

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.

1. COUNCILLOR PAUL-AUSTIN SARGENT What progress has been made in the revival of the Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee? Will we be attempting to resurrect the extant arrangement with Warwickshire and West Northamptonshire or will Oxfordshire County Council opt for a new model? If so, what will it be? Whatever form the committee takes, when can we get started? Time is ticking and the health provision of Banbury and its sub-region needs effective oversight and scrutiny.	COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES I completely understand the importance and urgency of this and thank Cllr Sargent for raising the issue again. We have been working on the options since the last Council meeting, and I hope we will have a solution and then a date for a first meeting soon. Given that this Council is not going to exist for much longer, getting on with something that works is more important than getting it perfect In view of the current wording of the Horton Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference, which precludes the Committee from currently meeting, in order to revive the Horton HOSC, it will be necessary for Council to determine the final wording of the terms of reference. The final shape of any Committee will ultimately therefore be the decision of members. Different possible Horton HOSC models are being considered, the related legal and financial implications of each model, and the possible options for involving neighbouring councils. On completion of the proposed modelling, the final recommendations on the two models will be put to Council for a decision to enable the approved Committee to be set up and work commence.
2. COUNCILLOR PAUL-AUSTIN SARGENT Buvidal (Buprenorphine) prolonged-release or depot injections may offer benefits to some people because it removes the need for regular attendance (commonly daily) for dispensing or supervised consumption of opioid substitution medicines like methadone, or oral forms of	COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES Opioid substitution therapy (OST) continues to be the most reliable and evidence-based approach for individuals dependent on heroin or other illicit opioids. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance^{11} identifies methadone and buprenorphine as the primary treatment options, delivered as part of a holistic care package including psychosocial support,

buprenorphine e.g. Subutex or Espranor in the following forms: • sublingual tablets (under the tongue); • a linctus; • lyophilisates (a quick melting, wafer-like tablet). This subcutaneous injection may offer advantages for those who have difficulties adhering to the regime of daily supervised opioid substitution medication, such as for people who are dysregulated due to substance use, mental health disorders or indeed, those with dual diagnosis. At the Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Public Health and Inequalities we were told that Buvidal injections were available by prescription through our Community & Drug Treatment Service (CDTS). However, an enquiry that I made at Turning Point Roads to Recovery, our CDTS provider, is that Buvidal injections are no longer listed on the matrix. Who is correct in this regard, our CDTS practitioners or our Public Health commissioners? How do we resolve this apparent dilemma?	recovery interventions, housing assistance, employment opportunities, and overall health support. Buvidal, a long-acting injectable form of buprenorphine, is available through Oxfordshire's Community Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service and can be prescribed where clinically appropriate. However, Buvidal is not a routine first-line treatment and is not offered to all patients. It is a specialist prescribing option where there is a clear clinical benefit, for example for people who are unable to reliably attend pharmacies for supervised consumption, those experiencing homelessness, or individuals leaving prison. It is prescribed within a framework that integrates medical, social, and psychological support. We are not able to comment on your conversation with Turning Point. However officers can arrange a call for you with a senior member of the Turning Point team if you would like to understand more about the prescribing criteria and how these are applied in practice. [1] NICE TA114, UK Clinical Guidelines on Drug Misuse and Dependence (the "Orange Book")
3. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY Over the last few years as the local member for Banbury Ruscote, I have seen substantial growth of weeds on pavements near Bretch Hill and surrounding locations	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR As was debated at Council on 24 March 2026, whilst the footways referred to form part of the adopted public highway and are maintained by Oxfordshire County Council, however, there is currently no countywide programme for the

within my division, which has resulted in complaints to local Labour councillors. Banbury Town Council has agreed that weed sprays will keep their growth down. Would the Cabinet Member, Councillor Leffman, respond to let me know if funding and resources can be made available to get contractors to remove the weeds as these are located on public footpaths owned by the County Council?	routine spraying or removal of weeds from footways and pavements. Funding for a countywide weed-spraying programme was withdrawn over ten years ago and, at present, there are no plans to reintroduce this budget. As resolved at Full Council, a report to Cabinet on the costs and options to re-establish this service is being prepared. At present, Oxfordshire County Council's vegetation policy is primarily focused on maintaining the safe use of the highway, including keeping footways and cycleways clear where vegetation is obstructing passage or creating a safety concern. As a result, works are prioritised where there is a demonstrable impact on highway safety or accessibility rather than for routine weed control. As noted, Banbury Town Council has indicated a willingness to undertake weed spraying in these locations. Such local arrangements can often provide a more responsive solution to managing cosmetic weed growth, particularly where the issue does not present a highway safety risk. Where weed growth is causing an obstruction to pedestrians or affecting the safe use of the highway, reports can be submitted via Fix My Street and will be assessed in accordance with the Council's maintenance policies. Link here: FixMyStreet
4. COUNCILLOR PAUL-AUSTIN SARGENT It has been confirmed that we are now in an <i>El Niño phase of the ENSO cycle</i>. The 2026 <i>El Niño</i> event is likely to be one of the strongest ever recorded, and its effects on UK weather could be pronounced. This has led to some media organisations describing it as a ‘Godzilla’ or ‘Super’ event as some models predict that it could exceed the current classification system.	COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL Over the last financial year, Oxfordshire County Council has undertaken the biggest drainage programme in its recent history. We inspected every one of the county's roughly 147,000 drainage gullies and catchpits, with the overwhelming majority cleaned as part of the programme. The work cost £2.6 million, including an additional £1.5 million secured through the Council's budget. In total, our crews removed around 2,346

Using past climatic patterns and meteorological observations during historic, strong *El Niño* phases, we are likely to expect in the early part of winter, a series of unsettled conditions bringing milder temperatures, heavier rainfall, and stronger winds. This early winter period could be marked by more frequent, higher intensity storms and persistent intervening wet spells. Heavy, intense rainfall onto land which is at field capacity will result in flashier and persistent flooding.

As the season moves towards late winter, the influence of an *El Niño* impact tends to evolve. The UK may shift into calmer, colder conditions, with sharper frosts and a more settled atmosphere replacing the earlier turbulence. This progression highlights the stark contrast typical of strong *El Niño* winters: a stormy, wet onset followed by a bitterly cold, snowy and frosty finale.

Day to day weather is hard to predict with any certainty months in advance, but we do have the climate history and powerful contemporary modelling as a guide of what may be coming our way.

Oxfordshire County Council should ensure that services such as Fire & Rescue, highways and social care provision are as prepared as they can be for possible higher fluvial and pluvial flood events and a prolonged cold snap. Can the Leader tell the Council what percentage of our infrastructure is capable of withstanding current design flood levels (with allowance for climate change)? How are we actively working with

tonnes of silt from Oxfordshire's drainage network. We doubled the number of drainage crews from six to twelve and introduced evening working so that we could reach gullies on some of our busiest roads without causing unnecessary disruption.

Most importantly, this is not a one-off clean-up exercise. During the previous administration, gullies were cleaned on a four-year cycle. We have changed that to annual cleaning of critical gullies such as on high-speed roads and every other year for all other gullies, because we simply don't believe once every four years is adequate for a county facing increasingly challenging weather conditions. Moving to this more frequent programme of cleaning represents one of the biggest changes to the way Oxfordshire manages surface water in many years.

We have also identified gullies that need more than cleaning because they are defective. Those have been added to a repair programme, with a further £4 million agreed in July to repair and replace defective gullies over the next two years.

We are also trying to help communities take action themselves. For the third consecutive year, Oxfordshire County Council has offered community groups grants of up to £25,000 to undertake projects that improve local resilience to flooding.

But we cannot pretend that this is enough. Climate change is moving at an alarming pace. I've seen the consequences first-hand in my own village of Wheatley. In September 2024, the High Street became a river and dozens of homes were so badly damaged that some residents have only recently been able to return. Since then, we've been working with the Environment Agency, the District Council, the Parish Council and local landowners on proposals for balancing ponds to hold back water and reduce the impact of future flooding.

district and anchor partners to mitigate the risks for the most vulnerable in Oxfordshire?	With forecasts suggesting that the developing El Niño could bring further unusual weather patterns, the work is becoming a race against time. We cannot prevent every flood. But we can make Oxfordshire better prepared, invest in the infrastructure we know we need, and work with communities to make our county more resilient to the climate we are now experiencing. Specifically in reference to your question climate change allowances are generally applied through flood risk assessments, planning decisions and the design of individual infrastructure schemes, rather than being expressed as a single percentage indicating the resilience of existing infrastructure to future flood events. The Council does not hold a countywide assessment identifying what proportion of infrastructure can withstand a particular design flood event with climate change allowances applied. This is because infrastructure assets are owned and managed by a range of organisations, were built at different times to different standards, and are assessed on an asset and scheme-specific basis. To provide a more precise response, further detail would be needed on the specific infrastructure being referred to. With regard to the further work we do to protect vulnerable residents, the County Council works closely with District and City Councils, emergency services, utilities, voluntary organisations and other partners through established resilience and emergency planning arrangements. This includes work through the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum and the Joint Oxfordshire Resilience Team to assess risks, develop and exercise emergency plans, and coordinate preparedness and response activity across the county. These arrangements include multi-agency planning for flooding, severe weather and utility disruption; promotion of Priority Services Register sign-up for vulnerable residents; support for Community Emergency Plans across Oxfordshire's towns and parishes; community resilience programmes and preparedness campaigns; flood warden initiatives; and joint working with district councils on severe weather provision and flood recovery support.
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	Together, these measures help ensure that vulnerable residents are identified and supported and that Oxfordshire's communities are as prepared as possible for severe weather and flooding events.
5. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY Would the Cabinet Member, Councillor Leffman, look into the delay in the defect repair by M Group contractors situated in the middle of the traffic-lighted junction of A422, Stratford Rd to Warwick Rd? There are roughly 4 portholes in total. There were previous FixMyStreet super user reports and as local member, I have submitted online reports via the councillor enquiries portal. At the last Council meeting, I was assured by the Cabinet Member that these repairs would be completed before August 2026, but unfortunately this was not the case.	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Thank you for bringing this to my attention. I apologise that these defects have not yet been repaired, particularly given the previous expectation that the work would be completed before the end of August. I can confirm that the defects are scheduled to be attended to no later than 10 September 2026, and officers have contacted M Group Ltd. to request that they attend sooner if operationally possible.
6. COUNCILLOR ANDREW COLES The Witney High Street and Market Square Enhancements are due to be completed just 3 days before the Witney's Christmas Lights switch-on on 27th November. As I have reiterated on many occasions, it is absolutely imperative that this work be completed on time, as to not affect the start of this crucial trading period for Witney's shops and businesses, and the wonderful occasion that the Christmas Lights switch-on is, attracting	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR The current contractor program shows a completed demobilisation and removal of site compound before 3 November. The project team have emphasised the importance of completing works to the agreed programme. As a West Oxfordshire member, I am very much aware that the work must be completed on time, as I know how important the Christmas Lights event is to the residents and businesses of Witney and the surrounding area.

around 7,000-8,000 people annually. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the work will indeed be completed on time and that our Christmas Lights switch-on will be unaffected?	
7. COUNCILLOR ANDREW COLES The Witney High Street and Market Square Enhancements are due to be completed at the end of November. Can the Cabinet Member please confirm that the new ANPR cameras, which were approved last year by the previous Cabinet Member through Delegated Decisions, will be installed to coincide with the end of the works to ensure the existing traffic restrictions are better enforced so that residents and businesses will see the immediate benefits of the new enhancements?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Yes, I can confirm that the two ANPR Cameras required for the Witney High Street 'No Motor Vehicles' Traffic Enforcement scheme will be installed to coincide with the end of the Witney High Street works.
8. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS Prior to the Council meeting on 24 March, I was told by the then Cabinet Member responsible that traffic count data for Stanford Quarry tip (HWRC) was not available because the system "had periods of faultiness across several months". Four months later, in a letter to the Vale of White Horse District Council on 17 July 2026, the new Cabinet Member responsible admitted that "the vehicle counting equipment at Stanford HWRC is not operating accurately." It's unacceptable that the Council has not fixed this problem and there remains no accurate data on the usage of Stanford Quarry tip before and after the introduction of the new booking system.	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY The Council first became aware of issues with the vehicle counting equipment at Stanford HWRC when reviewing data between February and April 2025, when periods of unreliable or missing data were identified. These issues were believed to have been resolved with it providing generally reliable operation; however, this was short lived as the system subsequently stopped providing data entirely on 18 February 2026. Replacement telemetry equipment is being installed as part of a wider Council programme to upgrade traffic monitoring infrastructure, of which Stanford HWRC is one element. The Council is working to complete this as soon as possible and expects accurate vehicle count data to be available again once the new equipment has been commissioned and tested. In the meantime,

Will the Cabinet Member confirm (a) when the Council first became aware of a problem with the traffic count data for Stanford Quarry tip and (b) when she expects there to be accurate data once again? Thank you.	officers are happy that the booking system provides accurate information on site usage through recorded bookings and attendance. However, it is appreciated this information is not 100% directly comparable with historic traffic telemetry data, as vehicle counts included operational and other non-visitor vehicle movements in addition to customer visits.
9. COUNCILLOR NICK FIELD-JOHNSON Please confirm (date and timing) when Carterton is going to get a slip road connecting to the A40 going west? Witney now has several slip roads and with all the housing development in Carterton and Brize Norton, a slip road at the Minster Lovell junction going west is needed (there is a slip road there going east).	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT In 2022, optioneering and feasibility work demonstrated that the proposal to provide additional west-facing slips at the B4477 Minster Lovell junction with the A40 would not attract sufficient trips to make it value for money as it would be too far to the east and vehicles were predicted to continue to use other routes into/out of Carterton. A new slip road to the A40 to improve connectivity to the west would need to be positioned further west than the B4477 junction and should be considered as part of the subsequent development proposals emerging in the area. The proposed developments in the area, which may form part of the emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043, will need to demonstrate how their sites will access the A40.
10. COUNCILLOR MARK CHERRY There was welcome news on 20th August 2026 that M Group contractors had started surface treatment work on Wimborne Avenue. The majority of works went smoothly, but unfortunately, due to some of the cars not moving, part of the road could not be completed.	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Thank you, Councillor Cherry, for your question. I share residents' frustration that the surface treatment works on Wimborne Avenue could not be completed in full on the scheduled day due to a small number of vehicles remaining within the work area.

