

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 29 January 2024  
**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

<b>SB1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown – Christmas Tree</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
What was the total and breakdown of the cost for the city’s Christmas tree this year and what are the requirements in terms of location? Which locations were assessed to determine a suitable alternative location to Broad Street in addition to the Rose Hill location that was finally chosen?	<p>The Christmas Tree forms part of an overall tender which includes the Festive Lighting in the city and the Reindeer too. It is not possible to break it down as a separate cost.</p> <p>The Christmas Tree was sited this year at Rose Hill as it was the only other</p>

	<p>suitable location it could be placed that was a Council asset with level ground and access to the required power supply and connection. The city council explored a number of other city centre locations with the county council but could not get agreement to proceed with any of them.</p>
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<p><b>SB2 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Overnight tourist levy</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Can the Leader update us on discussions with other councils about efforts to persuade central government to grant cities like Oxford powers to place a small overnight levy on hotel and other accommodation, as has been commonplace in European countries for many years, the revenue to be used for place-making and other improvements to the city, thus enhancing amenity for visitors and residents alike?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p><b>Author: Ted Maxwell</b></p> <p>The Council continues to explore the options for a locally-managed tourist levy. The rationale is similar to what you have said, in that the monies raised would enable the Council and partners to deliver more of the City Centre Action Plan and its projects, all of which will improve the city centre, for residents and visitors alike.</p> <p>The European model, of a blanket “visitor levy” is not possible in Oxford without primary legislation. The Scottish Government is pursuing a bill – the “Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill” – which would make this possible in Scotland, but we are not aware of any similar legislation being pursued by UK Government.</p> <p>Officers have engaged with several councils that are pursuing Accommodation Business Improvement Districts, which may be an appropriate route for Oxford to follow. The Council has also contributed to the “Oxfordshire Destination Management Plan” and its follow-up relating to strategic funding options. One of the report’s recommendations is to monitor the progress in Scotland and to lobby the UK Government for new legislation. We will support those efforts, mindful that 2024 is an election year and so potential changes will realistically only be from 2025 onwards.</p>

**SB3 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Brown – Closure of courses****Question**

Has the Council Leader written to Alistair Fitt - Vice Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University - as Oxford East MP Annalise Dodds has done, to convey concerns about the closure of courses such as music and maths, given the impact these closures have on the options for students in Oxford and across Oxfordshire?

**Written Response****Author:**

I have had a number of conversations with the Vice Chancellor raising concerns on behalf of the people of Oxford and seeking reassurances about the impact on students in Oxford and Oxfordshire.

**SB4 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Brown – Redundancy at Oxford Brookes University****Question**

Oxford Brookes University has announced that redundancies are on the cards as part of its programme of cuts. What support can Oxford City Council provide to students and staff affected by job cuts at the university?

**Written Response****Author:**

As I understand it, current students should not be impacted by these changes as the idea is to continue students in existing programmes but not to recruit new students. We will continue talking to Oxford Brookes to ensure that staff and students are getting any support they need.

**SB5 From Cllr Aziz to Cllr Brown – Empty shops in Covered Market****Question**

What is being done to ensure empty shops in the Covered Market are not left empty?

**Written Response**

Prior to a longer term letting, empty units are either made available for a short-term letting or as an event/promotional space either for new businesses or to support existing tenants' short-term needs- examples last year include unit 46 as an art therapy art show, unit 54-55 for Christmas trees and 115-117 used for window displays.

There are currently 4 empty units, 3 of which are under offer and legal completion is anticipated imminently. The only really vacant unit is being marketed and offers sought in line with the leasing strategy.

**SB6 From Cllr Aziz to Cllr Brown – Council support for small business**

**Question**

What is the Council doing to support small business? Six more business in the Covered Market are empty, including some of the longest established.

**Written Response**

**Author: Ted Maxwell**

There are only four businesses that are empty currently and three of them are under offer, only one being currently marketed.

The council has limited resources to support businesses, but we are committed to supporting small businesses.

