

**To:** Council  
**Date:** 6 October 2025  
**Report of:** Director of Law, Governance and Strategy  
**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 and Inclusive Economic Growth; Leader of the Council**

### SB1: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown

#### Question

Council has passed the motion opposing the congestion charge. Does this mean the Administration also opposes the bus filters?

#### Written Response

We support the important principle of reducing congestion and emissions. It is abundantly clear that the current administration at the county council have undermined public confidence and consent to traffic measures and that a new approach of engagement will be necessary. We need solutions that meet Oxford's unique local needs, address equity concerns and fill critical gaps in infrastructure and accessibility. We also need far more homes nearer to Oxford to reduce the need for car travel into Oxford. Importantly we believe that better communication and engagement with local communities would not only improve outcomes but also strengthen public confidence and support for any future measures.

#### Supplementary Question

County Council opposes congestion charges, where does Cabinet stand on this issue?

#### Verbal Response

The Labour Party and Cabinet are against the congestion charge. However, the County Council set transport policy and the City Council are not able to make decisions on this policy.

--	--

## SB2: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown

### Question

Val Smith was our former councillor who done lot for the people of oxford especially for the people of Blackbird Leys where she served on Parish, City and County Council same time the office manager for former MP Andrew Smith where she helped thousands of residents. Can you Confirm the new Community Centre in Blackbird Leys will be named after her and any new development take place on Blackbird Leys Road will be named after her?

### Written Response

As you would expect, we have consulted with Andrew and Val's family as we very much wanted to take this opportunity to honour her memory in the community she loved and served so well for so long. With their consent, we will name a road at the Knights Road site after her. The developer, Peabody trust, has already listed the addresses of new housing with the new name. Val's family expressed their preference for a road to be named after her, and community engagement for the new community centre demonstrated support for maintaining the centre's current name.

### Supplementary Question

No follow up was asked.

### Verbal Response

## SB3: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown

### Question

It was great to see the letter sent by the leader of the council to our twin city Ramallah in Palestine.  
Can we fly the flag of Palestine at the town hall to show solidarity to our twin city?

### Written Response

We have invited the Mayor of Ramallah to visit us in December when he hopes to be over in the UK. If that happens, then we would fly the Palestinian flag to welcome him.

### Supplementary Question

Why has the administration not supported the flying of the flag of Palestine at the town hall?

### Verbal Response

	If the Mayor of Ramallah comes to visit, as we hope that he will, we propose that we do fly the flag.
--	---

<b>SB4: From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Brown</b>	
<b>Question</b> What proportion of Members' Enquiry Forms are receiving responses within the target period?	<b>Written Response</b> Since the system went live 1304 enquiries have been received. 56% of OCC enquiries received a response within five days. Any feedback on the system can be sent to <a href="mailto:OCCCustomerRelations@oxford.gov.uk">OCCCustomerRelations@oxford.gov.uk</a>
<b>Supplementary Question</b> There is an issue with the Members' Enquiry Forms, what is being done to address this?	<b>Verbal Response</b> There is a review ongoing into the Members' Enquiry system. We look forward to the results of the review and how it will help us improve the system.

<b>SB5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown</b>	
<b>Question</b> Following the resignation of the UK government minister for local government, can the responsible member please confirm that this council has not received any indication of changes to the planned reorganisation of local government?	<b>Written Response</b> The new MHCLG Secretary of State wrote almost immediately on his appointment to confirm his commitment to take forward swiftly and effectively both the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation programmes initiated by his predecessor and set out in the English Devolution White Paper.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> No follow up was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

**SB6: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown****Question**

Recent reports have outlined that the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance has now been delivered to the minister for women and equalities, and it is likely that implementation will follow in the near future. Given the fundamental implications that this guidance may have on the human rights of many Oxford citizens, will the portfolio holder ensure that any changes of policy following the guidance is subject to a decision of cabinet and is subjected to cross-party scrutiny?

**Written Response**

Yes. Any substantive policy changes will follow the usual decision-making process.

**Supplementary Question**

No follow up was asked.

**Verbal Response****SB7: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Brown****Question**

In light of the overturning of the first instance judgment regarding the Bell Hotel in Epping, will the portfolio holder take this opportunity to rule out any court proceedings aimed at ending the housing of asylum seekers in the Kassam Hotel within Oxford City?

**Written Response**

We have not explored legal proceedings to challenge the use of the Kassam hotel. It has been the view of this council since the previous Conservative government first housed people there that hotels are not suitable accommodation. We are pleased to see the Labour Government is taking action to reduce the use of hotels and we hope this will soon result in the Home Office no longer needing the hotel they use in Oxford.

**Supplementary Question**

No follow up was asked.

**Verbal Response**

**Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council (Statutory)**

**ET1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner**

**Question**

What steps has the city council taken to identify business rate payer locations where phoenix shops suspect to be operating and take coordinated action with relevant partner agencies to prevent the loss of business rates income from these businesses?

