

To: Council
Date: 27 January 2025
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

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.

Responses are included where available.

Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the Cllr answering the original question.

This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.

Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for Partnership Working; Leader of the Council

SB1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Brown – Community Councils

Question

Can you update Council regarding the expected consequences of local government reorganisation for Parish and Community Councils? Considering that any reorganisation is likely to result in less-local representation in a larger council, ought we to look again at whether, like Swindon and Milton Keynes, Oxford ought to have Community Councils to bolster neighbourhood-level democracy?

Written Response

The White Paper specifically mentions positively the role of parish and community councils in the government's devolution proposals. It is open to any area of the city to put forward proposals for a parish or community council.

Supplementary question

Would the Council leader agree that taking a uniform approach will ensure all areas gain equal benefit?

Verbal response

The Councillor said it is something that can be considered when looking at the proposals for a unitary Oxford.

SB2: From Cllr Sandelson to Cllr Brown – Cash Payments

Question

Would the leader support my campaign to require businesses providing vital local services to continue to accept cash payments, in order to ensure people unable or unwilling to use electronic payment means are able to purchase basic provisions?

Written Response

I welcome Cllr Sandelson's support for the digitally excluded. I urge her to support the representations we have made to the County Council over the new system for residents' parking permits.

No Supplementary Question.

SB3: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Elections

Question

Cllr Brown's recent letter to Jim McMahon MP states that the County Council has requested a postponement of the county council elections in May 2025. This is a misrepresentation. Will she withdraw and correct her statement and apologise?

Written Response

I refer Cllr Gant to the statement by the Local Government Minister on 15 January which states: "*We have received letters from the leaders of the following county and unitary councils with requests that involve postponing their election from 2025 to 2026.*" The list of councils includes Oxfordshire County Council. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-letter-to-two-tier-areas>

Supplementary question

Who does the Councillor believe should speak for the leader of the County Council?

Verbal response

The Councillor said that there there was no need to send the letter if they were not seeking to postpone elections and emphasised that she stood by her initial statement.

SB4: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Timing of Devolution

Question

Cllr Brown has said it is "too early" to talk about local government reorganisation. Her letter to Jim McMahon MP does exactly that. Is it the right time to talk about reorganisation or not?

Written Response

The county council's letter asking for the county council elections to be postponed was on the basis that there could be a quick solution to local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire. Considering that there had been no discussion at all between local authorities in Oxfordshire on what is bound to be a complex subject I thought it was premature and that is what my letter indicated.

Supplementary question

Verbal response

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Is this the right time to talk about re-organisation?	The Councillor stated that the County Cabinet’s letter prioritised local government reorganisation over devolution decisions, which went against the agreement of District and County leaders to resolve devolution boundaries first. She added that the letter also came prematurely, before any discussions on government reorganisation had taken place, making the County Council’s bid for an early approach on local government reorganisation inappropriate.
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SB5: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Consultation on Oxford’s expansion

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<p>Question</p> <p>In making the case for an expanded Oxford unitary council, what evidence does the leader have that town and parish councils and residents around the city want to be part of such a council run from Oxford?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>As per my previous response, there has been no discussion at all on reorganisation as yet, but you can rest assured that discussions with parish councils and engagement with the wider public will be important to us and will happen.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>Should the Councillor have spoken to representative areas around Oxford before announcing her plan to include them in the proposal?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>The Councillor said there had been no discussions on local government reorganisation, but as County Council, South and Vale had all been talking about their proposals on having a joint unitary with one another, the Councillor set out the ambitions of this Council to be a unitary Oxford.</p>

SB6: From Cllr Yeatman to Cllr Brown – Child Grooming

<p>Question</p> <p>Given the recent comments from Simon Morton, (former senior investigating officer for Thames Valley Police), that child grooming is still happening in Oxford, can this Council, alongside Oxfordshire County</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The grooming of children for sexual abuse is a vile and horrific crime. In 2011, Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police launched Operation Bullfinch—a joint investigation into reports of child sexual exploitation in Oxford. By 2013, seven individuals were convicted of 59</p>
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Council, assure our communities that the lessons from Operation Bullfinch & the serious case review have been fully learnt, implemented and enhanced over time, so that children across Oxfordshire are receiving the best possible safeguarding.

counts of rape and child prostitution, resulting in custodial sentences totalling 95 years.