The economic development team's work is guided by Oxford's Economic Strategy and Delivery Plan, which include a range of actions and projects to support small businesses. A recent highlight is the Meanwhile in Oxfordshire programme, a county-wide initiative delivered by Oxford City Council and Makerspace Oxford. Its purpose has been to repurpose empty units for the benefit of start-ups and the independent business sector and so far 100 organisations have been housed and 200 jobs created or supported through the programme since its launch in 2021.

From a City Centre Management perspective, the City Centre Action Plan is the guiding strategy, which acknowledges that it has been a challenging environment for small businesses and seeks to help with this: our monthly city centre newsletter provides a wide range of useful information relating to the city centre; our quarterly "Talk of the Town" meetings rotate around city centre venues and are proving to be an increasingly popular way for small businesses to network and seek help and advice; and our city centre manager is available for one-to-one meetings to identify needs and sign-post further opportunities.

On the Cowley Road, the Council has supported the creation of a new ongoing business-council series of meetings, so that independent businesses in that area

	<p>have a regular chance to discuss issues and opportunities for improvement with the council and other agencies. It is hoped that this dialogue evolves into the businesses formalising their own association or grouping so that they have even more of a voice and ability to work well with the council and we are offering to help with this. We have also offered support to independent businesses on the Botley Road.</p>
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<b>SB7 From Cllr Aziz to Cllr Brown – Diversity representation in Cabinet</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>From October to November 2023, Oxford City Council has seen the resignation of two cabinet members, both are people of colour who are rooted in Oxford’s communities and has also seen most members of colour resign from the Labour Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What work is being carried out by the rest of the Cabinet to ensure Oxford’s diverse communities voices and needs are being recognised and represented by the group?</li> <li>• Will the Leader confirm that she is committed to ensuing Oxford City Council has a Cabinet that represents the diversity of the residents of the city - as it did before Oxford Labour lost control of the council?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>As Cllr Aziz has often said, and I agree with her, it is important that valuing diversity and listening to diverse communities does not fall on the shoulders only of those who themselves come from those communities.</p> <p>We have in place policies in the city council to ensure that we do listen to diverse communities, from the representative nature of our citizen’s panel to the outreach work that our officers do across our communities.</p> <p>In addition, Labour councillors are regularly out on the doorstep listening to and talking with residents across the city.</p> <p>Our cabinet was and is representative of the ruling group’s diversity. I am sure it will continue to be so.</p>

<b>SB8 From Cllr Aziz to Cllr Brown – Leader’s call for action on rising Palestinian civilian casualties</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Has the council leader written to the Mayor of Ramallah and other institutions in our twinned city to share her and Oxford residents alarm and horror at the sharp rise in killings and detentions of</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p><b>Author:</b></p> <p>Yes. I wrote to the Mayor of Ramallah in December.</p>

Palestinian civilians?	
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**SB9 From Cllr Aziz to Cllr Brown – Flying the Palestinian flag**

<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Oxford ended its twinning relationship with the Russian City of Perm, and also flew the flag of Ukraine from the Town Hall. Will the Palestinian flag be flown from the Town Hall once the flag mast is fixed?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p><b>Author:</b></p> <p>We are flying the City of Oxford flag at half-mast again as we did previously. One of our flagpoles is still out of action and likely to be so for quite some time as work is needed to make the access way across the roof safe for staff to access it.</p>
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**Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council**

**ET1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Selling gifts to council**

<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What document explicitly states that gifts to the city council (e.g. the Morrell Trophy or the personalised car number plate) cannot be sold with the proceeds invested into another asset class?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There is no one single document that sets this out. Rather each item/asset may have its own documentation and the Council would also have to adhere to general rules on best value.</p>
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**ET2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Existing and future flooding costs to council**

