

To: Council
Date: 31 January 2022
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
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, Healthy Oxford

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – Mitigating Coronavirus Spread During 2022 Peak Tourist Season

Question

What measures is the City Council putting in place to mitigate against the spread of coronavirus during the 2022 peak tourist season? Have plans been adapted following the emergence of the Omicron variant?

Written Response

May I point the member to the detailed answer provided to a similar question to him for the November Council meeting. In addition to the system-wide approach and many measures detailed in the answer provided to the November Council, we will be:

- Delivering a Community Vaccination Champions programme, with health and

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – Mitigating Coronavirus Spread During 2022 Peak Tourist Season

	<p>community/voluntary sector partners - supported by £485,000 grant funding the Council has secured - to help encourage the take up of vaccine among those communities and groups that have been more hesitant in getting vaccinated to date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will also be extending our ongoing programme of support to rough sleepers in the city – using a separate £336,000 Protect and Vaccinate funding secured by the Council – to offer accommodation (even where individuals may not qualify under the normal homelessness funding arrangements) and vaccination. <p>As it has done throughout the pandemic the Council will respond in accordance with the advice and directions issued by the government and the Director of Public Health. Our ability to respond effectively and work with stakeholders and businesses to protect the public from coronavirus resulted in a national award from the government in 2021 and we anticipate that we will provide all the measures that will be required during the peak tourist season.</p> <p>Our plans have been adapted to the emergence of the Omicron variant, for example resuming weekend out of hours inspections of premises where COVID passes are required and we will amend our plans again with the announcement of the return to Plan A.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security and Housing the Homeless

DW1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Walcott – Afghan Refugee Rehousing

Question	Written Response
<p>How many Afghan refugees families have been rehoused in Oxford?</p>	<p>The City’s first Afghan family of six (through the ARAP scheme), were resettled in Oxford City on 22/12/2021. The 3 school aged children have already started school, the family are registered with their local GP and the family continue to be</p>

DW1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Walcott – Afghan Refugee Rehousing	
	<p>supported by our welfare reform team.</p> <p>Our 2nd ACRS household of 1 person is due to move into her accommodation 21/01/2022.</p> <p>In addition, our first family of 4 under the UKRS scheme have been approved and process is underway to aid their resettlement.</p> <p>An additional 7 properties are in the pipeline, although some will be later in the year.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>The slow response to rehoming families is disappointing as Oxford City Council made a promise to rehome ten refugee families, but has only rehomed three. There is mention of seven properties in the pipeline later in the year, but deliverance remains disappointing.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>We are disappointed that we have not been able to rehome as many Afghan refugees as we desire. It is really important that the Council gets those houses but unfortunately not enough people have come forward with homes, however we and officers are working tirelessly to make this happen. As a child of refugees it is important to me that people do have a home and social housing and I would like to see this happen faster, but unfortunately people have not come forward fast enough with adequate properties and we have not had the level of uptake we desire. We have been working with the universities and are still pushing and knocking on doors, but I would welcome any additional solutions from Members if they have any.</p>

DW2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Walcott – Impact of Retrofit Already Completed on Leaseholders	
<p>Question</p> <p>The government has indicated that leaseholders will not have to pay for replacement tower block cladding and other fire safety measures. How will this impact on leaseholders in City Council owned tower blocks where work has already been completed?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>There will not be any impact at all. The costs of the cladding works to the five Tower blocks have not been charged to leaseholders. Under the terms of their leases they are only responsible for the costs of repairs not improvements. The recladding of Evenlode and Windrush was funded from the Government's Remediation Programme. The recladding of Hockmore is being funded by the contractor Fortem.</p>

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

MR1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Rowley – Gender Diversity among Council Officers

Question

What workforce diversity data does the City Council routinely collect on its employees (e.g., male /female etc..) and in what format and frequency?

Written Response

Workforce diversity data is collected and reported internally every month.

Every year the Annual Workforce Equality Report, Gender Pay Gap Report, Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and Disability Pay Gap Report are presented to Scrutiny, Cabinet and then published.

The Workforce Equality Report reports on a range of protected characteristics including sex, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation and religious beliefs.

The data is examined for trends in the workforce profile. The data is also reviewed in the context of grades, employment types, recruitment, on-boarding and staff leavers.

MR2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Rowley – Pothole Demand and Funding Gap

Question

What is the estimated funding gap between County provided funding for pothole filling and need for road pothole repair in the City?

Written Response

Every year the Council submits a bid for funding for highways work identified in the city. This year the bid was £11.7m. The funding allocated was £960k (revenue £400k, capital £560k). All councils typically have a gap between the desired work and the available funds. Next year we expect to get a similar amount although that hasn't been confirmed yet. These sums do not include the Section 42plus works and budgets.

MR3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Rowley – Catering Services and Procurement of Catering Services Contracts

Question

Can the Cabinet Member provide details of the catering services it provides and contracts for catering services it procures?

Written Response

The Council has one live contract for the provision of catering services which was procured in 2021 for the Town Hall (café and events).

Elegant Cuisine

MR3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Rowley – Catering Services and Procurement of Catering Services Contracts

Contract start date : 01/11/2021

Contract length: 3 years with the option to extend for 2 further years.

MR4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Rowley – Policies when Contracting Catering Services

Question

When contracting catering services, does the Council have a policy on using providers who offer a significant number of plant-based options?

Written Response

There is no specific policy across the Council on using providers who offer a significant number of plant based options, however in the latest catering tender suppliers were asked to offer sustainable food choice and the following objectives were included:

- Minimise foods that have a negative social or environmental impact and promote foods and practices that have a positive impact
- Enhance consumer awareness
- Actively source locally grown produce and promote seasonal foods
- Review new sustainable food accreditation schemes and maintain existing sustainable food and animal welfare accreditations
- Minimise unsustainable products through the procurement process

There was no mention of including a significant number of plant based options, however for events, dialogue will take place between the customer and the supplier to tailor each individual booking.

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism

MC1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson – Broad Street Cycle Route

Question

When events are held on Broad Street, Oxford City’s major east-west cycle route is routinely blocked. Does the city council commit to ensure that this major

Written Response

In summer 2021, our popular and successful temporary civic space, “Broad Meadow”, demonstrated how Broad Street could be re-designed and repurposed so that many people could gather, dwell and attend events while still

MC1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson – Broad Street Cycle Route

cycle route is retained when granting permission for events on Broad Street in the future?

retaining an accessible through route for emergency vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists when the events were publicly funded.

Based on the success of Broad Meadow, the County Council is now committed to delivering public space enhancements in Broad Street in 2022, to help inform a future permanent scheme.

The City Council is actively contributing to the County’s design feasibility, engagement and implementation work through officer resource in the first half of 2022. We have already highlighted to the County the importance of events (for the cultural vitality of the city centre and as a revenue-generator for both councils) and accessible movement through Broad Street.

We believe it may be possible for the design of a public realm scheme on Broad Street in 2022 to work for all parties. However, it is also likely that compromises will be needed (whether events need to resize or relocate, or councils need to accept a reduction in revenue, or cyclists may need to walk their bikes through a stretch of St Michael’s Street if Broad Street is assured to be open 365 days a year).

As a Council we will treat each case on its merits and work hard with others to do all we can to ensure that cyclists can still ride the length of Broad Street when events take place there.

Supplementary Question

Will the City Council be willing to work with the County Council to fit events into the Broad Meadow spatial configuration so that a clear cycle route can be kept free or find alternative sites for events, as opposed to encouraging cyclists to dismount and walk through?

Verbal Response

It is definitely our aspiration to always do everything we can to ensure cyclists do not have to dismount but, as indicated in my answer to the initial question, each event is judged on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes a one-off event (e.g. the half-marathon, where it would be difficult to move the event somewhere else) is for a shorter period of time and so we would allow it. At this stage, we would not want to say that every event has to enable cycle access – although that would always be our desire. It is a questions of balancing the pros and cons of each event.