**Written Response**

From the business rates perspective, we do act where cases are identified, and they are sent to the Investigation Team and to Local Law Enforcement if action is required. Rate avoidance in this manner is not as prevalent in Oxford as in other areas such as central London.

**Supplementary Question**

How prevalent is business rate avoidance in Oxford and how do we identify specific units where this happens frequently?

**Verbal Response**

I may need to follow up with officers to get the precise data being requested. It is difficult for us to manage this issue when we are not the landlord for a particular property. Please send me the exact question and I will follow up with officers to get you a more precise answer.

**Written Response**

Business rate avoidance is a common challenge for local authorities, with many companies and rating agents offering services designed to minimise liability. Oxford is no exception. National estimates suggest avoidance accounts for around 1% of business rate income. Under current legislation, avoidance is not an offence, and councils have limited powers to prevent such practices once identified.

The government's 2023–2024 consultation acknowledged widespread concerns and proposed reforms, but these have yet to be translated into enforceable measures. In the meantime, Oxford City Council has strengthened its approach to reliefs and compliance:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty property relief: Applicants must provide clear evidence of rateable occupation (beneficial occupation, exclusive possession, and permanence), supported by site visits and operational checks.</li> <li>• Charity relief: We verify that premises are used primarily for charitable purposes and assess the proportion of space and time dedicated to such activities.</li> <li>• Legal and regulatory coordination: We work closely with the VOA and our legal team to ensure schemes remain within the law, while sharing intelligence on suspected contrivance and pursuing civil recovery or anti-avoidance measures where appropriate.</li> <li>• Future readiness: We are preparing for forthcoming reforms to empty property relief, which aim to reduce opportunities for cyclical avoidance.</li> </ul>
--	---



## ET2: From Cllr Mundy to Turner

<b>Question</b> For how many different Council Tax (CT) debts were Civil Enforcement Agents (CEAs) used in 2024-2025?	<b>Written Response</b> 1025 were sent to our Enforcement Agents for Collection
<b>Supplementary Question</b> What is the recent trajectory for cases going to the enforcement agent over the past five years?	<b>Verbal Response</b> I will follow up with officers and email you an answer to this query. <b>Written Response</b> In 2023/2024, there was an increase in referrals, following a period during which enforcement agent visits had been significantly reduced due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, which limited physical contact. Since then, the use of enforcement agents has steadily declined. We work hard to continue this trend; However, it is closely linked to the level of customer engagement—higher engagement often reduces the need for enforcement action.

	Year	No. of Cases sent to Bailiffs Council Tax	No. of Cases sent to Bailiffs Business Rates
	2021/22	957	72
	2022/23	237	21
	2023/24	1547	181
	2024/25	1030	115
	2025/26 (YTD)	845	79

### ET3: From Cllr Mundy to Turner

#### Question

OCC CT recovery policy states that CEAs may be used even in cases where the debtor is identified as vulnerable. How many CEA visits were carried out in 2024-2025, following the identification of the debtor as being vulnerable?

#### Written Response.

The Recovery Team do not send people who are flagged as vulnerable to our Enforcement Agents, Vulnerable cases are dealt with in-house. We use two firms of Enforcement Agents, both firms have their own Vulnerability specialists, we will return cases to the Council where vulnerability is identified.

#### Supplementary Question

Do you support editing of removing the part of the policy that states that CEAs may be used even in cases where the debtor is vulnerable?

#### Verbal Response

We welcome the challenge on this topic, as it is an area where we want to continue to improve. We will work with agencies and teams supporting work in this area to get more information and integrate this feedback into our approach.



**ET4: From Cllr Mundy to Turner****Question**

Does OCC use multiple CEA contractors and were any contractors taken out of use in 2024-2025 due to their agents not following Professional Standards?

**Written Response**

Our Contracts were renewed in 2024; no agents have been removed due to not following professional standards. All customer encounters are recorded using body worn cameras.

**Supplementary Question**

No follow up question was asked.

**Verbal Response****ET5: From Cllr Mundy to Turner****Question**

Has OCC identified instances where the recovery of a CT debt was made harder due to the added burden on the debtor of the CEA fee(s)?

**Written Response**

Enforcement Agents fees are prescribed by law and can be found In the Taking Control of Goods Act 2013.To date we have received no complaints concerning the level of fees.

**Supplementary Question**

No follow up question was asked.

**Verbal Response****ET6: From Cllr Mundy to Turner****Question**

What was the gross financial cost to OCC, both operationally and through any fees incurred, of using CEAs in 2024-2025?

**Written Response-**

There is no cost to the Council fees are collected from the debtor in accordance with the above Act.

**Supplementary Question**

No follow up question was asked.

