

To: Council
Date: 2 October 2023
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Motions and amendments received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18

Councillors are asked to debate and reach conclusions on the motions and amendment listed below in accordance with the Council's rules for debate.

The Constitution permits an hour for debate of these motions.

Introduction

This document sets out motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18 by the deadline of 1.00pm on 20 September 2023, as amended by the proposers.

All substantive amendments sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by publication of the briefing note are also included below.

Unfamiliar terms are explained in the glossary or in footnotes.

Motions will be taken in turn from the Liberal Democrat, Green, Labour, groups in that order.

Introduction

- a) Digital Inclusion (Proposed by Cllr Mohammed Altaf-Khan, seconded by Cllr Steven Goddard) [Amendment proposed by Cllr Nigel Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ajaz Rehman]
- b) Oxford Climate Emergency Centre (proposed by Cllr Lois Muddiman, seconded by Cllr Emily Kerr). [Amendment proposed by Cllr Anna Railton, seconded by Cllr Ed Turner]
- c) Freedom from Fear for our Shop Workers (proposed by Cllr Edward Mundy, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz). [Amendment proposed by Cllr Chris Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle]
- d) Housing Management System problems and resultant accounts issues at Oxford City Council and ODS (proposed by Cllr Christopher Smowton, seconded by Cllr Laurence Fouweather) [Amendment proposed by Cllr Nigel Chapman, seconded by Cllr Susan Brown]
- e) A Ban on Disposable Vapes (proposed by Cllr Lucy Pegg, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle)

f) Clean Air as a Human Right (proposed by Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, seconded by Councillor Lizzy Diggins)

a) Digital Inclusion (Proposed by Cllr Mohammed Altaf-Khan, seconded by Cllr Steven Goddard) [Amendment proposed by Cllr Nigel Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ajaz Rehman]

Liberal Democrat Member Motion

Digital Inclusion in Council Services

The City Council provides a wide range of services to the residents of Oxford. There has been a shift over the years to provide online access to Council services. The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI, 2022) states that the Council will:

“Champion digital inclusion and accessibility as we move towards ‘digital by default’ services, working with partners to ensure there is access to devices, connectivity and skills development. Where appropriate, we will use council funding and infrastructure, such as free community centre Wi-Fi, to support residents to get online, so that no one is excluded as we move towards fully digital service delivery”

This approach has left some residents – mainly but not limited to older people – unable to communicate with Council Officers. This may be because they lack the technology to do so, don't have the skills or familiarity needed, or are unable to use IT systems because of a disability. It is very likely that there will always be a small percentage of residents that fall into this group and the needs of these people must be included in any strategy.

This Council needs to revise its EDI strategy so that it ensures any resident can communicate with all departments in ways which do not exclude them. Any communication from the Council requiring a response from a resident must offer several different ways of responding to ensure that there is no discrimination by age, income, disability or other disadvantage.

Therefore this Council calls on the Leader of the Council:-

- Commit to revising the EDI Strategy to explicitly recognise that there will always be some residents who will be unable to participate digitally and who will need alternative channels of communication with the Council.
- Work towards ensuring that any and all communications issued by the Council includes all the following means of responding or raising queries:
 - Online via the Council website
 - Telephone number with hours identified that this number will be manned and answered.
 - Where information is requested from residents, a Freepost reply facility with a paper form.
 - Details of the Council Contact Centre in the County Library including opening hours.

Amendment proposed by Cllr Nigel Chapman, seconded by Cllr Ajaz Rehman

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The City Council provides a wide range of services to the residents of Oxford. There has been a shift over the years to provide online access to Council services. The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (EDI, 2022) states that the Council will:

“Champion digital inclusion and accessibility as we move towards ‘digital by default’ services, working with partners to ensure there is access to devices, connectivity and skills development. Where appropriate, we will use council funding and infrastructure, such as free community centre Wi-Fi, to support residents to get online, so that no one is excluded as we move towards fully digital service delivery”

Whilst this strategy takes account of the inevitable growth of digital access, it is very mindful that ~~This approach has left~~ some residents – mainly but not limited to older people – need other options to be provided now and the in the future. That is why the Council continues to invest in a highly professional telephone call centre, available across all weekdays and in emergencies, and has just opened an expanded face to face facility at the Westgate Centre to assist citizens with their most complex requests/issues. ~~unable to communicate with Council Officers. This may be because they lack the technology to do so, don't have the skills or familiarity needed, or are unable to use IT systems because of a disability. It is very likely that there will always be a small percentage of residents that fall into this group and the needs of these people must be included in any strategy.~~

The recently Cabinet approved Citizen Engagement Strategy has articulated clearly that every citizen has a right to be heard and we will continue to invest in a diversity of ways for people to take part in consultations and feedback on our developing services.