<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What was the financial cost of this month's flooding to the city council and what was the money spent on?</p> <p>How is the council managing this increasing financial risk of loss and damage in the face of increasing severity of extreme weather events and flooding due to climate change?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The costs are still being accumulated but latest estimate is that the total cost will be around £70- £80k spent. Duties included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring flood sites in the run up to the event, including monitoring river levels and physical site inspections.</li> <li>• Manufacture and placement of flood warning signs across the city.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manufacture and placement of signage to close the towpath in various locations.</li> <li>• Bullstake Close - Erecting the flood barrier, sandbag wall and pumps. 24 hour a day monitoring once set up.</li> <li>• Vicarage Road - Setting up pumps and sandbag wall. 24 hour a day monitoring once set up.</li> <li>• Ferry Hinksey Road - Setting up pumps and sandbag wall. 24 hour a day monitoring once set up.</li> <li>• Delivery of sand and empty bags from depot to Redbridge.</li> <li>• Assisting EA with works on Abingdon Road area.</li> <li>• Extra sweepers deployed to clean areas after flooding.</li> <li>• Call out to Oatlands Rec and Botley Park.</li> <li>• Call out to council houses in Fox Crescent area.</li> <li>• Deployment of temporary toilets to Abingdon Road for tenants.</li> <li>• Assistance with the deployment of pumps</li> </ul> <p>We hope and expects costs to be picked up by Government and if that does not happen in a timely fashion we will obviously make appropriate representations. If these were not forthcoming we would need to revert to reserves and balances to fund such costs.</p> <p>Oxford City Council will continue to support the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS) as a partner in order to reduce flood risk to the city of Oxford, its resident's businesses and the Council. I would also point to the extensive coverage of this major concern in our new Local Plan.</p>
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**ET3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Business rates delinquency rate****Question**

What is the delinquency rate on business rates owed to Oxford City Council versus collected over the last 12 months?

**Written Response**

As at 31/12/2023

- 2022/23 collectable debt is £90,072,862.21, we have collected 96.82% so the delinquency rate is 3.18%
- 2023/24 collectable debt is £89,361,210.49, we have collected 81.11% so the delinquency rate at this stage in the year is 18.89%

**ET4 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Empty council owned commercial property****Question**

How many of the council's commercial property portfolio is currently empty?

**Written Response**

Currently there are 18 properties that are vacant in the Council's investment portfolio, excluding the Covered Market.

9 properties – under offer/in legals

4 properties – currently being marketed (none in city centre)

5 properties – requiring conversion works, or due to residential use will be taken to the market in a different way to the wider portfolio.

**ET5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Council owned commercial property portfolio EPC rating****Question**

What is the breakdown of the EPC ratings within the council's commercial property portfolio? (i.e. how many of the properties of the total number have each EPC rating?)

**Written Response**

Please see response provided in the table shown in Appendix 1

**ET6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Summertown public toilets****Question****Written Response**



<p>What are the opening hours for the public toilets in a) South Parade and b) Diamond Place, and what is the respective cost of operating these public conveniences?</p>	<p>The opening times for both toilet blocks are 08:00 till 17:00</p> <p>Due to the multi-faceted way that the streetscene crews work, it's really difficult to get an exact cost for cleaning 2 individual toilets. However, the best estimate for the 2 blocks would be £32k per annum, this includes labour, vehicle and consumables.</p>
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<b>ET7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Fee from South Park use for fireworks</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What was the fee was paid to the City Council for the use of South Park for the firework display that caused damage to the park in 2023?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>£3,150</p>

<b>ET8 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Turner – Meadow Lane car park</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>When will there be a public update on the future of the Meadow Lane car park, including a timeline for a decision-making process?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Following a review of all matters raised by the stakeholders, we are working with our consultants Jessop and Cook to submit a planning application on behalf of the Council. The timeline is still to be agreed and an update will be provided to stakeholders in early February.</p>

**Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks; Deputy Leader of the Council**

<b>CM1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Munkonge – Cycle parking city owned parks</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Does the city council follow the national guidance LTN 1/20 for installing cycle infrastructure when installing cycle stands in parks?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We are reviewing local transport note 120 and how we apply it within our parks and open spaces.</p>

<b>CM2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Munkonge – Use of park contract requirements</b>
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<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
What restrictions are placed on organisations using South Park (or other city-owned or operated parks) on use of vehicles and heavy machinery on grass surfaces?	There are currently no restrictions on the use of vehicles and heavy machinery on grass surfaces although this is under review.

