

To: Council
Date: 03 October 2022
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet Members and Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included where available.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.
5. Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships; Leader of the Council

SB1 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Brown – Warming Hubs

Question

In response to the cost of living crisis, rising fuel bills and the number of residents likely to be in fuel poverty this winter, will the council be providing 'Warming Hubs' in community centres, schools, museums and other public buildings?

Written Response

We have been taking action on this growing national crisis since the spring, when we held an initial event to bring together organisations in the city involved in supporting local residents. We followed that up with Cost of Living Roadshows across the city, and we are

SB1 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Brown – Warming Hubs

now providing autumn and winter cost of living support. Our teams will continue to attend events across the city to speak to residents about the cost of living and provide them with the booklet we have developed from that first event that shows what support is available. There will also be booklets available at food larders and community centres, schools as well as libraries, pharmacies and doctors surgeries etc.

The fact that we need to be thinking about how we can provide spaces for local residents to be warm is heart-breaking and a dire comment on government failure which sadly has become necessary. We are determined that these spaces are welcoming and should be an opportunity to bring communities together and tackle loneliness. We are working with the county council to provide a directory of warm spaces across the city. This includes activities that will be taking place in these warm spaces. We are currently in the process of gathering a list of community groups and centres that would like to take part. There will also be an opportunity for participants to attend 'Making Every Contact Count' training so staff can let people know what other support is available. Alongside the county council we will provide funding for the warm spaces. This could range from extra money to initially set up, or open for longer, providing hot drinks, activities and support with costs such as additional electricity.

SB2 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Brown – Fairtrade Champion**Question**

I welcome the appointments of council champions who help to highlight the council's commitments to our residents and businesses. Oxford City has been recognised as a Fairtrade City; would

Written Response

Our excellent new Small Business & Inclusive Economy Champion Cllr Ajaz Rehman also bears responsibility for promoting our Fairtrade City as did his

SB2 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Brown – Fairtrade Champion

you agree to appointing a Fairtrade champion?

predecessor, Cllr Chewe Munkonge.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council**ET1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Delinquency on Business Rates****Question**

What is the delinquency rate on business rates owed to Oxford City Council versus collected? What proportion of business rates due to Oxford City Council are never collected?

Written Response

As the 23rd September we have collected 50.20% of business rates outstanding for the current year. Our collection forecast for 2022/23 is 95.5%, very similar to the national average. The collection percentage will continue to increase after the 31st March 2023 as payments from customers on extended arrangement plans continue to come in throughout the year.

The total write off figure for Business Rates in 2021/22 was £520,193, for current year the figure currently stands at £252,552, I expect this year's write off figure to be similar to 2021/22. It should be noted that in some circumstances business rates can no longer be legally collected and there is no viable option other than a write-off, but that remains a last resort for our Council.

ET2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Turner – Council Tax for Narrowboats**Question**

Are there plans for narrowboats in Oxford to be moved into higher council tax bands, with this higher band applied retrospectively back to 2019? If this is the case, what is the rationale behind that decision?

Written Response

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) are responsible for the Banding of domestic property across England and Wales, this includes a mooring or pitch. It is the permanent residential mooring that is banded and not the boat that occupies it, which is regarded as a chattel. I have checked with the relevant team and we have no reports outstanding requesting the moorings in Oxford are reassessed.

ET2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Turner – Council Tax for Narrowboats

The Valuation Office Agency will periodically review the value of permanent residential moorings, however, the City Council would be only advised should the banding be increased. If the councillor has concerns about this matter, I would encourage contact with the VOA.

ET3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Turner – Grandpont Pipe Bridge**Question**

Can the Cllr please update us on progress to repair and re-open the Grandpont pipe bridge?

Written Response

Oxford City Council's consultant Stantec initially undertook a detailed options appraisal to help determine the best course of action for the Gasworks Pipe Bridge. After the exercise had been completed it was decided that refurbishment rather than replacement would be the preferred option. This is welcome as it is a much shorter and less costly process. To progress the refurbishment option Stantec developed the initial designs, which have now been approved by the Technical Approval Authority, Oxfordshire County Council.

Stantec will now proceed with preparing the detailed designs for the project, to be submitted for sign off by Oxfordshire County Council in October.

The procurement process to appoint a contractor is now underway and should be completed in December. Subject to securing approval for the detailed designs, work on the bridge will then start in early 2023 and should be complete in the summer, allowing the bridge to reopen.

Alternative crossing points are available at the Gasworks Railway Bridge and Folly Bridge with diversions in place. The routes will be regularly inspected and maintained to ensure they remain lit as the evenings become darker.

A press release setting out this

ET3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Turner – Grandpont Pipe Bridge

information and wider context was published on 27th September, and can be viewed [here](#).

ET4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Turner – Aristotle Lane Railway**Question**

Can you explain why, despite Network Rail's offer of funding, the work on the Aristotle Lane railway bridge and slopes has not been carried out to either replace the worn surface or repair the gabions on the western approach? I understand the gabion works are with this council and that progress has been slow, delaying work to the surface. Can the Cabinet member explain why the City Council has been so slow in taking action or even replying to requests for information, and when it expects to do the work?

Written Response

Following initial investigations earlier in the year which confirmed that the Gabion failure was not a health and safety risk we have been awaiting further advice from our external consultants on repair methodology and potential costs but this has repeatedly been delayed.

