

CABINET – 27 JANUARY 2026

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions are listed in the order in which they were received. Should any questioner not have received an answer in that time, a written answer will be provided.

1. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT Given the targets to decrease car use and increase active travel central to the LTCP, can the Cabinet Member outline what steps he is taking to work with District and City Council partners to ensure that in periods of sustained cold temperatures and icy weather, key walking and cycling routes, such as National Cycle Route 5 in my division, are gritted and so remain safe to use by residents?
	We support local communities directly, and through communication with district councils, to self-help through the provision of around 1300 salts bins; 110 of those are within Oxford. We will refill once a year on request, and further grit can be purchased. Requests for new bins are also accepted. This and further information can be found on our webpage - https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/street-maintenance-z/salt-and-grit-bins There is no routine proactive treatment of footways or cycleways however, at the council's request, our term maintenance contractors will respond to reports of particularly icy areas on our highway, footpath and cycle networks. Priority routes for snow clearance, subject to resources, are for some key footway routes, such as town centres routes to hospitals etc and this includes the Marston Ferry cycle route. This type of approach is adopted by many authorities across the country and in line with national guidance.
2. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT

<p>Given commitments within the LTCP to make the "bus a natural first choice", can the Cabinet Member explain why the current "free" bus travel offer at the Park & Rides only applies to up to two adults and three children. This bars 3+ adults or children aged 16+, who arrived in the same car, to benefit from the scheme, thereby potentially encouraging people to continue to use Westgate or City Centre car parks.</p>	<p>This administration has delivered the biggest traffic management scheme in Oxford for over a quarter of a century. The congestion charge is reducing traffic in the city, speeding up buses and boosting bus use. It is generating revenue which has allowed us to offer free park and ride bus travel – one of the top priorities recommended by the citizens' assembly on transport.</p> <p>The current offer is based on the discounted park and ride scheme offered by the county council, bus operators and Oxford City Council which had been in place since October 2022.</p> <p>Like its predecessor, the current scheme provides a free park and ride return ticket for up to two adults and three children under 16 per valid parking ticket. Additional passengers travelling in the same car can purchase bus tickets in the normal way. Even for larger groups of over-15s, this still represents a significant saving, particularly compared to the pre-2022 fares, and significantly undercuts city centre parking costs.</p> <p>Some other schemes in the country offer free or discounted travel for up to five people travelling together, regardless of the ages of the passengers. Whilst this could be offered, this would increase the average reimbursement rate paid to bus operators and therefore the cost of the scheme to the county council. As the congestion charge is still a new scheme and the available income remains uncertain, increasing the cost of the free P&R scheme may not be affordable and in any event would reduce the funding available for other potential schemes.</p>
<p>3. COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN</p> <p>How are the proposed fire service consultation changes (personnel,</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JENNY HANNABY, CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND SAFETY</p> <p>No changes for OFRS have been included pending the outcome of the consultation.</p>

<p>revenue and capital) accounted for in the 2026/7 or further year's budget?</p>	
<p>4. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW</p> <p>What is the impact of this budget in achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 for OCC's own operations? Please quantify this in terms of how many more / fewer tonnes of GHG will need offsetting by buying carbon credits (2027E&P7), compared to pre-budget operations.</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>The existing budget includes funding to switch fleet to electric vehicles, and this programme will continue in delivery.</p> <p>There is no further funding allocated in this budget to the building decarbonisation programme.</p> <p>As per previous reports to Cabinet it is estimated that there is a £19m outstanding funding requirement to decarbonise the council's properties prior to 2030 to result in a residual emissions of about 3,000 tCO2e.</p>
<p>5. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW</p> <p>Overall does this budget make nature recovery easier or harder? Please quantify and share major positive / negative impacts such as those linked to significant capital programmes, or marked changes to revenue-based operations eg.. Watlington Relief Road / HIF1</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>In October 2025, the Biodiversity Action Framework 2025-2030 was approved by Cabinet, requiring all infrastructure projects without an initial business case approved by 21 October 2025 to comply with a 20% Biodiversity Net Gain wherever possible. Projects approved by October 2025 will still comply with the national requirement of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>The budget for 2026/27 includes proposed additional funding for nature recovery as follows:</p> <p>Revenue proposals: Dealing with tree ash dieback disease in Oxfordshire and increased funding for the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>

