

To: Council
Date: 30 January 2023
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

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

SB1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Conditions for Market Trading in Oxford

Question	Written Response
What conditions does the city council place on market traders who wish to operate a market within the city of Oxford? What steps does the city need to take to develop and adopt a market policy to cover trading on Gloucester Green Market, the Covered Market and	All street trading in the city is considered to be covered by the Street Trading provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1985 unless exempt under section 1) (2) of that Act. The Council has a Street Trading Policy which sets out conditions

SB1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Conditions for Market Trading in Oxford

other market sites in the city in order to promote sustainable business practices of market traders?

under which Street Trading activity may take place. That Policy is currently under review and does contain measures to encourage environmental sustainability in street trading. This review is likely to set out guidelines around the recognition of any new markets.

Both the indoor Covered Market and the outdoor market at Gloucester Green are exempt from the street trading act and not covered by the current street trading policy. The market at Gloucester Green is operated by an independent market operator on behalf of the Council and are required to take full ownership for promoting and ensuring each trader complies with sustainable business practices.

The Covered Market is owned and managed by the City Council, with each trader having their own Lease or Licence in place. The Leasing Strategy, approved by Cabinet in June 2021 is placing greater emphasis on sustainability and encouraging traders to do the same by reviewing supply chains, packaging etc. The Covered Market has also introduced EV Bikes which traders are encouraged to use for local deliveries.

Supplementary Question

Would the Council be open to developing a standalone market policy for the city to cover the indoor and outdoor markets that are exempt from the Street Trading Policy?

Verbal Response

We have already got other mechanisms to control those markets. The Covered Market is part of our Leasing Strategy and we have a whole approach to the Covered Market which does include sustainability – which I know is your particular interest in this topic. Equally, when we procure the Gloucester Green Market that has been part of our strategy in terms of procurement in so far as we can influence it. So I am not sure I see scope for creating yet another strategy. It doesn't feel to me that it would add to our ability to control these things. I think we have got mechanisms that we already use, can use and are using.

SB2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Sky Lanterns**Question**

Would the leader support a ban on the release of Sky lanterns in the City of Oxford due to their environmental impact including on wildlife and pets within and beyond the city?

Written Response

We already stop the release of these lanterns on our land where we can and educate people about the potential hazards they cause. There are a substantial number of parks where we have banned fires using Public Spaces Protections Orders which would prevent the release of lanterns and we are currently investigating options to introduce more specific legislation which would allow a legally enforceable ban across all our parks. We are also proposing to amend our street trading policy to ban the sale of lanterns, this proposal will be considered by the General Purposes Licensing Committee in February 2023 for recommendation to Council for adoption.

SB3 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Brown – Community Hub**Question**

Does the council support the creation of a central community centre hub for Headington?

Written Response

There are a large number of community assets within the Headington area which are available to local people as meeting and community spaces. These include Headington Community Centre, Oxford Brookes University, Cheney School, Barton Neighbourhood Centre, Risinghurst Community Centre, Bullingdon Community Centre, Quarry Village Hall, the Coach House, Old Headington Village Hall, All Saints Church House, Ruskin College. In addition, the area is covered by our OX3 Locality Team. I therefore do not believe there is any demonstrated need for any additional Community Centre/Hub in Headington.

SB4 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Brown – Windrush 75th Anniversary Celebration**Question****Written Response**

<p>To the Leader of the Council: 22 June will see the 75th Anniversary of the Windrush, the ship that brought hundreds of immigrants from the Caribbean to the UK. Campaigners are calling for the date to be “a diamond jubilee for modern, diverse Britain”. How will the City Council be marking and celebrating this date?</p>	<p>The City Council have already put together a small team to explore ideas, which will include working with the community.</p> <p>This will include flying the Windrush flag on the Town Hall and supporting the Windrush group to put on a range of accessible activities through city council grant funding and the use of city council facilities (e.g. Museum of Oxford).</p>
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SB5 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Brown – Council App and Digital Engagement

<p>Question</p> <p>Why has the Council discontinued its app? What plans are in place to replace this digital engagement?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>There was limited usage of the Council app – which replicated the services available on our mobile-friendly website and was used primarily for bin collection reminders. About 18 months ago, we replaced the app with a new digital system that allows residents to sign up for automatic bin reminder messages as well as digital newsletters that provide details on upcoming events in Oxford, news on the Covered Market and the Museum of Oxford, advice on our Go Active programme to keep fit and much, much more. Removing the app has saved the Council £10,000 a year – and this saving was included in the 2022/23 Budget. Meanwhile, our digital newsletters have over 31,000 subscriptions across the various topics and we are continuing to work to expand this base and the levels of engagement.</p>
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SB6 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Brown – Oxford United Ground

<p>Question</p> <p>What is the Council doing to ensure Oxford United’s home ground remains within the City?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council is supportive of Oxford United and their search for a suitable ground. We have worked with them over many years and have supported them in looking for alternative sites in the city, but there are no suitable sites available.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council

ET1 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Budget / ODS Commercial Model

Question

I note that in the budget for consultation, a “[revised] ODS Commercial Model”, comprised of altering the margins charged on services billed to the general fund and the HRA, has the effect in practice of moving £280,000 between the two accounts, which the council would be forbidden from doing directly. Does this bending of the spirit of the rules concern you, either from an audit or an ethics perspective?

