

To: Council
Date: 26 January 2026
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 Smowton to Cllr Brown

Question

Do you agree with me that some of the housing sites mentioned in the Oxford Growth Commission interim report, for example at Chalgrove, are neither proximal to employment sites nor to rail connections and are therefore likely to foster more car commuting? Will you robustly defend the need for a reduction in car commuting and resultant congestion to the Commission?

Written Response

I warmly welcome the Interim Oxford Growth Commission report and its emphasis on the importance in particular of agglomeration and building housing near the City and/or existing transport hubs. This council's LGR bid for a Greater Oxford is based on the importance of building more housing and employment sites next to existing conurbation and transport links. I welcome Cllr Smowton's support for this proposal and for building housing next to Oxford where it is needed through strategic release of the green belt.

SB2: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Brown

Question

Do you agree with me that while the Oxford Growth Commission interim report's support for rail is welcome, this leans heavily towards the Cowley

Written Response

No, I don't agree with Cllr Smowton. The Interim report is focused on projects that can be delivered effectively and quickly to encourage housing and growth.

Branch Line and gives insufficient attention to much-needed new stations at Ardley, Begbroke and Wantage & Grove? Will you represent to the Commission the need to get behind OxRail 2040 in its entirety?

The Cowley Branch Line (the funding bid for which was led by the City Council) is, alongside Oxford Station, the rail project that will unlock growth quickest. Both these projects are also a pre-requisite for other rail projects across the county. It is right that the report focuses on delivering the branch line first.

The interim report also clearly expresses strong support for rail plans and projects throughout, including stating, on page vi and page 9 and page 13 and page 14, that OxRail 2040 is very strong in its entirety, that it should be delivered, and that the commission is going to work to support the delivery of the plan and the Oxfordshire Metro.

SB3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown

Question

What work has been done to identify a location for the city centre play park in the Broad Street and St Giles area since the cross-party support for such a facility?

Written Response

The city council has expressed its support for a city centre play area in principle. Explicit proposals for such a park on the highway would need to be brought forward by the County Council.

The Child Friendly City working group has trialled pop-up children's events at both locations.

A report on the outcomes of these events is currently being finalised by the County Council and will include recommendations. Early findings suggest that softer surfaces, such as grassed areas away from roads and fast cycle routes, are significantly more conducive to encouraging children's play.

As part of this work, the feasibility for permanent play space will be considered as will a decision on whether the City or County Council is best placed to utilise the funds available.

AR1: From Cllr Yeatman to Cllr Railton**Question**

Inconsiderate and dangerous cycling remains a concern for the users of Florence Park. Is there a log of any complaints or any plans to address concerns?

Written Response

There is no record of any complaints other than the communications from the Cllr. There had been an offer from the County Council to provide some signs left over from another project. However, there has subsequently been no responses to numerous attempts to chase this offer.

There is an online form for residents to make comments or complaints here: <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/xfp/form/165>

AR2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton**Question**

Which park locations have been short listed for the learner cycle park and what criteria have been used to identify the short list?

Written Response

The short list comprised: Croft Rd Rec, Cutteslowe Park, Florence Park, Milham Ford Park and Sunnymead Rec. This was based off the criteria below (in no particular order):

- Flood risk
- Safe access by bike (i.e. proximity to key cycling routes, low traffic streets)
- Access to car parking (since it would not be reasonable to assume everyone will cycle there and some people will drive)
- Access to ancillary facilities like toilets or a cafe
- Availability of space in the park

Provision of natural supervision (site lines)

AR3: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Railton

<p>Question</p> <p>As the portfolio holder is aware, Manzil Way Gardens played host to a winter wonderland during December. During the course of this event, vehicles caused significant damage to the grass. This compounded the damage already caused by vehicles used by contractors from St Hilda's College. Can the portfolio holder please outline what steps are being taken to ensure that events do not result in unnecessary damage to public spaces?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The main ruts were not caused by the short-term use of the site during the event but by the unauthorised access across the grass area by the St Hildas College maintenance vehicles over several weeks previously. The college now accepts this based on photographic evidence provided and has agreed to undertake restoration works at its own cost.</p> <p>All events on City Council land give an undertaking not to cause damage, so if they do they can be required to put it right – there is a standard clause in the agreement for this. In this case as I understand it the event did not cause any damage.</p>
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AR4: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Railton

