

# County Councillor Report for Faringdon Division

Bethia Thomas, January/February 2022

[bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

A belated happy new year to you all – as we enter February, we are reminded how quickly the months fly by. I am happy to report much activity over the last month and am excited at the prospect of pushing things forward throughout Faringdon Division in the new year.

Sadly, we saw several serious road traffic collisions in the area over the Christmas period. Officers have attended the sites of each to survey and assess any contributory factors which could be addressed by the council or its partners. A recent site visit to Buscot has identified a programme of works to improve drainage and road safety in the area.

Icy or flooded conditions are hazards on our roads, particularly when combined with speeding, and I am happy to announce three separate speed surveys are being ordered across the division to provide background data on traffic movement in these areas.

As well as this, two parishes have applied to the new 20MPH scheme in the last two months and the Faringdon 20MPH zone was approved in late January. Together with the new A420 safety working group, which held its inaugural meeting to discuss its aims and objectives, these strategies are addressing different road safety issues across the area.

Gritting is the responsibility of the county council and concern had been raised that during an unusually fierce cold spell this had not been done adequately. I have been assured that it had been but have been invited to follow this up if need be. Gritters will always treat roads to a bespoke forecast and when conditions require it, however, this is no guarantee that ice will not form, particularly where there may be local carriageway flooding hence additional signage may be required or improvements like those planned for Buscot.

As always, I have given a general update for the division followed up by specific updates for each parish. I would encourage you to get in touch with me directly if you have any queries; any major news stories will be available through the website at: [news.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

All the best,

*Bethia.*

## [News from Across the Division](#)

Unfortunately, our buses are still not running as scheduled, mainly due to the lack of HGV drivers as we have seen in other services nationally. This is a particular concern to us as we have no direct control over bus services but are doing our best to work with bus companies to ensure a more predictable service.

Civil parking enforcement has continued into the new year and I believe is beginning to make a difference on Faringdon's roads. It affects all residents and visitors to the town and I have received many emails, some in support of the ticketing some against, and I will continue to monitor the situation. I am hoping to review statistics on the number of tickets issued in the town and will share these with you as soon as I am able. Several requests have

suggested the possibility of establishing a residents parking permits scheme, and there is consultation currently open to share your views at [letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk).

The Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee (FATAC) AGM is scheduled for 10.00am March 14<sup>th</sup>. This is a Monday and represents a departure from previous meetings, and one in which we will be reviewing the constitution to make it more representative and accountable. As always, I am happy to represent you at the meetings, or for you to submit points to be raised to officers.

#### Buckland

Since the last parish meeting, I have been contacted by a resident of Buckland Marsh concerned with speeding in the area. Having spoken to officers about this, I have offered to fund a speed survey to establish a base level of traffic speeds and volume to see if a reduction in the speed limit would be an option on this stretch of road. I have no firm timescale for this but believe it will happen in the next month or two.

After a site visit to Littleworth we discussed the state of the footpaths on either side of the A420 and how they could be improved. I believe this would apply in some sections of Buckland as well and I would be happy to investigate further.

#### Buscot

I was glad to have been able to join the site visit to Buscot in January. After the serious road traffic incident, I have been reassured that officers have taken such swift action to assess the contributing factors and set up a programme of works to alleviate the flooding on the roads, with confirmation that all existing grips will be re-cut from opposite Buscot Hall all the way to St Johns Bridge on the County Boundary in late Feb, early March.

I have also ordered a speed survey to be installed at the most appropriate section of road designated by officers. I am unsure of the timescales on this but will pass on any details as they come to hand. The county officer who visited had already sent answers to questions raised at the last parish meeting, and I would be happy to follow these up if needed, including the possibility of formalising the passing place on the Buscot Wick Road.

#### Coleshill

I was very happy to attend your meeting in January where you voted in favour of applying for the new 20MPH scheme, which I believe has been logged by officers. I am happy to support you in your application and have written a letter to that effect, so please let me know if there is anything more I can do on this or on the installation of the chicanes at the top of the village.

#### Eaton Hastings

Over the last few months, I have been in contact with a resident who has helped focussed our attention vehicle speeds on the A417. I have now ordered a speed survey to be installed in this section of road. I am unsure of the timescale on this but have just seen quotes for this work so anticipate it happening in the next few months

I raised the issue of the last few potholes that still need to be repaired on the Church Road. Officers have apologised that a section had been missed and will reattend this section over the next few weeks to see that further repairs are carried out as soon as practical.