Would the Cabinet member look into the possibilities of cars being removed by towing in the future, given the cost to the Council by having to go back and complete the work at a later stage? This is something I was met with on the doorstep of Wimborne Avenue where residents quite rightly vented their frustrations of road works not being fully completed.	Prior to the works, residents were notified by letter, and advance warning signs were installed. The Temporary Traffic Regulation Order for the works also included "No Waiting" restrictions, and on the day of the scheme the site team made further efforts to contact vehicle owners and successfully moved several vehicles. Unfortunately, a small number remained, preventing approximately 40 metres of carriageway from being treated. The Council and our contractor, M Group, already have processes available to manage this situation. Where necessary, and where the required legal restrictions are in place, arrangements can be made for vehicles to be removed. However, vehicle removal is considered a measure of last resort and can only take place following the appropriate legal processes and involvement of the Council's parking enforcement service. Following this experience, officers and M Group will continue to review schemes where significant on-street parking is expected and will consider the use of additional enforcement measures, including vehicle removal arrangements where appropriate and proportionate, to help ensure that planned works can be completed efficiently and avoid the need for costly return visits. Our aim is always to deliver highway improvements right first time, safely, efficiently and with the least possible disruption to residents, while ensuring that any enforcement action remains lawful, proportionate and practical.
11. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON The Council's own monitoring data makes deeply concerning reading for Oxford's economy. In June, footfall on Queen Street fell by 14.7% year-on-year, compared with a decline of just 3.3% across UK high streets.	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY The figures Councillor Snowdon refers to are part of the monitoring data we have published, and they do show reductions in spending in some of Oxford's local centres. We take that data seriously, which is precisely why we have been publishing it transparently each month.

Meanwhile, card spending in May fell by 15.7% in Cowley, 17.1% in Headington and 15.7% in Summertown.

These are not abstract statistics. Behind every percentage point are local shops, cafés, restaurants and other businesses losing customers and revenue, with the inevitable consequences for investment, business viability, and employment.

Can this administration honestly continue to claim that its transport policies are supporting Oxfordshire's economy when the Council's own figures show such significant falls in footfall and spending in our local centres, and will the administration finally accept that the congestion charge and its wider anti-car policies may be contributing to economic damage and putting local jobs at risk?

On footfall, the June Queen Street figures cited in the question are currently being checked (along with the July data) following an issue identified with the counter by the data supplier, so it would be wrong to place undue weight on those figures until that process has been completed.

It is important not to draw firm conclusions from a single set of spend and footfall figures, particularly for individual months. The figures quoted in the question represent part of a much more complex picture. They also need to be considered alongside wider economic pressures affecting retailers, hospitality businesses and consumers nationally.

The spend data we have published also shows a more mixed picture than has been suggested. Total spend in Oxford city centre for the first six months of the congestion charge scheme compared to the same six months the year before declined by the same amount in the comparator city centres (4.3% compared to 4.2%). Footfall in Queen Street over the same period declined less than in a comparable retail street in Cambridge (2% year-on-year drop in Queen Street, 5% year-on-year drop in Sidney Street, Cambridge). Only a third of city centre car parking can be accessed without passing a congestion charge point.

Over the same six-month period, year-on-year spend in Oxford's suburban destinations has declined more than the average in comparator areas (8.4% compared to 2.5%). All car parking in suburban areas is accessible without passing a congestion charge point. These figures do not suggest the congestion charge has caused serious damage to the city's economy and it is particularly interesting to note that the city centre (where the majority of car parking can't be accessed without paying the charge) appears to be performing similarly to comparator centres.

	A survey of 300 Oxford-area businesses found that 79% of those who gave a view on performance compared with a year earlier said they were doing the same or better. On the temporary congestion charge specifically, views were mixed: 48% reported no noticeable effect, 22% reported a positive effect and 30% reported a negative effect. The temporary congestion charge was introduced in response to the severe congestion impacts arising from the continuing closure of Botley Road and the resulting delay to the traffic filter trial. Monitoring data shows reductions in traffic on a number of key routes across the city. Bus patronage has also increased, and not only on park and ride services, where congestion charge income has helped make travel significantly cheaper. The purpose of the congestion charge has been to keep Oxford moving during an exceptionally difficult period for the transport network. We will be introducing the previously approved traffic filter trial on 28th September and of course we will monitor its impacts comprehensively and carefully and listen to businesses' concerns. But I do not believe the available evidence supports the claim that, to date, the council's transport policies are causing economy-wide damage across the city. Nor does it demonstrate a collapse in local trade as a result of the temporary congestion charge.
12. COUNCILLOR JAMES ROBERTSHAW Can the Council consider a budget for river clearance due to the Environment Agency not enforcing riparian owner's responsibilities?	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY The County Council understands concerns regarding debris and obstructions within rivers and watercourses. However, responsibility for maintaining a watercourse does not generally rest with the County Council. For designated Main Rivers, regulatory responsibility rests with the Environment Agency, whilst landowners adjoining a watercourse (riparian owners) have duties and responsibilities relating to its maintenance and the unobstructed flow of water.

	As the Lead Local Flood Authority, Oxfordshire County Council has certain powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991 in relation to ordinary watercourses. These powers are generally discretionary and do not place a duty on the Council to undertake routine maintenance or clearance of rivers and watercourses. Where problems arise, the Council will normally seek to work with or, where appropriate, take action against the responsible landowner rather than carrying out maintenance itself. The establishment of a dedicated County Council budget for routine river clearance would have significant financial and resource implications. Any such programme would require ongoing funding for staff, specialist contractors, environmental assessments, permissions, vegetation and debris removal, disposal of materials and subsequent maintenance. It could also result in the Council assuming activities that are ordinarily the responsibility of riparian landowners or other public bodies. For these reasons, the Council's current approach is to focus its resources on its statutory flood risk management functions and to work with landowners, local communities and partner organisations, including the Environment Agency, to address specific flooding concerns where they arise.
13. COUNCILLOR JAMES ROBERTSHAW There are only 5 highways inspectors in Oxfordshire to check and verify highways work that is needed. Could the Council consider increasing this service?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTIONS AND REPAIR Oxfordshire County Council recognises the important role highway inspections play in identifying safety defects, assessing condition, and helping to prioritise maintenance work across the county. Inspection resources are kept under review to ensure they remain appropriate for the size of the network, the level of demand, and the Council's statutory responsibilities. While increasing the number of inspectors would require consideration alongside wider budget and workforce pressures, the Council

	will continue to assess whether additional resource, improved processes, or technology could help strengthen the service. Over the coming months, the service will review highway inspection resources as part of the wider service redesign, recognising their importance also to the Local Government Reorganisation. Seasonal temporary staff also remain an option to help manage peak winter demand. In the meantime, the inspection team continues to prioritise reported issues based on risk, safety, and the Council's highway maintenance policies, ensuring that the most urgent matters are addressed as quickly as available resources allow.
14. COUNCILLOR JAMES ROBERTSHAW Regarding the Council's Infrastructure Plan, the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) is not detailed enough to support current Local Plans. Can this be addressed?	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY OxIS was developed collaboratively through a working group comprising representatives from Oxfordshire County Council and the district councils. The development of OxIS was informed by adopted and emerging Local Plans, Infrastructure Delivery Plans (IDPs), and other key local priorities to ensure alignment with planned growth and infrastructure needs across the county. While the OxIS commission has now been completed, the intention is for OxIS to serve as a dynamic and flexible investment and prioritisation tool. Rather than acting as a static report or fixed set of recommendations, it is intended to support ongoing decision-making, helping partners identify, prioritise and coordinate infrastructure investment as needs, opportunities and funding sources evolve. It is important to note that the OxIS tool is for the prioritisation of strategic infrastructure, and not all local community infrastructure is included due to the sifting process.

15. COUNCILLOR DAVID HENWOOD

The £5 congestion charge has generated approximately £7.7 million in income in less than a year. The forthcoming traffic filters will introduce penalties of £75, reduced to £35 if paid promptly.

The £7.7 million congestion charge income represents approximately 1.54 million £5 chargeable transactions. If penalties under the traffic filter scheme were issued on anything approaching a similar scale, the resulting penalty income could be between approximately £53.9 million and £115.5 million, depending on the payment rate.

Given that the Council has already invested in the software, signage and enforcement infrastructure associated with the congestion charge, does the Cabinet Member consider it proportionate for the new traffic filter scheme to have the potential to generate such a substantial additional income from penalties, and what safeguards will be in place to ensure that the scheme is being operated primarily to manage traffic rather than to generate revenue?

COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

Thank you for the question, but I'm concerned that there are some fundamental misunderstandings contained within.

The temporary congestion charge income figures published on our website show total income before operating costs and they are clearly split between income from congestion charge payments and income from penalty charges. You have incorrectly assumed that all of the income is from daily £5 congestion charge payments; that is not the case. Based on the latest figures published, there have been 571,000 payments.

Congestion charge payments and traffic filter penalties are not directly comparable. With the congestion charge scheme, drivers can pay the daily charge to pass through the charging points if they don't have a permit but this won't be possible with the traffic filters. Cars will be able to access all locations in the city without driving through any of the six traffic filters even if some journeys may need to take a different route. The principal purpose of both schemes is to reduce congestion, benefiting the vast majority of residents and visitors and delivering significant benefits including the Investment Programme funded from payments.

The Council has developed a substantial permit and exemption system to ensure that access is maintained for those who need it. Residents of Oxford and the rest of Oxfordshire have access to free permits, while a range of permits will also remain available for groups such as Blue Badge holders, health and care related journeys, and other eligible users. The intention is to support compliance and provide appropriate access, not to maximise penalty income.

It will only be if someone drives their car through a traffic filter point during the operating hours without a valid permit that they would receive a penalty

	charge notice which is £70 but reduced to £35 if paid within 21 days. There will therefore be nowhere near as many PCNs in the traffic filter scheme as there have been daily £5 payments with the congestion charge. The assertion in the question is therefore not a reliable basis for assessing the likely income from the traffic filter trial and seems to show a real misunderstanding of the difference between the temporary congestion charge and the traffic filters trial. Furthermore, during the first six months of the traffic filter trial, the council will send a warning notice the first time any car goes through a traffic filter without using a permit, instead of sending a penalty charge notice. As has been said time after time, the traffic filter scheme is not an income-generating scheme – it aims to reduce traffic making buses quicker and more reliable and walking and cycling safer and more attractive. Any revenue raised through PCNs is legally restricted to transport measures and could include the continuation of subsidies for bus travel. The measure of success of the traffic filters will not be the amount of income generated but rather whether congestion is reduced and Oxford's transport network works better for all those who live, work and visit here. We will be gathering data and inviting feedback to help us fully understand to what extent this has happened.
16. COUNCILLOR DAVID HENWOOD The Council's monitoring and forecast data shows that traffic journey times have increased by more than 20% at a number of locations, including Heyford Hill, Hinksey Hill and Kennington. These are important routes for residents travelling into and across Oxford from the south. Given that reducing congestion is one of the stated objectives of the congestion charge, can the Cabinet Member explain why the Council considers significant	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT We recognise that communities such as Littlemore and Rose Hill are particularly sensitive to changes on southern routes, which is why journey times, traffic volumes and bus reliability in those areas will continue to be monitored closely. It is important, though, to consider those impacts as part of the wider network picture. The temporary congestion charge was introduced to address Oxford's chronic congestion during the prolonged Botley Road closure caused by multiple delays to Network Rail's works at the station. The council has always been

increases in journey times on these surrounding routes to be an acceptable outcome, and what assessment has been made of the impact on residents, businesses and public transport reliability in communities such as Littlemore and Rose Hill?

clear, both in its modelling and in its monitoring, that reducing traffic in some locations could lead to increases in traffic and journey times elsewhere. The question is whether, overall, the scheme helps the transport network function more effectively.

