

To: Council
Date: 29 November 2021
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet Members 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 Cabinet Member 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-19

Question	Written Response
With Covid-19 cases still high across the country and in Oxford and Covid patients putting increasing strain on our hospitals, what specific steps is the City Council taking to limit the spread of the virus within the city?	Oxford City Council has been a very active partner working in a systemwide and countywide structure to tackle COVID-19 in the city and Oxfordshire for the past 20 months. This includes regular meetings that make strategic and tactical decisions on actions and interventions to limit the spread of the virus in the City, which are attended variously by the Council Leader, Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Strategy, Head of Communities, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety and other officers.

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – Covid-19

This systemwide approach means that, for example, measures to encourage the take-up of third vaccinations by the over-40s, are framed by the NHS and County Public Health teams, communicated by County and City Communications teams, and promoted by our Communities teams working out of Locality Hubs.

A snapshot of some of the other current activities to limit the spread of COVID include:

- Our Regulatory Services and Community Safety teams hold weekly strategic and operational meetings with the Police and both Universities to co-ordinate the response and address any concerns raised regarding particular premises, business sectors or other public places and behaviour including student behaviour.
- Our Environmental Health team operates an out of hours service from 9pm to 3am on Wednesday evenings which is the busiest student night of the week to monitor and give advice to the hospitality sector. The team examines NHS/public health data reports on case clusters and where these highlight specific premises, officers follow up with checks and advice.
- Our Events Team works with the Environmental Health team regarding preventive measures for large scale events
- Advice and support for businesses from our Business Regulation team on ensuring well-ventilated workplaces and hospitality venues
- Liaison with diverse communities and distribution of translated materials on vaccination by our Localities team
- Provision of emergency temporary single room accommodation for rough sleepers by our Homelessness team
- Distribution of £270,000 funding to support residents who are struggling to make ends meet this winter by our Communities teams.
- Development of a new delivery model for our Hubs going forwards being developed by our Communities team to ensure better insight into changing community needs, more cost effective better joined up services, closer engagement with those most vulnerable communities and those not engaging, continued learning and improvement. Funded by £200,000 of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) money.

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – Covid-19

- Procurement of additional vehicles to support deliveries from Hubs for those in need. Funded by £60,000 of COMF money.
- Additional data analyst in our Policy and Partnerships team to support the development of mapping and monitoring of cross-council service demand particularly in Communities, Housing and Customer Services.

LU2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – Covid-19 Workplace support**Question**

What advice and support is the City Council giving to workplaces in Oxford to enable them to take measures such as improving air quality in order to limit the spread of COVID-19?

Written Response

The primary advice and support that is being delivered to businesses from the Council is with regard to ventilation in workplaces. This is in line with guidance issued by the government and the HSE. Our officers helped develop a ventilation project involving CO2 monitors and we are working with the countywide Covid Secure Team to directly promote the service to a variety of business sectors in the City. This includes a number of University of Oxford colleges, Oxford Brookes University and several places of worship which have been visited and ventilation assessments made to supplement their existing knowledge, with resulting recommendations and actions.

The out of hours service that operates on Wednesday evenings from 9pm to 3am visits hospitality premises and advises on issues such as queue management and reports back to the Licensing & Business Regulation Teams for any necessary follow ups.

Officers also attend business forums such as Pubwatch to advise on the latest information, trends, best practice and answer questions.

The City Council has renewed pavement licences for 80 hospitality businesses to enable them to continue minimising Covid19 transmission.

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

DB1 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Blackings – Council housing waiting list numbers

DB1 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Blackings – Council housing waiting list numbers**Question**

According to the City Council website, we had 2355 families on the waiting list for desperately-needed new council housing a year ago (2nd Oct 2020). More recently I have heard a figure of "nearly 3000" mentioned, which would represent an annual increase of 27%. What is the current figure, and if the "nearly 3000" figure is correct, what might be the reason for the dramatic increase?

Written Response

The demand for housing is higher than ever following the pandemic with more people seeking to move to more affordable & secure housing.

There are currently 2660 households on the Housing Register.

From 1/4/21 to date, 282 properties owned by OCC and the Registered Providers of Social Housing we work with, have been allocated to those in housing need on the housing register.

