

To: Council
Date: 4 October 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 a Safer, Healthier Oxford

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – COVID case spike

Question	Written Response
Given COVID-19 cases are rising across the country, and projections suggest this will continue throughout the winter, what measures are being put in place by the Council to mitigate the health, social and economic impact of a spike in cases in Oxford and any tightening	Oxford City Council is working as part of an integrated systemwide response to the ongoing risks and issues posed by the COVID pandemic. A systemwide COVID Recovery Strategy has been agreed by Leaders of the District and County Councils which identifies priorities for ongoing support and assistance across the county. An Economic Recovery Plan has also been agreed under the auspices of OxLEP to target support for businesses, and skills development. A health and public health programme will focus on COVID

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – COVID case spike

of restrictions from the government?

vaccination of 12-15 year olds and booster vaccines for older people, as well as mitigating the risks posed by Flu, Norovirus and RSV. A campaign is being developed to encourage non-urgent cases not to present at the John Radcliffe Hospital, to help manage capacity there. And the Local Outbreak Management Plan is being updated to reflect the risk of outbreaks in different settings, along with Standard Operating Procedures. We have accessed a significant amount of Government COVID funding, including the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to provide continued support for communities and businesses within Oxford through the winter months.

Funding has also been agreed for COVID Secure officers to patrol public places so resources are in place should there be any tightening of restrictions.

Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless

No questions

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

MR1 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services

Question

Can Oxford voluntary and charitable organisations use money that they raise independently of the City Council to employ contractors other than ODS to undertake building and maintenance work in parks and in council property?

Written Response

As with non- charitable organisations, charities are not bound to use ODS for works.

If a charity / voluntary organisation occupies property owned by the Council, the lease will provide guidance for any changes to the property, for example, gaining consent for major works. The leases do not stipulate that ODS carry out works or maintenance. If asked, officers would encourage tenants to include ODS in any tendering exercise.

MR1 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services	
	On land and buildings where repair and improvements are the Council’s liability ODS would be instructed in line with the contract between the 2 parties.

MR2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services landscape and ecological management	
Question Does ODS have the necessary expertise in landscape and ecological management to undertake landscape and ecological work for Biodiversity Net Gain, and what qualifications and experience do ODS staff have for this sort of work?	Written Response ODS, as a contractor, has the expertise necessary to carry out the work specified for it by its clients. Depending on the job that can mean working for the Council’s Environmental Quality team but could be for any other client wanting similar work. When engaged in these types of activities, ODS draws on its qualifications and experience. Some examples include community tree planting schemes which have been carried out at Rose Hill, Croft Road and Sunnymead recreational grounds or acid grassland restoration which is happening at Shotover. Additional funding was awarded to the Environmental Quality Team to be able to appoint a full time ecology/biodiversity officer. We are happy to communicate that this officer has been appointed and will start working for the council in November 2022. This person comes with skills to undertake landscape and ecological work and will work collaboratively with other colleagues in the council and at ODS. This is a rapidly growing area of work and we are all learning how best to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain across the city and county wide. There are also opportunities to work with work with the Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment which can support us in maximising opportunities for offsetting. This is currently being explored by officers as to how best to proceed.

MR3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services and Park Services	
Question Is the Park Service able to independently assess the performance of ODS and how is the assessment of performance recorded? What can Park Service do if it is unhappy	Written Response The Parks service independently assess the performance of ODS through annual ROSPA inspections of its play areas. In addition, external assessments of playing pitches and ancillary provision

MR3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services and Park Services

with aspects of the ODS service and what is the reporting mechanism?

have been conducted through the institute of groundsmen.

Over the past two years we have also conducted surveys of the sports clubs who use our sports facilities to help inform services.

The Council and the parks service holds regular client and performance meetings with ODS with senior management input.

MR4 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Rowley – HVO fuel

Question

Are our officers monitoring developments in the treatment of waste fats and vegetable oils to create Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Fuel — a diesel substitute for which claims of 90% reduction in CO2 emissions are made?

Could consideration be given to trialling such fuel in our own vehicle fleet?

Written Response

ODS are monitoring the development of HVO and the wider alternative fuel market. There is concern around the potential in increased frequency of vehicle maintenance linked to the use of such fuels. However, a trial on some specific vehicles is planned for the coming months.

MR5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Rowley- Aareon QL Housing Management Software

Question

1. Was the Aareon system deployed in a testing environment (using real or realistic data) before the full rollout, such that problems could be identified without impacting officers or users? If it was, why did this not identify the problems encountered? If no such test deployment was attempted, why not?
2. Was it considered to part-deploy the Aareon system to manage a subset of the Council's housing accounts prior to attempting a full rollout? If it was considered, why did this not identify the problems encountered? If it was not considered, why not?

Written Response

1. There will be lessons to be learned from how the testing was carried out and this will form part of the independent lessons learned exercise that will be carried out. These questions will be able to be fully answered at that stage.

Meanwhile the project team are working hard to move the project from 'recovery' to 'steady state'.
2. This will be best answered when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed.

MR5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Rowley- Aareon QL Housing Management Software

<p>3. Was parallel running of the existing and Aaeron systems for a transitional period considered? If not, why not?</p> <p>4. What measures if any were in place to permit a rapid rollback to the existing system in the event that the Aaeron system rollout did not proceed as planned? If there were such measures, why were they not used / were they ineffective when used? If no such measures existed, why not?</p> <p>5. What changes have been implemented in how software is acquired, developed and tested to ensure that future rollouts and better managed and risks of failure contained?</p>	<p>3. This will be best answered when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed.</p> <p>4. This will be best answered when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed.</p> <p>5. This can be more fully assessed when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed. In the meantime, new systems that are due to be implemented are being carefully assessed to avoid the issues that may have caused the problems with system implementation.</p>
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MR6 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Rowley - Aareon QL Housing Management System implementation

Question	Written Response
<p>1. Can the Council now be given a target date for the complete implementation of the new system and how much this has overrun the original date?</p> <p>2. Can the Council be told how much the budget costs have overrun for this system, including the additional staff costs incurred by the problems encountered?</p> <p>3. Has the Council received a decision from the Information Commissioner's Office about any penalty for the data breach that occurred?</p>	<p>1. The plan for the complete installation of the system may take until after the end of the financial year to meet the Council's operational needs and also because of other systems that are due to be implemented within the Council in the meantime. Parts of the system are being used successfully in some areas and it will be progressively rolled out over the coming months to ensure that the benefits of the system can be delivered in advance of the complete implementation wherever possible</p> <p>2. An additional £229,221 for project resources has been committed for the project up to 30 September and a further £146,260 committed up to the complete implementation next year.</p> <p>3. A full report was lodged with ICO when the data breach came to light but to date there has been no response received from ICO in relation to the breach.</p>

MR7 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Rowley – council email service**Question**

Over the summer, Councillors' email was disrupted on several occasions. This affected both incoming and outgoing email and caused delays in responses to both residents and Council Officers both in the City and the County.

1. Is this due to an underlying problem with the way the Microsoft software is used?
2. What steps have been taken to alleviate this problem and can we be assured that it will not recur?
3. If not can an alternative solution be identified and implemented as soon as possible?

Written Response

1. There were two separate issues:

- A security upgrade carried out by the data centre provider incorrectly blocked emails for new Councillors with new laptops. ICT informed the provider who updated their records to include the new Councillors.
- Some Councillors had auto-forwarding set up between their Council and personal email addresses. When set up both ways it caused a continuous loop of emails from one account to the other and back again, over and over. The automated security systems picked this up as potential SPAM email and blocked those accounts. Once we had identified which accounts were auto-forwarding, we were able to update the system to recognise those email addresses as safe.

2. The first issue should not occur again as the new Councillors have been added to the safe list.

The second issue should not occur if Councillors adhere to the policy which does not allow auto-forwarding of Council email to personal email addresses

3. Not relevant

MR8 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – digital vs cash payment options**Question**

Digital payments - including bank transfers and contactless and card payments - are increasingly becoming the primary means of financial transaction. However, access to such payment methods, and indeed bank accounts is by no means ubiquitous, with - for example - many who are homeless or precariously housed, or have an irregular or undocumented migration status facing

Written Response

We accept that there will still be instances when payments may only be made in cash. The Council has moved away from accepting cash payments already, and is working across service areas to understand circumstances where cash may still need to be accepted, as the exception rather than the norm.