MC2 From Jarvis to Cllr Clarkson – The Grapes on George Street

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Question

With the news that the tenants of The Grapes on George Street have vacated the premises, are officers taking a proactive approach to looking for a new tenant and are they taking the opportunity to approach local SMEs and social enterprises to see if they are interested?

Written Response

The Council is not responsible for a new letting of The Grapes. The tenant is in administration. The lease continues and the guarantor of the tenant (who is the previous tenant) will be liable for the rent and for performing the tenant covenants. If the lease is disclaimed by the administrator, the guarantor will be required to take a new lease of the property (rather than an unlet building reverting to the Council). Assuming that the previous tenant does not choose to trade from the premises, it will market the lease to find a new tenant. Where we have had interested parties approach us we have given details of the administrator so that prospective tenants can contact them direct.

MC3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Future Provision of Public Toilets

Question

In May 2019, the Tourism Management Review Group, commissioned by the Scrutiny Committee, produced a report entitled 'Building a Vision for Tourism in Oxford'. Two recommendations concerned the availability of public toilets in the city centre :

Recommendation 15 : That the Council undertakes to revive the Community Toilet Scheme with local businesses, and that it is explicitly within the remit of the Council's new City Centre Management function.

Recommendation 16 : That the City Executive Board commissions an options report concerning the long term future provision of adequate public conveniences in the City Centre. This should be produced in consultation with Oxford Direct Services.

Written Response

A detailed update on the recommendations from the Tourism Management Review Group was provided to Scrutiny on 8 September 2021. A link to the report is available [here](#).

It is agreed that toilets are an important facility in the City Centre. The Community Toilet Scheme has been included as a suggestion in the City Centre Action Plan as part of the “Getting the Basics Right” workstream at page 101. The plan highlights that “Maintaining adequate public toilet provision helps to ensure that the city centre remains inclusive for all those who use it”.

If there is business interest and support for a community toilet scheme as part of the strategy consultation, it may be pursued as a project for the action plan.

In terms of recommendation 16 a members briefing was provided in October 2019 with a range of options reviewed. A budget to produce a specific report is not in place and whilst desirable this needs to be balanced against budget and resource constraints. Officers will continue to work closely with ODS colleagues and actively look at where opportunities for improvements to existing and new provision can

MC3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Future Provision of Public Toilets

Good, clean and publicly accessible toilets are very important if our city centre is to be a place that is welcoming and inclusive to visitors, people with young children and many people who need ready access to such facilities. We are currently consulting on our City Centre Strategy but there is only a passing reference to public toilets in the document. Google Maps shows nine locations, one of which has never existed and another of which is permanently closed. I have not checked how adequate signage to these facilities is.

At the last Council a trans rights motion was almost unanimously passed which contained the following clauses :

The Council notes :

2. That transgender and non-binary people may require specific support to access services without facing discrimination. All council services must be equipped to provide appropriate service and good customer care to suit transgender and non-binary people.

5. That despite many positive initiatives there is always more to do to ensure we are a genuinely supportive, inclusive and welcoming city. The council will seek to better support transgender and non-binary people to live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

Clearly the implications of this

be aligned with new developments across the city centre.

MC3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Future Provision of Public Toilets	
<p>need to be considered in any report concerning the long term future provision of toilets. Has such a report been commissioned and/or completed? If not — why? will it be? and will it include examination of the gender-neutral implications of our motion?</p>	
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Will Cllr Clarkson commit to including the concern about addressing gender inclusive toilets in the reviews taking place?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>Under the Equalities Act 2010, people are able to go to whichever toilet based on the gender they identify with. The main issue is for people who are non-binary as they are currently forced to make a decision, but I am aware of movements within some of the colleges to make all of their toilets non-binary. When we have a review to look at additional provision and working with the community toilets scheme it will be really important that we look at this.</p> <p><i>Cllr Aziz, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities added that she felt it was really important that these issues had been raised and are being taken very seriously by the Council. She agreed that it should be included in the Tourism Strategy.</i></p>

MC4 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Clarkson – Cancelled Bookings for Swimming Lessons	
<p>Question</p> <p>Is the Cabinet aware that many school children are missing swimming lessons as Fusion have cancelled bookings?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>We have been working hard with Fusion to help them to recruit more swimming teachers which is the reason that they are unable to offer a full range of swimming lessons currently.</p> <p>A combination of factors, in particular, the pandemic and Brexit have placed significant challenges on leisure centre staffing for certain roles such as swimming teachers across the leisure industry. This has been compounded by staffing challenges in sectors such as hospitality.</p> <p>Swimming instructors need to have a minimum Level 2 Award in Teaching Swimming, alongside a National Pool Lifeguarding Qualification. There is a cost for training and a significant time commitment involved. Furthermore, a qualified</p>

MC4 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Clarkson – Cancelled Bookings for Swimming Lessons

swimming teacher is required to maintain occupational competency by undertaking regular continuing professional development (CPD).

A summary of the areas being worked on includes:

1. Advertised both national and locally to recruit via agency, local community facilities and organisations, and social media
2. Contacted previous team members who may be interested in coming back to work
3. Offered free training for current Fusion team members to become qualified as a swim teacher (course cost £775)
4. Looking to offer a programme of training to non-employees to become qualified swim teachers (with little or no cost)
5. Multiple recruitment days, with more days planned – two swimming teachers have just been recruited
6. Training current Fusion team members to be “up-skilled” in Swim Teaching
7. Fusion are attending an Oxford-wide recruitment day in March 2022
8. Reviewing swim teacher’s pay to help with the recruitment process
9. We have put Fusion in contact with partners including the Job Centre, the Welfare Reform Team, Advice Centres and Job Clubs
10. We are continuing to work with both Universities but in short, they are also really struggling with recruitment but remain keen to work with us on options
11. We are linking and creating opportunities for employment through our Youth Ambition work. While this is looking positive, especially the link with the DWP work hub at Rose Hill, and through the Life Chances Project (the social impact bond initiative), this work will take a while to have an impact.
12. Fusion are interviewing three external applicants for their vacant Oxford Swimming and Children's Activity Coordinator (F/T).

MC4 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Clarkson – Cancelled Bookings for Swimming Lessons

	<p>This includes an increase in salary by c£9k to attract a wider range of applicants</p> <p>13. We are promoting all roles through our networks</p> <p>14. We have engaged Fusion on a potential partnership with other city stakeholders, to submit a funding proposal for the provision of services for a pilot Adult Traineeships programme</p> <p>15. We are investigating opportunities for engaging with volunteers</p> <p>16. Feasibility work is taking place to offer practical dry land sessions to schools, including principles of water safety. Alongside, identifying opportunity for water based provision that may safely be offered, whilst qualified recruitment to posts is progressed.</p> <p>There is a lot of national work underway. Recruitment was on the agenda of the recent Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (a subgroup led by the CEO of Community Leisure UK solely focussed on this challenge).</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Is the Council prepared to put any money towards paying for an enthusiastic person who wants to take on the job and train to become a swimming teacher, which would help our schools to not be put to cost and inconvenience from last minute cancellations of swimming lessons?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>We would be prepared to look sympathetically if enthusiastic people came forward. I have taken up the issue of last minute cancellations with Fusion and know that it has been very difficult with staff shortages and COVID-19, but I have said that the absolute priority has to be on giving the maximum amount of communication around cancellation.</p>

ET1 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Turner – Payment Only Permitted by Direct Debit

Question

The Age UK website, referring to the Equality Act, says 'Public bodies must consider the needs of people with protected characteristics, including older people, when planning or carrying out their public duties or services.'

Does the Cabinet Member agree that it is unreasonably restrictive to oblige residents, in particular older people, to use direct debit to pay for a service, in this case garden waste collection, with no exceptions permitted? And will the Cabinet Member consider making exceptions to the direct debit rule in response to a resident's reasonable request?