The monitoring data shows that many key routes within Oxford have seen reductions in traffic volumes and improved journey times. In June, for example, traffic volumes were 30% lower on Hythe Bridge Street, 21% lower on Marston Ferry Road, 20% lower on Hollow Way and 15% lower on St Clements compared with the same month a year earlier. This is the type of change the scheme was designed to achieve. Bus journey times have also improved on several important routes in the city. Oxford Bus Company has also spoken publicly about increased bus ridership since the start of the congestion charge, and that increase has not been limited to park and ride services, where congestion charge revenue has helped make travel particularly good value.

Increases in journey times are not ignored or dismissed; they are assessed regularly. They must be considered alongside the wider network and broader benefits and the temporary context in which the scheme was introduced. That is why we have been reviewing the data every month. The existence of some increases on certain routes does not, in itself, mean the scheme has failed. The relevant question is whether the overall benefits of reduced congestion in Oxford's most congested corridors outweigh those impacts.

As with all aspects of the temporary congestion charge and the forthcoming traffic filter trial, we will continue to monitor the evidence carefully, listen to residents and businesses, and make adjustments where necessary.

17. COUNCILLOR DAVID HENWOOD As we approach the Local Government Reorganisation process, there is a risk of increased staff turnover and the loss of experienced middle management within the County Council. What measures have been put in place to ensure that the Council has sufficient management capacity and suitably trained staff to ensure that pothole repairs and routine road maintenance across Oxfordshire continue without disruption and remain within the approved highways budget during this period of transition?	COUNCILLOR JUDITH EDWARDS, CABINET MEMBER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES A key consideration within the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme is maintaining business continuity and service delivery throughout the transition period. The County Council continues to monitor workforce capacity and retention risks closely, particularly in critical frontline and management roles. Existing service and workforce planning arrangements remain in place, with succession planning, recruitment activity, targeted retention measures, and the use of temporary resources where necessary to maintain operational resilience. For Highways specifically, responsibility for pothole repairs and routine maintenance remains unchanged during the transition period. Performance, delivery capacity and expenditure continue to be monitored through established management and financial controls to ensure services are delivered safely, effectively and within the approved highways budget. It is also worth noting that the works themselves are undertaken by the council's contractor M Group. The Council will keep these arrangements under review as LGR progresses and will take further action where required to mitigate emerging workforce risks.
18. COUNCILLOR GLYNIS PHILLIPS Please can you provide an update on the safe pedestrian crossing between Barton and Risinghurst at the bottom of Collinwood Road. This was originally planned for in 2002 and the need for a safe pedestrian crossing has increased over that time with the higher housing numbers in the area with even more planned. These communities	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I'm grateful to Cllr Phillips for showing me the Collinwood Road A40 crossing location, which brought to life the safety concerns at the location. The county council secured the delivery of a new pedestrian and cycle crossing of the A40 from the adjacent and proposed Thornhill Park development (application reference 21/01695/FUL). The developer is required to deliver the crossing prior to first housing occupation of the site. Planning

have waited long enough for a safe crossing over 2 dual carriageways and there is a need for urgent action.	permission for the site was granted in September 2024; however, our understanding is that build out of the site has been delayed. We are continuing to monitor the situation: the developer is required to provide the crossing in line with the agreement.
19. COUNCILLOR GLYNIS PHILLIPS I met with Cllr Gant in February with a number of local residents to continue the discussion about improving the access to a right of way from Stoke Place in Headington to Barton Park across the northern bypass. It was agreed to provide a cost for improving access through the central reservation, renovate the steps on the Barton Park side and then consider signposting to drivers that this was a pedestrian crossing point. I would be grateful for an update on progress.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Whilst I welcome the practical improvements now being delivered at the Stoke Place crossing, I recognise that many residents would have preferred to see a grade-separated pedestrian and cycle link provided in this location. A bridge was explored during the preparation of the Barton Area Action Plan and wider planning of Barton Park but was not ultimately pursued through to inclusion within the approved development proposals. The City Council proceeded to grant planning permission for Barton Park without requiring such a link. In my view, a bridge would have provided a better long-term connection between Headington and Barton Park, but in its absence, it is important that we continue to improve the safety and usability of the existing crossing. A works order for the pedestrian crossing warning signs has been placed with our contractor M Group (MGH) which will see x2 signs on the westbound carriageway (nearside and offside) and x2 signs on the eastbound carriageway (nearside and offside). On the westbound carriageway the offside sign is complete. The nearside sign is not yet complete, due to a small installation issue which is being resolved. On the eastbound carriageway the works are not yet complete due to emergency works by a utility company that is preventing us from undertaking our works. MGH are liaising with the subcontractor and the permitting team, but there is a long notice to get the permit to put the lane closures on due to it being a busy road.

	With regard to the steps, the site has been visited by the Delivery Team Leader to assess that will be required. The work has not yet been programmed as the public footpath is currently closed due to the building works on the Barton side of the A40.
20. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS The Cabinet Member recently hiked the cost of a MyBus ticket for young people in Oxfordshire by 57%, from £3.50 to £5.50. I know that he will say that he only took the decision with the heaviest of hearts, but let's be frank about it: to govern is to choose, and the choice the Lib Dems have made is to increase these bus fares for young people by an eye-watering amount. For many people, the decision is particularly galling because the County Council boasts about the investment it is putting into buses for others, funded by the massive £5.2 million surplus from the Oxford Congestion Charge. Will the Cabinet Member now review this decision and urgently consider a) how to reduce the cost of a MyBus ticket in Oxfordshire, particularly for young people, and b) how to implement that reduction as soon as possible? Thank you.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I didn't have Cllr Evans down as a supporter of the economics of Jeremy Corbyn. Had he paid attention to the decision taken or read the reports concerning the temporary congestion charge investment plan, he would know that it was not a legal use of those funds to support existing schemes such as MyBus. In the context of £24 million of Labour Government cuts to the county, unpalatable decisions have to be made. He habitually calls for more Council spending on a growing number of fronts, without saying where the money would come from. The MyBus ticket has been one of the major transport success stories in Oxfordshire in recent years. Since its introduction in July 2024, more than 1.1m tickets have been sold and a survey undertaken in 2025 indicated that these had been successful in growing patronage and increasing the awareness of bus travel. This compares very favourably to when his party was voted out by the people of Oxfordshire in May 2021, when no such joint ticket was in existence and residents would have had to pay the full fares for their multi-trip journeys – or not travel by bus at all. Despite the recent price increase, the MyBus ticket still offers excellent value for money for those who need to make multi-trip journeys and reflects this Administration's commitment to making bus travel as seamless and integrated as possible.

In 2025/26, the MyBus scheme cost £2.1m. This was significantly in excess of the £700k budget, and the majority of this additional cost was as a result of changes to the national fare cap which made MyBus tickets comparatively better value and suitable for journeys not requiring a change of bus. The Council were able to fund the additional costs through utilising carried over funding for the scheme from previous years but are not in a position to do so in 2026/27.

Had no action been taken to increase ticket prices, the forecast deficit for 2026/27 would have been up to £2.3m. This is not a sum that the Council is able to secure, even in the event that the majority of the additional congestion charge funding is allocated to this scheme.

As set out in the papers related to the Cabinet decision on 19 May 2026, the congestion charge income is not primarily being used for the improvement of bus services – indeed, it does not need to, because the existence of the charge itself has improved bus speeds and vehicle utilisation within the city and surrounding areas, meaning that new and improved services could be created at no additional cost to the Council. The Council's commitment to improving sustainable transport and bus speeds in the city also resulted in £43.7m of private investment by the bus operators in 159 brand new electric buses, which have dramatically improved accessibility and reduced noise and air pollution for all residents regardless of whether they use public transport.

Congestion charge income is being used to fund the discounted Park & Ride fares offer, which was £2.50 until August 2026 and is now £3. This scheme has resulted in a significant increase in Park & Ride use, reducing congestion in the city centre and improving journey times and reliability for all.

In addition, we are shortly to be going out to tender for new limited-stop bus services between our Park & Ride sites and the East Oxford hospitals, which will improve connectivity to these important facilities. In the coming weeks, we

	will also be launching our travel discount scheme for NHS and school staff which is funded by the congestion charge income. The Council welcomes the re-introduction of the £2 bus fare cap in January 2027, and this will enable us to consider whether the price of MyBus tickets can be changed – noting that at present the price is aligned to the price of single-operator day tickets. I have already publicly committed to reviewing the price following this announcement. He should pay more attention.
21. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES What conversations has the Cabinet Member had with Thames Valley Police following the tragic killing of a cyclist on Iffley Road on Tuesday 4th August; and what implications might such conversations have for speed enforcement and the timing of the planned review of speed limits within Oxford?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The collision on the A4158 Iffley Road in Oxford on 4 August which tragically led to the death of a pedal cyclist is being investigated by the Police. As with all such incidents a joint site visit has been carried out by the Thames Valley Police and the Council's Vision Zero team. In terms of a review of speed limits in Oxford and specifically focussing on possible changes from 30mph to 20mph on the relatively few roads still 30mph within the ring road - I can confirm this will be carried out following an assessment of the impact of the traffic filter trial to be implemented in September. It should be noted that a 20mph speed limit already applies on the full length of the A4158 Iffley Road. Whilst the County Council can share locations of concerns of speeding with Thames Valley Police, the consideration of when, where, and how to carry out speed enforcement is their responsibility.
22. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR

Can the Cabinet Member outline an updated timeline for the reinforcement/replacement of the B4495 Donnington Bridge; and what consideration has been given to the use of ANPR enforcement of the weight restriction to reduce contraventions and an exemption for infrequent single-decker buses?	Donnington Bridge is a complex structure and the investigative work is iterative and a highly specialist activity. Further specialist survey work to the pier legs is being procured and is planned to be undertaken later this year. In parallel, a feasibility study is being prepared looking at options to strengthen the bridge. This will require the results of the pending surveys and so is planned to be issued by the end of the year. Until the surveys and feasibility study is complete it is difficult to know what works will be required and hence to give a timeframe. As the weight limit is a structural weight limit, this doesn't fall under moving traffic legislation, so any enforcement, even using ANPR, will require applying through the courts. ANPR would make gathering evidence easier as well as being a clear deterrent. Exemptions for buses/some buses will be considered once the survey has concluded. As I believe you are aware, we submitted a bid into the DfT structures fund and the outcome of this will in part determine what options are possible/affordable; it is understood we will hear the outcome of this later this Autumn.
23. COUNCILLOR BRAD BAINES Can the Cabinet Member outline how critical deterioration risks to essential, existing infrastructure and the potential costs of essential redial works are factored into the Council's Capital Programme planning; and given such	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION The Council takes the management of critical infrastructure deterioration risks very seriously and these risks are a key consideration in the development of the Capital Programme. Infrastructure assets, including bridges, are subject to ongoing inspection, condition assessments and risk-based asset management

financial planning requirements why the Council is now unable to fund key works such as the reinforcement/replacement of the B4495 Donnington Bridge and A423 Kennington Bridge?

processes to identify safety, operational and structural issues at the earliest opportunity. These assessments help inform both the annual Bridges Programme and longer-term capital planning. The Council currently invests significant capital funding in bridge maintenance and asset management, with the programme designed to address known deterioration and maintain the safety and resilience of the network. The Council identified a requirement of around £8m per annum for planned bridge maintenance, although this does not include substantial bridge replacement or reconstruction projects.

The challenge is that the scale of identified infrastructure needs significantly exceeds the level of capital funding available. The Council must balance a wide range of competing priorities, including statutory responsibilities for school places, health and safety works, highways maintenance, SEND provision, flood mitigation and major infrastructure schemes. Previous capital planning exercises have highlighted a substantial gap between available capital resources and the wider unfunded pipeline of investment requirements. In relation to Donnington Bridge and Kennington Bridge, the issue is not that these schemes are unimportant, but that the estimated costs associated with the required interventions are substantial and cannot currently be accommodated within existing capital resources without displacing other high-priority investments. Kennington Bridge, for example, is facing a funding gap of £71m.

For Donnington Bridge, recent structural reviews identified significant safety, durability and reliability concerns, resulting in precautionary weight restrictions being introduced while further investigations and funding opportunities are explored. The Council continues to assess the condition of the structure, develop intervention options and seek external funding opportunities where available.

