

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 9 December 2025 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 3.40 pm

Present:

Councillor Mark Lygo – in the Chair

Councillors:

Ted Fenton (Vice-Chair)	James Fry	Saj Malik
Thomas Ashby	Andrew Gant	Kieron Mallon
Brad Baines	Emma Garnett	Emma Markham
James Barlow	Sean Gaul	Gavin McLauchlan
Ron Batstone	Stefan Gawrysiak	Ian Middleton
Tim Bearder	Laura Gordon	Toyah Overton
Will Boucher-Giles	Andy Graham	Glynis Phillips
Chris Brant	Tom Greenaway	James Plumb
Liz Brighouse OBE	Kate Gregory	Susanna Pressel
Mark Cherry	Jane Hanna OBE	Leigh Rawlins
Andrew Coles	Jenny Hannaby	Judy Roberts
Dr Izzy Creed	David Henwood	James Robertshaw
Hao Du	Georgina Heritage	Geoff Saul
Imade Edosomwan	Ben Higgins	Roz Smith
Judith Edwards	David Hingley	Ian Snowdon
Gareth Epps	Johnny Hope-Smith	Peter Stevens
Lee Evans	Robin Jones	Bethia Thomas
Neil Fawcett	Emily Kerr	Liam Walker
Nick Field-Johnson	Liz Leffman	Matt Webb
Maggie Filipova-Rivers	Dan Levy	Tony Worgan
Rebekah Fletcher	Diana Lugova	

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.

97/25 MINUTES
(Agenda Item 1)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2025 be approved and signed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

98/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cotter, Crichton, Ley, McLean, Sargent and Shiri. Councillor Sargent observed the meeting online.

99/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

100/25 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair announced that Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) had confirmed that the Oxfordshire local area partnership had taken effective action to make improvements in services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. A monitoring inspection to assess progress began on 15 September and ended with onsite activity between 29 September and 1 October 2025. Ofsted and CQC found that the local area partnership had taken "effective action" in all five areas that were previously identified as priorities. Whilst the partnership recognised there was more to do to ensure all children, parents and carers feel these changes, this was an important milestone which showed a positive direction of travel.

The Chair thanked everyone who came to his Charity Christmas Quiz, held on 3 December, which raised £730 for his chosen charities. This was the third of his charity quizzes. Together, they have now raised £2,000 for OXSRAD, Abingdon RDA, and Oxford United in the Community.

The Chair was honoured to lay a wreath at the Oxford Service of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday this year and thanked councillors who likewise placed wreaths on his behalf in their divisions.

A list of the Chair's Events since the last Council meeting in November was included in Annex 1.

The Chair also announced some coming events:

10 December from 12.45 pm, the Annual City and County Council Christmas Fun Run in Christ Church Meadows.

On Monday, 15 December, the Chair's Christmas Carol Service at 6.30pm in St Nicholas Church in Marston. All councillors were invited to attend.

Council had been notified of the passing on 19 November of former county councillor Roy Darke. He was elected as a Labour Member for the Headington & Marston Division in 2009 but did not contest the election in

2013. He served as a member of the Audit Committee, which then became the Audit & Governance Committee, and sat as a member of the Standards Committee and Pension Fund Committee at periods during his term of office.

He also served on Oxford City Council from 2002 to 2004 and again from 2008 to 2016; and Sheffield City Council from 1990 to 1994. The Chair paid tribute to his years of service and Members stood for a minute's silence.

101/25 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

There were no appointments to be made.

102/25 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

The Chair accepted a request from Becky Howard to present a petition on 'Increase mental health care capacity in Oxfordshire'

Becky Howard stated she arranged the petition after witnessing a series of violent incidents perpetrated by a man in schizophrenic crisis. The petition requested NHS leaders to increase mental healthcare capacity in Oxfordshire by training more nurses, doctors and well-being professionals, opening more beds and recruiting more staff.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Cabinet Member for Adults, responded that the petition raised issues that sat largely within NHS responsibilities. Oxfordshire County Council works closely with the NHS with one of the biggest pooled budgets in the country. Councillor Bearder stated that he would refer the petition to the Chief Officer and ask them to liaise with our NHS partners to get a response back to the petitioner.

103/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Eleven questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

104/25 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Sixty-five questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

105/25 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of the Cabinet covering its meetings for 13 November and 18 November 2025.

On Item 1: Local Government Reorganisation – Submission of Proposal to Government.

Councillor Pressel asked how the County Council thought it could possibly run a unitary council across the whole of Oxfordshire, when it had no proper building to work from. Councillor Leffman responded by saying that the unitary authority would decide where it was going to be based and there was no reason why Speedwell and other buildings in the Council's possession should not be part of that consideration.

Councillor Evans asked that, given the Council's revised proposal to have 99 councillors for a unitary Oxfordshire Council, it was difficult to see how any of the proposals for local government reorganisation could go ahead without a boundary review. As such, Councillor Evans asked the Leader of the Council whether the Leader was confident that elections to a new authority would go ahead in May 2027. Councillor Leffman responded by saying that the elections would go ahead in accordance with the current boundaries.

Councillor Malik asked, whether Councillor Leffman had managed to convince her Members to support the 'one unitary' bid proposal or whether the matter was still undecided. Councillor Leffman responded that it was the Government's decision as to the configuration of the new unitary and it was not for Councillor Leffman to persuade anybody.

Item 3: HR and Cultural Change - Quarterly Employee Data Report - Quarter 2 2025-26

Councillor Barlow noted that the non-disclosure of ethnicity increased from 8 to 10% and asked how that compared to other local authorities and similar sized organisations and whether any analysis of the reasons for that had been undertaken. Councillor Fawcett undertook to look into this matter further.

Councillor Kerr asked if Oxfordshire had plans, similar to South Cambridgeshire, to move to a 4-day week, which was working well, or to permit officers more flexible working arrangements, such as allowing staff to work from abroad during the Christmas break. Councillor Fawcett responded that the county council was very keen to give staff as much flexibility as possible in terms of their working arrangements. Furthermore, he said that in terms of the 4-day working week, while some of the data was positive, there were some question marks over the outcomes. However, he was open to looking into this matter further.

Councillor Pressel asked why the amount spent on expensive agency staff had gone up based on the report. Councillor Fawcett confirmed that there had been a slight increase in this quarterly report. However, he said the trend over the last few years, was going in the right direction and stronger practices were in place to monitor the situation.

Councillor Malik asked about access to technology, especially for the elderly, where staff worked from home. Councillor Malik wanted to know what could be done to make sure that people could have face to face interaction with the relevant officers. Councillor Fawcett responded that staff were employed based on having the right skills as well as the right equipment if they were working from home. Furthermore, work could also be carried out from the local offices.

Item 4: Treasury Management Mid-Term Review 2025-26

Councillor Baines asked for details about draft plans for the issuing of a further green climate bond, including the timeline for issue, the total value and what the raised capital would be spent on. Councillor Levy advised that he was unable to provide any details as nothing had been planned as yet.

Item 5. Budget and Business Planning Report 2026/27 - 2030/31

Councillor Baines asked for an outline of the instructions given to directors as part of the budget planning process. Councillor Baines raised the matter, given the anticipated financial pressures expected on the headline budget as a result of the Fair-Funding review, the additional £5.2 million annual pressure to children's services and the financial adjustment already applied to savings within children's services. Councillor Levy responded that directors were expected to keep within the budget levels already set and to make as many savings as possible, while still delivering the services required by residents.

Councillor Smith asked why the process was so different this year. Councillor Levy responded that the full details from central government were awaited. Furthermore, he said that it was likely that, in the spending review, money would be taken away from places like Oxfordshire given it had a high council tax base. Councillor Levy added that the final data from the Fair Funding review as well as final settlements were still being awaited.

Councillor Fry asked what the implications would be for the Council with regard to the packaging extended producer responsibility, which had been introduced to encourage separate recycling of paper but had resulted in extra costs being imposed on the recycling system. Councillor Levy said that he would obtain a written answer to the question and reminded Council that roadside collections were the responsibility of the districts and not of the county council.

Item 6. Business Management & Monitoring Report - Performance and Risk Quarter 2 2025/26

Councillor Middleton noted that recycling was below target and some collection authorities were also looking at changes in collection cycles that could help. He understood that for it to be viable, there needed to be a financial concession from the county council which can be offset against costs as a result of the emissions trading scheme. He asked if this was

something that was being actively considered, and if so, how long was it likely to be before a deal was struck. Councillor Levy said he would have to obtain further information to respond to the issue.

Councillor Baines asked how short the Council had fallen of its target for footway and cycle maintenance and whether the cabinet member believed that the target could be met. Councillor Levy responded that there was a commitment to make active travel as popular as possible but there was an issue with maintaining cycle ways and pavements. He said he would obtain further information on the issue and get a written answer.

Councillor Brighouse asked what the Council was doing to address the massive risk that existed in relation to the deficit in the High Needs Block. Councillor Levy responded that central government had suggested that there would be a mechanism to deal with the issue. Future costs of SEND was a real issue, and more information was needed from central government to create a work plan.

Item 7. Capital Programme Approvals - November 2025

Councillor Kerr asked what percentage of road building schemes had seen a 20 or 30% capital overrun in the last couple of years. Councillor Levy responded that he would obtain more information and provide a written response on the issue.

Councillor McLauchlan asked what was being done strategically to minimise disruption in the area surrounding Steventon and Benson Lane in Crowmarsh. Councillor Levy responded that the question was an infrastructure issue rather than a financial one but undertook to ensure a written response would be provided.

Item 8. Response to motion by Councillor Creed on Children's Centres

Councillor Creed asked what steps had been taken by Cabinet to ensure that the money spent by local government was going to help the children that were the most deprived and most in need in the county, to ensure the success of the family hubs. Councillor Gaul responded that a strategic plan had been approved which was committed to achieving a good level of development for five-year-olds at 77.8%. This was a higher target than the rest of the country which was at 75%. Furthermore, it was hoped that the Children's Trust Board would also be used to examine what can specifically be done to reduce inequality.

Councillor Baines asked what steps the Council was taking to ensure that Best Start family hubs in Oxfordshire were delivered directly by the county council, rather than being reliant on a post code lottery of suitable charities and voluntary organisations, and how services would be effectively integrated with the in-house youth service. Councillor Gaul responded that there was an investment of £245,000 to get the programme up and running and another £1,000,000 set aside by the authority to boost the work in this

area, which demonstrated a partnership approach. Furthermore, he said that the locations of the primary hubs would follow the geography of the existing district and city councils.

Councillor Brighouse asked how Cabinet would judge whether the funding going into deprived communities was equitable and enabling those children who were not doing well to succeed. Councillor Gaul responded that Cabinet had received a presentation on how the areas of need were being analysed in order to help determine the specific locations of the family hubs.

Councillor Edwards asked if Councillor Gaul would confirm that a key priority would be to support the existing excellent children's centres in the county. Councillor Gaul responded that work was currently underway to determine who would be supported. He added that the work would be carried out in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.

Item 9. Response to motion by Councillor Hanna on Healthwatch Oxfordshire

Councillor Hanna asked if the mapping of the services of Healthwatch would be completed and given consideration by the Health and Well-being Board (HWB) in time for any required submission of local plans to the NHS, early next year. Councillor Gregory responded that a working group will be established to map out the next steps to ensure that there was a good understanding of the functions that needed protection. Councillor Gregory was committed to ensuring that the good work of Healthwatch continues beyond 2027.

Item 10. Proposed changes to the Waste Acceptance Policy (WAP) for Oxfordshire's household waste recycling centres (HWRCs)

Councillor Middleton noted that there were many concerns around imposing any barriers to the access and use of the HWRC's, which could reduce the use of those facilities and increase fly tipping and asked what the Council was doing to mitigate those concerns. He also asked if the impacts of those changes were being closely monitored and whether they would be reported to Council. Councillor Roberts assured Councillor Middleton that the impacts of the changes would be closely monitored and reported to Council as well as Cabinet. Furthermore, a review would be undertaken as to the effectiveness of the changes.

Councillor Phillips asked if staff were trained to handle asbestos-containing material and whether there were concerns that charging for asbestos disposal would encourage fly-tipping. Councillor Roberts responded that most people do not have a lot of residential asbestos in their own household and highlighted that the waste system was for residential use only and not for trade use. Councillor Roberts said she was quite certain that staff were fully trained with asbestos, given they already handle such waste, but would check the position..

Councillor Creed asked what was going to be done, particularly in areas around Banbury, where there was a requirement to pre-book waste disposal, which it was felt, could increase the amount of fly tipping. Councillor Roberts responded that the impact of the introduction of a pre-booking system would be monitored.

Councillor Snowdon asked how costs would not be increased if more staff were required to deal with more people turning up or would volunteers be used. Councillor Roberts responded that it had not been said that more staff would be hired, but that more staff would be available.

106/25 THE CALENDAR OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2026-27

(Agenda Item 10)

It was reported that, following discussions with the Political Group Leaders, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2.1, the Chair of the Council had decided to bring forward the Council meeting originally scheduled for 7 July 2026, to 30 June 2026. This change was made in order to avoid a clash with the Local Government Association Annual Conference.

RESOLVED:

That it be noted that the Council meeting originally scheduled for 7 July 2026, be brought forward to 30 June 2026,in order to avoid a clash with the Local Government Association Annual Conference.

107/25 DEVOLUTION FOR OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda Item 11)

Council received a report requesting Cabinet to approve the decision that Oxfordshire submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to Government for a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA).

The report was moved by Councillor Liz Leffman and seconded by Councillor Ben Higgins.

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The recommendations were approved with 60 votes in favour, 2 abstentions and no votes against.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft Cabinet report be noted.**
- b) That Cabinet be recommended to approve the submission of the Expression of Interest (EOI)to Government, as set out in Annex 2 of the report.**

108/25 GENDER AND ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORTS 2024/25

(Agenda Item 12)

Council had before it two reports, the Gender Pay Gap Report which the Council is legally required to publish, and the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which the council also publishes to be transparent about the Council's performance in this area.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Neil Fawcett and seconded by Councillor Liz Leffman. Following discussion, the recommendations were approved with 61 votes in favour, one abstention and no votes against.

RESOLVED:

- a) That Oxfordshire County Council's statutory Gender Pay Gap report of 2025 be noted and approval be given to its onward submission to the Gender Pay Gap Service by 31 March 2026.**
- b) That the Council's voluntary Ethnicity Pay Gap report of 2025, be noted.**
- c) That approval be given to the publishing of both reports on the Council's website by 31 March 2026.**

109/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-TERM REVIEW

(Agenda Item 13)

Council received a report on the performance for the first half of the year to September 2025, measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2025.

The report was moved by Councillor Dan Levy and seconded by Councillor Ben Higgins.

Following discussion, the recommendation was approved with 55 votes in favour, seven abstentions and no votes against.

RESOLVED:

- That the Council's treasury management activity in the first half of 2025/26, be noted**

110/25 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

(Agenda Item 14)

Council considered a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel proposing a Scheme of Members' Allowances to apply from 1 April 2026 for a maximum of a four-year period. The report set out options in relation to implementation covered in recommendations 1 to 4, of the report.

The Chair noted a correction in Appendix 1 to the report, page 99 in the agenda pack, in the list of scrutiny chairs in the table, "Health" should be

replaced by “People”. The Chair also reminded Members that Annex 2 to the report, the Equality Impact Assessment, was published in an Addenda.

Councillor Liz Leffman moved recommendations 1 and 5 in the report, for approval. These were seconded by Councillor Neil Fawcett. Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. Recommendations 1 and 5 were approved with 44 votes in favour, 17 abstentions and no votes against.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel made in November 2025, and as set out in Annex 1 to the report, be adopted.;**
- 5) That the Council adopts an annual index for a four year period (whereby if no other changes occur to a Scheme, then the Members' Allowances may increase in relation to that index for a period of no more than four years), and that this should relate (as in previous years) to the annual pay award for local government staff. The increase will be in line with the percentage rise in overall employee costs for Oxfordshire County Council arising from the annual Local Government Pay Award for staff and that this should take effect from the date on which the award for staff similarly takes effect.**

111/25 REVIEW OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS

(Agenda Item 15)

Council had before it a report proposing some changes to the role and function of Member Champions and clarifying the appointment process for future Member Champions.

The report was moved by Councillor Liz Leffman and seconded by Councillor Neil Fawcett. Following discussion, the recommendation was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Council's Constitution be amended to replace part 8.5, Member Champion Role with the text set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

112/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN

(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Gavin McLauchlan and seconded by Councillor Peter Stevens.

“Council notes that in July 2025 a judicial review upheld the Secretary Of State for the Environment's decision to approve the proposed Thames Water

Resources Management Plan which includes the South-East Strategic Reservoir Option in Abingdon.

As a result, Thames Water has to have an Emergency Discharge facility in place including the ability to empty the reservoir at a rate of 1 metre per day, possibly over a period of 3 to 4 weeks. This would put water back into the Thames at a rate of 75 m³/s just south of Abingdon c.3x greater than its normal flow.

Such a discharge could cause havoc along the Thames, endangering Life, residences, businesses, wildlife and the environment, yet there is no requirement for the reservoir operator to have an emergency plan before building the reservoir, only before filling it. Dealing with the emergency in the wider area will be the responsibility of this Council as the local emergency planning authority along with the emergency services.

This Council makes clear its deep concern that we could be made responsible by default for safely managing such an emergency, leaving us with impossible decisions about which lives, homes and businesses to save in a crisis situation.

We therefore call on the Leader to write to the Secretary of State to request clarity on how such an emergency discharge would be managed and to provide a commitment that we will be provided with the resources to do so before any Development Consent Order is considered.”

