

## CABINET – 13 OCTOBER 2020

### QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Questions	Answers
<p><b>1. COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN</b></p> <p>It is good to see that a number of libraries have now re-opened across the county and that volunteers are able to resume their roles. Many of our volunteers are in the vulnerable age group. What steps are being taken to ensure their safety?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE, CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION &amp; CULTURAL SERVICES</b></p> <p>In the final week before the national lockdown the Library Service suspended all its volunteering as it was felt that with many of our volunteers falling into the vulnerable group due to age or underlying health conditions this was necessary to keep our volunteers safe. Since April the Service has been working to assess how to safely restart volunteering in our libraries. Our criteria for doing so has been based on the following considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whether the volunteering role was able to be carried out within the guidance relating to social distancing. This has meant that some roles that involve volunteers working in groups or closely 1-1 with customers such as Rhymetime volunteers or Digital Helpers have not yet been restarted.</li><li>• Whether the volunteering role was critical to the delivery of the library service. This has meant some additional roles like offering volunteering places to young people carrying out their Duke of Edinburgh volunteer placements have not yet resumed.</li></ul> <p>Two roles where the criteria above was felt to apply was to our Home Library Service volunteers and our Community Library Volunteers and work commenced in the Summer to consider how volunteering in these roles could resume. As safety measures for staff had to be put in place first, and assessed to be effective, the move towards resuming volunteering came after we had experience of how our staff were working in the new environment. A key principle in the Community Library volunteering resuming was that all the protection and support offered to staff as part of the COVID site risk</p>

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	<p>assessment would automatically apply to volunteers, with OCC funding any masks, gloves or other items volunteers required.</p> <p>The process followed in standing up our community library volunteers involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consulting with all our library Friends Groups via an online conference in August and in follow up meetings with individual groups to keep them informed of the measures being taken to safely re-open and to answer any queries or questions they had.</li><li>• Asking our volunteers if they were happy to return, and if so to fill out a form updating crucial contact information as well as asking volunteers to declare whether they were in a vulnerable or extremely vulnerable.</li><li>• Those volunteers who had responded were then sent a Risk Assessment to complete with the volunteer's consent uploaded to the volunteer database.</li></ul> <p>The Community Library Volunteer Risk Assessment was based on the COVID-19 Library Staff Risk Assessment with the previous Risk Assessment for the Community Library role added to it, with some adaptations due to the changes in branch working since the lockdown. It was made clear to all volunteers that they had the right to cease their volunteering at any time, even when in branch, if they did not wish to continue.</p> <p>The approach for Home Library Service volunteers (visiting individuals in their homes) was largely similar, with each volunteer being asked to complete a specific Home Library Service Volunteer Risk Assessment Checklist to confirm both their health status, and also their understanding of new working arrangements to make the arrangements COVID-secure.</p> <p>We continue to monitor the level of risk to our volunteers and we have the ability to identify and email directly volunteers in different risk categories via our updated database if we have to suspend volunteering again due to a rise in infection rate in the county.</p>

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<p><b>2. COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER</b></p> <p>The Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Twitter account is sending almost weekly tweets about cyclist on the pavement, five since the 22nd of September. Could you please supply me with the communication strategy and explain why this particular problem features so high up the departments list of concerns?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR JUDITH HEATHCOAT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p><b>1. Could you please supply me with the communication strategy</b></p> <p>The communications calendar attached as an annex shows that cycle safety was a planned theme for our prevention activities in September. This was influenced by the Dept for Transport reporting last year that, at the national level, the only groups experiencing an increase in casualties were cyclists and pedestrians.</p> <p>The cycle safety initiative was jointly planned with and supported by the Police.</p> <p><b>2. Why this particular problem features so high up the departments list of concerns?</b></p> <p>OFRS recently presented our annual report to the Performance Scrutiny Committee and were asked to respond to concerns raised by panel members regarding cycling proficiency in children of secondary school age. OFRS was specifically asked by a Committee member to take some action regarding older children cycling on pavements which was creating local concerns for pedestrian safety.</p> <p>To provide some broader context, over the past year our most successful social media campaign (in terms of reach) was the drink driving campaign which was run last December. The next most successful campaign focused on taking extra care on the roads following lockdown in June. Activity to support the cycling on the pavements activity was very limited in comparison to most of our other social media campaigns.</p> <p>Road and cycle safety is our core business and links to our cycle safety</p>

