

## CABINET – 26 APRIL 2022

### ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p><b>1. COUNCILLOR FREDDIE VAN MIERLO</b></p> <p>In reply to a question at the last Cabinet meeting you told me that "There will be no East West corridor. This scheme [HIF1] will form no part of a through route for strategic travel. This is a route for local use not a through route as you so rightly say and we have the powers and the flexibility to be able to make that the case and to make that irrevocably the case."</p> <p>We know that National Highways are working on a solution to reduce the traffic on the A34 and we know that one of their previous plans to do this was to build an East West corridor between the A34 and the M40 south of Abingdon. If they should propose this again, could you outline what powers we have to make sure this is irrevocably not the case?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL &amp; DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b></p> <p>National Highway are currently progressing a study called 'A34 improvements north and south of Oxford.' This study is looking at options to principally address congestion and safety issues on the A34 between the M4 and M40 junctions. National Highways have not shared any information on options with OCC, but say that they may undertake a non-statutory consultation on these this summer, subject to central government sign-off. The County Council would need to consider any proposals carefully before responding to this consultation, in particular taking into account our emerging Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, but also any more specific plans we have for transport measures across Oxfordshire, for example the current Oxford proposals.</p> <p>In terms of next steps following any non-statutory consultation, National Highways would then need to produce an outline and then full business case to secure funding, alongside undertaking any required formal planning submissions. This is likely to be in the form of a Development Consent Order (DCO) process, which would include an examination in public. The DCO process would be overseen by the Planning Inspectorate, with recommendations on whether to progress with granting of permission given to the Secretary of State for a final decision. The County Council as</p>

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	<p>the Highway Authority would be a statutory consultee in this process.</p> <p>Further information on the A34 study is at the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.nationalhighways.co.uk/A34-improvements-north-and-south-of-oxford">A34 improvements north and south of Oxford - Highways England (nationalhighways.co.uk)</a></p> <p>Further information on the Development Consent Order planning process is at the following link:</p> <p><a href="https://www.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/the-process-national-infrastructure-planning">The process   National Infrastructure Planning (planninginspectorate.gov.uk)</a></p>
<p><b>2. COUNCILLOR FREDDIE VAN MIERLO</b></p> <p>The paper published for Cabinet March 15th 2022, Didcot Garden Town Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF1), stated without HIF1 a lack of infrastructure may impact strategic development sites, including Chalgrove Airfield. Notwithstanding that SODC's Local Plan explicitly states that it is not reliant on the site within the first 5 years, and no building is anticipated until 2025/6 at the very earliest, the airfield development has never been named in HIF1 applications. Will the Cabinet member correct the record that Chalgrove Airfield is not a reason to deliver the HIF1 project? Can you also report back as to why this development was referred to in the paper?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL &amp; DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b></p> <p>As stated in the Cabinet meeting of the 15th March, the reference to HIF Dicot scheme directly in relation to Chalgrove was an error. Chalgrove site is not linked to the HIF infrastructure or the business case for the funding. However, it is acknowledged that the HIF scheme will support the wider transport networks across South and Vale.</p>
<p><b>3. COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW</b></p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR GLYNIS PHILLIPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES</b></p>

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<p>I am advised that the council is to spend £5000 per annum on a councillor aid system called 'Caseworker'. That amounts to £15,000 between now and the end of your administration in 2025. The Conservative Group has already declared it has no use for this system, and only 12 councillors across all parties have indicated interest. Why are you unnecessarily spending so much council-taxpayer money on this indulgence wanted by less than 20% of councillors?</p>	<p>Caseworker.gov is a casework management tool that allows for easy monitoring and responding to residents' queries and comments with improved workflow for elected members, particularly for the management of workloads and assistance with engagement with residents. Whilst 12 councillors have expressed an interest in being involved so far this can be easily expanded if others would like to use the system, at a cost of under £200 per additional user. We are committed to providing modern and effective ICT tools and equipment to support all Members in their roles and answering residents' queries and comments is an essential element of the councillor role. Please get in touch directly with the ICT team if you would like to use the tool.</p>
<p><b>4. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</b></p> <p>In their recent White Paper on Education the government reiterated the statement from their previous White Paper that they would review the working of the 'in-year' admissions process. As the County is both corporate parent for children in care and also responsible for part of the in-year admissions process, can the Cabinet Member please identify:</p> <p>A] how many children taken into care since the May 2021 County elections, and requiring a change of school, have had to wait more than 21 days for a new school place? Of these children, how many were placed in-county and how many out-county?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE, DEPUTY LEADER and CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION &amp; YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES</b></p> <p>In response to part A)</p> <p>58 children of Reception to Year 11 age who required a change of school have been taken into care since the May 2021 County elections.</p> <p>Of these 4 waited more than 21 days for a new school place. Of the 4 , 1 child waited 21 days or over for a change of school in Oxfordshire and 3 waited 21 days or over for an out of county school placement.</p> <p>Therefore 6.8% of the 58 had to wait over 21 days for a school place.</p>

