

REPORT TO SHIPLAKE PARISH COUNCIL OCT 2023

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

DAMNING OFSTED/CQC REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SEND SERVICES

Oxfordshire's local area partnership (LAP) has apologised to families and committed to significant change to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) following an inspection of services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in July. Inspectors identified that there are widespread systemic failings across the local area partnership leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which must be urgently addressed. The LAP is made up of Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) who are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services (across education, health and social care) for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. The partnership also includes Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Angry parents called for the OCC Cabinet Member for Children's Services to resign, but this has now been overtaken by events (see below). The Conservative Opposition has called a special meeting of Full Council to debate the issue. This will take place on October 13th.

COALITION RUNNING OCC COLLAPSES AND COUNCILLOR RESIGNS LABOUR WHIP

The Fair Deal Alliance of Liberal Democrats, Labour, and Green parties, which had run the council since 2021, was shattered in September when Labour pulled out of the coalition. Following the turmoil, senior Labour figures have claimed there were difficulties from the very start of the coalition and that a 'long sequence of events' had shaken the party's faith in the alliance. The Oxford Mail has reported that Council leader Liz Leffman dismissed Labour's claims as "self-justifying nonsense" and said the party "could have broken the agreement at any stage" if it was uncomfortable with the alliance. The Mail added that in an email to Labour members on Tuesday, Cllr Michael O'Connor, the secretary of the Oxfordshire County Labour Group, explained the reasons for the party's dramatic departure. He said "Over the last two years, our efforts to transform services and improve outcomes for residents have been persistently watered down by the Liberal Democrats and the Green party. From day one, the Liberal Democrats have been plagued by infighting. Cllr Leffman has been repeatedly challenged from within her own party, resulting in weak and indecisive leadership. A lack of any political agenda means that council time has been prioritised for political posturing." County Councillor Damian Haywood has resigned from the Labour Party over the issue and will sit as an independent.

NEW CABINET

The Liberal Democrats and Greens have announced they will try and run the council as a minority administration. The make-up of the new Cabinet has yet to be announced.

OXFORD LTNS AFFECTING 'TEACHER RECRUITMENT' – REPORT

Oxford's low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) are among the factors making it difficult to recruit and retain teachers, a report has found. The Oxfordshire Education Commission said the scheme, along with other transport issues and the cost of living and housing, was "fuelling recruitment and retention issues in Oxfordshire." Teacher vacancies in the county are more than double the national average, according to Department for Education figures.

GOVERNMENT AWARDS OCC £250,000 FOR 'SMART STREET POSTS' SCHEME

The Government has awarded OCC £250,000 funding to test smart street posts that can house electric vehicle (EV) charging hubs, boost wireless coverage (including 5G), monitor air quality and display public information. The money is coming from the Government's Smart Infrastructure Pilots Programme (SIPP) and the amount awarded will be matched by the authority itself to create a total investment of £500,000.

EXTENDED TIMETABLE FOR CLOSURE OF OXFORD'S BOTLEY ROAD

Network Rail has informed OCC that it will no longer be able to reopen Oxford's Botley Road at the end of October 2023, as previously planned. Due to complications experienced during its £161 million redevelopment of Oxford Station, Network Rail has requested that Botley Road remain closed to through traffic until the project is completed in October 2024. The original plan was to reopen the road at the end of next month when utility diversion work was due to be completed, and then close it again to through traffic from March - October 2024 for highway work and the replacement of Botley railway bridge. However, Network Rail has not been able to keep to this schedule due to problems caused by the discovery of an inverted brick arch under the surface, which stretches beneath the railway bridge.

RELEASE OF £1.55M DEVELOPMENT FUNDS FOR EXPANDED ZERO EMISSION ZONE

At the Cabinet meeting on 19th September, Cabinet agreed to progress to the second phase of the expanded Oxford City Zero Emissions Zone Scheme project – detailed work needs to be undertaken to forecast the scheme's potential benefits, impacts and scheme design. The approved budget for the development work £1.55m. The actual implementation of the scheme has been delayed by the Botley Road closure referred to above and there are calls from the Conservative Opposition to scrap the scheme, or at least put it on hold.

SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS OPENS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Parents and carers can now apply for their Year 6 child to attend a secondary school for September 2024. Applications should be submitted online by 31 October 2023 at

oxfordshire.gov.uk/secondaryadmissions

Parents and carers will be contacted with the result of their application on national offer day, 1 March 2024.

UPDATE ON RAAC IN A SMALL NUMBER OF ACADEMIES IN OXFORDSHIRE

OCC has confirmed that none of the schools it runs is affected by the current RAAC ([Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete](#)) issue that has been prominent in the national news. Only one Oxfordshire secondary school is a local authority maintained school and around half of primary schools in the county are now academies. These schools are therefore run independently of the council and managed by the Regional Schools Director/Department for Education. OCC has been kept informed by a small number of academies in the county who do have RAAC issues but who have each come up with arrangements to ensure that children continue to be educated.

OXFORD UNITED STADIUM BID TO PROCEED

Proposals for council-owned land to be leased to Oxford United FC to build a new stadium near Kidlington have been approved by Cabinet. The club now has to submit a planning application to Cherwell District Council.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

CCTV CAMERAS/SPEED SURVEY AT JUNCTION OF CROWSLEY ROAD/NEW ROAD

The traffic survey company that installed the speed tubes (traffic counters) and surveillance cameras at this location did so without the permission of OCC. The company has subsequently apologised. Such equipment is normally installed as a precursor to a planning application, although on rare occasions there can be other explanations.

HIGHWAY OFFICER PRIORITIES/WORKLOAD

The PC asked me to investigate the four items below. They will be looked into but the officer sent a blanket response as follows:

"We are struggling to keep up with enquiries due to volume and other duties...Highways is in process of being reorganised and that will hopefully make improvements to the service. It is therefore even more important to utilise the fix my street system to record problems (even when errors are made at our end) as this does give us the chance to reinvestigate and update enquiries."

FMS ENQ 22939732 OVERGROWN VEGETATION ON FOOTPATH BY SCHOOL

Inspector to revisit to assess situation and clear if needed.

FMS ENQ23972527 FLOODING OPPOSITE HAILEYWOOD FARM

Inspector to revisit to assess.

FMS ENQ23972777 HIDDEN FLASHING VAS

Inspector to visit to assess situation.

FMS ENQ23974603 ROAD SIGN WITH STANCHIONS IN FOOTPATH

Inspector to visit to assess situation.

P22/S4613/MPO WYEVALE 40 DWELLINGS (NO 30MPH LIMIT EXTENTION ETC)

Ten months on, the SODC website is still showing that no decision has been made, although officers indicate earlier this year they were minded to refuse it. The PC may wish to contact the developer to request an appeal if the application is eventually refused.

FMS REF ENQ22937870: A4155 TO ORCHARD CLOSE FOOTPATH REPAIR

I am advised the costs have increased to c. £5000 and would like to know if the PC still intends to proceed with the work.

FOOTPATH FROM NORTHFIELD AVENUE TO BOLNEY LANE

I still awaiting a quote from OCC. Works could be joint-funded by the PC and my Councillor Priority Fund.