<b>CM3 From Cllr Snowton to Cllr Munkonge – South Park remediation</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
Can you confirm whether the council will need to spend any of its own money on restoration of South Park following the damage resulting from the Guy Fawkes Night event? What is the cost of the estimated officer time spent on managing remediation efforts after this damage compared to if no damage would have been caused?	The event organisers are paying for all the rectification costs for South Park following the firework event. At this point, it is unclear what officer time will be needed to manage the remediation efforts as the timescale involved is weather dependent.

<b>CM4 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Munkonge – Allotment sites asbestos contamination</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
Can the portfolio holder explain what steps the city council is taking to address the threat of asbestos contamination on allotment sites and remove all historic hazardous asbestos material from allotment sites, including in sheds and fencing?	The council is aware of the presence of asbestos in a number of the sheds and other structures on some allotments and has undertaken appropriate management surveys. Asbestos would only present a significant risk if disturbed and any posing a risk has been removed. Removal and disposal of the material would bring a significant budget pressure

<b>CM5 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Munkonge – Grass cuttings collection</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
Can the portfolio holder reassure residents that grass will be cut and collected towards the end of August and not left in situ to rot down and encourage rank vegetation to grow and block up street drains?	The cutting of the verges is undertaken by ODS on behalf of County Highways. County is unable to fund the additional costs of removal of the grass and green waste disposal which would be significant given the scale of the operation.

	<p>However, Oxford City Council does fund the collection of grass cuttings on across the 8 verges that formed part of its original 'no mow' pilot where this has been found to have increased biodiversity. These verges are on the following roads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marston Road</li> <li>• Sunderland Avenue</li> <li>• Headley Way (Oxford Road Bypass) / Eastern bypass</li> <li>• The Round way</li> <li>• Bayswater Road</li> <li>• Grenoble Road</li> <li>• Abingdon Road</li> <li>• Abberbury roundabout</li> </ul>
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<b>CM6 From Cllr Latif to Cllr Munkonge – New leisure provider 1</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Can it be explained to Council why a new provider for leisure services is being announced with just 2 months to go, given the previous provider had a 15-year contract?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There is a procurement process that needed to be followed in relation to any appointment of a leisure provider. Work started on this around 2 years ago, contracts should be reprocured as close as possible to the end of the previous contract to ensure the bids reflect current market trends and requirements of the Council.</p> <p>This has been a significant piece of cross council work for the authority. The process has been very competitive. There has been significant member engagement which has included regular member briefings, cross party steering groups, leaders and cabinet meetings.</p>

<b>CM7 From Cllr Latif to Cllr Munkonge – New leisure provider 2</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What risk to leisure services across the city exist given the new provider has just two months' notice before a changeover of provider?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Serco has confirmed that they are able to mobilise within this period and have a mobilisation plan in place.</p> <p>In addition, the Council has its own overarching transition plan and risk</p>

	<p>assessment in place. This includes contingency options to support the operator if required.</p> <p>Whilst we expect the transition to go smoothly, insight from local authorities across the country flags that there is always the risk of some minor disruption.</p>
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<b>CM8 From Cllr Latif to Cllr Munkonge – New leisure provider 3</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>During the covid pandemic many primary school children missed swimming lessons. What immediate measures have been agreed with the new leisure provider to ensure these potentially lifesaving lessons are provided for children who missed out?</p>	<p>Being able to swim is a key life skill and we recognise the impact of the pandemic, this is referenced within our Thriving Communities Strategy as a priority and something that we will continue to monitor.</p> <p>School swimming bookings will transfer over to the new operator and they understand the priority of these. In addition the operator does have a focus with its business plan on providing more after school swimming lessons.</p>

**Cabinet Member for Planning and Healthier Communities**

<b>LU1 From Cllr Snowton to Cllr Upton – Templars Square redevelopment</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>What steps has the council taken to encourage the redevelopment of Templar’s Square since the new owners of the site took ownership in 2022 and have been consulting on its future?</p>	<p>The potential redevelopment of Templar’s Square shopping centre is an important opportunity. However, it is one that will need careful thought given the important role the centre plays as a local retail and community asset, alongside its relationship with surrounding residential communities.</p> <p>In early 2023, officers established both an internal officer working group and an external working group with the new</p>

