

To: Council
Date: 18 July 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 Cllr 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

Leader of the Council

SB1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Town Hall Portraits

Question

What is the status update on improving the diversity of the town hall portraits so that they are more reflective of the gender and ethnic diversity of Oxford?

Written Response

We have a working group in place developing options on how and where portraits can be added that are more representative of Oxford's diversity and cultural identity.

The Commercial Manager has been trying to obtain details on how other listed buildings have done this, in terms of the products used to hang and display the portraits. Unfortunately no information has been received to date, so

SB1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Town Hall Portraits	
	we have begun contacting companies who can design options for us. By the end of July we aim to have booked a company to design an option and then we can confirm timescales, dependent on availability.
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Can the Leader confirm that the preferred option and the intention is to have additional portraits representing the diversity of our City placed within the Council Chamber itself?</p> <p>I know that this has been discussed as a potential option and is subject to necessary requirements due to the Listed Building status of the Town Hall.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I can confirm that was part of our discussions and thank you very much for your contributions to those discussions. Disappointingly we have been unable to get engagement from those colleges we were hoping to learn from that have been through the process themselves; but we are hoping to make some progress soon.</p>

SB2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Woodstock Road corridor improvements	
<p>Question</p> <p>A report went to the recent meeting of the FOP discussing potential reallocation of funds between schemes within the Homes from Infrastructure strand of the growth deal. The report recommended removing the Woodstock road corridor project. This scheme was designed in co-production with local stakeholders and is intended to deliver significant enhancements in cycling and active travel infrastructure, not least to mitigate the failure to provide adequate active travel measures at the Oxford North scheme granted planning permission by this authority. Does the Leader support removing the Woodstock Road project from the Hfl list?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council strongly supports the enhancement of cycling and active travel in the city and in particular improvements to facilitate this on key arterial routes such as the Woodstock Road and Banbury Road. We support the work of the County Council to find a scheme that helps deliver improvements as part of a wider package of measures known as the Core Schemes (formerly Connecting Oxford). It is important that individual road schemes are designed in that wider strategic context where the impacts of other schemes, including demand management measures are fully considered. We will continue to work with the County Council and other partners to ensure that schemes meet our overall objectives. Over time projects and schemes for the funds available through the Growth Deal are reviewed to ensure that those included can progress at the required pace to meet broader funding commitments. The City Council has throughout the Growth Deal programme, sought to ensure that funds</p>

SB2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Woodstock Road corridor improvements

are distributed appropriately between all the Oxfordshire Districts and where funds need to be reallocated they are none-the-less retained within the city for schemes that will benefit residents where possible. It is likely that there will be further reviews of this programme in the coming months and years and we will continue to press for the inclusion of city schemes and would look to encourage the reincorporation of schemes to improve the Woodstock and Banbury Roads if appropriate.

SB3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Homes from Infrastructure programme schemes**Question**

A report went to the recent meeting of the FOP discussing potential reallocation of funds between schemes within the Homes from Infrastructure strand of the growth deal. The report states that 'discussions [between growth deal officers] and city officers have indicated there may be schemes presently outside of the Hfl programme which would merit consideration [for inclusion in the Hfl]'. What schemes are these?

Written Response

Over time projects and schemes for the funds available through the Growth Deal are reviewed to ensure that those included can progress at the required pace to meet broader funding commitments. The City Council has throughout the Growth Deal programme sought to ensure that funds are distributed appropriately between all the Oxfordshire Districts and where funds need to be reallocated they are none-the-less retained within the city for schemes that will benefit residents where possible. It is likely that there will be further reviews of this programme in the coming months and years and we will continue to press for the inclusion of city schemes like Osney Bridge and the reincorporation of schemes to improve the Woodstock and Banbury Roads alongside other public realm and active travel improvement schemes.

SB4 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Brown – Job Ratio

SB4 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Brown – Job Ratio**Question**

Does the council regard Oxford's current job density (ratio between jobs and working-age population) as acceptable? If not, does it seek to raise or lower the ratio, and for what reasons?

Written Response

Although we monitor job density as an economic indicator alongside others we don't take a view on it. Job density is defined as the number of jobs in an area divided by the resident population aged 16-64 in that area. For example, a job density of 1.0 would mean that there is one job for every resident aged 16-64. Cities, as places that offer employment, typically have higher job density than rural areas and are typically higher than regional and national averages. Oxford's job density dropped from 1.33 to 1.26 between 2019 and 2020. Cambridge's job density is 1.54. The City of London is 102.32. Oxford is the place of employment for a much larger area than its own boundaries, which is not surprising considering the rural nature of much of Oxfordshire and this will remain the case. Oxford is a highly sustainable location for employment, which enables people from a large geography to access jobs by a sustainable transport mode. Seeking to lower job density in Oxford, even supposing that were possible (which I do not believe it to be) would have serious economic, social and environmental consequences that would be highly undesirable.

Supplementary Question

You said in your answer that you thought there would be some profound negatives to a lower job ratio in Oxford. Supposing for a moment that we are 20 years on and the commercial/industrial sectors of Oxford have grown but that housing has outstripped that growth and that ratio has come down as a result – what do you see as the most important negatives of that?

Verbal Response

I think the main issue that I am concerned about is the idea of having people travelling to jobs on obscure business estates in the middle of nowhere which is the alternative – effectively business parks across the county. We have tried that model and what you see is that everyone has to get there by car, with very, very few exceptions. All of those business parks are entirely reliant on the private motor car.

Jobs in the city mean that people can walk there, cycle there, get there by public transport, park and ride – there are

SB4 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Brown – Job Ratio

all sorts of ways people can commute into cities. Cities are natural places of employment; cities are places where, across the country, you will see high levels of employment.

Oxfordshire is no different to that and as a relatively rural county, Oxford has higher levels of employment in the city compared to the rest of the county. That is not surprising – it is more sustainable. I think it is entirely sensible to want to make sure that there are jobs in the city that people can travel to; we also want to make sure that there are houses for people and that means that we will have to cooperate with our neighbouring authorities to make sure that suitable housing is being built as an extension to the city to increase the chances of people being able to get to work in the city by walking, cycling and public transport – as we are doing already.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, Deputy Leader

ET1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Turner – Cuts to Oxford City Council services

Question

Oxford City Council says it is facing ‘tough choices’ over the coming months, and it is possible some services may have to be cut. Could you tell us which services are going to be cut?

Written Response

The report to Cabinet on 13th July identifies a £5.5 million deficit in the Councils finance in 2026/27 in addition to pressures around falling income levels, increased inflation and interest rates and utility costs. It also highlights uncertainties especially around the Government’s Finance Settlement. Work has already commenced on updating the Medium Term Financial Plan for the impact of these changes and also to identify efficiencies, increased income and other proposals will assist in bridging the gap. Until this detailed work has been completed, it is far too early to say what some of those tough choices will be and

ET1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Turner – Cuts to Oxford City Council services

what proposals will need to be included to achieve a balanced 4 year plan in the Council's Consultation Budget when it is presented to Cabinet In December. We are also extremely unhappy at being placed in this position by the government, and will continue to lobby for a funding settlement that takes account of the Covid and inflationary pressures, which are beyond our control.

ET2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Turner – Number of empty Council owned units empty**Question**

Recently the Oxford Mail reported on empty units in the city centre. How many Council owned units in the City Centre are empty and what have the Council done so far to let?

Written Response

Excluding units under offer and those not available, there are 12 units vacant within the Council's control to let. This includes 5 within the Covered Market. Amongst these are units which only came back to us for re-letting in June and July, and 4 are the subject of current negotiation but are not yet under offer.

Additionally there are 10 vacant units under offer including 4 within the Covered Market. Officers are working with leasing agents and interested parties to secure occupiers. The Meanwhile in Oxfordshire project aimed to bring empty units back to use has also helped businesses occupy space within the Covered Market and the City Centre Action Plan, adopted by Cabinet in June, has a project focusing on empty units with a series of actions. This is available at Oxford City Centre Action Plan 2021 - 2030: Consultation Draft.

