

These notes indicate the decisions taken at this meeting and the officers responsible for taking the agreed action. For background documentation please refer to the agenda and supporting papers available on the Council's web site (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.)

If you have a query please contact Colm Ó Caomhánaigh (Tel: 07393 001096; E-Mail: colm.ocaomhanaigh@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

COUNTY COUNCIL - TUESDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AGENDA	DECISIONS	ACTION
<p>1. Minutes</p> <p>To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 (CC1) and to receive information arising from them.</p>	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2024 were approved.</p>	<p>DLG (C Ó Caomhánaigh)</p>
<p>2. Apologies for Absence</p>	<p>Apologies were received from Councillors Bearder, Corkin, Hannaby, Haywood, Mallon, van Mierlo, Miller and Reynolds.</p> <p>Council on 16 April 2024 agreed a dispensation for Councillor Constance.</p>	<p>DLG (C Ó Caomhánaigh)</p>
<p>3. Declarations of Interest - see guidance note</p> <p>Members are reminded that they must declare their interests orally at the meeting and specify (a) the nature of the interest and (b) which items on the agenda are the relevant items. This applies also to items where members have interests by virtue of their membership of a district council in Oxfordshire.</p>	<p>Councillor Rouane declared that he was a director of OxLEP and was a member of the board of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, both of which were referenced in the papers for the meeting and were non-pecuniary interests.</p> <p>Councillors Graham, Leffman and Thomas also declared that they were members of the board of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.</p>	
<p>4. Official Communications</p>	<p>Congratulations to Oxfordshire students who have recently received their results for A levels, GCSEs and other specialist qualifications. Our thanks go to all the teachers, schools and settings who have made it possible for students to achieve their goals.</p>	

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	<p>This year we have also seen encouraging and improved outcomes in results for students with Special Educational Needs.</p> <p>Among young people for whom the Council is a Corporate Parent, we have had four university graduates, two with first class degrees and one graduate from the University of Oxford as well as nine new starters at universities this month. Our care experienced children have done better than ever at GSCE and A level. Congratulations to all of them.</p> <p>We have learned of the passing in August of former Councillor Teresa Smith. She was first elected as the Labour Member for the then Oxford South Division in 1985 with a majority of 679 votes, returned again in 1989, and stood down ahead of the 1993 elections. Our thoughts are with her family and friends.</p> <p><u>Save the dates:</u> Monday 16th December 2024 Carol Service with the Bishop of Dorchester, 6.30pm at St Michael's Church Abingdon</p> <p>Friday 10th January 2025 Chair's charity civic dinner, 7pm in Oxford.</p> <p><u>The following events were attended by the Chair of Council since the July Council meeting:</u></p> <p>10/07/2024 Europa School Leavers Ceremony - Culham 11/07/2024 Earth Trust Rose Planting - Long Wittenham 12/07/2024 British Empire Medal Presentation - Oxford 13/07/2024 Youth Concert St Edmunds School - Oxford</p>	

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<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AGENDA</i>	<i>DECISIONS</i>	<i>ACTION</i>
	<p>15/07/2024 OALC AGM at County Hall – Oxford</p> <p>20/07/2024 Wantage Fire Station - Wantage</p> <p>10/08/2024 Banbury Fire Station - Banbury</p> <p>17/08/2024 Mayors Charity Lunch - Bicester</p> <p>18/08/2024 Chair OCC Chairty afternoon tea at the Earth Trust - Long Wittenham</p> <p>30/08/2024 Bullingdon Prison groundbreaking ceremony Bullingdon prison</p> <p>6/09/2024 Vale of White Horse DC Chair's charity event - Faringdon</p> <p>08/09/2024 Battle of Britain Mayor's civic service – Carterton</p>	
<p>5. Appointments</p> <p>To make any changes to the membership of scrutiny and other committees on the nomination of political groups and to note any changes to the Cabinet made by the Leader of the Council.</p>	<p>Council approved the following change to the membership of the Audit & Governance Committee: Councillor Hicks to replace Councillor Baines</p> <p>Council noted changes to committee membership given effect by the Monitoring Officer on 21 August 2024 under the delegated authority set out in the Constitution under Part 7.2, section 6.4 (l) using the functions under Section 16(1) and Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to give effect to the wishes of the political groups as regards membership of scrutiny committees and committees of the Council:</p> <p>Pension Fund Committee - Councillor Stevens to fill the vacancy</p> <p>Audit & Governance Committee - Councillor Johnston replaced Councillor Hanna.</p>	DLG (C Ó Caomhánai gh)
6. Petitions and Public Address	Petitions	

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<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AGENDA</i>	<i>DECISIONS</i>	<i>ACTION</i>
	<p>Lesley McCourt: Remove the traffic restrictions in Crowell Road</p> <p>Pete Nellist: SEND Services</p> <p>Ella Buckingham: SEND Services</p> <p>Hannah Pearce: SEND Transport Services</p> <p>Public Address</p> <p>Item 13 Motion by Cllr Povolotsky: Claire Brenner</p> <p>Item 17 Motion by Cllr Sudbury: Dr Steve Smith</p> <p>Item 19 Motion by Cllr Povolotsky: Anna Gurl</p>	
<p>7. Questions with Notice from Members of the Public</p>	<p>Seven questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.</p>	
<p>8. Questions with Notice from Members of the Council</p>	<p>Nineteen questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.</p>	
<p>9. Report of the Cabinet</p> <p>Report from Leader of the Council.</p> <p>The report summarises the decisions from the Cabinet meeting on 16 July 2024.</p>	<p>Council received the report of Cabinet.</p>	
<p>10. Treasury Management Annual Performance 2023/24</p> <p>Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer</p> <p>The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021'</p>	<p>Council noted the report.</p>	

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<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AGENDA</i>	<i>DECISIONS</i>	<i>ACTION</i>
<p>requires that the Council and Audit & Governance Committee receive a report on Treasury Management activities at least four times per year. This report is the final report for the financial year 2023/24 and sets out the position at 31 March 2024.</p> <p>Council is RECOMMENDED to note the Council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2023/24.</p>		
<p>11. Proposed Leadership Restructuring - Tiers 3 and 4</p> <p>The information contained in the report is exempt in that it falls within the following prescribed categories:</p> <p>Paragraph 1 Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.</p> <p>Paragraph 4 Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority,</p> <p>and since it is considered that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, in that there is an expectation that consultation and negotiation should take place primarily away from the glare of publicity and public scrutiny in keeping with employment law.</p> <p>Report of the Chief Executive</p>	<p>Recommendations in the exempt report approved with 34 votes in favour, 13 against and 3 abstentions.</p>	<p>DHRCC (J Pitman)</p>
<p>11A Urgent Motion by Councillor Sally Povolotsky</p> <p>This Council notes that on Wednesday 4th</p>	<p>The motion was carried with 37 votes in favour; 14 against and 0 abstentions.</p>	

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<i>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AGENDA</i>	<i>DECISIONS</i>	<i>ACTION</i>
<p>September the Secretary of State approved the Thames Water Resources Management Plan (TWRMP) despite community and council opposition, technical data concerns and damning comments from the Environment Agency.</p> <p>This Council has passed many motions of concern including a vote of no confidence in Thames Water and we continue to express our concerns that the TWRMP is not fit for purpose and its schemes need independent scrutiny and review, including Waste Management, leaks and the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) proposal.</p> <p>This Council notes that Thames Water has 60 days to take into account feedback and we ask the Leader of the Council and the relevant Cabinet Member to urgently ensure that this Council's voice and that of our residents are heard and that our recommendations have been taken into account.</p> <p>We reiterate our objection to the plan on the table and continue to call for a public inquiry into the plan, and ask the Leader to request an urgent audience with the Secretary of State to ensure Oxfordshire's voice is heard.</p>		
<p>12. Motion by Councillor Kate Gregory</p> <p>The Two Child limit to benefit payments was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017 and is supported by the current Labour Government. It prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than 2 children in the household.</p> <p>Council notes the recent research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which has found that:</p>	<p>The amendment by Councillor Baines was lost with 14 votes in favour; 35 against and 0 abstentions.</p> <p>The motion was lost with 22 votes in favour; 28 against and 0 abstentions.</p>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one-in-ten children in the UK. • In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year. • Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in. • Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £1.3 billion, however it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year. <p>In Oxfordshire 10,850 children in 3050 households are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments.</p> <p>Council believes that the two-child limit is a cruel policy that should be scrapped.</p> <p>Council resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister expressing Oxfordshire County Council's strong belief that the two child limit to benefit payments should be scrapped. • Ask the Leader to write to all MPs covering the Oxfordshire area, asking them to commit their public support 		
<p>13. Motion by Councillor Sally Povolotsky</p> <p>In September 2023, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission declared their judgment post inspection that the Local Area Partnership (LAP) had multiple systemic failures.</p>	<p>The amendment by Councillor Reeves was accepted by the proposer.</p> <p>The motion as amended was carried with 50 in favour; 0 against and 1 abstention.</p> <p>In September 2023, Ofsted and the</p>	

