

To: Council

Date: 23 February 2026

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy

Title of Report: Public addresses that 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, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also 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 and questions to be taken in Part 1 of the agenda

1. Address from Paul Wightman

Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 1 of the agenda

1. Address from Paul Wightman

Hello, my name is Paul Wightman.

I'm here today as a director of Causing a Scene Ltd, which is a community- owned and run co-operative, set up by a diverse community of music fans, musicians, DJs, managers, producers, promoters, technicians, creatives and community leaders...

...to be the collective voice & champion of Oxfordshire's music scene, and its associated culture.

Specifically, I'm here to support the introduction of the new Live Music Fund, which is outlined in the budget before you for consideration today.

Causing a Scene's vision, is of a vibrant local music culture that's diverse, resilient and deeply valued...

...not only for its creativity, but for the hugely positive role it plays in improving individual wellbeing, community cohesion and a sense of belonging...

...and as a too-often overlooked multiplier of the local economy.

This city is the birthplace and home of extraordinary artists, venues and promoters that we can be rightly proud of.

Whether that's the incredible, diverse talent that you can see performing at a grassroots level on a daily basis.... people who perform for the sheer love of creativity and community connection.

Or the artists that became famous and put us on the global culture map, such as: Radiohead, Ride, Supergrass, Glass Animals, Foals and Stornoway.

You may not be aware, but Oxford was recently crowned the UK's rock music capital in terms of album chart and streaming success over the past 30 years, beating Manchester, Liverpool and London.

In a world where Berlin Techno has just been designated as an intangible global cultural asset by UNESCO, Oxford's music heritage is a largely untapped asset that, with the right backing and strategy, could generate significant income and overnight stays for the local visitor economy.

Meanwhile, a new generation of diverse, up and coming artists, such as: South Arcade, Elmiene, Sammy Virji, Hamdi, and Artemas continue to blow up across the globe. Elmiene for instance, who came to Oxford as a 5 year-old Sudanese refugee, recently sold out the Brixton Academy, while Sammy Virji is fast becoming one of the world's biggest DJs, and Artemas, in 2024, had the most globally successful single of any UK artist.

They all developed their craft at local grassroots music venues in this city. Venues which continue to act as the Research & Development centres of the next big Oxford export, in a UK music sector that generated over £8 billion for UKDP last year.

So with all this success you might be wondering why a new Live Music Fund is needed?

Across the UK, music and arts venues and artists, are facing existential threats, but in Oxford, there is a very specific additional, underlying challenge.

It's a city with uniquely acute competition for physical space.... which, if left purely to commercial forces, without interventions from public bodies and the occasional benevolence of landlords and philanthropists...

.... means music, arts and community, inevitably lose out to student accommodation, laboratories and boutique hotels...

...despite the fact that, music, art and community are the very things that make people want to move here and to stay and put down roots, especially young people entering the workforce, which employers rely on to drive their strategic growth plans.

No young people, no growth.

If you're yet to be convinced, consider this: Tech start-ups and University spin-outs are essentially subsidised on the basis of their IP until they turn a profit, why shouldn't musicians, or the R&D venues where they learn their craft?

In summary, although we wait with interest to see the finer details of the new Music Fund, and would welcome working with you to ensure it has maximum impact, we urge all councillors to back this aspect of the budget today, as a brave first step in the right direction.

Back the spaces where music lives, the talents that use them, and the communities that thrive in them.

And ensure music's place at the heart of Oxford's cultural life and night time economy for generations to come.

Thank you for your time.

causingasceneoxford@gmail.com

This page is intentionally left blank