

# Oxfordshire County Council Annual Parish Report

2019/2020

A summary of key events during the past year

## INTRODUCTION

As County Councillor, I represent Chalgrove and Watlington Division, which is made up of some fifteen parishes across South East Oxfordshire. It is my pleasure to present this report to you and if there is anything I can help with, all my contact details are on the OCC website. In addition to representing the interests of residents in this Division and my place on Full Council, I am Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services and, in this capacity, chair a number of related committees.

### **THESE ARE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES; WE ALL NEED TO TAKE CARE AND FOLLOW THE LATEST GOVERNMENT ADVICE.**

The organic growth of the community networks or hubs that we are seeing being set up is fantastic. These groups are providing some excellent services to local residents who are self-isolating or do not have relatives locally. It's important that they are community led but we need to avoid duplication, so the County Council and Districts are working with Oxfordshire Volunteers to list them all and provide support where needed.

If you are approached by people wishing to volunteer, they can register at:

<https://oxonvolunteers.org/vk/volunteers/index.htm>

Unfortunately, there are some cases of people taking advantage of vulnerable residents so Trading Standards are working with the Police monitoring the situation and will take action should there be a need. Should you be aware of anything please do not hesitate to contact me.

This is a very fast-moving situation so please use the OCC, NHS and Government websites for the latest information.

I would like to say a big thank you to all the residents who continue to help us get through this difficult time.

### **COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET OFFERS OXFORDSHIRE RESIDENTS NEW INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL SERVICES, SCHOOLS AND ROADS**

On 11 February 2020 the Council approved an "investment budget" to reduce neglect, ill-health and social isolation, following resident and business consultation.

The proposals include community support for vulnerable people so they can live independently for longer, and more help for struggling families to reduce the chances of children having to go into care.

Full details of the budget proposals are available [here](#).

However, as a result of the financial impact of Covid-19 we are expecting to see a deficit of some £35m+ in this financial year and so our plans for this positive 'investment' budget have rather been stymied by the interference of mother nature!

## **£218M SECURED FOR MAJOR TRANSPORT LINKS IN DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN**

OCC, working in close partnership with South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils, was awarded the funding to support the creation of thousands of new jobs and houses, including affordable homes. The main schemes for developing Didcot are:

- A4130 widening from A34 Milton Interchange towards Didcot;
- A new "Science Bridge" over the A4130, Great Western Railway Line and Milton Road into the former Didcot A Power Station site;
- A new Culham to Didcot river crossing between the A415 and A4130;
- A Clifton Hampden bypass

The county council worked with Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Highways England to complete the clarification stage of its £102m HIF bid projects associated with the A40 between Witney and Oxford, known as the A40 smart corridor.

We were successful in this second HIF bid, meaning we have secured £535 million of infrastructure funding for Oxfordshire since signing the Growth Deal in just over a year.

## **DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS**

### **Cherwell**

Remains under Conservative control.

### **South Oxfordshire**

Moved from Conservative to Liberal Democrat/Green coalition

### **Vale of White Horse**

Moved from Conservative to Liberal Democrat control.

### **West Oxfordshire**

Remains under Conservative control.

The result of the change in control at SODC saw the Local Plan placed in jeopardy, which in turn cast a shadow over the future of the £535 million of infrastructure funding for Oxfordshire. This was fortunately resolved and the Local Plan is now back on track and the funding is secured.

## **COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILS DRIVE THROUGH PLANS FOR JOINT PARK AND RIDE OPERATION**

A new management arrangement for park and ride services designed to reduce congestion and improve air quality was agreed by the county council and Oxford City Council's Cabinets. Under the new arrangement, the city council has taken over the operational management of two county council park and ride sites - Thornhill, Oxford Parkway (formerly Water Eaton) – from September 2019.

## **ELECTRIC VEHICLES CONTRIBUTE TO COUNTY COUNCIL'S CARBON NEUTRAL COMMITMENT**

Oxfordshire County Council has taken delivery of a new fleet of electric cars and vans for its fire and rescue service and general staff pool car resource. As the largest council in Oxfordshire, the county council has already taken a strong lead and committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. Achieving that aim will benefit the county's thriving communities and mean radically changing the way some things are done.

## **RADICAL CHANGES THAT IMPROVE THE LIVES OF FAMILIES ARE SET TO BE INTRODUCED IN OXFORDSHIRE**

A pioneering approach that has radically changed the way children's social care operates in Hertfordshire is set to be adopted by Oxfordshire County Council.

The "Family Safeguarding" model has seen the number of children on child protection plans by fall 55 per cent in 30 months in Hertfordshire. Social workers have been working in small integrated teams centred around individual families in need alongside experts providing specialist mental health, drugs and alcohol, and domestic abuse services. This new approach that has been pioneered in Hertfordshire will offer a way of beginning to reverse those trends.

Implementation of this new model has been delayed by Covid-19 but is still underway and will go live later this year.

## **GO AHEAD FOR FULL BUSINESS CASE FOR PROJECT TO REDUCE CONGESTION INTO AND AROUND OXFORD**

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council cabinets have approved plans to develop a detailed business case for a project to reduce congestion on routes into and around Oxford, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions.

The aim of "Connecting Oxford" is to make a real improvement to journey times for commuters, other travellers and quality of life for residents and visitors, including improved air quality.

Although delayed by Covid-19, further public engagement work will be carried out during the rest of 2020, with the next public consultation expected to take place in winter 2020/21.

## UNITARY GOVERNMENT

As mentioned in last year's report, a proposal for Unitary Government for Oxfordshire was submitted to DCLG in the Spring of 2017 by OCC, SODC and The Vale. Cherwell, WODC and the City of Oxford did not take part. This is still on the table and will no doubt remain there until Covid-19 has taken a back seat!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Above all please take care, stay safe and follow the advice.

Kind regards



**Steve Harrod**  
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## STAY AT HOME – PROTECT OUR NHS – SAVE LIVES

For information on COVID- 19 visit [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)



### [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): what you need to do - GOV.UK](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home) If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times Wash your hands as soon as you get ...  
[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