Written Response

There is nothing unethical in the budget adjustment here. ODS have been incurring losses on building works undertaken on behalf of the council primarily in relation to repairs and maintenance to council houses. The budget adjustment is the residual part of an efficiency exercise undertaken in ODS which has seen increased efficiency in ODS through reduced operatives and better procurement. The residual charge of £280k will enable ODS to break even on these works and ensure that the appropriate amount of charge is made to the HRA.

ET2 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Budget / Turnover Saving

Question

I note that the budget’s proposed “Turnover Saving” refers to a policy of intentionally leaving a gap between an employee’s departure and their replacement starting in post in order to save staffing costs. Do you agree that while not directly customer-facing, by inducing short-term labour shortages and inhibiting effective handover this is likely to have a negative effect on all council operations and therefore should be emphasised for reversal as future income permits?

Written Response

In reality a one month drag on all posts that become vacant (on which this saving is based) is likely to take place anyway particularly as most appointees are on 3 months’ notice periods, so this is a sensible way of assessing likely spend based on likely levels of staff turnover. The councillor has the opportunity to propose an amendment to this measure if he is concerned about the impact. We will of course look at the progress on this and other savings as part of our regular budget monitoring, as well as any impacts upon services, and we always try to include insights from this process in future budget rounds.

Supplementary Question

Considering that no corresponding turnover item appeared in the previous year’s budget, is it true that a manager

Verbal Response

A written response will be provided after the meeting.

<p>who was able to ensure an overlap and an in-person handover would now be exceeding their budget, whereas previously this would have been the default situation and any unwanted break in between post holders would have constituted an unexpected windfall saving?</p>	
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ET3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Turner – Trap Ground Bridge Repairs	
Question	Written Response
<p>What is the current status of the Trap Ground bridge repairs?</p>	<p>I am not completely sure which bridge is being referred to. The Trap Grounds Bridge (from the allotments) has been inspected and minor repairs were identified. These repair works are now complete.</p> <p>A condition survey has also been undertaken on Aristotle Lane Bridge, and while the gabion baskets do not represent an immediate health and safety risk, works of repair have been identified. The financial responsibility to remedy lies with Network Rail and the Council is currently negotiating the costs with that body.</p>

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture

SA1 From Cllr Sandelson to Cllr Aziz – Transport for Asylum Seekers	
Question	Written Response
<p>What support is the city council providing directly or in collaboration with the county council to provide asylum seekers allowed to work with transport to and from the city to seek employment (e.g. in the hospitality industry)?</p>	<p>Those who claim Asylum in the UK are not normally allowed to work whilst their claim is being considered, we would be required to ascertain if the said individuals have rights to work and access to funds, therefore would be on a case-to-case basis. However, people who have claimed asylum in the UK can apply for permission to work if they have been waiting 12 months for a decision, and they are not considered responsible for the delay. If permission is granted, the</p>

SA1 From Cllr Sandelson to Cllr Aziz – Transport for Asylum Seekers	
	<p>person will be allowed to take up jobs on the shortage occupation list only.</p> <p>Refer to this link to the relevant Home Office publication on the UK Government website.</p>

SA2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – Support for Asylum Seekers Housed Near Kassam Stadium	
Question	Written Response
<p>Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the Council’s work supporting asylum seekers housed near the Kassam Stadium by the Home Office?</p>	<p>Oxford City Council has been working alongside partners and stakeholders to ensure that asylum seekers are supported. This has included working in partnership with Care4Calais and Asylum Welcome to ensure that the residents have appropriate clothing through donations from the wider community including our local places of worship. We have also worked alongside grassroots community groups and stakeholders including Oxford hub, EMBS to organise basic English lessons at Blackbird Leys Community centre, volunteer led, that is in motion now and the turnout has been high with 60 people at the first session. Both Care4Calais and Asylum Welcome continue their weekly outreach, onsite and at our Blackbird leys community enter, allowing an avenue for the asylum seekers to ask questions and be supported.</p>

Cabinet Member for Safer Communities

DW1 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Walcott – Licensed Premises Bleed Kits	
Question	Written Response
<p>What measures does the Council currently take to ensure licensed premises have bleed kits?</p>	<p>There is no legal requirement to have bleed kits in licensed premises. Bleed kits can be used to assist trauma cases in a variety of settings and have been</p>

DW1 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Walcott – Licensed Premises Bleed Kits

actively promoted by a charity, the Daniel Baird Foundation. Some local authorities and police forces have recommended them to premises connected with the night time economy. We will raise the promotion of Bleed Kits in licensed premises at the next Pub Watch and Nightsafe meetings that we attend with our Police & NHS partners.

