

REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth with Thrupp and Wadley and Little Coxwell) January 2021

All that is detailed within my monthly report is in the public domain. The report provides local news and a wider picture of the strategic work that Oxfordshire County Council undertakes and thus involves me both as your local County Councillor and as Deputy Leader for the County Council. Much of the strategic work has implications locally and is “useful” for the local town and parish councillors.

The Department for Education (DfE) has been providing laptops to schools to help disadvantaged children and families to access education remotely during coronavirus (COVID-19). The first tranche of laptops during the initial lockdown was given to local authorities to distribute and fire service delivered these. The second and current tranche is being distributed directly to schools, following the latest DfE guidance [Get help with technology during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/get-help-with-technology-during-coronavirus-covid-19). The DfE is also helping disadvantaged children with improved internet connections by working with providers to expand broadband. [Laptops, tablets and 4G wireless routers provided during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-provided-during-coronavirus-covid-19). Despite this £400 million investment – it sadly is not enough, and we will find many children and young people across Oxfordshire with little or no technology access at home.

There are a number of local community initiatives that are also supporting this effort and OCC has draft budget proposals including investment of £100,000 council funding for digital inclusion where work is gathering pace. Also, the County Councillors Priority Fund may be used to provide monies for the purchase of laptops for schools during this financial year. Many County Councillors, like me have used all their County Councillors Priority Fund up on grants in their Divisions – mine was used up by the mid-summer of 2020, as follows:-

“Be Free Young Carers, 500.00. Citizens Advice Oxon south & Vale £1,397.94, Oxfordshire Play Association £1,000.00, “The Place” £4,887.04, Invita Summer Academy Oxfordshire £500.00, Farcycles Ltd £3,500.00, The Pump House Project £2,000.00 and Littleworth Parish Council £1,215.02

Oxfordshire firefighters break down barriers to first response emergency care

Residents being treated in emergency situations in Oxfordshire have a better chance of a speedy recovery thanks to a new role for firefighters. It is part of a scheme that is also saving time and money for partner blue light services in the police and ambulance. Firefighters and paramedics are joining forces to deliver faster response, reduced damage and improved outcomes for Thames Valley residents. Ambulance crews across the country face a common problem when responding to an emergency 999 call for help. It is not uncommon for them to arrive and find that the resident, incapacitated by injury or illness, cannot reach their door. Previously paramedics have turned to police colleagues to force entry to a locked property so they can provide vital first aid care. However, a year-long trial across Thames Valley has demonstrated that involving firefighters in the first-call attendance can result in faster response times, less damage to property, and most importantly, improved outcomes for residents requiring emergency medical treatment. In a collaboration involving the three fire and rescue services of Thames Valley, alongside South Central Ambulance Service and Thames Valley Police it was identified that fire crews are trained to achieve safe, quick, effective access in situations where buildings are locked tight. Using equipment carried on their vehicles, they can help reduce the damage that forcing an entry can cause. Over the twelve-month period of the trial, fire crews responded to 626 Thames Valley incidents where enabling entry was required, with an average response time of nine minutes. As soon as the crews had gained access, unless their assistance was required further at that incident, they were placed on standby ready to respond to the next emergency call. South Central Ambulance Service crews have seen a reduction in time spent waiting to enter properties and this, alongside quicker intervention, has led to faster re-deployment of their crews during the recent trial. Thames Valley Police has also seen a benefit. It has estimated that as a result of the fire service involvement, more than 200 hours of police time has been saved. This has not only generated a financial saving but importantly allowed for resource to be freed up to prevent, respond to and investigate crime across the Thames Valley.

Oxfordshire staff praised for response to Christmas floods, storms and ice and the further problems being experienced during January.

A combination of storms, flooding, and sub-zero temperatures caused problems for hundreds of households both over the festive period and the New Year. Oxfordshire County Council's highways, fire and rescue, adult social care, transport and emergency planning teams have been praised for their round the clock response to Storm Bella, widespread flooding and icy conditions over the Christmas and new year period, which included the evacuation of two care homes. Between Christmas and the new year, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) attended 70 flood related incidents – although many of these calls involved multiple properties, meaning the number of homes or people assisted was even higher. OFRS crews pumped out water for some incidents, where possible. Staff also had to deal with properties affected by flood water and sewage, including the evacuation of properties. The situation was exacerbated by high groundwater, which led to drainage and sewerage being inundated with water. A number of roads had to be closed due to surface water flooding and many vehicles needed to be rescued from flood water. During this period, approximately 25,000 sandbags were distributed by the county council to at risk or already flooded properties, and crews worked round the clock to keep on top of the demand.

