

County Councillor report

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

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

I've returned from a wonderful holiday to an extremely busy end of year season. I visited Didcot Primary Academy with the Cabinet member for Children and Young People to listen to their concerns about space and SEND provision; it is remarkable what enormously dedicated staff are managing to achieve with extremely constrained resources. Cllr Gaul came away with many ideas and questions for officers, and I will follow up with him on how we could do more to help our local schools. A recent monitoring inspection from Ofsted and CQC found that the Oxfordshire Local Area Partnership has taken effective action to make improvements in services for children with SEND. Whilst this shows a positive direction of travel for our children, the work is by no means finished and I will continue pushing for the recommendations of the latest report as part of my role on the Education and Young People's Scrutiny Committee.

I've also been pushing for visits to Harwell and Blewbury from the new HART team and flooding officers – these are likely to take place in the New Year.

I was very disappointed by the forthcoming booking system for HWRCs; while I understand a short-term need to solve capacity issues during the Redbridge HWRC closure, I remain unconvinced by the evidence used to justify the 2024 decision to introduce a booking system. Colleagues and I are pushing for this to be reviewed once the Redbridge HWRC reopens; I will keep you informed of our progress on this.

Best wishes

Bekah

Transport update

A4130 Steventon Lights scheme Phase 1 – construction has begun, and this phase (closure of Trenchard Avenue) is due to finish 19th December. There are multi-way signals overnight and a diversion in place that may cause delays.

Broadway, Didcot – as well as seasonal restrictions throughout December, there are gas works on Broadway until 14th December that will cause delays in and out of Didcot for those coming from Harwell.

Drewitts Corner and High St, Harwell – 12th December, coring will be taking place between 9:30-15:30. Traffic Management will be via stop/go boards, and delays are likely so please avoid the village if you can.

Road running NE from Manor Court, Chilton – 15th December 9:30-15:30. Work to straighten a sign plate, traffic management will be via stop/go boards but delays are possible.

Westbrook St, Blewbury – 14th – 21st January. Closure of a section north of Graham Close for electrical supply installation. Delays are likely.

A4130 / A34 Milton Interchange – Forward warning: closure 27th Feb – 2nd March. There will be a full closure over the weekend for resurfacing and re-marking. This will be extremely disruptive, but is necessary (I've received many resident complaints on this) so please bear with us.

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

Other news and information

Congestion Charge Permits – The Oxford temporary congestion charge for cars is now in effect. If you have yet to apply for your 25 permits, you can still do so. If you have any problems at all, or need support, please call officers on 01865 519800. The line is run at County Hall by people who are well-acquainted with the system, and the current average waiting time is 60 seconds, so you won't be kept on hold too long.

You can apply here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/oxfords-temporary-congestion-charge-cars/apply-permit>

South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) statutory consultation – the Thames Water statutory consultation on the SESRO scheme will close on 13 January 2026 and you can find out more here: <https://thames-sro.co.uk/public-consultations/south-east-strategic-reservoir-option-sesro-statutory-consultation-2025/>.

Shaping the future of our fire and rescue service - Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue has a consultation on a set of proposals for improving safety, efficient and resilience of the service. Please offer your feedback here: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ofrs-consultation>

Carers Phone Friends – new service from Carers Oxfordshire to support unpaid carers by connecting them with trained volunteers who understand the challenges of caring. Please promote this service across your networks. You can find out more, make referrals or volunteer here: <https://www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/carers-phone-friends/> or by calling 01295 234 850.