The courage of the victims to come forward, disclose their abuse, and seek justice through the courts is paramount in our thoughts when reflecting on these events.

In 2015, the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) published a Serious Case Review (SCR) examining child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire County Council is responsible for children's services. The Review's findings highlighted numerous failings by the County Council's Children's Services, Thames Valley Police, and other agencies.

Significant changes to child safeguarding arose from the SCR, including:

- the Kingfisher Team, a dedicated multi-agency unit, was formed to support victims and has ensured the prosecution of offenders.
- a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub established a unified referral pathway to children's social care.
- a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) screening tool was implemented across all partner agencies.
- over 7,500 professionals received CSE training.
- educational plays raised awareness in schools, and a new approach to addressing missing children was developed.

The tragedy of Operation Bullfinch profoundly shaped safeguarding practices in Oxfordshire. By learning from past failures and implementing robust, multi-agency approaches, we are steadfast in our commitment to play our role in protecting children from harm.

Supplementary question

Will this Council alongside the County colleagues be seeking to be part of local inquiries?

Verbal response

The Councillor said that while the decision would ultimately be for the County, they would support Oxfordshire being considered for review, if the County chose to put it forward. She clarified that this was not a City Council decision.

SB7: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Brown – Botley Road**Question**

The prolonged closure of the Botley Road is causing serious financial pressure on businesses in West Oxford and across the whole city. Elderly and vulnerable residents, and those with limited mobility, are cut off from essential services and social opportunities and are incurring increased costs for taxis to attend medical appointments. Urgent plans to reduce carbon emissions and pollution have been delayed. The social, economic and environmental costs to the City as a whole are enormous. Will the Leader consider taking legal action against Network Rail in order to gain compensation for those affected?

Written Response

We can all see the impacts on local communities and businesses and sympathise with their frustration. As I understand it, the delays in the delivery of the much-needed enhancements to Oxford Station, have been caused by a number of issues, most significantly delays linked to agreements needed with Thames Water. However, the City Council is not able to take legal action against Network Rail on behalf of third parties as it has no right to do so. Third parties would need to seek legal advice on their own position.

Supplementary question

Given the lengthy delay to the re-opening of Botley Road announced last week, will the leader of Council consider taking legal action against the Network Rail in the Council's own right?

Verbal response

The Councillor said to reiterate, this is not something the Council can do.

SB8: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown – Devolution 1**Question**

In light of the Government's proposals for devolution and local government re-organisation, can the portfolio holder please confirm what actions she will be taking to ensure the views and needs of Oxford City residents are properly represented within any re-organisation of

Written Response

We will want to ensure that the views and needs of Oxford City residents, businesses and other stakeholders are taken into account in any proposals and as we start the process of considering local government reorganisation we will make sure that this is part of our plans.

local government.	
Supplementary question What capacity will there be for cross party working to ensure that the City is properly represented?	Verbal response The Councillor said that she is keen to do cross-party working and wants there to be a cross party approach from this city. The Councillor said she will be looking to further engage with opposition groups on the proposals.

SB9: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown – Devolution 2	
Question The letter sent by the Leader of the Council to the Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution makes reference to an expanded City authority. Can the Leader provide any further details about what these expanded boundaries might look like?	Written Response We have not yet had any formal discussions about boundaries. However, it should be clear to everyone that Oxford is tightly bounded with our administrative geography constraining our population size and having ceased to reflect the character of our city decades ago.
No Supplementary Question.	

SB10: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown – Oxford Literacy Festival	
Question Oxford plays host to the Oxford Literary Festival. Recently a number of speakers have pulled out of this event citing concerns that there are multiple panels which involve discussion of the rights of transgender and non-binary people but no speakers with lived experience. Given this council's stated support for diversity, inclusion, and the rights of Oxford's trans and non-binary citizens, does the leader have a view on the importance of including trans and non-binary voices in discussions around the rights of trans and non-binary people?	Written Response In my view people's lived experience is always an important factor to take into account in any discussion and anyone putting together panels should be thinking about that.