Cabinet Member for Housing**LS1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Linda Smith – Selective Licensing****Question**

Since the implementation of Selective Licensing, how many properties have been registered?

Written Response

Since 1st September when the scheme started over 7,500 applications have been received with over 2,000 expected from agents. 732 draft licences have been issued and 305 properties have been licensed. In addition, 52 Temporary Exemption Applications have been received with 38 issued and 8 refused.

LS2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Linda Smith – Selective Licensing Enforcement Officers**Question**

How many enforcement officers did the Council have before the introduction of Selective Licensing? Since the introduction of the scheme, what is the total number of enforcement officers to date?

Written Response

The council had 6 enforcement officer posts dealing with the private rented sector before the introduction of Selective Licensing. These are all now funded by license fees and a further 3 posts are currently in the process of recruitment. As enforcement activity increases, more officers will be recruited.

LS3 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Linda Smith – Selective Licensing Inspections 1**Question****Written Response**

Since the introduction of Selective Licensing, how many properties has the Council done an inspection of?	The Council does not inspect properties before issuing a licence under the Selective Licensing scheme. Since 1 st September there have been inspections of 43 properties.
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LS4 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Linda Smith – Selective Licensing Inspections 2	
Question How many properties is the Council hoping to inspect per year? Reference Selective Licensing.	Written Response The annual target will vary according to the numbers actually licensed and the resources available, but the bid to the government stated that we would licence an estimated 10,000 properties and that we would inspect 60% of them during the 5 years of the scheme.

LS5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Linda Smith – Insulation of Rented Properties	
Question What insulation standards does the city council require for HMOs and private rented properties within the city and is there scope for these to be enhanced? What is the compliance rate of any insulation standards within the rented sector in Oxford?	Written Response In line with national statutory requirements, properties that are rented out in Oxford must be rated as an E or above on the EPC unless exempt from the requirements to have an EPC. The council cannot require higher standards than national legislation but we have incentivised higher standards through accreditation schemes where the landlord has to achieve the highest EPC ratings possible, within reason, for the property construction type. There are no F and G rated properties in the rented sector in Oxford and we continue monitoring the data to ensure that remains the case.
Supplementary Question What enforcement actions are taken - how do you check that there is adherence to the EPC rating of E or above with the HMOs, because I am concerned that they may not actually be at level E?	Verbal Response That is the point of the licensing scheme. Those certificates have to be provided as part of the granting of the licence. Those certificates are produced by professionals who are registered to do their job, so we leave it to them.

LS6 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Linda Smith – Solar Panels on Council Buildings**Question**

What percentage of Council owned buildings currently have solar panels?
What steps is the Council currently taking to increase this?

Written Response

Currently 3.5% of Council owned buildings (General Fund and housing) have Solar panels.

We are currently taking a fabric first approach with our housing stock as this is where government funding is targeted and is the approach recommended to reach EPC C (as per our target to reach EPC C by 2030 in 95% of our own housing stock). However solar PV will have a role to play in the future for reaching net zero for both our housing and general fund properties. As part of planned roof replacements we will be ensuring that, where possible, roofs are made suitable for future installation of solar panels.

Supplementary Question

While I think we all accept and agree that fabric first is best approach, it is very expensive and will take a long time to rollout. So surely in the meantime if rooves of properties are generally sound, why can't we go ahead and fit solar panels to the rooves as a much easier, quicker and simpler intermediary action?

Verbal Response

Thank you very much for that suggestion. At moment we are focussed on getting 95% of Council homes up to the EPC rating of C or above and we are influenced as well by the Government funding that is available and making full use of that to complement our own investment. Going forward we know that solar panels will be very important in terms of getting to net zero carbon by 2040 – and we will be looking at every opportunity and every single funding stream that is available to utilise solar to get us to that goal. I look forward to working with both our new Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice and yourself on looking for those opportunities and exploiting them.

LS7 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Linda Smith – SWEP Provision 1**Question**

How many beds have been provided under SWEP provision during cold weather during 2022/23?

