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

March 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:

- 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
- 22nd February: Residents Forum (Gypsy and Traveller Service), Headington

Upcoming meetings:

- 7th March: Nettlebed Parish Council
- 8th March: Little Milton Parish Council
- 13th March: Great Haseley Parish Council
- 14th March: Watlington Parish Council
- 15th March: Audit and Governance Committee, Oxford

*************************** **OCC NEWS**************************************

Budget: The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance 2023-2024 budget was passed at full council. The budget sees above inflation investment in children's services, and significant increases for adult social care and highways. The Conservatives presented a vision for a council stripped back to statutory obligations only. To achieve a rise in council tax 1% lower than the administration proposed, the alternative Conservative budget proposed cuts to libraries, the fire and rescue service, buses, funding to parish councils for 20mph schemes, a 25% cut to the councillor priority fund, and ending the joint parking and bus ticket for park and rides. Officers reported to council that the Conservative proposal,

which also included increased borrowing from reserves to fund free parking at 2 Oxford P&Rs, would have weakened the council's financial position.

5-year network management (highways) plan: A 5-year plan was agreed at cabinet on how the highways network is used. The document (among other things),

- Aligns highways policy with new transport and environment policies
- Sets out the rules for work on the highways and increased fees and fines for e.g., broadband utilities
- Prioritizes ensuring walking, cycling and bus travel is possible during road works
- Aims to reduce inappropriate use of local roads by freight

Bid for more active travel money: OCC has submitted new bids for funding to the Department for Transport (tranche 4), following on from successful previous bids. Schemes proposed include improvements in Abingdon, Bicester, Witney and Oxford. Money will also be spent county-wide to improve cycle parking and wayfinding routes.

Verges: A new verges and vegetation policy was adopted at cabinet to improve the management of roadside nature reserves and support for areas of local community managed biodiversity. The policy also instructs that footpaths and cycle paths are kept accessible and not restricted by grass and vegetation growth, and that visibility is maintained at junctions and other high-risk areas.

New Chief Exec: OCC's new chief executive, Martin Reeves has now started at OCC

************************GRANTS AND COST OF LIVING***************************

Cost of living support: Residents receiving housing benefit, but not in receipt of other state benefits, can claim £300 to help with living costs, thanks to the latest round of the Household Support Fund. Oxfordshire County Council has sent letters to residents eligible for support. Claims need to be made by 28 March 2023

Grants for care workers: Cost of living grants are available for care workers, available from the Care Workers' hardship grant – funded by Oxfordshire County Council. Up to £2000 can be applied for. The process is light touch and can be paid within two weeks.

Community organization grants: Grants between £5,000 and £10,000 can be applied for by community organizations that help people to live well and independently in the community. Applications need to be made by 13 March

*****************************20MPH SCHEME**********************************

Village	Consultation Closes	Decision Date	Installation
Berrick Salome	Closed	Approved	
Britwell Salome	Closed	Approved	
Chalgrove	Closed	Approved	Installed
Ewelme	Phase II	Phase II	
Great/Little Haseley	Closed	Approved	Installed

Great Milton	Closed	Approved	Installed
Lewknor	Closed	Approved	In progress
Little Milton	Closed	Approved	
Nettlebed	Closed	Approved	
Pyrton	Closed	Approved	
Watlington	3rd March	23rd March	

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

Chalgrove

- **Airfield:** OCC held a meeting with Homes England on 9th February. Homes England stated they still plan on submitting a planning application. Over the next six months they will revise the masterplan and transport package. At my request, a meeting between Homes England and councillors (OCC & SODC) is being planned in March
- **OCC objects to Obsidian planning application:** OCC has objected to a planning application for 150 homes off monument road on highways grounds. The applicant failed to supply all the relevant information. OCC officers also require the applicant further consider traffic calming measures, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, and improvements to street lighting
- **11 bus timetable:** A revised timetable will start on 16th April. An extension to/from Icknield Community College will start in September. The additional service to Icknield will help to replace the loss of spaces on the spare seats scheme for children travelling from Garsington, Stadhampton and Chalgrove**.** OCC transport team is in contact with Icknield to keep everyone informed.

Lewknor

- **Bledlow Recycling Centre:** Councillors from Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire will meet to discuss Buckinghamshire's decision to impose high fees for Oxfordshire residents

Watlington

- **Watlington Relief Road Consultation:** Public consultation is ongoing, and will close 20th March
- **Gigafast broadband for library:** Estimated to be completed by June 2023
- **Road closure & Charlotte Coxe Trust:** A road closure is planned for the High Street to facilitate connecting 33 High Street to mains water. The closure will start on 10th April, for a maximum of 5 days. I am working with officers to ensure it is made clear the B4009 is open and that traffic does not use the Love Lane diversion unless necessary (for access).
- **Watlington Footpath 36:** Officers are working to ensure the footpath is fully usable by the end of March
- **11 bus timetable:** See above report for Chalgrove