This new strategy is also seeing growing partnerships between the Council and community trainers to enable people to acquire digital skills at centres near to where they live, thus helping close the digital skills gap.

The Council accepts that ~~This Council needs to revise its EDI strategy so that it ensures any resident can communicate with all departments in ways which do not exclude them.~~ A any communication from the Council requiring a response from a resident must offer several different ways of responding to ensure that there is no discrimination by age, income, disability or other disadvantage.

Therefore this Council calls on the Leader of the Council:-

- Reinforce our clear policy that ~~Commit to revising the EDI Strategy to explicitly recognise that there will always be some residents who will be unable to participate digitally and who will need alternative channels of communication with the Council.~~
- Work towards ensuring that any and all communications issued by the Council includes all the following means of responding or raising queries:
 - Online via the Council website
 - Telephone number with hours identified that this number will be manned and answered.
 - Where information is requested from residents, **enable them by request to access a paper form to submit views and information** ~~a Freepost reply facility with a paper form.~~
 - Details of the Council Contact Centre in the County Library including opening hours.

If the amendment is agreed the motion would read:

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b) Oxford Climate Emergency Centre (proposed by Cllr Lois Muddiman, seconded by Cllr Emily Kerr). [Amendment proposed by Cllr Anna Railton, seconded by Cllr Ed Turner]

Green Member Motion

In January 2019, Oxford City Council members unanimously declared a climate emergency and agreed to create a citizens' assembly in Oxford to help consider new carbon targets and additional measures to reduce emissions. The Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change was duly held over two weekends in September and October 2019.

One of the headline findings of Oxford Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change in 2019 was:

'a demand for more education and information provided for the wider public...to help them understand what they can personally do to help'.

Across Oxford, excellent work has been done to meet this demand over the past 20 years. For example, the work of all the groups in the CAG* project founded in 2001 and the many projects being undertaken by members of the Zero Carbon Partnership formed in 2021, (replacing the Low Carbon Oxford network launched in 2011).

Despite all this work to educate, inform and engage the public, it is clear from the demands of the Citizens' Assembly that we are still not doing enough. On housing alone, we urgently need to support residents to retrofit their homes to tackle fuel poverty, rising energy costs, and the climate emergency because approximately 60% of homes in Oxford still have an energy efficiency rating of D or below. The Low Carbon Hub and Cosy Homes Oxfordshire offer advice and services but they are not accessible enough to the public.

Given the urgency of the climate crisis, Oxford needs a highly visible Climate Emergency Centre (CEC). A CEC is a central, inclusive and accessible space where residents and groups can meet to share and gain information on the climate and ecological emergencies, and develop local solutions for nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation. Through the CEC, residents could:

- Find information about our changing climate, its impact and solutions.
- Have an opportunity to discuss their concerns about the future.
- Access advice and support on how to take positive steps towards a safer future for themselves, their families, and their communities.

There are lots of examples of Climate Emergency Centres across the UK from Leeds to Lewes, Preston to Portsmouth, and in Guildford, Islington, Kingston and Northampton as well as more locally in Abingdon and Swindon.

The creation of a CEC in the middle of the city would increase public engagement of all the existing groups, organisations and projects in the city and enhance the public realm in the city centre.

This council therefore resolves to request the cabinet member for zero carbon and climate justice and the cabinet member for finance and asset management to:

- Support the objective of establishing and running a Climate Emergency Centre in Oxford.
- Work closely with partner organisations and local communities to achieve this objective.
- Identify a suitable site for a CEC in Oxford City Centre.
- Consider grant funding towards the costs of establishing and running a CEC.

Amendment proposed by Cllr Anna Railton, seconded by Cllr Ed Turner

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The Low Carbon Hub, **the various local Low Carbon groups, the county run <https://www.climateactionoxfordshire.org.uk/>** and Cosy Homes Oxfordshire offer advice and services but they are not accessible enough to the public. Given the urgency of the climate crisis, Oxford needs a highly visible Climate Emergency Centre (CEC). A CEC is a central, inclusive and accessible space where residents and groups can meet to share and gain information on the climate and ecological emergencies, and develop local solutions for nature recovery, climate mitigation and adaptation. Through the CEC, residents could:

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c) Freedom from Fear for our Shop Workers (proposed by Cllr Edward Mundy, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz). [Amendment proposed by Cllr Chris Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle]

Labour Member Motion

Our shop workers are key workers who risked their health by working through the Covid pandemic, providing essential retail services while many stayed at home. Sadly, in recent years, shop workers and delivery drivers have increasingly been the victims of violence and abuse, as well as being on the front line during an uptick in shoplifting. Research from both the Association of Convenience Retailers (ACR)¹ and the British Retail Consortium² has found that shoplifting and violence against shop workers has increased from pre 2019 levels. ACR data found that 87% of convenience store workers had been victims of verbal abuse in the last year. There is considerable strain and hardship being placed upon people across the country from the impacts of the cost of living crisis (including on shop workers themselves), as well as a mental health crisis and difficulty in accessing essential care and support. It is vital that this is addressed both nationally and locally.