Written Response

Please note that SWEP is currently open at the time of responding to this question. The data used runs up to the night of

	<p>January 18th into 19th. At this date there have been 15 days of SWEPP activation providing 258 nights of accommodation, at an average of 17 spaces per night. The lowest number of people accessing SWEPP on one night is 10, and the highest is 21.</p> <p>There are 29 spaces made available for SWEPP each night. This can be supplemented by utilising spaces in existing supported accommodation or booking hotel rooms if required. Since January 1st, the independent Oxford Winter Night Shelter (OWNS) has been operating, providing up to 10 spaces of accommodation until the end of March. Officers work closely with OWNS when planning SWEPP activations.</p>
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LS8 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Linda Smith – SWEPP Provision 2	
<p>Question</p> <p>Have there been any people turned away from SWEPP provision in 2022/3. What are the reasons for this?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Please note that SWEPP is currently open at the time of responding to this question. The data used runs up to the night of January 18th into 19th. So far this year no-one has been refused access to SWEPP. Whilst we try to accommodate everyone during SWEPP activation, access is not unconditional. Reasons for refusing someone would normally be connected to significant anti-social behaviour. If someone needs to be turned away from a venue consideration would be given as to whether they could be accommodated in an alternative venue.</p>

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

AH1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Paving Over Front Gardens	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can you confirm that paving over the front garden is in breach of the city's</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The paving over of front gardens is, regrettably, permitted by the nationally</p>

AH1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Paving Over Front Gardens	
<p>planning policy and if so, how many enforcement cases have been taken over the last 2 years?</p>	<p>set General Permitted Development Order 2015 (Schedule 2, Part 1, Class F). Therefore to do so is not in and of itself a breach of planning policy.</p> <p>However, there are conditions attached to the permitted development rules which need to be adhered to, and the Council can and will investigate if it appears that these have not been followed.</p> <p>Within the last 2 years the council has opened 5 investigations into potential breaches of the conditions relating to permitted development at the front of properties. Of these, 3 were closed as investigation showed that there was in fact no breach. The remaining 2 investigations are ongoing, one of which is awaiting the determination of a retrospective planning application.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>This is an issue in my ward – basically cars are overhanging onto the pavement because people have paved over their front gardens. While I understand that this is permitted development and therefore allowed, you mentioned that there can be conditions that can be attached to this permitted development and sometimes there are breaches in that. Can you give an example of what kind of conditions can be attached, or the kinds of breaches that allow the Council to actually take action?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>It is about permeability not size, unfortunately. The requirement in the permitted development regulations is that if you do choose to pave over your front garden you need to do it in a permeable way and it will be over breaches to the permeability not to the size. The issue that you highlight I absolutely recognise what a pain it is. The view of ‘if it doesn’t fit on the street you shouldn’t have that car’ seems applicable - if you can’t fit it into the parking space then you need a smaller vehicle. I do encourage all councillors to encourage the parking enforcement teams to look at whether they can issue tickets, but I appreciate they find it very difficult apparently to issue tickets for cars parked across pavements, which is deeply regrettable.</p>

AH2 From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Hollingsworth – Nesting Sites	
<p>Question</p> <p>What scope is there for updating planning regulations to enforce the</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The current Local Plan 2036 policy G8 requires that biodiversity measures are to</p>

<p>provision of nesting sites for species such as Swifts, bats, etc., in new builds across the city?</p>	<p>be included in all development proposals that require a Design and Access Statement; the preamble to the policy makes clear that these measures should include bat and bird boxes as appropriate.</p> <p>Looking forward, the 2040 Local Plan Preferred Options recognises the hierarchy for delivery of mandatory 10% net gains as set out in the Environmental Act. It also, in recognition of the importance of securing biodiversity features on-site, tests the ambition for a policy with specific requirements to secure biodiversity features on site (Policy Option Set G5: Protecting and enhancing onsite biodiversity in Oxford). Bird and bat boxes would clearly have a part to play as part of such a suite of enhancement measures.</p> <p>The final wording of the policy will be part of the Regulation 19 Consultation on the 2040 Local Plan, which is due at the end of this year.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Does the councillor have views specifically on the use of so called 'swift bricks' in new builds, which as the name suggests are very easily installable because they are in effect a constituent part of any human property?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>My personal view is that all tools to implement a policy ought to be open. Things like bat boxes and swift bricks are important, but I think there are other things which are equally important, for example planting native hedges. As we move forward the fullest array of things we can do to maximise biodiversity are important and swift bricks would be something that would get my personal support.</p>

<p>AH3 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Greenfield Site Review</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>I note that Ruskin Fields (HELAA site 463) would have a Site Policy in the 2040 Local Plan draft, having flipped from rejection due to anticipated harm to the Old Headington CA in the 2016 HELAA, to acceptance without comment</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The HELAA does not allocate land for development. It is a tool that follows a nationally prescribed methodology to identify sites that have development potential by testing whether the site is 'suitable', 'available' and 'achievable'</p>

regarding that shift in opinion in the 2017 HELAA. Meanwhile HELAA site 112b2-6, the fields between Marston and the Cherwell, remain protected due to rejection in the Green Belt Report 2017, in turn citing harm to the Old Marston CA. Why the distinction between these two apparently-similar cases?

(viable) for development.

The actual allocation or otherwise of a site for development is made through Local Plan process, of which the HELAA is one piece of evidence.