<p>Question</p> <p>As discussed during the previous meeting, Manzil Way Gardens was damaged by contractors from St Hilda's College. I am delighted that the portfolio holder has confirmed that St Hilda's will make good the damage. Can they please confirm the timeline for the completion of this work?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The works will commence in the next few weeks, weather dependent, and will include steps taken to address the compaction and re-seed the affected areas. Temporary fencing will be erected while the new grass re-establishes. The timeline for the grass to re-establish will be partly weather dependent.</p>
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AR5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Railton

<p>Question</p> <p>I was pleased to see the government propose new powers for councils to tackle pavement parking. Noting</p>	<p>Written Response</p>
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that responsibility for these powers lies with the County Council as the transport authority, pavement parking nonetheless represents a key issue for residents in East Oxford. Cowley Road in my ward is a particular hotspot. Will the portfolio holder take this opportunity to encourage the County Council to act as promptly as possible on pavement parking once the powers to do so are in place?

Yes, I would encourage the County Council to act promptly once the powers are in place. There are huge problems with antisocial pavement parking across the city but they will need to acknowledge that in some areas there may not be an alternative option.

AR6: From Cllr Robinson to Cllr Railton

Question

The City Council passed a motion to make Oxford easier to walk and wheel around - and we assume this includes the winter months. In the last few weeks we have all experienced the dangerously icy conditions on pavements and cycle lanes and heard evidence of our residents falling from bikes or when walking, and others too fearful to leave their homes. This happened last winter too. We know that the City Council supply the grit bins and top-up the grit, but also that ODS do not provide the people power to actively grit pavements and cycle lanes. Therefore, could the cabinet holder offer some solutions to the problems of how to move the grit to our persistent problems areas - which might include better communications and/or work with community groups, colleges and secondary schools, senior scouts, trained volunteers, parish councils and local residents associations?

Written Response

The current gritting regime within Oxford is carried out to the County's specification and that does not include specific gritting of footpaths and cycle paths.

The Council's web pages are being updated to provide clearer advice to people around gritting, both what each council does and what residents can do with grit bins.

A more systematic gritting of key cycle paths and pavements is beyond the placement of a few grit bins, so options are also being explored with ODS into delivering this. Additional budget will be required for an increase in gritting – watch this space at budget council.

NC1: From Cllr Yeatman to Cllr Chapman**Question**

Given the drive for "active travel" it was concerning to see some of the conditions on key routes and a number of injuries during the recent bad weather. Is there an opportunity for Oxford City Council, ODS & Oxfordshire County Council to improve the current processes for these routes?

Written Response

I refer the Cllr to the answer from Cllr Railton AR6.

The County Council, as Highway Authority, is responsible for road safety, and the specification and budget for the work undertaken by ODS in this space. The County Council specification does not include gritting of footpaths and cycle paths. Through our Labour members on the County Council, we are making representations about these matters not least because the County Council wants to encourage safe active travel like cycling yet is doing nothing yet to grit the growing number of cycle paths in icy weather. The cost to the local NHS is significant as is the pain suffered by individuals and the disruption to families and businesses by inevitable absence from work.

NC2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman**Question**

Storage of bin bags on the pavement on Cornmarket by some food businesses remains a problem - encouraging rodents and destroying the public realm. What enforcement action has been taken for non-compliance by businesses on Cornmarket in terms of the requirements for them to store their waste on their premises prior to the official collection time?

Written Response

I do agree this is an issue on Cornmarket and we are doing all we can to improve the situation.