In addition to this, 63 customers been offered a property and are currently waiting to view &/or sign up & move into their new home, with a further 46 properties advertised and in the process of being allocated.

To help meet this demand OCC and our partners continue to build properties in the City where possible to help meet this demand and supply as many new affordable homes as possible.

We are well aware that #OxfordNeedsHomes and are also working with our neighbouring councils who are also building homes for Oxford's unmet housing need which was based on the need for affordable housing.

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services**MR1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Rowley – HGV damage to street furniture and residential properties?****Question**

In the past year, on how many occasions has street furniture been damaged by heavy vehicles (e.g. HGVs and coaches) using residential streets in Oxford? Where have these incidents taken place?

Written Response

We looked back over the last 12 months. As far as we are aware, the bus shelter on Henley Avenue was hit by a third party vehicle. We do not have records of any other incidents.

MR2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Rowley – City Council app

Question

What is the annual number of downloads of the Oxford City Council app for the last 12 months? Does the City Council track the number of active users of the app, if so what is the number of active users? Within the report it function of the app, what is the breakdown of number of reports submitted by each category (e.g. graffiti, litter etc.) for the last 12 months?

Written Response

There is limited functionality around what is recorded in relation to the Oxford City Council app and so we do not record total annual download numbers. However, we know that around 11,000 households have signed up to receive notifications of bin collections each week. In addition, the Report It function is tracked and the data for the past year shows there were 419 reports including 158 linked to littering, 129 on fly-tipping, 14 on graffiti and 30 on dog fouling. We are also currently looking at alternative options that we may use to replace the existing app that will help extend and increase our digital engagement of citizens. The Council and ODS now use the govdelivery platform to send regular email newsletters to residents and this includes functionality that would enable people to sign up for alerts and information around a range of council services as well as highlighting channels to feedback. Currently we have 9,856 subscribers on govdelivery – and our ambition is to seek to sign up as many Oxford tenants and residents as possible. In addition, ODS is considering use of the Fixmystreet system to gather input from residents around issues with roads and street infrastructure.

MR3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Rowley – QL payments and accounting system

Question

Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the rollout of the QL payments and accounting system? What is the current state of service delivery? What is the cumulative effect of delays and changes to process? Do we have an estimate of the cost of the issues experienced, not just in cash terms but in terms of officer time?

Written Response

The current status is repairs are being undertaken, suppliers are being paid, and rental income is being collected, although there are currently constraints on the production of financial management and performance information.

Progress has been made with stability, governance and operational assurance with significant senior officer oversight, cross organisational Business assurance team and project team involving staff energy and involvement, the system is currently working efficiently including 'workarounds' which allow for financial transactions to be processed outside of the main QL system.

A comprehensive plan is in place and being managed under close oversight to; remove the operational workarounds, bring additional functions into play and to target the resolution of the financial information, meanwhile proxy information being developed for

MR3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Rowley – QL payments and accounting system

	<p>reporting.</p> <p>There is good progress toward the position to reverse the operational workarounds with key upgrades being planned, which will enable the benefits of reversing these workarounds, along with new functionality and improvements to processes that drive efficiencies in many of our areas of business.</p> <p>Significant effort has been applied to addressing the issues that have arisen since the system went live in May with a multi-disciplinary team of officers from Oxford City Council and Oxford Direct Services. It should be recognised that the progress had been achieved through hard work of staff working as a single strong multidisciplinary team.</p> <p>In terms of cost over and above the original implementation this is currently estimated at around £280k to get the system to 'steady state'. It is difficult to estimate the opportunity cost of officer time but it is acknowledged that this will have been significant.</p>
--	--

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism

MC1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Clarkson – Menorah lighting on Broad Street

Question	Written Response
<p>Why, after almost 20 years, is the Council now refusing to support the Jewish community's menorah lighting on Broad Street which is held annually in memory of former Oxford City Councillor Dr Mike Woodin who tragically died aged 38 whilst still a serving Councillor?</p>	<p>The Council is fully supportive of the Jewish Community's menorah lighting on Broad Street. The City centre councillors have agreed to cover these costs from their ward members budgets for this year, and spoken to Rabbi Eli Brackman.</p>

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

ET1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Turner – Commercial property purchase expenditure

Question

Against the advice of Scrutiny Committee, Council set aside £20 million at the last budget for the purchase of commercial property to rent out. Can the portfolio holder update Council on how much has been spent on commercial property since the budget, whether this expenditure is on-track, and the revenue generated?