The Council is looking to trial cashless payments at one of its car parks. An initial Equality Impact assessment has been completed and various options to make payments will be offered, as well as plans to receive feedback before any roll out

MR8 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – digital vs cash payment options

substantial barriers to accessing them.
Does the Council intend to move away from accepting cash payments, and if so what assessments have been made as to the impact this may have on those lacking digital literacy and/or access to bank accounts?

takes place.
Of the UK's total population approximately 97 percent had any day-to-day account, amounting to approximately 49.7 individuals. 49.1 million UK adults as of October 2017 had a current account. In 2019 approximately 1.3m people did not have a bank account, although it is expected that this will have reduced as a result of the pandemic and more services moving to card only options.
The Council works with customers to assist with getting a basic bank account, and is also looking at other options that are available to customers, such as cards that are loaded with cash as part of an ongoing project looking at Going cashless.
Where people do still need to pay in cash or by cheque, they can do so at local Post Offices or at any one of the 42 Pay Point facilities across Oxford, which may well be more convenient than going to the Council offices.
If customers appear vulnerable and come to the Contact Centre with cash we do offer to accompany them to the Post Office, but this is not a common occurrence.

MR9 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Rowley - Vehicle fleet and Cargo bikes

Question
What is the total number of vehicles owned by the city council and its wholly owned social enterprise Oxford Direct Services (ODS) Group?
Specifically, within this vehicle fleet how many of the vehicles are electric or manual cargo bikes, and manual and e-bikes respectively?
What steps has the city council and ODS taken to encourage the use of manual or e-bikes and cargo bikes in the course of their duties within the city boundaries?

Written Response
OCC and ODS operate 330 vehicles
ODS has 4 e-bikes and are in the process of introducing 6 further e-bikes to the fleet.
ODS are exploring opportunities to increase our use of bikes of all descriptions. There are limitations to their use due to the majority of ODS' services requiring tools & equipment or materials.

MR10 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Clarkson – ‘Changing Places’ toilets grants**Question**

The government has allocated £30 million to support the provision of fully accessible ‘Changing Places’ toilets for the quarter of a million people nationwide that need them.

Has the council applied for funding for ‘Changing Places’ toilets, or does it intend to?

Written Response

A changing places toilet is included within the design for the soon to be developed East Oxford Community Centre. This funding pot had been earmarked within our funding plan for the site and we are in the process of reviewing whether we are able to submit an application in line with the funding pots terms and conditions, deadlines and also in line with the stage of the project that we are currently at.

A Changing Places toilet already exists at the Westgate Centre as a result of planning work with the developer based on the importance of having one available in the City Centre

MR11 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – empty homes**Question**

Reports in the Oxford Mail suggest that over 450 properties in Oxford are empty, over 350 of which had been empty for more than two years.

Can the Cabinet member confirm how many residential properties are currently registered as ‘empty’ in the city, and what additional information we have about them - for example, whether they are for sale and awaiting purchase or whether they are second homes for owners living elsewhere?

Could the cabinet member advise Council of our policy intentions regarding empty property and council tax?

Written Response

Council Tax records at 31st August 2021 suggest that there are currently 1,072 Empty properties. 598 have been empty for more than 6 months, and 123 have been empty for more than 2 years.

The Council’s empty property officer regularly contacts owners of empty dwellings, this also includes a yearly mailshot with questionnaire attached. The questionnaire requires information on current occupation status and information as to why the dwelling is empty and what intentions there are for the property to be re occupied.

Responses include,

- being renovated
- redevelopment
- probate processing
- up for rent
- up for sale
- caught up in a trust
- legal dispute

Owners who do not respond are contacted again and encouraged/supported to bring them back into use.

MR11 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – empty homes

Some empty properties are entitled to an Exemption- for example an unoccupied annexe, or left empty by someone who is bankrupt.

There are 937 properties that we identify as second homes. The Council does not allow any Council Tax second homes discount on these.

The Council charges additional Council Tax premiums for empty properties (as agreed by Cabinet in February 2019), depending on how long they have been empty. These premiums differ, and now go up to 300% for properties that have been empty for 10 years or more.

As this premium applies to the property, should that property remain empty following a change of ownership or tenancy, the premium will not be removed.

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism

MC1 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson – Oxford Half Marathon arrangements

Question

During the Blenheim Triathlon on 11 September, one competitor died and another suffered a heart attack which could have proved fatal. The Oxford Half Marathon is expected to take place in October. First responders will not be adequate if there is a major medical emergency.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the City Events Team has insisted that ambulances will be able to move freely across the race course, and that high level medical cover will be drafted in for the event?

Written Response

The Blenheim Triathlon was run by the same organiser as the Oxford Half Marathon (Limelight Sports).

Limelight Sports have confirmed that all emergency vehicles have access and can move freely throughout the Oxford Half Marathon course and they also have ambulance service presence within the event control room to facilitate this smoothly, if necessary.

Limelight Sports have submitted their Medical Plan to the Events Team. They have an independent medical consultant to advise on their plans. They will have 6 dedicated event ambulances available for this event as well as 8 cycle responders working in 4 teams tasked to patrol the course. Cycle Responders will be the primary response to any incident on the run route. For any patient requiring transport back to the Medical Centre, an event ambulance will be dispatched to the location.

MC2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson – major event debriefing**Question**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that, after each major event in the city, the Events Team will hold a debriefing session to ensure that positive and negative outcomes are identified for the future?

Written Response

The event management plans and risk assessments for each major event in the city are considered by the SAG (Safety Advisory Group), which Events Team representatives attend. Accordingly, debrief meetings for major events in the city are also held by SAG to enable the wider contribution of partner knowledge to the debrief (including fire, ambulance, police, environmental health etc.) and therefore there is a broader sharing of lessons learned across all the key stakeholders, including the Events Team.

MC3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Clarkson – Cleaner Thames**Question**

Will the Council will go ahead before this year's deadline (31st October), and apply for Designated Bathing Water status for the local stretch of the Thames?

What are the subsequent stages a 'Blue Flag' application needs to go through prior to confirmation?

Written Response

Yes an application for Designated Bathing Water Status for a part of the Thames within the city will be submitted to DEFRA by 31 October.

Blue Flag is an international award presented to well-managed beaches with excellent water quality and environmental education programmes. It is not clear that this would be available to a stretch of the Thames if Designated Bathing Water status is achieved.

MC4 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Bathing Water Status application**Question**

At the last Full Council we were advised that our new Waterways Coordinator is working with the group involved in the Bathing Water Status application.

Could we be reassured that the drafting of this application is on track? Do we have a target date for its submission, and are there ways in which local residents can assist in drafting it?

Written Response

Yes an application for Designated Bathing Water Status for a part of the Thames within the city will be submitted to DEFRA by 31 October.

The Waterways Coordinator is liaising with the community organisation Thames 21 over the application.

MC5 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – waterways cross-agency working**Question**

The cabinet member's response to the waterways question at the last Full Council reported that the Waterways Coordinator "has already begun cross agency working with the Environment Agency and Canal and River Trust, and with the group involved in the Bathing Water Status application".

Could she provide us with a list of all the various organisations the Coordinator is in contact with and/or is intending to work with, and tell us what the 'coordination' remit and objective of the post is?

Written Response

The primary focus of this role is to address various health and safety issues on waterways assets where OCC is riparian land owner, and working with relevant agencies to rectify these.

Other areas of opportunity are working with Housing/Planning on provision for Boaters, opportunities for increasing biodiversity and active travel on our 'Blue' infrastructure, and linking agencies/community groups together to ensure the waterways can be enjoyed by all users.

Agencies and organisations the Waterways Coordinator has so far been in contact with are: the Environment Agency; Canal & Rivers Trust; County Council; other riparian landowners on Oxford's waterways; Thames 21/ Oxford Rivers Project; Earthwatch.

