

## QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

## ANNEX 3

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><b>1. COUNCILLOR NICK HARDS</b></p> <p>Following on from Councillor Dhesi's question in September about persistent potholes and the explanation that repairs are guaranteed for 2 years, please would the Cabinet Member for Environment explain what the position is when a badly worn section of road is patched and the adjacent section then deteriorates so much that a patch is required next to the previous patch. Would enquiries be made to establish whether the second fault had occurred as a result of the first repair?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>County inspectors work hard to identify the most effective repairs for failed sections of road taking account of the budget constraints that we have. Inevitably any repair will always leave a joint with adjoining surfacing and this is a point of weakness in the overall carriageway surface. We monitor the quality of repairs through a combination of random site visits and photographic evidence and should we become aware of a repair that is not completed to a satisfactory standard we would have this redone at the expense of our contractor. If an adjacent section of road subsequently fails then there could be a range of causes for this ranging from the extent of the area initially identified for repair through to subsequent foundation failure caused by ongoing traffic loads. Whilst the council would prefer to do more preventative pavement repair schemes to eliminate this problem it has to manage its programme within the available budget and so professional choices regarding the amount and type of repair have to be made.</p>
<p><b>2. COUNCILLOR SAM COATES</b></p> <p>Will the Cabinet Member recommend the recently published upgraded 'London Cycling Standards' for future planning purposes with regard to the future provision of cycle ways?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>As you may be aware, the Council has recently approved an ambitious new cycle strategy as an element of Connecting Oxfordshire – Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 (LTP4). Our ambition within the lifetime of this Plan is to take cycling from its current levels (of around 3% of all trips) to 10% of all journeys across Oxfordshire. A crucial element in the Strategy is to develop a high quality cycle network.</p>

	<p>As part of LTP Adoption by Full Council, an amendment was passed proposing that LTP4 should be strengthened in its aims to reduce air pollution, including by more positively encouraging walking and cycling. As a result, we are proposing to include our updated approach to cycling as part of an 'Active &amp; Healthy Travel Strategy', which will be drafted in early 2016. As part of this process, we will be reviewing the London Cycling Design Standards and the Design Guidance for Cyclists as an outcome of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 and consider whether to adopt all or part of these Standards.</p> <p>Given the current financial climate, it is important to add that Transport for London and the Welsh Assembly have access to more funding than is available to OCC for cycling. For example, the Mayor of London undertook to double spending on cycling to £400 million (The Mayor's Vision for Cycling in London, 2013). However, we are committed to achieving our ambition of 10% mode share across Oxfordshire over the Plan period, and will give this proposal full and detailed consideration. With this in mind, we see it as essential to take up opportunities to achieve this through the planning process for new developments to ensure they are spatially well-integrated and connected in cycling terms.</p>
<p><b>3. COUNCILLOR SAM COATES</b></p> <p>When the decision was taken earlier this month by Cabinet to end support for all subsidised bus services, it was expressed that the decision may be reviewed during the budget preparation process. What further developments have there been, and are all these expected cuts still expected to go ahead?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>The decision as to whether to withdraw all bus subsidies is a council decision and will be made in February 2016 as part of the budget setting process.</p>

#### **4. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS**

Much was said in October about how the County Council was willing to actually help the current wave of genuine refugees from Syria desperately trying to escape from incessant bombing by over a dozen countries and despotic treatment on the ground by terrorist organisations such as ISIS but what has actually been done? Is it any clearer what the Government intend to fund and by how much?

#### **COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The County Council has convened and led the statutory agencies ie all local housing authorities (district councils) and health organisations, working in cooperation with Roy Millard of the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration. We have co-operated closely with the City Council which has acted as the co-ordinator for the voluntary and faith sectors in the county.

At the start of the process it was unclear from the Home Office what would be most helpful and what the government's arrangements would be for receiving and funding support to refugees from Syria. The County Council has been prepared to develop emergency accommodation from which to receive and disperse arrivals, to provide foster homes or supported lodgings to young people arriving alone and to offer social care to children and adults and support parents in getting children into nurseries, schools and colleges.