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<p>B] how many children with SEND seeking an in-year place since the May 2021 elections had to wait more than 21 days for a place, and whether any parents had to resort to a Tribunal to achieve a school place?</p>	<p>In response to part B)</p> <p>Unfortunately, the SEND Team do not currently store the data requested in a format that allows an easy response to this question, this is not part of the captures that take place and so we are currently unable to let the councillor know how many children with an EHCP are placed in year in more than 21 days. This is because the SEND Team have different admissions processes and timeframes. It should also be noted that the education directorate is moving across to a single Business System called Liquid Logic, which will see all teams within the directorate using the same IT system from August 2022 onwards. From that point, complex data collection and analysis should be significantly enhanced from the current situation which is reliant upon spreadsheets and manual processing.</p>
<p><b>5. COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT</b></p> <p><i>Active Travel provision on Woodstock and Banbury Roads</i></p> <p>There has been public discussion recently about infrastructure schemes in the Growth Deal, in particular the Woodstock and Banbury Roads Corridor projects, both of absolutely fundamental importance to the safety and amenity of residents of my division and others.</p> <p>Will the Cabinet member confirm that these projects have not been “scrapped”, but will be kept under active consideration as part of any review of the Hfl list?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL &amp; DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</b></p> <p>The Woodstock and Banbury Road projects are currently on the list of growth deal schemes with a limited amount of funding. The Growth Deal schemes list undergoes regular review to ensure Oxfordshire is delivering the best possible outcomes in line with the Growth Deal objectives. Any changes to schemes in the capital programme will be made through the proper decision-making process.</p> <p>As pointed out, this administration is committed to improvements in active travel, and these two key corridors into the city are no exception. The council will take every opportunity to secure funding to deliver its priorities, but I cannot guarantee when such funding may become available.</p>

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<p>Will he confirm that this process sits with elected members, and will be conducted in a fully open and democratically accountable way, with full opportunity for members to contribute on behalf of their residents?</p> <p>Whatever the outcome of this process, will he commit the Council to delivering substantive improvements to Active Travel on these key routes, in line with the publicly-stated principles of the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance and the very welcome unequivocal commitment to Vision Zero, in the shortest possible time-frame?</p> <p>If these schemes are considered for movement within the Growth Deal in response to external pressures and wider policy considerations, what assurances can he give on where the funding for improving these roads will come from, and on what timescales?</p> <p>Notwithstanding any wider discussions, would he consider asking our excellent Active Travel and other officer teams to look at some of the more obvious anomalies in the current provision, such as bike lanes not reaching access points for schools, with a view to short-term mitigation?</p> <p>Finally, as a representative of a Witney division, could the Cabinet member share his own impressions of entering Oxford via these routes? Does cycling round the Wolvercote roundabout and down the Woodstock Road live up to the confident billing passed <i>en route</i> that Oxford is “A Cycling City”?</p>	<p>We are committed to improving transport links in and out of the city, including active travel, and the ongoing work with the Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy will help define this ambition.</p> <p>Entering Oxford from the A40 in the West on a bike is an interesting experience, particularly given the Oxford North gateway works. The objective of these, and of the A40 scheme as a whole, is to open up a safe and comfortable route for active travel from Oxford to the western towns and villages of Oxfordshire. The continued journey down Woodstock Road is relatively sheltered for cycles by the bus lane, but the quality of the surface is not great and junctions (particularly Wolvercote roundabout) are a block to easy travel - by any mode, but particularly on foot or by bike. We have a lot of work to do to make Oxford as good as the best places to cycle, but that is our objective.</p>