<b>LU1 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Upton – Templars Square redevelopment</b>	
	<p>leaseholders Redevco to explore opportunities. This work has also informed the proposed site allocations policy in the draft Local Plan.</p> <p>Redevco requested a pause in our discussion last year while it undertook further work internally, but late last year signalled it will be ready to reengage again in early 2024.</p> <p>The Council is in the process of commissioning external consultants to provide advice on any future redevelopment options for the centre. Once this is in place a clearer programme will be established with Redevco.</p> <p>A briefing for local ward councillors with Redevco and the City Council is being set up, expected to be in March.</p>

<b>LU2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Gardens being lost</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
As part of the planning application process for property redevelopment (e.g. extensions and major alterations) can the Cabinet Member ensure that applicants are informed that any reduction of the amount of garden space in favour of hard surfaces must be defined and included?	<p>The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 includes policies that set out what is expected from development in terms of sustainable urban drainage (SUDS) techniques.</p> <p>The Council has a National and Local Validation List that sets out what is expected from planning applications, and this specifies that all applications must include details of the SUDS proposals for the scheme. The latter includes how they intend to ensure that rainwater soak away is maintained.</p>

<b>LU3 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – SUDS</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>

<p>Given the recent extensive flooding in Oxford, can the Cabinet Member work with colleagues to drive an improvement in runoff amelioration relating to property redevelopment (e.g. extensions and major alterations), for example by tightening future requirements that new or replacement hard surfaces must be to the SuDS standard?</p>	<p>There are already measures in place to achieve this.</p> <p>The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 already has a policy that requires new development to manage surface water through SUDS systems and techniques to limit run-off and reduce the existing rate of run off from development. This is considered as part of our determination of planning applications.</p> <p>Householders can replace hard surfaces with permeable paving under permitted development rights. Householders wanting to replace hard surfaces exceeding a certain area with non-permeable paving would need to apply for planning permission.</p>
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<b>LU4 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Upton – Contractor site access damage</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>Can the Cabinet Member discuss with the County Council how it might, as highways authority, put in place measures through its consideration of planning applications to ensure that where any work is carried out under City Council planning permission, that applicants are made liable for the repair of damage caused to pavements and/or adjacent roads?</p>	<p>Where there will be permanent alternations or improvement works to the highway as part of a planning consent the applicant would be required to enter into a section 278 legal agreement with the County and as such the County would be able to approve and oversee any works and/ or damage.</p> <p>Where this is not the case and there is damage, e.g. erosion of verges or pavements etc. then the County would be the authority most likely to be able to enforce this.</p> <p>In most cases planning applications include conditions seeking construction traffic management plans, which include requirements for condition surveys of roads pre and post construction. The County Council highways team deal with such matters.</p>

**LU5 From Cllr Latif to Cllr Upton – ODS overtime costs 1****Question**

The Budget Review Group were recently advised that the overtime costs to ODS had risen from £140,000 per annum to £168,000 per annum over the last year. Has this added cost to ODS, and subsequently the Council, been factored into the modelling around LTNs and the cost-benefit analysis?

**Written Response**

This is the estimated additional cost incurred by ODS as a result of the LTN's which the Council has agreed to pay. I am not aware of whether these costs have been factored into the cost- benefit analysis of the LTN's which would be a matter for the County Council

**LU6 From Cllr Latif to Cllr Upton – ODS overtimes costs 2****Question**

Has the figure of £168,000 been shared with residents across Oxford to allow them to consider the full impact of LTNs on the City, and potential impact on Council services?

**Written Response****Author: Nigel Kennedy**

The figure has been calculated by ODS as an estimate of the additional cost of them carrying out their services for the Council. It is referred to in the Council's published budget papers which are currently out to public consultation.

**Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services****NC1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Data systems****Question**

What data system does the council use to aggregate and track all incoming complaints from residents to the council and direct them for resolution by the appropriate team (e.g. related to litter, fly tipping, noise nuisance, business regulation, environmental health etc.)

