

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

ANNEX 2

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received. The time allowed for this agenda item will not exceed 30 minutes. Should any questioner not have received an answer in that time, a written answer will be provided.

Questions	Answers
<p>1. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Could the Portfolio holder give the Council any information as to if the County Council has been approached by DfRA officials with regard to conducting a badger cull on Oxfordshire County Council land ?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council has not been approached by DfRA officials with regard to conducting a badger cull on Oxfordshire County Council land.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Now we are living in the 21st Century would the leader of the County Council consider recommending to his Cabinet colleagues that Oxfordshire County Council follows the majority of local governments in the UK in their quest to be more open and accountable and have the full Council proceeding video recorded and made available to view on the Council's website?</p>	<p>COUCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>Cllr Williams might recall that, at the last meeting of Council in September, Council approved a motion from Cllr Mallon with a view to extending electronic accessibility to meetings of the Council. Council resolved that it would welcome the opportunity to hold its April 2014 Council Meeting at Cherwell District Council's Bodicote House, to test their existing equipment, and that the Director for Environment & Economy should undertake a feasibility study into this possibility with a report back to Council with recommendations in terms of a trial. Council has therefore already expressed its support, in principle, for extending access and is actively assessing this in terms of cost and practicality.</p> <p>I have told the press that I am content that they record Cabinet meetings to enable the Cabinet to be open and transparent without any cost to the tax payers of Oxfordshire. I would not want to waste valuable taxpayer's money on such schemes when we should be concentrating on providing services for the most vulnerable in the County.</p>

3. COUNCILLOR SAM COATES

What is the present pupil teacher ratio in Primary and Secondary schools? Has the figure significantly improved in the last 5 years?

COUNCILLOR MELINDA TILLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES

The table below shows how pupil teacher ratios have changed since 2008. The changes over that time are not significant.

Information on class sizes in Oxfordshire schools 2008-2013

	Primary Schools						Secondary School	
	Reception		KS1		KS2		KS3&4	
	Pupils	Pupil to Teacher Ratio	Pupils	P to T Ratio	Pupils	Pupil to Teacher Ratio	Pupils	Pupil to Teacher Ratio
2013	6283	24.4	12134	25.7	21667	25.3	10888	23.1
2012	5925	24.2	12148	25.6	21887	25.4	25759	23.2
2011	5506	23.7	12036	26.0	21290	25.6	28186	23.0
2010	5096	23.6	11472	25.6	21352	25.7	29179	22.6
2009	5028	24.3	10951	25.5	21949	25.9	29410	22.7
2008	4196	23.2	11294	24.8	23615	25.9	30442	22.8

NB data does not include academies who do not share this level of data with the LA.

This has a slight effect on secondary school (KS3&4) data in 2012 and a more significant effect on the secondary school data in 2013.

Source: DfE school census - as of January of relevant year.

<p>4. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Given the scale of the proposed cuts especially the revised estimates of an extra £60million on top of the budget reductions already announced would the Cabinet member for Finance consider a referendum of Oxfordshire ratepayers as an option in the budget setting process.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ARASH FATEMIAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>No decisions have yet been made in what is going to be a difficult budget process. To avoid the necessary savings, there would need to be a referendum on a council tax level for an increase of greater than 20%. At a time when most people are struggling with household finances, we only have to look at the choices some face between eating and heating as a result of price rises by energy companies, I do not believe it would be in the interests of Oxfordshire citizens to introduce such a draconian measure.</p>
<p>5. COUNCILLOR SAM COATES</p> <p>Could the Cabinet member give an estimate of the number of young people not in employment education or Training (NEETs) in Oxfordshire?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR MELINDA TILLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES</p> <p>As of end of September 2013 there were 919 young people in school years 12-14 who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).</p>
<p>6. COUNCILLOR STEWART LILLY</p> <p>At our previous Full Council Meeting on September 10th, it was unanimously agreed, that Highway officers would copy their responses to planning application consultations from District Councils to the local County Councillor in whose division the matter was located. This to be a simple exercise of using the "Cc" or "Bcc" facility on the email system. Can the Cabinet member please confirm these instructions have been issued, and when will the Councils' decision</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>Officers have been instructed that as from 1st November local members will be copied in on all planning responses.</p>