**Verbal Response**

<b>ET7: From Cllr Mundy to Turner</b>	
<b>Question</b> <p>Have our CT Recovery Team undertaken any impact assessments, specifically regarding the use of CEAs and particularly in regard to debtors who may be vulnerable, since 2019-2020?</p>	<b>Written Response</b> <p>The have been no such impact assessments carried out as when vulnerability is identified, as the cases are dealt with in-house.</p>
<b>Supplementary Question</b> <p>Would the member support a risk assessment, to ensure we understand the full impact of our current policy?</p>	<b>Verbal Response</b> <p>We do impact assessments when the policy is created and instituted. When we review the policy, we can do a further impact assessment as part of that process. We will review the policy with officers, as we need to be adept at signposting those in need. We want all conversations and policies to be evidenced from practice.</p>

<b>ET8: From Cllr Muddiman to Turner</b>	
<b>Question</b> <p>Can you explain how the awarding of the pre-construction contract for Oxpens River Bridge to Balfour Beatty, a notorious company whose negligence led to the death of a construction worker and serious injuries to another in 2020, who were fined £49million for fraud for systematically falsifying data in 2021, and who are currently being sued for £34m after substandard building work required the evacuation of an entire student block this year, meets the Council's own ethical procurement policies and procurement strategy?</p>	<b>Written Response</b> <p>All procurement has to comply with both the laws governing local authority procurement and the Council's own constitution and requirements in relation to procurement.</p> <p>Balfour Beatty were procured through SCAPE, a local authority procurement framework <a href="https://scape.co.uk/our-frameworks">https://scape.co.uk/our-frameworks</a>.</p> <p>In the light of cost increases the construction of the bridge is to be tendered through another framework, Pagabo, to enable a competitive process.</p>
<b>Supplementary Question</b>	<b>Verbal Response</b>

Can you confirm that you have no concerns about Balfour Beatty's reputation and record?

I am not going to say that I am not concerned about the company's reputation and record. However, we have to follow our own policies for the procurement of companies. If we don't follow our own policies, then we can make ourselves open to a legal challenge.

#### ET9: From Cllr Powell to Turner

##### Question

In light of the appearance of flags on council property in towns and cities across the UK, will the portfolio holder please outline the City Council's policy regarding flags which have been affixed to City Council property without consent?

##### Written Response

If anyone reports an issue where a flag is causing a problem, then the City Council can remove it. Most flags that have been displayed in the city are attached to structures owned by Oxfordshire County Council, such as bridges and streetlights

##### Supplementary Question

In what instances will the City Council remove flags?

##### Verbal Response

The Leader has issued a statement on flags. The removal of flags will depend on the nature of the problem and the report made. However, my personal view is that I love the flag and my country and despise those who are abusing the flag in this way.

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

#### AR1: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton

##### Question

##### Written Response

<p>Luke Marion, MD of Oxford Bus Company has said that Oxford is trapped "in a vicious cycle of people driving private cars because public transport is too slow, which adds more vehicles onto the roads and in turn worsens the situation". He believes that the Congestion charge "will help reduce traffic, make bus journey times faster and more reliable, enable the delivery of new and improved bus routes, and reduce pollution." Does the portfolio holder agree with him?</p>	<p>Although we feel the temporary congestion charge for cars could have been designed better for residents it is acknowledged that the scheme is likely to reduce the number of cars in the city centre and so lessen congestion for buses.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>What is your position on the congestion charge? What would you do differently with this policy?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The congestion charge is regressive. We stated that it would probably work, not that we support the charge being implemented.</p>

<p><b>AR2: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What discussions have the council had with Network Rail about the need for the Beckett Street car park to become a transport hub/bus station?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We continue to work closely with Network Rail on long-term plans to redevelop Oxford station and I welcome the news that they are currently procuring a new design team to take forward a new masterplan and planning application for the station redevelopment.</p> <p>The need for an improved bus interchange at the station is critical and will need to be explored through this work, in collaboration with both the City and County Councils, and the bus companies. Initial work undertaken demonstrates that it should be possible to provide necessary bus capacity on the station forecourt and on-street, which would enable Beckett Street car park to be considered for enabling development to help pay for the scheme.</p>

	However, this will be explored in detail through the upcoming design process, including through the pre-application planning process.
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  Would you support the building of a multi-story car park, where the Beckett streetcar park currently is?	<b>Verbal Response</b>  This matter is not one for us, or the City Council to decide. However, personally, I would like to see the redevelopment of the station done with as little car parking as possible.

## Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford

15

<b>LA1: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad</b>	
<b>Question</b>  The Kassam Hotel, which is currently home to a number of people seeking asylum in the UK, has recently been a location targeted by far-right activists. Will the portfolio holder please undertake to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that the geographic remoteness of the hotel has been considered and that proper plans have been formulated to ensure that violence of the kind that swept the UK last summer can be effectively contained should it arise?	<b>Written Response</b>  There is a national policing response to the protests outside hotels being used to house people seeking asylum. Thames Valley Police are part of that response and I have had assurances from senior police officers in Oxfordshire that an appropriate level of policing is allocated, ensuring there is not a breach of the peace and to facilitate peaceful protest.
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

**LA2: From Cllr Robinson to Cllr Arshad****Question**

Hope Not Hate have made a range of excellent recommendations about how local people can promote community cohesion, safety and wellbeing through grassroots sports events and in community centres. Could the portfolio holder assure us that she is working with both the portfolio Cabinet Member for a Healthy, Fairer Oxford and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities to invest in community led projects in the most economically deprived areas?

