

To: Council
Date: 27 November 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 Malik to Cllr Brown – Calling for a ceasefire in Gaza

Question	Written Response
Could the Leader of the council write to both Oxford MPs calling for the ceasefire in Gaza?	I will write to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary urging them to call for a ceasefire.

SB2 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Lowering the flag in solidarity with

Palestine	
<p>Question</p> <p>This city flew the flag half-mast in solidarity with Israel. Ramallah, our twin city in Palestine, has not been honoured in the same way. After the killing of over 8,000 Palestinians, when will the city council lower the flag in solidarity with Palestine?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>We have been unable to access the main flagpole since 31 October for safety reasons.</p>

SB3 From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Brown – Child Poverty Strategy	
<p>Question</p> <p>Within Northfield Brook child poverty rates are sadly stagnant. This council agreed unanimously on oct 3rd to submit a report to Cabinet with options to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implement the Socio-economic Duty within all Council policies over the next eighteen months; and b. Encourage partnership institutions, including Oxford University, to adopt the Socio-economic Duty. <p>Request that the Head of Communities submit a report to Cabinet with options to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop a Child Poverty Strategy (noting the work done at the Scrutiny Committee) over the next eighteen months informed by the voices of young people affected. b. Implement more immediate actions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Donation of devices to Getting Oxfordshire Online ii. Considering how parents and carers in or at risk of destitution (including those with no recourse to public funds) can access support via "food first" and "cash first" approaches. 	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Part one - A & B</p> <p>Officers have undertaken work assessing the potential implementation of the Socio-economic Duty into Oxford City Council policymaking. An options paper will be brought to Cabinet on this matter.</p> <p>Part two</p> <p>A)</p> <p>Child poverty response</p> <p>Cabinet took the decision not to develop a separate Child Poverty Strategy because it felt that this was intrinsic to our Thriving Communities Strategy.</p> <p>B i)</p> <p>In relation to laptops, officers have worked with partners such as Aspire to provide refurbishing old laptops to young people in the ward who are digitally excluded.</p> <p>B ii)</p> <p>The Council supplied food parcels and food vouchers as part of its response to the pandemic. As the pandemic began to ease the Council working with and listening to the community food system refocused its support towards better empowering the community food system (such as food banks, food larders etc). The funding that was secured from government was used to help enable</p>

<p>Will above deadlines as agreed unanimously by council be met and what progress has taken place thus far?</p>	<p>better sustainability within the system through training, wrap around support, funding a community van, funding of fridges/fridge freezers and more healthy and nutritious food etc. We have similarly been using the Household Support Fund to fund community groups, advice centres and some individuals. The funding to individuals is currently through vouchers rather than cash which enables the Council to accurately manage what the vouchers are spent on and meet its reporting requirements to government.</p>
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<p>SB4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Brown – Gender neutral toilets in public buildings</p>	
<p>Question</p>	<p>Written Response</p>
<p>Can the portfolio holder set out what steps if any have been taken to introduce gender neutral toilets in public buildings owned by the city council since November 2021?</p>	<p>There have been no gender neutral toilets provided in existing public buildings. In new schemes in the control of the council gender neutral toilets will be provided where possible.</p>

<p>SB5 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Brown – Motion on period products</p>	
<p>Question</p>	<p>Written Response</p>
<p>Since the motion on period products at council in July 2022 what steps has cabinet taken to implement the motion as voted in favour of at the meeting?</p>	<p>We have provided free products in the toilets of most of our community centres since August 2022. The products are displayed in the toilets alongside a poster that has information about who to contact if someone needs more products. Staff in our community centres will check when products need replacing and contact a distributor when they need more products. We haven't managed to reach all of the community centres as yet, but there is a plan in place to get products into these locations as soon as possible.</p> <p>To fund the project, Oxford City Council used a combination of facilities budget, contribution from the Federation of Oxford Community Associations and the Household Support Fund. Oxford City Council also work in partnership with a number of partners and organisations to</p>

	<p>distribute products across the city in community centres as well as to community groups. We share a donation box in one of our local Tesco stores with the Wings project. The Wings Project is a part of the Young Women's Music Project - you can find out more about the Wings project here. We also take opened products which Wings are unable to use to reduce waste.</p> <p>Since the project began, we have had really positive feedback from members of the public such as "I didn't know you did this, what a great initiative" and "I'm really pleased to see this". The products are well used, and people are reaching out if they are in need.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council

