakeholders and local communities.

The SPD will therefore take a proactive role in coordinating development across the West End, and set high standards for achieving quality and inclusivity in the area.

18. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – Land at Meadow Lane, Iffley (1)

Question	Written Response
<p>Could the Cabinet member confirm (a) the estimated net profit from sales of homes in this proposed development, and (b) the estimated annual net income from rental of market rent/affordable homes retained by OCHL*?</p> <p>*Oxford City Housing Ltd</p>	<p>The information sought in question (a) is confidential – exempt under paragraph 3 of schedule 12 as OCHL is a separate legal entity and therefore cannot be answered here. The OCHL Business Plan contains relevant information and the councillor can pursue the information in the confidential session of an appropriate forum, such as the Companies Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>None of the housing is proposed to be retained by OCHL, with the affordable housing being transferred to the HRA. As the precise mixture of sizes and types of properties has not yet been fixed, it is not possible to give a final figure for the annual rent level from the affordable homes. The annual rental income for each property type is determined by the government's formula for social rent, as with all other new HRA properties.</p>

19. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – Land at Meadow Lane, Iffley (2)

Question	Written Response
<p>Could the Cabinet member confirm the number of homes which would be provided for social rent, the number of bedrooms in these homes and the estimated annual income from rental?</p>	<p>The precise number of homes and mix of accommodation sizes has yet to be determined. Local Plan policy SP42 requires a minimum of 29 homes on the site, and Local Plan policy requires that at least 40% of the total be social housing and a further 10% intermediate affordable housing. OCHL are currently in the process of procuring their contractor and design consultants for the scheme and once selected and approved by their Board they will begin design work.</p> <p>The annual rental income for each property type is determined by the government's formula for social rent, as with all other new HRA properties.</p>

20. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Call-in process

Question	Written Response
<p>Most Councillors respect the quasi-judicial nature of the planning process and the need to act in a non-partisan manner; ensuring that this is both the public perception and the reality.</p> <p>Would the Portfolio Holder therefore not agree that there should be a change in</p>	<p>I'm not clear what the question is referring to. When a councillor asks for a call-in under paragraph 17.4 of the Constitution they can copy whichever other members of council they chose to in order to try to get support for that call-in.</p> <p>Officers have no role in circulating call-in requests, and nor should they. It is up to</p>

20. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Call-in process

practice around call-ins?

Currently, any call-in submitted is not circulated by officers to all Councillors (as it used to be) with the consequence that most call-ins tend to be selectively circulated within party groups.

individual councillors to decide from whom they should seek support for a call in.

Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford

21. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Upton – ‘Active Travel in the City’ group

Question

I have been told that a new group; ‘Active Travel in the City’, has been set up by, or with the active involvement of, the Portfolio Holder.

The City is already blessed with independent groups such as the Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (with 10 members including Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, Oxford Pedestrians’ Association, Cyclox, Oxfordshire Cycling Network), as well as numerous active local cycling groups, groups formed around the Low Traffic Neighbourhood proposals, and local representation from national bodies such as Sustrans and Cycling UK. In addition, the City Council has its own Cycling Forum which has been very successful in pulling together a wide array of organisations including bike shops, university sustainable transport officers, GWR, cycle delivery companies, schools, Councillors and highways officers and so on (in addition to the other organisations already mentioned).

The Cycling Forum, of which I am a founder member, has not met since before the first lockdown despite a lot of recent activity around sustainable travel (due in part to the many Government and County funded transport schemes such as

Written Response

The “Active Travel in the City” group exists, but it is not a new group. It was created several years ago in order for organisations across the city to share information about Active Travel initiatives.

The group was always focused on the ‘activation’ side of transport schemes, so the supporting measures rather than the infrastructure changes. Pre-COVID it was an informal information-sharing setting. But the County’s Local Cycling and Walking Activation Plan (LCWAP) which was drawn up in 2020 in order to support the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan created a new focus for its activities.

Since last year the group has been re-purposed around the LCWAP and now meets when there is a particular opportunity to discuss ideas and proposals for furthering the objectives of the LCWAP. I had not attended meetings until I was invited to Chair the group a couple of months ago, with Josh Lenthall from Active Oxfordshire as Deputy Chair.

Cllr Wolff is right that a meeting of the Cycling Forum is overdue – I have been reluctant to organise one as the informal networking, which was such an important part of its raison d’etre, is just not possible

21. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Upton – ‘Active Travel in the City’ group

the LTNs).

