

REPORT TO SHIPLAKE PARISH COUNCIL JANUARY 2023 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

CLIMATE LOCKDOWN

Conspiracy theorists have cunningly linked OCC plans to create '15-minute neighbourhoods' with the plans to introduce six traffic filters that will divide the city of Oxford.

- An example is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkZDcVF1xRI>
- And the OCC rebuttal is here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8Dn8MWpv-U>
- Regrettably, the fake messaging has frequently been believed and has resulted in threats to councillors and staff: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-64001776>

THE TRUTH: NO LOCKDOWN BUT FILTERS TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS

The truth behind the 'Climate Lockdown' scare is that 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. At the Cabinet meeting on 29th November 2022, a record number of individuals and organisations spoke passionately for and against the highly controversial proposal. The meeting was attended by police armed with tasers and security guards. The chamber had to be cleared at one point. The proposal was approved by Cabinet. The Conservative Opposition has grave concerns about the proposal but condemns the misinformation that is being spread and the resultant abuse suffered by councillors and employees. Many supporters of these measures now concede that they have been poorly planned, maximising the damaging effects of Low-Traffic Neighbourhoods, bus gates and Botley Road improvements works to motorists and businesses in Oxford.

COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 23/24

The Budget process is nearing conclusion, and it is likely the administration will impose a 5% increase in Council Tax on residents. In terms of proposed Directorate spend, a staggering 71% will go on Social Care (Adults £221.3m, Children's £164.9m, total Directorate £544m). As a proportion of gross expenditure (excluding schools) it will be around 52% of c£750m. By way of comparison Highways & Transport will get just 8%.

CHILDREN SERVICES CURRENTLY £14.5M OVER BUDGET OF £149.1M

The Children's Services budget for 22/23 is £149.1M. As of October 2022, the latest forecast actual spend is £163.M – an overspend of £14.5M. While there is no question that vulnerable children must be protected, the individual costs are staggering. A typical mainstream residential placement is £5,100 per child per week. Costs for children who need significant support can be as high as £20,000 per child per week – pro-rata that is £1m per child per year. Conservatives are questioning whether best value is being achieved and what action is being taken to bring down these extraordinary costs. Despite such questions over value for money, the Council is consulting on a budget that would see Council Tax increase to pay for an 8.3% cash rise in Children's Services spending.

OCC APPOINTS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON £225,000 PA



Dr Martin Reeves has been named as the new Chief Executive of OCC. Dr Reeves is expected to take over from Interim Chief Executive, Stephen Chandler, in the Spring. The move means the Council will have been without a permanent Chief Executive for over a year, following Mr Chandler's engagement as an Interim in February 2022, when the process of ending the partnership between OCC and Cherwell District Council began. Dr Reeves joins from Coventry City Council where he has been Chief Executive since 2009. From 2008 - 2009 he was Chief Executive of Bedfordshire County Council, after serving as Assistant Chief Executive there from 2006 - 2008. He will be paid a salary of £225,000 pa. Not only do Conservatives question whether Town Hall chiefs should be paid such salaries but they also continue to raise the issue of the lack of urgency surrounding the recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive.

CAR PARK 'LIVING WALL' THAT COST COUNCIL-TAX PAYERS £30,000 NOW REMOVED

The strange structure that appeared in the car park in front of County Hall during August, taking up two valuable car parking spaces intended for visitors on county business, has now been removed. Apparently, it was a 'living wall' and the aim was to understand the impact of plants on air quality in the car park. The cost of this five-month project to Council Tax payers was £30,000.



OCC RESOLVES TO IMPROVE SERVICE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

At the 13 December Full Council meeting, the council acknowledged the difficulties experienced by certain parents and students in the delivery of its SEND service and paid tribute to the testimonies of parents heard at Full Council on 1 November 2022. Councillor Eddie Reeves, Leader of the Opposition, said: *"This is an issue of national and indeed grave concern and Oxfordshire does not compare that favourably to other counties and certainly not to other comparable local authorities – we are letting parents, pupils and professionals down if we don't acknowledge that. We have over 5,000 children and young people with educational health plans in this county – that has grown of a quarter in the past three years. We must ensure that assessments are undertaken promptly and we must ensure that recommendations are subsequently acted upon promptly."*

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

DISTRIBUTION S-14(2) NOTICE - T11102 SHIPLAKE, READING ROAD (A4155), RG9 4BT

A temporary Notice is being made by OCC to implement the temporary restriction and will operate from 23/01/2023 to and include 25/01/2023 (each night from 23:00hrs to 05:00hrs). In effect, the A4155 will be closed between Plough Lane and Memorial Avenue during this time. A long diversion via the A4 will be signposted for traffic, but it is anticipated that those who know the area will use Plough Lane and Memorial Avenue to bypass the closed section of the A4155.

‘THE BEECHES’ UNFINISHED ENTRANCE & FOOTPATH

As previously reported, the OCC Highways Engineer met with the developer in November. The developer blames the contractor for the unfinished works even though the arbitrator found in favour of the contractor. The developer states he hopes to have a new contractor appointed by mid-January with the work to start late February. If the work does not progress, OCC will complete the work and draw down the bond it holds.

FLOOD FROM WATER ON READING ROAD: FMS ENQ22917578

OCC has assessed the location and identified some improvements to reduce the risk of highway water entering residents' driveways. This includes additional kerbing on the approach to reduce the run-off of soil from the adjoining land and enlarging the existing gullies with deeper silt traps to catch more highway water. Officers are currently awaiting a quotation for the works and once approved will look to programme the work.

POSSIBLE CLOSURE OF LEVEL CROSSING FOR RAILWAY MAINTENANCE WORKS

With regard to access issues, OCC officers have advised that no applications have been received at this time.

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

Subsequent to Cllr Head's meeting, OCC officer Jon Beale emailed proposals to Cllr Head on 11 October 2022 12:40. The clerk emailed Jon on 25 November with a request for three speed surveys in advance of other action. I have still not been advised of the outcome of this.

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 appear to have moved off site and residents have moved in. The residents have no way of entering or leaving the site other than by car as the footpath has not been built. This is contrary to safety and sustainability policies. The PC may wish to follow this up with OCC (jason.sherwood@oxfordshire.gov.uk) and SODC Planning Enforcement. (NB: 'Stow House' was originally marketed as 'Iris House'.)

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. Nothing appears to have happened about the site at Crowmarsh Gifford abandoned after the fire many years ago.

SPECIFIC SODC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

CALL-IN: P22/S1193/HH - SHIPPING CONTAINER STORAGE AT WILLOWS REACH

I am awaiting a response to my email to the PC of 29 December 2022 16:13 enquiring whether it wishes me to maintain my call-in and, if so, on what basis.

P21/SO835/LDP STATIC CARAVAN AT THE 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. The PC may also wish to express its concern about this matter, quoting the reference number.

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.

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. The PC may wish to follow this up with Enforcement quoting the reference number.

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.

P21/S5382/FUL WYEVALE 55 DWELLINGS

The refusal notice has finally been issued.

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. The PC may wish to write again to the Deputy Chief Executive.