

To: Council

Date: 13 July 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. Nick Eyre
2. Dom Birch
3. Chaka Artwell

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Nick Eyre

Thank you, Lord Mayor

I'm not going to talk in general terms about the importance of climate change. I know that commitment to climate action is widely shared across the Council. Many of you have recently defeated opposition from climate deniers. And, from working with your officers on climate issues over the last few years, I know they are very committed and effective.

What I do want to talk about is the Council's specific goal to making the city net zero by 2040. This arose from the Citizens' Assembly on climate in 2019, where it was very clear that Oxford's citizens believe we should be a leader on climate action.

But net zero by 2040 is a tough goal. It's worth spelling out why.

'Net zero' means, by definition, matching emissions of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere with removals from the atmosphere.

In urban areas, the opportunities for removals within the city are quite limited. Tree planting can and should contribute, but given the city's boundaries and pressures on land use, its contribution can only be small. And it's increasingly clear that the prospects for engineered removals are negligible.

Offsetting is possible – essentially by paying other places to reduce their emissions instead of doing it here. But offsetting our direct emissions is not compatible with good practice guidance on net zero.

So the science clearly points to a conclusion that, to meet the city's net zero commitment, we have to eliminate most fossil fuel use in the city by 2040.

Fortunately, that is possible. And largely good economics, because of the declining costs of solar power, electric vehicles and heat pumps.

Many measures can contribute and are in the existing 2040 Net Zero Action Plansolar roofs, more insulation, public transport, better provision for cycling and walking, local food etc.

And these can all help. But when we are planning to eliminate most fossil fuel use, two measures stand out as essential.

First, replacing gas boilers, and

Second, replacing combustion engine vehicles.

If we don't do both of these, we will fail to meet the net zero goal.

In both cases, the change is beginning to happen. But it needs to go faster. And it will take time to complete. Both boilers and vehicles have lifetimes of about 15 years. We are now less than 15 years from 2040! So, we should already be avoiding installing gas boilers and buying new petrol and diesel vehicles. Delivery of the 2040 target implies speeding up action on these quickly.

Fortunately, there is a context in which this can be done – the Local Area Energy Plan. (Not to be confused with the Local Plan). Work has started on it, with input from your officers, who will update you on progress in due course.

My advice to you is to ask two questions of the plan

First, is it clear what incentives and regulations are going to be used to drive the phase out both petrol- and diesel-fuelled vehicles and gas boilers?

Second, is there a plan for changing our city's energy infrastructure: for including building district heating networks, upgrading electricity networks and decommissioning gas networks?

Of course, developing a detailed geographical plan is complex and may not be possible quickly. But the Local Plan Energy Plan at minimum needs to set out key priorities and begin a process to deliver that detail.

This clearly will raise questions for Cabinet and Scrutiny. But the changes needed will affect every neighbourhood, and almost every household. So, it's also an issue for you all as ward councillors as well.

That, I think is my 5 minutes. But I am happy to follow up with any of you in political groups or other forums.

Lord Mayor, thank you.

2. Dom Birch

As a non-binary resident of Oxford, I am speaking on the impact of the EHRC code of practice on Oxford's substantial trans community. The code of practice empowers the exclusion of trans people from services and spaces, and will make the lives of trans people worse.

For a non-binary person like me, this means that I will have no legal access to government defined 'single sex' spaces or services. Or, to do so, I am now required by law to identify as my birth sex for accessing a service. Given the extensive changes to my body due to the impact of hormone replacement therapy this essentially places me with the choice: acting unlawfully to access a female only space or service, or face discrimination or open hostility by accessing a male only space where my gender presentation and identity make me a visible outlier. I have, since the introduction of the EHRC draft guidance, already been challenged in bathrooms and changing rooms no less than six times—moments that often start with confusion and leave me challenged and harassed when moving through Oxford or simply trying to do my job. One at least one occasion I was left fearing for my safety after particularly aggressive questioning in a nightclub (men's) bathroom. Not only does the code undermine my dignity of living out my gender, it also puts me (and people like me) in danger.

I say this to highlight that the impact of the code is not trivial, and it is particularly serious in Oxford. A city with a substantial trans community that is being threatened by our own government. Insidiously and subtly, yes, but threatened nonetheless.

As an educator who works in inclusion and access, and volunteers with marginalised youth, I add that this harm will not simply be felt by Oxford's adults—but also by young people who are already struggling to interpret a world that chooses to reject them. Forcing them, as they come to terms with their gender identity, to also make the difficult choice between dignity and lawfulness, and between self-betrayal and safety.

3. Chaka Artwell

Stonewall, the leading publicly funded lobby for the LGBTQIAP2S+ men and women, has been mute, and has not condemn the behaviour of the same-sex adoptive parents; who have been convicted of baby Preston's death.

Given that Oxford City Council has reported to have paid to attend Stonewall's training, and sending Oxford City Council employees to Stonewall's expensive training courses, will Oxford City Council disengage from financially supporting, and attending any training organised by Stonewall?