

To: Council

Date: 28 November 2022

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

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 sent in 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. Question from Linda Newbery – Plant Based Food and Sustainable Farming

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1. Question from Linda Newbery – Plant Based Food and Sustainable Farming

I support Councillor Dunne's motion on Plant Based Food and Sustainable Farming and am disappointed that it won't be heard today.

Councillor Dunne quotes ample scientific evidence that the massive emissions from animal agriculture must be reduced if climate targets are to be met. A behavioural shift is urgently needed. Just as the public is urged to switch to electric vehicles and to use renewable energy, and given opportunities to do so, encouragement must be given to move away from meat and dairy in our diets.

It's a hard message to get across to the public – which makes it crucial that councils and other organisations lead by example. That's not taking away choice, but rather using every opportunity to show that plant-based food can be nourishing, appealing and affordable. Serving plant-based food at Council events will 'normalise' meat-free

eating, helping people to shift from seeing meat as a dietary staple. This is excellent climate leadership.

The motion presents the Council with a straightforward, immediately effective way of showing commitment to its environmental aims, joining forward-thinking councils such as Oxfordshire County Council and Haywards Heath.

Can it please be debated without delay, and will it receive full support from Councillors?

Verbal Response from Cllr Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships

Thank you very much, Linda for coming to address Council today and for your excellent points on the environmental and cost-saving benefits of a plant-based diet – and indeed the health benefits of a plant-based diet.

Firstly, I would like to say that as part of the Council's Oxford to Zero Campaign, we have already advocated that people reduce meat and dairy consumption and we stress this is as much for personal health benefits as well as for environmental ones. The Climate Action Oxfordshire Consumer Advice Portal, which all Oxfordshire Councils have developed jointly, includes a handy tool to calculate your diet's climate footprint.

Whilst we recognise that decisions on diet must be a matter for personal choice, we have consistently made sure that we have, in the past when catering for mass events had plant based options. I think it is important to recognise that we don't any longer as a Council provide food for councillors, so this motion is in a large part a symbolic one and is perhaps why it has not had such a high priority on the agenda. I cannot guarantee you, I'm afraid, that it will be discussed today – I think as you have quite rightly noted it is unlikely to be discussed today.

I am sure we will get round to discussing it at some point, but each time councillors do prioritise motions and it is a democratic process that councillors go through to decide which motions should have greater priority. At this particular Council, we have chosen public transport and cost of living from our Group's perspective as being the motions that we wanted to give highest priority to at this Council. That doesn't mean to say that we don't think that these are important issues. The other thing I cannot guarantee for you is that there will be unanimous support, because again it is a democratic process open to all councillors to take their own view. I would encourage them to support the motion when it comes before us. Thank you very much.