There are also units that the Council own in the city which although non-trading are not within the control of the Council to re-let. These remain subject to occupational leases with tenants.

ET3 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Turner – St Aldate's Chambers rental

ET3 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Turner – St Aldate’s Chambers rental	
<p>Question</p> <p>How much is the Council going to receive by renting St Aldate’s Chambers?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Once terms have been agreed with a suitable occupier and the available space is let, the MTFP predicts that the annual income estimated is £446,000, with savings from reduced premises costs of a further £184,000 per annum.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>It’s alright for us to balance the books and I think we as a Council have a responsibility to our taxpayers to provide services. Many citizens have complained about the closure of St Aldate’s. Saving all that money, what benefit will the citizens of Oxford have – do you propose in future freezing any Council Tax?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>This is about the office space as well as the customer services.</p> <p>We have a duty as an employer to make sure people have the right places to work. We have all discovered that home working can work more than it did a few years ago – it is better for the environment and better for saving money.</p> <p>In terms of customer services, co-location with the County library seems like a good idea to me – again, it uses space more efficiently and I don’t think it is any particular dis-benefit to people.</p> <p>Referring to a previous question on cuts to budget – the situation we are in, because of the double digit inflation, impact of COVID-19 and impact of austerity we are consistently expected to get by with far, far less money. So I think we have to be honest – some of this is about mitigating the impact of cuts that we don’t want to make, but if the Government sits on its hands we might be forced to make. I don’t know where that sort of decision would fall, I don’t want it to happen which is why we are being extremely energetic lobbying Government, making as much noise as we can with the Local Government Association. Local Government is not being treated fairly but the problem is that we, at a time where our costs are going through the roof and we are not being adequately compensated by Government, are having to look to save money on the back office.</p>

ET4 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Turner – Fair Tax Declaration pledges

Question

What progress has been made against the set of pledges Oxford City Council made in 2019 when it signed up to the Fair Tax Declaration?

Written Response

The Fair Tax Declaration require the Council to take the lead in the promotion of exemplary tax conduct; be that by ensuring contractors are paying their proper share of tax, or by refusing to go along with offshore tax dodging when buying land and property. This requirement includes :

- **excluding supplier businesses for proven tax offences** – provision has been made within the council's procurement documentation to exclude suppliers who have been found to be in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions
- **Ensuring IR35 is applied to contractors-** The Council uses the HMRC model to identify 'employees' as opposed to contractors and ensure income tax is applied as appropriate
- **Shunning the use of offshore vehicles** – the council does not use such vehicles to avoid corporation tax
- **Ensuring 'not for profit' structures are not being used inappropriately** – Due diligence and checks are undertaken on suppliers prior to entering into contract. The council is not aware of not for profit structures used by suppliers are being used inappropriately although clarity on this may be limited
- **Seeking clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers, be they UK based or overseas, and their group consolidated profit and loss position** – Where appropriate due diligence is undertaken on Group entities where financial cover is required at that level rather than subsidiary company.

ET4 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Turner – Fair Tax Declaration pledges	
	Such checks are undertaken by Council staff and are applied to our wholly owned companies Oxford Direct Services and OX Place.

ET5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Council advice services cuts	
Question Last budget cycle, cuts were proposed to the city’s advice services, but were eventually reinstated after a long campaign. Can you commit to not attempting to cut that budget again considering the city’s current difficult financial circumstances?	Written Response Labour councillors were glad to confirm funding for advice agencies after their representations – the councillor is aware the advice sector is a major priority for the administration. Clearly we cannot prejudge the outcome of this budget process – the budget will be set by full council, not by me as portfolio holder, but the amount of priority attached to the sector has not changed. Sadly this priority is not shared across the political spectrum: I would draw attention to the reductions to legal aid implemented in 2013 by the Coalition Government, which had a highly damaging effect on the advice sector, and most importantly upon the legal representation of vulnerable groups.
Supplementary Questions Will you be using your influence as the portfolio holder to ensure that the cuts to advice centres that were proposed in the previous round of budgeting, are not once again proposed in this round of budgeting?	Verbal Response I will use my influence as portfolio holder to try to come up with a budget which balances and tries to make Oxford a fairer place. We are appalled at levels of inequality in our City and want to do what we can to help. This is why long after other authorities made cuts to advice centres we have tried to continue; but at the same time we have our statutory services that we need to continue providing and it is going to be a really difficult budget round. Rather than picking out one sensitive issue to ask a question about to put on a focus leaflet, let’s work together to get a fairer settlement from Government.

ET6 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Use of charitable sector to provide non-statutory services

Question

In view of the difficult budget circumstances, will you look to make more use of the charitable sector to provide non-statutory services currently run in-house, with the city acting as a funding backstop rather than the primary source of funding? If yes, which service areas do you believe are best suited to this style of provision?

Written Response

We are always on the lookout for ways to lever in extra funding to support our services, and are open to different ways of providing services, although I would stress that we are not at all keen on outsourcing services to for-profit providers, and we have had particularly good experiences with in-sourcing work. While we are always interested in co-operating with charities, they do not run on thin air, and the premise of the question seems disturbingly similar to that of the failed Big Society experiment of the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition government.

Supplementary Question

Do you agree that trying to get services onto a donor-supported base is the least worst option? Isn't that something that the Council should be using its leverage to achieve sooner rather than later?

Verbal Response

The initial question was about charitable organisations and the supplementary is asking whether we can leverage in funds from donors. The premise there is that sometimes third parties will be more successful at leveraging in funds than Councils. But I am aware of councils leveraging funds from the public to contribute. But either way we have had the Oxford Lottery come forward as a way of doing these things. We work closely, particularly in the field of homelessness, where organisations work in close partnership and leverage in support from elsewhere. I would want to distinguish between outsourcing services to other providers and working in partnership with others towards a shared goal – which we have a really good record of doing.

CM1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Munkonge – Protecting river users	
<p>Question</p> <p>What action is being taken this summer to protect river users, particularly swimmers, from the dangers highlighted in the recent report to Cabinet from the Waterways Coordinator?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Wild Water Code outlines risks that can be associated with wild swimming, and posters have been put up across a number of sites that is known to receive a high footfall of river users during the summer months, where possible. Social media posts are being produced over the summer to further support this, and the council participated in the national Drowning Prevention Week campaign last month.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Do you think social media and posters are adequate in highlighting the dangers of the waterways that were highlighted in the Waterways Coordinator’s report?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>Social media and posters are just one part of the response.</p>

CM2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Munkonge – Waterways report safety issues timeline	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the cabinet member set out a timeline for dealing with the safety issues highlighted in the recent report to Cabinet from the Waterways Coordinator?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Officers are working to provide a clear timeline to address waterways related safety issues for summer 2023. Members will note this has slipped since the update provided to Scrutiny in June, given the scale of work involved.</p>

CM3 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Munkonge – Repairs to Tumbling Bay	
<p>Question</p> <p>How and when will the council engage with the local community about the different options for repairs to Tumbling Bay and what budget has been allocated for this work?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>An update on Tumbling Bay was given to interested members of the community in June 2022, at the West Oxford Community Centre. Options are currently being review by officers, and we are aiming to be able to hold a similar style session in the community centre in the</p>

CM3 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Munkonge – Repairs to Tumbling Bay	
	coming weeks to outline proposals and receive feedback.
Supplementary Question At the recent meeting in June I understand officers committed to clearing reeds from the upper part of Tumbling Bay and a third of the reeds from the lower part of Tumbling Bay. Will you take advantage of the current very low water levels to ensure this work is done before the summer?	Verbal Response The work is being done this week.

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture

SA1 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Aziz – Town Hall public community hub	
Question I understand the Council has put in planning consent for a space within the Town Hall for a public community hub. This is highly commendable. Could part of this new public space be set aside for climate related action, particularly retrofitting houses and energy saving tips, tech and apps?	Written Response We do not have an application for a public community hub.
Supplementary Question I apologise for misunderstanding what was proposed, but could we think about considering that as an option for the future?	Verbal Response As stated, we do not have an application in at the moment for the public community hub, but happy to discuss it further with you, then speak to officers and come back to you.