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried with 61 votes in favour, no abstentions and none against.

113/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MAGGIE FILIPOVA-RIVERS

(Agenda Item 17)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Maggie Filipova-Rivers and seconded by Councillor Emma Markham.

“Council notes that:

- Oxfordshire residents have endured successive crises in recent years: Covid, the cost-of-living emergency, underfunding of public services by successive governments, leaving many residents in precarious situations, creating a climate of uncertainty and fear.
- Research shows that rising inequality fuels support for far-right movements, eroding trust in institutions and creating fertile ground for scapegoating and division.
- Against this backdrop, right-wing media and far-right groups have wrongly blamed migrant communities to further their agendas.
- Extensive research, including the Migration Observatory’s 2024 study, finds that migration contributes positively to the UK economy by expanding the labour force, addressing skill shortages, and supporting productivity and growth, with little evidence of wage suppression for

native workers. Migrants' net fiscal impact is generally positive, with greater contributions in taxes than cost to public services.

- Oxfordshire is proud to be the first County Council of Sanctuary, committed to ensuring that everyone who lives here, whether newly arrived or long settled, is treated fairly.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Recognise the risks to our communities if the disinformation, suspicion, and intolerance disinformation generates go unchallenged, and commit to addressing them wherever they occur.
- Work with partners to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our communities and that racism is confronted wherever it occurs, in schools, workplaces, and on our streets.
- Request that Cabinet supports the co-production of a community cohesion action plan with key stakeholders in consultation with councillors, including actions to support community-led dialogue and ensure appropriate resourcing is considered during budget setting."

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried with 49 votes in favour, two abstentions and 10 votes against. The motion was referred to Cabinet.

114/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE

(Agenda Item 18)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Liz Brighouse and seconded by Councillor Izzy Creed.

"This Council being deeply concerned by the impact of poor mental health on adults and children in the County asks the Health and Wellbeing Board to request the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to investigate and report back to them and to the County Council on how Mental Health services provided by Oxford Health and other organisations are tackling this issue.

Such an investigation of issues needs to include addressing accessibility to services including

- Prevention
- Assessment
- Therapeutic support
- Medication
- Emergency intervention such as "sectioning"
- Inpatient beds

How these issues impact on other public services such Community Safety, Public Health, Housing, Schools, Fire and Rescue and the Police also needs to be assessed and understood. Most of all poor mental health impacts on individuals, families, and communities around the County and this must be addressed.

Council requests that the outcome of the investigation be sent to the appropriate Secretaries of State."

Following discussion, an electronic vote was taken. The motion was carried with 61 votes in favour, no abstentions and none against.

The time being 3.30 pm, the following motions were not considered in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.

115/25 MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB

(Agenda Item 19)

**116/25 CROSS-PARTY MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR NATHAN LEY,
SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW**

(Agenda Item 20)

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Questions from Members of the Public

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

<p>1. RICHARD PARNHAM</p> <p>What is / are the specific root causes of the situation where Oxford congestion charge permits are not being deducted, days / weeks after car journeys though checkpoints have been made? Please be as specific / location-specific as possible about ALL known root causes of recent / ongoing systems failures.</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Which dates, if any, has the Martson Ferry Rd congestion charge filter not been correctly deducting permits?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>There are no ongoing system failures. The delays impacting Oxford congestion charge day pass deductions were the result of two issues.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Initially, cameras on Thames Street experienced poor 4G connectivity, which resulted in an error uploading images to the system. The fix led to unintended consequences, as is commonplace with IT systems, which meant we needed to suspend an element of the permit system for a short period.The permit hierarchy had to be readjusted to automatically prioritise default permits e.g., blue badge holders over resident day passes. <p>These issues have now been resolved, and permit holders should see accurate deductions and exemptions applied going forward.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>2. RUSSELL WILLIAMSON</p> <p>If you insist Hollow Way needs a bus gate, even though it's nowhere near the city centre, why can't it be one way where those of us living inside that area can travel through the bus</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The Hollow Way congestion charging point operates 7am – 9am and 3pm – 6pm Monday to Saturday only.</p>

<p>gate towards the ring road via Horsepath Driftway?</p> <p>Like many other residents living in that area, I need to access the bypass, and having to go the long way round instead of wasting a permit is costly as well as bad for the environment with increased pollution.</p>	<p>Residents can apply for a permit allowing free travel through the Hollow Way congestion charging point on 100 days a year.</p> <p>We are monitoring the impacts of the congestion charge in this area carefully.</p>
<p>3. PETER WHITE</p> <p>In light of the fact that the Independent Oxford Alliance has already advanced a fully developed suite of non-punitive, evidence-driven congestion-reduction measures — including optimised traffic-signal phasing, comprehensive pavement-parking enforcement, hydrogen upgrades for the bus fleet, expanded 24/7 park-and-ride capacity, and modernised freight-consolidation systems — on what intellectually defensible basis have all and every non-charging alternative been entirely ignored, particularly when your proposed congestion charge inexplicably exempts the heaviest diesel emitters, financially targets only private motorists, and is fiscally dependent on congestion continuing in order to generate revenue, thereby rendering the scheme a logically incoherent, ideologically derivative imitation of the London Mayor's model rather than a genuinely forward-thinking or environmentally credible policy?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The temporary congestion charge (and the traffic filters scheme it precedes) are not being pursued <i>instead of</i> other schemes, but as part of a wider strategy that includes a wide range of measures across the city and county. There are too many schemes to list here but they are outlined in full in the council's transport capital programme and of course in policy documents such as the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan, Bus Service Improvement Plan and others. The case for the congestion charge was set out in detail in the public consultation materials and September 2025 cabinet report, and I do not intend to repeat it here.</p> <p>The congestion problems we are grappling with in Oxford have existed for decades. The notion that cheap, quick and uncontroversial measures like adjusting signal timings and better parking enforcement could solve the problem is not credible. If that were the case, why has no Oxfordshire County Council administration, led by a range of political parties, not implemented these "simple" solutions in the last few decades?</p> <p>Oxford's bus fleet is already 70% electrified following investment secured in part thanks to the council's commitment to tackle congestion in the city. We'd like to go further, of course, but this will rely on future commercial investment in the bus fleet, which</p>

	<p>will only materialise if we improve bus operating conditions and boost bus use to give bus operators the confidence they need to invest in more zero-carbon vehicles. The current park and ride system is nowhere near fully utilised, even with the congestion charge and free park and ride bus offer in place. A new park and ride site at Eynsham is due to open in the next two years. Further park and ride expansion may be needed in the future and we are planning for this; there is sufficient capacity across all sites.</p> <p>The forecast revenue from the congestion charge assumed a significant reduction in traffic levels in the city. The scheme revenue self-evidently relies on some people paying the charge, but traffic can of course exist without congestion, so the scheme revenue certainly does not rely on congestion continuing.</p>
<p>4. BERNADETTE EVANS</p> <p>Shop front businesses in Temple Cowley (Wilkins Road, Hollow Way and Oxford Road) are reporting a drop in turnover and customers since the congestion charge went in. Please can you tell us how this shopping neighbourhood is being monitored? Please be as detailed and specific as possible including roads, postcodes and method of monitoring.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Footfall and spend is being monitored through the Huq Industries “Lighthouse” system. In principle any area can be selected for monitoring, although smaller areas will be less robust statistically.</p> <p>We plan to report on footfall and spend in the Hollow Way and Oxford Road area in our monthly updates.</p>
<p>5. NICHOLAS HARDYMAN</p> <p>Please can Councillor Gant specify, in detail, how many businesses and how many postcodes in Summertown are being monitored as part of the congestion charge evaluation?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Footfall and spend is being monitored through the Huq Industries “Lighthouse” system. In principle any area can be selected for monitoring, although smaller areas will be less robust statistically.</p> <p>We plan to report on footfall and spend in Summertown in our</p>

	monthly updates.
<p>6. KOSTANDINA ISIDOROS</p> <p>Can Councillor Gant confirm he is aware of, and justify how he has spent millions on road 'improvements' and new pavement built-in planting beds, despite the long-time problem of rain still regularly flooding many sections of both lanes on Woodstock Road OX2?</p> <p>We continue to suffer dangerous walking, cycling and car/bus driving conditions on Woodstock Road. I have sent some screenshots of relevant road flooding evidence and have videos available to watch.</p> <p>The appalling irony is that the biggest risk-to-life is to cyclists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the rain water fills entire/both lanes, even covering the painted cycle logos, the curb edges, the potholes or sunken manhole covers on left sides of the road edges - in some sections with flooding both sides, buses, cyclists and cars are forced to use the middle lane - with the chop & change bus lanes, some sections are down to one lane only for cars in both directions, cyclists are at grave danger in that - cars cannot move into bus lanes to create safe space for cyclists for fear of APNR capture - cyclists have to cross into on-coming traffic to avoid 	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>As part of the recent highway improvement scheme on Woodstock Road, the opportunity was taken to provide some locations for planting. These areas which are not yet with established planting, are intended to provide a number of benefits including enhancing biodiversity, traffic management, and localised benefits to drainage. The size, depth and scale of these planted areas is limited and hence the opportunity for these planted areas to significantly alter drainage / flooding is limited. However, whilst limited, our initial observations are that these features are not making previous existing drainage issues worse. We continue to monitor the scheme.</p> <p>Regarding the safety concerns you raise I can report that the cycle collision history over the last 25 years shows no relevant incidents, and the scheme has been subject to safety audits at each stage as appropriate.</p> <p>In terms of surface condition, Woodstock Road is inspected on a monthly basis and any defect meeting our intervention levels will be reported for repair in line with our policy. As Members will be aware, all gullies across the county will be inspected and cleaned during the financial year. The gully emptying is taking place over November and December so will hopefully improve the situation you describe at this location.</p> <p>In addition to this, some drainage repairs were undertaken last year. However, further investigations are still on-going. If these investigations indicate that a scheme is needed, then the aim</p>

flooded lane sections	would be to deliver this next year.
<p>7. EMILY SCAYSBROOK</p> <p>In August, I submitted a detailed response to the Congestion Charge consultation on behalf of the Oxford Business Action Group. In that submission, we set out four minimum safeguards that we believed were essential if the Council intended to proceed with the scheme in spite of overwhelming opposition from the independent business sector. None of these safeguards were implemented.</p> <p>We asked for implementation to be postponed until after the Christmas trading period. This did not happen.</p> <p>We asked for clear, measurable thresholds for economic harm to be published, so that the scheme could be paused, reviewed or withdrawn, depending on the level of economic damage it duly caused. This did not happen.</p> <p>We asked for transparent, accountable mechanisms for collecting and responding to business feedback. This did not happen.</p> <p>Finally, we asked for a funded mitigation plan to support businesses through the Council's own projected three-to-six-month "adjustment period". This has not happened either.</p> <p>As I hope you were made aware during your recent visit to the Covered Market, a number of longstanding independent businesses are now experiencing severe and immediate declines in trade, exactly as I laid out in OBAG's consultation response and as many other business owners similarly predicted.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Footfall and spend is being monitored through the Huq Industries "Lighthouse" system and will be reported monthly, with the first footfall update for November 2025 due soon. Spend data will not be available until early 2026 as there is a two-month lag before data becomes available.</p> <p>A feedback survey will be launched in early 2026 for residents, businesses and visitors to provide feedback on the scheme.</p> <p>Under the Transport Act 2000, net proceeds from a road user charging scheme can only be used "for the purpose of directly or indirectly facilitating the achievement of local transport policies of the authority". Financial support to businesses would not fall within this and would be unlawful under the act.</p>

<p>Given that the Council proceeded without implementing any of the requested safeguards, and that early evidence indicates serious and potentially irreversible harm to independent businesses, will you now reconsider your position and commit to ring-fencing a proportion of revenue from the scheme to support those businesses through the transition period that the Council anticipated but failed to mitigate?</p>	
<p>8. ANNE GWINNETT</p> <p>The County Council has often referenced a statistic that says that 90% of people travelling into Oxford City Centre travel in by non-car modes.</p> <p>That statistic comes from the “Summary of City Centre and Jericho pedestrian interview surveys” report produced by Steer, although the first paragraph states that it was Oxfordshire County Council that completed (I think they mean ‘conducted’) the interview survey.</p> <p>Can Councillor Gant please confirm who conducted the survey, and explain why it was undertaken in the week commencing 23 May 2022, and on what basis the locations used for the survey (Cornmarket, Queen Street and Broad Street) were chosen?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>I asked why the Pedestrian Interview survey was undertaken in a week in May. I would like to know the answer to that and how do you think a survey in just one week in late spring can be representative of travel patterns</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The survey was commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council, conducted by Indiefield (a market research fieldwork company) and analysed by Steer.</p> <p>The survey locations were chosen to capture a broad cross-section of city centre footfall in busy locations some distance from bus stops and car parks and not unduly influenced by any single destination. High Street was not included due to the high concentration of bus stops in High Street, which would have exaggerated the number of bus passengers.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>

<p>throughout the year? Furthermore, this survey that you rely on was conducted in May 2022, 3 years ago and during an immediate post COVID era, yet it is being used to justify a congestion charge scheme being introduced in winter 2025. Why wasn't a more recent survey conducted to get more reliable, up-to-date data?</p>	
<p>9. PAUL MAJOR</p> <p>In the consultation pack for the congestion charge there was a section that suggested the result of the charge would be a minor positive for businesses. There was no evidence or credibility given to that statement. Since then during the consultation, in the build up to the decision and since the charge went live Councillor Gant has continued to state in the media and in public that the charge is good for business; again, without any qualification as to how or why that would be.</p> <p>I would like to ask Councillor Gant what he now thinks as retail businesses have shown in real evidence that the charge has been severely detrimental to their income and livelihoods and other businesses anecdotally talk of issues with recruitment and staff leaving. As an example my business was trending 10% ahead of last year before the charge, last week continued a trend of 14% down, a 24% negative shift. Covered market traders talk of 40% and 50% down on last year. Does Councillor Gant still consider this scheme a 'positive' for business?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Footfall and spend data will be published as soon as it becomes available.</p> <p>The scheme aims to boost access to the city by non-car modes of transport, which the vast majority of city centre visitors use, whilst maintaining access for car-borne visitors.</p>
<p>10. GEOFFREY SUTTON</p> <p>Observation of the ongoing evening peak congestion on</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p>

<p>West Bound St Clements after the congestion charge has been introduced, reveals that the cause of congestion is not the number of cars using St Clements, but the unremitting and unregulated flow of buses, taxis, cars and cyclists, lit and unlit, coming from the city centre onto the Plain Roundabout from Magdalen Bridge to access Cowley and Iffley Roads, which, when combined with LTN Boundary traffic proceeding from Iffley Road to Cowley Road, takes priority over traffic trying to emerge from St Clements, so effectively cutting the St Clements exit off at busy periods. What plans does the Council have to regulate the flow of traffic around the Plain to give greater priority to the West Bound St Clements traffic?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>The congestion charge has been in place for six weeks yet peak congestion, evening congestion, at St Clements hasn't reduced one bit, so, as the scheme hasn't yet worked, when will it work? Will it ever work? And what are your plans now?</p>	<p>It is uncontested that traffic circulating on The Plain roundabout reduces the westbound capacity of St Clements in the evening peak. The county council trialled traffic signal control of the Iffley Road and Magdalen Bridge approaches to the roundabout in February 2024 for precisely this reason, but this produced little benefit for St Clements whilst increasing delays approaching from Magdalen Bridge, which has a much higher bus and cycle flow than St Clements.</p> <p>The only way to reduce congestion in this area is to reduce traffic volumes, which is what the congestion charge aims to do.</p> <p>Monitoring data for the first month of the congestion charge will be published soon.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p> <p>As far as I'm aware the data for the first month is coming out very shortly and I think any response will be made based on data.</p>
<p>11. ERIC JANSSON</p> <p>The 'My Permits' webpage where holders of congestion-scheme permits access their account and related records (here) has for some time now displayed this advisory note: "Day pass deductions: We've experienced delays in processing deductions, but these should start appearing correctly soon. You may also notice the date in your permit history differs from your travel date - this shows when the deduction was processed, not when you travelled. We're working to bring all accounts up to date as quickly as possible. Thank you for your patience." I note that such</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The exercise to bring all accounts up to date has now been completed, and day pass deductions will continue to be processed much more quickly going forward, typically in the early morning following the day of entry.</p> <p>At this point, we do not have any record of a permit holder depleting their allocation and then travelling without payment in</p>

advisory statement is indeed warranted, as my family's account shows two permits deducted on 24th November for travel that had occurred on 1st and 2nd November, and a further two permits deducted on 25th November for travel that had occurred on 7th and 8th November -- from which we observe that the processing delay can last anywhere from 17 to 23 days, a substantial time. What happens in a situation where a person has used his allotted number of permits yet passes through a congestion-charge point without paying, believing he need not pay, in reliance on information from the 'My Permits' webpage, which tells him inaccurately that he does have permits remaining? Specifically, will the Council fine the person for passing through the charge point without a permit and without paying, or will the Council agree to waive the fine in that situation?

reliance on outdated information. Should such a situation arise, it would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but the improved processing times should prevent this from occurring.

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

1. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT
Would the Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Councillor Gant, urgently look to liaise with the drainage team within the County Council on the timelines to look at the storm	Thank you for raising this concern. Following a review with our cyclical team, I can confirm that all gullies in the affected area were marked as operational after the last maintenance visit.

