

# County Councillor report

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

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

I returned from half-term break to a flurry of roadworks in and around Harwell and have spent a good deal of time over the last week trying to get clearer information. I apologise if some of my other queries have slipped down the list as a result.

I'm pleased that progress is being made on several issues that residents have been raising for some time. However, the concentration of all this work has understandably led to frustration, particularly where scheduling seems to overlap. From discussions with officers, that frustration is largely shared. While the council has limited control over utilities works, and multiple utilities projects have leapt in front of planned works, there is nonetheless a recognition that we need better co-ordination where possible.

Over the past week, I have met with a senior officer to review overlapping works in both Blewbury and Harwell, and liaised with the relevant cabinet member to discuss safety and remedial measures in Harwell and Upton. I really hope that these conversations will help to ensure that local concerns are reflected in how works are managed and mitigated on the ground.

The new cabinet has been announced, and one of the changes is the separation of responsibility for road maintenance and network management; this should allow for more granular oversight of highways. I am using this opportunity to highlight to colleagues the areas where improvements are needed across both functions.

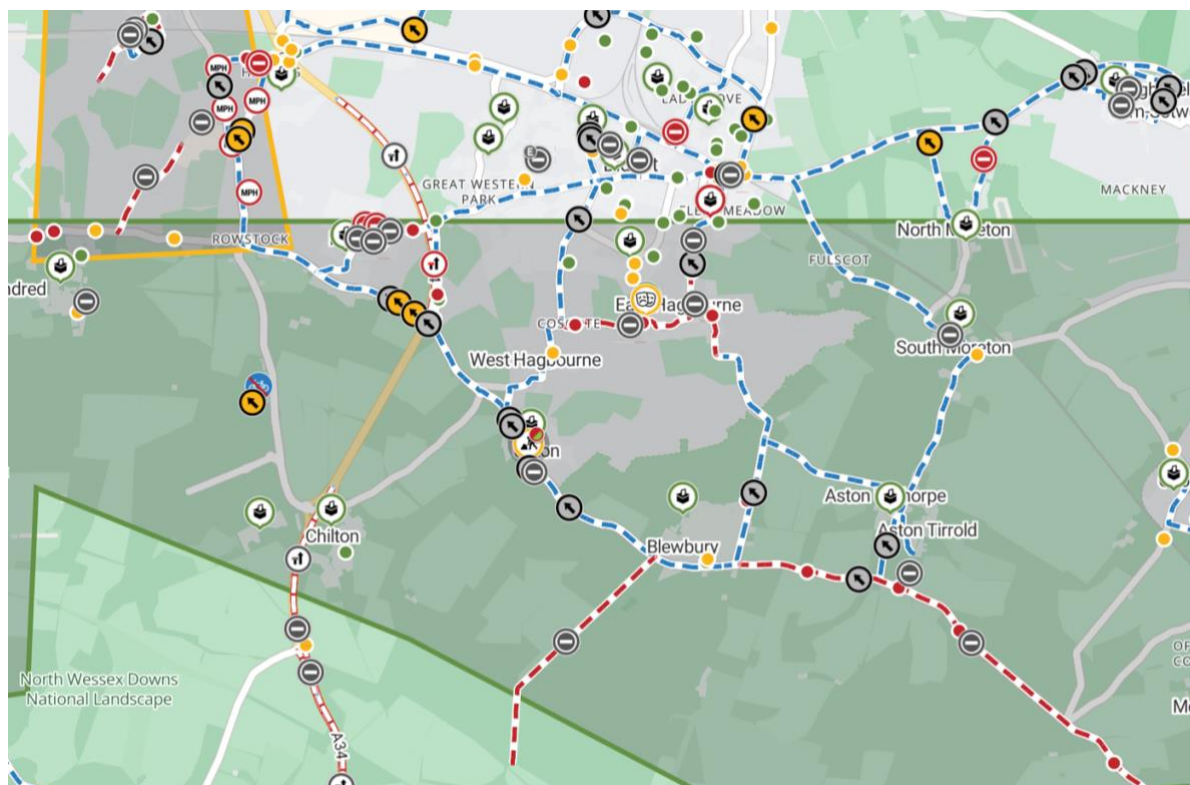
Following the reshuffle, I have taken on responsibility for Adult Social Care and have therefore spent much of the past fortnight in briefings. The portfolio includes Adult Social Care, carers' services, mental health and homelessness. While I am still getting fully up to speed, I want to be open that the council is facing the need to make significant savings, amounting to tens of millions of pounds, over the next three years. This is due to a combination of reduced funding and increasing demand. Adult Social Care has a budget of £330 million, the vast majority of which is committed to statutory (obligatory) services. This leaves very limited flexibility, with savings needing to be found in areas where we are providing discretionary services. Cabinet is entering a period of detailed consideration of council-wide savings, and I will be advocating as strongly as I can for those who rely on Adult Social Care services. I'm therefore particularly keen to hear from anyone affected by the consultation on [changes to Adult Social Care contributions](#), which is open until 21<sup>st</sup> June. Please do get in touch.