**Written Response**

The Council currently uses Aareon QL to manage all Housing related complaints and will expand this to the rest of the council from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Complaints are captured by using a form which is directed to the appropriate service for investigation. Prompts are made by the system when the actual response times are outside of those expected. The system provides management information including the analysis of

	trends to identify future improvements
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**NC2 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Chapman – Housing Management System**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>Given the revelations regarding deficiencies in the Post Office Horizon System and the supplier Fujitsu, can the Cabinet Member assure the Council that the system has been properly and independently audited in its use for financial transactions? Can he also confirm that the supplier has robust procedures in place to ensure that the Council is informed promptly of any and all software faults which could adversely affect its use of the system?</p>	<p>There are controls in place to ensure the accuracy of data entered into the system by staff and this is supported by regular reconciliation of data being fed in via interfaces from other systems. With all systems, errors do from time to time occur, but these issues are raised in a timely manner and the project team work on these to fix, thereby ensuring that the accuracy of the output is maintained. When problems occur, which are more in respect of systems design, these are reported to the supplier by any one of its customers and are subsequently fixed in future systems updates and patches. System controls are from time to time subject to internal audit scrutiny with any recommendations on changes being reported back to management and Audit and Governance Committee for action. Whilst errors can never be entirely eradicated, the mitigations and controls that are in place should be sufficient to ensure that these are kept to a minimum.</p>

**NC3 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Chapman – ODS work on floods**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>Does the portfolio holder agree that ODS did an excellent job in minimising the impact of the recent floods for both residents and businesses?</p>	<p>Yes, I do. The ODS Flood teams did an amazing job during Storm Henk working around the clock to protect businesses and properties. As a result of working over the weekend and through the night, only four domestic properties in Oxford suffered flood damage. Whilst I feel for any person affected by flooding, given the risks, this is a very good result.</p> <p>There was excellent co-operation with the Council and the Environment Agency. There are always lessons to learn to be even better next time and a</p>



	<p>review of how we responded is being undertaken.</p> <p>But I am very proud of the response – a practical example of ODS “Doing Good” in action and of public service at its best.</p>
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**NC4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – Driving to household waste recycling centre**

<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Following the removal of bring banks, how can residents recycle textile waste if they are not able to drive or cycle to a household waste recycling centre?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>ODS is in discussions with charities that operate seasonal/temporary bring banks for textile collection – and it is expected these arrangements will continue.</p> <p>More generally, residents wanting to dispose of good quality and usable textiles are advised to consider the following options:</p> <p>Charity shops (most charity shops are happy to take a range of textiles and household items, as long as they’re clean and in good condition)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online second hand vendors, i.e. Shpock, Vinted, Depop, ebay</li> <li>• Oxford <a href="#">Freegle</a> – the local online secondhand marketplace</li> </ul> <p>For other textiles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of retailers take back items within store (e.g. H&amp;M and Dunelm)</li> <li>• Charity shops such as the British Heart Foundation, Helen and Douglas, Age UK and OXFAM accept rags (unusable textiles) except bedding and curtains. But please double check by calling your local store before visiting them.</li> </ul> <p>As a very last resort, textiles can be disposed of in your green refuse bins.</p>
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**NC5 From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Chapman – ODS maintenance efficiencies**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>When ODS are called out to a property for maintenance. What percentage do they have to return to within 4 weeks to carry out further works? Once called out do operatives carry out an inspection of the property? If not, would it be more efficient to do so, and any works required booked into routine works.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 23 – 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 23 there were <b>29,523</b> responsive repair &amp; heating breakdown orders raised.</li> <li>• Of these <b>23,840</b> were raised at first point of contact by OCC Contact Centre</li> <li>• On attendance the ODS operative will identify if any further works are required and will also ask the tenant if there are any further repairs they want to report. If further works are required, we raise the order through our mobile working IT solution and agree an appointment with the tenant before leaving the property - last year ODS raised <b>5,683</b> additional work orders.</li> <li>• Properties are not routinely inspected as part of the repairs appointment, but additional works are identified and appointed as detailed above.</li> <li>• However, as part of the ODS Damp and Mould strategy, our operatives have been trained to identify if there are any mould and damp issues in the property. This is also part of the script in our mobile working IT solution. If damp and mould is identified an electronic survey report is produced and sent directly to OCC. Last year we completed damp surveys to <b>855</b> properties where mould or damp had been identified. These are then reviewed by OCC who decide what action is required.</li> <li>• Orders raised by the OCC Contact Centre within 1 month of a previous order was <b>2,410</b> orders = <b>8.16%</b>. These orders primarily relate to heating, plumbing and electrical repairs, which were not known at the point of the previous repair order visit.</li> </ul>