Gradually, it has become clear that there would be no need for emergency reception centres after all as the Syrian Vulnerable People's Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) ensures people are screened, given 5-year refugee status before arriving in the UK, and matched to identified housing once here. The plan is to transfer families directly from the airport to permanent accommodation.

The County Council has the statutory responsibility to look after children under 18 years who present in our area without parents and carers. Indeed, in the last year, we have more than doubled the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children we look after and their numbers continue to rise. We place and support these children in foster homes, hostels and supported lodgings and help them with their induction, education, training and employment. The council has been working with Home For Good, a fostering recruitment and support charity, to attract more carers. Recently our two information evenings attracted 100 attendees and we are following up expressions of interest and assessments.

In regard to extending these responsibilities under the SVPRS, we were

advised that it would be highly exceptional for children to be brought here without their families as there is an emphasis on reunification work in the camps. Once children have been taken such a long distance away, any practical possibility of placing them with their extended families or communities is lost and is not considered to be in their best interests. So far, the SVPRS has made no request to us to accept any unaccompanied children.

We have maintained close working with the Districts and City Council, supporting their officers who are developing housing options for families. This has proved to be challenging due to the high cost of rented accommodation in the county and the limited availability of suitable properties, especially in the City. The Home Office has offered to pay local areas a per capita amount (see the enclosed guidance) to cover the costs of all services. This includes a single amount for local authorities, which has to cover the costs of top-up rent and any additional social care. However, the Home Office is open to considering specific individuals' high cost-needs in addition.

The City Council has made a commitment to housing 10 families over the next year, starting with two families of 4 and 5 members, respectively, starting in January. The County Council is willing and able to provide social care, should it be needed, for any of the families, and have appointed an officer to be in direct contact to meet parents and address the children's educational needs as soon as they arrive. I enclose the City's scheme, which you will see also has proposals for providing the welcome and induction arrangements families will need.

West Oxfordshire District Council is also working to identify suitable housing and we have just learned that they will be receiving two families on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December. We shall offer to support to these refugee families in the ways outlined above.

We remain in touch with the other district councils, in similar vein.

<p><b>5. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</b></p> <p>In view of recent research indicating that more than half of schools in England are cutting staff, what steps will the County Council be taking to ensure teaching and support staff in the County's schools are retained? In what way will passing on the full costs of local authority support services to schools budget help them retain staff?  <i>Note Article: Half the schools in England set to cut staff to balance books - Richard Adams Guardian 20/11/2015.</i></p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR MELINDA TILLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION &amp; FAMILIES</b></p> <p>Schools are of course aware of the importance of securing and retaining sufficient teachers and support staff; it is for them to deploy the resources available to them to best effect. This is not something in relation to which the Local Authority can (or has the capacity to) become involved.</p> <p>The local authority has increased delegation of funding to schools in recent years consistent with the principles of school funding reforms. This has reduced funding available centrally so provision of traded central services to schools cannot be subsidised, and the expectation is that where schools are purchasing services the charges include recovery of the full costs, as would be the case with other providers.</p>
<p><b>6. COUNCILLOR SAM COATES</b></p> <p>I note that Oxfordshire is ranked as the third worst area in the country for the proportion of nursing homes and care homes not meeting standards, according to the Care Quality Commission. Could I ask the Cabinet Member to outline what steps the Council will be taking to address this problem?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR JUDITH HEATHCOAT, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE</b></p> <p>We are aware that the TrustedCare online directory reported that Oxfordshire is the third worst area in the country for the proportion of nursing homes and care homes not meeting standards according to the care quality commission.</p> <p>However I would like to make it clear that in my view the above statement does not tie in with the data published by the Care Quality Commission on their website. Recent analysis of the Care Quality Commissions ratings by officers from the council indicates that 45% of care homes in Oxfordshire require improvement, compared with 37% nationally and 76% for the third worst ranked authority. No home in Oxfordshire is rated as inadequate, compared to 4% nationally. Over two thirds of authorities nationally contain inadequate homes.</p> <p>These ratings are based on a relatively new inspection regime that came in last year, which included new lines of enquiries with both inspectors and service users reviewing services. We are aware that the Care Quality Commission has adopted a risk base approach for its inspection programme so it is perhaps inevitable that some of the earlier results will include a</p>

number of services rated as Requires Improvement. In Oxfordshire, as elsewhere, we would hope to see the ratings improve as the Commission completes its first full round of inspections.