SA2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Aziz – Standingford House development	
Question Many of the tenants and groups based at East Oxford Community Centre - including East Oxford Community Association, African & African Caribbean Kultural Heritage Initiative, The Oxford Action Resource Centre, BK.LUWO, Fusion Arts and Oxfordshire Chinese	Written Response We understand this is a challenging period for the groups. As you know, the Council has been developing the plans for East Oxford Community Centre and Standingford House, in consultation with the community, for several years now.

SA2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Aziz – Standingford House development

Community and Advice Centre - have repeatedly expressed concerns about the decant from the Centre and office space at Standingford House as plans to redevelop both sites begin. Concerns expressed by these groups have included: inadequate provision of alternative space for groups during the period of the redevelopment; delays in alternative space being available; reduction in size of alternative space on what had initially been offered; lack of guarantee that groups' possessions will be stored safely and for a suitable period; a failure to meaningfully consult with groups. These concerns have been echoed and communicated to the Council by Councillors representing wards in East Oxford.

Will the portfolio holder agree to a meeting with the groups based at the Community Centre and East Oxford Councillors to look at potential solutions to the problems facing the groups during the redevelopment?

We gave formal notice of the decant over nine months ago. These are ageing facilities that urgently need investment to secure them for future generations.

We have been in regular communication with groups throughout this project and our records show a different account on some of the key points that have been raised by the groups. As part of the consultation and engagement process we have had 1-1 meetings with the groups, have provided weekly drop-in sessions and regular phone / email dialogue.

When we began discussing vacating the building over nine months ago, we made clear to the groups that they were in the best position to find their own temporary homes as they would know best their own requirements, likes/dislikes, and affordability.

We do not normally rehome site tenants and have no legal obligation to during redevelopment. However, for EOCC we agreed to see if we could find an alternative, being very clear that an alternative shared venue would require many compromises. Groups have also been able to use our property agent at no cost to find alternative sites, although this offer has not been taken up.

The Templars Square option is a compromise to meet the affordability, location and shared space requests from tenants. The Oxford Chinese Advice Centre are the only group to take up the Council's offer at Templars Square. Despite repeated attempts from our team to finalise arrangements with tenants, it has been difficult to gain timely responses.

On the storage issue, all groups were informed in August 2021 that they would need to move their belongings out this spring. In April this year, it was clear that groups were nevertheless unprepared, and we arranged to move and

SA2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Aziz – Standingford House development	
	temporarily store belongings, the council has also paid for this.
Supplementary Question The response given does not respond to the question itself. Will the portfolio holder agree to a meeting with the groups based at the Community Centre and East Oxford Councillors to look at potential solutions to the problems facing the groups during the redevelopment?	Verbal Response As you're aware, as a portfolio holder we have been giving regular detailed updates to all Members on this situation. Meetings, discussion and dialogue continues and at this point in time we are not looking to organise a meeting in the way that you've asked right now. But we can look into this later on after the summer and get back to you.

SA3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – Updating Council policies for trans and non-binary inclusion	
Question What progress has been made on updating council policies following the motion on trans and non-binary inclusion passed at the November 2021 full council?	Written Response Over this period the Council has been working on developing and has published its EDI Strategy, which shows an absolute commitment to EDI. We now have an EDI steering group that includes officers from each service area and have implemented EIA training to senior managers that is now being cascaded through teams. We are currently recruiting an EDI Lead and a new post in the People team to provide the capacity that will enable further work on EDI, including the actions from the motion to be worked through. In relation to the small gestures (point 5 in the motion) an increasing number of council staff have chosen to add pronouns to email signatures.
Supplementary Question Does the EDI Steering Group mentioned in the answer have representatives from the communities it is working on behalf of? If it doesn't, how are you engaging members of these communities in the work that steering group is doing?	Verbal Response As we know this is a very challenging time for trans people. I will need double check if there is a representative from the community on the EDI steering group, but I would like to assure you that we continue to ensure that our steering group is as representative and diverse as possible. To be factually clear and

SA3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – Updating Council policies for trans and non-binary inclusion

accurate I will go away and check and get back to you.

SA4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – East Oxford Community Centre – gender neutral toilet provision

Question

Will the redevelopment of Cave Street and East Oxford Community Centre include gender neutral toilet provision?

Written Response

Yes, gender-neutral toilet provision is part of the plans at the new build element of East Oxford Community Centre.

Supplementary Question

Can you clarify whether there will also be gender neutral toilets at the Cave Street redevelopment?

Verbal Response

I will check that and get back to you.

Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

DW1 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Walcott – Modern slavery definition

Question

How does the Council define modern slavery and what work does it do to help victims based in Oxford?

Written Response

Modern slavery can take many forms including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and removal of organs. Council officers work closely with colleagues in the Oxford Community Safety Partnership to address slavery and exploitation, and we are members of the OSCB Child Exploitation Subgroup. The Council have recently employed the Anti-Slavery Coordinator within the Community Safety Service to coordinate activities to tackle modern slavery, focussing on support for adult victims.

DW2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Walcott – Rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people

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Question

Given the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act is now in force, how is the City Council planning to ensure the rights of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are maintained?

Written Response

Oxfordshire County Council's Gypsy and Traveller's Service have primary responsibility for supporting and engagement with Gypsy and Traveller communities. They work closely with the police and Oxford City Council to engage and support families who have arrived in the city.

The Cabinet Member meets regularly with the Local Police Commander and issues such as proportionality in the use of police powers is discussed. Where encampments set down on Oxford City Council land, our officers are often first on scene and engage with the families to understand their needs and support them in accessing the services they need. This can be to access medical services or attend church services for their community.

Supplementary Question

Since the Policing Bill has become the Policing Act and effectively criminalised Gypsy, Roma and Traveller traditional way of life, has anything changed in the Council's approach to this?

Verbal Response

With the passing of the Act we are working a lot more intentionally to really understand what more we can do to best support our communities living within the City. We understand that the Policing Bill actually involves some of the over-policing and part of our conversations are around mitigating that and ensuring that everyone in our City can feel included and is able to thrive. Happy to bring that back to another Council meeting if that would be of benefit or we can catch-up offline.

LS1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Smith – Number of Afghan Refugee families housed to date

Question

How many Afghan Refugee families have been housed to date? Council was told on the 31st January, an additional 7 properties are in pipeline. Has this been achieved?

Written Response

To date we have resettled 6 Afghan families, with 1 other family scheduled to arrive 19/07/22. We have secured 2 additional properties which are ready and waiting for Afghan families but we are currently awaiting suitable family matches from the Home Office. To meet our full current commitment we will need 1 further property to meet our commitment of up to 10 families.

LS2 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith – Number of rough sleepers in Oxford

Question

What is the latest number of rough sleepers in Oxford? How does this compare to previous years?

Written Response

At the end of June there were 40 people rough sleeping in Oxford. This number includes four individuals who have accommodation, and twelve with no recourse to public funds, who cannot access accommodation commissioned by the City Council. The number of rough sleepers for the same period in previous years is as follows:

2021 – 24

2020 – No data due to Covid but was 23 in for the second quarter

2019 – 48

During 2020 to early 2022 additional accommodation was available as part of the “Everyone In” initiative which reduced the number of people rough sleeping.

LS3 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith – Social housing repairs and improvement wait times

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Question

What are the average wait times for residents who report social housing repairs and improvements? How does this compare with pre-Covid wait times? What is the council doing to manage any backlog?

Written Response

The current average completion time for responsive repairs for all priorities, is 10 days from an order being raised to it being completed. In September 2020, during Covid this was 16 days, an improvement of 6 days from pre-covid.

For minor works the current completion time is 15 days and in September 2020 this was 23 days an improvement of 8 days on pre-covid.