<p>Supplementary question Does the Councillor share the same view that there is a particular importance that people speak with caution and don't treat real lives as a mere debate?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor said yes.</p>
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Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council

ET1: From Cllr Coyne to Cllr Turner - Ethical Investment Policy

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<p>Question On February 7th, 2024, Cabinet agreed to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation (concerning the Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25) to review Council investments "in light of the conflict in Israel and Palestine and any associated human rights abuses with a view to assessing alignment with the Council's current Ethical Investment Policy".</p> <p>Cabinet commented: "The Council reviews its investments in line with its Environmental, Social and Governance Policy at the time of making the investment as well as our Ethical Investment Policy. This is updated and subject to review and in the light of the current situation we are happy to confirm that it will be included in our review arrangements."</p> <p>How have these review arrangements progressed, and what specific actions has Council taken to heed the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation regarding the Treasury Management Strategy?</p>	<p>Written Response We have indeed looked at our ESG policy in the light of the awful developments highlighted. In fact, circumstances have changed: Due to the policy of using internal funds to finance capital before taking out more expensive external borrowing, the Council has now reduced the funds available for investment to a level that only allows short term cash-type investments. Investments now held are limited to the pooled funds (property and multi-asset) and money market cash deposits. There is not therefore investment capacity to enter into fixed term investments.</p> <p>We think our current ESG policy and the current circumstances mean local people can be assured that their council tax is not being used in a problematic way</p>
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No Supplementary Question.

ET2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Flood Response Costs

Question

What was the cost to the city council of its emergency flood efforts in late November 2024 which resulted in the South site of the Cherwell school being closed to pupils among other impacts. What was the source of council funds used to cover these costs and had they been allocated in the budget for emergency flood response?

Written Response

The cost of flooding in November is estimated at around £30k. This was charged to an earmarked reserve of the Council's which is held for flood related expenses.

Supplementary question

Does the Councillor think that there are sufficient reserves set aside for future unpredictable incidents of flooding and have other financial approaches been explored for this loss and damage?

Verbal response

The Councillor mentioned that they have been advised by the Section 151 Officer regarding the adequacy of reserves, and that this will be included in the officer's one-on-one report. As for alternatives, the type of insurance and the specific product are not cost-effective.

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ET3: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Reorganisation and Council Budgets

Question

Can you update the Council regarding the expected budgetary consequences of local government reorganisation? I would hope that since reorganisation is touted as a money-saver, councils would be rewarded with increased budget security; is there any sign from ministers that this will happen?

Written Response

It is too early to say what the financial impact of local government reorganisation will be, as proposals for alternative structures across the country have yet to be tabled. It is my personal view that grand assumptions about cost savings are likely to be misplaced, and that inefficiency can result from having organisations, including councils, that are too big as well as too small. More generally, ministers have told us to expect a multi-year settlement next year – I am not clear about the interface of that with changes to local government structures.

<p>Supplementary question Will this Council make it clear to ministers that any reorganisation will likely cause short-term difficulties that are not quick or inexpensive to resolve, and that an injection of funds will be necessary to ensure the success of any re-organisation?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor stated that the white paper discussed research on this topic, though it was commissioned by the County Council. The Councillor expressed agreement with the concerns raised in the question</p>

ET4: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Employers’ National Insurance

<p>Question Can you update Council regarding whether the City expects to be fully compensated for increased employers’ National Insurance costs resulting from the increased rate announced in the 2024 Budget?</p>	<p>The Government have yet to announce the allocations of compensation grant for local authorities in respect of national insurance and do not intend to do so until the Final Local Government Finance Settlement is made sometime between now and the end of January. It is estimated that the council’s share of the £515 million grant announced by the Government in the Provisional Finance Settlement for local authorities to cover this issue, would be around £250k. The Councils estimated cost of increased national insurance is £800k per annum with an additional £600k for ODS. The budget presented to Cabinet in February will be updated to build in the financial impact of this change.</p>
<p>Supplementary question Indication from other Councils suggest that the government have failed to fully cover costs of a national insurance increase. Are we in a position to say it has failed to do so for Oxford?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor stated that he is not aware of the final allocations and that they haven’t been received yet. He said based on current calculations, it is likely that funding will not be sufficient and full funding may not be provided.</p>

ET5: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Turner – Grandpoint Bridge 1