Ruskin Field (HELAA site 463) falls within a conservation area and contains listed buildings. At the time of the 2016 HELAA the site formed part of the larger 'Land North of Old Headington' parcel (HELAA site 116) which was assessed as not suitable because of the unacceptable harm to the Old Headington Conservation Area, as set out by the Barton Area Action Plan Inspector in November 2012.

In the 2019 HELAA update the smaller Ruskin Field parcel was assessed as being suitable for residential development and was included as a proposed allocation in the Draft Local Plan 2036. The Inspectors considered the proposed allocation and concluded that part of the site was suitable for residential development and it was subsequently allocated under Policy SP56.

The OLP2040 Preferred Options document proposes that the Ruskin Field site allocation is carried forward from the current Local Plan to the new Local Plan.

Land at Old Marston, (HELAA site 112b) forms part of the Oxford Green Belt and is adjacent to a conservation area. It was assessed in the HELAA 2016 as not suitable following an assessment in 2014 which concluded that this segment of the Green Belt has a vital function in maintaining the open gap between Marston and Summertown. In addition, the assessment considered that development would cause unacceptable harm to the setting of the Marston Conservation Area.

In the 2019 HELAA update, Land at Old Marston (HELAA site 112b2-6 (the northern part of the previous site 112)) was again assessed as not suitable

	<p>following assessment in the 2017 Green Belt Study.</p> <p>In the 2022 Interim HELAA, Land at Old Marston 112b (5-6) was again assessed as not suitable for the same reason.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Regarding site 112b, why is it that our Green Belt reviews regarding that site indicate that preventing settlement agglomeration is an overriding concern there, when Marston and Summertown are absolutely prevented from merging due to the existence of the Cherwell floodplain and, in particular, when being unable to house more of our own in that way means that we experience settlement agglomeration on Oxford's fringes – most notably at Kidlington?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>First of all the assessments are technical assessments and they are done in an objective manner. So unlike the previous question I am not expressing a view and I do not express views and I have never expressed views on which sites should and should not be subject to particular assessments within a technical document like the HELAA. The important thing here is that the processes that we follow in the last round of Local Plans in terms of assessing sites suitable for development against the tests of the Green Belt were identical inside Oxford and outside Oxford – and that seems to be the principle that is the most important thing. It would be entirely inappropriate, I think, to apply one test inside Oxford and then ask the councils around us to apply a different test – and that is not what happened, we applied an entirely identical test, which is why some Green Belt sites in Oxford were as a part of that Local Plan deallocated from the Green Belt allocated for housing; something which I am very comfortable with and fully in support of, because is it the exact same process as the councils around us followed and that is an important principle to maintain.</p>

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

NC1 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Chapman – AAreon QL System	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member update the Council on:</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The QL system is now at Business-as-Usual status. All workarounds have been removed and the system is functioning</p>

NC1 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Chapman – AAreon QL System	
<p>a. The current state of the implementation of the QL system?</p> <p>b. When the consultants' report on the problems encountered during the implementation of the QL system be available for Councillors to read?</p>	<p>as was intended although there is still an element of catch up to be finalised. The project team have already implemented a first upgrade to the system to drive additional benefits and is working towards the greater exploitation of the system. A report of 'lessons learned' following some work undertaken by external consultants was presented to Audit and Governance on 18th January 2023. The report was exempt from wider publication given that the Council are still in contractual discussions with the supplier in relation to the implementation, which it would not want to fetter.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>I noticed that the report presented to Audit & Governance is exempt from wider publication. Could we have an assurance that this report will eventually be published to the Council?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I would like to take advice on that. I think at the moment definitely we can't publish it because there are a lot of confidential conversations going on in discussion with the contractors, but my instinct is that we should be in a position to do that, yes – but I would like to take advice from the Head of Law & Governance.</p>

NC2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Chapman – Benefit Thresholds	
<p>Question</p> <p>Later this year the thresholds for receiving social care from the County are to be changed so that those with up to £100,000 in assets can now get up to 80% of their care costs paid (previously the threshold was £23,250). Are the City Council planning to review their benefit thresholds in light of this change?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Council is not able to change the threshold for capital for housing benefit as these are set by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). There are no plans to change the £16k threshold for Council Tax Reduction Support (CTRS). The Council is one of a handful of authorities in the country who have retained the original CTRS scheme conditions and pay support based on 100% of the council tax liability.</p>

NC3 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Chapman – Glyphosate Warnings	
<p>Question</p> <p>When the Council uses glyphosate, does it warn local people that this will be</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Weed treatments are carried out by trained (NPTC City & Guilds PA1 & PA6</p>