MC6 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Iffley Fields Residents Association waterways group**Question**

Can Oxford City Council commit its officers to providing the Iffley Fields Residents Association waterways group with the help and support it needs to take forward its community initiative to improve the environment and safety of the Longbridges Nature Reserve for citizens?

Written Response

City Council bathing places were decommissioned in the late twentieth century. We welcome initiatives to improve local environment and safety, however the council have no plans to reinstate facilities at Longbridges.

The Waterways Coordinator would be happy to have a follow up conversation with the Iffley Fields Residents Association agenda on what steps can be taken to improve this area.

MC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Out of hours noise service**Question**

The out of hour noise service has been reduced by the council. What have been the average number of calls to this service currently on a

Written Response

The average number of calls over the last month on Fridays was 2 and on Saturdays the average was 4. Visits were made to 42% of the calls received and 58% of

MC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Out of hours noise service

Friday and Saturday night over the last month, by category of noise nuisance, and of these what proportion of these calls has the duty officer attended to?

callers either declined a visit or could not be contacted. The noise nuisance calls were primarily about parties with two calls about neighbours playing loud music and one call about noise from an alarm.

MC8 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Noise nuisance from outside dining**Question**

The COVID-pandemic has led to an increase in pubs using their outside space for customers. However the noise from amplified music and customers of pubs using outside spaces for entertainment are causing a nuisance to neighbouring residents throughout Oxford.

What steps is the city council taking to ensure that the licensed premises adhere to the noise-level requirements within their license conditions?

Written Response

A small number of pubs have been the subject of complaints about noise from outside space for customers and these were all investigated by officers and dealt with appropriately, with formal action only required at one premises.

The COVID Secure Team carried out nightly visits to hospitality venues across the city from September 2020 to the ending of restrictions in July 2021 and worked with businesses to help them comply with COVID restrictions and reduce disturbance from outdoor areas to a minimum. From July when the restrictions ended, visits have been carried out every weekend although they were increased to nightly for Freshers' Week at Oxford Brookes University. In addition the Licensing and Business Regulation Teams regularly liaise with businesses and share intelligence about premises with the police. Officers will make additional visits as necessary to ensure licensed premises are compliant.

MC9 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Temporary events licences**Question**

How many temporary events licences have been received by pubs in Oxford over the last six months, and of these how many have been refused?

Written Response

From March 2021 the Council received 22 applications for Temporary Event Notices from Pubs in Oxford. All of them were issued as there were no objections from the Police or Environmental Health

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council

ET1 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Turner – Internal auditors for ODS and City Council

Question

Can the cabinet member assure the Council that having the same audit firm, BDO, for our internal audit and for Oxford Direct Services is consistent with the latest CIPFA guidelines?

Written Response

The current CIPFA document concerning Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (updated March 2017: <https://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/standards/public-sector-internal-audit-standards>) confirms the application of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) from 1 April 2017. Standard 1100 – ‘Independence and Objectivity’ does not preclude a single audit firm from providing internal audit service for both a parent company & its group companies. The provision of internal audit services by BDO for both the Council and ODS is therefore consistent with the latest CIPFA guidelines.

ET2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Turner - boardwalk at Port Meadow

Question

What does the City propose to do with the boardwalk at Port Meadow? There were serious concerns that insensitive proposals to address health and safety concerns might visually damage Port Meadow. The city council has not followed up with any proposals since the spring 2021.

Written Response

As agreed with the moorers at Port Meadow a further review was undertaken by RoSPA in relation to the proposed security fence. The report concluded that fencing was not required and moorers have been advised accordingly. Officers have recently received the results of a condition survey that is being considered and there will be a meeting with moorers and other stakeholders in the next couple of weeks to advise on any proposed work to the boardwalk .

TH1 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – sedum-roofed bus shelters	
<p>Question</p> <p>Will the Council be seeking to emulate Witney Town Council’s installation of its first sedum-roofed bus shelter?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The bus shelter at Morrell Avenue is to be replaced with a green roof model as part of a trial. The shelter was ordered earlier in the year and is expected to arrive in the latter part of this year. Clear Channel have advised that they would not fund further trials and any additional shelters would need to be purchased.</p> <p>Clear Channel have the current contract for provision of bus shelters in Oxford until November 2022. At that time, there will be an opportunity to include green targets in any new contract.</p>

TH2 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood programme	
<p>Question</p> <p>Perhaps we are forgetting what traffic levels were like pre-pandemic, but there is a widespread feeling that both within the city and beyond they have greatly increased and are now unsustainable. The Low Traffic Neighbourhood programme is currently stalled for five months while the County engages with its objectors, whom to date have shown little recognition of the scale of the problem. We have been told to expect a final decision on December 23rd.</p> <p>What assurance can we be given that the city council is fully supportive of the programme and is determined to see it implemented?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>At the 26th July Full Council, an amended version of Cllr Wolff’s motion was adopted. The City Council supports the LTNs programme in principle as part of wider strategic efforts to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and support active travel and public transport. The most critical thing now is to expedite Connecting Oxford, so that a wide-ranging, coherent package of changes (including traffic filters, workplace parking levy, support for buses and active travel) is introduced. The current piecemeal approach is unhelpful.</p>

TH3 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood Schemes

Question

Why are there no LTN scheme in North Oxford and all the experimental LTN schemes are in East Oxford?

Written Response

The County Council consulted on an LTN scheme in Jericho and Walton Manor and report that the lack of clear consensus within the community for any plan led to the decision against any new implementation. This took place at a Cabinet Member Decision on 29th April 2021 before the change in administration. The County Council report that they selected East Oxford as the area for experimental LTN schemes based on the findings contained within its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

TH4 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood Schemes data

Question

Is the current Labour Administration's support for the LTN based on any data provided or just on the consultation?

If there is any data can you share this with the council?

Written Response

As per the 26th July Full Council motion, which reaffirms the opening paragraph of a 5 October 2020 motion, the support in principle is based on established data from other cities.

“This Council welcomes the public discussions which are taking place in this city about the value of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in encouraging walking and cycling, preventing rat-running, and decreasing air pollution, while also having the positive effect of opening up residential and shopping streets for local communities, supporting local businesses and boosting community ties. This ongoing discussion is informed by successful LTNs in Waltham Forest, Groeningen in the Netherlands and Ghent in Belgium.”

We are expecting Oxfordshire County Council to publish information in due course, and encourage Cllr Malik to address his request to the local transport authority that exercises responsibility for the LTNs.

TH5 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes - ZEZ

Question

In response to a question from Cllr Miles at council in July about the further delay to the introduction of the city centre ZEZ, the Cabinet member stated that he had fully answered previous questions about how the zone will be enforced, and provided links to a number of earlier documents and statements. None provide information about numbers and siting of cameras, whether they are fixed or mobile, hours of enforcement, or whether enforcement will be carried out by council officers or a contractor, and if so who the contractor is.

Will the Cabinet member please answer those specific questions?

Cllr Hayes also stated in July that “we expect to have more clarity on timescale shortly” for resolving the technical issues about back-office and emissions checking which he referred to in his answer. Can he provide an update?

Written Response

In my response I highlighted Cllr Miles’ inaccuracy about opposition members asking on a number of occasions about enforcement. I did not feel it was correct to permit the Opposition to so overstate their performance of a scrutiny function. Of the 29 questions asked about the ZEZ over 8 meetings of Full Council, 2 broadly covered enforcement. I would also urge Cllr Gant to revisit recordings of my verbal responses to follow-ups.

Five static cameras and one mobile camera are anticipated to be used for the ZEZ Pilot. The static cameras will be at the following locations:

- New Inn Hall Street junction with George Street
- New Road / Castle Street / Bonn Square junction by County Hall
- Cornmarket Street junction with Queen Street
- Cornmarket Street junction with George Street
- Ship Street near junction with Cornmarket Street

Hours of operation are 7am to 7pm on all days of the year. Enforcement will be carried out by a contractor, Conduent Public Sector UK Ltd.

The ZEZ pilot is set to launch in February 2022, with the registration system for exemptions and discounts going live in December 2021.

