

OCC (Sonning Common & Henley South) councillor's report

Shiplake – 13th July 2026

Improved Road Safety Results in Oxfordshire

Government Dept for Transport's provisional reporting of safety statistics on the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Oxfordshire roads in 2025 has shown a year-on-year fall of 18% to 213; this follows a year-on-year fall last year too. This reduction compares with an increase of around 20% in 2025 over the wider Thames Valley.

The Department for Transport published its provisional personal injury collision and casualty statistics for Great Britain on 28 May 2026. While the figures remain provisional and may be revised as additional data is confirmed, the early trends are encouraging for Oxfordshire. The KSI measure is generally regarded as the most robust indicator within the provisional dataset because serious and fatal collisions are more consistently reported and recorded than lower-level incidents.

In February 2022, Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet approved funding to support the roll-out of 20mph schemes in communities across the county at no cost to town and parish councils. Since then, more than 275 communities in urban and rural areas have requested and implemented 20mph measures.

Flags and Injunction

Across Oxfordshire flags have been being erected on County Council land and highways furniture – including lampposts. It seems these carry a nationalist theme that excludes a part of the population and which are thus seen as threatening.

The conditions in which they are put up cause safety and road disruption concerns. Where council officers seek to remove flags or indeed when residents challenge their putting up there have been numerous incidents of intimidation and suggested violence. A number of those involved have a record of very bad behaviour and/or violence.

The highways assets cannot be used for any affixings without prior permission and due safety; it is illegal without permission and no such permission has been granted. Costs of removal are significant and the safety of staff and residents is important.

Accordingly, after a "cease and desist" letter did not have the desired effect, OCC brought an injunction case in the High Court against 4 individuals. The injunction was granted and the 4 individuals were required to agree to the Court that they would no longer put up material on highways furniture in Oxfordshire and would not act to encourage others to do so. The order extended to others who might take up the activity. Anyone so doing could face up to 2 years in prison. Whilst the court action had a cost, it will now save further costs. It is the first such case, but other councils are now taking a keen interest.

(Subsequently it has transpired that one of the individuals is due to appear before Reading Crown Court having been charged with 3 counts of making indecent child images. The case is now some months away and the individual denies the charges.)

SEND action plan

Like all other councils, OCC has submitted its report to Government demonstrating its action plan on SEND. This is required before the Government agree to write off 90% of net "High Needs Deficits" up to end March 2026. These deficits have been subject to a "statutory override" whereby they were incurred but not reported in a traditional way – in effect "off balance sheet"; that decree was issued by the previous pre General Election government as a stop-gap.

It is believed that OCC's report does meet the Government's requirements – based on prior consultation. Their formal response will follow after their full review.

The action plans are required to demonstrate how the Government's revised policy will be applied – with a plan to direct more SEND children to mainstream school settings, but with extra support resources, in the future.

Except at key gateway dates – e.g. transition to secondary school – existing placed children will not be moved or disrupted.

Constitution

At its council on 30th June council agreed a revised constitution, following a working group review chaired by Cllr Stefan Gawrysiak. The new version extensively tidies up the previous version and seeks fairness with more efficient use of time in council meetings.

Council meeting 30th June 2026

At its council meeting on 30th June, OCC agreed annual scrutiny reports for each of the scrutiny committees. In addition 3 motions were agreed unanimously (save the last where there was one abstention by the Reform councillor for Didcot). They were :-

- To call for faster action on Disabled Facilities Grants. These seek to put in facilities to help those with developing disabilities to live comfortably and safely at home. Particularly with some rapidly advancing conditions it is vital that this work is done promptly. However the set-up by government is complex involving staff by NHS and OCC, grant funds by districts and sometimes permission from social or private landlords. Such facilities sometimes include downstairs shower installations etc.
- To call for more work on Climate adaptation and various forms of action, including by considered and targeted planting, to alleviate flooding by slowing or diverting flows. Also to seek to mitigate “heat islands” in urban areas as we begin the journey to more extreme summer temperatures. (It is suggested that Oxfordshire might routinely face 45 degree centigrade temperatures by 2050.)
- To call to use new Government powers to restrain the problem of dangerous pavement parking. Seeking a joined-up plan that considers local needs in the round to balance appropriate needs – including for disabled, elderly and mothers with pushchairs. Exploring scope for measured enforcement without a lot of extra net costs for the council.

Oxford Traffic Filters

From Monday 14 September the traffic filters trial will replace the temporary congestion charge. Car drivers will no longer have the option to pay the £5 charge.

For most people, their congestion charge permit will automatically become a traffic filters permit. They will not need to reapply.

Everyone in Oxfordshire gets 25 permit days per annum and those in the City get 100 p.a..

The filters were approved as a trial in 2022, but were delayed by the long-running Botley Road rail bridge works. Subsequently, as an interim measure, the temporary Congestion Charge was initiated. Now, Botley Road is confidently scheduled to re-open at the end of August 2026,

In future a car (not commercial vehicles) passing through a filter point without a permit will trigger a £70 penalty (which can be reduced to £35 with prompt payment). For a six month period a first infraction will attract a warning letter, thereafter a penalty fine.

It is expected that the filters will improve the results of the temporary Congestion Charge scheme that have themselves been positive. For this reason it is expected that receipts will fall sharply. Any such receipt must be spent on the operation of the scheme first, then any net surplus receipts must go on congestion-mitigation measures or appropriate post-trial costs.

The trial will run until no later than end March 2028, although it could be replaced by a permanent scheme by then after evaluation of consultation and results.

Everyone without a permit can apply online. Each person can have a permit with up to two vehicle registrations for each. Anyone who can't apply online can call by phone – **01865 519800**.

More information is here

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/trafficfilters

Devolution and LGR

For devolution UK Gov tried to force through a version in which Oxfordshire and Berkshire had to also include Swindon. (Although they are said to be reconsidering, Buckinghamshire have vetoed being part of a Thames Valley FSA.)

UK Gov have decreed that the area for the Spatial Development Strategy will be Thames Valley plus Swindon. Councils have no power to block this; although the inclusion of Swindon is resented as not being part of the Thames Valley.

Under the Devolution legislation upper tier/unitary councils have a power of veto over devolution proposals. In the case of the Thames Valley the proposal has been vetoed – including by OCC and Windsor and Maidenhead. Other council resent and reject Swindon but don't go so far as to veto the proposal. Far from the original MSA (Mayor with substantial funds from UK Gov) proposal all that UK Gov are now offering to Thames Valley is an FSA (No mayor scant funding and limited benefits and powers. This latter point has also driven the vetoes. SODC and Vale of White Horse would have vetoed, but as Districts did not have that power. It is not yet clear how UK Gov will respond, but there seem scant scope for their devolution to proceed. OCC have called on the new Burnham Government to support an MSA proposal for the Thames Valley – with funding – and to exclude Swindon. Swindon has no historic cultural or current material economic links to the Thames Valley and belongs with Wiltshire.

Despite the current extent of change in central Government it is suggested that the Government will launch a suggestion for their preferred LGR (Local Government Re-Organisation in the days ahead in July.

Leigh Rawlins

County Councillor (Sonning Common & Henley South)