<p>happening? If so, what is the process for issuing these warnings and do they note the potential risks to human health?</p>	<p>certification) and experienced members of staff and contractors. Safe systems of works and risk assessments are in place for weed spraying. Residents are not informed when weed treatment is being placed and it is not a requirement under HSE and DEFRA guidance. When applying glyphosate, the chemical is sprayed directly on to the plant during active growth. Also chemicals can only be used under specific conditions such as temperatures between 12-20c, not in windy conditions, dry conditions etc. The exposure to the general public is minimised as much as possible.</p>
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<p>NC4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – Glyphosate Usage</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>How often did the Council (whether directly, or through ODS or other contractors) use glyphosate in 2020, 2021, 2022? Please provide figures for each year individually.</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>2020 – 3 times a year 2021 – 3 times a year 2022 – 3 times a year</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Could you tell us the locations where glyphosate was used on these occasions in 2020, 2021 and 2022?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I don't have those details to hand and I must slightly question the value of that level of detail. This is used in small ways across many parts of the city to target certain sorts of weeds on hard surfaces – tennis courts, gullies and other such places. The list is going to be enormous, so I must question, quite frankly, the value of the public knowledge and the cost of getting all that information. You can ask for it but I do rather challenge the value of it.</p>

<p>NC5 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – Glyphosate Alternatives</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Has the Council trialled the use of any alternatives to glyphosate?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>ODS has carried out extensive research on this issue, and concluded, that at present, there are no practicable/financial viable alternatives. The current approach is therefore to use as little as possible</p>

	and only where strictly necessary.
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Could you provide details of the extensive research that ODS has carried out into alternatives and about what alternatives are dismissed as unviable? Other cities similar to Oxford have made alternatives work, so it would be interesting to know why we can't do that here.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>As I understand it they made alternatives work because they are very labour intensive, they are not necessarily chemically driven and they require people to go round and literally tackle weeds on a weed-by-weed, place-by-place basis – which is frankly far more expensive than a weed killer based solution whatever ingredients you have in it. Again, I slightly have to challenge the premise of your question and the value of spending a lot of time doing that research. What I can assure you is that they are looking all the time for alternatives. We want to find alternatives, but the alternatives at the moment are not cost effective, they are not efficient and if we were to go to alternatives they would be very labour intensive, there would be very significant budget implications for that and we would have to come back to the Council and argue for that against all the other priorities that we would be facing in terms of budget pressures.</p>

NC6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – Council Use of Glyphosate	
<p>Question</p> <p>What is the Council's objective in its use of glyphosate?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Glyphosate treatment is the most effective and cost-efficient method of treating weeds to help maintain tennis courts and highway paths. Annual weeds, including grasses and most broad-leafed plants, are easily controlled using Glyphosate. Glyphosate use is also used for the treatment of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed which is prevalent in Oxford.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Would I be correct in concluding that, for the Council, keeping paths and tennis courts clear is a more important objective than tackling the biodiversity crisis?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>Again, I think that is a false dichotomy. We believe in doing both. I believe, actually, that the limited use of weed killers is having a massive impact on biodiversity. If you have evidence of that I would be very pleased to see it. I would</p>

	be very, very surprised if that was the truth.
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NC7 From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Chapman – Glyphosate	
Question Does the councillor agree that it would be good for the City Council to follow the lead of dozens of others around the UK in giving up the use of glyphosate altogether?	Written Response There is limited use of Glyphosate on some highway path areas and tennis courts to keep them free of algae/weeds. The current policy is to use as little as possible in as few areas as possible. There are currently no real practical and financially viable alternatives to its use.

NC8 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Chapman – Council Tax Collection	
Question Over the last 12 months, how often has the council made errors collecting council tax? What is the average wait time of residents reporting mistakes and what is the council doing to reduce the number of cases and wait times?	Written Response The Council has received 223 complaints since January 2022 of which around 50% were justified. Complaints receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days and a response within a further 10 working days. A small number of complaints do take longer to resolve, due to the complexity of gathering the information before a reply can be dispatched, so we use a holding e-mail in such cases. Whilst the ‘wait’ times are considered to be reasonable the Council continues to invest in new technology and regular training of the staff both on the system and on customer contact to make improvements where we are able to.

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice

AR1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Railton – Hollow Way Pollution	
Question At the previous Council meeting, own pollution data record showed Hollow Way road was in breach of legal pollution limit.	Written Response Publicly available data via the Oxfordshire air quality website shows this location has not been in breach of the

AR1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Railton – Hollow Way Pollution	
Since then, what measures have the Council taken to tackle this issue?	<p>legal NO2 air pollution limit at any time that monitoring has taken place there. NO2 levels have reasonable seasonal variation which is why the legal limit is set as an annual mean (40µg/m³) and an hourly limit (200µg/m³) not to be exceeded more than 18 times in a year. A single month's data cannot be taken in isolation.</p> <p>The city does not currently collect other pollution data at this location.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>The response does not answer my question – when it happened last time, what measures has the Council taken since the report was issued?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>The answer to the question was that there was no legal breach of NO2 on Hollow Way. A legal breach requires two things – because it varies seasonally you have to take an average over the whole year, though there is an hourly limit of 200µg/m³ which I don't believe it breached.</p>

