

To: Council
Date: 29 January 2024
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 17 January 2024, 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 Oxford Social Independents, Independent Group, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green groups in that order.

Introduction

- a) Stop the Anti-Boycott Bill (Proposed by Cllr Dr. Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, seconded by Cllr Chris Jarvis) [Amendment proposed by Cllr. Chris Smowton, seconded by Cllr Laurence Fouweather]
- b) Moving Oxford City Council to a committee system of representation to increase resident' confidence in democracy (proposed by Cllr Dr. Amar Latif, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz)
- c) The Cost of living crisis and local government funding (proposed by Cllr Ed Turner, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman). [Amendment proposed by Cllr. Andrew Gant, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles]
- d) Scrap the two-child benefit cap (proposed by Cllr Chris Smowton, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles)
- e) Disposable Vapes (proposed by Cllr Lucy Pegg, seconded by Cllr Rosie Rawle)

a) Stop the Anti-Boycott Bill (Proposed by Cllr Dr. Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini, seconded by Cllr Chris Jarvis) [Amendment proposed by Cllr. Chris Smowton, seconded by Cllr Laurence Fouweather]

Oxford Socialist Independents Group Motion

Council Notes

1. The Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill passed its third reading in the House of Commons on 10 January 2024.¹ It will now continue its passage through the House of Lords.
2. The legislation has been dubbed the 'Anti-Boycott Bill' and seeks to stop public bodies from making any decisions around investment and procurement that aren't in line with UK government foreign or economic trade policies.²
3. The Anti-Boycott Bill is specifically designed to target the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement - an initiative launched by Palestinian civil society organisations. The BDS movement seeks to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law.
4. The only geographical areas that the legislation would prohibit the government making exemption provisions for are - as listed in the Bill - 'Israel', 'the Occupied Palestine Territories' and 'the Occupied Golan Heights'.³ The legislation would therefore explicitly prohibit public bodies - including local authorities - from engaging in any form of boycott of Israeli goods and services, including those produced or developed through an illegal occupation.
5. More than 60 charities, campaign groups, civil society organisations and trade unions have publicly opposed the legislation, including ASLEF, CWU, FBU, Friends of the Earth, Global Justice Now, Greenpeace, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, Liberty, Methodist Church in Britain, Muslim Association of Britain, Na'Amod, NEU, NUS, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, PCS, Unison, UCU, and War on Want.⁴

Council Believes

1. The Anti-Boycott Bill is an anti-democratic measure which restricts the ability of public bodies to take ethics and human rights into account in key parts of their decision making. It has profound implications on public bodies' ability to act upon human rights violations, slavery and environmental destruction.
2. Ethical boycotts from public bodies - including local councils - have played an important role in many historic campaigns for justice - most notably in the struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.
3. Local authorities like Oxford City Council have a duty to speak out and resist such attempts to diminish democracy.

Council Resolves

¹ <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

² <https://righttoboycott.org.uk/>

³ <https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/53574/documents/4223>

⁴ <https://righttoboycott.org.uk/#signatories>

1. To ask the leader of the council to:
 1. Issue a public statement condemning the Anti-Boycott Bill.
 2. Write to the secretary state for leveling up, housing and communities - Michael Gove - expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the legislation and calling for him to withdraw the Bill.
 3. Write to Ben Jamal, Director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the Anti-Boycott Bill and support for the Right to Boycott campaign.
 4. Write to Labour leader Keir Starmer, Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey, and Green Party co-leaders Adrian Ramsay and Carla Denyer, encouraging them to ensure that their MPs actively oppose the legislation in parliament.
 5. Write to the leaders of the parliamentary groups in the House of Lords, encouraging them to ensure that peers within their groups actively oppose the legislation in the Lords.
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Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