ET1 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Turner – Meadow Lane car park	
<p>Question</p> <p>When will a decision be made on future management of the Meadow Lane car park?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council has received objections from a statutory consultee to all 4 options tabled – further work is being undertaken to understand the options available to the Council. Stakeholders are being kept up to date with the changes in timescale.</p>

ET2 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Turner – Rent Relief/Holidays for Tenants	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member confirm if it is looking at further rent relief and/or rent holidays for tenants of its buildings in the voluntary and community sector, given the huge challenges around availability of grant funding, maintenance costs, and increasing need for the kind of services they provide?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Asset Management strategy was refreshed and approved by Cabinet in 2021. The strategy sets out the approach to rents relating to buildings occupied by community and volunteer groups.</p> <p>Any funding provided to support community and volunteer groups should be through the Council's grants</p>

	programme rather than rent concessions or relief. Groups are also able to apply for grants from third parties if required.
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Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks; Deputy Leader of the Council

CM1 From Cllr R Smith to Cllr Munkonge – The Quarry Sports Building	
Question How many community groups currently hire the Quarry sports building in Margaret Road Park?	Written Response There are three different groups that use the pavilion in line with questions CM1 and CM2. Quarry Rovers FC are the main user.

CM2 From Cllr R Smith to Cllr Munkonge – The Quarry Sports Building	
Question How many commercial groups currently hire the Quarry sports building in Margaret Road Park?	Written Response We would highlight that all groups pay a general fee to use the facilities and that there is no separate 'commercial or community fee level'.

CM3 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Munkonge – Additional public spaces for growing food?	
Question Could the portfolio holder outline what the council is currently doing to identify additional public spaces for growing food?	Written Response There are a number of different pressures on space within the City. This makes identifying additional public growing spaces more challenging. As part of the City Food Action Plan and Food Action Working group, the City Council in partnership with Good Food Oxfordshire and other public bodies will be looking to build on existing mapping of biodiversity and green space to explore this. It should also be noted that in a recent survey (2021) Oxford was seventh in a list of cities in the country with the most allotments.

CM4 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Munkonge – Cutteslowe Greenhouse project's lease

Question

Can the portfolio holder explain the current situation with regards to the Cutteslowe Greenhouse project's lease?

Written Response

The current leaseholder is not in occupation and the Council is aware they would like to surrender their lease. The Council is in negotiations with an alternative community group to take a new lease of the premises. The new group do not intend to change the use of the premises.

CM5 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Munkonge – Large scale firework display at South Park

Question

What assessment has the City Council done as to the suitability of South Park as a venue for large scale fireworks displays following the substantial damage done to the park this year?

Written Response

South Park has been used as a venue for large scale fireworks events for over 50 years and this is a very popular event which also raises money for charity. This year, there was a storm a few days before the event which meant that the park was muddier than usual. A thorough review is being undertaken to consider all options to mitigate this in future while safeguarding this important event.

CM6 From Cllr Sandelson to Cllr Munkonge – South Park's annual fire display

Question

What future plans does the council have to prevent South Park, during the annual fireworks display, from being made into an inaccessible mud bath for many months?

Written Response

A thorough review is being undertaken to consider all options to mitigate this in future while safeguarding this important event.

Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities

LU1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Cycle parking process**Question**

What is the city council's official process steps for approving and installing bike stands on pavements and land owned by the city council?

Written Response

If the land is within city council ownership, once a request for a cycle rack is received the council then undertake any stakeholder engagement required. If the location is suitable, it can be added to the list for funding through our Cycling Infrastructure Fund, and if that site is prioritised ODS are instructed to install the racks

If funding is available from, for example, a ward member's CIL fund, then the racks can be installed by ODS immediately.

The council is also actively seeking suitable sites to install racks and is working with third party landowners through our Park That Bike scheme.

LU2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Seacourt Park and Ride**Question**

Since the extension to the Seacourt Park and Ride was opened how many times has it had to be closed because of flooding?

Written Response

The extension has been closed four times as a result of flood events - January 2023, April 2023, October 2023 and November 2023.

LU3 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Seacourt Park and Ride**Question**

For each time the Seacourt Park and Ride extension has been closed due to flooding how much has the Council paid ODS to clean up the car park so that it is available for parking again?

