



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

**County Council
Tuesday, 9 July 2024**

SPEECHES

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Agenda Annex

Friends of Stratfield Brake

Statement to be read at Full Council Meeting 9 July 2024

On 10 May this council announced that agreements had been finalised with Oxford United, including a lease option for the Triangle and a collaboration agreement.

The council refused to disclose details in response to our Freedom of Information requests. It has now released a redacted version of the collaboration agreement but continues to withhold the heads of terms, lease option agreement and site valuation.

The Council's September 2023 decision to lease the land was subject to conditions which Oxford United must meet. Councillors Levy and Miller wrote to the club in October 2023 to set out these commitments and stated that these were non-negotiable. The collaboration agreement states that its purpose is to secure these conditions but it is deficient in many ways. Not only are some commitments materially different from those agreed by Cabinet, the terms are: extremely biased towards Oxford United; lacking effective sanctions for either the Council or the community; and in our view, outside of the decision made by Cabinet in September. To give examples...

First, OUFC is only obliged to use 'reasonable endeavours' to meet the Community Pledge. And even then, it's drafted only as an 'aim'. In legal terms, the weak drafting creates an extremely low bar for the club and makes it virtually impossible for the Council to take action for any breach. Coupled with the one sided termination rights in OUFC's favour only, it is shocking the Council could have approved this agreement.

Second, The requirement that vehicle movements on the Oxford Road could not be disrupted has been changed to a requirement to minimise disruption. This allows for closure of the Oxford Road, a major arterial route into the city, on a regular basis. Does Councillor Leffman remember she said this council wouldn't support any proposal which includes closure of the Oxford Road?

Third, the club is quote "**to look at putting in place** effective measures such as parking restrictions to control potential parking problems". The obligation should be to actually **achieve** effective measures not just look into them!

Fourth, why has the requirement for a 20% biodiversity net gain shrunk to 10%?

In short, this collaboration agreement, which in legal terms reads like a list of New Year's resolutions, has been agreed behind closed doors with no opportunity for public comment nor scrutiny, and reneges on the community promises on which this deal was based. This is not in line with the openness and transparency promised by Councillor Miller in 2023.

Has this Council, which is under severe budgetary pressure, accepted a low valuation of this land by valuing it for use only as a football stadium rather than a hotel, thereby allowing its disposal at less than market value? Why won't the Council disclose the valuations?

We ask this council to:

1. accept that it has failed the public by consulting on one set of proposals and then agreeing materially different and less favourable ones with no transparency;
2. agree that the collaboration agreement reneges on community promises and is outside of the decision made by Cabinet in September 2023 and should be reviewed;
3. disclose the entirety of the agreements with Oxford United and the valuations.

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The message from this petition is that Oxfordshire County Council MUST be honest with local residents about Oxford United's planned road closures on match days

Oxfordshire County Council owns the 'Triangle', an area of land which it has offered to Oxford United as a site for its new stadium. As well as being the land owner the council is also the highways authority.

In April 2023 Councillor Leffman, leader of Oxfordshire County Council, replied to an email sent on behalf of the four parishes of Kidlington, Begbroke, Yarnton, and Gosford & Water Eaton in which they expressed concern regarding Oxford United's planned closures of the Oxford Road on match days. Cllr Leffman wrote "we will not support any proposal that includes the closure of the road on match days".

However, in September 2023 the county council's senior transport planner in response to Oxford United's pre-planning application wrote: "A bridge would be preferable but may not be possible due to land constraints or necessary due to the approved speed limit reduction on Oxford Road and the planned crossings. **Due to the number of fans and the width of the footways, it may be necessary to close part of Oxford Road between the stadium and Oxford Parkway before/after matches** to allow more space for pedestrians".

In April 2024 in response to Oxford United's planning application, the same officer responded along similar lines i.e. on the assumption that there may be road closures on match days.

National Highways response in June 2024 states: "There is not much that can be said concerning Traffic Management proposals at this stage apart from noting that **the closure of the section of Oxford Road adjacent the proposed stadium and Oxford Parkway Station would appear to be a practical necessity...**"

Last week the redacted collaboration agreement with Oxford United was released. This does not rule out road closures as Cllr Leffman promised. In addition, it is extremely difficult to see how this agreement in any way aligns with this council's commitment to active travel which is a key aspect of its transport strategy for this area in which many thousands of homes are to be built. How will non-stadium cyclists and pedestrians navigate their way through the road closures and crowds of fans on matchdays? What about the bus services?

We call on the leader of Oxfordshire County Council to confirm that she is standing by her commitment to the four parish councils that any proposal by Oxford United to close the Oxford Road on match days will not be supported.

Since this commitment is not explicit in the collaboration agreement, can she explain how this condition will now be imposed?

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OCC 9July

WASP has been engaging with TW since 2017 up to CEO level.

Our lack of confidence is in the Leadership and owners of Thames Water, not its staff.

TW is in its precarious financial state due entirely to mismanagement and inappropriate extraction of funds by shareholders and senior execs.

It failed to carry out around 108 fully funded remedial projects in the current spending period due to decisions taken at the top of the organisation.

It has allowed Sewage Works like Witney, Oxford and many more to fall way behind capacity and to frequently operate illegally despite knowing the reasons and solutions for these failures.

The outstanding example is Oxford Sewage Works and the Environment Agency's landmark objection to planning on the grounds of lack of sewage treatment capacity – This followed similar capacity challenges by WODC and WASP for West Oxfordshire sewage works.

