

Agenda item no. 5- Questions from councillor

Question No.	Questioner	Question	Question to
PQ 1.	Cllr Hitchiner	<i>The outline business case for Phase 1 of the bypass (page 137) sets out anticipated benefits. A claimed benefit is a reduction of traffic in the city centre. What evidence is in the public domain to support this claim? What evidence does the Council have to support this? If such evidence exists why is this not being made public?</i>	Cllr Price
<p><b>Response:</b>            Our initial modelling indicates that construction of Phase One will see improvements in transport resilience; it does not indicate increased traffic in the city centre. At the same time will reduce traffic on portions of Belmont Rd, Walnut Tree Ave and Holme Lacy Road. The traffic modelling that underpins these forecasts is still going through our formal validation and verification processes. It would not be appropriate to publish this data until those checks are complete, as the results need to be robust, accurate and fully assured. The modelling will form part of the investment and business case documentation, which is scheduled for publication in July 2026. However, we expect the modelling work to be completed ahead of that date and will look to make the information public as soon as it has been fully verified.</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary Question:</b> None</p>			
<p><b>Supplementary Response:</b></p>			
PQ 2.	Cllr Ben Proctor	<i>Given the "deeply concerning reports of the Grok AI chatbot account on X being used to create and share undressed images of people – which may amount to intimate image abuse or pornography – and sexualised images of children that may amount to child sexual abuse material (CSAM)" (I am quoting the OfCom news release of 12 January 2026). Will the Cabinet close all council accounts on X and ensure that the X or Twitter logos are no longer used on council communication materials?"</i>	Cllr Hurcomb
<p><b>Response:</b>            We fully acknowledge the seriousness of the recent misuse of Grok’s image generation capabilities, which has enabled the creation of non-consensual and harmful deepfakes - an issue that has rightly drawn widespread condemnation. xAI has responded by imposing restrictions on creating sexualised images for all its users, and the government has confirmed the changes bring the platform into compliance with UK laws. We will</p>			

continue to monitor developments closely and will reassess our use of the platform should substantive improvements not materialise. In the meantime, maintaining a presence on X, alongside a range of other channels, allows us to communicate with the public, especially at times of crisis where it often becomes the go-to place for breaking news and updates.

**Supplementary Question:**

Thank you for the answer. I'd just like to take issue with a couple of statements in it. It talks about users misusing Grok but in fact they were using an explicit feature of the service that had been demonstrated by the owner of the company and it still offers this feature, it merely doesn't offer it to UK IP addresses and it has found that it is such an attractive feature its made it a premium product. Even though he accepts in his answer that Grok is generating deeply harmful images, he argues that the fact we can reach some people with council press releases on the platform outweighs this harm. But we don't simply use X, we heavily promote the service, we put it on every page of our website, its appeared on every slide in public questions and he said that we will reassess our use of the platform should substantive improvements not materialise. He may not have been familiar with the history of the company, but what improvements does the cabinet member anticipate X delivering and by when?

**Supplementary Response:**

Thank you Councillor Proctor. I don't actually think your assessment of what I've said is accurate. We said that it has rightly drawn widespread criticism and condemnation. So, we're certainly not supporting the activities of X in this instance. The ICO has published a statement on 7<sup>th</sup> of January investigating X. Since then X have banned that particular provision from UK services. So, as you've identified, you can no longer do that. Now, if that ban does not hold then we will certainly review our position. One thing I should point out is I've taken the advice of colleagues in communications team on this, this is not my decision, this is their decision that I'm fronting. So, they will continue to review it and should the promised changes not materialise then I'm sure that we will reconsider our decision.