

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 CHARLES MATHEW</p> <p>May I request the Leader and/or the Cabinet Member for Environment and Economy to write a strong letter to the Highways Agency to declare Oxfordshire's disappointment at the state of the central carriageway and verges of the A34 in this county (covered in plastic and waste, especially around the Hinckseys but far from exclusively), to point out that this reflects badly on the County whether rightly so or not, when it is the HA's responsibility? The same request also applies to being a good neighbour where illegal ragwort grows unrestricted as is the case throughout the length of the A34 and is free to distribute its seeds at its own whim.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The Highways Agency has a Litter Strategy which was published in 2014. In this document their vision is "A network predominantly free from litter, without compromising safety and delivered affordably". Officers have spoken to EM, the Highways Agency contractor for the A34, and they have confirmed that central reserve litter picking is programmed to fit in with other works, in order to minimise disruption and is undertaken by the relevant District Council.</p> <p>With regard to ragwort, EM have a Ragwort Control Policy which was issued in early 2012 which explains how they will deal with any ragwort which is either reported to them or identified during routine inspections.</p> <p>I have asked officers to make the Highways Agency aware of your concerns at their next meeting with them.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY</p> <p>Will the cabinet member for Environment tell me if contractor Skanska has the capacity to contract out all the line painting in Oxfordshire and then have a schedule in place to have white/yellow lines renewed before they start</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The majority of budget for replacement of white lines was included in the Area Stewardship budget when it was introduced in 2011. Some councillors have used this budget to refresh lining over the years but others have had other priorities for their fund allocation. As you know, the Area Stewardship Fund has been withdrawn as part of this year's budget reductions and so we will not</p>

<p>to fade? Or furthermore has the budget cuts that continue to hit Oxfordshire County Council mean that the funding is no longer able to sustain the line painting program in Oxfordshire? I therefore ask the highways department at OCC to draw up a report on line painting which should be made available to the public.</p>	<p>be able to refresh all the lines in the county but will be remarking statutory and safety lining as and when this is required.</p> <p>Skanska is able to contract in line marking resources as required by OCC. They are currently not contracted to replace all lines before they start to fade, but replace lines as and when OCC instruct them to.</p>
<p>3. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Could the Leader of the Council confirm that he has given his backing to a large scale expansion of Kidlington Airport focused on the concept that the London Oxford Airport will be a hub for a network of international scheduled commercial flights?</p> <p>What evidence does he have of the economic viability of such a project and does he appreciate the environmental damage that will be caused by increased Co2 emissions locally and the impact on the people of Kidlington of having an international airport virtually within yards of their front door.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>I'm not sure which newspaper Cllr Williams has been reading but I can confirm either he misread the article or I was misquoted. I have never said anything about a large scale expansion of Kidlington airport. I have said that I recognise that the runway length is similar to that of London City airport giving it the potential to fly many destinations within Europe. I've also stated that I've used the airport to fly to Jersey and found the service simple and easy to use. In fact I checked in and went through security 15 minutes after leaving my house.</p> <p>It is in our interest to work in partnership with what could be a key transport hub in the future. Our support to date is based on the fact that use of the Airport is well below the number of passengers a year it is licenced for, so we are working to support them in providing new services which will support local people and growth. These would be services that support the local economy – providing better access into Oxfordshire with the potential to actually reduce emissions with reduced distance to travel compared to Heathrow and Gatwick.</p>
<p>4. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Recently the County Council announced it wants to build a number of new Park and</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>The Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) proposes expansion and updating of the Park & Ride system. With 100,000 homes and 85,000 jobs planned in</p>

<p>Rides on the Oxfordshire Green Belt. Although it is true that the figures using Park and Rides have increased on what basis have traffic planner concluded that such large extra numbers will be required?</p>	<p>Oxfordshire by 2031, Park & Ride will play an important role in keeping car traffic out of the city whilst providing a convenient travel option for those who do not have direct bus access to the city's main destinations. The additional spaces proposed have taken into account the spare capacity in the current system, the number of additional users resulting from growth in the county, and the number of people currently driving into the city who would switch to Park & Ride as a result of the measures in the OTS.</p> <p>The extra capacity would be delivered over the next 20 years. Further work is needed to determine the best exact locations for new Park & Ride sites. No specific sites are proposed at this stage. It is worth noting that some of the existing sites are already located within the Oxford Green Belt.</p>
<p>5. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Would the Leader of the Council agree with me that the introduction of the Self Registration system for voters has been a disaster for democracy with a drop of over 11,000 in the City alone (over 10% decline) and nationally taking well over 1million people off the register. As all the Districts are recording significant declines what is the County Council trying to do to encourage voters to register?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>The deadline for registering to vote does not expire until Monday 20th April 2015. Since the dissolution of Parliament and the start of the restricted period, the election process will receive a significantly higher profile through the national press and television coverage, highlighting the surrounding issues. It is envisaged that this will also lead to an increase in the number of people registering their right to vote. This is likely to intensify from the Publication of Persons Nominated, which is due to take place on Friday, 10th April 2015. Indeed the Electoral Commission recently has announced that one million online registration applications have been made since 16 March.</p> <p>It is therefore perhaps premature, at this time, to determine whether registration is greater or lower than previously. In any case, this would be a question that Cllr Williams should ask the City and District Council Electoral Registration Officers.</p> <p>This is because the maintenance and publication of the Register of Electors is a function of the respective City and District Councils. Each of these Councils has a dedicated page on their websites explaining the process for registering to vote, how to ask for postal votes and proxy votes, and also directing members of the public to the on-line registration service at</p>

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> , which is the preferred method for registration. Each authority has undertaken proactive public engagement and registration work.