Road Treatment by Highways Staff during the Christmas period and January have also been tested. If there is a sharp drop in temperatures mixed with the already wet and flooded roads this will make, both treatment and driving difficult in places for the gritters since Christmas Eve they have used nearly 2,500 tonnes of salt 1,200 miles of treated network – a total length of road network treated during that period of more than 14,000 miles. There are still flood alerts in place in Oxfordshire. Visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for more information. For one-stop advice about what to do and how to get help before, during and after a flooding incident visit the county council's [Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit](#).

Care Homes in Oxfordshire - New resource helps to improve our oral health

Residents who live in care settings across Oxfordshire will be able to get additional support to improve their oral health with a new online toolkit. Designed by Oxfordshire County Council, in collaboration with Community Dental Services, the new toolkit aims to improve oral health and offer practical advice to those who live and work in care settings. Oxfordshire County Council has been working with Community Dental Services (CDS) since 2015 and engagement of care homes and their staff in oral care has always been a priority.

Oxfordshire County Council's Fire and Rescue Service has received praise from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following an inspection that assessed its response to COVID-19. The inspection assessed how effectively and efficiently the service prevents and protects the public against fires and how well it looks after staff. As the Cabinet Member for Community Safety, I was also interviewed by the HMI Inspector Matt Parr.

Her Majesty's Inspector, Matt Parr, commented in his findings: "The service responded well during the pandemic and provided additional support to its community. It used its wholetime and on-call firefighters to respond to emergencies, and the increased availability allowed the service to support its partners, especially the local ambulance trust. This meant the people of Oxfordshire were well supported through the pandemic."

Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Deputy Leader of Oxfordshire County Council and Cabinet Member for Fire and Rescue, said: "Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is a key partner amongst our regional emergency services. I am proud to see that the hard work of our staff, particularly to all those who supported our ambulance service has been recognised in this inspection. Inspections are an important way to get objective feedback on how a service has responded and continues to respond to the pandemic."

Due to the current lockdown and pressure on the National Health Service, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service remains available to support South Central Ambulance Service. The inspectorate also recognised the work the service carried out alongside the county council's emergency planning team in supporting the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum. This involved putting in place necessary command structures to respond to the pandemic and to continue providing services to members of the public. The pandemic has resulted in unprecedented changes to the way many organisations deliver services and the use of digital technology is no exception. The inspection found that Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is continuing to improve and use technology to ensure it is working in the most effective and efficient way. The service adapted its free safe and well visits to

telephone calls, working with residents to help reduce the risk of fire in the home. During these calls, firefighters provide advice and support to reduce any immediate risk from fire, flooding or power cuts. It also provides advice on health and crime prevention. The service confirmed that it is still conducting high risk safe and well visits in a COVID-19 secure way. Residents can request a safe and well assessment using the form on the Council's Website.

Pancake Day ... avoid the need to call firefighters to your celebration

Residents are being given safe cooking tips by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in readiness for Shrove Tuesday - Pancake Day - on Tuesday 16 February. It is easy to be consumed by the tantalising aroma of a delicious, warm pancake sprinkled with lemon juice and sugar. But such a mouth-watering distraction might mean fire safety is not be at the forefront of the mind! The cook safety messages are designed to grab attention: Fat and chip pan fires can be devastating, with a very high proportion of fires resulting in injuries. **Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Community Safety, said:** "Making pancakes can be lots of fun for the whole family and they certainly can be delicious. However, over half of all accidental fires in the home start in the kitchen. So please take care, especially when cooking with hot oil. Avoid the need to call firefighters to your Shrove Tuesday celebration."

Smoke alarm testing promoted in new Fire Kills campaign- Residents are being reminded that smoke alarms save lives. As part of its Fire Kills campaign, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is asking people to test their smoke alarms as part of a regular household routine. **Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Community Safety, said:** "Fire safety should be a priority for every resident. They should ensure they have enough smoke alarms in the home and that they work. Smoke alarms can give the vital extra seconds warning needed to escape a fire. Fire kills. Please take sensible safety precautions by fitting and regularly testing smoke alarms." While the majority of homes across the country now have alarms fitted, most people are not aware that the average alarm has a lifespan of just ten years and then needs replacing.

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is asking people to make sure that their alarms are up to date and up to the job.