**Written Response**

The Council is working with communities under its Thriving Communities strategy to deliver significant impact within these areas. This includes the Council's grants schemes such as the Oxford Community Impact fund that helps support many of our community groups in these areas.

In addition, the Council has worked with our leisure provider to provide a variety of different activities including kids free swimming, concessionary access and in-kind funding which has helped provide free or reduced fee access to groups in our most deprived areas.

We have also been working closely with our communities and partners on various programmes which include Move Together, You Move and Park Play aimed at getting individuals and families to move more.

Recently the Council has, in collaboration with young people on the Leys, developed the Leys Youth Hub bringing in approximately £1.7 million in external funding and enabling a programme of youth developed activities at the Leys Leisure Centre.

The Council has invested heavily in its community facilities and new replacement community centre is being delivered in Blackbird Leys and a modernised community Centre in East Oxford, both were shaped by significant community engagement.

**Supplementary Question**

No follow up question was asked.

**Verbal Response****Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies****NC1: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Chapman**

**Question**

How much revenue has been generated year by year to-date since the council have introduced the Bulky items charge?

**Written Response**

at 30/09/2026	£
financial year	net income
2014/15	-1,125.00
2015/16	-1,575.00
2016/17	-2,548.00
2017/18	-1,950.00
2018/19	-1,500.00
2019/20	-2,125.00
2020/21	-3,625.00
2021/22	-102,340.00
2022/23	-87,825.51
2023/24	-76,442.10
2024/25	-80,699.00
2025/26 (YTD)	-55,269.55
	-417,304.16

Local authority pricing for a single bulky waste item varies significantly. A review of pricing across all LAs in 2021 shows the average cost for a single item was £28.

Oxford's 25/26 pricing is £23.50 (£10) per household item and £34.50 (£15) for large electrical/white goods. Large white/electrical item collections incur higher operational costs. The prices in brackets are for discounted rates for residents on benefits (Oxford provides greater than 50% discount).

<b>Supplementary Question</b>	<b>Verbal Response</b>
No follow up question was asked.	

<b>NC2: From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Chapman</b>	
<b>Question</b> How can recent issues with widespread uncollected waste in north Oxford and elsewhere be prevented from recurring?	<b>Written Response</b> The Waste & Recycling service has experienced difficulties throughout the summer. Predominantly, this is due to a particular issue with agency staff's availability and unfortunately some vehicle breakdowns over the summer. The Council & ODS are treating this as a high priority. A focused recruitment drive is underway to employ more drivers and loaders directly whilst reducing our reliance on freelance agency staff and four new refuse vehicles should arrive in the next few months. This will allow for better management and scheduling of rotas and help reduce the likelihood of issues arising in the future. The last four weeks have seen a considerable improvement with no incomplete rounds.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

<b>NC3: From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Chapman</b>	
<b>Question</b> What is the service level agreement the city council has with its fully owned company ODS for the frequency and intensity of street cleaning of the central city centre zone streets of Cornmarket, Queen's Street, George Street, High Street and Broad Street?	<b>Written Response</b> Street cleaning in the city centre is carried out in accordance with our Service Standards. Cornmarket, Queen Street, George Street, High Street and Broad Street receive high intensity cleaning from 5am daily. This includes mechanical sweeping, litter picking, litter bin emptying and detritus removal. These areas are maintained throughout the course of the day,



	<p>seven days per week. This high intensity is based on the volume of pedestrians who use these streets on a daily basis.</p> <p>Mechanical sweeping is carried out once/twice per day in these areas. Litter picking and bin emptying has a constant daily presence. When it's very busy, areas such as Bonn Square can have up to 10 visits per day for a combination of litter picking, manual sweeping and bin emptying.</p>
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

<b>NC4: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Chapman</b>	
<b>Question</b>  Which herbicides does Oxford City Council and ODS use and where?	<b>Written Response</b>  ODS uses a glyphosate-based herbicide on a spot application basis to hard paved areas including car parks, pavements, kerb-side areas and council garage forecourts across the city. There are three applications per year. It is 'spot applied' and not a blanket treatment to reduce chemical use. It is <i>not</i> routinely used in parks and open spaces (other than around the perimeter of tennis courts) – and hasn't been used in this way for at least 10 years in Oxford
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  Does ODS only use one type of herbicide?	<b>Verbal Response</b>  We will have to check with officers about this and respond to you later, via email.  <b>Written Response</b>  In ODS the only herbicides used are all glyphosate based, and the relevant application depends upon the nature and extent of the vegetation being treated.

**NC5: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Chapman****Question**

In response to a survey by Pesticide Action Network in 2024, the council said that it used herbicides in the following spaces: parks and green spaces, cemeteries, playing fields, road Verges and roundabouts, hard surfaces (eg. pavements) and housing estates. In the same survey, Labour run Cambridge City Council said they did not use herbicides in any of those spaces. Why is Oxford not as committed as Cambridge to the protection of our biodiversity, water, soil and air?