Written Response

I think the councillor is alluding to the purchase of commercial assets for regeneration and then to deliver an income stream. At present there has been no capital spend from the £20 million set aside. The Council has bid unsuccessfully on an asset at the science park and is currently awaiting the response on another regeneration asset. It is also considering 2 further opportunities. We will continue to evaluate opportunities but will only bid when we are very confident that it is in the interests of Oxford City Council to do so. The councillor will be glad to hear that the Council is very active in regenerating property which it already owns or in which it has an interest, for instance with the Cave Street scheme recently agreed in cabinet, and the development of the former Boswells store, both of which will deliver financial contributions to the City Council, as well as wider economic benefits to our city.

ET2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Turner – Cost of Broad Meadow

Question

A grant of £150,000 was made by the Outbreak Management Fund towards the cost of Broad Meadow. This has covered the fees of external consultants LDA Designs (£24,800), the artist's fees, and ODS. I understand that there may be further costs for infrastructure, operational and project management costs. Could the Cabinet Member please confirm the total expenditure?

Written Response provided by Cllr Hayes, Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford

The final Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) budget allocation for the temporary scheme on Broad Street ("Broad Meadow") was £250,000, which will be reported separately to the County Council to support Oxfordshire's claim for the central Government COMF grant.

Design, infrastructure, implementation, project management and operating costs associated with Broad Meadow to date totals £222,500. Broad Meadow was open from 1 July 2021 to 11 October 2021 for residents and visitors to meet friends and family throughout the summer. Over 100,000 people used the facility during this time.

This use of public funds was an urgent investment in the city centre in order to encourage a safe return of footfall to support local businesses. Broad Street businesses have reported that the scheme made a difference to the amount of people on Broad Street and how much time they spent there.

ET2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Turner – Cost of Broad Meadow

	<p>The scheme was a great success (87% of 1,039 respondents to our public consultation said that Broad Meadow had a positive impact; 80% of respondents said they back permanent pedestrianisation of the whole of Broad Street). And on 17th November the County Council committed to delivering public space enhancements in Broad Street in 2022, in large part due to the “great work that has been done with this initial pilot”.</p> <p>Delivery of the scheme was made possible through partnership working by a range of stakeholders including bus service providers ODS, the colleges and businesses located in the area, the emergency services and Oxfordshire County Council. Broad Meadow benefitted from proactive input by key local groups, including: Oxford Civic Society, Oxford Pedestrians Association, Cyclox, Unlimited Oxfordshire and the City Council’s Inclusive Transport and Movement Focus Group.</p> <p>And even though Broad Meadow had to be a temporary scheme in 2021, detailed consideration was given to the reuse of the different elements involved. On 6th October we announced that none of the constituent parts of Broad Meadow would end up in landfill after the scheme closed in October. We subsequently donated all the structures, seating, plants, trees and turf to six local charities and organisations and charities: Blackbird Leys Adventure Playground, Cowley Children’s Allotment, Marston Community Garden, Oxford Urban Wildlife Group, St Ebbe’s Primary School and St Mary Magdalen Church.</p>
--	---

Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford; Deputy Leader of the Council

TH1 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ: expected air quality improvements

<p>Question</p> <p>Given that the so-called zero emission zone being piloted in 2022 will not prevent any vehicle from entering the area covered by the ZEZ, is only in place</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Three things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It’s not a so-called Zero Emission Zone, it’s a Zero Emission Zone. By comparison, the Leader of Brighton City Council is a so-called Green because he flew to COP26 instead of using (as I
--	---

TH1 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ: expected air quality improvements

7am to 7pm, and that of the streets covered all are either already restricted or dead ends, what air quality improvements are expected?

did) more environmentally-friendly rail travel and allowed weeks of rubbish to pile up in the streets by devaluing our unions and public sector workers.