To keep alarms effective in working order:

- Make sure there is at least one smoke alarm on every level of the home.
- Test the smoke alarms by pushing the button every month.
- Check that the smoke alarms are less than 10 years old.
- Change the batteries every year. Never remove them.
- Fit smoke alarms in the right place - on landings and hallways and near bedrooms. Also consider fitting them in rooms which have electrical appliances. For example, a heater or charger - or other fire risks.
- Take a moment to check on loved ones who may need help to ensure They are fully protected.

Oxfordshire's Library Service - Residents across Oxfordshire have continued to benefit from the county's home library service during the pandemic with 8,364 library books being delivered from April to December 2020. Oxfordshire County Council's home library service is offered free to users in partnership with Age UK to almost 800 residents of all ages. These residents are unable to visit libraries themselves through frailty, infirmity or a disability and have no other means of getting access to loaned products. It is also available to full-time carers and those who might need the service in the short-term following illness or hospitalisation. The service depends on a team of around 180 volunteers who supply the users with loan items on visits every three weeks. The service matches its volunteers carefully to specific residents to allow the same volunteer to visit each time. During the pandemic the number of volunteers has dropped linked to the impacts of COVID-19.

Faringdon Market Place – Highway Programme 2021/22 - further to several visits by officers to examine the Market Place pavements and attendance at Faringdon Town Council by an officer to discuss and explain the repair programme, I would advise that I am now waiting on an answer from officers with regard to when the pavements are to be repaired with in the programme of works.

Great Coxwell – Grips and Gulleys – OCC’s programme of maintenance of “grips and gulleys” is a four yearly cycle – the Coxwell Road within Great Coxwell Parish is to be visited by engineers and will be cleared/cleaned.

Faringdon “Better Ways to School” – Cycle Scheme – I have been in conversation and correspondence with both the Clerk of FTC and officers at OCC. I am pleased at last to be able to advise that “Skanska” is to further this project.

Faringdon 20mph Speed Limited – It has been agreed that a consultation on this piece of work will be paid for by OCC.

Faringdon Division S106 monies –

Faringdon Library – total S106 monies of £128k to be spent on the refurbishment of the library which commenced in 2020 and was to have been completed last year but, have been hampered by Covid-pandemic.

Youth Work - £5,471.22 developer obligations that are currently unspent for youth work – I have met with officers and have also be in correspondence with FTC Clerk and it is hoped that this money will be used and support work of the Oxfordshire Play Association to develop a youth programme for years 7-9. I have supported Oxfordshire Play Association for several years via my County Councillors Priority Fund – their work is superb.

“Since writing the above, I can confirm that approval for some of these fund is to be made available for the youth provision proposal in Faringdon. The funds must be used for capital so they can only be used for certain pieces of work. They cannot be used for staffing and must be put to use for longer term sustainable opportunities/provision. On that basis the Childrens Education Familites officer has managed to secure £2880.00 as per Martin Gillett’s request to pay for hire of premises in Faringdon and £4,659.74 for session resources (including external delivery costs, activities and equipment. This totals £7,539.74 to go towards the proposed youth provision. There were slight additional funds available which officers have been able to add to the original figure hence this total.”

Adult Social Care - £15,471.22 – I have met with officers on several occasions to have this money invested in the Division but the terms of the S106 contribution are very constricting I have met with Karen Fuller of Adult Social Care and two other officers to discuss once again how these monies can be used for the benefit of the Division directly and not at arm’s length and this has been supported and is being investigated.

Museums - £919.08 developer obligations currently unspent on Museums and I have met with Carole Anderson the Museums Service Manager. I have written to FTC Clerk to bring her up to date on the situation. I have been pushing for this small amount of money to be passported across to Faringdon Town Council but, currently these monies are being invested in the storage areas in the County where collections from Faringdon are currently being stored in appropriate conditions. I have written and waiting on a response to have this “small” amount monies move to FTC for the town’s use – once I have a response I will advise FTC. I have always supported Faringdon’s desire to have a museum of it’s own, from being Chairman of the Faringdon and District Museum Trust, up to this present day and the current museum displays in the Pump House. I have also ensured that my County Councillors Priority Fund has supported this project.

“FixMyStreet”- this is software on the OCC website for residents to register road defects.

I am currently not undertaking “surgeries” but please do not hesitate to contact me on 01367 241468 or Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.

Judith Heathcoat – C/Cllr Faringdon Division

Deputy Leader – Oxfordshire County Council, Cabinet Member for Community Safety