Meet our new gritters! – 30 new gritters for salting roads across the county over the winter season have been named. Radiospread, Alfred the Grit, Agatha Gritstie, Prof Stephen Thawking and Grittenham Clumps are amongst the names chosen. You can read more here: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/famous-oxfordshire-figures-inspire-names-for-countys-fleet-of-gritters/>

Councillor Priority Fund – All County Councillors have access to a pot of funding to support local community projects. Applications are open until November 2026. All parish councils and community groups or charities are welcome to submit applications – the minimum grant is £500, and there are rules regarding eligibility of applicants and projects. You can read more at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/communities/councillor-priority-fund>

High Sheriff's Awards 2025–26 - Nominations for 2026 - Each year, the High Sheriff invites nominations for individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the communities in which they live and work. If you know someone in our community who quietly goes the extra mile to make life better for others, without seeking recognition, you can submit your nomination here: <https://highsheriffoxfordshire.co.uk/high-sheriffs-awards-applications>

New Highways Maintenance Initiative – I have already asked for visits to the local area from the new HART team. If you have any local concerns about the following issues, please do let me know:

- Street furniture cleaning (e.g.: signs, bollards and other safety maintenance)
- Pedestrian safety enhancements (such as removing damaged equipment/footway plates and repairing surface deterioration)
- Vegetation management (clearing footways and cycleways)
- Surface debris clearance (street and pavement sweeping)
- Visual amenity improvements (removing old flyposting to keep streets smart and tidy)
- Street clutter reduction (making sure old traffic management signs and barriers are removed promptly)

Councillor queries

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

Ticket description	Status	Outcome/latest information
Traffic calming Harwell village	ONGOING	Works have now been confirmed – will miss the deadline of 19 th December and may take up to 8 weeks, most likely in New Year. The Parish Council already has details of the works. Coring to take place in December – unclear whether this is related
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. I have a briefing scheduled in the New Year on what the obstacles are to adoption.
Damage to electrical unit at skate park, GWP	ONGOING	Repeated damage to the electrical unit at the skate park – repaired and re-damaged multiple times this year. Taylor Wimpey are in discussions with SSE on providing a more robust housing unit.
Blewbury road safety	IN PROGRESS	Funding confirmed for wig wags, dropped kerbs and bollards at multiple points on London Road and Bessels Way. Hoping this will be a Christmas present for Blewbury! Still pushing for funding for a crossing at Savages – this should be possible if residents can agree to dark skies compliant street lighting either side of the crossing.
Harwell roadworks	AWAITING RESPONSE	Investigation into the Grove Road works is ongoing – I have pushed for more information on this.
Road safety issues on A417	IN PROGRESS	Crossing confirmed at the Winnaway, with other speeding measures to be included as part of the works. Have asked for an update
Coffin Way cycle path	IN PROGRESS	Requested briefing on previous work re: footpath/potential cycle route between Blewbury and Upton – relevant officer on leave. Finally have an offer of a meeting - to be scheduled for the New Year
Chilton Main St traffic calming	HANDED OVER	PC would need to fund (approx. £6k for unit, £500 per pole) – will wait to hear decision
Newbury Road speed	AWAITING RESPONSE	Have asked about possibility of reducing the adopted section of Newbury Road to 20mph due to number of houses facing straight onto road and considerable traffic
Harwell - flooding	IN PROGRESS	Visit agreed: to be scheduled with flooding team: Mondays and Tuesdays available
Harwell – pavement repairs and maintenance	IN PROGRESS	Visit agreed: to be scheduled with HART
Townsend Harwell electric shutoff	COMPLETE	Townsend Harwell electric shutoff - asked what for and whether we can force SSE to help - apparently not. Appalling delay to response.
SID data	HANDED OVER	SID data submitted to Police and Crime Panel; will be followed up at a future meeting.
Rat infestation	AWAITING RESPONSE	Have pushed back on original response directing to District Council
HWRCs	AWAITING RESPONSE	Have forwarded all questions to cabinet member
Didcot Road fence	AWAITING RESPONSE	Asked why fence was redone, why differently and can we fix
Harwell link road resurfacing	AWAITING RESPONSE	Have queried why the resurfacing was undertaken here: whether the original work was faulty or was there another reason
Harwell campus rough sleeper	ONGOING	Housing Needs team have engaged with and offered support to find shelter. Once the immediate safety of the individual concerned has been assured, will work with PC to make sure the site is tidied up/waste cleared.
Harwell traffic monitoring	AWAITING RESPONSE	Temporary traffic monitoring cameras put up on Westfield & Gaveston Road - have asked why.