The ZEZ is a joint project but a matter in the direct remit of Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Gant’s party in a coalition. I expect that Cllr Gant will wish to ask the same question in the next Full Council meeting of that local authority.

TH6 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes - ZEZ -comments about delays

Question

Commenting on the delay to the ZEZ, Cllr Hayes said in the Oxford Mail “If you’ve been to the shops recently and wondered why some shelves look bare, you’ll understand why we’re launching the Zero Emission Zone early next year.”

The link between bare shelves and the delay to the ZEZ is not clear to me. Could the Councillor explain?

Written Response

This question refers to a quotation that features on a joint press release by the City Council and Oxfordshire County Council. In agreeing to this quotation, the County Council’s administration recognised the validity of my explanation. The latter authority is governed by an administration led by Cllr Gant’s party in a coalition.

We are all aware of just how torrid a time our local businesses are enduring owing to the pandemic. This was made worse for a time (coinciding with the delay to the ZEZ announcement) and fears of a further significant supply chain disruption have been realised. This Council is fully committed to supporting local businesses to have the best possible Christmas trading—something that will be made worse by this supply chain disruption manifesting itself in bare shelves.

Therefore, with the Christmas season being an important time for traders, a launch of the ZEZ in the new year, after the busy trading period is over, feels like a cooperative approach to take.

We know that the introduction of the pilot involves change and challenge—we have supported our local businesses to adapt to such change with, for example, multi-year discussion and planning, the provision of electric cargo bikes to the Covered Market, and arrangement of discounts and exemptions.

I would remind Cllr Gant that transport changes are best made when a Council properly consults and listens to local businesses set to be affected by such changes. I do not believe that we are seeing such an approach by the County Council in relation to LTNs.

TH7 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ 1**Question**

Why didn't the proposed ZEZ go ahead in August as previously promised, and what caused it to be delayed?

Written Response

The Councillor may wish to consider the press releases issued in July 2021:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1966/zez_pilot_to_launch_in_february_2022

and in September:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1899/statement_on_zez_pilot

The scheme could not be launched because Conduent, which is providing the back office payment system have had to overcome a number of challenges with writing the programming.

The ZEZ is a joint project with Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Landell Mills' party in a coalition.

TH8 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ 2**Question**

Won't the proposed ZEZ deter shoppers from coming into Oxford and what provision has the City Council made to ensure that shoppers are not deterred ?

Written Response

The ZEZ is a joint project with Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Cllr Landell Mills' party in a coalition.

The City and County Councils continue to promote and support the use of public transport and active travel by shoppers coming into the city centre, in particular from our Park & Rides. We are seeking urgent action by the County Council to prioritise bus transportation, including priority access for buses on roads, and strongly hope that they will respond to calls for action positively. Buses are in real need of a lifeline and anything that prevents their recovery is a bad thing.

For those that do need to drive into the city centre and park, those carparks are outside the area covered by the ZEZ Pilot, which starts in February. Longer term, the full city centre ZEZ and Connecting Oxford will still permit those that need city centre parking access to it, while incentivising a shift to non-polluting vehicles.

TH9 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ 3**Question**

Would not the ZEZ proposals be more effective — in terms of improving air quality while promoting active travel — combined with a congestion charge zone?

Written Response

As the Councillor will be aware, the City and County Councils are proposing to combine the full city centre ZEZ with Connecting Oxford – which will improve air quality while also promoting active travel. A congestion charge was assessed as part of the development work for Connecting Oxford and rejected on the grounds that it would have insufficient impact.

The ZEZ and Connecting Oxford are a joint project with Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Landell Mills’ party in a coalition.

TH10 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – air quality monitoring station**Question**

How much does it cost to buy an air quality monitoring station and how much does one cost to operate one per year? How many has the City got and is it proposed to buy any more?

Written Response

A Typical network monitoring station for measuring NO2 and PM can cost between £50k-£150k to buy and £10k-£30k p.a. to run. I have explained this to Cllr Landell Mills at the time of his most recent request to introduce new air quality monitoring into the city and, at that time, I identified that we were very satisfied with our coverage.

We have 3 of these stations (2 road site stations and one background station: AURN St Ebbes, AURN Oxford Centre, Oxford High Street)

Oxford City Council operates an extensive air quality monitoring network. In addition to the 3 automatic monitoring sites identified above, we monitor air quality levels at 71 different locations across the city. For the purposes of deciding which locations to monitor, the City Council considers locations with relevant public exposure. Approximately half of the monitoring locations are within central Oxford, in locations where the City Council reasonably believes relevant public exposure is most likely to be significant. The remaining locations are outside of the central area, with priority again fixed to locations where relevant public exposure is most likely.

The City Council has a rotational system, ensuring sites are covered, on average, every 2 to 3 years, to increase our coverage and continuously identify potential new air quality hotspots or new areas of interest

One important aspect of monitoring is to be able to demonstrate trends in air quality over long time periods.

TH10 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – air quality monitoring station	
	<p>In order to do so, the Council sustains multi-year monitoring at a number of sites, so that the results can help to evidence trends that are independent of location.</p> <p>Oxford City Council has recently approved a new Air Quality Action Plan which sets the toughest air quality standards in the country.</p>

TH11 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Connecting Oxford	
Question	Written Response
<p>Does this administration support Connecting Oxford which proposes bus gates around the city and how do you propose people will be able to commute?</p>	<p>Yes, as I believe Cllr Malik did himself while part of the Labour Group. We propose that more people will be able to commute by bus. With fewer cars in front of buses slowing them down, bus travel will become more reliable, more punctual, more attractive, and more successfully used.</p> <p>Based on the Oxford Transport Strategy (2016) and Connecting Oxford Plan (2019), a 10% decrease in the car driver mode share is needed to maintain the current unacceptable levels of congestion. And by 2031, the impact forecast increases in congestion could result in a loss of around £150 million from the economy of the city.</p> <p>The County Council’s congestion monitoring, shows that congestion on city centre streets has nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels. Average bus speeds in Oxford have been under 8 mph since 2016 and worsening</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council are submitting a BSIP bid to Central Government next month, which if successful will deliver substantial amounts of new funding via an ‘Enhanced Partnership’ over a three-year period. We have worked closely with the County Council on the bid to ensure that it has a higher level of ambition in respect of improved infrastructure, an enhanced passenger experience, simpler/discounted fares, and a high-quality new vehicle specification.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council have been shortlisted to prepare a business case for ZEBRA funding. This Central Government funding initiative will support the delivery of 166 new battery-electric double deck vehicles during 2023. This will ensure that buses operating exclusively within the SMARTZONE will be zero emission and very quiet. Again, the City Council has worked closely on this opportunity.</p>

TH12 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes – Westgate Centre car park charges**Question**

Can the councillor report if any progress has been made in his discussions with the Westgate Centre over their undertaking to “have regard” to charges in City Council-owned car parks in setting tariffs in their own car park?

Observation suggests that charges at Westgate remain significantly lower, thus continuing to draw motorised traffic into the city centre, and reduce income for this council.

Written Response

The City and County Councils agreed to send a joint letter to the Westgate with a view to raising our issues and working constructively to underline the importance of car park charging as part of a broader approach to achieving modal shift. In our conversations to date, Westgate have said that they are keen to understand the impact of interventions such as Connecting Oxford and the Zero Emission Zone as part of any longer-term plan around their car parking charges.

Officers advise me that the joint letter has not yet been progressed due to capacity. However, they assure me that they have picked this up with County Council and will progress with them in the coming weeks.

TH13 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes - Sea Court Park And Ride**Question**

- When will the Seacourt park and ride extension become operational?
- How much has the Seacourt park and ride cost in terms of capital cost and professional fees to date?
- How much more, is it anticipated, will need to be spent on the Seacourt Park and Ride to make it operational and when will it be opened?

Written Response

As set out in the response to a similar question to Council in July the Seacourt extension is complete (completion certification was given in June 2021) however, the car park extension has been temporarily barriered off whilst usage levels remain low due to the pandemic with original car park still operating below capacity.

