

**County Council
Tuesday, 10 September 2024**

SPEECHES by members of the public

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Agenda Annex

A petition to open the Crowell Road presented at Full Council by local Littlemore resident Lesley McCourt.

I am speaking with regards to the LTNS in East Oxford being made permanent. Myself and other Littlemore residents feel quite frankly cut off from the rest of Oxford. Please could you consider opening Crowell road permanently and with a separate cycle lane for cyclists? So that both motorists and cyclists can benefit. My journey to Gregory's school used to take a smidge of 10 mins now thanks to Crowell and cricket road blocked off to through traffic my what was a nice comfortable 10 minute journey into a half an hour journey.

Most residents in Littlemore want the permanent opening of Crowell Road and a safe cycle route for pedestrians and cyclists. The road closure of Crowell Road is denying residents' access to their key amenities at Cowley Centre and is causing the unnecessary increase in journey time for those who need to be on the road for everyday living

I have succeeded in gaining 152 signatures on a petition to open up Crowell road for Littlemore and surrounding residents. Many people feel the frustration and inconvenience of no direct route to the local amenities in Cowley. I also fear that the Cowley centre will lose its vibrance as travelling there from the surrounding areas as mentioned becomes ever more frustrating and challenging.

The petition received many comments regarding residents' distress on the imposition of the filter

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Good morning Chair and Councillors. A year ago, the OfSTED/CQC inspection found widespread and systemic failings in Oxfordshire SEND provision, and the specific failings of Oxfordshire County Council have broken and traumatised far too many young people and their families. I trusted that the report would act as a catalyst for improvements. Since then, due to my daughter, Katie's, determination to come here to ensure no other young person is treated the way she has been by OCC, I have spent more time in County Hall than I could ever have predicted. Together we have seen council meetings, scrutiny committee meetings, presented petitions, seen motions not discussed, votes of no confidence. We have read reports, infographics, blogs, co-production charters. But there is one thing we have not seen – meaningful change. As you can see from the protest outside, public addresses today, and the 669 signatories to this petition, families like mine have simply run out of patience.

What we have seen is massive heel-dragging. Perhaps this avoidance of change is indicative of a sense of denial at the scale of the failures at OCC where it is always easier to blame someone else: parents, the national funding picture, other partners in the Local Area Partnership, rather than address the real failure of leadership, structure and process at OCC that has failed young people.

It would have been Katie speaking presenting this petition, but she is at Broadcasting House participating in a live Radio 4 Woman's Hour programme about SEND failures as we speak. It is indicative that the BBC has actively sought to hear the authentic voice of a young person in a discussion about SEND improvement, whereas OCC has actively sought to avoid it, contrary to the OfSTED/CQC inspection which requires the gathering of the views of

children and young people with SEND. Are you afraid of hearing their voices and the truths they will tell?

How about the requirement to “rebuild fractured relationships” with families. Well, clearly they are not rebuilt, and the heel-dragging just erodes the trust further. No attempts at restorative practice have been made, no actions on how to build co-production into support plans, no reform of SEND panel accountability to deliver better decision making to reduce appeal and tribunal rates. Transparency is lacking, for example we are not trusted with minutes from the SEND Improvement board, and instead have to read self-congratulatory blogs about the proceedings that make me seethe with frustration.

This petition is to remind you that you are our elected representatives. We need strong and decisive leadership to overcome the heel-dragging. Let’s work in partnership bringing together young people, their families, representative groups such as OxSEND parent action, to drive this change by forming a task force to set an ambitious positive change agenda and to hold the SEND Improvement Board and its sub-committees to account. Oxfordshire could be a national leader in young person inclusion in SEND, for example. We cannot afford another wasted year or you must bear responsibility for failing thousands more young people across Oxfordshire.

Good morning councillors,

My name is Ella. Today I am here to protest the suffering by this council's continued failure to support children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities.

Seven years ago, due to my disabilities, I was denied an education by OCC for over a year, because the council did not know their own policy. I should have had some form of education within two weeks. It took you over fourteen months.

I was housebound with no education. It is impossible to put into words the distress that this caused me and my family. Our emails, letters, and calls being ignored by councillors compounded this.

My case was ruled by the Local Government Ombudsman to be unequivocally the fault of OCC. I was told that my case would be a turning point. I thought that being promised this would never happen to another child was the light at the end of the tunnel.

As you can tell by the petitions and protests today, I was not the last child.

Nothing has changed. Since the SEND Inspection Report last year, there has been no change. We were naïve last year, as I was seven years ago, to believe that this council is committed to change.

I am seeing a whole new generation still suffering as a result of your lies and empty promises. This is a system that results in the blatant discrimination against disabled children.

After seven long years, I still ask whether the leadership of the council is really committed to improving the system. The people that I speak to still speak of a system that ignores the cries for help from children and treats parents as the opposition. These brave people have accepted that OCC will not even try to comply with educational law. It is chilling.

My message today, as it was seven years ago, is that change is needed, so that children, parents, and guardians are treated as partners.

How long will it take for you to follow last year's Inspection plan? Another year? Another seven years? Will I be back here again in seven years? We demand change. Real change. As soon as possible.

No child, no family, should ever have to feel as utterly worthless as you made us feel.

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