Written Response

The number of UK adults with a bank account is now estimated at 96%. The pandemic has forced many businesses to re-evaluate how they transact. This relates to the cost and speed of processing and taking cash and cheques, and the impact of the exchange of cash on COVID 19 infection rates. It has seen moves towards electronic means of payment. A large number of business have changed to processing by such means and no longer accept other methods of payment. The cost of processing a cheque or cash is significantly more than an electronic transaction. The City Council is no different in undertaking this evaluation. Staff are predominantly working from home and extensive home working is likely to continue, which makes cash handling difficult. In addition, the major impact of COVID means savings are necessary to balance the budget.

Importantly, however, for most city council services cash payments are still possible through Paypoints, which are available in many locations across the city. In respect of garden waste the issues are more challenging still with the added difficulty of trying to chase relatively small amounts of money being particularly costly (estimated at around £50k per annum) and time consuming, and therefore we will take payment only by direct debit. Whilst the City Council are always willing to consider individual circumstances, if this budget saving is to be delivered it is important those taking up this service switch to direct debit. The City Council also supports various advice centres who could assist someone without a bank account to obtain one. The alternative would be to find alternative savings in the budget.

TH1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Air Quality in Cowley/Temple Cowley	
<p>Question</p> <p>There has not been enough work pre LTN's to collect baseline data on traffic counts and pollution figures. There is little to no evidence of any traffic counts taking place during the trial, and there is limited data available on pollution/air quality filters.</p> <p>Many local people have asked me for this information, which to date I have been unable to obtain. Please can you release information/data from the air quality filters in Cowley/Temple Cowley.</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>When Oxfordshire County Council first announced its plans for the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, Oxford City Council acted quickly to install additional air quality monitors and encouraged the County Council to utilise data to help inform its evaluations of the schemes. The County Council is currently making a preliminary evaluation of the Cowley LTNs, which includes assessing the impact of LTNs on air quality, on displaced vehicle traffic and on active travel modes. The assessment will also try to estimate the specific contribution of the pandemic to air quality and traffic levels in these areas and during the period of interest, so that the impacts caused by LTNs alone can be isolated and properly quantified. The results of this evaluation are expected to be shared with everyone as soon as the report is published by the County Council, which is expected towards the end of February. The scheme's final evaluation – again being conducted by the County Council with input from the City Council, is expected to be out towards the back end of the summer.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Why are you not sharing the figures?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>You asked for data within a specific time period, and for that data to be robust we need to be able to present it to you with all of the context and analysis of it to ensure it is meaningful. You have asked for various data related to LTNs, but I am not entirely certain you have asked for air quality a data a lot of times, so do not want to give the impression that we are not supplying the data to you. I refer you back to the answer to your initial question which states you will receive the first set of data towards the end of February and the next set towards the back end of summer. Hopefully this provides you with the assurance that we will provide the data you need and ensure it can help you in the right way.</p>

TH2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hayes – The Seacourt Extension

<p>Question</p> <p>At the last Full Council meeting on 29 November 2021 the Cabinet Member agreed to provide the following information on 31 January 2022:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. on how many days was the extension open as a car park between 29 November 2021 and 31 January 2022 i.e. over the Christmas and post-Christmas sales period?2. on how many occasions during that time was it closed due to high water levels?3. what was the amount of revenue taken on those days when the extension was open in comparison to days when only the main car park was open? <p>Can that information now be provided?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The car park extension currently remains closed. The original car park is able to cope with current demand, which remains reduced due to the pandemic.</p> <p>This continues to be kept under review. The extension can be opened quickly once required.</p> <p>The extension has not been closed due to a flooding event to date.</p> <p>The answers are therefore:</p> <p>1: 0; 2: 0; and 3: N/A.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p><i>Cllr Gant asked the supplementary question on behalf of Cllr Wade.</i></p> <p>How is it possible that on the same day, Seacourt Car Park can be closed because there is no demand, but Westgate Car Park is closed because it is full?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>There is no excess demand for the park and ride, which is why it is still closed.</p>

TH3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – Domestic Air Pollution

<p>Question</p> <p>During the winter there is a high level of coal and wood burning by residents in houses and houseboats in North Oxford and throughout the wider city. What steps are the city council taking to</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Oxford City Council has a strong track record in taking action on air quality to protect the health of residents and visitors. In January 2021 we were the first Local Authority in the UK to establish its own local annual mean target for NO₂, the tightest in the country, set at 30ug/m³,</p>
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TH3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – Domestic Air Pollution

engage with residents, including houseboat residents, to combat air pollution from wood and coal burning stoves in the city?

which is 25% lower than the current UK legal limit value. This was developed as part of the city's new Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2025 and adopted by Council.

On 22 September 2021 the World Health Organisation (WHO) published new Global Air Quality Guidelines which recommends much stricter values for the legal limits of air pollutants. These new guidelines have been updated following the analysis of the last 15 years of scientific studies and latest data that now provide clear evidence of the damage that air pollution inflicts on human health at concentrations below the current legal values. On 23 September 2021 we wrote to Government requesting them to consider the development of new national air quality standards in line with this latest scientific evidence provided by WHO. We are at the moment still waiting for an official response from the Right Hon. George Eustice MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on this matter.

With regards to the specific issue of domestic air pollution - there is not a high level of coal and wood burning by residents in Oxford. Gas and electric remain the main forms of heating in the city although wood burning stoves have become more popular in recent years. As long as these stoves are DEFRA approved for smoke control areas and are installed by a competent person the Council cannot control their use.

[As we announced in March last year](#), Oxford City Council has been awarded an air quality DEFRA grant worth £45k to deliver a city-wide raising awareness campaign on wood and coal burning.

In late January 2022 we are holding a campaign workshop with our local partners Friends of the Earth and the Canal & River Trust, both of which have experience delivering similar schemes in some of the London boroughs (specifically focusing on wood emissions from canal boats). The workshop will be led by an experienced team of communication/design consultants, who will help us define the campaign's identity and campaign materials.

This campaign will be city-wide but it will have a number of targeted messages – some for boat

TH3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – Domestic Air Pollution

users, others for residents, current owners of wood stoves, but also for people who are at the moment considering to buy these technologies

The messages will highlight the negative impacts to human health of being exposed to wood and coal smoke emissions, and will also be focusing on sharing best practice: i.e. what people can do to minimise particulate emissions from these heating sources. It is planned that the campaign launches in February.

In the meantime, and from an operational perspective, it is also important to highlight that Oxford City Council officers respond to service requests regarding smoke pollution and will follow up where there appears to be a potential breach of smoke control legislation or a wood burner has not been installed in accordance with building regulations.

TH4 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – Air Pollution from Licensed Premises

Question

Due to the COVID pandemic, there has been an increased use of outside space for drinking and dining and a trend towards using firepits to provide warmth and ambience for customers at licensed premises. This is resulting in air pollution negatively impacting Oxford residents. What actions are the city council taking to reduce air pollution through fire burning from licensed premises?

Written Response

Overall, air pollution levels in the city have not been increasing over the last few years, rather we have seen a steady improvement linked to actions we have been taking, for example to help clean up our bus fleet. They then improved by a further 30% in 2020 due to the pandemic – which means that for the first time since we started monitoring air quality across the city all locations have registered air pollutant concentrations below the current legal limit values.

The COVID Secure Team has visited every pub in the city during the pandemic, with many premises being visited numerous times. There has only been one report of a firepit being used which was followed up and the use was ceased. As such there is no evidence that air pollution is being caused by fire burning from licensed premises.

Throughout the pandemic, both the City and County Councils have actively worked together towards the fast implementation of several active travel measures and opportunities to support

TH4 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – Air Pollution from Licensed Premises

businesses and to improve air quality in the city and which included for example pedestrianisation trials, allocation of road space for outdoor drinking and dining, free park and ride, etc. – and hence reducing road space for traffic – which continues to be the main source of harmful pollutants in the city.

