

REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth with Tubney and Little Coxwell) –December/January

For information, all that is detailed within my monthly reports is already within the public domain and thus in the media. My monthly report is a document of varied information which will be of interest both to locally elected Parish Councillors and to the residents and rate payers of my Division. The report provides both a local news update and a wider picture of the strategic work that Oxfordshire County Council undertakes and thus involves me both as your local County Councillor and also as Deputy Leader for the County Council. Much of the strategic work will have implications locally and thus is “useful” for the local town and parish councillors.

Oxfordshire - County councillors back climate action plan to join ‘green revolution’ in Oxfordshire We have approved plans for the County Council to meet its ambitious target of reducing its own carbon footprint to net zero by 2030. ‘Climate Action for a Thriving Oxfordshire’ explains how the council will reduce its own carbon emissions and supporting the environmental ambitions of others, including schools. We already fund support for 65 community action groups at the forefront of community-led climate change action. We see the continued success of these action groups in tackling environmental issues such as waste, transport, food production and local energy generation as vital to reducing emissions in the county. We have started planning for major changes to improve energy efficiency and reduce travel-related carbon emissions, with a cross-party group of councillors already working on proposals for change. The county council has already reduced its carbon emissions by nearly 50% since 2008 and has a target of making its own estate carbon neutral by 2030.

New property policy helps local organisations take over community assets

Changes have been approved for our Asset Transfer Policy to give greater clarity when we are working with community organisations interested in taking on council buildings. We own more than 700 assets including land and buildings. When buildings are not needed for county council purposes consideration is given to leasing out wherever possible. Of these properties which are leased out, 85 are leased to community organisations and provide an income to the council of circa £170k per annum. This revised policy intends to enable greater flexibility to agree appropriate terms with community groups in future transfers, reinforce support for the approach and ultimately maximise the use of our assets for community benefit. The changes seek to support our vision of thriving communities through a greater level of flexibility in determining appropriate terms regarding rent and repair liability on a case by case basis whilst also ensuring that we do not create an indirect subsidy to a community group by offering them discounted premises costs compared to other groups using non-council properties. **Contact:** Director for Property, George.Eleftheriou@oxfordshire.gov.uk

“County lines” TV documentary features young people from Oxfordshire

Our social workers have used a national TV documentary to put the spotlight on gangs and organised crime networks who ruthlessly recruit local children to sell drugs. Children’s services know of about 280 children who are, who could be, or have been, at risk of exploitation, who are being supported by its teams across social care, early help and youth justice. The social care and early help teams work in partnership with families, schools, health and the police to protect children from exploitation. They engage children and families in activities, delivering protective behaviours work in schools, including raising awareness in assemblies and plays. For young people who are at higher risk, the teams do specialist intensive one to one work with children, and their parents and families, as well as group work. Working with Channel 4’s documentary film makers helped raise awareness of the tell-tale signs of exploitation, and the measures that can be taken to protect vulnerable young people. **Contact:** Lucy Butler, Director for Children’s Services, Lucy.Butler@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Graphene road trial rolls out in Oxfordshire

The county council is testing a new substance that could help keep more roads pothole free for the first time in Britain on a road in Oxfordshire. A joint trial is being held by the council and its contractors, Skanska, to lay and test a fully recyclable, graphene-enhanced asphalt on a 750m stretch of busy main road in Curbridge, near Witney. Graphene is a specially developed ingredient that is added to otherwise ordinary surfacing material and has the potential to extend the life of roads and guard against potholes and other problems. One lane has been resurfaced using conventional materials - effectively acting as the control measure - while the opposite ‘trial’ lane was resurfaced using the asphalt enhanced by the innovative additive developed by Italian company Iterchimica. Engineers will monitor how the new surface performs and it will take up to two years to get a full picture of how well it compares to the conventional materials.

Oxfordshire reaches top ten in most productive council survey

Oxfordshire has been recognised by the annual IMPOWER Index survey as being a top ten council for 2019. The survey acknowledges the improvement to productivity over the past year, taking Oxfordshire County Council from 49th place in the index. The full report highlights how the council has improved its performance across seven types of services for our residents. One of the key areas recognised was services for older people where we were ranked as the fifth best performer in the county in that category. The council also achieved a higher position on scores on children’s social care; all age disability; health and social care interface; housing and homelessness; waste and recycling; and – new for 2019 – children with high needs.

Gritters gear up for winter weather

Oxfordshire's team of over 60 staff are on standby throughout the winter to turn out at all hours to make sure that the priority roads around Oxfordshire are salted and kept as safe as possible during freezing and sometimes treacherous weather. In Oxfordshire the county council grits all A-roads, B-roads and some C-roads. This amounts to 1200 miles per gritting run which is the equivalent of travelling from London to Iceland.

There has been no change to the winter maintenance budget in recent years. The money we spend relates directly to the conditions on Oxfordshire's roads in any given year. Last year we spent more than £1.8m gritting Oxfordshire's roads. This is a **Corporate priority**: Supporting a thriving economy

Free flu vaccinations for patients with long term conditions

Oxfordshire County Council is working in collaboration with NHS partners to encourage patients to have the free flu vaccine this winter. Patients living with a long-term condition such as diabetes, asthma or a heart condition are urged to have a free NHS flu vaccination to keep them well this winter. These patients - including children and adults - are more at risk of the complications of flu which could result in a stay in hospital or even death.

