

REPORT TO SHIPLAKE PARISH COUNCIL **FEBRUARY 2023** FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 23/24

OCC has received an unexpectedly generous Local Government Settlement which has resulted in the council having a surplus of £9m relative to the draft Budget that has been out for public consultation. Rather than use this surplus to cut Council Tax, the administration is looking for ways to spend the money. This approach is being contested by the Conservative Opposition. The Budget will be debated and voted upon by Full Council on 14 February.

OCC SPENDS £152K ON 20MPH SCHEME ADS – £10K IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE!

The LibDem/Green/Labour administration at OCC is spending £8m of Council Tax payers' money switching 85% of the county's 30mph speed limits to 20mph. This is little more than a cosmetic sign-changing exercise, and in most cases is not supported by the police, who are unlikely to enforce it. Nevertheless, many parish councils are giving the scheme a go. (Why not? It costs parish councils nothing directly.) Others are concerned that lots of money is being wasted.

While there is disagreement on the merits of the scheme, almost all Oxfordshire residents will be baffled why they are funding the administration's self-congratulatory advertising aimed at BUCKINGHAMSHIRE residents! This photograph was taken at Tesco, Broadfield, Aylesbury, BUCKS on Sunday 8th January. The 'out of Oxfordshire' element accounts for about £10,000 of the overall advertising budget of £152,000 for the campaign.



PLANS TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS WIDELY ATTACKED

As previously reported, OCC plans to spend £6.5m on traffic filters that will split Oxford into four sectors: North, South, West and East. When the traffic filters are operating, for cars without a permit, movement within each sector is unrestricted, but direct movement between sectors is not possible and requires use of the ring road. Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour. These plans are hugely controversial and have resulted in abuse being directed at council officers and councillors. The Conservative Opposition has grave concerns about the sectors proposal but condemns this abuse and the misinformation that is being spread.

OXFORD LTNS REMOVED FOR REPAIR AS TAXPAYER BILL SOARS

The Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) scheme continues to be highly controversial. In November 2022 OCC said it had spent £72,000 repairing vandalised plastic bollards. Many of the plastic bollards have now been removed at various locations in Oxford. OCC is temporarily replacing them with metal plates embedded in concrete. Officers said this is a safety measure while bollards are being repaired or replaced. (The metal plate makes the site safe while there is no bollard there by covering any damaged fixings.) OCC is now spending £100,000 to replace the plastic bollards with steel ones to prevent further damage.

NHS HEALTH CHECKS IN OXFORDSHIRE NOW AVAILABLE IN MORE LOCATIONS

It is easier than ever for people aged 40 to 74 to get a free NHS health check, with the service now available in even more locations. Health Checks Oxfordshire is now providing free NHS health checks on behalf of OCC at convenient community-based locations across the county, including libraries. This is in support of existing GP practice provision, making it easier than ever to get one. An NHS health check can lower a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and (certain types of) dementia. More information is available on the Health Check website: <https://www.healthchecksoxfordshire.org>

OCC CABINET APPROVES CONTINUED STADIUM DISCUSSIONS WITH OXFORD UNITED

OCC's cabinet has authorised its officers to start negotiations with Oxford United FC on outline legal and commercial terms relating to the club's proposal to lease land for the development of a new football stadium. Discussions to secure information and undertakings that meet OCC's objectives will continue. Any final decision regarding the leasing of the land will be taken in public by a future cabinet meeting, based on whether the council's objectives have been met.

PROPOSAL FOR GIANT RESERVOIR FACES CONTINUED OPPOSITION

Renewed efforts by water companies to move forward with proposals for a giant reservoir near Abingdon are again facing opposition. OCC's cabinet discussed its draft responses to a series of consultations taking place concerning future water supplies, including the Water Resources South East (WRSE) draft regional plan. The WRSE plan includes proposals for a reservoir located between Abingdon, East Hanney, Steventon and Marcham, which would hold up to 100 million cubic metres of water – known as the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) – as well as other options for securing future water supply. In the council's draft response, the WRSE consultation is described as “deeply flawed” and based on “unrealistic and non-evidence-based assumptions” about climate change, as well as “ludicrously outdated population projections”. The response calls the £1.244 billion reservoir “a destructive scheme, both environmentally and in its impacts on local people”, with bill-payers effectively being asked to “sign a blank cheque”, with no clear cost-benefit analysis or justification.

