

Zuhura Plummer

Address to Council – 12 December 2023



I'm not going spend time running through the points of this motion, which could have been more constructive while achieving what Labour needed, but instead look at the meaning behind this it.

Fundamentally this is Labour sounding the alarm that people on the doorsteps are saying 'I don't understand why I can't drive like I used to'.

And I get that. Why these LTNs/traffic filters/ZEZ? It's all the same? Why make driving so difficult?

And the honest truth is known by everyone in this room – it's because 100k more houses in our County means 150k more cars, many of them trying to get in and out of Oxford every day.

Everyone in this room knows that you can't speed up buses without swapping out some car journeys. Everyone knows you can't gently persuade people out of their cars. Even the Tories which is why they introduced the LTNs and were going to introduce the filters before Covid.

But the public outside this room don't know this. But they're not stupid – they get it, if you explain it.

And this is the material point.

These policies need to turn information into knowledge and understanding.

You need stories that feel right in people's bones, values-led narratives which reframe core beliefs around freedom, flexibility, and convenience.

And it needs to start way, way before the policies are introduced.

And I don't mean a standard marcomms campaign, which at best fill an information deficit. It needs bravery, imagination and creativity which requires resources - and god knows the current comms officers are doing the best they can with what they have.

This is HARD. This is a new world. It would be amazing if any local authority emerged from a decade of austerity and came up with this.

But we do now we know we need it. And please do not say there are not the resources for it. There are resources for the legal and technical elements, but a stool cannot not stand up on only two legs alone, and building this social mandate has clearly not been considered to be essential – not by the current admin or when four Labour members sat on the cabinet. If it is not invested in, then all the policies will be swept away on a tide of disinformation and misunderstanding. And no data and monitoring plan, no matter how extensive, will make an adequate life raft.

This motion is not about traffic lights at the Plain. It is about people having a sense of where we're going, and why we're going there, and how we're going to get there together, and you've got to provide it.