There are only minor backlogs in specific trade areas which are fencing with 199 open orders – supply chain issues and budget restraints have affected this work area. Currently this is being assessed for alternative options but critical works are being done (where there are Health & Safety concerns)

The other two areas are Decorating with 125 orders and Plastering with 238 orders. These are trades which suffered mostly with access issues during covid as they are the most invasive work types. With resourcing and work planning these have both improved from previous levels (Decorating 210 orders and Plastering 375 orders) and ODS continue to plan works to reduce the number of open orders in these areas.

Supplementary Question

Can you share the waiting times for larger scale jobs, such as ramps for accessibility – so improvements rather than repairs?

Verbal Response

I don't have those figures to hand, but if you'd like to clarify what figures you would like after the meeting then I will certainly obtain those for you.

LS4 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Smith – HMO enforcement with Oxford Brookes

Question

How does the HMO enforcement teamwork with Oxford Brookes

Written Response

The Council receive a list of properties occupied by Oxford Brookes Students to

LS4 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Smith – HMO enforcement with Oxford Brookes

University, to verify privately rented property, is not an unlicensed student HMO?

verify the student exemption for Council Tax. The list has been used in the past (pre-covid) as proactive intelligence to identify unlicensed properties. Oxford Brookes Lettings (leasing scheme) are part of our agent forum and check a property is licensed or will apply for a licence. Oxford Brookes Advice Centre is aware of the scheme and makes referrals for unlicensed properties. We also work with Oxford Brookes Community Engagement team if they have concerns about unlicensed properties.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

AH1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hollingsworth – Iffley Meadow

Question

Is the Council still planning to build houses on Iffley Meadow?

Written Response

The site at Meadow Lane is allocated for housing development in the Local Plan adopted by this Council in June 2020. All sites allocated in that Plan are expected to come forward for development during the Local Plan period. This site has subsequently been purchased by the City Council's wholly owned housing company and I therefore fully expect that the City Council's housing company will build houses on the site.

Supplementary Question

Wouldn't keeping those green spaces make Oxford better?

Verbal Response

To reiterate the two points made in the original answer, when the Local Plan is made the housing need for the city is one of the required inputs into that plan – there is a requirement to meet that housing need, laid down in law. The City Council then identifies as many sites as it can to meet that need; the owner of this site proposed it for housing development and after two full rounds of consultation,

AH1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hollingsworth – Iffley Meadow

	<p>detailed assessment by our own City Council officers and the public enquiry, it was included as a housing site in the Local Plan. Those decisions are always difficult, it is a question of balancing the needs of past generations, current generations and future generations. The then-owners of the site then put it up for sale when it was allocated as a site for housing, it was acquired by the City Council's wholly owned housing company and an appropriate planning application will be brought forward in, I hope, the very near future.</p>
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AH2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hollingsworth – Renaming of Council housing company

Question	Written Response
<p>Why is the Council renaming the housing company?</p>	<p>The City Council's housing company was set up to develop and build homes, and then to rent them and to sell them, either outright or as shared ownership homes in competition with other developers. The name originally given to the company at establishment was descriptive, but wasn't designed to maximise the potential for marketing to potential house buyers. The new branding as OXPlace does so.</p> <p>The renaming and branding to OXPlace allows the company to stand out against other developers in a competitive market. The aim is also to communicate the values of the company to potential purchasers but also residents of the rented homes we build. We are committed to building affordable homes and helping the Council to deliver its carbon zero targets.</p>

AH3 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Hollingsworth – Affordable homes target

AH3 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Hollingsworth – Affordable homes target**Question**

Given the Council only delivered 241 affordable houses in the first year of a five year plan, how does the portfolio holder envisage the Council will achieve its own target of 2150 affordable homes in the next four years?

Written Response

The City Council has a detailed programme for new affordable housing totalling over 2,000 homes over the next four years. These are managed and tracked by officers, and used to inform budget setting and performance monitoring measures. Schemes are brought forward through the planning process at the appropriate time, and Council schemes (concerning land or purchases in the HRA) seek approvals from Cabinet. The City Council's own target is over 1,000 affordable homes over that period, with the remainder being delivered by Housing Associations. The detailed pipeline of projects can be found in the housing company's Business Plan, which is reported on the confidential agendas of the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group and the Companies Scrutiny Panel.

AH4 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Hollingsworth – Innovative ways for strong environmental performance in new building developments**Question**

Can the Council look at more innovative ways to facilitate stronger environmental performance with all its new building developments? This could include creating more shared facilities such as kitchens and showers, rainwater collection, green roofs, solar panels, communal heating, and electric bike storage/charging?

Written Response

The City Council and its housing company continue to look at all options for improving environmental performance in its developments. The Local Plan already sets one of the highest environmental performance standards in the country, substantially above building regulation standards, and both the Council and the housing company have, and will continue to, bring forward schemes that go beyond even that standard wherever possible.

We are currently developing options for policies of the next Local Plan covering the period to 2040. There will be a number of policy options on this theme and we will be seeking public and stakeholder feedback on those in the Autumn before selecting from them to

AH4 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Hollingsworth – Innovative ways for strong environmental performance in new building developments

draft the Local Plan.

AH5 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hollingsworth – Cost of OCHL rebrand

Question

How much did the rebrand of OCHL to Ox Place cost?

Written Response

There was no cost to the Council. The benefits of improved marketing will help to increase profits for the housing company and therefore dividends to the Council.

The budget for the marketing campaign has been included within the Company's Business Plan and is capitalised across the programme. It is essential to the success of Shared Ownership and Open Market Sales that the company has a strong identity that is recognised for the core values that the Company shares with the Shareholder

Supplementary Question

How much did the rebrand cost OCHL?

Verbal Response

The cost is nil, because there was a marketing budget assigned, so the company would have spent the same amount of money anyway. The view of the company, and I support that view, is that it is a more effective way of spelling it. OCHL, frankly, doesn't reach out and grab customers and of course the purpose of the company is to sell both at market rate but also Shared Ownership in a competitive market where there's other people doing the same thing. OX Place is a better way that is likely to increase the speed of sales.

AH6 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Homes from Infrastructure: Osney Mead-Oxpens Bridge

Question

As part of the early stages of the allocation of funds within the Homes from Infrastructure strand of the Growth Deal, 6m was "passported" to the City Council

Written Response

As outlined in some detail in the report to Cabinet in March of this year, the City Council acts as the delivery agent for Oxfordshire County Council on this

AH6 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Homes from Infrastructure: Osney Mead-Oxpens Bridge

for developing plans for a foot and cycle bridge across the Thames to link Osney Mead into the Oxpens development. At a recent meeting of the FOP the Leader requested the bridge project be included in any review of allocations of funds to schemes within the Hfl. However, funds from this source have to be “spent” by March 2023, and there appear to be no plans or budget for completing the bridge project. Can the Leader tell us:

How was the initial 6m allocated?

Where are the plans and budget?

What is the justification for building a bridge at all so close to an existing facility, the entirely serviceable Gasworks Railway Bridge between Grandpont Nature Reserve and the River Garden?

scheme. The County Council undertook to deliver the bridge as part of its commitments to the government in the Oxfordshire Growth Deal. The funding package was set by the County Council. In March 2020 the City Council agreed to take on the role of progressing the bridge through the design, planning and delivery stages on behalf of the County Council. In the report in March 2022 it was clear that there was a funding gap but it was agreed with the County Council that up to £450k would be spent to complete the design and secure planning permission whilst work was undertaken to seek to bridge the funding gap. The reports to Cabinet in 2022 outlined the terms of that arrangement. The report also explains the progress made to date, and what further steps are required to complete the planning and design stages for the bridge.

The location of the bridge is designed to create as direct link a link as possible for cyclists and pedestrians from Osney Mead to the city centre, the railway station and beyond while avoiding the Botley Road. The existing Gasworks Railway Bridge is a far from direct link, and would require substantial works to create a compliant bridge for cycling and compliant pathways and ramps which would be highly disruptive to areas on both sides of the river.