The Food Business Operators are given advice on waste as part of the food hygiene Inspection programme. If there is a non-compliance in storing waste prior to collection, this is included in the Food Hygiene Rating Score. Presenting waste for collection on the street at the incorrect time is dealt with by the Community Response Team.

Businesses are required to present their waste on the highway to be collected by their Waste Collection Provider. In order to ensure that there is

	<p>no excess waste left out during the busiest parts of the day and due to vehicle restrictions, waste is collected normally in the early hours of the day. This assists with the movement and safety of the public and allows for cleansing operations.</p> <p>Officers have conducted several operations in relation to commercial waste in the city centre. Businesses and organisations have been written to and a number spoken to in relation to their presentation of waste. There has been a variety of further enforcement actions taken involving service of legal notices and penalty notices being issued to those causing the most nuisance.</p> <p>At the moment, ODS cannot collect and store waste overnight at Cowley Marsh or in their refuse vehicles so a late evening collection is not feasible. We do rely on businesses to co-operate with us but will issue legal notices and penalty notices where necessary.</p>
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NC3: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Chapman

Question

The public toilets at Manzil Way Gardens are a key resource for residents of East Oxford. However, 3/5 are currently out of order. I have previously received reassurances that these are on the list for reparative work. Can the portfolio holder please outline the timeline for reparative works, including when these facilities will again be open to the public?

Written Response

There were a number of defects in these toilets, which were actioned and rectified before Christmas. Unfortunately, this appears to be a recurring issue because of vandalism. The current repairs are scheduled to be completed by 30th January at the latest. We will also liaise with the Safer Oxford Team to explore any other avenues for addressing the antisocial behaviour.

AH1: From Cllr Stares to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

Why is all the CIL money collected by the City Council from the numerous developments in Littlemore being funnelled into the Cowley Branch line and not being protected and used for the direct benefit of the Littlemore Community?

Written Response

The purpose of CIL is to raise funds for local authorities to use to help them deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in their area. Oxford City Council created a CIL scheme to cover the whole city, and the funds are used to deliver the creation of new, or the repairs of existing, infrastructure. Much of this infrastructure is social and community projects that is of benefit to the whole of Oxford. For example, recent CIL funds have been used to support cycling infrastructure across the whole city, and the wholesale reconstruction of the East Oxford Community Centre, a building which has been and will be used by people from the whole of Oxford and beyond.

Over the last 10 years (up to October 2025, which is when the latest figures are available for) Oxford City Council has received £5,439,784 in CIL for developments in the Littlemore ward. Of that sum £815,968 has been given to Littlemore Parish Council for it to spend on infrastructure as it wishes.

The allocation of funds to the Cowley Branch Line project will both benefit Littlemore, in creating a local railway station that has been missing for more than 50 years, and Oxford and Oxfordshire more broadly by providing a public transport option that will help to reduce private car journeys. It will also help to allow further development in Littlemore, which will generate further CIL funds. If the Littlemore Neighbourhood Plan is passed and adopted then Littlemore Parish Council will have an increased share of those funds, which it can - and I am sure will - spend on local community needs.

AH2: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth

<p>Question</p> <p>With the introduction of the congestion charge, it is anticipated that Oxford City Council-operated car parks will experience a reduction in usage and associated income.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member provide a detailed breakdown of the projected or realised revenue losses, disaggregated by individual car park?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council is aware there was a short-term reduction in usage at City Centre car parks, as would be expected with any significant change to the transport network. There was also a short-term increase in use of the City Council operated Park and Ride car parks.</p> <p>However, there is currently only limited data available to understand what the longer-term impact of the introduction of the Congestion Charge might be, and it is too soon to draw any meaningful conclusion.</p> <p>The City Council will be monitoring data closely over time in order to see if any clear pattern or change emerges to all City Council operated car parks.</p>
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<p>AH3: From Cllr Stares to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can you please provide details of any impact upon the City Centre parking revenue following the introduction of the Congestion Charge?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>See AH2</p>

