

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10 December 2024 commencing at 10.30 am and finishing at 4.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Alison Rooke – in the Chair

Councillors:

Mark Lygo (Vice-Chair)	Ted Fenton	Michael O'Connor
Brad Baines	Nick Field-Johnson	Glynis Phillips
Hannah Banfield	Donna Ford	Sally Povolotsky
David Bartholomew	Andrew Gant	Susanna Pressel
Tim Bearder	Stefan Gawrysiak	Eddie Reeves
Robin Bennett	Andy Graham	G.A. Reynolds
Liz Brighouse OBE	Jenny Hannaby	Judy Roberts
Nigel Champken-Woods	Damian Haywood	David Rouane
Mark Cherry	Charlie Hicks	Geoff Saul
Andrew Coles	John Howson	Les Sibley
Yvonne Constance OBE	Bob Johnston	Nigel Simpson
Ian Corkin	Liz Leffman	Roz Smith
Imade Edosomwan	Nick Leverton	Ian Snowdon
Trish Elphinstone	Dan Levy	Dr Pete Sudbury
Duncan Enright	Dr Nathan Ley	Bethia Thomas
Mohamed Fadlalla	Kieron Mallon	Michael Waine
Arash Fatemian	Ian Middleton	Liam Walker
Neil Fawcett	Calum Miller	

The Council considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and decided as set out below. Except insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports, copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

121/24 MINUTES

(Agenda Item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 were approved.

122/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(Agenda Item 2)

Apologies were received from Councillors Ash, Bloomfield, Bulmer, Gregory, Hanna, van Mierlo, Murphy and Stevens.

123/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE

(Agenda Item 3)

In relation to Item 2 on the Report of the Cabinet, Councillor Leffman declared that she was a Director of OxLEP and that Councillor Roberts would respond to any questions on that item. Councillors Graham, Rouane and Thomas declared that they were also Directors.

In relation to the petition taken under Item 6, Councillor Povolotsky declared that she was the Co-Chair of the Parent Teacher Association of the Europa School.

In relation to Item 14, Councillor Reynolds declared that he was a farmer.

124/24 OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS

(Agenda Item 4)

The Chair congratulated Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service members who raised an amazing £35,329.72 in aid of Children in Need.

A scheme to refurbish two bridges in University Parks had won a coveted [Oxford Preservation Trust Award](#) in recognition of its historically sensitive approach. The Chair congratulated all those involved.

The Chair invited all to attend coming events:

Oxfordshire County Council Chair's Carol Service. Hosted by the Chair and The Right Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester at 6.30pm on Monday 16th December at St Michael and All Angels Church, Abingdon.

Oxfordshire County Council Chair's Charity Gala Dinner on Friday 10th January 2025 at the Mercure Oxford Hawkwell House Hotel, Church Way, Iffley, 7pm for 7.30pm. Details on how to order tickets were in the Schedule of Business.

A list of events attended by the Chair and Vice Chair since the last Council meeting was published in the Schedule of Business. The Chair highlighted two in particular. The Nomad AGM in Henley showcased the incredible work that the charity does for youth and the community in the area including running a foodbank. The Charity Fun Run in Oxford featured several members of staff and Councillors Lygo and Bearder. Well done to all involved.

Council was notified of the passing in October of former Councillor Rita Milne who represented the Wolvercote division as a Liberal Democrat member between 1993 and 1997. She was a member of the Museum, Arts, Libraries and Leisure Committee, Oxford City Divisional Youth Committee and the Southern Arts Ltd - Executive Committee.

Councillor Bob Johnston paid tribute to her work on the Council and recalled that she had been assiduous in her case work and had been a very popular councillor. Members stood for a minute's silence in her memory.

125/24 APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda Item 5)

Council noted the formation of a Cabinet Committee called the Shareholder Committee under Terms of Reference detailed on Page 15 of the Agenda.

Council approved the following appointments:

Councillor Yvonne Constance to replace Councillor Felix Bloomfield on the Audit & Governance Committee.

Councillor Yvonne Constance to replace Councillor Nigel Champken-Woods on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

126/24 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda Item 6)

Petition

Aidan Reilly presented a petition with 870 signatures for a safe walking and cycling route from Abingdon and Sutton Courtenay to the Europa School and Culham Science Centre. The speech is published alongside the minutes of this meeting.

127/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(Agenda Item 7)

Four questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

128/24 QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(Agenda Item 8)

Fifteen questions were asked. The questions, responses and supplementary questions are recorded in an Annex below.

129/24 REPORT OF THE CABINET

(Agenda Item 9)

Council received the report of Cabinet covering the Cabinet meeting on 19 November.

On Item 1, Including Everyone Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework 2025 – 2029, Councillor Phillips asked why there was no mention of young carers. Councillor Leffman thanked her for pointing that out and responded that she would make sure that it will be amended going forwards.

Councillor Pressel cited a number of examples of a lack of consideration of diversity in Council appointments and consultation, and asked if the Leader agreed that the practice fell far short of the policies. Councillor Leffman agreed that there was a long way to go but that the Council wanted to lead on this and there were Key Performance Indicators that will be monitored.

Councillor Brighouse asked that Looked After Children be included in the consideration of inclusion and expressed concern that much of the data available was not very useful. Councillor Leffman responded that officers were looking at ways to improve Council support for care leavers. With regards to data, she believed that there was a lot of data there but that the Council sometimes did not make the best use of it and this was something she knew that officers were examining.

Item 2, Local Enterprise Partnership Integration - Phase 2, Councillor Brighouse stated her surprise that Council was only being asked to note the formation by Cabinet of a Cabinet Committee and asked that any further decision on this be more inclusive of Council. Councillor Roberts responded that the decision was taken at a public meeting of Cabinet where Members could have asked to speak or put questions.

Councillor Smith asked for an update on progress and when the first Shareholder Committee meeting would take place. Councillor Roberts responded that the first meeting will be on 17 December 2024.

Councillor Baines asked if the Cabinet Member would agree that it would be beneficial to have cross-party representation on the Shareholder Committee. Councillor Roberts noted that the Committee had yet to meet to decide on the future approach so she could not give any commitment to that at this stage.

Councillor Bennett stated that he believed that OxLEP had paid more attention to the voices of larger businesses and asked if there would be a more inclusive approach to consultation. Councillor Roberts confirmed that it was the intention to have more broad representation on any advisory panel such as including the community and voluntary sector.

Councillor Enright asked if the important relationships with the City and District Councils will be retained in the new advisory structure. Councillor Roberts responded that discussions had already taken place with the other councils to ensure that.

On item 3, Climate Action Programme Six Month Update, Councillor Hicks asked the Cabinet Member to outline the plans to deal with the red indicator on Energy and the amber indicators on Transport. Councillor Sudbury responded that the red indicator resulted from the rejection of a bid for government funding and that the Council was working with low-carbon groups to amend the bid. The report to Cabinet included details on how the amber indicators were being tackled.

Councillor Pressel noted that it had been known for some time that LED lighting was more damaging to insects than sodium lighting and asked if this had been taken into account when deciding to switch to LED lighting. Councillor Sudbury responded that it was white LED lighting that caused the biggest problem. The decision to switch to LED had been taken by a previous administration but he had decided that all new lighting should use a yellower colour to reduce the harmful impact.