This in turn is delaying the finalisation of negotiations with Network Rail which is dependent on the delivery of this information and as the repairs here have to be sequential this is delaying the surfacing repairs upon which County have already reached agreement with Network Rail.

We are now looking at alternative sources for the required information in order to move this forward as quickly as possible.

ET5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – West End Development**Question**

Concerning the West End development, what financial yield does the council expect per square metre of office space or similar employment usage, either in direct revenue from the lease or in NNDR? What yield would it expect per square metre developed for housing?

Written Response

The only direct income the Council is likely to receive from development activity in the West End is via the Oxpens development, where we are in the OxWED JV with Nuffield College. While high level financial modelling continues to be undertaken for the Oxpens scheme to demonstrate the scheme is viable, the route to market is still to be agreed by the JV. As such, we are not in a position to confirm how income for the scheme will flow to the Council (e.g. capital or revenue, phasing etc.), nor the level of NNDR, or indeed Council Tax. The viability work undertaken to date is

ET5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – West End Development

	<p>commercially sensitive, but is reported through the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group meetings, and subject to scrutiny in the usual manner.</p> <p>As a principle, based on current market evidence, commercial development is likely to drive greater income than the delivery of policy compliant residential development. However, development in Oxford, and therefore the West End, continues to be driven by planning policy. West End planning policy includes requirements for mix use development, including both residential and employment.</p> <p>In relation to our own land interests via the OxWED JV, there is a commitment to deliver a policy compliant scheme, while also delivering a financial return from the Council’s ongoing investment in the project. Any future income from the scheme will ultimately support the Council’s budget and delivery of core services.</p> <p>More broadly, sites across the West End are in different stages of development, with none of the major schemes yet brought forward as a planning application, and without any permissions in place, the Council does not yet have an expectation of the level of income we will receive from future development in this area, whether that be residential or commercial.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>You mention in your response expecting less income to the Council from residential and commercial development. Do you believe a further tilt from commercial to residential land use would be possible while still turning a profit on the Council’s investment overall – and if not then what is the limiting factor?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I think what the Councillor is asking me to do is speculate about likely returns from different schemes that don’t in fact exist. I think really I owe it to Council to be a little bit more robust than that. I think as the Shareholder we ought to explore different options which the partnership might deliver and I have set out here what I think the parameters are, but I don’t think it is for me to speculate in Full Council about whether particular changes would lead to different levels of</p>

ET5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – West End Development

return. What I do think is that there are opportunities for Members to be briefed on this scheme – there have been opportunities and I’m sure there will be further ones; and I think that would allow us to more openly consider areas which are more sensitive and where I can’t go into the detail in a public forum like this. I appreciate that is a disappointing and completely unilluminating answer to the question, but I hope the Councillor understands why I have to give it in that way.

ET6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Turner – Meadow Lane Carpark

Question

Can you provide clarity on the decision-making process on the future of the Meadow Lane Carpark, which is currently temporarily closed? (Car park next to Donnington Bridge)

Written Response

Oxford Direct Services resurfaced the car park and subsequently obtained retrospective planning permission (Ref: 21/01271/CT3). One of the planning conditions in respect of the resurfacing works is “the existing car park gate shall be closed and locked and shall only be unlocked and open when the Falcon Rowing Club is in operation and shall only be used exclusively by the users of the Falcon Rowing Club.”

Two options for the car park are to be assessed. One option is to negotiate a lease with Falcon Rowing Club giving the club exclusive possession but requiring them to maintain the car park and incorporating a requirement that other local community groups have access. The second option, if financially viable, is for the Council to operate the car park as a Council car park subject to an amendment to the planning condition requiring exclusive use by Falcon Rowing Club. Oxford Direct Services are currently carrying out an assessment of the costs to operate as a Council car park.

If it is financially viable to operate as a council car park, the decision making

ET6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Turner – Meadow Lane Carpark

process will involve assessing which is the best option for the Council taking in to account the potential income, the running costs and maintenance costs, and the risks associated with each option. As part of the decision making process the Council will also take into account the potential for the car park to be used by local community groups. I would be very happy to engage with the two ward councillors on this important issue, and have been grateful for previous contact about it.

Falcon Rowing Club have been given Council permission, under licence, to use the car park and control access in accordance with the planning permission until a final decision has been made by the Council.

Cabinet Member Leisure and Parks; Deputy Leader of the Council**CM1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Munkonge – Heat Pumps in Parks****Question**

Has the Council considered using heat pumps in parks to power nearby homes and buildings, as has been done by Hackney City Council, working with the campaign group Possible?

Written Response

As the councillor will know, we're not just considering this – we're already doing it, with the installation of a water source heat pump into the lake next to Hinksey Park to provide heating for the outdoor pool. We had also developed an initial design for a ground source heat pump system to provide heating at Rose Hill Community Centre, with the heat pump located in the adjoining park, but this had to be removed from the overall leisure centre decarbonisation programme, as it would have exceeded our total budget

CM1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Munkonge – Heat Pumps in Parks

envelope. We are also having discussions with commercial operators to explore the potential for pilot ground source heat pump schemes linked to housing, in which the vertical boreholes required would need to be sunk under public land.

Cabinet Member for Safer Communities**DW1 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Walcott – Vandals Damaging or Removing LTNs****Question**

Have there been any prosecutions of vandals damaging or removing Low Traffic Neighbourhood bollards or filter bollards or planters?