Cabinet Member for Health and Transport

LU1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – Traffic Filters Pollution Monitoring Stations	
<p>Question</p> <p>Has the Council installed / reinstated pollution monitoring stations at all planned traffic filters' locations (including acknowledgement of locations, where there are currently none) to allow 2023 base line data to be captured, ahead of their installation in 2024? And if not, why not?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Yes, we have. Air quality consultants modelled the potential impacts of the traffic filters, and the modelling results were used to identify locations for deployment of an additional 53 diffusion tubes – to complement the 77 sites that we already monitor - in May 2022. The aim of this is to capture baseline data on air quality at the locations where both positive and negative impacts of the traffic filters are predicted to be greatest.</p> <p>As a result, the city currently operates a network of 130 diffusion tubes in Oxford. We will have at least 12 months' air</p>

LU1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – Traffic Filters Pollution Monitoring Stations	
	quality baseline measurements at those locations before the scheme’s proposed implementation date.

LU2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – Support for Traffic Filters	
Question	Written Response
Does this Administration support the incoming traffic filters currently proposed by the County Council?	<p>Yes, we have publicly supported the decision taken by the County Council’s cabinet in November 2022 to implement trial traffic filters under an experimental traffic regulation order.</p> <p>There is an urgent need to address congestion in Oxford, in order to sustain an affordable and reliable bus network. The city lost two bus routes last month primarily because congestion was making them commercially unviable.</p> <p>The modelling and assessments undertaken by the County and their consultants clearly demonstrated that trial traffic filters are the best intervention available to the County. The trial nature of the proposal will allow them to adapt their approach once the filters are in operation.</p> <p>We also support the way the traffic filter proposals have evolved through significant stakeholder and public engagement during 2022, with the County’s decision in November being very different from its original announced intention of delivering traffic filters, an expanded Zero Emission Zone and a Workplace Parking Levy as part of a single package.</p> <p>The timing of the implementation will depend on factors including the expected impact of the unrelated Botley Road closure for the station redevelopment. However, to prevent the collapse of our bus network, which many people rely on to get around Oxford, interventions to prioritise buses are needed soon.</p>

Supplementary Question	Verbal Response
<p>In your point of view do you think these traffic filters which are being brought in will have an impact on local businesses?</p>	<p>Businesses will be able to go through the filters, so it will be much easier for many business owners to get around the city. So if you are a window cleaner, or a taxi driver you are going to be able to get around the city without sitting in a traffic jam. So I think it will be good for businesses. In terms of customers who are coming by car, I'm afraid we can't have everyone coming by car anymore. You asked about air quality in the last question – it is terrible for our air quality for people to be arriving by car, so I think that with the permit system that is in place to go with this proposal so that people who really cannot find any other way to travel can come by car, but everyone else it is the nudge to get them onto public transport, onto a bike, or to walk – and there is lots of evidence that if you are walking or cycling past a business you are much more likely to drop in than if you're driving past it in a car.</p>

LU3 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – Cowley LTNs	
Question	Written Response
<p>Can you please provide the latest pollution data figures in Cowley LTNs?</p>	<p>Reported data from diffusion tubes installed to monitor the impacts of Cowley and East Oxford LTNs, is available in our latest air quality annual status report here.</p> <p>Data from 2022 will be available when fully processed and ratified (corrected); and this is expected in June 2023.</p>

LU4 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – East Oxford LTNs	
Question	Written Response
<p>Can you please provide the latest pollution data figures in East Oxford LTNs?</p>	<p>Reported data from diffusion tubes installed to monitor the impacts of Cowley and East Oxford LTNs, is available in our latest air quality annual status report here.</p>

	Data from 2022 will be available when fully processed and ratified (corrected); expected in June 2023.
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LU5 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Seacourt P+R Flooding	
Question	Written Response
<p>Can the Cabinet Member tell the council:</p> <p>a. How long the extension to the Seacourt P+R was out of use due to flooding earlier this month?</p> <p>b. How much revenue was lost as a result?</p> <p>c. What steps are being taken to ensure that flooding is prevented in future?</p>	<p>The extension to the P&R has been closed since 3rd January and the water levels remain too high to allow reopening at the current time. It is regularly monitored and the extension will be reopened as soon as the water levels recede and the area is cleaned. The car park is not at 100% occupancy and therefore it is not anticipated that there will be a loss in revenue as customers can be accommodated within the main car park.</p> <p>The car park is located in a zone 3 flooding area, which means there is a high probability of flooding. The car park has been designed to flood and therefore the preventive measure is to close the car park or sections of it when flooding is likely to occur.</p>