Councillor Snowdon asked the Cabinet Member's view on the fact that the Council had not acquired a single electric vehicle for the gritter fleet. Councillor Sudbury responded that that had not been his decision but that he had accelerated the decarbonisation of the fleet in his portfolio through acquiring second hand vehicles that can be obtained more quickly.

Councillor Johnston asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed that those who seek to obstruct progress towards net zero are amongst those endangering the future of the planet. Councillor Sudbury agreed that there was still a powerful lobby working to obstruct climate action but that the administration will continue to do everything that they can.

On item 4, Educational Psychology Assessment Service, Councillor Brighthouse asked what other options were looked at given the crisis in the service and Councillor Smith asked if there was a timescale envisaged on when the backlog would be cleared. Councillor Howson responded that there had been a particular backlog in processing Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) in one area and the Cabinet decision provided a framework to draw down educational psychologists from across the country to clear the backlog. The service was doing its best to have it cleared by the end of this financial year.

On item 5, Treasury Management Mid Term Review 2024/25, Councillor Baines asked what the administration's priorities were in relation to the surplus returns on cash balances generated by the Treasury Management team. Councillor Levy responded that the priorities were outlined in the budget papers that had been published.

On item 6, Business Management and Monitoring Report - September 2024, Councillor Baines asked how the Cabinet Member intended to bring the finances in Children's Services under control. Councillor Levy responded that he had confidence in the Director of Children's Services and her team's ability to do so but that the administration will always prioritise children over the need to stay exactly on budget.

On item 7, Capital Programme Approvals - November 2024, Councillor Smith asked what the unspent balance of Section 106 funds had been in 2021. Councillor Levy responded that the figure was £226m when the LibDem-Labour-Green administration took over in 2021. Since then, around £87m had been spent on such as libraries and schools. Another £172m has been collected. He stated that he was confident that the money was being spent effectively.

Councillor Baines asked if modal shift required the 'carrots' of attractive alternatives such as mini-Hollands rather than a 'stick' approach. Councillor Levy responded that he did not agree that the efforts to encourage people to switch to buses should be characterised as being a 'stick' approach.

Councillor Bartholomew noted that £6.646m was being spent on the East Oxford mini Holland and asked how such expenditure on such a small area could be justified when rural roads were in great need of repair. Councillor Levy responded that there were particular issues in East Oxford and he believed that the mini Hollands would be exemplar projects that the county could be proud of.

Councillor Enright noted that Members had been informed that the Shores Green Development had been delayed until 2026 and asked if this amounted to another pressure on the Capital Programme with projects being delayed again and again. Councillor Levy confirmed that there had been a misprint and that the notice should have read until 2025.

On item 8, Local Transport and Connectivity Plan Monitoring Report, Councillor Pressel noted that the report showed cycling had decreased while car trips had increased and asked if the poor state of paths and highways was a factor in this. Councillor Roberts agreed that the statistics across the county were disappointing and responded that Council was putting as much resource as it could into improving surfaces.

Councillor Hicks noted that the number of cycle trips would have to be doubled to reach the Council's target and asked the Cabinet Member if the proposed £2.5m funding in the budget papers was going to be enough to work towards that goal. Councillor Roberts responded that some of the funds under Highways Maintenance included work to improve active travel facilities as well.

On item 9, Outline allocation of cost of living and associated community wealth building funding for October to March 2024/25, Councillor Baines asked what engagement the Council planned to have with the Government's newly established Child Poverty Task Force. Councillor Ley advised that he would provide a written response.

Councillor O'Connor asked if the Council would be working with grass-roots community groups as well as established charities in the distribution of funds for cost of living support. Councillor Ley confirmed that this has been the case and progress will continue to be monitored.

Councillor Hannaby asked how many residents have been helped so far through the cost of living support. Councillor Ley responded that it was several thousand.

Councillor Hicks asked if social value could be taken into account when reviewing rent agreements with community organisations such as Flo's The

Place in the Park. Councillor Ley responded that he would have to consult with the Cabinet Member for Finance on that.

On item 10, Cabinet Response to Council Motion on SEND Services, Councillors Brighthouse, Waine and Corkin asked if the Council will continue with coproduction in the priority action plan and if the involvement of all parent groups will be real. Councillor Howson responded that coproduction was an important part but the Council also had certain legal responsibilities that could not be devolved to others.

Councillor Reeves noted that an Extraordinary Meeting of Council in October 2023 had agreed a cross-party approach and he asked the Cabinet Member if he was content that this was happening. Councillor Howson responded that he was not content in that he had received very little correspondence from the other parties outlining how they believe that should work.

Councillor Haywood asked for better metrics that indicate an improvement in the actual SEND services of the Council. Councillor Howson responded that the number of officers working on EHCPs had increased from 57 to 64 since July 2023 and 44% of EHCPs were rated good or outstanding compared to 21% in July 2023.

Councillor Reeves asked the Cabinet Member to rate SEND services out of a score of 10. Councillor Howson responded that services had improved since 2023 and he would give it a score of 5 out of 10.

130/24 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID TERM REVIEW 2024/25

(Agenda Item 10)

Council was asked to note the Treasury Management Mid Term Review 2024/25 which summarised the performance for the first half of the financial year, measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2024.

The report was moved by Councillor Dan Levy and seconded by Councillor Liz Leffman. Following discussion, Council noted the report.

131/24 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

(Agenda Item 11)

Council considered the Scrutiny Annual Report which covered the activities of the scrutiny committees, other than Health, for the 2023/24 Council Year.

The report was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Simpson.

Councillor Reeves thanked the Chairs of the overview and scrutiny committees and Councillor Simpson thanked the scrutiny officers for their work throughout the year. Following discussion, Council received the report.

132/24 APPRAISAL PROCESS FOR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

(Agenda Item 12)

Council had before it a report establishing a procedure for an annual appraisal of the position of Chief Executive. The recommendations in this report had been endorsed by the Remuneration Committee for Council approval.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Liz Leffman, Chair of the Remuneration Committee and seconded by Councillor Liz Brighthouse, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion, the recommendations were approved with 48 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED to:

- a) **Approve the proposed changes to the appraisal process for the Chief Executive (Head of the Paid Service) as set out by the South East Employers (SEE) review report (Annex 2).**
- b) **Delegate authority to the Remuneration Committee to constitute the Appraisal Panel and undertake the appraisals for the Chief Executive.**
- c) **Approve amendments to the Constitution to include acting as an Appraisal Panel and undertaking Chief Executive's appraisals to the terms of reference to Remuneration Committee at Part 5.1C and to delegate to the Director of Law and Governance and the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution.**

133/24 FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

(Agenda Item 13)

Council was recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee to approve amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations in the Council Constitution.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Ted Fenton, Chair of the Committee and seconded by Councillor Roz Smith, Deputy Chair.

Following discussion, the recommendation was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

Approve the amendments to the Financial Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations, as recommended by the Audit and Governance Committee.