<p>drainage by 53 Park Road, which includes the majority of the storm drains by Boxhedge Road West?</p> <p>In spite of my numerous FixMyStreet reports on this issue, residents of Boxhedge Road West are concerned about water laying in the road as this has been an issue for a few years now.</p>	<p>However, some gullies were missed due to parked vehicles, and these will be revisited. The gullies are connected to Thames Water surface water drains, so capacity within that network may also influence performance.</p> <p>It is worth noting that both Park Road and Boxhedge Road West were cleaned in August, but the recurring issue of water pooling often coincides with periods of heavy leaf fall. Leaves can significantly reduce drainage efficiency by blocking gullies, which appears to be a contributing factor based on FixMyStreet reports and photographic evidence.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor the situation and liaise with Thames Water where necessary to ensure any underlying capacity issues are addressed. The District Council are responsible for street cleansing and therefore could address the leaf fall situation now the majority of leaves appear to have fallen.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member for Transport Management, Councillor Gant, investigate safety improvements for Broughton Road, in Banbury Ruscote, towards Woodgreen Avenue and Queensway Roundabout, with the County Council's Vision Zero team due to residential concerns and recent traffic collisions?</p> <p>This includes looking at any improvements on safety crossings and lower speeds (20mph limits) that I would support as the local Member. Some of the crossing improvements may be funded by Section 106 development funding and I have put a Councillor Enquiries form into the relevant infrastructure officers.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The section of the Broughton Road from the edge of the built-up area to the junction with Queensway does need reviewing for those walking, wheeling and cycling and to be added to the Banbury Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), given recent development in the vicinity.</p> <p>Planning for this section of highway can be considered within the 2026/27 work programme, including assessing the speed limit and the need for additional crossings. This would establish the cost of any measures and assess whether there is a funding gap. There is funding allocated from the development site east of Withycombe Covert that could be used towards any active travel measures on Broughton Road.</p> <p>Amendments and additions to the 20mph speed limits already implemented under the 20mph programme will be considered as part of the planned monitoring and evaluation of the project, taking account of the feedback</p>

	<p>received from councillors and the parish and town councils. This work is due to start in the 2026/27 financial year following the completion of the implementation phase of the project.</p> <p>There are several recent planning applications from west of Bretch Hill with s106 funding that are contributing to the nearby western active travel corridor along Queensway, where there are also plans to install raised crossings in 2026/27. The junction of Brantwood Rise and Queensway is also to be remodelled to reduce the speed of vehicles exiting Brantwood Rise onto Queensway.</p>
<p>3. COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER</p> <p>For each year for the period from 2019 to the present, can you outline:</p> <p>What the County Council received from Central Government for highway maintenance?</p> <p>What is the estimated cost of maintaining the highways network in Oxfordshire was?</p> <p>How much did the council borrow in each of those years to subsidise that spend (portion of borrowed money)?</p> <p>What was the difference between the actual spend and the assessed need?</p> <p>What is the cumulative borrowing?</p> <p>What is the annual cost of that borrowing?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Thank you for your Question. The information requested is best presented in tables which can be found in the Annex below*</p> <p>*annex at the bottom of the page</p>

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7. COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER As we move into the winter period, with the weather getting wetter and colder, the perennial issue of potholes has resurfaced in my inbox and residents in my division are increasingly concerned about the state of our highways network. I know that the finances are incredibly stretched but could you reassure the people of Oxfordshire that we are doing everything possible to keep our highways safe and useable and outlined what is being done?	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT Yes, I can provide that reassurance. We have a planned repair and preventative capital maintenance programme that is delivered utilising government grant and increased further through allocation of the council's own funding. In addition to this, we undertake cyclical maintenance activities, and reactive repairs to our network. Reactive repairs that are considered (by officers) a safety hazard, in line with our highways safety defect policy and approved intervention levels, will always be undertaken. In addition, our highways service are continuing to review, change, and implement innovative ways to repair highway defects to ensure that repair methods are both the most economical and efficient and have the longevity expected. Information on all this can be found on the council's website - Maintaining our

	<p>roads and highways Oxfordshire County Council .</p>
<p>8. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>At the December Full Council meeting last year, I raised concerns about the lack of urgency in progressing the adoption of three completed developments within my division (some residents living there for 13 years). In response, the Cabinet Member stated that: "Adoption of key development in and around Didcot is a priority for the HA Team, with Great Western Park a key focus site." Given that another entire year has now passed with Great Western Park identified as a key focus site and a priority for the Highways Agreements Team, can the Cabinet Member for Highways confirm how many of the approximately 3,300 homes at Great Western Park are now located on adopted roads and therefore able to access services such as FixMyStreet?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>At present, I can confirm that no roads within Great Western Park (GWP) have been formally adopted. However, significant progress has been made in addressing the key issues that have previously prevented Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) from entering into Section 38 agreements with the multiple developers involved.</p> <p>OCC has been working closely with Taylor Wimpey to complete the outstanding highway works required to enable adoption. One of the recent achievements is the resurfacing works at the Wantage Road signalised junction. There remain several works linked to the Section 106 agreement that must be completed, such as improvements to the Manor Bridge roundabout. The Section 278 agreement for these works is currently being engrossed and is expected to complete shortly.</p> <p>In addition, the Section 278 agreement for the Harwell traffic calming scheme has been finalised, and we are now in the final stages of completing the bond to allow these works to commence early in the new year. Other colleagues have also worked with Taylor Wimpey to agree a deed of variation to the Section 106 agreement, which is now at completion stage and will secure payment of the final highways contributions due under that agreement.</p> <p>OCC continues to attend monthly adoption progress meetings with Taylor Wimpey, who are fully aware of the requirements to enable adoption of the northern neighbourhood spine roads, Sir Frank Williams Avenue and Greenwood Way; this would include remedial works and adoption file</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Councillor Gant has told me, year after year now, that adopting a single road in Didcot is terribly complicated yet the same administration managed to think up, design and deliver an</p>	<p>documentation. While progress has been slower than anticipated due to the complexity of certain issues, some key obstacles have now been resolved. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The drainage system running through public open space could not be adopted by the District Council. Taylor Wimpey has now secured approval from LEEP Utilities for adoption of these assets, removing a major barrier.• Of the two required drainage easements, one has now been completed. <p>The closure of Taylor Wimpey's Oxfordshire office has impacted progress in addition to bondsman thresholds being reached. This has resulted in existing highway agreements being closed out and bonds needing to be released before funds can be allocated to newer agreements.</p> <p>Taylor Wimpey has confirmed that, subject to the remaining off-site highway works being signed off, their focus will then move to adoption of the spine road, which will in turn unlock adoption of the residential parcels.</p> <p>We appreciate that progress may appear slow however, as can be seen from the above, the complexity of issues and constraints have inevitably extended timelines. Please be assured that OCC officers are doing everything possible to expedite adoption. Adoption of key developments in and around Didcot remains a priority for the Highways Agreements Team. For future enquiries for GWP please do contact Highway Agreements: HighwayAgreements@oxfordshire.gov.uk .</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p> <p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
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<p>entire Oxford congestion charge in just a few months. Isn't the real issue not complexity but the fact that he can only find energy and resources to deliver for Oxford at the expense of residents of Oxfordshire?</p>	
<p>9. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>I would ask the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing And Safety, Cllr Jenny Hannaby, to strongly reconsider any cuts to fire crew cover numbers at Banbury fire station. Banbury is a growing North Oxfordshire town with expanding communities with on-going housing developments and growing population.</p> <p>I have put this view across in the online public consultation to help shape the future of Oxfordshire county Council fire and rescue service. Any cut to fire services covers would be a retrograde step that could put Banbury members of public in danger in emergency if moved forward.</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY Given the lack of liaison with the FBU unions on</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JENNY HANNABY, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND SAFETY</p> <p>Option 1 within the Fire Cover model aims to ensure that sufficient wholetime fire crews are available across the county in daytime periods. This is to ensure that the best-possible response times are provided across Oxfordshire and also allow essential Prevention and Protection activities to take place within the communities these crews would be based within.</p> <p>In order to provide the personnel to staff these 5 “day-crewing” shifts, the Fire Cover Model has suggested two solutions: either further investment is required in order to recruit and train sufficient staff to crew these areas, or a reallocation of existing staff would be required. In this second instance, alongside moving personnel from other existing, wholetime stations, 1 person would be reallocated from each of the four current Watches of personnel at Banbury.</p> <p>This would leave 6 personnel on each watch, with the requirement to provide a crew of 4, at minimum, in order for an appliance to be mobilised.</p> <p>As such, this does not represent a “cut” or reduction of overall staffing for OFRS but rather an option (if investment is not selected) of providing personnel from across the county’s current stations into these new positions, in order to provide the levels of response, prevention and protection we feel are needed within daytime periods.</p> <p>RESPONSE No, I won't withdraw. It is 20 January when the consultation completes. I have</p>

<p>the fire service reorganisation, not even going to locality committees, would the Cabinet member commit to immediately ceasing the consultation, going back to the drawing board with the FBU in the new year?</p>	<p>had a good conversation with a lot of firefighters today and I've taken a lot on board. I have asked them to fill in the consultation as I ask everybody in this room to fill in the consultation. And then when that comes through, then we will take it forward as I'm sure that there's more conversations to be had at a later date.</p> <p>But, until that consultation of our residents and our community is in, I will leave it as it is. The Fire Chief is going round and he's visiting areas; he's meeting people; he's having virtual meetings online. So there is a chance for the Community to speak to him directly.</p>
<p>10. COUNCILLOR NATHAN LEY</p> <p>The privately run Bonfire and Fireworks event held on Dalton Barracks on 15 November resulted in significant congestion and disruption across Abingdon and surrounding villages, bringing the local area to a standstill from the afternoon until the early hours.</p> <p>In addition to local residents being severely disrupted, some attendees reported being trapped in gridlock for extended periods - for several hours - with no signage, no traffic stewards and no communication from the organisers.</p> <p>Local Councillors were not informed of anything before the event by the organisers about the 'new traffic plan' for 2025, but neither were we told anything from the transport authority. In light</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Thank you for your question, I can advise as follows:</p> <p><u>What oversight the Council had of the traffic management and safety arrangements for this event, including any conditions attached to permissions or notifications given to the organisers</u></p> <p>Safety briefings and Traffic Management plans were presented by the event planners and the traffic management company employed by the event at the South and Vale Safety Advisory Group which includes emergency services and local authorities. The presented plan took into consideration learnings from previous years' events e.g. parking restrictions and rat runs used. Learnings were aimed at trying to reduce congestion and were felt to be well considered and very credible. However, recognising the issues experienced this year the Network Coordination team will be meeting the Safety Advisory Group for a debrief and to review approaches for future years. Data on actual traffic conditions at the event is being collated to allow an evidence led approach to this review.</p>

<p>of this, can you tell me:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What oversight the Council had of the traffic management and safety arrangements for this event, including any conditions attached to permissions or notifications given to the organisers - Whether the Council will in future review the planning and traffic management along with National Highways, given the impact on the A34 and the wider road network - Can OCC liaise with the District Council regarding licensing for large private events like this which can cause serious negative economic and environmental effects for the county as a whole, and consider the pros versus the cons - Can OCC communicate in future with local members regarding all of the above so we are better prepared to answer residents' questions? 	<p><u>Whether the Council will in future review the planning and traffic management along with National Highways, given the impact on the A34 and the wider road network</u></p> <p>National Highways were made aware of the event as there was signage for the event placed on their network and they were also invited to the SAG meeting, however they did not attend. Recognising the impact the event had on the A34, the Network Coordination team, via the SAG, will request they are more active participants in future years.</p> <p><u>Can OCC liaise with the District Council regarding licensing for large private events like this which can cause serious negative economic and environmental effects for the county as a whole, and consider the pros versus the cons</u></p> <p>The event management was coordinated and determined by the District Council with their environmental team involved. The County Council, once aware of a potentially impactful event, will always liaise both through the SAG and outside, where appropriate, to ensure mitigations are applied to reduce impacts of events</p> <p><u>Can OCC communicate in future with local members regarding all of the above so we are better prepared to answer residents' questions?</u></p> <p>Yes, where events which are expected to have an impact on the highway are identified through SAG meetings, officers will ensure a briefing note and/or meeting is offered to local members.</p>
<p>11. COUNCILLOR NATHAN LEY</p> <p>When will the Zebra Crossing for Faringdon Road, Abingdon, be constructed? The crossing</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The design work is finished and ready for delivery. We're now finalising quotes for the main works. Once confirmed, we'll set the start date for construction.</p>

<p>is fully funded and was approved at the Cabinet Member's decision meeting well over a year ago. This is needed as soon as possible for the safety at two schools along this road. Surface Dressing is also for the same road is scheduled for 19th February and it's essential these two things are coordinated properly.</p>	<p>Our team is actively coordinating with contractors to agree a clear programme. As soon as the start date is confirmed, we'll share it with residents. We're aware of the planned patching works in the area and have been working with the relevant team to make sure everything is well coordinated.</p> <p>Thank you for your patience as we move closer to delivering this project and I will ensure officers will keep you updated as soon as the construction date is agreed.</p>
<p>12. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member for Place, Environment and Climate Action explain why compulsory ID checks will be introduced at all our household waste and recycling centres—an unprecedented, county-wide barrier for residents—without publishing a shred of data based evidence that out-of-county use is even a meaningful problem? Isn't this a policy built on anecdote rather than data, one that will cause extra journeys when people forget ID and almost certainly increase fly-tipping? How can you justify imposing inconvenience and environmental risk on every resident for a problem you haven't proved exists?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council as a Waste Disposal Authority (WDA) has a legal duty to provide HWRCs for Oxfordshire residents only. For some time now Oxfordshire has not restricted out of county use of HWRC services, despite most neighbouring authorities restricting such usage, either via charging or banning access outright. Authorities do this to reduce exposure to additional service costs.</p> <p>Each visit to a HWRC does come at a cost to taxpayers, as beyond the standard service management overheads, there are also the costs associated with waste handling, transport, and disposal which will vary depending on the nature and the volume of waste being received across the network.</p> <p>With a view to improving the financial and environmental performance of the HWRC services in mind, we went out to public consultation on this subject. Results showed two key things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The largest portion of respondents were in favour of introducing a charge for out of county usage. • The majority of respondents thought it was reasonable to carry out residency checks.

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Your reply cites duties, consultation, opinions and neighbouring councils but, again, it provides no Oxfordshire evidence. So can you state plainly what figures, if any, on out-of-county usage, what cost estimates, what tonnage data and what records of misuse inform this decision? And, if none exist, will you acknowledge that the Council has introduced a county-wide ID requirement without a single piece of quantified evidence that there is even a problem that exists?</p>	<p>The £15 charge to be introduced for non-Oxfordshire customers should mean that we cover our costs and maintain reasonable access for those outside of Oxfordshire where our facilities may be more conveniently positioned.</p> <p>To support this process customers attending HWRCs will be asked to show proof of address. Verification would be quick and easy on entry to site. This is not an unprecedented measure as this policy has been in place across many local authorities across England including a number of authorities close to Oxfordshire, such as Buckinghamshire, West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell. Furthermore, there is no evidence to suggest that such changes are a barrier big enough to encourage residents to break the law and fly-tip and to date other local authorities that have adopted similar approaches have not identified such issues.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>It's only after the system comes in that ID is going to be required. Because up to this point, no ID has been shown. We only have an estimate of out-of-county use, but we know there're at least two places where they're very close to the border and the service within their county is an awfully long way away. Until the booking system goes up, there will be no data.</p>
<p>13. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY</p> <p>By the time of this Council meeting there will be the first full month's data on the impact of congestion charging on traffic movements. What</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Monitoring data will be published on the county council's website soon. This will include data for Marston Ferry Road.</p>

has been the reduction in bus journey times in Marston Ferry Road in the hours when congestion charges are in effect? How much reduction do you view as a threshold for introducing very badly needed pedestrian controlled crossings at the Marston Ferry Road-Banbury Road junction, knowing that these would add a few seconds to the phasing of traffic lights at that junction? The same issue of the trade-off between greater pedestrian and cyclist safety, on the one hand, and bus journey times, on the other, will apply in other locations. Would the threshold reduction in bus journey times apply equally at these other sites?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Since the badly needed reconfiguration of the whole junction by Marston Ferry Road and Banbury Rd will take ages, may I ask what the costs would be simply to introduce pedestrian control buttons for the traffic lights on either side of Marston Ferry Road and adapting the timings of the other lights accordingly?

The congestion charging scheme is a temporary precursor to the traffic filter trial. The scheme is still in its very early stages, with full enforcement processes not yet in place (at the time of writing, we are still in the six-week "warning notice" period).

No decisions would be made about permanent junction changes until the impact and status of the traffic filters scheme is clear.

Funding would need to be allocated to the project – which would be a significant sum as the whole junction would need to be reviewed to incorporate a pedestrian crossing. Opportunities to make other improvements to the junction at the same time would need to be considered.

There is no 'threshold' for bus journey time savings that would apply here. Officers will continue to monitor the impact of the congestion charge (and subsequently the traffic filters) and explore opportunities to take advantage of traffic reductions to provide improved bus priority and active travel infrastructure across the city. Your support for improved pedestrian crossings at the Marston Ferry Road/Banbury Road junction is noted and welcomed; officers are aware of the long-standing desire for this locally and are already considering options here, only made possible by traffic reduction measures.

RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts

I will ask officers to provide a written response.