Written Response

This is a matter for Thames Valley Police who are the enforcing authority for criminal damage.

Cabinet Member for Housing**LS1 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Linda Smith – Encouragement of Lodging****Question**

Has the Council looked at measures it can take to encourage more people to have lodgers, in order to share energy costs and increase housing availability?

Written Response

The Council delivers housing advice through its Housing Options service and other staff working with customers on the prevention of homelessness. As part of this advice staff will explore the most suitable housing options for people, and this may include becoming a lodger at a property.

The Council also seeks to support and

LS1 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Linda Smith – Encouragement of Lodging

approve arrangements when our tenants want to take in lodgers, when considered appropriate.

LS2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Linda Smith – Short-term Holiday Lets**Question**

What is the current number of short term holiday lets in the city, (including AirBnBs) in Oxford and what concrete steps is the city council taking to licence and restrict the numbers of short term lets to address concerns associated with this particular rental market (e.g. impact on housing for local residents, noise, litter, etc.)?

Written Response

It is estimated that there are currently over 750 whole house short-term lets. It is also estimated that there are a further 650 rooms available for short-term lets as well. This is based on research of current listings on popular short let website platforms.

The Council does not have licensing powers for short lets. Short-term letting of a property is a specified exemption under the Housing Act 2004 which excludes the properties from the Council's two city-wide property licensing schemes (HMO licensing and selective licensing).

We have lobbied for new powers for several years and in September we responded to a Government consultation expressing the view that licensing was our preferred option.

From a planning enforcement perspective, we actively investigate cases using data such as Business Rates but each case must be individually assessed to establish whether a material change of use has occurred at the property. Currently, short-term letting is not its own defined planning use class which makes arguing that a material change of use has occurred even more difficult. Nevertheless, the Council has taken successful enforcement action through the planning enforcement service against a number of active short let properties and at the September Cabinet we reaffirmed our commitment to proactively pursuing planning enforcement against short let properties. At the September Cabinet it was also agreed to remove the domestic waste

LS2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Linda Smith – Short-term Holiday Lets	
	service from short let properties registered as businesses.
Supplementary Question I welcome what the Council is doing with respect to this. Is there anything we can learn from cities or places such as Whitby for instance that have actually put restrictions on short term lets within their boundaries; and if you are unable to clarify that here today, could we look into that as a follow-up?	Verbal Response If Cllr Miles has examples of best practice from elsewhere then I would be very happy to take a look at them and see what we can learn.

LS3 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Linda Smith – Hosting Ukrainian Refugees	
Question What is the City Council doing to ensure longer term accommodation for Ukrainian refugees that are staying with local host families but coming towards the end of their stay?	Written Response The Council continues to work with partners across Oxfordshire to respond to the needs of Ukrainian refugees. This includes ongoing detailed planning for the housing options of Ukrainian refugee households as they reach the 6 months mark under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. These plans will contain a wide range of options; looking firstly to stay in their current placement, moving within the scheme to a “rematched” host, the private rented sector as well as the social sector. The unaffordability crisis in Oxford’s housing market, alongside the very limited supply of social housing, means staying at the current host arrangement or rematching to a new host will be a the main option for most households. In order to prepare for the work to rematch households, 3 new officers are being recruited to lead this work across Oxfordshire, and will be hosted by the City Council.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

AH1 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Osney Mead–Oxpens Cycle/Pedestrian Bridge

Question

At the recent meeting of the FOP this Council advocated allocating an additional £2.8m, on top of the £6m already allocated, from the Growth Deal Infrastructure fund to support a proposed new cycle and pedestrian bridge from Osney Mead to Oxpens. What is the justification for this scheme, given that it is literally yards from the existing Gasworks bridge, a perfectly serviceable and well-used facility?

Written Response

The bridge was first identified as being necessary for the creation of direct and convenient cycle and pedestrian routes to and from Osney Mead in the West End Area Action Plan, developed jointly by the City Council and Oxfordshire County Council over a number of years and adopted by this Council in June 2008. In particular it will create an easy and direct cycle link to the railway station which will avoid the use of either Oxpens Road or an off-road route across the meadowland, which is frequently flooded in the winter. Since then the City and County Councils have viewed the new bridge as a requirement for the development of car-free residential uses on Osney Mead, as made clear in the relevant Local Plan policies. Schemes funded via the Growth Deal have to meet specific criteria, the most important of which is that they should enable the development of residential accommodation which would not otherwise be developed, and a second of which is that such development should have the potential to provide further funding via CIL. The Osney Mead bridge does both of these things, while being investment in infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists rather than for cars.

AH2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Growth Deal Scheme Progress

Question

Why has there been such limited progress on this scheme during the five years of the Growth Deal since 2018, and nothing to show for the original allocation of £6m?

Written Response

The funding for the bridge was allocated to Oxfordshire County Council when the Growth Deal was signed, but was not progressed by them. In March 2020, in order to assist with a key Growth Deal scheme that was not progressing, the City Council agreed to take the funding for the scheme and take it forward

AH2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Growth Deal Scheme Progress

ourselves (as reported to Cabinet in March 2020 and to Full Council in May 2020). Funding was allocated to the City Council in July 2020, thus allowing work to begin to appointment of designers and specialist engineers, to identify and agree the preferred route of the bridge, and to complete the design work to get the bridge ready for the necessary planning application to be developed prior to submission. The original timetable proposed in March 2020 was contingent on the funds initially allocated by the County Council being sufficient to complete the project. The detailed design and costing work, as reported to Cabinet in March this year, showed that the original allocation was not adequate, and that additional funds would be required before a contractor could be appointed; hence the request to the FOP for additional funds.

