

To: Council

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Date: 18 July 2022

Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that submitted by the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council.
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Address by Rosanne Bostock, OxClean – Sustainable Street Trading
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1. Question from Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) – Oxfordshire Plan 2050
 2. Denis Gregory – Greyhound Racing in Oxford

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Address by Rosanne Bostock, OxClean – Sustainable Street Trading

OxClean which was started in 2006, has long wanted to do something constructive about the litter from street trading. When we first started campaigning on this you could

buy a decent hot meal from a street trader for £2.00, apparently many students use this facility.

However the boxes are made of foam plastic and make a very satisfying crunch if stamped on. Certainly up and down the Woodstock Road, Summertown and Gloucester Green these boxes are scattered.

Times have moved on and I think there are more cardboard type materials that the boxes could be made from. Since the food is liquid the containers need some kind of liquid proof lining. This would mean that the boxes were recyclable.

The real aim is behavioural change.

All boxes should have ***bin me*** stamped on them. Nudges like this really make a difference. The notices on the Oxford ring road - please don't drop litter - have made a vast improvement. It's a positive message which is important.

It would help if the street trader has the stall clean and litter free and with a large notice asking people to put their litter in the bins near the stall.

It would also help if there are bins in the vicinity that are regularly emptied.

Nudges make a difference to behaviour. **Bin me** in large letters stamped on the container, whether or not it is recyclable would be another step forward for Oxford city leading the way on sustainability and recycling. More decent bins would also help.

Written Response from Councillor Diko Walcott, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

The Council welcomes initiatives and suggestions to reduce the environmental impact on our city. The issue of sustainability and the use of recyclable packaging is addressed in the current Street Trading Policy and in the conditions attached to Consents as follows:

“The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended) places a duty of care on businesses to dispose of their trade waste in an appropriate manner. Trade waste must be stored appropriately and be disposed of by a licensed waste carrier. No water or waste material shall be discharged on to the highway or any adjacent property. The Consent holder shall take reasonable steps to ensure that litter arising from their own trade is minimised as far as possible, for example by making a bin available for customers to use.”

When submitting applications for a new Consent, or renewal, all applicants must provide a valid Waste Transfer Note and food traders are also subject to the following condition: -

“All packaging and utensils for use by customers shall be made of recycled or part recycled materials.”

We encourage residents, traders and all interested parties to engage with the Council using our street_trading@oxford.gov.uk email.

2. Julie Kleeman, Taste Tibet – Sustainable Street Trading

My business, Taste Tibet, started life as a street food stall in Oxford's Gloucester Green market back in 2014. At the time there were very few food traders at the market and we were the first to use compostable and recyclable packaging for our food. We did this from the outset - it was an approach that was very important to us. We were adamant that we would not be contributors to a problem that was so bad that it was already highly visible at that market, even during the early days of hot food in Gloucester Green: at the end of every lunchtime the bins would be full to overflowing with styrofoam boxes and other non-recyclable packaging. We were proud of our efforts to reduce waste, and highlighted our use of sustainable materials on our menu boards and in conversations with customers. It became a selling point and was clearly welcomed.

Shortly after we began running our stall, the Oxford City Council Street Trading Policy was updated to include a condition on food traders that 'packaging and utensils shall be made of recycled or part recycled material.' We were thrilled to hear about this initiative, but soon discovered that the policy was not being enforced. We spoke to LSD Promotions, the market managers, about this and were informed - on multiple occasions - that if other traders did not yet appear compliant this was because they were using up existing stocks. But many of these traders never made any change: this was not a case of using up stock.

We continued to promote the use of sustainable packaging at our stall, and by 2016 we had introduced an incentive for customers to bring their own Tupperware with 50p off for anyone who brought their own boxes. This initiative was copied by other traders, some of whom I believe continue to offer it today. It was warmly welcomed by our customers - there was wide uptake. We continue to offer customers the opportunity to bring their own Tupperware to our takeaway in East Oxford today, a move that is also very popular and gratefully received.

But even now there are many food vendors in Gloucester Green market and elsewhere who continue to use non-sustainable food packaging. There appears to be no enforcement of the Council's Street Trading rules. We are very grateful for the opportunity to raise this with the Council directly as it has been a frustration and bugbear for us for many years. I am personally very happy to assist in any consultations if this helps to bring about real change.

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Gloucester Green market is exempt from requiring Street Trading Consent as stated in the current Street Trading Policy – “The Gloucester Green weekly markets and the Covered Market are outside the scope of the street trading scheme. Gloucester Green has Charter Market status and trading in the Covered Market takes place from permanent shop units.”

We investigate any complaints of breaches of conditions or traders causing nuisance and take the appropriate action. Our enforcement policy is to employ the four ‘E’s - Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce.

We encourage residents, traders and all interested parties to engage with the Council using our street_trading@oxford.gov.uk email.

3. Address by Martin Hackett - Bertie Park

Bertie Park is a small, well-used recreation ground near the Redbridge Park and Ride which OCC would like to redevelop as housing. We are members of the Save Bertie Park campaign. We would like to complain about the council's poor communication with our community.

We requested an update in January. We had to wait 2 months for postcards to be delivered to the houses closest to the park announcing your intention to share designs with us in 2022.

Well.

It is now July.

And we still have no news.

The roles that people can play in decision-making can be seen as a spectrum from informing → consulting → involving → collaborating → empowering. In the face of a growing democratic deficit, it is not clear why OCC remains proudly to the left of this spectrum. You have told us many times that there have been extensive consultations, particularly in preparation for the 2036 local plan.

During these consultations, our closest drop-in event was at the South Oxford Farmer's Market. Few people at this end of the ward can afford to shop there. Those who do don't depend on Bertie Park. You engaged directly with the South Oxford Residents Association, but we've never even heard of them.

