

County Councillor report

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

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

Last month I mentioned my membership of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), where we scrutinise policy and performance, and challenge decisions made by the council that affect vulnerable adults in our communities. I have now also attended two Education and Young People OSC meetings as a substitute. It is no secret that there are areas in our Special Educational Needs provision that have been heavily criticised and need marked improvement. I have done my best to provide fair and just critique at these meetings, to influence future policy and improve experience for young people and their families as they navigate education services, including SEND provision, and care services. After the last meeting, I was asked by one of the Young co-opted members if I would consider joining the committee as a permanent member. After some consideration of whether I have capacity to take on an additional responsibility, I have agreed to take over the position from another councillor. I will continue to press for a formal review into how we manage co-production – working with parents and young people to co-create processes and guidance that meet their needs, not just the bare minimum required.

I have already been in contact with many caregivers who have had difficult experiences with our SEND services; it's part of my role to take your concerns forward, and it's an area I feel very passionately about, so if this affects you, please do get in touch with me by email.

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

Best wishes

Bekah

Transport update

A note that there are a lot of roadworks planned in the coming months. I will note only those where some delay is possible or likely, but for information there are also water and gasworks planned in Harwell, Chilton and Blewbury that should have no impact on transport.

Grove Road, Harwell

Residents will no doubt have experienced the absolute chaos caused by the Grove Road closure. I am working with officers to ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent similar disruption by future contractors. I am extremely sorry that the works were so poorly managed, and have made my feelings clear both to the company concerned and to Council Officers.

Bessels Way, Blewbury

5th - 7th August, telephone pole replacement on verge. Two-way signals, delays possible.

Bohams Road, Blewbury

18th August – 1st September, civils work (Openreach). Please note, the road will be CLOSED to traffic.

A34 – diversions

From 5th – 8th September National Highways will be repairing the A34 Northbound Chieveley-Chilton. The diversion route is convoluted and I would strongly recommend avoiding. Delays are likely.

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

Consultations

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>

Other news and information

The Oxfordshire Way – this is our adult social care strategy and it's very close to my heart. Our aim is to help people live fulfilling, healthy lives for as long as possible. It has a strong community focus and is worth a read: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/social-and-health-care/adult-social-care/oxfordshire-way>.

Unpaid Carers' Coffee Morning – Tuesday 19th August. I've been to this myself, and I really recommend it for those able to join. A low-stakes, casual chance to meet other local carers and have a chat. You can just drop on the third Tuesday of the month.

Libraries Summer Reading Challenge – until 6th September, children can join in with the summer reading challenge at Didcot Library. This year's theme is Story Garden, celebrating the connection between nature and storytelling. Participants will need to be members of Oxfordshire Libraries (but it's free to join!) and can collect stickers for each book they read. Mini challenge also available for under-4s.

Councillor queries

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

Ticket description	Status	Outcome/latest information
Church Hill road markings	COMPLETE	Some confusion over this; I was advised this would happen end of May but Church Hill white lines were missed. Completed early July
Traffic calming Harwell village	IN PROGRESS	The S278 has now been signed by developer and returned after very lengthy delay. Date to be confirmed asap (potentially October-ish)
Chilton bus stop placement	IN PROGRESS	Happy to advise, PC to own costs. Brochure supplied to PC
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.
Blewbury road safety	AWAITING RESPONSE	Requested briefing on proposed crossing at Savages and other traffic calming measures. Chased.
Broken drain cover on Bessels Way Blewbury	IN PROGRESS	Deadline for completion 13th August
Harwell roadworks	IN PROGRESS	Substantial back and forth on the contractors undertaking works on Grove Road. They are not our preferred suppliers and considerable problems have arisen - several meetings with officers and contractors to discuss
Road safety issues on A417	AWAITING RESPONSE	Requested briefing on previous requests for crossing on Reading Road
Coffin Way cycle path	AWAITING RESPONSE	Requested briefing on previous work re: footpath/potential cycle route between Blewbury and Upton