

County Councillor report

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Parishes: Blewbury, Chilton, Harwell, Upton, Western Valley

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

The last month has continued to be full of training (which is mostly complete), but I have now also attended the full gamut of Parish Councils, at least one meeting for each parish. I'm picking up running themes on a few local issues; some related to speeding and traffic calming, and some related to SEND provision. Having already acted as a substitute for a colleague on the Education and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), I have also latterly attended my first formal People OSC. It was great to get first-hand accounts of how the Oxfordshire Employment Service is supporting people with long-term health needs or disability to gain and sustain employment. It's all part of our strategic vision for adult social care, the "Oxfordshire Way". I do truly believe it's a brilliant programme and I would strongly encourage people to have a read of it at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/social-and-health-care/adult-social-care/oxfordshire-way>.

However, the purpose of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee is not just to applaud the good work being done; it's to be a "critical friend". We review policy, challenge anything we think is lacking, and make evidence-based recommendations to cabinet and officers on how we could improve our initiatives for adults in potential need of social care or safeguarding. I would therefore particularly urge anyone who has experience of our Adult Social Care services to get in touch with me if you have anything you'd like me to investigate.

You can also keep updated on my activity via Facebook at www.facebook.com/CllrBekahFletcher

Best wishes

Bekah

Transport update

Grove Road, Harwell

Unconfirmed closure 28th-29th July towards junction with High St. for road resurfacing. Permit still listed as pending so may not go ahead but be aware there would be a diversion via Barrow Road/The Croft

Reading Road, Harwell

Until 11th July, there will be two-way signals on Reading Road for duct installation works. Some OpenReach network blockages have also been identified and work on these should also be carried out. Delays are likely.

High Street, Harwell

Application made by Scottish and Southern Power for two-way signals on Wantage Road 22nd-24th July. No further details, but delays are possible.

A34 – diversions

From 4th – 7th July National Highways will be repairing the A34 Northbound Chieveley-Chilton. The diversion route is along the A4130, between Milton Interchange and Abingdon Road. Delays are likely.

Chapel Lane, Blewbury

7th -9th July, Gas utility works. Delays are possible, traffic management will be give and take.

Please continue to report any highway defects on www.fixmystreet.com.

Consultations

OCC has several open consultations, which I would encourage you to give feedback on. Some of them have been misreported or misunderstood, so please do feel free to ask me any questions if you want more information.

Closing 20th July: New community special school for southeast Oxfordshire.

OCC has already approved the specification for a new school for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) needs. This consultation is on the specification for another new school in Valley Park, for children with Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and other associated needs. If you are interested in the delivery of special education, please fill in the survey at

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/new-valley-park-special-school-for-south-east-oxfordshire>

Closing 27th July: Local Government reorganisation.

The government is intending to streamline how local government works, replacing County and District Councils with unitary authorities. There are three proposals; a single unitary council for Oxfordshire, two unitary councils (under which system we would be covered by Ridgeway Council; SODC, VOWH and West Berkshire), or three unitary councils (the same as two councils, but with an additional "Greater Oxford" standalone city). OCC's preference is for a single unitary authority, but it will be a central government decision and ultimately, we will have no say. The consultation is to gather residents' feedback on OCC's initial proposal:

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation>

Closing 3rd August: Oxford temporary congestion charge for cars

OCC is looking to introduce an interim version of the bus filters scheme, while Botley Road remains closed. This is designed to make bus travel quicker and has been called for by the two main bus companies. It will also allow easier access for those who need it, such as healthcare workers, blue badge holders, traders and carers. Oxfordshire residents would get several day permits, and beyond these, a £5 congestion charge would apply to cars. A local Citizen's Assembly on our transport system was heavily in favour of measures to reduce congestion, with 88% supporting a "car-free city centre" and 74% explicitly supporting a congestion charge.

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/congestion-charge>

Closing 11th August: Household waste recycling centre consultation.

OCC is reviewing its HWRC opening hours, van and trailer permits, reuse and recycle policies, all with a view to reducing the amount of household waste we throw away. If you regularly use our local HWRC, please fill in the survey at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hwrc-consultation>

Councillor queries

Recent queries I've raised on behalf of residents and Parish Councils include:

Ticket description	Status	Outcome/latest information
Chilton Fields adoption	HANDED OVER	With Cllr Hanna for Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds
Church Hill road markings	REOPENED	Some confusion over this; I was advised this would happen end of May but Church Hill white lines were missed. We have been advised that they are on the planned works, but there is no timeline yet. I have escalated to try and pin down a date.
Traffic calming Harwell village	RESPONSE RECEIVED, FOLLOWED UP	Ongoing delays due to developer, being chased each week. I have now received the plans for the works. Many of the measures are signs; speed limit roundels and repeaters, car-activated speed signs, chevrons, pedestrian and cycle signs. There is also a proposed cycle lane (Wantage Road), removal of centre lines, and three raised speed tables. I have followed up to request road resurfacing as part of the works.
Chilton bus stop placement	IN PROGRESS	Happy to advise, PC to own costs. Further requested clearance of overgrown vegetation: this has as of 2nd July been ordered so hoping for speedy resolution.
Bus obstruction in Chilton	COMPLETE	July 1st
Burning of domestic waste in Upton	HANDED OVER	Passed onto District Council
Steventon lights integrated transport scheme	COMPLETE	Delays but going ahead. Currently in phase 2a; utility diversions.
BetterPoints scheme	COMPLETE	Have requested. Confirmed joint travel/public health programme, using external funding (no precept). Officially launched in March 2025, as of June 2025 there are ~2000 active users and another ~1000 new users.
GWP adoption	ONGOING	Spine roads adoption currently stuck in negotiations between Leap Utilities, SODC and Taylor Wimpey. We can't adopt any estate roads until the spine roads are adopted.
Bus price increase for schoolkids	COMPLETE	Not within our remit; school services in question are run directly between bus companies and schools and unfortunately, we can't oblige them to keep costs affordable.
Aureus School capacity	COMPLETE	Followed up directly with parents