Written Response

The cost per clean-up is £750.

LU4 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Upton – Marston cycle path**Question**

Can the portfolio holder set out what

Written Response

<p>correspondence the City Council has had with the County Council over lighting the main Marston cycle path behind Purcell Rd?</p>	<p>This cycle path is not owned by the City Council and therefore no correspondence has been exchanged by council officers, but city councillors particularly Cllr Mary Clarkson, have raised this on many occasions. It has been referred to County to investigate the possibility of lighting. The adjoining land owner, Hertford College, is also considering lighting as part of a forthcoming works programme to update their site.</p>
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LU5 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Upton – Retrofit Air Source Heat Pumps	
Question	Written Response
<p>Is the cabinet member concerned by the noise requirements residents looking to retrofit their homes with air source heat pumps are being asked to meet?</p>	<p>Residents looking to fit an air source heat pump (ASHP) can either choose one which complies with nationally set limits and conditions and can then install it without further regulations (known as a Permitted Development (PD) right) or they must apply for Planning Permission. The limits and conditions relating to PD rights include siting, heating capacity and other restrictions, which in part limit the noise impact of an ASHP on their neighbours. Because all ASHPs emit noise, which has the potential to harm people’s health and wellbeing, the Council’s current approach to planning applications which include an ASHP is therefore to require them to submit sufficient information to demonstrate that the noise is not likely to cause problems for those in the locality. Similar requirements apply in most local authority areas and officers are working to use best practice in providing guidance and advice to applicants.</p>

LU6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Electric charging points for street traders	
Question	Written Response

<p>What is the progress that has been made on providing electric street charging points for street traders?</p>	<p>The importance of finding alternative power sources for street trading was recognised by the General Purposes Licensing Committee and as Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities, Councillor Upton has taken a lead role. Discussions with County about the role of the ZEZ expansion in controlling the problem have been initiated by Councillor Upton who has also engaged with City Council officers to explore the possibility of using commercially-provided rechargeable batteries.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

NC1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Bin storage arrangements for terraces without front gardens

Question	Written Response
<p>What is the council's formal policy for alternative options for bin storage for streets like (e.g. Mayfield Road) where houses do not have front gardens and where the multiple bins are permanently being stored on the narrow pavement blocking pedestrian access of this infrastructure?</p>	<p>Properties that cannot store bins off-street are provided with lilac sacks for waste and clear sacks for recycling. These are provided twice a year currently and collected on the same schedule as wheeled bins.</p> <p>Where residents request wheelie bins for storage in rear gardens these are provided. The bins would typically need to be brought through the property and left on the pavement on collection day. Wheelie bins should not be stored on the public highway.</p> <p>It should be noted that these arrangements operate successfully in a number of areas across the city, in particular within Jericho and Osney Island. Nonetheless, where appropriate we can arrange for the ODS recycling team to door knock and advise residents, and they can sticker and label bins and provide sacks - if the occupants do not have them.</p> <p>An ODS team visited Mayfield Road on Monday 20 November and reported that there were no</p>

	<p>sacks or bins left out on the street.</p> <p>If there were such a recurrent problem in any specific area, then the Community Response Team would need to address this as they have environmental enforcement powers.</p>
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NC2 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Chapman – ODS response times																							
<p>Question</p> <p>The report page https://image-house.co.uk/occ/ti-annualreport2023/oxford-direct-services/ shows ODS' response time for certain trades that resolved repairs to city council properties in under 9 days on average. Which trades, executed via ODS, performed repairs to city council properties in greater than 9 days, and what were their average response times?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The measurement of repair 'End to End' times is an important measure, which enables us to understand the service we deliver in 'customer terms' and it is used in conjunction with other measures which help us understand repair demand, first time fix and customer satisfaction.</p> <p>The measurement of 'end to end' times is calculated from the order raised date, to the date the order is completed – which would include any time required for follow on visits or no access issues. There is a direct correlation between customer satisfaction and how long jobs take to complete and it is important to understand that this varies by trade.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made in reducing 'end to end' times for repairs, with a +50% reduction since March 2020.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Core Trades</th> <th style="text-align: left;">End to End Times</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Plumbing</td><td>6 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Electrical</td><td>5 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Heating</td><td>3 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Carpentry</td><td>8 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Glazing</td><td>16 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Drainage</td><td>3 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Roofing</td><td>28 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Brickwork/Groundwork</td><td>26 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Painting and Decorating</td><td>17 days</td></tr> <tr><td>Plastering</td><td>32 days</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Core Trades	End to End Times	Plumbing	6 days	Electrical	5 days	Heating	3 days	Carpentry	8 days	Glazing	16 days	Drainage	3 days	Roofing	28 days	Brickwork/Groundwork	26 days	Painting and Decorating	17 days	Plastering	32 days
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AR1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Town hall window boxes**Question**