Supplementary Question

Can we really justify, at best case, a 4 minute reduction in journey time for £6 million? Surely there must be better places in Oxford to make use of that funding.

Verbal Response

As numerous reports make clear, this is a County Council project which the City Council is delivering, so it is not for us to decide where it should go in the strategic sense, but it is in our Local Plan as a requirement of the Local Plan to enable to development of the Osney Mead site. I would challenge your times, the railway bridge requires very substantial infrastructure works to bring it up to standard, which would be required anyway. The requirement is for a

AH6 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Homes from Infrastructure: Osney Mead-Oxpens Bridge

particular crossing which could provide the potential for a wet weather route between the two sites which the current one would not. If the routes were developed up to the appropriate standard there would be a greater impact on the Grandpont Nature Reserve than with the proposed bridge and an impact potentially on the land at the Meadows in Trust. For all of those reasons I think that the project outlined and given to us to deliver is a good one.

AH7 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Plan and Jobs

Question

Do you believe that increasing the number of people housed per job in the city (i.e., lowering the city's job density) is important to lowering the typical cost of living in Oxford?

Written Response

No. This would be a grossly simplistic measure, which would ignore the realities of the economic reach of the city and the broader Oxfordshire area, the regional housing markets and travel to work area for Oxford, and which if pursued would be likely to have significant negative impacts on the city and in particular the county that surrounds us. Oxford is a highly sustainable location for a range of uses and that includes employment, people from the wider county and beyond can access jobs by sustainable transport modes which would not be so possible in many other parts of the economic area. In particular, attempting to disperse jobs away from Oxford's transport routes and hubs – which is in effect what would be the consequence of this approach – would substantially increase the number and duration of journeys, and force them away from sustainable modes like walking, cycling and public transport, and into cars. This is entirely the opposite to what is needed and would run counter not just to the principles of our Local Plan but also the rightly ambitious targets for reducing journey numbers and modal shift in the County Council's Transport

AH7 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Plan and Jobs	
	<p>Strategy. History shows that this is exactly what happened when similar policies were pursued in Oxfordshire in the 1980s. Concentrating jobs at transport hubs like railway station, in places which can be easily reached by walking or cycling like Oxford city centre, or along public transport corridors like the Cowley Road is a far better and far more sustainable approach.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Our Local Plan is predicated on meeting unmet housing need, which implies a need for our supply to outpace demand. Aren't these positions contradictory – at the end of the day don't you need to be able to deliver that excess supply?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>This is the kind of strategic planning question which should and could have been dealt with by regional planning structures and systems which were abolished by a Government made up of two parties.</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Plan 2050 offers the opportunity to address some of these kinds of strategic spatial issues. My point, echoing the Leader, is that to treat Oxford as if it was surrounded by nothing is grossly simplistic. The assumption within that is that somehow the economy can be switched off and jobs can be moved; and the evidence for that is just non-existent. If you look at current levels of demand for office and laboratory space, particularly in the City, it is quite clear that there will be jobs in Oxfordshire – it is a question of where they go. They need to be where there are transport links otherwise they will be in places accessed only by cars.</p>

AH8 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Plan and Jobs	
<p>Question</p> <p>Considering the considerable commercial developments intended for South Oxfordshire Science Village (SOSV), Oxford North and the West End, will the strategic site allocations made within LP2036 lead to higher job density in the city (the contiguous urban area, not the district) and therefore more intense</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Local Plan 2036 takes into account the requirements for both housing and employment during the plan period. The balance between these uses was one of the key issues considered by the Planning Inspectors who examined the plan; they considered that a good balance had been struck and supported</p>

AH8 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Plan and Jobs

competition for housing and higher cost of living?

the policy approach taken in this respect. That the need for housing exceeds the city's capacity to identify sites for it is reflected in the provision of sites in other local plans in Oxfordshire to meet Oxford's unmet need for housing. I agree that it is important to think strategically about locational issues, and that is why this Council has supported the process of creating the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan, which will set out at a strategic level the trajectories for economic growth and housing numbers, which all local plans in the county will need to be congruent with.

AH9 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Plan and Jobs**Question**

In the development of the next iteration of the Local Plan, will you look to lean strategic policies away from commercial and towards residential use in order to more urgently address the city's cost of living crisis?

Written Response

The next Local Plan will need to reflect all the differing demands for employment and housing use, just as the current Local Plan does. The balance between these and the many other factors that the NPPF requires a local plan to take into account will need to be made based on the detailed evidence currently being gathered by officers, and the policies in the new Local Plan will need to be based on that evidence and pass the four paragraph 35 tests required by the NPPF (that any plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy).

AH10 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Community Infrastructure Levy Funding decision-making**Question**

Will the Cabinet member confirm where the public can find the Council's CIL Infrastructure list? Can he additionally confirm how the Council decides what goes on the list, how this process is scrutinised and accountable, and how

Written Response

There is no separate CIL Infrastructure list. I assume that the Councillor is referring to what was called the Regulation 123 list, which included items that COULD be funded by CIL, and which were therefore not eligible for

AH10 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Community Infrastructure Levy Funding decision-making

members of this Council can apply, especially where development in their wards generates CIL for the Council’s general list (as distinct from Parish or Neighbourhood portions) but is not used to deliver mitigations in the locality where development is delivered?

funding via a s106 agreement. It was not and never was a list of schemes that WOULD be funded by CIL (I have answered numerous previous questions on this subject and this misunderstanding appeared to be widely held). The Regulation 123 list was abolished by the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 which came into force on 1 September 2019. Since these changes to the Regulations the Council has published the required annual summary of what CIL it has received, and what it has been spent on or how it is intended to be spent, in the Infrastructure Funding Statement which can be found on the City Council website.

Items funded from CIL are agreed as part of the City Council’s overall capital budget and clearly identified as such. Any councillor can propose any amendment to that capital budget at the annual Budget Council in February. This process is entirely open to full public scrutiny.

Supplementary Question

When I went to the Council website it said that the Regulation 123 list was now the CIL Infrastructure List – could you clarify that?

Verbal Response

The Regulation 123 List, which was widely misunderstood to be a list of things to be funded with CIL which it was not – it was a list of things which could no longer be funded by s106, was abolished by the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019. That was replaced with a requirement to have an infrastructure funding statement, which says what CIL funds have been spent on or will be spent on in the future. It is essentially reporting what is approved to be in the Council’s budget. The critical part of the answer is that CIL money is spent as part of the capital programme of the budget, but there is no separate pot of money – there is no

AH10 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Community Infrastructure Levy Funding decision-making

separate list of schemes.

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

NC1 from Cllr Malik to Cllr Chapman – Face to face queries for the public

Question

St Aldate’s Chamber has been closed to the public. What are the timings for members of the public to have face to face queries and where?

Written Response

The City Council’s face to face customer service has been co-located with the County Council on the second floor of the Westgate Library since the end of January 2022. Citizens Advice Oxford is also operating its face to face service from the same location.

The City Council’s Customer Service Team are available there Monday, Wednesday and Fridays each week from 10am to 3pm.

Since relocating to the Westgate Library, the average number of visits have been circa 370 per month. The top 3 enquiries are usually in respect of Housing Needs, Council Tax and Benefits.

The communications campaign has included a media release, messages on social media, naturally there are posters on the frontage of St Aldates Chambers and there has also been a range of internal communications to ensure all our staff are fully briefed.

Customer satisfaction has been strong since we moved, which shows the service registering 95.8% satisfaction this year (since April), with customers rating the service as Good or Average.

Supplementary Question

Not everybody has the technology to go online. There is no privacy at the library to access services so it is not adequate. Would you revisit this and see if you can find a space, even in the Town Hall? This

Verbal Response

There has to be a balance of those services provided by telephone and online. The number of visitors coming is almost the same as when services were 5 days a week, so people are coming in

NC1 from Cllr Malik to Cllr Chapman – Face to face queries for the public

service should be 5 days.

decent numbers which is a good thing. In terms of privacy, I will take a look at it but customer satisfaction levels are running at about 96% so all the evidence is that it is working, but I will take it away but I don't think there is an opportunity for a wholesale rethink of it.