<p>be activated and all members receive these important notifications?</p>	
<p>7. COUNCILLOR SURINDER DHESI</p> <p>What safety measures are in place to ensure that Providers of Care are providing sustainable contracts in delivering Care?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDITH HEATHCOAT, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE</p> <p>We currently contract with a wide range of suppliers in adult social care with the aim of providing quality and choice for service users and good value for the council. The quality and safety of these services is of paramount importance and we monitor these contracts at least annually and more frequently in most cases.</p> <p>We encourage a range of different types of providers from small 'micro providers' to large voluntary sector and private providers. Increasingly people are using Direct Payments to buy their own support using money from the council. In these cases we don't have a contract with the provider but we still work to ensure that care needs are met and there is a sufficient supply of good quality care available for people.</p> <p>As part of our procurement process we test out the viability of a providers' bid to contract with us (including their workforce arrangements), their experience, financial security and their business continuity plans. We also seek references from other statutory organisations (Local Authority/Health Authority/CCG) that a provider may be currently working with.</p> <p>We have regular dialogue with our suppliers that include an annual provider conference, quarterly meetings by sector and ad hoc meetings in addition to contract monitoring. We aim to establish relationships built on trust and we encourage service providers to let us know if they have any problems. From time to time providers do go out of business and we work to ensure that alternative arrangements are made for the clients in a timely way.</p>

<p>8. COUNCILLOR CHARLES MATHEW</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member with responsibility for relations with Thames Water please arrange a meeting before the end of the year with a senior executive from Thames Water plc. to discuss the manifold sewer problems in Oxfordshire villages, so that the responsible parties can arrange a solution agreeable to all parties to the long running problems causing considerable inconvenience to Oxfordshire residents? In the meantime would Thames Water cease giving the go ahead in these villages for new build, until the problems are solved?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>A meeting will be arranged with Huw Thomas, Thames Water Utilities, Local/Regional Liaison Officer and senior colleague to discuss the extensive problems which have occurred in Oxfordshire's foul pumping stations.</p>
<p>9. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member for Finance agree with me that it would be a wise move not to include children's centre closures as an option in the proposed budget cuts as this obvious attack on front line services will not be acceptable to the overwhelming majority of ratepayers?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ARASH FATEMIAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>As Councillor Williams will be aware, Oxfordshire County Council needs to find a further £61m of savings by 2017/18. This is on top of the £170m that will already have been saved over the period 2010/11 to 2013/14 and the £31m that is already in the Medium Term Financial Plan to be delivered from 2014/15. Given the scale of the savings, proposals from all service areas will need to be considered. To date front line services have been protected as far as possible, but the scale of the further government cuts, this will inevitably lead to some reductions or changes to the delivery of services.</p> <p>I repeat the no decisions have yet been made in the budget setting process but nor do I recognise his phrase 'obvious attack on front line services will not be acceptable to the overwhelming majority of ratepayers'. I appreciate the strength of feeling about some service lines but a recent poll in the Oxford Mail found 53% in favour of shutting Children Centres.</p> <p>There are important and difficult decisions to be made in the coming weeks</p>

	and months and the feedback from talking Oxfordshire will form a part of this.
<p>10. COUNCILLOR ZOE PATRICK</p> <p>According to Section 3.5.2 of the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan Bus Strategy, the Council is asked to consider replacement of commercial bus services which are suddenly withdrawn. Given the fact that the Thames Travel 36 service has now terminated and the 32 service will no longer serve Grove after December, will the council consider using some of the S106 developer funding secured by housing developments in the area to continue to keep this service running, especially for residents at peak time who have no cars and need this service to enable them to reach main employment sites at Harwell, Milton Park and Didcot.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The Council will consider using some of the S106 contributions available (both held and secured) to improve the connectivity of Grove to the main employment sites at Harwell, Milton Park and Didcot. However, this funding is limited and needs to be targeted towards proposals that both support the longer-term ambition for the area and are self-sustaining in the longer term. In considering the options available, account will need to be given to the timing and potential implication of planned growth in the Wantage/Grove area.</p>
<p>11. COUNCILLOR JOHN TANNER</p> <p>Does the Cabinet Member agree that calculating the share of funding for main road repairs on the basis of the use of those roads rather than their length, as at present, would result in significantly more money for much-needed road repairs in Oxford and other urban areas?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The Service are currently reviewing the Councils approach to Highways Maintenance as part of the development of a Highways Asset Management Plan, in conjunction with member representatives, and will consider opportunities for improving the effective allocation of funding and the national classification of road types as part of this exercise.</p>

