

# Supplement for Council

On **Monday 7 October 2024** At **5.00 pm**

## Minutes Supplement

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	Attached to these minutes are the supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting.	
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	Council heard six addresses from members of the public. Attached are the written responses from Cabinet Members which were read out during the meeting.	

The agenda, reports and any additional supplements can be found together with this supplement on the [committee meeting webpage](#).

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**To:** Council  
**Date:** 7 October 2024  
**Report of:** Head of Law and Governance  
**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

### MR1: Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Rowley – Diversity in Full Council Meetings

#### Question

We are grateful to have an excellent contribution from the City Rector at the beginning of each Full Council meeting.

Oxford is made up of people of many different faiths and of no faith. Does the Lord Mayor agree that our great diversity should be reflected in these Chambers, by inviting representatives from different belief systems to speak at the start of each Full Council Meeting?

#### Written Response

The City Rector is a historic and purely formal appointment, and the postholder is invited as part of that role to attend City Council meetings but does not take part in the deliberations, nor does the City Council have any religious affiliation.

The idea of asking the City Rector to make a few remarks was introduced by former Councillor Craig Simmons during his period as Lord Mayor. His remarks are invariably thoughtful and are not bound to any religion.

We work closely through the Council of Faiths to engage with people of all religions and none, and will continue to

	do so.
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Is it agreed that diversity should be reflected in the chamber by inviting representatives from different backgrounds and belief systems to speak at the start of the full council meetings?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr stated that there is significant diversity in the chambers. It was noted that while some councils begin meetings with prayers, Oxford City Council does not. Additionally, a constitution review is underway, and members are welcome to contribute to this process.</p>

**Cabinet Member for Partnership Working; Leader of the Council**

<b>SB1: Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Flying the Palestinian Flag</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Since the war at Gaza, I have repeatedly asked the council to fly the Palestinian flag in solidarity with the citizens who are suffering during this war. Additionally, we have a city twinning with Ramallah, A Palestinian city. My Question is why can't we show solidarity to Palestine as we have for Ukraine, despite the situations hold many contrasts?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>As I have said previously, we have flown the City Flag at half-mast to convey our sorrow at the situation in Gaza and the events on 7 October, a year ago today.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>If the flag of Ukraine can be flown, why can't the Palestine flag be displayed in solidarity, especially considering that Ramallah is Oxford's twin city?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr stated that the request to fly both the Israel and Palestine flags has been made, but neither have been displayed. The best solution is not to fly any flags.</p>

<b>SB2: Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Devolution to Oxfordshire</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>How would devolution affect Oxford City Council?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>While Government has invited expressions of interest, it hasn't yet set out details of what may be offered in devolution deals.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we welcome the commitment to transfer more powers out</p>

	<p>of Westminster to empower local communities, institutions, and businesses. Unlike the previous government, the new government has indicated that it would expect powers to be appropriately shared or devolved with district councils.</p> <p>Oxford and Oxfordshire are key to Government ambitions to deliver growth. Yet we face significant challenges, including the recent rejection of our local plan, the difficulties in developing because of the failures of Thames Water. All this mean that the necessary means to tackle our financial and health inequality, and the enormous pressure on housing, public services, infrastructure and the natural environment, and the increasing impacts of climate change are currently very difficult. We would welcome more powers to tackle them locally.</p> <p>We need longer-term certainty on funding to invest in infrastructure and the long-term health prevention agenda and the ability to agree priorities locally. We could deliver more with new flexibilities to make the most of our local assets, for example through tourism levies.</p>
No further questions.	

<b>SB3: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Brown – Flagpole</b>	
<p><b>Question</b> Can you confirm the flagpole has been fixed?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I believe I have previously clarified that it is not the flagpole that is broken, contrary to what I had originally been told. The problem is the unsafe access to the flagpole. This will be renewed as part of a project to refurbish the Town Hall roof. This project is at planning/ feasibility stage.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b> When will the feasibility stage for the flagpole be completed?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>A written response will be provided.</p>

	<p>Written Response Provided</p> <p>It is estimated that RIBA stage 1 (including feasibility studies) of the project will be completed by March/April 2025</p>
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<b>SB4: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Brown - Donations</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>In light of the freebies being accepted by politicians like confetti. Would it be pertinent for council to publish any such activity or benefits such tickets, lunches on a monthly basis for residents to access easily?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Unlike MPs, councillors don't tend to be offered the sorts of gifts and hospitality that would certainly merit registering if offered. Individual councillor's entries in the Register of interests is available on the website against each councillor's details. I am not aware of any declarations – the value would be over £50.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Should there be an obligation on councillors to declare gifts and hospitality?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>Clarified that all councillors have an obligation to declare any gift/hospitality offered over the value of £50.</p>

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

<b>ET1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Gloucester Green Car Park</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Gloucester green car park is unsuitable for disabled users. Therefore, in light of the council's policy measures to reduce private car journeys into the city centre, and its reliance on car parking revenues as an income stream, what research and financial modelling has the council undertaken to identify options to repurpose this asset for alternative revenue generation purposes, such as</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Income from Gloucester Green car park is assumed throughout the MTFP. The Council is not in control of the entirety of the car park with 2 of the 3 areas being on a long lease to provide parking for the residential units above. The public car park would be complex to convert and unlikely to be viable in isolation. It would need to be considered as part of a wider project and resourced appropriately.</p>

<p>underground secure bike parking or office space?</p>	<p>There are alternative - deliverable - opportunities the Council is prioritising across the City.</p> <p>For customers unable to use Gloucester Green car park, there are alternative opportunities for accessible parking within both Worcester Street car park and Oxpens Road car park.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Would the council agree to conduct financial modelling to repurpose the car park asset for alternative revenue generation, such as bike parking in the city centre?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr stated that he will be open to reviewing the budget amendment and will request further clarification.</p>

<p><b>ET2: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Turner – Winter Fuel Payments</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>With this government's disgraceful decision to cut winter fuel payments. What additional support are we able to provide to our fathers, mothers and grandparents who will now need to choose between freezing or going to into energy debt?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We recognise that this will be a serious concern for a number of residents and we are putting in place support for those that will be hardest hit by this change. We are actively promoting support for people to claim the benefits they are entitled to, notably Pension Credit, by attending events across the city and officers being present at our community Ladders. We are also training front facing community leaders on the changes and how they can support anyone who presents to them for help.</p> <p>We are also expecting to be allocated some Household Support Fund shortly and we can allocate a proportion of this to support people affected by the loss of the winter fuel payment. We will be working with partners to organise warm spaces again this winter. Our Home Improvement Agency support low income households and they are running a keeping warm programme for those who are eligible.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>What actions is the council taking?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr suggested that a direct approach</p>

<p>Additionally, what measures can be implemented to motivate individual's facing life-or death situations? How can more substantial support be provided?</p>	<p>is the most effective way and mentioned an aim to implement something more targeted. Additionally, he noted that the home improvement agency's work will continue.</p>
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**Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford; Deputy Leader of the Council**

**AR1: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Weight Limit of Bridges 2**

<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The laden weight of a single-decker electric bus is approx. 13,750 kgs (13.75 metric tons) and laden 18,600 Kgs just over 18.6 metric tons. Fully laden electric rubbish trucks weigh a similar amount. Given that the roads in Herschel Crescent, Littlemore are collapsing and several main road bridges are limited to 7.5 tons, how will the city council collect rubbish and transport the public on infrastructure that isn't designed to carry such large load vehicles? (weight sources: <a href="https://pelicananyutong.co.uk/vehicle/e12/">https://pelicananyutong.co.uk/vehicle/e12/</a>)</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>ODS' Refuse Collection Vehicles and other fleet vehicles comply with the requirements of the maximum allowable highway weight limits associated with bridges and other road structures, irrespective of their fuel source. ODS adapts services such as waste and recycling operations accordingly.</p> <p>The Councillor will be aware that Oxford City Council doesn't operate bus services - and that the County Council is both the Highways Authority, which is responsible for enforcement around weight limits on roads and bridges and, together with the bus companies, forms the Enhanced Bus Partnership – which is responsible for transporting the public.</p> <p>With regards to the specific case, A TTRO (temporary traffic regulation order) is in place on the Herschel Crescent area to protect the carriageways from double decker buses. There is an exemption for "<i>carrying out any statutory functions of a local authority</i>". Therefore, our domestic waste rounds and highway maintenance functions are exempt from this TTRO.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Will the portfolio holder agree that lorries that weigh 15 to 18 tons exceed highway weight limits?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The 7.5-ton weight limit accommodates a bus route and bin collection services, both of which are essential and cannot be removed.</p>



<b>AR2: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Weight Limit of Bridges 2</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What precautions have been taken for two laden electric buses or two laden rubbish trucks crossing each other at the same time over a bridge designed for 7.5 tons?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>ODS’ fleet vehicles comply with the requirements of the maximum allowable highway weight limits associated with bridges and other road structures.</p> <p>There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with. ODS would similarly adjust its fleet movement arrangements were weight limits to change on any other bridges or road structures.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Does the portfolio holder know how heavy the ODS lorries are and if they are compliant with weight restrictions?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr confirmed that the bridges are compliant with the weight limit.</p>

<b>AR3: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton - Weight Limit of Bridges 3</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Given a laden bin lorry weight up to 26 tons (laden) and single electric buses 15 tons (normal double-decker bus 12 ~14 tons and normal single-decker 11~13 tons) how is the city council going to negotiate bin collections in Blackbird Leys when the Sandy Lane West Bridge has a weight limit of 7.5 tons?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There is no bridge on Sandy Lane West. There is a bridge linking Barns Road and Blackbird Leys Road however, there is no weight restriction on this bridge.</p> <p>There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Can there be clarification on the weight limit on the Sandy Lane West Bridge and will the portfolio holder kindly review her response and defer an answer next session?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr confirmed that the Bridge does not have a weight restriction.</p>

<b>AR4: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Railway Bridge</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Given a laden bin lorry can weigh up to</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There is no weight limit on the rail bridge</p>

<p>26 tons (laden) The old stone bridge above the railway line on Sandford Road, Littlemore has a weight limit of 7.5 tons, how will the city council serve Littlemore residents living in Medhurst Way and Armstrong Road with bin collections, and how will the council facilitate public transport from the future Cowley branch line to the city center when buses and bin lorries crossing strategic bridges weight between 13.5 tons and 26 tons respectively?</p>	<p>on Sandford Road.</p> <p>There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with.</p> <p>ODS would similarly adjust its fleet movement arrangements were weight limits to change on any other bridges or road structures.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>How does ODS serve the residents of Medhurst Way and Armstrong Road when there are busses and bin lorries that are not compliant with weight limits?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>ODS is compliant with the weight limits in the city. Any further questions need to go to the County Council.</p>

<p><b>AR5: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Osney River Bridge 1</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Given a laden bin lorry weight up to 26 tons (laden) and single electric buses 15 tons (normal double-decker bus 12 ~14 tons and normal single-decker 11~13 tons) how is the city council going to deliver bin collections and public transport over the cast iron Osney Bridge?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There is no weight limit on Osney Bridge. There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with.</p> <p>ODS would similarly adjust its fleet movement arrangements were weight limits to change on any other bridges or road structures.</p>
<p>No further questions.</p>	

<p><b>AR6: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Osney River Bridge 2</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>What is the maximum beam load of Osney Bridge, and what is the maximum traffic load the bridge can bear?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>This question should be addressed to Oxfordshire County Council, which is responsible for the majority of highway bridges in the city, including Osney Bridge.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>The Osney Bridge has a maximum load of 7.5 tons. With this knowledge, will this impact the delivery of the bus gates</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>County council matter.</p>

planned for the city centre?	
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<b>AR7: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Bridge Traffic Lights</b>	
<b>Question</b> Given the maximum load the Osney Bridge can bear, will bin lorries and buses need to pass the bridge one at a time? To avoid a combination of two vehicles passing over the bridge at any one time will traffic lights be installed to mitigate the threat to the Sandy Lane, Donnington, Five-mile drive, Osney, and Sandford road bridges?	<b>Written Response</b> This question should be addressed to Oxfordshire County Council, which is responsible for traffic management, including the installation of traffic lights should that be required anywhere on the city's road network.
No further questions.	

<b>AR8: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Bridges Risk Assessment</b>	
<b>Question</b> Will the city council kindly share the risk assessment they have conducted to mitigate damage to the city's bridges from laden bin collection lorries?	<b>Written Response</b> There is no risk assessment. ODS complies with all weight restrictions on bridges and other highways structures in the city.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> Has a risk assessment been conducted for the ODS plant vehicles operating on weight-restricted roads? Given the urgency of the matter, could the development of a risk assessment be reconsidered?	<b>Verbal Response</b> The Cllr clarified that ODS complies with all the weight restrictions around the city, therefore a risk assessment is not necessary.

<b>AR9: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Flooding in Oxford</b>	
<b>Question</b> Has the council made any attempts to plan for the anticipated increases in the frequency of flooding in the city including during the autumn/winter 24/25 period, with impacts on residents and the local economy and council resources?	<b>Written Response</b> The Council is supporting Oxfordshire County Council in the developing a Climate Adaptation programme. Central to this, particularly for the city, is delivery of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme to help mitigate the increasing risk of flood events.  However, climate change is also leading to more regular episodes of very heavy

	<p>rainfall which can lead to surface water flooding rather than fluvial flooding. This is what happened on 23 September, which saw approximately 1/5 of annual rainfall in a 24-hour period. This level of flooding overwhelms the sewer system.</p> <p>The drainage network in Oxford, similar to most areas of the UK, was built when there was far less housing and more fields that would have acted as flood plains for heavy rainfall.</p> <p>Householders have the primary responsibility to protect their homes from surface water flooding and there are limited things Oxford City Council can do to prevent it taking place, though it is involved in deploying targeted Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) measures in certain locations, such as the domestic water butts being deployed on Campbell Road and measures at New Hinksey Primary School.</p> <p>Typically, surface water flooding takes place too rapidly for the effective deployment of sandbags – though Members should be reminded that the neither the City nor County Councils provide sandbags to individual properties except to vulnerable residents.</p> <p>As the Highways Authority, Oxfordshire County Council has responsibilities for dealing with flooding of roads, but there is little they can do when sewers under the roads are full. The suggestion made by some that road drains blocked by grass cuttings caused the flooding is factually incorrect.</p> <p>When flooding does happen, ODS and the Council have worked with partners to provide support. Our response to the January flooding was effective and undoubtedly prevented more households being affected. Nevertheless, there were learnings taken from this national-scale event.</p> <p>With last week’s surface water flooding, ODS attended over 50 flooded properties in the city and worked tirelessly with</p>
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	Thames Water and the EA to ensure drains and gullies last week were operating to their maximum.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> Are the council willing to have a round table with businesses who were affected/ will be affected again?	<b>Verbal Response</b> Cllr confirmed that they will talk to the officer in charge to get this put in place.

<b>AR10: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Railton - Biodiversity</b>	
<b>Question</b> Despite Oxford City Council's commitment to biodiversity, residents have disturbing reports of the use of drilling equipment strictly prohibited (without license) within several metres of where a protected species resides.  What reassurances can the cabinet member provide that if such reports are indeed, accurate that this contravention of the laws will be independently investigated to ensure the safety and wellbeing of wildlife within what used to be called Spindelberry Park?	<b>Written Response</b>  A planning enforcement officer has investigated this matter, including visiting the site and reports the following:  From a planning point of view, what has happened is the developer has erected a hoarding fence along the boundary of the site to keep the public out. They are able to do this without planning permission as 'permitted development' under Schedule 2, Part 4, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order 2015. There is no other breach of planning control. As part of erecting this fence, the developer used a piece of equipment to break up the ground slightly in order to drive in the posts of the fence.  With regard to the licences, the developer has a licence from Natural England to relocate a protected species and our Planning Enforcement Officer found no evidence that the terms of the license were being breached.  The developer confirmed to our Planning Enforcement Officer that they have an ecologist there on a weekly basis and they are satisfied.  The Council does not have any further powers in relation to ecology enforcement and so in general, any suspected wildlife crime should be reported to the police.

<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Would it be possible for the cabinet member to encourage more regular updates on the issue around fencing gate?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>Cllr Railton passed this over to Cllr Louise.</p> <p>Cllr Louise said that while there are legal restrictions on certain updates, they will strive to provide more updates and work collectively to keep people informed.</p>
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<p><b>AR11: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Railton – Gul-e</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Gul-e is an innovative electric vehicle (EV) charging solution created by ODS. ODS is now taking expressions of interest from local councils across the UK, individual residents, fleet operators, and private businesses. Despite this a disabled resident has reported being refused permission by Peabody to have a charger installed at their bungalow in greater leys hence having to give up their mobility electric car.</p> <p>Has the cabinet member considered in the first instance encouraging the councils own partnered housing associations to allow the Gul-e charger to be installed in areas such as Northfield Brook?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I would be happy to contact Peabody in relation to their tenant if you could provide me with the details.</p> <p>The Blackbird Leys development the Council is bringing forward with Peabody will provide 29-32 EV chargers.</p> <p>ODS' GULe system provides a legal solution to the issue of charging cables crossing pavements for homes that don't have offstreet parking – it is not the charger itself, which appears to be the problem here (though please forward on details).</p> <p>ODS is preparing to bid for the installation of c300 GULe systems across Oxford under the Government-funded LEVI scheme.</p>
<p>No further questions.</p>	

**Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford**

<p><b>LA1: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Arshad – Far Right Protests</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>We have witnessed far right protests and attacks on communities. The police have worked wonderfully well to make communities feel safe</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I strongly agree with the Councillor's praise for the Thames Valley Police response in Oxford and support provided to our communities during the race riots period. Our communities in Oxford showed that the kind of violent, racist, thugs who try to terrorise our</p>

<b>LA1: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Arshad – Far Right Protests</b>	
<p>and secure. I would like to thank them for this. What plans have we in place with the police to keep our communities safe?</p>	<p>communities as seen in other parts of the country by a very small minority of criminals has no place on the streets of our city. Oxford Police supported our right to peaceful protest, engaged with the Council and our community representatives and ultimately played a pivotal role in keeping the city, Thames Valley, safe. Alongside other Councillors, I ensured that any potential threats were thoroughly investigated, keeping Thames Valley secure.</p> <p>Our ongoing collaboration with local law enforcement is guided by the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, which identifies key priorities for community safety and works collectively to maintain Oxford as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place to live, work, and visit.</p> <p>For more information, please refer to the link below:</p> <p>Oxford Safer Communities Partnership Rolling Plan 2024-25.</p> <p><a href="https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1084/oxford-safer-communities-partnership-rolling-plan-2024-25">https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1084/oxford-safer-communities-partnership-rolling-plan-2024-25</a></p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Is the Cllr concerned about what elected representatives are doing to support the community following far-right protests, and is the cabinet member willing to collaborate with cross-party members to develop a more substantive approach?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>Cllr said they will take the comments forward and noted that Thames Valley Police have collaborated with various faith communities.</p>

**Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies**

<b>NC1: From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Chapman – Gul-E Installed</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Some residents in the city have been waiting more than three years to have a Gul-E installed. While this isn't</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>ODS' GUL-e system provides a legal solution to the issue of charging cables crossing pavements for homes that don't</p>

<p>exclusively ODS' responsibility, could the portfolio holder nonetheless outline what the current limiting factors are (beyond just it being someone else's responsibility) and a likely timeline for resolution?</p>	<p>have off street parking. However, it still requires Highways Authority approval for installation.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council is the Highways Authority and in 2022 they piloted deployment of GULe with 26 households across Oxfordshire, including a number within Oxford. ODS has also run GULe trials in Bedfordshire, Bromley, Buckinghamshire and Solihull.</p> <p>The County Council will shortly be letting a contract for the installation of c300 GULe systems across Oxford under the Government-funded LEVI scheme. ODS will be bidding for this work, with implementation expected during 2025.</p>
<p>No further questions.</p>	

<p><b>NC2: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Chapman – Apprenticeship Levy</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p>
<p>it is noted 25% of the unused apprenticeship levy has been used. Why have we not been able to utilised these funds to help youth development in these difficult times and why have we not used/spent the remaining 50%?</p>	<p>The apprenticeship levy is used by employers to support the education and training of apprentices who have been recruited (it does not cover salary costs) or to develop workforce skills and qualifications more broadly using approved suppliers of education and training. Unused levy may be transferred to other organisations for the same purpose.</p> <p>At OCC we have prioritised the use of levy funding to support staff development and aid recruitment. This includes the development of our corporate apprenticeship cohort. We have been working with managers to improve understanding and identify opportunities for more apprenticeships in services. We are currently exploring apprenticeship cohorts from across the business in AI, Business Transformation and Change. We have committed to transfer unspent levy of £152k. 50% of this is being allocated locally by OXLEP to fit in with</p>



	<p>our OIEP pledges and is available to local small and medium-sized employers based in Oxford or Oxfordshire in the sectors of social care and education. Funding can support any age group although it most often benefits younger workers. The remaining 50% is allocated by OCC to local employers using the same criteria.</p> <p>We now have a plan with commitments for the levy account for the next 12 months and we are finalising plans for spending all the levy for the following two years.</p>
No further questions.	

<b>NC3: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 1</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>Questions concerning the purchase commonly known as Horse Fields in Iffley</p> <p>I would like to know which councillors were involved in the purchase of Horse Fields from Donnington Trust?</p>	<p>Member decisions on Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) company business are via the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group (SJVG).</p> <p>The site was included in the 2021/22 OCHL Business Plan approved by the SJVG in December 2020, prior to the acquisition completing in February 2021.</p>
No further questions.	

<b>NC4: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 2</b>	
<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>I would like to know which councillors sanctioned the purchase of Horse Fields</p>	<p>The OCHL Shareholder Agreement for OCHL gives delegated authority to the OCHL Board to make such acquisitions if they are consistent with the provision of the agreed Business Plan.</p> <p>As noted in the question above, the site was included in the 2021/22 OCHL Business Plan approved by the SJVG in December 2020, prior to completion of the acquisition of the site by OCHL in</p>

<b>NC4: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 2</b>	
	February 2021. The members who approved the Business Plan were Cllr Susan Brown, Cllr Ed Turner, Cllr Tom Hayes, Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cllr Mary Clarkson, Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cllr Mike Rowley, Cllr Linda Smith and Cllr Louise Upton. It is worth noting that a cabinet and council report in March 2023 (approving funds and arrangements for the City Council to purchase the future homes to be built on the site) made reference to this acquisition being made in October 2020. This was incorrect. The acquisition was completed in February 2021.
No further questions.	

<b>NC5: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 3</b>	
<b>Question</b> How was the purchase made, from which accounts?	<b>Written Response</b> The purchase of Horse Fields was a transaction undertaken by OCHL. The associated payments were made from the Oxford City Housing (Development) Limited Bank Account.
No further questions.	

<b>NC6: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Chapman – Winter Fuel Allowance</b>	
<b>Question</b> Age UK reports that the change in winter fuel allowance could affect the health of two million pensioners. Many of my residents in Northfield Brook are already living on empty and will simply not have the money needed to stay warm. The top issue raised by residents of Northfield Brook with Citizens Advice Bureau last year was fuel debts and there is already a four-week waiting list to see an advisor	<b>Written Response</b> I do share Cllr Marbini’s concerns about the impact of the decision to restrict the winter fuel allowance to people on Pension Credit and other benefits. There are clearly groups who are not eligible for these benefits who will struggle to pay their heating bills this winter.  As a Council, we are working hard to ensure that everyone who can claim Pension Credit gets support to do so,

<p>at the local Agnes Smith advice centre. There is a staggering fifteen-year age life expectancy gap between Oxford's richest residents and those living in my ward, which is likely to worsen in the coming winter.</p> <p>What preparatory steps have been taken to support elderly residents who will not be able to afford to heat their homes? Have more financial support been drawn up for our advice centres which will have an increased number of pensioners in financial difficulty?</p>	<p>with a major campaign to encourage new claims. We are also reminding people that if they are eligible, it is likely that they will get reduced council tax bills as well.</p> <p>The Government has extended the provision of the Household Support Fund. This is open to anyone who is struggling to pay their bills and offers one off financial support. Again, we will be promoting this widely through our outreach, our Contact centre and through our Advice Centre partners.</p> <p>Our role is to get as many people to apply for the support available and we are doing this vigorously.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Has there been any extra financial support for advice centres?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr clarified that he is not aware of any additional costs. He advised that concerned individuals can call the Centre or visit in person at Westgate Library.</p>

**Cabinet Member for Business, Culture and an Inclusive economy**

<p><b>AH1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Workshops for Businesses</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>When and in what format was the last time the city council held any consultation events or workshops with representatives of businesses located in the district centre of Summertown to identify the views of business owners, managers and entrepreneurs on the local business environment challenges and opportunities?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>During 2023, the City Council undertook an engagement round in Summertown, relating to proposals to redevelop Diamond Place. We had a very low attendance from local businesses despite the Neighbourhood Forum doing a leaflet drop in the area. One of the key issues identified was that many businesses in the area are national companies such as M&amp;S, Costa and Pret, who may be less likely to be involved at local level.</p> <p>More generally, the City Council has limited resources for ongoing</p>

	engagement with businesses outside the city centre, and can only do so around specific consultations, such as that for Diamond Place and the like.
No further questions.	

<b>AH2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Promoting cigarette and vape smoke-free cafe terraces</b>	
<b>Question</b> What is the council’s position on promoting cigarette and vape smoke-free cafe terraces in all cafe outside seating areas?	<b>Written Response</b> Council officers include a condition in all pavement licences, which requires the reasonable provision of non-smoking tables, separated from smoking tables, clearly identified and with no ash trays.  Applicants are advised to read the City Council’s terms conditions; the information is available on the Council’s website.
No further questions.	

<b>AH3: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Criteria on November 2nd fireworks decisions</b>	
<b>Question</b> Can the portfolio holder please give details of the criteria by which a decision to proceed with the 2 November 2024 fireworks display was reached?	<b>Written Response</b> The procedure for events in South Park has two elements:  First, there is an Annual Meeting with the formal stakeholders under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding relating to South Park – the City Council and Oxford Preservation Trust - which considers feedback on events from the previous year and agrees which applications will be accepted for future events. For a number of years the Friends of South Park have been invited to this meeting as a courtesy and as a conduit for local views. The Annual meeting usually happens in November each year, but was held later in this cycle

	<p>(February 2024) because of the damage to the park caused by last year's fireworks event. An additional meeting with the Friends of South Park was held in the same month.</p> <p>The second element is that each event then has to go through the formal consultation process to check the event management plan including traffic management plan, risk assessment, noise, medical and environmental plans, and so forth. Any concerns raised by statutory consultees such as Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and others are taken into account before confirming whether or not an event can go ahead. The formal consultation for the fireworks event was held between 17 and 30 September 2024.</p>
No further questions.	

<p><b>AH4: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Detail on agreement regarding November 2nd fireworks</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Can the portfolio holder please detail how the council will ensure that all elements of the agreement between the Council and the Roundtable regarding the 2 November 2024 fireworks is adhered to?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The formal consultation period ended at midnight on 30 September. The City Council has reviewed responses in line with the standard process for all events before deciding whether there any objections from statutory consultees that would prevent the event from going ahead. In the light of those responses a permit has been issued for the event to go ahead, subject to some changes to the proposed event management plan around the fun fair.</p> <p>The City Council has the right to cancel any event that it has issued a permit for, without notice. To help the organisers of this and other events to be clear about</p>

	<p>when the City Council would exercise that right in the light of inclement weather or of potential damage to the ground, the Council has issued a Cancellation Protocol alongside the permit for the event. This protocol is explanatory and does not change the existing right to cancel without notice.</p> <p>As with all events, when a permit is issued, City Council staff ensure that the details of the event are clearly understood and that the applicant has appropriate arrangements in place to make sure its sub-contractors adhere to all elements of the event plan that has been permitted. City Council staff will undertake spot checks during the week leading up to the event and on the night to ensure that it is held in line with the agreed plan.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Could the cabinet member expand on the content of spot checks and how they will be used to ensure plan will be adhered to?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr stated that while they cannot guarantee staff presence on the ground at all times, the staff available will focus on the positioning of the trackway to ensure compliance with the plan agreed upon with the round table. They will also ensure that the vehicle services utilise the designated trackway. Additionally, various safety checks will be conducted.</p>

<p><b>AH5: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Officers present on November 2nd fireworks</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Can the portfolio holder please request that officers are present on site during the set up and take down preparations for the 2 November 2024 fireworks to ensure appropriate action is taken promptly if possible signs of damage are present?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Council officers are already due to be on site before and after the event. The responsibility for adhering to the event plan, and avoiding damage to the park, rests with Oxford Round Table, as the event organisers. The City Council is fully committed to making sure that the popular and long-running Fireworks display can go ahead while</p>

	simultaneously preventing the damage to South Park that has occurred in the last couple of years.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> Could the cabinet member expand on how steps will be taken if there are damages in the leadup to the event?	<b>Verbal Response</b> Event organisers hold the responsibility for preventing any damage. They will ensure that any damages are reported. Furthermore, the trackways are designed to mitigate serious damage to the ground.

<b>AH6: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Limit of capacity in South Park</b>	
<b>Question</b> Can the portfolio holder please confirm whether there is a limit on the set capacity of South Park in terms of people attending events and, if so, what this limit is?	Each event will have its own limit, depending on how it is structured and which parts of South Park are used. The limit for the Fireworks Event is 25,000 attendees.  By way of contrast, the Radiohead show in South Park in 2001 had an audience of about 40,000, because it used the park in a different configuration.
No further questions.	

<b>AH7: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - South Park fireworks cancellation plan</b>	
<b>Question</b> Can the portfolio holder please confirm under which circumstances the South Park Fireworks cancellation plan mentioned in his reply during the Full Council Meeting on the 15 July would be put into effect?	<b>Written Response</b> Cancellation would be triggered by adverse weather conditions such as high winds, but also – specifically because of the problems in recent years – if the ground conditions in South Park were such that going ahead, even with the extensive mitigation measure that the Round table are putting in place, would lead to an unacceptable risk of damage to the park. The protocol has been issued alongside the permit for the event.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> Could there be a timeline on when cancellation could come into effect?	<b>Verbal Response</b> The Cllr stated that the matter is outside of his control. He mentioned that clarity

	will be achieved earlier when weather conditions are disclosed closer to the date.
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**AH8: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Meetings with friends of South Park Group and residents**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>The current consultation plans for the South Park Fireworks display seem to be being channelled through the Friends of South Park group. Can the portfolio holder please confirm what, if any, independent channels exist for members of the public to feed in their own views and questions; and will the portfolio holder and relevant officers agree to meet with residents ahead of the November fireworks event to ensure that residents feel listened to and consulted as the event progresses?</p>	<p>The consultation process for events is laid down on the City Council’s website. The City Council is responsible for ensuring that the event meets all the necessary requirements of the various statutory consultees before it can go ahead. It is the responsibility of the event organiser to plan their event, including any broader consultation beyond the statutory consultation process. If the event meets the requirements of the statutory consultees, then it can go ahead.</p> <p>In this instance the Friends of South Park, who are one of the two formal stakeholders for South Park, have also offered to act as the conduit for broader comments, which of course they can do. Should a member of the public feel one of the statutory consultees – Police, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, County Council and so forth – have failed to properly assess the event, then they should raise that directly with that organisation.</p> <p>I am aware of course that there are many members of the public who do not believe that there should not be any Fireworks event in South Park this year or ever again in the future, because of the damage done during last year’s event in particular. I am also aware that there are many thousands of residents across Oxford who would be horrified if the event were cancelled. It is not possible to meet both those conflicting demands.</p>



	<p>I believe that the much-revised event put forward by the Round Table is a good compromise, with enough mitigations in place to ensure that the event can happen and that South Park is not damaged in the process. I am happy to meet local people to hear their concerns, and to explain what the Round Table are proposing and how the City Council will be working to ensure that the proposed plan is delivered on the ground. The only way for any of us to be sure if the proposed plan will work as promised is for it to be implemented.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Would it be possible to liaise and meet with concerned residents?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>Cllr Hollingsworth was in agreement and confirmed that he will arrange something.</p>

<p><b>AH9: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Hollingsworth – Botley Road</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Do we have grants or knowledge of grants available to businesses impacted by the Botley road bridge closure?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>There are no local or national grants available for businesses impacted by the Botley Road bridge closure.</p> <p>The City Council wrote to the Valuation Office Authority on behalf of Oxford businesses on 22 November 2022. In the letter the City Council asked the VOA to consider applications for business rates relief sympathetically where the evidence provided to them shows that businesses' ability to operate has been negatively impacted.</p> <p>Several Botley Road and Frideswide Square businesses have had promotional videos filmed by the City Council and published on web and social media, which is an opportunity that the council has offered to all businesses affected by the Botley Road bridge closure.</p>
<p>No further questions.</p>	

**AH10: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Hollingsworth - Fireworks****Question**

Round table firework display looks to be going ahead, well done along with officers There will be no bonfire along with other changes. Given the funds raised for good causes are we concerned it may not as successful/appealing as previous events and has that been evaluated?

**Written Response**

The event is organised by the Round Table, and it is up to the event organiser to judge whether or not it will be successful.

It was quite clear that there could be no repetition of the damage caused last year (the costs of repairing which are paid for by the organisers of the event that caused it, something the Round Table will have had to take into account), and the revised plan aims to address that issue and allow the Fireworks to go ahead without causing damage to the ground in South Park.

**Supplementary Question**

What measures can be taken to limit damage to the park while ensuring the round table are not hindered, given this is part of the city?

**Verbal Response**

The Cllr acknowledged that the event has a long-standing history, and it is a shared asset belonging to the entire community of Oxford. However, he noted that the previous year's event resulted in significant damage to both the local residents and the park. There is hope that this year's event will prove to be more viable.

**Cabinet Member for a Healthy Oxford****CM1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Munkonge – Serco Leisure****Question**

Now that the new Serco Leisure contract has been in place for 6 months, can you confirm how many regular community groups that were meeting regularly at the

**Written Response**

More Leisure (Serco Leisure) have confirmed that they have not made any general price increases for community groups, or aware of any regular bookings

<p>time of the takeover have either faced a price increase of 25% or more for their bookings, or have terminated their regular booking?</p>	<p>cancelling.</p> <p>The only exception to this is one regular community group who had full use of a swimming pool who were paying well below the market rates and unsustainable in the longer term. More Leisure have agreed a phasing plan for the charges with the community group, to help enable them to continue swimming.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Could you specify how many groups have had their time slots displaced?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>Not aware of any.</p>

<p><b>CM2: From Cllr Coyne to Cllr Munkonge – Physiotherapy Service</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Eight months ago, the local physiotherapy service based in Manzil Way was relocated to Hanborough House on North Hinksey Lane in Botley. The difficulties of access to these services, which were previously available within the city, has been brought to my attention by several residents with mobility (and other) challenges who can no longer easily get to (or afford to get to) appointments and follow-up care. Was the cabinet member for Healthy Oxford informed about the decision to move from Cowley Road? Is he aware of this 're-structuring' of a vital service? How does the Cabinet member engage with the Integrated Care Board (Bucks. Oxon and Berks West) and other NHS partners to ensure equitable access for all residents to essential services like Physiotherapy. How is communication maintained between outsourced services and patients' GP services? Residents are deeply concerned.</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>It is of course extremely unfortunate that the physiotherapy service which was previously located at Manzil Way is now located somewhere which is not currently easily accessible by public transport or by private car from the city.</p> <p>The role of the Cabinet Member for Health on Oxford City Council is not about liaison with health services, but more about using our facilities to encourage healthy lifestyles. I do not engage directly with the Integrated Care Board. That role is taken by the Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council on behalf of the Oxfordshire councils currently.</p> <p>We are concerned, as are other Oxfordshire councils about the withdrawal of the role of Place Director by the BOB ICB, which we see as a retrograde step and one which may lead to more decisions such as these. The Oxfordshire HOSC, on which Cllr Susanna Pressel sits as a representative of this City Council has made representations on this.</p>

No further questions.	
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<b>CM3: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Munkonge – Electric Bikes</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Recent news in local and national media about the Electric bikes going too fast. Many residents has been in touch with their concerns about the electric bikes going to fast in Marsh park &amp; near by cycle path. Where they witnessing near misses and a collision while walking their dog &amp; walking in the footpath in Marsh Park. Can Oxford city ban electric bikes using city council parks?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We should clearly distinguish between illegally modified e-bikes, which are effectively e-motorcycles, and the legal ones which are speed restricted to 15.5mph and have to be pedalled to engage the motor.</p> <p>The legal e-bikes are a useful, relatively new option to make it easier for more people to cycle instead of using a private car. Used carefully and conscientiously, we are happy with these sorts of bikes being used in City Council parks.</p> <p>The illegally modified e-bikes are already classified legally as motorcycles, so should not be driven without a licence and insurance on the roads, and are not allowed to be used in City Council parks.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Is it not dangerous to keep the speed limit at 15.5mph and what happens if someone gets injured?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr said he will discuss this via email.</p>

<b>CM4: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Munkonge – Serco Leisure</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Despite reassurances at the time of the Serco handover around providing leisure activities for all and meeting the health inequalities prominent in our communities, the women's' swimming session in BBI pool which is very popular with around 25 women regularly attending has had and change in the time without any consultation and even more worryingly the three women lifeguards who were trained and recruited after a lengthy search and process have all now resigned. How will the council urgently meet the needs of our women swimmers who</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>More Leisure (Serco) are committed to providing leisure activities for all and we have secured key items such as concessionary access, free swimming for children at different times in the programme, a community fund and the commitment to work with the City Council and health partners to deliver an effective Active Communities programme to help tackle health inequalities.</p> <p>To try to best ensure that the pool programme is available for all, there has been a timetabling change for the Women's swimming session at the Leys</p>

<p>prefer and only use the women only session including our Muslim residents? What reassurances will be given that Serco processes will actually prioritise the health and wellbeing needs of our communities?</p>	<p>Leisure centre of a later start by 30 minutes. However, More Leisure will keep this under review to try and ensure a positive impact.</p> <p>More Leisure are sorry that the recruited female lifeguard team for the Women's session at the Leys Leisure Centre have left. Unfortunately there is an industry issue around lifeguard recruitment and retention, which the City Council and More Leisure are continuing work on.</p> <p>More Leisure have made the recruitment to these posts a priority and lifeguard course are running almost every holiday period and at weekends to maintain our pool of lifeguards. If there are any women or community groups that are interested then More Leisure would be delighted to hear from them.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Have there been any recent changes to Serco Leisure's terms and conditions regarding lifeguards, and have there been any reported injuries amongst lifeguards?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr stated that he is uncertain whether the terms and conditions have been changed but he emphasised that the issue is not limited to Oxfordshire, it is occurring nationwide.</p>

## Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

<p><b>LS1: Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – Green Square Accord</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>How many times has Green Square Accord met with Council officers and/or councillors to resolve maintenance issues of their properties within the city this municipal year to date (since May 2024)?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The maintenance of Registered Provider housing stock is a matter for the Housing Association landlord or the Regulator.</p> <p>If there are HHSRS issues then the Regulatory arm of the Council can intervene to enforce The Housing Act 2004, there have been no cases which have escalated to this level this year with GreenSquare Accord.</p> <p>Officers of the council working in</p>

	<p>Affordable Housing Supply have met once this year with Greensquare Accord at the regular strategic partnership meeting.</p> <p>I also met once informally with the Regional Localities Manager for Greensquare Accord,</p> <p>I am unable to answer for other individual councillors who may have met representatives of GreenSquare Accord to discuss matters in their ward.</p>
No further questions.	

<b>LS2: Cllr R Smith to Cllr L Smith – Empty properties</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The recent empty properties briefing paper showed Oxford had over a thousand empty homes (in February 2023) with 125 identified as 'long term empty'. The work to return empty properties into habitable, much needed homes is commendable. Could the cabinet member advise how many properties have had notice to improve the appearance served between February 2023 and March 2024?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>20 properties were reported for appearance with owners being contacted and site inspections carried out. Notices can be served under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. Of the 20 properties, The Empty Homes Officer issued one Community Protection Notice (CPN).</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>Would it be helpful to be transparent and have any notices that have been served listed for members of the public?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>It was stated there is a general understanding that this issue is not considered a matter of public record. However, she clarified that if a case involves a landlord being sued in court, then it becomes a public matter.</p>

<b>LS3: Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – New Licensing Scheme</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The new licensing scheme is great and very welcome. When do you anticipate our tenants to be afforded the same standards as private tenants and what would you say to our tenants regarding rent payments if our</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The standards applied to the homes of Council tenants is already far stricter than in the private sector with an existing Decent Homes Standard, which incorporates all of the elements of the</p>

properties fall short?	<p>Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS), and strict regulatory standards introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing.</p> <p>The MHCLG has announced that it will imminently (this autumn) be consulting on an updated Decent Homes Standard that would apply both to existing social housing but also to the private sector.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the protections already afforded by existing standards for Council tenants, tenants have recourse to disrepair claims, Right to Repair claims and the Council's complaints process, which is administered in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Complaint Handling.</p> <p>Withholding rent in lieu of outstanding repairs is not a right that tenants have in any sector, and landlords can take recovery action, including possession proceedings where arrears arise.</p>
No further questions.	

**Cabinet Member for Planning**

<b>LU1: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – Oxpens Scheme</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Following the objection from the environment agency regarding sewage capacity, what can we expect from the development for the Oxpens scheme? Will this delay the scheme?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The delays experienced in the planning process has delayed the progression of the scheme as it has delayed the application going forward for consideration at Planning Committee. OxWED as applicant are working with the Local Planning Authority and the Environment Agency to find a way to enable the scheme to move forward to decision and onto delivery. The objection</p>

	from the EA does not only affect the Oxpens scheme it affects and will ultimately delay development proposals across the city and beyond. Please see previous statement from the Leader available at: <a href="#">Statement on the state of Oxford's sewage treatment system and related planning objections   Oxford City Council</a>
<b>Supplementary Question</b> Does the environment agency have any dates to when work can be completed?	<b>Verbal Response</b> Senior officers of the council are meeting almost weekly. There was an interim plan aiming for 2027, but it is still awaiting sign-off.

<b>LU2: Cllr Jupp to Cllr Upton – 5G in Oxford</b>	
<b>Question</b> How is the Council working with authorities and service providers to ensure that users across Oxford have access to a stable and continuous 5G connection outdoors?	<b>Written Response</b> The City Council is part of the County Council's Digital Infrastructure Programme Partnership Board. And the County Council has invited all City Council members to an update on Oxfordshire Connectivity, including 5G, on Tuesday 22 October. I encourage you to attend this briefing.
No further questions.	

<b>LU3: Cllr Morris to Cllr Upton: – Donnington Bridge Road Closure</b>	
<b>Question</b> Donnington Bridge Road has recently been closed to heavy vehicles, while engineering inspections take place, and as a result, two crucial bus routes have been adversely affected, cutting off residents from traveling easily by bus between the east and south of the city. Has the cabinet member been in communication with the County Council and relevant bus companies about finding solutions for these residents, such	<b>Written Response</b> It is for the County Council to work with the bus companies to identify and agree any mitigations. I have been in correspondence with the bus companies to explore options. I am happy to say that after pressure from <a href="#">two local</a> Labour councillors and local residents, the County have moved quickly and a limited service, the 46A, over Donnington Bridge will be starting in mid-October.



as a temporary mini shuttle bus service?	
No further questions.	

<b>LU4: Cllr Powell to Cllr Upton – Speeding reduction infrastructure</b>	
<p><b>Question</b> Residents of Morrell Avenue have repeatedly called for new speeding reduction infrastructure to address the huge volume of speeding happening on their street. Does the cabinet member agree that speeding is a serious risk to the health and safety of residents and will then join me in encouraging the County Council to act more quickly in addressing the concerns raised by many residents?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b> Speed limits, enforcement and changing roads to make them safer - all of these are County Council responsibilities which support their Vision Zero policy. Their commitment is to reduce deaths and serious injuries on Oxfordshire’s roads to zero by 2050, with targets of a 25 per cent reduction by 2026 and 50 per cent by 2030. I agree that the County Council should listen to residents and do more to ensure that people drive safely within speed limits on Oxford’s roads. I will raise this at my next meeting with the County Council’s highways cabinet member.</p>
No further questions.	

<b>LU5: Cllr Rawle to Cllr Upton – Notice of Donnington Bridge closure</b>	
<p><b>Question</b> The closure of Donnington Bridge to heavy vehicles was communicated to residents with less than 24 hours notice, and following initial inspections that took place earlier this year. Has the cabinet member had conversations with County Council about how it balances the need to take quick action upon recommendations from engineers, at the same time as providing reasonable notice to residents about as many upcoming disruption?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b> I share your residents’ frustration at the short notice of this bridge closure. However it is entirely the responsibility of the County Council, as the highway authority to make judgements about the safety of the public and to weigh this up with other factors which may be multiple and complex.</p>
No further questions.	

<b>LU6: Cllr Robinson to Cllr Upton – Monitoring impact of e-bikes/scooters</b>
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<p><b>Question</b>          What discussions, if any, has the portfolio holder had with the County Council about the monitoring of the impact of trial e-bike/scooter schemes on walking and wheeling in Oxford?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I have discussed the e-scooter and e-bike schemes in Oxford with the County Council highways cabinet member since the e-scooter trial launched in February 2021. The City Council has supported these additional options as helpful alternatives to the private car for short journeys. At the same time, it is important that these new travel options are used safely and conscientiously, and they are parked in a way that doesn't cause obstruction, particularly for people walking and wheeling on pavements. This has been a frequent and ongoing topic of discussion at our Inclusive Transport &amp; Movement Focus Group.</p> <p>In contrast to the regulated e-scooter hire trial, the recent arrival of e-bike hire schemes in the city has not been as well managed. There is a lack of legislation to control e-bike hire schemes and not all operators engage constructively with the County Council. I have had conversations with County officers and councillors about trying to do whatever is possible to minimise the negative impacts of the e-bike hire schemes.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b>          Will the Cllr ask the county how many penalties have been issued for bad parking or illegal riding?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b>          Will work with Oxfordshire County Council to try and receive a response.</p>

<p><b>LU7: Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Upton – Football Pitches</b></p>	
<p><b>Question</b>          What specific plans does the council have currently for the development of the local football pitches and green areas in blackbird leys and greater leys?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Sports pitch provision and green areas are an incredibly important part of our city, the protection and enhancement of which are covered by our planning policies.</p> <p>The development of local football pitches</p>

	<p>is picked up within the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which sets out the approach to ensuring the city has a good supply of well-managed, maintained and efficient playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities which meet identified needs and encourage residents to have an active lifestyle.</p> <p>The strategy highlights that where development which would adversely affect pitch provision is proposed, then adequate replacement (equivalent or improved) should be secured. This is in line with government policy guidance for the protection of playing field land.</p> <p>The Council also has a Green Spaces Strategy which is designed to protect and enhance green spaces across the city. Both strategies support the wider planning policies for the Council.</p> <p>As you will be aware there are numerous regeneration projects currently either underway or being proposed across Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys. Officers from across the council actively engage with all key stakeholders at the various stages of each of the projects that are being delivered.</p> <p>The regeneration scheme for Blackbird Leys is providing a substantial amount of new public space in the district centre although this will not be sports pitch provision. The scheme also covers the relocation of some sports equipment including goalposts and outdoor gym provision from Knights Road open space to Fry's Hill to ensure this equipment can still be utilised by the local community.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question</b></p> <p>When speaking about replacement, will it be replacement locally in Blackbird Leys?</p>	<p><b>Verbal Response</b></p> <p>The Cllr confirmed that they are aiming for it to be as close as possible.</p>

<b>LU8: Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Upton - Sandy Lane Football Field</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Sandy Lane football field is a much loved and used community space with numerous teams meeting there regularly including under 9, under 10 and girls football teams as well as at least 6 other football clubs. The weekly matches also take place here along with other clubs. Members of the general public use the area regularly for other uses such as dog walking, exercise etc. These are all a crucial element of the health and wellbeing of local adults and children. The loss of this space would have a devastating consequence for many in the area.</p> <p>Regarding Sandy Lane Football Field, What considerations have been given to the impact of loss of this green space on the physical and mental well-being of residents, particularly in terms of recreational opportunities and access to nature, and what steps are being taken to address these?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The Sandy Lane Recreation Ground has a site allocation for housing in the Oxford Local Plan 2036, adopted in June 2020. The site policies in the plan reference numerous policy requirements from the site, including the re-provision of any football pitches as necessary. Other Local Plan policies relate to green spaces and biodiversity improvements required from any development.</p> <p>Any development proposals to be brought forward on this site would be looked at in the context of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which seeks to ensure the city has a good supply of well-managed, maintained and efficient playing pitches to meet identified needs, as well as the Green Spaces Strategy, which is designed to protect and enhance green spaces across the city..</p> <p>Development will require a planning application, and at that time all relevant considerations will be consulted on and assessed.</p>
<p>No further questions.</p>	

<b>LU9: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Upton – Botley Road</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The Botley bridge is now closed for another year. At what point did the council know this is the situation?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Officers were informed on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and I was informed on 8<sup>th</sup> May. A meeting with relevant cabinet members from both the City and County Council was subsequently held on 9<sup>th</sup> May. At this meeting NR made it clear that this information was provided to us in confidence while they looked to mitigate this issue and develop options. At this point both councils emphasised the need</p>

	to get this information out into the public domain as quickly as possible.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> What has been put in place to mitigate the year long process?	<b>Verbal Response</b> There were no specific reasons that were told, it was more a general timescale. It was mentioned that the shuttle that was put in place for disabled users to have a route into the city centre will continue. No other information.

<b>LU10: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Upton – Electric Hackney Carriages</b>	
<b>Question</b> In light of the further years delay and the devastating impact on the taxi trade. Would this council re consider its decision and extend by a further year the introduction of Electric Hackney carriages?	<b>Written Response</b> The proposal for an extension of the final stage of the emission standards policy for Hackney Carriage Vehicles was presented to the General Purposes Licensing Committee in February 2024, this matter was fully considered, and it was agreed a one-year delay was appropriate when balancing the emission standards policy with the challenges faced by the hackney trade. A proposal to extend the policy for a further year was proposed at the Full Council Meeting in March 2024. Council was provided with the full report considered by the General Purposes Licensing Committee and were provided with additional representations from City of Oxford Licenced Taxicab Association (COLTA). The proposal was put to a vote and the one-year policy extension was passed. Since March 2024, there has been no new information or significant changes to suggest the council should re-consider further extensions to the final stage of the Emissions Standards Policy for Hackney Carriage Vehicles.
<b>Supplementary Question</b> Given that you mentioned being informed in May 2024 about the bridge closure	<b>Verbal Response</b> The Cllr mentioned that it could potentially be discussed again at the

<p>extending another year, which will impact the taxi trade due to reduced income, shouldn't your previous answer take this into account when discussing the situation?</p>	<p>licensing committee, although she clarified that it had been discussed in detail already.</p>
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<p><b>LU11: Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Upton – Active Cities</b></p>	
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<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>During the excellent Healthy New Towns project in Bicester, a 5 km circular blue line, (via various green spaces), was painted onto pavements. It was extremely successful in nudging residents to increase their physical activity. Does the portfolio holder agree that we should have a similar initiative in Oxford?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>We work closely with colleagues in other Oxfordshire districts and are aware of the positive impact that the Blue Line, as well as schemes such as the Kidlington Zoo Trails and Abingdon Nature Trails, have had on supporting activity. At Oxford City Council, we have worked with partners to create various digital routes shown here <a href="#">Walks in Oxford - routes and maps   Oxford City Council</a></p> <p>City Council officers are also currently exploring the various advantages and disadvantages of different types of walking trails, and should external funding be identified, we will also be looking at this alongside other potential options.</p>
<p>No further questions.</p>	

**To: Council**

**Date: 7 October 2024**

**Report of: Head of Law and Governance**

**Title of Report: Public addresses and questions 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, 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 2 of the agenda

1. Address from Mr. Greg Owen – Spindleberry Nature Reserve
2. Address from Chaka Artwell – Discrimination against non-internet users
3. Address from Georgie Steele – Support for Motion 13f (Protection of Carers from Exploitation)
4. Address from Sushila Dhall, Refugee Resource (deputised by David Waller) – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)
5. Address from Emma Jones, Asylum Welcome – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)
6. Address from Bill MacKeith, CKCC – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)

## **Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda**

1. **Address from Mr. Greg Owen – Spindleberry Nature Reserve**

I'm a resident of Greater Leys and a member of a new group of volunteers The Friends of Spindleberry Nature Reserve. My question is to the Cabinet Member for Planning. It concerns the Knights Road Site allocated as residential in the Local Plan 2036. It is part of the Blackbird Leys redevelopment project on which the Council is partnered with Peabody. The site is under construction and includes part of Spindleberry Nature Park. I don't know why the Council designated part of our Nature Reserve for residential use and I don't know why they have given sole responsibility for it in perpetuity to Peabody. Especially as the Council still own it. I do know residents have concerns about it. In my case informed by my familiarity with the planning permission and the associated documents and conditions. Condition 9 and it's approved Construction Environmental Management Plan dictates that two Biodiversity Exclusion Zones were to be established inclusive of this part of the Nature Reserve. On Page 6 paragraph 2.2.2 bullet point 2 it denies contractors access to these fenced off areas during the construction phase unless associated with the new planting. In the summer I had fears that changes would happen in this area and the public would not be informed so I sought assurance from the planning officer, the Council's regeneration manager and Peabody's development manager that only work by dint of the planning permission and conditions would occur. I got it via emails. But things are different enough now within the Exclusion Zones to raise reasonable concerns. I have the following examples. The reptile and sediment fencing to protect the slow worms, the Exclusion Zones and brook which the CEMP dictated to be in place prior to commencement has never been installed. Fencing for these Zones has occurred out of sequence. New fences have recently appeared that were scheduled for erection prior to commencement. Huge tree bows in the Spindleberry Zone have been cut down and logs stacked by the contractor. Not for ecological reasons or for safety but to make way for the new fence. They must have entered the Zone. An earth work has been constructed within this Exclusion Zone. I know what it is for but it's presence contradicts the access restrictions. Will the Member for Planning give a detailed explanation of how the continuing works and access to the Biodiversity Exclusion Zones conforms to the planning permission and conditions which can only be varied by written consent?

Response from Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Planning

*Congratulations on the formation of the Friends of Spindleberry Nature Park – that is excellent news.*

*The Blackbird Leys redevelopment project will provide 294 new affordable homes, shops, green spaces and a new Community Centre for Blackbird Leys. The site does include part of Spindleberry Nature Park.*



*It is a difficult balance when we have over 3000 households on our waiting list for social housing, and homes are too expensive for most people to buy or rent, but we do recognise the importance of green space for mental and physical well-being and this is reflected in the council's Green Spaces Strategy.*

*Planning permission was given for this development, and from that point it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the development is brought forward according to the submitted plans and conditions. If a concern is raised with us, a member of the Enforcement team will visit the site to ensure work is being conducted appropriately. This has been the case on this site when issues have been raised previously - and our enforcement officers have visited. Thank you for bringing these additional concerns, our officers will now investigate the matters you have raised today, including the earthworks, and access to the Biodiversity Exclusion Zones, and will respond to you directly on the matter in a detailed manner.*

## **2. Address from Chaka Artwell – Discrimination against non-internet users**

Will Oxford City Elected Councillors, and ODS's stop the direct, and indirect discrimination against the 5,000 homes, who do not enjoy access to the internet, do not have a smartphone, and have never needed to use a QR code?

Oxford City Council's discrimination against cash users, and against people without access to the internet is an unlawful form of direct, and indirect discrimination.

For this Labour-led Council, which celebrate its Politically Correct, "diversity Inclusion and equality," (DIE) creed, why are the paid Councillors so tolerant of discrimination against cash users, and people without access to the internet?

As you are aware, the Governor of the Bank of England reports five million Subjects of His Majesty do not have current accounts, and use cash for transactions; which equates with 5,00 homes in Oxford.

It is completely illegal, and ethnically wrong for the elected Councillors to tolerate this discrimination.

The discrimination takes the form of people being unable to contact their Elected Councillors; who in the case of Barton, do not live on the estate, and do not have surgeries. As I have stood as a candidate in local elections, Barton people ask me for assistance for issues which ought to be address to the paid Councillor.

However, as many of these people are of senior years, and without access to the internet, they are effectively disenfranchised.

The whole ethos of Local Government Councillors is destroyed by Elected Councillors hiding behind the internet, as the only means of communication; communication which often does not even receive a reply.

Smart carparking meters discriminate. ODS has removed its public reception at Cowley Marsh and Horspath repair centre.

Post Office pay-point Council tax payers suffer discrimination as transaction are not instant, and summons have been issued as a result.

How MANY Council-Tax summons have been issued by the Council, to people using the slower cash pay point system?

Councillors being local, available, and accessible are the traditions of England's Protestant and Catholic people.

Will Oxford City Council require its publicly paid councillors to reveal their postal address for people without access to the internet; as claiming the Town Hall for communication does not work?

Will Oxford City Council investigate how many Council-tax summons has been issued to cash pay-point users?

Will Oxford City Council instruct ODS to re-open its public reception office at Cowley Marsh and Horspath?

Will Oxford City Council please mandate its paid Councillors to make publicly known when their surgeries are held-this is especially important when Councillors do not live in their elected area.

Will the Council require Councillors to reveal how many enquiries from the public, they have meaningfully responded too; as is courteous of paid Elected Councillors?

Will Oxford City Council require its Elected Councillors to reply to all who have contacted them, as one would expect of publicly paid Councillors?

Lastly, will Oxford City Council examine its policies, and prevent its policies from discriminating against cash users?

#### Response from Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

*I do not recognise the situation characterised in the address, and I certainly don't agree that our service offer is discriminatory. The City Council, through its Citizen Experience Strategy, seeks to ensure that no-one gets left behind.*

*We provide a range of ways to contact us to get support. You can see us in person, talk to us over the phone, and interact with us online. You can pay your bills in person, online and over the phone.*

*We continue to provide face to face and other assisted support and help the most vulnerable people to ensure their complex needs are met. We see about 450 people each month face-to-face. Services are available in the Westgate Library Monday, Wednesday and Friday and Officers are attending food larder sessions around the city to support residents with queries. Housing surgeries are held at the Westgate Library on Tuesdays and Thursdays.*

*We will do all we can to reduce digital exclusion by improving our citizens skills and access to technology. We have a Digital Cafe available in the Westgate library every month to help citizens with the use of digital technology.*

*Our contact centre is open Monday to Friday supporting a range of services from council tax, rents, benefits, planning, waste collection, housing repairs - each year we handle circa 180,000 calls as our trained Customer Service Officers offer support and guidance not just for our own services but signposting callers to partner organisations too. We also offer a web chat facility to help people engage with our digital channels. Customer satisfaction with our contact centre at 83% and face to face is at 97%.*

*There is a whole network of council officers that provide outreach -TMOs, TSOs, Community Health Development officers, to name but a few. And we provide grant*

*funding to enable local advice centres to thrive across the city, which means there is independent face to face support available in our communities.*

*With regard to payment methods, from the 63,430 households in the Oxford City Catchment area, approximately 2,300 council taxpayers choose to pay using AllPay at the Post Office or at a local shop.*

*Most customers who choose this option pay their council tax instalments on time, but a small number do not. Since the 1st of April 2024, persons using this payment method make up less than 1% of those summonsed for missing or overdue payments issued.*

*Direct Debit is favoured by a significant number of households as once the instruction has been set up, the customer does not need to worry about the logistics of paying each month. And Oxford City Council offers a choice of when to pay, so citizens know what date the payment will be taken, fitting it around the timing of their salary or wage coming in.*

*Online payments save time. People do not have to wait in lines, take time to write cheques, or wait for paper bills. Online payments also decrease the chances of overdue payments.*

*In summary, we continue to provide a real variety of ways for all the people in our city to interact with us. I believe we have a strong offer that recognises the diverse needs of individuals. We have diverse services to match those needs. I take pride that we still offer face-to-face services, and are out there proactively in communities, whilst being one of the most advanced councils in England when it comes to exploiting the digital revolution. And our citizens regularly rate us highly for doing this well, putting us in the top ten for council's surveyed – a very different story from the one painted in the address we have just heard.*

### **3. Address from Georgie Steele – Support for Motion 13f (Protection of Carers from Exploitation)**

I'm Georgie Steele, a carer and a theatremaker living with my family close to Oxford. I have two sons, now aged 19 and 17, who have a degenerative muscle-wasting condition DMD and are wheelchair users. They have limited use of their hands and cannot transfer, for example from their wheelchairs to a bed, without using a hoist. For the last ten years we have needed to employ carers for them, and increasingly as their condition advances and as they become adults, we their parents are not physically able to do their care, and it isn't appropriate that we should.

Over the last thirteen years we have been funded through Direct Payments for an increasing number of hours to pay for care. The problem has been finding carers, which has from the beginning been a time-consuming and demoralising struggle, as not many British people are willing to take up the job of being a carer. Despite our many efforts advertising locally and across Oxfordshire as well as online, we generally either couldn't find anyone or were let down by unreliable or unscrupulous people whom we had allowed into our home to do our children's personal care. (There were a few heroic exceptions!)

So we resorted to using various agencies to supply (generally) migrant carers. The agency carers were usually competent at caregiving, and were thoughtful and lovely people. However, they were often exhausted, late and needing to take time off due to illness, necessitating replacement carers being sent.

This was difficult for us as a family because if our sons' carers are late then that seriously affects our day as well, as when our older son was in the middle of doing his A levels and needed to be on time for school. Often we would have to step in and begin the care routine, and this meant we couldn't get to work on time. It is also difficult, time-consuming and distressing for our sons to have to explain the nuances of their personal care (which is highly complicated and individualised) to different, often exhausted, people every day.

What was even more distressing was discovering the reasons for the carers' lateness and absence. They were reluctant to explain why this was but we gradually understood that they were being systematically exploited, and were effectively indentured labourers. One carer told us how some days he needed to arrive for work at another client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available at that time or to that location but even so his sponsors refused to pay for a taxi but insisted that he got there himself. He then spent all his wages for that job paying for the taxi himself. Carers were often placed in poor housing with damp and infestations, and most of their earnings were taken to pay for this substandard accommodation. Many carers were sliding into destitution.

We wanted to challenge the agency about this but were repeatedly entreated by the carers not to say anything to their sponsors as they were terrified of losing their sponsorship. They had been told, don't complain about anything or we'll send you home.

Also, they know that if their sponsoring agency were to be investigated and then shut down, they would be in the position of having to find another sponsor.

Trying to find another sponsor would be an absurdly brief race against time, just 60 days. One of our carers found another sponsor but their existing agency refused to sign the papers to release him. If carers can't find a sponsor, they have to return home and face repaying an enormous debt of the money they borrowed in order to come here. (Sponsors charge them on average more than £10,000 as a recruitment fee).

Despite paying income tax and national insurance contributions, migrant care workers can't access most public funds. This means that if they're not given enough hours at work, if they're dismissed, or if they leave their job without another lined up, they're likely to struggle financially.

It is hard enough to leave your home and family and go to a foreign country, but then to experience such treatment as this is often goes near to breaking people. Many migrants here often slide into destitution. We saw one overworked and underpaid migrant carer who collapsed in the street and was taken to hospital, only to be told after one day that they must return to work, with no sick pay. This same person had reason to believe that they had a potentially life-threatening medical condition, but was not able to go to the GP because their sponsors refused them any time off.

So we have a badly-treated essential workforce on a constant verge of collapse, not able to provide reliable care for the most vulnerable people in our society. Not to deal with this is to leave yet another Social Care timebomb ticking: it's not just cruel, it's incredibly shortsighted and unwise.

So please can we improve visa conditions so migrant carers know they can find a better sponsor more easily if their current one exploits them?

It's a great privilege for me that migrant carers are prepared to leave their homes, their children and their own country, to come far

away to my home and help look after my children: it's a great shame on us all that they have to do so under such conditions.