134/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES - FARMING

(Agenda Item 14)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Field-Johnson. Following debate, the motion was carried with 36 votes in favour, 14 against and 0 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

This Council considers that the government's changes in its Autumn budget to Inheritance Tax treatment of farmland, increases to employers' National Insurance and introduction of a new fertiliser tax on key agricultural imports will have a detrimental cumulative impact on family farms across Oxfordshire.

This Council notes with concern that these family farm taxes risk:

- Adversely affecting local farmers' potential to employ people in Oxfordshire's rural economy;
- Damaging the ability for family farmers to pass on their farms to their children; and
- Making food production at competitive prices more difficult for us as a county.

This Council requests Cabinet to ensure that:

1. Its own policies are as supportive of local farmers as reasonably possible;
2. The newly integrated Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership ('OxLEP') prioritises the local rural economy in its governance structure and ongoing development of its strategic plan;
3. The Cabinet Member for the Environment organises a meeting with local farmers and elected members of all political groups to listen to their concerns with a view to informing the Council's and OxLEP's ongoing policy development.

This Council requests the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ask that introduction of these family farm taxes be reconsidered for the sake of environmental protection and food security.

135/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR CHARLIE HICKS - CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT IN CENTRAL OXFORDSHIRE

(Agenda Item 15)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Hicks and seconded by Councillor Enright.

Amendment 1 was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Bartholomew and was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion and by Council.

The following Amendment 3 was proposed by Councillor Haywood and seconded by Councillor Bennett:

“This Council considered setting up a Congestion Commission and agreed to set up a Citizens’ Assembly as part of its last budget. **With the formulation of this assembly underway this council reiterates that the assembly must take into consideration the main areas of congestion in Oxfordshire, especially the congestion that occurs travelling into, out of and around Oxford, and asks the cabinet to communicate this request to facilitators.**”

~~This Council considers that it is time to establish a Citizens’ Assembly of local residents or a Congestion Commission including businesspeople, public sector leaders, civil society and faith group leaders, and academics with relevant expertise, to ensure a greater democratic say in key decision-making.~~

~~This Council notes that its ambitious suite of traffic management measures is due to be rolled out in the very near future. These include Oxford’s traffic filters and workplace parking levy, which are now largely enshrined in the Council’s budget and will take place unless there is a change of administration next year.~~

~~If all such measures go ahead, Oxfordshire motorists could be hit by £57million in fines in fines and charges, broken down as follows:~~

- ~~• Expanded Zero Emissions Zone £25m;~~
- ~~• Traffic Filters £11m;~~
- ~~• Workplace Parking Tax £21m.~~

~~For clarity, the purpose of a Citizens’ Assembly or Congestion Commission would be to assess the effectiveness of such measures, provide recommendations on existing proposals and advise as to whether other measures might be given effect after next year’s local elections as supplements or substitutes for such policies, putting residents’, businesses’ and civil society groups’ voices at the heart of local decision-making.~~

~~Council requests Cabinet to establish a Congestion Commission or Citizens’ Assembly ensuring in so doing that the voices of elected members, businesspeople, public sector leaders and civil society and faith groups are properly heard.”~~

Following debate, amendment 3 was lost with 19 votes in favour, 28 against and 1 abstention.

Following further debate, the motion as amended was carried with 29 votes in favour, 20 against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED:

This Council **considered setting up a Congestion Commission** and agreed to set up a Citizens' Assembly ~~on the Future of Transport in Central Oxfordshire~~ as part of its last budget. This Council considers that it is time **to establish** ~~for such a Citizens' Assembly~~ **of local residents or a Congestion Commission**, ~~focused on reducing congestion, to be established. It should happen this financial year.~~ **including businesspeople, public sector leaders, civil society and faith group leaders, and academics with relevant expertise, to ensure a greater democratic say in key decision-making.**

This Council notes that its ambitious suite of traffic management measures is due to be rolled out in the very near future. These include Oxford's traffic filters and workplace parking levy, which are now largely enshrined in the Council's budget and will take place unless there is a change of administration next year.

If all such measures go ahead, Oxfordshire motorists could be hit by £57million in fines in fines and charges, broken down as follows:

- Expanded Zero Emissions Zone £25m;
- Traffic Filters £11m;
- Workplace Parking Tax £21m.

For clarity, the purpose of a ~~Congestion~~ Citizens' Assembly **or Congestion Commission** would be to assess the ~~likely~~ effectiveness of such measures, provide recommendations on existing proposals and advise as to whether other measures might be given effect after next year's local elections as supplements or substitutes for such policies, putting residents', **businesses' and civil society groups'** voices at the heart of **local** ~~the~~ decision-making process.

Council requests Cabinet to establish a Congestion **Commission or** Citizens' Assembly ~~of Central Oxfordshire citizens, with an advisory group to comprise~~ **ensuring in so doing that the voices of** elected members, local businesspeople, public sector leaders ~~from the Council's health, education and blue light partners,~~ **and** civil society and faith groups ~~leaders are properly heard, and academics with relevant expertise in the field.~~

136/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON - BADGER CULLING
(Agenda Item 16)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Middleton and seconded by Councillor Johnston. Following debate, the motion was carried with 30 votes in favour, 8 against and 7 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

In 2018 this Council passed a motion stating that it was opposed to the licensing of a badger cull in Oxfordshire.

When DEFRA announced badger culling would be phased out by 2025, many people believed that the cull had ended. Sadly, culling in Oxfordshire intensified, seemingly with the intent of shooting as many badgers as possible before the deadline with over 50% of the county in the killing zones.

Numerous scientific reports show that culling is ineffective as a control measure, yet DEFRA, the NFU and British Cattle Veterinary Association and others continue to advocate its use.

While it's welcomed that the Labour government has abandoned plans to allow up to 100% of badgers to be killed in some areas, there was a hope that they would cancel the cull altogether and focus on cattle based measures, including support for farmers over improved biosecurity, and a move towards testing and vaccination.

However it now seems likely that the government will permit the cull to continue for at least the next 5 years meaning even more badgers in Oxfordshire will be senselessly slaughtered.

This Council therefore :

1. Re-affirms our opposition to badger culling which has been shown to be an ineffective control measure for Bovine tuberculosis.
2. Asks the Cabinet to consider a specific policy that badger culling will not be permitted on Council-owned land.
3. Requests that the Leader writes to DEFRA making clear our continued opposition to the cull and any extension of it in size and scope.

137/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES - CONGESTION COMMISSION

(Agenda Item 17)

The motion fell as the issue had already been discussed under item 14. [Council Procedure Rule 11.5(iii)].

138/24 MOTION BY COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE - DARK SKIES

(Agenda Item 18)

The motion was proposed by Councillor Brighouse and seconded by Councillor Phillips.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Mallon was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion and by Council.

Following debate, the motion as amended was carried with 39 votes in favour, none against and no abstentions.