There is an enormous impact on shop workers from crime and abuse. The Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers (Usdaw) has a long running Freedom From Fear Campaign³, which has gathered survey data on the nature and frequency of violence and abuse perpetrated against shop staff. Shockingly, their annual survey for 2022-23 found that three quarters of retail workers had been victims of abuse from customers. Many workers don't even feel that reporting incidents of abuse will make a difference. The most significant trigger for abuse and violence against shop staff has been shoplifting, being cited as the cause of nearly a third of such incidents.

This Council pledges to:

- Back the Usdaw Freedom From Fear Campaign with a letter of support and solidarity to the Usdaw General Secretary Paddy Lillis.
- Support and contribute to local messaging promoting respect for shop workers and our commitment to stamping out abuse and violence.
- Lobby the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley Matthew Barber to do more to combat shop lifting as well as the abuse and violence perpetrated against shop workers.
- For our Cabinet Member for Safer Communities Shaista Aziz to engage with local police sergeants as to why retail workers are not empowered to report abuse and what our neighbourhood policing will do to protect retail workers and tackle retail crime.

¹ https://cdn.acs.org.uk/public/acs_crime_report_2023.pdf

² <https://www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2023/Jul/BRC-finds-retail-theft-and-abuse-have-increased>

³ <https://www.usdaw.org.uk/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=768eb764-e8dd-4d48-a913-17d6d1d03c1c>

Amendment proposed by Cllr Chris Jarvis, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle

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d) Housing Management System problems and resultant accounts issues at Oxford City Council and ODS (proposed by Cllr Christopher Smowton, seconded by Cllr Laurence Fouweather) [Amendment proposed by Cllr Nigel Chapman, seconded by Cllr Susan Brown]

Liberal Democrats Member Motion

Council notes that the report to Cabinet on the 14 June 2023 concerning the Housing Management System Implementation and lessons learnt.

Council notes that the budget for the project has had to be doubled to over £3 million.

Council also notes that this project and its intended benefits has been delayed by many years since its original intended go-live date of May 2018.

Council notes with concern that this has had an impact upon Oxford Direct Services (ODS) being unable to submit its accounts for financial year 2021/22 to Companies House as they are not yet certified by the ODS auditors. ODS is thus being fined every month for non-compliance. Council notes that this also prevents the Council's auditors from approving the Council's own accounts for submission to Central Government.

Council notes that the more information about failures of this nature that can be published, the more third parties including other local authorities and public bodies can benefit from the lessons learned.

Council resolves to:-

Ask the Leader of the Council, as a matter of priority, to:-

1. Request the publication of a minimally redacted version of the lessons learned report, in contrast to the brief summary published in June 2023.
2. Ensure that action is taken as soon as possible to ensure the new Housing Management System is properly implemented in the Council and that the benefits promised are realised.
3. Ensure that the deadline (October 2023) for reporting the certified Council accounts to Central Government is met.

Amendment proposed by Cllr Nigel Chapman, seconded by Cllr Susan Brown

Council notes that the report to Cabinet on the 14 June 2023 concerning the Housing Management System Implementation and lessons learnt.

Council notes that the budget for the project ~~has had to be increased~~ **has been** doubled to over £3 million.

Council also notes that **two years after going live, that whilst the benefits of the system are not yet fully realised, there is an agreed and costed plan to do so, which is on track. Officers and the relevant Portfolio Holder are confident this plan can be successfully realised.** ~~this project and its intended benefits has been delayed by many years since its original intended go-live date of May 2018.~~

Council notes **that despite some delays attributable to system implementation, Oxford Direct Services submitted its 21/22 accounts for ODS Ltd and ODST Ltd to Companies House on August 15th.** ~~with concern that this has had an impact upon Oxford Direct Services (ODS) being unable to submit its accounts for financial year 2021/22 to Companies House as they are not yet certified by the ODS auditors. ODS is thus being fined every month for non-compliance. It is on track to submit its 22/23 accounts by the end of the year and within the deadlines set by Companies House.~~ Council notes that **the audit of its 21/22 accounts is now underway and it is hoped that these accounts will be submitted by the end of the calendar year.** ~~this also prevents the Council's auditors from approving the Council's own accounts for submission to Central Government.~~

Council notes that whilst the full lessons learned report must remain confidential, it has been reviewed by both the Audit and Governance and Scrutiny Committees with senior officers and the relevant Cabinet member. The summary document is in the public domain and captures all the key lessons which might interest third parties, including other local authorities and public bodies and can be shared with them.