What are the plans to use the window boxes on the town hall to promote biodiversity in the city centre?

Written Response

The window boxes are no longer able to be used due to their condition, when they are watered, they leak, and the water ingress goes into the basement which includes the newly developed Museum of Oxford. Options for repair are currently being looked at to be able to re-instate them next year.

AR2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Railton – Solar Panels in car parks**Question**

Given the opening of yet another solar carport in Plymouth, is the Councillor yet able to give the promised report on the feasibility of using Oxford City Council's car parks in the same way?

Written Response

No commitment was made to produce a report on this matter, rather that Members should be updated – which this response does. The Council remains fully committed to supporting the installation of solar PV within Oxford and indeed across Oxfordshire, to meet the target of 1,900 MW installed as set out in the Oxfordshire Energy Strategy. The majority of that installed capacity could only be met through the large-scale ground mounted solar, which is also the most cost-effective format.

Roof-mounted solar capacity is likely to provide the next largest contribution. The proposed Local Plan 2040 seeks to support this stating: *'the use of large roofscapes for solar panels or green roofs will be encouraged'*, and requiring that opportunities should be explored within new developments to *'orient layout/roof tops to maximise solar gain on photovoltaics solar panels for renewable energy generation.'* Proposed Local Plan 2040 policies also support retrofitting existing buildings using a whole building approach, which may include the installation of solar PV.

In respect of the Council's own general fund and HRA buildings, as part of

	<p>planned roof replacements we will be ensuring that, where possible, roofs are made suitable for future installation of solar panels.</p> <p>Solar canopies over car parks present another opportunity, albeit at a smaller scale. Officers will be initiating a review of potential development options at Council owned park and ride sites, the first of which will be a review at Redbridge. Once this work is completed it will provide greater clarity on where it may make sense to install PV canopies, which would require a significant timeframe for payback on capital investment. However, it should be noted that there are many associated issues that would need to be addressed in each case, including the availability of grid capacity locally, offtake for energy generated, planning and other potential uses for the land.</p> <p>Therefore, it should be recognised that there are many other live workstreams, such as the Council's involvement in Project LEO-N, and - if our bid is successful - Project FOx, that are also essential building blocks in supporting the uptake of solar PV.</p>
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AR3 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton – Climate Emergency Centre	
<p>Question</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member for zero carbon and climate justice and/or the cabinet member for finance and asset management update Council as to what actions have been taken towards the goal of establishing a Climate Emergency Centre as approved in the motion at the meeting of Council on the 2 October 2023?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Council already provides many inclusive and accessible spaces where residents and groups meet to share and gain information about how to respond to the climate and ecological emergencies - not least our Town Hall. If groups come forward with proposals to establish an additional centre within the city to facilitate such information sharing, then we will provide officer support as appropriate.</p> <p>In the meantime, we have provided</p>

	<p>detailed information to all Council Members to share with residents on the £millions of grant funding currently available to support the installation of energy efficiency measures in homes that would save energy, improve comfort, reduce fuel poverty, help achieve net zero and facilitate the transition away from gas. We are also waiting on the outcome of the £5 million consortium FOx bid that will involve multiple workstreams including a trial of salary sacrifice scheme to support retrofit uptake and the development of a robust platform for Area-Based Insetting, which could drive significant corporate and institutional funding towards local carbon-reduction projects.</p> <p>It is essential that we can engage the widest number of people as possible in taking action. This includes, in particular, those with limited financial resources who don't have the available capital to invest in home retrofit. It also includes those who don't currently perceive taking action as a priority and may be unlikely to attend a Climate Emergency Centre, or the many other existing gatherings of people around the city of people already motivated to act on climate change.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Culture and Events