This saves money in terms of maintenance and management and reduces risks of damage, which seems prudent whilst usage is down. Pre-pandemic and evidenced as part of the planning application, the original park and ride was full very early in the morning and there was significant demand for the extension. We expect the very low levels currently being experienced to be temporary and for increased usage to return over time. This is particularly relevant given we want to encourage further modal shift over time compared to the modal split we currently have to support reduced congestion and improved air quality. The usage is being kept under review and the barriers can easily be removed to allow access.

The final accounts for the scheme are being completed but the cost came in within the budget agreed at last budget setting and is around £5.372m. Ongoing costs are part of the operation budget and not part of the capital investment cost.

TH14 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – eCargo bikes grant funding

Question

The government has announced a £400,000 Fund to enable the purchase of eCargo bikes (closing date 14th December) by organisations.

Has the Council applied for a grant or is it intending to? Would the cabinet member welcome suggestions for the deployment of such machines?

Written Response

Defra awarded the City Council a grant to support the introduction the ZEZ, which helped to acquire two eCargo bikes for use with traders in the Covered Market. Officers at both the Council and ODS are working with traders to support and encourage the optimal use of these cargo bikes. In order to have a chance of successfully applying for funding in future, having received some already, the Council needs to evaluate the take-up of Atlas and Aria, the two bikes and demonstrate to the funder that we have a need which can be met and a track record for delivering such schemes.

As Cllr Wolff will be aware, the Council has a track record of seeking and securing external funding to further our air quality and zero carbon ambitions. We are at a juncture between a decade and more of terrible underfunding of local government and potentially much deeper cuts to our councils. We need external funding to be able to move forward as quickly as possible to our goal of net zero emissions as a city by 2040 or earlier and the toughest local government air quality standard in the country. Bringing in external funding, whenever the right opportunity arises and we can maintain our track record of successful delivery, will be key, and I thank Cllr Wolff for highlighting such a possibility.

More information: the Council's news [article](#)

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities

SA1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – numbers of Afghan refugees

Question

How many Afghan refugees does the Council expect to arrive in Oxford, when are they expected, and what steps, if any, is the Council taking to find housing for Afghan refugees in Oxford?

Written Response

The Council has made a commitment to house up to 10 Afghan families through either the ARAP (Afghan Resettlement Accommodation Programme) or ACRS (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme). Families will be matched to Councils when the housing has been sourced.

SA2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – resettling Afghan refugees

Question

Will the council make a commitment to find permanent accommodation places for refugees on the Afghan resettlement scheme?

Will this impact the number of resettlement places currently committed for the new UKRS scheme, and can you confirm the number of places currently available under the UKRS scheme?

What factors, if any, are limiting the council from offering more resettlement places?

Written Response

Yes, please see above SA1.

The commitment to ARAP and ACRS is in addition to the existing commitment of 8 families from the UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme) and the previous 30 families from SVPRS (Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme).

The main factor limiting the Council is the lack of available and affordable private sector housing.

SA3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – supporting groups assisting Afghan refugees

Question

How will the Council support the work of community groups like Asylum Welcome, Oxfordshire Afghan Aid, Refugee Resource and Care4Calais who are offering assistance to Afghan refugees locally?

Written Response

We have supported a number of community groups, including Refugee Resource and Asylum Welcome, through our community grants programme and Controlling Migration Fund. We are exploring how our current community grants may be able to assist local community groups with Afghan refugees.

Through the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Vulnerable Migrant Coordination Group, and other forums, officers will continue to work closely with many local groups who offer assistance to refugees.

SA4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – supporting Afghan refugees**Question**

How will the Council look to work more closely with the County Council, who are currently responsible for Afghan refugees in temporary accommodation, to ensure the best quality local authority support?

Written Response

The County Council will continue to be the lead authority for those in temporary accommodation. The City Council will play a full role in the systemwide response led by the County and is committed to providing short term emergency assistance wherever possible to help with this.

The Council will continue to discuss the potential for longer term county-wide provision and support for all refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Oxfordshire.

SA5 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – Operation Warm Welcome**Question**

Has the Council received money from the UK Government as part of its Operation Warm Welcome?

Written Response

No. Funding for Operation Warm Welcome has been granted to Oxfordshire County Council as the lead authority co-ordinating the emergency response.

SA6 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Aziz – rehousing Afghan refugees**Question**

Have the City Council rehoused all the Afghan families arriving from Afghanistan?

Written Response

No, the City Council has made a commitment to house 10 families who have arrived from Afghanistan and currently living in bridging hotels.

SA7 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – reducing LGBTQ+ hate crimes**Question**

Data from Thames Valley Police has shown that recorded LGBTQ+ hate crimes in Oxford have increased 150% in 2020/21, as reported in the Oxford Mail on 2nd September. What plans does the Council have to address this, in partnership with other authorities?

Written Response

The Council will be working with the new Local Police Area Commander to continue its partnership approach to addressing hate crime in all its forms in Oxford. Our collective focus is on increasing public confidence to report hate crime; engaging with our communities and partners; using data analysis to identify and manage repeat offenders, victims and locations; and improve recording, outcomes and the quality of investigations.

SA8 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – reducing transphobia

Question

Given that data from Thames Valley police shows that reported transphobic hate crimes in Oxford doubled in 2020/21, how will the Council work with other authorities to address transphobia in the city?

Written Response

The Council will be working with the new Local Police Area Commander to continue its partnership approach to addressing hate crime in all its forms in Oxford. Our collective focus is on increasing public confidence to report hate crime; engaging with our communities and partners; using data analysis to identify and manage repeat offenders, victims and locations; and improve recording, outcomes and the quality of investigations.

SA9 From Cllr Linda Smith to Cllr Aziz – supporting the Hindu community

Question

Will the cabinet member join me in commending the excellent contribution to the local community made by the Oxford Hindu Temple and Community Centre Project over many years?

Does the cabinet member agree that Oxford's Hindu community would benefit from dedicated premises from which to grow their activities and further their contribution to the fantastic diversity of this city?

How can Oxford City Council assist with this?

Written Response

The Hindu Temple has certainly made an excellent contribution to Oxford and its communities over the years and we are very thankful for this. The Council have met with the Hindu Temples on various occasions to understand their requirements and how we can work together on potential solutions. This strand of work is ongoing and the Council is currently undertaking a review of potential space that may be able to provide options to help serve their needs.

Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction

LA1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – support for a Muslim cemetery

Question

In the next local plan review, would the Labour administration support a separate Muslim cemetery, following the examples of other cities in the UK?

Written Response

As work on the 2040 Local Plan only began a few weeks ago, it's far too early to predict what it will contain. However, it is important to note that the Local Plan only covers the planning designation of sites within the City boundary; sites outside the boundary would come under the Local Plans of the relevant neighbouring District Council. As the City Council has carried out extensive searches over many years for sites for new burial spaces, and no potential sites inside the City have been identified the 2040 Local Plan for Oxford is unlikely to identify a new burial site. It is worth noting that there is a national shortage of burial space. We have regular conversations with faith communities in Oxford and are continuing to try and progress new burial space near the city, working with neighbouring authorities.

LA2 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Arshad – No-Mow May verges

Question

Would the cabinet member agree that some residential verges are **not** suitable for 'no mow' May and should be cut on a regular basis?

Written Response

While the Council is committed to allowing some of the city's verges to grow long to promote biodiversity, it is certainly the case that not all verges should be kept long. The current pilot involves a relatively small number of predominantly arterial routes. If we are satisfied the pilot is successful this could be expanded in a carefully managed way in areas where there is support. Elsewhere, grass verges will continue to be cut in the normal way.

LA3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Arshad - Litter

Question

The level of littering within Oxford is currently significant. Many residential streets are going for more than a week without being cleaned.

Written Response

ODS comply with our service standards within residential areas by litter picking or mechanically sweeping areas at least once every 15 working days. We also

LA3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Arshad - Litter

What is the current minimum service level agreement requirement set by the council for residential street cleaning in Oxford, and is this currently being met?