RESOLVED:

This Council, being **extremely** concerned about the lack of political governance in relation to ‘Dark Skies’, the **administration’s** plan to switch off many of the county’s streetlights between 11pm - 6.30am, **which could have had significant adverse consequences for public safety across parts of our county, especially our urban centres, had it proceeded.**

Recognising the need for the Council to safeguard public money, support our rural parishes in their aspirations to curtail unwanted light pollution and protect and local wildlife in our villages, this Council calls on the Cabinet to:

- (i) carry out a full consultation before bringing this back for delegated decision-making by the Cabinet Member,- Such consultation to include all county councillors alongside community groups and particularly those working with women, and girls, and shift workers in our hospitality and other key sectors, who the Council’s own report recognises may have been disproportionately affected by this decision;**
- (ii) ensure that all county councillors are fully briefed, whether through their locality meetings or by way of an all-member briefing, before any street lights are switched off; and**
- (iii) ensure that a fuller Equalities Impact Assessment takes place in connection with future decision-making on such matters of public safety, the previous one in Annexe 5 being lacking.**

In future, this Council asks that Cabinet consult elected members more fully on matters of public safety in future.

This Council further notes that pre-scrutiny of such important matters would be beneficial to ensure greater democratic oversight.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

Questions from Members of the Public

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

<p>1. CITY COUNCILLOR DAVID HENWOOD</p> <p>Cllr Gant, can you cite a single public consultation under your administration concerning LTNs, CPZs, and other restrictions on traffic movement where you and your colleagues have respected and modified your actions to reflect the majority view of those who responded?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>We understand that traffic flow and demands evolve and change, and therefore it is our responsibility to incorporate a degree of flexibility. As highways authority, we are committed to the continuing monitoring of the city's roads network, and making necessary adjustments as needed.</p> <p>We are, always have been, and remain committed to listening to the views of residents, businesses, visitors, and everyone who uses our road network.</p> <p>Regarding the role of formal consultations, these are an entirely free and open opportunity for anyone to comment on a proposal as they see fit, and for cabinet to gather views and feedback on proposals before any decisions are made. When making a decision, cabinet is asked to consider a range of information including consultation feedback monitoring data, legal advice, and equality and climate impact assessments.</p> <p>Many respondents to consultations make hugely valuable contributions, often with detailed local knowledge and insight, and these are very welcome.</p> <p>Others use the opportunity to indulge in general criticism or worse. Some respondents object on grounds which represent a misunderstanding of what is being proposed. Allowing such responses to influence or change a decision would be inappropriate, and would damage the integrity of the process.</p> <p>Equally, the over-arching policies of the County Council are agreed through due process in the relevant policy decisions and documents such as LTCP or the agreed 20mph policy. Each scheme recommended by officers then gives operational effect to that policy. Therefore, responses which criticise the underlying policy cannot be regarded as relevant to its application in a specific scheme. That is not the question being asked.</p>
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At the same time, there is often a group of responders who object on the grounds that they want the policy to go further. Clearly, counting these objections in the same category as those who object to the policy as a whole is not representing their views.

The responsibility of the decision-maker, therefore, is not just to count responses but to read them and try to understand what they are saying to us. I spend a great deal of my life doing just that. Politicians who instead simply count up the ticks in one column and the crosses in another and think a decision should be made on that basis are just being lazy, and are certainly not representing the views of the population. Such an approach also, of course, opens the process to being dominated by whichever voice can organise itself to speak loudest. That is not how responsible democratic decision-making works, and not the way to achieve lasting beneficial change for our residents and future generations. We've seen far too much of that kind of pusillanimity in Oxfordshire in recent decades, which is why this administration has made more progress in three-and-a-half years than previous administrations and some other councils did in decades.

Regarding specific instances of the weight given to consultation responses, I would refer the questioner to any item at any of my Cabinet Member Decision meetings, in which such responses are always evaluated and taken into account as appropriate. This is not the place to try and precis those long and complex interrogations of individual items, all of which are on the record and available to listen to and read. I also try to take every opportunity, sometimes using my prerogative to stretch agreed limits on things like notice periods to speak, to encourage and allow engagement with anyone who wants to contribute, including elected members and members of the public.

However, just one very recent example of this working in action is in relation to CPZ decision in Iffley and Rose Hill. In this instance, the CPZs for Iffley Village and Rose Hill shops was approved, but the decision on Iffley Borders and the residential area in Rose Hill was deferred. This was in direct response to engagement, consultation and representation at the decision meeting. There are countless other schemes where projects have been amended as a direct response to feedback and how constructive engagement and consultation truly can make a difference to the democratic process.

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Do you agree in principle with the Labour amendment to introduce CPZ's in Littlemore North, an amendment that yourself, Cllr Elphinstone, Cllr Hicks and Cllr Lygo all voted in favour for in February, also demonstrates a conflict of interest in your role as Transport lead. How will you be able to reach a decision without demonstrating bias?</p>	<p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p> <p>I think that since the question was quite a personal one, we will have to ask for a written reply.</p>
<p>2. BERNADETTE EVANS</p> <p>The on-street parking in the Oxford suburb of Jericho costs £19 for two hours making it more expensive than St Giles in the city centre. This is due to the Jericho machines being programmed so you can only pay for one hour or three hours. There is no option to pay for two hours. Is it possible to correct this anomaly to ensure that there are options to pay for one, two and three hours separately?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>There are no plans to make any changes to the tariff structure at this time. However, we will keep this under consideration.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p>

<p>Given that Jericho is an Oxford suburb some 15-20 minutes' walk from the City Centre, do you think it is odd or lacking in logic that on-street parking there costs significantly more for 2 hours than it does in St Giles?</p>	<p>As that is a policy question, I think the officers will have to provide a written reply.</p>
<p>3. RICHARD PARNHAM</p> <p>What (if any) quality control improvements have been put in place to improve the thoroughness of OCC's equality impact assessments (EIAs) BEFORE EIA are published, following the recent dark skies debacle?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>In light of the decision by OCC to review its Equalities Impact Assessment process, will Mr Ley urgently consider reviewing the EIA associated with the decision to move away from visitor permits based on scratch cards to a system based on phones and apps? This planned switch has</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR NATHAN LEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES</p> <p>A detailed review of the equality impact assessment (EIA) process is planned in light of recent EIAs which have not been up to standard. This will not only include the approvals process but also the training and support provided to officers. We want to ensure that, at an early stage of policy development, impacts on different groups are anticipated, potential issues identified, and mitigations considered.</p> <p>We have recently published our refreshed Including Everyone framework, which includes a commitment to an inclusive workplace and ensuring that colleagues have the skills and knowledge they need to include everyone. We have a partnership with Inclusive Employers who will be helping us with this, and we will be training EIA champions in our service areas to provide advice, expertise and support to colleagues on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Thank you for the supplementary question. Regarding the digital parking permits initiative, I'm not 100% up to speed with that but we recognise that the transition to the digital system may present challenges to certain groups, particularly the elderly and those with disabilities. To address these concerns in this particular instance, the Council has provided alternative methods for applying so that residents without a smartphone or a computer can contact customer services advisors. In addition, those advisors are able to assist with applying for using the virtual permits once they're activated. These steps will ensure that residents can access all the services they need. However, in this instance, we acknowledge that the EIA captured potential negative effects. Moving forward, the Council is committed to enhancing</p>