In fairness to the County Council, all Growth Deal infrastructure projects have been impacted by the unexpectedly high levels of inflation in the construction industry as a result of the pandemic, lockdown and most recently the war in Ukraine, none of which the County Council could reasonably have been expected to have anticipated. As the various publicly available reports to the FOP make clear, many projects have had to be changed, or have their budgets significantly increased, while others have not progressed at all and have had to be removed from the Growth Deal programme altogether. In contrast, since the City Council took on responsibility for the Osney Mead bridge in the summer of 2020 there has been substantial progress, with the scheme now ready for a formal planning application and the appointment of a contractor, which was why it scored highly in the assessment used to weigh up different Growth Deal funded projects in the recent review.

AH2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Growth Deal Scheme Progress

Now that his misapprehension has been corrected, I'm sure the Councillor will wish to join me in thanking and congratulating City Council officers of their excellent work in progressing this scheme in difficult circumstances.

AH3 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Osney Mead–Oxpens Bridge

Question

Has this council had substantive discussions with the promoters of Oxpens, Osney Mead or both to secure developer funding for the bridge, given the intense pressure on the remaining Growth Deal funds and the urgent claims of competing schemes on grounds of safety, amenity and housing delivery?

Written Response

The criteria for infrastructure schemes funded by the Growth Deal are first that they must enable the delivery of housing that would not otherwise be delivered, and then that it is highly desirable that in doing so the new infrastructure should create the possibility of generating future funding for further infrastructure via CIL. The bridge is not a requirement for the Oxpens scheme, and so cannot be funded via a developer contribution from that development. The bridge is however a requirement in the Local Plan for the development of residential uses on Osney Mead, where there are a substantial number of different landowners with different sizes of landholding. The number and variety of landowners makes it impractical to pursue developer funding from them at this stage, whereas using Growth Deal funding now will mean that all landowners on Osney Mead will be liable for planning obligations and/or CIL if and when they bring their sites forward for development, as they will then be able to. This is an example of exactly how the Growth Deal funding is supposed to work.

AH4 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Bridge Service to Barton Park

Question

Written Response

AH4 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Hollingsworth – Bridge Service to Barton Park	
<p>Given that the purpose of the Growth Deal is to facilitate housing delivery, did the Council consider suggesting adding a pedestrian and foot bridge from Barton Park to the list of schemes, for which plans exist, and where it has built a new housing quarter? Barton Park residents feel cut off from Oxford because the bridge was dropped and they have to use a risky pedestrian crossing on the A40 Eastern Bypass Road.</p>	<p>A bridge at Barton Park was initially considered at the early stages of the planning of that scheme, but when it became clear that it would not be possible to build a DDA compliant bridge because of the differences in levels between the two sides of the A40 at Barton Park it was not pursued. As a bridge at Barton Park was not physically deliverable, it was not proposed for inclusion in the Growth Deal. The Bayswater development next to Barton Park in South Oxfordshire may offer an opportunity for a bridge across the A40 to be built, as the levels are much more equal at this point west of the Barton Park junction.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>I find it very odd that it wasn't possible to build a bridge due to the difference in levels over the two sides of the A40. Can Cllr Hollingsworth clarify exactly why you can't have a bridge that is built on a different level on one side to the other?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>Yes. I could have gone on to expand on the issue. The issue is that a DDA compliant bridge has to have ramps as well as steps. When the two sides are different, obviously you need a much greater take of land for the ramps and that was the issue. The issue is you would have ended up with an enormous land take on the northern side of the A40, so the Barton Park side, for the ramps for the bridge. So essentially it wasn't a practical, deliverable option and that was a conclusion arrived at quite early on in the process. I am sure there are plans and diagrams which you can request from officers to further your research.</p>

AH5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Front Garden Conversion	
<p>Question</p> <p>There is a current trend of residents removing their front walls and converting their front gardens to parking spaces, and in turn partially obstructing council owned pavements. If this is allowed, what is the council's position on the minimum space requirements if this is</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The removal of a front boundary and the conversion of a front garden is permitted development, meaning that no planning permission is required. In its wisdom, the Government in creating this permitted development right has only added one proviso, which is that the surface should</p>

AH5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Front Garden Conversion

permitted development and when does such change of use require planning permission? In cases where this is not permissible, have any cases of enforcement action taken over the last 3 years?

be permeable. There have been several cases when the enforcement team have been involved, but as it is the only element where enforcement action is possible all have related to the permeability of the surface, and all were resolved by changes made by the householder to address the concerns raised.

Space standards, which would be applied when a space requiring planning permission is created – for example when a new home was built, or a house converted into flats - are therefore moot in these circumstances. If a car overhangs the pavement and blocks it sufficiently to cause an obstruction, then Thames Valley Police have the powers to issue a fixed penalty notice. The County Council would only have the power to issue a penalty notice via its traffic wardens if the vehicle was contravening a specific parking restriction.

