



Focus on Parishes with Cllr Freddie van Mierlo (Chalgrove and Watlington)

February 2023

Welcome to my monthly update. I share a regular update in the first week of every month. In the interests of transparency, I share this update publicly as well as with parish councils.

My recent meetings:

- 5th January: Chalgrove Parish Council
- 9th January: Great Haseley Parish Council
- 10th January: Watlington Parish Council
- 12th January: Berrick Salome Parish Council
- 16th January: Great Milton Parish Council
- 18th January: Audit and governance committee, Oxford
- 25th January: Place committee, Oxford

Upcoming meetings:

- 7th February: Nettlebed Parish Council
- 8th February: Ewelme Parish Council
- 13th February: Lewknor Parish Council
- 14th February: OCC Full Council, Oxford
- 14th February: Watlington Parish Council

***** **BUDGET SPECIAL** *****

OCC news: Budget

Oxfordshire County Council will set its 2023-24 budget at the February full council. The budget is delivered within a context of high inflation and rising pressure for services, particularly in adult social care and children's services.

The administration will propose a 5% rise in council tax, including a 2% adult social care precept. Judicious savings, a rising council tax take from increased population, and a

better-than-expected government settlement also support the budget and mean drastic cuts can be avoided, despite the gap between the council tax rise and the rate of inflation.

Children's Services & SEND: I am delighted to say that children's services will see an inflation busting boost of 12.3% (£18.8m). In this climate, providing a real terms increase (+1.6%) to children's services, including for special educational needs and other vulnerable children in care, has been difficult to achieve, but reflects the priorities of the administration. £500,000 will be spent to speed up needs assessments (EHCPs) for children with SEND.

Adult social care: Accounts for approximately half of OCC's budget and is particularly sensitive to inflation due to the labour intensive nature of care. Because of the size of the budget, it is difficult to provide an inflation matched rise, however, adult social care will get a 6.8% (£14.4m) increase to support its work, which will soften the impact of inflation. The 'Oxfordshire Way' reforms also support more efficient use of budget.

Highways and travel: We will be investing an additional £1.6m to reduce flooding on roads – clearing ditches and cutting through red tape (riparian rights!) that prevent action on the ground. Monies will also be used to clean signs and improve road markings. By investing in flooding prevention, we can reduce damage to road surfaces and save taxpayers money. However, it remains the case that successive grant reductions from government means that we have too little money to manage such a large network.

Climate: It's easy to talk the talk on climate – but walking the walk is much harder. Amongst other initiatives, there is increased funding for trees planting (essential not only for carbon capture, but also localised climate resilience).

Voluntary organisations, libraries, and other services: Library services will be supported as they account for the loss of income from DVD rentals etc. Voluntary organisation will also again be given a year's rent holiday where they pay rent to OCC.

OCC news

Sustainable warmth grants: Home energy efficiency grants can be applied for [online](#) (*Deadline: March 2023*). OCC secured funding from the government's Sustainable Warmth Fund. Homes connected to the mains gas grid can apply for up to £10,000 and homes not connected can apply for up to £25,000 (means tested)

Call for hosts - Homes for Ukraine: A campaign encouraging people to come forward who are willing to accommodate families from Ukraine has been launched. While the government is reducing payments from the current £550 to £350 in April, or £500 for those hosting beyond 12 months, OCC has committed to maintaining the current rate of £550.

Active travel: OCC has secured over [£0.5M](#) from the government’s Active Travel Capability Fund to invest in improving access to active travel. The county is also developing a plan for a ‘Strategic Active Travel Network’ that will link towns and villages. While only a plan at this stage, the data collected and planning done puts OCC in a good position to bid for government money when it arises.

Potholes: Freeze thaw conditions over the past couple of months has seen a large number of potholes emerge. OCC are dealing with the backlog but will take some time. Please continue to report potholes using fix my street (reporting each pothole separately).

Coronation: Apply for up to £10,000 funding from the national [lottery](#). See also the government’s guide on street [parties](#).

Electric buses: First vehicles in a fleet of 159 electric buses set to arrive in September.

Verges: Revised policy to go to Cabinet in February, with call for trial sites.

20mph scheme

Last month, applications for Berrick Salome, Lewknor, Little Milton, and Nettlebed were all approved. A consultation has opened for Watlington, including Christmas Common

Village	Consultation Closes	Decision Date	Installation
Berrick Salome	Closed	Approved	
Britwell Salome	Closed	Approved	
Chalgrove	Closed	Approved	Installed
Great/Little Haseley	Closed	Approved	Installed
Great Milton	Closed	Approved	Installed
Lewknor	Closed	Approved	
Little Milton	Closed	Approved	
Nettlebed	Closed	Approved	
Pyrton	Closed	Approved	
Watlington	3 rd March	23 rd March	

Parish round-up

Not all parishes are covered – below is a selection of the main updates.

Chalgrove

- **High street (new housing estate) traffic calming measures:** Measures, including proposed zebra crossing, traffic calming measures and bus stop clearways will go to the cabinet member for highways for a decision on 23 Feb. The plans reflect conditions set during the planning application stage.
- **Airfield:** OCC is meeting with Homes England on 9th February. Homes England have agreed to meet local councillors in a follow up meeting.
- **Objection to Obsidian planning application:** I have submitted an objection as part of OCC's response to the planning application on land off monument road

Cuxham

- **Drainage issues and potholes:** Continuing to chase!
- **Work to tree:** Work on a poplar tree took place on 6th February

Ewelme:

- **HGVs / Rumbolds Pit:** OCC's investigation is continuing. OCC has received a response to the Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) within the prescribed time and await a response from the planning agent with regard to the certificate of lawful use application. The PCN confirmed that the concrete loading facility does not benefit from current planning permission.

Lewknor

- **M40 junction:** OCC continuing to engage with National Highways, who had developed a scheme to better facilitate use of the Oxford Tube and other bus services. National Highways have requested an OCC contribution which is being discussed as well as the scope of the potential project.
- **Broadband poles:** While authority rests with central government and the district council, OCC is encourage SSE to share the use of their poles with Airband.

Watlington

- **Last but not least! 20mph for Watlington:** Watlington and Christmas Common may be the last of the Chalgrove and Watlington county division to have a scheme go to consultation – but it's by no means the least! The [consultation](#) is open until 3rd March, with a decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Highways on 23rd March
- **Watlington Relief Road Consultation:** The public consultation for the Watlington Relief Road will take place in February and March, with exhibitions scheduled to take place in Watlington and Pyrton. Residents will receive a letter from OCC informing them of the consultation and how they can contribute. Materials will also be available to view in Watlington library.
- **Brook and flooding:** An OCC report is pending on improvements made to the brook to reduce flooding and potential further needs. Information from residents suggests work has reduced the impact of heavy rainfall.