<p>raised numerous equalities concerns for the elderly and digitally excluded.</p>	<p>these processes. Thank you for the question; it is an important one.</p>
<p>4. MATTHEW WEBB</p> <p>Prompted by the recent letter / statement from the head of Oxford Bus company to the recent 20mph consultation. That the current transport policies implemented by the council are ineffective. And my understanding that as part of the Oxford electric bus rollout the council made financial commitments to implement effective transport policies. Can you state the commitments the council has agreed to including the dates and the financial liabilities / penalties of not meeting those commitments.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT#</p> <p>The Council is progressing a number of transport-related projects intended to make bus travel more reliable and efficient, as well as improve safety for all road users.</p> <p>The details of arrangements between the Council and bus operators in relation to improvement in bus productivity and the deployment of electric buses are available in our Enhanced Partnership Plan & Scheme document, which is available on our website at https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/roads-and-transport-policies-and-plans/OxfordshireEnhancedPlan.pdf.</p> <p>The Enhanced Partnership document does not specify any financial penalties.</p> <p>The traffic filter trial scheme, and other projects designed to promote buses and active travel within Oxford, have been part of the Council's transport strategy since 2015 and long predate any proposals for electric buses. The delivery of the council's transport programme has been disrupted by the Botley Road closure remaining in place for much longer than expected.</p> <p>Regarding 20mph schemes, detailed consideration is given to all feedback and consultation responses in consideration of each scheme brought forward under the 20mph policy, including significant attention to the content and detail of responses from bus operators. I would refer the questioner to the record of those decision meetings for further information. The Council's 20mph scheme has been and continues to be a huge success, requested and implemented in the vast majority of communities across Oxfordshire, and making a significant impact on safety and amenity, as evidenced by recent accident statistics in Wales which show a 28% reduction in KSIs in 20mph areas.</p>

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

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

<p>1. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL WAINE</p> <p>Given the high return rate to the consultation on the Bicester Sheep Street Two- Way Cycling proposal, what percentage of 'strongly disagree' responses would have enough impact to change your decision?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>What value should town residents place on an ongoing consultation as part of the ETRO when both they, and their County Councillors who live in Bicester and not North Oxford, who regularly use Sheep Street and who strongly disagree?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>There is no percentage figure which automatically triggers a particular decision, as the responsibility of the decision maker is to read responses and analyse them, not just count them.</p> <p>The ETRO process provides for ongoing consultation during the first six months, whilst also collecting data. The pre-consultation process enabled me to consider the areas of objection or concern voiced and how these could be addressed during the ETRO.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p> <p>I think the answer already actually covered that and it is an ETRO, so there will be constant consultation through this process. That should answer any questions that are raised by the residents.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL WAINE</p> <p>Responses to the Sheep Street Two-Way Cycling consultation showed very clearly that the public were extremely concerned about safety to pedestrians and the disabled. Given your worrying decision to go ahead with proposals, what process will be in place for the reporting of accidents, and who carries responsibility for</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The Cabinet Member Decisions (CMD) report contained a detailed analysis, in a separate appendix, of consultation responses, including the demographic represented by the responders.</p> <p>I would refer the questioner to the record of the meeting for the very detailed and lengthy consideration given to all factors which I was asked to take into account, and to how I did so.</p>

recourse?

Considerable safeguards were built into my decision over and above those already enshrined in the CMD process, including a formal report back to CMD, and an approach to DfT about making different arrangements on Fridays.

Accidents are reported through the police.

People can provide feedback to the consultation on the ETRO through Oxfordshire County Council's Let's Talk pages.

Feedback on the consultation could also come via the local county councillors to the Place Planning North inbox.

Vivacity technology will be in place and we are reaching out to Cherwell District Council for CCTV access. Officers will be monitoring speed, the tracking of cyclists, how use they use the space and information on pedestrian movements. We are also looking at the availability of "Near-miss" technology.

An officer within the Place Planning North team will coordinate this work.

I have requested a regular update to go to Cabinet Member Decisions and will be the one that makes the decision whether to make the Order permanent, amend it or discontinue it.

SUPPLEMENTARY:

The demographics of those responding to the consultation pointed to over half of the correspondents being over 55 years of age. The Cabinet Member suggested, by allowing two-way cycling, would increase usage by under 55's. Wouldn't most of these people be at work or at school?

ANSWER: (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY)

The answer was fairly thorough and actually, when I went to the consultation about the Market Square, I did ask people about two-way cycling and at the time, I didn't find anyone saying problems with it had been found. I think again, back to the same thing, that it is an ETRO and things will be changed if there's a problem. Near misses can be reported, not through the police system, but through the ETRO system. That also can be recorded.

<p>3. COUNCILLOR MICHAEL WAINE</p> <p>Now that Sheep Street will no longer be a pedestrianised street, how will 'two-way' cycling be monitored, and with what enforcement?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Does this mean cyclists will be able to cycle anywhere in the street?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>It will be a two-way shared space for cyclists; the one-way street only applies to motorised vehicles.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p> <p>It is a shared space and as such, the shared spaces rules apply. So when you say anywhere, every person using that space has to give respect to every other user on the space</p> <p>.</p>
<p>4. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>Following on from the previous Cabinet question regarding flooding of Warwick Road properties, I'm afraid to say that although highways officers have investigated, nothing has been done. The drainage is over capacity and holds water at the first sight of heavy rainfall. I've been told this is due to tree root ingress on the majority of the storm drainage system.</p> <p>Again, this is down to Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Water. Residents are getting their driveways flooded out and the road in question holds water, but literally doesn't dissipate into the drainage storm system.</p> <p>Can I, as local member for Banbury Ruscote, get a timescale of work for Warwick Rd or some kind</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council have a scheme to create a bypass drain and additional gullies at this location. We are currently awaiting confirmation of a price from our contractors. It is envisaged the work will commence in the new year though we are unable to give an exact date at present. The work will however be carried out during this financial year.</p> <p>Flooding occurs at this location due to Thames Water's surface water drain being blocked by tree roots and our gullies are connected to their asset. We have chased Thames Water and will continue to do so.</p>

<p>of resolution to a problem that over 8 years?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member agree with the frustrations of Warwick Rd residents that, in going through this flooding for a year, it is simply not good enough? I know that Thames Water are responsible but it is not the ideal situation.</p>	<p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Perhaps we should get a report from the highway maintenance team to see where they have it on their list of maintenance.</p>
<p>5. COUNCILLOR NICK FIELD-JOHNSON</p> <p>Why do we need another consultation on A40?</p> <p>Clearly residents have said that they wanted a dual carriageway in both directions all the way to the Wolvercote roundabout from Witney. This would significantly alleviate the congestion</p> <p>A further consultation is a waste of time and money as well as clearly shows that residents requests and opinions are again ignored.</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>The most recent consultation for the previous A40 Smart Corridor Scheme was in 2019 which consulted on the Dualling scheme (Witney to Eynsham) and the Bus Priority Scheme (East and West bound bus lanes and active travel improvements from Eynsham to Wolvercote including Wolvercote bridge capacity upgrades). Since that consultation, the A40 Smart Corridor Scheme has suffered significant impacts from global inflation, challenges in land assembly, ecological impacts, and changes in legislation such that the programme became unaffordable in its current form. A full scheme review was commenced and at the July 2023 Cabinet, it was agreed that an alternative solution for scheme delivery was required to be identified that met the funding requirements and delivered the most beneficial value. A new scheme with a change of scope has been negotiated with our funding partners (Homes England and DfT) which aligns with national and local policies and delivers on the desired benefits within the funding envelope. This scheme is called the A40 Eynsham Park and Ride to Wolvercote and is presented in the new public engagement process. This latest version of the scheme requires a new planning application, as such, the current engagement round is needed to provide part of the evidence base for the new planning application.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p>