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	training and walking to school initiatives, as well as cutting across public health priorities.
<p><b>3. COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER</b></p> <p>Could you please tell me how much land the council owns in any of the sites in South Oxfordshire District Council's emerging local plan and what is intention to do with this land should the local plan get adopted?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</b></p> <p>Three allocations in the draft South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011-2034 contain land or property that is owned by Oxfordshire County Council. In summary they are as follows:</p> <p><b>Policy STRAT10ii Berinsfield Local Green Space</b>  Former Abbey School Site: 3.6 hectares within Local Green Space  Berinsfield CP School (Abbey Woods Academy): 1.5 hectares within Local Green Space</p> <p>This land is likely to be managed as it has in the past, for open space and school purposes.</p> <p><b>Policy STRAT12 – Land at Northfield</b> [not to be confused with the school / hostel site]  Guydens Farm, Garsington: 15.63 hectares</p> <p>Should the Local Plan become adopted, the County Council will seek to maximise land value in order to support the delivery of services to Oxfordshire residents.</p> <p><b>Policy H2g (Didcot Gateway)</b>  Lydalls Nursery school: 0.3 hectares</p> <p>The County Council supports the redevelopment of the Didcot Gateway site, which is the triangular area of land opposite Didcot train station. This development has a real opportunity to introduce a high quality development</p>

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	<p>that can be seen as gateway to the centre of Didcot. The County Council recognises that redevelopment of the Lydalls Nursery site may bring opportunity to deliver an integrated cohesive development should opportunities to relocate the Nursery be identified. Should the Local Plan be adopted the Council will work with stakeholders to assess the viability and suitability of relocation where it is appropriate to do so.</p>
<p><b>4. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</b></p> <p>We are facing a climate crisis, a Covid-19 crisis -- and a general health crisis, because of killer air pollution and because of our increasingly sedentary lifestyles. The government is telling us to encourage active travel and get cars out of city centres. The bus companies are desperate for us to reduce congestion and the City Council is so keen on the bus gates that they were happy to pay for them.</p> <p>All we need from you is leadership.</p> <p>These <i>temporary, experimental</i> bus gates, which can easily be moved and the timings and exemptions adjusted, are the ideal way to gather evidence for the permanent scheme that we hope will follow -- and we hope it will follow soon.</p> <p>The bus gates would encourage people to use the ring road, instead of driving through the city centre, and encourage people to use the park and ride car parks, if they want to come into the city centre.</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR YVONNE CONSTANCE, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT (INCLUDING TRANSPORT)</b></p> <p>I agree that action is required to permanently reduce congestion and pollution across Oxfordshire, particularly in and around Oxford that is why we are progressing the policy of Connecting Oxford which is part of the strategic Connecting Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Temporary or experimental schemes could play a helpful role in achieving this. However, we have to recognise that even temporary or experimental schemes can have a major impact on people's lives and businesses and we must take the time and care to understand those impacts.</p> <p>A hastily implemented experiment can do more harm than good, dividing communities, eroding trust in the local authorities, and damaging the prospects for permanent change – which must remain our primary focus. In other parts of the country rushed emergency active travel schemes are being removed following outcry from residents and businesses. We don't want that to happen here, and particularly not with a proposal that sits at the heart of our long-term transport strategy. If we get this wrong, we won't get a second chance.</p> <p>We have listened to local people and businesses. Opinion was sharply divided on the temporary bus gates. The deepest anxiety and anger about the temporary bus gate proposals came from <u>Oxford</u> residents and</p>

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<p>People in my division, in the Botley Road area, are in despair at the solid lines of vehicles, stationary in both directions, spewing out exhaust fumes, that regularly bring the road to a standstill and threaten their health and the health of their children -- and if you decide today not to go ahead with the temporary bus gates, after all the work that has been put in, it seems they may now have to wait until 2023 for relief from this intolerable situation!</p> <p>My question is – what are you going to do to <i>really</i> reduce pollution and congestion in the city centre (which can only be done by reducing the number of vehicles) and to rescue the residents in my division from the intolerable situation they are suffering?</p> <p>Sadly, the current Botley Road improvement scheme will make very little difference without the bus gates: most drivers will still choose to drive into and through town, because that's what they are used to doing.</p>	<p>organisations, concerned that their lives would be disrupted with little warning or mitigation. However, many of those same people actually supported the scheme's objectives. Their concerns about bus gates are, we believe, surmountable. But it will take time, money, and a period of thoughtful, constructive dialogue with residents and businesses to steer a path through their legitimate concerns to arrive at an effective long-term solution. We can't do that if the scheme is rushed through in a few months.</p> <p>Yes, a temporary scheme could be adjusted to try to mitigate its unforeseen impacts. But now that we have heard the strength of public feeling about the bus gates, I think making adjustments in the heat of a live experiment of this scale is a recipe for lurching from one change to the next, while the public steadily lose patience and the credibility of the scheme drains away.</p> <p>Unlike many local authorities, we already had highly ambitious proposals to reduce traffic and pollution <u>before</u> COVID-19. With Connecting Oxford and the Zero Emission Zone we're going further and faster on traffic and emissions reduction than any other local authority in the country. We'll be spending almost £45m on sustainable transport schemes in the city in the next four years – excluding Connecting Oxford and the ZEZ.</p> <p>Officers have put forward suggestions to accelerate this programme, and explore other alternatives to the bus gates which support it.</p> <p>Our plans will be transformational – but only if they are delivered. Let's not throw away the chance of long-term transformation in our haste for short-term change. We already have a plan; let's stick to it and get it delivered.</p>