



## **Focus on Parishes with Cllr Freddie van Mierlo (Chalgrove and Watlington)**

**April 2022**

*Welcome to my monthly update. I share a regular update in the first week of every month. In the interests of transparency, I share this update publicly as well as with parish councils.*

### **My recent meetings**

- 9<sup>th</sup> March: Swyncombe Parish Council & Little Milton Parish Council
- 10<sup>th</sup> March: Oxfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee
- 10<sup>th</sup> March: Berrick Salome Parish Council
- 14<sup>th</sup> March: Watlington Neighbourhood Planning Group
- 15<sup>th</sup> March: OCC Cabinet Meeting
- 15<sup>th</sup> March: Pishill with Stonor Parish Council
- 18<sup>th</sup> March: Thame River Conservation Trust
- 22<sup>nd</sup> March: Nettlebed Annual Parish Meeting
- 23<sup>rd</sup> March: Watlington & Pyrton Parish Councils
- 5<sup>th</sup> April: Full Council (County Hall, Oxford)
- 7<sup>th</sup> April: Chalgrove Parish Council

### **Upcoming meetings:**

- 12<sup>th</sup> April: Watlington Parish Council
- 13<sup>th</sup> April: Ewelme Parish Council
- 19<sup>th</sup> April: Great Milton Annual Parish Meeting
- 27<sup>th</sup> April: Brightwell Baldwin Annual Parish Meeting
- 28<sup>th</sup> April: Britwell Salome Annual Parish Meeting

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## OCC news:

**Homes for Ukraine:** I'm aware that a significant number of residents in the Chalgrove & Watlington division have applied through the Homes for Ukraine scheme to host refugees from the war in Ukraine. Local councils in Oxfordshire are preparing to perform safeguarding and accommodation suitability home visits. These are supposed to take place either before, or directly after arrival of guests. Previously, the government had indicated these checks would take place centrally, but since OCC has received no information, we are working with districts to do so. Although there are there are significant problems with the quality of data OCC is receiving from government, OCC has piloted a small number visits and checks and is developing a rollout plan. Myself and other councilors are continuing to ask questions to OCC and will keep you informed. *If you have applied to be a host, or are aware of potential hosts in your parish do please let me know if you have questions.*

**Chalgrove Airfield defeated by Con-Lab pact:** My motion on Chalgrove Airfield was [defeated](#) at Full Council by Conservative and Labour councilors voting together, in a repeat of the alliance they formed in 2020 to [remove planning powers from SODC](#). During the meeting I accepted a Green amendment that resolved concerns from legal officers at SODC, but the amended motion was nonetheless defeated. I am bitterly disappointed that politics has gotten in the way of good sense again, but I am determined to continue fighting the airfield development.

**20mph progress continues:** The county is continuing to make progress on its ambitious 20mph policy. Dedicated officers have been appointed to the roll out, with some 70 town and parish councils included as part of the first tranche. Details to come on exact timings

**Bid to electrify buses success:** OCC's bid to electrify the fleet of buses in Oxford has been successful, with contributions from government, the bus companies and OCC that will see 159 electric buses operating in the Oxford area. The plan is subject to a consultation that will take place shortly

**Bid to National Bus Strategy fund successful:** OCC is one of 31 councils in England which will receive £12 million in funding to improve bus infrastructure. The [news](#) comes 7 months after the bid was submitted and is significantly less than the amount we asked for - £56 million – in large part because the government quietly cut the 'bus back better' fund from 3bn to 1.4bn. Unfortunately, it is becoming quite typical of this government to make big announcements only to then row back on them. While we are fortunate to receive some money (neighbouring counties didn't get any), OCC now needs to decide how best to use the money. While government strings means that a significant proportion will be spent in Oxford City, I am making the case for rural investment.

**SEEN Resilient Communities Fund:** Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) launched its annual Resilient Communities Fund. Communities are invited to submit applications for grants ranging from £1,000 to £20,000. The deadline is 1 June 2022. The

fund is only available to parishes or towns who have SSEN as their supplier. Applicants must also ensure they are not covered by Western Power Distribution or UK power networks when applying for any funding

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### **Parish round up** *(Not all parishes are covered – below is a selection of the main updates)*

#### **Chalgrove:**

- **Gigaclear:** Following reports on Facebook of an oil leak in the brook, potentially as a result of contractors working for Gigaclear I made enquires with the company. Gigaclear has confirmed they were the source of the leak and I have made clear to the company the importance of the brook as a wildlife habitat. Officers at OCC will monitor and take action as needed to previous repeat situations

#### **Nettlebed**

- **Bus-Train alignment (X38):** We don't do integrated transport well in this country, not least because of the system is fragmented between different companies. However, I am working with Thames Travel to better align the X38 to GWR trains from Henley to Paddington. Timetabling is a complicated business, but I'm hopeful that we can reduce the need for sprinting across town!

#### **Watlington**

- **Charlotte Coxe Trust:** Significant progress continues to be made in bringing #33 back to life. At Full Council, a new committee of 5 OCC councilors was confirmed that will act as trustees on behalf of OCC going forward. This will bring greater accountability and responsiveness. OCC also approved a suite of works to the building as part of the project sponsored by Jeremy Irons to renovate the property for emergency housing for refugees.
- **Shirburn Road works:** Between 9 April and 3 June traffic signals will be in place again on Shirburn road, this time to facilitate installment of sewer pipes for the Castle Gardens development. At my insistence, letters have been dropped by the contractor, Engcon construction, to impacted residents
- **Pyrton Lane:** Officers and contractors visited Pyrton Lane in early April to review the final plans. It has been agreed that as part of the plan, a section of verge will be reinstated and protected with bollards (NW side of the lane, to the NE of Lower Courtyard)
- **Watlington 2030:** I was very pleased to attend a meeting in Watlington to discuss the future of traffic management for the town post-edge road. Some excellent ideas were discussed that would give priority to people over cars, so that we can all enjoy the wonderful offerings of the town in a pleasant environment