

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS FEBRUARY 2020 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

As per my note last month, I have changed the way I supply reports and I now send out my 'General OCC Report' to all parish councils at the beginning of the month. This is to ensure that parish councils that meet later in the month don't receive out of date news. I will take questions on the report at PC meetings and then deliver my local report in the usual way.

GENERAL OCC REPORT

SPECIAL THIRD READING BRIDGE MEETING FRIDAY 31st JANUARY 2020

At an informal joint meeting of parish councils from the southern part of Oxfordshire on 31st January 2020 to discuss the proposed Third Reading Bridge, the following resolution was overwhelmingly passed:

- a) In the context of the Climate Emergency a car-based solution to a car-based problem that would pour thousands of cars and HGVs into Oxfordshire is totally inappropriate and should a new bridge be built it should be restricted to public transport, cyclists and pedestrians;
- b) Notwithstanding the above, if a car-based solution is pursued, the proposed bridge and necessary mitigation measures (i.e. improvements to the Oxfordshire road network) are not considered as two separate projects, but as one single project in order that the benefits, disadvantages and costs of the complete scheme can be holistically assessed.

I was asked to communicate this fact to the MP Bridge Summit meeting in March.

Representatives from these parish councils attended: Binfield Heath, Eye & Dunsden, Harpsden, Highmoor, Ipsden, Kidmore End, Rotherfield Greys, Rotherfield Peppard, Shiplake, Sonning Common.

BUDGET OFFERS RESIDENTS INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL SERVICES, SCHOOLS & ROADS

Proposals for an 'investment budget' to reduce neglect, ill-health and social isolation will be considered by councillors when the budget is set on Tuesday 11 February, following resident and business consultation. The proposals include community support for vulnerable people so they can live independently for longer, and more help for struggling families to reduce the chances of children having to go into care.

Funding for children and adult social services would increase by £30 million next year, including an extra £8.1m from the government. This money is needed to support an increase in adult social care needs for both older and disabled people, as well as the increasing number of child protection cases, which has grown in line with national trends.

The budget proposals also include investment in infrastructure across the county, such as an extra £50m for new and existing schools over ten years. Most of the funding comes from housing developers to meet the need for more pupil places in Oxfordshire.

The county council proposes to spend £30 million in 2020/21 from its capital budget on repairs to roads, bridges, drainage and footways across Oxfordshire's towns and villages. New funding of £3m per year is proposed to improve local road safety and accessibility, including new pedestrian crossings, improved junctions and better bus stop facilities. These measures are designed to encourage walking and cycling as part of the council's commitment to improving air quality and active lifestyles.

Responding to climate change features prominently across budget proposals, including support for sustainable travel such as improving park and ride services on the A40, and the replacement of over 50,000 streetlights with energy-efficient LEDs. However, all budget proposals have to consider the climate change agenda and how OCC will meet its carbon neutral target by 2030.

NEW ONLINE WASTE INFORMATION TOOL LAUNCHED TO BOOST RECYCLING RATES

A new online tool has been launched by the council to help tackle the main issue inhibiting residents doing better at recycling. It is called Waste Wizard and offers information on: what can and cannot be recycled; where to deposit waste; and be repurposing or donation.

Waste Wizard uses postcodes and allows residents to identify what to do with a huge range of household objects and materials to avoid them being disposed of based on location. It works across all areas of the county, irrespective of district. It aims to inform residents of where and how to get some objects repaired or donated as well as recycled at local authority sites or from the kerbside.

Oxfordshire has a commanding lead position in England for recycling with over 58 per cent of all waste is reused, composted or recycled in compared to the national rate of 45 per cent. The rationale for Waste Wizard is to drive this rate up further. It aims to cut the contamination in kerbside recycling collection bins (currently 10%) as well as informing residents about the many items (especially food) that are erroneously deposited in the general waste bin.

The online tool can be found at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard

WINTER BOOKLET OFFERS ADVICE TO OLDER PEOPLE

Age UK Oxfordshire has joined forces with local partners to provide advice to older people on staying healthy and well during the winter. The aim is to provide older people with health, well-being and lifestyle advice that supports them during the winter months – when they are susceptible to flu, coughs and colds.

Working in partnership with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and OCC, Age UK Oxfordshire is encouraging older people to create a personal winter plan.

‘Staying Well This Winter’ is full of tips and advice on how to look after oneself and others. This might include having a list of emergency phone numbers by the phone, getting repeat prescriptions in plenty of time or having a free flu vaccination for those in an ‘at risk’ group. The booklet also includes a handy checklist of items you may need as part of your winter plan. It is available via www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire or by contacting Age UK Oxfordshire by phone on 01235 849 434 or email network@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk.

GO AHEAD FOR BUSINESS CASE TO REDUCE CONGESTION IN AND AROUND OXFORD

OCC and Oxford City Council cabinets have approved plans to develop a detailed business case for a project to reduce congestion on routes into and around Oxford, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. The aim of ‘Connecting Oxford’ is to make a real improvement to journey times for commuters, other travellers and quality of life for residents and visitors, including improved air quality. This will be done by reducing the number of cars travelling into and around the city and encouraging more people to travel by buses, walking and cycling. The business plan was informed by a survey run in autumn 2019 on an outline of possible proposals. Over 3000 responses were received from residents, employers and other major city organisations including the NHS and universities.