

**County Council
Tuesday, 11 July 2023**

Speeches by members of the public

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Agenda Item 16

Steve Wright - Petition

Here to present the petition on behalf of Oxfordshire Firefighters, signed by over 1000 people in just four days. This shows the strength of feeling.

Recognise the incredible contributions and talent of serving ffs and support them.

I stand here as a representative of the firefighters across Oxfordshire who have gathered here to voice their concerns and opposition to Ofrs proposal of direct entry.

As someone who joined the fire service back in 2001, I have witnessed firsthand the dedication and commitment of these firefighters, and it saddens me to see their invaluable contributions being undervalued and disregarded in the manner it is by the current management team.

I went through rigorous training at the fire service college for 16 weeks, followed by a two-year probation period, where I was mentored by senior firefighters. Through further training and experience, I progressed in my career, taking on the roles of crew manager and later watch manager, learning my craft and attending operational incidents and personally been at forefront of some significant incidents including the tragic Didcot power station collapse and Randolph hotel fire.

The reason I share this with you is to emphasize the significance of the next rank in our fire service: the station manager role. These individuals are expected to attend and lead large-scale incidents, providing guidance and managing the overall response. I fail to comprehend how anyone could consider this proposal that undermines the importance of this role as a good idea.

Direct entry has consistently been challenged and concerns of Oxfordshire firefighters voiced. Even at the Joint Consultative Committee, councillors agreed with those concerns. However, it seems that these concerns are now being brushed aside and the proposal is moving forward without due consideration.

Oxfordshire firefighters oppose this change because it completely undervalues the dedication and expertise of the current staff at all levels of the service. Instead of investing in and developing our existing firefighters, this proposal undermines their capabilities and diminishes their contributions. This not only impacts morale but also raises significant safety issues, which should never be compromised.

Furthermore, it is crucial to note that this opposition is not driven by the union alone. It originated from one station, a group of firefighters who recognized the far-reaching implications of this decision. Their concerns were dismissed, prompting them to pass a motion. This sentiment spread like wildfire, with over twenty fire stations passing a similar motion, including the officers section that represents station managers and above.

As an elected representative, it is my duty to stand firmly against this proposal, with the backing and show of support you've seen outside today. The members, are determined to protect the integrity of our fire service.

If as the service say, this is about being diverse, then lets focus on recruitment, if its about leadership then invest in Oxfordshire firefighters to be the next generation of leaders.

We will consider our next steps, which could include a ballot for industrial action, that's what ffs are talking about - highlighting the strength of the collective sentiment.

Our firefighters are united in their plea for this proposal to be stopped. We urge the service to act now and invest in our current staff.

Thank you.

Simon Howell – Petition

I am presenting this petition on behalf of residents of Shrivenham and surrounding villages.

This is supported by our County Councillor, Yvonne Constance and the Parish Council, where the petition was presented to Cllr Constance and discussed at their Parish meeting last week.

The Petition asked that this council looks into options for managed parking on Shrivenham High Street to enable it to be a thriving hub for residents to use.

Background:

Shrivenham High Street is a mixture of residential, businesses and core services such as the Doctors surgery.

Many of the local villages use the facilities as a local centre.

The GP surgery is obviously a very busy location with a high “footfall” of visitors.

The High Street is also used as a convenient location for “park and ride” for the excellent S6 bus service – this has the effect of clogging up spaces for long periods of time and restricting a regular throughput of visitors.

Over recent years the village has grown significantly with approximately 1000 dwellings approved that doubles the size of the village. There will be growth for many years to come with the build out of planning applications already approved.

Request for help

This petition is asking for your help.

This is not a suggestion of what the solution should be, but requests those more expert and familiar with the subject matter to look into possible solutions and ideas that could help balance the needs of the interested parties.

With a good solution in place, the environment could be protected by reducing longer journeys to towns such as Swindon, and instead support the local businesses.

Ideas that have been put forward from the discussions include a local solution for “park and ride”, a combination of restricted time limits of 2 or 3 hours with some sort of business/resident solution, but hopefully the experts will look into further and propose creative, cost efficient solutions.

I hope in response to this petition that a review of possible solutions and appropriate consultation could be actioned to help support the village High Street and protect the environment from longer, avoidable car journeys.

Thank you.

James Schumann - Petition

I'm presenting this petition from DRARA (Divinity Road Area Residents Association), which is inside the East Oxford LTNs.

We call on Oxfordshire County Council to 1. *leave* the timber bollards in place in Cowley and East Oxford LTNs to *protect* those who cycle, scooter, walk through our neighbourhood, and 2. *avoid* opening the LTNs to further vehicles, such as *taxis*.

We do appreciate the huge work done by councillors and officers in implementing the LTNs. But we are *dismayed* by your decision to allow black cabs and minicabs exemptions through 3 Cowley filters, and *deeply concerned* you intend to do the same in East Oxford.

This is an unusual, *retrograde* step, a radical shift in policy which will undermine your hard work, and substantially weaken the LTNs.