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<p>Despite the Priority Action Plan (PAP), the Council is failing to meaningfully engage with and capture the voice of the user, our young people.</p> <p>Council calls on Cabinet to consider;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meaningfully involving young people and youth organisations throughout all policy-making processes within SEND improvement and the PAP. Co-management and co-creation structures are the best way to ensure direct participation. 2. Any consultations or engagement with young people by this council must have a visible public follow-up to the outcomes. 3. All Council policies and frameworks that affect young people, must include an impact assessment, and ensure there are mitigation measures in place for those youth groups that might be negatively impacted by a new policy or framework. 4. Ensuring all future events, in person/online, run by or funded by OCC, especially those related to the PAP, LAP, and SEND improvement, are open to all young people with the attendance of their parent or carer. 5. Launching a rapid task force for the voice of the young person and SEND users, and task them to create a framework for a Youth Forum within 3 months of this meeting date. 6. The leader to appoint a SEND Champion to enable seldom heard 	<p>Care Quality Commission declared their judgment post inspection that the Local Area Partnership (LAP) had multiple systemic failures.</p> <p>Despite the Priority Action Plan (PAP), the Council is failing to meaningfully engage with elected members on a cross-party basis or and capture the voice of families affected and the user, our young people.</p> <p>Council calls on Cabinet to consider;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More Meaningfully involving young people and youth organisations throughout all policy-making processes within SEND improvement and the PAP. Co-management and co-creation structures are the best way to ensure direct participation. 2. Any consultations or engagement with young people by this council must have a visible public follow-up to the outcomes and tangible metrics to ensure outcomes are delivered. 3. All Council policies and frameworks that affect young people, must include an impact assessment, and ensure there are that reasonable mitigation measures are put in place for those youth groups that might be negatively impacted by a new policy or framework. 4. Ensuring that where appropriate all future events, in person/online, run by or funded by OCC, especially those related to the PAP, LAP, and 	

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<p>voices in the SEND community to feed into SEND improvement and services, and that person to sit on the SEND Improvement board.</p> <p><i>Note: The motion, if passed, would constitute the exercise of an executive function in which case it will be referred to the Cabinet together with any advice the Council may wish to give, in accordance with Rule 13.5.1 (i) of the Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution.</i></p>	<p>SEND improvement, are open to all appropriate young people with the attendance of their parent or carer.</p> <p>5. Launching a rapid task force for the voice of the young person and SEND users, and task them to create a framework for a Youth Forum within 3 three months of this meeting date.</p> <p>6. The leader to appoint a SEND Champion from an opposition group to enable seldom heard that a wider range of voices in the SEND community to are able to feed into SEND improvement and services, and that such person to sits on the SEND Improvement board.</p>	
<p>14 to 20. Motions by Members</p>	<p>The time being close to 3.30 pm, these Motions were considered dropped in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 5.2.</p>	

Questions from Members of the Public

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

<p>1. CITY COUNCILLOR LINDA SMITH</p> <p>What is the County Council doing to prevent the far too frequent flooding of Watlington Road under the rail bridge? Does the County Council have any understanding of the cause of the problem and what could be done to prevent it in future?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR PETE SUDBURY, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS</p> <p>Thank you for highlighting this concern. I can confirm that our gully emptying crew attended to the flooding under the railway bridge on Saturday, 24th August. They removed all surface water and cleaned all highway surface water drainage assets. Since this visit, we have not been made aware of any additional flooding.</p> <p>Regarding further investigation, our Highway Operations Team will examine the water pump within the embankment of the railway structure.</p>
<p>2. PETER WEST</p> <p>As a part of the July 9th Council meeting, I posed a question to you regarding compensation for businesses that had lost money or closed due to the introduction of the LTNs. However despite representations to you personally, Martin Reeves, Bill Cotton and formal presentations to the Council, witnessed by many, you wrote the following.</p> <p><i>The County Council is not aware</i></p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of our transport strategy is to make Oxford accessible, attractive, and sustainable. We therefore expect our plans to improve the city's economic performance, not worsen it. • In many parts of the city, a minority of visitors arrive by car (in the city centre fewer than 10%), so improving access by non-car modes should lead to greater economic benefit than improving access for cars. • Business performance will always be influenced by a wide variety of factors, including wider trends in consumer preferences. • Over the longer term, it is possible to gauge whether national and local policies (which extend well beyond transport) have supported economic growth in the city. However, the data to make a causal link between specific transport policies and the performance of individual business simply does not exist, either in Oxford or anywhere else. Even if it did, local authorities have to take a broader and longer-term view, so individual cases cannot and should not drive policy.



<p><i>of any empirical evidence linking reduced income and/or closure directly to changes in patterns of patronage as a result of LTNs.</i></p> <p>I would be grateful if you would either confirm that the council has received empirical (definition; information gathered through observation, experimentation or sense experience) or not. Should you have to correct your response I would be pleased if you would make a public apology for the error.</p>	<p>The empirical evidence comment was related to the <u>direct</u> and <u>singular</u> relationship between a loss of income and LTNs. There will be many and varied factors that will impact on a specific business in question; cost of living challenges, energy prices and changing consumer habits (e.g., internet shopping, home delivery, a change in ideology, such as seeking more sustainable brands etc) to name just a few. Indeed, the biggest issue often cited by large and small retailers alike, up and down the country, is the outdated business rates regime.</p> <p>The high street is constantly evolving and at a faster rate than perhaps there has ever been, most likely due to rapidly changing consumer habits (mentioned above) and the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses are sadly closing across the county and country. In many of these locations, LTNs will not be present but trading conditions will still be challenging, even where there is free parking (e.g., Abingdon). There is every sympathy for all businesses that are struggling in these times but to simply say it is solely down to one factor is oversimplifying a very complex issue. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that by providing an environment that is easily accessible on foot or by bike can benefit retail. More people access the city on foot, by bike or using public transport than by car so enhancing access by these more space efficient modes will benefit the majority of residents and visitors. Furthermore, raw data on St Clement’s and Cowley Road show an increase in footfall from 2019 (pre-LTN and COVID-19) to 2023/24 (post LTN and COVID-19) – footfall is widely accepted as a good barometer for the ‘health’ of the high street.</p> <p>In the city, many customers already arrive by non-car modes (in excess of 90% recorded in city centre pedestrian surveys in 2022) and the filters will make access by bus, walking and cycling even more attractive in the future – in the city centre and beyond.</p>
<p>3. BERNADETTE EVANS</p> <p>The Council tells us it will be monitoring the impact of the traffic filters on Oxford's SMEs with a shopfront by way of measuring footfall. Botley Road</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>We are monitoring footfall and spend data for key locations / areas – city centre, Jericho, Cowley Road, Cowley, Headington and Summertown. This will not provide data for individual shops and businesses, but it will do at the local area level. The data can then be compared to wider regional/national data.</p>