<p>14. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY</p> <p>The reports to the last Cabinet meeting proposed a £5.50 charge when cement bonded waste is delivered to waste recycling centres. Will these charges cover costs with a margin to spare? In a similar vein, the proposed charge for out of county residents' household waste deliveries is £15 per vehicle per visit but the report implies this is unlikely to cover the full cost. Since Buckinghamshire is a neighbouring council and charges £94.50 for a medium sized car boot load, why is the proposed charge only £15?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The introduction of charges at £5.50 per 1x1m section will generally cover disposal costs.</p> <p>When considering approaches for out of county customers, we did look at the policies of our neighbouring authorities, where the majority ban out of county use of HWRCs outright. In the case of Buckinghamshire Council, they have a range of rates that seem to be set on more of a commercial footing, ranging from £27.40, up to £450.20, which in our view probably delivers the same result as a ban, as we expect there has been little uptake from the public.</p> <p>When setting the £15 out of county charge for Oxfordshire HWRCs, whilst the cost for each HWRC visit does vary depending on the volume and nature of waste being deposited, we calculate on average the cost for each visit would be covered by £15. We feel this price sets a sensible balance to maintain reasonable access for non-Oxfordshire residents whilst covering the additional costs to the authority in doing so.</p>
<p>15. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY</p> <p>In the reports to the last Cabinet meeting there is a discussion of identifying projects that deliver carbon offsets, with a clear focus on those generated locally. Oxfordshire has many institutions with excellent links to carbon reduction projects in parts of the world where the costs per tonne of CO₂ are well below those in the County and wider UK. Please will the Council contact local institutions such as the Oxford University Environmental Change</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The Carbon Management Plan Residual Carbon and Offsetting Policy has two main aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure the council meets its carbon neutral target by 2030. 2. And additionally, where possible to use the allocated funds for carbon credits to benefit Oxfordshire—its residents, nature, and businesses. <p>Owing to the time it takes to develop carbon credits the procurement agreed in the hierarchy means credits outside Oxfordshire will likely be purchased in the short term to meet the 2030 target, but the goal is to shift towards sourcing all</p>

<p>Institute to assess where there are reputable monitored carbon reduction schemes in less developed countries that have a much lower cost per tonne of CO2 savings than local schemes, and would have the added health benefit of reducing dangerous emissions in regions that are more highly polluted than Oxfordshire.</p>	<p>credits locally by supporting market growth. International credits were excluded at the current time for a number of reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor verification of some international credits and reputational risks • Ability to make demands as a small buyer with no established broker relationships, which is more consequential for international projects • Inability to deliver additional local benefits for the county. <p>Section 4 of the policy on high-integrity use of carbon credits commits the council to monitor best practice and investment needs, including reassessing these considerations over time. As such the council will be monitoring all markets.</p>
<p>16. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB</p> <p>The 63 Bus Service benefits residents in villages across my division, including Fyfield, Tubney, Appleton and Cumnor. Given the Council's commitment to improving bus services and encouraging sustainable transport, would the Cabinet Member agree to work with me to explore funding opportunities - whether through government grants, partnerships or other sources - to expand the 63 service to include evening and weekend provision?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The Council has provided funding for service 63 since 2020, and latterly through our allocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan money from the Government. I am pleased to hear of the benefits this is bringing to residents in Cllr Plumb's division, as this is arguably the best level of service the route has ever had.</p> <p>When future Bus Grant funding is received, the first priority will be to maintain the existing services and projects already being provided – including service 63 as it currently stands.</p> <p>Whilst the Council still has no confirmation of future funds for next financial year and beyond, we do not currently expect there to be headroom for new revenue projects over and above what is already committed. We would ordinarily prioritise improvements to routes where growth potential is significant, including key urban and inter-urban services, so that over time the amount of support required for these routes decreases and there is scope for future network enhancements on more marginal routes such as the 63.</p>

	<p>Whilst partnerships can be explored, sustainable long-term improvements require significant funding. Officers will work to identify such opportunities where they arise.</p>
<p>17. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB</p> <p>The recent Ofsted and CQC inspection acknowledges that effective progress has been made in improving Oxfordshire's SEND services, which is welcome. However, many families still tell us that their lived experience does not yet reflect these improvements. What specific plans does the Cabinet Member have in place to ensure that this progress not only continues but translates into tangible, positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and their families?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>The recent Ofsted and CQC SEND monitoring visit recognised effective progress, however, we fully acknowledge that there is still more to do to ensure that more families feel the positive impact of these improvements in their daily lives.</p> <p>This is a whole-system responsibility. Improvement doesn't sit with the Council alone. We are acting as a Local Area Partnership (LAP) with our statutory partners in health, education and social care; accountability and delivery are shared across the partnership and with our strategic parent carer partners (OxPCF).</p> <p>Second, we are refreshing the Priority Action Plan (PAP) so it reflects the improvements the monitoring visit advised and what we have already identified as improvements to reflect what children and families have said matters most to them and is deliverable across the system. The milestones and oversight will continue through our existing strong Governance oversight groups, PDG and SIAB and will set out a clear timeline with a submission date to the DfE on 7 January 2026, and publication on 26 January 2026.</p> <p>Third, we're strengthening voice and communication so families can see, shape and judge the changes. To address this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have recruited an interim communications lead using DfE improvement funding to coordinate targeted engagement and clear, accessible updates for families.

- We are prioritising expansion of the SEND Youth Forum so more children and young people can influence decisions, supported by a grant bid already submitted to grow capacity and increase the opportunities for children and young people to share their views.
- Working with the Parent Carer Forum (PCF), we are expanding their reach so more families' views are represented in planning and evaluation across the LAP. (This is a joint commitment with our partners.)
- Communication was identified by the Partnership as a core enabler; we are recruiting additional communications capacity and embedding a feedback-and-response loop so parents can see how their input leads to change and improvement.

We are ensuring that we address specific issues Ofsted/CQC highlighted so improvements are felt in practice, this includes:

- Consistency and quality of communication, ensuring we have consistency across service areas.
- Quality of EHC plans and annual reviews: we will continue embedding a quality-improvement framework across education, health and social care. In addition, we have commissioned targeted support from SESLIP on the end-to-end annual review process.
- Sustainability and sufficiency: we have plans underway to secure funding for key initiatives, including a business case to expand enhanced pathways and increase specialist provision sufficiency so the right help is available at the right time, prioritising developing localised provision.

	<p>Finally, in terms of evidencing impact: The refreshed PAP will set out clear, measurable outcomes, and progress against these will be reported through our LAP governance, making use of improved data sources to inform our actions and strengthen accountability. We plan to embed communication, working together, and measuring impact across every theme within the SEND Transformation programme, so families will be able to see not just what we are doing, but the real, positive outcomes being achieved.</p> <p>In summary, we welcome Ofsted/CQC's recognition of effective progress, but we will continue our continuous improvement focussed on our children and families experience. Through shared LAP accountability, a co-produced PAP, stronger child, young person and parent voice, and targeted action on quality, consistency and sufficiency, we are determined to ensure further improvement is evidenced across the Local Area Partnership.</p>
<p>18. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB</p> <p>Residents have raised concerns regarding the claims process for damages incurred as a result of potholes on local roads. Can the Cabinet Member confirm what measures are in place to ensure that the vehicle damage claims process is fair, transparent, and accessible to residents? Specifically, how does the process accommodate situations where claimants cannot provide photographs because repairs were carried out promptly, and will guidance be improved so residents know what evidence is required before repairs are made?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The County Council has an online claim form in respect of highways property damage, the link to which is located on the council's public website.</p> <p>For reference the link to the relevant page is provided below.</p> <p>Compensation claims as a result of highway defects Oxfordshire County Council</p> <p>This online form was created working alongside an external provider.</p> <p>In the event that individuals do not have access to the council's website, a hard copy can be requested and is issued via the Royal Mail.</p> <p>The online form is accompanied by clear guidance which details how the claims process works and how claims are considered. This guidance ensures</p>

	<p>that the claims process is as transparent as possible and indicates the criteria against which claims are judged and the process that the claim will follow.</p> <p>With regard to photographs being provided, the guidance indicates that photographs should only be taken if it is safe to do so, therefore they are not compulsory and failure to provide a photograph does not prejudice the claimant's case.</p> <p>If a claimant does however wish to submit photographic evidence, the fact that a defect may have been repaired at the time the photograph is taken does not impact the claim decision. It is still helpful to receive such a photograph.</p> <p>A full review of the wording of the guidance provided online and within the claim form will be conducted to ensure the guidance is clear.</p>
<p>19. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>People in my division and elsewhere are desperate for work to begin on the Flood Alleviation Channel. It is also crucial for the economy of the county and in fact the whole country. It can't go ahead without the rebuilding of the Kennington rail bridge section of the A423. Please can the cabinet member tell us exactly how the massive £71m gap in funding for this vital repair will be filled?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Firstly, I want to reassure Cllr Pressel that I understand the impact flooding can have on our communities and the anxiety that worrying about flooding can and does cause. The Council recognises the local, regional, and national significance of the OFAS scheme and continues to work closely with the EA.</p> <p>Council officers are working hard to secure funding to close the £71m gap in the budget of this complex project. We have made clear to central government that the Kennington rail bridge replacement is vital not just for flood relief, but for traffic flow, economic growth – including science and technology innovation – and house building. We have written to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor, and updated MPs whose constituencies fall within the scheme's remit. We are grateful for their interest in the scheme and Anneliese Dodds MP has already raised a question in the House of Commons, pressing for more information on the DfT's Structures Fund, which we think the bridge is an ideal candidate for. Council officers are now preparing our case to enable</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY Construction on the Kennington Rail bridge was supposed to begin in 2023. Why did we allow this long delay? Was the Cabinet again asleep at the wheel?</p>	<p>us to apply for this fund when more information is available early next year.</p> <p>I must be clear – the County Council cannot meet the full cost of this bridge replacement on our own and there is now severe bearing corrosion affecting the bridge. Inflation in the price of construction has impacted what is already a complex project, where we need to consider waterways, railway lines, utilities, and the need to stabilise the bridge so it can be replaced one side at a time and stay open to traffic. This has resulted in what I agree is a significant funding gap. I am reassured that officers are doing all they can to secure funding, including having conversations with central government, and I welcome Cllr Pressel's interest in this issue.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>No, I'm afraid it's an application from the Environment Agency. So the whole process has been run by the Environment Agency and so has the timing.</p>
<p>20. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>What % of households in the city and what % in the rest of the county received an information leaflet about the congestion charge and when?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY This is about the congestion charge information</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>We arranged a leaflet drop through Royal Mail to every household in the green area on the map* below. This is a total 181,237 households. The Royal Mail door drop was delivered with post to households over a two-week period, starting from 13 October. Royal Mail may have delivered for an additional two weeks to households that did not receive post during the initial two-week period.</p> <p>*map at the bottom of the page</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>

<p>leaflets which went out so late in my division. Some leaflets didn't arrive and many arrived very late on. They should clearly have gone out much earlier. Why was this not done?</p>	
<p>21. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>Our property officers received advice from our archaeology officers in December 2023 and again in January 2025 about the important archaeological remains under part of the Speedwell House site. That should have given the cabinet plenty of time to realise that it would be a grave mistake to agree to vacate county hall in such a hurry. Why on earth did you proceed with this catastrophic timing, which will leave the county council with no proper base for many months?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>The decision to relocate from County Hall to Speedwell House was taken after extensive analysis and consultation, and it remains the most appropriate course of action for the council's long-term operational, financial, and environmental objectives.</p> <p>First, the advice received from our archaeology officers in December 2023 and January 2025 was fully considered. The archaeological investigations confirmed that while there are important remains in the wider site, the existing Speedwell House footprint is not affected. This allowed us to proceed with a revised plan that avoids unnecessary disturbance and complies with all heritage requirements. The revised scheme focuses on refurbishing the current building rather than expanding into areas of archaeological sensitivity. This approach was endorsed by experts and reflects our commitment to responsible development.</p> <p>Second, the timing of vacating County Hall was driven by multiple factors, including the condition of the building, the cost of maintaining it, and the opportunity to fund the Speedwell House project through the capital receipt from the County Hall sale. Remaining in County Hall would have required significant expenditure to address carbon inefficiency and modernisation needs, with estimates of over £3+ million per year for temporary relocation during refurbishment. Selling County Hall and reinvesting in Speedwell House ensures best value for taxpayers and supports the regeneration of both Oxford's West End & Southern Quarter.</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>If making us move out and making us homeless is now such a brilliant outcome as the reply goes on and on about saying, why did we devote so much time and money to drawing up and consulting on a much larger scheme for Speedwell House?</p>	<p>Third, while the archaeological findings necessitated design changes and extended the program, these adjustments were made precisely to mitigate risk and maintain financial control. The revised plan delivers a modern, net-zero city centre hub within the existing footprint, with flexible spaces for democratic services, staff collaboration, and public engagement. Interim arrangements are in place to use existing council buildings and partner facilities during the transition, minimising additional cost and ensuring continuity of service.</p> <p>Finally, this decision was not taken in haste. It reflects a strategic response to changing working practices, sustainability goals, and the government's local government reorganisation agenda. By acting now, we avoid escalating costs and position the council to operate efficiently in the future. As I said in the press and am happy to repeat to the chamber, "This conclusion by archaeological experts confirms that we made a very sound and sensible decision to focus on the existing building as we plan our transformation of Speedwell House... The plan works financially as well as operationally."</p> <p>Remaining in County Hall for any longer would have incurred additional cost and put the excellent deal we have done to sell the building at risk. It would not have saved money. It might well have cost a great deal more. And our move gives this council and its successor or successors the flexibility to ensure that the public estate is best shaped for future challenges.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>We would have preferred to move to the bigger footprint. That was not possible. We also weren't aware – and there was no way of being aware – that there was going to be local government reorganisation. What we've ended up with is a sale of County Hall, the ability to purchase or to recreate Speedwell House; to improve the whole area, and to come up with an adequate service and the flexibility to make sure that, whatever shape local government is in Oxfordshire, everywhere has an appropriate home. I think it's been an excellent outcome.</p>
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<p>22.COUNCILLOR JAMES ROBERTSHAW</p> <p>There is a failure by the Environment agency to enforce riparian owners to maintain riverbanks. This is a major issue to prevent flooding, OCC as the leading flood council in Oxfordshire would be better placed to be allowed to have powers to charge riparian owners for regular annual maintenance if the riparian owners do not do this work. Would OCC investigate this as soon as possible to improve the current unworkable system , to prevent flooding in our towns, there is</p> <p>much concern with residents in Witney, trees are still not being cleared from the Windrush, and this must apply to other towns in Oxfordshire. The Witney Flood group does not have any legal powers and is a charity.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The Environment Agency are responsible for undertaking enforcement of riparian responsibilities on main rivers, these are designated and can be found here Main river map for England: proposed changes and decisions - GOV.UK there is no ability for their powers to be delegated to us as set out in primary legislation (Water Resources Act 1999 and the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPRs) from April 2016).</p> <p>The County Council is designated as the Lead Local Flood Authority, and while we have powers on ordinary watercourses when there are obstructions in the channel that affect flow, we have no powers on main rivers. These are given to us by the Floods and Water Management Act 2010 and the amended Land Drainage Act 1991. We have no overarching powers to regulate or enforce against other regulators such as the Environment Agency and no delegated authority in this instance.</p>
<p>23.COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON</p> <p>Residents have been horrified by the discovery of a large illegal landfill outside Kidlington, only metres from the River Cherwell. Can you outline what steps have been taken to secure the site and mitigate the immediate environmental risks?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Thank you for this question. What has taken place in Kidlington appears to have been an extraordinary act of serious organised crime with potentially major impact on the environment and local residents. Quite rightly, national bodies are pursuing a criminal investigation, with public domain reports late last month of arrests having taken place.</p> <p>The site has now been secured with fencing and 24-hour security, provided by the County Council on behalf the Environment Agency [EA] who will fund the security arrangements. All footpaths around the site have been closed by the</p>

	<p>County Council.</p> <p>The EA has installed a large sand bund around the waste adjacent to the River Cherwell, to prevent waste from entering the river, especially in case of heavy rainfall or flooding.</p> <p>Specialist EA teams are attending the site, conducting testing of the material and monitoring environmental impacts including on the River Cherwell, and have committed to publishing this data as soon as possible. Similarly, teams from National Highways, Thames Water and SSE, the electricity District Network Operator, are monitoring risks at the site.</p> <p>The Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Service (TVFRS) has used thermal imaging to check for fire risks and made proposals for fire mitigation measures that could be taken. TVFRS has also developed plans for what an intervention in the event of fire would involve.</p> <p>The site is an active crime scene and subject to a legal restriction order preventing access. The public are urged not to attempt to illegally enter the site to avoid hampering investigations, causing further environmental harm or putting themselves in danger.</p>
<p>24. COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON</p> <p>Given the scale of the environmental risks, it will be essential to clear up the site as soon as possible. Can you outline what steps you have taken to urge the environment agency and central government to advance this goal?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>We agree that the only sensible course of action at this point is to plan for the removal of the waste, on the fastest possible timeline. While we must not compromise the criminal investigation or undermine the principle of 'polluter pays', ultimately the waste needs to be moved and the best way of mitigating all the associated risks is to get this done as soon as possible.</p> <p>The multi-agency Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG), which includes local councils, emergency services, and national agencies including the Environment Agency, has set a strategic objective to put in place plans to clear the site as soon as possible and operational planning is underway.</p>