- The ZEZ pilot covers the commercial heart of the city which has high footfall and poor air quality. The pilot will be operating during the very hours of highest footfall, so that they are protected against air pollution and its harmful health effects created by fossil fuel vehicles. Ongoing air quality monitoring will demonstrate the impacts.
- The pilot is accompanied by the toughest environmental standards on the taxi trade in the country and the requirement on our bus service providers to run cleaner buses across a large geography, including Oxford's most air-polluted road—St Clement's.

TH2 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ: classic cars

Question

Why are classic cars - which have some of the most polluting engines - exempt from the ZEZ charge?

Written Response

Just like CAZs of Liberal Democrat-led Bath and Labour-led Birmingham, and the ULEZ of Labour-led London, historic tax vehicles are exempt. They are impossible to retrofit with exhaust treatment, replacing them defeats the point of having them, and they will be present in such tiny numbers as to be completely irrelevant to air quality considerations. We saw no reason not to follow other schemes in exempting them. Moreover, the classic cars of the future (today's fossil fuel cars) are not going to be allowed into the ZEZ and nor will they be in the future.

TH3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Implications of London's ULEZ for Oxford's air quality plans

TH3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Implications of London’s ULEZ for Oxford’s air quality plans

Question	Written Response
<p>Does the recent evidence on the limited impact on air quality of the London ultra-low emission zone affect the plans for Oxford's air quality plans?</p>	<p>No.</p>

TH4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hayes – Safety of cyclists in relation to motorcycle and moped food delivery drivers

Question	Written Response provided by Cllr Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford
<p>Has the Council had any dialogue with food delivery companies in relation to danger to cyclists caused by the irresponsible driving of some of their delivery drivers using motorcycles or mopeds?</p>	<p>The Police are the enforcing authority and any reports of dangerous driving should be made to Thames Valley Police on 101 (non-emergency) or 999 (emergency). The Police can report rider behaviour directly to the company they are operating under. Oxford City Council, Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire County Council are currently jointly working together to address a range of issues created by food delivery riders in the city centre. This has involved engaging with the food delivery companies in relation to irresponsible driving as well as breaches of traffic orders and anti social behaviour.</p>

TH5 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hayes – Seacourt Park & Ride Extension

Question	Written Response
<p>At last Full Council you responded that usage levels remained low in the main Seacourt car park and that was why the extension had been fenced off. Can you now advise when the extension is scheduled to open? When will the final accounts for the capital scheme be</p>	<p>We are reviewing car park usage, which of course is currently difficult to predict and will announce a date when it is possible to have a clear analysis of likely usage. The barriers can easily be removed to allow access at short notice should the usage increase over the Christmas period.</p> <p>It is intended that the footpath will be opened and lit from 1st December in order to facilitate access for pedestrians and cyclists.</p> <p>The extension does not have a separate operational</p>

TH5 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hayes – Seacourt Park & Ride Extension

available, and are any costs currently being incurred in the operational budget for the extension?

budget this is part of the budget for operation of park and rides as a whole.

The total approved budget was £5.372m. We are awaiting some final transactions to be settled for example we will pay the final balance to ODS once the defect period expires. These are expected to be resolved this financial year so the final accounts can be reported within the annual full statement of accounts next year.

Officers expect that we will be on if not slightly under the approved budget.

TH6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – OCC representation at COP26

Question

How many representatives of, and who, attended the COP26 conference in Glasgow on behalf of Oxford City Council and for what purposes? What were the top three practical insights and learning gained from this participation that will be applied to inform action on climate change by Oxford City Council?

Written Response

I attended COP26 as the climate and transport lead and a Deputy Leader of Oxford City Council to represent the views of the Council, citizens, and partners; learn from others; share our own best practice; and highlight Oxford as a city which is doing a large number of widely recognised climate projects and seeks to do much more to achieve our ambition to be zero carbon by 2040 or sooner.

The top three practical insights gleaned were:

1. Boot Boris Johnson and his crowd of charlatans and cowards out of No 10
2. Help the people and parties that typically facilitate Tory Government (either indirectly or in Coalition) to get smart and get out of the way.
3. Put Keir Starmer into No 10 as soon as possible to implement climate action in a way which promotes high-paying green jobs and meets ambitious targets.