<p>businesses are made of up builders/trades yards with parking, retail parks with parking, wholesalers with parking and smaller independents. Monitoring customers via footfall won't be accurate for these businesses given so many arrive in a vehicle, so what proposals do the council have for accurately measuring the impact of the traffic filters on these businesses?</p>	<p>We will also be actively seeking feedback from shops and businesses throughout the consultation that will initially run during the first six months of the trial to help us understand how they are being impacted by the traffic filters.</p> <p>Overall, the filters should make access to Botley Road businesses for deliveries and servicing easier due to reduced traffic levels across the city and also of course because vans and HGVs will be exempt when the filters are operating. We have been engaging with businesses since February 2022; we listened to concerns about the impact of the proposals on their deliveries and that is one of the reasons why HGVs and other goods vehicles are exempt from the filters.</p> <p>As regards the customers shopping at businesses along the Botley Road, these will of course be accessible by car from the west if not using a permit; for those who use a traffic filter permit, <u>any</u> route will still be possible. Indeed, many of the trips to the larger retail units/sheds are low frequency and as such people should be able to use their day passes to drive there through a filter if they need to. For those travelling to the smaller businesses who don't want to use a permit, driving will still be possible but catching the bus or walking and cycling will be more attractive options than at the moment given the positive impact the filters will have on levels of traffic and congestion.</p>
<p>4. IAN YEATMAN</p> <p>Several areas, such as Greater Leys, Herschel Crescent, Donnington Bridge, and Jericho, are currently considered unsuitable for double-decker buses, causing significant challenges for residents, particularly those with limited mobility. Is the council working with the bus company to explore the possibility of introducing a smaller bus service</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>As part of our successful Enhanced Partnership, bus companies have made significant investments in the vehicle fleet with 159 new zero emission buses being placed into service this year – the largest single such investment ever made in Oxfordshire. This comes despite the impact of the pandemic, which has made bus operations more difficult and expensive to maintain.</p> <p>On most routes, double deck vehicles are necessary because of the popularity of Oxford's bus network. Although there may be plenty of capacity available at the periphery of the city, the key radial corridors into the centre attract high loadings which necessitate the use of larger vehicles. The majority of vehicles in the companies' fleets are double deck for this reason, and relatively few single decks are available.</p>



<p>in these areas?</p>	<p>Whilst one of our main bus companies has access to a small number of minibuses, these would not be suitable for use on existing routes and therefore it would be necessary to create new routes to serve areas off the commercial network. As a single bus costs £200,000 per year to operate, this would be very expensive and would not be the most effective use of funds or staff when the majority of residents remain within a 10-minute walk of a bus stop, as opposed to other areas where the very existence of any bus services depends on Council income. Additional routes would also abstract passengers and revenue from the commercial network, making it less financially sustainable – experience from the PickMeUp service indicated that over 40% of users simply switched from the main bus network.</p> <p>Where residents are unable to access the commercial network, the Council provides the Comet community bus service which is available between 10am and 2pm on weekdays to facilitate essential travel. In south Oxford, similar services are provided by the Daybreak organisation located on Greater Leys.</p> <p>Officers continue to explore options for Donnington Bridge, although this would result in significant unbudgeted expenditure compounded by that already required as a result of Network Rail’s extension of the Botley Road closure.</p>
<p>5. RICHARD PARNHAM</p> <p>Did, at any point since the start of 2023, Network Rail and / or its contractors offer Oxfordshire County Council the opportunity to fully (or partially) reopen Botley Road to any form of motorised traffic, in either 2023 or before November 2024?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>When the original plans were drawn up, there was an intention to open the road between the different work stages, though this didn’t happen due to original project delays. Work commenced 11 April 2023 and was due, on this phase, to be completed on 31 Oct 2024. All this was set out in public information and on the web page Oxford City Station Phase 2C Botley Road Oxfordshire County Council .</p> <p>Since the communication of the recent further delays to the project, we are aware of several options being explored by Network Rail and understand a partial reopening is not feasible and a temporary re-opening not practical. Network Rail provide up to date information on their website Botley Road bridge replacement - Network Rail .</p> <p>ANSWER:</p>



<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>When communicating in writing with Network Rail on the specific subject of the Botley Road closure, which two specific electronic communication platforms (WhatsApp, MS Teams etc) would you say you use most frequently?</p>	<p>I don't know the answer to that without checking, but normally it would be by email.</p>
<p>6. EMILY SCAYSBROOK</p> <p>In a city like Oxford with so many tourists, footfall does not meaningfully reflect trade for all city businesses. Cash is also still used extensively, especially by said tourists, and so credit card data is not sufficiently reflective either. With that in mind, will the recently-reappointed traffic filters evaluation company, Steer, reexamine its approach to evaluating the impact of the traffic filters on Oxford businesses, and promise to meaningfully engage with them - both individually and including neighbourhood business groups like the High Street Association, Jericho Traders, Cowley Road traders etc - directly?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>One of the ways we will assess the effects of the traffic filters on businesses, will be by analysing footfall and spend data in the city centre and five other locations: Cowley Road, Cowley Centre, Headington, Jericho and Summertown. Footfall data provides information on general activity levels, while spend data, based on credit card transactions, provides insight into the level of economic activity in an area. We will also be running a consultation during the first six months of the trial, actively seeking the views of the public and wider stakeholder groups. This will include businesses – we will encourage them to let us know the detail of how the trial is impacting them. Data from the traffic filter trial monitoring and evaluation together with consultation feedback will be considered by the county council's Cabinet in deciding whether to make the scheme permanent.</p>



<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>My question is, why such a nominally experimental trial can hardly be considered as such or taken seriously without clear definitions of success and failure – I would have thought this is obvious. A cynic may say such an emission is entirely intentional and I hope you can convince me and other deeply concerned business owners otherwise.</p>	<p>ANSWER:</p> <p>The monitoring and modelling for the traffic filters does indeed contain a great deal of detail about outcomes that officers believe and expect to happen. Of course, the purpose of a trial is to test, whether in fact, they do, and to seek feedback in real time from residents, businesses and everybody; and that will absolutely be factored into the decision-making process. I don't think it is appropriate for me to pre-judge what that response may be, but the objectives and the modelling of the scheme have been set out in great detail in the various papers.</p>
<p>7. ANGUS WILKINSON</p> <p>It is roughly 12 months since the last ofsted/CQC inspection of SEND provision within Oxfordshire. Is the Cabinet content that OCC's planning and actions since then have had sufficient urgency, intensity, and resource to deliver the demonstrable changes that the Improvement Notice demanded?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR SEND IMPROVEMENT</p> <p>Thank you for your question on this important issue. Since the inspection of the authority in 2023, a significant amount of work has taken place to address the weaknesses identified across the local area partnership. These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The production of a priority action plan which was approved in December 2023• The establishment of an improvement board with an independent chair and representatives from Oxfordshire parent/carer forum, the SEND youth forum, senior leadership from the integrated care board, schools and multi-academy trusts from January 2024. The Board meets monthly and monitors progress against the priority action plan and our broader transformation programme.• The establishment of specific workstreams focused on addressing the weaknesses and involving representatives from across the partnership including parent/carers• The continuation of our Enhanced Pathways initiative working to support mainstream schools to be more inclusive• Refreshing our approach to assessments for EHCPs so that we meet statutory deadlines – our performance is now above the national average• Rolling out our trauma informed restorative approach with mainstream schools



- Supporting our special schools to share best practice with mainstream schools through our 'inreach/outreach' programme
- The development of a Quality Improvement Framework for EHCPs to improve the quality of assessments
- Stabilisation of the senior leadership team and an increase in capacity to address backlogs

The council has committed significant resource of £1m to the support of SEND services and to the work of the area partnership. We have taken on additional staffing and appointed permanent staff and are developing schools led approaches to Alternative Provision, leading to an increased stability in the service.

Our progress is regularly monitored by the Department for Education and in July this year a full stocktake of our progress took place. We are awaiting the outcome of that stocktake. We will also have a 'deep dive' into our progress in October this year as well as a number of other 'inspection' type events. We are particularly pleased that the early years and key stage 2 performance indicators show that children with SEND are performing above the national average in some areas.

Whilst we know we have more work to do to turn around what a recent report called a 'broken' system (ISOS 2024), we await the outcome of our recent monitoring to ascertain whether we are making sufficient and robust progress.

SUPPLEMENTARY:

What targets does the County Council have for meeting 100% of those statutory requirements around SEND provision? Indeed, is 100% commitment to those things is something that they feel is deliverable? If not, how close do you think you can get to it and what timeframes are you setting for those improvements?

RESPONSE:

Thank you, Angus, and it was great to speak to you outside, earlier. Yes, the target, absolutely, for the timeliness on Educational Health & Care Plans (EHCP's) within the 20-week timeframe is 100%. We are at about 50% at the minute, which is up from 4% in January last year. But you are absolutely right, we need to do better. Shockingly, we're above the national average, so we are better than other local authorities, but yes, we strive to get to 100%. In terms of those exact timeframes, I'll get back to you with a written response.