The degrading of the sewerage infrastructure has now created a block to sustainable housing giving planners the choice to create additional criminal pollution events and increase risk to public health, damage to biodiversity and the environment or to block needed housing.

On 20 May WASP wrote to the Thames water CEO to call on him to show leadership and stop the company misleading planners and developers over capacity – he shirked his responsibility.

We are sending a complaint to Ofwat about what we say is Mr Weston's dereliction of duty.

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Stephen McKechnie

I am a resident and Chairman of EHPC and urge you to vote you have no confidence in TW.

They are the utility supplier who we trust with the very essence of life, clean water, clean waterways and the treatment of our waste. Instead We use technology we have a supplier who continually falls short in every respect except one, it's dividend history. Judge Laing accused TW in Court of "deliberately misleading" the EA while discharging sewerage destroying protected eco systems.

For the first 4 months of this year TW's own data shows they discharged sewerage for over 478 hours into Letcombe Brook, the first stop for this being East Hanney.

EH has up to 60 family homes that raw sewerage discharge runs into or beside their home. Other families are having sewerage returned through the drainage systems into their gardens as it's always at full capacity.

This year we have suffered five flood events that closed roads for days and disrupted emergency services. TW are culpable, they have demonstrated a deliberate reluctance to either build in resilience or effective infrastructure. The new Crab Hill (P24/V0709/FUL) development for instance will send a further 162,000 litres/hr of run off into the Brook then Hanney, increasing our flood risk and this further necessitates TW to discharge sewerage into our village and according to TW it will be a further 21 years before they can meet current Govt targets for us.

On behalf of the residents of East Hanney we urge you, that like us, you have no confidence in TW.

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My name is Robert Wilcox.

I attended a Thames Water Reservoir Public Consultation event last week July 5th and asked to speak to an expert on design and ground water control. I want to make 4 points.

1. Following the discussion I am alarmed at the lack of transparency on Ground Water level control, which would be essential to avoid future flooding in Abingdon and Steventon.
2. Thames Water accept that the new Reservoir **will partially block** the existing natural flow of Ground Water into the Thames across the width of the reservoir which is several miles across.
3. However **they will not say** how much the reservoir will cause the ground water level to rise, and **can't quantify** what they plan to do to mitigate this rise.
4. We're all aware that floods which were 1 in 100 year events, may already be 1 in 10 year events and Thames Water are **unable or unwilling to explain openly their plan** to minimise rising ground water levels caused by the reservoir and what **design criteria** they will use to ensure there is not an increased risk of flooding.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak

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Submission to OCC Meeting on Tuesday 9th July in support of Councillor Gawrysiak's Motion on SSHBs in Henley by Robert Aitken and Ian Reissman

I am presenting agreed views on behalf of myself and Ian Reissman, Chair of the Townlands Steering Group in support of Councillor Gawrysiak's motion on removal of the Step-Down Beds in Henley.

- ICB and OCC decided last year to close the Hub Beds in Henley without consultation or communication, even with the GPs looking after the Hub patients.
- Early October, this leaked – Note **not** “Was announced”.
- Townlands Steering Group sought information and a consultation. We were told by OCC and ICB that this was “a done deal”, the beds would close December, and that these were not NHS beds, so no need to consult.
- Minimal information was supplied, then further information to justify plus an invitation to attend a public TSG meeting refused.
- At the December OCC meeting Councillor Gawrysiak submitted a motion to have the beds restored pending full consultation.
- This Council never got to that item.
- In February, Councillor Gawrysiak spoke at HOSC. OCC and ICB reps stone-walled on their earlier decision, still claiming there was no obligation to consult.
- Then a Henley Standard Freedom of Information request established that these **were** NHS beds and a consultation **should** have happened.
- Councillor Gawrysiak again presented a motion at the May OCC meeting. **Again** this Council did not get to debate it.

So here we are again.

Our region of South Oxfordshire has had **all** Hub beds withdrawn, without consultation, initially secretly. Even if the NHS target of 95% of returns from acute hospital to final location were respected, this would still imply **some beds**. And surely this cannot be an absolute without consideration of clinical needs and home circumstances.

The idea that patients requiring Step-Down can just be floated off to other facilities in the county ignores:

- Problems of travel for relatives & carers (often frail, elderly, and non-drivers).
- Lack of proof of available capacity in the alternatives.
- The fact that places in these are also being severely reduced. And
- No proof the Care in the Home services are adequate for the additional demand.

There is serious anecdotal evidence of people being discharged to empty houses, without meds, and without a day one visit, presumably due to lack of resource; also of people needing a bed being offered distant sites including Swindon. There is national evidence of a serious shortage of care staff, and of the despair of dedicated staff at the inadequacy of service being offered to weak, elderly, post-hospital patients.

Without evidence from a consultation how can it be claimed that this is the right way forward for vulnerable patients – which I believe even common-sense dictates it isn't?

In short, nearly a year after the original decision, it must be wrong that this body has not even debated the issue, let alone triggered a consultation. This must be delivered and in the interim local beds reinstated.

Robert Aitken, Chair of The League of Friends of Townlands Community Hospital Charity, long term member of Townlands Steering Group & former Ambulance Service Community Responder; and
Ian Reissmann, Chair of Townlands Steering Group and a Henley Town Councillor
9 July 2024

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