LU6 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – ZEZ Timescale	
Question	Written Response
<p>Noting the ongoing uncertainty with Botley Road works leading to schedule slippage of the proposed traffic filters, will you support pressing ahead sooner with the Workplace Parking Levy and Zero Emission Zone in order to reduce traffic on key radial roads and therefore improve bus service reliability?</p>	<p>To my knowledge, both the County Council's timeline for implementing the traffic filters following their November 2022 cabinet decision and the schedule for works to Botley Road remain unknown, so it would be highly speculative to advocate pressing ahead with other elements of the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan in the meantime.</p> <p>We believe the most critical element of the core transport schemes are the traffic filters as they will have the largest impact on congestion and supporting bus services which is absolutely critical.</p> <p>A Workplace Parking Levy would require Secretary of State approval after any</p>

	<p>relevant County Council decision, so it is not possible to implement it quickly. However, we actively encourage the County Council to continue work in progressing this whilst they are working to implement the traffic filters so it can be introduced as quickly as possible.</p> <p>The Zero Emission Zone is primarily an emissions-improving, rather than congestion-reducing, scheme. It would therefore not be expected to have a significant impact on radial road traffic levels and by extension bus reliability.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>You write in your answer that you would not expect the ZEZ to have a significant congestion impact, but regardless of the stated purpose of the zone, it amounts to a £4 daily charge at least for the vast majority (95%) of cars. In other words, in all but name it is essentially a congestion tax. When London initially charged £5 a day for most private vehicles, they observed around a 30% fall in relevant traffic. Why is it that you wouldn't expect Oxford to experience a similar benefit?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>I think the ZEZ was always assumed as coming in after or alongside the traffic filters, so it is never expected to be producing that change. We would expect that change to be produced by the traffic filters. So I don't think the situation is going to arise where we would need to think about that.</p>

<p>LU7 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – ZEZ Income-Contingent Charging</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>I note that Cambridgeshire's proposed congestion zone features banded charge reduction for people on low incomes, with banding structure similar to Council Tax Reduction bands. Will you support similar measures regarding ZEZ charging?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The charges associated with the current ZEZ Pilot are banded according to the amount of pollution emitted by the vehicle, with a series of discounts and exemptions for certain types of vehicles (such as community transport vehicles) and groups of people (such as blue badge holders).</p> <p>People on low incomes and with existing health conditions are disproportionately affected by air pollution. The ZEZ is focused on delivering clean air for all, to help address these health inequalities. It has a very different rationale from Cambridge's congestion charging zone which is focused on reducing congestion.</p> <p>The approach to tackling congestion</p>

	<p>being taken in Oxford is different, it relies on the separate traffic filters scheme which has no charges associated with it. By prioritising buses, the filters will make bus journeys faster, reducing the number of drivers needed for congested routes and making bus travel more attractive. This will increase patronage and help to bring down bus fares.</p> <p>To date we have been focused on assisting people and businesses to adapt to the ZEZ to ensure we deliver the improvements in air quality needed to improve the health of our citizens. I envisage that this focus will continue, by ensuring that people on all incomes will have access to affordable public transport and cleaner air while cycling and walking.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>The ZEZ presents a financial incentive and, in general, shouldn't a financial incentive be pitched relative to a person's means, not relative to an absolute number? The highest ZEZ charge is currently £10, which for some people is little and for others is a day's budget or more, so why would we ask them to pay the same?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>It is difficult with the ZEZ. We know that poor air quality contributes to the death of 1 in 17 of our residents, so we really have to do something serious about improving our air quality. We are asking everybody who can not to drive a polluting car into the city. We are trying with the traffic filters to make public transport as viable as possible and we are also doing measures to try and make walking and cycling more pleasant. Of course it is difficult asking people to pay money for things and we know it is easier for wealthy people to pay it than poorer people, but on something like air quality we can't compromise and we have to put in measures that can stop it. We could explore this with our colleagues at the County Council who are responsible for imposing the charges and I agree with you that I think it is something that we could explore.</p>

<p>LU8 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Upton – Oxford Food Strategy</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Why has the Oxford Food Strategy been delayed?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Oxfordshire Food Strategy was developed by many elements of the food</p>

	<p>system within the county, in partnership with Good Food Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and the District Councils. It was endorsed at City cabinet in June 2022. It has similarly made its way through the separate County Council and District Council approval processes.</p> <p>The next step is to develop action plans for the City and each of the districts. These will be developed to provide support, opportunities and good governance for all the partners. The intention is for the action plan to go to cabinet in December 2023.</p> <p>The City is the first of the district and City Councils to start this. I chaired the first meeting of the city's Food Action Working Group on 17th January – bringing together voluntary groups, small businesses, anchor institutions, city council officers, researchers on food poverty, campaigners and food experts of all sorts who will work together over the course of this year to produce an action plan.</p>
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