~~Council notes that the more information about failures of this nature that can be published, the more third parties including other local authorities and public bodies can benefit from the lessons learned.~~

Council resolves to:-

Ask the Leader of the Council, as a matter of priority, to:-

1. Make available the summary of the lessons learned review to interested parties.
- ~~1. Request the publication of a minimally redacted version of the lessons learned report, in contrast to the brief summary published in June 2023.~~

2. Ensure that action is taken as soon as possible to ensure the new Housing Management System is properly implemented in the Council and that the benefits promised are realised.
3. **Ensure that the certified Council accounts for 22/23 are reported to Central Government as soon as is practicable.**
- ~~3. Ensure that the deadline (October 2023) for reporting the certified Council accounts to Central Government is met.~~

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3. Ensure that the certified Council accounts for 22/23 are reported to Central Government as soon as is practicable.

e) A Ban on Disposable Vapes (proposed by Cllr Lucy Pegg, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle)

Green Member Motion

Disposable vapes are creating an environmental and health crisis. Far from helping smokers to quit, with their attractive packaging and child-friendly flavours, disposable vapes are getting a new generation addicted to nicotine. Frequently littered and hard to

recycle, disposable vapes are also causing damage to the natural environment and wasting critical materials.

This council notes that:

- There has been a fourfold increase in the number of disposable vapes being discarded over the past year, with 5 million vapes now being thrown away every week
- Vapes contain critical raw materials, such as lithium and copper, which are vital for our transition to a greener society. The disposable vapes thrown away over the past year contain enough lithium to create 5,000 batteries for electric cars
- 1 in 9 young people aged 11 to 18 have experimented with e-cigarettes, with 69% of these people choosing disposable vapes, according to research from Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). There has been a 7-fold increase between 2020 and 2022 in the choice of disposables amongst this age group, alongside a 50% year on year increase in the proportion of children experimenting with vaping of all kinds.
- Lithium ion batteries, like those used in vapes, caused 700 fires at waste sites in 2022 due to not being properly disposed of.
- Prominent environmental and health organisations have called for a ban, including The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Marine Conservation Society, Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and Surfers Against Sewage.
- Councils across the country have called for a UK ban on disposable vapes by 2024, and the Scottish Government has already agreed to carry out a consultation on banning disposable vapes
- Whilst vaping can help smokers to quit, reusable vapes serve this same purpose

This council resolves:

- That the Leader of the Council will write jointly to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, supporting a ban on disposable vapes by 2024 on environmental and child health grounds
- To ask Oxford Direct Services to provide additional facilities for recycling disposable vapes and publicise the existing e-waste recycling services, which accepts vapes
- That the Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities investigate ways the council can encourage retailers selling disposable vapes in Oxford to provide recycling facilities for vapes in their stores

f) Clean Air as a Human Right (proposed by Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, seconded by Councillor Lizzy Diggins)

Labour Member Motion

In August 2022 the United Nations declared that clean air is a Human Right. Yet WHO figures suggest that 99% of the world's population are breathing air that harms their health. Research by the Lancet in the UK shows that outdoor air pollution contributes to more than 25,000 deaths a year.

Two of the most dangerous pollutants are the gas nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) produced by vehicles and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) produced by vehicles, wood burning, industry and farming.

High levels of NO₂ can damage the human respiratory tract and increase a person's vulnerability to respiratory infections and asthma. Microscopic fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) are small enough to fit through the walls of the lungs and into the bloodstream where they are carried around the body, often eventually lodging themselves in different organs.

Exposure to air pollution increases the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, diabetes, neurological disorders, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Research has shown a direct link between increasing levels of pollution in the air and GP appointments for respiratory symptoms and asthma, and that exposure to traffic related pollution increases the likelihood of having multiple long term physical and mental health conditions.

Despite this, the current targets for limiting air pollution in England would see the country aiming to be double the current WHO minimum standard by 2040.

This council notes with concern that while cleaner engine standards are reducing some forms of vehicle pollution, there is growing evidence that the increasing size and weight of road vehicles is leading to an increase in harmful PM_{2.5} pollution from non-exhaust emissions.

This Council therefore asks the Council Leader to write letters to the two MPs for Oxford and the Secretary of State for Transport, copied to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, to:

1. Endorse The Clean Air (Human Rights) Bill introduced to Parliament by Baroness Jenny Jones which has received cross-party support
2. Welcome the statement by Steve Reed MP that a future Labour Government should legislate to make Clean Air a Human Right
3. Continue to support the implementation of Ultra-Low and Zero Emission Zones across the country as a crucial part of the process of reducing air pollution to the WHO minimum standard.
4. Express the Council's concern about the pollution and safety impacts of increasing vehicle size and weight, and to support changes in vehicle taxation and charging that reflect both exhaust and non-exhaust emissions
5. Continue to support local and national policies that aim to reduce car use and to provide safe, affordable and convenient public and active transport alternatives.