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities

SA1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Aziz – East Oxford Community Centre

Question

Since the Council took back control of East Oxford

Written Response

In 2015 Oxford City Council took on the running of EOCC after concerns were raised to us about financial

SA1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Aziz – East Oxford Community Centre

Community Centre from the Community Association, how have the number of bookings changed? Does the Council have an assessment of whether there are groups which have ceased using the space since the takeover?

irregularities. During the transfer, we worked hard to keep all existing tenants and community groups, and we froze prices to support this. Since this point, the centre has generally been well used and broadly comparable with our other centres in the City and in line with national averages. We did not notice a trend of groups leaving, and the year before the pandemic, we had 62,869 users and 163 different unique hirers.

Clearly, the pandemic has had an impact, with the centre needing to close at some stages in line with government requirements and also on when and how some community groups and individuals are returning to the site once open. As business and groups recover, we are welcoming back more and more of our hirers and tenants and are excited about the prospect of a redeveloped centre soon.

Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction

LA1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – Tree felling in Donnington Ward

Question

How many trees have been felled or otherwise removed in Donnington Ward per year for 2019, 2020 and 2021 to date?

Written Response

2019: 0

2020: 7

- Iffley road – Lime Tree x2 (decayed)
- HRA Property Freeland's road – Ash x 3 (self-seeded trees)
- HRA Property Swinbourne road – Ash x 2 (self-seeded trees)

2021 to date: 2

- Iffley Road – Beech (diseased)
- George Moore Close – Robinia (dead)

There have been 5 trees planted as well as the tiny forest that was planted last year in Meadow Lane Nature Reserve.

LA2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – Use of glyphosate

Question

Can the public access information about where the Council, ODS and its contractors are using glyphosate? If so, where can they access this information?

Written Response

The public are able to read previous Council [meeting minutes](#) which will show answers to glyphosate questions on several occasions, including at the 23 July 2018 Council meeting (see below). We are happy to provide the public with information on request.

We treat roads, car parks and garage areas within our remit, along with the Council's HRA stock (flat sites and tower blocks), three times a year.

We do not use glyphosate products in parks and green spaces.

Previous response provided at the 23 July 2018 Council meeting:

ODS (via a specialist contractor, Charlton Environmental) applies glyphosate in accordance with manufacturers and industry standards to all street pavements and associated hard surface areas two to three times annually throughout the city (approximately 320 litres used in total). This is carried out as a pedestrian operation and is a spot treatment only, meaning only visible weeds are targeted. We do this using controlled droplet applicators (CDA), and so very little visible residue is left behind on the street surface. This helps to minimise the volume of pesticide being applied, and is the safest method of application available for our operators and for the public. This method of application uses far less product, down from 200L per hectare through conventional knapsack sprayers, to between 15L and 40L per hectare using CDA machines. The products themselves have also changed, so that formulations are now safer to the public, operatives and wildlife, and most are 'clean label' and do not now even carry an irritant warning.

In recent years we have also applied glyphosate around the bases of all trees, so that the need for strimming throughout the season is minimised. This was brought in due to concerns surrounding the strimming causing damage to the trees across Oxford, and is usually a one off treatment in April, or in line with the first cut of the season.

We continue to monitor any debate about the future licencing of this product and we will only continue to use it whilst it is licenced.

LA3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Arshad – Cutteslowe Park

Question

Many users and local residents to Cutteslowe Park are concerned that the presence of the ODS depot in the middle of the park, and in particular the regular traffic of large vehicles along routes inside the park and out through the well-used entrance to Harbord Rd, a road shared by pedestrians and vehicles, is unsatisfactory. Does the cabinet member agree?

Written Response

Cutteslowe Depot has been operational for several decades and traffic has always passed through Harbord Road. The traffic in and out of the park is not solely ODS', there are residential dwellings as well as organisations such as the miniature railway, the café and greenhouses all which have deliveries. Furthermore, the public car park has c40 spaces and is well utilised by members of the public.

From an ODS perspective the traffic to and from the depot is mainly Monday – Friday at 7am and 3pm for 10 minutes when the grounds staff are arriving and departing from work. The ODS vehicle movements outside of this time is intermittent and negligible.