The Government carried out a consultation on pavement parking in 2020, asking for views on different options to expand the ban that applies only in London across the country. According to the Department for Transport website they are still “analysing feedback”. This delay is absolutely unacceptable, and the sooner powers are given to highways authorities to issue fines to drivers who block pavements, the better.

Supplementary Question

To clarify this is regarding the removal of boundary walls which allows cars to park in the front of houses and it is commonly a problem where cars are bigger than the space that has been converted as a parking space. I understand from your written response that essentially the only thing we can do to address that is encourage Thames Valley Police to be putting enforcement notices or Fixed Penalty Notices to the offending owners

Verbal Response

It is a thing that has been raised by Councils up and down the country, not just with Thames Valley Police. It is something that this Council has flagged with them and Oxfordshire County Council has flagged with them. Thames Valley Police’s response has by and large been: we’ve have our budgets cut, this just isn’t a high enough priority. My answer sets out how unsatisfactory the current situation is; it is a complete

AH5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Front Garden Conversion

of those vehicles and properties where this is happening. Is this something that you could possibly take to your joint meetings that you have with them as the Council more broadly?

nonsense of a position and the fact that the Government have been cogitating for nearly two years on consultation they launched with some fanfare I think is pretty poor. It is a situation which needs proper resolution; so yes, we will do our best but I fear that the Thames Valley Police response is going to be as it has been in the past and this entirely unsatisfactory situation will continue – and it will continue, no doubt, until there is a really serious accident caused by this and I deeply regret that.

AH6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Occupancy Policy

Question

What is the council's position on placing local occupancy clauses on new builds as a condition of planning to address the housing crisis in Oxford?

Written Response

A Local Occupancy requirement for private new builds could only be included as a planning condition or a planning obligation if we had such a policy in our local plan and, to be included in the plan, such a policy would need to have been supported by evidence presented to a Local Plan enquiry. Such clauses do exist, but are largely limited to the various National Park authorities, where there are very stringent conditions limiting any new building at all, and specific challenges relating to second homes and holiday letting. A specific example where a local occupancy clause would be justified is for new housing for agricultural or forestry workers which would otherwise not be given planning permission. Neither I nor officers are aware of any council or city similar to Oxford pursuing such a policy, and I am not clear what level of evidence would need to be provided to support it in an urban area with a highly mobile population drawn not just from across the country but from round the world.

Like most Councils, the City Council does have local occupancy rules in our allocation scheme for affordable and social housing, and this seems to be the

AH6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Local Occupancy Policy	
	right balance to strike on this matter.
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>I understand that we have said in the response that it is unclear what level of evidence that would be needed to be provided to support pursuing such a policy in the context of an urban area with a highly mobile population. However there is a fixed local population that have been here for a long time and who are being priced out of the area, so I wonder whether we could explore what evidence would be needed to see if a local occupancy clause could be established?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I will talk to officers about what sort of evidence they think might be required for such a thing. To my knowledge, these clauses are only currently being applied in the National Parks, where building any new homes is incredibly difficult and where, if you do have an exemption to build a home, then quite often putting one of these clauses on is a good way of ensuring it doesn't immediately get turned into a second home or a short term let. I have some nervousness about exactly how these clauses might work. Some of us with long memories may recall Tower Hamlets back in the late 1980s where a clause on a housing policy was straight out, blatant racism and that is why I feel really queasy about this. Even if I found out what the evidence base is, I am unlikely to think this is a good idea.</p>

AH7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – External Insulation	
<p>Question</p> <p>Given the current energy and cost of living crisis, why does Oxford City Council require planning permission for external insulation in its planning policy?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Government has created a permitted development right for external insulation except for listed buildings and in conservation areas, where planning permission is still required. It is not therefore the City Council that requires planning permission in these circumstances, but the Government.</p>

AH8 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Housing Demand	
<p>Question</p> <p>Considering the fall of Oxfordshire 2050 and the new demand to be introduced by OxWED, how can we now achieve the net reduction in housing demand needed to bring Oxford's cost of living under</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Following the demise of the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan, the existing duty to co-operate system laid out in the NPPF will apply. Each planning authority will need to identify and provide for its housing need, and where that is not possible</p>

AH8 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Housing Demand

control?

because of a lack of capacity then the duty to co-operate requires that neighbouring planning authorities work together to provide sufficient sites to meet demand.

Supplementary Question

Given that we're pursuing a policy of focusing new commercial development in the city, thereby contributing to a local housing shortage, isn't it rather abusing the spirit of the duty to co-operate, to create a problem and then ask the Planning Inspector to oblige your neighbours to resolve it and aren't you concerned that the Inspector may call your bluff in that respect?

Verbal Response

No, I'm not concerned because unlike you I went to the last public enquiry and heard the Inspector then assess our existing policies in the 2036 Local Plan, which strike the appropriate balance between the provision of housing need and the provision of employment space and jobs – both of which are requirements of any Local Plan. The alternative proposition, I should be clear, is not to switch-off jobs and pretend that jobs will just disappear from Oxfordshire – which is something I hear from a wide range of people as if somehow either the Oxford Local Plan or the Oxfordshire Growth Deal signed only a few years ago have been the only things that have created jobs. You look at what is driving economic growth in Oxfordshire, it is decisions made 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago in the case of places like Milton Park. We have an option, I think, or we have a couple of options as to where employment should go – we could pursue the failed, utterly failed and discredited county towns policy which ends up with jobs in Greenfields accessible only by car, or we try and create jobs where they can be best reached by public transport and active transport, which means in the city centres and the town centres. That seems to me a much better way of proceeding. To pretend that somehow having jobs in Oxford is the sole driver of housing need is entirely wrong, as was evidenced at the 2036 Local Plan, at previous Local Plans and will no doubt be the subject of conversation in front of Inspectors at the 2040 Local Plan hearings if and when we get to that stage.