<p>Question Following from last council, I am seeking clarification</p>	<p>Written Response Discussions have taken place to secure the grant funding that has been</p>
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<p>the original grant funding has expired/lost due to time restrictions as set out previously. With that in mind can you confirm this £10 million bridge will not be funded by council finances subject to the Judicial Review?</p>	<p>allocated for the proposed bridge following the delays resulting from the judicial review process. Once the outcome of the judicial review is known it will be possible to accurately review the costs position on the bridge. Clearly the bridge needs external funding, it is not a cost we would be able to fund from City Council resources.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

ET6: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Turner – Grandpoint Bridge 2

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<p>Question Can you clarify the cost of grant funding bids in relation to future bids and can they be justified in light public concern and financial costs already incurred?</p>	<p>Written Response Future funding bids are only likely to involve staff time and we would consider this a good use of our staffing resource. Any other costs would be dependent on the funding and the requirements of the bidding process.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford; Deputy Leader of the Council

AR1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Fines for Vehicles Idling

<p>Question What is the council's approach to managing the enforcement of idling and issuing of fixed penalty notices for such behaviour? How many fixed penalty notices have been issued by the city council for vehicle idling?</p>	<p>Written Response OCC is not the primary enforcer for idling engines. It normally falls to County Council who as has widely been publicised in local press have sent Civil Parking Enforcement Officers to locations where this is highlighted as a concern. A prime example being the coaches parked at St Giles. Even then if they are loading or unloading, they will idle engines as they are actually controlling the climate for the passengers. The City Council does</p>
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	<p>not have any dedicated resources to police traffic or consistently patrol for this.</p> <p>Whilst the City Council may issue an FPN, it has not issued any FPNs. On the few occasions we have assisted due to complaints the drivers have turned their engines off or moved on. They must be warned first and simply turn the engine off. The FPN is currently set at £20 rising to £40 if unpaid in 28 days.</p> <p>It is considered that educational campaigns such as the ones promoted over recent years by the Air Quality Team are more effective in delivering the anti-idling message</p>
No Supplementary Question.	

AR2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Grazing on Meadows

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<p>Question Has the city council considered adopting a similar approach to Port Meadow allowing residents grazing rights (for a small fee or free) for specific types of graziers on other council owned meadows during the spring and summer, rather than paying a contractor for grass cutting of these land assets?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>In addition to Port Meadow, we also use grazing to manage habitats at Chilswell Valley and Raleigh Park, but these are the only obvious sites where it is viable to install the appropriate fencing and take other measures needed to control stock.</p>
No Supplementary Question.	

AR3: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Railton – Grandpont Bridge 1

<p>Question Trees felled prior to planning permission granted, you</p>	<p>Written Response</p>
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<p>have stated the trees were in a poor condition. Can you share a report on the condition of the trees?</p>	<p>All the trees impacted by the construction of the proposed bridge were subject to a tree survey. This was completed prior to any works to the trees taking place. The survey was submitted with the planning application and can be viewed on the planning application reference 23/02506/CT3, Arboricultural Impact Statement, Appendix B.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

AR4: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Railton – Grandpont Bridge 2

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<p>Question Would you agree any tree is better than no tree and planning decisions should not be pre-empted and when were you aware of the tree felling?</p>	<p>Written Response Trees were removed for the Oxpens bridge before the planning determination to avoid disturbance to nesting birds and to enable the delivery of the bridge within the original programme required by the funding envelope. The bridge has subsequently been delayed by the judicial review process. There is a commitment to replant trees. The biodiversity value of the trees has been assessed as well as the impact on the canopy cover of the trees and proposals included in the development, secured through the planning permission, to ensure biodiversity and tree canopy are increased through the proposals for the bridge. Details can be viewed on the planning application.</p>
<p>Supplementary question With the judicial review ongoing, what happens if the bridge isn't built? Will there be a commitment to restore the trees?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor confirmed that there were commitments made to re-plant regardless of the outcome of the planning decision.</p>

AR5: From Cllr Morris to Cllr Railton – Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City motion

Question

At the previous full council meeting we passed the 'Making Oxford a Truly Walkable City' motion, where Council resolved to 1) discuss with officers the designing of a plan for improving walking in Oxford; 2) work with the Cabinet Members for Zero Carbon and Culture and officers to create a walkable map of Oxford; 3) write to the new Transport Minister to urge rapid release of the 2020 pavement parking consultation; and 4) propose the idea of a 'Kerbside Strategy for Oxford' to the County Council. What steps have been taken towards these actions, so far, and is there a timeline for them to be resolved?

Written Response

The first two elements of the original motion would require a budget allocation by full council. Until a budget allocation is made progress is likely to be slow on these elements. The council has no dedicated officer resource for transport except where there is project specific funding so even bringing forward a cabinet report exploring the detail of what would be needed to fulfil this motion will be challenging to deliver quickly.

I have spoken with the Head of Regeneration and Economy since the motion and she will confirm a timetable to me for bringing forward a short paper about what would be required during 2025. I will also raise with the county council, as highway authority, to see what their role could be in delivering this as part of future phases of the Central Oxfordshire Movement and Place Framework that sites as part of the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan.

In the meantime, we will progress the letter to the Transport Minister regarding the 2020 pavement parking consultation. I will raise the Kerbside Strategy with the County Council at the next regular meeting where we discuss issues affecting the city relating to Transport, Planning and Placemaking. There has not been a meeting of this group yet since the motion was agreed at November Council.

In the meantime, I have sought to get some information from the county council relating to the use of Dutch kerbs in new developments but also when dropping existing kerbs, which are important when considering progress to a more walkable city. I will follow this up with the county at the same meeting.

Supplementary question

Could the Councillor include Councillor Morris and Councillor Kerr in any responses received from the transport minister and any plans going forward?

Verbal response

The Councillor confirmed that she will do that.

Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford

LA1: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad – Pavement Parking

Question

Pavement Parking continues to cause considerable accessibility issues for residents across our city. Can the portfolio holder undertake to raise this ongoing issue with relevant individuals in both the County Council and the police as a part of her role as Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford?

Written Response

Thank you for raising this important issue. I will contact the Highways Authority at Oxfordshire County Council regarding this matter. Concerns relating to a specific area can be reported to the Highway Authority via the FixMyStreet website.

Supplementary question

Will the Councillor write to Anneliese Dodds and encourage her to ask the Government to take action so there is more power given to address pavement parking issues in Oxford?

Verbal response

The Councillor said that she is happy to do this.

Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford

CM1: From Cllr Snowton to Cllr Munkonge – Bury-Knowle Storybook Tree

Question

The sculpture was converted into a climbing log and the fencing removed

<p>On 12th Feb 2024 a plan was announced to reuse the Storybook Tree sculpture as a climbing log in the Bury-Knowle play area. However it has now been waiting behind metal fencing for over a year. Can we please get it moved and the fencing removed?</p>	<p>some time ago. Unfortunately, the log has started to fall apart because of the natural decaying process, though this has been accelerated by the constant wet weather over the last year (there was already significant rot in the dragon's head section before it was felled, which is why it was not re-erected).</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

<p>LS1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Selective Licensed Properties - Overseas Landlords</p>	
<p>Question What proportion of the properties licensed under the council's selective licensing scheme are owned by overseas based individual landlords?</p>	<p>Written Response Our data analysis is by licence holder not "landlord/owner". A licence is not always issued to the owner. Analysis in October 2024 found 0.656% of Selective Licence holders are overseas. At this time, the data was not further analysed to establish the proportion of overseas licence holders held by individuals or organisations.</p>
<p>Supplementary question Could the Councillor elaborate whether there is feasibility to collect information on who is the owner of properties that are being licensed under the HMO licensing scheme?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor said that she is happy to explore with officers when the scheme is renewed.</p>

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<p>LS2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Selective Licensed Properties - Beneficial Ownership</p>	
<p>Question What proportion of the selective licensed properties in our city are owned by companies rather than</p>	<p>Written Response Our data analysis is by licence holder not "landlord/owner". A licence is not always issued to the owner.</p>

<p>individuals? Is proof of residency and beneficial ownership information collected during the selective license process for overseas landlords?</p>	<p>Our current reporting categorises licence holders as “individuals” or “organisations”. “Organisations” includes companies, trusts or other types of legal entity. Individual licence holders are likely to be the owner/landlord. Licences issued to organisations include where the managing agent is the licence holder. Analysis in October 2024 found 2.9% of selective licences are issued to an organisation (87.5% to individual; 9.7% unclean data). For HMO licences, 12.8% HMO licences issued to an organisation (87.2% issued to individual; 0.02% unclean data).</p> <p>As part of the application process, the name and address of all interested parties is required as per the Regulations pertaining to applications. Following Legal Advice requested at the start of the Selective Licensing scheme where the proposed licence holder resides overseas, for both HMO and Selective Licensing, we request a statement for how the property will be managed given the person is overseas. A standard form was developed for this purpose, with legal advice. We do not collect further information.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