	<p>We have urged the Environment Agency and government to take action and provide funding. Alongside officer-level engagement, the Leader of the Council wrote jointly with the Leader of Cherwell District Council in November urging national action. At the same time we have made clear our commitment to being an active partner in removal and have been working with our waste specialists and our supply chain to develop a workable plan for the Environment Agency's consideration.</p>
<p>25. COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON</p> <p>Illegal waste dumping is a rising category of rural crime, and as Oxfordshire is a rural county there is a high risk of similar crimes - hopefully at a smaller scale - occurring in future. Will you commit to reviewing ways of working to identify and respond to these issues in future?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>We agree. Rural crime is a serious concern and we are committed to working with partners on how we can better use local intelligence, advanced technology and analytics, and better inter-agency coordination, to both prevent and react to this trend. We will also review how we respond to these crimes once they have occurred and in particular, how we communicate our response both to elected members and the public.</p>
<p>26. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS</p> <p>If a resident of Oxfordshire forgets to bring their proof of address with them to the tip, they would have to decide whether to pay £15 - as if they were not Oxfordshire residents - or to return home, pick up their paperwork, and double their journey. In some parts of my division, that latter option would mean repeating a 12.5 mile round trip. It's easy to see how some people might just decide to pay the charge. How many Oxfordshire residents does the Cabinet Member anticipate will end up paying the out-of-county</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The requirement to provide proof of address has been long established in other local authorities and has proven successful as a measure to help manage the services delivered to their residents. For those that don't routinely carry proof of address on them it is not considered onerous to find and carry as standard when visiting their local HWRCs. It is on most people's driving licences. Overall, other authorities generally find numbers of people arriving without a proof of address to be extremely low.</p> <p>For HWRCs within Oxfordshire, in addition to information being available on our website, and via other forms of communication, the new booking system will further remind customers of this requirement. To further help these</p>

<p>charge to use the tip because of the new requirement to provide proof of address?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Insisting that everyone brings proof of address to the tip will unavoidably lead to some Oxfordshire residents who forget the paperwork paying the £15 out-of-county fee. Will the Cabinet member therefore agree that, in the event someone is charged to use the tip but can subsequently provide proof of their address in Oxfordshire, the Council will refund them the charge in full?</p>	<p>changes bed in, during the first 8 weeks after the changes have been implemented there will be a grace period afforded to customers allowing for discretion when customers arrive without being aware of certain things – such as the requirement for bookings, proof of address, and so on. In such instances, site staff would advise them accordingly for their next visit but otherwise allow the customer to proceed with their visit.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>There's a six week grace period so that nobody will be charged to begin with, and hopefully the information will pass around. I will go away and ask the officers for answers to that, but I would have thought that, in most cases, we are fairly understanding. I have had one query from somebody whose son comes and removes their waste for them and so the son lives out of county but his mother lives in county. I'm assured that, with proof of her address, it will be fine.</p>
<p>27. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS</p> <p>The tip in Stanford in the Vale operates a one-way system which, in places, is reduced to a single lane. It is not easy, once you enter the site off the A417, to turn around and leave the tip without going through the one-way system. So, if a resident turns in to the tip, but has forgotten to book in or to bring their proof of address, what does the Cabinet member expect them to do?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>It is planned that a member of staff will be greeting customers on entry to all HWRCs, and the council and site contractors shall agree on the specific positioning of this member of staff at each HWRC to ensure that they are suitably positioned to efficiently direct arriving customers.</p> <p>In the case of Stanford-in-the-Vale, it should be possible for staff to be positioned to do this effectively. I should highlight on implementing the service changes there will be an initial grace period for the first 8 weeks. During this period, if customers arrive without a booking or proof of address, staff would inform them of those requirements for their next visit but otherwise allow them to access the services. If there are any difficulties meaning a member of the public needs to be turned away (e.g. if they arrive in a vehicle type not</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Does the Cabinet member not accept that having meet-and-greet staff at the entrance to tips, to check the paperwork this Council will soon demand, will likely lead to more queues at the tip, and that at sites like Stanford and the Vale those queues could easily spill out onto the A417 and block the carriageway of a major a road.</p>	<p>permitted on HWRCs, or a commercial operator), if they cannot turn around safely then they may need to exit by travelling through the HWRC, but they would not be permitted to deposit their waste.</p> <p>RESPONSES</p> <p>This has been taken into consideration and they are putting extra staff on for this period so that that doesn't happen - so that people can be dealt with in a much faster fashion.</p>
<p>28. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION</p> <p>The illegal dumping over a period of time in Kidlington has caused a huge amount of embarrassment for Oxfordshire and for the Environment Agency. Does she agree that as well as the criminal investigation there should be a full investigation into why this took so long to prevent, what role the local councils played, and how this can be prevented from ever happening again.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>First and foremost, this presents as a serious criminal act and quite rightly, the Environment Agency's National Environmental Crime Unit is leading a major investigation with an arrest announced last month. Best intelligence at this point was that the majority of waste was deposited over a very short period of time in a deliberate plan to avoid detection.</p> <p>Partners are committed to transparency and learning from what has happened in terms of reducing risk and prevention, and on the roles of local and national agencies. While the current focus is on addressing the immediate risks on-site, we fully support a lessons learnt exercise and initial discussions have taken place on how this could be reported back in the first instance through the Place Scrutiny Committee.</p>

<p>29. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION</p> <p>Can you please confirm that since its implementation, how much income has been generated from the on-street parking charges in Woodstock?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The charging machines were operational from July 2023 and the income generated is £292,613.14.</p>
<p>30. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION</p> <p>Can you please confirm how many fines have been issued with regards to the Oxford Congestion Charge scheme and how many drivers have now paid the £5 congestion charge?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>No PCNs have been issued yet, but we are still processing and reviewing violations so this will change.</p> <p>71,613 web and 150 telephone payments have been received for the £5 charge</p>
<p>31. COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS</p> <p>Libraries occupy a hugely important and valuable role in our communities. It was great to secure a new coat of paint for the prominently located Deddington Library - the first in over 20 years, I'm told, giving pride to its place in the heart of our community.</p> <p>There are other works due shortly, funded through Section 106 Improvements, and supported by the marvellous Friends of Deddington Library - and if you need Christmas gift ideas, their excellent calendars are available to raise additional funds.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Epps, for acknowledging the positive and impactful role that Libraries play in communities. Deddington Library is much-loved and well-used, and Gail (the Library Manager) and the team there, including our wonderful Friends Group and volunteers, provide a vital and engaging service.</p> <p>We have strategically and objectively reviewed all of our branch network libraries in the last couple of years and put in place an evidence-led Libraries Asset Development Plan. This plan sets out, in a prioritised way, the works that we need to carry out to bring all of our libraries up to the standard we aspire to and to enable us to better meet changing needs.</p> <p>Recent refurbishment projects at Bampton, Chinnor, Faringdon, Goring, Henley, and Witney (which reopened on 6 December 2025) have all</p>

What lessons have been learned from recent library refurbishment projects and how will they influence future projects such as that in Deddington?

transformed the look and feel of the library, introduced more of a local flavour, provided new facilities, achieved greater environmental sustainability, and created more flexible and accessible community spaces. These are the core principles that we are bringing to all our library developments. We are also proactively applying for, and heavily utilising, Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funds to make those developments happen; without placing undue pressure on council capital funds.

With further works in the pipeline for 2026, we are confident that we can maintain momentum in this area and deliver further improvements to libraries across the county.

We've learnt a number of lessons from our recent refurbishments. One is that working in partnership with Friends groups and Town and Parish Councils adds huge value to our projects. Another is that there is massive public support for local libraries, as the successful crowdfunder for improvements to Hook Norton Library showed. And finally that the investment is worth it, with a significant increase in library use after each refurbishment with increases of up to 40%.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Can I just ask if the County Council could do a little bit more to publicly acknowledge the contribution of each of the Friends of the Library groups? I think it's important we show our appreciation for what they do to support the libraries and I think it will also help the groups to continue to grow and thrive. So would you be able to undertake to do that please?

RESPONSE

I'll be happy to do it again. One of the highlights of this role is when I do get to speak to the Friends of Libraries. When I was not long into the role again last year, I spoke up at a meeting that we had for people from Friends of Library groups, specifically to thank them for their work that they do for their communities. The crowd funding appeal to raise funds to expand Hook Norton Library was solidly supported by the Friends group there and would not have been as successful as it was without them. One of the recent re-openings that I went to, which was a joy, was Chinnor library and the Friends group there played an enormous role in that as well. So, absolutely, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Friends groups across the county that support local libraries and we are very supportive of working with them to improve services in our local communities.

<p>32. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS</p> <p>Safety at the Buckland Road junction with the A420 (USRN: 41601900) is a concern for many of my residents, especially those who live in or around Buckland. Can the Council confirm the experience of local residents, specifically that the volume of traffic using this section of the A420 has increased significantly since the road was originally designed and, therefore, the current design of the junction is no longer suitable for the volume of traffic using it? Thank you.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The A420 is and has been, since it was implemented, a strategic route between Swindon and Oxford. Developments within Swindon and within the villages themselves along the corridor will have increased movements along and joining the A420. As part of the planning process the capacity and design of the road and its junctions are assessed to ensure the design remains appropriate.</p> <p>As mentioned with the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan at Policy 53, it identifies the intention to develop an A420 corridor plan which will consider the nature of the road and access of the connecting villages.</p> <p>Collisions are monitored and investigated which has resulted in excessive speed along the corridor being identified as a concern, and hence the county council has been actively working with Thames Valley police on consideration of suitable speed management measures. This has resulted in Thames Valley Police considering the use of average speed ANPR cameras along this route. This was publicised by Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber on 28th May within a BBC news article - A420 in Oxfordshire: Average speed camera plan for 'deadliest road' - BBC News.</p>
<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Will Councillor Gant commit to a formal review of traffic volumes at the Buckland Rd junction of the A420 and then report back to my residents</p>	<p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p> <p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>

<p>on whether or not the current road design is safe, and, if it is not, what is required to make it fit for purpose?</p>	
<p>33. COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN</p> <p>HIF1: What are the forecast costs for HIF1, what is the County Council's exposure and how does this compare to the funds which have been signed off? What now are the timings for work to commence on this project?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The 17 July 2024 Cabinet paper for the HIF1 scheme set out the anticipated costs of the scheme. Although costs have increased, the anticipated cost of the scheme is still well within the total budget available, with a suitable level of contingency funding. Homes England has approved access to its contingency funding where requested.</p> <p>The County Council is committed to contributing approximately £30m to the scheme. As has always been the case, the Council will be required to cover any and all cost overruns over and above the grant, and to meet costs not claimed by the end of the availability period.</p> <p>Main construction work for the scheme is anticipated to commence in Spring 2026.</p>
<p>34. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT</p> <p>The East Oxford Low Traffic Neighbourhoods were implemented by the previous LibDem-Green-Labour administration. They have been very successful in providing safer streets for people walking, wheeling and cycling - by making active travel the shortest route for a number of journeys – at an extremely low cost: benefit ratio.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>The Government is currently making decisions about the design elements for EWR including measures to be delivered when the London Road level crossing is closed as part of further train services being added to that railway line. The DfT was looking at the cheapest viable option which is a pedestrian bridge with lifts. Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC's) response to the consultation was that this would not be acceptable as it would not be a suitable solution to the severance caused by closing this route into the town centre for those that live and work to the south of Bicester, and in particular would not be an inclusive solution.</p>

Oxfordshire County Council has a target of reducing the number of car journeys by 25% by 2030.

There have been recent reports of OCC contributing funds to an underpass for cars, pedestrians and cyclists in Bicester for when the London Road Crossing closes as part of the East West Rail upgrades.

What range of funding is being considered for a contribution towards this project?

Is an active-travel only underpass (likely to be considerably cheaper) being strongly considered?

If not, why is a different approach to active travel and car reduction being taken in Bicester rather than Oxford?

References:

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-county-council-welcomes-proposals-for-underpass-at-bicesters-london-road-crossing/>

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/connecting-oxfordshire/central-oxon-travel-plan>

SUPPLEMENTARY

I appreciate, as you say, that the Council is not the decision maker, but can you clarify: would you be advocating (or is your preference for) an

In recent negotiations with the DfT and in EWR's recent 'You Said, We Did' report there is an offer to construct an underpass instead if the additional funding required for this option could in part be funded by third parties.

The funding mechanisms are being assessed at the moment, including the level of local contribution that could be offered. The form of underpass will continue to be discussed with the EWR team and the DfT, but the priority is to get the bridge + lifts removed from the negotiations.

OCC will want a policy compliant solution but are not the decision makers on this occasion.

RESPONSE

That is a subject that's very much under discussion. We would certainly want anything to be compliant with our own policies and that's what we will be aiming for. It's very much a subject of discussion but we haven't yet achieved

<p>active travel and car-free underpass or for an underpass with cars?</p>	<p>with EWR an agreement that they will entirely do away with the up and over bridge. Our focus at the moment is making sure that they don't go ahead with that because we don't believe that is the right solution.</p>
<p>35. COUNCILLOR TOM GREENAWAY</p> <p>Redbridge park and ride is proving to be a very popular and convenient way to get into Oxford city centre, with what looks to be a significant increase in passengers over recent months. However, we are going into the Christmas shopping period with a large portion of this Oxford City Council park and ride sitting empty. What steps can be taken to unlock this extra capacity at Redbridge for those wanting to visit the city centre?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>We are monitoring park and ride usage carefully. The number of park and ride users has increased significantly since the congestion charge and free park and ride bus offer were introduced, which is exactly what we hoped would happen.</p> <p>Redbridge park and ride has been close to full on a couple of weekend days but across the park and ride system there is still plenty of parking capacity.</p> <p>We are investigating with Oxford City Council, as the owner of Redbridge park and ride, whether it would be possible to release additional parking spaces.</p>
<p>36. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>By now, we are all no doubt aware of the huge waste dump created on the edge of Kidlington by criminals intent on making a quick profit from a selfish and wanton act of environmental vandalism.</p> <p>There have been many reports in the press about the series of events that led up to the recent discovery of this huge illegal dump on</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>In law the responsibility for the deposit of this waste sits with landowners and those who deposited or arranged the deposit of the waste. As stated in response to previous questions, in this instance there is an investigation underway, by the Environment Agency, into potentially very serious criminal acts.</p> <p>Following initial reports of potential unauthorised development, the Environment Agency and Oxfordshire County Council, along with Cherwell District Council, attended the site together on 2 July 2025 where</p>

land on the edge of my division. Could the Cabinet Member confirm when she and the County Council were made aware of it and what action was taken by her and the council at the time?

substantial unauthorised waste disposal was found. The Environment Agency as lead agency began a criminal investigation and a cease-and-desist letter was sent to the landowner on 31 July. Ultimately this process led to a restriction order being granted by the Court to the Environment Agency on 23 October 2025 which makes it an immediate criminal offence to dump any further waste at the site or to access it without authorisation.

In parallel, as Minerals and Waste Planning Authority, Oxfordshire County Council served a formal Planning Contravention Notice on 17 July 2025, and further notices on 29 July and 4 August, responding to information received. National Highways were also informed due to the proximity to the A34 and other partners were informed by the Environment Agency through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum arrangements. This matter was treated within agencies as an operational matter, albeit a very significant one dealt with at senior levels, and I was not briefed as Cabinet member until public awareness was raised in November.

Further interventions to manage the site and plan for the winter season were subsequently taken as detailed in the responses to earlier questions.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Thanks to the Cabinet member for the clarification of the time scan and for confirming when she was first briefed. I'm sure she'd agree that was very late, considering her key role. Does she have any idea why it took so long for that to happen, and why other Members nearer the area were not briefed by the Council until very recently?

RESPONSE

You were present at the briefing that I was at yesterday where I think a lot of those things were explained. But, if you wish to have those written down on piece of paper again, then that's fine. I thought the explanation yesterday was sufficient.