AH9 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Use of Low-density Commercial Sites in LP2040

Question

Will you consider permitting or encouraging the use of low-density commercial sites ("big box stores", e.g. on Botley Road) for higher density housing in LP2040?

Written Response

The existing Local Plan already encourages increases in density on existing employment and housing sites, and allows for conversion to housing on all but a very small number of strategic employment sites. These sites can sometimes be subject to other limitations, and the retail park on the Botley Road is a case in point, where national planning policy relating to flood zones means that the vast majority of the area could not be used for residential development. Given the demand for high quality laboratory and research space in Oxfordshire, and given that the Botley Road retail park is both currently a substantial generator of car traffic and is in a highly sustainable location for public and active transport options, this site seems a much better place to meet that demand than elsewhere in the county on sites that can only realistically be reached by car.

AH10 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – LP2040

Question

The LP2040 introductory text suggests intent to make a case for housing requirement above the existing SHMA figures (with any new amount presumably exported to neighbouring districts). How will you justify requiring this of our neighbours when Oxford's development policy particularly in the West End is actively creating significant new demand?

Written Response

The NPPF requires that Local Plans meet the need for housing and provide sufficient employment space to support the local economy, particularly where it is a 'global leader driving innovation'. Oxfordshire's economy fits that description exactly, but it is not driven by whether or not sites in the West End are developed or otherwise, but by decisions made across Oxfordshire 50 years ago or more. It is simply not possible to wish away the consequences of those decisions. The issue is therefore where jobs should be located, and car free sites in central Oxford like Oxpens are much better and more sustainable than any other option.

Supplementary Question

Verbal Response

AH10 From Cllr Snowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – LP2040

You say in your answer that you believe Oxpens is the best site for new commercial use. I wonder why you're so pessimistic about the next best alternative. It would seem to me that there are many Oxfordshire towns which might constitute themselves a highly sustainable location, but you seem convinced that a mostly residential Oxpens would be disastrous in this respect – why is that?

It is not for me to speculate as to how the councils around Oxfordshire position employment land in their Local Plans – that is for them. But if you look at where previous administrations have encouraged them and celebrated this, it is very frequently not in those town centres, it is in out-of-town business parks like Milton Park where it is pretty difficult to use public transport to get to it; Harwell even more so. You look at other sites around the county and they are even more challenging from a public transport point of view. So it is not for me to judge as to where those district councils ought to be putting their employment sites, though I am pretty clear where I would if I had any say in the matter – which I do not. What I do think is that when it comes to employment in the city as part of the broader Oxfordshire economy that putting employment in locations which are accessible to public transport is the best option and that is what I will continue to pursue.

AH11 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Promotion of Public Boat Mooring

Question

In light of the city's focus on sustainable transportation, what is the council's policy on promoting public boat moorings along the riverbanks of the city and greater use of the river network as part of an integrated transportation system?

Written Response

The Oxford Local Plan 2036 includes specific policies encouraging the creation of new permanent residential and temporary visitor moorings, and there is a demonstrated need for both. There are limitations that we have to work within, notably the requirements of the Environment Agency and the Canal & River Trust that moorings should not have negative impacts on navigation or navigational safety on the waterways, but where possible options for new moorings will be encouraged. For example the development site allocated in the Local Plan at Land East of Redbridge Park and Ride has a requirement for the provision of new moorings and associated facilities on Weirs Mill Stream as part of any

AH11 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Promotion of Public Boat Mooring

	<p>development.</p> <p>Moorings in Oxford are individually managed, across a number of agencies and private operators, based on land ownership. Where the council is land owner, there are a number of temporary, 72 hour moorings for boats to moor in the north, centre, and south of the city. There are also a number of temporary moorings managed by the Environment Agency, and Canal & River Trust.</p> <p>The council is actively working with partners to assess the viability of projects that can make moorings in Oxford more sustainable, through the council's Air Quality Action Plan.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services**NC1 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Chapman – AAEREON QL System Implementation**

Question	Written Response
<p>Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on the progress of the implementation of the AAREON QL system? In particular, has the expected end date of August 2022 for the full implementation without workarounds being used been met?</p>	<p>Removal of manual workarounds following the implementation of the QL Housing Management System continues to be a priority. Testing is currently taking place on the repairs and maintenance billing process. Batches of between 500 and 1000 jobs have been tested and whilst there have been some errors these have been quickly fixed. Further batch testing is being undertaken. Whilst the project team have not achieved the planned 'business as usual' date of this process by the end of August, progress has still been made, with a view now to going live with this element of the system in early October. This will remove the final workaround that is currently in place. Work is also continuing on exploiting the system as originally planned including testing on a version</p>

NC1 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Chapman – AAEREON QL System Implementation

4.11 upgrade for all modules. This upgrade which provides added functionality and updates to the current version of the software will take place after the repairs and maintenance billing process has been finalised.