Meanwhile, health and social care organisations across Oxfordshire have joined together to call on healthcare professionals to make sure they are immunised against flu this winter. By vaccinating the county council's front-line staff, we can stop people from catching the virus and passing it on to the sick and vulnerable. It also means health and social care organisations can be more resilient during the coming busy winter months.

Council launches foster carer recruitment campaign

The council's fostering team has launched a campaign to encourage people to consider fostering to increase availability of placement for vulnerable children.

There has been a 66% increase in the number of children looked after in Oxfordshire since 2015. Two-thirds of them are over the age of ten. But the County Council is always on the lookout for more foster carers. Different types of fostering are provided to best meet the needs of both the children and the carer. Facts about fostering:

- You don't need a specific qualification, once approved, carers are supported, and you are provided with training to help prepare you to foster. There are lots of other opportunities for training and learning.
- There is no upper age limit to foster. You must be over 18. Oxfordshire County Council has foster carers who are in their 70s.
- Single? Not a problem - children need stable loving homes by single parents and couples, whatever their gender or sexual orientation.
- Disabilities or not, you can still foster - health problems and disabilities will not stop you from fostering, provided you can care for the children.
- There are children from many different backgrounds needing to be fostered, what is important is that you can meet the needs of the child."

More information about becoming a foster carer in Oxfordshire is [here](#). **Contact**: Lucy Butler, Director for Children Services, Lucy.Butler@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Roll-out of broadband for small businesses continues

Oxfordshire County Council has announced two new contracts have been signed to deliver ultrafast broadband to 970 SMEs. This follows a successful application to Defra for £6.3m of EAFRD funding to improve broadband for businesses in rural parts of the county. The suppliers will also connect some 900 nearby residential premises at their own cost. These are all to be full-fibre connections offering speeds up to 1Gb/s and will bring superfast coverage in Oxfordshire to 98%. The work will add several hundred kilometres.

Fire and police target safe driving - message at Oxfordshire sixth-formers

Five thousand Oxfordshire sixth-formers and college students attended a special event to learn about the devastating impact of being involved in a car crash this month. Safe Drive Stay Alive was organised by the Road Safety team in Oxfordshire County Council's Fire and Rescue Service – which exists to educate people on how to stay safe on the roads. Oxfordshire young drivers (aged 17-24) make up around one in eight drivers on the road but are almost twice as likely to be involved in road traffic incidents that result in death or injury. In 2018, 15 percent (1 in 6.5) of all road traffic accident casualties were sustained in an accident involving at least one car being driven by a person aged 17 to 24. **Contact**: Rob MacDougall, Chief Fire Officer, Rob.Macdougall@Oxfordshire.gov.uk
Corporate priority: Helping people live safer lives.

LGA issues counterfeit alcohol safety advice

Councils across the country through their Trading Standards Units" have seized hundreds of bottles of counterfeit alcohol from rogue retailers, some of which can cause permanent blindness and even death. I am particularly concerned that parents and young people should be aware.

Faringdon Division

During the month of December, I have attended the usual round of meetings both locally within my Division and at County Hall. The most rewarding evenings are attending the Faringdon Community College Presentation Evenings. I presented the Faringdon Education Activities Trust prizes, the Award for Design and Engineering and the Judith Gillett prize that is presented for personal development.

At the beginning of December I met with OCC officers from the Customer Services, Sheena our librarian, and three representatives of the Faringdon Library Action Group to discuss the plans for renovating the library using S106 monies. There have been several meetings already. I am, as a County Councillor, obviously fully aware of the S106 monies for the Faringdon Division. I initiated discussions with officers at County Hall earlier this year during June to see how the monies for the Faringdon Library £128k could be used beneficially to ensure that the library should become a flexible space not only for library users but for the communities of the Faringdon Division. There have been meetings during the summer, the autumn and more recently on 3rd December. Planning is underway for some exciting improvement and refurbishment works at Faringdon Library. These works will be funded by Section 106 money which is available due to the large amount of development in the town over the past few years.

- Although the library staff have several ideas, we do need to hear from existing customers and FLAG about the sort of things they would like to see in a refurbished facility as an initial consultation. In late January, Oxfordshire County Council will start the process of selecting a library design company to work with us in preparing some proposals, and to run a community engagement event so that the residents of Faringdon can *have their say* in the design. It is important that the “voice” of Faringdon and the surrounding villages is heard – a wider consultation will be initiated once a design concept is secured. However, talks with the library staff and volunteers and the Faringdon Library Associates Group (FLAG) about the refurbishment will continue and residents can provide their thoughts via a feedback form at the library or to faringdon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

I am currently in discussion with officers with regard to the use of S106 monies for social services for adults in Faringdon. Once I have definitive news to relay I will of course advise.

Can I conclude my report by wishing you all a very Happy and Peaceful New Year and advise that my next monthly surgery will be in the Faringdon Library on Saturday 1st February 2020. If you are unable to attend the surgery I am of course available on 01367 241468 or Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Judith Heathcoat
Deputy Leader Oxfordshire County Council
County Councillor – Faringdon Division
January 2020