Council Notes

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3. The Anti-Boycott Bill is specifically designed to target the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement - an initiative launched by Palestinian civil society organisations. The BDS movement seeks to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel to comply with international law.
4. The only geographical areas that the legislation would prohibit the government making exemption provisions for are - as listed in the Bill - 'Israel', 'the Occupied Palestine Territories' and 'the Occupied Golan Heights'.⁷ The legislation would therefore explicitly prohibit public bodies - including local authorities - from engaging in any form of boycott of Israeli goods and services, including those produced or developed through an illegal occupation.
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4. The Anti-Boycott Bill is an anti-democratic measure which restricts the ability of public bodies to take ethics and human rights into account in key parts of their decision making. It has profound implications on public bodies' ability to act upon human rights violations, slavery and environmental destruction.
5. Ethical boycotts from public bodies - including local councils - have played an important role in many historic campaigns for justice - most notably in the struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.
6. Local authorities like Oxford City Council have a duty to speak out and resist such attempts to diminish democracy.

Council Resolves

2. To ask the leader of the council to:
 1. Issue a public statement condemning the Anti-Boycott Bill.
 2. Write to the secretary state for leveling up, housing and communities - Michael Gove - expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the legislation and calling for him to withdraw the Bill.
 - ~~3. Write to Ben Jamal, Director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the Anti-Boycott Bill and support for the Right to Boycott campaign.~~
 4. Write to Labour leader Keir Starmer, Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey, and Green Party co-leaders Adrian Ramsay and Carla Denyer, encouraging them to ensure that their MPs actively oppose the legislation in parliament.
 5. Write to the leaders of the parliamentary groups in the House of Lords, encouraging them to ensure that peers within their groups actively oppose the legislation in the Lords.
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If amended, the Motion would read:

Council Notes

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2. The legislation has been dubbed the 'Anti-Boycott Bill' and seeks to stop public bodies from making any decisions around investment and procurement that aren't in line with UK government foreign or economic trade policies.¹⁰
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Council Believes

7. The Anti-Boycott Bill is an anti-democratic measure which restricts the ability of public bodies to take ethics and human rights into account in key parts of their decision making. It has profound implications on public bodies' ability to act upon human rights violations, slavery and environmental destruction.
8. Ethical boycotts from public bodies - including local councils - have played an important role in many historic campaigns for justice - most notably in the struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.
9. Local authorities like Oxford City Council have a duty to speak out and resist such attempts to diminish democracy.

Council Resolves

3. To ask the leader of the council to:
 1. Issue a public statement condemning the Anti-Boycott Bill.
 2. Write to the secretary state for leveling up, housing and communities - Michael Gove - expressing Oxford City Council's opposition to the legislation and calling for him to withdraw the Bill.
 3. Write to Labour leader Keir Starmer, Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey, and Green Party co-leaders Adrian Ramsay and Carla Denyer, encouraging them to ensure that their MPs actively oppose the legislation in parliament.
 4. Write to the leaders of the parliamentary groups in the House of Lords, encouraging them to ensure that peers within their groups actively oppose the legislation in the Lords.
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¹² <https://righttoboycott.org.uk/#signatories>

b) Moving Oxford City Council to a committee system of representation to increase resident' confidence in democracy (proposed by Cllr Dr. Amar Latif, seconded by Cllr Shaista Aziz)

Independent Group Motion

This council notes:

Years of low voter turnout in local elections (less than 40% in May 2022)¹³ within Oxford would suggest that there is discontent amongst the electorate in the city.

Low turn out has been suggested to disproportionately affect the more disadvantaged across communities and society who may find it more difficult to access elected politicians, find it challenging to access online consultations and be more disenfranchised with the political process.¹⁴¹⁵

That the Labour administration has lost 10 councillors since October 13th, 2023, which is almost a third of total Labour Councillors, yet continues as a minority administration.

Furthermore, despite Oxford having the third largest ethnic minority population, 29%¹⁶, within the Southeast of England, and being proud of its diversity and internationalist identity as a city, there is only one cabinet member from an ethnic minority background.

Prior to the racist murder of George Floyd in the USA in May 2020 and the reinvigoration of the Black Lives Matter and Rhodes Must Fall Movement in Oxford, the Labour lead Oxford City Council carried out internal work to ensure it has a racially diverse and representative Cabinet, the progress made has since been reversed.

That the decision-making process within the City Council leaves large numbers of decisions to individual cabinet members who cannot fully represent the diversity of views from residents across Oxford.

