

QUESTIONS WITH NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1. Question from Mr John Paine, Secretary, Oxfordshire National Pensioners' Convention Group to Councillor Yvonne Constance

In 2016 OCC announced that, in relation to the Westgate Shopping Centre development – then under construction - it intended to ban bus routes running through Queen Street. At the County Council meeting in July 2016 Oxfordshire NPC Group suggested that OCC first carry out a survey into the possible effects such a ban on buses using Queen Street may have.

OCC refused and subsequently the Department for Transport was not prepared to ratify the OCC scheme banning bus use of Queen Street. Instead the DfT asked OCC to undertake investigations to establish what impact a possible ban on buses using Queen Street would have. Since late 2017 OCC has carried out an extensive data-collecting and monitoring exercise, which covers Queen Street and other central Oxford streets.

Can we now be given a date when the results of that OCC information-gathering will be made public?

Allied to this, how does OCC intend to carry out further public consultation as to how Queen Street will feature in the pattern of bus routes through central Oxford?

Within its COMMUNITIES: TRANSPORT CAPITAL PROGRAMME Oxfordshire County Council has a total allocation of £1,470,000 for Pedestrianisation of Queen Street. About half of this has been spent whilst £734,000 is shown as allocated expenditure in the current 2019/20 financial year.

How, and with whom, does OCC intend to consult on what that Queen Street pedestrianisation work will entail?

Answer

Officers plan to report to Cabinet in the summer about the future of Queen Street in the light of analysis of the monitoring of Queen Street and other nearby streets since the Westgate Centre reopened in October 2017. The report will make a recommendation about whether buses should remain in the street and therefore whether it should be pedestrianised.

If it is recommended that buses remain in the street, an experimental TRO would be made for the street which would serve as a formal public consultation for whether buses should be removed on a permanent basis. Any objections received during this consultation would need to be considered by a council committee before a final decision is made on buses in Queen Street. The decision that Cabinet makes in the light of the report will determine the level of spend on the Queen Street project.

2. Question from Ms Joanna Gill, Extinction Rebellion to Councillor Yvonne Constance

Do you agree that Climate Change presents such a significant threat that, in the words of David Attenborough, “If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon”? If this is true, surely the responsibility to act lies with all of us as individuals and also with government at all levels. When there is a financial crisis, governments step in to support the economy.

Do you agree that our responsibility to our children and grandchildren means we must do the same for our environment and recognise and act on an emergency when one arises? And will you therefore support the motions calling for the declaration of a Climate Emergency, as over 40 other local authorities of all political colours have done?

Answer

Oxfordshire County Council has a long history of activity on sustainability and emissions reduction:

- We have led the way nationally in driving waste reduction and recycling and are rated best county council for recycling in the UK.
- We have commissioned the Community Action Group project for over a decade: supporting our communities to develop innovative projects and business models to drive sustainability in Oxfordshire. Now supporting 65 groups, this is the biggest network of its kind in the UK.
- We have reduced emissions on our own estate by an average of 6% per year and have recently committed investment to replace all remaining streetlights with LED which will reduce our overall carbon footprint by a further 25%.
- We work with a wide range of partners in the County to position Oxfordshire at the forefront of the low carbon transition. Alongside the City Council we declared the world’s first zero emission zone in Oxford. We are a long-term supporter of the work of not for profit ‘Low Carbon Hub’ which has just seen the 20th solar array installed on our maintained schools. Alongside partners we will also be announcing a ground breaking 3-year project to demonstrate how a new energy system; fit for electric vehicles and renewable generation can operate in Oxfordshire.

The October 2018 report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the United Nations body for assessing the science related to Climate Change) was, however, very clear. It explained that in order to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change we must limit average global temperature increase to below 1.5°C degrees, *requiring rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society*. The report states that global emissions need to be halved in 11 years and hit ‘net zero’ by 2050.

Moving towards ‘net zero’ emissions will require intervention from all levels of government. However, we recognise we have an important role and there is

more to do. We will therefore be supporting the motion to call a 'Climate Emergency' but also looking at ways we can practically take action. This will include reviewing our carbon targets in 2019 and asking officers to investigate an Environmental Management System to further embed consideration of carbon reduction and sustainability across our business practices.

3. Question from Dr Alison Chisholm to Councillor Yvonne Constance

Do you agree that ensuring a swift and orderly transition to a clean energy future that preserves clean air, stable weather systems and secure access to food and water for our children and grandchildren is a goal that people from across the political spectrum would wish to pursue? Councillors in the Vale of White Horse District Council appear to: their climate emergency declaration was passed in February with unanimous cross-party support. Leader of the Council, Cllr Roger Cox, said "By declaring a climate emergency we are sending a clear message to the Government that we urgently need more support to tackle climate change. We can no longer simply ask people to 'do their bit.' We now need to see national policy and support from government which will allow us to implement significant changes to ensure we can achieve the emission reduction targets."

Voters of all political hues are already anxious about climate breakdown and will support action if you, our political leaders, spell out what we can do to reverse this emergency and commit to taking action. Will you join your Conservative colleagues elsewhere in the country to support the climate emergency motion to preserve the security of today's Oxfordshire residents and of generations to come?"

Answer

Oxfordshire County Council has a long history of activity on sustainability and emissions reduction:

- We have led the way nationally in driving waste reduction and recycling and are rated best county council for recycling in the UK.
- We have commissioned the Community Action Group project for over a decade: supporting our communities to develop innovative projects and business models to drive sustainability in Oxfordshire. Now supporting 65 groups, this is the biggest network of its kind in the UK.
- We have reduced emissions on our own estate by an average of 6% per year and have recently committed investment to replace all remaining streetlights with LED which will reduce our overall carbon footprint by a further 25%.
- We work with a wide range of partners in the County to position Oxfordshire at the forefront of the low carbon transition. Alongside the City Council we declared the world's first zero emission zone in Oxford. We are a long-term supporter of the work of not for profit 'Low Carbon Hub' which has just seen the 20th solar array installed on our maintained schools. Alongside partners we will also be announcing a ground breaking 3-year project to demonstrate how a new energy system; fit for electric vehicles and renewable generation can operate in Oxfordshire.

The October 2018 report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (the United Nations body for assessing the science related to Climate Change) was, however, very clear. It explained that in order to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of climate change we must limit average global temperature increase to below 1.5°C degrees, *requiring rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society*. The report states that global emissions need to be halved in 11 years and hit 'net zero' by 2050.

Moving towards 'net zero' emissions will require intervention from all levels of government. However, we recognise we have an important role and there is more to do. We will therefore be supporting the motion to call a 'Climate Emergency' but also looking at ways we can practically take action. This will include reviewing our carbon targets in 2019 and asking officers to investigate an Environmental Management System to further embed consideration of carbon reduction and sustainability across our business practices.