<p>We've had so many consultations and discussions on the A40. The residents of West Oxfordshire really want a dual carriageway there. We've now got thousands of new houses coming on; the car park-and-ride is still not working. I really do think further discussions on this is a waste of time and money. What we need to spend money on is putting a dual carriageway on the A40. Does the Councillor not agree that we need a dual carriageway?</p>	<p>I think the answer was quite full and actually it highlights that we were not given funding for a dual carriageway. We were given funding to complete the entire project of which it did not stretch to all the things in the original plan. The officers have come up with the best way of approaching the congestion that occurs at that point and that is the plan that has gone out to consultation. That is the best officer solution to where the money can be spent and clearly the entrance to the Park-and-Ride is probably the highest priority spend because your previous administration funded that, and it would be somewhat churlish to not give it an entrance so that it cannot be used. Having achieved that in the money we have available, we then have to make the rest of it achieve the best we can for the residents of that area, West Oxfordshire District residents and beyond. That is what they've done and there is a consultation. Please respond to the consultation and then we can amend or go ahead with that plan as best we can. Thank you.</p>
<p>6. COUNCILLOR KIERON MALLON</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member inform the Council of the number of gullies cleaned by Oxfordshire County Council in the last full calendar year (2023)?</p> <p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>I thank the Cabinet Member for the figure and it looks good until you break it down by area, since the Labour-Liberal-Green administration took over. Over the last financial year in Banbury, the number of gullies cleansed has fallen from 879, which was the last Conservative administration's budget, and it fell every year, until the last financial year when it fell to 455 gullies cleansed. How does the Cabinet Member account for this</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The number of gullies cleaned between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2023 is 38,860.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p> <p>To my knowledge, the clearance of gullies is done on a risk basis across the whole county. I'm sorry that the risk in the Banbury area was not sufficient to require as much cleaning as probably came up in other areas. I'll pass onto Cllr Gant as to whether he feels that requires an apology or not.</p>

cut in funding corresponding to a 50% drop in gullies cleansed in Banbury and is he willing to apologise to those residents in Banbury affected by the recent storms?

7. COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Can the Cabinet Member for Finance provide head-count figures for full- and part-time staff were employed and engaged by Oxfordshire County Council in each of the last four financial years (2021/2, 2022/3, 2023/4 and current)?

COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

This Table shows the number of employees, both full time and part time that have been employed at the County Council during each financial year.

EMPLOYED:

Financial Year	Full time employee	Part Employee	Time	Total
2021/2	2,889	2,227		5,116
2022/3	3,055	2,255		5,310
2023/4	3,164	2,214		5,378
2024/5 (as at Sept 24)	3,315	2,185		5,500

Note on Employed Headcount: The snapshot figures for the three full financial years are as of 31st March at the end of each Financial Year.

This Table shows the number of agency workers, both full time and part time that have been engaged at the County Council during each financial year.

ENGAGED (the below numbers are for those engaged via Comensura only):

Financial Year	Full time agency	Part Time agency	Total
2021/2	286	19	305
2022/3	375	22	397
2023/4	379	7	386

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>The number of full-time employees according to these figures has risen by 15% under this administration. Meanwhile, council tax for a Band D property has risen by 15%. Does the Cabinet Member think there might be a link?</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="922 159 2134 236"> <tr> <td>2024/5 (as at Sept 24)</td> <td>370</td> <td>15</td> <td>385</td> </tr> </table> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Thank you for the question. I am convinced that all of our officers are doing work that is required. There are lots of areas where we have come under pressure from you, the opposition, quite rightly, in areas like SEND. I think our staffing is correct and as you know, there is a process to make sure numbers in the future continue to be correct but perhaps at a slightly lower level.</p>	2024/5 (as at Sept 24)	370	15	385											
2024/5 (as at Sept 24)	370	15	385													
<p>8. COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member for Finance advise as to the expenditure by Oxfordshire County Council on (i) agency staff and (ii) consultants in each of the last four financial years (2021/2, 2022/3, 2023/4 and current)?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="922 678 2134 962"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial Year</th> <th>Agency Staff (Comensura spend)</th> <th>Consultants (Non Comensura spend)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021/2022</td> <td>No information</td> <td>Spend not tracked in 2021/2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/2023</td> <td>£27,770,000</td> <td>£12,260,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023/2024</td> <td>£27,980,000</td> <td>£8,090,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024/5 up to Q2 24/25</td> <td>£13,800,00</td> <td>£2,550,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>1. Notes on agency spend</p> <p>1.1. Also includes individual consultants recruited via the primary corporate contingent contract.</p> <p>1.2. Since 2022/23 only send categorised as agency spend has been included.</p> <p>2. Notes on consultancy service spend</p> <p>2.1. Includes spend recorded in the accounts against Management Consultant Fees, Technical and Professional Consultant Fees.</p>	Financial Year	Agency Staff (Comensura spend)	Consultants (Non Comensura spend)	2021/2022	No information	Spend not tracked in 2021/2022	2022/2023	£27,770,000	£12,260,000	2023/2024	£27,980,000	£8,090,000	2024/5 up to Q2 24/25	£13,800,00	£2,550,000
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<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>The previous table shows that agency staff has risen by 29% under this administration. 29% in 4 years. Does he think that is good enough?</p>	<p>2.2. Includes spend against previously reported consultancy services spend not classified as per point 2.1.</p> <p>2.3. Spend on delegated schools and Adopt Thames Valley excluded.</p> <p>2.4. There is additional consultancy services spend not recorded here as it does not meet the two conditions listed in 2.1 and 2.2. This can be obtained but would require further time to complete the data extraction and preparation.</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Similar answer to last time. This Council will employ agency staff where agency staff are the best way of delivering services to our residents. Again, it is something that senior management are very much aware of and are looking at.</p>								
<p>9. COUNCILLOR EDDIE REEVES, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION</p> <p>Can the Cabinet member for Finance advise as to the expenditure by Oxfordshire County Council on (i) redundancy settlements, (ii) non-disclosure agreements and (iii) settlement agreements in each of the last four financial years (2021/2, 2022/3, 2023/4 and current)?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>Total expenditure by Oxfordshire County Council (including maintained schools) on redundancy settlements, non-disclosure agreements and settlement agreements is as below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="922 1161 2051 1390"> <thead> <tr> <th>2021/22</th> <th>2022/23</th> <th>2023/24</th> <th>2024/25 Year to end of November</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>£1.276m</td> <td>£1.140m</td> <td>£0.685m</td> <td>£1.137m</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Year to end of November	£1.276m	£1.140m	£0.685m	£1.137m
2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 Year to end of November						
£1.276m	£1.140m	£0.685m	£1.137m						

