



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

November 2024

OCC NEWS

Budget setting: The county has entered its budget setting cycle which will culminate at February's full council meeting, requiring a majority of councillors to support a budget. The government is permitting councils to raise council tax by a total of 5% (including 2% specifically for adult social care), in line with previous years. No decision has been taken yet on proposed rises in council tax in Oxfordshire but must be set against the rising demand for adult and child social care.

SEND Improvement: The department for education has reviewed OCC's Send Improvement plan at the 6-month mark following on from OCC's poor Ofsted report. The DfE made observed that OCC has been able to demonstrate the plan for improving the timeliness of new ECHPs is on track; that there has been corporate and political support across the partnership, leading to investment in SEND services in Oxfordshire; and there has been improved accountability and governance structures across the partnership, resulting in actions now being delivered in a timelier way. OCC recognises more needs to be done, which will remain a priority for the council.

Winter Fuel Payments: At a full council meeting on 5th November, councillors passed a [motion](#) noting the impact of the governments decision to remove winter fuel payments and directing the council to work to encourage uptake of pension credit (and therefore winter fuel payments for those eligible) and to work to develop a scheme to support pensioners locally in Oxfordshire.

Streetlighting proposals deferred: [Proposals](#) to reduce streetlighting at night in support of dark skies initiatives, save costs and carbon emissions have been deferred in order to consult more widely with stakeholders. This follows concerns raised by community groups about the proposals.

Priority fund: Monies have now all been allocated from the councillor priority fund. A new round of funding will be contingent on being agreed at the next budget, with applications likely opening after May's county council elections.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Booking system for recycling centres: OCC is introducing a [booking system](#) for HWRCs in 2025

Ride the bus for £1: [Fares](#) to cost just £1 on Sundays in December

Free mental health app for young people: [App](#) aimed at 11-18 year olds

Car clubs to continue: Success of trials sees [car clubs](#) made permanent.

Road gritters: Oxfordshire is preparing for ice and snow with a new salt barn and gritters

GRANTS

Cost of living support extended: [Cost of living support](#), including the [Residents Support Scheme](#) for anyone experiencing financial crisis will continue is extended to 31 March 2025.

CONSULTATIONS

Live well with dementia: Survey [open](#) until 20 December

Period poverty: [Feedback](#) on provision of free period products in council buildings

Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Consultation on phase three [open](#) to 1 December

Watlington Relief Road: Consultation on planning application [open](#) until 21 December

PARISH ROUND-UP

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

Berrick Salome

- **Planning application:** OCC has responded to P24/S3131/FUL (The Orchard, Braze Lane) with an objection based on transport, requesting further information from the applicant. Issues cited include the lack of direct pedestrian footway not in compliance with the NPPF, OCCs Local Transport and Connectivity Plan 2022 and SODC Local Plan.
- **Benson Relief Road:** Progress on the road continues, including construction of a new [wetland](#) habitat as part of flood compensation work

Chalgrove

- **Traffic survey:** OCC has provided the read out of a traffic survey of B480.

Ewelme

- **CLEUD:** OCC's planning committee met on 25th November to determine recommendations made by officers to approve the certificate of lawful existing use or development (CLEUD) with limitations. Councillors decided to defer the decision pending further engagement with both the applicant (Hazel and Jeffries) and Ewelme Parish Council. Councillors requested that the application comes back to the planning committee for their decision (rather than delegated to officers).
- **Mud on road:** Reported to officers. Residents can also report directly via Fix My Street.

Lewknor

- **Manor Close:** No update – awaiting further news from developer & OCC (no response to chasing).
- **Hill Road steps:** Officers held meetings with the trees team (23/10) to agree what needed to be cut back and are reviewing the need for temporary closure of layby to facilitate works vehicles. Project is due for completion this financial year (before April 2025).

Swyncombe

- **B480 Flooding:** Contractors investigated ponding on the B480 at Cookley Green and cleared gullies. Further work will take place to help resolve the issues long term.

Watlington

- **Relief Road:** OCC has submitted a revised planning application for the relief road. A public consultation is taking place, and is [open](#) until 21 December. Capital funding will need to be agreed at the February budget meeting of all councillors.
- **Charlotte Coxe Trust:** Officers are compiling a report on future governance models and have engaged the advice of Geldards Solicitors. A committee meeting will be held upon completion of the report to discuss and to sign off accounts (likely December or January)
- **Red Kite View to Cuxham Road path:** Work is (finally!) being carried out. Replacement trees for those cut down being pursued with OCC.
- **High Street Parking:** Officers will enhance enforcement of parking restrictions on the High Street following resident reports.
- **Damaged barrier:** Damage to white railings on Brook Street reported to OCC.
- **Footpath clearance:** Footpaths have been cleared between Watlington and Shirburn