<p>37. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>We're another month on beyond the point where the Cabinet member's previous guarantee to me that road gullies in the most vulnerable areas in Garden City Kidlington would be attended to as a matter of urgency. In September he gave me a categorical assurance that the work would be completed within 2 months.</p> <p>As the people in those areas continue to watch the skies in fear of the next major downpour, is he still unable to wield enough authority within his own service area to ensure that the specific promises he made to those residents actually meant something? If so what would he like to say to them now?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Can my residents be confident that the deadline will be met this time?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Since the prolonged flooding throughout most of 2024 and the early months of 2025 the Highway Teams understandably received an unprecedented number of enquiries and calls for service requests. This is on the back of many years of underfunding towards the highway drain and gully cleansing programme.</p> <p>The Highways teams continue to work tirelessly with our contractors to resolve areas where property flooding exists. With drainage particularly, issues are often not known until investigation work has commenced which can and does lead to delays with the programme. Cllr Middleton will be aware that there has been much multi-agency work undertaken in the Garden City area and other areas of Kidlington already, to reduce the flooding concerns.</p> <p>Without further knock-on delays to other equally nervous communities across the County that also flooded, Highways have rescheduled attendance to Garden City to early January 2026, however, highway officers are also in liaison with colleagues in our LLFA team to see if their 'framework contractors' are able to do some of the key areas earlier.</p> <p>I will ensure that officers respond to you directly when the precise dates are known.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p> <p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>38. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>During the last full council I asked the Cabinet Member why Thames Valley Police were</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The Vision Zero team liaises closely with Thames Valley Police (TVP), including at regular meetings of the Thames Valley Safer Roads Working</p>

<p>seemingly ignoring their own data which showed that Cherwell was amongst the highest level of fixed camera offences recorded in April to May, yet the number of mobile enforcement actions were actually REDUCED in June.</p> <p>The answer I received was completely unrelated to the question. Has he now had time to properly consider the question and address the issue appropriately with TVP? If so, could he now answer it more fully, especially in view of the council's commitment to Vision Zero?</p>	<p>Group comprising all County and Unitary councils and TVP. This includes consideration of priorities and opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the resources available for enforcement by TVP. However, decisions by Thames Valley Police on their detailed operational deployment of enforcement resources are a matter for the police to take, on the basis of their analysis of priorities throughout the TVP area.</p>
<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>The answer says the deployment of TVP resources are made on the basis of their analysis of priorities. The point I was making was they appear to be ignoring their own data, which should be informing those priorities. Can we not make that point more forcefully to them and ask for a more appropriate and informed response?</p>	<p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>39. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW</p> <p>Please can you confirm that all directly employed OCC staff are paid a minimum of the national real living wage (For the real cost of living Living Wage Foundation) of £12.40 p.h., and where relevant for Oxford-based staff, the Oxford living wage of £13.16 ph?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>We pay all employees a minimum of £12.65 per hour. The current national living wage is £12.21 per hour, meaning we pay 44 pence per hour (3.6%) more than the minimum.</p> <p>We do not currently have accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation to pay the UK Real Living Wage of £13.45 per hour, or with Oxford City Council to apply the Oxford Living Wage of £13.16 per hour to any Oxford based</p>

	<p>employees.</p> <p>A previous review of the option to apply Oxford Living Wage set out several reasons for not pursuing this at that time. These included impact on the cost of service contracts, the financial implication as the salary bill would increase by a significant figure, the council would have limited voice in respect of annual increases, there could be an impact on recruitment and retention aligned to other authorities and partners. Living Wage Foundation accreditation to date has not been considered but would have a similar impact on the salary bill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our lowest pay point is 3.6% above the legal minimum - Pay is agreed in line with the national negotiations - OCC does not stipulate through our tendering process that other organisations should pay the Living Wage
<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>What provision can be made in the 2026 budget for us to join over 100 organisations, including for-profit enterprises, by paying at least the Oxford living wage to all its staff that this is relevant to? I welcome that the IRP recommendations include for OCC to pay at least the Oxford living wage for carers employed to support Members able to conduct their councillor duties. I hope for consistency across all of Oxfordshire County Council's own staff.</p>	<p>RESPONSE</p> <p>I think it's a really important question that we need to look at going forward as a Council. I did ask for some additional information about this point. Apparently, we last reviewed this policy in 2019, which is a while ago now. We are currently obviously moving towards unitary local government. We don't know the boundaries yet, but we know that that's on the way. As part of that part of that process, we are looking first of all in terms of what we do and the other councils do as well. And that will then be coming together in that transition period. My view is that would be a good opportunity to look again at this policy and my personal view is that, if we can make progress on this front through that process, that would be very positive.</p>
<p>40. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW</p> <p>In the County Council's (OCC) One Oxfordshire Proposal, economic growth is mentioned 86 times. Climate is mentioned only 15. Given that OCC has declared a climate emergency, and</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>The 'One Oxfordshire' proposal lays out OCC's vision for the future of local government but does not bind any future authority to any decisions. The proposal envisions a future where there is a balance between having the capability to make "strong plan-led decisions at scale" whilst also "protecting</p>

<p>life-friendly economic growth completely depends on the climate, what should we make of this?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Given the recent national emergency briefing, what comment would you give to the reality that the Council's key legacy to its successor organisation is to ensure it does put mitigating and adapting to the climate and ecological emergency at the heart of its mission, rather than economic growth, which, as we all know, actually completely depends on the climate and ecology?</p>	<p>our environment and ensuring access to green spaces for all our communities". (p.98).</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>I can't say what the new authority or authorities will adopt as their policies, but I would certainly be advocating that all the policies of this Council, particularly with regard to putting climate change at the heart of everything that we do, should be adopted by those Councils.</p> <p>With regard to your comment around economic growth, I would say that one of the things that characterises this county is the enormous amount of work that's going on, on innovative technologies, which are going to really help with the climate and making sure that we are ready for future issues around climate change. Some of the things that are going on, such as battery storage, some of the work that's going on with regard to innovation around energy, Tokamak for example, all of those are absolutely fundamental not just to this county, but to the national and the international picture. So we have to support their growth and I don't want to see us doing that at the expense of climate or at the expense of green spaces, which is why we have said that we want to make sure that we have an inclusive and climate-ready economy in this county.</p>
<p>41. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW</p> <p>The council's Carbon Management Plan was approved in November. It forecasts around 3,000 tonnes of CO₂e per year of residual emissions by 2030, representing roughly 10–15% of OCC's direct emissions footprint. The policy commits to prioritising credits from Oxfordshirebased schemes, but acknowledges that the local market is still developing, so only a</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR BEN HIGGINS, CABINET MEMBER FOR FUTURE ECONOMY AND INNOVATION</p> <p>The council is working to invest in market accelerating activities to support more carbon credits being produced in Oxfordshire. As part of the development of the Carbon Management Plan Residual Carbon and Offsetting Policy, the council led discussions with project developers, brokers, and code developers to understand the opportunities across Oxfordshire present and future. The council also has a Request For Information out to acquire specific information about the types of projects or activities that could be accelerated through seed funding, research, or pilots.</p>

minority of credits will initially be sourced locally, with the share expected to grow over time. How will the Cabinet Member for Future Economy & Innovation prioritise developing Oxfordshire based schemes, a win-win for residents and businesses alike?

SUPPLEMENTARY

I'd just like to ask how much financial investment is targeted at developing Oxfordshire-based schemes and how does that compare to the financial investments that are committed to promote future economic activities which do not relate to the key requirements of this Council, namely, as Councillor Leffman just said, mitigate and adapt to climate change, given its emergency.

Work already in train includes:

The council is the lead on a new Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership sprint group that aims to create a local buyer coalition to demonstrate demand for local credits. It will explore demand aggregation, identify shared interests in project types, as well as potential shared mechanisms like a buyer's club that would support producers of credits to bring forward more schemes. The sprint group will also bring in project proponents to align interests between buyers and sellers. The need for this group was identified in the Local Nature Partnership's Nature Finance Group.

The county council has committed £500,000 as a recycling loan to the Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Fund which will help address the time lag between when nature-based credit projects with high biodiversity uplift commence and saleable credits become available. It aims support more landowners bringing projects forward.

RESPONSE

Focusing on shaping our local market for offsets is a really important approach because remote offsets have suffered from credibility issues. I think it's important we do everything we can locally. It's clearly very early days. So we're focused at the moment on developing the market. Until we develop the market, it's difficult to understand how much pump priming will need to be done to really get it away. In terms of funding commitment down the road, I think it'll probably be coming to Cabinet soon.

<p>42. COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS</p> <p>Residents in my division welcome the recent improvements to bus services as well as the increased reliability brought about by the Oxford temporary congestion charge.</p> <p>One remaining challenge is how to improve public transport access to the John Radcliffe Hospital, which saw little or no improvement under previous Tory administrations while congestion got worse and worse.</p> <p>The frequency and journey time of the 700 bus from Oxford Parkway has been improved recently, again because of the charge. However, is there anything the Cabinet Member can further do to improve public transport to the hospital from the North, in a way that might also relieve the significant congestion around it?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>In recent years bus services to the John Radcliffe hospital have considerably improved, from within Oxford, including the park & ride sites, as well as from further afield in Oxfordshire. This has been made possible by several means, including S106 funds available in some areas to establish new routes and hospital policies to encourage staff to travel in by bus.</p> <p>It is not likely to be possible for everywhere in Oxfordshire to be directly linked to the John Radcliffe by bus, aside from funding there is a limit to how many buses the John Radcliffe can sensibly accommodate. Where residents are not directly linked to the John Radcliffe by bus, the improved services help make interchange a more feasible option. For example, Summertown shops could be seen as an interchange point for buses from the north going into the city. There are now up to five buses per hour between Summertown shops and the John Radcliffe (routes 700 and H2); most bus routes heading into Oxford from the north pass Summertown shops and therefore the connection would be frequent.</p> <p>The temporary congestion charge has enabled Oxford Bus Company to increase the frequency of route 700 by enabling more efficient utilisation of their buses, as they spend less time in congestion. The increased frequency of this route along with the park & ride free bus travel offer, which is funded by congestion charge revenue and includes travel to the John Radcliffe, will hopefully result in many more people travelling to the hospital by bus. This will in turn help reduce congestion in the area.</p>
<p>43. COUNCILLOR GEOFF SAUL</p> <p>It is disappointing that the 14 Intermediate Care Beds at the Chipping Norton Memorial Hospital were taken out of commission without any</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS</p> <p>Oxfordshire has been working to a <i>Home First Discharge to Assess</i> model for people who have been admitted to hospital and who cannot go home on their own since 2023. The model was piloted in 2023 and fully deployed from</p>

notice to or discussion with local Councillors and residents, especially after all of the efforts taken to preserve community beds in Chipping Norton when the new hospital was first opened.

Can you please explain;

1. The reasons why the 14 Intermediate Care beds were decommissioned without consultation with or notice to local councillors and residents;
2. The rationale for the decommissioning of the beds and the expected benefits of the new Home First Discharge model
3. The availability of new Short Stay Hub Beds in the Chipping Norton area; and
4. The current and ongoing use of the 14 former Intermediate Care Beds Chipping Norton Memorial Hospital run by the Order of St John

January 2024. This has reduced the demand for step-down beds (previously known as intermediate care beds and from November 2019 as *short-stay hub beds*). The Council has been reducing the numbers of beds since 2023 by agreement with NHS partners. We fully recommissioned the short stay hub bed model in July 2025.

Home First Discharge to Assess has been a success: more people have been able to return to their own home in the community after a stay in hospital; the length of time they stay in hospital has reduced; and we have reinvested money we spent on step down beds into the Home First pathway, which is more efficient and more effective.

1. I approved the procurement of a new model of short stay hub beds focussed on more complex people who cannot go directly home in a Delegated Member decision in January 2025. [20250221R2 Short Stay Hub Beds.pdf](#) The new model was developed with the input of clinicians across health and care including the GP practice supporting the beds in Chipping Norton. The Council consulted fully with the Order of St John Care Trust (OSJ) who delivered the 14 beds in Chipping Norton and with residents of the short stay hub beds across the County.

In the Delegated decision (at paragraph 45) it was noted that there was **no requirement to consult on changes to these beds** but that local stakeholders should be informed about any change of use to the 14 beds in Chipping Norton. Unfortunately, OSJ began to market these beds before the Council had separately informed local stakeholders of the change. OSJ were acting with the agreement of the Council, but officers had not at that point communicated locally.

2. The rationale for the change to the short stay hub bed model and the numbers of beds required to meet needs in this model was set out in full in the delegated member decision paper and in the earlier report to Cabinet in December 2024 [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 17/12/2024](#)

	<p><u>14:00</u></p> <p>3. The procurement of the new model of short stay hub beds in July 2025 has sourced 8 beds in Chipping Norton out of a total of 37 across the County. These beds are supported by the same hospital team and the Chipping Norton Health centre. There is flexibility to increase and reduce the number of beds according to demand</p> <p>4. The 14 beds in Henry Cornish House fall within the Council's agreement with the Oxfordshire Care Partnership (OCP). OSJ provides the care within OCP, and the Council has agreed with them that the beds will be used for long-term nursing care. The beds will be a mixture of beds purchased by the Council and beds marketed to self-funders. This explains the marketing exercise recently undertaken by OSJ.</p>
<p>44. COUNCILLOR GEOFF SAUL</p> <p>There is concern in Chipping Norton that the proposals currently under public consultation to reorganise Oxfordshire's Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) may lead to the removal and break up of a dedicated on call daytime crew which has strong support from the local community and that offers a high level of availability and service.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member please review the position and consider the potential benefits of having a second fire engine at Chipping Norton Fire Station manned by a daytime on-call crew to operate alongside the proposed wholetime fire engine. These benefits would include</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JENNY HANNABY, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND SAFETY</p> <p>At present the consultation is in place to take views from the community and staff around all options presented in the model – review of the feedback from this engagement, including consideration of any viable, alternate options presented through the consultation will take place once the consultation is closed.</p>

increased response times for calls requiring two or more fire engines and greater general resilience as well as the retention of an effective daytime on call crew.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Should there not have been prior long-term engagement to outline the issues and develop these plans not only with firefighters and the FBU but also with councillors, locality committees, local communities generally in order to generate proposals with greater buy-in and thereby probably a greater chance of long term success.

RESPONSE

We are on a very long journey of change for the fire service and the first thing we want to do is to hear from all the firefighters who we have high regard for. And we also want to hear from the community. This is why we went to the community for the consultation. The firefighters also can put down their comments on this consultation.

When this consultation is seen in January, there will be plenty of time for us to all sit round the table again to look at the consultation. The model we put forward might not be the model we actually go forward with. I do agree we should be doing more consulting of them, but there's always the time we need to do it in a measured, clear way so everybody understands the journey that we are on. I'm hopeful that, at the end of the journey, we will have a much better fire service, a much safer fire service and of course, more hopefully more on-call and daytime firefighters.

45. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK

How much is the County Council spending on school transport? Can you please provide a breakdown for the past 3 years?

COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Category	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
SEN Transport	20,485,474	25,878,733	29,744,646
Mainstream Transport	7,665,846	8,251,405	9,403,115
Other	437,669	151,096	192,641
Total	28,588,990	34,281,234	39,442,826

Over the past three years, Oxfordshire County Council spent £28.59m

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>As you can see from the breakdown of the last three years, the amount is going up and in your answer you have said 'currently undergoing organisational redesign'. Can you tell me why it's taken so long? Because year by year the figures are going up and when will this organisational redesign be completed so one will know the outcome of that?</p>	<p>(2022/23), £34.28m (2023/24), and £39.44m (2024/25) on home-to-school transport, with 72–75% for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and 24–27% for mainstream transport. The Supported Travel Service is undergoing organisational redesign and a travel improvement programme aimed at increasing efficiency, achieving savings, and coming in under budget for the first time this year.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>When I arrived in post and saw how much it was rising every year, I was quite fearful about where we were going. And my honest assessment is that the officers running the service really are doing an incredible job. Everything is being examined and what we're now looking at is, rather than an increase in spends this year into next year, for the first time we're now looking at spends coming underneath the budgeted amount. Why has that taken so long up until now? I don't know. I've just arrived in post but I'm pleased with who we've got looking after the service.</p>
<p>46. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK</p> <p>Please could we have a yellow box with CCTV enforcement camera in front of Church Cowley St James Primary School for the safety of children?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Yellow box markings prohibit vehicles from entering a section of road and can only be installed in particular locations for very specific reasons.</p> <p>The principal purpose of a yellow box is to prevent queuing traffic from blocking 'cross' or 'through' traffic movements at junctions, we are not permitted to use them to prevent parking, loading/unloading or picking up/setting down passengers.</p> <p>Camera enforcement of yellow boxes is only allowed if there is evidence of violations, and other physical measures to increase adherence is not possible.</p> <p>Consequently, further details of the activity and challenges faced will be required before this can be considered further.</p>

	I will arrange for officers to reach out to you and discuss the best way forward.
47. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK The County Council claimed the congestion charge would ease traffic but it has had the opposite effect in my division. People living on Church Cowley Road and Oxford face extra traffic, pollution and constant traffic jams. Due to the extra traffic since the implementation of the congestion charge, people living near the Eastern Bypass are suffering from pollution. What plans do the Council have to resolve these issues that I have raised? SUPPLEMENTARY When will we know this data will be published, especially in my division?	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT Our transport modelling and assessments have always been clear that both the traffic filters and congestion charge reduce traffic in some areas and increase it in others. Data on traffic flows and speeds, and bus journey times will be published on our website soon. RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts I've been told that the data is going to be published this week, so I don't know exactly, but that's what I've been told so far.
48. COUNCILLOR ANDREW CRICHTON Cherwell District Council is currently looking at resolving longstanding issues related to the adoption of the Lapsley Drive area in Banbury, specifically around wild spaces that should have been transferred to Cherwell after the estate was built in the 2000s. Around 50% of Lapsley	COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION The County Council is not party to adoption of the non-highway public open space areas. This is for Cherwell District Council to resolve with the owners. There are currently three roads off Lapsley Drive that remain unadopted. Highway works have been completed for all of them, and they are all open for use by the public.

