



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

**May 2022**

*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

- 5<sup>th</sup> April: Full Council, County Hall
- 7<sup>th</sup> April: Chalgrove Parish Council
- 11<sup>th</sup> April: Great Haseley Annual Parish Meeting
- 12<sup>th</sup> April: Watlington Parish Council
- 19<sup>th</sup> April: Great Milton Annual Parish Meeting
- 27<sup>th</sup> April: Wild Oxfordshire & residents of Britwell Salome
- 27<sup>th</sup> April: Brightwell Baldwin Annual Parish Meeting
- 28<sup>th</sup> April: Britwell Salome Annual Parish Meeting
- 28<sup>th</sup> April: Charlotte Coxe Trust Committee, County Hall

### Upcoming meetings:

- 10<sup>th</sup> May: Joint Oxfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee
- 10<sup>th</sup> May: Watlington Parish Council
- 12<sup>th</sup> May: Berrick Salome Parish Council
- 17<sup>th</sup> May: Full Council, County Hall

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### OCC news:

**Ukraine:** The system for checking accommodation and undertaking safeguarding visits at hosts' houses is now fully underway. However, I am hearing that the initial £200 payment to each guest is slow. Going forwards, payments will be made with a pre-loaded card that acts in the same way as a normal debit card.

**Quiet but important change to trees policy:** It wasn't widely reported on, but an important new [policy](#) has been adopted to increase the number of trees in Oxfordshire. The policy puts in place a '*presumption in favour of trees*', recognising the benefits to the climate, environment, and wellbeing. The goal is to move away from the previous unambitious policies of merely maintaining and managing existing trees, to actively enabling more trees in rural and urban settings. One key requirement of the policy is to plant two new trees for every tree that has to be removed from county council land. Funding will come from increased developer contributions (s106, s278, CIL), as well as bids for national funds and third-party contributions, with the potential to increase the council's investment in trees in the 23/24 budget.

**Prospect of East-West Corridor Challenged:** At the meeting of Cabinet in April, I asked a [question](#) to cabinet member Cllr Duncan Enright, to express concerns that Highways England could create an A34-M40 link road south of Abingdon. Cllr Enright confirmed that National Highways have not shared any information on options with OCC but say that they may undertake a non-statutory consultation this summer, subject to central government sign-off. You can sign up for updates about national highways' A34 'improvement' plans [here](#)

**Firefighters honoured:** 22 firefighters, with a combined 500 years of service, have been [awarded](#) medals on behalf of the queen at Blenheim Palace

**2023-24 Works Highways Programme:** The capital spending for significant highways maintenance works is decided 1-2 years in advance of the work being carried out. This means that the 2023-2024 programme will be decided this year with opportunities for councillors to input to the process in June and September. While councillor input is important, there are other criteria that form part of the decision making process on what improvements can be funded from the limited budget.

**Motorbikes and road noise:** Not OCC news, but I know that noise from motorbikes and other vehicles is of concern in many areas. The transport secretary, Grant Shapps, is encouraging parishes to [write to their MP](#) to ask to take part in a noise camera trial

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## Parish round up

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

### Britwell Salome

- **Wildflower verges:** I visited the site of the Road Verge Nature Reserve on Britwell Hill with Wild Oxfordshire and local residents. A damaged sign is to be replaced, and I have emphasised to officers the importance of delaying cutting to September

## Chalgrove

- **Gladman planning application for 160 homes:** Gladman have submitted a housing application to SODC for 160 homes. OCC is a statutory consultee, in particular in relation to highways, flooding, and archaeology. OCC has already objected on archaeology grounds. Officers are being appointed to cover highways and flooding and I am liaising to coordinate our response

## Great Milton

- **Lower End drainage:** Work to clear blocked drains in Lower End is included in the 2022-2023 programme, but a date is yet to be confirmed for the work

## Lewknor

- **Weston Road:** Discussions are ongoing with OCC as to the best solution to improve the damaged Weston Road crescent verge
- **Manor close:** An issue with incomplete road access to a development is being resolved after the developer supplied OCC with the required application. This issue is now being handled by OCC solicitors to resolve the land registry issue

## Swyncombe

- **Surface dressing B481 (road closure):** A section of the B481 around Cookely green will be closed again, from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May between 05:00 and 20:00.

## Watlington

- **Charlotte Coxe Trust:** At the first meeting of the new Charlotte Coxe Trust Committee at OCC, councillors approved recommendations to invite WPC to submit a presentation on taking over the trust, as well as agreeing permissions to allow WPC to use volunteers to carry out decorating and garden work, and to grant WPC a 12-month tenancy of 33 High Street at a peppercorn rate with the intention of sub-letting to a refugee family. Additionally, Councillor Geoff Saul was elected chair of the committee
- **Cuxham road roundabout lights:** Work was supposed to be carried out by SSE to streetlights near Cuxham road in early April. The work hasn't been done – I am chasing to find out what happened, and OCC have made a complaint