That other Councils, including Sheffield and Bristol, have moved towards a committee system of representation which better reflects views of residents across their respective cities.

This council believes that a committee system of representation:
Is a better and more transparent way for decisions to be made across Oxford, which will create a more equitable system ensuring residents voices are listened to and acted upon alongside a wider group of councillors.

Will allow a less centralised and more collaborative way of working.
Will better reflect the diversity of views and opinions from a wider demographic of society, including across the political spectrum.

¹³ https://www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20046/elections_and_voting/1521/oxford_city_council_election_results_-_5_may_2022

¹⁴ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953623000746>

¹⁵ <https://www.democraticaudit.com/2019/10/11/have-we-all-underestimated-the-severity-of-socioeconomic-differences-in-electoral-participation/>

¹⁶ [Ethnicity | Ethnicity | Oxford City Council](#)

Will allow individual Cabinet members to be replaced by Policy Committee Chairs who will have responsibility for different areas of Council policy.

This council agrees to:

Request the Officers assess the implications (financial, resource, legal and otherwise), negatives and positives of the Council moving to a Committee System of governance, including considering and developing plans as to how such a system of governance may work.

Present the final proposals to Cabinet and then Council for comments and consideration as to whether to commence the process to consider a formal change of governance arrangements in the Council, with a view to putting this to a City-wide referendum by May 2025.

c) The Cost of living crisis and local government funding (proposed by Cllr Ed Turner, seconded by Cllr Nigel Chapman). [Amendment proposed by Cllr. Andrew Gant, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles]

Labour Group Motion

This Council believes that the English local government finance settlement proposed by the Tories for 24/25 is thoroughly inadequate and penalises our poorest citizens the most, who are least well equipped to face the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

Government pronouncements about increased funding are “smoke and mirrors” and do not reflect the reality that costs are rising faster than any increases in funding, and that increases in “core spending power” largely come from local residents, not government funding.

Council is very concerned that a one-year increase in local housing allowances (after years of freeze) will be eroded by the Government’s failure to increase the benefits cap and temporary accommodation housing benefit, thus offering support with one hand and then denying it with the other. That failure will be exacerbated by reintroducing the housing allowance freeze again in April 25. This will once again increase homelessness in areas like Oxford.

In addition, this Council is angry that the Conservative Government has abolished funding for the Household support grant from May 24 – denying poorer people a welcome source of cash support for household and fuel bills, and vital heating repairs. This comes in addition to the end of centrally provided fuel bill support for many who had been in receipt of it.

Overall, English local government faces a huge funding crisis and cannot close the gap without cutting front line services, especially those aimed at its poorest citizens. This is evidenced by Oxford City Council having to draw down on its reserves and propose a reduction in funding for its Council Tax reduction scheme from April 2025.

More widely, Council believes households are feeling huge pressure as a result of substantial increases in taxes as well as, for many, higher mortgage costs and rents due to the chaos caused by Liz Truss’ mini-budget, and a sharp focus on the cost of living is urgently needed.

This Council calls upon the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government demanding:

1. A sustainable long term funding settlement in the March Budget for councils like Oxford, facing a funding squeeze due to inflation and the rising costs of homelessness.
2. A commitment to increasing local housing allowances annually in line with local housing costs and scrapping the benefits cap.
3. The re-instatement of funding for the Household Support Grant which provides a flexible and rapid response to people with urgent needs.
4. Support for councils like Oxford which retains a Council Tax reduction scheme for people struggling to pay these costs, and encouragement that other councils should instigate such schemes.

It also asks the Leader of the Council to contact our two local MPs, for Oxford East and Oxford West and Abingdon respectively, and ask them to write with the same demands to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Liberal Democrat Group Amendment

This Council believes that the English local government finance settlement proposed by the Tories for 24/25 is thoroughly inadequate and penalises our poorest citizens the most, who are least well equipped to face the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

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It also asks the Leader of the Council to contact our two local MPs, for Oxford East and Oxford West and Abingdon respectively, and ask them to write with the same demands to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Council notes that it is likely a Labour government will be in power by the time this council is forming its next budget, that shadow ministers must make their intentions clear as soon as possible to aid financial planning for that eventuality, and that Keir Starmer has recently pledged not to "turn on the spending taps". It therefore also asks the Leader of the Council, that in event of a change of government at the upcoming general election, they should also write to the new Chancellor of the Exchequer reiterating all four of the above demands.