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

<p>1. COUNCILLOR CHARLIE HICKS</p> <p>Has the Council, or Active Travel England, undertaken any audits of the quality of active travel schemes and/or designs in Oxfordshire using review tools provided by Active Travel England (which can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-england-scheme-review-tools)? If so, please can the Cabinet Member share which schemes and/or designs were reviewed and what they scored?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Active Travel England’s local authority active travel capability ratings for 2024, which relates to the</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Active Travel England continue to expand their range of tools for Local Authorities and the specific tools mentioned (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/active-travel-england-scheme-review-tools) were launched in February 2024.</p> <p>Officers are attending regular training sessions hosted by ATE as new tools are released to ensure tools are used appropriately. Where the use of tools are specifically requested for example through the Active Travel Funding Tranches this is adhered to. Schemes reaching the current deployment phase were in planning before the tools were released so the tools would not have been used for these. Upcoming schemes will have the tools applied where appropriate based on the type of scheme, and where resources are available to support the cost of collecting the required data and this is reasonable and in proportion to the overall cost of the scheme. Other analysis tools are also used such as Healthy Streets assessments and the Cycling Level of Service – among others to ensure the projects we deliver are of a high quality and benefit our communities and provide a safe and useful experience for those walking, wheeling and cycling. For details on specific projects please do engage with the relevant project manager.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Well, I do hope so. If that is a way to help us do that, then yes, absolutely. I think officers have answered very clearly that they have continued to factor the tools into</p>
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<p>question in terms of: are we following the tools and the fact we haven't gone up in those ratings when Cambridgeshire, for example, has gone up. With that context therefore, is the Cabinet Member content that officers are following tools published by Active Travel England sufficiently that we're going to go up a level in the capability ratings next time round?</p>	<p>decision-making as they have been rolled out by Active Travel England and that is extremely useful and will continue. I hope the new government will be fully behind Active Travel England and indeed make the process of bidding for funds better and more fit for purpose than it has been before. But, I do note what he says about Cambridgeshire's success, and I congratulate them for that. Obviously, that is a challenge for us to do better.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member note that there is a large number of trees that fall into to the ownership of Oxfordshire County Council in Banbury Ruscote and every few years Council contractors need tree surgery work.</p> <p>Constituents quite rightly raised concerns of overgrown trees on roads like Warwick Road, Fairway Road, Cromwell Road and Edmonds Road.</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member assure me, as the local member for Banbury Ruscote, that there are adequate funding resources to move forward tree surgery work when needed in a planned Council tree maintenance schedule?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR PETE SUBBURY, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council's Tree Service conduct a cyclical programme of tree inspection and tree care across the whole county. This encompasses all trees growing within land denoted as public highway, with the planned frequency of the cyclical programme being every four years.</p> <p>Banbury was due to be surveyed with associated works issued last financial year, however this work is currently one year behind on our original programme schedule. As such, Banbury will be surveyed this autumn/winter with the aim to issue works next spring.</p> <p>As Cllr Cherry has raised, the aforementioned roads contain mature tree stock. Historically the Tree Service have conducted pollarding works on trees across this area, trees on roads such as Cromwell will have further pollarding specified. This ensures trees remain appropriate for context and situation in which they are growing.</p> <p>The tree care budget is managed to enable the Tree Service to prioritise tree care in line with the planned survey schedule and inspection outputs.</p> <p>Through the inspection process, if specific tree care is determined by the Tree Service as being a greater priority than other tree care operations in the area, the budget plan can change to accommodate this need. This may include phasing of</p>



<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Thank you to Cllr Sudbury for his in-depth response as trees and surgery work are a big concern in my Banbury Ruscote division. With trees comes consequential ingress into public pavements. Would there be adequate funding to do all of the repairs as I've put them into FixMyStreet and they have not been fixed?</p>	<p>work to ensure it can be accommodated within the budget available.</p> <p>Officers will provide further detail once the tree surveys are concluded in his division.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>We know in general that the funding for repairing highways is about 1/3 of what we would need to keep them in their current state due to the excellent management by the previous government of highways funding. I await the new government's brave new dawn on that, but I think that we would put repairing pavements as a high priority because it is much easier to trip up a human being, than a car.</p>
<p>3. COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY</p> <p>Steventon Bridge has now been a single channel coming up to 3 years, and we have lacked communication as to next steps and timelines. Given the high likelihood of continued and sustained damage to the structure, can the Cabinet Member please inform my residents how long he expects the repairs to take and how long they will last, and will the single traffic channel be a permanent feature after repairs?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Works to strengthen the bridge are planned to commence in October and be finished by the end of March 2025. There are still some design considerations to resolve around utility services due to their depth and potential location. They are carrying out trial holes to verify its location. This is in the area currently protected by the road narrowing. The outcome of these findings may influence whether the single traffic channel needs to remain a permanent feature. The current design of the strengthening works does not include modification to the single traffic channel, but this may enable consideration for it to be removed. A firm decision on whether the single traffic channel should remain as a permanent feature, potentially with enhanced facilities for cyclists, has not yet been made.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>I have no reason to doubt what you say and I apologise if I've failed to reply. I will do</p>



<p>The Chair of Steventon Parish Council emailed you just a few weeks ago and she is still awaiting a reply, Cllr Gant. Can I ask when that will come?</p>	<p>so as soon as possible.</p>
<p>4. COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY</p> <p>The voice of young people is lacking in this chamber and throughout many of our services, given many of the decisions in this chamber are medium and long-term plans. Will the Leader of the Council commit to looking at options for a youth council under the chair of councils remit to engage young people across our communities for better engagement, input and ideation around this Council's policies and strategies for place and service shaping in the future?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>The Council is committed to ensuring the voices of children and young people inform our decision making and shape our services. Cabinet has also agreed (as of April 2024) a mission statement relating to future generations: "We affirm the fundamental importance of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. We will take a nationally leading role in putting intergenerational fairness at the heart of our decision-making."</p> <p>Supporting this commitment is a work programme which focuses on two key areas: i) youth engagement with local democracy; and ii) enhancing youth engagement. Examples of recent and planned activity are provided below.</p> <p>Encompassing young people in our democratic structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are planning a Future Generations Week between 18 and 24 November 2024, which aligns with UK Parliament Week. The programme will be co-produced with children and young people and will include sounding boards for primary and secondary age children and a debate in the council chamber.• We are looking at how we can actively involve young people in the work of council committees. <p>Enhancing youth engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We supported young people to participate in a Future Generations in Policy Making event at the Blavatnik School of Government in May 2024.• As part of the council's annual budget and business planning consultation and engagement programme, 64 secondary school-aged children took part in two sounding board events and two focus groups in June and July 2024. The activities enabled them to take part in citizenship conversations, learn about how the council and local politics work, and to share their service and budget priorities through individual and group discussions and using our online budget simulator.



- Children's Services is developing a participation and engagement strategy, a sub strategy to the council's corporate consultation and engagement strategy 2022-2025. The strategy sets out how children, young people and families can participate in a range of different opportunities to influence decisions and outcomes that affect them within children's services, including through groups, forums, boards and co-production.
- The council is scoping its first citizens' assembly focusing on travel and transport. Planned for early 2025, children and young people will be recruited to participate alongside adults. Citizens' assemblies are deliberative processes that bring together people from all walks of life to focus on a specific topic and reach collective recommendations for decision makers to respond to.
- We have also run a range of dedicated focus groups and engagement activities for children and young people as part of our wider consultation and engagement activity.

Finally, I would like to confirm that we have a very active Future Generations champion in Cllr Charlie Hicks. Rather than making this the Chair's remit, I would suggest asking Cllr Hicks to consider further ways of engaging effectively with young people.