PLANS FOR NEW ACTIVE TRAVEL FUNDING

OCC has secured £520,415 from the government's Active Travel Capability Fund to invest in improving access to active travel options across the county. This investment will be used to deliver projects that enable more people to walk, wheel or cycle as a first choice for local transport. It will also be used to enhance high streets and improve access to work and education. Active Travel Minister, Jesse Norman, announced an additional £32.9m of government funding under an Active Travel Capability Fund last week. The fund supports Active Travel England's ambition for half of all journeys within English towns and cities to be made through walking, wheeling, or cycling by 2030. The funding enables OCC to deliver more of its wider active travel strategy across South and Vale, Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

STREET LIGHTING IN TOAST LANE

I do not support the PC's request for street lighting in Toast Lane. Those concerned about the lack of lighting can use the alternative entrance/exit on Station Road, which is fully lit, or carry a torch. The SNP was clear that residents want dark skies and oppose unnecessary lighting.

'THE BEECHES' UNFINISHED ENTRANCE & FOOTPATH

The developer has confirmed that they have ceased all efforts to secure a contractor to complete the outstanding works. As a result, OCC has requested the developer to put this on headed paper to clarify that it is their clear intention for OCC to complete the outstanding highway works on their behalf using the security deposit monies. Once this has been received by OCC, OCC will move to the next stages of the security deposit call in process.

FMS REF ENQ22937870: A4155 TO ORCHARD CLOSE FOOTPATH REPAIR

OCC officers have been chasing Openreach but there appears to be little progress.

MEMORIAL AVENUE/PLOUGH LANE SPEEDING ISSUES & FMS ENQ22924787: 'WIG-WAG' SIGN NEAR SHIPLAKE PRIMARY SCHOOL

I have not been able to get an update from OCC officer Jon Beale as he is on leave.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE S278 AGREEMENT & P21/S4102/RM

Officers continue to state good progress is being made with the S278 Agreement and therefore no enforcement action is going to be taken at the moment with regard to the commencement of works in breach of the Unilateral Undertaking. However, the occupation of the adjacent houses in advance of the footpath construction is of great concern (see below).

LAND ADJACENT THE TOWER HOUSE READING ROAD (STOW HOUSE AND THE PINES)

The contractors have moved off site and residents have moved in. The residents have no way of entering or leaving the site other than by car or by the muddy track, as the footpath has not yet been built. This is contrary to safety and sustainability policies. I have expressed my concern to both OCC and SODC.

GENERAL SODC REPORT

HQ ISSUES

Conservatives continue to press that the move to Abbey House should be made permanent and the vanity project of a brand-new HQ in Didcot should be scrapped. The administration's Budget to be debated on Thursday allocates £25million to the scheme.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

P22/S2790/FUL: FLATS & CAR PARK AT KINGSLEY HOUSE CROWSLEY ROAD

The PC Chairman and I spoke against this at the planning meeting on 1 February and the application was refused. The committee was concerned about the lack of weight given to the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan by officers.

P22/S1193/HH - SHIPPING CONTAINER STORAGE AT WILLOWS REACH

The PC Chairman and I spoke against this at the planning meeting on 1 February and the application was refused. As with the application above, the committee was concerned about the lack of weight given to the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan by officers.

ENFORCEMENT REF SE22/363 RE P21/SO835/LDP STATIC CARAVAN AT DOG HOUSE

The case officer has expressed concern that the building under construction may not be compliant with the permission granted and has referred the matter to Planning Enforcement. The Enforcement team has confirmed that a case has been opened under reference SE22/363.

P21/S4010/FUL THE BEECHES (FORMERLY MOUNT IDA)

Enforcement officers have stated the developer is actively trying to resolve the unfinished landscaping issues. The residents do not agree this is the case.

P22/S4211/HH THE WHITE HOUSE/'POPLAR EYOT' ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATION

The case officer has visited the site, reviewed all of the plans and documentation provided, and subsequently asked the agent to withdraw the application and resubmit it as a FUL. The officer has also asked the applicant to provide clarity on the use of the barn and the annexe building when they submit a FUL application. I am expecting an update shortly.

LAND ADJACENT THE TOWER HOUSE READING ROAD (IRIS HOUSE AND THE PINES)

As noted in the OCC report above, the contractors appear to have moved off site, and residents have moved in. The 'temporary hoarding' has not been removed and has had a gate with combination lock fitted to it. Enforcement has opened a case reference number SE22/378.

P21/S4271/RM & P22/S4613/MPO WYEVALE 40 DWELLINGS

The developer submitted an amended RM application and recently followed this up with a 'Planning Obligation Modification'. I am broadly supportive of the RM proposals subject to the MPO being agreed.

P20/S2808/DIS: THAMES FARM

I am continuing to press SODC to take robust action in respect of the tree replanting needed to shield this abandoned site. Sadly, SODC appear appears to be reluctant to take any action at all. The recent activity on site is due to a company undertaking ground investigations for Taylor Wimpey to help find a way forward regarding discharge of surface water. They have also been monitoring ground water levels and working with Thames Water.