NC2 From Cllr Landell-Mills to Cllr Chapman – Rare and protected plant species**Question**

After the recent incident where bee orchids were destroyed during routine mowing of a roundabout in Oxford, what steps has the city council taken to establish a mechanism so that a) the public can report locations of rare and protected species on council land including verges and parks, and b) rare and protected plant species are not accidentally destroyed during maintenance by sub-contractors?

Written Response

The public can contact the Council via its main telephone number or dedicated email address: biodiversity@oxford.gov.uk. Species information is shared with ODS and if appropriate mowing schedules are updated.

Since we were contacted by residents of Adderbury Road in respect of the bee orchid, we have amended our mowing schedule so the roundabout will get cut once a year in late summer. Currently there are 21 verge areas that are now subject to a single cut in late-summer.

Residents of Harbord Road contacted us a couple of years ago and asked for the grass on Harbord roundabout to be left long, which has since been. The residents emailed recently to say there are now pyramidal orchids flowering on the roundabout.

NC3 from Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – ODS guidance on protecting green spaces**Question**

Does ODS produce guidance for its employees on how to protect and prevent damage to the areas they are working in, particularly when they are working in green spaces?

Written Response

All ODS Parks staff are trained and experienced at working within the parks and prioritise working safely and respectfully towards the environment. The teams are briefed by supervisors on emerging issues as the mowing season unfolds. Recently staff have been asked

NC3 from Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – ODS guidance on protecting green spaces

to be particularly vigilant about natural wild flower growth and encouraged to take advice before mowing begins in a location if they are unsure whether to proceed.

NC4 from Cllr Morris to Cllr Chapman – ODS Community/Street champions

Question

Can ODS train community/Street champions to do simple energy saving tips round people's homes? For example, this could include temporary double glazing, draught exclusion, radiator reflectors, radiator bleeding, chimney blocks, water saving techniques, simple insulation like rolls of insulation wool etc.

Written Response

ODS does support the Council in its response to the cost of living crisis in a number of ways, including distributing their recently commissioned Energy Advice leaflet in our daily interactions with tenants. The Council also employs three Energy Advice Officers who offer bespoke advice to tenants and private sector residents to support them regarding energy efficiency and how to reduce their bills. We are encouraging homeowners and private sector landlords to apply for [£2m of funding for energy efficiency measures secured by the Council](#) and just last month supported the Energy Saving Homes event involving Oxford householders opening the doors of eco-homes and retrofitted houses across the city to the public to showcase energy and carbon saving measures.

However, the actual installations can be complex and costly. Whilst ODS does have expertise as installers of energy efficient measures and this facility will become even more important as it tackles a backlog of Council-owned property with little or no energy saving capacity, the practicalities of training street champions in these skills is beyond the scope and capacity of its teams. In many cases it needs the input of a professional surveyor to get the right approach. So realistically ODS can raise awareness of the options rather than train a network of street champions

NC4 from Cllr Morris to Cllr Chapman – ODS Community/Street champions	
	on the implementation of them.
Supplementary Question Can the Home Improvement Agency only deal with people who are Council tenants for improvements in their homes?	Verbal Response from Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing The Home Improvement Agency is there to support people in private accommodation, not Council homes.

NC5 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Chapman – Single use plastics update	
Question Can the portfolio holder update on progress on the motion passed by Council in 2018 on single use plastics?	Written Response The Council's Street Trading policy was renewed in 2020 and included the following requirement to ensure single use plastics cannot be used: All packaging and utensils for use by customers shall be made of recycled or part recycled materials
Supplementary Question What steps will you take to ensure that the policy is enforced?	Verbal Response If we have cases brought to our attention where it is not being properly applied then of course we will look into them, but I think we need to balance here – explaining, encouraging, engaging before we enforce as we have to get this in proportion. If you have concerns about specific traders then I and officers would like to know about them.

NC6 From Cllr Landell-Mills to Cllr Chapman – Hedgehog preservation	
Question What steps is the council taking to specifically protect and promote hedgehogs in Oxford? As part of a campaign by the Hedgehog Preservation Society, many councils are placing stickers on their strimming equipment to remind staff to check for hedgehogs before strimming. Can the City Council support this campaign by requesting that ODS place stickers on their strimming equipment to 'check the area for hedgehogs before use'?	Written Response A requirement to consider the needs of hedgehog populations is being considered as part of the Council's planning process for new developments where we strive to ensure hedgehogs are protected and provided spaces to roam and forage. The mowing teams within ODS Parks already check grass areas prior to mowing for wildlife such as hedgehogs or bees nests. The Hedgehog Preservation Society

NC6 From Cllr Landell-Mills to Cllr Chapman – Hedgehog preservation	
	campaign sounds useful and we will be looking at whether this can be used to highlight the importance of our hedgehogs.
Supplementary Question Can you write to the Hedgehog Society and request their advice?	Verbal Response I spent some time on the Hedgehog Preservation Society website and discovered that urban hedgehogs are flourishing. So the situation is more related to rural areas of which there are not many in Oxford. I will have a further look at it but I didn't think from my initial reading this afternoon that there was lots of new advice they could offer us.

NC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Outsourced recycling	
Question To whom and where does the council send its recycling for processing? Do any of the outsourced contractors send any Oxford city council recycling overseas for processing, and if so where and to whom?	Written Response Oxford City's Council mixed dry recycling is sent to N&P's Crayford Material Recycling facility (MRF) in Dartford, Kent where the materials are sorted and sent to final destinations – these are summarised below: Recycled commodities, like many products, are a global trade. There is limited processing capacity within the UK. As markets change so does demand - for example newspaper and magazine readership declines as we continue into the digital age, cardboard packaging is rising as a trend with more and more residents shopping online. This means that in the near future there is likely to be additional processing capacity within the UK as waste and resource organisations look to develop facilities fit for the future. N&P Ltd is responsible for the material once it has been processed through the MRF. They operate in both national and international markets to ensure maximised financial and environmental benefits. N&P's objective is to ensure that the quality products generated are

NC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Outsourced recycling

	<p>positioned and placed within the UK, European and global markets in a timely, professional and balanced manner to ensure the secure, reliable, financially stable and environmentally sustainable use of the recyclate.</p> <p>As an ethical business they work hard to ensure all our output materials are used appropriately and in the most sustainable way. N&P aim too to minimise the environmental impact associated with the movement and end use of materials. The end destinations used for Crayford MRF outputs are carefully selected in line with this, in compliance with the Waste Hierarchy, and also dependent upon their appropriateness and distance from site. It should be noted that ocean going bulk carriers emission levels per tonne per km travelled can be just 1/30th of that of a road-going heavy goods vehicle. Given the existing lack of recycling capacity for paper and card in the UK the alternative domestic end uses would be landfill or incineration.</p> <p>In terms of compliance and traceability there is a process of approval before materials are shipped abroad, outside of the UK to EA Approved and Licence Reprocessing Facilities</p> <p>A summary of the end destinations is shown below, a further breakdown of the Countries these materials are exported to can be provided but this may vary on a monthly basis. See Appendix 1.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question I recognise that the end destinations can vary; could you please provide further details and example countries of where these materials are being sent for processing by N&P?</p>	<p>Verbal Response That level of detail is quite specific, therefore I will need some time to go off and research and will respond to you.</p>

NC8 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Chapman – ODS Highways engineering provision

Question

It seems that ODS have come under tighter budgetary control regarding their provision of highway works under the city's Section 42 agreement with the County Council, with attendant disruption to planned maintenance works. Why have they struggled to provide a convincing value-for-money case leading to these measures being taken?

