

County Councillor report

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

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

Over the last few weeks, I've been to both the People and the Education & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSC).

At People OSC, we looked at our Unpaid Carers Strategy and the Supported Living offer for adults with learning disabilities. Unpaid carers contribute an estimated £184 billion a year nationally, and here in Oxfordshire we have more than 52,000 of them — with half providing over 50 hours of care each week. These people are remarkable, and we need to make sure the support we offer genuinely works for them. Carers Oxfordshire does provide a lot, but many sessions and groups run at times when carers are, understandably, busy caring. I've asked for the timings to be reviewed, so sessions can also run at more accessible times of day.

At EYP OSC, we focused on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and EOTAS — the tailored provision for young people whose needs can't be met in school. The good news is that SEND work is moving in the right direction. The latest CQC/Ofsted report shows effective action across all five priority areas identified in 2023, and both EHCP timeliness and quality are improving. That said, the committee still has questions around co-production with parents and carers, as some guidance is still unclear or hard to use. We've put forward several suggestions to improve the EOTAS guidance.

Over the past month, we've had the worst possible weather for our roads: heavy rain followed by repeated freezing. That combination creates potholes very quickly, which is exactly what we're seeing locally and nationally. The council has more than doubled the number of repair crews out on the network, but in this weather, only temporary fixes are possible — the materials simply can't bond properly. Those temporary repairs also don't last as long as they normally would. I've escalated several serious FixMyStreet reports, along with three persistent flooding issues (two in Harwell and one in Blewbury). An engineer will be investigating, but historical flooding problems can take time to resolve. In the meantime, please take extra care on the roads.

If you do need to make a claim for vehicle damage, you can do that here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/street-maintenance-z/compensation#paragraph-3985>

Best wishes

Bekah

Transport update

A4130 Steventon Lights scheme Phase 2 – from now until **April 2026**, Trenchard Avenue will be closed. There are multi-way signals on the High St but two-way traffic will be maintained (in narrow lanes).

Harwell Link Road – **Until 15th May** there will be multi-way signals that may cause delays while Thames Water undertake works. I'll be keeping a particular eye on the quality of these works, as it's a road that was only surface dressed last year.

Wantage Road, Didcot – **9th – 13th February** there is work taking place to the telecommunications infrastructure that may cause delays in and out of Didcot for those coming from Harwell.

London Road/Blewbury Hill – **24th – 27th February** various works taking place along this section of road (installation of road signs and prep work for forthcoming drainage investigations in March/April). Delays likely, possible two-way signals.

A4130 / A34 Milton Interchange – 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.

Lower Road to A34 junction, Chilton – 2nd March 9:00 – 15:30 - road closed for vegetation management.

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

Other news and information

Finance – The Council warned of major budget challenges following government funding cuts:
<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council-budget-202627/>

Local Government Reorganisation - Three different unitary models have been proposed for Oxfordshire. Ultimately, the government will decide which model to implement, but your feedback is invited by 26th March here:
<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/oxfordshire/>

A4130 Steventon Lights integrated transport scheme – The Council is consulting on proposed traffic and highway improvements for the scheme. You can give feedback until 6th March here:
https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/steventon_a4130_traffichighway2026

HWRC Booking System – You now need to book a slot to visit any of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. When visiting, you will need to bring proof of address, and if possible, sort your recycling before you arrive. If you're unable to do this in advance, you will be asked to separate your waste by material type onsite in the designated sorting areas.
I've asked for a review of the booking system once Redbridge HWRC reopens. For more information or to book your slot, go to: <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hwrcbooking> or call 01865 519800. If you have any problems with the booking system you'd like me to take up, please send me an email.

Congestion Charge Permits – you are entitled to 25 free permits. You can apply here:
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/oxfords-temporary-congestion-charge-cars/apply-permit>. If you have any problems at all, or need support, please call officers on 01865 519800.

Carers Phone Friends – This service from Carers Oxfordshire offers support to 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.

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>

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	IN PROGRESS	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. Latest update: 20mph speed limit signage should be completed by early January – subject to road space being secured. Remaining traffic calming works should be completed early Spring 2026 – again subject to road space being secured.
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. Latest update: main spine road close to adoption once some verge clearance sorted – subject to confirmation of easements and adoption of sewers
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	ONGOING	Funding confirmed for wig wags, dropped kerbs and bollards at multiple points on London Road and Bessels Way. These are underway. Funding for a puffin crossing at Savages has been submitted for inclusion in forward plan of works (2026/27 financial year)
Harwell roadworks	AWAITING RESPONSE	Investigation into the Grove Road works is ongoing – I have pushed for more information on this. Still waiting for a meeting.
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. Meeting date being arranged
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 undertaken 6 th Jan – waiting list for drain maintenance c. 10 months – have followed up with colleagues on interim measures to be included as part of traffic calming above.
Harwell – pavement repairs and maintenance	IN PROGRESS	Multiple road surface patches agreed but not yet scheduled due to ongoing bad weather. Pavements may potentially receive slurry treatment – awaiting news on this.
Rat infestation	IN PROGRESS	Pest control should now have attended but still awaiting follow up
HWRCs	COMPLETE	Have forwarded all questions to cabinet member – officers have provided responses which are, in my opinion, unsatisfactory. I have received confirmation from Cabinet member that review will be undertaken once Redbridge HWRC reopens
Didcot Road fence	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Asked why fence was redone, why differently and can we fix. Latest update: we do not believe the fence is OCC's, belongs to landowner
Blewbury Road signs	IN PROGRESS	Visit scheduled with Highways Engagement 19 th February
Chilton vegetation clearance A34 crossings	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Clearance of Chilton footbridge/underpass across A34 - officers sent out to investigate, awaiting more information
S106 funds	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Harwell primary school reconciliation – funds incorrectly recorded as spent, error now rectified and school will be contacted once “secured” funds are held by the council.
Outcome of pothole trial	AWAITING RESPONSE	2023 trial to test different types of pothole repair - what was the outcome?
Grove Road flooding	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Grove Road persistent flooding since 2017 – SODC engineer to visit but has to wait for current flooding to subside in order to investigate properly
Bridleway resurfacing	AWAITING RESPONSE	Harwell asked if they can undertake surface improvements to Green Road/Bridleway but haven't had a response - have escalated twice now.
Blewbury flooding	AWAITING RESPONSE	Sheencroft corner flooding problems - escalated directly to officers at both OCC and VOWH
OFS reorganisation	AWAITING RESPONSE	Further questions from Didcot firefighters – handed over to cabinet member
Flooding Frank Williams Way	IN PROGRESS	TW will be asked again to clear the road and gullies of debris