What steps are being explored by the council to better leverage technological solutions to increase efficiency and the standards of cleaning of the pavements and removal of litter?

carry out regular street inspections which allow us to target our resources in high demand areas. Shopfronts in residential areas have their bins emptied and are litter picked on a daily basis.

We are always exploring new ways of working with the aim of improving efficiency and service provision across the city. ODS are heavily involved in trialling new technology as and when it comes to market.

LA4 Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Arshad – Green Flag scheme**Question**

Are parks that were previously entered for Green Flag award as well maintained this year as in previous years and what metrics and being used to gauge this?

Written Response

The parks are being managed in a different way. The trees are still being surveyed every three years as part of the Tree Management Policy and bins are still being emptied twice a day. However grass cutting has changed because of the biodiversity action plan which calls for drip lines around to be left long rather than mown. Also there is a greater participation from residents to manage/maintain shrubs/flowers beds. The management of all the parks have moved with the wider industry/ public consensus that parks don't need to be overly manicured because it has a negative impact on biodiversity.

LA5 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad - community facility at Cowley Marsh Park**Question**

Temple Cowley had more than its share of housing in the area, in fact, it's over developed. After the closure of Temple Cowley pool, local residents have nowhere to get together to socialise in Temple Cowley.

Can the current leadership support the community facility at Cowley Marsh Park and draw up a financial strategy over two to three years in the budget

Written Response

There are a number of community accessible facilities within the wider catchment area. These include the soon to be improved East Oxford Community Centre, Asian Cultural Centre, Regal Community Centre, Oxford Spires Academy, St Gregory The Great School, Florence Park Community Centre, Cowley Workers Sports and Social Club and The Venue at Cowley to name some.

There is currently no Council budget to develop or operate a facility of this type at Cowley Marsh park. If there were community groups or organisations who were interested in developing a community facility within Cowley Marsh Park then they would need to ensure that they could demonstrate clear need for the

LA5 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad - community facility at Cowley Marsh Park

to fund this?

facility, that it was deliverable with a comprehensive and fully funded business case. A fair and equitable competitive process would also need to be undertaken to ensure that all interested groups/organisations were able to apply and necessary diligence undertaken such as planning and feasibility.

LA6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – reducing paper recyclate going to landfill

Question

What measures do the Council and Viridor Resource Management take to ensure that the paper and card they export from the UK does not end up in landfill?

Written Response

Recycled commodities, like many products, are a truly global trade. Fibre packaging is produced abroad and comes into the UK to be sold, used and then collected as recycling before it arrives at Viridor's MRF. There is huge demand in SE Asia and India (previously China until recent years) as this is where the majority of the world's paper mills are located. They are a major markets for UK fibre as the product quality is high. The material is shipped to these mills to be re-manufactured into new packaging and it is a constant cycle around the world.

There is limited processing capacity within the UK, with circa 8 million tonnes per annum of paper and card collected each year but only 3 million tonnes per annum processing capacity available at a small number of paper mills that still operate. Consequently, the majority of collected materials are exported.

As newspaper and magazine readership declines as we continue into the digital age, cardboard packaging is rising as a trend with more and more residents shopping online. This means that in the near future there is likely to be additional capacity within the UK as waste and resource organisations look to develop facilities fit for the future.

Viridor Resource Management (VRM), is responsible for marketing these materials optimally, both nationally and internationally as appropriate, to ensure maximised financial and environmental benefits. VRM sells large amounts of paper and card products to manufacturers in the UK.

VRM's prime objective is to ensure that the quality products generated are positioned and placed within the UK, European and global markets in a timely, professional and balanced manner to ensure the secure, reliable, financially stable and environmentally

LA6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – reducing paper recyclate going to landfill

sustainable use of the recyclate.

As an ethical operator we work hard to ensure all our output materials are used appropriately and in the most sustainable way. With this in mind, VRM are careful who they approve to sell materials on to. In line with the Proximity Principle, our preference is always to minimise the distance any materials travel. The end destinations used for Crayford MRF outputs are carefully selected in line with this, in compliance with the Waste Hierarchy, and also dependent upon their appropriateness and distance from site.

LA8 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – public water fountains**Question**

Does the Council have any plans to install additional public water fountains in Oxford, like those in Florence Park, Bury Knowle and Cutteslowe Park?

Written Response

The fountains installed were part of additional funding provided in collaboration with the 'Refill' campaign. Exploring further opportunities to expand provision of fountains would be subject to identifying appropriate locations that demonstrate good value/need, and finding the necessary resource to deliver and maintain these for future years.

LA9 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Arshad – felling mature tree on Howard Street**Question**

Why was a mature tree at the junction of Iffley Road and Howard Street removed when it hadn't been listed as being in need of attention in any of the previous five weekly tree lists?

Written Response

We have been monitoring the tree over the last three years and over this time have seen the crown become thinner in distribution and an increase in decay causing fungi around the base of the tree. These observations highlight that the tree is under a large amount of stress and it is likely that the root system of the tree is physiologically and structurally dysfunctional leading to its eventual death or failure.

The ward councillors were made aware of the condition of the tree and the works in July this year.

The weekly tree list is sent out by the planning department and is a list of trees that have planning applications submitted. This tree did not require a planning application.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

AH1 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – biodiversity gain mapping

Question

The biodiversity net gain which developers are required to show, is often met by offsetting the net gain on to another piece of land, separate from the development site.

Will the City Council now create a publicly available map to identify sites deemed appropriate for offsetting within the city boundaries?

Written Response

Policy G2 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 says that “Offsetting measures are likely to include identification of appropriate off- site locations/projects for improvement, which should be within the relevant Conservation Target Area if appropriate, or within the locality of the site.” A map of Oxfordshire’s Conservation Target Areas, which cover just over 20% of the county by area, can be found at <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/conservation-target-areas/oxfordshires-ctas-to-download/>

Since these maps already exist, are publicly available and can be located in seconds using a standard search engine, I don’t think it is necessary for the City Council to create its own versions.

AH2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - biodiversity gain mapping 2

Question

Will the City Council create a publicly accessible map which shows all areas of Biodiversity Net Gain agreed as part of a planning permission with the City Council, both inside and outside the city’s boundary, that references the planning permission and the Biodiversity Net Gain agreement and provides a summary of the agreement?

Written Response

Policy G2 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 says that “Offsetting measures are likely to include identification of appropriate off- site locations/projects for improvement, which should be within the relevant Conservation Target Area if appropriate, or within the locality of the site.” A map of Oxfordshire’s Conservation Target Areas, which cover just over 20% of the county by area, can be found at <https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/conservation-target-areas/oxfordshires-ctas-to-download/>

Since these maps already exist, are publicly available and can be located in seconds using a standard search engine, I don’t think it is necessary for the City Council to create its own versions.

AH3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – securing biodiversity net gain in development

Question	Written Response
<p>The Government’s Environment Bill (2020), currently making its way through Parliament, contains an important section on securing biodiversity net gain in development. As well as being an important initiative in terms of the future of our country and planet, this provision has significant implications for councils. A number of councils, including West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire, have acted as “early adopters”, implementing a range of requirements on developers to deliver net gain, allow third-party offsetting and/or contribute to a council-led offsetting fund.</p> <p>Has Oxford City Council made similar provisions in advance of the progress of the Bill?</p>	<p>The City Council is currently in discussions with a third party organisation about the establishment of such measures; if the outcome of those discussions is successful this will be reported in due course.</p>

AH4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - Biodiversity Net Gain 1

Question	Written Response
<p>Biodiversity Net Gain will mean that developers will be required to make long term commitments lasting tens of years. How will the City Council be policing these agreements and ensure that the agreements are upheld years after they were agreed, and which City Council officers will be responsible for monitoring the delivery of the plans?</p>	<p>Policy G2 of the Local Plan specifies that ‘A management and monitoring plan may be required for larger sites’ and the Technical Advice Note on this matter adds that ‘the future maintenance and management of habitats that are identified as forms of mitigation or compensation must be assured through the provision of funded management plans. The City Council will consider the appropriate use of Section 106 obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy or financial endowments to achieve security for management in perpetuity (or the lifetime of the development)’. The responsibility for monitoring these agreements will sit with City Council corporately, with specific officers – such as the Ecology Officer, officers in the Environment and Planning teams, in Parks and Leisure and so forth – being responsible for different aspects of different projects, as appropriate.</p>

AH5 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - Biodiversity Net Gain 2**Question**

Is it sensible for the City and our in-house contractor ODS to both monitor and deliver Biodiversity Net Gain? Is this not a case of the City acting as both poacher and gamekeeper?

