

To: Council

Date: 26 January 2026

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy

Title of Report: Public addresses that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Shavonne Allen
2. Kaddy Beck
3. Chaka Artwell
4. Dan Glazebrook

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Shavonne Allen

Madam Mayor, Councillors, thank you for hearing me today.

I am here to propose a county-wide Youth Council and Youth Mayor programme. For many centuries, Oxford has been known for its growth and innovation in multiple areas, such as education; however, we currently lack a modern, county-wide youth voice system.

This is why I am proposing today the establishment of a Youth Council and a Youth Mayor programme to enable young people across the county to become politically involved. By launching a Youth Council and a democratically elected Youth Mayor, Oxford would enrich its democracy as a whole.

This initiative would allow passionate individuals to become politically involved by representing the youth of Oxford in their own form of council, while also collaborating with both Oxford City and County Councils on decision-making and sharing their perspectives. This would enhance younger generations' understanding of politics across schools, communities, and alternative provisions throughout Oxford.

It would also allow young people to become involved in the wider community not just the one in which they live, but communities across Oxford as a whole. This would help break down socio-economic imbalances by bringing together young people from different backgrounds.

Oxford would be following the example of modern councils, such as Bristol and Lewisham, which already involve young people in decision-making through the formation of youth councils. By establishing a Youth Council, Oxford would further reflect itself as a diverse, forward-thinking city.

Thank you for hearing me today.

2. Kaddy Beck

I coordinate the campaign to save Bertie Park recreation ground in South Oxford. We have spoken many times about the loss of open space which this development would involve. This time, we'd like to talk about the planning process itself, and highlight objections raised by Thames Valley Police.

You have told us many times you want to build on Bertie Park because it's been on local plans for 20 years. So, we thought it was OK to cut and paste a policy from one plan to another.

When your principal planner said: "For reassurance, a site wouldn't automatically be carried over from one Local Plan to the next but would be subject to a new review of the current planning position and any constraints / opportunities," it was a light bulb moment!

The plan policy states "planning permission will only be granted ... if the existing Bertie Place recreation ground, including a replacement Multi Use Games Area (MUGA), is re-provided on land in plot B" behind Wytham Street.

The current plan was submitted in March 2019, but by that November it was already clear you had no intention of re-providing the recreation ground as required. You announced instead: "a smaller but more modern play area which would be open to the public," the land behind Wytham St was to become "a nicer environment for the community." I.e. you decided to depart from the plan policy before the current plan was even agreed in June 2020. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that plan policies be both up to date and deliverable. It is obvious that the submitted plan policy for Bertie Park was neither.

Your planning application was validated in May 2023. It normally takes 13 weeks for proposals to reach planning committee. The first date we were given was that August. For 2½ years you have drilled holes and held meetings. This is just such a waste of council tax money.

We have known for a long time that Thames Valley Police thought the land behind Wytham Street unsuitable for unaccompanied children. They have now officially submitted their advice.

The police say:

“Site B does not have any clear function or purpose, and significantly lacks surveillance, creating significant concern that there will be opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour to flourish in this area... This space is very difficult to activate and is highly likely to be a significant attractor for crime and antisocial behaviour. ...Careful consideration needs to be evidenced how legitimate activities will be promoted in this space and crime/ASB prevented/discouraged. This has not been achieved in the current application.”

They also say:

“The MUGA is located very close to residential properties creating a risk of noise having a negative impact on residents, neighbour disturbances and community tension. This space is a very challenging location for development, with no clear solution. I appreciate the community wish to retain this youth recreation facility, however if houses are to be built here then neither the current location or the previously suggested location in site B are appropriate locations for such a facility.”

The council has not listened to the voices of local residents. We hope that it will listen to the police.

Finally, in October last year, OCC published its Green Spaces Technical Advice note 9. This says if you want to argue that an open space (like Bertie Park) is surplus you would need to “demonstrate a long-term lack of public access and/or use.” You have not done this. It also says that in Oxford, there is no spare pitch capacity, and that, with the population of Oxford growing, if pitches (like our MUGA) are “lost without compensation then so is that opportunity.”

Our recreation ground sits at the heart of our community because it is a physical space where families meet and kids play together. If you build on it, it is gone forever. And so is the heart of our community.