NC2 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Chapman – AAEREON QL System External Consultant Report

Question

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the external consultant's report into the AAREON QL implementation has been completed and tell us when it will be available to Councillors?

Written Response

The external consultants have produced a draft report. Officers have sought further clarification on a number of areas. The report is expected to be finalised shortly and it will then be reported to Audit and Governance Committee together with management responses to the issues raised, before any wider Member circulation.

NC3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – OCC Personal Pronoun Policy

Question

What is the council's policy on encouraging city council employees to include their personal pronouns on their email signature?

Written Response

Some colleagues are already including their personal pronouns in their email signature.

We will undertake some awareness raising to explain why personal pronouns are helpful, how including them in email signatures helps to foster a more inclusive environment; and provide guidance to make it happen.

We do not feel that this should be covered by a policy but believe it is a matter of personal choice.

NC4 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Chapman – Waste Hierarchy

Question

What work does the Council do to encourage local companies and

Written Response

When securing a new business, ODS will always work with customers in an effort

NC4 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Chapman – Waste Hierarchy

employers to follow the waste hierarchy?

to reduce their carbon footprint and potentially their operating costs. This is regularly reviewed and if potential opportunities are identified the client is informed. Also see **Appendix A**.

NC5 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Chapman – Cost of LTN Filter Bollards**Question**

Given ODS is the contractor replacing the bollards, could the portfolio holder provide the total cost to date of Low Traffic Neighbourhood filter bollards being stolen or destroyed, and then replaced across both the East Oxford and Cowley schemes?

Written Response

ODS is a sub-contractor for this work, working to a private client who is responsible for the County Council's highways work. As such the information cannot be provided as it is commercially sensitive. I can understand why Cllr Kerr wishes to know the costs involved as there is a case in terms of the public interest that they are revealed. However, ODS is a sub-contractor and unable to provide this information.

NC6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – Subsidised Water Butts**Question**

Has the Council considered offering subsidised water butts, like some councils offer subsidised compost bins?

Written Response

Given the cost of living crisis and our own budget challenges, this cannot be a priority for limited Council funds at this time. Water butts are available to buy in many retail outlets and many residents already install these in their gardens and on Council allotments at their own cost.

NC7 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Chapman – Roadside Trees**Question**

I note that ODS have ceased replacing failed roadside trees as part of their minor road maintenance activities under their Section 42 agreement with the county, undermining the council's Urban Forest Strategy. How can you ensure we don't lose our urban canopy as a consequence?

Written Response

Neither ODS or the City Council have ever received funds from Oxfordshire County Council for roadside tree-planting. Other sources of funding are sought for tree-planting to help deliver our Urban Forest Strategy. We are set to plant 80 trees this forthcoming planting season within our parks and green spaces funded through the Urban Tree

NC7 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Chapman – Roadside Trees	
	<p>Challenge Fund and by local community groups. We are also seeking crowdfunding and sponsorship to help support our delivery of a new “Jubilee Avenue” of trees on Ridgefield Road, as part of the Queen’s Green Canopy initiative - which the Palace has extended to March 2023. Over the past decade Oxford City Council has planted over 10,000 trees in the city. However, the biggest contribution towards increasing the tree canopy in Oxford is likely to come from residents and institutions planting trees in their gardens and on private land. We are working with partners and will be launching a campaign to encourage and support this in the run up to National Tree Week: 26 Nov-4 Dec.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>The answer given is at odds with ODS’ Director of Infrastructure who described specifically the act of replacing a failed roadside tree as having been previously considered an act of maintenance and therefore relevant to s42 and no longer. Would you confer with them and seek to clarify how the disagreement arises?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I think the answer is right so I am quite surprised by your question. From all my experience the only time we’ve had replacement trees is in a scheme like the Access to Headington’ scheme, where we had trees that died off during the creation of that particular scheme and then they were replaced as a part of that scheme. I will go away and look at this, but the answer is the answer – we do not get money from s42 to do this; money comes from other sources as outlined in my answer.</p>

NC8 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Bike Parking	
<p>Question</p> <p>Does the council commit to ensuring that any future upgrade to bike parking at the town hall is configured to be accessible for a variety of bike types (e.g. tandems, recumbent bikes, trikes, side by side bikes) to ensure an inclusive approach to bike parking?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>As part of the move to the Town Hall this year the Council is ensuring that existing capacity for cycle parking is retained. We will be investing in new bike racks for 80 bikes, however given the footprint available it won’t be possible to immediately include the range of options outlined. As part of the longer term investment in the Town Hall I am happy</p>

NC8 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Bike Parking	
	to look at options for the wider range of bicycles described.
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>We appreciate the upgrades that are going to be made to bike parking in the Town Hall. Do you commit to, as part of this, following some of the national standards for bike parking, just to make sure that there is sufficient space for the proposed bike racks for 80 bikes in the Town Hall?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I'm sure we will follow the national standards and be an exemplar of them.</p>

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice

IT1 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Thomas – VAT on Clean and Renewable Energy Products	
<p>Question</p> <p>Is the Council lobbying the UK Government to reduce VAT on all clean and renewable energy products?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>While we're all still trying to understand the full ramifications of the Chancellor's mini budget, it doesn't appear to undo the changes introduced in April this year that removed VAT on energy efficiency measures for the next five years – including the installation of renewable systems such as solar panels and heat pumps.</p>