Written Response

The Section 42 allocation is coming under closer review due to a significant change in approach by County Council officers, this is not linked to any value for money assessment. For the last twenty plus years the County Council have allocated the City Council broadly 6% of their county wide highway maintenance budget to reflect the length of the highway network in the city. County officers advised a change in the process to reflect need rather than network length in March. The Executive Director – Corporate Resources from the City Council and the Commercial Director from ODS are meeting senior officers at the County in order to seek clarity regarding the budgetary allocation.

NC9 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Chapman – AAREON QL system

Question

Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the progress of the implementation of the AAREON QL system In particular is there an end date for the 'workarounds' needed to overcome the deficiencies uncovered when the system was implemented

Written Response

The Council has made significant progress since an update was last given. All expenditure in relation to 2021-22 financial year has been posted and ODS have been paid for all completed jobs undertaken for the Council. This forms the basis for enabling the Council and ODS to prepare its statement of accounts for the last trading year. The material part of work undertaken in this financial year 2022-23 has also been posted to the financial ledgers and ODS have paid accordingly for completed jobs, albeit by a manual process. The Council have a project plan in place to automate the job payment process and remove the remaining work around and is on track to bring that into operation in August at which point the status of the QL system will be changed to Business As Usual (BAU). In parallel the project team have commenced work on the implementation of a customer portal in relation to rents

NC9 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Chapman – AAREON QL system

and repairs, implementation of a mobile working upgrade in early August, (Versaa) and also a system upgrade to version 4.11 at the end of September, all of which will provide additional functionality and efficiencies.

NC10 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Chapman – AAREON QL system**Question**

I understand that an external contractor has been engaged to look at the implementation of the AAREON QL system and that a 'Lessons Learnt' report has been commissioned. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that when this report has been completed it will be made available to Councillors?

Written Response

The report is currently being drafted and I can confirm that the report will be made available for scrutiny by Audit and Governance Committee and all councillors. Although the report has yet to be finalised the Council have already acted to implement a number of key findings/ recommendations which affect not only the QL project but also other ICT projects in the Council.

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice**IT1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Thomas – Latest pollution and air quality data****Question**

Could you please provide the latest pollution & air quality data available which county is going consider when making decision on the Cowley LTNs?

Written Response

Oxfordshire County Council has just published the Cabinet report on the Cowley LTN scheme. The relevant air quality data is published with the report, which can be found at:
https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s61606/CA_JUL1922R06%20Cowley%20LTN.pdf.

IT2 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Thomas – Occupancy rates within city centre retail properties**Question**

What is the current number of empty

Written Response

There are 591 units in the city centre.

IT2 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Thomas – Occupancy rates within city centre retail properties

retail properties in the city centre? How has this changed over the last 12 months? What is the Council doing to increase occupancy rates within city centre retail properties?

Our last audit was conducted in March 2022, excluding units under refurbishment, under offer and not available, there are 31 units, equating to a little over 5% vacancy. In 2021, applying the same criteria, there were 28 units equating to just under 5%. The UK national average of empty units in March 2022 was 14.1%, so we can see that Oxford is comparing well to other city centres in spite of the economic climate.

The City Council attracted £1.875m of HMG Getting Building Funds to deliver Meanwhile in Oxfordshire, working with OxLEP and the wider group of councils in Oxfordshire. The aim of the project is to bring empty units back in to use working with Makespace, who are supporting occupiers and landlords alike. County-wide this has so far has enabled 33 organisations to occupy empty spaces, and secured 28,000 sq. ft. of space, which will support c.110 occupiers to 2025. In Oxford this has helped businesses and organisations into the Covered Market, Gloucester Green, Park End St, and Templar Square among others. 15 of those organisation are Oxford based so far.

The City Centre Action Plan, adopted by Cabinet in June, has a project around focusing on empty units and a series of actions. This is available at: [Oxford City Centre Action Plan 2021 - 2030: Consultation Draft](#) . It should also be borne in mind that the Council is part of some substantial developments in the City Centre, including those at Oxpens brought forward by OxWE, and also the Boswells hotel project, and these will increase the number of people living and working in the city centre, which will make it even more vibrant.

Supplementary Question

I notice in the response it said the national average of empty units, do we

Verbal Response

I will take that away and provide a written response.

IT2 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Thomas – Occupancy rates within city centre retail properties

have an idea of our rates in comparison to other cities like Oxford?

IT3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Thomas – Air pollution monitoring**Question**

What geographic and temporal resolution is the city council planning for its new air pollution website, and what method is being used to collect this data?

Written Response

The Defra grant-funded air quality website will display air quality data from diffusion tubes and automatic monitoring stations from across Oxfordshire. It will display monitoring data collected by methods approved by Defra. The air quality map that will be developed for the website will provide live air pollution data for air quality monitoring stations where these exist in Oxfordshire, as well as annual data from diffusion tubes. The map will also display annual modelling maps covering all of Oxfordshire for the main pollutants of interest; NOx, PM2.5, PM10.

IT4 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Thomas – Impact of Council's ZEZ**Question**

What have the initial impacts of the Council's 'Zero Emission Zone' been, in relation to:

- Improvements in air quality
- Reductions in traffic
- The number of people paying and the amount revenue raised

Written Response

The ZEZ Pilot has been in operation since February 22 and a monitoring plan developed by Oxfordshire County Council and approved by their cabinet is in operation, which aims to collect data for at least 6 month before reporting. When the report is available it will be shared.

IT5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Thomas – Street trees**Question**

ODS has ceased its programme of replacement of dead street trees, and in at least one case in my ward has removed a street tree pit rather than re-plant it, citing a lack of budget for the

Written Response

If tree pits are left open following the failure of a tree a tarmac cap will be placed over the hole so it isn't a tripping hazard. This cap is easily removed so a new tree can be planted.

IT5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Thomas – Street trees

work. What will you do to ensure the Urban Forest Strategy becomes a reality, considering this work has ceased?

The Council is committed to delivery of the urban forest strategy and we are currently working on a project to increase street trees in Oxford, with a joint grant funding bid with Oxfordshire County Council recently having been submitted.

IT6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Thomas – Grass mowing policy**Question**

What is the current council policy on grass mowing? Can the Council commit as a general principle to leave grass unmown until early August in order to preserve nature and promote biodiversity?

Written Response

The City Council, in partnership with ODS, used to cut Oxford's grass verges every fortnight, but will now cut verges alongside main roads once a year and alongside smaller roads once a month. This will impact all grass verges in Oxford – an area of grass equivalent to 40 football pitches. The change will encourage the growth of Oxford's naturally-occurring wildflowers, which in turn will provide pollen for bees and butterflies, and increase the city's carbon storage. It will also reduce the City Council's fuel use

Supplementary Question

Who decided that cutting grass once a month is infrequent enough to be beneficial for wildlife, as it seems like that is quite often, and is the Council collecting the cuttings from when it mows?

Verbal Response

This is something that has been in local and national press lately. It is, as ever, a balancing act and something that Oxford is ahead of the curve on. Oxford has been trialling longer grass verges and part of that in some of our smaller streets is that grass has been allowed to grow and had one cut late in summer which is beneficial for biodiversity, balancing nutrient levels and allowing seed germination. In those areas we do remove the cuttings and that meant we had to purchase specialist equipment to do that. I would encourage everybody to go away and look at our Biodiversity Action Plan and some of the steps taken there. I'm really proud of our policies but it is a balancing act.

IT7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Thomas – Air pollution from commercial cooking**Question**

What is the contribution to the city's air pollution of licensed premises, and in turn, what steps has the council taken to date to reduce the human health impact of air pollution from commercial cooking operations at licensed premises within the city?

Written Response

The national environmental permitting legislation enforced by the council does not include commercial cooking operations at licensed premises so data on pollution from those processes are not collected. The council has the power to take action against statutory nuisance from commercial cooking operations and regularly investigates odour complaints, requiring improvements to be made where necessary. In addition the Council has acted to deal with indoor air pollution created by commercial cooking operations that have put workers health and safety at risk.

Cabinet Member for Health and Transport**LU1 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Upton – East Oxford LTN vandalism****Question**

How is the Council working with the County Council and Thames Valley Police to tackle vandalism of the trial East Oxford LTNs?