**JH1 From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Hunt – South Park damage**

**Question**

The damage to South Park caused by the firework display in November. When will the park be repaired and what is the estimated cost?

**Written Response**

The park will be repaired when the ground is firm enough. Given the scale of the damage, attempting to undertake the work while the ground is still waterlogged will make the situation worse and cause further compaction of the soil. The cost for rectification is currently being assessed together with the event organiser.

**JH2 From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Hunt – Cowley Road Carnival**

**Question**

Can we have an update on the Cowley Road Carnival. After last year's late cancellation, it was promised the City would engage earlier and work more closely with organisers to ensure we have a carnival this year.

**Written Response**

Council officers have been in regular contact with Cowley Road Carnival throughout the last year. The Carnival Committee have submitted a funding application to the Arts Council and expect to know the outcome in April 2024. Officers have supported the committee with grants advice and encouraged them to apply to the council's Oxford Community Impact Fund as well as other external funders. The council is also encouraging the Carnival Committee to contact local businesses

## Cabinet Member for Housing

### LS1 From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Smith – Rented housing inspection

#### Question

What is the role of Metastreet in the City Council's rented housing inspection programme?

#### Written Response

Metastreet is the software system used to process applications and to record property inspections undertaken as part of the selective licensing scheme.

### LS2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Smith – Rats in rented accommodation

#### Question

What is the average time taken for complaint resolution when rubbish dumped in the gardens of HMO or rented properties are the source of local rat infestation?

#### Written Response

In the last 3 years there have been 149 complaints concerning rubbish from privately rented HMOs. On average service requests are open for 3 months for such types of complaint.

### LS3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Smith – Green Square Accord - maintenance issue

#### Question

How many complaints has the council received regarding Green Square Accord properties over the last 12 months, and on which broad categories of topics (e.g. mould/leaking roof)?

#### Written Response

Regulatory Services have received 6 complaints regarding GreenSquareAccord properties in the last 12 month and they have been about:

- Damp and Mould ( 2 properties)
- Pests ( 2 Properties)
- Disrepair
- Overcrowding

### LS4 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Smith – Green Square Accord - communications quality

#### Question

How many times has Green Square Accord met with Council officers and/or councillors to resolve maintenance

#### Written Response

Officers from regulatory Services have met GreenSquareAccord 6 times in relation to 3 properties concerning

<p>issues of their properties within the city over the last 12 months?</p>	<p>maintenance issues, in relation to the 3 other properties where complaints were received, the issues were resolved without the need to meet GreenSquareAccord.</p>
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<p><b>LS5 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Smith – Brownfield development grant application</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The DLUHC has announced further funding (£80 million) for converting Council owned brownfield land so that it can be used for housing. Is the City Council bidding for a share of this funding for any projects and if so where?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p><b>Author:</b> Dave Scholes</p> <p>The Council successfully bid in the previous round for BLR funding for 5 small sites, and these are being progressed into delivery – with a report to Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The Council has a project to consider approx 200 small garage and back-land sites that might be suitable for housing, but often have many constraints and delivery challenges. It is proposed to review the resourcing required to bring forward further sites, after this initial ‘pilot’ phase moves into delivery, and to only apply for further funding after further decisions on this.</p>

<p><b>LS6 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith – Landlord registry</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Can the portfolio holder explain why the rogue landlord registry is not made public?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Housing and Planning Act 2016 does not permit the Rogue Landlord Database to be in the public domain. In 2022, the government announced, following a consultation into widening the access to the database that they would “introduce a Property Portal to make sure tenants, landlord and local councils to have the information they need”, there are no details as to when this will be introduced.</p>

**LS7 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith – Discrepancy in selective licence registration**

**Question**

At present, fewer than 7,000 properties are registered with either a selective licence or an HMO licence. According to the City Council's estimates prior to the selective licence scheme being introduced, there were 30,000 privately let properties in Oxford. Can the portfolio holder explain the discrepancy between these two figures and why many landlords appear not to be registered?

