

CABINET – 20 JUNE 2023

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p>1. COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY</p> <p>Climate Change is seeing an increase in adverse weather, the ONS report from 12th May 2023 stated almost two thirds of adults in GB are worried (somewhat or very) about the impact of climate change. In the past 12 months, we have seen a 26% increase in ‘sunny days’ and 3,271 excess deaths were caused in England and Wales during the five heat periods between June and August 2022! Whilst we see some drivers for change, it's not fast enough and adverse weather is a risk to food, farming, health, highways, homes, and our day to day life. On 11th June 2023 we experienced challenging conditions in Oxfordshire, sudden flooding and power cuts. Temperatures hit 32.2 in Surrey on that day, and 30 degrees in parts of Oxfordshire. Can you tell us what the County Council is doing in real terms to cope with such extremes, from Fire and Rescue resources, Public Health, Flooding, Food, Energy and Water resilience? Are we truly ready for what's coming, no matter how hard we try to mitigate climate change as a county council?"</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR PETE SUDBURY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE DELIVERY AND ENVIRONMENT</p> <p>In terms of current preparedness Oxfordshire County Council Emergency Planning team and Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum have plans in place to respond to all current national and local planning assumptions. These are based on the National Security Risk Assessment produced by government and regularly reviewed and updated. This includes planning for all adverse weather types and flooding. We regularly respond to weather related incidents and have plans in place for evacuation and care for people should this be necessary for a climate/weather related event. There is also engagement work with communities to ensure they are prepared. This includes ensuring that those in our communities who are vulnerable are signed up to priority Service Registers with the Utilities so that we can identify them in emergencies. We also support communities to produce Community Emergency plans providing a template and advice.</p> <p>Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service now includes a specific strategic risk assessment for hot weather within our community risk management planning process which means that we monitor the impact of this specific risk on Oxfordshire's communities to ensure that we adapt and improve our services as necessary. In recent years this has included greater numbers of 4x4 vehicles with firefighting capabilities to respond to extreme weather events, and additional equipment and training for our firefighters. We also</p>

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	<p data-bbox="1088 221 2047 552">actively contribute to the national conversation within the fire and rescue sector such that there is a co-ordinated national response as and when it is required. In the short term, and as part of the Local Resilience Forum, agencies in Thames Valley are collectively monitoring the day-today risk associated with extreme weather events and reacting accordingly. This will include continuing to communicate with the public, via social media, to share extreme weather alerts received from the met office and to offer safety advice with the aim of managing the risk.</p> <p data-bbox="1088 592 2047 1214">As part of our long-term climate resilience planning, we are currently finalising a climate vulnerability assessment for Oxfordshire, which will assess the vulnerability of the county to current and future climate change across a broad range of thematic areas including health and wellbeing, natural environment and physical infrastructure. This assessment will form an evidence base to support the development of a countywide strategy for climate resilience (development for which due to start later this year) as well as support a range of other climate-adaptation related workstreams being undertaken by the county council and other Oxfordshire stakeholders. The evidence base is largely spatial, enabling identification of key parts of the county that are vulnerable to a range of hazards, including heatwaves and flooding. As part of the vulnerability assessment, a specific health impact assessment is being undertaken, which will explore a range of health-related impacts of climate change, including on mortality, morbidity and mental health.</p> <p data-bbox="1088 1254 2047 1396">In addition, we are looking to learn from other Authorities that have experienced extreme weather events. Our Climate and Public Health teams were recently briefed on the British Columbia Extreme Heat Event of 2022 by Public Health Professor Sarah</p>