<p>12. COUNCILLOR JOHN TANNER</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member accept my thanks for relaying the badly damaged stretch of road in St Aldates, Oxford between the police station and the law courts? Does he share my regret that some of the low-cost options for improving the road for cyclists at the same time have not been pursued?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>We would always wish to make the most of our opportunities to improve the network, but inevitably, there is a balance to be struck between doing work that is essential and how much we can afford to spend on doing more, and what that would bring in terms of the benefits overall.</p> <p>The purpose of the July consultation was to discuss possible improvements that could be made as part of the scheme. I appreciate your participation in this.</p> <p>Various improvements were discussed but it was conceded that major modifications would be difficult due to limited funds. However, all of the points raised during the consultation were considered and the following points were agreed to be incorporated into the works; as improvements to the current situation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory 1.5m cycle lanes throughout the site • Cycle boxes at both signals to be extended to 5.0m deep • Existing cycle lane to be extended across Floyd's Row
<p>13. COUNCILLOR JOHN TANNER</p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member join with me in congratulating the National Employers Group for seeking further talks and congratulating the Fire Brigades Union for calling off strike action over their proposed conditions of employment?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LOIUSE CHAPMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR</p> <p>I welcomed the view by the Fire Brigades Union with reference to calling off their strike which was scheduled for Saturday 19 October 2013 in light of the productive negotiations that were taking place nationally. However, it is with disappointment to note that the national Fire Brigades Union announced further strikes on Friday 1 November and Monday 4 November 2013 which puts the residents of Oxfordshire at greater risk from being killed or seriously injured in fires or road traffic accidents.</p> <p>It is very clear that this dispute will only be resolved by meaningful and serious negotiations on both sides and I am sure that Cllr Tanner will join me in calling for such talks to continue to ensure this dispute is settled.</p>

<p>14. COUNCILLOR SAM COATES</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member give the figures for the number of paying parking spaces now operated the County Council and the number of spaces that at the moment are free but which could be made into pay and display control systems. Could he also give an indication of the amount per annum generated by these parking spaces at the moment and the thematic pay rates? Would he agree with me that if the Conservative Leadership had taken up the suggestions for parking charge increases in the last two Green budgets the County could have generated over £2m more in income? Could he indicate if increases in charges play a part in the forthcoming budget to mitigate the impact of cuts?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The number of Pay & Display on street parking spaces is 550 approximately. The Council does not have a separate record of the number of free bays available, however these bays are typically provided in areas to support local businesses and ensure that they are not detrimentally impacted by restrictions in parking arising from Controlled Parking Zones. These bays are typically isolated from other Pay & Display facilities and therefore it is not considered that the increased implementation and administration costs for introducing such facilities would be sufficiently off set by income to warrant the detrimental impact a blanket approach of converting Free bays to P&D may have on the local community. Notwithstanding this, the Council could potentially review individual locations as needs require.</p> <p>With regards to whether increased charges would have increased income by £2m, it is difficult to determine whether this would be the case or whether drivers would be displaced to Off Street Car Parks, Park & Ride or indeed out of Oxford altogether. There is a fine line between managing an effective charging mechanism for parking and maintaining a thriving local economy. On Street Parking Charges may be reviewed in future but will need to form part of a comprehensive parking management, congestion and local economy strategy rather than being seen as an income generator in their own right.</p>
<p>15. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member give an indication of the numbers who will be facing fuel poverty in Oxfordshire this winter and will she indicate if the County Council will use the new more restrictive definition of fuel poverty as recently presented by the Government or will the authority stay with the original criteria?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDITH HEATHCOAT, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE</p> <p>Under the currently used “10% definition” of fuel poverty* (see definitions below) in 2011 in England, there are estimated to be 3.2 million fuel poor households which is 14.6% of the population. The rate of fuel poverty in Oxfordshire is estimated to be significantly lower than the England rate, with 9.9% of the population in fuel poverty according to the same definition – approximately 26,000 households.</p>

	<p>Numbers of households considered to be fuel poor will be lower with the new measure being proposed - Low Income High Cost (LIHC)**. Under this definition the figure is estimated to be 2.6m households in fuel poverty in England. Figures for Oxfordshire are not yet available under this new measure.</p> <p>It is not possible to estimate the numbers of people who will be in fuel poverty in Oxfordshire this winter accurately. Trends have shown little change across the county over the last 5 years but recent changes in fuel prices are likely to have an impact.</p> <p>Surveillance of the data in Oxfordshire will continue to use the definition currently in use, alongside the new measure, for as long as data is available from the Office for National Statistics. We also hope to use the “Fuel Poverty Gap” measure*** when it is reported as this will give more information in relation to fluctuating fuel prices.</p> <p>Work to reduce fuel poverty is undertaken in Oxfordshire through a partnership approach. It is among the current priorities of the Health Improvement Board in Oxfordshire and there will be a discussion at the meeting in November about further development of the work already going on. The role of Public Health has included keeping surveillance of the prevalence of fuel poverty and working with partners to disseminate information and to improve energy efficiency of homes.</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>*The “10% definition”: A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth (usually defined as 21 degrees for the main living area, and 18 degrees for other occupied rooms)</p> <p>**The “Low Income, High Cost” (LIHC) definition –A household is fuel poor if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their income is below the poverty line (taking into account energy costs); and
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their energy costs are higher than is typical for their household type. This measure will not fluctuate with fuel costs to the same extent as the 10% definition. <p>***The “Fuel Poverty Gap” is a new additional measure that goes hand in hand with the LIHC definition that is more dependent on Fuel Prices and paints a similar picture to the 10% definition.</p>
<p>16. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Would the Cabinet member for Finance give the figures for the central reserves and identify the total departmental contingencies related to specific policies now being held by the County Council. Could he give some indication if this level of reserves is proportionally high by comparison with other local authorities?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ARASH FATEMIAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>The last Financial Monitoring Report presented to Cabinet in October set out that earmarked reserves were forecast to be £109.9m at 31 March 2014. Of this, Directorate reserves are £27.6m, schools reserves £24.7m and corporate reserves £5.8m. In addition there are reserves totalling £51.8m relating to capital, insurance and cash flow.</p> <p>Provisional data on the reserves held by other councils as at 31 March 2013 is available for 25 out of the 27 shire counties. This data indicates that the level of revenue reserves held by Oxfordshire County Council is just below the average for shire counties.</p>
<p>17. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>We have a policy of encouraging local businesses and we also now have more than 20 excellent micro-breweries in Oxfordshire -- the Shotover Brewery in Horspath, the Hook Norton Brewery, the Compass in Carterton, the Old Bog in Headington, to name but a few.</p> <p>As well as the option of being able to buy a glass of wine with our lunch at Council meetings about 6 times a year, could we offer for sale different local ale each time?</p> <p>Could we also consider serving some of them</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR RODNEY ROSE, DEPUTY LEADER</p> <p>Before answering the question, I must correct what I am sure will be seen as a huge insult to all who live in Hook Norton, and lovers of real ale the world over. To call a “Victorian Tower brewery” MICRO is scandalous, and as a company that has 47 tied houses in 5 counties, then the Wikipedia description of being a <i>regional</i> brewery is surely appropriate. As to offering beer for Members to purchase at Council lunches, this is nothing new as might be expected. When tried in the past, quantities of purchased beers have remained in our stocks to beyond their sell-by dates and then disposed of. I am reluctant to support purchase of any more on that basis, and would add that it would be impractical to start with fresh stocks from a different brewery at each meeting. Should enough Members commit to buying beer [by email to me – Rodney.rose@oxfordshire.gov.uk] for use at future meetings, I will be</p>

<p>at the Christmas Reception? Please can we also look at using local wines?</p>	<p>happy to look again at the viability, with the proviso that minimum order would be 24 50cl bottles in the region of £2.25 each. I will look further into the subject of Oxfordshire wines, which will obviously involve some tasting! Current research shows them to be a tad expensive. In terms of the Christmas Reception for next year, we would also need to consult with the Chairman, as it is from that budget that wine is procured.</p>
<p>18. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>Cambridge City Council recently unveiled what could become the future of street lighting – a road surface that glows in the dark. It has covered a city pathway with ultraviolet particles which turn blue when the sun sets. The technology, called "Starpark", absorbs light during the day before emitting the artificial glow in the evening. It is thought the idea could one day replace street lamps as a cheaper and more energy efficient form of lighting.</p> <p>Whatever they can do, we can surely do better? Are we working with our two universities to pioneer similar innovations?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>We continue to look at innovative ways to deliver our street lighting service and we are always happy to engage with the academic community to consider the options. The Cambridge City project was carried out in a park and so may be more appropriate for our Oxford City colleagues to consider at this time.</p>

