

**REPORT TO THE FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth with Thrupp and Wadley and Little Coxwell) March 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 for the people of the Faringdon Division and is therefore “useful” for the local town and parish councillors too!**

The month of March has been busy with most days full of meetings with much diversity of subject matter. There has been Informal Cabinet, full Council, full Cabinet, Strategic Leaders Team Meeting for the Fire Service to briefings given to “all councillors” (on many subjects of course Covid-19 has featured strongly), Political Group Leaders and partnership meetings with Cherwell District Council, the Growth Board, Political Cabinet and of course there has been the usual round of Parish Council Meetings. Many days start early at 0800hrs with many finishing at or after 1930. Life is varied but, I must make special note of our County Council staff who have continued during the Covid pandemic to ensure that our residents and the communities across the whole of Oxfordshire continue to receive a high-quality delivery of services right across the piece. There has been a significant increase in business activity whilst our staff working predominantly from home, often not in ideal settings, continue to show that there has been no impact in the delivery of services.

Within Community Safety, my own Portfolio, the Trading Standards team has once again joined the BBC Radio Oxford Breakfast show to highlight the need for vigilance with regard to the rise in coronavirus vaccination scams. The team has also been successful with the confiscations of illegal shisha and chewing tobacco from some retail premises in Oxford. I would like to mention particularly that our Fire and Rescue Service has been praised by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service after our inspection which assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of the service delivery to the public and the care of its staff. I’d like to quote from the report – OFRS used its wholetime and on-call firefighters to respond to emergencies, and the increased availability allowed the service to support its partners, especially the ambulance trust. This meant the people of Oxfordshire were well supported through the pandemic”. I am pleased to report that there have been no road fatalities in this last quarter, however, there continues to be a national concern that with the reduction in road traffic volumes there has been an increase in speed – there is a national campaign around speeding which we will support and promote.

**Investment by OCC - Millions of pounds to be invested in highway repairs and improvements**

More improvements are on the way for Oxfordshire’s motorists, cyclists and pedestrians in the next 12 months as a result of investment in the network totalling £31.3 million. Roads, cycleways, bridges, drainage, pavements and streetlights will all benefit from the programme, which is part of Oxfordshire County Council’s wider investment into highway infrastructure. Some of the major maintenance schemes for 2021/22 include Marsh Lane in Oxford, **Park Road in Faringdon** and the Orchard Way/Warwick Road Roundabout in Banbury. The list of projects include resurfacing, embankment repairs, road edge strengthening, surface dressing to waterproof and extend the life of roads, and recycling schemes using new techniques that incorporate old road materials. Repairs are identified either through reports from the public or during the council’s own routine inspections. People can report any defect found with the highways at any time using [“FixMyStreet”](#). Between April 2020 and March 2021, Oxfordshire County Council treated just under 1.5 million square metres of highway at more than 220 sites, with works valued at just over £20m.

**Challenges facing young people** – Some of our Young people are suffering psychological challenges, made worse by COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, and will have access to an information hub giving contact details of local professional support services and resources. It is recognised that teenagers face daunting choices, such as deciding between continuing in education or entering the workplace. Many are struggling with loneliness, maintaining friendships and social circles, while often wrestling with themselves. It can be a confusing, scary and anxious time and this is compounded by COVID-19. Whether to stay at school or college, look for work or training. Do they keep living at home or find their own accommodation? There will be financial concerns too. The County Council has launched a mental wellbeing information hub – we believe that in many cases, parents and carers are also lacking the support they need to help young people manage stress and anxiety. Resources to

help with this will be promoted to them in the coming weeks. Further information is available from the county council's young people website: [www.oxme.info/wellbeing](http://www.oxme.info/wellbeing)

### **Safety Messages:-**

An Oxfordshire firefighter is encouraging motorbike riders to prioritise safety after he was involved in a life-changing biking accident. **A firefighter** based at Burford Fire Station, suffered life changing injuries after a car pulled out in front of his motorbike. His safety helmet and the correct protective clothing saved him from being killed. There has been a hard-hitting safety-first campaign – “Ride Safe Campaign” taking place in Oxfordshire and across the Thames Valley during March and involves OFRS who have organised safety awareness events with local riders to highlight the importance of bike maintenance, wearing proper riding kit, and the benefits of further rider training. Motorcyclists are being encouraged too, to improve their riding skills and hazard awareness. **My media quote said:** “Motorcyclists are among the most vulnerable road users, but they can play a big part in keeping themselves safe. I encourage every motorcyclist to ride responsibly, wear all the necessary safety clothing, travel at safe speeds, appropriate to the conditions they face; and attend one of our Ride Safe sessions.” Further details about Ride Safe events are available on the [365alive website](http://365alive.com).

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service were called to a large domestic garage blaze which threatened to spread to adjoining properties. Please be aware that your garage can contain many flammable fluids and items – petrol for lawnmowers, white spirit, bleach and turpentine as a few examples!

Firefighters were called to a fire in a shop and firefighters had to wear breathing apparatus to gain access and use hoses to bring the fire under control. As a precaution some flats above the shop were evacuated. After looking at the footage from security cameras the cause of the blaze was found to be candles. Please never leave candles under attended.

**Recycling and Composting** - Residents in Oxfordshire have helped the county top the table nationally when it comes to recycling and composting for the seventh year in a row. Oxfordshire County Council has once again been named the best performing county council waste disposal authority in England, according to new government figures released on 3 March 2021. Last year, residents recycled or composted 1.6 per cent more of their household waste than in the previous year. Nationally, the average for recycling in England rose by 0.9 per cent overall, 58.8 per cent of household waste was recycled and composted in Oxfordshire last year, compared to 57.2 per cent the previous year. The national average was only 45.5 per cent according to the latest figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Oxfordshire's five district and city authorities have also achieved excellent results above the national average. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse came second and fourth nationally, with recycling rates of 64 per cent and 63.3 per cent respectively.

### **Zero-carbon county by 2050 and a Carbon Neutral Council by 2030**

**OCC - Target for cutting greenhouse gas emissions exceeded. More savings on the way with rollout of LED streetlighting** - Oxfordshire's aim of becoming a zero-carbon county by 2050 has received a boost with news that a target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions was exceeded last year. Oxfordshire County Council cut its own corporate carbon emissions by eight per cent from April 2019 to March 2020, beating its target of six per cent. The replacement of boilers and streetlighting with more energy-efficient models, the installation of solar panels and the purchase of more electric vehicles were all factors in the reduction. As a member of the Cabinet I am pleased that last year we promised to put climate action at the heart of everything we do, and these figures show we are delivering on that promise. The measures put in place mean 1,132 tonnes of carbon dioxide have been saved from ending up in the atmosphere. The council is committed to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030. Oxfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in April 2019 and developed a Climate Action Framework in 2020 to set out how to achieve its net-zero goals. We aim to replace the county's streetlights with highly efficient, environmentally friendly LED (light-emitting diode) alternatives. Scheduled to take four years to complete, the county council is investing £40 million over this period, which also includes upgrading columns and it is expecting this work will lead to savings of more than £75m over the next 20 years. More than 2,800 streetlights were replaced in

2019/20, saving 245,109 kWh of electricity, and helping the council to exceed its emissions target for those 12 months.

Our “ Climate Action Framework” is affecting all aspects of council policy and responsibility, including:

- Replacing its fleet with electric vehicles (EVs) and creating more EV charging points.
- Generating its own clean power and buying from green energy sources.
- Seeing what services can be delivered digitally.
- Promoting active travel such as walking and cycling.
- Reducing its demand for energy.
- Setting sustainability standards for its suppliers.
- Helping schools meet their low-carbon targets.
- Maximising waste reduction and recycling.

During the Covid-19 pandemic I have not held my usual surgeries but, I have of course received emails and telephone calls. I can be reached on 01367 241468 or by email at [Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

I should like to finish my monthly report by thanking all the staff of Faringdon Town Council, the local volunteers across the Division, the shops and super markets who have ensured that we have a fully functioning retail/food service and our medical teams for their continued support to us all and the superb delivery of the Covid vaccination programme. Everyone of you deserves huge thanks from us all.

Judith Heathcoat

Deputy Leader – Oxfordshire County Council

Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Regulatory Services

April 2021