At the moment traffic levels are at 80% of pre-pandemic times, and the transport sector still represents 68% of the local emissions of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) in the city. In February 2022 we will be introducing the ZEZ pilot to address dirty air arising from transportation, and we have a list of [30 air pollution measures](#) that we intend to implement in the city during the period 2021-2025 to support the ZEZ work and the decarbonisation of the domestic and transport sectors (e.g. introduction of e-cargo bikes at the covered market, working with County and bus operators on the ZEBRA scheme for the electrification of the city's entire bus fleet, etc.).

TH5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hayes – Licensed Taxi Cycle Rack Provision

Question

In Denmark taxis are required to carry a bike rack, and passengers can bring a bicycle on a taxi for a small fee to enable mix mode transportation. As the Taxi Licencing Authority, and in light of the city's commitment to active travel, is the City Council willing to introduce a similar requirement for hackney carriage and private hire vehicle operators it licences in the city?

Written Response

All Hackney Carriage Vehicles in Oxford are able to carry a single bicycle as they are all wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Larger Private Hire Vehicles (which are available in Oxford) are also able to accommodate a bicycle and this should be requested at the point of booking, to ensure a suitable vehicle arrives, in a similar way to booking a vehicle for carrying pushchairs or other large items.

As suitable provision for cyclists already exists within the taxi and private hire vehicle market in Oxford there is no need to introduce a further requirement for all vehicles to carry a bike rack. This is reflected in the statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards recently reissued by the government in 2020 which does not include this as a requirement.

TH6 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes – Turning Broad Street into a Vibrant and Successful Public Space

<p>Question</p> <p>In its current budget proposals, Oxfordshire County Council is recommending the removal of parking in Broad Street. As the authority responsible for public realm, will this Council play its full part in taking the opportunity to turn Broad Street into a vibrant and successful public space for all stakeholders, including fully maintaining active travel routes at all times?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council has provided an example of a beautiful car-free space in Broad Street, in the heart of the city centre. With Broad Meadow, we have piloted a wildflower meadow which has received overwhelming support from the majority of respondents in a consultation.</p> <p>The City Council has repeatedly called for the creation of a permanent whole-street car-free space which preserves cycling access, privately in meetings with colleagues at the County Council and publicly, such as on 17 November and via a motion to council unanimously passed (I amended the motion to provide for this and a timetable for action that includes further consultation and implementation of permanent pedestrianisation in time for the summer of 2022).</p> <p>Following the successful conclusion of the public consultation into the City Council’s “Broad Meadow” temporary project in 2021 (where 87% of more than 1,000 respondents reported it had had a positive impact on the city centre), the County Council has agreed to pick up the baton.</p> <p>The City Council has sought to have this treated as a joint project similar to that of Connecting Oxford and Zero Emission Zone and included within our shared project coordination/collaboration. We have offered officer resource at no additional cost to deliver design feasibility, engagement, and implementation, thereby helping to save the County Council time and money by using existing knowledge and experience.</p> <p>Now is the time for the County Council to implement the will of this Council as we expressed it through our motion.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Can I assume that Cllr Hayes endorses the comments made by Cllr Clarkson on MC1 given he has not answered this question himself?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I do endorse what Cllr Clarkson said, but it is a bit peculiar you are coming to this Council to ask this question because the County Council is responsible for the implementation of this scheme. We introduced Broad Meadow which shows what can happen on Broad Street – we saw over 100,000 people come to that space, it</p>

TH6 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes – Turning Broad Street into a Vibrant and Successful Public Space

was so successful that we extended it and the scheme overall won an Oxford Preservation Trust Award. The City Council through its officers, expertise and enthusiasm for a permanent pedestrian approach on Broad Street are willing to step up and help, but I would urge you to speak to the County Council Cabinet Member about the pedestrianisation of Broad Street and ask him to introduce this on a swift timescale and work with him in a collaborative fashion.

TH7 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – City Council Scientific Advisor

Question

Does the city council have scientific advisor?

Written Response

Indeed, the City Council does have a scientific adviser, [as announced in 2020](#), Professor Nick Eyre, Professor of Energy and Climate Policy, University of Oxford. Professor Eyre leads the Centre for Research into Energy Demand Solutions, which is the main UK university research programme on energy use. He is also a Co-Director of the Oxford Martin Programme on Integrating Renewable Energy. He has advised both Government and the United Nations on climate change and appropriate responses.

Professor Eyre has provided input and advice on the Council’s plan to reach Net Zero, in particular in the drafting of the Zero Carbon Oxford Roadmap and Action Plan, and the development of the “scenarios” section. This section provided the basis for the decarbonisation pathway for the city to identify near, medium and long-term actions. Professor Eyre’s advice also resulted in the Council’s updated definition of “Net Zero” as set out in the December 2021 Cabinet Paper. He advised that the priority actions should be arranged in a hierarchy – firstly through emissions reduction by the Council from its own activities; secondly ‘insetting’ (i.e. support for emissions reduction by others in Oxford); and only thirdly by offsetting actions outside the city, including the purchase of green gas credits.

TH8 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Pollution Levels on Hollow Way

Question

See photos attached at Annex 1.

What happens if pollution levels become consistently illegal on Hollow Way following the introduction of these measures. Because that's what started to happen in September and October.

Legal limit is 40. It was below on Hollow Way before the pandemic.

Written Response

I would like to thank Cllr Malik for his concern about air quality.

There is a strong seasonality effect on air pollution levels in the city. NO₂ emissions tend to be much lower from May to July, due to the warmer temperatures, and start constantly increasing from there onwards, reaching their peak during the months of December/January, where the cold and still weather often tends to favour poor dispersion and pollutant entrapment. This is the main reason why the current long term legal limit value for this pollutant appears under the form of an annual mean (so that this seasonality effect can be taken into account) and the main reason why air pollution monthly mean values should not be compared.

It is very difficult to make any robust assumptions of air quality levels in any given place just by comparing the results of two consecutive months – as the differences observed are much more likely to be attributed to weather than to anything else.

Another factor that needs to be taken into account is that the results available for comparison in Annex 1 correspond to the diffusion tube raw data from the lab – these datasets still need to be corrected for bias – in the same way we correct all of the raw data we receive. Bias represents the overall tendency of the diffusion tubes to under or over-read relative to the reference chemiluminescence analyser. These monitoring results are therefore still preliminary and as such should not be considered.

As detailed in the response to Question TH1, Oxfordshire County Council is making a preliminary evaluation of the Cowley LTNs, which includes assessing the impact of LTNs on air quality, on displaced vehicle traffic and on active travel modes. The assessment will also try to estimate the specific contribution of the pandemic to air quality and traffic levels in these areas - including Hollow Way - and during the period of interest, so that the impacts caused by LTNs alone can be isolated and properly

TH8 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Pollution Levels on Hollow Way	
	<p>quantified.</p> <p>As Cllr Malik will be aware we will also be introducing in February 2022 a ZEZ pilot for the city centre, with the view of extending it to other areas of the city within the next 12-18 months, which I hope he will be pleased to welcome as a further important step in our actions to improve air quality across the city.</p> <p>At the same time, we continue to work with the County Council and with bus operators to clean up the emissions from Oxford’s entire bus fleet, with a proposal having been recently submitted to Government under the ZEBRA scheme for the electrification of all the buses in the city, which would also positively impact areas with high density of bus routes, such as the Cowley Rd.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Could you tell us if the buses going through Queen Street will be all electric?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>We have a bid in to Government for the ZEBRA scheme, which you can see in my answer to your original question, in order to bring forward the funding to electrify the bus fleet. We already have up to 5 electric buses in the City which we managed to secure by working with the Government to bring that funding into the City and we have 150 Euro 6 engine buses which are increasingly running across the whole of the City Centre as part of the bus Low Emission Zone. We have already brought forward significant investment to clean up our bus fleet and we are aiming to bring more money in to go even further. If we do bring this money in, we would be the second city after Coventry to have an all-electric bus fleet. I agree that we need to have the cleanest possible air because we know that breathing in dirty air has harmful health impacts, but we need to ensure that when we present data around the impacts of measures on air pollution that we do it in the most evidence-led way.</p>

TH9 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Public Bicycle Pump Maintenance

TH9 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Public Bicycle Pump Maintenance

Question

The public bicycle pump on Cowley Road (opposite Tesco) has been broken for some time. How are these being maintained?