**Written Response**

A paper was submitted to OCC in 2023, which outlined the approach to weed killing in numerous local authorities, using information from APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence). It was commissioned by me as the Cabinet Member for Citizen-Focused Services. This summarised outcomes as well as costs in most of these examples.

The review found that significant care was taken in the way Glyphosate is used by ODS in Oxford to minimise negative impacts on wider biodiversity. It also found that all the alternative weed treatments had a higher cost, and none had demonstrated the level of effectiveness of Glyphosate. The use of acetic acid, for instance, created new risks to the insect population and to humans. Relying on more manual human intervention was prohibitively expensive and hard to find staff to undertake this work.

The continued tightly controlled application of Glyphosate to tackle weed penetration of paved surfaces and invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed was approved by the City Council. This is in line with current DEFRA and Environment Agency guidance, and is entirely legal, in the UK, the USA and large parts of the EU.

**Supplementary Question**

Why is Oxford not as committed as Cambridge to protecting biodiversity?

**Verbal Response**

We reviewed our approach to this issue in 2023. We cannot speak to how Cambridge operates, but we are operating in both a cost effective and efficient way for the city and its residents.

**AH1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth****Question**

Has the city council undertaken any economic analysis of the proportion of city jobs related to different economic sectors and vocational groups, such as education (teachers), and healthcare (nurses, doctors)? What steps had the council taken to match the housing categories it is investing in with the categories of jobs and related wage brackets of the economic sectors that drive the city's economy?

**Written Response**

The City Council assesses housing need in line with the regulations governing planning and in partnership with relevant statutory bodies and partner organisations.

The requirement for new affordable rented homes, identified in the Local Plan, and developed in partnership with Registered Providers, is informed by a household's housing need on the Housing Register, for example overcrowding and the number of bedrooms required, or adaptations for needs. The Council does not match housing categories to specific jobs or wage brackets of specific economic sectors.

To meet wider housing needs, the Local Plan also recognises the need for intermediate housing to be provided, including for example shared ownership. Many homes being delivered in the affordable housing supply programme provide for this low-cost route into home ownership and this offer has been taken up by a number of key workers.

Furthermore, the Local Plan identifies some sites in the city as being appropriate for delivery as Employer-Led housing schemes (especially on health and education sites) to assist in further housing delivery on sites that may otherwise be unsuitable for general needs affordable homes.

The Council cannot and does not assess housing need based on different economic sectors and vocational groups.

**Supplementary Question**

What action has the administration taken to support housing schemes for teachers and nurses to address the shortage of accommodation for these groups?

**Verbal Response**

The current local plan demonstrates conversations on specific policies regarding particular sites for hospitals and schools. This work will continue in the next local plan and in its preparation.

--	--

## AH2: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth

### Question

How does the Council intend to floodproof the route between Osney Mead and Grandpont Nature Park, to ensure the planned Oxpens River Bridge is accessible from Osney Mead and Osney Island in times of flood?

### Written Response

The bridge and the connecting paths that would be improved are designed not to flood or are situated outside the floodplain. There are no current proposals to make the towpath under the railway bridge at the western end of Grandpont Nature Park floodproof.

We will work with the University and other landowners on Osney Mead to explore options to provide a safe means of refuge through the masterplanning for that area. This may or may not involve work to the path under the rail bridge as part of proposals to address flooding in the locality.

The purpose of the Oxpens River Bridge is, as was made clear in the many reports on the principle, the proposed bridge, the planning application and reports considered at different stages by the City Council, is to provide connectivity between a range of different locations to the south and west of the bridge and the city centre to the north. It is not primarily a safe means escape route from Osney Mead at times of flooding.

### Supplementary Question

No follow up question was asked.

### Verbal Response

## AH3: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth

### Question

How much of the additional £3.7m required for the Oxpens River Bridge has so far been pledged by Oxford University, Homes England and/or any other external sources?

### Written Response

We currently have an in-principal agreement with the University of Oxford to cover £1m of the additional costs. Conversations are on-going with other parties.

<b>Supplementary Question</b>	<b>Verbal Response</b>
No follow up question was asked.	

<b>AH4: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth</b>	
<b>Question</b> Can the portfolio holder confirm that, should the full £3.7m for the Oxpens River Bridge not be raised from external sources, the decision to spend any City Council funds from the budgets allocated for that purpose at the Cabinet meeting on 13th August 2025 will need to be approved by a future meeting of Cabinet?	<b>Written Response</b> As I made clear at the Cabinet meeting on 13 <sup>th</sup> August 2025, should the external funding not be found then the decision would need to be reviewed. The purpose of the Cabinet decision was to allow the project to proceed if the funding is secured, rather than incur still further delay with the increased cost consequences of that delay, to add to the costs already incurred because of delays such as the unsuccessful legal challenges.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

<b>AH5: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth</b>	
<b>Question</b> Can the portfolio holder clarify who owns the land between East St and the River Thames?	<b>Written Response</b> No, as I do not possess information from the Land Registry about land ownership. I would suggest a Member Enquiry to identify the ownership of the land in question, defining exactly on a map which land is being referred to in case there are multiple owners.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