From the Harbord Road entrance there is a designated walkway into the park and within the last year we have installed a hoggin path around the gate to ensure there is a hard surface for wheelchair users to use when the gate is closed. In the past 6 months an automatic gate has been installed to keep vehicles entering the park to a minimum during non-operation hours e.g. during the weekends. There is also a speed limit of 10mph in the park. This area also has a public car park and provides c60 spaces and is well utilised.

I am pleased to report that there have been no incidents within the park involving pedestrians and ODS vehicles for at least the last seven years, although possibly much longer.

LA4 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Arshad – Biodiversity Net Gain

Question

As Cabinet member for Parks, what is your view of the arrangements for BNG from Oxford North?

Written Response

I'm confident we are moving in the right direction in seeking to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) linked to the Oxford North development in Cutteslowe Park. The principles of BNG recognise that, particularly in a city, there are limitations on what can be achieved around boosting biodiversity on a site that is being developed. With Oxford North, the offsetting scheme in question was designed in a collaborative process involving the City Council Ecology and Parks teams and 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 Section106 process after the application was approved.

LA4 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Arshad – Biodiversity Net Gain

The scheme is the restoration 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).

The Cutteslowe scheme has ensured our S106 requirement that there is a 5% net gain in biodiversity (underpinned by Policy G2 of the Oxford Local Plan) is achieved. However, the position will change following the Environment Act 2021 receiving Royal Assent a week ago and which will increase that requirement to 10% in future.

The Local Government Association advises that Mandatory biodiversity net gain as set out in the [Environment Act](#) applies in England only by amending the Town & Country Planning Act (TCPA) and is likely to become law in 2023. Oxford City Council cannot bring in the measure unilaterally. The Act sets out the following key components to mandatory BNG:

- Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric & approval of net gain plan
- Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations/conservation covenant
- Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits
- There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites
- The mitigation hierarchy still applies of avoidance, mitigation and compensation for biodiversity loss
- Will also apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)
- Does not apply to marine development
- Does not change existing legal environmental and wildlife protections

Clearly we will have a lot of work to do to ensure we are prepared for the new BNG regime within planning as it is implemented in due course.

AH1 From Cllr Bely-Summers to Cllr Hollingsworth – Littlemore Ward infrastructure

Question	Written Response
<p>Littlemore ward has 6.400 residents, no GPs practice, no dentist, only two bus services not running on Sundays nor Bank Holidays. Littlemore is among the 20% most deprived areas in England and experiences multiple levels of deprivation: low skills, low income and relatively high levels of crime. The life expectancy there is 15 years less than in Summertown ward.</p> <p>In the next few years Oxford City council will build 1000 new accommodations in Littlemore with no plans to deliver comprehensive infrastructure. This will put pressure on local schools, already stretched GPs and dentist practice in surrounding wards. We want to attract NHS workers in these new developments but no provision for direct route to hospitals.</p> <p>Is there not a duty on this council to provide adequate infrastructure and amenities in areas of deprivation such as Littlemore firstly to redress social/economic/health inequalities between have and have not wards but also more importantly</p>	<p>While there is significant development in Littlemore at present, the correct figures are a little lower. Since 2013 some 418 new homes have received planning permission in Littlemore, and there are currently a further 170 that are the subject of live planning applications which may, or may not, be approved. There is one further significant site allocated in the Local Plan which is partially in Littlemore and partially in Blackbird Leys which has a site allocation of 150 units, for which there is no current planning process underway. Only two of these sites, both current planning applications and totally 74 units, are being built by Oxford City Council or its housing company OCHL. The remaining sites belong to other organisations.</p> <p>When the City Council, or any planning authority, draws up a Local Plan, it is reliant on the relevant statutory bodies to provide it with the relevant requirements for investment in infrastructure. The County Council will provide requirements for school places, highways infrastructure and public transport provision, Thames Water for water and sewage infrastructure and so forth, and the relevant bodies in the NHS will provide requirements for medical provision. This is a vitally important part of the process, because without an evidence of need, the City Council cannot require a developer to make a financial contribution to meet that need.</p> <p>For example, for two of the sites in Littlemore the County Council identified a need for financial support for highways infrastructure and support for public transport, and so those developments made contributions for those requirements – a s.106 agreement that included £214,650 for public transport improvements in one instance, and the creation of new bus stops and highways infrastructure via a s.278 agreement with the County Council in the other.</p> <p>However the relevant NHS bodies for primary care and dental services have not identified any such need. In a recent letter, the CCG stated that all of the GP practices that current serve Littlemore have capacity to take on</p>

