

County Councillor report

Date: January 2026

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

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

Happy New Year – I hope you all had a wonderful, restful Christmas period.

Just before Christmas, my colleague Cllr Worgan and I visited Didcot Fire Station to meet with some of our incredible firefighters. We listened to their concerns around the Fire and Rescue consultation, and agreed a list of questions to take to officers. I will be working with colleagues to ensure this feedback is taken onboard, and that we do the best we possibly can to support our local firefighting teams.

The year is kicking off with a lot of activity – I’ve managed to get site visits to Harwell from senior officers in the Flooding and Highways Engagement teams at OCC, and will update on these next month. I’m hoping to get pavement repairs scheduled to go along with the new traffic calming measures in the village, but obviously budgets are tight (more on that below) so will work with officers and the Parish council on prioritising concerns. I’m trying to schedule similar visits to Blewbury, and continuing to prod on improvements to road safety there.

The early part of this year is likely to be focussed on finances: council taxes are going up, but government funding is going down, so there is still a balancing act to be done to account for our increasing population – including the spend on supporting vulnerable young people and adults. The budget is due to come to full council in February.

Please remember that from 14th January, you will need to book your recycling centre visits (see below). I’m still hoping to get a review of this once Redbridge HWRC reopens; I will keep you informed of our progress, but please don’t get caught out in the meantime.

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).

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

Harwell Link Road – 2nd February – 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 recently resurfaced road.

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.

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

HWRC Booking System – From **14th January**, you will need to book a slot to visit any of the Household Waste Recycling Centres. In the short term, this will help mitigate the county-wide knock on effect of the temporary closure of Redbridge HWRC. For cyclists and car drivers, your slot will be 15 minutes. For vans or cars towing a trailer, you'll get 30 minutes (and you may need a permit). 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.

In the longer-term, I'm doing everything I can to get a review of the booking system once Redbridge reopens. For more information or to book your slot, go to: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hwrcbooking or call 01865 519800.

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.

Shaping the future of our fire and rescue service - Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue has a consultation on a set of proposals for improving safety, efficiency and resilience of the service. Please offer your feedback here before **20th January**: <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.

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>

Finance - The government has undertaken its “Fair Funding Review” and delivered the “settlement” for the next 3 years. The amount of funding delivered by central government to Oxfordshire (and to all districts except the city) is being reduced, and calculations assume an increase in Council Tax of 4.99% each year. These increases will mean additional income from residents of c. £154m over the 3 years, to cover inflation, increased population and growing demands on statutory services such as Adult Social Care and looking after Oxfordshire's young people. However, the Government has calculated the funding such that the council will only receive c.£141m, and the balance of c.£14m will be redistributed to other parts of the country. The budget will be approved by the County Council on **February 10th**. You can read the council's statement here: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council-budget-202627/>

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 now 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. Should be completed by start of April 2026 Still pushing for funding for a puffin crossing at Savages – this should be possible if residents can agree to dark skies compliant street lighting either side of the crossing. Latest update: 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. Meeting to discuss has been rescheduled again.
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 Q1 of 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 undertaken 6 th Jan – waiting list for drain maintenance c. 2 years - will follow up with colleagues on interim measures.
Harwell – pavement repairs and maintenance	IN PROGRESS	Visit agreed for 13 th Jan
Rat infestation	IN PROGRESS	Have pushed back on original response directing to District Council and received confirmation that pest control will attend.
HWRCs	RESPONSE RECEIVED – FOLLOWED UP	Have forwarded all questions to cabinet member – officers have provided responses which are, in my opinion, unsatisfactory. I have requested the cabinet member to confirm in writing that the system will be reviewed once Redbridge HWRC reopens.
Harwell link road resurfacing	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Have queried why the resurfacing was undertaken here: whether the original work was faulty or was there another reason. Latest update: road was “dressed” rather than resurfaced. This helps protect the road against water ingress. Early treatment, before significant damage appears, prevents minor defects from developing into major issues, making it a cost-effective solution that offers up to 10 years of additional service life.

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	AWAITING RESPONSE	Asked HART team to attend to replace/maintain signage throughout the village. Current waiting time approx. 3 months, will keep pushing.
Harwell campus rough sleeper	COMPLETE	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. The person has now moved on.
Harwell traffic monitoring	RESPONSE RECEIVED	Temporary traffic monitoring cameras put up on Westfield & Gaveston Road - have asked why. Latest update: Surveys were privately commissioned (there is no license requirement) – OCC therefore unaware of the purpose of the traffic surveys. We do know, however, that they were undertaken by a Traffic Surveys data collection provider