LS3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Overcrowded Properties — Children Sharing Bedrooms

<p>Question What proportion of households on the housing waiting list for the city are living in overcrowded properties (i.e. have children sharing rooms of an age where it is recommended they have separate bedrooms based on age and gender)?</p>	<p>Written Response 26.2% of the 3588 current live housing register applications have received priority as a result of being overcrowded in their current occupation. This includes households where there are more children than rooms available (factoring in who can share by age and gender), but also adults and couples who don't have rooms available.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

LS4: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – HRA 40 Year Business Plan

<p>Question Target of reducing operating costs, over the next 5 years. Given the current maintenance record and costs together with energy targets. Can you explain in detail how council propose to reach efficiency targets by a whopping 5%?</p>	<p>Written Response It is imperative that the Housing Revenue Account demonstrates value for money to its tenants and drives sufficient efficiency to enable it to deliver against its statutory and regulatory requirements e.g. Decent Homes. With its new Asset Management Strategy and 5-year capital programmes, investment work will be delivered in a more holistic and efficient way allowing both ODS and OCC to plan its resources over a longer term which will support a more efficient delivery.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

<p>LS5: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – Council Rents</p>	
<p>Question Council rents are already at their highest and continue to rise, currently set at 1% above CPI which does not include council tax rises. Any additional rise will obviously hurt tenants financially. These rises whatever the amount are no more than stealth taxes sugar coated and really impact the most vulnerable in our City. Does this administration believe it to be fair to financially penalise the neediest in our City and if not why are the Council imposing rise upon rise on council tenants?</p>	<p>Written Response The Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is currently facing significant additional financial cost in a number of areas including meeting the requirements of the New Housing Regulator and the Governments requirements for decent homes as well as meeting carbon net zero by 2040 and Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of level C by 2030. To be able to fund all this additional work as well as continue to meet its housing priorities of providing additional social dwellings then the council must increase rents by the maximum allowable by the Government which is CPI+1%. At an average weekly rent of £133.68 these social rents are still low in comparison to rents charged by other landlords in the city and it should be noted that 67% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit or the housing cost element of universal credit.</p>
<p>No Supplementary Question.</p>	

<p>LS6: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – Disposal of 10 Properties 1</p>

<p>Question Referring to the HRA 40 Year Business Plan Cabinet report from December 2024, it noted: “increasing capital through the sale of poor performing assets, by reviewing underperforming stock that do not work socially for tenants, or are expensive to maintain and maybe beyond maintainable. Initial indication for disposing up to 10 units/yr from 2025/26 for 10 years “How will they be returned to stock after 10 years, or is that was a typing error?”</p>	<p>Written Response The councillor misunderstands. The suggested action involves disposing of 10 units a year, every year for 10 years. Not disposing of 10 units for 10 years. As part of its asset management work, and HRA Business Plan, OCC will need to develop a policy for the disposal of properties where properties demonstrate unsustainable financial performance i.e. requiring high investment presenting inefficient use of capital resource OR poor customer experience. Examples would be excessive repair issues (eg structural), significant cost linked to energy efficiency (based on archetype).</p>
<p>Supplementary question If the properties designated for proposal are not within the budget, how will the Councillor adjust the budget to account for those properties they planned to sell?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor stated that there are various mitigation strategies in place to ensure the budget remains balanced moving forward.</p>

LS7: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – Disposal of 10 Properties 2

<p>Question How can a property be beyond maintaining, bringing these properties to a reasonable standard can the cost really be more expensive than purchasing properties on Barton Park?</p>	<p>Written Response Properties can be beyond maintenance where there are significant structural issues, repair issues based on e.g. post-war archetypes or where the required energy efficiency work to bring up to EPC C are beyond the financial performance of the property and often combined with poor customer experience e.g. damp and mould.</p>
<p>Supplementary question How will the budget be balanced in Barton Park?</p>	<p>Verbal response The Councillor explained that any development or acquisition requires a business plan to be put forward. In such cases, the costs are structured so that the development can be paid off over a period of time. She stated that each acquisition and property identified in the survey needs to be assessed on an individual basis to determine its financial impact.</p>