- We're just getting used to LTN streets as safe places; daily we see children take their first wobbly bike rides, parents let their kids cross roads by themselves, streams of older kids cycling to school. Taxi exemptions will immediately put off many from traveling like this - in particular the very young and old - parents tell us they will return to *driving* their kids to school if the 1,000 or so black cab and minicab drivers get access through these streets. As traffic levels increase, the well-documented consequence is a *decrease* in active travel.
- And *current* data from Telraam traffic counters on Cornwallis Rd (where the taxi exemption has just been granted) *already* show significant numbers of taxis are *speeding*, this can only worsen once it's a through-route

- The council forecast for *number* of taxis (based on counts in roads with ANPR at only *one* end) is clearly *unrealistically low* given that opening up a taxi route between *two arterial roads* (as is the case here) will create a *shortcut*, which will inevitably become the main route for taxis; *a taxi 'superhighway' through our narrow residential streets.*
- And most of these streets are *too narrow* for cyclists and mobility scooters to pass cars safely; Divinity Road is on a hill, so more dangerous for cyclists with increased traffic. And many minicabs will be used by drivers 'off duty' - how will you know the difference?
- If Divinity Road gets ANPR and taxis, the parallel Southfield Road will get the scooters - so knocking out the safe cycle routes on *both* streets.
- This step goes against the council's key policies on traffic volumes, accidents, active travel, climate change - it will cost a lot to counter its negative effects. It will undermine the active travel and liveability gains of the LTNs - it's *not* what you signed up for.
- Exemptions for minicabs like this have not to have been implemented in any other LTNs in the country as far as we know, so the effects are *just unknown*. If introduced in Cowley, it's surely clear: it *cannot* be repeated in East Oxford until the Cowley changes have been *fully monitored and assessed*.

So: stick to your guns - don't destroy your good work. *Reverse* the Cowley decision. *Don't* implement this in East Oxford. *Don't allow taxis or other motor vehicles through our LTNs.*

Evelyne Godfrey – Item 14

I'm Evelyne Godfrey, a Director of Oxford City of Sanctuary. We're a local refugee support co-operative.

I'd like to express the support of Oxford City of Sanctuary for the Motion of Cllr. Imade on the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

All individuals are born equal in dignity and rights, and all form an integral part of humanity. Refugees escaping war in Africa must be afforded the same support as European refugees, and allowed to live with dignity and independence. All refugees must be treated the same.

There is of course a serious lack of affordable housing in the County. Oxford City of Sanctuary has a project to build new affordable co-operative housing, to accommodate refugees locally, and we are hoping that the Local Authorities and community will support our plans. In the meantime, we urge the Local Authorities to actively engage with the Oxfordshire Sudanese community and local refugee support groups. Sponsorship of named individual refugees should be by family members and registered community groups. Safeguarding of vulnerable refugees cannot be adequately monitored when they are housed in rooms in owner-occupied homes of unrelated families.

If Ukrainian citizens and legal residents were issued with visas to travel to the UK without any refugee assessment or UNHCR documentation, then we call on the UK government to issue travel visas to citizens of Sudan, but also Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Eritrea, who are fleeing war and the oppressive aftereffects of recent war in those countries.

In the interests of fair and just treatment of individuals who are facing persecution and would qualify for refugee status under the 1951 UN Convention and its 1967 Protocol, we call on the UK government to immediately introduce a system of Humanitarian visas, in order to permit African and Asian refugees to travel to Britain safely and legally, in the same way that Ukrainians were encouraged to do.

In the interests of equal opportunity in employment, if refugee status was automatically granted to Ukrainian citizens and legal residents who chose to resettle temporarily in the UK, and if the right to work immediately upon arrival in the UK was granted to those Ukrainians, then we call on the UK government to allow all other nationals with refugee claims and those whose applications are under consideration, to likewise be granted the right to work immediately upon arrival in the UK.

We endorse the actions in this Motion on Sudan, and urge the County Council to act on its recommendations without delay.

Thank you.

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Cllr Lubna Arshad, Temple Cowley, Oxford City Council – Item 14

We all have a duty to fulfil the rights of humanity. We are all very fortunate to be in a position to not fight for only our own rights but having a passion to fight for the rights of others too, moving towards peace and justice and I pray our efforts make it a blessing for all.

We witness some inequity in the assistance provided to different groups. While conflicts in countries like Ukraine, Syria, and others receive substantial attention, there are numerous ongoing conflicts around the world, such as in Sudan, where people are not receiving the same level of support. Sudan must have our support

Millions of Sudanese are in urgent need of aid, lacking access to medical care and supplies, water and food, and electricity.

We support the rejection of war by the Alliance of Demand-Based Campaigns (TAM) and echo the Sudanese demands for:

- an immediate ceasefire
- immediate humanitarian aid
- the cancelling of Sudan's debt.