Could the Portfolio Holder confirm the existence of this new group, describe its status, purpose, membership and the reasons why it was felt necessary to further expand the number of ‘active travel’ groups?

with virtual meetings. However, I hope Cllr Wolff will join me in working up an agenda for a meeting in April .

Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities

22. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Tidball – Council Hub help for boating community (1)

Question

Does the Council Hub help extend to the boating community - and include help with fuel for boaters living in poverty?

Written Response

The Locality hub team have delivered information leaflets to the boaters and also shared communications using messaging groups such as WhatsApp. The Central hub has worked with the Canal and River Trust and the County Council to ensure signage in place at the main entry points to the waterways, reminding people to be mindful of boating residents and to maintain social distancing.

Support funds such as the Covid Winter Support Grant (that includes fuel) have also been promoted to the boating community.

23. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Tidball – Council Hub help for boating community (2)

Question

What outreach work has the City Hub and North Hub done to connect with hard to reach people in the boating community?

Written Response

I refer to the answer to the previous question.

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

24. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown - Council-administered COVID business support

Question	Written Response
<p>Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether or not The Wheatsheaf applied for and/or received one of the Council-administered COVID business support grants or loans?</p>	<p>I cannot answer this.</p> <p>Information about business grants applied for and awarded is not in the public domain, and is considered exempt (i.e. not to be disclosed in public) as it relates to the business affairs of another under para 3 of schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.</p>

25. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – Standards complaint

Question	Written Response
<p>I understand that a Standards Board complaint has recently been submitted following a Facebook post by a member of this Council.</p> <p>Can the Leader please inform Council of the timeline for considering this complaint?</p>	<p>The procedures for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints are set out in the Councillors' conduct pages of the Council's website. Specifically the <i>Procedure for handling complaints against a councillor - indicative timescales for dealing with the different stages of a complaint</i> are set out at paragraph 9 of that document.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer aims to complete the Assessment stage of any complaint within 25 working days of receipt of that complaint. If the complaint proceeds to the Investigation stage it may then take several weeks or months to conclude.</p>

26. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Brown - Launch of the Localis report

Question	Written Response
<p>Members of this council were made aware of the launch event of the Localis paper on future governance of our city on 9 March, eight days before the event. At the time, and at the time of writing, neither the report nor the brief given to Localis were available to members. The list of speakers included</p>	<p>The event on the 17th March is a Localis event, not organised by the city council, though we have helped publicise it with local stakeholders.</p> <p>It is entirely usual practice for the relevant cabinet member (in this case me) to be invited to speak at events organised by third parties, and perfectly within our remit as Cabinet members to represent the views of the council on matters relevant to the city. The event is not restricted and members are able to attend and contribute to the debate.</p> <p>As the Council was informed in October 2020, the city</p>

26. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Brown - Launch of the Localis report

only one elected representative, the leader of this council, with regional and other bodies represented by officials.

Does the Leader agree with me that a discussion of crucial issues of this kind would have been more valuable if it had been more broadly based?

Does she also recognise that describing the report as a document of Oxford City Council is misleading as neither the commission, nor the brief, nor the report have been anywhere near the majority of members of this council until a few days before the launch?

council sponsored this piece of independent research and analysis work to look at the case for place-led growth and renewal around Oxford to inform our response to the government’s expected Devolution White Paper, the emerging City Economic Strategy, our work with Oxfordshire LEP and our position in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Again it is entirely within the remit of cabinet members or officers within their delegated authority to commission pieces of work to inform work in their areas of responsibility.

I agree it would be entirely misleading to describe this report as a document of the City Council, because it is not, it is a Localis document. Fortunately it is not being described that way, other than by implication in this question.

I agree that a broad based discussion of these issues for our city will be valuable and is exactly what the report and the launch are designed to achieve.

27. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Cabinet’s policy position

Question

In a recent document arising from the recommendations of the excellent Scrutiny Review Group report on Climate Change, Cllr Hayes committed this council to supporting “County Council applications for Controlled Parking Zones”. However, a few days earlier, Cllr Turner opposed the introduction of a CPZ in his ward. This is a rather stark public difference of opinion between two senior Cabinet members (indeed, the two deputy leaders) on a key issue.

Which of them speaks for the Cabinet?

Written Response

The Cabinet and indeed this council have committed to support the introduction of Controlled Parking Zones where there is public support following consultation. We are funding them where the county decide after consultation to go ahead. That does not of course preclude local councillors representing the views of their residents if they do NOT currently want a CPZ. They are therefore both right as always.

28. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxford-Cambridge Arc governance

28. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxford-Cambridge Arc governance

Question

The Leader recently warmly welcomed the government's new paper on its vision for the governance of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Recognising that the Leader speaks as a member of the Growth Board and other bodies, would she however agree with me that the document in fact contains element about which we should be extremely concerned and watchful, including the suggestion of an arc-wide planning system, and the creation of a "Growth Body" with no indication of its membership or powers?

Does she share my concern that these initiatives potentially feed into emerging narrative of the centralising instincts of this government, already made plain through its actions over the SODC Local Plan, recent Planning White Paper, changes to PD rights and much else?

Will she join me in insisting that any such body, while of course having to find an effective model of governance over such a wide and disparate area, must have its decision-making functions rooted in locally elected representatives?

Written Response

I entirely agree that we need to engage with discussions about the proposed Spatial Framework and governance body for the Arc to inform government's thinking.

If Cllr Gant has been following what I have said, then he will know that I have been consistently arguing for the last few years that the Arc needs a proper voice for cities and that it is disgraceful that the two cities after which the Arc is named, have no representation on the Arc Executive Group.

I was disappointed therefore that the Liberal Democrat leaders of neighbouring councils aligned with the local Conservative leaders in denying the City a space on the Arc Executive and I hope that they will not do the same again on any new body.

I and other city leaders in the Arc are continuing to argue the case for a voice for cities who have distinct and different needs and issues.

29. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – NHS pay award

Question

Will the Leader join me in condemning the Government for their derisory pay offer to NHS staff and other public sector workers who have worked tirelessly during the pandemic?

Will she be writing to the Prime Minister expressing this view?

Written Response

I think all of us will be disappointed that the government has utterly failed to recognise the contribution that public sector workers have made. The government promised that local government would be compensated for the costs of COVID and that has not been the case. The Labour Party and our excellent local MP, Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds, have led the campaign to condemn the government's contempt for NHS staff and to challenge them over their massive underfunding of local government.

30. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Recognition for the Oxford Vaccine team

Question

Would the Leader agree with me that the Oxford Vaccine team led by Professor Sarah Gilbert and Professor Andrew Pollard has brought incalculable benefits to public health, our economy, and the reputation of our city through their professionalism, skill and sheer hard work?

Does she agree with me that this Council should commit to honouring their work at the earliest suitable opportunity in the most appropriate way, potentially including Freedom of the City, and agree to form a cross-party group to consider options?

Written Response

I have nothing but admiration for the work of the Oxford Vaccine team and huge pride in their work. I have been privileged and delighted in my professional life to work alongside Professor Andrew Pollard and the work that they have been responsible for is currently transforming our ability to lead our lives.

The city will want to recognise the work done by the Oxford Vaccine Group and Oxford Biomedica amongst other major local contributors to the roadmap out of the pandemic.

However, we also need to be cognisant of other aspects of the pandemic too. When the time comes, we will want to commemorate those who we lost, thank ALL of those who have worked to keep us safe from care workers to refuse collectors as well as our medical staff.

We are not out of the pandemic yet and whilst I have started conversations about how we commemorate and celebrate when we are able to do so - that time is not now. We will make sure that there is engagement with opposition councillors on plans as they develop.

31. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – International Women’s Day

Question

Will the Leader join me in belatedly congratulating those current and former Oxford residents honoured in the media on International Women’s Day including Sarah Gilbert (Oxford Vaccine Group), Kate Raworth (green economist), Malala Yousafzai (young women’s rights campaigner) and Emma Watson (actress, UN Goodwill Ambassador and campaigner for gender equality)?

The Leader may wish to acknowledge others that she is aware of.

Written Response

Clearly the councillor hasn’t listened to the video that I put out on International Women’s Day. One of the areas that it covered was women’s experience of ‘mansplaining’.

The women that Cllr Simmons mention are all outstanding contributors in their field and are rightly recognised for it. I would also like to celebrate the huge contribution that all women make every day.

My short video if Cllr Simmons cares to watch it recognised that women in leadership and in all aspects of life often have to work twice as hard to be heard, which makes their success even more creditworthy.

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