Written Response

While there is a routine inspection schedule for the bike pumps by ODS Streetscene team, to date the defective bike pump on Cowley Road hadn't previously been picked up, and so I'm grateful for the Councillor raising this to our attention.

Now we are aware, ODS will attend the site and make the repair as soon as possible.

TH10 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Implications of the Zero Emissions Zone Trial for Disabled People

Question

Whilst exemptions from the rules restricting the bringing of polluting vehicles into the ZEZ attach to the vehicle itself, exemptions for disabled people attach to the disabled person themselves by means of the Blue Badge — not to the vehicle in which they travel. This inevitably creates a difficulty. Our ZEZ trial recognises this and attempts to resolve it by allowing a Blue Badge holder to register two vehicles, 10 days in advance. However, many disabled people are either unable to drive or own no car, relying on a 'pool' of more than two friends to drive them about. Disabled visitors to the city will often not be able to satisfy the 10-day notice conditions.

In the long term, a greater proportion of vehicles will be zero emission, but in the closer future this will become a significantly more important issue once the ZEZ is extended.

How might we learn what the implications of the ZEZ trial have been for disabled people? Are

Written Response

I would like to thank Cllr Wolff for raising this specific issue, and also raising the wider point about how the ZEZ Pilot will help us to learn lessons before the scheme is scaled up to a larger area.

On the specific example, City Council and County Council officers have received a question along these lines from a member of the City Council's Inclusive Transport & Movement Focus Group. Officers have arrived at a proportionate adaptation and improvement of the back-office setup, so that any registered Blue Badge Holder (BBH) will be able to swap the details of the specific vehicle they will be travelling in straight away via a phone call to the County Council's Customer Service Centre.

The initial registration of a BBH on the County Council's Zero Emission Zone system will take up to 10 days, as this is an annual process which will enable officers to validate the 100% discount on charges. Both councils continue to work hard to publicise the start of the ZEZ Pilot and the process for applying for discounts and exemptions, so we hope through our publicity and wider networks that the message will reach visitors as well as residents in Oxford.

On the wider issue of learning from the ZEZ Pilot, we are actively seeking feedback on how the ZEZ Pilot is working from now on, including how we can improve things such as the ease of transfer of BBH details among vehicles, before

TH10 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Implications of the Zero Emissions Zone Trial for Disabled People

there mechanisms in prospect that might overcome this difficulty?

any enlargement of the ZEZ area. There will also be another widespread consultation on the plans for a wider zone in due course, before a formal decision is taken by councillors to go ahead.

TH11 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Pivot Power-led Oxford Energy Superhub

Question

Can the PH update Council on progress of the Pivot Power-led Oxford Energy Superhub that has benefitted from UK government Industrial Strategy Challenge Funding?

Written Response

Contracts are in place with Pivot Power, which is providing the grid connections to the Redbridge site, and the three Electric Vehicle Charging Operators – Tesla, Gamma and FastNed. The ESO hub is under construction, with solar canopies and a High Voltage substation now in situ. The remainder of the work is on course for completion by May 2022.

Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction

LA1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – Temple Cowley LTN Consultation Results

Question

It is clear from the consultation results that the majority of respondents from the Temple Cowley area have clearly rejected the LTN trial. Will Cllr Lubna Arshad show her support to residents and oppose the LTN trial in Temple Cowley?

If not – why not?

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

Cabinet Members answer questions on their portfolio not ward matters, so this question has been assigned to relevant portfolio holder which in this case is Cllr Hayes as the Cabinet Member for Transport.

Oxfordshire County Council implemented a low traffic neighbourhood in Temple Cowley in March 2021 under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO). We believe the consultation to which Cllr Malik refers is the “follow-up perception survey” which closed on 25 November 2021. We have made it very clear that we think it is important that the County Council listens to the views shared by residents during the ETRO period, not just because it is a legal obligation, but also because transport projects need to work in the here and now for

LA1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – Temple Cowley LTN Consultation Results

	<p>those directly affected by them.</p> <p>It is important to note that a clear majority of residents in the affected areas supported the initial introduction of the LTNs in Cowley, the latest survey results demonstrate a dissatisfaction with the current approach rather than an objection to the principle of LTNs.</p> <p>The proper course of action for the County Council in light of the November 2021 feedback is to adapt and improve the implementation of the Cowley LTNs, much as other local authorities have done in the months and years after delivering LTNs in their areas.</p> <p>The Leader and I have already written to the Leader of the County Council on 10 December 2021 in order to request a pause of further implementations of LTNs until wider, more strategic measures are introduced.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the decision was taken to proceed by the County Council without delay. However, as we stated in our response on 16 December to the decision it remains this Council's view that LTNs – implemented properly alongside strategic interventions that reduce traffic on Oxford's roads, and with fulsome public and stakeholder engagement – are a positive intervention in Oxford.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Why did you write to the County Council to defer the implementation of LTNs when the County Council and people of Oxford want LTNs?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>We campaigned during the election about LTNs being an effective method of traffic management and we support them in that sense. We have also passed motions at this Council saying that we believe that LTNs are just one tool in the toolbox and there are plenty of other tools that we can use. We are not ideological about LTNs, we just want to achieve our goals and LTNs are one way to get there – so when it is apparent to us that bus companies are concerned about the implementation of LTNs in East Oxford, including in my Ward, and they think that one possible impact could be a further delay of their buses, it is right that the City Council listens to the bus service providers and makes a decision based on that. The County Council has come to a different decision and the City Council will do all it can to make a success of the implementation of LTNs, but also to ensure that bus services are</p>

LA1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – Temple Cowley LTN Consultation Results	
	viable and continue to flow without disruption or delay because residents want good bus services.

LA2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – Bulky Item Refuse Charges	
Question	Written Response
Will this administration abolish the bulky item refuse charges in the next budget?	<p>The option of reducing or removing the charges for collection of bulky waste were considered and rejected as part of the Budget proposals preparation.</p> <p>This is because of the very significant cost impact on the Council of more than £100,000 per annum; and because data gathered by ODS suggests that while there has been a reduction in the number of bulky waste collections, there has not been an increase in fly tipping within the city, as it would appear more people are taking things to Redbridge Household Waste Recycling Centre themselves.</p> <p>Between April 2021 and mid-January 2022 there were 3563 bulky waste collections, involving 5,548 items collected. Those on qualifying benefits, paying at the discounted rate constituted c16% of total collections.</p> <p>Collections are likely to be around 5,000 for the full year generating an income of c£100,000. If the bulky waste charge were removed we could also expect an increase in the number of collection requests, which would add to operational costs.</p> <p>This programme is not yet one year in and it is working well operationally. We should at least allow a full year to complete and then review.</p>
Supplementary Question	Verbal Response
£100,000 in the whole Council budget is quite an insignificant figure – why won't the Council scrap the bulky item refuse charges?	While Cllr Malik appears to believe £100,000 is insignificant, I can only disagree. It's equivalent to the cost of us continuing to provide the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to some 210 households in Oxford. In circumstances of a very tight Council budget, that's why we don't propose to scrap the bulky item collection charge. Those on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme of course benefit from a 50% discount.

LA2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – Bulky Item Refuse Charges

However the actual costs of removal of the charge are almost certainly higher, as we could also expect an increase in the number of collection requests, which would add to ODS' operational costs.

LA3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Arshad – Tree Protection Orders

Question

When works are required to trees that are subject to Tree Protection Orders, ward Councillors are automatically notified via the weekly tree lists. Works to trees not subject to TPOs do not require such prior notification.