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>The amount of money that the taxpayer has paid out in pay-offs to members of staff has increased by 34% over the last 4 years. 34% - that is just the amount of money that we have spent as taxpayers on paying staff off. What has he been playing at over the last 4 years?</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="922 161 2051 201"> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Thank you for the question. What we have been playing at is making sure that the appointments made under the previous administration have been resolved. I am 100% convinced that we have now have an organisation that is both leaner and better than the one we inherited and to do that, you do need a through-put of staff. When staff change, there are associated costs. I think that is the full answer and it will balance itself out in the future.</p>				
<p>10. COUNCILLOR GEOFF SAUL</p> <p>Please can the Cabinet Member give an update on progress in bringing forward plans for the East Chipping Norton Strategic Development Area (in respect of which the County Council is a major landholder)?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>Tank Farm in Chipping Norton, now known as the East Chipping Norton Development, was designated as a Strategic Development Area by, West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC). Approximately 1,200 homes were planned on the site jointly owned by Oxfordshire County Council and Cala Homes.</p> <p>Part of the southern portion of the site, on the land owned by CALA Homes has been designated as an Ancient Monument by Historic England due to archaeological findings, which has paused the development, making delivery of the planned housing numbers no longer achievable.</p> <p>Officers at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) have met on several occasions with Officers and Members of West Oxfordshire District Council to review the options available to see what can be achieved by working collaboratively. From these meeting OCC Officers were tasked to liaise with the owners of the potential development site, to the east of the SDA site, north of London Road to see what could be achieved.</p> <p>From these meeting a potential option is being evolved that will be presented to WODC for discussion in next year that could open the opportunity to deliver the majority of the housing numbers identified in the SDA and the local plan. WODC will need to consider the proposal as part of the development of the next local plan and</p>				

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>Thank you for the encouraging reply. Back before we found a Roman settlement in the proposed development, we were undertaking a master planning process with formal input from all interested parties. Is the Council willing to engage in a similar exercise in respect of the revised development?</p>	<p>consider if the boundaries of the SDA can be adjusted, or whether the designation can be removed</p> <p>ANSWER:</p> <p>Yes. Absolutely. It is unfortunate that the Romans decided that Chipping Norton was a nice place to live and it has caused lots of trouble. It is in the interests of both West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and this Council, and of course the residents, to make sure that we come up with a plan that works for everybody. I'm sure that officers here will work with officers from WODC, and that Councillors and residents will work together too.</p>
<p>11. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>The latest flooding incidents in Kidlington have exposed some weaknesses in local flood defences. Specifically the road drainage system on the junction between Mill Street and Evans Lane where surface water is supposed to drain into the Cherwell via a sump and valve system with equipment in place to prevent the river back-flowing on to the road.</p> <p>However during recent flooding events Mill Street has continued to flood putting businesses and homes at risk and regularly requiring the road to be closed. On some occasions the road floods when there has been little or no rain in the area which suggests the safeguards on backflow from the river are not working.</p> <p>Could the cabinet member please liaise with me to ascertain who is responsible for this</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Initial investigations indicate that there is a surface water sewer running along Mill Street which outfalls into the River Cherwell. This type of asset would typically have a non-return valve, as you describe, and this system is believed to belong to Thames Water.</p> <p>It is possible that, in preventing the river from backing up the system and flooding the highway with river water, the non-return valve effectively shuts the highway drainage system down. Hence the continued highway flooding until river levels reduce and the non-return valve opens up again.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council would only be responsible for the gullies and gully connections to the surface water sewer. However, especially noting the observations made, further investigation is needed to confirm what is happening. Officers will arrange to check the highway drainage system and will contact Thames Water to ask them to check their apparatus. I have asked officers to keep you updated on this.</p>

<p>infrastructure and help me press for it to be urgently inspected and repaired or upgraded?</p>	
<p>12. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>As the Cabinet Member is aware, I have been in protracted correspondence with officers about the deal struck with OUFC giving them an option to lease land in my division for a new stadium.</p> <p>While the details of the lease agreement have been kept secret, a side agreement known as the 'collaboration agreement', supposedly intended to tie OUFC to specific community commitments, was eventually made public earlier this year.</p> <p>However, amongst numerous clauses many of which, in my and other's opinion, are poorly drafted and largely unenforceable, the clause dealing with financial and practical support for community and sports facilities had been completely redacted. This appears to negate the publication of the agreement at a local level since details relating to whatever has been agreed between OUFC and OCC about community support is not visible to the very people who will be most impacted by the stadium should it go ahead.</p> <p>Since the publication of the agreement I have made repeated requests for this clause to be unredacted, but have now been told that the</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>Negotiations on a commercial transaction will usually need to take place in private and it is not unusual for the Council to agree to confidentiality clauses with commercial parties in order to protect their commercial interests or ours. The terms of this deal were agreed with the Leader and myself in keeping with the delegations provided by the Cabinet resolution.</p> <p>The fact that we have entered into an option for a lease is a matter of public record and we would not normally publish the terms and conditions of this type of legal agreement. The commitments of the football club to the community have been set out in the Community Collaboration agreement, which sets out contractual obligations on the club. These commitments can only come into effect in the event that the club receives planning permission from Cherwell District Council.</p> <p>The clause that the Councillor refers to has not been redacted in full as the question sets out.</p> <p>In this case OUFC have asked us to maintain the confidentiality of certain legal provisions to protect their commercial interests.</p> <p>As the club have recently stated, "With the planning submission likely to be considered in early 2025, the club are actively exploring alternative short-term provisions for the period between the lease at the Kassam Stadium expiring in 2026 and the new stadium being ready.</p>

council has agreed with OUFC not to do so as it's regarded as commercially sensitive. This is a bizarre statement since it can have no bearing on a commercial deal that has already been signed off by both parties. Furthermore any practical and financial support will have to be made public eventually as councils and other organisations in receipt will have to declare it in published accounts.

Does the Cabinet Member understand that it's seen by residents and stakeholders in my division as democratically obtuse for OCC to be making deals around community benefits without involving local community stakeholders in those negotiations, and that by continuing to deny them access to those details now we underline the clumsy and overbearing approach that has characterised negotiations surrounding the leasing of public land in my division?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

Apologies if I wasn't clear about the bit of the Community Collaboration Agreement that had been redacted. I was referring to Clause 4.1.3, paragraph h), sub section i), which states that

'OUFC will deliver the Pitch Perfect programme by providing 'redacted' funding to improve and maintain the sports playing pitches at Stratfield Brake'.

So it appears a figure has been agreed with

ANSWER:

In order to have an agreement with a commercial organisation, sometimes you do have to have less openness than I'd personally like. I am sure that the Community Agreement with the football club is a good one. It will have benefits for the residents of Kidlington, whom you represent so well; it will have benefits for those who want to play sport in the area and there is a substantial number in there, which I unfortunately cannot reveal because of the commercial confidentiality. But, we have negotiated a good contract with the football club.

