

REPORT TO SHIPLAKE PARISH COUNCIL MARCH 2025

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

OCC BUDGET 2025/26

The minority Liberal Democrat/Green administration at OCC has published its Budget for 2025/26 on the council website. Despite receiving more Government funding than expected, the administration has kept the Council Tax rise at 5%. The Conservative Opposition had put forward amendments to limit the rise to 4.5% and to spend over £6m more on roads and flood measures, but they were voted down at Full Council on 11th February.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION AND DEVOLUTION

OCC is not in the fast track for reorganisation, so the elections scheduled for May will go ahead. The government has asked Oxfordshire councils to submit an interim plan for a new unitary authority or authorities by 21 March 2025, with a full proposal by 28 November 2025. In parallel with this, OCC is continuing discussions with neighbouring authorities across the Thames Valley about a future mayoral strategic authority. Meanwhile, Vale of White Horse District Council has declared it favours combining with West Berkshire District Council.

NEW WALKING AND CYCLING ROUTES INTO OXFORD

Residents are being asked for their views on plans for six new walking and cycling routes into Oxford from towns and villages within an eight-mile radius. The proposal to create a series of 'greenways' – high-quality paths in urban or natural areas prioritised for pedestrians and cyclists – comes from a joint project being developed by OCC, Oxford City Council and the University of Oxford. The consultation runs until Tuesday 18 March. To take part, visit [Let's talk Oxfordshire](#).

NEARLY 10,000 CIGARETTES SEIZED FOLLOWING TRADING STANDARDS OPERATION

Almost 10,000 counterfeit and smuggled cigarettes and other tobacco and nicotine-based products have been seized following a series of visits to retail premises by OCC's trading standards team. The raids, carried out on 21 January, were part of Operation CeCe, a national initiative to tackle the sale and supply of illegal tobacco products. Officers were accompanied by specialist tobacco detection dogs, which can sniff out contraband in concealments within till points or hidden in storerooms. Premises involved included off-licences, convenience stores, food retailers and barbers in Banbury, Kidlington and Oxford. The operation resulted in the seizure of 9,340 illegal cigarettes, 700g of counterfeit hand rolling tobacco, 180 unit packs of non-compliant nicotine pouches and 42 disposable electronic cigarettes, or vapes, with a capacity of nicotine containing liquid nine times the maximum allowed. The total street value of the haul was approximately £5,000.

CONTRACTORS APPOINTED FOR STAGE TWO OF DIDCOT INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME

OCC has officially entered into contracts with GRAHAM Construction Ltd and AECOM to deliver stage two of the Didcot and surrounding areas major infrastructure (HIF1) scheme. GRAHAM is undertaking the detailed design of the Culham river crossing and the Clifton Hampden bypass elements of the scheme while the detailed design of the Didcot Science Bridge and the widening of the A4130 is being led by AECOM. Segregated two-way pedestrian and cycle facilities will feature along the entire route. Detailed design is underway, with construction expected to start in early 2026.

SPECIFIC OCC REPORT FOR SHIPLAKE

NEW ROAD: 25 HOUSES

I have contributed to the OCC 'Single Response' and the PC has been copied in.

FMS ENQ251030964: CHURCH LANE POTHOLE

As previously reported, I had a site meeting with officers on Wednesday 5th February and arranged for the potholes to be made safe on a temporary basis within 28 days. For the long-term repair, officers are exploring potential treatments. However, this may not happen within this financial year. I am awaiting an update. The PC may be asked to contribute towards the long-term repair.

TEMPORARY EMERGENCY FOOTPATH CLOSURE OF FOOTPATH-7 (GRID SU77947873)

OCC closed Footpath 7 in November 2023 as the surface had collapsed. After several missed deadlines, repairs were finally completed by Network Rail and the EA by towards the end of 2024. The path was reopened but the repairs appear to be inadequate and new sink holes have formed. OCC officers fenced off part of the area and contacted Network Rail concerning further remedial work. Network Rail engineers have now been out to assess the situation. Given the sink hole/scouring out, a much more substantial fix is required. Network Rail is now in negotiations with the EA for a permit to allow this to happen. This will take some time. I am awaiting an update from officers.

THAMES FARM/CROSSWAYS DRAINAGE DITCH FENCING ON A4155

At the beginning of January, persons unknown erected fencing around the drainage ditches on the western side of the A4155 opposite the war memorial. According to OCC officers, this wasn't done by Taylor Wimpey, Westbourne Homes or OCC. I pressed the issue and officers now advise that the fencing was in fact erected by Taylor Wimpey, who have been instructed to remove it as it is not the correct specification.

A4155 CROSSING POINT NEAR HIGHLANDS HOUSE

As previously reported, officers have advised that as the Section 278 works are not 'completed' in accordance with the legal agreement and will not be until such a time as the on-site drainage matters are resolved and re-constructed, Taylor Wimpey (TW) remains responsible for the S278 works that have already been carried out. The Stage 3 Road Safety Audit had identified possible issues with the crossing point and the officers' plan was to ask TW to carry out speed surveys prior to first occupation. However, due to all of the site delays, and that other developments on that side of the road are building out, they have now written to TW to ask them to carry out the speed surveys, clear vegetation in the visibility splay and report accordingly on the speed survey information. I am awaiting an update.

SHIPLAKE CORNER SHOP SIGNPOST

The incoming postmaster has requested that a 'Brown Sign' publicising the shop/PO is attached to the road signs at the Station road/A4155 junction. I am investigating the matter.

FOOTPATH ALONGSIDE A4155 FROM MEMORIAL AVENUE TO PLOUGH LANE

I had a site visit with an officer in November and a plan has been circulated to the PC. The estimate has come in at £28,000.00 + vat for these works, with highways completing some minimal signage relocation at no extra cost. PC to advise whether it wishes to fund this project.