Written Response

While ODS may on occasion be the contractor delivering a particular Bio-Diversity Net Gain scheme – for example in a City Council owned Park – the responsibility for the scheme lies with the Council corporately as Local Planning Authority and the applicant on whose behalf the scheme is being delivered. In this case ODS is no different to any other contractor, and is neither poacher nor gamekeeper.

AH6 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - Biodiversity Net Gain 3**Question**

There is considerable local expertise in landscape, ecology and amenity outside of the City Council. How will this expertise be accessed and what opportunities are there for stakeholders to be consulted on Biodiversity Net Gain plans and have a meaningful input into them before they are adopted?

Has the planning department got the necessary expertise and experience to assess developers' Biodiversity Net Gain plans?

Written Response

Yes. The Planning Department, and the Ecology Team who assess Biodiversity Net Gain plans, have the necessary skills and expertise to assess plans, something that all Councils are required to do as part of their statutory responsibilities. Plans that are part of planning applications are both consulted upon and assessed as part of the development control process, allowing for stakeholders and interested parties to express their views on the adequacy or otherwise of the proposals, in exactly the same that groups expert in say building conservation do at the moment.

AH7 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth - Oxford North biodiversity off-setting**Question**

TWO, the developers of Oxford North, reached a s.106 agreement with the City Council under which a biodiversity net gain of 5% had to be delivered — this net gain to be through off-site provision in Cutteslowe Park. The scheme prepared by the developers was not discussed with the Park stakeholders, although TWO were informed that it had been. The stakeholders have, when they learned

Written Response

The premise of this question appears to be incorrect. The offsetting scheme in question was designed in a collaborative process involving the City Council Ecology and Parks teams, the Friends of Cutteslowe Park before the Oxford North application was determined. It was subsequently signed off by Oxford City Council Planners as part of the s.106 process after the application was approved. The scheme is the restoration

AH7 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth - Oxford North biodiversity off-setting

of the scheme late in the day, made compelling objections based on their long-term knowledge of the park.

Can the Cabinet Member now take steps to ensure that future off-setting works are consulted on with local stakeholders, so that the situation in Cutteslowe, where the plan is powerfully opposed by stakeholders, cannot happen again?

of a wildflower meadow from 3ha of grassland in the lower level of Cutteslowe Park, an aspiration referred to in the 2018-2022 Cutteslowe & Sunnymead Park Management Plan and specifically referred to in the Oxford City Council Green Spaces Biodiversity Review, last updated in February 2020, as being funded through the offsetting scheme (see paragraph 10.1 'Top 12 Priority Projects' of that report).

This being the case, it would appear that local stakeholders were consulted about the scheme as part of the Management Plan and in particular the Green Spaces Biodiversity Review, and were some considerable time ago.

AH8 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth –biodiversity net gain from Oxford North

Question

While the principle in the Environment Bill of requiring biodiversity net gain in order to receive planning permission is welcome, indeed vital, there is considerable concern about how it will be achieved in practice, including around the metric proposed to measure net gain and assess landscape and habitat, the lack of empirical exploration of outputs so far, the question of who does the measuring, and the ability of councils to monitor and police mandatory requirements. Many stakeholders, including parliamentarians based in Oxford, the LGA and academics have expressed concern. For example, a recent academic paper¹ stated that "...these [biodiversity] gains fall within a governance gap whereby they risk being unenforceable...", and concludes "...designing governance mechanisms for reconciling infrastructure expansion with biodiversity conservation is deeply challenging".

Meanwhile, Oxford continues to deliver huge developments like Oxford North, whose

Written Response

The process for ensuring that biodiversity off-setting plans are sufficient is one that is carried out by the relevant officers of this Council who have the professional and expertise to judge whether or not proposals are satisfactory. It's their professional opinion that matters.

The offsetting scheme here, which was outlined in the original report on Oxford North to the West Area Planning Committee in late 2019, is for the enhancement of 3ha of grassland in Cutteslowe Park which currently has a relatively low biodiversity level because of the domination of wildflower species by a limited range of grass species. The scheme was first proposed as an aspiration in the *2018-2022 Cutteslowe &*

AH8 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth –biodiversity net gain from Oxford North

proposed biodiversity plan includes planting a hedge in Cutteslowe Park.

Is the Cabinet member satisfied with the biodiversity offsetting plans for Oxford North, and with the Council’s processes for securing net gain?

Can the Cabinet member explain how planting a hedge in what is already a varied natural habitat represents any significant mitigation for such a huge development (as well as limiting the openness and amenity of the lower playing field)?

1.: zu Ermgassen and others, *“Exploring the ecological outcomes of mandatory biodiversity net gain using evidence from early-adopter jurisdictions in England”* in Wiley, *Conservation Letters*, March 2021.

Sunnymead Park Management Plan and specifically referred to in the *Oxford City Council Green Spaces Biodiversity Review*, last updated in February 2020, as being funded through the offsetting scheme (see paragraph 10.1 ‘Top 12 Priority Projects’ of that report).

There are no current proposals, as far as I am aware, to plant a hedge.

AH9 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – Oxford North access from site

Question

Is the Council administration happy with details in emerging plans for Oxford North for residents to get in and out of the development on foot and by bike, including to Wolvercote primary school, to join up with active travel lanes on Woodstock Road, and to Parkway station (in particular bearing in mind the actual experience of residents of Barton Park)?

Written Response

The details of access to the site for all modes were discussed at substantial length when the planning application was heard by the West Area Planning Committee. In general terms the City Council’s view is that active travel modes should take priority. However it is important to bear in mind that Oxfordshire County Council is the Highways Authority, and as a statutory consultee its views are critical in shaping a planning application appropriately. Experience of numerous sites in Oxford is that the County Council has not been as willing to support restrictions on speeds and the prioritisation of active modes over private cars, as the City Council would have required had it been able. Barton Park is prime example of this. Fortunately the recent elections have led to a change of political administration at County Hall – and I would like to congratulate Cllr Gant on his appointment to an important role in that administration – and I very much look forward to a changing of emphasis in the advice from the Highways Authority on schemes like this.

AH10 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – cycle and pedestrian access to Barton Park

Question

The Cabinet member will be aware that residents of Barton Park and other stakeholders held an event on Friday 10 September, attended by several members of this council and other elected representatives, to draw attention to the unsatisfactory facilities for residents to cross the A40 on foot or by bike.

Is the city council satisfied with this aspect of how the Barton Park scheme has been delivered, bearing in mind it was the landowner, promoter and planning authority?

What plans, if any, does this council have for improving this aspect of the amenity of residents of Barton Park?

Written Response

As Cllr Gant has perhaps forgotten, the City Council strongly supported a significant reduction in the speed limit along the A40 past Barton Park, in order to give greater security and safety for residents of the development and make it easier to cross between Barton Park and Northway. Unfortunately this was not supported by Oxfordshire County Council. I am very proud of the work that Oxford City Council has done as landowner, promoter and planning authority for the Barton Park development. But the one aspect, outside of the control of the City Council, that is less than satisfactory is the speed limit on the A40 at this point and the consequent ease of crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. Given that higher speeds simply allow motor vehicles to travel from one queue of stationary traffic to another at a higher speed but with minimal impact on overall journey time, it seems to me that the situation would be significantly improved if the County Council were to change their position, and reduce the speed limit on this part of the A40 to a reasonable level. Perhaps Cllr Gant, as an important member of the ruling administration at County Hall, might be best advised to press for this change there, since the power to make the change now rests with him and his colleagues. I therefore look forward to seeing him take forward this long overdue measure.

AH11 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hollingsworth – Horse Fields EIA

Question

Recognising the site's biodiversity value, will the Council be requesting a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from Oxford City Housing Ltd before it develops the Horse Fields site in Iffley Village?