AH1 From Cllr Bely-Summers to Cllr Hollingsworth – Littlemore Ward infrastructure

because the Council intent to exert even more pressure on what is already lacking.

more patients, and are doing so. The NHS body responsible for dental services stated that there is currently greater provision of dental services in the relevant area of Oxford than is required by them. With official statements like these from the statutory bodies that additional resources are not required, it is impossible for the City Council to then pursue a s106 agreement from a developer.

Nonetheless the City Council, like all the local planning authorities in Oxfordshire, is seeking closer engagement with the soon to be abolished CCG and its successor body, so as to better identify where new, expanded and replacement primary care facilities should go. The CCG has produced a useful starting point - the Oxfordshire Primary Care Estates Strategy 2020-2025 – which sets out the current situation for each surgery and PCN across Oxfordshire and proposes an approach to prioritisation. It’s now important for the proposed ‘next steps’ in that document to be brought forward, so that detailed plans for primary care requirements can inform Oxford’s Local Plan 2040 and the other Local Plans across the county. The Primary Care Estates Strategy also makes clear the CCG’s preference for large primary care ‘hubs’, and lack of enthusiasm for small or satellite surgeries, describing them as “no longer clinically or financially viable”.

Link: <https://www.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk/key-occg-publications/oxfordshire-primary-care-estates-strategy-2020-2025/151176>

AH2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Diamond Place

Question

Is the Council supportive of the proposal from the local community in North Oxford that there should be a joint working party of the City, Oxford University Developments, and the community, to co-design a master plan for Diamond Place?

Written Response

The City Council has already discussed and agreed with Oxford University Developments how best to jointly pursue the different aspirations for the Diamond Place site and both parties believe that working on a joint approach to masterplanning principles with the local community is the right way forward. This is a complex site, with significant physical and financial constraints, and the best outcomes for all parties will be achieved by an ongoing process of developing partnership. It is important to note that because both landowners see the benefits of working together, this necessarily

AH2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Diamond Place

requires moving at the pace of the slower – OUD has a number of prior schemes which it needs to bring forward in order to vacate the buildings on its site at Diamond Place, and this means that their timescales form the critical path for the scheme.

AH3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Master Planning for Diamond Place**Question**

Given the expressed willingness of Oxford University Developments to join in a master planning exercise for Diamond Place, and the urgency of providing a new health centre for the expanding residential areas in North Oxford and the need for new social housing, is the Council supportive of starting a master planning exercise for Diamond Place now?

Written Response

The City Council has already discussed and agreed with Oxford University Developments how best to jointly pursue the different aspirations for the Diamond Place site and both parties believe that working on a joint approach to masterplanning principles with the local community is the right way forward. This is a complex site, with significant physical and financial constraints, and the best outcomes for all parties will be achieved by an ongoing process of developing partnership. It is important to note that because both landowners see the benefits of working together, this necessarily requires moving at the pace of the slower – OUD has a number of prior schemes which it needs to bring forward in order to vacate the buildings on its site at Diamond Place, and this means that their timescales form the critical path for the scheme. It is important to be clear that although a new Medical Centre is a high priority, it is not currently a requirement for the site and it is reliant on the Clinical Commissioning Group and its successor body, and the relevant NHS funding bodies, supporting the scheme not just verbally but financially and throughout detailed and committed engagement with the specification of the site.