Within the council we receive a weekly update from the Care Quality Commission - usually on a Monday - identifying the reports that they have published in the previous week. Each report relevant to Oxfordshire is reviewed to identify if specific action is needed by the council.

Outside of this regular update there is good information sharing between the Council and the Care Quality Commission. Where there are significant concerns about a care home the Care Quality Commission will contact us immediately to share its concerns and seek our views.

The Council has a good track record of working with providers to improve services, and it monitors care homes in Oxfordshire through its Quality and Contracts Team. They undertake annual reviews, put in place action plans, and use a traffic light system to provide intelligence on all providers.

Furthermore and since the beginning of this year officers have taken steps to improve the overall market intelligence available to us. We have developed and now hold a multi-agency Care Governance Group that meets monthly to share intelligence on areas of concern and areas of increasing risk. This multi-agency group involves representatives from the County Council (Safeguarding, Contracts, Complaints and operational teams) together with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford Health's Continuing Health Care Team and the Care Quality Commission; these are the key partners we work with when issues arise. These meetings provide intelligence that helps the council to co-ordinate actions including where we should undertake a contract review and if necessary institute safeguarding procedures; it also acts as an early warning system for themes and trends that may be emerging.

<p><b>7. COUNCILLOR DAVID WILLIAMS</b></p> <p>Now that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has reversed his previous decisions on Police cuts, tax credits and the level of Council tax rises allowed could the Leader of the Council now confirm that with the extra money this may produce and the slight easing of pressure on Council services provision that may result, the planned closure of the Children's Centres will not now go ahead?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p>I welcome the additional funding opportunities that the Chancellor announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review however the ability to raise the council tax was related to providing additional funding for Social care and more importantly it was linked to delivering the Living Wage by 2020. In Oxfordshire this could be an added pressure that has to be taken into consideration before we can set the budget. With regard to Children's Centres there is an ongoing consultation until 10<sup>th</sup> January that has to take into account the £6 million reduction in funding that council voted through as part of the budget 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015.</p> <p>I am sure that Cllr Williams is aware that the council is required by law to produce a balanced budget on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2016 that has to be signed off by the section 151 officer. I look forward to viewing his budget proposals that find the additional funding to reverse the £6million of savings for Children's Centres/Early Intervention along with all the other savings that are required following the Comprehensive Spending review.</p>
<p><b>8. COUNCILLOR JOHN TANNER</b></p> <p>What preparations and planned response does the County Council have for dealing with a possible nuclear incident taking place in Oxfordshire, such as a petrol tanker crashing into a lorry carrying a nuclear warhead and causing a fire on the A34?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR RODNEY ROSE, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p>As part of our role as a category one responder within the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum we have ensured that the risks associated with this type of incident have been identified and there are sufficient preparations and planned responses to deal with an accidental or deliberate release of a radiological substance as the result of any incident within Oxfordshire. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Agency Procedures-Emergencies</li> <li>• Evacuation and Shelter Protocol</li> <li>• Mass Fatalities Management Plan</li> <li>• Mass Casualties Framework</li> <li>• Humanitarian Assistance Framework &amp; OCC Supporting People Plan</li> <li>• Recovery Plan</li> </ul>

- CBRN and Hazmat Plan
- Site Clearance Plan
- Communications Plan - Warning and Informing
- Strategic Roads Plan

In addition to these plans we have National Operational Guidance available for Fire and Rescue Services when attending incidents relating to the release of chemical, radiological and biological and nuclear substances through an accidental release. OCC also provides off-site plans for key fixed sites within the county which include planning, training and exercising.

There is also national guidance from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for dealing with the transportation of nuclear weapons which set out the levels of protection and the MoD response to an incident that has occurred whilst being transported by road. It lays out the specialisms with the convoy team which includes firefighting and radiological monitoring as well as the MoD response and assistance to the local emergency services and local authorities.

Whilst there has never been an accident involving defence nuclear material which has led, or come anywhere near leading to a release of radiological material to the environment, the County Council,

Thames Valley LRF and the emergency services within Oxfordshire have ensured that they are fully prepared and have resilient and exercised plans to deal with any such event. These plans have been exercised across the Thames Valley with the National Ambulance Resilience Unit on the last two regional exercises and the next planned exercise in Oxfordshire is in September 2016.



<p><b>9. COUNCILLOR JOHN TANNER</b></p> <p>I'm grateful that the County Council has been drilling investigative holes into Folly Bridge in Oxford. Will the Cabinet member tell us the state of the bridge and when the public can expect the road on the bridge to be resurfaced?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>The drilling mentioned was in fact trial holes dug to determine the depth of the existing surfacing material over Folly Bridge. The intention is to resurface approximately 80 linear metres of carriageway over this bridge. The main three span section of the bridge to the north is in reasonable condition but the single span section 30 metres further south requires some stonework repairs to its arch barrel. As some of these stonework repairs need to be done from above it is intended that these repairs will be undertaken immediately prior to the resurfacing works as effectively one coordinated scheme.</p> <p>Given the complexities of undertaking work over navigable water on a bridge that is both listed and a scheduled ancient monument it is anticipated that the work is unlikely to be able to commence before mid or late summer next financial year. Until then the surfacing over Folly Bridge will be inspected monthly as part of the St Aldates inspection route. Any surfacing safety defects identified during these inspections will be remedied as per our inspection policy.</p>
<p><b>10. COUNCILLOR JOHN TANNER</b></p> <p>Before work began on Frideswide Square the Cabinet member for Transport told assured me that there would be two east-west cycle paths, for cyclists only, on either side of the square. Can he explain the absence of the cycle path?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>As part of the design there is a 4.5m off-carriageway (or off-road) shared footway/cycleway i.e. in-between both lines of planters created on both sides of the square. Cyclists can get onto the shared pedestrian/ cycling area accessible by lengths of dropped kerbing, marked by timber bollards with signs and highlighted by slabs with the shared use symbols etched into them. These are at the north and sides of the square. The decision to do this was included in the report presented before Cabinet Members in 2012. This is a deliberate decision as incorporating cycle lanes would mean that the road would be wider and motorists would also have the opportunity to use that space and the design is focused on keeping vehicle speeds through the square down which would have been compromised by a wider carriageway.</p>

<p><b>11. COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE</b></p> <p>As a result of your exchange of letters with the Prime Minister the LGA were commissioned to carry out a review of Oxfordshire's finance in order to help the Council set the budget in February. As all members of this Council will be involved in setting the budget can you please give them a copy of the report written as the result of that review?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b></p> <p>The LGA review report will be published as part of the papers for Performance Scrutiny Committee on 17 December.</p>
<p><b>12. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</b></p> <p>What safety measures are in place for cyclists accessing the shared space outside the Said Business School when travelling from the Hythe Bridge Street direction?</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>As part of the design there is a 4.5m off-carriageway (or off-road) shared footway/cycleway i.e. in-between both lines of planters created on both sides of the square. Cyclists can get onto the shared pedestrian/ cycling area accessible by lengths of dropped kerbing, marked by timber bollards with signs and highlighted by slabs with the shared use symbols etched into them. These are at the north and sides of the square. The decision to do this was included in the report presented before Cabinet Members in 2012. This is a deliberate decision as incorporating cycle lanes would mean that the road would be wider and motorists would also have the opportunity to use that space and the design is focused on keeping vehicle speeds through the square down which would have been compromised by a wider carriageway.</p>
<p><b>13. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</b></p> <p>When will the consultation on possible bus gates in the Worcester Street &amp; Longwall Street vicinities be undertaken in view of the adoption of the Local Transport plan by this</p>	<p><b>COUNCILLOR DAVID NIMMO SMITH, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <p>Further traffic access controls in the city centre and other parts of the city are included in the long term transport strategy for the city as part of the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS). The OTS does not specify that these access controls will be bus gates (such as the High Street bus gate). The access</p>

Council in September?	<p>restrictions could be full or part-time closures, or could be road user charging points.</p> <p>No specific timetable has been set for their introduction, or, therefore, for consultation. However, the OTS suggests the earliest they would be introduced is 2020.</p>
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