**Written Response**

The estimated 30,000 privately rented properties includes properties which are exempt from licensing under the Housing Act, due to ownership/ management eg college owned student accommodation, we estimated 12,000 exemptions. Currently we have received 11,451 selective licence applications covering 12,796 properties/units. ( due to block licences covering a number of flats ) Within the HMO stock we have 3630 HMOs currently either licensed or in the process of being licensed.

The remaining equates to 5% of the estimated number that are not licensed, however work to find unlicensed properties continues.

Please note, the Housing Act 2004 and associated regulations require licences to be placed on the register only once the licence has been granted.

**LS8 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith – Unregistered landlords**

**Question**

Can the portfolio holder explain what steps are being taken to catch unregistered landlords and what the City Council would advise residents whose landlords are unregistered to do?

**Written Response**

Work to identify unlicensed properties is on-going. We have received 285 reports of unlicensed properties in the last 12 months. All such reports are investigated and where appropriate formal action will be taken for properties operating without a licence. Proactive work is recommencing in the near future following training of officers in this area. Residents can report concerns about unlicensed properties via the website. Occupiers of unlicensed properties can also apply for a rent repayment order to reclaim rent paid from the landlord, whilst

	the property was unlicensed, details of this are on the website.
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**LS9 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith – Section 21 notices**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
Can unlicensed landlords issue section 21 notices to tenants?	A section 21 notice to evict a tenant cannot be served where a valid licence application has not been made or a property licence has not been issued.

**LS10 From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith – Kestrel Crescent garages**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
It is very positive that innovative community led housing developments will be led at the Balfour Road and Pegasus Road site via the Oxfordshire Community Land Trust especially considering the very high cost of and need for housing. Officers inform us that there is also a review under way of all such small sites. There is a similar site at Kestrel Crescent. This is a derelict and mostly unoccupied or abandoned garages (around 15-20). Quite a few are boarded up and have graffiti on etc and residents have been enquiring the possibility of the use of this space for much needed car parking spaces. What are the plans for this site?	<p><b>Author:</b> Dave Scholes</p> <p>As referenced with regard to the question above (LS5), a small sites project is underway to assess approx 200 sites, many of which are very under-used. This project proposes to test the viability of each site for housing, but where that is deemed unviable, then alternative uses will be explored to try and bring these spaces into more worthwhile use again. That could include EV charging, and other possible uses, all of which can be explored on a site by site basis.</p>

**LS11 From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Smith – Community centres**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
Given the investment made in community centres and Blackbird Leys and East Oxford currently not available to residents. Why are resources available not being utilised and operated to fully to fill some of the voids the closures have caused. Asian Cultural centre operating on limited hours with no elections for over 5 years. Littlemore Community	Staff resources from the temporarily closed community centre's at East Oxford and Blackbird Leys have been reallocated to cover vacancies at Rose Hill Community Centre and to also support the work to redevelop those sites.

<p>Centre not producing accounts for 5 plus years. As Landlords what are we doing to ensure that centres are operating to the terms of very favourable lease agreements and ensuring residents are receiving value for money and social benefits?</p>	<p>Discussions with the Asian Cultural centre have been taking place over the past couple of months to support the association in increasing its usage. More recently this month the senior officer team have included the facility within the East Oxford locality walk around.</p> <p>We meet with all of the Community Centre Associations on a monthly basis, to understand any issues, how the centres are performing and to look at opportunities to work better together. We will look to work with Community Associations where issues arise and have written to Littlemore Community Association regarding their accounts.</p>
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