<p>Drive and roads on this estate remain unadopted, while half of it is adopted. Please can you look to investigate if these longstanding issues on this estate can be resolved and the area adopted, and work with Cherwell District Council to try and find a solution?</p>	<p>The remaining part of Lapsley Drive, Lord Grandison Way and Lord Elwood Road all form part of the same adoption agreement. Our Legal Team has been instructed on this and have been for some time. Once the adoption agreement is in place we will be able to adopt straight away. Our legal representatives are working with the developer (Taylor Wimpey's) legal representatives to get the necessary legal agreement in place. We expect adoption of the remainder of Lapsley Drive to take place within the next six months but this will depend on the cooperation of the developer and any other landowners.</p> <p>Sir Henry Jake Close (Bovis Homes) has an adoption agreement in place and is waiting for Lapsley Drive to be adopted as it provides the only vehicular link to public highway. Once Lapsley Drive is adopted then adoption of Sir Henry Jake Close will take place shortly afterwards.</p>
<p>49. COUNCILLOR ANDREW CRICHTON</p> <p>The Banbury Baby Bank and Banbury Uniform exchange provide a vital service for children in Banbury and the surrounding communities. This relieves the pressure on other public services, such as those provided by Oxfordshire County Council. The impending temporary loss of their home at Hanwell Fields Community Centre, while it is renovated from January 2026, means they may not be able to deliver this service for the much of the next twelve months. Please can you explore how Oxfordshire County Council might support them with their hunt for a new home, and whether there is any support the County Council can provide them with in this period of uncertainty?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council can conduct a thorough review of its property portfolio to identify any vacant properties that could meet the needs of the Banbury Baby Bank and Banbury Uniform Exchange. Additionally, we can provide guidance to other landowners who may have suitable accommodation available.</p> <p>We are committed to developing robust Community Leasing and Community Asset Transfer policies designed to support our community tenants. These policies will enable tenants to apply for reduced rents through a formalised process, acknowledging the significant social benefits they provide while granting them longer-term security.</p> <p>To ensure a fair and structured approach, we are creating a comprehensive scoring mechanism. This will balance the crucial social value contributed by community tenants with the operational demands of our property portfolio.</p>

	<p>Each application and property will be meticulously assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration key factors such as the alignment of the VCS group with Council objectives, the condition and location of the property, and the community's need for the proposed asset use.</p> <p>It is important to note that while we cannot extend rent relief to all tenants, these policies will guide our decision-making process. We will soon communicate the dates for engaging with the VCS community to consult on the details of the proposal, targeting the end of December for a consultation period in January or February. Our current VCS tenants will be able to apply under these policies when their leases expire.</p> <p>We aim to complete this policy by the end of the financial year, preparing us to engage with tenants in April 2026.</p>
<p>50. COUNCILLOR STEFAN GAWRYSIAK</p> <p>With regards to the Fire and Rescue Cover Model consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The consultation it states that Henley is only available 9% of the time. Whereas in subsequent emails with Rob the figure has changed to 39.39%. which is the correct figure? - Henley has a current response time of 10 mins for a serious incident. After it closes what will the response time be from Caversham and Wallingford? - Is the Henley area the busiest in South Oxfordshire? 	<p>COUNCILLOR JENNY HANNABY, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING</p> <p>Cllr Gawrysiak; you have asked a number of questions which we will attempt to answer in turn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"The consultation it states that Henley is only available 9% of the time. Whereas in subsequent emails with Rob the figure has changed to 39.39%. which is the correct figure?</i> <p>Both of the availability statistics that have been discussed with you are correct. One set represents the core Henley fire station availability (9 percent and 25 percent at night) and is that which is used in the main consultation document. The second set of availability (39.39 percent day and 30.58 percent night) data reflect their availability between July 2022 to March 2024 with the additional resources that we have placed at the station to support crewing. The average of these two day and night data points are available in chart format on p.25 of the underlying ORH report.</p>

- Oxfordshire fire service should look after Oxfordshire residents. If Henley closes, we will rely on Caversham for cover. This is wrong. Is this correct?
- Is it correct that Henley has been banned from recruiting volunteer firefighters?
- Our response times should be 11 minutes. Please confirm that if Henley closes the response will be. From Caversham 21 minutes. Wallingford 31 mins. Please confirm that this is unacceptable?

- *"Henley has a current response time of 10 mins for a serious incident. After it closes what will the response time be from Caversham and Wallingford?"*

Incidents on Henley's station ground were attended within 14 minutes on 58.89% of occasions in the 2024 calendar year (as an example) compared to our aim of attending 95% of incidents within 14 minutes. The response time into Henley's station ground from Caversham (or any other station) will largely depend on exactly where an incident is located.

- *Is the Henley area the busiest in South Oxfordshire?*

For the period that the incident data was modelled, the analysis included the number of incidents that occurred on each station ground. We have not modelled this at the level of wards, or similar. This analysis indicated that Wallingford's station ground was the busiest in South Oxfordshire with 0.4 incidents per day. Thame's was the second busiest with 0.39 incidents per day followed by Wheatley with 0.27 and then Henley with 0.24.

- *"Oxfordshire fire service should look after Oxfordshire residents. If Henley closes, we will rely on Caversham for cover. This is wrong. Is this correct?"*

Our proposals do not rely on Caversham and the proposed day shift fire station in Wallingford/Crowmarsh would have an important role to play. Nevertheless, Henley's station ground receives an operational response from Caversham today and this would continue to be a need in the future under our proposals.

- *"Is it correct that Henley has been banned from recruiting volunteer firefighters?"*

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>In the last paragraph you say that for Oxfordshire the response times should be 11 minutes and 14 minutes.</p> <p>If Henley closes, for an incident in central Henley the response will be 21 minutes from Caversham and 31 minutes from Wallingford. Clearly missing this response time.</p> <p>1. Is this correct for central Henley? 2. Why was this vital information NOT included in the consultation?</p>	<p>There has never been a ban on the recruitment of on-call firefighters in Henley.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Our response times should be 11 minutes. Please confirm that if Henley closes the response will be from Caversham 21 minutes and Wallingford 31 mins. Please confirm that this is unacceptable?"</i> <p>Our response performance standards are that we aim to arrive at emergencies within 11 minutes on 80 percent of occasions and within 14 minutes on 95 percent of occasions. The response time into Henley's station ground from Caversham or Wallingford (or any other station) will largely depend on exactly where an incident is located.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>I will get you a written answer for that.</p>
<p>51. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT</p> <p>Given that Local Government Reorganisation is the biggest shake-up of Oxfordshire politics for over 50 years, what are the reasons that we as a full council have not had the opportunity to debate and vote on the One Oxfordshire LGR proposal when all the Oxfordshire District local</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>As Oxfordshire County Council operates using the Leader and Cabinet model for decision making, full council were not asked to vote on the One Oxfordshire proposal. The approval of the Council's final plan proposal is an executive function in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 Section 9D(2).</p>

<p>authorities have?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Can I ask why have you said the Oxfordshire County Council has not had a vote on One Oxfordshire because we use the leader and cabinet model when, for example, South Oxfordshire District Council also uses the leader and cabinet model and has had a vote on the unitary proposals?</p>	<p>Before publication, we endeavoured to keep Councillors informed on how the proposal was progressing by: bringing the proposal to three all councillor briefing sessions; two meetings of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee; one meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee; regular briefings of political group leaders and within political groups. Representations, comments and observations made via the full debates at briefings, scrutiny and audit meetings were all considered prior to the finalisation of the LGR final proposal and some amends were made in response to representations made.</p> <p>Post publication, the proposal was then further debated during Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November and Cabinet on 13 November. Following this, the proposal was officially submitted to central government on 27 November 2025.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>My understanding is that the other Councils noted; they didn't vote. It was a cabinet decision to go ahead and that's the way that we've done it in this Council.</p>
<p>52. COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED</p> <p>Has the Cabinet Member for Transport Management considered making an exemption to the congestion charges for nurses, teachers and other key workers commuting from across Oxfordshire into Oxford given the shortages faced with many of these occupations in Oxford and unaffordability of housing in Oxford for</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>All schools and NHS premises can be accessed without passing a congestion charging point. Nurses, teachers and other key workers do not therefore need to pay the congestion charge to get to work.</p> <p>Permits are available for community health and care workers who rely on their car to get to appointments during the day, or for on-call medics who need to travel to a hospital in an emergency. At the time of writing, 3516 such permits</p>

<p>many of these workers?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>What monitoring are they doing to ensure the effect that it's having on key workers and also the effects on staff vacancies in our schools and hospitals?</p>	<p>have been issued.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p> <p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>53. COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED</p> <p>Agnes Court in Banbury just off the town centre is a nursing home for Adults with physical difficulties in Banbury, ran by Leonard Cheshire. The home is due to lose its Physiotherapist at the end of the year, a vital role for many residents, with the charity suggesting unrealistically that the NHS will be able to pick up this provision. What is the County Council doing to help residents and their families to keep this vital service in the home?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS</p> <p>The Council continues to fund placements for people's eligible social care needs, and the NHS funds health-related needs. Where a person requires physiotherapy, this is often provided outside their residence. If someone needs a placement with on-site specialist therapeutic services, we make every effort to find one that meets those requirements.</p> <p>Agnes Court is part of the Council's Care Home Framework, which was established through a formal procurement process in 2024. Leonard Cheshire chose to join this framework and bids for placements at agreed rates in line with defined care needs and specified inputs from care home staff. These rates were set at the time of tender and have been increased annually since the framework's inception.</p> <p>Leonard Cheshire's physiotherapy offer refers to enhanced services that go beyond the requirements of the Care Home Framework care bandings. These additional services have historically been funded by donations and grants to Leonard Cheshire. The presence of these additional services has not been a factor in the Council's decision to place people at Agnes Court and does not form part of referrals within the 2024 Framework.</p> <p>We remain committed to ensuring that people's assessed care needs are met and will work with providers and health partners to support individuals appropriately.</p>

<p>54. COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED</p> <p>The adoption of the spine road and beyond that the other roads off it in Longford Park is a complete mess due to issues with ownership of the road. The first residents to Longford Park moved in over 10 years ago, so what is the County Council doing to speed up adoption and what lessons, if any, have been learnt for the new development starting eminently in Longford park, and for other developments across Oxfordshire. Would the Cabinet Member consider meeting me to discuss this further?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are pursuing the consortium of developers to complete the necessary Section 38 legal agreements to allow adoption of the roads to take place.</p> <p>Progress has been slow due to a lack of engagement on the part of the consortium.</p> <p>Issues with the consortium no longer owning areas due to land title transfers are also preventing completion of the agreement. Only the landowner can dedicate land as highway and where areas have been transferred to plots or other third parties, OCC are prevented from completing the agreement.</p> <p>We have been advised by their legal representatives the consortium are acting to resolve the issues preventing completion of agreements. OCC are doing all we can to assist and pursue resolution.</p> <p>All Section 38 agreements to adopt new roads, in the majority, lie with the developers delivering the infrastructure to pursue and complete. Without their willingness and cooperation to follow technical review and legal process, OCC are unable to complete agreements. OCC Highway Agreements Team and Legal Team can only progress agreements where information and communication are maintained and shared between parties.</p> <p>For large scale strategic developments the requirement to offer spine road or significant on-site highway infrastructure will, where appropriate, be included</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>I think the Council needs to do more to force the developers hand into actually adopting the road and what is being done to do that?</p>	<p>with Section 106 planning obligations. This will provide confidence that key highway infrastructure will be both delivered and adopted in a timely manner.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>55. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES</p> <p>The County Council is right to be making use of Government grant funding to address historical safety issues on the road network, including use of the Safer Road Fund to provide side road entry treatments on Banbury and Iffley Roads. The new side road entry treatment on the southern-branch of Iffley Road is however causing significant concerns amongst residents - with vehicles reportedly having to maneuver into the opposite lane to turn left into the junction. Operator Barhale which has been undertaking work for Thames Water in Oriel Field, using significant amounts of heavy machinery, has concluded the newly formatted junction as "dangerous". What steps is the Cabinet Member taking to address these concerns, especially those from Barhale, and what action will be taken to review the new junction design to ensure it is safer for all road users - even if this requires modifications?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The junction mentioned in the MQ55 query forms part of the Safer Roads Fund project, which includes the construction of 12 new Side Road Entry Treatments - designed to make the junctions safer for all road users but particularly for vulnerable road users.</p> <p>Prior to construction, the designs underwent a combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 Road Safety Audit that included the swept path analysis and vehicle tracking for estate cars, delivery vans and refuse lorries (and buses where relevant). This is in accordance with Manual for Streets which states of larger vehicles, '<i>In many cases it will be better to have slightly greater carriageway widths at the junction, rather than generous corner radii, or accept that larger vehicles occasionally cross into the opposing lane.</i>' It is also in accordance with best practice guidance in Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20. This sets out national standards for active travel, including how side road junctions should be treated to ensure safety and continuity for cyclists and pedestrians. It should create priority for pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles by creating continuous, raised footways and tight corner radii to reduce vehicle speeds, shorten crossing distances and ensure good visibility for all users.</p> <p>This is the approach used in the designs on Iffley Road, Banbury Road and the separate side road entry scheme on Woodstock Road. Historic road</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY Can the Cabinet member outline what specific engagement the councillor has had with Barhale regarding the amended Iffley Road / Henley Avenue Junction?</p>	<p>layouts, some of which are decades old, on the Abingdon Road and Botley Road also follow these basic principles.</p> <p>The Stage 3 road safety audit, which should be completed post-construction, has been instructed and will be carried out early in the new year. The outcomes of that safety audit will help us to consider how the new junction layouts are performing and identify any safety alterations that may be necessary.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>56. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES</p> <p>Bus Operator Oxford Bus Company has reported that its newly timetabled services on the Iffley Road are facing delays as a result of traffic levels being higher than expected following the introduction of the temporary congestion charge. Can the Cabinet Member provide data from the last month detailing current traffic flows on Abingdon Road and Iffley Road and how these compare to comparable data before the introduction of the congestion charge, as well as current reliability data of bus services on both these roads?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY Can the Cabinet member outline a specific</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Data on traffic flows and speeds, and bus journey times will be published on our website soon.</p> <p>It is worth noting that services using Iffley Road have faced delays in Littlemore and on Grenoble Road in recent months, due to ongoing utility works.</p> <p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p>

<p>timetable for the publication of future monitoring data on the impact of the temporary congestion charge? And can you commit to ensuring that the monitoring, timeline and eventual data is published on the County Council's website?</p>	<p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>
<p>57. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member outline what steps are being taken to accelerate completion of the ongoing but delayed inspection of Donnington Bridge?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The delayed inspection of Donnington Bridge is part of a broader process to determine short-, medium-, and long-term risk management strategies, informed by ongoing assessments and lessons from Wytham Bridge, a similar and technically complex structure.</p> <p>National Highways' experience shows that direct inspection of critical elements is impractical, leading to precautionary external post-tensioning and long-term monitoring, which may also be considered for Donnington Bridge.</p> <p>Current work includes evaluating potential failure modes, exploring satellite radar data for historic deflections, and assessing whether enhanced monitoring or full replacement offers better value for money, while factoring in environmental impacts and cost implications.</p>
<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>The answer does not deal with the substantive delays caused the inspection of Donnington Bridge due to the appointment of contractors and subcontractors, nor indeed the impact of the continued weight restrictions on the local community due to rerouting the number 46 bus service. What lessons have been learned from this process to ensure that other communities don't have to suffer the length of ongoing</p>	<p>RESPONSE from Councillor Judy Roberts</p> <p>I will ask officers to provide a written response.</p>

disruption?	
<p>58. COUNCILLOR NICK FIELD-JOHNSON</p> <p>Regarding local government reorganisation, would you not agree that it important for Oxfordshire to speak with one voice? The County Council and Oxford City Council have proposed different structures – could we not agree on a united approach?</p> <p>Would you not agree that a Labour government is more likely to support a Labour Council's structure rather than a non-Labour Council?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>Throughout the LGR proposal drafting process the county council and district/city councils have been in communication on a variety of topics whilst developing separate proposals. The County Council has been a strong advocate for working collaboratively throughout the LGR process thus far. A statutory invite was issued to all councils in Oxfordshire and councils are entitled to produce their own proposals should they not be in agreement on their vision for the future of local governance. This was the case in Oxfordshire and thus three separate proposals have been submitted to central government.</p> <p>We have been working under the assumption that proposals will be assessed on their merit and we are unfortunately not able to predict the rationale for the decisions central government will make on LGR proposals in Oxfordshire. However, it may be worth noting that, recent LGR decisions have not necessarily fallen on partisan lines, for example in Surrey; the successful proposal (a two unitary option) was proposed by the Conservative Surrey County Council (though the political landscape of Surrey differs considerably to our own).</p>
<p>59. COUNCILLOR NICK FIELD-JOHNSON</p> <p>How many discussions were held with Oxford City Council and was any progress made on trying for a united solution?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>Throughout the LGR process thus far, 'LGR Leads' across the County and District/City Councils have met regularly and Chief Executives have also been in regular contact on the topic of LGR. Although councils were developing separate proposals for LGR, we have worked collaboratively with other councils and have provided data and information when requested. These</p>

	<p>meetings were not in place to develop a united proposal but to keep all councils informed of key developments.</p>
<p>60. COUNCILLOR NICK FIELD-JOHNSON</p> <p>Given that we work as a democracy, surely we should have had a full discussion in the Council Chamber on local government reorganisation? Merely holding a consultation is not adequate. Can we have an open discussion in the chamber on this important topic?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>As Oxfordshire County Council operates using the Leader and Cabinet model for decision making, full council were not asked to vote on the One Oxfordshire proposal. The approval of the Council's final plan proposal is an executive function in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 Section 9D(2).</p> <p>Before publication, we endeavoured to keep Councillors informed on how the proposal was progressing by: bringing the proposal to three all councillor briefing sessions; two meetings of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee; one meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee; regular briefings of political group leaders and within political groups. Representations, comments and observations made via the full debates at briefings, scrutiny and audit meetings were all considered prior to the finalisation of the LGR final proposal and some amends were made in response to representations made.</p> <p>Post publication, the proposal was then further debated during Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 November and Cabinet on 13 November. Following this, the proposal was officially submitted to central government on 27 November 2025.</p>
<p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>We did have briefings. We did have consultancy but my question to the leader was, whenever I wanted to talk about a 2-system or a 3-system, I was told we're only here to talk about one single unitary. I am very disappointed and I'd like it</p>	<p>RESPONSE</p> <p>They did have a discussion in the Council Chamber, but we have conducted ourselves in a different way. It's been to a number of different committees. There's been opportunities for Members to discuss this in Members' briefings. That's not been done, as far as I'm aware, in some of the other councils.</p>

<p>minuted that we never here as a Chamber were allowed to discuss local government reform because I know my colleagues in Cherwell and North Oxfordshire have similar views.</p>	<p>But it was always going to be a decision for the Cabinet in all those councils. The decision was taken by the Cabinet to go forward with whichever proposal that Cabinet preferred and, in this Council, the Cabinet preferred the single option, the single unitary option. That's what we've decided to put forward. What other councils chose to do with regard to bringing it to the other Members was up to them but we have had a full consultation with Members prior to making that decision.</p>
<p>61. COUNCILLOR BEKAH FLETCHER</p> <p>Having spent the week at the National Children's and Adult Services Conference in Bournemouth recently, what are Leaders in the industry flagging as key concerns for Councils at the moment?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULTS</p> <p>The conference covered a wide range of concerns for Council's some of which are in our hands to resolve, and some of which create an external policy challenge.</p> <p>Under the heading of <i>opportunities</i> there was much interesting discussion regarding how we can improve on quality, insight and impact. The leader of CQC identified key opportunities around support for unpaid carers, co-production, better use and understanding of social care data and work especially around the transitions for children and young people into adult services. The Council is already engaged in these initiatives to reduce waiting lists, improve experience and increase impact but there is the chance to do more.</p> <p>The national ask of local government is challenging. The Fair Pay Agreement carries risks if improved rates of pay to care workers are not backed by investment both in terms of funding to local government, but also training and support to career development and the opportunities for "proper jobs" rather than "better-paid piece rate working". Oxfordshire is already actively engaged in these discussions with our local care market.</p> <p>The conference signalled key risks which were not addressed in the Minister's keynote address. Leaders across the sector were absolutely clear that councils are being left at high levels of risk from Government policy choices —</p>