When you spoke at the South Oxford Forum in 2019, many residents only found out because Carole Thorne leafleted the local area. No consultation materials were provided, but there was broad resistance to proposals. This was the start of our campaign.

In the local plan consultation booklet there was a single question about whether OCC should

"Consider building on greenfield sites (including under-used and/or poor-quality recreational land)".

245 people answered this question; a majority disagreed or strongly disagreed. One person commented that "how poor quality/under-used green spaces are defined is a very sensitive issue and community consultation is vital".

So, what does OCC do when it gathers information that it doesn't like?

Anyone really trying to engage with the consultation was faced with a huge amount of poorly written, often contradictory documentation. So, only two people commented on the Bertie Park proposals.

OCC claimed to take these comments into account by "allocating the smaller part of the site (site A in the plan) for a school or residential development, with the larger part (site B) to be used for replacement recreational facilities." ... which is what you were going to do anyway.

But now you have changed your mind and you want to squeeze both the development AND the recreational facilities onto site A.

Is it any wonder that there is a democratic deficit in Oxford? If OCC really wanted to know what we thought about the Bertie Park proposals, you could ask our community. This is what we intend to do as soon as you publish your designs.

In your written response, maybe you would like to persuade us that you are not targeting Bertie Park because it is at the poorer end of our ward. This is what many in our community believe.

Written Response from Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

The site at Bertie Place was not first allocated for development in the current Local Plan. In fact the site was allocated for the building of a school, or if the school was not required for the building of housing, in the Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026. This is a formal document which went through multiple stages of public consultation during the preceding years and was finally adopted by the City Council in 2013 as part of its then Local Plan.

That allocation, with the same uses, was carried forward into the current Oxford Local Plan 2036, which was adopted in 2020 after several years of consultation, including leaflet drops to every household in the city as well as numerous events across the city. The County Council, who as education authority had requested that the site be reserved for possible use as a school, confirmed that a new school was not needed, meaning that the allocation is now for housing. This was the only change in the designation of the site between the Sites and Housing Plan adopted in 2013 and the Local Plan 2036 adopted in 2020.

Following several stages of informal consultation, the City Council's wholly owned housing company is finalising its designs for the site ready for a formal consultation and planning application in the early autumn.

4. Address by Lilian Sherwood - Bertie Park

I live in the South East end of Hinksey Park Ward.

The council did not inform, or consult us, about plans to build on Bertie Park. We did not find out until Summer 2019. This was when members of the Save Bertie Park campaign first put up posters, and delivered leaflets.

I asked the Council why we had not been informed. The replies I eventually received were quite dismissive.

This is the sort of exchange I had:

Council: "You have your playground in Fox Crescent".

Me: So, am I being told that we can only use the small, hard standing, Fox Crescent playground?

Council: "We only need to inform residents in the houses closest to the park. They are the ones who will be affected."

Me: Correction: All of us in the lower/south end of the ward will be affected.

Council: "There have been consultations, and there will be another one when the plans are drawn up".

Me: Where, when and how will this happen?

We are still waiting for news of the consultation.

The majority of residents here are strongly against the plans. Bertie Park is very important to the health and well-being of us all.

The top north end of the ward has massive Hinksey Park. We only have Bertie Park. And you want to make it smaller.

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1. Question from Need Not Greed Oxfordshire (NNGO) – Oxfordshire Plan 2050

NNGO understands that the Oxfordshire Councils are currently involved in discussions around the level of housing to be included in the next draft of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050.

There are a staggering 85,000 dwellings already committed to in existing local plans. The number of additional dwellings which might be included in the Oxfordshire Plan range from 16,000 to 67,000 (as per the Reg 18 consultation).

NNGO believes that no more than the lowest number of additional dwellings should be built, and possibly many less. Anything else would be incompatible with this local authority's commitment to tackling the climate emergency and the need to address nature's recovery.

We are concerned that Local Authorities might regard the middle housing trajectory, which is inappropriately called 'Business as Usual', as a reasonable compromise between the highest and lowest housing targets. In fact, it is based on a period of high growth following recession and as such it is clearly not 'Business as Usual' and should in no way be regarded as 'middle ground'.

We would like to know this Council's views on:

1. The 'Business as Usual' trajectory
2. The number of dwellings that should be built in Oxfordshire in the period to 2050.

Written Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, Councillor Alex Hollingsworth

Oxford City Council is fully involved in the work to develop the Oxfordshire Plan with our partners across Oxfordshire. The question refers to one piece of the evidence base that is being built up to inform and support the policies of the Oxfordshire Plan, called the Oxfordshire Growth Needs Assessment (OGNA). That evidence base study was published in full alongside the most recent consultation document on the Oxfordshire Plan. The OGNA alongside a wealth of other studies will help inform the policy approach of the Oxfordshire Plan for the number of homes and jobs that will be planned for.

A further consultation on the Oxfordshire Plan is planned for the Autumn and as before, all relevant evidence base studies will be published alongside the consultation document to facilitate community involvement. It is through this process, involving the continual building of the evidence base, supported by feedback gleaned from the consultation exercises, and testing of that information, that the partners will collectively determine their preferred policy approach for the Plan. Working with our partners through this process, the City Council will seek to secure the right balance between homes (in particular genuinely affordable homes) and jobs.

2. Denis Gregory – Greyhound Racing in Oxford

How much direct or indirect payment of council funds might be involved in the return of greyhound racing to the Sandy Lane Stadium?

Written Response from Councillor Ed Turner, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management

In principle, none. Business rates apply to the stadium when it operates regardless of the precise use.

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