LS8: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr L Smith – Selective Licensing Scheme**Question**

With more than 11,000 properties now registered under the Selective Licensing Scheme, it is understood that enforcement has become a growing focus for the council. Would the Cabinet member therefore be willing to meet with local housing groups, including tenants unions, to discuss progress in this area and to gather feedback on our approach

Written Response

The Selective Licensing Year 2 report is due to be published Spring 2025 following review at Housing and Homelessness Scrutiny Panel in March 2025. The report will include information on enforcement.

The team use advice, encouragement, and enforcement to achieve the schemes' aims as per the Council's Enforcement Policy.

Yes, I am happy to meet with tenant unions to discuss general matters of policy and operation of our licensing schemes including our approach to enforcement.

No Supplementary Question.

Cabinet Member for Planning

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LU1: From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Upton – Timely Community Infrastructure Levy Payments**Question**

What steps are being taken to ensure that Community Infrastructure Levy payments owed to organisations in Wolvercote ward and elsewhere are in future made promptly in order to avoid months-long waits such as have recently occurred?

Written Response

Payments to neighbourhood groups were unfortunately delayed due to staff turnover. Once this was identified officers reached out to all neighbourhood forums to alert them to the issue and where possible expedite payments. We have recently expanded and recruited into the team, as well as changing our internal processes to ensure there is a centralising of information to avoid this happening again in the future.

Supplementary question

Will one of the changes to the internal process allow local bodies to bypass neighbourhood forums and

Verbal response

The Councillor said that she will talk it over with the Head of Planning.

address this issue more directly with the Council?

LU2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Fines for noise nuisance from licensed premises

Question

How many fixed penalty notices have been issued to licensed premises due to noise over the last 12 months?

Written Response

There have been none

No Supplementary Question.

LU3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Upton – Contractor Parking During Construction

Question

How does the city council ensure that contractors follow the terms of their construction management plan regarding the location of contractor parking around construction sites?

Written Response

This is something that we would expect to be managed by the Local Highways Authority given they are the responsible authority for matters such as contractor parking around construction sites.

Our planning enforcement team would investigate any concerns about a breach of the terms of a construction management plan as and when they were alleged, and we would involve the Local Highways Authority in such investigations.

No Supplementary Question.

LU4: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Upton – Taxi Extension for Electric Vehicles

Question

After answering a number of queries, it now transpires the decision to extend or not does not lie with the

Written Response

Any decision to remove, retain or amend a licensing policy lies with the

cabinet member thus with the administration. Can you then inform us who is in charge?	General Purposes Licensing Committee.
No Supplementary Question.	

LU5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Upton – Controlled Parking Zones

Question Several residents in my ward have been in contact to raise concerns about un-permitted cars parking in Controlled Parking Zones during the evenings and early morning, when the chances of coming into contact with enforcement are lower. As a part of her Transport Liaison role, will the responsible member make representations to the County Council regarding the impact of this on Oxford residents?	Written Response As identified in the question, the responsibility for enforcing against unauthorised car parking does sit within the remit of the County Council. I am happy to raise this issue at the next appropriate meeting that I attend. Residents, and city councillors, can also raise their concerns about this directly with County, and I encourage you to do that as well.
No Supplementary Question.	

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LU6: From Cllr Robinson to Cllr Upton – eBikes

Question In light of the recent motion to 'Make Oxford a Truly Walkable City' and the recent BBC Panorama documentary about eBikes, could you detail how you will ensure that Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police will enforce the safe and legal use of eBikes and eScooters in Oxford City?	Written Response We are a very high performing council, nominated for best council of the year last year, and we do far more than the statutory minimum for our residents, but we cannot perform the jobs of TVP and the County Council too. That said, I have had discussions with the city centre policing team who have devoted a fair bit of resource to this issue - they confiscated more than 40 illegal e-bikes last year and had an education outreach event for delivery riders to explain the law. Many people are not aware that a legal e-bike has a motor that cuts out if you stop pedalling, or if you reach 15mph.
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No Supplementary Question.	
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