<p>JH1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Hunt – How is the ban on single use plastics for street traders being enforced?</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the portfolio holder outline how the council is currently enforcing the ban on single use plastics for street traders?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Following a similar question on this topic, tabled by Cllr Miles at the 2nd October Council meeting, Cllr Hunt reported on steps to engage individually with street traders in person, to advise on the single use plastic restrictions introduced in April</p>

	<p>with the revised Street Trading Policy. Any non-compliant traders identified were warned of potential consequences for their Consent to trade, should they continue not to comply. With effect from 1st October 2023, national legislation enforced by the County Council's Trading Standards Service, has taken effect. For street traders the new Regulations introduce no requirements beyond those already included in their current Consents, but they do introduce additional legal and financial penalties for non-compliance. Council officers are now working in liaison with Trading Standards colleagues so that street traders are made aware of the new Regulations and, conversely, that information about non-compliant street traders is shared with officers in that service. Advisory letters are being sent out and re-inspections will take place in due course.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Housing

LS1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Smith – Collins Street redevelopment 1	
<p>Question</p> <p>The building on the Games Hall site on Colin's Street has stalled. When will the building works restart and what is the reason for the delay?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The housing developments on the Collins Street and the Princes Street sites are on programme. Demolition works are complete and contracts for the main build contract are being signed in November, for a start on site date in March 2024.</p>

LS2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Smith – Collins Street redevelopment 2	
<p>Question</p> <p>What are the plans for the public realm improvement outside the East Oxford Games Hall on Colin's Street to improve the area for residents and children travelling to school at East Oxford</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Collins Street development delivers much needed affordable housing within the site plan and does not impinge on the public realm or highway. There will no longer be car parking bays provided,</p>

Primary School?	which along with the new use and improved visual surveillance from the building, should improve pedestrian safety and reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour.
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LS3 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Smith – Housing Report / Warm Home Discount

Question	Written Response
<p>The annual housing report says that the council "Advised 113 tenants of their eligibility for the £150 Warm Home Discount, saving £16,950". Do we know that they were able to apply for and receive the discount, or only that they were advised they could? Similarly, WaterSure and other schemes where the report describes advice given, not outcomes.</p>	<p>When WHD was operated by the energy companies, Energy Advice Officers were able to help tenants directly on calls or online applications, where decisions were immediate and those figures were reported.</p> <p>WHD changed last year and became automated and run by government rather than by energy companies, through the .Gov site and Energy Officers had to instead talk people through the automated process. The application outcomes were not immediate and letters are sent out to tenants by the government later in the year. The figures provided are based on the number of tenants that were talked through the automated process, rather than outcomes.</p> <p>Similarly, we used to have a direct referral pathway into Thames Water so we could see outcomes, however Thames Water removed our access to the pathway and do not get feedback on successful applications</p>

LS4 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Smith – Valentia Road rec

<p>Question</p> <p>I note that Valentia Road Rec no longer appears in the Local Plan. Is it the Council's intention to continue to pursue development at that site?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The current Local Plan (Site Policy 61) allocates a site of 0.76 hectares for a minimum of 12 homes. The delivery of 12 homes is no longer considered achievable. This site is unlikely to be able to deliver more than 10 homes. This is below the threshold considered appropriate for a site allocation in the draft Local Plan 2040. The Council could still seek to enable a smaller development, on a smaller part of the site, in the future. An allocation policy would not be required to deliver homes on this site.</p>
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<p>LS5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Smith – Housing Report/Tenancies</p>															
<p>Question</p> <p>https://image-house.co.uk/occ/ti-annualreport2023/tenancy-management/ notes that 650 tenancies were commenced, but then the subcategories (general register, transfer register, ...) only account for 296 of them. What was the source of the remaining 354 tenancies?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>When the data for the Annual Report was collated, some data was incomplete. The full data is now available and the Annual Report will be updated:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="791 1214 1375 1570"> <tr> <td>General Register</td> <td>393</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Homeless Register</td> <td>79</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transfer Register</td> <td>194</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sub Total</td> <td>666</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mutual Exchanges</td> <td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Succession</td> <td>28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>722</td> </tr> </table>	General Register	393	Homeless Register	79	Transfer Register	194	Sub Total	666	Mutual Exchanges	28	Succession	28	Total	722
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