<p>19. COUNCILLOR ROZ SMITH</p> <p>A decision has been taken recently to increase the bus lane on part of the A40 highway leading up to the Green Road Roundabout. What evidence of improved bus time, safety design and possible further congestion did he consider when making the decision?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>As with all our schemes of this nature we model the impacts of the changes and undertake safety audits in accordance with national practice. Our modelling concluded that there would be an overall reduction in delays at the roundabout and that there would be a particular saving for westbound buses on the A40. If Councillor Smith would like a more detailed explanation of the work we have done and the findings I would be happy to arrange for officers to take her through the scheme development.</p>
<p>20. COUNCILLOR ROZ SMITH</p> <p>Would he agree that “pedestrians crossing” warning signs should be considered for the busy crossing point on the A40 near the Collinwood junction</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>I’m aware a request for a sign has already been made to our Traffic Team who have quite correctly pointed out that the latest guidance from DfT is that such signs should only be used “where pedestrians frequently cross high-speed roads”. Technically, the site is not what the DfT would consider to be ‘high-speed’ (there speed limit is 30mph, and a recent survey of this site just over 170 pedestrians and 30 cyclists were counted crossing in a 12-hour period. Of course, if appropriate funding could be found I would be happy to ask officers to look into this issue in more detail.</p>
<p>21. COUNCILLOR ROZ SMITH</p> <p>Residents living in a Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) area can pay for a parking permit enabling them to park their vehicle in marked parking bays. Does the income from these permits cover the cost of administering the schemes?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ARASH FATEMIAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>Administration of the Controlled Parking Scheme is funded by both income from parking tickets and permit charges. Last year the cost of administering enforcement within Oxford was £1.44m approximately half of which is attributable to administering/enforcing Controlled Parking Zones. Total income from parking tickets and permits was similarly £1.44m which again was broadly split equally between income inside and outside of Controlled Parking Zones. In total last year enforcement within Oxford, including Controlled Parking Zones was a net cost to the council of approximately £39k. This is an improvement on previous years in which losses against a breakeven position were £112k and £178k have been made in 2011/12 and 2010/11 respectively</p>

	and we continue to work towards a breakeven position.
<p>22. COUNCILLOR ROZ SMITH</p> <p>If the Cabinet does decide to radically reduce the number of children's centres will the Council be liable to repay some Sure Start grants received from the DfE?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ARASH FATEMIAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>No decisions have been made in relation to Children's Centres so it is not possible to say if the Council will be liable to repay any Sure Start grants. If any reduction to the funding for Children's Centres is agreed by Council in February 2014 then work will be undertaken to determine what conditions apply to any Sure Start funding received on a site by site basis.</p>
<p>23. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>We have all agreed that we want to encourage cycling in Oxfordshire. One of the streets that is most heavily used by cyclists is Park End Street in the city centre. It has been in an appalling state for several years now -- even when one slows right down, the very uneven surface is dangerous for cyclists. I have had countless complaints about this. Please can you bring forward the date for its resurfacing?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO-SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>We appreciate the condition of Park End Street is far from ideal, unfortunately until the future of Frideswide Square is determined, any maintenance scheme to Park End Street, prior to the commencement of the Frideswide's Improvement works, may be abortive, therefore to ensure best value, at present we are unable to advance the maintenance works. We will of course continue to monitor and maintain Park End Street in accordance with our safety defect policy.</p>

24. COUNCILLOR JENNY HANNABY

Does the Leader of the Conservative and Independent Alliance Group agree that the report given to the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Financial Board on the 31st August was disappointing, considering the support given to them by County prior to the formation of the (OCCG) board. Which raises concerns regarding the competence of the Board members. Will the Leader inform Council what actions he will be taking on behalf of the community to ensure the worst financial scenario does not occur?

COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

I will be working with all parties to ensure that a robust structure is in place to ensure a sound financial platform for the future. However we can only provide advice and assistance and it's for the Clinical Commissioning Group to determine the way forward.