

Title	County Councillor's Report
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Parishes	Cholsey, East Hagbourne, Little Wittenham, Long Wittenham, Moulsoford, North Moreton, South Moreton, West Hagbourne
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Dear Parish Councillors and Residents,

Here are some updates and news I have gathered for you. Please provide any feedback, if its too much or not enough and of course any more information on a specific topic I can help with. I have put in **BOLD** the items which I think may be specifically appropriate for the Parishes to consider advertising or acting upon

Best wishes,



Johnny

1. Councillor Priority Fund – Supporting Local Projects

The Councillor Priority Fund has reopened, offering each Oxfordshire County Councillor £10,000 to support community projects within their division. This funding is designed to help deliver local priorities and strengthen community initiatives.

Parish councils, community groups, and local organisations are encouraged to apply for funding to support projects that benefit residents. Examples might include:

- Improvements to community facilities
- Local environmental initiatives
- Activities that promote wellbeing or inclusion
- Smaller-scale projects are especially encouraged, as the fund is modest and intended to support a wide range of communities across Oxfordshire

Key details:

- Applications must be submitted by 30 November **2026**
- Grants are typically paid within 28 days of approval
- Applicants must register for an account to apply and track progress
- Monitoring and reporting are required for successful projects

To ensure your project meets the funding criteria, please read the guidance document before applying.

What parishes can do:

- **Identify local projects that could benefit from modest funding**
- **Collaborate with community groups to develop proposals**

- **Submit applications early to allow time for review and payment**

Keep records and be prepared to report on outcomes

For more information or to apply, visit the Councillor Priority Fund page.

<https://service.oxfordshire.gov.uk/councillorpriorityfund>

2. Free Park and Ride Bus Travel & Temporary Congestion Charge Scheme

Oxfordshire County Council is introducing free park and ride bus travel in Oxford for an initial three-month period starting 29 October 2025, coinciding with the launch of the city's temporary congestion charge.

This initiative allows up to two adults and three children with a valid park and ride parking ticket to **travel free to and from Oxford's park and ride sites**. The offer applies to any Stagecoach or Oxford Bus Company service serving these sites — not just designated park and ride routes.

For example, at Redbridge, parking costs £2.50 for up to 16 hours. Normally, a combined parking + bus ticket would cost £4–£5, so this offer makes the bus travel element completely free when you park

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/free-park-and-ride-bus-travel-with-temporary-congestion-charge/>

The temporary congestion charge is a short-term measure to reduce traffic while Botley Road remains closed, delaying the start of the council's traffic filter trial. It aims to:

- Improve bus services and air quality
- Support local businesses in the lead-up to Christmas
- Make travel easier for those with permits (including carers, traders, and blue badge holders)

The charge applies to six key roads in Oxford, with a £5 daily fee for cars without a permit. However, many permit types are available, and applications can be made online.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/oxfords-temporary-congestion-charge-cars-cars/apply-permit>

3. Common Ground Award – Capital Funding for Community Cohesion Projects

The UK Government has launched the Common Ground Award, a capital grant scheme aimed at strengthening community cohesion through the work of voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations.

Grants of up to £10,000 are available to support projects that bring people together from different backgrounds, including funding for new builds, refurbishments, or essential equipment. In exceptional cases, larger awards may be considered.

Key details:

- Applications open: 13 October 2025
- Deadline: 21 November 2025
- Funding awarded: January 2026
- Projects must commit funding by 31 March 2026

- Total fund: £1.7 million, with a focus on broad geographic and organisational diversity

What parishes can do:

- **Encourage eligible local groups (e.g. charities, CICs, community associations) to apply**
- **Identify facilities or equipment needs that support inclusive community activities**
- **Support applications by offering letters of endorsement or helping with project planning**
- **Promote the opportunity locally, especially to smaller organisations who may benefit from capital investment**

This is a competitive grant, and applications will be assessed on alignment with the fund's goals, community engagement, impact, sustainability, and use of funding. Smaller organisations are especially encouraged to apply, and the process is designed to be proportionate and accessible.

For full details and to apply, visit the Common Ground Award page

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-ground-award-prospectus/common-ground-award-prospectus>

or contact CGA@communities.gov.uk to register interest.

4. INFO - National Recognition for Oxfordshire's Supported Employment Service

Oxfordshire County Council's Oxfordshire Employment service has received national recognition for its work helping people with disabilities, long-term health conditions, and other barriers to employment secure and sustain meaningful work.

The service has successfully renewed its Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF) accreditation, placing it among a select group of organisations nationally recognised for delivering high-quality, inclusive employment support.

Key achievements:

- Significant improvement in six-month job retention, rising from 53% to 80%
- Continued compliance with national standards following a rigorous review
- Strong performance in areas such as vocational profiling, job matching, and in-work support

The SEQF kitemark, awarded by the British Association for Supported Employment (BASE), is the benchmark for quality in supported employment. Oxfordshire Employment's accreditation is valid for three years, with annual reviews to ensure ongoing excellence.

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-receives-national-recognition-for-work-to-secure-jobs-for-people-with-disabilities-and-health-conditions/>

5. INFO - Improving Mobile Signal – Oxfordshire's Digital Twin Investment

Oxfordshire County Council has committed £500,000 to develop a "digital twin" of the county's mobile phone network — a pioneering project aimed at improving mobile signal for residents and businesses.

The digital twin will allow the council to run “what if” scenarios to test how changes to the network — such as adjusting antenna direction, increasing signal gain, or adding small cells — could improve coverage in areas with poor reception.

The initiative responds to growing concerns that poor mobile coverage is becoming a barrier to daily life and economic activity across Oxfordshire.

Key benefits:

- Identifies areas with weak signal and explores practical solutions
- Helps determine which mobile network offers the best coverage in specific locations
- Supports smarter planning for future infrastructure upgrades
- May reduce costs if other councils join the scheme

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn82yzkm0jyo>