The Council therefore continues to actively manage both assets through inspection, monitoring and option development, whilst seeking to balance

	these requirements against other statutory and corporate capital priorities. As part of future budget-setting processes, the Council will continue to review deterioration risks across its infrastructure portfolio and consider the most appropriate funding strategy, including opportunities for external grant funding, partnership funding and reprioritisation within the wider capital programme.
24. COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN Is the Council going to object (and how) as a County Council to Palantir's involvement in the NHS, and any current and future risks involved in the use of the Palantir FDP (Federated Data Platform)?	COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES The NHS Federated Data Platform (FDP) is a national NHS data insights system supplied under a £330m contract awarded by the NHS in 2023 to a consortium led by Palantir. Palantir was initially used in exigence by the Department for Health and Social Care during Covid, as one of two national patient tracking databases. It is contentious as a US-based company for its political connections, its investment base, and its products used internationally in contentious activities. Since June 2026, the NHS Palantir contract is under parliamentary scrutiny. Oxfordshire County Council does not contract, deploy or engage with Palantir products directly. The council does not have access to the NHS Federated Data Platform, nor does the FDP ingest council data. Across NHS partners in Thames Valley, the FDP is used in certain data sources. The ICB's published technology inventory shows FDP implementations within the ICB. nhs-tech.6b.health Each NHS trust and ICB controls its own FDP instance. Data sharing with local authorities only occurs where there is a lawful basis, specific purpose and data sharing arrangements in place. Where NHS organisations could share information with the council through separate activities such as supporting integrated care, discharge planning or patient flow, or population -

	level planning, the council would apply all standard information governance and data sharing requirements, ensuring the data protection principles of lawfulness, fairness and transparency, data minimisation and data accuracy, and security and accountability of processing. Were Palantir products to be in scope of council procurement activity or data activity, these would have to pass the same standards regime as any prospective supplier, including supply chain assessment, information governance and AI governance, information security, territorial processing, cyber security, data governance and ethical integrity. This is managed on a case-by-case basis in every procurement or sharing activity. Any objection to the NHS contract with Palantir, or to local or regional NHS use of Palantir-hosted data in the FDP, would need to be raised to the ICB locally or the DHSC nationally.
25. COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN Given that Palantir is an acquisitive company and will undoubtedly have involvement in more enterprises than are currently known to the Council, what efforts are the Council applying to fully understand where Palantir has any involvement and what actions will we take to avoid any subsequent potential risks?	COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES Please refer to the answer given to question 24.
26. WITHDRAWN	WITHDRAWN

27. COUNCILLOR LEE EVANS

The Local Government Reorganisation process requires warding arrangements to be proposed for the new unitary councils. I am strongly of the view that wards for new Councils should mirror the existing electoral boundaries that have already been independently determined through the Local Government Boundary Commission. The only exceptions should be where it is absolutely necessary to do otherwise, because pre-existing boundaries would create a ward that is clearly incompatible with the wider warding pattern for the new authority. Any other approach, such as the redrawing of ward boundaries behind the scenes and without any input from the public, risks undermining the legitimacy of new wards and could lead to accusations of 'gerrymandering'. We should all want to avoid that.

Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that pre-existing, independently determined electoral boundaries should be used for warding in the LGR process? And does she also agree that proposed warding arrangements should be made available to the public and subject to scrutiny at the earliest possible opportunity – and if so, will she do everything in her power to make sure that they are? I would be very grateful for clear and unambiguous answers. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR JUDITH EDWARDS, CABINET MEMBER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Thank you, Councillor Evans, for raising this important matter.

I recognise that existing electoral boundaries, which have been independently determined by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, provide an important starting point for developing interim warding arrangements for any new unitary authority. Those boundaries have been subject to an independent review process and reflect established electoral arrangements and recognised local communities.

However, it does not necessarily follow that existing boundaries should be retained in every circumstance. The purpose of this exercise is to identify workable electoral arrangements for new councils created through Local Government Reorganisation. In some areas, the creation of new unitary boundaries means that existing county divisions cannot be transferred intact into the successor authority. Where this occurs, a judgement is required as to how best to organise the remaining areas in order to establish coherent wards, support effective representation and provide a practical electoral framework for the new authority from vesting day.

The approach taken by officers has therefore been to use existing electoral boundaries wherever possible, while recognising that limited changes may be necessary where existing divisions are affected by the creation of the new unitary councils. The objective has not been to redraw boundaries unnecessarily, but to ensure that the proposed arrangements operate effectively as a whole.

I also recognise the concerns that have been raised regarding transparency and public scrutiny. The starting point should always be openness. However, the warding proposals currently under discussion form part of an iterative

	process between the councils involved and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to the Structural Changes Order. Monitoring Officers have advised that these submissions are currently being treated as confidential working documents, as they form part of discussions and responses being considered by the Secretary of State before formal publication. Members have been provided with access to support the discharge of their representative role, but the advice received is that wider publication should await the next stage of that process. The advice provided by the Monitoring Officers notes that the proposals remain at a formative stage and that there are important considerations regarding the timing and manner of publication. Officers have already sought clarity from MHCLG on publication arrangements and timescales, and the MHCLG officers confirmed that they agree with the advisory position on confidentiality set out by the Monitoring Officers.
28. COUNCILLOR LESLEY MCLEAN Will the Cabinet Member confirm the future cleansing arrangements for highway gullies in areas covered by a Section 19 flood investigation, including whether they will continue to be cleansed at least annually?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Basically yes. A risk-based approach is being applied with a cleanse at least every two years. However, those higher risk locations, such as high-speed roads and known problem areas, including those identified through section 19 investigations, will be carried out annually.
29. COUNCILLOR LESLEY MCLEAN Will the Cabinet Member advise when the next scheduled cleansing will take place in Yarnton, Begbroke and	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR The Gully cleansing schedule can be found on our website here, where it is regularly kept up to date - Maintaining our roads and highways Oxfordshire County Council. Yarnton and Begbroke are currently programmed in for

Kidlington and when the outstanding data for Begbroke and Kidlington will be provided?	October this year, with Kidlington following this in December and January. Regarding data for Yarnton, Begbroke and Kidlington I believe that some data has already been provided to Cllr Mclean by a member of our Cyclical Maintenance Team, who will provide more information later this week.
30. COUNCILLOR LESLEY MCLEAN Will the Cabinet Member set out what investigations and remedial works are being undertaken in response to the blockages, defects and operational failures identified, whether the planned testing of drainage flow routes and connectivity has been completed, and when a consolidated schedule of outstanding works, current status and target completion dates for all three areas will be made available?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Officers have commissioned a number of drainage investigations across the affected communities. These investigations include gully cleansing, CCTV surveys, connectivity testing, condition assessments and verification of drainage flow routes. Where inspections have identified defects, further remedial works are being programmed through the Council's drainage maintenance contracts. Investigations undertaken in the area have identified issues including root ingress, silt accumulation and defects affecting parts of the carrier drainage network. In a number of cases, drainage connectivity has been successfully proven, whilst some locations require further maintenance or repair works before surveys can be completed fully. Where defects are confirmed, remedial actions may include root cutting, cleansing, pipe repairs, excavation of damaged connections and other drainage maintenance interventions as appropriate. The Council has established specific task orders for both drainage investigations and reactive gully defect works to support this activity. This long list of defects is the result of neglect over many years by the previous administration. Officers are currently reviewing the outputs from ongoing investigations and surveys and will prepare a consolidated schedule setting out identified defects, proposed remedial measures, current status and proposed delivery timescales for Yarnton, Begbroke and Kidlington. That information will be

	shared with local members once the review has been completed and the required works have been prioritised.
31. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON Oxfordshire County Council has set ambitious net-zero targets, yet the Council's own latest performance report states that Oxfordshire has now been off the required emissions trajectory for two consecutive years. Meanwhile, the Council's latest Carbon Management Plan says that the County Council itself is not currently on track to fully meet its 2030 target, with modelling suggesting around 3,910 tonnes of residual emissions could remain. Given that residents have repeatedly been promised ambitious action on climate change, does the Cabinet Member accept that simply setting ambitious targets is not enough, and will you say what specific additional measures, with clear costs and timescales, will actually be delivered to get Oxfordshire back on track? And given that many of the Liberal Democrat councillors responsible for climate policy at County level also hold senior positions at councils such as South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse, where similarly ambitious promises have been made (and missed in SODC), when will residents see delivery rather than more targets, strategies and political leaflets telling them how much these councils care about net zero?	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY Emissions from the Council's estate and operations have reduced 72% since the 2010 baseline year. Progress made in 2025/26 includes decarbonisation and energy efficiency works on 24 corporate properties, with a further 33 projects in delivery, completion of detailed audits across all 83 corporate buildings, expansion of the electric vehicle fleet and installation of additional solar PV. Through to 2028 the council will continue to further the transition of our fleet to electric, reduce the impact of high mileage users, and complete current funded building works. There are a number of challenges in such a far-reaching programme - including the withdrawal of central government Public Sector Decarbonisation funding (PSDS), grid connection challenges and now considerations associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It would not represent good value for money to make significant long-term investments in buildings that may not form part of the future estates retained by the successor councils. Decisions on the remaining estate therefore need to be aligned with post-LGR asset strategies. The forecast residual emissions in 2030 largely relate to complex buildings, specialist operational vehicles such as fire appliances, and factors outside the Council's direct control, including the pace of national electricity grid decarbonisation. To address genuinely unavoidable residual emissions, the Council has adopted a Carbon Offsetting Policy and is exploring opportunities

	to support high-quality carbon reduction projects within Oxfordshire, including exploration of purchase of a solar farm. Work on our estate is only one aspect of the Council's wider programme on climate action including measures such as supporting homes in fuel poverty, supporting schools with energy efficiency, supporting communities and homes vulnerable to extreme heat, working with community energy organisations, and our major employers in the county.
32. COUNCILLOR IAN SNOWDON The County Council's published programme for the northern section of the Didcot Northern Perimeter Road (NPR3) has now moved yet again from a previously stated completion date of Autumn 2027 to Autumn 2029, with construction itself not now expected to begin until Spring 2028. Given the importance of NPR3 to supporting the substantial housing and employment growth being imposed on Didcot and the surrounding communities, can the Cabinet Member explain to Council the specific reasons for this two-year delay, why the previously published programme was not achieved, what additional costs the delay has created for the County Council, and what guarantees or safeguards are now in place to ensure that Autumn 2029 will actually be achieved?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR Whilst NPR3 is part of the wider infrastructure improvement package to support growth across the Didcot and wider Science Vale area, it is enabled by the North East Didcot and Ladygrove East developments. At present the southern part of the NPR3 is planned to be delivered by the developers and to ensure that both sections of the road are completed, the timeframe for delivery needs to be co-ordinated. Regular discussions with the developers are happening to ensure this takes place. In addition, we need to ensure that the latest information and requirements are included within the planning application that needs to be submitted. This includes for example the updating of the strategic traffic modelling to reflect further housing and employment growth in the area, additional/updated environmental surveys and updated flood risk assessments. While no major infrastructure project can be guaranteed against future risks, the revised programme has been developed using a better understanding of the surveys, design, planning and technical work required to deliver the scheme. The remaining site investigations and detailed design work will

	continue to be progressed, and the costs, risks and programme will continue be monitored.
33. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK Has there been an impact assessment of the Congestion Charge on the schools in Cowley? And, if so, please can you tell me which schools and describe fully what kind of impact assessment took place?	COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE The Council undertook modelling and assessment of the likely impacts of the temporary congestion charge, but did not carry out a separate impact assessment specifically for individual schools in Cowley. The scheme was also subject to consultation, through which feedback was invited from residents, businesses, schools and other stakeholders. Feedback received from schools, parents, carers and staff has informed the development of the scheme and the associated permit and exemption arrangements. Since the scheme was introduced, officers, I, and my former Cabinet colleague Councillor Andrew Gant have met with the Trade Union Joint Consultative Committee and headteachers on a number of occasions to hear concerns and comments about the ongoing impact of the temporary congestion charge. A direct consequence of these discussions with representatives from the Oxford city school community has been the approval by Cabinet of the below measures which will be funded through the Temporary Congestion Charge Investment Plan. (Further details can be found following this link aebhdfh)

	Part two – other measures		
	Free 16hrs weekday P&R parking at relevant P&R sites for: - NHS employees (all year) - state and private school employees (term-time only) whose main work base is in Oxford <i>Subject to further discussion with NHS trusts, schools and Oxford City Council</i>	To be confirmed with NHS, schools and Oxford City Council	120
	Free or discounted bus travel on relevant bus routes for: - NHS employees (all year) - state and private school employees (term-time only) whose main work base is in Oxford <i>Subject to further discussion with NHS trusts, schools and bus operators</i>	To be confirmed with NHS, schools and bus operators	720
	An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the scheme, and the council has recently published an addendum covering both the temporary congestion charge and the traffic filter trial. This does not provide a standalone assessment of each school, but it does consider relevant equalities impacts, including age-related impacts, young people's indirect impacts through family travel patterns and school access, and impacts on carers, disabled people and families. The addendum also reflects the permit and exemption arrangements that are now in place or proposed, including provisions relevant to qualifying pupils with special educational needs, home-to-school transport and some caring-		

	related journeys, specifically for teachers needing to drive to a number of different locations in Oxford on the same day to provide educational support. We have no data regarding observations for organised transport in relation to ease of congestion for arranged transport. There have been no issues regarding a drop in the availability of providers in the current market to provide services. With regards to any additional costs to services, routes are still be tendered and again we are unable to report back on any contract changes connected to the congestion charge. The cost of transport is dictated by many factors and isolating the congestion as a factor for a change in cost has not been raised as major factor by service providers. We will continue to monitor the impacts of the temporary congestion charge and the forthcoming traffic filter trial, including any issues raised by schools and families. Feedback received during the trial consultation period will be fully considered as part of that ongoing assessment. Meanwhile, our school travel teams are working with schools in the area to promote opportunities for active travel.
34. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK If there hasn't been an impact assessment on the congestion charge on schools in Cowley, can you tell me if there has been any correspondence between you and school heads in Cowley?	COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Please refer to my answer to question 33.

35. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Righty the communities in and around Bicester, including the village of Piddington, are deeply concerned about government plans to house economic migrants at the former Ministry of Defence (MOD) Bicester site. Does the Cabinet Member support the local community in opposing this use of MOD Bicester and what work has the County Council done to ensure community safety and cohesion are a top priority?

COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES

When the Home Office first announced its intention to explore the use of the former MoD site near Bicester for asylum accommodation, we made clear our concerns about the way the proposal had been communicated. We were given less than 24 hours' notice and there had been no prior engagement with local authorities or the local community. Decisions of this scale should be developed in partnership with local areas, with full transparency about the implications for local communities and services.

The Council recognises that local residents in Piddington, Arncott, Ambrosden, Blackthorn and Bicester have legitimate questions about the proposal and its potential impact. Our priority has been to raise concerns about the risks related to this site which include: the lack of local buses, footpaths or cycleways, the risk of flooding, the need for adequate fire protection, concerns about adequate welfare support on site and the potential impact on social care services, as well as questions about the capacity of local voluntary and community sector organisations to provide on-site support. We continue to seek clarity from the government on the scale of any accommodation, the timing of proposals, and the support that would be provided for local services and infrastructure. We have consistently made the case that any arrangements must be properly planned and adequately resourced and that community cohesion and public safety remain priorities.

Decisions about the procurement of accommodation for people awaiting a decision on their asylum claims, as well as decisions about who is eligible to receive humanitarian protection, are the remit of the Home Office. I am sure we all believe in the rule of law and in the right to a fair hearing. Determining who is deserving of protection and therefore qualifies for refugee status is therefore not for you, nor me, nor this council to consider. It is, and has always

	been, the responsibility of central government, this one and those that came before it. Oxfordshire has a strong record of supporting all people in need, including those who have fled violence and persecution, which aligns with our status as a Council of Sanctuary. That status has no bearing on how many people are accommodated in Oxfordshire or where the Home Office chooses to place them. Our commitment is much simpler: that all human beings placed in our communities are treated with basic dignity and humanity. And it is precisely because of that commitment that we believe warehousing large numbers of people in isolated sites, often with several people to a room, unable to work or volunteer and with limited access to basic services, is contrary to the integration, cohesion, safeguarding and public health policies and principles we aspire to. Those conditions do little to help people become part of, and contribute to, the communities in which they are living. We will continue to speak up for the needs, safety and dignity of all our residents, both new and settled across Oxfordshire.
36. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION Can the Leader confirm how much has been spent to date on the removal of flags on lamp posts including any legal costs associated with recent High Court action ?	COUNCILLOR TIM BEARDER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL From September 2025 to July 2026, the Council removed approximately 1,640 unauthorised attachments to our highway assets at a cost of £80,345.00. This expenditure reflects the necessary efforts and resources allocated to maintaining the public highway free from the unauthorised attachments and ensuring the structural/lighting integrity of the equipment and public safety. This is in line with the existing statutory framework under the Highways Act 1980 (including but not limited to the duty to maintain the highway) in addition to council policy and procedures. In terms of legal costs, these are in the order of £40,000 representing the costs of investigation and making an application before the high court. The

costs include internal legal services fees, external counsel fees, disbursements (including court fees, process servers etc.).

The Council is in the process of making an application to recover this.

At a time when the Council is having to identify more than £24 million in savings, it is hugely disappointing that we have been forced to spend tens of thousands of pounds simply to enforce the law against a very small number of people who have pursued a sustained and determined campaign to break it. For the avoidance of any doubt, placing any item on public assets without consent has always been against the law. We have simply enforced the law.

I am sure that the Conservatives, who have previously regarded themselves as the party of law and order, would agree that the rules must be applied consistently and fairly to everyone, without fear or favour.

The action we have taken has been extremely successful. As a result of the Council's action, the number of items being illegally affixed to lamp posts across Oxfordshire has fallen dramatically, saving both council and police resources. Indeed, we have received interest from councils across the country who are considering similar action and following Oxfordshire's example. We are aware Birmingham are in court very soon.

Our objective has never been to target legitimate political expression. It has been to ensure that public infrastructure is not damaged or cluttered, that highways remain safe, and that the law is applied equally. That is a reasonable and proportionate approach, and one that I believe this Council should continue to uphold.

37. COUNCILLOR LIAM WALKER, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Could the Cabinet Member confirm whether Oxfordshire County Council will support the Boys Need Bins campaign and consider installing sanitary disposal bins in men's toilets across the Council's public buildings and facilities?

The campaign, being championed locally by Witney resident Stefan Thomas, highlights the difficulties faced by men living with conditions including bowel incontinence, urinary leakage and prostate cancer, who may need somewhere safe and discreet to dispose of sanitary products.

With the campaign calling for at least one sanitary bin to be provided in every men's toilet, will the Cabinet Member commit to reviewing provision across the Council's property estate and, where these facilities are not currently available, look at introducing them?

COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION

A number of local authorities, including Hampshire, Winchester and Chorley, have already introduced sanitary disposal facilities in male toilets as a practical and inclusive measure.

I propose to fully support providing at least one sanitary disposal bin in every male toilet block, with appropriate signage, and ensuring all accessible toilets are similarly equipped.

This presents a wider opportunity to adopt a broader principle of inclusive hygiene provision across all council facilities. By positioning the initiative in this way, we acknowledge that modern public services should be designed around the varied needs of the people who use them, rather than assumptions about who those users may be.

Such an approach aligns with our responsibilities as an inclusive employer and service provider, helping to create environments where everyone feels respected, considered and able to participate fully. It also reinforces our ambition to be an employer of choice, demonstrating that inclusion is reflected not only in policy but in the practical details of how our workplaces and public buildings are designed and managed.

The cost and operational impact are modest, but the benefits are significant, supporting dignity, inclusion, and accessibility for all users.

This would demonstrate our commitment as an inclusive employer and service provider, while helping to ensure that our facilities reflect the diverse needs of the people who use them. Small changes such as this can make a meaningful difference and reinforce the Council's commitment to equality and respect.

38. COUNCILLOR GAVIN MCLAUCHLAN

We have just started a new school year. Due to increasing numbers attending Wallingford school and the growth of school-age children in the catchment many children living in Benson / Ewelme (etc.) are now being sent to schools further away. Even though technically these schools are not that far away (6-10 miles) the availability of public (or school) transport to get them there is limited and costly in time. As an example, to get from Benson to Icknield Community College in Watlington requires taking two buses - one from Benson to Oxford, the other from Oxford to Watlington. This takes (if all runs to plan) two hours seventeen minutes (each way). As we really shouldn't be encouraging multiple car journeys (especially to congested Watlington!) what measures are we looking at to match requirements and numbers of children to public and or school transport?

COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We recognise the concerns that families may have when increasing demand for school places means that children are not offered a place at the school closest to their home. This is an issue that can arise in parts of South Oxfordshire, including Wallingford and the surrounding area, where population growth and changing patterns of parental preference continue to place pressure on available school places.

Where a child cannot be offered a place at their nearest suitable school and is instead allocated a place at the next nearest available suitable school, Oxfordshire County Council will assess eligibility for free home to school transport in line with its Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. Where eligibility criteria are met, transport assistance will be provided at no cost to the family. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure eligible children can access their allocated school and will determine the most appropriate and cost-effective transport arrangement to meet that duty.

We appreciate that some families may have expected to secure a place at a school that has historically been able to accommodate local demand. However, admission patterns can change from year to year as housing growth, demographics and parental preferences evolve. Where a child is allocated a place at the next nearest suitable school because no place is available at the nearer school, transport eligibility will continue to be assessed in accordance with the Council's policy, ensuring that families are not disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control.

The Council continually monitors pupil forecasts, school admissions data and transport demand to ensure sufficient planning takes place both for school places and the transport network that supports them. Following each admissions round, transport requirements are reviewed and arrangements put

	in place for eligible pupils. These arrangements may include dedicated school transport services, shared transport or the use of existing public transport where appropriate. We recognise that travel can be a particular concern in rural areas where public transport options may be more limited. In all cases, the Council seeks to ensure that transport arrangements for eligible pupils are safe, practical and appropriate for their age and circumstances, while also representing value for public money. It is important to note that the majority of Oxfordshire families make their own travel arrangements to and from school, with Council-funded transport available only where statutory eligibility criteria are met. Nevertheless, where children are unable to secure a place at their nearest suitable school due to capacity constraints, the Council will continue to ensure that eligible pupils receive the transport assistance to which they are entitled. More broadly, the Council continues to work proactively with schools, academy trusts and the Department for Education to plan for future demand and secure sufficient school places in growing communities, helping to ensure that local children can access high-quality education as close to home as possible.
39. COUNCILLOR LIZ BRIGHOUSE OBE, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION Can I have a breakdown of complaints received by the Council or posted on FixMyStreet concerning the use of scooters and electric bikes?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I understand this request applies to the last year and ideally that complaints be differentiated between illegal e-bikes / e-scooters and public hire ones. I can confirm 97 complaints were received via email and Fix My Street combined concerning e-scooters and e-bikes. This covers both usage of these vehicles and complaints relating to parking / abandonment of them.

	Of these 64 mentioned scooters only, 15 mentioned e-bikes only and 18 mentioned both. It is difficult to be confident as to which related to illegal vehicles, and which related to legal hire vehicles as the complainants do not always specify. It is believed though the majority (80%) relate to hire vehicles. I am happy to take up issues relating to policing aspects of illegal vehicles. In June I approved a new contract designed, in part, to reduce the incidence of complaints relating to e-scooter and e-bike hire.
40. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW Following on from your helpful answer to Q34 at June's Full Council, please share with Council the financial year (FY26-27) consolidated list of active travel priorities in our county*, indicating, for each initiative, the investment needed for each initiative, its location, when priority is planned to be addressed (or has been completed if since March 2026), the funding source (eg S106, National Active Travel Funding (I understand this to be over £20M over the four years starting 26-7 source: Oxfordshire awarded active travel rating upgrade), budgeted OCC capital amount for FY 26-27, Green Group Amendment #4 to FY27 budget or a named other source), the LCWIP it is named in and the group of highway users to benefit from this initiative (eg cyclists, pedestrians, other wheeled users etc). *as per your answer which stated "All these improvements have been put together, having been assessed against the same prioritisation criteria, and are consolidated into one list which will be used for	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I have asked officers to liaise with you directly to provide this data, where available.

countywide funding opportunities, such as OCC capital funding or Active Travel England funding. Ongoing monitoring of the list means that when other opportunities arise, the schemes on the list are up to date with their delivery status."	
41. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW Please share with Council the list of work that has been carried out, or is planned in FY26-27, as funded by Green Group Amendment #4 to FY27 budget. Please indicate for each piece of work the location, the investment needed, the activity and the beneficiary (eg cyclists, pedestrians, other wheeled users etc).	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR No definitive list is available yet as this work is more suited to autumn for ecological reasons. Officers will imminently begin to develop that programme. I have asked that you be updated with this information once the programme has been drawn up.
42. COUNCILLOR JAMES BARLOW Please share with Council the specific initiatives that are being funded to date by the £100k provided by Amendment 20027GG3. Please indicate the costs of each initiative, what the funding source is (alternative grant funding was being pursued I know), some details of each, including location, when it is planned to take place / when it was completed, and which stakeholders are involved.	COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES The Council's Community Cohesion Programme is being developed around three complementary workstreams: a community grants fund, targeted interventions, and community dialogue activities. These proposals have been developed with input from the cross-party Community Cohesion Members Advisory Group. The current proposal is to allocate approximately £70,000 towards a community cohesion grants fund which, enabling community organisations and local partners to deliver activities that strengthen relationships, increase understanding between different communities and build local resilience. A further £30,000 is proposed to support targeted interventions where specific community cohesion issues or opportunities are identified.