	Capital Proposals: Ash Die Back tree stock replacement, Oxfordshire Tree Project
6. COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>What would the cost be to provide ANPR cameras over an appropriate trial period to fully understand the flow of inappropriate lorries through Watlington.</p> <p>The cost would depend on the scheme implemented in terms of signage and number of cameras required. There would be a capital and revenue implication. Due to locations of some destinations a good proportion of HGVs are classed as local traffic and therefore permitted through any environmental restriction. It is also worth noting that the issue for Watlington Town centre is more than just HGV traffic.</p>
7. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Given the OCC's target to reduce car trips by 25% by 2030 (compared to 2024) and a further 33% by 2040 and the strong evidence for road building to relieve congestion simply leading to further car trips and levels of congestion returning (induced demand) – what is the justification for spending an additional £3 million on top of the existing £11 million for a road building scheme instead of e.g. building much-needed new cycling routes?</p> <p>Please include in your response</p> <p>OCC recognises the challenge of meeting ambitious car trip reduction targets while addressing current congestion and safety concerns. The additional proposed £3m investment is justified because the road scheme is primarily aimed at improving network resilience, supporting planned housing and economic growth, and mitigating severe congestion hotspots that cannot be resolved solely through behavioural change or active travel measures.</p> <p>Alternatives such as ANPR enforcement for HGVs, enhanced cycling infrastructure, and demand management have been assessed and remain part of a wider integrated transport strategy for the town; however these alone do not address freight access or junction capacity issues critical to development delivery. Importantly, the scheme leverages significant external funding through developer contributions (Section 106 agreements) and other sources, reducing the net cost to OCC and ensuring compliance with planning obligations tied to growth areas.</p>

<p>how OCC has considered alternatives to road building to resolve the situation - such as ANPR cameras to limit HGV traffic, and what the breakdown and basis (e.g. GBP value and developments in any cases of s106 agreements) of the other sources of funding outside of OCC are, those that may have been included in the justification.</p>	<p>This combined approach balances immediate operational needs with long-term modal shift objectives, ensuring that road investment complements, not replaces, active travel and traffic reduction initiatives – Indeed, the Watlington Relief Road includes enhanced Active travel measure including Cycling, walking and Quiet lanes to connect existing and new communities.</p>
<p>8. COUNCILLOR ROBIN JONES</p> <p>How much funding is being made available in the budget for flood protection measures outside of the gulley clearance plan? Please make clear what specific activities (revenue) and infrastructure (capital) are funded</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>There is a capital budget proposal of an additional £4m to repair highway drainage with the expenditure expected to be spread over two years.</p> <p>2026EP10 refers to the previously proposed one - off investment of £2.0m agreed in February 2025. This funding was for pro-active flood resilience measures to be put in place. The pro-active measures are part of a wider flood risk management workstream including BAU and projects and in line with the approved and published Local Flood Risk Management strategy.</p> <p>Current workstreams are:</p> <p>Priority Actions – delivered through grants to local communities as well as small scale framework and these include works that are small local projects that are managed by the local group, parish council, District Council or charity group. Currently we have 41 projects from first round of Priority Actions EOIs at the start of the financial year. From these projects 23 are completed, or a grant</p>