<p>AH4: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Given the ongoing uncertainty and lack of clarity around long-term support for the Bus Filter scheme and its financial implications, will the Council now reconsider the redevelopment of its car parks to offset operational losses, for example through housing or employment-led schemes, and if so, which sites are</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Car Parks continue to operate at a surplus, not an operational loss.</p> <p>The current Local Plan 2026 has policies that permit particular forms of development on some specific car parks, varying from location to location. These include Policy SP59 Union Street Car Park which would permit</p>

<p>currently under active consideration, and will this require an amendment to the draft Oxford Local Plan?</p>	<p>different forms of residential use along with the retention of sufficient car parking to serve the local area, Worcester Street and Becket Street car parks in Policy SP1 which covers the whole of the West End of the city centre and is expanded in more detail in the West End and Osney Mead SPD, and Policy AOC5 Summertown District Centre Policy which sets out the principles for rationalising land used for public and private car parking and the site specific Policy SP6 Diamond Place and Ewert House which would permit a range of uses along with the retention of sufficient car parking to serve the local area.</p> <p>There are no Local Plan policies preventing development on any car park sites, but other issues such as operational Flood Zones, impacts on Heritage Assets or the Green Belt might well need to be taken into account should any development be proposed. Any application for development on any car park site would need to be judged on its merits against all Development Plan policies and other material considerations. So there is no requirement to change any Local Plan policies.</p> <p>The City Council has been in ongoing discussion with local community groups in Summertown in relation to the Diamond Place site for some time about potential development, and that will continue. Of the other car parks specifically mentioned in the Local Plan policies there are currently no active plans for the redevelopment of Union Street, and the others are not owned by Oxford City Council.</p>
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AH5: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth	
<p>Question</p> <p>What reasons did Balfour Beatty give for withdrawing from the Oxpens Bridge project?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Balfour Beatty provided several reasons for withdrawing from the Oxpens Bridge project: relationships within the project teams, project delays related to planning and technical approvals and cost recovery and resource constraints as delay had disrupted the original resource planning.</p>

AH6: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth**Question**

Has the council appointed a new contractor for Oxpens Bridge and if so who is it?

Written Response

A procurement exercise has been undertaken to appoint a new contractor to deliver the bridge. The contractor, Jacksons Civil Engineering Group Ltd, has been selected and it is intended to appoint them once the regulatory procurement and governance standstill periods (as defined in the Procurement Act 2023 Section 51 regulations; these do not formally apply to this contract as the Framework being used was based on the previous regulations, but are regarded as best practice, and so are being followed here)

AH7: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth**Question**

How much has the council spent on buying steel for the Oxpens Bridge project without having a contractor in place

Written Response

The Council has not purchased steel for the bridge. The potential expenditure was added to the forward plan as it would be a key decision where it required, but it was not. It is now anticipated that this will occur after the contractor has been appointed.

AH8: From Cllr Robinson to Cllr Hollingsworth**Question**

Building on the new site at Hill View, Mill Lane in Marston to create 159 new dwellings started last October. Despite concerns over building in green belt,

Written Response

The City Council has taken enforcement action regarding the development at Hill View Farm, but it is important to be aware of the limitations on the legal jurisdiction that applies to some issues, such as speeding by vehicles

using inappropriate roads for construction traffic and having the exit/entrance through a village with sheltered accommodation for vulnerable people, old buildings of preservation status and local schools; the building has gone ahead - and multiple breaches to the construction site management plan have been made. Residents have reported countless breaches of dangerous construction site traffic speeding, or vehicles using residential roads outside agreed times, caused school commuters danger; beautiful old buildings to crack, break and cause foundation damage. Recently the drilling of a deep trench for cabling to the site has caused further structural damage to the cottages adjacent. The planning enforcement team on the City Council have been inundated with evidence, however, they seem to have no cause of action to enforce changes/ agree compensation to residents for considerable housing damage. Thames Valley Police also refuse engagement with the issue of breaches of the traffic plan. How can you reassure us that the conditions within the construction site management plans which are placed on developers hold any weight - and that the City and County Council will actually hold developers, such as Bellway, to account?

on the public highways and civil issues between private individuals or between a private individual and an organisation or business.