Best wishes

Bekah

## Transport update

There is a huge amount going on over the summer; to give you an idea of how complicated the plans are, this is a screenshot of the active applications in the area over the next three months:



I will do my utmost to keep people informed via Facebook, as many of these change on a weekly basis as permits are altered or traffic management plans are adapted. Below I've listed the most urgent:

**A4130 Steventon Lights scheme** – 8<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June, daytime surfacing work on the south side of the A4130. Most of this will be done without traffic management, but there will be some traffic lights. Update is here: [Steventon lights scheme](#)

**High St, Harwell** – 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> June there will be a full closure for road surfacing, overnight only 20:00-6:00. Please note, this is for three nights, so will finish at 6am on Saturday 13th.

**A417 Blewbury - Streatley** – 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> June, 04:00-18:00 there will be a full closure for surface sealing. There is an overlap with a Thames Water full closure in East Hagbourne so please expect delays.

**Burr St/Blenheim Hill, Harwell** – 15<sup>th</sup> June – 10<sup>th</sup> July there will be a full closure for gas pipe replacement works. Please note, these works, once finished, will continue up the hill and towards Didcot (mainly under traffic lights rather than closure).

**Jennings Lane, Harwell** 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> June there will be a street closure for Openreach works. It looks to be blocking Brookside, so I've asked for more information.

**Reading Road, Upton** – 20<sup>th</sup> June is Uptonogood! There will be stop/go boards so cyclists can cross safely, so please watch out (and also come to Upton for the day, it's a great day out!)

**Boham's Road, Blewbury** – 22<sup>nd</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June they will be sealing the new road surface between 07:00 and 19:00, so there will be full closure.

Please continue to report any highway defects on [www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com).

## Other news and information

**Cabinet reshuffle** – As mentioned, I'm now cabinet member responsible for adults, but other positions and post-holders have also changed. You can read about the [new Oxfordshire cabinet responsibilities](#) online.

**Adult Social Services Contributions Policy** - We are asking for your views on some suggested changes to charges for some statutory and non-statutory Adult Social Care services. [The consultation](#) closes on 21 June, although we have also written to those affected.

**Shared Lives Carers** – If you might be interested in opening up your home to an adult who needs additional support to be independent, please do consider becoming a [Shared Lives Carer](#). It's a paid role, our carers describe it as hugely rewarding, and it can genuinely change lives for people with additional support needs.

**Local Government Reorganisation** - Three different unitary models have been proposed for Oxfordshire. A 'minded-to' decision on whether there will be one, two or three unitary authorities for Oxfordshire is expected on or shortly after 16 July.

**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. If you're unable to sort your recycling in advance, you will be asked to do so onsite in the designated sorting areas. For more information or to book your slot, go to: <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/hwrcbooking> or call 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. 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, and I still have around 50% of my fund remaining so any local charity or parish council, please do apply! 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 and ongoing queries raised on behalf of residents and Parish Councils include:

| Ticket description                                         | Status                                    | Outcome/latest information                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Traffic calming Harwell village                            | IN PROGRESS                               | The agreements have all been completed and we are expecting the permits application this week. I've been advised that the work could take 8 or 9 weeks, so scheduling will be vital. Ideally it would take place over the school holidays as much as possible, but with all the other works going on, this may be too disruptive.                                                                      |
| 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. Latest update: the required remedial works at Didcot Road last year weren't up to standard and had to be redone in places. Highways Agreements have therefore imposed another 3-month review on Taylor Wimpey before adoption. |
| Damage to electrical unit at skate park, GWP               | ONGOING                                   | Repeated damage to the electrical unit at the skate park – Taylor Wimpey is in discussions with SSE on providing a more robust housing unit. Latest update; consideration of whether the unit should go underground, but no decision communicated.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Blewbury road safety                                       | IN PROGRESS                               | Scheduled for October-December 2026!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Harwell roadworks: to become "Network Management concerns" | IN PROGRESS                               | As a result of several concerns raised re: works in and around Harwell, the Network Management team is undergoing a reconfiguration that should improve planning in the future; however, I'm still in regular contact as the continued disruption is causing understandable frustration.                                                                                                               |
| Road safety issues on A417                                 | IN PROGRESS                               | Crossing confirmed at the Winnaway, with other speeding measures to be included as part of the works. Latest update: scheduled to start July-September, but given other concurrent works this may be too disruptive.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Coffin Way cycle path                                      | IN PROGRESS                               | Requested briefing on previous work re: footpath/potential cycle route between Blewbury and Upton – relevant officer on leave. Latest update: team looking to reopen conversations with landowner; with countryside access, but have offered a walkaround                                                                                                                                              |
| Harwell – High St. flooding                                | IN PROGRESS                               | Visit undertaken 6 <sup>th</sup> Jan – waiting list for drain maintenance c. 10 months – have followed up with colleagues on interim measures. Latest update: Have now seen gully reports from January gully cleansing; silt had been between 25% and 75% and now all cleared; will monitor whether this improves situation                                                                            |
| Harwell – pavement repairs and maintenance                 | IN PROGRESS                               | Footway slurry treatments in progress. Additionally, Didcot Road, Blenheim Hill, and Burr Street are marked for footway reconstruction, while Westfield Road is set for carriageway surface inlay. Have also reported High St/Wantage Rd as particularly bad                                                                                                                                           |
| Rat infestation                                            | COMPLETE?                                 | Have had no further complaints, but also no confirmation all is clear. Please let me know if issue recurs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Blewbury Road signs                                        | COMPLETE?                                 | Repair visit should now have been completed – will confirm once I see them!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Grove Road flooding                                        | COMPLETE                                  | Problem identified: tree roots penetrating into culvert. Since then, landowner has removed one tree, with further removals planned. Also excavated a grip through the verge into their field to allow floodwater to drain away from the highway and onto their land. Sincerely hope this will solve the longstanding issue                                                                             |
| Blewbury flooding                                          | IN PROGRESS                               | Sheencroft corner flooding problems – identified more than 50% of gullies non-operational. Now chasing to get action on fix.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| OFS reorganisation                                         | COMPLETE                                  | As result of firefighters' concerns, all proposals dropped                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Reading Road - flooding                                    | AWAITING RESPONSE                         | Flooding query - now that the weather has turned, asked for flooding sites to be re-investigated.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Flooding Frank Williams Way                                | IN PROGRESS                               | District has cleared road, but almost immediately problem has recurred. Drainage improvements due on A4130; trying to get entrance to GWP included in programme                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Hagbourne Hill improvements                                | AWAITING RESPONSE                         | Stagnated due to problems with funding and utilities; I am chasing regularly                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| London Road resurfacing                                    | COMPLETE                                  | Contractor had to return at own cost to put right incomplete/poorly completed works                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Harwell High St SGN works                                  | IN PROGRESS                               | Currently running two weeks behind schedule. Have requested shuttle bus during 3-week closure of Burr St.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 20 mph signs Harwell                                       | COMPLETE                                  | Query about odd location of some 20mph signs, blocking pathways; confirmation received these will be moved                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Steventon Lights; impact on traffic                        | COMPLETE (albeit not very satisfactorily) | Response re: traffic queuing back onto A34: traffic lights only during off-peak hours, traffic from A34 given priority, extended greens to release queuing traffic. Monitored on site using camera systems, to mitigate queuing towards slip road.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Traffic concerns re: Esso site N. of Rowstock              | COMPLETE                                  | Impact on highways has been considered and mitigations required from applicant – will continue to keep me updated, but officers "keenly aware"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Upton-W.Hagbourne one-way route                            | ONGOING                                   | Query as to whether the road from W.Hagbourne to Upton could be southbound only, with Upton-W.Hagbourne diverted via roundabout.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |