

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 30 June 2026 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at Time Not Specified

Present:

Councillor Ted Fenton – in the Chair

Councillors:

Roz Smith (Vice-Chair)	Andrew Gant	Saj Malik
Thomas Ashby	Emma Garnett	Kieron Mallon
Brad Baines	Sean Gaul	Emma Markham
James Barlow	Laura Gordon	Gavin McLauchlan
Ron Batstone	Tom Greenaway	Lesley McLean
Tim Bearder	Kate Gregory	Ian Middleton
Chris Aramini-Brant	Jane Hanna OBE	Toyah Overton
Liz Brighthouse OBE	David Henwood	Glynis Phillips
Mark Cherry	Georgina Heritage	James Plumb
Dr Izzy Creed	Ben Higgins	Susanna Pressel
Hao Du	David Hingley	Leigh Rawlins
Imade Edosomwan	Johnny Hope-Smith	Judy Roberts
Judith Edwards	Robin Jones	Paul-Austin Sargent
Gareth Epps	Emily Kerr	Geoff Saul
Lee Evans	Liz Leffman	John Shiri
Neil Fawcett	Dan Levy	Ian Snowdon
Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Dr Nathan Ley	Peter Stevens
Rebekah Fletcher	Diana Lugova	Bethia Thomas
James Fry	Mark Lygo	Tony Worgan

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

40/26 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 12 May 2026 and 20 May 2026 be approved and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

41/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Coles, Cotter, Crichton, Field-Johnson, Gawrysiak, Graham, Robertshaw and Walker.

42/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

43/26 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair congratulated two officers of the Council who had received awards in the King's Birthday Honours.

Jacqui Gitau, Family Help Practitioner in Children's Social Care, was awarded an MBE for services to migrant families in Oxfordshire. Jacqui founded African Families in the UK after witnessing how many families were falling through the gaps, sometimes due to systemic barriers, and sometimes simply because they lacked timely information about education, health, and social care.

The Council's Chief Executive, Dr Martin Reeves, was awarded an OBE in recognition of his outstanding service to local government. He was Chief Executive of Coventry City Council for over 14 years, during which time Coventry became the first Marmot City in the country. He was also instrumental in establishing the West Midlands Mayoral Combined Authority and was its first Chief Executive from March 2016 to September 2017.

A full list of Oxfordshire award recipients in the King's Birthday Honours was attached at Annex 1 to the Schedule of Business.

A list of the events attended by the Chair and Vice-Chair since the last Council meeting was in Annex 2.

The Chair noted that two former chairs of this Council had passed away recently. The death had occurred of a former chair of Oxfordshire County Council and of Cherwell District Council, Timothy Hallchurch MBE. Tim was elected Conservative Member for the division of Otmoor & Kidlington in 2005 and 2009 and for Otmoor Division in 2013.

Former Councillor Hallchurch was also a Member of Cherwell District Council from 2002 to 2022, including a year as Chair in 2011/2012. He chaired this Council in 2013/2014 and served on many committees including Audit, Corporate Governance, Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) and Planning and Regulation.

Councillors Mallon and Brighthouse paid tribute to former Councillor Hallchurch's record of public service.

Former County Councillor John Jones was the Liberal Democrat Member for Grove Division from May 1989 until he stood down ahead of the May 1997 election. He had previously been a member of Shrewsbury Borough Council from 1964-1968, and a senior probation officer in Oxford.

Having been elected as Chair of Oxfordshire County Council in 1992, former Cllr Jones was then unusually re-elected for a second term of office, following the 1993 Oxfordshire County Council elections. He served on the Environmental Committee (1989-1992) and Education Committee from 1992.

Former Cllr Jones was extremely proud of his service as a member of Oxfordshire County Council and requested that his Former Chair's Badge of Office be placed on his coffin as it enters the church for his funeral.

Councillors Fawcett and Brighthouse commended former Councillor Jones' memory to the Council.

Council observed a minute's silence.

44/26 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

There were no appointments to note under this item. Committee appointments were dealt with under Item 14: Committees and Review of Political Balance.

45/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

Matthew Jerwood presented a petition on behalf of local residents calling for improvements to safety at the junction of Rose Hill, Henley Avenue and Church Cowley Road. He stated that residents, including people with mobility difficulties and families with young children, felt unsafe crossing the junction. He argued that changes in traffic patterns had led to greater congestion, speeding and other dangerous behaviour, and noted that residents had recorded nine accidents and incidents in recent months. On behalf of the 575 signatories to the petition, most of whom lived locally in OX4, he called for an urgent safety review, the installation of two pedestrian crossings, stronger speed and red-light enforcement measures, and a site visit by council representatives to work with residents on improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Councillor Epps, Cabinet Member for Transport, thanked the petitioners for highlighting residents' concerns and acknowledged that the junction at Rose Hill, Henley Avenue and Church Cowley Road presented longstanding safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists. He explained that, while improvements to the junction would be desirable, there were significant challenges, including the need to reduce traffic volumes without creating wider transport or safety problems. He noted that previous changes made as part of the Quickways scheme had increased space for cycling but led to additional

collisions, traffic issues and poorer bus reliability, resulting in the reinstatement of the former layout. He also highlighted the high potential cost of major alterations and the absence of an allocated budget, although he said design work on possible future improvements could still be explored. He clarified that speeding and red-light enforcement were matters for Thames Valley Police and concluded by offering to follow up with the petitioners and undertake a site visit to discuss the issues in more detail.

Emma Parker presented a petition signed by 384 people calling on the Council to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists along the A40 London Road, particularly on the stretch between Thornhill Park and Ride and the Holton turn. She highlighted concerns that children travel to local primary and secondary schools along a shared footway and cycleway that runs close to fast-moving traffic and argued that the route is unsafe despite being promoted for active travel and “park and stride” journeys. While the petition originally proposed a vehicle restraint system or crash barrier, she noted that residents had also suggested measures such as speed reductions or alternative cycle routes. She urged the Council to investigate and implement the most effective safety improvements as a matter of priority, emphasising that doing so would support the Council’s Active Travel Strategy and Vision Zero objectives by making walking and cycling safer and more attractive, particularly for school journeys.

Councillor Epps thanked Emma Parker for highlighting safety concerns along the A40 London Road route and acknowledged that it felt unsafe, particularly as it is used by school pupils. He outlined the Council’s completed feasibility work, which proposes a range of improvements including widening and resurfacing the shared-use path, improving crossings and visibility, redesigning the Park Hill junction roundabout, closing the parking lay-by, and reducing the speed limit to 50 mph. He explained that the aim was to provide a safer, segregated cycling and walking route while complying with current Active Travel England guidance and incorporating input from local cycling groups. While barriers may be required at some locations, he noted that there were challenges to installing them along the entire route. He advised that funding was available to complete detailed design work this financial year, but that no construction budget had yet been identified. Once funding was secured, the Council would move forward with public consultation on the proposals.

Huw James, speaking on agenda item 9, Report of the Cabinet, urged the Council to support participation in the proposed Thames Valley Strategic Authority, arguing that Oxfordshire, Swindon and the wider Thames Valley form an interconnected economic area with strong transport links, integrated supply chains and complementary industries. He highlighted examples of collaboration between businesses and institutions across the region and contended that a stronger regional governance arrangement would help secure devolved powers and funding for transport, infrastructure, housing and skills. He stressed that businesses were interested not in devolution for

its own sake but in the opportunities it could unlock for sustainable economic growth, improved productivity and a stronger voice with central government. He warned that delaying Thames Valley devolution could mean missing out on long-term funding settlements and growth opportunities, and urged councillors to back the Strategic Authority in order to support businesses, residents and the region's economic future.

46/26 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Three questions were submitted. The questions and responses are recorded in an Annex below. No supplementary questions were asked.

47/26 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Thirty nine questions were submitted. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

48/26 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the Cabinet report covering the 17 March 2026, 21 April 2026 and 19 May 2026 Cabinet meetings.

On item 1 (Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire: Statutory Consultation Response), Councillor Garnett asked if the response could be styled as from the Cabinet given that the Council had not voted on local government reorganisation. The Leader noted that the administration represented the whole Council and so it was appropriate for the response to be attributed to the Council.

Councillor Baines asked for assurances that responses to the Structural Changes Order would seek cross-party consensus and input from across the Council. The Leader responded that the government set arbitrary targets for the number of councillors in a single unitary authority, which was the Council's preferred option, but that it could hopefully be addressed in the future.

Councillor Mallon asked why the working group for dealing with electoral matters was not convened at an early stage and why, when it was convened at a late stage, its advice was not followed. The Leader welcomed the input from the working group but noted that Cabinet was not obliged to take every suggestion on board.

Councillor Evans questioned whether the Leader thought it was undemocratic for some divisions to have one councillor and other divisions to have two councillors in a potential one Oxfordshire unitary authority. The Leader agreed that it was undemocratic.

On item 2 (Devolution Update – Thames Valley Strategic Authority), Councillor Middleton asked why the Leader had vetoed plans for the County Council to join a foundational strategic authority. The Leader noted that the government had initially offered a Mayoral Strategic Authority for the Thames Valley region but that this had been watered down through the process and stated that the Council wanted to be much more ambitious in what it sought to benefit from in the devolution settlements.

Councillor Brighouse noted that a Foundational Strategic Authority was intended to be short-term before transitioning to a Mayoral Strategic Authority and asked if the Leader agreed that the administration had sought to scupper devolution proposals. The Leader disagreed and stated that no timeline had been provided by the government, noting that potential changes in government ministers might help deliver meaningful devolution in the Thames Valley.

Councillor Rawlins asked what deadlines could confidently be expected from the government on devolution and local government reorganisation. The Leader noted there were no firm deadlines but expected engagement with the government in the coming weeks.

Councillor Baines asked why the Leader opposed devolution settlements for Oxfordshire given that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had experienced clear benefits from similar settlements. The Leader noted the complex local government arrangements in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and that the Council wanted simpler structures that benefitted residents.

Councillor Pressel asked what discussions had taken place with the government since the decision to withdraw support from a Foundational Strategic Authority was taken. The Leader noted that the responsible Minister had previously resigned and that binary choices were not helpful in producing productive working relationships with the government on devolution.

Councillor Mallon asked about differing views between different Liberal Democrat leaders at national and local levels. Councillor Fawcett responded that the government proposals were a bad deal for Oxfordshire and that the Leader was correct to reject it to allow the government to come back with an improved devolution settlement offer.

Councillor Saul asked whether the Leader had discussed his decision to withdraw support from a Foundational Strategic Authority with District Council colleagues beforehand. Councillor Fawcett stated that District Councils and the County Council believed there was potential for a better devolution settlement, compared to the deal that was offered.

On item 3 (Improving our Fire and Rescue Service), Councillor Markham asked when a new proposal would be brought forward for decision on the future of the Fire and Rescue Service. Councillor Fawcett stated that collaborative discussions had begun with the Fire Brigades Union, which was

independently chaired, to bring forward positive proposals which could hopefully be reported on to the Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed Members of the Fire Service initially.

Councillor Saul asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that the centre of Oxford would be better served by the existing Rewley Road Fire Station compared to an edge of city location. Councillor Fawcett noted that proposals would always have trade-offs, with historic buildings in Oxford requiring faster response times due to their special value. Different plans were required in order to assess the necessary trade-offs with limited resources.

Councillor Smith asked if the process of finding positive solutions to the challenges faced by the Fire and Rescue Service had started. Councillor Fawcett stated that he was committed to finding positive solutions through a collaborative approach.

Councillor Cherry asked for reassurance that previous plans for the Fire and Rescue Service would not resurface over remaining years of the County Council. Councillor Fawcett stated there were no overall cuts proposed to the Fire and Rescue Service, but a movement of resources between facilities, with the aim of providing better services for residents and that some previous plans had been ruled out.

Councillor Phillips sought clarification on whether a decision had been made on the closure of Rewley Road or Kidlington Fire Stations. Councillor Fawcett stated that decisions on their closures had not been made, stating that the option would remain open with many factors to balance to ensure the right way forward.

Councillor Pressel asked what progress had been made on the recruitment practices for firefighters. Councillor Fawcett noted local and Oxfordshire-wide campaigns to support recruitment and stated one of the positive elements from the consultation was the strength of support from local communities for their local fire services.

On item 4 (Refresh of the Our People & Cultural Strategy 2026-2028), Councillor Barlow asked if expectations could be grounded in the current and future funding realities, acknowledging that the best chance to deliver outstanding services was by working with communities. Councillor Fawcett noted that the aim should be to deliver excellent services regardless of the financial constraints, acknowledging that the Council valued the work that employees undertake and as individuals.

Councillor Phillips asked the Cabinet Member to describe staff morale, faced with the closure of County Hall and other uncertainties, such as devolution plans for Oxfordshire. Councillor Fawcett noted that there were some factors outside of the County Council's control, such as local government reorganisation and devolution, but that it was important to listen and communicate with staff, which was evidenced by staff morale improving

across Oxfordshire, noting that the proportion of staff who work in County Hall was small.

Councillor McLauchlan noted timing challenges with delivery of services and asked what the Council was doing over the last years in which it would be in operation to retain and recruit staff. Councillor Fawcett acknowledged the frustrations over delays, recommending that councillors raise concerns with Cabinet Members if required and that the Council was aware of the risk of staff retention moving forward into the transition towards new authorities.

On item 5 (Local Transport Consolidated Funding Settlement – Local Transport Delivery Plan), Councillor Kerr asked why costs were predominantly allocated to roads when the Council's targets were on active travel and buses and how they were trying to avoid value-engineering dropping active travel elements of schemes as costs rise. Councillor Epps noted the challenges in this area, stated that detailed discussions and reviews of future programmes should continue, highlighting new initiatives on active travel and public transport outlined in the report.

Councillor Fry asked what action was being taken to increase the coverage of PM2.5 monitoring which was harder to undertake than NOx. Councillor Epps noted the work being undertaken to address air quality challenges, reflecting that air quality was a function of the District Councils but that he would be happy to sit down and discuss it further.

Councillor Barlow asked how the Local Transport Delivery Plan was being integrated into major highways decisions being made so a wide range of options were available, rather than defaulting to road building such as was the case on the Watlington Relief Road. Councillor Epps noted that several items in the report related to planning decisions and stated he'd be happy to meet with the councillor to discuss how the Council will look to prioritise going forward.

Councillor Pressel asked why the item was only on the Forward Plan for 28 days, noting that this did not give scrutiny enough time to scrutinise it. Councillor Epps stated that he was happy to take that point on board going forward and would reply on the specific point in writing.

On item 6 (Movement and Place Plans), Councillor McLauchlan asked if there was a Movement and Place Plan for the Benson area to mitigate the potentially vast induced increase in traffic from various schemes. Councillor Epps responded that he would provide a timescale in writing.

Councillor Baines asked how the 2040 Bus Strategy would shift shorter journeys onto public transport and if future Movement and Place Plans (MPP) would be more ambitious on public transport modal share. Councillor Epps noted that there was a low starting base and that work needed to be undertaken in conjunction with Local Plans to hold developers to account, looking at improvements that could be made to buses across Oxfordshire.

Councillor Saul asked if proper weight could be given to consultation responses to the West Oxfordshire Lowlands MPP that object to the introduction of parking charges and if the proposal could be avoided in the West Oxfordshire Uplands MPP. Councillor Epps reiterated that there were no plans to introduce car parking charges in West Oxfordshire Lowlands MPP and that car parking was the responsibility of West Oxfordshire District Council, committing to working on challenges in the Uplands MPP with local councillors.

Councillor Brighthouse asked how Marmot principles were taken into consideration when looking at Movement and Place Plans. Councillor Epps noted that these principles had to be embedded into plans and welcomed the valuable reminder which he would take back to officers.

On item 7 (Oxford Congestion Charge Investment Plan), Councillor Garnett asked how bus investment could be used to encourage less car use, particularly noting cheap Park & Ride options that were available per person rather than per car. Councillor Epps noted that the arrangements weren't entirely in the County Council's control but was happy to discuss that issue moving forward.

Councillor Baines asked what consideration had been given to including the Rose Hill/Church Cowley Road junction in the list of active travel upgrades funded by congestion charge income. Councillor Epps noted he was happy to meet with local councillors to explore safety concerns and funding possibilities.

Councillor Henwood asked about the increase of charges from £5 to £70 in the transition from the temporary congestion charge to the traffic filters scheme and how that would impact the poorest communities in Oxford. Councillor Epps advised that he would need to wait for future details on the traffic filter scheme but that he was acutely conscious of the need to ensure equity is entrenched in everything we do.

Councillor Creed asked how Marmot principles were taken into consideration when looking at the congestion charge investment plan, considering that it had moved traffic into some of the most deprived areas in Oxford. Councillor Epps noted he was not the Cabinet Member at the time of the decision but referenced equality impact assessments that were undertaken and noted the importance of the Marmot principles in this area of work.

Councillor Edosomwan asked which specific parts of the investment plan would improve transport accessibility and opportunities for residents in Oxford, rather than primarily benefitting those travelling into Oxford. Councillor Epps noted support for public sector workers in schools and health services as an example of supporting residents in Oxford and stated he would be happy to meet with the councillor to discuss further.

Councillor Malik noted that park and ride support did not benefit residents in Cowley and asked about measures to improve congestion on Oxford Road

and Church Cowley Road. Councillor Epps noted that the Council continues to monitor the impacts, particularly with the scheduled reopening of the Botley Road, and look for ways to relieve congestion.

On item 8 (Updates to Parking Standards for New Developments), Councillor Garnett asked how the County Council was working with City and District Councils who were responsible for planning, and for making sure a new unitary authority/authorities enforced these plans moving forward. Councillor Epps stated he was seeking to improve partnership working with the City and District Councils.

Councillor Fry noted that the Council's initial provision for cycle parking on new developments had been double the national standard and now was in line with it, querying whether the Cabinet Member would be open to going halfway to improve cycling provision on new developments and provide safe parking spaces for electric bikes. Councillor Epps noted the importance of e-bikes and referenced examples of cycle parking provision seeming too high but would be happy to have a discussion with the councillor on the potential flexibility there could be, whilst noting different travel methods across Oxfordshire and cycling levels in Oxford.

49/26 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

(Agenda Item 10)

Council was asked to note the Scrutiny Annual Report which documents the activities of the four overview and scrutiny committees for the 2025/26 Council year.

The report was proposed by Councillor Brighthouse and seconded by Councillor Snowden. Members thanked scrutiny officers for their work during the year. Following discussion, Council noted the report.

RESOLVED: that the Scrutiny Annual Report be noted.

50/26 JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (JHOSC) ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26

(Agenda Item 11)

Council had before it the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report that documented the breadth and depth of the Committee's work over the 2025/26 Council year.

The report was proposed by Councillor Hanna and seconded by Councillor Edosomwan. Members thanked officers and partner organisations for their work on health scrutiny during the year. Following discussion, Council noted the report.

RESOLVED: that the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (JHOSC) Annual Report set out in Annex 1 be noted.

51/26 REPORT FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

(Agenda Item 12)

Council considered the report setting out proposed changes to the Council's Constitution following the findings and conclusions of the Constitution Working Group and the Audit and Governance Committee.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Shiri, Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee. Members thanked the members of the working group and the officers supporting it for their work.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken on the recommendations. They were approved with 53 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED that

- a) **the proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution as recommended by the Constitution Working Group and Audit and Governance Committee, as set out Appendix 1, including amendment number 11, be approved;**
- b) **the amendments undertaken by the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, in accordance with Part 7.2 of the Constitution (Scheme of Delegation to Officers), paragraph 6.4 (t) and considered by the Constitution Working Group and Audit and Governance Committee; as set out in Appendix 2, be noted;**
- c) **the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer be requested to ensure the necessary changes are made; and**
- d) **a final edit of the Constitution covering layout and grammar be undertaken prior to publication.**

52/26 THE USE OF URGENCY PROVISIONS

(Agenda Item 13)

Council was asked to note a report on the use of an urgency provision in a Cabinet decision on SEND Reform.

The report was proposed by Councillor Gaul, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, and seconded by Councillor Gregory, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Inequalities. Following discussion, Council noted the report.

RESOLVED:

- **That the exemption from Call-in of the following decision be noted:**
 - a) Cabinet on 16 June 2026 – SEND Reform Plan.**

53/26 COMMITTEES AND REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE

(Agenda Item 14)

Council was requested to approve committee appointments, in Annex 2 to the report, based on revised political balance calculations following Councillor Higgins joining the Liberal Democrat group.

Councillor Bearder proposed an amendment to the list of Liberal Democrat Group Members on the Performance and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Councillor Roberts to replace Councillor Shiri.

The recommendations as amended were proposed by the Chair and seconded by the Vice-Chair. Following discussion, the recommendations were agreed with 56 in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the review of political balance of committees to reflect the current formation of the political groups as detailed in Annex 1 be noted;**
- b) Members be appointed to the committees of the Council as listed in Annex 2 as amended.**

54/26 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS

(Agenda Item 15)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Evans and seconded by Councillor Brighouse. Councillor Evans proposed an amendment set out in Annex 5 to the Schedule of Business. Council agreed to receive the amendment so that the following amended motion was considered.

“This Council notes that many people in our county suffer from progressive and life-limiting conditions, such as Motor Neurone Disease (MND). As these diseases progress, symptoms worsen and people’s needs increase, often unpredictably.

This Council believes that people living with progressive conditions deserve to live in safe and accessible homes, with as much independence and quality of life as possible. We commit to doing all we can to ensure this.

This Council notes that early interventions, as well as being good for individuals and their families, can save taxpayer’s money by enabling people

to manage their condition more effectively and reducing the need for critical interventions at a later stage.

This Council therefore resolves to ask the Cabinet Member for Adults to review the County Council's role in the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and report to the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee with:

- How the Council currently delivers its role in the DFG;
- Timeliness over the past three years for the County Council fulfilling its role in the DFG, including assessments and referrals;
- How the Council's processes could be improved, including the timeliness of assessments and the working relationship with District Councils and other partners;
- Whether the County Council is acting quickly enough to ensure that target timeframes of 55 days for simple adaptations and 130 days for complex adaptations can be met for people living with MND and other progressive or terminal conditions."

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried with 56 votes in favour, no abstentions and none against.

The motion was referred to Cabinet.

55/26 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW

(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Barlow and seconded by Councillor Jones. An amendment, set out in Annex 5 of the Schedule of Business, was proposed by Councillor Henwood. The amendment was accepted by the proposer and seconder. Council agreed to accept the amendment so that the following amended motion was considered.

"Council notes:

1. Climate impact is the Council's highest strategic risk.
2. The Oxfordshire Climate Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (2024) identifies flooding and extreme heat as significant, growing climate risks; driven by warmer, wetter winters, more intense rainfall, prolonged summer heatwaves and increased built-up areas.
3. Impacts of climate and Nature collapse are acknowledged to be even greater than thought in 2024. They pose an existential threat to humanity and all ecosystems. Serious adaptation must become standard operating practice similar to the fiduciary duty to council tax-payers.

The assessment illustrates large-scale space for water storage and retention is vital, slowing water flow and decreasing flooding. Urban design is also key - to prevent localised surface-water flooding, and build temperature

resilience, preventing human-made “heat islands” which drive excess residents’ deaths, especially the most vulnerable.

Adaptation measures’ success depends on multi-year, multi-stakeholder, community-based collaborations at impactful scale. Partners’ (e.g. Environment Agency) 6-year funding cycles allow capacity to develop – starkly contrasting to the council’s annual budget-setting process.

Council requests that cabinet considers:

- Significantly increased investment through the Council’s remaining years’ budget process to accelerate Oxfordshire’s capacity and capability to convene and work at impactful scale, in multi-stakeholder action groups, embedding climate adaptation as standard operational procedure.
- Supporting multiple location-specific initiatives, working with councillors, officers, partner organisations and local communities, to build resilience through collaborative action to:
 - Reduce the risks associated with river, groundwater, surface water and flash flooding
 - Improve resilience to extreme heat and mitigate urban heat island effects.”

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried with 55 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

The motion was referred to Cabinet.

56/26 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR BETHIA THOMAS

(Agenda Item 17)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Thomas and seconded by Councillor Roberts. An amendment from Councillor Middleton, as set out in Annex 5 to the Schedule of Business, was accepted by the proposer and seconder. Council agreed to accept the amendment so that the amended motion considered was as follows.

“This Council:

- Recognises that dangerous parking, on pavements, paths and verges, in cycle lanes, around schools and in many other instances, causes significant danger and inconvenience to many people particularly those with limited mobility.
- Understands that this is a county wide issue, and many representative groups have worked tirelessly to highlight these issues.
- Recognises the findings from the Government’s consultation, allowing the highway authority to enforce a ban on pavement, path and verge parking.
- Recognises that a ban on pavement parking needs to be accompanied by the consideration of parking as whole, and by extra budget from Government or else effective enforcement may not be possible.

Council therefore:

1. Fully endorses the objective to end pavement, path and verge parking and doing so in a way which suits local needs best.
2. Commits to supporting the use of civil enforcement powers in a way which enforces this policy effectively in a cost neutral way to the council.
3. Asks the Cabinet Member for Transport to:
 - a. Oversee the introduction of an enforcement mechanism, recognising that different areas will require different solutions.
 - b. Ensure that key stakeholders and representative groups of people with restricted mobility be consulted throughout.
 - c. Ensure that the Council follows the progress of Government's latest research exercise into this issue, responding as appropriate."

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried with 50 votes in favour, one abstention and no votes against.

The motion was referred to Cabinet.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Questions from Members of the Public

ANNEX

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received.

1. RICHARD PARNHAM "How many £5 congestion charge payments have been made, since the scheme was introduced, where it has not been possible to assign the payment to a vehicle captured on the congestion charge monitoring cameras? i.e. the congestion charge payment MIGHT have been made by someone who BELIEVED they should pay the congestion charge, but was not actually required to pay the congestion charge on that specific trip?"	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Unfortunately, I am informed that we do not hold this information in a reportable format. To obtain it, we would need to manually review each individual payment, which as I'm sure you will appreciate is simply not practicable.
2. MATTHEW BROADWAY By when, and as a result of what specific policies being implemented, can North Oxford residents expect to see congestion ease - and journey times shortened - so both are better than before the congestion charge was introduced?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Congestion is expected to ease in north Oxford when Botley Road reopens. The closure of Botley Road in April 2023 led to significant traffic increases on Woodstock Road, which will have increased congestion on Woodstock Road and to a lesser extent Banbury Road and the wider north Oxford area. The benefits of the temporary congestion charge include faster and more frequent bus services as part of a broader set of transport improvements, as well as targeted interventions to reduce specific causes of congestion on key corridors such as the Woodstock and Banbury Roads
3. PHILIPPA GIBBONS Have the number of vehicle crashes on Marsh Lane increased, or decreased, since the congestion charge was introduced, compared with the same time period the year previously (i.e.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Confirmed data for November -December 2025 and provisional data available to 2026 to the end of May shows one slight injury collision reported in January 2026.

November 2025 - June 2026, compared with November 2024 - June 2025?	Data for November 2024 to June 2025 shows no collisions.				
	Annual collision totals for the road for the five-year period 2021-2025 are as follows:				
	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
	6	1	0	3	2

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received.

1. COUNCILLOR NATHAN LEY Residents in Abingdon - and no doubt alongside many of our other towns and villages - have repeatedly raised concerns about excessively noisy vehicles, particularly late at night, on roads such as Northcourt Road near Boundary House. This causes real disturbance for people living nearby and is not simply a nuisance issue; the government has previously recognised the health impacts of prolonged environmental noise. The Department for Transport's roadside noise camera trials recorded 1,777 activations and concluded that mobile noise cameras could offer a cost-effective way to support compliance and behavioural change on local roads. The previous government also committed, through the "Plan for Drivers", to allow councils to roll out noise cameras to target unacceptable vehicle modifications, although national guidance appears either delayed or not forthcoming.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I am happy to ask officers to look into this and determine what the relevant powers and responsibilities are across the two tiers of Oxfordshire councils and Thames Valley Police.
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Given this, will the Cabinet Member ask officers to explore, with Thames Valley Police and relevant government departments, whether Oxfordshire County Council could develop a local pilot of acoustic/noise camera technology, using Northcourt Road near Boundary House in Abingdon as a potential trial site, and report back on the legal, technical, enforcement and funding issues involved?	
2. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY Could the Cabinet Member urgently look into the situation with alleyway access for members of the public from Prescott Close to Mold Crescent? The old concrete pavements have failed due to tree roots and need to be reinstated by Oxfordshire County Council contractors. This has been an ongoing issue for a number of years and as the local member for Banbury Ruscote, I have had concerns raised by residents of Prescott Close.	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR I am sorry to learn about the issues you have highlighted, particularly the deterioration of the concrete footway as a result of tree root activity, and the impact this is having on residents using the route. Concrete is a notoriously difficult material to maintain in these circumstances, as it is less tolerant to movement caused by tree roots compared to more flexible surfacing types. This can lead to recurring issues where underlying root growth continues to affect the integrity of the footway. I can confirm officers will be in contact to arrange a site meeting to assess the concerns and consider the urgency of it.
3. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY Would the Cabinet Member, Councillor Leffman, agree that, as local member for Banbury Ruscote, we welcome the surface treatment works by M Group contractors on Warwick Road, with the	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Thank you for your comments regarding the recent surface treatment works on Warwick Road, and for your support of the programme overall. I note the concerns you have raised in relation to the junction of the A422 Stratford

caveat that the area of the traffic junction of the A422 Stratford Road to Warwick Road and the area on Warwick Road before Ferndale Road junction have not had surface treatments with some outstanding potholes still to be repaired.

Would the Cabinet Member investigate when future roadworks are done, that all the work and defects are repaired along with resurfacing works? This then saves general disappointment from the public and complaints.

Supplementary

As of this time, at the junction from A42 to Stratford Road to Warwick Road, just before the Barley Mow Pub, the defects have not been fixed.

Road with Warwick Road, and the section of Warwick Road approaching Ferndale Road, where defects remain following the completion of surface treatment works.

Surface dressing is a preventative maintenance treatment designed to extend the life of the carriageway by sealing the surface and improving skid resistance, rather than addressing all underlying defects. In line with current policy, any significant defects such as potholes should be identified and repaired either in advance of, or alongside, the treatment where they meet the Council's intervention criteria before surface dressing takes place.

Defects, however close to other maintenance works, will only be repaired if they meet the Council's intervention criteria and these will be inspected either as part of our scheduled inspections, or due to enquires raised.

This can sometimes give the impression that areas have been missed, particularly where there are isolated defects within an otherwise treated section.

The locations you have identified have already been raised previously and recorded for further attention, and I will ensure that they are reviewed again so that any qualifying defects are progressed for repair.

More broadly, your point regarding the coordination of works is well understood. The Council continues to work closely with its contractors to improve the alignment between defect repairs and planned maintenance schemes, but they are different treatments, however, some improvement can be made I'm sure, reducing the need for follow-up interventions.

Response

I have been told by our contractors M Group that they expect to have all the defects that have been reported fixed by the end of July. So I think I can assure you that, as long as they're reported on FixMyStreet, they will be on the schedule. If that doesn't happen, please feel free to get in touch with me again.

Can I be assured that they are going to be fixed in the next couple of weeks? They have been reported in the appropriate manner.	
4. COUNCILLOR TOM GREENAWAY Radley Road in Abingdon is a busy residential area, traffic through route and home of 3 schools. Because of this, the area experiences significant increases in vehicle traffic at drop off/pick up times, as well as bus/minibus traffic and an increase in car parking in the area surrounding the school. Parked vehicles obstruct the sightlines of pedestrians and other manoeuvring vehicles which increases the risk of accidents. On top of this, we also hear reports from concerned residents and parents that drivers are consistently speeding past the schools and children. When Thames Valley Police were made aware of these concerns, they said: <i>“You’ll be aware that speeding is a partnership matter in which road design and layout is the most important component. Due to this and other influencing factors we do not enforce 20mph limits-Resourcing challenges, Anti-social behaviour in town centres, violence against women and girls, burglaries and robberies, with occasional time for engagement events means OCC must lead as the statutory responsible agency.”</i> While Oxfordshire County Council obviously have a part to play in road safety, speeding and	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT As part of the planned monitoring of the 20mph programme, officers will be contacting all town and parish councils which participated in the scheme (a summary of the process is included here: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/traffic/20mph-scheme/20mph-transformation-programme to review current speeds and safety issues, and to also identify possible measures to improve compliance with the 20mph speed limit. This work is set to begin in July and to confirm that this will include the roads in Abingdon – including Radley Road, which are now 20mph. I share your concerns about enforcement. Thames Valley Police takes a conscious choice not to enforce the law on speeding in the same way as other police forces. At my first Road Safety Partnership meeting and as the Council's representative on the Police & Crime Panel, I challenged this and made clear that residents and councillors would like to see much more speeding enforcement on roads such as Radley Road. I would also like to see a greater problem-solving approach to road safety on an issue-by-issue basis.

dangerous driving are clearly matters for the police, and residents are right to want visible action to keep children safe. When Great Britain saw 19,972 pedestrian road casualties in 2025, and when this area has seen multiple road traffic collisions and many more near misses, how can Oxfordshire County Council support Thames Valley Police to police our roads and keep our communities safe?	
5. COUNCILLOR TOM GREENAWAY Central Government have announced that all social media users will soon be required to provide proof of age such as a facial scan or credit card to continue using many popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube. These restrictions will extend to total bans for those under 16 years old, and nightly curfews for 16–17-year-olds, with currently little detail on how this will work. Oxfordshire County Council frequently makes use of social media platforms to communicate with our residents. Examples of videos on our YouTube channel include ‘How to use a walking stick’, ‘Celebrating every child at school – reading, kindness and helping people!’, ‘Armed Forces Day – Flag Raising Ceremony’, an instructional video on how to contribute to a Council meeting, public safety videos from our Fire and Rescue Service, and a reminder that emergency contraception can be accessed free of charge at Oxfordshire	COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES Communicating support and advice to residents is a core part of the council’s work. We don’t rely on social media alone for any community, but we use a wide mix of channels that we continue to strengthen. For young people, this includes: • Trusted networks: Young people respond to people they trust, so we work through parents and carers, schools, colleges and community groups. This is done in a variety of ways, which include email communications, updates for local newsletters, shareable blog content, leaflets and posters – all of which are unaffected by the social media ban. We provide the information in easy to share formats, making it simple for these key influencing groups to share onwards. • Frontline teams: Council and partner teams (e.g. social care, family centres / hubs, district and city colleagues) are regularly and consistently in front of young people, including those who are more vulnerable. Ensuring they are equipped with the right information means they can then provide support and advice if needed. • Direct reach: Where appropriate, we use posters, leaflets and public

pharmacies. The information in these videos is clearly not harmful, and government attempts to restrict access to them through bans and digital ID will leave residents less informed and potentially in danger. How can Oxfordshire County Council ensure that we can communicate with residents throughout these new restrictions on social media access for the United Kingdom?	advertising. When used carefully and in the right place – for example at bus stops or outside colleges - this can be highly effective. • Peer networks: We are planning to develop a network of young influencers, who will be able to share messages locally within their own communities. WhatsApp channels, widely used and unaffected by a ban, give us a direct and safe route to do this. This is early-stage, but has potential.
6. COUNCILLOR TOM GREENAWAY Residents in Abingdon report long wait times at key pedestrian crossings, and I have often experienced these myself in Abingdon and across Oxfordshire. These waits extend journeys, can create long pavement queues at peak times of day, and cause frustration when there are very few or no passing vehicles to justify an extended red signal. Cities across the world have addressed this by improving pedestrian priority signalling at crossings. In London, Transport for London saved residents time, while improving traffic safety and signal compliance by trialling continuous green pedestrian signalling until an approaching vehicle is detected. In Bristol, signal wait times have been reduced and, in some circumstances removed following ‘Overwhelmingly positive’ feedback in an initial trial. In Vilnius, pedestrian priority traffic signalling reduced average wait times by around 30%.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT There are some 30 signalised junctions and controlled crossings in Abingdon. Individual sites vary in terms of how they adapt to changing traffic conditions and the level of priority given to vehicular traffic, cyclists and pedestrians at different times. Signal timings are reviewed when we receive reports from stakeholders, pick up issues ourselves, or when sites are refurbished. There isn’t a pro-active assessment programme that takes place. During busy peak times, the pedestrian crossings within Abingdon town centre are linked to the nearby signalised junctions (Ock St/Stratton Way and Stratton Way/Vineyard). To coordinate flow, each crossing runs on the same cycle time as the adjacent junction which is the reason why the maximum wait time for pedestrians is higher than usual. Outside of peak periods individual crossings are isolated and wait times reduce. As part of the County Council’s BSIP commitments Yunex Fusion is due to be rolled out in Oxfordshire market towns including Abingdon within the next 6-9 months. The new system can be configured to allow automatic priority changes based on certain metrics (delays/pollution/pedestrian wait times etc). Experience from elsewhere indicates that the introduction of Fusion (or similar advanced adaptive control systems) significantly improves the performance of junctions and traffic flow across extensive urban areas.

What assessments have Oxfordshire County Council made on pedestrian priority crossing signals to save residents time and improve pedestrian access across Oxfordshire? Supplementary Would the Cabinet Member like to join me and my colleagues in central Abingdon to look at the impact of traffic signal timings and afterwards to discuss our findings.	The Council's Traffic Signals team continues to respond constructively to requests made by local councillors and bus operators for additional bus priority and active travel measures. Site specific visits can be arranged to enhance understanding of the possible options for improvement, particularly where significant delays are caused to active travel users or buses. We will continue to investigate and implement improvements to signals operation in line with the principles detailed in OCC's Network Management Plan: CA FEB2123R08 Annex 1 OCC draft Network Management Plan 2023-28.pdf Response Yes, very happy to do that.
7. COUNCILLOR ANDY GRAHAM How does the Cabinet Member intend to take forward the new library in Woodstock, which is long awaited and needed, after the Conservative administration closed it from its previous location and created a temporary location within the Oxfordshire Museum, which is totally inadequate?	COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES We would love a new, permanent, larger library in Woodstock, but both resources and opportunities are thin on the ground at this point in time: • We hold limited S106 funds for Woodstock library, and are unlikely to receive significant additional funds in the near future. • OCC capital funding is stretched and needs to be prioritised. As such, investment over the next couple of years has been committed to major library redevelopments in Banbury and Didcot. • Sadly, there is no obvious available site in Woodstock to re-locate the library, and minimal scope at the current location to expand the operation; although this is something that we remain open to considering.

	We have been engaged with WODC and Blenheim over the last couple of years on potential projects to develop a new library. Proposals have centred around the current fire station site and nearby car park; and the Thames Valley Police site. However, we have not been able to gain approval to take either project forward and neither project now appears viable. Rest assured, we will continue to explore alternative options and re-engage with WODC and Blenheim to explore what might be possible.
8. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT Freight trains have been running from Oxford to Milton Keynes on that stretch of East West Rail since late 2024 but we still have no passenger services [1]. This absence of a fast public transport link is severely holding back people in our county - and across the region – from getting around easily for work and leisure. A provisional timetable has been released for December this year, but timetables have been released before with no trains forthcoming. Will the Leader of the Council write to the Secretary of State for Transport urging the Labour government to find solutions to get passenger trains running on the line as soon as possible, as well as expressing support for a train guard on the services for passenger safety and accessibility?	COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL I completely agree that this vital new link must open as soon as possible. Many along the line have made plans based on trains running from last year and the ongoing delay is having a real impact on working people. I will be happy to write to the Secretary of State.

[1]https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/may/02/east-west-rail-oxford-milton-keynes-chiltern-railways-delays https://oxfordclarion.uk/the-08-44-to-milton-keynes-has-been-delayed-by-several-months/ [2]https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2026-05-20/HL338 Supplementary Thank you, Cllr Bearder, for agreeing to write to the Secretary of State about the lack of passenger East-West trains. Would it be okay to share that letter with councillors once it has been written and what would the timeframe of that be?	Response I don't have that information but I will pass it on.
9. COUNCILLOR EMMA MARKHAM Please can the Cabinet Member explain why it took three months to fix seriously dangerous potholes on the A420, the main road between Swindon and Oxford? These potholes were reported on FixMyStreet at the end of Jan 2026, I submitted a Councillor Enquiry to Highways on the 9th Feb as they had not been fixed and were deteriorating further. No action was taken and so I wrote an open letter to the Cabinet Member and the Highways team on the 20th Feb, to which I did not receive a reply. I continued to submit Councillor Enquiries highlighting that the road was getting worse, on the 29th March 2026 I then contacted the	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR I am informed by officers that the defects on this section of the A420 were not isolated potholes but a series of closely spaced carriageway failures. Following initial reports, these were assessed and it was determined that repeated reactive repairs would not provide a durable or effective solution. The decision was therefore taken to group the defects and deliver them through a mini planer patching programme, which treats a larger section of carriageway and provides a significantly more robust and longer lasting repair. During this period, the route remained under review to ensure that any immediate safety risks were identified and addressed where necessary. I understand that this type of repair requires more planning than individual pothole repairs. In this case, it involved defining the extents of the failure, programming the works within an existing patching programme, and safely managing traffic on a heavily trafficked A road. While this approach resulted in a longer lead in time, it

leader of the Liberal Democrats to request help and that all of my emails were going unanswered and I was worried more people would be hurt on this dangerous road due to all the serious potholes, but my concerns were dismissed. Then in early April I tried requesting a Highways site visit and was told this was not possible. Cllr Thomas, the Councillor for the neighbouring division, was able to secure a site visit with the Cabinet Member and the Highways team and as this road was becoming a major concern, she made the team visit this location, this resulted in us obtaining 'failed road signs', the potholes were finally fixed on the 30th April. This is completely unacceptable and put residents' lives and safety at risk, these potholes resulted in multiple serious accidents during this period, including a head-on collision.

Please can the Cabinet Member explain why it took three months to repair a major A road, which should be top priority and explain how road repairs prioritised by OCC? as I'm aware lots of other minor roads were being repaired during this period, so workmen and equipment were available to do this work and failed to prioritise and allocate resources appropriately. How will the Cabinet member for Highways ensure that the Highways team implements a more appropriate prioritisation system to ensure our major A roads remain safe and are repaired promptly?

avoided repeated short term interventions and provided a more effective long term outcome for the network.

I do accept that explaining and communicating this could and should have been better and this is something that as the new Cabinet Member for Highway Construction and repair I will be working with officers to improve.

10.COUNCILLOR EMMA MARKHAM

Please can the Cabinet Member explain how enforcement of double yellow lines are handled across the county. As I have been requesting enforcement for parking on double yellow lines opposite a junction in Watchfield, which is the site where a cyclist was killed previously, but no enforcement has occurred. I have submitted dozens of time-stamped photographs of cars parked on the double yellow lines using the online platform, and I have large numbers of residents pressuring me to have enforcement to improve safety at the junction. I have tried working with the highways team to find solutions, suggested that we could train local residents or members of the parish council to issue tickets if the issue is cost of enforcement officers, or use a system of civil enforcement where photos and dates and times can be submitted and a warning letter sent in the first instance, and then if they are caught again a ticket is issued.

Please can you explain the enforcement policy and why some areas of Oxfordshire receive enforcement and other areas (which have been requesting it and submitting evidence of its need) do not, and please can you describe how you will make this fairer and more cost effective for all residents in the future while improving road safety?

COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

Sorry to hear of your frustrations, increased parking enforcement is very much on my agenda to improve. Having enquired into this specific case, I am informed that there is technical issue with enforcement linked to the fact it is on former Ministry of Defence (MOD) land. Necessary action to try and rectify this is being looked into and an update will be provided once a view has been formed and appropriate identified.

To report parking issues, we advise getting in touch with the department using the following link: [Reporting an illegally parked vehicle | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

11.COUNCILLOR EMMA MARKHAM Can the Cabinet Member explain why we were promised that all drains in the county would be cleared on an annual schedule, and yet dozens of drains which are blocked with compact mud and have been submitted on FixMyStreet multiple times have still not been cleared, and yet we are told that there is an underspend in the drain clearing budget and that operations will be scaled back as it wasn't needed? Some of the drains I have been urgently requesting to be cleared have been blocked for multiple years and are located in villages which regularly experience flooding, and so it is vital they should be priorities for clearance. Can the Cabinet Member ensure these drains will be cleared this year?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR The Council prioritises highway maintenance using a risk based approach. This means resources are directed to locations presenting the greatest immediate safety risk, regardless of road classification. It is therefore not the case that works are prioritised simply on whether a road is an A road or a minor road. In some instances, defects on lower classified roads may be addressed more quickly because they present a higher immediate risk or can be resolved through rapid reactive intervention, whereas more extensive failures on key routes sometimes require a planned engineering solution and therefore can take longer to deliver. We now have an unprecedented number of crews repairing potholes. With 26 crews on our network, contractor and county council teams are working extended hours and over weekends too. We are prioritising those potholes which pose the greatest safety concerns first and, depending on the situation, a temporary fill may be carried out and a permanent fix done later. More broadly, the Council continues to balance reactive safety interventions with planned maintenance to ensure that the network is managed both safely and efficiently, with interventions targeted where they will have the greatest overall benefit
12.COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION Can you confirm how much the Council has spent to date removing flags from lampposts and on the High Court legal process so far?	COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL The total cost of removing flags from council highway structures from September 2025 to May 2026 has been £79,790.21. The injunction has been granted and there is a further court review pending in July, therefore a costs figure relating to the High Court process is not yet available.

13. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION Overgrown trees on the A4095 and A40 from Minster Lovell to Eynsham are now blocking key road signs and junction safety information. Are there plans for the highways team to carry out works along these two keys roads to improve road safety and ensure road signs are visible?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Thank you for your question and for raising this issue. The Tree Service will arrange for an inspection of the roads to determine the extent of any works required to enhance the visibility of signs along the A4095 and A40 from Minster Lovell to Eynsham within the next 2-3 weeks. Following the assessment, any recommended works will be undertaken.
14. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION The decision by the Lib Dem administration not to go ahead with the dual carriageway upgrades from Witney to Eynsham was a missed opportunity and a clumsy mistake. Can he share the latest traffic data, along with what year it was collected, that has recorded vehicle journeys to ascertain which routes drivers are taking when they travel eastbound on the A40?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The proposed A40 widening between (Hill Farm) east of Witney and Eynsham (west) to dual carriageway was initially agreed by Cabinet in May 2016 following explorations of this from July 2015. Cabinet then sought to approve inclusion of this dual carriageway section, as one element of a wider A40 Strategy, into the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF2) expression of interest in September 2017. The HIF2 Grant Determination Agreement was subsequently signed in August 2020. However, due to updated estimated costs exceeding the funding available, in June 2022 Cabinet approved that the A40 HIF2 Smart Corridor Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Revised Grant Determination Agreement was pursued. This prioritised funding for the bus priority, active travel and junction improvement elements of the HIF2 bid between Eynsham west and Oxford North. The Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan was adopted by the council in July 2022 in which Policy 36 states “we will only consider road capacity schemes after all other options have been explored”.

Looking ahead, especially considering planned future growth in West Oxfordshire through the emerging Local Plan 2043 proposals, Officers are further developing the A40 Corridor Strategy by exploring strategic public transport opportunities in the form of an options appraisal for Mass Rapid Transit (MRT). This study is due to report later this year.

The approach to investigate MRT supports the objectives of the LTCP targets which seeks to replace or remove an additional 1 out of 3 car trips in Oxfordshire by 2040 succeeding the previous (LTP4) objective of replacing or removing 1 out of every 4 current car trips in Oxfordshire by 2030. The focus strategy to meet LTCP objectives by strengthening public transport is reflected in LTCP Policy 18 *to work in partnership to maintain a commercially sustainable and comprehensive network of services which is accessible to as many residents as possible and to seek to make the bus a natural first choice through development of infrastructure.*

Figures 1 to 10 below provide information on historical and more recent traffic data trends from OCC fixed monitoring locations.

Total vehicle volumes along the A40 and main routes in west Oxfordshire increased rapidly through the 1970s and 1980s, rising more gradually until around 2005 and remained relatively stable since. (Figures 1 & 2) The flattening with little increase in total traffic over the last 20 years is largely a result of peak period capacity constraints for general traffic on these routes into Oxford.

A more detailed picture of traffic patterns of the last 10 years for the A40 east of Witney and along the A4095 are provided in Figures 3 to 8. The graphs show a significant drop off in traffic through the period of the Covid pandemic.

In terms of traffic routeing and destinations for eastbound vehicles moving along the A40 east of Witney, a major ANRP survey was undertaken in Feb 2020 prior to any traffic impacts through Covid. The results indicate around 65% of vehicles are making local trips, with approximately 55% destined for the wider Oxford area (See Table 1 and Figures 9 and 10). This aligns with the earlier modelled information from

	2015. The implication being that the most effective means, and the appropriate policy compliant approach, to improve capacity for the A40 corridor is via public transport priority and bus service improvements, and active travel enhancements. This is the focus of the current infrastructure improvements along the A40.
15.COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK How much compensation has the County Council paid in relation to damage from potholes between 1 November 2025 and the latest date available? Supplementary My question is, looking at the size of the Council and the budget, why don't we have our own team to fill the potholes like ODS have their engineers to go out? Why do we subcontract the work?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR From the 1st November up to the 18th June we have made payments of £260,626.72 in respect of pothole related vehicle damage to claimants. NB Please note that the payment may relate to (will include) a claim in respect of an incident prior to 1 November 2025. We would usually look to complete a claim investigation within 4 months of the incident date however due the sheer volume of claims received in 2026 this has needed to be extended. The Team is currently working on claims received in the first week of February. Response I don't know whether you attended the session that we had up in Banbury last, I think, 17th of the month, where a lot of demonstrations were done on how we fill potholes. It depends entirely on the type of pothole and the type of filling that's needed. And we simply don't have that expertise in house. We have to rely on contractors to do that, which is why we have a contract with M Group. And obviously, we keep an eye on that contract. But that is the reason that we don't do things in-house. We need that specialist approach.
16.COUNCILLOR GEORGINA HERITAGE Residents in the rural villages of the Chinnor division desperately want to see improvements to transport, particularly to get to nearby towns and	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The Council has been working to improve rural bus services across Oxfordshire, by reinstating services to all parishes that have populations of over 500. Within the Chinnor division we have reinstated links from Lewknor, South Weston, Postcombe

villages for health appointments, shopping, schools and other amenities. Many residents effectively feel cut off, unless they can drive and own a car. I understand a “Plan for Bus” is being developed. Please could you tell me how my rural residents might benefit from this, and how they will be able to input?

Supplementary

I just wanted to add that the links you mentioned from my villages to Thame, this is just one bus twice a week with a three-hour return time. So, for example, leaving a village at 10.30 and returning at 1.30. Tuesdays and Thursdays only. So, while this connection is very welcome in rural areas, it benefits few people and I would just like to ask if you'll commit to looking into more meaningful services for rural villages.

and Towersey to Thame whilst maintaining the existing bus routes throughout the division.

The OxBus 2040 Plan for Bus will set out our long-term vision for buses in Oxfordshire to 2040. It will be a high-level document and is still in the early formation stages.

We are presenting this item to Place Overview and Scrutiny on Wednesday 24th June as an early-stage item so that the committee can help shape and influence the approach and emerging content. You can read more here: [Agenda for Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Wednesday, 24 June 2026, 10.00 am | Oxfordshire C...](#)

We know that connecting rural communities is important and so this will be factored into our ambitions.

We are collecting views already from a range of different groups to feed into the plan and all residents will have the opportunity to respond to the public consultation planned for later this year.

Response

Yes, very happy to do that. And I would like to urge people, particularly in rural communities to comment. We had a really, really useful session on this at Place scrutiny with a lot of very, very useful feedback, particularly on the needs of rural areas who've suffered so much over the last 10 years in terms of rural bus services. We're in a much better place now than we were, but there's an awful lot more that we can do. And by hearing from people, then we can help make that better.

17.COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON

In May 2025, the Council issued a statement confirming its commitment as part of the recently approved budget to “clean and empty every highway drainage gully in Oxfordshire this year, and every year going forward”.

However, in 2026 a £300K reduction in the budget for gulley clearance was announced along with reassurances that this would not impact the programme to clear every gulley on an annual basis.

Yet it has recently been confirmed that the gulley clearance programme has now been amended so that only areas that have been subject to an S19 flooding report will receive annual clearances, whereas other areas will now be reduced to a two-yearly clearance cycle.

This seems to be a u-turn on our previous commitment to annual gulley clearances and a return to a targeted clearance regime which previously resulted in a widespread issues of blocked gulleys and serious flooding in many areas, including in my division.

Why was the change made to our previous commitment for a full county-wide annual clearance and has a full impact assessment been carried out on the flooding risks for areas that have

COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

The reduction, as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process, was proposed following the data and intel obtained from the 2025/2025 activity. Due to silt levels in some of the gullies and the need to fix the wider network to make the gully emptying worthwhile, a decision was made to reduce the gully emptying activity by £300k. I am not aware of any reassurances made as part of that decision regarding continuing to empty every gully each year.

A commitment to invest in the drainage network to make improvements remains, and well as the additional investment in gully emptying, accepting a 300k reduction in the original £1.5m additional investment, a capital investment of £4m to fix and improve the network itself was approved.

The regime, as a result of this decision, will be an annual inspection and cleanse for the high-speed network along with locations that have a known high flooding risk, which is about 50% of the gully network, with the remaining 50% being lower risk that will be inspected and cleaned once every 2 years. I can also confirm that adhoc blocked drain issues will still be dealt with on a case-by-case priority basis.

now been downgraded? Supplementary I have to say it seems counterintuitive to me that additional silt found in the gullies should result in a reduction in funding for these works. But could the cabinet member confirm that we're in an even worse situation than I originally surmised in that now only 50% of gullies will be emptied annually rather than the 100% as promised in the 2025 budget.	Response Well, to be absolutely clear, we've done a complete survey of our gullies across the whole of the Council. What we have discovered is that half of them do not need regular emptying, but half of them really, really do. So, we're concentrating our efforts, focusing on those that require regular clearance. But I would also say, and I did say this in my answer that we are in the process of looking at all of those gullies, and have noticed that a lot of them were broken and that meant we need to have capital in order to repair those broken gullies. Once we've done that work, that will make a significant difference, we hope, to the efficiency of those gullies and therefore preventing flooding in the future. That's why we've transferred money into the capital budget and reduced some of the work that we're doing on an annual basis.
18. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON The Council (OCC) has agreed to lease public land in my division to Oxford United Football Club for the development of a new stadium and a hotel. However, the council has refused to make public the ground rent they have agreed with OUFC for the use of the land. An FOI request was made by a local campaigning group which resulted in a further refusal by OCC to divulge the rental figure even though a subsequent appeal to the Information Commissioners Office directed that there was no justification for withholding the information. The Council subsequently appealed the decision,	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION The Council wants people who it negotiates with to be confident the Council do as much as possible to ensure that sensitive information remains confidential despite the Council being subject to Freedom of Information legislation. The case should reassure people that the Council will be robust when presented with FOI requests. The counterparties to this transaction have not consented to the release of the confidential information included in the contract. There is of course a tension between the council as a public body and the rights of those it contracts with in terms of data release. The council has complied with the law relating to such matters. In any event, in any transaction, price terms tend normally only to be revealed once a land transaction has completed (via Land Registry records) and not before.

and the appeal was upheld on the grounds of commercial confidentiality. Given that OUFC are the exclusive lessee in this matter and the land involved is held in trust for the people of Oxfordshire by OCC, what possible commercial disadvantage could there be to either OCC or OUFC in being open and transparent about the agreed rental of this land and why has OCC fought so hard to keep that figure secret from the people of Oxfordshire? Supplementary Thanks for the answer, but I still maintain that the sensitivity of the information involved is questionable. But given that this council is ultimately answerable to its residents, does the cabinet member feel it's appropriate that the only way that they will find out how much we are leasing publicly owned land for is by interrogating the land registry records rather than relying on the transparency from its own elected members? And will the legal costs incurred by the council in keeping that information secret also be made public at some point?	Response It is entirely appropriate that our commercial relationships, which requires a contract with a second party and often more than the second party, respect confidentiality, and that's exactly what we've done. Everything will become clear, I'm sure, in the fullness of time, but unless both parties want to reveal information, it's not going to get revealed
19. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON The recent closure of the North Oxford Golf Course in my division and the subsequent announcement of the impending development of the site has been	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY This is a live planning matter being considered by Cherwell District Council, with the County Council acting as a statutory consultee. It would therefore be inappropriate to comment on the merits of the proposal, including questions of need, policy

met with dismay by former members of the club. The announcement of an impending planning application for a massive data centre on land near Frieze Way which was intended as a replacement golf course, as outlined in the planning inspectors report on the CDC Local Plan Partial Review, is predicated on a claim that there is no need for golfing provision in the area. Would the Cabinet member agree with me that this flies in the face of the clear evidence of the popularity of the North Oxfordshire Course which proves that golf is indeed an important local recreation activity open to all, and that this sad loss of golfing provision needs to be mitigated in the same local area in line with the recommendations of the planning inspector and the commitments made as part of the local plan partial review?	compliance, or mitigation, outside of that formal process. All relevant planning policy considerations, including the provision of recreational facilities and any mitigation requirements, will need to be assessed by the determining authority as part of the application. Residents and stakeholders are strongly encouraged to engage directly with Cherwell District Council through the consultation process to ensure their views are properly considered.
20.COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY What measures are being taken to make the Council more ready to address potholes this winter than it was last winter?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR The Council has taken a number of practical steps to ensure that it is better prepared to respond to potholes this coming winter than it was last year, reflecting both the experience of the past winter and the lessons learned from the significant increase in defects caused by the winter weather conditions. Firstly, we have strengthened our operational resilience and capacity. During the peak of last winter, additional crews were mobilised to respond to the surge in defects, increasing from 7 to 26 at the height of demand. Building on this experience, we are planning resources earlier and ensuring the ability to scale up quickly again if required, including access to additional crews and specialist

	equipment. Secondly, we are continuing to invest in and expand the use of more efficient and durable repair techniques. This includes wider use of specialist methods such as thermal patching, mechanised patching crews, and “Dragon” patching. In parallel, you may have seen that starting 10 days ago, we are undertaking a formal pothole repair trial on Wildmere Road in Banbury to identify the most effective and long-lasting approaches, with a structured lessons learned review feeding directly into our winter preparation. I'm pleased to say that a number of our councillors attended the open day on June 17th and I hope you were among them. Thirdly, we are increasing the focus on preventative maintenance, which is key to reducing the number of potholes forming in the first place. This includes large-scale surface dressing and resurfacing programmes, as well as targeted programmes to address areas of failed surfacing across the network. This preventative approach is designed to extend the life of the carriageway and reduce the reliance on reactive repairs over time. In addition, we are enhancing our drainage and flood resilience programmes, recognising that water ingress is a major contributor to pothole formation. The Council has invested significantly in gully cleansing and will increasingly use flood risk and asset data to better target high-risk areas. We are also investing £2million in replacing broken gullies, which will improve drainage. Improving drainage helps prevent deterioration during freeze–thaw conditions, which were a key factor in last winter’s damage.
21. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY The Council has over £270million S106 sat in its account. Please detail the precise plans for Witney, including projects and time periods for the funding to be spent in Witney.	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION This information is available in the dashboard made available to members where members are able to filter by service area, locality, division and parish. To assist with the details, for the Witney Parish area across All Service areas £2.44m

	is held. Extracting the Dashboard into this answer would present a considerable amount of information so I will write separately to Cllr Ashby with the relevant extract.
22. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY The Movement and Place Plan for West Oxfordshire does have some interesting aspects to it. However, a major concern is the suggestion that the County Council is looking to remove parking spaces and free parking in West Oxfordshire. Can the Cabinet Member confirm if this is the case, and can they ensure that this aspect of the MAPP is removed immediately?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The public consultation for the West Oxfordshire Lowlands Movement and Place Plan (MAP Plan) closed on 2nd June. During the consultation period, officers held a number of drop-in sessions allowing members of the public to hear from officers and find out more about the MAP Plan. Officers are now reviewing the public consultation feedback and will be presenting an updated version to members. It is the intention to firstly present to the Place Overview and Scrutiny (POS) Committee in September and then cabinet in October. Cllr Ashby will know that the bulk of parking in Witney and Carterton is off-street and run by West Oxfordshire District Council. In spite of fictional claims that charges would be introduced, the council administration has been clear since it took charge in 2022 that those car parks remain free. I see no evidence that there would be any benefit in charging for on-street parking in either town in light of this. I and Officers are aware of the feedback surrounding parking, and will be looking at this, along with all of the consultation findings to provide a revised version of the MAP Plan before presenting it to POS or cabinet later this year. This is the process we have followed for all of the recently adopted MAP Plans – Science Vale and Bicester and the Surrounding Villages. Those suggesting “plans” – be it on car parking or for that matter quiet lane proposals around Curbridge – have generally been proven to be silly and wrong. Furthermore, officers have updated local members at the recent locality meeting in June and Witney’s Traffic Action Committee, where members were informed of the revised timetable and explanation for this.

23. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW

The latest in a long and growing line of vulnerable residents to be hurt by the terribly maintained pavements in Wallingford's Market Place, St Mary's and St Martin's Streets was a 91-year-old gentleman. He reportedly tripped, landed face-first, was taken to hospital then to his dentist with broken teeth, in rather a bloody mess. Since last year I have persistently asked for OCC investment in central Wallingford's pavements to save injury and subsequent healthcare and legal defence costs. It is in society's interest for the elderly & vulnerable to be out and about. Please can you let me know when the centre of Wallingford's pavements will be made safe for residents and visitors alike?

COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

I am very sorry to hear of this and the other incidents. Officers have confirmed they are aware of the concerns regarding footway condition in central Wallingford, including Market Place, St Mary's Street and St Martin's Street, and these locations are actively being reviewed by officers.

As with all highway assets across Oxfordshire, maintenance is managed through a risk-based approach. This means that the most serious safety defects are prioritised for repair first, with wider improvements delivered through the capital maintenance programme where funding allows. I will reinforce the importance of pavement condition to officers in enabling those less mobile to move around safely.

The Council continues to invest significant resources into maintaining the highway network, including footways, although national funding levels remain insufficient to address the full backlog of maintenance need across the county.

In terms of next steps for Wallingford:

- Officers are currently reviewing the condition of the affected footways to ensure that any defects meeting safety intervention criteria are addressed as a priority.
- Any defects that are present but not considered a safety issue will be assessed alongside other priorities across the county and considered for inclusion in upcoming capital investment programmes, subject to available funding and overall prioritisation.
- Locations in central Wallingford have been highlighted through member and resident feedback as part of the development of future programmes.

Please do continue to report on FixMyStreet so that they can be assessed and addressed in accordance with our safety policies.

Supplementary Given the importance of this issue to Wallingford residents, please will you and your officers meet with me and the concerned residents, including the mobility issues group Wallingford, on-site to prioritise the work using local knowledge, something Councillor Epps has just offered concerning the A40 London Road petition.	While I cannot at this stage confirm a specific delivery date for wider reconstruction works in the town centre, I can assure you that the concerns raised are recognised and are being actively considered as part of both ongoing safety inspections and future programme planning. Response We are looking for a date in the diary when Councillor Epps and I can come down to Wallingford and we will do that as soon as we can.
24. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW In response to highways officers requesting feedback on the emerging forward programme for the 2027/28 highway maintenance year, many residents in the Wallingford & Brightwell-cum-Sotwell division have reported dangers relating to cycling and walking and asked for active travel to be made safer. Only this week I learnt of another teenager getting hurt falling off their bike whilst cycling to school due to the poor state of the residential, low traffic, highway. Residents shouldn't need to have full-suspension mountain bikes, and equivalent skills, to take the active travel, climate- & future-generation choice. Please can you confirm to us all that the 2027/28 highway maintenance programme will prioritise spend in line with the transport hierarchy that identifies	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR The County Council fully recognises the importance of supporting active travel and the need to prioritise the safety of more vulnerable road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. This is reflected in our wider transport policies and the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which promotes a clear hierarchy of users. In developing the highway maintenance programme, including the 2027/28 forward programme, we take a data-led and risk-based approach. This ensures that: • Safety defects across both carriageways and footways are identified and addressed in line with our intervention criteria; • Locations with a higher risk to vulnerable users are given appropriate consideration; and • Member and public feedback is incorporated into the prioritisation process. The feedback received from Wallingford residents, including concerns about cycling conditions and footway quality, has been captured as part of the programme

pedestrians and then cyclists as the vulnerable? Supplementary In your description of the risk-based approach, you write that locations with a higher risk to vulnerable users will be given appropriate consideration. What does that mean in practice when it comes to investing with appropriate proportion in pavements, cycle paths and pedestrian safety, crossing roads, etc.?	development process and will be considered alongside other priorities across the county. However, it is important to be clear that the maintenance programme must balance a wide range of competing demands across Oxfordshire's extensive highway network, within the funding available. While current investment enables us to keep the network safe and address the most serious issues, it is not sufficient to address all underlying condition concerns at once. In summary, the programme is aligned with the objective of supporting safer conditions for pedestrians and cyclists, but prioritisation is undertaken using a combination of safety risk, asset condition, and available funding rather than a single factor alone. I appreciate the strength of local feeling on this issue and can assure you that the concerns raised will be carefully considered as the 2027/28 programme is developed and finalised Response We want to prioritise active travel, walking, etc. and I know that there was some extra money put into the budget this year at the request of the Green Party, which we will use to do exactly that. So, the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and others who use our roads without cars is really important to us.
25. COUNCILLOR KIERON MALLON Could the Leader explain the thought process and reason leading to the decision by Oxfordshire Leaders to withdraw support for a shadow Foundation Strategic Authority?	COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL Thank you for the question. Leaders across the Thames Valley remain strongly committed to the principle of devolution and to securing greater powers, funding and local decision-making for our area.

This would lead to a 'Thames Valley Mayoral Strategic Authority', which could have added a gross added value of £97.3 billion to the area's economy, based on the M40 and M4 corridor. The previous letter to ministers from council leaders stated, "the economic case is made" for devolution". This proposal is also backed by business leaders across the Thames Valley. Does he also agree that this u-turn has put jobs, investment and economic growth at risk?	However, the decision not to proceed at this time with a shadow Foundation Strategic Authority reflects the specific nature of the Government's current offer, rather than any loss of ambition for the region. Leaders were originally invited to develop proposals for a Mayoral Strategic Authority, which would provide significant powers, long-term investment and clear democratic accountability. The proposal subsequently presented by Government—namely a Foundation Strategic Authority—offered reduced powers, resources and benefits, alongside a geography that was not locally determined. In considering this offer, I have also had regard to the scale and economic contribution of the Thames Valley, which is recognised as significant at a national level, and whether the Foundation Strategic Authority model proposed would provide a proportionate framework to support that potential. In addition, the Government indicated a contribution of £250,000 towards the establishment of a Foundation Strategic Authority. Evidence from other areas suggests that the ongoing cost of operating such an authority is materially higher, in the region of £1 million per annum at its base level. This represents an ongoing financial commitment that would fall to local partners and has therefore been an important consideration in assessing the proposal. I also believe that it will be important to consider the outcome of the Spatial Development Strategy work and the extent to which this may inform future geography and partnership arrangements, including igniting engagement with Buckinghamshire. Given these factors, and recognising that Government expects such arrangements to be based on clear local consensus, I and other Leaders were unable to reach agreement across all participating authorities on proceeding with the devolution offer at this stage.
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Supplementary I thank the Leader for his answer. I know in his answer he suggests that the possible ongoing costs of foundation status could be £1m per annum split across the region. He will also note that the Strategic Authority could have added value to the tune of £97bn to the M4 and M40 Corridor directly affecting this council area. Does he agree with me that part of strategic leadership has to be that you sometimes have to speculate to accumulate?	It is therefore important to be clear that this is not a rejection of devolution. Rather, it is a considered position that the current offer does not provide the scale of opportunity to fully realise the economic potential of the Thames Valley. I remain willing to engage constructively with Government and continue to advocate for a model of devolution that reflects our economic geography, commands local support, and supports sustainable growth and investment for our communities. Response We don't lack ambition in this space. What we want to do is have a mayor for the region who will actually have the powers and the investment to do what we need in the Thames Valley, which is the growth engine of the country. And we ought to respect that and give it the powers and funding that it deserves.
26. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK Local businesses have been raising their concerns over the last few years about this Council's anti-car policies which harm local independent businesses and now Oxford colleges have raised the same concerns that the council's anti-car policies will harm the city. Will this administration now take any notice and review their anti-car policies?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Our policies are not anti-car; they support and promote enabling a range of ways to move around and access services and facilities that residents need and want to. Most people want the same thing: journeys that are quicker, better connected, and more reliable, regardless of whether they travel on foot, bicycle, bus or private car. Most people travel around the city by non-car modes including 90% accessing the city centre. For those that need to drive, there are a range of permits to do this in less congested conditions. If we all drive a little bit less, we will all move a lot faster. Doing nothing about Oxford's chronic congestion has never been an option. That's why we have pioneered solutions such as the country's first park and ride, and the only major congestion charge scheme outside of London.

Since the introduction of the temporary congestion charge, bus operators have been able to introduce new services, and the scheme has been supporting free park and ride bus travel from day one.

As a result, Go Ahead is now seeing a 12 per cent growth in bus patronage in Oxfordshire (April –mid-June); around 20,000 more passengers per week.

Our schemes are monitored and evaluated, and data is published for everyone to see. In our recent business survey, nearly 80 per cent of respondents said that compared to a year ago, their performance is the same or better.

City centre weekend daytime footfall figures – a good indicator of shopping and leisure activity in the city – show no signs of decline; we're seeing a slight increase from four years ago.

Period	Total pedestrians counted in Queen Street, Oxford between 10am and 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays
November 2022 - May 2023	1,248,912.00
November 2025 - May 2026	1,263,284.00

Supplementary Where I disagree, but the question remains, don't you think this administration needs to reset the policy when you look at the six businesses closing in my division. I was hoping the new cabinet member would kindly come out and meet the local residents to have a look at the impact because the question you have kindly answered in here does not reflect the picture where the business has suffered and a 70 year old business is closing.	Nationally there has been a decline in footfall Britain's towns and cities. Separating out wider economic influences from local traffic measures is not always easy when discussing the reasons why businesses are experiencing upswings and downswings. However, reducing congestion and creating the conditions for business to thrive are not mutually exclusive concepts. I'll be talking to businesses, listening and learning as we continue to develop transport solutions to maximise Oxford's potential. Response Well, I have been out visiting businesses, certainly those that have been in touch with me and been setting up meetings with local members. So, I'm very happy to have those discussions. The point here is that I think in 1937, it was unanimously agreed by this council, the City Council, Berkshire County Council then, whose boundary then came up much closer of course, and the university and the Oxford Preservation Trust that something needed to be done about congestion in Oxford. I'm very proud that this administration has finally grasped that nettle.
27. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK The County Council's Active Travel Policy clearly encourages people to walk or ride a bicycle. Do you agree that cyclists and pedestrians' safety is paramount? Why has it taken more than three months to repaint the pelican crossing in my Cowley division, by Marsh Park, which is a very busy crossing for	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I have had it confirmed that officers are aware of the refreshment need and it is planned for inclusion in the first batch of the 2026/27 lining programme. When it was assessed, whilst it was agreed relining was required, officers did not seem it as meeting the criteria to be treated as emergency works. To confirm, officers will continue to monitor the condition of the crossing markings,

pedestrians and cyclists using this route for the local school and to the city centre via Donnington? Is this Council's policy to be full of slogans and empty promises and failing to protect cyclists and pedestrians in reality? Supplementary I totally disagree with the answer because if we really mean to support the active travel, that's a main cycling route used by children, commuters to Donnington, the City Centre and the school, to the Old St Gregory School. And if the officers are saying this is not a priority, the question is, can I have the date please? When will this pedestrian crossing be repainted? Just saying 26-27 does not give an indication because it's gone more than six months now. The lamppost has not been repaired. So, there's no visibility. The pedestrian safety is in danger.	and if before the planned works are due, it is considered they have degraded to a point where it needs to be considered for an emergency/immediate repair, then this will be done. Much as we would like to bring forward works more quickly, we are working in the context of over £24 million of Government cuts to Oxfordshire's budget. Response The councillor will need to write to the cabinet member responsible for highway maintenance repair to get that answer.
28. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON Following repeated requests from me as the local County Councillor, senior highways officers have confirmed there are no plans to trial removal of the traffic signals at the Orchard Centre junction in Didcot or investigate alternative junction arrangements, despite a recent period when the signals were out of operation following damage to the power cabinet, during which residents reported noticeably improved traffic flow and reduced	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Whilst traffic flow may have improved as a result of the signals being out of operation, there are concerns for vehicular safety (in particular right turn out of the orchard centre) and importantly pedestrian accessibility which means progressing with a trial is not considered appropriate. • Safety: Due to the volume of traffic on Hitchcock Way and the speed of cars approaching, signalisation is required to ensure that the junction operates as efficiently as possible and to avoid drivers making risky turning movements

congestion.

Given that the Orchard Centre junction was designed and consented prior to substantial housing growth in Didcot and while major transport schemes intended to mitigate traffic impacts — including HIF1, NPR3 and the Didcot Central Corridor — remain delayed or undelivered, does the Cabinet Member agree that decisions on future operation of this junction should be based on current traffic conditions and observed network performance rather than historic modelling and assumptions about future infrastructure, and will he meet me on site with officers to review the evidence?

across traffic into and out of the Orchard Centre. This is supported by Oxfordshire's LTCP and Vision Zero which include a target to have zero, or as close as possible, road fatalities or serious injuries by 2050.

- **Safety and accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians trying to cross the road (including vulnerable road users):** Due to the speed and volume of traffic and the wide road present, anyone crossing that road would require signalisation to facilitate their active travel movements. This supports walking and cycling policies (policies 1 – 6) within Oxfordshire's LTCP which focus on active travel priority and aim to provide safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Strategy:** The overarching transport strategy for the area includes schemes such as HIF1 and NPR3 which aim to reduce traffic in the centre of Didcot by encouraging people travelling through Didcot to use the A4130 instead. This will have an impact on traffic levels and congestion on Hitchcock Way. In addition, specific amendments to the Hitchcock Way / Orchard Centre junction are not included within the Science Vale Movement and Place Plan (Science Vale MAPP) which brings together all the projects in the area requiring our attention and investment and directs us to which projects to prioritise in the future. Changes to the traffic signals at this junction are also not included in the approved Didcot Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

I can confirm that there is work underway to help to improve traffic flows on Hitchcock Way. to investigate the potential for changes to the signal timings to make them more efficient at this junction and to optimise traffic flows. We have also had discussions with the Orchard Centre Management Company and will continue to work with them on their car park design and function to ensure that queuing caused by their business is catered for within their car park rather than on the highway network.

In addition, the County Council's Travel Plans Team are working to address the

Supplementary Given that the junction was designed before the significant and ongoing growth in the Didcot area and the major highway schemes which remain years overdue, do you accept residents should not have to continue living in today's congestion simply because the promised road and cycle infrastructure has yet to be delivered? And will you commit to reviewing that junction based on current real-world traffic conditions rather than historical assumptions.	travel behaviour of people travelling to the Orchard Centre to investigate whether car use to the site can be reduced. This will help to ensure that as many journeys as possible are made by sustainable modes, rather than single occupancy car use, which will also help to reduce congestion on Hitchcock Way. This is supported by LTCP policy 11 which states that OCC will work with employers and businesses in the county to improve promotion and education of travel choices. I have been invited by Cllr Worgan to visit Didcot to look at issues raised regarding pedestrian and cycle access between Ladygrove to the centre of Didcot and would also be happy to meet Cllr Snowden and others representing Didcot whose residents would be directly affected. Response There is clearly a need to look at traffic flows on Hitchcock Way. I did highlight that with my initial response. I think it would be worthwhile having a meeting with the Members on site to look at what can be done in what's a slightly constrained space with the railway on one side.
29. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON The administration has repeatedly argued that the long-term economic and environmental benefits of its transport and growth policies outweigh short-term disruption and delay.	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY Housing and employment growth is generally planned alongside infrastructure, for example in Local Plans and Local Transport Plans. Some 'growth' is directly linked to infrastructure using requirements within planning permissions. Where possible, we seek to work proactively in advance of developments coming

However, Oxfordshire County Council has previously had to withdraw business footfall analysis after concerns about the reliability of HUQ data that had been used publicly to support economic claims.

Can the Cabinet Member explain what reliable measures the council now uses to assess the economic impact of delayed infrastructure delivery and transport disruption across Oxfordshire, and whether the administration has quantified those costs to local businesses and local economies?

In my own division, residents and businesses are still waiting for three major highway infrastructure improvements that have been delayed over many years despite significant housing and employment growth proceeding in the meantime.

How does the Cabinet Member justify continuing to support growth where the enabling infrastructure remains incomplete?

Supplementary

Using the same example, in Didcot we have had thousands of new homes and employment zones, but not the road and cycle infrastructure that were meant to accompany them. Businesses are living with the consequences today, so if the Council has not quantified the economic cost of these infrastructure delays, on what evidence can the administration continue to claim that growth is being properly supported in Oxfordshire?

forward to ensure necessary infrastructure is in place. However, it is sometimes possible that either the 'growth' and/or the infrastructure does not come forward as originally intended, which is often linked to planning permissions and funding.

If Councillor Snowdon has a specific example, officers would be happy to discuss further.

Response

It wasn't entirely clear in the question which schemes you were referring to but I am happy to take this away and give you a more detailed answer now that you have clarified.

30. WITHDRAWN	
31. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS In recent months, we have tragically seen a fatality on the A420 in my division. I am sorry to say that this came as little surprise to me and many of my residents because, as I have previously highlighted in this chamber, we have grave concerns about the safety of junctions along the A420. Will the Cabinet Member commit to working with me on a comprehensive study of traffic volumes and junction safety (for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians) on the A420 at Littleworth, Buckland, Hinton Waldrist, Pusey, Longworth, and Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, and to publishing the findings and recommendations in the next six months? Thank you. Supplementary Tragically, this year has already seen a fatality on the A420 in my division, but Councillor Epps refused in his answer to commit to the proposed A420 corridor study that could improve road safety. Why?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Vision Zero schemes on the A420 include the recent speed limit reductions on the Faringdon and Shrivenham bypasses and at the Tubney Woods dual carriageway, together with a junction improvement at the Pinewood Road / Charney Bassett Road staggered junction programmed to be carried out in September 2026; the planned A and B road speed limit review will also consider further changes put forward as part of the forthcoming stakeholder consultation. Additionally, the VZ team will continue to closely monitor safety on the network including this part of the A420 to identify schemes for future programmes. <u>The assistance of Thames Valley Police in pursuing average speed enforcement would also help.</u> Maintenance needs at the A420 junctions continue to be reviewed as part of our day-to day operational role across the network. The place planning team also have an A420 Corridor Study on their forward plan, however the exact scope of this has not yet been defined and there is currently no capacity or funding to conduct these works, <u>in the context of the cuts of over £24 million imposed by the Government.</u> Response As Councillor Evans should be aware, and his parishes will be aware, the Vision Zero team has just done a series of comprehensive studies on the A420 and other roads. I'm very happy to share that information with him and set up with my office a briefing with officers going through the detail of it. I have to add, as I said in my answer, the other thing we need on the A420 is average speed cameras and I'd be very, very grateful if he can have a word with his friends in Thames Valley Police to

	see if they can bring that forward as they seem to be spending an awful lot of interest in that area or on other matters just now.
32. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS Several residents have contacted me regarding the length of time it is taking to process Blue Badge applications. In one case, following a major medical incident, a family invested a significant amount of money in a new vehicle for a newly disabled relative, only to face a lengthy wait for the Blue Badge application to be processed. To help us understand the scale of delays, can the Cabinet Member tell me: the average length of time between receipt of an application and a decision being made on a Blue Badge application, broken down by quarter for each of the past three years; whether the Council has undertaken any formal review of the Blue Badge application process in recent years, with a view to simplifying the process and/or reducing processing times; and if so what actions and improvements have followed? Thank you Supplementary The written answer shows that when the administration introduced a congestion charge, they did not consider the impact it would have on blue badge applications, and disabled people were left waiting up to 14 weeks over three months for their blue badges. Will the cabinet member now	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION I have attached data showing the volume of blue badge applications over the last three years. As you will see, we had a significant spike in referrals from the start of pre-registration for the congestion charge which lasted until April. Residents have applied for Blue Badges to gain an exemption from paying the Congestion Charge, and the increased sustained volume in not just applications but emails and telephone calls extended processing times. Alongside the improvement work already in place, we are working closely with IT to look at how automaton can support in speeding up processing times. We are continuing to make improvements to the process and are now turning applications round within two weeks. Without any specific identifiers I would not be able to comment on individual cases but if these can be provided, I will look into it. <i>*See Appendix 1 below for further information</i> Response I am, of course, very sorry if anyone was unnecessarily delayed. Of course, I'm very proud of the work that our call centre does, both online and on the end of the phone. I think it works really well and it's constantly kept under review. I think there's a perfectly valid point that if we introduce a new policy, that is likely to cause a spike, we should take that into account and we will do so.

apologise to disabled residents for the delays and promise to formally review the process for blue badge applications to make it easier for residents?	
33. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS Recent Cabinet papers showed that, against planned capital investment of £343.6 million in 2025/26, the Council's actual expenditure was just £231.3 million. This funding is intended, among other things, to deliver major infrastructure projects, maintain our highways assets, and provide additional pupil places. Usually, I might welcome an underspend as representing savings or better value for money, but this is instead a story of money not being invested in our communities at the rate that the Council leadership has promised. And I am, in fact, concerned that delays to capital expenditure could increase the eventual cost of projects. What assessment has the Cabinet Member made of additional costs incurred by the Council's capital programme over the past three years as a result of delays to planned expenditure?	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION The Council recognises that delays and rephasing within the capital programme can increase exposure to cost pressures, particularly in relation to construction inflation, materials costs, supply chain pressures and the costs associated with maintaining project teams over longer delivery periods. However, the Council does not currently hold evidence that the programme as a whole has become financially undeliverable as a result of delayed expenditure. The capital programme continues to be managed within its approved funding envelope, with pressures monitored through established governance and escalated for decision where required. It is also important to distinguish between in-year financial slippage and project delay. Some of the difference between planned and actual expenditure reflects the timing of payments moving between financial years, rather than schemes stopping or failing to progress. Many schemes continue to move forward, including some that remain on site or within approved budgets, even where spend has been reprofiled. That said, the Council accepts that extended delivery timeframes can increase the likelihood of additional costs. Recent Cabinet approvals have included targeted budget increases, including £1.4m for A34 Lodge Hill, £1.8m for Access to Witney, and £2.5m for A4130 Steventon Lights. There have also been significant increases over recent years on larger schemes, including HIF1 and additional budget provision for Watlington Relief Road through the budget-setting process. These pressures are assessed case by case as part of ongoing programme monitoring, budget management and governance reporting. Where tender prices

Supplementary The answer acknowledges that, to quote, “delays and rephasing within the capital programme can increase exposure to cost pressures”. But it seems the Council has undertaken no proper analysis of the total cost of such delays, which I find staggering. Will the cabinet member now commit to undertaking a holistic review of the impact of delays in the capital program on overall program costs?	exceed expectations, or where scope and affordability need to be revisited, schemes may be paused, refined, de-risked or re-scoped before progressing. This is intended to protect value for money and ensure that decisions are based on realistic cost and delivery assumptions. The Council is also taking further action to improve delivery certainty and reduce future exposure to cost escalation. This includes strengthening programme-level reporting, improving visibility of scheme progress beyond in-year spend, reviewing scope and affordability earlier in the project lifecycle, and continuing to embed stronger project and programme management disciplines across the capital portfolio. Response I don't acknowledge at all that there is no review of delays in the capital programme. There's a continual delay in the capital programme and a huge amount of effort that goes into making sure both that the data originally is right, the programmes are properly timed within our capital programme, and that the relevant amounts of capital are allocated to each scheme, unlike what happened under the previous administration. And let's remember that we are still putting in place now those schemes that were dumped on this administration without proper costing.
34. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW The development of Wallingford's LCWIP is very welcome. I and residents thank officers for their work on this, and the Cabinet Member for Transport Management for signing it off in April. As we all know, for an LCWIP to make a difference on the ground today, to mitigate and adapt to climate change for current and future generations, and practically support the social inequity issue of active travel, these plans need funding. How much	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) are undertaken to identify key routes within settlements, improvements to help increase their level of use, and assist with funding opportunities to deliver them. Oxfordshire County Council has completed LCWIPs for 14 different parts of the county, with five more planned. Part of this includes a prioritisation task, which seeks to order the identified improvements to aid with prioritising funding as and when it becomes available. All these improvements have been put together, having been assessed against the same prioritisation criteria, and are consolidated into one list which will be used for countywide funding opportunities, such as OCC capital funding or Active

funding is there in the 2026-7 budget for putting in place the LCWIP priorities in Wallingford, and which measures will be prioritised, and how?

Supplementary

Please could you provide for me a quantified financial breakdown of the 2026/27 investment plan for highways improvement and maintenance in the Wallingford division comparing investment in the following:

- Smooth safe progress for wheeled vehicles on roads
- Investment for pedestrians crossing roads

Travel England funding. Ongoing monitoring of the list means that when other opportunities arise, the schemes on the list are up to date with their delivery status. This is to say that, for example, should CIL become available locally in South Oxfordshire, the South Oxfordshire LCWIPs will be pooled for CIL where there aren't other means of funding the works. Additionally, when opportunities arise with housing or employment developments, Section 278 agreements can be made for any such development to directly deliver any LCWIP improvement within the vicinity of the site, and/or collect S.106 contributions as means for progressing works.

The LCWIP list of improvements is for all highway and transport teams to utilise when developing and identifying programmes so there will be many opportunities for the delivery of works. This may include the resurfacing of roads to include cycle symbols to raise awareness of the presence of people cycling, or routine maintenance of footway repairs. This may also be through the vision zero or active travel programmes. Or if the Town Council have the means to do so, they are able to deliver on improvements identified, too. Officers are always on the lookout for these chances to develop and deliver the schemes, however, due to the nature of funding opportunities and the LCWIPs, it is not practical to set out a clear LCWIP scheme/works prioritisation framework due to the varied nature of the funding opportunities.

The imposition of over £24 million of Labour Government cuts is bound to impact service delivery, but I will commit to minimising its impact on this important work.

Response

I didn't note all of that down but if you send that to me in writing, I will happily answer that in full.

- Cycle paths - Footpaths and pavements along with an explanation of the prioritisation process and how that is guided by OCC's number 1 strategic risk: climate action?	
35. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB Back in March, the previous Cabinet Member advised that the Windrush Valley Freight Study would be completed in the Spring, and that work on the Cumnor & Farmoor Freight Study, covering the B4017, B4044 and B4449, would progress before the Summer. We are now in late June and there has been no further update to members or to parish stakeholders. Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the current position of the Windrush Valley Freight Study, including whether the final report has been completed and when it will be published, and set out a clear timetable for progressing the Cumnor & Farmoor Freight Study? In addition, it would be helpful to understand what steps are being taken in the interim to address the ongoing concerns raised by affected parishes regarding freight traffic on the B4017, B4044 and B4449.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Thank you for your query regarding the draft freight study covering the B4017, B4044 and B4449. This scheme has been treated as interdependent with the work on the Windrush Valley Freight Study, which has taken longer to progress than anticipated. As reported in March, it was anticipated that Officers would be able to allocate resource back to the B4017, B4044 and B4449 before the Summer, which hasn't been possible due to further work being required on the Windrush Valley study. I've offered to meet local County Councillors representing these areas to try and expedite progress. On a more positive note, Officer work is now concluding on reviewing the proposal from lobby group WIVTAG for a large Area Weight Restriction for the Windrush Valley area both north and south of the A40, extending into Gloucestershire, and I am due to be briefed on this and will then carefully consider the way forward. Officers have included in that report that the WIVTAG proposal doesn't meet the objectives of the parishes on the B4449, B4044 and B4017 as heavy vehicles would still be able to route to Blackditch via this route. In addition, I'm aware Highways Operations officers are making progress with the Parish of Stanton Harcourt on the traffic calming features. In terms of taking forward the traffic surveys, Officers are progressing an internal business case to release held S106 funding to survey the Blackditch junction to provide greater evidence as to how heavy vehicles are routing.

36. COUNCILLOR BETHIA THOMAS There has been some speculation about the roll-out of the new quiet lanes scheme over the last month. When I first heard about the scheme some time ago, I considered all the parishes in my division and any road that I thought might be suitable for this scheme, where residents have already flagged traffic problems. I could only think of one possibility and did raise this with the parish, in this example, Buscot Wick in Buscot Parish, though I believe they have not pursued it because they thought it would not be suitable for that settlement. Recently, in Faringdon, one member of the town council was concerned that a quiet lane was being foisted upon Faringdon town centre, I explained to him that this was not the case, but concerns arose and I would like to reassure all town and parish members within my division that the implementation of quiet lanes would be entirely within their gift. Given the controversy that seems to have arisen around the scheme can the Cabinet Member set out the scheme, clarifying that Faringdon town centre will not become a quiet lane unless it was the express wish of the town council?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Quiet lanes form part of the county council's commitment to making roads safer and encouraging sustainable travel. By removing through traffic, quiet lanes can reduce vehicle numbers and speeds, lower the risk and severity of collisions, and make minor roads feel calmer and safer. New quiet lanes will only be taken forward where there is an explicit request and demonstrated support from the parish or town council and county council elected member. If a site is not supported and does not meet the criteria published in the guidance it will not go ahead. I can confirm that we have not received an application for a quiet lane in either Buscot Wick or Faringdon town centre but would welcome the opportunity to work with parish and town councils, and local members, should either area decide to apply to the pilot programme. We plan to pilot up to 10 quiet lanes as part of our new programme and are working with parish councils and elected county councillors to identify sites and work out if they are feasible to deliver. Not all requests will be successful. Before any sites are trialled, we expect to see dialogue with residents and other stakeholders, including businesses such as farms, to understand potential impacts and help to decide whether to continue developing an individual quiet lane. If a quiet lane does go ahead as a trial, changes can be made. All pilot sites will be consulted on and no decisions on whether to remove or make them permanent will be made until a pilot is evaluated.

37. COUNCILLOR BETHIA THOMAS I have recently met with a number of SEND parents in Faringdon. Talking to them was enlightening and I felt I was able to understand some of the issues they face supporting their children every day. We are considering setting up an informal support group for SEND Parents and Carers for children in our schools and we are considering options around this, including asking any experts in the field, either from individual schools, the trust, the voluntary sector or the council to join us to discuss various aspects of SEND provision within Faringdon. To start this process off on the right foot, could the Cabinet Member provide an update and overview of the provision at this point across all settings, including the new SEND school which is being built in Faringdon?	COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Thank you for raising this and for the work you have undertaken to engage directly with SEND parents and carers in Faringdon. Hearing from families about their lived experience is essential to ensuring our provision is responsive, inclusive and continuously improving. Current provision in Faringdon and Wantage SEND sufficiency planning across Oxfordshire is organised around nine planning areas, with Faringdon sitting within the <i>Faringdon and Wantage</i> area. Within this locality, there is a mix of specialist and enhanced mainstream provision: • Fitzwaryn School (Wantage, Propeller Trust) A community special school with capacity for 125 children and young people aged 3–19, supporting a wide range of needs including physical disabilities, learning difficulties and complex needs. • Enhanced Pathway provisions (primary and secondary): These offer a hybrid model between mainstream and specialist provision, enabling children to access personalised curricula within mainstream settings: ○ <i>Shrivenham CE Primary (Cambrian Trust)</i> – 10 places (ages 4–7), Communication and Interaction ○ <i>Stockham CE Primary</i> – 10 places (ages 7–11), Communication and Interaction and SEMH ○ <i>King Alfred's School</i> – 10 places (ages 11–13), supporting a broader range of needs These pathways are a key part of our strategy to strengthen inclusion and meet needs earlier, reducing escalation where possible.

	Planned expansion of specialist provision We are significantly increasing specialist capacity in and around Faringdon to respond to rising demand: • Artemis Academy, Faringdon (Gallery Trust) ○ 100 places for children aged 7–19 ○ Specialising in SEMH and ASD ○ Being delivered through the Department for Education’s free school programme ○ Construction is underway and on track for completion in February 2027, with opening planned for after February half-term • Wider South Oxfordshire provision (Didcot) While just outside the immediate locality, two new special schools are planned to open in 2029 (subject to approvals), providing capacity for a further 240 children: ○ One ASD/SEMH school (age 7+) ○ One all-age community special school (2–19) Together, these developments will significantly strengthen sufficiency in the south-west of the county, reducing travel distances and improving access to appropriate provision. In addition, as part of our SEND Reform programme, we are actively working with multi-academy trusts to establish further resource base provision (within mainstream schools), initially focused on secondary but extending into primary over time. Wider system improvements Alongside increased capacity, our reform programme is focused on: • Earlier identification and support through locality-based, multi-agency working • Improved consistency and quality of provision across all schools
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- Greater access to specialist advice within mainstream settings
- Stronger co-production with families

Engagement with parents and carers

We recognise that improving provision is not only about capacity, but also about relationships and trust. Across Oxfordshire, we are strengthening engagement with parents and carers through:

- Regular **parent carer forums and co-production activity** at both county and locality level
- **Local engagement events and listening sessions**
- Increased opportunities for families to shape services and provide feedback on their experiences

The proposal to establish an informal SEND parent and carer support group in Faringdon is very welcome. Local spaces for parents to connect, share experiences and engage directly with professionals can play a vital role in strengthening community support and ensuring services are responsive to need.

As part of our SEND Reform Plan, we are strengthening the role of the Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum (PCF) in supporting locality-based delivery. This includes working alongside Family Hub and school clusters to facilitate local engagement, bring together parent voices, and support co-production of solutions at a community level. Through this approach, the PCF helps ensure that cluster-level planning and provision are informed by lived experience and remain responsive to the needs of families.

We will continue to work with partners across schools, trusts, the voluntary sector and council services to contribute expertise, provide information, and listen to feedback as this develops.

Response

I'm happy to meet with any Member on this discussion. If anybody wants to involve

Supplementary I believe you recognise that communication with SEND parents is a continuing process and sometimes best done locally. So, I wanted confirmation from you that you will continue to work with me and other division Members as well as other partners so that we can improve lives of our residents.	me or children's officers on anything SEND related, I'm very happy to set some time aside. Continuous improvement is the journey that we're on. I know that we've made good progress. I know that we've still got improvements to be made. But yes, this is a very sincere offer, yes.
38. COUNCILLOR PAUL AUSTIN SARGENT Heat stress poses a significant health risk for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and those living with underlying medical conditions. High temperatures can quickly overwhelm the body's ability to regulate itself, leading to dehydration, heat exhaustion, or even heatstroke. Older adults are particularly vulnerable because their bodies are less effective at cooling down, and certain medications can further increase the risk. People with chronic conditions, such as heart or respiratory problems, may find their symptoms worsening in hot weather. Similarly, those with mobility or cognitive impairments may struggle to take the necessary steps to stay cool and hydrated. I would like to inquire about Oxfordshire County Council's plans and initiatives to support retrofitting residential properties, particularly in more deprived	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY As we are seeing this week, with temperatures of 37 degrees and a Red Extreme Heat Warning from the Met Office, climate change is having a significant impact and we will continue to see increased instances of extreme heat. Extreme heat is a significant public health risk. With this June set to be the hottest June on record in Oxfordshire, we are continuing to invest and promote heat management to residents. Many people living in poorly designed or alternative housing or on low incomes struggle to keep their homes a comfortable and safe temperature. This is a particular risk for those living with health conditions and disabilities. Residents can access advice via the County Council's Keeping Cool webpages for practical and low-cost actions. This is supported by the seasonal campaign "Beat the Heat" which is targeted at higher-risk groups. OCC is also developing 'cool packs' for the first time this year, to distribute to residents at higher risk of heat impacts via routes including through community groups to help residents stay cool and safe in extreme heat. Through established programmes such as Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) and shortly through the developing Heat Safe Homes programme residents will be able to access, tailored advice through home visits. This targeted and tailored advice supports residents during heatwaves and during colder weather so addressing inequalities through the

neighbourhoods such as those in Grimsbury and on the Ruscote Estate in my Banbury division.

Are there any schemes or guidance for homeowners to improve insulation, ventilation, or shading to maintain comfort during periods of extreme heat?

Supplementary

Could you detail how residents and parishes can access the call packs and tailored advice for individuals? You mentioned community groups, but that seems a little bit haphazard. And could Members be informed of the provision in their areas? And secondly, would the cabinet member agree that the planting of trees in neighbourhoods can provide cool places? However, we must balance that with fire risk and risk to damage to buildings. We need the right trees, the right species of tree in the right place.

wider determinants of health.

There is no central government funding currently specifically designed to support retrofit of homes that suffer from overheating. The council receives central government grants to support retrofitting measures for homes in fuel poverty. Whilst some measures deliverable under these schemes would also support summer cooling, the funding is designed to improve winter comfort and in practice the mechanics of the scheme limit its use to. The council is also aware of avoiding risks of exacerbating overheating through retrofit programmes designed to deal with winter cold issues. As such the council is participating in the national research programme HEARTH on Health, Net Zero and extreme heat which is studying the effects of retrofit on health.

In communities we are providing training on risks associated with a changing climate and advising on producing community resilience plans. A small grant fund can support communities with measures to help with adaptation such as canopies to create shade in community areas or green roofs to help cooling.

We'd be happy to meet and discuss what opportunities there might be to support community resilience to heatwaves in his division.

Response

On the first one, I think that that's a really good point. While I think that we have scaled up our communications between the first heatwave this year and the 2nd heatwave this year, I think that there is a very clear point that there's more that we can do. And I think that if the anticipated forecast for next week is correct, then we will have an opportunity, unfortunately, very soon to do even better. If anybody, not just yourself, but anybody else has any comments about how we can do that, please do feel free to get in touch. In terms of trees, absolutely take the point. Trees are an incredibly effective way at promoting urban cooling. But there are also downsides and they need careful maintenance, especially around root systems and around fire risk, as do grasses and other sort of natural management, which can promote both cooling and protection against flooding. It all needs to be looked at. And I think as the

	UK becomes a hotter climate, this is something that we'll have to develop significant expertise in very, very quickly. But I think that it's a very important point. It's something we're very aware of and that we will be looking at in more detail.
39. COUNCILLOR PAUL AUSTIN SARGENT What is being done across Oxfordshire to improve the outcomes for people with dual diagnosis (substance use and mental health), and how is the impact of existing intervention measured and reported? What joint commitments does Oxfordshire County Council have with lesser authorities and NHS commissioners/providers to reduce inequalities for people with dual diagnosis. How is this work being delivered in practice?	COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES Summary response Oxfordshire is improving outcomes for people with co-occurring mental health and substance use needs through flexible treatment, earlier identification, co-ordinated support through integrated partnership working and targeted outreach. Impact is monitored through contract management, service reporting, reviews, feedback and national benchmarking, with further work needed to strengthen data on outcomes for people with dual diagnosis. 1. What is being done to improve outcomes? Oxfordshire Roads to Recovery, the commissioned community alcohol and drug service delivered by Turning Point, provides high quality flexible, person-centred support for people with substance use and mental health needs. This includes pharmacological support, psychosocial interventions, recovery-focused work and individual, group, home-based and digital options to reduce barriers to access. Support considers wider physical, mental and social needs, helping address these challenges together while promoting peer learning and mutual support. In line with national guidance, the service identifies dual diagnosis early, does not exclude people because of substance use or mental health need, and considers wider physical, mental and social needs. It also supports professionals to understand substance use and referral pathways. Current improvement priorities include reducing access barriers, strengthening links with primary care and mental health services, improving pathways for co-occurring needs, and ensuring support is responsive to neurodivergence. A new Lived Experience Advisory Group, due to begin in 2026, will inform service development,

	strategic planning and delivery of the new drugs and alcohol strategy. 2. How is this being delivered in practice? Oxfordshire Roads to Recovery operates a 'no wrong door' approach and works closely with mental health services to reduce fragmentation and improve engagement for people with co-occurring conditions. This includes: • Weekly in-reach at Littlemore forensic secure wards, the Warneford Hospital, and supported mental health accommodation, including MIND properties • Work with the Emergency Department Psychiatric Service, including monthly staff supervision for complex cases • Monthly attendance at Community Mental Health Team meetings • Joint protocols with IAPT Talking Therapies and Keystone Primary Mental Health Teams to support rapid referrals and joint assessments • Collaboration with Oxfordshire Health & Inclusion and CRSIS Home Treatment Teams to support people discharged from hospital with mental health and homelessness needs These arrangements help bridge gaps between services. The ongoing review of the Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Delivery Framework will further strengthen local pathways and responses. Dual diagnosis is also a priority in the new drugs and alcohol strategy, shaped through stakeholder engagement across health, housing, criminal justice and community partners. 3. How is impact measured and reported? Impact is monitored through quarterly contract monitoring, service reporting, outcome and service reviews, onsite visits, feedback and co-production. Required improvements are agreed with providers and tracked through contract management. Data is submitted to the National Drug Treatment Monitoring System (NDTMS), enabling comparison with national, South East and other local authority benchmarks. Smaller-area data is available in some cases, but its use may be limited where low
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Supplementary Could you explain what the pathway is for people with dual diagnosis? I'm not sure that it's actually mentioned or detailed in the answer given. And how do we actually engage with chaotic	numbers risk identification. Outcomes for people with co-occurring mental health conditions are not yet routinely monitored. Strengthening this data will help identify unmet need, access issues, outcomes and inequalities. Outreach and engagement also target areas of identified need, including Ruscote, Neithrop and Grimsbury, to reduce access barriers where possible. 4. What joint commitments are in place? Oxfordshire County Council works with district councils, NHS commissioners and providers, and voluntary and community sector partners to reduce inequalities for people with dual diagnosis. This includes shared work through: • Oxfordshire Inclusion Health Partnership, bringing statutory, voluntary and community organisations together to improve outcomes for people facing significant inequalities. • Countywide Housing Steering Group, keeping substance use and mental health central to housing solutions. • Collaboration with Oxford Health Mental Health Crisis and Urgent Care Teams on alcohol and drug-related needs. A practical example is the Oxfordshire Mental Health Outcomes Improvement Programme (MHOIP), where work with Oxford Health Mental Health Crisis and Urgent Care Teams is improving staff understanding of addiction and mental health, strengthening communication and referral pathways, increasing access to practical resources, and developing substance use champions. Response Thank you, Councillor Sargent for the question. Also, thank you for your collaborative approach on this. I don't have that level of detail right now, but I'd be more than happy to meet with you and go through how we deal with this.
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behaviours so often exhibited by people suffering dual diagnosis?

Appendix 1 – MQ32

Year	Month	Processing time (weeks)
2023	June	4
	July	3
	Aug	6
	Sept	6
	Oct	4
	Nov	4
	Dec	4
2024	Jan	3
	Feb	4
	Mar	3
	Apr	4
	May	4
	June	3
	July	5
	Aug	5
	Sept	3
	Oct	4
	Nov	4
	Dec	3

2025	Jan	3
	Feb	3
	Mar	4
	Apr	4
	May	6
	June	4
	July	6
	Aug	8
	Sept	12
	Oct	13
	Nov	14
	Dec	14
2026	Jan	12
	Feb	12
	Mar	8
	Apr	4
	May	3
	June	2

The Council has undergone a review of the blue badge service which began in April 2025. Collaboration between the Blue Badge Team and the Council's internal IT Development Team have worked on redesigning the application process and introducing automation to assist residents when applying for Blue Badges.

In September 2025 the Council went live with a new Fast Track service for terminally ill residents. This new service allows Health Professionals to request Blue Badges for their patients without delay, meaning Blue Badges can be with terminally ill residents in around 10/15 days. The feedback from our partners in health has been very positive.

Unfortunately, the wider improvements to the overall Blue Badge application form and system have been delayed due to unforeseen circumstances with our current supplier. The work internally is still ongoing, and we are looking to go live with aspects of improvements over the summer.

I appreciate that there have been delays to processing Blue Badge applications, however, as you can see from the tables above and below, the delay in processing Blue Badges has been due to the increased volume of applications received since the Congestion Charge has been introduced.

Unfortunately, residents have applied for Blue Badges to gain an exemption from paying the Congestion Charge, and the increased sustained volume in not just applications but emails and telephone calls extended processing times.

Month/Year	Apps Rece ived	Apps Appr oved	Apps Ref use d
June 2024	481	289	74
July	592	551	139
Aug	572	541	164
Sept	536	390	87
Oct	538	477	109
Nov	460	502	122
Dec	312	311	90
Jan 2025	499	482	155
Feb	503	383	100
March	543	421	106
April	452	325	86
May	497	401	71
June	593	303	57
July	608	478	74
Aug	606	145	40
Sept	601	125	30
Oct	749	574	224
Nov	607	455	152

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Dec	436	295	109
Jan 2026	606	322	91
Feb	553	318	79
March	661	293	77
April	608	481	155
May	532	756	199