A primary purpose of Conservation Area Status is to protect views of the locality from the public realm, and trees frequently form a very significant element of the street view. There have been a couple of recent incidents of large trees in (or very close to) a Conservation Area being felled without notification, causing considerable public anger. Retrospectively, when challenged, it has been claimed that the trees in question were diseased and not subject to TPOs, but the public's sense of violation remains, and there is often scepticism about such claims, made after the event.

The presence of a TPO does not prevent work to, or even felling of, significant trees, but it does mean that the public (through its Councillors) is given prior notification, thus preserving the sense of the Council's accountability to the general public. Would the cabinet

Written Response

The question would appear to conflate two parts of the councils functions.

As a Local Planning Authority we publish works to trees that are subject to Tree Preservation Orders, and, works to trees in conservation areas on the weekly tree lists. It is not correct to say that works to trees that are not subject to TPOs do not require prior notification, because such notification is also required for works to trees in conservation areas. Hence they are also included on the weekly lists.

The question makes reference to a couple of incidents of large trees being felled in (or close to a) conservation area. It is not clear which incidents are being referred to specifically, but it is noted in the last sentence that reference is made to where this relates to public land. There has been a recent case where a street tree was removed by the council in Iffley Road which we presume is being referred to here. In any case it is important to note that the Council has the responsibility to maintain trees on public land and this is handled by Oxford direct Services. They are exempt from having to submit prior notification application for works to trees in conservation areas. Notwithstanding this, we understand that there was a Tree Management Policy in place with ODS which said that ward councillors would be notified of works being undertaken to trees on public land in advance of these works so that they would be notified. We are aware that such notification was undertaken with respect to the tree on the Iffley Road prior to its removal. However if this is no longer happening, then the tree management policy should be refreshed.

The suggestion that all mature trees in, or

LA3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Arshad – Tree Protection Orders	
<p>member support a proposal that all mature trees in, or viewable from, Conservation Areas and on public land should automatically be subject to TPOs?</p>	<p>viewable from, conservation areas and on public land should automatically be subject to a TPO would not be practical. Firstly all trees within conservation areas are protected where they have a trunk / stem diameter of greater than 75mm as measured at 1.5m from ground level. Therefore a TPO is unnecessary. Furthermore where they are on public land, there is an exemption for the local authority to have to provide prior notification. With respect to making a TPO for all mature trees viewable from a conservation area, this would be an onerous requirement as a judgement would need to be made in each case as to whether they were worthy of a TPO being made.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>The first and last paragraphs of the written response seem to contradict one another. Should Councillors have been notified of the intention to fell a tree on public land on the edge of a conservation area or not?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>The Planning team has confirmed that while works to trees in conservation areas require notification, there is an exemption where the trees are on public land being carried out by the responsible body. In this case ODS on the Council's behalf. Nevertheless, while there is no requirement for Councillors to be notified in advance, I would prefer that this did generally happen and I will relay this to ODS.</p>

LA4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – Crowdfunding for Tree Planting	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can local people crowdfund the planting of a tree in a specific location, if the land is owned by the Council?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council already works with community groups and other organisations to support tree-planting in the city. An example are the two Tiny Forests planted at Meadow Lane Nature Reserve and Foxwell Drive last year containing 600 trees each, where the Council provided the land and others sourced the funding.</p> <p>Residents can contribute towards the planting of a tree in their local area. The location of the tree will need to be agreed with the Council and ODS because checks such as utility searches and driver sight lines need to be carried out first to determine if a location is viable.</p> <p>The City Council has already planted 420 trees in the current financial year, and some 10,000</p>

LA4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – Crowdfunding for Tree Planting	
	<p>new trees on its green spaces in the last ten years. It should be noted there is now limited space left available to plant further multiple trees on open land in the city.</p> <p>In the coming years focus there will be a greater focus on planting along streets and highways to help tackle climate change and improve air quality and urban settings. Creating the pits for street trees is complex and expensive because of the need to create a viable root space in areas of tarmac/underground services etc. Council officers are currently examining a number of potential external sources of funding, and local crowdfunding would be very much welcomed.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Would you be willing to meet with community groups who are very enthusiastic about the idea of raising money to fund trees in their areas?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>Yes.</p>

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

AH1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hollingsworth – Introduction of Local Plan Policies to Protect Biodiversity	
<p>Question</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member include policies in the next review of the Local Plan to disincentivise the paving over of front gardens for car parking, in order to reduce damage to biodiversity and the drainage ability of gardens?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Under current national planning rules creating a parking space on a front garden, as long as permeable paving is used, is a Permitted Development Right. In other words, no planning permission from the local council is required in order to do it. This is highly regrettable, and officers have not been able to identify any precedents for an Article 4 Direction to remove or to limit that Permitted Development Right, which suggests such an attempt would be unsuccessful. More broadly the review of the Local Plan will allow further work on policies relating to both drainage and biodiversity, and these will form an important part of the new Plan, and officers will explore what options we have</p>

AH1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hollingsworth – Introduction of Local Plan Policies to Protect Biodiversity

available to us that will pass the required tests of soundness (NPPF para. 35) for a Local Plan policy.

AH2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hollingsworth – Next Local Plan Review

Question

When will the process of creating the next Local Plan review begin?

Written Response

Work on Local Plan 2040 began last year, following the adoption of our Local Development Scheme 2021-26 in March 2021 (the LDS sets out timescales for the preparation and revision of documents in Oxford City Council's Local Plan and other planning policy documents). An Early Stage Issues Consultation was carried in August and September via a survey delivered to all households in the city, and consultation on an Issues Paper carried out at the same time. The next round of full consultation is likely to be held in mid-2022.

AH3 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Next Local Plan Review ('Doughnut Economics')

Question

In response to a question from Green Councillors (July 2020) urging use of 'Doughnut Economics' in framing the next iteration of the Local Plan, Cllr Hollingsworth 'welcomed' the idea. Has any progress been made?

Written Response

Officers working on the Local Plan 2040 are aware of the conceptual framework of 'Doughnut Economics' and will aim to take it into account in the development of the policies in the Plan.

AH4 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Green Belt Protection

Question

A primary purpose of Green Belt is to prevent settlements merging into one another in order to protect their unique identity and

Written Response

Oxfordshire's five local planning authorities have worked collaboratively on the issue of Green Belt and continue to do so. In 2015 a joint Oxford Green Belt Study was produced and each of the

AH4 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Green Belt Protection

prevent urban sprawl. Already plans are in place to merge Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke with new development in the Green Belt, and the possibility has been recently reported of Oxford United building a new and larger stadium on Stratfield Brake, which sits in the crucial Water Eaton corridor between Oxford and Kidlington. I believe university developments are also being considered on North Oxford Golf Course immediately to the south of this. With Oxford Parkway station car park already occupying several acres to the east, and a new housing development planned for St Frideswides Farm to the north of Cutteslowe it is looking as if within a decade Kidlington will be completely connected to Oxford by building development, much of it including large and prominent buildings.

Although the land in question lies within Cherwell District, Oxford City must have a view about the threatened loss of this important undeveloped corridor. Does the portfolio holder agree that such developments represent a fundamental breach of Green Belt protection in a crucial inter-settlement corridor, and will the Council be making strong objections to the proposals?

districts and the City used this evidence to inform their own Local Plans.

Cherwell District Council used the joint study when developing their Local Plan, and all but one of sites in question were allocated for development in the Cherwell Local Plan ‘Partial Review to Meet Oxford’s Unmet Housing Need’ which was adopted by Cherwell District Council last year.

The exception is the proposed site for Oxford United’s new stadium at Stratfield Brake. It will be for Cherwell District Council to decide on any planning application received for that site, based on their own planning policies as well as national guidance. The City Council is likely to be consulted on any planning application, and will respond taking into account national and local planning policies in place at that time.