<b>AH6: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth</b>	
<b>Question</b> <p>Since the last Full Council meeting, what specific actions has the council taken to resolve the Jericho Boatyard situation?</p>	<b>Written Response</b> <p>In September the City Council facilitated a meeting between the landowner and the Jericho Wharf Trust to discuss their plans for the site. Another meeting is planned in November, where we will see if the landowner will demonstrate progress on bringing forward a scheme for the site. We will continue to work with all parties to look at the full range of options to bring forward development on the site.</p>
<b>Supplementary Question</b> <p>No follow up question was asked.</p>	<b>Verbal Response</b>
<b>AH7: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson</b>	
<b>Question</b> <p>What is the planning status of the two locations being used for hand carwash businesses operating a) on Wash and Go car wash business on the Abingdon Road next to Tesco and b) behind the derelict buildings at 21 and 22 South Parade, and the history and current status of any planning enforcement taken around the alignment of usage of these sites with planning status?</p>	<b>Written Response</b> <p>This is a general question which would be better put to officers in the Planning Service directly so that they can provide you with a fuller response on the planning history for both sites including the status of any enforcement history.</p> <p>In brief terms the car wash on the Abingdon Road was the subject of a two unsuccessful prosecutions for an unauthorised use in 2014. Further consideration was being given at that time as to how to proceed with the enforcement notice but it does not appear to have been pursued.</p> <p>In relation to the derelict buildings to the rear of 21 and 22 South Parade, our enforcement officers have undertaken a quick inspection following this question and could not see any evidence of a car wash. If the member would like to send details of the alleged unauthorised use to the enforcement team they will investigate.</p>
<b>Supplementary Question</b>	<b>Verbal Response</b>

Why was enforcement not pursued with the car wash on Abingdon Road, and why is the administration supporting a company that is breaking rules?	In terms of the Council's position, there were two unsuccessful prosecutions. However, that is the limit of the Council's enforcement processes. We are aware of the potential links between these types of companies and modern slavery; however we have no evidence that these operators are responsible for modern slavery. We would be cautious of using that wording without evidence.
--	---

<b>AH8: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Clarkson</b>	
<b>Question</b> People submitting comments on planning applications presently have their names and addresses published. This can on occasion be a vector for abuse, and is not in general required; rather, different councils take different views as to how and when details associated with comments are published. Will you consider revising the City's approach to this?	<b>Written Response</b> The council's procedures with respect to the handling of comments on planning applications are long-standing and accord with the GDPR regulations. The council's privacy statement makes clear to residents how their data will be handled.  The manner in which we handle this data is consistent with a number of our neighbouring authorities. The LPA consider it is important for the public to see who has commented on a planning application as it ensures that there is an open and transparent process and that sufficient weight can be given to the representation. There are no plans to make changes to our approach at this stage.
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  What action is being taken to ensure that address information is only being published when it is strictly legally necessary?	<b>Verbal Response</b>  There are strong views on both sides of this issue and there are a range of reasons why we would not want this data to be published. We will discuss this with officers and ensure that this is appropriately addressed.

<b>AH9: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>

Is planning permission needed for community notice boards to be installed on a) council owned land and b) land owned through housing management companies on housing estates in our city? Of the new community notice boards installed in the city in the last 5 years, how many received planning permission and who has paid for the planning permission fees?	<p>Permission is not needed for a notice board on council owner land if it is installed by the council. It would be required on land owned by housing management companies on housing estates in our city.</p> <p>We have not refused any notice boards as far as I am aware.</p> <p>The planning fee is paid for by the applicants.</p>
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

### Cabinet Member for a Healthy, Fairer Oxford and Small Business Champion

26

<b>CM1: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Munkonge</b>	
<b>Question</b>  How much money was spent to provide free leisure experience for non-Oxford residents and did MHCLG approve this as a legitimate use of these funds?	<b>Written Response</b>  If the question is referring to the recent campaign around a Greater Oxford under Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) then I can confirm that no money was spent on providing free leisure experiences to non-Oxford residents. We're proud of Oxford's excellent leisure service provision, which should provide a template for a Greater Oxford Council.
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  What is the notional value at the gate of the services provided free under this scheme?	<b>Verbal Response</b>  No amount of money was provided for free.