In line with the council's Corporate Enforcement Policy, the Planning Enforcement Team has taken a graduated approach to addressing the issues raised by engaging with contractors and site operatives to resolve matters without the need to take formal enforcement action. However this option remains under consideration and may yet be used.

Officers have visited the site to undertake their own evidence gathering, particularly early in the mornings. Their engagement with the developer has secured additional signage on roads leading to the site, along with the provision of traffic marshals to ensure construction traffic accesses the site during the agreed hours and navigates to and from the site safely.

The City Council does not have the legal jurisdiction to enforce vehicle speeds on the public highway. Speeding is a road traffic offence, and Thames Valley Police are therefore the enforcing authority. A possible option for the affected local residents is to consider establishing a Community Speedwatch programme to support the Thames Valley Police in fining speeding vehicles, and get a greater engagement by Thames Valley Police in addressing issues where it is the authority with the enforcement powers.

Any damage to residential properties is a civil matter between the developers and those affected. The City Council has no jurisdiction to act in such matters nor the legislative authority to seek compensation on their behalf.

The City Council continues to monitor the site to address issues when they are raised, where it was the power to do so, and will be supportive as far as it can of issues where the legal jurisdiction sits with Thames Valley Police or are civil matters.

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Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

LS1: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Linda Smith

Question

There is a huge need in The Leys for community space. What is the current timetable for opening of the community centre?

Written Response

Currently, the community centre is set to be delivered in two phases with the building shell & core or envelope being delivered by Peabody, and the internal fit out by the Council. Construction works for the shell and core are due to start at the end of January/early Feb 2026, with completion programmed for March 2027. Delivery of internal fit out will follow and is programmed to take 12 months to complete, making occupation of the centre possible from March 2028. Officers are currently exploring delivery options to try and reduce that timeline.

LS2: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Linda Smith

Question

Considering Sandy Lane football pitches, what specific plans are in place to ensure that the football pitches currently proposed for development will be replaced or relocated? It is vital for our community to maintain access to adequate sporting facilities, particularly for youth and grassroots football programs.

Written Response

A report to Cabinet on this development, including proposals to ensure the continued provision, or improvement, of the football pitches and facilities is on the Forward Plan for March 2026. Plans will be brought forward in more detail at this time. Consultation with the local football clubs has commenced and will continue, recognising the need for good community access to facilities, and the great work of local clubs like Blackbirds FC and Greater Leys FC who OxPlace and the council wish to work in close partnership with on this project.

LS3: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Linda Smith**Question**

Re Sandy Lane football pitches, where will the replacement pitches be located, and what is the timeline for their availability?

Written Response

Plans will be brought forward in more detail in the Cabinet report in March, as referenced above. Re-provision of the pitches and facilities will take place ahead of the commencement of any development for much needed affordable homes.

LS4: From Cllr Djafari-Marbini to Cllr Linda Smith**Question**

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 residents' fences have been damaged many months ago with a fence erected on the other side which means residents cannot access the alleyway. Residents were promised action back in Oct 2025, so can the Cabinet Member confirm if the Council will be working with Hill to address these concerns.

Written Response

Hill and Peabody acknowledge that rear access to some of the existing properties on Knights Rd has been closed off since works started 2 years ago.

Works at Knights Road have been delayed by two main issues: the need to replace groundworks subcontractors who went into administration, and prolonged planning processes for two planning applications. The LPA has now approved both the S73 and the application for a new temporary Spindleberry Close access road, and Hill are now working with their sub - contractors to complete the necessary works to handover the first phase of the development. This will open up part of the site and allow rear access to these properties again.

Peabody will be contacting residents with a timetable for when they can expect to regain use of their rear gates, as well as agreeing a solution to the levels issue affecting one particular property.

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