

County Councillor Report

Chinnor Division

29 May 2025

Cllr Georgina Heritage



My Meetings and Council Activity

I'm honoured to have been elected as County Councillor for the Chinnor division. Thank you to those who supported me, whether by voting, volunteering or sharing your hopes and concerns for our communities. I look forward to working with residents, parish councils and local organisations to deliver positive change and represent your voices. I'm still undergoing training programmes, getting to know the processes and most appropriate contacts for villages' questions and queries, and I thank parish councils for the welcomes, support and patience they have offered over the past few weeks.

On a local level, I'm working hard to understand the priorities in the Chinnor division and I'm very grateful to parish councils for their assistance with this and for getting me up-to-speed with local concerns and projects. These include ongoing flooding issues, school buses, land adoption issues and of course Chinnor's traffic problems. I feel strongly that a wider, more strategic view needs to be taken regarding the traffic issues experienced in Chinnor. Although each individual problem is important in its own right, I believe the village's traffic issues need to be studied as a whole by OCC. I'm looking into how to get support with this to achieve the desired outcome for Chinnor.

A full council meeting was held on 20th May, the first meeting of all 69 councillors since the election and the first of the new Liberal Democrat administration. As well as the new chairs of council and committees, the new cabinet was also presented at the meeting. Cllr Liz Leffman continues as Leader, with Cllr Neil Fawcett taking on the role of Deputy Leader (with cabinet responsibility for resources including cultural services and libraries).

Other cabinet member appointments were as follows:

- Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care: **Cllr Tim Bearder**
- Cabinet Member for Highways and Mobility: **Cllr Andrew Gant**
- Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services: **Cllr Sean Gaul**
- Cabinet Member for Public health and Inequalities: **Cllr Kate Gregory**
- Cabinet Member for Community Safety: **Cllr Jenny Hannaby**
- Cabinet Member for Future Economy and Innovation: (Covering Enterprise Oxfordshire, Innovate Oxfordshire, community wealth building) **Cllr Ben Higgins**
- Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation: **Cllr Dan Levy**
- Cabinet Member for Transport Strategy and Climate Action: **Cllr Judy Roberts**

Cllr Liz Leffman made the following statement regarding the council's goals and priorities for the coming year:

“As we embark on a new administration, we will build on the work of the past four years to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier place for all our residents.

“We will work with partners across the county to combat flooding, we will tackle the potholes that have resulted from years of cuts to funding for our highways, and we will continue to develop sustainable transport and active travel in all our communities.

“We will seek to create innovative financial solutions while ensuring that we are run as efficiently and cost effectively as possible, so that we can pay for the crucial services we need to deliver for the Oxfordshire public, and for the benefit of future generations. We want to work hard to help create the conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

“Our focus on special educational needs (SEND) remains strong. Recent feedback from inspectors has been that we are very much on the right track.

“As such we believe it is now the right moment to have the cabinet member for children’s services focusing on SEND directly alongside all of the other hugely important services provided for children and young people by the county council.”

Resurfacing Plans 2025/26

There are temporary traffic regulation notices for the **B4009 Kingston Blount & Crowell in June 2025**, to facilitate carriageway surface dressing works which I’m sure will be good news for residents. OCC is in the process of a £7.4 million road resurfacing programme this spring, aiming to improve nearly 100 roads across the county. The initiative, running until 16 June 2025, involves surface dressing treatments to over one million square metres of carriageway. This preventive maintenance approach is designed to extend the lifespan of roads and enhance driving conditions. The council emphasises the importance of this work in maintaining road quality and urges motorists to stay informed about upcoming works and to drive cautiously in treated areas.

The resurfacing method offers many advantages, including:

- Sealing the road surface to keep out water, one of the major causes of deterioration and potholes.
- Reducing the deterioration of the road surface.
- Restoring the necessary level of skid resistance to reduce skid-related traffic collisions.
- Enabling worn out road surfaces to last longer, increasing the time before structural maintenance is required.
- Maximising the cost effectiveness of limited highway maintenance budgets.
- Minimising traffic disruption and congestion as large areas of roads – up to 100,000 square metres – can be treated in a single day.
- The work is highly weather dependent and cannot be completed in wet conditions.