### CM2: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Munkonge



<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The women only swimming sessions at the OCC leisure centres often have male lifeguards which make them less accessible. What steps are being taken to address this?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There have been some challenges across the country around recruitment of lifeguards in general and Oxford has had similar challenges. Working with our leisure operator we have taken steps to try and address this such as regular free training and lifeguard qualifications and better promotion and engagement with our communities. We are also working on a longer-term basis to improve access, skills and education into the industry with partners such as CIMSPA (Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity) on the trail blazer Local Skills Advisory Board <a href="#">Oxfordshire - CIMSPA</a>.</p> <p>I am pleased to confirm that an additional four female lifeguards have been recruited which should help to address this.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>From my experience, swimming pools are not prioritizing women's only sessions and ensuring that men leave at the appropriate times. Is there any way of changing how staff address this problem?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>We will follow up on that with officers and come back to you with a response.</p> <p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We have taken this up with our leisure operator, they will remind staff of their obligations around ensuring areas are clear of men prior to women only sessions. If there are any specific dates, times and location this would also be useful to help pinpoint the issues.</p>

## Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

### LS1: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Smith

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
-----------------	-------------------------

<p>Could the portfolio holder provide the list of community centres that currently stock free period products and how it monitors and ensures there is a continued supply of these products? If there are community centres that do not have these in supply, could the cabinet member provide an explanation for this and the plan for implementation?</p>	<p>The Council consulted with the Federation of Community Centres in relation to the best way to work with them to deliver this. The Federation worked with its member community centres funding each a one-off sum of £150 to purchase and stock period products.</p> <p>We can only guarantee stock at the Community Centres we manage (currently Rose Hill Community Centre). There is an annual review of this at the Community Associations meeting which the Council and Community Associations attend. This is scheduled for the 6 November.</p> <p>The Community Centres within the scheme include Barton Neighbourhood Centre, Rose Hill Community Centre, Cutteslowe Community Centre, Donnington Community Centre, Florence Park Community Centre, Risinghurst Community Centre, Headington Community Centre, South Oxford Community Centre, Jubilee Hall, Bullingdon Community Centre, Northway Community Centre, Asian Cultural Centre, Littlemore Community Centre, West Oxford Community Centre and Regal Community Centre.</p> <p>If any of the centres are running low or are out of stock we would recommend that they contact the Federation of Community Associations or contact the Council.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>No follow up question was asked.</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p>

<p><b>LS2: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>OCC aims to make cycling safer and more accessible. One of our residents in an A2 housing association block has been asking for a safe place to keep their bike for three years. The bike is not allowed in the communal areas or the garden, leaving the residents of these one bedroom flats with nowhere to store bikes.</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>While we have no regulatory powers over Housing Associations and their management activities, if the member could provide me with the location of this block, we will make formal enquiries regarding the possibility of a bike store being installed.</p>

What actions are being taken to act on partners such as housing associations not engaging with OCC aims?	
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

<b>LS3: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith</b>	
<b>Question</b>  Huge screens have appeared in the tower blocks in The Leys that are meant to be fire safety notices but are often blank. What was the cost of this instalment to the council and why was more traditional method of communications such as newsletters not used?	<b>Written Response</b>  Digital noticeboards have been installed in each of the five tower blocks to cover a range of real time information about the building, activities, Council news, services and other important safety information. They have not been installed in place of fire safety notices. The noticeboards have not been commissioned yet and are expected to be switched on in October. The budget for the noticeboards and their installation was approved by Cabinet in February 2024. Hard copy Newsletters will still be provided where appropriate.
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>

<b>LS4: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith</b>	
<b>Question</b>  Residents at Knights Road have been unable to access their rear gate for many months meaning they cannot for examples use their bicycles. They have raised this with Hill numerous times to no effect and	<b>Written Response</b>  Hill has been liaising with local residents during construction to tackle issues with fences and access through the back of residences of Knights Road. Damaged fences or ones that are in incorrect locations will be fixed or relocated by the contractor. Access to the alleyway may have to be

<p>now residents' fences have been damaged and a fence has been erected on the other side which means residents cannot access the alleyway. How will the cabinet member ensure that the blocking off of rear gates, and damage to fences is addressed in a timely manner?</p>	<p>restricted or blocked during construction works but this is temporary and will be reinstated by the developer once works are completed. Hill are addressing residents' concerns and issues as they arise and based on individual resident needs.</p> <p>The Council meets with Peabody once a week to monitor and escalate resident concerns when needed.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Does the member have a time frame for when the damaged fences will be fixed?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>We will write back to the Councillor with a timeline after consulting with officers.</p> <p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We still do not have a firm timeline for repairs to be carried out. We received a response from Peabody (with Cllr Djafari-Marbini cc'd) informing us that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PBT met with Hill today (10/10/25)</li> <li>• Hill have appointed a groundworks subcontractor for the S278 works but not yet for Knights Road, where the fences are located</li> <li>• Hill hope to conclude appointment of new subcontractor by end of week commencing 13/10/25</li> <li>• The fence repairs will be scheduled once the new subcontractor has been appointed and works can resume</li> <li>• Kris (PBT) spoke to an affected resident at the Parish Council meeting on 30/09/25 about his fence. She remains in contact and is keeping him informed on timings.</li> </ul>