## Faringdon

In late January, Faringdon's proposed 20MPH Zone was approved. Officers are currently pricing up the job and now awaiting quotes back from contractors. Details of signage can be circulated, and I will let you know the timetable of planned work as it comes to light.

CPE is still a focus of many residents in Faringdon. I have had emails both in support of and against the new scheme and have been working to address these issues as much as possible. Several residents have raised the need for a parking permits scheme, and I am grateful that council will be discussing this at their next meeting. There is also a public consultation asking your opinions on aspects of these schemes which I have already circulated.

I have been working closely with the town council on the condition of footways in the town centre. We were all disappointed that the resurfacing works which we had hoped to see in October did not go ahead – despite the impression we had been given, funds had never been reserved for this work. We've now been informed that there will be no funds available until the next financial year 2022/23 and are urging that works are scheduled at the earliest opportunity. Recently I have done an extensive survey of the area, posting fifteen separate reports on Fix My Street to order patching works in the interim, and have invited officers to visit for a site inspection. I will make sure to keep you posted with updates.

Other issues to report include:

- Faringdon Infant School – the DfE feasibility study continues with surveys planned for the upcoming half term, no decision has been made on its future as yet;
- Faze - the planning application for redevelopment will be submitted within months;
- S106 Social Services Contributions – training session scheduled S106 payments;
- Drainage on Humpty Hill – an area of ongoing investigation;
- Footpath connecting developments onto the Fernham Rd – investigating with the help of David Grant;
- Faringdon Play Day – I have awarded £1000 towards staging the event.

## Great Cowell

I am looking forward to your next parish meeting. I will be happy to support efforts to organise a community day and survey residents' views on proposed changes to traffic movements in the village.

## Little Coxwell

I already have the date for your next meeting in my diary where I look forward to hearing from the attending representative from Grundon. With their response now circulated, I would be happy to support your views going forward. I am aware that time may be an issue, so please contact me with any further thoughts.

## Littleworth

I enjoyed coming out to the site visit in January. I am following up on details from the visit to circulate to residents. Many of the improvements that could be made are larger projects that will need further investigation. I want to make sure that suggested footway improvements on either side of the A420 are scheduled on the work programme as soon as possible. I am also following up the possibility of installation litter bin near the bus stop and have informed Jerry Avery to keep him in the loop. The application you made to the new 20MPH scheme has been logged, and I will be happy to support it through the system. New signs will be installed on the Thrupp Corner, and I am investigating options around formalising the passing place there, following comments from a resident.

## [News from across the County](#)

### Covid Updates

At the time of writing my last full report the Omicron variant was only just emerging; its spread was rapid, and the number of cases quickly skyrocketed. While things are going "back to normal" cases are still high particularly in young children, and in the last week of January cases increased by 25% in Oxfordshire. As always, we are asking people to follow instructions about testing and self-isolating. For further advice and support visit the website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

### Other News

All news can be found on the council's website. I am not one for rehashing stories that are already in the public domain, but one that caught my eye explained how illegal tobacco confiscated by the council's trading standards team has been sent to the Ardley Energy Recovery Facility to be safely disposed of and contribute to the plant's generation of electricity. "The trade in illegal tobacco brings crime into our communities. That's why it is so important to clamp down on it. Sending confiscated tobacco to energy recovery is a win-win, permanently destroying it, diverting from landfill, and generating power for homes and businesses". Very innovative!

### Councillor Activity Report

I would like to remind you of the Councillor Priority Fund which allows me to fund community projects to benefit residents across the division is still available. I have spent £1000 to part fund Faringdon's Play Day in August and will also be using it to pay for the speed surveys ordered across the division. Details of this fund can be found on the website.

The next full council meeting is scheduled for the 8<sup>th</sup> February at which the budget will be set. I am on several committees scrutinising the work of the council, and a working group to review the council's constitution.

Face-to-face surgeries have restarted both for the county and district, with appearances at the first Saturday Market of the month in Faringdon Town Centre from 11.00am. My full details are available on the website, and I am very happy for you to contact me directly using my council email address: [bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk)