

Annual Report to the Faringdon Division April 2021 from C/Clr Judith Heathcoat, Deputy Leader OCC

I have to start my annual report to the Faringdon Division by thanking all the people of our communities, the staff of each authority within the Division, the staff working in our shops who have insured the provision of fresh foods and domestic products, the Faringdon medical centre staff for all that they have done to support us so well. The last twelve months have been labelled as “unique” in the annals of local government with the Covid-Pandemic late in 2019, through 2020 and into 2021 which has placed pressures as elsewhere, on staff and the peoples of the Faringdon Division.

On a quarterly basis I present the Workforce Report & Staffing Data Report which confirms that the OCC's workforce is the most valuable asset the Council deploys. This has never been more so than since Covid-19 pandemic reared its ugly head. The staff have continued to ensure that the residents and the communities of Oxfordshire continue to receive a high-quality delivery of services right across the piece. There has been a significant increase in workloads during the pandemic and our staff, working from home, often under difficult circumstances have ensured that there has been no impact on the delivery of services. No staff have been furloughed and as an example, our library staff – whilst libraries have been closed have worked in the Public Waste Recycling Centres in the County. Our schools have provided huge support for our frontline workers and remained open. Teachers have also faced extreme challenges too. Thank you everyone!

I have attended local Parish and Town Council virtual meetings within the Division which includes Faringdon, Buckland, Buscot, Coleshill, Gt. Coxwell, Littleworth and Little Coxwell. I prepare, circulate and present a monthly report to these meetings. These reports are an update of the activities that I have been involved in and decisions made affecting both our local communities within the Division and the County as a whole.

Within the report I include safety messages as the Cabinet Member with the Portfolio for Community Safety and the Regulatory Services - I have responsibility for Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Trading Standards, Emergency Protection Unit, Gypsy and Travellers, Human Resources, Industrial Relations, the Prevent Agenda – all of which of course is work that links to the community here. As Deputy Leader to OCC, I attend the County Council Network meetings, the Growth Board for the Leader of OCC, Faringdon and Wantage Locality Meetings, monthly meetings with UNISON, and quarterly meetings with the FBU at the OFRS Joint Consultative Committee which I chair. I chair the Thames Valley Fire Control Service meetings which is attended by Royal Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Fire Authority Members. I chair Informal Cabinet meetings and attend the Chief Fire Officers Strategic Leaders Meetings. At Cabinet I present a monthly report on Business Management which forms part of a suite of documents which gives a monthly health check on our progress, our priorities and financial performance toward the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and quarterly a Workforce and Staffing Data Report. I chair the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee with representation from OCC, VWHDC, Faringdon Town Council, TVP, OCC Highways officers and a JP. I've attended “The Place” and “The Pump House” meetings too.

Resume of news:-

Oxfordshire firefighters - have broken down barriers to “first response emergency care” in partnership with blue light services in the police and ambulance services. In the last 12 months fire crews have responded to 626 Thames Valley incidents where enabling entry was required with an average response time of 9 minutes. We received praise from HMICFRS following our inspection – where we were assessed on our effectiveness and efficiency. As the Cabinet Member I was interviewed too. I am very proud of the OFRS and particularly the staff at the Faringdon Fire Station.

Faringdon Library - A total of S106 monies - £128k is to be spent later this calendar year - I have worked with officers and a small group of library supporters prior to Covid-19 for this project to be progressed. The letting of the contract for this work has been delayed due to Covid but is now being developed and I have sent proposed plans through to all the Town/Parish Councils in the Division.

Youth Work - I have secured a total of £7,539.74 for youth provision in Faringdon

Apprenticeships – this last year, I was pleased to advise that OCC's Adult Social Care helped a young Faringdon student to take up an apprenticeship and thus a career in adult social care.

Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme – OCC received £1.37million from the Government to run local support schemes for those in greatest need and we worked closely with the city and district councils to identify those most in need.

Holiday-hunger scheme - OCC administered this scheme to support families around school holidays for those in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. During the autumn Oxfordshire councils

funded community food providers, including food banks with total grants of £250,000 to ensure support was available where needed.

County Councillor Priority Fund 2020-21 – I have spent my £15,000 annual budget allocation

thus: “Be Free Young Carers - £500, Oxfordshire Play Association - £1,000, Spurgeons – The Place - £4,887.04, Citizens Advice - £1,397.94, Invicta Academy £500.00, Farcycles - £3,500.00, Pump House Project - £2,000 and Littleworth Parish Council - £1,215.02.

Civil Parking Enforcement – OCC as the Highways Authority were formally approached by South and VWH District Councils for us to investigate the feasibility of implementing CPE within their Districts. We agreed to apply to Government to take over the responsibility for civil parking enforcement across the whole of the county. It is expected that the new measures will be in force this coming Autumn.

Investment in highway repairs and improvements – With the Covid pandemic the road maintenance programme has slipped as the highways staff must work in accordance with Covid regulations. Within the Division there has been – much repainting/refreshing of statutory road markings within Faringdon and the Division especially on the A420 from Faringdon travelling west to Little Coxwell, plus road re-surfacing on the Coxwell Road/A420 junction. At the February budget meeting investment in the highways was agreed and this will mean that Park Road – A417 re-surfacing will take place later this year as will, Faringdon Town Centre footway resurfacing – I have already ensured that OCC officers and Faringdon Town Council staff are discussing the project. Work will also take place as follows:- Westland Road, Marines Drive, Town End Road, Elm Road, Orchard Hill, completion of Beech Close, Hawthorn Road, Marlborough Gardens, Goodlake Avenue, Untons Place, Bennett Road, Pye Street, Folly View Crescent, Elm Road, and Fernham Road.

During the Covid pandemic I have not held my monthly surgeries but have of course I have been fully engaged with people via the telephone and email.

Judith Heathcoat
C/Cllr Faringdon Division
April 2021