Written Response

The rules governing EIAs are clearly set down in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. An EIA is only required when certain thresholds relating to the type of development (for example a nuclear power station, an airport, a motorway, a waste-disposal facility and so forth) or to the scale of the development (for a housing development, one of more than 150 units or more than 5 hectares) are exceeded. The site in Iffley Village does not come close to exceeding any of these thresholds, so no EIA is required.

AH12 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Hollingsworth - Warren Meadow housing stability: to be replaced

Question

The 1973 Foundation Engineering/British Geological Survey concluded that the 12m drop of the rubble slope from Warren Meadow to the Lye Valley below is unstable and thus unsuitable for a new access road to the Churchill hospital. There is evidence of at least one landslip down the bank that has buried a sewer hatch. The slope angle is 32-42 degrees, far steeper than the safe maximum of 22 degrees according to Dr Curt Lambeth.

Note: Foundation Engineering suggested reinforcing the slope, filling in the Valley with tonnes of hogging and culverting the Lye Brook to stabilize it.

Has the slope now been stabilized and its precipitous drop reduced prior to development?

Written Response

As part of the planning application approved in 2016, and the subsequent preparatory work for building the approved scheme, Oxford City Council, OCHL and the contractor have carried out a number of site surveys:

- Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment, in 2012 by Peter Brett Associates and Geotechnical Engineering Ltd (GEL) for Oxford City Council
- Land Quality Assessment, in 2018 by WSP and GEL for OCHL
- Interpretive Report on the Ground Investigation, in 2019 by GEL for the contractor
- Slope Stability Appraisal in 2020 by GEL for the contractor

This most recent survey, the Slope Stability Report, found no recent slippage, and found no evidence of movement or instability in the ground or the mature trees on the slope. The report explains that the development of mature vegetation on the site with its significant root mass is the most likely reason: the made ground had been present for less than 20 years when the Foundation Engineering survey was carried out in 1973; a further 48 years have now passed, allowing for the root complex to grow and enhance the slope stability. No buildings are being constructed close to the edge of the slope.

The report does not identify a need to further stabilise the slope nor to reduce the drop; there is therefore no intention to do so.

The contractor and OCHL have carried out a significant level of site survey work and are satisfied that due diligence has been applied. The works will be undertaken by competent and qualified professional engineers, in partnership with the relevant statutory bodies, to comply with the relevant standards.

SB1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – councillors contacting service areas

Question

When I contact officers for council business, in their reply it's always copied to an email addressing: MP & Councillorenquiries -at- Oxford.gov.uk. Can I ask why this is happening?
Who ordered it, and was this council informed?

Written Response

I am very surprised that Cllr Malik doesn't seem to be familiar with the email address set up for councillors to use for all enquiries to Housing Services. All enquiries to housing services should be directed to this email address which is a monitored mailbox and ensures that enquiries are picked up and dealt with in an appropriate timescale. It has been in use for many years, is listed on the contacts list circulated periodically to all councillors and issued in a pack to new councillors, and returning councillors on their (re)election and referenced in councillor training sessions that Cllr Malik will have attended. I assume this means that he is not using it. Can I please encourage him to do so?

SB2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Brown – reinstate the Carfax Conduit

Question

Broad Street is about to be considered for a major renovation. It is a street internationally famous for its powerful buildings. The mini-meadow which we saw this summer is not appropriate in this architectural context. Since 1869 the Corporation of Oxford has owned the Carfax Conduit, an amazing renaissance construction, currently languishing on the Nuneham Courtenay estate.
Will the Cabinet Member consider the possibility of reinstating the Carfax Conduit where it belongs — at the heart of the city — in Broad Street?

Written Response

On 1st July 2021, the City Council has introduced "Broad Meadow", a temporary public space on the western half of Broad Street, made up of grass, planters, trees and mobile furniture. All feedback on the scheme is welcome, and the public consultation (at consultation.oxford.gov.uk) remains open until 29th October, a few weeks after the scheme is coming to an end on 10th October.
After the public consultation closes, the City Council will analyse the results before publishing them. Once Broad Meadow is finished, responsibility for Broad Street reverts to the County Council, the highway authority. Oxford City Council wants the experience of Broad Meadow to inform the development of longer-term options for creating better civic spaces on Broad Street and in other parts of the city.
Any suggestion of relocating the Carfax Conduit to Broad Street would need to be taken in the round, alongside many other suggestions and lessons learnt from Broad Meadow.

SB3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Brown – City Centre business plan**Question**

Does the City Council have a business plan for the city centre taking into account the City's property assets?

Written Response

The Council is developing an Asset Management Plan that is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet in December. This will set out the strategy for how we manage assets across the city including the City Centre. We are also about to start consultation on the City Centre Action Plan and the City's Economic Development Strategy.

SB4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Brown - Economic Development Strategy and City Centre Action Plan**Question**

What is the brief for the new Economic Development Strategy and City Centre Action Plan and when will they be published for consultation?

Written Response

The brief for these pieces of work were published on the South East Business Portal in Autumn 2019 and consultants were appointed in November 2019 to undertake the work.

In summary the intention of these documents is to set out the key issues that face the economy of the city and city centre and identify key actions and interventions that we can work with partners to address over the short, medium and longer term. They have been broadened since the original brief to encompass a response to the impacts of the pandemic and Brexit with an aspiration to have a more inclusive and sustainable economy that does more for individual residents and the environment as well as the national bottom line.

These documents are in the final stages of preparation having been paused earlier in the pandemic whilst officers were diverted onto COVID-19 related work and to allow time to review evidence and understand the renewed context as far as possible in terms of economic recovery.

Consultation drafts are now in the final stages of preparation with consultation plans being confirmed but the expectation is that consultations will launch on both documents by November 2021 ideally before the end of October.

SB5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown - Town Hall Picture frames	
<p>Question</p> <p>With reference to the question raised at the last Council meeting, regarding the lack of diversity within the portraits in the town hall, it was noted by the council leader that there are issues specifically with replacing the existing artwork due to the requirements of the picture frames as the town hall has listed building status.</p> <p>Can the cabinet member provide details of the specific requirements for picture frames for paintings or photographs within the town hall due to its listed building status?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Conservation have confirmed their initial thoughts are that Listed Building Consent would be required to replace the paintings. The reason for this is because the paintings are so closely associated with the function of the room and the building, they would be regarded as being fixtures, of belonging to the room, and therefore their replacement would trigger the need for listed building consent.</p> <p>The conservation team are now seeking further advice from Historic England.</p>

SB6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown Town Hall Art archives	
<p>Question</p> <p>What artworks does the council have in-store or in the archives in the following categories: (portrait paintings, landscape paintings, photographs and statues)?</p> <p>Of those that depict individual people, how many are of women and how many of men? Secondly, are there any reciprocal or direct loans of art with the Council and any of the colleges or museums, if so what are these art works?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>All of the paintings/artwork we have are on display.</p> <p>There are 115 in total, of which 45 are portraits showing people and the breakdown is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male – 40 • Female – 3 • Male and Female - 2 <p>All of these are fully owned by the council, there are no loans.</p>

SB7 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown – Restart grants, Additional Restrictions grants and Home & Mobile Worker Licence grants	
<p>Question</p> <p>How many applications did the City Council receive from local businesses for Restart grants, Additional Restrictions grants and Home & Mobile Worker Licence grants?</p> <p>How many of these</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p><u>Applications received:</u></p> <p>Restart grants: 1,365 (1,280 without duplicates)</p> <p>ARG: 3,269</p> <p>Home and Mobile worker licences: 583</p> <p><u>Applications granted</u></p>

SB7 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown – Restart grants, Additional Restrictions grants and Home & Mobile Worker Licence grants

applications were successful, and were we able to deploy the full £4.4m provided by central government for this purpose?

Restart grants: 957

ARG: 2,029

Home and Mobile worker licences: 482

Yes we used the full two allocations for the Additional Restrictions Grant totalling £4.4m and subsequently secured a further £991k funding allocation in August to be spent by 31/3/22