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Nazar Eltahir – Item 14

Chairperson and distinguished members of Oxfordshire County Council,

Good morning/ Good afternoon

Today, I stand before you to support the motion put forward by

Councillor Imade Edosomwan, urging the UK government to take immediate action and help stop the devastating war in Sudan.

The situation in Sudan has reached a critical point, and it is our moral duty to intervene and bring an end to the suffering of countless innocent lives.

The conflict in Sudan has caused immense human suffering, with widespread violence, displacement, and loss of life. Families have been torn apart, children have been orphaned, and communities have been shattered. It is a crisis that demands our attention and swift action.

The UK government has a crucial role to play in ending this war. As a nation committed to peace, justice, and human rights, it is imperative that we extend our support to the Sudanese people. We must work hand in hand with the Sudanese communities residing in the UK to evacuate British citizens and their families from Sudan, ensuring their safety and well-being.

By initiating and supporting evacuation efforts, we can bring relief to those in imminent danger and provide them with the necessary assistance to rebuild their lives. We have a responsibility to extend a helping hand to our fellow citizens and ensure their safe return to the UK.

Furthermore, we must recognize the importance of family reunions for the Sudanese community residing in the UK especially in Oxfordshire.

The war in Sudan has forcibly separated families, leaving loved ones stranded and torn apart. It is our duty to uphold the principle of family unity and grant the Sudanese community the right to reunite with their families affected by the conflict.

Let us remember that the Sudanese people have been enduring unimaginable hardships since April 15th.

We cannot turn a blind eye to their suffering; we must act now. By supporting this motion, we send a powerful message to the UK government that we stand united in our pursuit of peace and justice.

Together, we can make a difference. Let us urge the UK government to take immediate action to help stop the war in Sudan, work with Sudanese communities in the UK to evacuate British citizens and their families, and grant the Sudanese community the right to family reunion.

Together, we can bring hope, healing, and a brighter future to the people of Sudan.

Thank you.

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Charlie Maynard – Item 15

Motion by Councillor Bob Johnston

This council welcomes the feasibility study for a railway line in the west of Oxfordshire linking Carterton to Cowley. With the possibility of around 10,000 additional employment opportunities being created on the north and west side of the city, (4,500 Oxford North; 1,000 Botley Road; 4,000 Osney Mead; up to 1,000 at Oxpens) there has never been a more important need for a mass transit system connecting the city with the expanding towns along the A40 corridor.

This Council urges the Cabinet to request the Corporate Director Environment & Place to build upon the results of the recently published feasibility study by entering into discussions with central government and other possible funders to identify sources of funding that would take the project forward, either in phases or as a complete route.

I am Charlie Maynard, Chair of the Witney Oxford Transport Group, a cross-party, voluntary, not for profit organisation seeking better transport solutions along the A40 corridor.

Car travel times between Witney and Oxford will be more than 30 minutes slower by 2031, and crucially, this takes into account the A40 work currently underway. This forecast is from the 2021 “A40 Smart Corridor Assessment”, which was commissioned by the county council and written by AECOM, the lead contractor for the current A40 works.

So, we have a very big problem. All of us who live in West Oxfordshire know this already, though few of us know how much worse it is forecast to become. Unsurprisingly, exploring solutions to our transport problem is extremely popular, with 97% of more than 800 West Oxfordshire residents surveyed supporting a feasibility study being conducted.

I’d like here to give my thanks to:

1. you all as a Council, for committing to the feasibility and funding studies
2. the many county councillors from West Oxfordshire, of all political stripes, who have given their support for this project and who pledged two years ago to define and protect a route
3. Cllrs Bob Johnston, Liz Leffman, Duncan Enright, Calum Miller, Nick Field-Johnson, Tim Bearder, Charles Mathew and Dan Levy for their strong support over the last few years

We look forward to continuing to work with Network Rail, the county council and West Oxfordshire district council to take the project to a sufficiently good state of development so that a proposal to the DfT to include this project in their Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline succeeds first time.

Relating to this, near term goals include the following:

At the county council, we will be seeking your support on:

1. committing to the final Phase 3 of the Land Value Capture funding work, which involves negotiating legally binding contribution agreements with landowners
2. Incorporating this rail project into the county’s infrastructure strategy, as well as its transport and connectivity plan
3. Seeking confirmation from the DfT that we have now completed Stage 1, “Decision to Initiate”, with the next step being to develop an Outline Business Case, which results in a single viable development option.

At the district council:

1. We are working with officers and members to incorporate the project into the new Local Plan and the upcoming Local Plan consultation
2. We will be seeking to explore with WODC the potential implementation of Supplementary Planning Guidance which would come into effect prior to the Local Plan being finalised . These would become a material consideration to inform WODC and the Planning Inspectorate decisions on planning applications and appeals
3. Follow-on work so that a route can be defined and protected, so development does not accidentally block the route. This is a very real risk currently

Given the good progress and the very wide support for the project, I ask that each of you support this motion to help to develop a solution to our transport problems in West Oxfordshire.

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