<p>OUFCC but that the parish and district councils responsible for the upkeep of Stratfield Brake have been deliberately kept out of the loop. Why did we agree to that?</p>	
<p>13. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>Residents of three completed housing developments in my division which are still not adopted by the council, with some residents living in their homes for over 12 years. Those residents can't report anything like streetlights not working, flooding due to blocked drains, potholes, illegally parked cars and so on at FixMyStreet as they are still technically private roads.</p> <p>Can you please provide any reason why the council is taking so long to adopt these roads and provide residents with access to all council services?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Highway Agreements Team (HA Team) officers work closely with Developers to progress highway adoption agreements including assessment of design and construction across Oxfordshire. Adoption of key development in and around Didcot is a priority for the HA Team, with Great Western Park a key focus site. To this end, significant work is underway to progress the adoption of Sir Frank Williams Avenue and Greenwood Way, at the aforementioned development, which are key to unlocking ability to progress adoption for the remainder of the development.</p> <p>Highway adoption agreements can be complex and are often delayed by land matters, drainage vesting issues and lengthy problems with highway remedial works; such matters have all been experienced with key development sites in and around the Didcot area.</p> <p>Until adopted, carriageway and any associated apparatus, remains the responsibility of the Developer to maintain. It is the case that speed limit and parking restriction enforcement can be carried out on these private roads by the Police once a traffic regulation order (TRO) is implemented, which are in place for the Great Western Park development. The requirement is on the Developer to complete the roads to an adoptable standard, in addition to meeting all adoption criteria, before the roads become maintainable at the public expense.</p> <p>In order for a road to be adopted, it has to connect to existing highway and therefore the estate roads that may be offered for future adoption, cannot be adopted until any main development infrastructure (such as spine roads) become public highway. Adoption of the roads will also include apparatus such as streetlights, footways, drainage and verges that are adjacent to the road and associated with the highway.</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>We clearly have a very different view of what a priority is after 12 years, but Cllr Roberts, would you agree that residents living in their homes for over 12 years without being able to use OCC services like FixMyStreet is unacceptable and needs more effort than being referred to as a priority?</p>	<p>Developers are not obligated to offer their roads for adoption, neither are they required to have legal agreements in place prior to highway construction or property occupation. It is the case however, for major developments going forward, that adoption agreements are required as S106 obligation for key development infrastructure. This mechanism goes some way to ensuring timely signing of legal agreement for key infrastructure on some of the larger developments.</p> <p>The Highway Agreements Team will be happy to meet with you to discuss specific developments, their status in highway adoption terms and any planned future actions accordingly.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p> <p>I'm afraid I know this system only too well. I have a development in my area that was first occupied in 2008. It's still not adopted. If the developers and the subsequent management committee do not put it forward for adoption, it doesn't have to be adopted. If there were problems when they actually developed it, such that perhaps the drainage was insufficient, until those changes have been made that make it acceptable, I'm afraid OCC cannot take on the liability until it is of a sufficient standard. I'm not absolutely sure of the consequences of this area, but has given you a fairly full response. That is the system and we have to adhere to it.</p>
<p>14. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>Many residents of the completed 3,300 homes at the Great Western Park housing development in Didcot are angry at the high level of antisocial and illegal parking, cars completely ignoring double yellow lines and parking restrictions outside schools, along with blocking pavements and resident's driveways.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) can enforce double yellow lines on private roads if these are covered by a traffic regulation order (TRO). I can confirm that a TRO is in place for Great Western Park for the double yellow lines and therefore we are able to carry out civil enforcement.</p> <p>In the past, these have been enforced by Thames Valley Police however, we have recently instructed OCC's civil enforcement contractor to begin enforcement.</p>

I am repeatedly told that our civil parking enforcement officers cannot ticket cars on the estate as it's technically private roads while it remains unadopted and fines wouldn't be enforceable.

However, on the same estate we now have a bus gate with a new ANPR camera which is fining cars on the same unadopted private roads.

Can the cabinet member explain why bus gate fines are enforceable on unadopted roads parking fines are not on the very same roads?

SUPPLEMENTARY:

In the previous question, part of the answer was 'speed limits and parking enforcement can be carried out on private roads by the police once a Traffic Regulation Order is implemented'. In the answer to this question, it states that Oxfordshire County Council can enforce double-yellow lines on private roads if they are covered by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) – so it contradicts it a little bit. Cllr Gant has also confirmed that a TRO is in place for Great Western Park. For years, the entrance and spine road from the A4130 has had a TRO, which has never been enforced. That statement says there is one in place for Great Western Park. Can you confirm if there is a new TRO in place because I'm unaware of it, officers are unaware of it and so are the parish council?

ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):

That one is very technical and I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask Cllr Gant to provide a written answer.

<p>15. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON</p> <p>With winter approaching it's good to hear OCC has a new fleet of 30 new gritters hitting our county, but it's sad to hear that the entire fleet is diesel when there are electric options available with a range of 250km and a recharge time of just 2 hours.</p> <p>With Salt Barn producing its own electricity this would have been a good chance to lead by example in fighting the climate emergency and at least purchase a few electric vehicles for some of our urban streets.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member explain why the entire fleet had to be diesel and how this decision fits with the administration's priorities?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The new gritter fleet, as with the majority of fleet used for the delivery of the highway service, operate using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). HVO is a sustainable and renewable fuel which reduces CO2 emissions and pollutants.</p> <p>Provision of fully electric vehicles is under regular review as the technology and equipment to support this develops. Currently the provision of sufficient charging capacity at all operational depots is not available and would require a grid upgrade to be able to meet the charge requirement of a fully electric winter fleet. This, coupled with the cost of electric vehicles, meant that the most sustainable, modern, and cost-effective procurement of vehicles has been realised via the procurement of our new fleet.</p> <p>During periods of prolonged snow and ice when the gritters are operating 24/7 we would not be able to stop the service for the time taken to charge the vehicles, (likely to be many hours). During trials we have found that range and charging times can vary and are still not reliable or at the ranges and times required to be operationally efficient.</p> <p>The solar panels at Deddington depot will feed back into the grid but would not be enough on its own to power electric vehicles. The provision of charging points at all depots requires sufficient capacity from the grid. This capacity is not available in the near term but is being explored for the future. We are working with the corporate climate team to explore all available options. The lead time for this is in between 3 to 5 years based on National Grid feedback.</p>

<p>SUPPLEMENTARY:</p> <p>The answer talks about a fully electrical winter fleet. Now, I understand this would be very challenging but surely as a Council that supposedly puts the climate emergency at the forefront, we could have set an example by purchasing a few at least for the urban areas?</p>	<p>The vehicles will run on HVO. There are also projects underway to explore use of Hydrogen fuel. One includes provision of a Hydrogen fuel station at Drayton Depot to trial three large goods vehicles (LGV). Provision of hydrogen converters which work in tandem with existing fuel systems are also being trialled as part of the new Highway Contract. These converter units can be installed to existing plant and reduces the consumption of standard fuels as well as reducing carbon.</p> <p>ANSWER (CLLR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY):</p> <p>Yes, the details of the fleet are complex. I am aware of that and I think we will have to provide a written answer.</p>
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