If amended, the motion would read:

This Council believes that the English local government finance settlement proposed by the Tories for 24/25 is thoroughly inadequate and penalises our poorest citizens the most, who are least well equipped to face the continuing cost-of-living crisis.

Government pronouncements about increased funding are "smoke and mirrors" and do not reflect the reality that costs are rising faster than any increases in funding, and that increases in "core spending power" largely come from local residents, not government funding.

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It also asks the Leader of the Council to contact our two local MPs, for Oxford East and Oxford West and Abingdon respectively, and ask them to write with the same demands to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Council notes that it is likely a Labour government will be in power by the time this council is forming its next budget, that shadow ministers must make their intentions clear as soon as possible to aid financial planning for that eventuality, and that Keir Starmer has recently pledged not to "turn on the spending taps". It therefore also asks the Leader of the Council, that in event of a change of government at the upcoming general election, they should also write to the new Chancellor of the Exchequer reiterating all four of the above demands.

d) Scrap the two-child benefit cap (proposed by Cllr Chris Snowton, seconded by Cllr Katherine Miles)

Liberal Democrat Group Motion

Council notes that:

- The two-child limit, introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017, restricts support in Universal Credit and tax credits to two children in a family.
- The Child Poverty Action Group identified 4.2 million children living in poverty in the UK in 2021–22, with the prevalence of poverty much higher among Black and minority ethnic groups¹⁷.
- Research by the End Child Poverty Coalition shows that scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty, and that the economic and societal effects of child poverty, including spending on public services, cost the UK £39 billion every year¹⁸.
- A new report by the Commons Education Select Committee warns that cost-of-living pressures on families are driving missed education¹⁹.
- In a country already struggling with fewer and fewer young people supporting an ageing population, it is not in any case in our interests to attempt to prevent or delay people from raising children through financial pressure.
- Despite initially pledging to repeal the policy in 2020²⁰, the Leader of the Opposition then reversed himself and pledged to keep the Tory policy²¹, before eventually adopting a noncommittal stance on the issue²².

¹⁷ <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

¹⁸ https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/two_child_limit/

¹⁹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41590/documents/205047/default/> particularly para.148

Council resolves:

- That the Leader should write to both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition expressing this council's strong support for a repeal to the two-child benefit cap.
- That the Leader should further write to Oxford's MPs requesting that they in turn pressure both government and opposition to abolish the cap.

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

Green Group 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 week²³
- 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 cars²⁴
- 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.²⁵
- Lithium ion batteries, like those used in vapes, caused 700 fires at waste sites in 2022 due to not being properly disposed of.²⁶
- 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.²⁷

²⁰ https://twitter.com/Keir_Starmer/status/1225465424092987393

²¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/jul/16/labour-keep-two-child-benefit-cap-says-keir-starmer>

²² <https://news.sky.com/story/starmer-softens-stance-on-two-child-benefit-cap-amid-snp-attacks-ahead-of-by-election-12940684>

²³ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/sep/08/call-for-uk-ban-on-single-use-vapes-as-more-than-5m-discarded-each-week>

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ <https://ash.org.uk/uploads/Use-of-vapes-among-young-people-GB-2023.pdf?v=1690455394>

²⁶ <https://www.materialfocus.org.uk/press-releases/over-700-fires-in-bin-lorries-and-recycling-centres-are-caused-by-batteries-many-of-which-are-hidden-inside-electricals/>

²⁷ <https://green-alliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Letter-to-ministers-on-disposable-vapes.pdf>

- 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.²⁸ The UK must rapidly respond to it's consultation on youth vaping by bringing in a full prohibition on disposable vapes.
- Whilst vaping can help smokers to quit, reusable vapes serve this same purpose

This council resolves to:

- Request 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 the end of 2024 on environmental and child health grounds
- Request 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

²⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-66718599>

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