However, the County Council has also assisted the City and District Councils under Regulation 35A of the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001. This says that a County Council may disclose county council-held data to electoral registration authorities to assist them in their role of maintaining the electoral register. Information has therefore been disclosed to each of the City and District Council Electoral Registration Officers under agreed data sharing processes for a two-fold purpose in connection with Individual Electoral Registration: firstly to enable them to verify persons already on the electoral register; and secondly to identify other persons who may not be on the register and/or who may be of voting age on the day of the election. The County Council has therefore fulfilled its responsibilities and has contributed directly to ensuring that electoral registration is maximised.

Beyond this, as the elections this year are not for the full County Council, no additional proactive work has been commissioned. Given the constraints on resources, it is not appropriate to commission general or targeted publicity which, in any event, could lead to the contention that the Council was interfering in elections in which it has no part, either democratically or statutorily.

I am confident, however, that the County Council has played its part fully in assisting County and District Council partners in their responsibilities for voter registration.

I can confirm that at all opportunities recently including many visits to schools I have stressed the importance of voting.

<p>6. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</p> <p>Recently the Leader of the Council was photographed warmly receiving a petition from the Disinvest in Fossil Fuels Campaign and apparently wished them well in their efforts to convince local authorities to withdraw their pension funds' investments from fossil fuels.</p> <p>Does this mean that the Leader of the Council will be writing to the Oxfordshire Pensions Committee urging them to invest in safer long term securities than fossil fuels and will he immediately order the orientation away from investment in fossil fuel companies in the County Councils own day to day investment portfolio.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>No.</p>
<p>7. COUNCILLOR GILL SANDERS</p> <p>Can Councillor Carter please assure the parents, students and staff of Rose Hill Primary School that the fabric of the building, including roofs and windows, will be repaired and improved to adequate standards before they all have to face another cold winter and can you tell me when the necessary work will be done? If our children are to improve their performance and achieve good results they and their teachers need decent accommodation in which to work.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR NICK CARTER, CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS & CUSTOMER SERVICES</p> <p>Rose Hill Primary School has been assessed based on the standard qualifying criteria and the asphalt roof repair including the clerestory windows are currently on the 2015 /2016 programme. We have been able to allocate funding to address these issues in the coming financial year, though as always, this will still need to be prioritised against the on-going competing demands of schools across the whole of Oxfordshire.</p> <p>Following the OCC funding gateway process, once the detail planning of this work commences, the timings and logistical details will be discussed with the school to minimise any impact.</p>

<p>8. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>This Council is making various changes as a result of the horrific crimes uncovered in the course of the Bullfinch trial. We have recognised that councillors need to be better informed and ask more searching questions. The obvious way of ensuring that this happens is to have all the scrutiny committees chaired by opposition members. When will the Conservatives at last agree to follow good practice and make this important change?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>I think that it's inappropriate to link these two matters. May I remind you that committees are cross-party and not solely reliant on the Chairman to ask searching questions.</p> <p>To answer your question, I would say that it's important that the best person is chosen for the job, rather than having to abide by any rules or quotas, such as the Chairman of the Performance Scrutiny committee.</p>
<p>9. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL</p> <p>Please can you put pressure on the DfE, which is being very unhelpful about the bids that Cherwell School is putting in to pay for an expansion? This year the school has had to turn away more than 200 children, of whom 100 live in the catchment area, including in Jericho, which is very close to Cherwell School. There is no other secondary school anywhere nearby, so the families that didn't get a place are distraught.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR MELINDA TILLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION & FAMILIES</p> <p>The Cherwell School is an academy and as such the Council has no locus in relation to bids that its trust might make to the Education Funding Agency. I share your disappointment, and that of your constituents, that The Cherwell's bid to the EFA was unsuccessful as the Council had hoped to support a joined up scheme along the same lines as it is supporting at Cheney School. The Council will therefore proceed with discussions with The Cherwell School to agree a modest expansion of one form of entry (30 extra places per year group) funded from developer (Section 106) contributions.</p>

10. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL

The performance of Oxfordshire children who are eligible for free school meals is far below the level of children on free school meals nationally, in every key stage. How do you account for this and what are you doing about it?

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

The Education and Learning team in CEF are working closely with colleagues in Early Intervention and Children's Social Care to support schools and are developing a strategy for closing the attainment gap in Oxfordshire.