OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Cabinet
Tuesday, 14 July 2026

ADDENDA

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CABINET – 14 JULY 2026

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received. Should any questioner not have received an answer in that time , a written answer will be provided.

1. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION
Agenda Item 22 The press release about the proposed purchase of a solar farm states: *Oxfordshire County Council is investigating the prospect of buying a solar farm at an undisclosed location in the county that would help meet its own energy needs, reduce carbon footprint and provide a financial return for the taxpayer.* Purchasing an existing solar farm of itself does absolutely nothing to increase solar power generation or reduce the carbon footprint of the county as a whole. It merely pays the developer of the solar farm a good price and shifts the ownership of the project to the	The Council is not exploring the purchase of an existing solar farm. The solar farm in question does not currently exist. Working with an experienced developer to build and operate a successful solar farm will add significant new green energy generation in Oxfordshire and align with the council's green ambitions.

County Council without adding a single kWh to county-wide renewable electricity supply. This is little more than a bookkeeping transaction, appearing to lower the Council's carbon footprint while at the same time increasing the apparent carbon footprint of those who have taken on the Council's former energy contract. In terms of the Council's logic, if I own shares in a local solar farm, as I do, I am somehow lowering my carbon footprint. What would be meaningful and good for Oxfordshire as an entity and for the planet would be for the council to take the lead in constructing brand new solar capacity. Why did the Council not propose that truly positive contribution to carbon reduction?	
2. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY <u>Agenda Item 7</u>	**COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION**

The Council is buying out the leasehold interest in the Castle Quarter, presumably with borrowings, to increase its return from the tenants on the site. In the absence of the detailed data describing the financial attractions of this purchase, one must ask why the County would be expected to generate a better return from the Castle site than the previous owners, who were one of the country's largest property companies and whose interests include the Westgate shopping centre. The former owners had every incentive to build upon possible synergies between the two neighbouring sites by attracting Westgate shoppers to cross over Castle Street to the Castle Quarter. What property development expertise does the County bring to this site which a major company specialising in the sector lacked? Why should the County prove more successful than professionals with deep roots in the commercial property sector?	The Council purchased the long leasehold interest in Castle Quarter primarily for regeneration and place shaping purposes and not to "increase its return from the tenants on site". Castle Quarter was acquired from Land Securities and has been unloved with very little investment from them and limited asset management occurring over the last decade. Land Securities ownership and redevelopment of Westgate has been actively detrimental to Castle Quarter drawing tenants from Castle Quarter to Westgate. The purchase of the site was made possible because of the net initial yield of 7.87%, which is significantly about the costs of servicing and repaying the borrowing associated with it. The council has appointed specialist advisors – both asset management and property management – with significant and long standing commercial expertise in managing similar sites, to help shape and deliver the strategy to transform what is an asset of significant strategic importance for Oxfordshire, into a thriving hub of economic activity with increased footfall, dwell time and spend in the heart of Oxford.

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ITEM 5 – PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

Item	Speakers
8 - Best Start Family Hubs	Cllr Jane Hanna
12 – Cowley Branch Line – Enterprise Zone Funding	Rita Atkinson District Cllr Andrew Crawford Cllr Jane Hanna Cllr Bethia Thomas
14 - Procurement of a Strategic Partner to Support Local Government Reorganisation across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire	Cllr Glynis Phillips
18 - Capital Programme Monitoring Report	Richard Drew

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