Updated details about the programme, including a map showing where and when the work will be taking place, is available on Oxfordshire County Council’s [website](#).

Every roadside drainage gully to be cleaned this year

Work to clean and empty every highway drainage gully in Oxfordshire this year - and every year going forward - is now under way.

For the Chinnor division, the scheduled dates this year are 1st June – 31st July 2025

The enhanced programme began in Wheatley last month, and contractors working on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council are planning to clean nearly 145,000 highway drains, gullies, manholes and catchpits by the end of March 2026.

The £2.6 million programme is taking place after an additional £1.5m investment to improve highway drainage was approved in the council's 2025/26 budget.

Drain cleaning was previously carried out on a four year cycle, although high priority drains – such as those in areas most at risk of flooding and on high-speed roads – were cleaned more regularly. The additional investment will be used to empty gullies, carry out improved drainage management, and repair the infrastructure connecting the gullies to the outlets. Improving drainage also helps protect roads by getting water off the surfaces, reducing the risk of potholes forming during freezing weather.

Waste is removed from the drains using suction pipes and then they are cleaned with jets of water. Some may require digging out by hand if a lot of silt has accumulated.

It is expected that the work will cause minimal disruption, although there might be temporary traffic lights or manually operated stop-go signs in operation if lane or road closures are necessary. Motorists will be asked to make sure their vehicles are not blocking access to drains when the work is due to take place, and to take care when driving past gully emptying operations.

The cleaning programme is being carried out by specialist operator Drainline on behalf of the council's principal highway maintenance contractor M Group.

Budget

For those who haven't seen this previously, the OCC budget for 2025/26 was approved in April and some of the highlights are as follows:

- An additional £58.8 million fixing potholes
- An additional £17.2 million for children's services
- An additional £1.14 million for SEND
- An additional £10.8 million for Adult Social Care
- An additional £11.8 million for greener schools and public buildings
- Unlocking £22.5 million of developer contributions
- An additional £1.8 million for rural active travel including £200k for the Haddenham and Thame Greenway
- £3.6 million to increase the frequency of gully clearing from every 4 years to annually
- Park & Ride prices frozen for 2025/26

Young people review Oxfordshire's targeted youth support service

Young people have provided positive feedback about OCC's targeted youth support service as part of a peer review, published on 27th May 2025.

The service works with children and young people at times of difficulty with the aim of preventing problems escalating to the point where police, social services or other authorities need to become involved.

OCC initiated a peer review – involving the National Youth Agency, representatives from the youth sector, as well as trained young reviewers – to ensure the service continues to meet the needs and aspirations of the young people it serves and supports. It was originally launched in 2021. The peer review found that the targeted youth support service has a clear sense of purpose that is widely understood throughout the council and by most of its partners, and valued by young people.

The targeted youth support service team is highly regarded by other practitioners and is delivering some high quality youth work. It was noted that the service has been purposefully developed through good recruitment, with a clear remit and a flexible approach to need. It was evident there is a person centred, strength based approach to supporting individual young people's needs and circumstances.

The reviewers observed that quality detached youth work is being delivered in some areas of the county, with youth workers clearly knowing their communities well and engaging with diverse and underrepresented groups.

Cabinet member for Children, Education and Young People's Services Sean Gaul stated that the review's findings are encouraging, however he will ensure the council will never become complacent, particularly in any initiative designed to help and support at a time of greatest need.

Grants and Cost of Living

Hardship fund: OCC's hardship fund (Resident Support Scheme) is launched in June. Phone: 01865 804171

Home Upgrade Grants: OCC & its partner AgilityEco is reaching out directly to households who will qualify to benefit from Home Upgrade Grants (to improve energy efficiency for 'off-grid' homes)