ANSWER:

I'm always happy to meet with any groups, but as you rightly say, this is something we need to consider as a County, and indeed, everything we are doing, including the Future Citizens Assembly – that will be recruited across the County. All of the initiatives I have spoken about in my reply are County-wide initiatives, so I am very conscious that we do need listen to voices of young people everywhere. As regards meeting with the SEND Youth Forum, yes, I am very happy to do that. This isn't just about SEND, it is about young people's future in general and I'm pleased to say having appointed a Future Generations Champion, and I have to say that Cllr Hicks is doing an excellent job as Future Generations Champion. We have regular meetings with myself, Cllr Hicks and Cllr Sudbury, who has taken that on as part of his portfolio, so I think we have to look at this in the broadest possible terms because

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you for your reply, but can I remind this Council and the Future Generations Champion that there is an entire County outside of this City. I would ask the Leader and the Future Generations Champion if they would meet with the SEND Youth Forum as a start of trying to get these voices heard?



we want the best for all of our children everywhere in the County and I'm happy to meet with any groups to discuss this.

5. COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY

Can the Cabinet Member for SEND Improvement please publish the registered tribunal data for the last 8 years (since 2016) to this chamber and explain the rise in tribunals and the time delay from appeal registered to appeal conceded/heard/withdrawn and the number of tribunal rulings OCC have appealed to the upper tribunal?

COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR SEND IMPROVEMENT

Thank you for this question about this very important matter. Like other English local authorities, Oxfordshire has experienced significant challenges in the SEND system. The national system implemented from 2014, was recently described by the ISOS partnership as 'broken' (July 2024). The national increase in appeal tribunals is reflective of this broken system and the position in Oxfordshire mirrors this. We have seen a significant rise in Tribunal appeals since 2016. The national figures show a rise of 24% in the number of appeals lodged in 2022-2023, which is four times the number lodged in 2014-15 when the SEND reforms were first introduced. Oxfordshire's increase in tribunals from 2022 to 2023 was 26%.

The rise in tribunal appeal numbers is driven locally and nationally by a number of factors. For Oxfordshire, the increase in requests for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) alongside an increasing statutory school aged population, has led to an increase in appeals. We are aware that one of the issues driving the increase is a lack of special school places in the state and independent sectors and hence our drive to deliver over 300 additional special places by 2028. We were delighted to open Bloxham School alongside Gallery Multi-Academy Trust in January 2023 which will cater for 120 pupils with ASD/MLD need. Planning is also underway for our new special school in Didcot which will provide for 120 pupils with SEMH/ASD needs.

We recognise that parents and carers have the right to appeal to Tribunal if they are not satisfied with outcome. In line with the national picture, there has been a substantial increase in the number of appeals and the proportion of EHCPs that go to appeal.

The table below shows the figures for appeals since 2016 (This table is reproduced in larger print at the end of the document.)



	Number of appeals	Hearings	Withdrawn	Conceded	Partly Agreed/Allowed	Agreed/Allowed	Dismissed	Other (please state)	Ttal number of Statements/ EHCPs
2016	27	8	13	4	N/A	8	0	2	2,420
2017	50	8	27	4	N/A	6	2	11	2,755
2018	67	12	17	14	N/A	11	1	24	3,076
2019	66	4	25	19	N/A	4	1	17	3,554
2020	92	21	9	31	1	16	4	31	3,380
2021	193	29	3	78	22	6	1	83	4,070
2022	276	20	11	159	14	4	2	86	4,914
2023	347	29	8	178	21	4	4	132	6,160
								Other = struck out, transferred or still active)	
2024 January to July only	217	12	4	63	3	9	0	138	
									Current total - 6,934

Against a backdrop of increasing requests for EHCPs, in Oxfordshire, the proportion of appeals as a percentage of all EHCPs has risen from 1% in 2016 to 5.6% in 2022 and 2023. The figures for the final 2 years suggesting that, maybe, the proportion is beginning to plateau.

We are aware that nationally the majority of appeals are upheld by the Tribunal court, with over 93% of parents having their case agreed by the Court in full or in part. We are aware that this route is stressful and can be expensive for parents and is not a step that they take lightly.

At the local authority, we face challenges in capacity of accessing other resource from across the public sector system which may lead to lack of access to expert advice (such as speech and language assessments) being provided to the local authority. This can further delay assessments and lead parents to sourcing private, alternative advice.

Once an appeal is registered by parents/carers, SENDIST (the Tribunal court) will set a timetable for dates. Given the significant volume of appeals now facing the court, this can now take over a year since the original registration. The local authority and parents have no choice but to work to the timetable as set out by the Court.



Once registered, the local authority will make a decision as to whether to defend or concede its decision. During this time further evidence may be collected and parents may decide to withdraw their appeal, in the majority of cases this is because a suitable resolution has been reached.

As the figures above show, the rate of concessions has risen from 15% of appeals in 2016 to 51% of appeals in 2023. However, for the year to date, concessions have declined to 29% of appeals. We have not during this time appealed any rulings to the upper tribunal. There are very specific rules about when an appeal can be made.

Our work as a local area partnership (across the Council and the Health sector) is focused on transforming outcomes for children and young people so that parents do not need feel they need to appeal. This work includes working with mainstream schools to support inclusion through our enhanced pathway work, our approach to restorative practice and supporting our special schools to work with mainstream colleagues. All these actions combined with our investment in new school places will help us continue to support children and young people with SEND and their families. We plan to roll out an EHCNA guidance document for settings which describes information to submit to support robust decision making. The impact of this is that there is an increase in the number of EHCNA request that progress to an assessment.

We have a significant recruitment and retention campaign in place for Educational Psychologists, and nationally there are a shortage of EP's making this a hard to recruit to post. We are also onboarding more agency EPs to support us in meeting statutory timeframes. The timeliness of assessments is impacted by the 38-week school year and delays can occur because of school holidays making parts of the year more difficult to gather information.

We are regularly monitored by the Department for Education on our progress to tackle the challenges we face in Oxfordshire to achieve the very best outcomes for all our children and young people. We recognise that more progress needs to be made but also that we can already see the 'green shoots' of improvement.



SUPPLEMENTARY:

Can the Cabinet Member explain what she is doing to restore relationships between the families that lack provision and to reduce the tribunal being used as a solution rather than a choice? I look forward to hearing what she has done over the last 12 months to reduce the tribunal numbers, which clearly aren't reducing.

ANSWER:

I have regular meetings with the SEND Parent Action Group and the Parent Carer Forum to get their real-life experiences. Operationally, I cannot get involved with the tribunal cases, as you well know, and also the families have a legal right to appeal any decision that is made and they have the right to use that route should they need to.

6. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL

Because vehicles can no longer drive under the railway bridge in Botley Road (though someone did try), Abbey Road and especially Mill Street are often full of cars dropping people off and picking them up – or just turning round, because they didn't realise they couldn't get through.

They often park dangerously and drive fast. This is unpleasant for the residents, who are already suffering the effects of living in a 24-hour building site. What can be done to help them?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you for the reply, but it is not working. Even yesterday, a developer's vehicle, an earth moving piece of equipment, was parked in a resident's space and did not get a ticket. People are still terribly upset at what is going on here. You say

**COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT
MANAGEMENT**

With regards to parking enforcement in the Botley Road, Abbey Road and especially Mill Street these are priority areas for the Enforcement Officers. The Council has asked the enforcement contractor to ensure that an officer is present in the area during the peak hours when drop off and pick-ups take place.

Dangerous driving or speed can only be enforced by the Police, and this will need to be raised with them. Officers will also make the Police aware of your concerns.