	<p>the most immediate threat is their decision to shut down overseas recruitment for care workers. ADASS has been unequivocal: removing this workforce pipeline, with no credible domestic plan to replace it, will drive services into deeper crisis. This is a significant risk to Oxfordshire and officers are working with local providers to assure capacity. The Minister knows this is a problem but is not acting to protect the older and vulnerable people who rely on these staff every day.</p> <p>Equally alarming is Labour's decision to delay the long-promised social care reforms to 2028. After years of cross-party recognition that urgent action is essential, pushing reforms back another three years is simply abandoning councils to cope alone. At NCASC the message from Directors was consistent: demand is rising, costs are rising, and workforce numbers are collapsing — and yet the Government has failed to provide leadership.</p> <p>That was painfully evident in Stephen Kinnock's address to conference. Instead of engaging with the very real crisis caused by ending overseas recruitment, he delivered a political speech warning that "dark forces are at the gates" and claiming that, if unchecked, they will privatise the NHS — a reference to Reform UK. But instead of being principled, progressive, and standing up for the overseas workers our services depend on, he is bending to that very pressure. By adopting their rhetoric and tightening immigration rules in response, he is helping to create a hostile environment that is already fuelling more racism and discrimination in our communities.</p>
62. COUNCILLOR BEKAH FLETCHER <p>Given the ongoing uncertainty over local government reorganisation, it will be important to engage parishes in this discussion. What steps have been taken to do this?</p>	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL <p>Town and Parish councils are invaluable partners in local democracy and have been engaged with extensively throughout the proposal writing process. The Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils held a "talking tables" session, there were meetings with individual town and parish councils, and workshops were held with larger town councils and the Oxford parishes.</p>

	<p>Additionally, town and parish councils have been factored into the future operating framework of the 'Oxfordshire Council' proposal and on page 127 of the proposal we clearly state "We will work with our partners, residents, town and parish councils and elected councillors to bring the council closer to its communities."</p>
<p>63. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY</p> <p>As part of the West Oxfordshire District Council's Local Plan, there are proposals to redevelop the Welch Way area in Witney. This location is significant as it contains several vital community facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windrush Medical Practice • Witney Hospital • Witney Police Station • Witney Fire Station • Witney Library • <p>Could the Cabinet Member please provide an update on the discussions held with the West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Team concerning the Welch Way redevelopment? While acknowledging the potential opportunities this project offers, there is considerable resident concern regarding the retention of essential public services. Specifically, residents are strongly concerned about the potential loss of Blue Light Services (fire and police stations) from the town centre, as well as the closure of the Library, which has recently received significant investment.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 is at an early stage and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) are statutory consultees of the live Preferred Spatial Options Consultation running to 22 December 2025. We are supporting WODC in engaging the landowners of the land identified in the consultation as AREA W – Welch Way, Witney as having potential for regeneration through the Local Plan process. This includes OCC as landowner (e.g. Fire Station; Library) to ensure those who currently occupy the land are involved in developing the emerging vision set out the consultation paper which "<i>identifies a broader area of underutilised space and civic buildings which could provide a useful brownfield development opportunity, to intensify residential land uses in a highly accessible and sustainable location whilst retaining or enhancing existing community uses</i>". This will open discussions regarding the needs of the present owners/occupiers, local communities, movement and place making opportunities and potential efficiencies which can be further shaped at the next stage of West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043.</p>

<p>64. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY</p> <p>Fiddlers Bridge has been closed for months, cutting off a vital walking route used by my constituents, including pedestrian commuters to New Mill Lane.</p> <p>The delay is apparently due to County Council ecological advice suggesting the need for botanical surveys to allow vehicle access across the field. This botanical survey is stated to require scheduling in May, which is one year after the initial closure. This level of bureaucratic intervention is excessive. Farmers do not require botanical surveys simply to cross a field, so why does the Council?</p> <p>I urge the Cabinet Member to use their power to immediately stop these ludicrous interventions, ensure that any necessary repair work is fast-tracked, and confirm that Fiddlers Bridge will be fixed and reopened as soon as possible in the New Year.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The timescales for this work are now being determined by the presence of a bat roost in the bridge and the requirement to avoid the bat hibernation period which extends from now until the spring.</p> <p>Surveys undertaken in summer 2025 identified the roost; all British bat species and their roosts are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Therefore, a Bat Mitigation Licence (Bats: protection and licences - GOV.UK) will be required in order for the project to proceed lawfully. Ecological advice has been received from a bat licenced consultant that to proceed under licence the project works will need to be carefully timed for April 2026 in order to avoid the bat hibernation period.</p> <p>With regard to the need for botanical surveys, the project design team were initially considering access using heavy machinery and potential vegetation clearance through the fields to the south of Fiddlers Bridge in order to carry out the works required. These fields are mapped as Floodplain Grazing Marsh priority habitat and high quality semi-improved grassland on Natural England's inventory (Magic Map Application). The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Environment Act 2021 place a duty on all public authorities to have regard for these priority habitats as part of their work. The project design team have taken this advice onboard and have adjusted their access plans through this area to use a small motorised vehicle instead</p>

	of heavy machinery to minimise impacts on the priority grassland habitat, removing the need for further botanical survey so this is no longer a constraint.
<p>65. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY</p> <p>Ducklington Parish Council wishes to enhance the Parish's identity, which is larger than Ducklington Village, by installing clear boundary signs. Despite their efforts, they have not yet secured approval for this project.</p> <p>Will the Leader lend her support to the Parish Council and take action to ensure the installation of signage on their boundary, helping to clearly mark the Parish limits for residents and visitors?</p> <p><i>*This request is seeking permission, not the funding of the signs*</i></p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY</p> <p>Rather than considering the draft, can a draft just be written please - a draft policy?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>I appreciate that a parish's identity is important and is more than just that within the built-up area of the place.</p> <p>We do need to be mindful that the more signage there is along our highway the more cluttered it can look, that it can make hedge and verge cutting more difficult, and can negatively contribute to any collision that occurs on the highway. Whilst this might be minimal for one parish, we do need to consider the impact of several wishing to pursue such a measure, and the fairness of those areas who could afford to install and maintain and those who can't.</p> <p>The council has no approved policy that specifically considers this and that would be a first step on this matter; if the policy was favourable, then alongside this, requirements on location, size, style and material would need to be specified with any permission provided.</p> <p>I will ask officers to consider and draft a proposed Parish Boundary Signage & Identity policy for Cabinet to consider.</p> <p>RESPONSE</p> <p>I'm not sure quite what that would look like. It needs to be considered before it's written, obviously, because there is no policy at the moment. I do appreciate that parishes want to have their boundaries noted, but we also need to be very careful that we don't put too many signs on too many bits of road where it's not suitable to have those signs. So it would have to be considered and then a policy would be written up if we think that that's a policy we need to have.</p>

<p>66. COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS</p> <p>Since its purchase by Elon Musk in April 2022, the X platform, formerly known as Twitter, has entrenched its position as a major driver of disinformation and division in the UK. It has restored the profiles of far-right figures such as the convicted criminal Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, sometimes known as "Tommy Robinson", and Elon Musk has a history of inflammatory comments, including being recently accused by a Home Office minister of 'borderline incitement of violence'. Posts on this channel are no longer visible without an X account, making this less effective as a way to communicate with the general public. With that in mind, is it really still appropriate for critical council updates such as road closures during the recent Storm Claudia to be communicated primarily via X?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>I share your concerns, and deplore the fact that extreme language is allowed to be used by some high profile subscribers to X without any form of control. However, our residents access information across a wide range of communications channels, both online and offline, and X is currently an important platform. In our communications mix, we need to include channels which residents already use to ensure we get messages to them in a timely way and with maximum impact. We currently have 46,840 followers on our corporate X channel and 6,064 on our OxonTravel X channel, and a recent post about flood warnings had views in the tens of thousands.</p> <p>For critical council updates, such as flooding information and road closures, we don't rely on a single channel but use a range of channels to ensure the latest information reaches people as quickly as possible. Alongside social media, we provide regular updates on the council website, including through an 'adverse weather' webpage, a flooding webpage, and a road closures webpage. We also work closely with the local media and share information by email and through partners to communicate information as widely as possible.</p> <p>Our use of social media is under constant review, and we are proactively exploring and trialling other channels such as BlueSky and WhatsApp. However, these do take time to grow and our follower numbers on them are still low. We are therefore currently using them alongside, rather than instead of, X. However, based on very recent news regarding Elon Musk and his use of his platform, I will be asking our comms to review urgently the suitability of X as a platform for our communications.</p>

<p>67. COUNCILLOR ROBIN JONES</p> <p>With gratitude to the Cabinet Member for his response to Question 58 at our previous Council I respectfully clarify that my question relates to the village and parish of Garsington itself and not the Garsington Road or Grenoble Road, important thoroughfares in my Division though these are. Therefore I refer back to the 'duty to coordinate roadworks with the explicit objective of minimising disruption to residents and other road users'; point out the following from the schedule ahead for the said village with seemingly obvious overlaps:</p> <p>2-4 Jan 2026 (Approved) - Oxford Road (nr Northfield Brook) - SSE 7 Jan 2026 (pending) - Oxford Road (nr Village Hall) - SSE 16-20 Feb 2026 (pending) - Wheatley Road (between Green and Denton Lane) - Gigaclear 2-3 Feb 2026 (pending) - Denton Lane - Thames Water (in pretty much the same place as the current Thames Water closure) 21 April 2026 (pending) - Denton Lane - SSE 5 Jan - 25 June 2026 (pending) - Southend - SGN</p> <p>and ask if our statutory duty to coordinate could be fulfilled to ensure this village has some periods of full accessibility and movement in the course of 2026?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>A detailed written response will be provided after discussion with officers.</p>
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<p>68. COUNCILLOR ROBIN JONES</p> <p>The UK Government's Climate Change and Mental Health Report (linked here) published in November highlights that local authorities must prepare for rising mental health needs linked to climate change, embed climate resilience into public health planning, and strengthen community-based support systems. Since local authorities are on the frontline of climate change impacts this report signals that councils must not only adapt infrastructure but also proactively safeguard mental health, ensuring resilience is both physical and psychological. What is OCC doing now to proactively safeguard mental health, ensuring resilience is psychological as well as physical?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH & INEQUALITIES</p> <p>Climate Change is increasingly linked to poor and declining mental health. OCC undertakes community engagement and coordination within the county, helping residents' groups and communities to feel that they are part of a climate conscious county, empowering them to take actions which help reduce their climate anxiety and the feeling of being alone in their concerns. This is supported by a Climate Action Oxfordshire Website. We have specifically targeted schools and young people with climate projects to inform, coordinate and empower.</p> <p>Preparedness and awareness are key to psychological wellbeing following flooding and indeed all emergencies. Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team, of which OCC is a partner, has a community resilience programme in place to provide information to communities and businesses prior to emergencies. At our emergency evacuation centres we have British Red Cross psychological support volunteers, and those affected are also directed towards their GP & NHS 111 if they feel they need further support.</p> <p>The Mental Health Service is a joint NHS contract between the Council and ICB with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. Neighbourhood-based responses are being developed to better tailor local service provision to community needs and reduce over-reliance on crisis services. Workstreams are developing to address social vulnerabilities, including accommodation, ongoing care and support, and transitions are designed to close service gaps, which could be exacerbated through the impact of climate change.</p> <p>The Mental Health Prevention Concordat have focused their efforts on</p>

	<p>creating Resilient Communities, supported by grants to voluntary sector organisations to address, for community-based activities to prevent and support mental health, whilst narrowing inequalities. Public Health commissioned Oxfordshire Mind to deliver mental health and suicide prevention training to professionals and volunteers across the County.</p> <p>The Council has recognised the importance of research on key issues for people in Oxfordshire where evidence is lacking, and has a research strategy which aims to support the council's overall ambitions of greener, healthier, fairer, and the questions about climate crisis and mental wellbeing will fit within this.</p>
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3. COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER TO COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

Table 1 below has been collated in response to the following questions:

What the County Council received from Central Government for highway maintenance?

How much did the council borrow in each of those years to subsidise that spend?

What is the cumulative borrowing?

Table 1	DfT Highways Maintenance Block Allocation	DfT Incentive Fund	DfT Pothole Fund	Total Grant Funding	DfT	OCC Capital Top-up	OCC Highways Capital Expenditure	OCC Highways Revenue Expenditure	OCC Borrowing	OCC Highways Total Expenditure
2019/20	£13,424,000	£2,545,000	£0	£15,969,000	£18,060,000	£34,029,000	£19,375,700	£16,000,000	£53,404,700	
2020/21	£13,434,000	£2,798,000	£11,083,000	£27,315,000	£18,985,000	£46,300,000	£22,472,000	£16,000,000	£68,772,000	
2021/22	£9,265,000	£2,316,000	£9,265,000	£20,846,000	£21,927,000	£42,773,000	£19,892,000	£16,000,000	£62,665,000	

2022/23	£9,265,000	£2,316,000	£9,265,000	£20,846,000	£9,354,000	£30,200,000	£23,589,300	£16,000,000	£53,789,300
2023/24	£9,265,000	£2,316,000	£9,265,000	£20,846,000	£12,937,000	£33,783,000	£20,879,200	£16,000,000	£54,662,200
2024/25	£9,265,000	£2,316,000	£9,265,000	£20,846,000	£22,209,000	£43,055,000	£19,453,800	£0	£62,508,800
2025/26	£24,508,000	£8,975,000	£0	£33,483,000	£15,362,000	£48,845,000	£20,397,900	£23,800,000	£69,242,900
TOTALS	£88,426,000	£23,582,000	£48,143,000	£160,151,000	£118,834,000	£278,985,000	£146,059,900	£103,800,000	£425,044,900

The figures in Table 2, which must be read with the accompanying notes answers, in part (carriageways), the following questions below.

What the estimated cost of maintaining the highways network in Oxfordshire was?

What was the difference between the actual spend and the assessed need?

Table 2
Carriageway Investment
Need & Actual Expenditure

	2019/20*	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25*	2025/26
Cost to maintain Steady State (excl. Inflation)	£18,094,719	£18,084,284	£18,116,333	£18,133,503	£18,139,526	£24,291,911	£24,291,911
Outturn Inflation RPIX	2.6%	1.7%	4.2%	11.5%	8.6%**NA	2.7%	***TBC
Cost to maintain Steady State (incl. Inflation**)	£18,094,719	£18,554,476	£18,869,902	£19,662,437	£21,923,618	£24,291,911	£24,947,792
OCC Capital Carriageway Expenditure	£11,938,000	£17,780,675	£22,837,000	£23,256,435	£24,091,851	£27,995,120	£30,287,000
% Network in Red Condition	11.8%	11.3%	12.1%	11.5%	10.9%	11.9%	11.7%
% Network in Amber Condition	20.3%	19.8%	19.6%	20.2%	21.0%	22.0%	20.8%

Notes

1. Financial modelling was carried out to determine the capital cost of maintaining the asset at its current Red and Amber percentages, also known as "Steady State", for carriageways****.
2. The Financial Models applied a treatment strategy considering detailed conditioned data of the analysis year over a 20-year analysis period.
3. The raw cost outputs, were calculated at "Net Present Value", meaning they did not account for inflation, which was applied later, sourced from ONS Retail Price Index X data (RPIX)
4. Outturn condition data has shown that investment in carriageway maintenance has successfully maintained overall carriageway condition at 2019/20 levels, accounting for a ±2% margin of error in survey accuracy.
5. The effect of maintenance on condition scores is not immediate and may take several years to appear on condition surveys. Conversely the effect of not investing at the right time may take longer to manifest, if the invest to save window has been missed, resulting in more expensive structural treatments later in the assets' lifecycle.
6. In determining the "Cost to Maintain Steady State" the financial model assumed 100% of the investment would be spent solely on highways treatments and resurfacing, in the areas required to the prescribed spend profile, however maintenance schemes often consider all assets which require maintenance, for e.g. signage and drainage. Although overall spend between 2019/20 and 2024/25 has exceeded target spend by approximately 5%, overall condition has not improved significantly, this may be due to surfacing schemes including ancillary spend on other assets, or the effect of not meeting spend targets in the first two years of the profile.
7. Financial modelling has also been carried out to determine the cost of improving road condition to align with the councils' peers and has estimated that to improve the network by a modest amount would cost in the region of £40-£50M per annum.

*Yellow highlighted columns indicate financial modelling analysis years (2019/20 & 2024/25)

**NA - Denotes "Not Applicable" due to rerun of financial model in following year

***TBC - "To Be Confirmed" for 2025/26

**** Carriageways is the only asset for which we are able to estimate annual maintenance need with a degree of confidence and consistency.

What is the annual cost of that borrowing?

The latest agreed borrowing, that was agreed at Full Council in February, is around £3m per year. This includes the total borrowed for highway maintenance and other areas across the Council.

20. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL TO COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

***Map as set out in answer above.**