Supplementary Question

Is Cllr Hollingsworth content that neighbouring authorities make the decisions as to whether to merge the settlements across the Green Belt to Oxford City, with the City Council having no view of its own?

Verbal Response

This question has been quite a contentious matter over the past few years. Over a very prolonged period the sites in question have been subject to public debate and a formal planning process through the making of the revised Cherwell Local Plan, which the City Council made contributions to. Cherwell District Council then decided to allocate those sites for

AH4 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Green Belt Protection

development to meet Oxford’s unmet housing need – as did every other district council in Oxfordshire. The view this Council expressed was that, while it was right for other councils to identify sites to meet Oxford’s unmet housing need, it was up to those councils to identify which sites. You also asked about the Stratfield Brake site and the Council will submit views on that, but those views will be expressed by professional officers not politicians.

AH5 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Planning Legislation and Definitions in Relation to Climate Change and the Local Plan

Question

Our Local Plan defines 'brownfield land' as follows:

Both land and premises are included in this term, which refers to a site that has previously been used or developed and is not currently fully in use, although it may be partially occupied or utilised. It may also be vacant, derelict or contaminated. This excludes open spaces and land where the remains of previous use have blended into the landscape, or have been overtaken by nature conservation value or amenity use and cannot be regarded as requiring development.

A debate is arising in the wider county which has implications for Oxford City concerning solar farms (and by implication wind turbines). Much agricultural land, though not considered 'brownfield' in planning terms (presumably because it is 'open'), has been heavily treated with artificial fertilisers, pesticides etc for generations. It has suffered catastrophic loss of biodiversity

Written Response

The definitions of Brownfield Land are established at a national level, and are not subject to redefinition by local planning authorities. Agriculture is not currently considered to be development in that legal context. While I can see the point the question makes, I think there are very likely to be serious consequences from redefining agriculture as development that both the Councillor and I would profoundly regret. A similar issue might arise from allowing temporary structures on undeveloped land – not all temporary structures would be as beneficial as solar farms, and given the payback periods for any major investment in such a structure there might well be conflicts between the meaning of ‘temporary’ in a planning context – usually no more than five years – and the length of time that a solar farm or similar installation would need to exist to be a worthwhile investment. This is an issue best resolved by carefully considered amendments to national planning guidance.

AH5 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Planning Legislation and Definitions in Relation to Climate Change and the Local Plan

and its soil structure is severely damaged. Solar farms, which have an 'industrial' appearance, could be considered temporary structures which, apart from overshadowing the land beneath, arguably have far less impact on the environment — indeed may help land recover to some extent quite apart from their primary purpose of producing renewable energy. The debate is about the relative priority given to 'aesthetic appearance pleasing to humans' and 'value in preserving the viability of continuing human existence on the planet'. This debate also has implications for the retrofitting of heritage buildings and policies on Conservation Areas.

Does the portfolio holder consider that current planning legislation and its associated definitions are 'fit for purpose' in the context of climate change, and what discretion might the City Council have to embed new thinking when we come to review our Local Plan?

Supplementary Question

Looking at the City, does Cllr Hollingsworth foresee future policy clashes between the protection of heritage street scenes and the need for greater insulation and renewable energy generation and does he agree that the Council will eventually need to prioritise between the two?

Verbal Response

I do agree. There are conflicts and tensions, but not necessarily contradictions. Our guidance, based on the Energy Saving Trust's guidance, is to take a fabric first approach to energy conservation. What we encourage in conservation areas, where there is a lot of local guidance and national law on how conservation areas and heritage assets should be protected, is to try and take an approach to reduce the energy use of the building before adding measures such as solar panels. Each planning application has to be treated on its merits, but with the increasing urgency to shift towards reducing energy use I foresee that those tensions will come more to the fore and this

AH5 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Planning Legislation and Definitions in Relation to Climate Change and the Local Plan

Council will need to look at its guidance. I have already asked officers to update the technical advice note on this issue, which will be published later in the year. To emphasise the challenge, at national level the NPPF has very clear guidance on protecting heritage assets that may need to be changed to reflect national and local priorities.

AH6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Healthcare Centre in Summertown

Question

Summertown residents are suffering from insufficient healthcare facilities to meet the level of demand. What actions is the council taking to address the shortage of capacity of primary health care provision for North Oxford residents?

Written Response

As the Councillor will know from the briefings on Diamond Place that we have attended, the City Council is in discussion with both the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the two current GP practices in the Summertown area about the potential for Diamond Place to include a replacement building for the two current buildings, which are both poorly laid out for a modern GP practice and on leases that run out later this decade.

The CCG's Primary Care Estates Strategy 2020 – 2025, published in December 2020, identifies where plans for new facilities may need to be drawn up by the CCG's successor body, the Integrated Care System for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire (ICS-BOB). This includes Oxford and the Primary Care Network that includes the two Summertown practices and the two associated satellite facilities in Wolvercote and Kendall Crescent. This work needs to be done urgently, so that the City Council as the local planning authority can take into account when developing the Oxford Local Plan 2040, and so that Oxfordshire County Council as the co-ordinator of work on the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy can properly take into account the scale of investment needed in Summertown and across the County as a whole.

The lack of such detailed requirements from the CCG before now has been a concern for both the City Council and the other District Councils in

AH6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Healthcare Centre in Summertown

Oxfordshire. We welcome the new focus on this urgent priority from the NHS, and are working closely with the CCG (and will do so with its successor body from April onwards) to ensure that this work is fully and quickly carried out. As highlighted in the emerging Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS) Stage 1 reports, the NHS needs to identify what facilities it needs and where, so that planning authorities like Oxford can try to identify suitable locations for them in their Local Plans and the investment required identified in OXIS.

[for transparency I am a registered patient at one of the practices mentioned in this answer but do not regard that as an interest which would preclude me from answering the question]

Leader of the Council

SB1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Cowley LTN Consultation Results

Question

A recent Freedom of Information request relating to the Cowley LTN consultation results was published on social media on 23rd December 2021.

1537 respondents in total object to the LTN's (63.17%). Additionally 264 respondents also had Concerns (10.85%). Only 627 respondents were in support (25.77%). This shows a clear majority of respondents are not in favour of them.

After nearly a year of LTNs, the figures broken down into the three areas show that the people of Cowley & Oxford clearly do not want the LTN's & they have failed.

- 537 respondents against Temple Cowley LTNs

Written Response

I refer the councillors to the answer given by Cllr Hayes to his question on the same topic.

It remains this Council's view that LTNs – implemented properly alongside strategic interventions that reduce traffic on Oxford's roads and with proper public and stakeholder engagement – are a positive intervention in Oxford.

As Cllr Malik will be aware, Cllr Hayes and I wrote to the County Council to ask them to delay any implementation so that it was brought in alongside more strategic interventions that reduce traffic congestion on Oxford's roads, including improvements to bus services. This was set out in the letter from Cllr Hayes and me on 10 December and the follow up on 16 December.