Written Response

As the East Oxford LTNs are County Council schemes, the City Council has not been involved in the liaison between Thames Valley Police and the County Council.

LU2 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Upton – East Oxford LTN traffic regulations**Question**

How is the Council working with the County Council and Thames Valley Police to ensure that drivers adhere to the new traffic regulations brought in as part of the trial East Oxford LTNs?

Written Response

As the East Oxford LTNs are County Council schemes, the City Council has not been involved in the liaison between Thames Valley Police and the County Council.

LU3 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Upton – Occupancy rate of existing cycle parking provision**Question**

What is the current occupancy rate of

Written Response

The majority of cycle parking in Oxford is

LU3 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Upton – Occupancy rate of existing cycle parking provision

existing cycle parking provision in Oxford? What is the level of demand for additional cycle parking provision? If both occupancy rates and demand are high, will the Council look to reallocate some existing car parking bays for the purposes of cycle parking?

at a premium, particularly in the city centre – anecdotally occupancy and demand has remained high throughout the pandemic. This year, the City Council is therefore looking to install more than 150 racks in more straightforward locations which do not require complex permissions or have implications on wider transport schemes. At the same time, officers continue to scope out more cycle parking opportunities across the city to install in 2023. Regarding the reallocation of car parking bays for the purposes of cycle parking, this will be included in scoping work for 2023, both of sites which may be in City ownership or private land opportunities, and on the carriageway which would need County Council approval.

LU4 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – ZEZ and theatres

Question

Will you work with Oxford’s theatres to ensure that their highly unusual situation (frequently changing companies and players, need to deliver bulky items to their premises) is accommodated by the ZEZ’s rules, to ensure that if and when it expands they are not subject to further financial strain?

Written Response

The ZEZ aims to reduce air pollution and make Oxford’s air safe for all to breathe. The expansion of the ZEZ will be subject to public consultation and stakeholder engagement is currently ongoing with businesses in the zone including with theatres. At this stage we cannot commit to exemptions for specific business, however, the Pilot ZEZ which the ZEZ will build on already provides a 90% discount for businesses located in the zone. It is expected that adaptation support will also be available for businesses within the expanded ZEZ area, funded in part by revenues generated by the ZEZ.

LU5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – Backing buses

Question

Several of Oxford’s Community Labour Parties (CLPs) have recently passed

Written Response

I am delighted that opposition councillors

LU5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – Backing buses	
<p>emergency motions vigorously opposing reallocation of road space away from cars in favour of bus travel, including specifically campaigning against any form of traffic filter on Hollow Way. Will you stand up to pressure from the CLPs and back our buses by recognising that they are frequently bogged down in traffic, making them neither attractive to riders nor financially viable, and therefore action to help them is necessary?</p>	<p>follow the motions passed by Labour party branches so closely, even if they don't always get the acronyms right... The City Council position on supporting our buses is clear - the focus needs to be on reducing congestion in a strategic manner through the Core Transport Schemes, formerly referred to as Connecting Oxford. These interventions need to be evidence-based, which is why we are insisting on modelling data to demonstrate the need for each of them.</p> <p>The City Council recognises the fundamental importance of the bus as part of the sustainable travel options in Oxford and Oxfordshire. Our officers work closely with the bus operators and the county council officers to identify ways to improve context for public transport. One example of recent work is set out in the City Cabinet "Park and Ride charges" agenda item on 13 July, which includes a trial of reduced charges for people parking and taking the bus into Oxford centre, demonstrating a significant commitment from the City Council towards backing Oxford's bus network in a way which has financial cost implications for the Council.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Can I press you specifically with regards to Hollow Way because we've seen elements within Oxford Labour pushing for no change or at least no filter on that lane – will you push back?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>In our constituency Labour motion we removed that line about objecting to the Hollow Way one, precisely because those who opposed it had not seen data that showed it was necessary. Our position is that where data shows it is necessary, we will be behind it.</p>

LU6 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Westgate car park	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the progress and/or results of the survey of users of the Westgate Car Park promised by Councillor Hayes in response to my question (22.TH11) at</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>City and County Council officers have continued dialogue with Westgate shopping centre since the March question was posed, as part of the stakeholder engagement regarding "core</p>

LU6 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Westgate car park

the March Council meeting?

transport schemes” and as part of the Park & Ride multi-agency working group. All parties are seeking solutions to the problems on the wider road network which cause and are caused by too many people choosing to drive to the Westgate car park.

However, given that the vast majority of car drivers will go past a Park & Ride site in order to get to Westgate car park, the main opportunity remains to encourage car drivers to switch to the Park & Ride. The “Park & Ride charges” decision at 13 July Cabinet, which includes a trial of a combined ticket for parking and taking the bus at a reduced cost is intended to be a significant step towards improving the take-up of Park & Ride by Westgate shoppers and everyone visiting the city centre.

With regards to undertaking surveys to understand what will encourage people to switch from car to more sustainable modes, we have discussed this with Westgate and County colleagues as part of the Park & Ride working group, and hope to undertake further data gathering over the summer and autumn.

LU7 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Seacourt park & ride

Question

At the last Full Council meeting in March Councillors were informed that the extension to the Seacourt Park and Ride Car Park had not yet been used. Can the Cabinet Member tell the Council if this is still the case – i.e. has there been any use of the extension and how many days has it been in use since then?

Written Response

As explained in answers to previous questions on this subject, the extension has been closed whilst usage at Seacourt is low. We built the extension because the original Park and Ride was full very early in the morning, before the pandemic (as evidenced as part of the planning application), and there was significant demand for an extension. We expect the low levels currently being experienced to be temporary and for more users to return.

Usage is increasing and recently has exceeded average occupancy rates of

LU7 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Seacourt park & ride	
	65%. Officer observations on site are that the car park approached capacity on Mondays to Fridays in June. On that basis, although the threshold we have set to open the extension is that it reaches 80% capacity in the main car park, we have taken the decision to open the extension ahead of the expected official usage data. It was opened on 15th July 2022.
Supplementary Question Could we know exactly how long it has been left empty – where does this leave the payback period and how much has this now cost?	Verbal Response I will check and provide a written response.

LU8 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – EV Charging point	
Question When will the EV charging point on Frenchay Rd be working again, as it has been out of action since last year?	Written Response Many of the existing chargers on Oxford's roads were installed under one of the UK's first on-street charging pilot projects, Go Ultra Low Oxford, and as such required substantial intervention and investment over the last two years to bring them up to current charging standards, with the upgrade programme continuing for another year. The upgrade programme was made more difficult due to a series of contractor acquisitions and one contractor going into administration. While most chargers could be upgraded, Frenchay Rd was severely damaged in an act of vandalism alongside three further chargers. The Council issued a statement on this last year. Several attempts were made to fix it but the operator has confirmed it cannot be repaired. The charge point will be replaced over the coming months, which is now possible since the insurer has confirmed policy compliance. Oxford City Council introduced a dedicated EV Infrastructure Contract Management Facility in January to improve Service Level Performance of

LU8 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – EV Charging point	
	charge point operators. Since the introduction we have seen a reduction of SLA failures from over 60% previously to under 10% now. The facility is a pilot, but has been extended for another six months, after which it will be reviewed.
Supplementary Question Can you confirm and commit to a specific timeline so that I can inform residents?	Verbal Response I can't give you one now, but as soon as we know you will be the first one to hear.

Appendix 1

Additional Information for: NC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Outsourced recycling

Oxford City Annual summary 21/22 of End Destinations for material processed at the MRF

	Inside UK	Outside UK	Total	Percentage in UK	Percentage exported
Mixed glass	3084.96	0.00	3084.96	100.00%	0.00%
Metals	570.29	144.52	714.81	79.78%	20.22%
Paper	492.32	2834.18	3326.50	14.80%	85.20%
Card	564.91	3157.14	3722.05	15.18%	84.82%
Plastics	1600.92	130.58	1731.49	92.46%	7.54%

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