	<p>agreement/grant has been made having had back quotes, with work either currently ongoing or scheduled.</p> <p>We were able to add an additional 14 more in November 2025 bringing the total to 55 during 2025/26 with current forecast spend of £940,000 (including resource to support the community groups with their delivery where required). Of the 55 projects the works include a range of activities as follows:</p> <p>Survey or Investigation = 8 Watercourse/culvert works = 14 Natural flood management/SuDS = 7 Community resilience = 11 Flood risk engineered = 15</p> <p>Property Flood Resilience measures We have also allocated an initial £50,000 funding to develop a pilot area for Property level protection measures and are currently working through the legal aspects of this and the use of the Environment Agency Framework to deliver the surveys for 25 dwellings, which would then lead to works in the next financial year.</p> <p>In addition, £100,000 revenue budget was agreed in February 2025 for two flood officers to recruit, train and support Flood Wardens, or the equivalent, in those places that have Section 19 reports under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 associated, and to work with Emergency Planning and local resilience bodies to encourage relevant Parish and Town Councils or equivalent to complete emergency plans.</p>
9. COUNCILLOR EMILY KERR	COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT <p>What's the total amount of funding being made available for road</p> <p>The defect budget isn't broken down to a level that allows it to be split into this level of detail. As the council's inspectors identify safety issues on the network,</p>

<p>repairs (potholes) / gritting and repairs to existing footpaths and cycle paths and the establishment of new ones (including Greenways) - including gritting path & cycleways? This needs to clearly break-down the monies allocated to each element of the mix as defined above.</p>	<p>work orders are issued to carry out the necessary repairs. A number of factors can also influence this, such as wet and cold winters and it is only after the work has been issued that it can be broken down to asset type.</p> <p>The council supports local communities directly, and through communication with district councils, to self-help through the provision of around 1,300 salt bins. We will refill once a year on request, and further grit can be purchased. Requests for new bins are also accepted.</p> <p>There is no routine proactive treatment of footways or cycleways, but at the council's request, our term maintenance contractors will respond to reports of particularly icy areas on our highway, footpath and cycle networks.</p> <p>Priority routes for snow clearance, subject to resources, is for some key footway routes, such as town centres routes to hospitals etc and this includes the Marston Ferry cycle route.</p> <p>This type of approach is adopted by many authorities across the country and in line with national guidance</p> <p>In terms of new infrastructure such as cycle paths, these will come from a number of different projects, some that OCC will be delivering but others that will come from developments or other works.</p>
<p>10. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>Given OCC has declared a CEE, how has the "A Current & Future Climate Vulnerability of Oxfordshire" report commissioned</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>There is a range of existing funded work within the budget supporting climate adaptation including funding of part post within climate action service, highways funding, work through the councils emergency planning teams, our statutory flood teams and flooding grants.</p>

<p>by OCC influenced this budget? Please share the specific capital and revenue investments in this budget, and their scale, so we can see the importance climate adaptation is afforded.</p>	<p>There is additional proposed funding with the budget for Investment into Drainage Infrastructure (£4.0m): This investment will deliver highway drainage system repairs to ensure that the increased gully emptying regime delivers the expected benefits. The new gully emptying programme has identified a number of new issues that were not previously known.</p>
<p>11. COUNCILLOR EMMA MARKHAM</p> <p>Given Cllr Filipova-Rivers' motion that was passed at council on 9th December, where is the Community Cohesion budget line, and what budget is allocated to it?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> <p>There is no dedicated budget line for community cohesion. There is a range of funded activity already taking place across the council, from community insight profiles to the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership. New activity will be funded from existing budgets or applications will be made for external funding.</p>
<p>12. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON</p> <p>Every budget line / project in this budget has an associated monetary value. Given OCC has a 2030 carbon target, and has undertaken a climate impact assessment, where are the line by line, and indeed, overall, GHG emission absolute values and changes compared to the prior year?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION</p> <p>The Climate Impact Assessment, approved by SLT in 2022, is a qualitative assessment, aiming to support early decision making as there may be limited data available at budget setting stage.</p> <p>Quantitative assessments are carried out if required within the planning process. They require significant detailed evidence and resource.</p>
<p>13. COUNCILLOR ROBIN JONES</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR JUDY ROBERTS, CABINET MEMBER FOR PLACE, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION</p>

<p>Where is the public health / climate change strategy influencing this budget on the ground? Please share revenue / capital expenditure lines and the value of spend associated with the activities infrastructure funded - it could be, for example, provision of cool spaces in urban heat islands where levels of deprivation are also worst, and mental health support for residents experiencing flooding who now have significant 'flood anxiety' (see <u>Every_time_it_rains_FINAL.pdf</u>).</p>	<p>Budget decision making takes in-the-round consideration of council policies including public health policy and initiatives, not least our leading work on Marmot Place, and our climate strategies. In the time available it is not therefore possible to give a line by line analysis of where influence on the current budget can be shown directly. However there are significant public health and climate change interventions in this budget, alongside existing investment, including investment for Youth Futures Hubs, Family Solutions Plus, Community Capacity Grants, the Oxfordshire Tree Project, ongoing flooding investment, active travel schemes including quiet lands and LCWIPs, and investment in the public realm (both with impact across health and climate) and investment in the response to Ash Die Back.</p>
<p>14. COUNCILLOR EMMA MARKHAM</p> <p>What exact sums are in the budget to expand rural bus services and to make cheaper fares available to certain age groups and market segments (i.e. Military Veterans) to improve social equity, reduce traffic on Oxfordshire roads, carbon emissions and improve air quality across the county?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT</p> <p>The existing budget of £1.27m for rural and community transport services will continue. This currently funds 29 local bus routes across the county plus the community transport grant scheme, which in 2025/26 funded four improvement schemes for local organisations.</p> <p>The council utilises Government grants for additional bus services in rural areas, plus the continuation of the MyBus ticket scheme which offers a discounted countywide multi-operator product – including particularly good value fares for young people aged up to 19 (£3.50 per day / £17 per week). The grant also funds free travel for asylum seekers in residence at the Kassam Stadium hotel.</p>

	<p>The budget also contains an extension of the £400k additional funding provided for maintenance of the combined Park & Ride return fares at £4 for a single passenger or £5 for a group. This scheme has contributed towards greater Park & Ride use and improved air quality in Oxford.</p>
15. COUNCILLOR EMILY KERR We note the reference to the national living wage. Please clarify whether this budget allows for both all directly employed OCC staff and those in OCC supply chains or organisations who provide commissioned services to be paid at least the (Oxford) Real Living Wage, and if not, please explain why OCC is not setting an example alongside over 100 other Oxford for- and non-profit organisations.	<p>COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES</p> <p>The council pays all employees a minimum of £12.65 per hour. The current national living wage is £12.21 per hour, meaning we pay 44 pence per hour (3.6%) more than the minimum.</p> <p>We do not currently have accreditation with the Living Wage Foundation to pay the UK Real Living Wage of £13.45 per hour, or with Oxford City Council to apply the Oxford Living Wage of £13.16 per hour to any Oxford based employees.</p> <p>A previous review of the option to apply Oxford Living Wage set out several reasons for not pursuing this at that time. These included impact on the cost of service contracts, the financial implication as the salary bill would increase by a significant figure, the council would have limited voice in respect of annual increases, there could be an impact on recruitment and retention aligned to other authorities and partners. Living Wage Foundation accreditation to date has not been considered but would have a similar impact on the salary bill.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Our lowest pay point is 3.6% above the legal minimum · Pay is agreed in line with the national negotiations · OCC does not stipulate through our tendering process that other organisations should pay the Living Wage
16. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT	COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

<p>How (if at all) will the move to frozen school meals change both the supply chain climate impact and the nutritional value delivered to school children, and will this change align with the provisions agreed in the plant-based food motion adopted by Cabinet in 2022? Please specify where details are known.</p>	<p>The move has not been a switch to frozen meals, but a switch to a mixture of both fresh and frozen vegetables dependant on seasonal availability and cost. Frozen vegetables, if anything have higher nutritional value than fresh, given picking and packaging timescales compared to fresh produce that loses its nutritional value between harvesting and use in the kitchen.</p> <p>During our three-week menu cycle of 15 days, 5 days are completely meat free. Of the 51 choices available during the cycle, just 10 (20%) contain meat, all fresh, apart from 1 item. 4, (12%) contain fish, 22, (43%) are suitable for Vegetarians (excluding fish) and 13, (25%) are suitable for Vegans.</p>
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