SB1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Cowley LTN Consultation Results	
<p>(66.87%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 398 respondents against Florence Park LTNs (54%) • 602 respondents against Church Cowley (67.41%) <p>Considering this information, it is paramount that a democratic decision is made, considering what the results of the consultation. People do not want the LTN's.</p> <p>Would the leader of the Council write to the County Council and abolish the LTN trial in Cowley?</p> <p>If not – why not?</p>	
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Would you write to the County Council to abolish LTNs?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I have already written to the County Council on LTNs and ensuring they are part of a strategic transport response. I do not think we have anything to add to that letter.</p>

SB2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Oxford LTN Trial	
<p>Question</p> <p>Before the last May elections council Cllr Susan Brown was pictured and quoted that Labour will support the LTN trial. In December (?), Cllr Brown wrote to the County Council requesting the East Oxford LTN decision was deferred. Was she buying time until the next elections, trying to gain popularity to secure votes at the next election, or has she changed her mind about the LTN scheme?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Councillor notes that Cllr Hayes and I wrote to the County Council on its decision to press ahead with the East Oxford LTN against City Council advice, but he doesn't appear to have read what we said in those letters.</p> <p>On 10 December Cllr Hayes and I were clear that Oxford City Council strongly supports Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), but were concerned with implementation of the East Oxford LTNs in early 2022. We asked for this decision to be deferred.</p> <p>For LTNs to be truly successful, they need to be brought forward as part of an integrated and strategic approach to transport planning in our city, not piecemeal. Central to this should be bus prioritisation on key roads, which would support a shift to a faster and more efficient bus network, alongside enhanced cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Our shared plans, called</p>

SB2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Oxford LTN Trial	
	<p>Connecting Oxford, deliver this and need to be prioritised and delivered before additional LTNs.</p> <p>On 16 December, in response to the County Cabinet decision to proceed with the East Oxford LTN, I restated the Council's continued support for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods as important tools of traffic management, but reiterated it should be implemented alongside the broader set of measures to reduce traffic on Oxford's roads under the Connecting Oxford plans.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Why delay the implementation of the LTNs?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>As expressed previously by myself and Cllr Hayes, our concern is about the impact on bus services. We know that bus services have had considerable impact from COVID-19, which has led to some existing bus cuts. We have always argued that LTNs are one useful measure amongst many in terms of managing traffic in our City, but you need carrots and sticks when it comes to changing people's traffic habits and need to ensure buses, cyclists and pedestrians have the ability to move smoothly through the City. All of these things are important and cannot be implemented in isolation – and these are the points that were made in our letter to the County Council, which I recommend you read.</p>

SB3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Policy on Babies in the Council Chamber	
<p>Question</p> <p>There is a need to reduce the barriers for mothers with young infants and children to participate in elected office. With this in mind and given the recent situation in Parliament where a female MP was reprimanded for taking her young son into the chamber, what is Oxford City Council's policy for allowing councillors' babies into the council chamber for council meetings?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>I would like to assure the councillor that we will be delighted to welcome her baby into the council chamber and to attend council meetings. Both of my (now adult) daughters attended many meetings as babies here and were welcomed and have been many other babies (and children) who have been brought by their parents to meetings over the years. We all recognise that sometimes this is the best or only option for both parents and children, particularly for breastfeeding mothers. Let's hope that one day the House of Commons will catch up with what has been accepted practice in Labour Oxford City Council for at least 30 years.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

SB3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Policy on Babies in the Council Chamber

Given the Council's progressive approach, is it willing to formally document this informal policy on babies in the Council Chamber and consider looking at creating a formal parental leave policy that is applicable to all Councillors?

This policy on babies in the Council Chamber is not a new one and goes back to around the 1980s. I would need to take advice from the Head of Law and Governance, but I am unsure we are allowed to do what you suggest in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972. I would be happy to look at what we can do in terms of a parental leave policy as part of the Constitution review.

SB4 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment**Question**

At its meeting on 23 November 2021, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership was asked by the Scrutiny Panel to initiate a peer review of the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment. This document forms part of the suite of documents supporting the emerging Oxfordshire 2050 Plan, and sets out a variety of scenarios for projected growth in the county. The scenario adopted by councils is of absolutely crucial importance in planning the future of our county, and many stakeholders have asked for an independent review of this kind. The Partnership replied that it would not initiate such a review, partly in order to wait for a report on the results of the Regulation 18 part 2 consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan, partly because "The Future Oxfordshire Partnership cannot itself commission a peer review of the OGNA, as decision making powers relating to the Oxfordshire Plan lie with the city and district councils". The report on the consultation feedback was reported to be expected "in the New Year". Does the administration of this council

Written Response

The OGNA was produced for a partnership of all the councils in Oxfordshire to feed into the work to develop the Oxfordshire Plan 2050. The partner authorities were all involved in the development of that work and have confidence in it. We do not see that a peer review is required at this stage. It was published alongside the consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan in the Summer. As work continues on the Oxfordshire Plan partners will continue to work on the evidence base, supplementing and refining as appropriate to ensure that the next stage consultation document is informed and supported by the best available evidence. Eventually the entire evidence base will be before the Planning Inspector for the Oxfordshire Plan and will be charged with determining whether the policies of the plan are based on sound evidence.

The question refers to the consultation feedback on the Oxfordshire Plan; the intention is for a report on this to come to the City's Scrutiny Committee in February and Cabinet in March. At the same time it will go before the equivalent committees of the other Oxfordshire partners.

SB4 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment	
support a peer review of the OGNA?	
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Later this year the City Council will get a vote on the text of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 Regulation 19 to go out to consultation and this will include a vote on the level of growth assumed in that text. In the interests of openness and transparency, what possible objection could there be to an independent review of the OGNA?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I have nothing to add to the written response to the original question, which sets out the answer to your question exactly.</p>

SB5 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxfordshire Plan 2050	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the Leader confirm that the final text of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 to go to Regulation 19 consultation, including a decision on which of the growth scenarios in the OGNA to adopt, will be decided by a vote at each of the five planning authority councils in Oxfordshire? Can she also confirm the timescales for that document to come to Scrutiny, Cabinet and Full Council in the City? Can she also confirm that, as always, Scrutiny has full freedom to scrutinise the text and make recommendations to the City Cabinet, notwithstanding that the same process will be happening concurrently in the other councils?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>At each major stage of work on the Oxfordshire Plan all of the partner authorities will individually consider and approve draft plan documents (in a co-ordinated manner) as the decision makers in the process. Draft consultation documents will always be reported to Scrutiny Committee and the report and their recommendations go onto Cabinet, and at the final stage of work approval of Council will be required in addition.</p> <p>The timescales for future stages of work are currently under review however they will be set out in future reviews of the Local Development Scheme and advertised on the Forward Plan and Scrutiny Work Plan as is standard practice.</p> <p>In addition I would flag that there is an additional opportunity for Scrutiny Committee to be involved in the Oxfordshire Plan work at their February meeting, when a report on the latest consultation and related matters will be on the agenda.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Can you confirm that the role of Scrutiny on this matter will be carried out in the normal way and that the need to take decisions in a coordinated manner will not be</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 process will be a very difficult one to manage because we have to try and come up with one document which is agreed by a number of different councils. I would expect there to be an opportunity for Scrutiny</p>

SB5 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxfordshire Plan 2050

used as an excuse for not engaging with the Scrutiny function?

Committees in each of the councils to scrutinise the document and come up with recommendations. It will then be for the Cabinets in each of those councils to consider those recommendations and at some point and somehow we will have to reconcile any conflicting recommendations. This will not be a simple process, but we do want it to be as accountable and democratic as possible, which definitely involves Scrutiny.

SB6 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Multi Faith Room at Oxford Town Hall**Question**

Oxford is unique and historic city and Millions of visitors visit our beautiful city.

Oxford city council town hall where provides other facilities.

Would the Leader of the council agree with me the idea of having multi faith room at the town hall like the airports around UK?

Written Response

Options for a Faith Room have been looked into previously in liaison with some councillors. There was no permanent space available without losing essential office space or hireable rooms. The Town Hall is a lot smaller than an airport! While a permanent space was not found, the team will always allocate a suitable space for all hirers and their customers for this purpose on request. We also are able to provide prayer mats if required. For staff working within our SAC offices there is a Quiet Room that can be used for prayer.

Supplementary Question

Would the Leader consider forming a cross-party group to see if any space at the Town Hall could be made available for a Faith Room?

Verbal Response

I am not sure what this would achieve. We have looked into this in the past and do not believe that forming a group would change the space available in the Town Hall. The written response to your original question makes clear that we are always very keen to support anyone who requires a room and to make one available for them on a given day. The difficulty is making a room available permanently for that purpose. I understand the request for a Faith Room and we would always look sympathetically on the need to make a room available for someone if they needed it – it just may not be the same room all the time. There is a clear commitment to this from the Town Hall staff.

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