ANSWER:

On that last point, I will certainly follow that up. If you are specifically talking about a vehicle that is part of a construction project, then that vehicle should be subject to a construction management plan. We hope that the considerate contractor's scheme should be required to obey them. If the Councillor knows who it was, please let us know and we will follow that up to ensure that they do. On the general point of cars, I



<p>that officers are contacting the police. Was this done and what was the response please?</p>	<p>hear what you say. Of course, people are allowed to drop off and pick up, but they are required to do so in accordance with law. It is important to stress that if people do not do that, that is the responsibility of the driver of the car, not the County Council. Enforcement is important but inevitably limited.</p>
<p>7. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>Thames Water is sporadically working on Osney Bridge. They claim to be trying to mend their water main. One of the two narrow traffic lanes over the bridge has been coned off for many months. Why were they told that it was fine for TW staff to park their cars in this lane? I thought we were trying to discourage commuters from driving into the City?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>This is about the Thames Water works on Osney Bridge, as if these poor residents do not have enough to contend with the Network Rail works. Cllr Gant has been misinformed when he says that these are essential vehicles parking in the coned off lane. They are not. They are very often commuter vehicles, or private cars used for commuting. Please could the Cabinet Member contact Thames Water and insist that they require their employees to use the Park and Ride, like everybody else should.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>This is required for them to attend site and allow them to bring equipment, carry out inspections, and manage traffic management.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>I will certainly take that up again with our Network Manager, but the Councillor and I have attended on-site meetings there where this very issue was raised with Thames Water and we were informed that these vehicles were used for the purpose as set out in the answer. Short of opening the boot to check if they were carrying any kit, I have to take what they say on trust, but I will certainly ask officers to look into that again.</p>



8. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL

We have been asking for years for Localities to be able to send recommendations to Cabinet. The Peer Review said this should happen. Why is it still not happening?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

This is about the Localities meetings, so everybody will be interested in this. The bit that was quoted from the Constitution is not relevant to Localities at

COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES

During the review of Locality Meetings, chaired by my predecessor in this Cabinet role (Cllr Phillips) an all-member survey was undertaken as part of the review. The results from this survey showed that only a minority of respondents wanted to make fundamental changes to the locality meetings. The working group, comprising Locality Chairs and senior officers, agreed that there was no desire to introduce new powers or responsibilities, particularly those that might duplicate the role of overview and scrutiny committees.

That being said, there are existing provisions within the Constitution under Cabinet Procedure Rules (Part 4) and the Protocol on Councillors' Rights and Responsibilities (Part 9) which already enable councillors to raise issues to Cabinet, with the endorsement of a cabinet member:

Part 4.2 paragraph 2.5: "Any member of the Council may make a request through a member of the Cabinet that an item be placed before the Cabinet. If the Cabinet Member endorses the request and so notifies the Proper Officer, that Officer will arrange for the Cabinet to consider in the context of the Forward Plan arrangements to make consideration of that item. When any such item is considered by the Cabinet the agenda for the meeting will give the name of the Councillor who asked for the item to be considered. The individual member shall be invited to attend and speak at the meeting during consideration by the Cabinet of that item."

On behalf of the Cabinet, all of whom attend a locality, we will be happy to receive any written requests that have been discussed and agreed in the meeting.

ANSWER:

Thank you, Cllr Pressel. As the answer states, this was looked at, there was a discussion. I was not part of that discussion as it preceded me having this role, but my understanding is that it was looked at and the consensus was that it was not



<p>all and is not very helpful. There is a big danger that the localities meetings are just talking shops if they have no power to even send a recommendation to Cabinet in a formal manner. Please could the Cabinet Member review the effectiveness of the localities from this point of view?</p>	<p>appropriate for localities meetings to have that direct ability to make recommendations to Cabinet. There was a genuine concern that it would put localities meetings in the position of effectively being pseudo-scrutiny committees. That isn't their role. Localities meetings are there to give Councillors in each area of the County an opportunity to be briefed on things that affect their locality and that sometimes may be county-wide to all localities and sometimes it may be specific; and for those councillors to feed back to officers about things that happen in their patch. There are, in the Constitution, and there is one example in the answer, several different routes through which any Councillor can approach different people in the Council to have discussions on issues. They can approach a Scrutiny Committee chair to put an item onto the Scrutiny Committee work programme and I can say for myself, and it would apply to my colleagues, that if a Chair of a localities meetings came to me and said there was an issue and that we need you to do something about it/take it forward to have a discussion with officers, my view would be that it is part of my job as a Cabinet Member to do that. As it stands, I believe that is a reasonable approach and it is open to a group of Councillors to put forward a proposal to change the Constitution to put this route into it if they want.</p>
<p>9. COUNCILLOR ANDREW COLES</p> <p>Councillor Sudbury will be aware of the flood drainage ditch in Woodford Way, in my division, which is one of the few in Oxfordshire which falls to the county council to maintain. Last year I repeatedly expressed my concerns, through our localities meetings, about its current state. It is overgrown with vegetation, looks very unsightly, is often littered with rubbish and sometimes abandoned shopping trollies etc. I have repeatedly questioned whether it is fit for purpose. Could Councillor Sudbury update me please on what plans the council has to address these concerns</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR PETE SADBURY, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS</p> <p>The Area Operations team are aware of the work required to the ditch on Woodford way and although there has been some delay with this work, for which we apologise. I can confirm that arrangements are in hand for this vegetation clearance to be undertaken during September.</p>



<p>and reassure residents as to its current state and condition, bearing in mind Witney is particularly vulnerable to flooding, especially in the winter months?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Thank you, Cllr Sudbury, and I appreciate the prompt response from officers on this. Going forward, could I ask for your assurance that there will be a regular ongoing programme of maintenance towards this ditch as this would hopefully prevent it getting in the state it is currently in and ultimately costing the taxpayers of Oxfordshire more?</p>	<p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Yes, there will be a programme. There is a caveat because last year was the wettest year since records began in 1880 and when there is widespread flooding, routine stuff gets put to the back of the queue as officers and contractors are busy stopping houses being flooded. I think it is something we need to be looking at actively about what sort of capacity is needed in a Britain where extreme rainfall is becoming more common.</p>
<p>10. COUNCILLOR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. At your decisions meeting on July 18th you approved £0.5million expenditure to develop the Workplace Parking Tax.2. A Team Leader for the project has been/is being recruited at a salary of c.£50k per annum.3. The Leader has said that the tax will go ahead. <p>Given these three points, what is the purpose of the proposed public consultation on the tax?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>In July I approved the procurement of technical transport consultancy support required for the development of a WPL, delegated the award of the contract to the Director of Economy and Place, and authorised officers to progress the development of the WPL including the undertaking of the required future public consultation. The funding for these activities is part of the £2.488m approved as part of the budget in February – it is not new funding.</p> <p>It is not possible to carry out a public consultation on a WPL without first developing and assessing the proposals, for which technical support is required.</p> <p>The council advertised recently for a 2 years fixed term Technical Lead - Oxford Workplace Parking Levy to lead the development of the WPL working alongside other OCC colleagues, consultants and other appointed specialists to develop proposals from concept to consultation, including ongoing liaison with employers affected by the scheme and other external stakeholders. The postholder would not</p>



SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you for your answer. Thank you for confirming that through consultation, you simply mean that your workplace parking tax proposals may be refined, not that there is any chance of this ill-considered scheme being scrapped. Please clarify why you persist in calling this scheme a levy? Why not speak plainly? This is a tax. It is a tax on jobs if the employer pays or it is a tax on working if the employee pays.

be involved in the operation of the WPL. If the implementation of a WPL is approved in future, operational staff would be recruited to administer the scheme.

The Work Place Parking Levy programme assumes a Cabinet decision on its implementation during 2026. Only a decision to develop the Work Place Parking levy has been made.

To be clear recommendations to Cabinet will be informed by technical work, public consultation and engagement with affected employers. It is also important to note that the final decision on a WPL rests with the Secretary of State for Transport, so the council will only be able to implement the scheme if the Secretary of State approves it.

The purpose of the public consultation on the Workplace Parking Levy is to gather feedback and input from employers, the public, and other stakeholders to inform the development of the WPL and the local and national decision-making process. The consultation is a legal requirement, and an integral part of the scheme development. People's feedback allows us to refine our proposals and assess the potential impacts of the Workplace Parking Levy.

ANSWER:

Thank you. It is a levy because it is only charged against people or companies that are greater than, and that is part of the public consultation, where 10 parking spaces is sufficient and 11 parking spaces is where you pay a levy. That company has the ability to make changes. A tax is something which we don't have the ability to change over. Once the council tax is decided, that is the rate we all have to pay. So, that is the difference between a tax and a levy.



11. COUNCILLOR GLYNIS PHILLIPS

At the last Council meeting on 9th July, you advised that there would be a meeting of officers in July ‘to discuss likely timeframes for the implementation of speed enforcement measures at the Barton Park junction’. Would the Cabinet member advise when these speed enforcement measures will be installed? And are safety barriers at the pedestrian crossing points being actively considered?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you for the reply, although, I remained frustrated with my perceived lack of urgency in making this junction safe. My question is that the only way I can find out about what is going on in my division on this particular important junction, is by asking you questions at Council. Can I ask that you tell officers to inform local members when work is taking place in their divisions, as I think this is a matter of basic courtesy.

**COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT
MANAGEMENT**

Officers met on site with representatives of Thames Valley Police and a supplier of enforcement equipment in August and are carrying out further technical appraisal work. Subject to the outcome, funding from the Vision Zero programme will be allocated for the installation of the equipment, with Thames Valley Police then managing its operation. Timescales will be dependent on a number of factors but with the expectation – should the suitability of the site be confirmed – that installation would be carried out in the first half of 2025.

Preliminary work on the installation of safety barriers for pedestrians has been carried out but this did identify a number of constraints and current work is focussed on the installation of the red light and speed cameras.

ANSWER:

I certainly do not recognise the charge of lack of urgency. With the Councillor’s active support and the other City Councillors for the area, as she knows, I have been working very hard on this and I am absolutely delighted that we have secured the co-operation of Thames Valley Police (TVP) on the installations of these cameras which, by the way, before that TVP did not support and certainly would not pay for. We are now moving ahead with that and that is a significant step forward. I share the Councillor’s frustration that it hasn’t happened quicker, but there has certainly been urgency within it. In terms of keeping in touch with Councillors on this, I have certainly done my best to try and keep everyone informed on this and have attended several public meetings, as the Councillor knows. Certainly, Councillors are welcome to ask me about specific projects or ambitions in their own divisions.



12. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON

At the end of July the Leader wrote to the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper reminding her of this council's strong objections to proposals to re-open Campfield House Immigration Detention Centre in Kidlington. This was a follow up to the passing of my motion in October 2022 when the leader wrote to the former Home Secretary expressing our opposition to the plans. Following the new government's cancellation of the Rwanda Resettlement Scheme it was hoped that the plans for Campfield would also be cancelled since the scheme was cited as one of the principal reasons for the re-opening. However since the Leader's letter to Ms Cooper was sent, the government has surprisingly announced its intention to continue with plans to reopen the centre. Does the leader agree with me that this is a hugely retrograde move, especially given that Oxford is looking to become a City of Sanctuary, and that not only is it going to have little impact on dealing with the backlog of asylum claims, it could also jeopardise inward investment into an area designated as a centre of innovation and technology?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you to the Leader for her recognition of how backwards a step this is from our new government. Could she write again to the Home Secretary express our moral misgivings and disappointment over the government's plans and urge her to engage with local Councillors and stakeholders

COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Yes, I agree that this is indeed a hugely retrograde step by the Home Secretary, and I very much regret her decision for all the reasons that Cllr Middleton gives. Calum Miller, the MP in whose constituency Campsfield House is situated, has also voiced his objections which I agree with and fully support.

ANSWER:

Thank you, Cllr Middleton, and I have to say, I was very disappointed indeed, having written to the previous Home Secretary and I have actually sent a letter to the Home Secretary expressing our dissatisfaction with this decision. I think all of us in this chamber remember that we had a debate on this. We have agreed to become a Council of Sanctuary. It's really important that as part of that, we recognise that this decision by the Home Secretary will not change in any way the situation that many



<p>over the concerns of local businesses and residents?</p>	<p>vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees find themselves in. This is actually a very retrograde step, not just for our area, but for the country, because it indicates a lack of understanding of what the fundamental problem is, which is that we have gangs across the world who are assisting innocent people across the Channel. We need safe and secure routes for those people to be able to access the asylum they seek. It is disappointing to me that this new government does not recognise how important it is to address this issue and is going for what I can only describe as a sort of ‘window-dressing’ decision to reopen a facility such as Campsfield House, which in the past had many things which was bad about it, including that many of the people who lived there found themselves in situations which meant there could be suicide. We cannot, I believe, as a Council of Sanctuary, stand up and avoid saying we disagree with this, and I will be doing everything I can to impress upon the Home Secretary what a retrograde step we consider this to be.</p>
<p>13. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>Members from all groups have expressed concerns about a lack of feedback about issues affecting their divisions. I’ve also had similar complaints from District and Parish Councillors. There have been repeated acknowledgements of these shortcomings by the administration with promises to improve communication, especially on E&P projects and other key decisions, yet the problem persists. I have personally experienced this on more than one occasion and was recently told by a senior officer that they did not believe it was “necessary” to inform me of a significant and controversial development directly affecting my division before an announcement was made to the media. Could the Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services confirm that these failures of communication are going to be urgently</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SERVICES</p> <p>I would like to thank Cllr Middleton for raising the question of communications to members. It’s very important that local members are kept informed about issues affecting their division and will ask that all officers are reminded of the importance of doing so.</p> <p>I have also had my own experience of such situations and understand how frustrating it can be.</p> <p>It may not always be possible to brief local members in advance of communications being issued, but that should be very much the exception.</p> <p>We are also committed to improving communications with our district, town and parish councils. We recently signed up to the Oxfordshire Councils Charter, which is aimed at improving ways of working across all tiers of local government in the county.</p>



addressed and provide assurances that officers will be made aware of the importance of informing members about decisions and events directly affecting their divisions before such information is released to the media?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you to the Cabinet Member for taking on my concerns. I think we've seen in this meeting earlier some similar concerns about the lack of communication between members and officers. Would it be possible to have a future, open discussion or forum with all members and appropriate officers on ways to improve future communication between both arms of the administration?

ANSWER:

I'm happy to look at that and alternative approaches. I will just reiterate the point I made in my previous answer that, as a local Councillor myself, I've had many experiences in my many years as a local Councillor, of instances where communication about things happening in my patch was not as good as it should have been. There are occasionally things which happen that are just an exception, but they should just be an exception. I will sit down and have a discussion with officers at my next opportunity to do so about why this keeps happening as it has been raised many, many times in many different administrations across my time at the County Council. It is not something which has suddenly started. I will look at what we can do as it a systematic problem, I think, so systematically Councillors are informed about things that Councillors should be informed about. It may not be easy but we need to find a way to make things a lot better. I'm aware of one new issue that has come up since Cllr Middleton submitted the question that highlights the same issue.

14. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES

Can the Cabinet Member please explain why the principal inspection report for Donnington Bridge was not submitted for ten months after the original inspection in May 2023, and whether he has confidence that similar delays and emergency intervention will not befall other bridges in the County?

COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

- Principal inspections are generally carried out every 6 years and allow a detailed assessment of all parts of a bridge. The purpose of these inspections is to ensure any potential issues are identified and addressed promptly to maintain the safety and integrity of the bridge.
- This is an operational activity and it is not required for me to have sight of these.
- Following the report, further work was carried out by our teams and a



subsequent risk update was provided and approved by the client on 15th August 2024 which identified the need to install the weight restriction.

- More detailed, specialist and intrusive testing is required, and this work is being commissioned with a view to determine what works will be required at the earliest opportunity.
- We have many structures across Oxfordshire, and we continue to inspect them in line with our asset strategy. It is only when these inspections are carried out, we will be clear as to the extent of any works required.
- I would like to assure you that decisions to impose restrictions of this kind are not taken lightly, and always on the basis of expert advice and recommendation
- The primary outcome of the decision is to protect the users of the bridge and protect the asset from any further unnecessary stress and damage.

ANSWER:

Certainly not, and I didn't say that responsibility for bridges doesn't sit under my portfolio, it clearly does so I have no idea what he is referring to there. A supplementary question seemed to be about something completely different from the original question, which was about the Donnington Bridge and then he subsequently asked me about a backlog of repairs. I'm not in a position to answer that because you didn't give me notice of it, but I will take it away.

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Given there remains a backlog of inspections, the funding to close the backlog of inspections of closed bridges remains unspent and that in his previous response, the Cabinet Member said it was not his responsibility to ensure that bridges in the County was being cared for, does the Cabinet Member concede that under his watch, the County Council has been wilfully neglecting its bridges?



15. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES

Can the Cabinet Member confirm when he was first informed of the findings and consequences of the principal inspection report for Donnington Bridge submitted to the Council on 28/03/2024?

SUPPLEMENT:

Does the Cabinet Member believe that a 16 month turn-around for a principal inspection report following an inspection of Donnington Bridge on 28th March 2023 to be good service to the people of Oxfordshire and if so, how many further bridges in Oxfordshire will be closed to important traffic due to the Council's neglect?

16. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES

Since the Botley Road is set to be closed for a further indefinite period whilst Network Rail upgrade the Botley Railway Bridge, with the Leader speculating that the delay could last

**COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT
MANAGEMENT**

I can confirm that I was informed by our Head of Service for Highway Maintenance, that there was a need to impose a weight restriction on Friday 16th August 2024. (Officers had been working hard to understand the risk report received by the client team on 15th August following on from an extensive analysis of the findings of the information supplied by our contractors.)

ANSWER:

I do not recognise or accept the characterisation of the Council's neglect. It is another supplementary question that is not related to the original question, which was when was I first informed of the findings, which is answered very clearly in the answer. The sequence of events connecting the original inspection with the emergency inspection is clearly set out in the answer to his previous question; particularly in bullet point 3. Do I have confidence that there will not be further emergency interventions because of structures being found to be not in satisfactory condition? I certainly can't guarantee that and this question, along with the earlier question from Cllr Povolotsky, draws attention to the fact that Oxfordshire has a great many historic structures, many which are coming under strain. This particular one dates back to the early 1960's and other similar structures of a similar age are being found to be requiring attention. Officers are incredibly professional about the way that they do that, and will continue to be.

**COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE
AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

I have sought officer advice and see no reason to revisit the November 2022 Cabinet decision on the trial traffic filters.

There is no automatic requirement for all decisions made by the council to be



<p>another year, does the Cabinet Member consider it to be legally and judiciously appropriate for an updated Cabinet decision to be taken on the proposed traffic filter scheme, given that the original decision may be taken three years prior to implementation and the changed circumstances since then?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Given that the Cabinet Member seemingly agrees with the previous comments by the Leader that there has been enough consultation surrounding the major changes to Oxford’s transport system, does she believe that the scheme has public support as required by the strategic risk register and if so, how is she evidencing this?</p>	<p>revisited solely due to the passing of time.</p> <p>The council considers that the original justification for trialling traffic filters – that motorised traffic in Oxford needs to be reduced to facilitate efficient bus operation, safer cycle routes, more liveable streets and reduced congestion and pollution – will remain valid once Botley Road reopens. The traffic filters are to be introduced as a trial, with the expectation that the scheme may be adjusted in response to monitoring and consultation feedback during the trial. Cabinet was made aware of the imminent closure of Botley Road in the report, which also contained an officer recommendation that the trial only starts after the Botley Road re-opens, and so in this regard, the circumstances remain unchanged.</p> <p>Furthermore, the November 2022 Cabinet decision delegates authority to officers (in consultation with the relevant Cabinet member) to make minor changes to the scheme before it comes into force in case tweaks are needed.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>I don’t think there has been necessarily enhanced public support. The consultation was done, and the decision was made and therefore the system will be implemented when the Botley Road reopens. I think that was the answer the first time round and as far as I can see, answers your supplementary question as well.</p>
<p>17. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER</p> <p>Parents and learner drivers right across Oxfordshire continue to struggle to book driving tests in the county with many having to travel hours</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>The County Council has no control over matters of this nature.</p>



<p>away or spend hours searching for a cancellation. Is there anything that the county council can do to assist with improving this service in Oxfordshire?</p>	
<p>18. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER</p> <p>The new £51million park and ride at Eynsham has now been completed but as yet there is no access into the site. Can she confirm when the access will be constructed and also confirm how much the site is costing each week whilst it remains closed?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>The Eynsham park and ride was funded by a ring-fenced and non-inflation indexed grant award, which had obtained all the relevant consents and approvals to allow it to proceed to construction. Any delays to its commencement would have resulted in the inflationary pressures impacting on the affordability of the scheme.</p> <p>Completing the park and ride site ahead of the bus lanes which required more complicated approval, has saved millions of pounds in inflation and construction costs. This was a conscious decision, taken at a time when costs were rising rapidly across all industries.</p> <p>Delays caused by funding pressures, including inflation, has meant that the wider A40 improvements scheme has needed to be redesigned. The revised scheme will deliver a connection for the park and ride, bus lanes and walking and cycling infrastructure along the A40. We are discussing this revised scheme with Homes England and DfT and hope to progress with its delivery later this year.</p> <p>Following the completion of the permanent landscaping at the Eynsham park and ride, I can inform the council that ongoing maintenance of the site is being provided as part of the existing delivery contractor. It is important to note that the council is not incurring any additional costs on this maintenance, as it is covered by the construction contract.</p> <p>To clarify, the total project cost of the park and ride did not cost £51m. From the projected £51m total cost for the wider Science Transit (ST2) scheme, around £32m was allocated for the delivery of the park and ride, with the remaining going on the delivery of the eastbound bus lane. This eastbound bus lane now forms part of the proposed new A40 improvement scheme.</p>



SUPPLEMENTARY:

Thank you for your answer. I do notice that you didn't answer the last part of the question. So, can you confirm how much our new park and ride that we cannot use is going to cost each week up until its point of opening in 2027?

19. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER

Work to improve the Cotswold Railway Line seems to have slowed down. Please can the cabinet member provide an update on the Cotswold Line improvements and when we can expect the car park at Hanborough Station to be expanded and if the Hanborough Subgroup has now been established?

Regarding the opening of the park and ride facility, the park and ride will be opened when the necessary infrastructure to connect it to the A40 is delivered. This connection and the bus lanes serving the park and ride are scheduled to be constructed under the revised A40 improvements scheme, which is currently under discussions with Homes England and the Department for Transport. Our discussions with them are nearing completion.

Subject to the successful conclusion of these discussions, we plan to hold a public engagement on the plans in later in the year. This will kickstart the delivery phase of the scheme, with a projected completion date of the relevant infrastructure to allow the park and ride to operating being in 2027.

ANSWER:

I thought it was in the answer. It clearly says that's part of the contract that the developer has and the part of the contract is that the developer maintains it, so there isn't a cost.

COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The North Cotswold Line Task Force (NCLTF) engaged with the previous Government earlier this year, meeting with the-then Rail Minister and had extensive follow-on discussion with DfT Civil Servants, rail industry colleagues and consultants from SLC Rail (who support the work of the Task Force). A further discussion with the Rail Minister – to seek support and funding for project development – was scheduled for 10 June, but due to the General Election being called during that period, had to be rescheduled.



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The NCLTF invited MPs along to a Parliamentary event on 4 September to update line of route MPs (most newly elected). This was hosted by Lord Faulkner and NCLTF members, including Councillor Liz Leffman and John Disley (Head of Transport Policy). This included discussion about the substantial amount of new residential development proposed in the vicinity of Worcestershire Parkway station. The NCLTF encompasses five counties and a number of sub-regional transport board areas, with a very substantial amount of planned development, and enhanced rail services are critical to delivering improved connectivity in the most sustainable way

Our new OxRail 2040: Plan for Rail strategy will set out the need for full double-tracking from Oxford, through to Worcester. We will also propose 25kv AC overhead electrification from Oxford to Hanborough railway station (Didcot-Banbury via Oxford proposed for wiring). Hanborough station will be developed as a two-platform station, connected by a footbridge and ideally as a Tier 2 'Mobility Hub' to serve a wider area of West Oxfordshire

We are in discussion with GWR/Network Rail and West Oxfordshire District Council about the scope to expand the existing station car park and any formation of a 'Hanborough station sub-group' is dependent on progress with the wider NCLTF ambitions. Such a group would probably be led by Place Planning and involve local Members, Blenheim Palace and West Oxfordshire Community Transport and is likely to be formed later next year.



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

	Number of appeals	Hearings	Withdrawn	Conceded	Partly Agreed/Allowed	Agreed/Allowed	Dismissed	Other (please state)	Ttal number of Statements/ EHCPs
2016	27	8	13	4	N/A	8	0	2	2,420
2017	50	8	27	4	N/A	6	2	11	2,755
2018	67	12	17	14	N/A	11	1	24	3,076
2019	66	4	25	19	N/A	4	1	17	3,554
2020	92	21	9	31	1	16	4	31	3,380
2021	193	29	3	78	22	6	1	83	4,070
2022	276	20	11	159	14	4	2	86	4,914
2023	347	29	8	178	21	4	4	132	6,160
								Other = struck out, transferred or still active)	
2024 January to July only	217	12	4	63	3	9	0	138	
									Current total - 6,934