Response from Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working

*Thank you for raising these important and concerning issues in your address and as you will see from recent news reports, this is playing out at a national level. Workers are coming to the UK to seek a better life, but some are being exploited. Many migrant care workers are unaware of the sponsorship process or their employment rights in the UK and are forced to work long hours for poor pay under the threat of sponsorship removal.*

*Oxford City Council has been working closely with the police, Oxfordshire County Council, NHS and other partners to prevent and respond to the issue at a local level. We understand that some migrant care workers face labour and financial exploitation, a fear of their employers and the threat of losing their sponsorship, poor and overcrowded accommodation and not being able to provide for the families they have left behind, all of which significantly impacts them physically and mentally. The partners having been raising awareness among care workers who are on Sponsored Visas and speaking with them addressing and alleviating the fears they have, informing them they have options and giving them practical and emotional support. We also undertake activities that disrupt those who exploit care workers.*

*We are also working with government departments and represent Oxfordshire partners on national forums who are driving for change to the Sponsorship scheme. We feel strongly that the scheme should never put a care worker in an exploitative situation, where they feel that it is a better option than leaving and falling into destitution and homelessness.*

*We are committed to support those affected so please encourage anyone you are concerned about or who knows of someone being exploited to contact the Anti-Slavery Coordinator confidentially:*

*Nicola Bell*  
[nbell@oxford.gov.uk](mailto:nbell@oxford.gov.uk)  
01865 252406

**4. Address from Sushila Dhall, Refugee Resource (deputised by David Waller) – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)**

Refugee Resource stands in firm opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield Detention Centre. At Refugee Resource, we see the damage done to vulnerable people when they are imprisoned for indefinite periods having committed no crime, and having come to the UK seeking safety and sanctuary. Oxford City Council, being a Council of Sanctuary, continues to demonstrate a commitment to human rights and dignity; and strongly stating opposition to imprisoning people at Campsfield is part of upholding these values, which align with ours.

Immigration removal centres such as Campsfield, are well-documented sites of violence, hostility and degradation, with no place in a modern society that claims to respect human rights. Detention centres have long been sources of unnecessary harm, fear and trauma. As a trauma informed therapeutic organisation Refugee Resource has had to work with those affected by detention to help them heal after the damaging impacts of indefinite imprisonment and the threat of deportation to places where their human rights have been seriously breached, and from where they have fled, losing everything. Reopening Campsfield would represent a significant step backward for the UK's asylum system.

What the UK needs is not more detention, but humane reform of its asylum policies. This includes creating safe and legal routes for those fleeing persecution to

claim asylum in the UK. Instead of expanding detention units such as Campsfield, the government should focus on humane solutions that respect the dignity and rights of all individuals. Safe routes to the UK, a fair and open asylum system without long waits, sometimes for more than a decade, a phone line to caseworkers that does not involve long delays, and caring case worker interactions would form part of these much-needed reforms.

In addition, negative portrayals of asylum seekers, and policies that stigmatise and demonise asylum seekers only serve to deepen societal divisions and fuel the far-right. It is critical that we reject these harmful narratives and work toward a more inclusive, compassionate approach to migration.

In solidarity with Oxford City Council, Refugee Resource adds our voice to your call on the government to:

- Abandon its plans to reopen Campsfield.
- Take immediate steps to reduce the use of detention in the asylum process.
- Introduce more humane migration policies, starting with safe and legal routes to the UK for asylum seekers.

Refugee Resource reiterates its strong opposition to the reopening of Campsfield; urges the government to prioritise the protection of human rights over policies that perpetuate fear, harm and division.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working provided a combined response to addresses related to keeping Campsfield closed which can be found under address number 6.

## **5. Address from Emma Jones, Asylum Welcome – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)**

Yarl's Wood. Brook House. Harmondsworth. These names are notorious for a reason—immigration detention centres are synonymous with cruelty.

At Asylum Welcome, we stand with those impacted by the Hostile Environment, including the detention system. Our opposition to reopening Campsfield is evidence-based and shaped by our own experiences providing a visiting service there from 1993 to 2018.

Despite government claims, most detainees held at Campsfield will eventually be released into the community. Many will endure long periods of detention, even without a realistic prospect of deportation. Charlie Taylor, the chief inspector of prisons, revealed in a damning report earlier this year that around 60% of detainees at Harmondsworth were eventually released, and we have no reason to believe the new Campsfield will be any different.

Immigration detainees are not being held in punishment for a criminal offence and yet the system places overwhelming emphasis on confinement and security, with little focus on welfare. Detention centres are operated for profit by private companies, complaints of bullying and racism are rife, and healthcare services are often drastically under-resourced. We know that survivors of torture, trafficking, and sexual abuse are routinely detained, contrary to official guidance. Again, we have no reason to believe Campsfield will be different.

Legal representation becomes far more difficult within detention, leaving detainees even more isolated from justice. And unlike in any other European country, the UK has no time limit on detention, meaning people can be held indefinitely—sometimes for months or years—without knowing when they might be released. This is a shocking abuse of human rights, and – as I hope you will agree – contrary to everything we like to think of ourselves as a country.

Unsurprisingly, this leads to a cycle of trauma, self-harm, and tragically, suicide attempts. From January to May 2024, there were 285 incidents of self-harm across the UK's detention centres, meaning self-harm incidents occurred almost twice a day.

At Asylum Welcome, we believe in a compassionate, fairer approach. We welcomed the closure of Campsfield following the two Shaw Reviews, after which the then Conservative government appeared to accept that immigration detention must be drastically reduced. The Brook House Inquiry, published last year, exposed a “toxic culture” and “credible evidence” of breaches of human rights law and recommended widespread changes, including a 28-day time limit. We support community-based alternatives to detention that have been successfully piloted in recent years.

We urge you all to back the motion and to raise Oxford's voice to Keep Campsfield Closed. Thank you.

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working provided a combined response to addresses related to keeping Campsfield closed which can be found under address number 6.

## **6. Address from Bill MacKeith, CKCC – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)**

Like other levels of local government, parish and county, the City has long had a policy of calling for the closure and opposing the reopening of Campsfield.

The adoption of the City of Sanctuary status has reinforced that position.

Behind the unnecessary suffering imposed on those detained by the policy, and the local opposition to detention from many parts of the local community, from trade unions to religious organisations, from student to human rights organisations, there is the question of national policy.

The only reason given by the previous government for the reopening of Campsfield, near Oxford and Haslar, near Portsmouth, immigration detention centres was a need for more detention places arising from the Rwanda flights plan. With the passing of that plan, there is absolutely no ‘need’ for them to be reopened.

Despite this, and despite no mention in the Labour manifesto of increasing detention, the incoming government has endorsed the plan to reopen Campfield and Haslar near Portsmouth saying this is in order to deport more people.

This is a failed policy and government should do better.

It is also the wrong response to the anti immigrant and anti Muslim riots.

The government should be opening up safe ways for asylum seekers to each he country, not taking lessons from right-wing leaders in other countries and macho talk of smashing the smugglers.

The Shaw reviews of the mid 20-teens and a broad movement in civic society resulted in the previous government adopting an immigration detention reform programme in

2016 to detain fewer people for shorter periods and to pursue community based alternatives to detention.

The very least we should do is call for from the new government is to revert to this reform programme, which indeed led to the closure of Campfield, Haslar and other detention centres.

Immigration detention is needlessly cruel as attested by the protest of detainees, the Brooke House inquiry report and the Panorama programme. Furthermore, 2/3 to 3/4 of detainees are released to live in the community. In the words of the Chief Inspector of UK Borders, it makes you wonder what the detentions were for in the first place.

Immigration detention is extremely expensive. The cost of running Campsfield and Haslar for six years would be £400,000,000 ([procurement notice September 2022](#)). This huge amount should be saved and spent elsewhere. This sum excludes the cost of new-build on both sites.

The argument that extra capacity is needed to deport more people is one that need to be challenged because what is called the detention estate is rarely anywhere near filled to capacity. The women's detention centre at Hassockfield in Durham for example has never been even half filled since it opened in 2018.

In the opinion of the UNHCR, alternatives to detention pilots have been shown to work, and the previous programme of 4 pilots should be continued. The possibility of Oxford hosting such a pilot should be pursued.

Campsfield, which used to be surrounded on 3 sides by open fields, now borders directly onto a new flagship Oxford university science park – not a good look – I would say incompatible - for a University laying claim to be a university of sanctuary.

A £70 million contract with Galliford Try to refurbish the old buildings for 160 residents is due to be completed by 24 December. The contract should be discontinued. The Home Office is well able to do this as demonstrated by the £60 million written off when the government recently cancelled the project to use RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire to house asylum seekers.

I commend the motion 'Keep Campsfield Closed' and urge you to vote for it.

#### Response from Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working

*As you will be aware, we have a motion on our Council agenda later on to discuss this very issue. I wanted to reassure you that we haven't waited for that motion to come to Council before restating this Council's very long-standing policy to keep Campsfield closed and to protest its opening.*

*On the 22nd of August, the day after the announcement was made, I wrote to the Home Secretary. I have today circulated that letter to all Council members. The response from the Home Office was a little disappointing as they didn't agree with our position.*

*We're grateful to all of the organisations that you represent for all the longstanding work that you do supporting Asylum Seekers in our city, specifically at Campsfield.*

*I'm really sorry that you are probably going to have to be doing that again – that is not the wish of this Council as we have had a longstanding campaign supports yours.*

*I specifically wrote and asked the Home Secretary to cancel the reopening of Campsfield House as a Detention Centre to create safe havens and more legal routes to apply for asylum in the UK to prioritise the prompt and fair processing of Asylum claims whilst introducing appropriate safeguards to allow Asylum Seekers to live and*



*work in our communities in the meantime, and to adequately fund local authorities to be able to support people seeking Sanctuary locally.*

*I'm very happy to make those two letters available to you so that you are fully apprised of both our letter to the Home Office and their response.*

*Thank you again for coming to address us today.*

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