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	<p>Henderson, who was directly involved in the preparation and response to that event.</p> <p>The council also runs the Better Homes Better Health programme aiming to support Oxfordshire residents with health needs to access support to reduce housing-related health issues. The service aims to ensure safer, more suitable housing conditions, to signpost for support for other social and health problems, and to promote independent living for those with existing health issues. The service provides specific support to vulnerable residents during climate hazards such as cold snaps and heatwaves through an advice hotline and home visits and offers training to other organisations who work directly with the public.</p> <p>Specifically with regard to flooding, within our role as the Lead Local Flood Authority we are currently reviewing and updating our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Oxfordshire. This sets out how the County will manage flood risk for now and in the future. The strategy will be aligned to the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) strategy prepared by the Environment Agency and the climate strategy being prepared by the Council.</p> <p>In our flood risk role, we undertake several actions which incorporate climate change resilience and adaptation. This includes responding to planning applications in relation to surface water drainage and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) measures within new developments using the National and Local Standards, where climate change is integral to the design of any system. We are also developing a pilot for local community flood wardens that can identify issues on the ground to enable these to be addressed effectively.</p>

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<p>2. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</p> <p>What is the timetable for the work upgrading cycle tracks along the Woodstock Road and how will it overlap with the resurfacing of sections of the road this August?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT</p> <p>Opportunities will be taken to consider any road lining benefits that can be provided at no extra cost as part of the planned resurfacing work however, as the resurfacing work will be localised to the worst areas of the road this may not be possible. You will be aware that the county council previously consulted on a more comprehensive proposal for improvements on Woodstock Road but the funding to implement that comprehensive scheme is no longer available. There may be an opportunity to consider some targeted and localised measures to improve cycle and pedestrian facilities in the area as part of a scheme which is being developed to complement the traffic filters trial.</p>
<p>3. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>I've repeatedly requested full transparency on OUFC's current licence status at the Kassam Stadium ever since they first raised the possibility of leasing OCC owned land in Kidlington. This is key to their claims about an existential threat should they not be provided with land for a new stadium, but I've so far had no response other than confirmation that their current lease ends in 2026 with no option to renew.</p> <p>However, I have now had sight of their original licence agreement lodged with the Land registry in 2006 which shows they did then have the right to renew on the same terms for a further 20 years on expiry in 2026.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR CALUM MILLER, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>Thank you, Cllr Middleton, for your question. You have been carefully scrutinising this proposal on behalf of your residents and I appreciate that you want reassurance that the premise for OUFC needing to seek a new stadium is valid. I share this wish and have sought the same reassurance from the club via officers.</p> <p>Officers have seen confidential information which has been provided by the club which supports the statement on their website setting out their position. These documents have been disclosed on a confidential and commercially sensitive basis and so cannot be divulged. However, officers assure me it is credible information.</p> <p>You refer to an arrangement that was signed by the club and the stadium owner when they were under the control of the same people. That arrangement has changed over time and the</p>

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<p>In a recent statement, the club has confirmed that this licence was terminated early by their landlord on legal grounds in 2021 and that they subsequently signed a new licence also ending in 2026 but with no right to renew. However there appears to be only 2 clauses in their original licence that would have allowed early termination, one of which being a default by the club.</p> <p>Does the cabinet member agree that, if this was the reason, it puts a rather different complexion on claims by the club that they will be made homeless through no fault on their own and that this should have a significant bearing on any future consideration of their proposals?</p>	<p>information we have is that the club is not in a position to unilaterally extend its licence.</p> <p>I am going to meet with the Chief Executive, Director of Property, Director of Communications and the Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer within the next week to discuss the information that the club have provided, seek further verification of the legal position, and determine what – if anything - we can share regarding the circumstances by which the club’s original licence ended in 2021. At the same time, officers have asked the club to consider going further to provide reassurance to councillors on this point.</p> <p>The property covenant protecting the land as a stadium will fall away at the same time as the expiry of the licence.</p> <p>If the current Landlord of the Kassam stadium wishes to provide the club with a new licence or lease, that is a matter for them and the club. If there is open and public agreement on this issue then the Council would no longer be in a position where it would be interested in a lease or sale of its land. The Council is only considering this matter in good faith due to the club’s predicament.</p> <p>We are not an intermediary for the club, and it is not our role to engage in a conversation with the current Landlord with the club to then try and mediate or judge on the relative positions of those parties.</p> <p>We understand that the club will provide more information regarding alternative sites as part of its planning application. This will provide a public assessment as to whether the club needs to move or not, and whether alternative sites are more suitable. If this fails, then they will not be granted planning permission and the land would not need to be leased or sold.</p>

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