3. Chaka Artwell

Does Oxford City Council believe it is right, correct, and just, for illegal migrants, and asylum seekers, are prioritised for housing, and welfare needs, by the Home Office and Local Councils, above native English men and women's housing needs?

4. Dan Glazebrook

The motion put forward by councillors Jupp and Miles rightly points out what the Friends of Grandpont Nature Park have been saying for some time - that the Oxpens bridge would not provide the floodproof route required for student housing at Osney Mead (rendering it a pointless replication of the existing two bridges in the same area) - and the incredible £14million price tag for the bridge would be far better spent elsewhere. For example - it is surely only a matter of time before there is a serious casualty on the A40 at Barton Park, where there have been several nasty accidents already as residents are forced to dodge speeding traffic every time they want to reach shops, schools or the doctor's surgery. The Council's building of the estate without a bridge or subway was directly counter to both the police's recommendations and County-wide traffic regulations.

Likewise, the lack of a crossing from South to East Oxford at Jackdaw Lane means residents of New Hinksey are forced instead on a long diversion round the Plain, the most dangerous cycling spot in Oxford, where there have already been fatalities. It would even be useful to have a bridge across the river directly from Osney Mead, to ensure users do not have to cross the flooded towpath under the railway bridge, where

a man tragically drowned just last winter. The one place a bridge is not needed is from Grandpont Nature Park to Oxpens Meadow, two sites already linked by an excellent, wide and well-used cycle and foot bridge just 100m from the proposed new one. Yet it seems the Labour Council prefer to use public money to pointlessly augment the private commercial developments of Oxford University than to address the safety and wellbeing of their own constituents.

When the residents of Grandpont and Osney started their campaign in 2024 they were told by a Labour cabinet member that it would not be possible to use Growth Deal funding for projects such as those being put forward today. They were told, quote, that “we couldn’t spend it elsewhere in the city. It can only be spent on infrastructure that enables new development or new housing.” And it is true that this is the usual criteria for projects receiving Oxfordshire Growth Deal funding. But Oxford City Council, unique amongst all the Councils in Oxfordshire, had by then managed to wangle itself an exemption from these criteria. Unlike all the other Councils, the City Council was and is allowed to use Growth Deal funding for projects that do not directly enable new development or new housing. So the funds could have - and can be - used for other projects.

Furthermore, it is now clear that the Oxpens River Bridge as currently conceived does not *itself* enable any new housing or development, whether directly or indirectly. When the bridge went to planning, Council officers were at pains to point out that, quote, “the future developments [at Osney Mead and Oxpens] could go ahead *without* the bridge”, that “The bridge is a standalone development that can be delivered on its own without the need for the Oxpens or Osney Mead allocations to be delivered *and vice versa*”; that “the Osney Mead development could still come forward [without the bridge]”; and that “if the bridge doesn’t go ahead then both the proposed developments [Osney Mead and Oxpens] could come ahead *on their own*.”

There you have it, in black and white: the bridge is not necessary, either for the Oxpens development or for Osney Mead. This is truer than ever since the Environment Agency vetoed the Council’s plans to floodproof the towpath between Osney Mead and Grandpont Nature Park in November 2021. The Council, to this day, don’t have the faintest idea how to floodproof this path, which means that to reach the new floodproof bridge from Osney Mead, users will have to cross a section of towpath that regularly floods - and, where, as I mentioned, someone tragically drowned just last year.

Last time I stood here, the Cabinet Member responsible responded with a long list of outdated documents referring to plans for the bridge. All of these were made redundant by the EA’s ruling in 2021.

The Council are now in breach of Homes England’s funding requirements, which, unlike the Growth Deal, the Council have not wangled an exception from, which state that funds can only be used for infrastructure that unlocks housing developments. The £1.5million they were awarded by that body for the bridge was provided specifically for a path that their application claimed would provide the floodproof exit out of Osney Mead required for residential planning permission to be granted on the site. In fact it will do nothing of the sort. You may, in the coming discussion, seek to ask council leaders how they expect to get millions more from this body for a project which it is not lawfully allowed to fund, as it will not - by their own admission - enable any housing.

Now the Council have diverted a further £3.7million from the local budget for the bridge, including £1million from the maintenance fund, which is supposed to be used to repair council homes. Enough is enough. It’s time to stop throwing good money after bad, and to start addressing the safety and wellbeing of the town’s working class residents rather than simply subsidising the wealthiest institution in the city with a pointless ornament for their commercial developments.