AH4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Health Centre at Diamond Place**Question**

In view of the severely inadequate accommodation for GPs and patients at the two GP surgeries in Summertown, what is the council doing to

Written Response

The City Council has heard from the local GP surgeries their clear issues with the current premises. We have reached out to the CCG through several channels over the years, including the Local Plan, and have recently had contact from them. We need the NHS to make clear their requirements for any new surgery or medical centre, and their financial commitment to it. At present

AH4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Health Centre at Diamond Place

progress the development of a new health centre for the north of Oxford at Diamond Place?

it is probably fair to say that so far the degree of detail in terms of floor space and other building specifications that have been forthcoming has been rather limited, but as the Diamond Place site come closer to development the Council looks forward to a fuller engagement process to allow these details to be more fully developed.

AH5 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – Active travel route from North Oxford to Parkway

Question

The CDC LPPR site PR6a, being brought forward by the site owners, has the opportunity to provide a key active travel route from North Oxford to Parkway station and beyond, something which clearly should have been delivered when the station opened. NCR51 crosses the A40 by the footbridge from Wren Rd to the entrance to Cutteslowe Park. There is clearly therefore a challenge in joining this route legibly and safely to routes through and/or adjacent to PR6a and the Croudace site at Frideswide Farm. Would the Cabinet Member join me in calling for this to be done in a way which provides a safe and convenient route for cyclists and at the same time respects the needs of local residents and all other stakeholders?

Written Response

Yes, and City Council officers have already raised these issues of connectivity for active transport modes with colleagues at Cherwell District Council. The specific link referred to would be a significant benefit. I particularly intend to make such a call to the County Council's cycling champion, whom I believe has a keen interest in and understanding of the issues, and hope to have his support in lobbying his County Cabinet colleagues.

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Growth, Economic Recovery, and Partnerships

SB1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Brown – Vacancy rate for City Centre retail units

Question

How does the vacancy rate for retail units in the City Centre including the

Written Response

Oxford City Council's most recent vacant units audit undertaken by the City Centre Management team was in August 2021, and the picture will have changed

SB1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Brown – Vacancy rate for City Centre retail units

Covered Market compare with the situation prior to the tripling in size of the Westgate Shopping Centre?

since then. This audit assesses core city centre ground floor retail, hospitality and service providers e.g. hairdressers, barbers, beauty salons etc. including the Westgate.

It showed that since 15th September 2020, 25 businesses had either opened or announced plans to open in vacant city centre units. This includes some major national brand names. The majority (60%) were independents; just over half are retail.

The August update also showed the number of empty and available units in Oxford city centre to be 28 - 4.6% of the 604 units total. This figure includes those vacated by national brands e.g. Debenhams, Edinburgh Woollen Mill, Cath Kidston, TM Lewin, Oasis which closed the majority if not all their stores. This is below the British average. The British Retail Consortium reported the vacancy rate in Britain to be 14.5% in July 2021 (available here). The changes in retail and the impact of the pandemic have clearly had the biggest impact on the retail picture in the city centre over the last few years.

When people look around they may think the number is higher but:

- 29 units that may appear vacant were, when reviewed, listed as under offer or let awaiting occupation.
- 20 units are being refurbished or redeveloped or are part of redevelopment sites, and so are not available. For example some of these include, units within the Clarendon Centre that have been cleared ahead of redevelopment, North Bailey House (former Argos) and 1-3 George Street which are both under construction.
- 4 were in 'meanwhile' short term use.

The City Centre Management team does not hold comparable data from before the redeveloped Westgate Centre was opened in 2017.

SB2 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown – Support for Cave Street small businesses**Question**

What support is the Council giving small businesses forced to relocate during the development works at Cave Street?

Written Response

As set out within the November report to Cabinet tenants have already been consulted on the intention to redevelop and the requirement of the Council to achieve vacant possession. Further engagement is underway including one to one discussion with tenants. The Council will continue to work with tenants to help them source alternative accommodation during redevelopment including sourcing specialist accommodation where required. This includes both accommodation within Council premises and/ or other commercial space. It should be noted however that there are a number of similar projects being undertaken and office space within the city is limited. Tenants will be given the opportunity to return to the building once the new units are completed if they wish.

SB3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown – Cave Street**Question**

How many of the businesses are planning to return to Cave Street after the works are complete? How does that affect the business plan used to justify the redevelopment?

Written Response

We do not know how many businesses intend to return at this point in time. The business plan does not rely on existing businesses returning.

This page is intentionally left blank