

Annual Report to Great Coxwell Parish

16/5/2022

Cllr Bethia Thomas

This year has been quite a whirlwind for me. With the successful election in May 2021, I was plunged into the deep end, and with no handover period, had to learn the job from scratch from day one. This is quite an experience, and I am thankful to everyone for bearing with me with patience as I learn the ropes.

The election last year saw a political shift in the county council with a progressive alliance of Liberal Democrats, Greens and Labour in administration for the first time. This has meant a concurrent shift in focus with new priorities at the forefront. Public consultation showed a need to address nine key issues and a new strategic plan was drawn up with this in mind to address those priorities, which include tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire, prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents, and supporting carers and the social care system. Obviously we put the climate emergency at the centre of all activities and hope to be in a position to invest in an inclusive, integrated and sustainable transport network, including the introduction of the 20MPH Scheme across the county.

These priorities were drawn up last year, before the current cost of living crisis has hit hard, and we are particularly sensitive to the ongoing welfare of our most vulnerable residents. Alongside this, and the recovery from the pandemic, we are managing an additional concern, as we work to settle incoming residents from the war in Ukraine. Resources have been stretched once again as officers work to find homes, medical cover and school places for refugees finding homes in the county.

Taking all this into consideration, the last twelve months have been an eye opener for me. For the moment I am content in my position as a simple backbencher. While I do sometimes think I would be able to make a positive impact further up the chain of command, I prefer to learn the ropes from a distance, sitting on various committees to broaden my experience and play my part in holding the administration to account, on scrutiny panels, and at times, when I do not necessarily agree with the 'party line'.

My priority has always been to represent the residents of my division, and I hope that I have started to achieve this over the last year. I would like to remind you that I am always here if you have any concerns that I can help with, and I hope my contact details are readily available to all. I am always happy to bring an issue to the attention of officers and see if action can be taken. Much of my time is taken up with concerns I would not report here, however we have worked together to achieve change with the parish's application to the 20MPH and other issues that I continue to follow up; with the promised improvements to the A420 around Great Coxwell, alongside your application to the councillor's priority fund we should be able to make a positive contribution to the village and its residents.

In closing I hope that we will become increasingly productive as we strengthen the relationship we have established over the last twelve months between the county and parish council, and I welcome any opportunity to get more involved in the community in Great Coxwell.

Bethia

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Committee Appointments

- County Council
- People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Constitution Review Group Working Party
- Adoption & Permanency Panels & Fostering Panels (Fostering)
- OCC Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed Members of the Fire Service

Applications to Councillors Priority Fund

The priority fund is there for projects that directly benefit the community; the following are applications that directly affect Great Coxwell specifically, other applications have been made by parishes across the division and some benefit the parish indirectly. Figures are approximate, for further details please contact me directly.

- Contribution Towards Reading Room Refurbishment (Processing)