

**County Council  
Tuesday, 5 November 2024**

**Speeches by Members of the Public**

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# Agenda Annex

## Speech to County Council 5 November 2024: OxPlay

Councillors, officers, thank you for allocating us time to speak. My name is Josie Procter and I'm speaking, and presenting a petition on behalf of OxPlay. We are a group of residents, asking the county council, quite simply, to work with the city council on providing some space to site a children's playground in the city centre. Please.

The petition has, at the last count, 1701 signatures. A copy is with the monitoring officer. We are also presenting this petition to the city council later this month.

We believe that Oxford city centre is great for retail, and history and culture, but terrible for families. We believe a significant barrier for families from all over the city and county plus tourists from beyond Oxfordshire who could spend time, and money, in the city, is the lack of a play space for kids to safely burn off energy between stops. The closest play areas to the city centre are Friars Wharf, Jericho, and the Angel and Greyhound, which are too far to be viable for a city centre trip.

Other great European cities with similar architectural heritage and tourist considerations have found ways of delivering this and becoming more family friendly cities. Paris has a play space almost on every corner, and one at the foot of the Sacre Coeur. Oslo has a play space outside the central station. Closer to home, new retail developments like Westfield and Battersea recognise the value of investing in play spaces so have baked those in to the design from the outset. We believe that investing space in a city centre playground would have benefits for city centre businesses through increased dwell time and also health benefits from more active children.

During the process of building this petition we have gathered a great deal of feedback from residents about what they would like to see and where they would like to see it, which we are more than happy to share with both city and county councils if helpful. But we are also aware that Oxford is undergoing a degree of change right now so our ask is simply that space for a playground or play spaces for children of all abilities are baked into the thinking when creating that change, and that you work with the city council on delivering this for residents and businesses.

Thank you for listening.

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## **Submission to OCC Meeting on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November in support of Councillor Gawrysiak's Motion on SSHBs in Henley by Robert Aitken**

I will try to be brief as I have twice before made a submission supporting a motion by Councillor Gawrysiak on this subject.

- ICB and OCC decided last year to close the Hub Beds in Henley without consultation or communication, even with the GPs looking after the Hub patients.
- Early October last year, this leaked – note **not “Announced”** - the rundown of the unit having already started.
- Community Groups and Councillors sought information and a consultation. They were told that this was “a done deal”, the beds would close December, and that these were not NHS beds, so no need to consult.
- Minimal information was supplied, then further information to justify plus invitations to attend public TSG meetings refused.
- In February, Councillor Gawrysiak spoke at HOSC. ICB and OCC reps again stone-walled on their earlier decision, still claiming there was no obligation to consult.
- It was then established via a Freedom of Information request that these **were** NHS beds and a consultation **should** have happened.
- Motions to OCC for a debate on this and to force those responsible to provide a full justification to be subject to scrutiny and consultation have been presented three time I believe, and yet more than a year after the decision, not one of the motions has even been debated.

The key point is that these beds, which were well used, highly valued by local GPs, patients and their families, were withdrawn clandestinely without any communication or consultation, leaving not just Henley, but an area of South Oxfordshire with a population of some 140,000 people without **any** Step-Down Beds. Information is emerging of vulnerable patients being discharged from hospital without proper home care or to distant locations. This was never what was stated in the national policy decision on which the ICB/OCC decision relies.

**So here we are again.**

**I therefore urge this Council to hear Councillor Gawrysiak's motion, give it and our 140,000 residents the respect of a full debate, and do all in your power to demand full justification and consultation, resulting, I would hope in reinstatement of bed provision for our area.**

Robert Aitken, Trustee of The League of Friends of Townlands Community Hospital Charity, long term member of Townlands Steering Group & former Ambulance Service Community Responder

4 November 2024

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Linda Ward, Kidlington resident and Trustee of Oxfordshire Badger Group, which is a small registered charity that works to protect badgers and their habitats across the Oxfordshire. I am here to ask you to support the motion brought by Cllr Middleton .

This motion is timely, as it could help influence discussions currently taking place in Westminster over future btb control strategy.

It is an important local issue. Cull zones cover at least 60% of Oxfordshire, an area running broadly west of a line from Banbury through Thame, barely skirting the City. Culling started in 2020 and aims to kill 70% of the population each year for at least 4 years. Based on official cull figures, we estimate that between 6-8000 badgers have been shot in Oxfordshire to date.

The largest of the 3 Oxon cull zones – Area 49 - completed 4 years of culling in 2023. This year a supplementary license has permitted a further 6 month 'open season'. In June 2024 they will have started killing newly independent cubs; from now till the end of the year they will be shooting pregnant females. This is killing on a remorseless, industrial scale. The threat of local extinction is very real.

Over the past 10 years half the badger population of England has been culled. Despite this, there is no scientific evidence to show the cull has helped with disease control.

A Council committed to an "Oxfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy" must oppose a policy of culling Britain's largest native terrestrial carnivore. Badgers are a keystone species for maintaining ecosystem health. The farming lobby may argue that culling badgers will help stop the decline of other species. No wildlife charities, or hedgehog expert agrees. Human action is largely responsible for the loss of biodiversity. The badger cull is a massive assault on nature.

Oxfordshire is a largely rural county; many of you represent areas in the cull zones. You may know farmers that have been affected by bovine TB and understand the serious impact it has on livelihoods and mental wellbeing.

I badly want to see BTB eradicated ASAP for the benefit of farmers, cattle and badgers. It's appalling that DEFRA looks increasingly likely fail to achieve this by 2038 as originally planned. Wales and Scotland do not cull and are reducing bTb more successfully.

94% of btb is spread from cow to cow. It's disgraceful that English farmers have been denied access to the more stringent and accurate testing methods already available. Disgraceful that it has taken so long to develop and deploy cattle vaccination. The industry needs to focus on using EFFECTIVE tools – better cattle welfare, enhanced biosecurity measures and improved control over risky cattle movements. Culling badgers is an ineffective, costly, cruel and dangerous distraction that needs to stop.

Mahatma Gandhi said "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated" . Councillors – please show your greatness and morality by supporting this motion.

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