

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

Shiplake – 11th May 2026

Elections

There are local council elections in some areas of England on Thursday 7th May. In the period before then we will have been in a “Pre-Election Period” when controversial or major decisions at councils are avoided to prevent them influencing voters unduly.

There are no elections in SODC or OCC this time. However there are elections in WODC, Cherwell DC and Oxford City as well as in neighbouring Reading BC and Wokingham BC.

At the time of writing the results are unknown.

Highways

Gradual but positive progress continues with reducing the backlog of potholes; the better weather is helping with this.

Please continue to report new or any unresolved potholes via FMS:-

<https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

If interested, please see the explanatory videos on the “[potholes portal](#)”

In parallel, investment in preventative work to protect and seal the road surfaces continues and OCC's annual surface dressing programme is now well underway again.

There is also an explanatory video on surface dressing here: [surface dressing portal](#)

Foster Care and Carers

Across the UK, hundreds of foster carers open their homes to provide love, stability and care to children and young people in need. But many more foster carers are urgently needed across Oxfordshire to ensure every child can be matched with the right home for their individual needs.

From 11-24 May, The Fostering Network is running its annual Foster Care Fortnight campaign – a nationwide effort to raise awareness of the incredible impact of foster care and to encourage more people to consider becoming foster carers. See:-

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/children-and-families/fostering/foster-care-fortnight>

Adult care at home

Having a comfortable home really matters, especially as we get older. As a bit of extra help becomes needed, it can be hard to know where to begin.

From working out what support is available to understanding the cost of care, there's a lot to think about. That's where OCC's [living well at home guides](#) come in. They're designed to make things clearer and help people find the right support at the right time.

Fire & Rescue service

It is now confirmed that Henley fire station will remain. Hurrah!

Thanks to Stefan, Freddie, Henley TC, our parishes, public and firefighters we got the message across and did the data analysis to evidence our points.

Immediately there will be more effort on recruitment and training. Whatever it takes, the availability issue has to be addressed. I believe – as do Stefan and Freddie that we must also consider full-time day-crewing.

A wonderful result and to be fair to Rob McDougal the Chief Fire Officer and his team, they listened throughout and engaged with our analysis.

They also went on to do some extra modelling – which we understand rather supported our case; albeit that more may be needed to consider options - in the firm context of retention of our fire station. Hurrah!

[Leigh Rawlins](#)

County Councillor (Sonning Common & Henley South)