<b>LS5: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>

<p>This Council was awarded City of Sanctuary status in Dec 2024. Cities of Sanctuary promote positive narratives that highlight the contributions of people seeking refuge and challenge negative stereotypes often perpetuated by media, fostering a broader sense of solidarity and welcome within the community. Despite this and numerous anti asylum protests at the asylum seeker hotel in the city in recent weeks, there has not been a media strategy from the council communications team, humanising the asylum seeker residents at the hotel. This is despite the fact that many asylum seekers have fled unimaginable situations, are volunteers inc in food banks (they are not permitted to work), and a valued part of local sports teams (supported by the great work of the communities team). When will this Council of Sanctuary humanise our neighbours at the hotels in its media output via a thought through strategy and help our communities heal?</p>	<p>Our commitment to being a council of sanctuary is underpinned by our Council of Sanctuary Framework and three-year action plan. This includes the creation of opportunities and space for people seeking sanctuary to have their voices heard and their stories told. I am working with our communities' team and communications team on a media strategy for publicising the great work supported by our Community Impact Fund and this will feature migrant voices.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>What is the strategy to humanize asylum seekers and refugees at hotels?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>Hotel residents are getting involved with projects funded through community impact funding. We will seek out opportunities to feature those individuals.</p>

<b>LS6: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Smith</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Recent reports have suggested that the new Home Secretary is planning to move people seeking asylum out of hotels and into large scale facilities such as</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The Home Secretary is working to fix the asylum system after the Tories failed to manage it effectively. Tory failure to process asylum claims led to the ballooning use of hotels for accommodation. The Labour Government</p>

<p>military bases. This echoes actions which under the previous government resulted in vulnerable people's health being seriously undermined, including through the spreading of diseases such as dysentery which had otherwise been eradicated from the UK. The Oxford Mail has reported that the proposed moves will include Asylum Seekers housed in Oxfordshire, including those in Oxford City. As an accredited City of Sanctuary, will the portfolio holder undertake to write to the Home Secretary to publicly state this council's opposition to having the vulnerable people housed in our city removed and placed into facilities which, as many experts have outlined, can be considered to be unfit for human habitation?</p>	<p>is taking action to reduce the use of hotels, and we hope this will soon result in the Home Office no longer needing the hotel they use in Oxford. We need to see asylum claims being processed swiftly with asylum seekers being accommodated in decent conditions which provide for their welfare for the necessary duration. If we were to become aware of sub-standard conditions in Home Office provided accommodation within our area then of course we would take action.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>No follow up question was asked.</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p>

<p><b>LS7: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Smith</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Will the portfolio holder take this opportunity to re-affirm the commitment of this council to the principles of the City of Sanctuary Scheme and offer a condemnation of the anti-migrant organising taking place within our city?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Yes. Oxford City Council is proud to have been awarded Council of Sanctuary status. Migration has a positive impact on our community, and we are proud to welcome people from around the world to our city including those in search of a place of safety. The use of hotels to accommodate asylum seekers by the Home Office is not something supported by either this Council or the public, and the far-right should be condemned for exploiting the situation created by the Tory Government's failure to stop small boat crossings and competently manage the asylum system.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>No follow up question was asked.</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p>

**LS8: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith****Question**

The highways delays around Blackbird Leys Road and Knights Road are causing untold misery to our residents who are struggling to access their local amenities. Residents are describing that “a big hole has been made and left”. Regarding the disruption and unacceptable delay: What engagement, if any, is the cabinet member having with the responsible authority Oxfordshire CC?

**Written Response**

The highways works have been delayed because Thames Water works took longer than anticipated, and now Hill have had to replace their roadworks subcontractor. The latest update from Peabody and Hill is that an appointment is imminent and they are doing what they can to resume works as soon as possible. The Council has weekly meetings with Peabody to monitor progress, and understand what is being done to mitigate impacts, and I receive regular updates from our project manager.

**Supplementary Question**

Why were the road work contractors replaced?

**Verbal Response**

We cannot go into the contractual details in public session. However, they hope to have a replacement to the contractors in place by the middle of the month.

**LS9: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith****Question**

Has the cabinet member been informed as to why a new subcontractor is involved in the works and will this delay the reopening of the road even further?

**Written Response**

The works are instructed by Peabody and being delivered by Hill. They have advised of the need for a new subcontractor but that the details are confidential. Hill are currently working to procure an alternative subcontractor to resume and complete works. We are told they are doing everything they can to expedite the process, but this will cause delays to both Highways works in the District Centre and groundworks at Knights Road. The extent of delay is currently unknown, but the Council meets with the developer weekly for updates and we will continue to push for the work to progress as soon as possible with minimum further disruption to residents.

<b>Supplementary Question</b>  No follow up question was asked.	<b>Verbal Response</b>
<b>LS10: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Smith</b>	
<b>Question</b> There is a huge need in The Leys for community space. What is the current timetable for opening of the community centre?	<b>Written Response</b>  The new community centre is scheduled for completion by late 2027. Stakeholders and local residents will be kept updated if this needs to be reviewed as a result of the current delays to the associated highways works.
<b>Supplementary Question</b>  Is there a timetable for decisions for the governance processes of the community centre in place?	<b>Verbal Response</b>  We will run it directly for two years, at that point, once we have established costs and understand how the centre is working and can share information, then it will be worth reviewing the information and speaking with groups interested in taking over management.