Cabinet Member for Health and Transport

LU1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – eScooter Enforcement	
<p>Question</p> <p>What authorities have done to contain council-approved and privately-owned E-scooter riders who are caught not wearing helmets and/or using pavements?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The County Council and Thames Valley Police are the enforcing authorities for eScooters. The city council has no powers regarding their use.</p>

LU1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – eScooter Enforcement**Supplementary Question**

I'm disappointed in the answer; I think it should have come from the community safety portfolio holder. We have a Community Safety Partnership where we have different partners; this question was from one of my constituents so I said I would ask the Council. I would appreciate if that could be asked to the Police or the County what the score is, as this is what the people are worried about – people riding around in their private eScooters without a helmet or anything. The only question was to get a number from the Police – how many have they stopped or confiscated or is there any enforcement out there? That is what the people want to know.

Verbal Response

It isn't a legal requirement to wear a helmet, so we can't do anything about that – you don't have to wear a helmet if you're on a scooter or a bike, that's a matter of choice. Riding on pavements is absolutely illegal and they shouldn't be doing that. The illegally owned scooters are a problem as they are not speed limited like the trial ones; the trial ones if they go into a pedestrianised area they drop their speed, unlike the illegal ones. I have been out with the Police on one or two operations where they have stopped people, so they are putting some resource into it but this is a problem across the whole city and they can't be everywhere. But I'll ask Cllr Walcott if she can get a latest update for you.

LU2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Driveway Letting**Question**

Does the council take a position on driveway letting in general (e.g. via a third party such as Just Park) and also in particular where the council owns the land?

Written Response

The Council would only intervene with regard to driveway letting if there was a specific issue that arose where we had the powers to act.

Supplementary Question

Whilst I recognise the entrepreneurship people are taking in letting out their driveways, has the Council done any analysis to cross-check that any of its properties are being rented out through this driveway letting; and if not, could we look at doing an analysis of that, out of interest more than anything else?

Verbal Response

Would we have the manpower to do that – it would be difficult. It is probably not something that we would take a strict line of enforcement on, even if it did happen to be rife; unless it was causing problems for neighbours around them. Unless it is actually starts to be a reported problem, then I'm afraid we're unlikely to give resources to look at it.

LU3 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – Traffic Reduction Scheme**Question**

I note your remarks at a recent public meeting opposing road pricing (aka

Written Response

From his remarks, it's difficult to understand whether the Councillor

LU3 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – Traffic Reduction Scheme

congestion charging etc) on egalitarian grounds. However the only alternative traffic reduction scheme is a pure quota or rationing approach, which requires (a) that the council anticipate every reasonable exemption since there is no 'flex' in the scheme, and (b) that no location may only be accessible via traffic filters, preventing effective handling of prominent demand sinks such as the perennial Westgate queue. Considering these disadvantages, shouldn't a balance be struck between the merits of quotas and those of pricing?

supports the traffic management and wider transport proposals being put forward by his Lib Dem colleague in the County Council cabinet, or not. What is being proposed and what has my support, is a range of measures including traffic filters, an expanded Zero Emission Zone, a Workplace Parking Levy to pay for additional bus services and improvements to cycle routes, School Streets, and significant investment in rail including the opening of the Cowley Branch Line to passengers.

The traffic filters are a vital building block for meaningful traffic reduction. The modelling suggests they will have a bigger impact on congestion than any other individual measure – reducing traffic levels by around 20% across the city with minimal impact on the ring road, and cutting traffic by over a third in the city centre. These reductions in congestion are vital to allow bus routes to remain viable, and allow new ones to be created.

The system of permits and exemptions to the filters allows for reasonable flexibility, and I would encourage everyone to respond to the consultation to indicate different circumstances that need to be taken in to account.

Queuing for the Westgate car park is an issue. With the traffic filters in place, there should be less traffic using Oxpens Road, as much of the through traffic will be removed. In addition, the non-car alternatives will improve and many more of those currently arriving to the Westgate by car may choose to use bus or Park & Ride rather than drive through a less direct route. Most Westgate customers already choose to use a non-car mode.

Supplementary Question

I note that, while in previous remarks you gave the impression of being very strongly against any use of charging to

Verbal Response

It is difficult. The filter system is obviously being proposed by the Lib Dem and Labour coalition at the County, which is

LU3 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – Traffic Reduction Scheme

pass a filter or enter a zone, preferring the sort of rationing scheme that is on the table at the moment, but in your answer to this question you gave your support for ZEZ expansion, which in its current form follows rules reminiscent of a London-style congestion zone, plus an incentive for EV ownership. It seems like a contradiction - how do you square the two positions?

also behind the ZEZ charging zone, so this is something that all of the parties are having to struggle with I think, looking at both of these. With the cost of living crisis at the moment, obviously anything that involves more charging to people is not welcomed, so in some ways the fact that the ZEZ is to be coming a little bit behind the filters is to be welcomed for that reason. But I think the two things are achieving different things – the filters are absolutely essential for reducing car journeys enough to save our bus network and to make it safer and pleasanter for people to walk and cycle around; the ZEZ is crucial to our ambition for decarbonising our transport system and encouraging the shift to electric cars. So I think we are going to need a bit of both; but all parties will be wrestling with both of these tools – both of which do different things.

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