	Alongside this, the Council has a community dialogue workstream focused on 'listening exchanges', which bring together people with different experiences and perspectives to build understanding and support constructive conversations on issues affecting local communities. The Council has commissioned the University of Oxford to support the design and delivery of these listening exchanges. This work is being funded from existing council budgets and does not form part of the £100,000 allocated through budget amendment 20027GG3. Further details of funded activity will be shared with councillors once the programme has been agreed by the advisory group and implemented. The next meeting of the Members Advisory Group for Community Cohesion is on Thursday 17th September, which Cllr Barlow has been invited to.
43. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON At the June full Council meeting I asked why this Council was going to such great lengths to keep details of the rent being charged to OUFC for the use of land in my division for a football stadium. The answer I received was the usual claim about the need for confidentiality which I continue to dispute. The Information Commissioner's office apparently agreed with me given that they instructed the Council to make that information public as a result of an FOI request. However, the council took what I regard as the extraordinary step of challenging the ICO direction by means of a tribunal which overturned the ICO decision.	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION Thank you for your question. The Council took entirely reasonable steps to challenge the Information Commission's decision and it is clear that the original decision failed to take into consideration all relevant matters and the need to balance commercial confidentiality, the public interest test, and the need for the Council to protect commercial interests and maintain a level playing field in the commercial market. The Council's successful challenge in itself speaks volumes and supports the Council's original decision to preserve commercial confidentiality which of course extends to details of rent charges. The appeal legal costs incurred in challenging the ICO decision totalled £14,995 (plus VAT)".

My supplementary question in June included a request for information on the total costs for instigating and defending the tribunal but I didn't receive a reply. Could I be provided with an answer now please?	
44. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON With winter approaching, residents in rural locations who rely on oil for their heating needs will be facing hugely increased costs for filling their tanks as a result of Donald Trump's vanity war in the Middle East. While all residents will be seeing increased energy bills as a result of the energy cap being increased in October, many others in rural locations who are forced to use heating oil have no such protection and are subject directly to the impacts of the war on the global oil price. Only those who on low incomes who qualify under the government's Crisis and Resilience Fund will be eligible for help with their oil fired heating costs, whereas the cap on gas and electricity prices will apply to everyone. Would the Cabinet Member agree with me that this is an extremely unfair and inequitable situation, particular in highly rural counties like Oxfordshire, and could we consider measures to help affected residents who don't qualify for the government support scheme but may still be in need of help with their energy costs in the same way as everyone else?	COUNCILLOR KATE GREGORY, CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES The Council recognises the challenge that price volatility has brought for residents who use heating oil as their sole or main energy source. Heating Oil is not subject to the energy price cap, and therefore residents are fully exposed to market fluctuations. It is estimated that 15% of Oxfordshire residents use heating oil as their sole or main energy source. The cost of oil was 64 pence per litre (ppl) at the start of the year but spiked as high as £1.70 in April, following the conflict in the Middle East. Prices have come down since and are more stable but as of September 1st, the price was 88 ppl, significantly higher than the start of the year, and with the geo-political situation remaining complex. In March, the government provided additional Cost of Living funding to councils who have significant numbers of residents using heating oil. Oxfordshire received £440,215 in additional funding. This support is provided through our Crisis Support Scheme and has been available since Easter. Although the government didn't ringfence this funding, it has been treated so far as if it were ringfenced in order to protect the funding for the winter period when it is expected that there will be an increase in applications for support. From April to June, 77 households have been provided with support worth £45,606. This low level of take-up is comparable with other authorities receiving funding for heating oil support. Support from the Crisis Support Scheme is not means tested in the sense that households must fall beneath a particular income threshold, or be in receipt of

	certain benefits. Instead, residents need to demonstrate that they can't afford the particular essential for which they are applying (e.g. heating oil), with reference to their income and outgoings. In practice, the majority of people supported are in receipt of welfare benefits, but other struggling households are also able to access support. As such it is not considered necessary to develop a separate source of support for this group. The scheme has been promoted through district council partners using data they hold on low-income households using heating oil, and through voluntary and community organisations, including an oil purchasing scheme facilitated by Community First Oxfordshire.
45. COUNCILLOR IAN MIDDLETON Oxfordshire is seeing a growing number of applications for the development of data centres, with some already being approved by means of the high-handed and controversial process of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects or NSIPs. Another is currently being proposed in my division in Kidlington along with others across the county. Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that the pace at which these developments are being rolled out in Oxfordshire is extremely concerning, especially in view of the lack of democratic oversight and the huge requirements for increasingly scarce resources such as water and energy that these centres demand?	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY Thank you for your question. I recognise that data centre proposals can raise understandable concerns for local communities, particularly regarding electricity and water demand and the implications for wider growth and infrastructure across Oxfordshire. Data centres form an increasingly important part of the UK's digital infrastructure, supporting economic growth, research, technological innovation and the wider digital economy. Government has identified digital infrastructure as being of national importance and this is reflected in the planning frameworks that apply to such developments. At the same time, it is important that the resource requirements of data centres are considered alongside other strategic priorities, including the delivery of new homes, employment opportunities and supporting infrastructure. Where utility capacity is constrained, the planning process should carefully consider how competing demands will be accommodated. Planning applications for data centres are generally matters for the relevant Local Planning Authority or, where proposals come forward through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project process, are considered through a

	statutory planning regime established by Government. Decisions on individual proposals must therefore be assessed on their planning merits within those processes. While it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the merits of specific schemes, I would expect any proposal in Oxfordshire to be subject to robust assessment of its energy, water, transport and environmental impacts, together with consideration of whether the location is appropriate and sustainable. The planning process should ensure that sufficient infrastructure capacity exists, or can be provided, to support development whilst avoiding unacceptable impacts on existing communities, services and future growth.
46. COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED What work is the Council currently doing on the Longford Park road adoption and what, if anything, they are doing with Cherwell District Council to force developers to ensure the roads around the development are in a suitable state for adoption?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is actively working to progress the adoption of roads at Longford Park among many other locations. Officers from the Highway Agreements Team and Legal Services are currently working with the Longford Park Consortium and their solicitors to complete the necessary Section 38 highway adoption agreements, with the primary focus being the spine road. This involves multiple developers and land interests and the process has been more complex and protracted than anticipated, largely due to land ownership and legal agreement issues and delays in engagement from developers' solicitors. However, progress continues to be made, and the legal agreements are currently being drafted. The roads being offered for adoption have been inspected by OCC highway officers and, subject to completion of any remaining snagging works and final construction sign-off, are considered capable of meeting the required standards for adoption.

	Formal adoption cannot take place until the Section 38 agreements legal have been completed. OCC is also working closely with Cherwell District Council to help expedite progress. The relevant Executive Director is engaging directly with the County Council and the developer consortium to help drive forward the outstanding adoption and transfer issues.
47. COUNCILLOR IZZY CREED I have a number of residents in Calthorpe that are struggling despite supporting the original CPZ on the Council's policy to only allow one vehicle per person in the household due to being a single occupant of a house and having both a commercial and personal vehicle. I would like the Cabinet member to consider changing the policy to allow an exception in this particular case, ideally across Oxfordshire, but at least in the Banbury area where this is affecting several residents.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) are introduced and managed to prioritise the limited on-street parking available for residents and their visitors. To try to ensure fairness for everyone, we do need to apply clear and consistent rules across all the schemes we are responsible for. There is little off-street parking in the area and with properties being located close together, residents are already competing for the small number of on-street spaces. In many cases there is around one space available per property frontage, or even fewer where private accesses need to be kept clear. This means some degree of restriction is necessary to manage the space as fairly as possible, which is why all our schemes operate based on one permit per person, and in most cases, a maximum of two permits per property. However, in general we don't receive a great number of complaints about this policy. To ensure consistency in how schemes are managed and administered, any policy changes to the operation of permits schemes needs to be looked at across the whole of the service for Oxfordshire. I understand that officers in our Parking and Placemaking teams are planning to review operational changes in the future so I will ask that the issue you've raised is included for consideration as part of this work.

48. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL How many recently planted trees were allowed to die this summer, for instance the ones in Broad Street, Oxford?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR The County Council committed to planting more than 4,400 standard trees by the end of 2028, primarily on the highway network with 2,900 planted by end March 2026; of these trees, 87 trees, less than 4%, have died this year in spite of the extreme heat. In respect of the trees specifically in planters on Broad Street, these were planted in October 2022 as part of the temporary public realm scheme. Despite surviving for almost four years, the two tree species struggled to establish and flourish within the constrained planters. Following the extreme heat this summer, and despite irrigation systems being in place, only 2 of the 41 trees remain alive. The Broad Street planters contain a variety of species in addition to trees, and the planting within 60 planters continues to be in good overall condition.
49. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL How does the Council safeguard young people who have been excluded from school?	COUNCILLOR SEAN GAUL, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE Oxfordshire County Council takes its safeguarding responsibilities towards children and young people who have been excluded from school very seriously. Exclusion from school can increase a young person's vulnerability, and the Council works closely with schools, families and partner agencies to ensure that appropriate support is in place to protect young people throughout any process of exclusion. Where a pupil is permanently excluded, the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that suitable full-time education is available from the sixth school day. For the first five days the excluding school maintains responsibility for the child. The Local Authority has an Exclusion and Reintegration team who make

	contact with families within 48 hours of notification of a permanent exclusion notification and will discuss any immediate concerns or support needs. From Day 6, the Local Authority's duty to provide and safeguard is primarily provided through Meadowbrook College or another approved alternative provision, to ensure that no child is left without access to education and to minimise any risks. The provider (Meadowbrook or an approved AP) picks up safeguarding responsibilities, alongside the excluding school and in partnership with any other professionals already involved with the family, until the exclusion process is completed. In addition, any Local Authority officer working with the child or family continues to have a responsibility to identify, respond to and report safeguarding concerns in line with Oxfordshire's safeguarding procedures, no matter where the young person is supported during a period of exclusion. The Council's Exclusion and Reintegration Team works proactively with schools to reduce the need for exclusion in the first place through early intervention, advice, inclusion support and multi-agency working. The team collaborates with services including SEND, Children's Social Care, CAMHS, Youth Justice, the Virtual School and Attendance Services to identify and address any underlying needs that may be contributing to a young person's difficulties in school. Ultimately, our approach is focused on ensuring that excluded children remain safe, continue to access education, and receive the support they need to achieve positive outcomes and successfully reintegrate into education.
50. COUNCILLOR SUSANNA PRESSEL What is the Council doing to increase digital inclusion?	COUNCILLOR NEIL FAWCETT, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES The Council works hard to improve digital inclusion.

	As one example, I was very pleased to be able to attend our recent conference for Library volunteers, which includes a large number of volunteers who help people across our library network, and who are very well utilised. Our overall approach is set out in the Digital Inclusion Strategy. Even though this was initially a three-year plan, the approach continues. A summary of our approach and a link to the Strategy is on our website: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/communities/digital-inclusion An example of how we work with the charity and voluntary sector can be found here: https://gettingoxfordshireonline.org/digital-inclusion-for-our-communities/ We are well aware that digital exclusion has the potential to exacerbate already significant inequalities in our community and we are dedicated to helping to reduce the level of digital exclusion.
51. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB Residents across the county continue to report substandard repairs that fail to adequately address the condition of our roads. For example, a repair carried out in Frilford earlier this year was delivered to a standard that residents consider wholly inadequate, with the repaired section now causing significant disturbance, particularly when heavy vehicles pass over it.	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR M Group Highways normally handles around 40,000 highway defects each year, with approximately 25% reported through Fix My Street (FMS). Most are pothole-related road safety defects. Reports are typically submitted by OCC Highway Inspectors, the Customer Service Centre in response to public enquiries, and authorised Fix My Street SuperUsers. Over 90% relate to carriageway potholes, with the remainder involving kerbs, drainage, signs, overhanging trees, and street furniture.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm what quality assurance processes are in place to ensure that highway repairs meet an acceptable standard before they are signed off, what recourse exists where repairs are found to be substandard, and whether she considers the current standard of repairs being carried out across Oxfordshire to be acceptable to residents?

Since January 2026, which followed the wettest winter on record, more than 54,324 defects have been repaired to date.

The Council inspects repair work to assess quality. Random samples are reviewed for compliance with instructions, workmanship, and finish. As the checks are sample-based, some workmanship failures may not be identified. Since the new contract began on 1 April 2025, an operational improvement plan has been introduced across several areas and remains ongoing. To improve defect repair quality, the Council has introduced more robust inspections through a joint initiative with the main contractor. Any failures identified are subject to workmanship challenges and joint review. The contractor must correct confirmed failures at its own cost, and these are recorded as non-compliance defect (NCD) challenges. Monthly NCD challenge numbers have been tracked since January 2025.

Workmanship challenges are not raised for defects repaired on a temporary basis.

The contractual checking threshold is 10%; however, we have a service aim of 20%. Our focus is also on meaningful quality engagement with the main contractor through representative examples, rather than solely increasing volumes for statistical purposes.

The term contractor is subject to contractual Operational Performance Indicators (OPIs) linked to the quality of works.

In the 2025–26 financial year, approximately 1,700 quality checks were completed.

Since April, we have increased the quality checking resource and have already completed around 1,900 checks.

52. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB Earlier this summer, long-overdue drainage works were carried out on the road through Garford following longstanding concerns raised by local residents. Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether those works were successful in addressing the drainage issues identified, whether any further remedial works are required as a result of the CCTV inspection carried out, and what the next steps are for ensuring the long-term maintenance of the drainage infrastructure in the village?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR A CCTV survey of the surface water drainage network was undertaken on 20 July 2026. Extensive root cutting and jetting operations were required throughout the scheme, with a full shift dedicated to removing root mass before a comprehensive CCTV inspection could be completed. Following the cleansing works, the majority of the network is now clear and functioning as intended. However, several sections remain inaccessible due to significant root ingress and silt accumulation. A further visit is therefore required and is currently scheduled for mid-November. This work will need a road closure and the use of a robotic root cutter to fully clear and inspect the affected sections. The survey also identified multiple cracks and displaced joints within the pipework. As a result, approximately 140 meters of patch repairs and relining are required to extend the service life of the carrier pipes. These remedial works are currently being costed. Although the defects are not presently impacting the hydraulic performance of the system, it would be beneficial to undertake the repairs at the earliest opportunity, subject to the availability of funding. It is anticipated that this work may need to be deferred until the beginning of the next financial year. Once the final root-cutting works have been completed in November, the system should be restored to its original design capacity. This will improve the network's ability to accommodate periods of heavier rainfall and reduce the risk of flooding.
53. COUNCILLOR JAMES PLUMB Residents in Marcham, Shippon and surrounding villages have long raised concerns about the impact of large-scale	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Large scale events, such as those at Dalton Barracks, are referred to the relevant Safety Advisory Group (SAG), in this case the South and Vale Safety

events at Dalton Barracks airfield on the local road network. Whilst the recent decision to cancel the August bank holiday fireworks display on fire safety grounds was widely welcomed, it has brought renewed focus on what many residents consider to be inadequate traffic management arrangements for events of this scale. Can the Cabinet Member confirm what role Oxfordshire County Council plays in reviewing and approving traffic management plans for large-scale events at Dalton Barracks, whether the current arrangements are considered adequate given the recurring congestion experienced by residents in the surrounding area, and what steps the Council is taking to ensure that future events are accompanied by traffic management plans that properly reflect their impact on local roads?	Advisory Group, for advice on issues including public safety, crowd management and transport plans. SAG's include emergency services and local authorities. The County Council, once aware of a potentially impactful event, will always liaise both through the SAG and outside, where appropriate, to ensure mitigations are applied to reduce impacts of events. When considering proposed mitigations officers will review experiences and data from previous events to ensure lessons are learned. The District Council has ultimate say whether an event can go ahead or not though they will often base their judgement on recommendations from the safety advisory group.
54. COUNCILLOR ROBIN JONES With particular emphasis on the Cabinet Member's responsibility for Procurement, would the Cabinet Member consider please the benefit to residents of Oxfordshire of committing to join the Electronics Watch initiative (Affiliates), thereby sending a clear signal about standards in procurement as a leading public sector buyer, alongside others already signed up such as Lewisham Council, the Greater London Authority and Unison?	COUNCILLOR DAN LEVY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PROPERTY AND TRANSFORMATION Electronics Watch is a membership-based organisation that champions human rights in technology manufacturing supply chains. Membership for Oxfordshire County Council (based on a combined IT Hardware and Low Emission Vehicle affiliation) would cost in the region of £15k + VAT and offer little practical benefit to residents of Oxfordshire as Oxfordshire is not frequently involved in the often complex and challenging international technology manufacturing supply chains where human rights abuses are unfortunately common. Oxfordshire residents can be assured that the Council makes informed decisions that prioritise ethical considerations. Specifically for Electronics Watch, the Government Commercial Agency is an affiliate and builds

	appropriate mechanisms into the public frameworks they provide. This benefits all authorities that utilise their frameworks to procure hardware. In addition, the Council has published its ethical procurement policy on our external website for suppliers and incorporates it into our tenders. This provides a pragmatic approach to assuring supply chain compliance with the Council's ethical standards covering environmental and social sustainability criteria.
55. COUNCILLOR ROBIN JONES With regard to the Cabinet Member's responsibility for Strategic Planning, Environment, Flooding and indeed all her portfolio elements, given that it would help address this Council's Number One Strategic Risk, namely the Climate Emergency, when will Oxfordshire County Council show all employees - both directly and indirectly employed - the People's Emergency Briefing?	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) declared a climate emergency in 2019 and it has been a significant priority since that time. There have been more than 20 screenings across Oxfordshire, with more to come, with support coming through our thriving network of Climate Action Groups (CAGs) and CAG Oxfordshire. These have been listed on the Council hosted Climate Action Oxfordshire website alongside other climate action events. One of the Climate Action Groups is an internal colleague led CAG and this group intends to screen the briefing during the autumn.
56. COUNCILLOR ANDREW CRICHTON Residents of Hanwell Fields and workers at local sites would very much like to use the B4 bus service to get into Banbury Town Centre from Southam Road. However, there is currently limited accessibility, with no crossings on Southam Road from the Dukes Meadow Junction until you get down to Beaumont Road. There is also not even	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The Council has been successful in improving numerous bus services over the period of the current administration. However, it is recognised that the speed at which this has been achieved means it cannot always be matched by the longer timescales required for the implementation of improved infrastructure.

a dropped kerb on the west side of Southam Road at the Bus stop towards the town centre. Please can the Cabinet Member for Transport work with the Cabinet Member for Highways Construction and Repair and relevant officers to investigate whether some simple measures could be taken to improve pedestrian access to the B4 bus service?	The importance of crossing points to access bus services is acknowledged and understood, however the traffic and road safety budget is fully committed for 2026/27 and we are also having to implement over £24 million Government cuts. This request will be added to the list of schemes for future consideration should funding not be found from elsewhere. Separately, the Council's bus stop maintenance and improvement budgets are expected to be fully committed for 2026/27 and works such as crossings are usually outside the scope of minor improvements due to their cost and complexity. Notwithstanding the above, we are keen to find a solution and officers will consider whether this is possible within budgets for this or future financial years. I'm happy to discuss the finer points.
57. COUNCILLOR ANDREW CRICHTON Residents of Nickling Road and Roman Fields have been unhappy at the level of speeding and difficulties crossing at the top end of Warwick Road in Banbury for some time. I wondered if you could update me on when the new Pelican Crossing on the stretch of Warwick Road north of Dukes Meadow Drive is likely to be in operation and also when the speed limit in this area is next likely to be reviewed? I have previously suggested it should be reduced from 40mph to 30mph.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I'm pleased to say that the new signal-controlled pedestrian crossing on Warwick Road, north of Dukes Meadow Drive, has now been installed and was inspected by Oxfordshire County Council's signals team this week. A small number of remedial works were identified, including issues relating to the signal controller and sections of footway surfacing. These have been raised with the developer, and we are awaiting confirmation of when the necessary works will be completed. Subject to completion of these outstanding works, it is anticipated that the crossing will be commissioned and brought into operation within the coming weeks. In relation to the speed limit, Warwick Road is included within the County Council's ongoing review of speed limits on A and B roads. The request to

	consider a reduction from 40mph to 30mph in this location will be assessed as part of that review, alongside the relevant evidence and policy criteria.
58. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY Will the Cabinet support a moratorium on new data centres in the county unless they can demonstrate a truly additional source of supply of renewable electricity, such as solar farms that would not be installed without the establishment of the data centre and will the Cabinet only support the creation of new data centres if they can demonstrate investment in truly additional sources of supply of water to cool these centres?	COUNCILLOR LAURA GORDON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY Thank you for your question. The County Council recognises the important role that data centres play in supporting the UK's digital economy, research sector and future economic growth. However, as with any major development, it is essential that proposals are carefully assessed to ensure that their impacts can be accommodated sustainably. Particular consideration should be given to the demands that such developments may place on electricity networks, water supplies and other supporting infrastructure, especially where capacity is already under pressure and is needed to support wider economic growth and the delivery of new homes. The key issue is not whether infrastructure is provided exclusively for a particular development, but whether sufficient capacity exists overall to support both the proposed development and the wider needs of Oxfordshire's communities and economy. The planning process must therefore examine the evidence provided by developers and the advice of relevant statutory consultees when considering these issues. It is also important that significant developments are brought forward in appropriate and sustainable locations. Consideration should be given not only to environmental and infrastructure impacts, but also to whether proposed sites represent the most suitable use of strategically important land.

	Ultimately, decisions on individual applications must be taken through the relevant planning processes and informed by a full assessment of their environmental, infrastructure and sustainability impacts.
59. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY With estimates of the revenues raised from congestion charges/traffic filters increasing substantially, please will the Cabinet extend exemptions from these charges for support staff working in educational establishments and the health sector, many of whom are on low incomes and cannot easily combine family obligations with work shifts without using their cars?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT We recognise that some school and NHS staff work shifts or have caring and family responsibilities that make travelling by car the most practical option. However, the purpose of the congestion charge is to reduce traffic and congestion, and widening exemptions too broadly would undermine its effectiveness in delivering the benefits we are already starting to see, including improved bus journey times and reliability. That is why the council is using congestion charge income towards measures that specifically support school and NHS staff. Cabinet has agreed to use congestion charge income to provide free park and ride parking and reduced cost bus travel for NHS and school staff working in Oxford; helping to reduce the cost of travel while continuing to encourage a shift away from car use where feasible. It is worth noting that NHS and education workplaces account for approximately 42% of workplace parking spaces inside the Oxford ring road, indicating the scale of peak-time travel to these sectors. Many health and education workers will be Oxford or Oxfordshire residents and may therefore have been eligible to apply for residents' permits giving free travel through charging points on up to 100 and 25 days a year respectively. There are of course permits for community health and care workers who need their car for work purposes, for example, where they make multiple visits to care for patients in a single day – 4511 such permits had been issued by 24 July 2026. It is also important to stress that all schools and hospitals in Oxford remain accessible by car without using a permit or paying the £5 daily charge. In

	some cases this will mean using a different route, although for many journeys no change of route is required at all. Even though the congestion charge will be ending and is being replaced by the traffic filter trial on 28th September, we will of course continue to monitor its impacts and welcome further feedback from those working in education and healthcare settings in the city. Support for NHS and school staff through the park and ride and bus discounts will continue during the traffic filter trial. We will continue to listen to feedback about how the scheme affects journeys to work.
60. COUNCILLOR JAMES FRY Please will the County Council support City Council efforts to shift tourist coach parking from the city centre by creating cafes and related facilities for drivers in Park & Rides, such as Redbridge.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT The County Council has committed capital funding to develop a long-term, visitor coach management strategy which is currently in development. I'm acutely conscious that issues arise across the county, including in popular visitor economy destinations such as Burford. This builds on a coach observation study completed in 2025, consisting of on-site observations to record volumes of coaches, dwell times, and passenger numbers to establish a deeper understanding of coach movements across the city. The next steps are to take the lessons learned and recommendations from this study and translate them into a coherent action plan that meets the needs of residents, coach operators, and businesses collectively to improve the management of visitor coaches across the city. Officers have convened a strategic stakeholder working group, which includes officers at Oxford City Council, and will continue to work closely with this group to develop and assess different solutions to issues relating to coach

	activity in the city-centre, including pick-up and drop-off locations and suitable layover facilities for drivers. The work will also consider how any proposed solutions maintain a positive experience for visitors to Oxford and support the visitor economy.
61. COUNCILLOR SAJ MALIK I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for repainting the crossing at Cowley road/ Marsh road and repairing the post. Over the past few months, a couple of cyclists have fallen into the brook which runs from Cowley road to Donnington behind Elder Stubbs. Active travel has said there is no funding for the barrier. All they have done is painted a white line which is not a great deterrent for cyclists falling into the brook. If the County Council believes in active travel and wants to encourage people to cycle, then than it is the Council's duty to make sure cyclists are safe. A couple of my constituents have sadly fallen into the brook while cycling and got seriously injured. Can the Cabinet Member find funding for the barrier to be put up to stop cyclists falling into the brook?	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I am sorry to hear about the recent injuries from people who have fallen into Boundary Brook while cycling. As suggested and through discussion with local active travel groups, the council has recently delivered some white line markings along the edge of Boundary Brook path to help improve the awareness and visibility for the path and adjacent brook for all users. Whilst the suggestion of further measures, including physical barriers, is appreciated initial assessments are that implementation would have some significant costs as well a number of engineering challenges. In several narrow locations, barriers may also compromise the width usability of the path for some people. Whilst we appreciate the path is an attractive route for people cycling, especially school children, it is also worth noting that in legal status the path is designated as a footpath.

62. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT

When the Oxford High Street Bus Gate is not operational (from 6.30pm to 7.30am) the street becomes an impromptu car park in the evenings - including on double yellow lines - with cyclists and buses often struggling to manoeuvre around parked cars.

Furthermore, from 2022 to 2024 (the most recent data available) - despite the much lower levels of traffic during non-operational hours[1], 36% of 22 collisions on the High Street and nearby (excluding The Plain roundabout) occurred when the Bus Gate was not operational [2]. One serious crash in January this year occurred at 2.40am[3].

Will the Cabinet member look into a) the feasibility and b) likely impact on road safety of making the High Street Bus Gate 24/7 and in the meantime, increase spot checks from parking wardens in the area?

[1] Nearby road: St Clements. I could not find hourly traffic numbers for the High Street.

<https://telraam.net/en/location/9000007297/2024-11-28/2024-11-28>

[2] <https://bikedata.cyclestreets.net/>

[3] <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cre2jrq8z1go>

***see Appendix 1 below**

COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

The County Council has been successful in obtaining funding from the Department for Transport for the A420 route in Oxford to improve safety. This route includes Oxford High Street. As part of this project and consistent with county transport policy, it would be appropriate to consider if amendments to on-street parking provision and access timings like bus gates would be appropriate along this route for the reasons mentioned. Any proposal for amendments to access and parking would need to give careful consideration for those who might be either positively or negatively affected by any change.

In the meantime, officers will ask our parking contractors, Trellint, to deploy civil enforcement officers in the evenings to High Street to ascertain the parking situation.

63. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT

I was very disappointed to see the Council u-turn on their parking policy for car-lite and car-free development after pressure from the university and others. To tackle traffic, road safety and climate breakdown (which has been all too apparent this summer) we need to move away from private motor vehicles and this does not need to come at the expense of new housing. This was an exciting step forward which has now been abandoned.

I'm aware of the open letter from some colleges and Savilles[1].

Can the Cabinet Member confirm: given the new standards were agreed in spring and then withdrawn only a few months later, what was the process? Did this letter alone result in the policy u-turn? Were other representations made that contributed to the policy u-turn and if so what were they and who were they from?

[1]https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/open_letter_from_savills_and_res
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cy4kn3v970wo>

COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT

Thank you for the question.

The decision to withdraw the April 2026 updates to the Parking Standards was not taken as a result of a single letter or representation.

Following Cabinet's approval of the revised guidance in April 2026, the Council received a range of representations from stakeholders, including Local Planning Authorities, raising concerns about the operation, implementation and potential impacts of the updated standards, particularly on the delivery of housing including affordable and social housing.

Following receipt of those representations, officers reviewed the issues raised and the potential implications. Relevant Cabinet Members were also briefed on the position. Having regard to those matters, a delegated decision was subsequently taken by the Chief Executive to withdraw the April 2026 updates pending further review and evidence gathering, with the October 2022 Parking Standards continuing to apply in the interim.

To be clear, this decision should not be interpreted as a change in the Council's commitment to supporting sustainable travel, reducing reliance on private car use where appropriate, or delivering the ambitions set out in the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Rather, it reflects the need to ensure that any future parking standards are evidence-led, capable of effective implementation through the planning system, and appropriately balance transport, climate, housing delivery and affordability objectives. I am acutely conscious that the agenda of the current Government will add even more pressure to our finite road space, with all the implications that brings; and action needs to be taken to challenge lazy assumptions about development, specifically that car use can continue to grow unchecked. It is particularly disappointing that some of the laziest assumptions come from those best

	placed to lead the way in terms of providing sustainable development in areas best served by public transport and active travel. The Council remains committed to reviewing and updating its parking standards and will engage with local planning authorities and other key stakeholders as that work progresses. This engagement will help ensure that any future revisions are supported by a robust evidence base, are effective in practice, and can be implemented consistently through the planning system. Any future revised standards would be subject to a further formal decision-making process.
64. COUNCILLOR EMMA GARNETT Recent Swiss research has found that lack of safe bike parking is preventing the uptake of e-bikes - their findings are highly relevant to the UK [1]. Bike theft is too common in the UK and in Oxfordshire (two recent examples from the news: Layla Moran MP and Cllr Emily Kerr have both had cargo e-bikes stolen). What plans does OCC have to a) install more secure bike parking, such as hangers for local residents and b) could the cabinet member write to Matthew Barber PCC to urge that cycle theft be given a higher priority by Thames Valley Police? [1]https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0965856426003435?via%3Dihub	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I thank Cllr Garnett for her question. I am in regular dialogue with Thames Valley Police about various matters, and I'm happy to raise the need for them to prioritise tackling bike theft. I'm happy to meet her to discuss potential solutions. The report she points to highlights the need to ensure new housing stock is appropriately designed for cycle storage and that retrofitting provision can be challenging. The context of £24 million Government cuts to the County Council's budget provides an additional challenge.

65. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY After enduring several years of anticipation and delay, both the residents and I find ourselves deeply frustrated by the apparent stagnation in the progress of constructing the two crossings on Deer Park Road. These crossings were initially scheduled to be built last year, yet there has been no visible advancement. Therefore, we urge Cabinet Member to provide a firm commitment to ensuring that these constructions are completed within the current financial year. It is important to note that we were given assurances regarding this matter last year, and now is the opportune moment for the Council to take decisive action and fulfil their previous promises.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT I understand your frustration regarding the lack of progress after many years; for various reasons connectivity for residents of Windrush Place with Witney has taken too long to put in place, and I can confirm that this scheme is actively being progressed and, along with some other schemes (as we are packaging up these smaller schemes), are in the process of finalising contract documentation to award the work to the contractor. The importance of this scheme to the local community is recognised and I am keen to see it delivered too. I have asked officers to update you and me as soon as the construction programme is known and confirmed. I understand this is expected to be within the next few weeks.
66. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY Curbridge is set to receive traffic calming measures within this financial year, which will enhance the safety of its residents. These measures include the installation of chicanes and speed humps, designed to reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety. Could the Cabinet Member please provide a detailed timetable for the implementation of these measures? Additionally, it would be helpful to know the specific locations and types of measures that will be introduced to ensure the village becomes a safer environment for everyone.	COUNCILLOR GARETH EPPS, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT Oxfordshire County Council's Traffic Team Senior Officer met with representatives of Curbridge Parish Council on Thursday 20 August to walk through the village to assess the feasibility of the calming measures requested. Drafting of the measures is currently underway with a view to submit the draft proposals to the Local Member and Parish Council in the coming weeks. These proposals will form the basis for a Parish Council-led informal consultation amongst Curbridge and Lew residents. Once results of the informal consultation are known, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) can further liaise with the Local Member and Parish Council to finalise proposals for a formal consultation. The formal consultation will last for 28 days. Results of the consultation will be summarised and reported to the Cabinet Member for decision.

	A more detailed timetable will be reliant on the Parish Council and their consultation timetable. Following receipt of the informal consultation results from the Parish Council, officers will then need to prepare and undertake a formal consultation with the decision taken at the Cabinet Member for Transport decision meeting. This is alongside securing a design, price and programme from our contractor. This process normally takes around 4 to 5 months. An additional complication is securing the road space for the works which requires 3 months' notice. Officers have therefore indicated that a scheme would possibly commence in Spring or early summer 2027. Depending upon what was approved, any aspects not requiring a closure may be completed sooner than this e.g. the proposed Main Road speed limit reduction.
67. COUNCILLOR THOMAS ASHBY As we enter the Autumn/Winter season, we anticipate an increase in cooler temperatures and higher rainfall. Last year the Council appeared to be unprepared for this period resulting in the largest number of pothole reports ever. Please could the Cabinet Member outline the Council's plans for the Autumn/Winter this year to ensure that roads are repaired and maintained within the FixMyStreet time-frame?	COUNCILLOR LIZ LEFFMAN, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIR We are working closely with M Group to prepare for the forthcoming Autumn/Winter season. As part of this work, a report is being developed for consideration by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October. In the meantime, the following outlines the current position and the measures being taken to strengthen the Council's winter resilience and response capability: 1. <u>Pothole Trial</u> The pothole trial remains ongoing and is being monitored monthly by M Group. Data continues to be collected and assessed, and it is therefore too

early to draw definitive conclusions or provide a substantive evaluation of its effectiveness.

2. Winter Readiness Improvement Workshop

Oxfordshire County Council and M Group have jointly undertaken a winter readiness workshop to identify opportunities for improvement. This complements the wider defects continuous improvement programme, with around 30 actions identified to strengthen planning, operational resilience and service delivery ahead of the winter season.

3. Enhanced Weather Forecasting

Improved use of weather forecasting data is being developed to better predict periods of increased defect formation. This will support operational decision-making, including the selection of appropriate repair materials, such as hot or cold lay products, and will inform forward planning through extended weather-focused operational briefings.

4. Advanced Material Storage

Preparations are underway to establish dedicated covered storage facilities for winter repair materials. This will ensure sufficient stock levels of products such as Viafix, which are specifically designed to perform effectively in wet weather conditions.

5. Resource Planning and Workforce Flexibility

All in-house M Group gangs are trained to undertake defect repairs, supported by subcontractor resources where required. M Group has reviewed gang capabilities to increase workforce flexibility, enabling additional repair teams to be redeployed rapidly from other operational activities when demand increases.

This approach is being supported by predictive modelling using historic defect data to help forecast seasonal demand and mobilise additional resources in advance of anticipated peaks. The impact of winter gritting commitments on

repair gang availability is also being considered as part of wider resilience planning.

6. Night-time Working

While the majority of repair activity will continue during daytime hours, dedicated night-time gangs are being established to address defects on key routes and at sensitive locations. Dedicated traffic management resources will also support works on A-roads and other complex sites.

7. Find and Fix Approach

The Council and M Group will continue to utilise the Find and Fix approach, enabling repair teams to address multiple defects within a working area while traffic management is in place, maximising productivity and reducing repeat visits.

8. Maximising Dragon Patcher Deployment

Opportunities are being explored to deploy Dragon Patcher vehicles proactively ahead of programmed safety inspections and in areas where clusters of public reports indicate emerging defect trends. This will help reduce repair backlogs and mitigate peak demand.

9. Communications and Public Awareness

A winter defects communications plan is being developed and is expected to launch around the time of, or shortly after, the October Scrutiny Committee meeting. The campaign will raise awareness of the Council's winter preparedness activities and help explain maintenance approaches, including the use of temporary repairs where appropriate.

10. OCC Officer Resources

Officer resources will be reviewed and, where necessary, redeployed to support increased volumes of FixMyStreet enquiries during the winter period. This may also include the engagement of additional seasonal support.

	<u>11. System Improvements</u> A number of system enhancements have been identified to reduce duplicate defect reports, minimise unnecessary site visits and improve operational efficiency. These improvements are also intended to enhance the experience for system users, including Superusers and support more effective defect management.
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Appendix 1: MQ62 – Cllr Garnett to Cllr Epps

Collision Index	Timestamp	Collision severity	Casualties	Number of Casualties	Number of Vehicles	url	apiUrl	Latitude	Longitude	clusterCount	Bus gate in operation?
2023430279357	10:30pm, 24th June 2023	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430279357/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430279357/	51.75249	-1.25406	1	No
2024430617937	2:10pm, 19th December 2024	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430617937/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430617937/	51.75272	-1.24865	1	Yes
2024430585440	6:35pm, 2nd December 2024	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430585440/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430585440/	51.75149	-1.24669	1	No
2024430580168	4:40pm, 29th November 2024	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430580168/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430580168/	51.75221	-1.25604	1	Yes
2024430491812	5:50pm, 11th October 2024	slight	Cyclist	1	3	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430491812/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430491812/	51.75216	-1.25657	1	Yes
2024430464500	7:45pm, 19th September 2024	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430464500/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430464500/	51.75224	-1.25614	1	No
2024430419917	12:14pm, 1st September 2024	slight	Cyclist	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430419917/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430419917/	51.75105	-1.25711	1	Yes
2024430184263	1:52pm, 22nd April 2024	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430184263/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2024430184263/	51.75236	-1.24882	3	Yes
2023430548009	10:50am, 6th December 2023	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430548009/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430548009/	51.75213	-1.25669	1	Yes
2023430373790	9:29am, 21st September 2023	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430373790/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430373790/	51.75103	-1.2572	1	Yes
2022430174039	3:05pm, 22nd April 2022	slight	Cyclist, Motorcycle rider/passenger	2	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430174039/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430174039/	51.75239	-1.25479	1	Yes
2023430095642	1:57pm, 2nd March 2023	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430095642/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430095642/	51.75237	-1.2487	2	Yes
2023430092153	9:03pm, 28th February 2023	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430092153/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430092153/	51.75259	-1.25338	1	No
2023430069624	6:20pm, 14th February 2023	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430069624/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2023430069624/	51.75204	-1.25747	1	Yes
2022430566967	12:21am, 18th December 2022	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430566967/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430566967/	51.7513	-1.25743	1	No
2022430481470	7:20am, 26th October 2022	slight	Cyclist	1	2	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430481470/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430481470/	51.75261	-1.25063	1	No
2022430478772	2:45pm, 22nd October 2022	slight	Pedestrian	1	1	https://www.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430478772/	https://api.cyclestreets.net/collisions/reports/2022430478772/	51.75207	-1.25736	1	Yes
2022430417954	6										