

Focus on Parishes with Cllr Bethia Thomas

Great Coxwell

Feb 2025

There has been a lot going on at council recently, passing a balanced budget at our meeting earlier this month. There has also much discussion about Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. As always, happy to answer any questions you may have.



General News

- **Budget:** OCC has set its budget for the period for 2025/6. The Council had greater flexibility to invest in services this year with an improved settlement from the new government. However, this was conditional on setting council tax at the maximum 4.99%. Additional funding is being put towards our highway network with £50m for maintenance, including on pothole prevention work like reducing flooding and earlier resurfacing. The administration also delivered another year-on-year increase for SEND and children's services, as well as £1 million for early years support.
- **Devolution and local government reorganisation:** Oxfordshire was not selected by the government to be in the 'fast lane' for reorganisation and devolution. This means the changes will likely take place in 2027/8, rather than 2026. Councils are preparing to put forward proposals for local government reorganisation, with options including a whole Oxfordshire unitary authority, or multiple smaller unitary authorities. These drafts will be submitted by 21 March 2025 with final proposals due in November.
- **Local elections 2025:** The government confirmed that elections to Oxfordshire County Council will take place in 2025. This will take place on the previously agreed new boundaries that include divisions for Faringdon which will be reduced in size, with Littleworth and Buckland now linked with Stanford in the Vale and Kingston Bagpuize.
- **Rural inequalities:** The county would like to hear from residents their experiences of rural inequalities, including difficulties in rural areas in accessing health and social care, housing, employment, and infrastructure. This is part of the 'Oxfordshire Marmot Place' initiative (after Sir Michael Marmot). Please send your insights to marmot@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- **Bus services:** Changes are being made to some of the subsidised services for rural areas following a retendering, including Service 68 run by Pulhams Coaches between Faringdon and Wantage via Uffington; minor changes to route and timetable to better suit students at King Alfred's Academy and an additional morning journey between Wantage and Uffington.

Live Public Consultations

- **Pharmacies:** Input to an assessment of the need for community pharmacies in Oxfordshire by 9 March. [Input to assessment.](#)
- **Home to school transport:** Add to the important topic of home to school and post sixteen transport policy by 2 March. [Input to survey.](#)
- **Free period products:** Add your voice to the discussion about providing menstruation products in all council buildings. [Input to survey.](#)
- **SEND Conversations:** OCC is hosting further information sessions on improvements to SEND services on 18 and 25 March. [Add to the conversation.](#)

Grants

- **Green grants:** Grants are available to support activities for Big Green Week, applications close 14 March. [Apply here.](#)

Councillor Surgeries

I will be available for face-to-face surgeries between 10.00-11.00am at Faringdon Library on the following dates:

- 8th March
- 12th April

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