

# County Councillor Report for Faringdon Division

Bethia Thomas, September 2021

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Autumn is upon us, and as time marches on, I am happy to say I feel as though we are making real progress towards shaping the new council work programme, and more locally, starting to get things done to make a difference to the communities in and around Faringdon.

It is quite a task to take on a role like this; you have no handover period and no training, except the previous experience you bring with you. Fortunately, having knowledge from the Vale I have a fair understanding of how things work in councils, and have used that to my advantage and feel as though I am now making inroads to get things moving.

Communication is key in a role like this, and I hope you are still happy with the format of the monthly reports I am sending out. I also run a Facebook Page, that covers both county and district matters that you might find useful: you can find it if you search "Your Councillors in Faringdon". Although I am not the most dedicated Facebook user, I do try and keep it updated as much as possible.

The FATAc meeting in September was probably the most significant event that occurred since my last report and I am grateful to all of you who sent me information to feed into the discussion, and for those of you who came along to address the committee – your contributions were appreciated. I have been following up on many of the points raised there and will get back to you in the coming weeks.

As always, 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](https://www.news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

All the best,

*Bethia,*

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

As I have already mentioned, I was very happy to see so many contributions to the FATAc meeting in September. This is a great forum to speak about specific traffic concerns, and I am happy to represent you there, or for you to submit points to be raised to officers. The next meeting is scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup>, but in the meantime, I will make sure to address ongoing issues.

Speeding is a universal issue across the division, and we are looking into ways in which this can best be addressed in each setting. The new administration is making plans to roll out 20MPH zones in villages across the county over the next three years. I will of course let you know of any further developments on this.

I would also like to remind you of the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) which is due to come into action on November 1<sup>st</sup>. This is a joint initiative between district and county council and I have attached some information alongside this report that may help explain a little more about the programme – if you would like any of these guides to distribute to your residents please let me know and I will see what material is available.

### Buckland

I am happy to report that the work to repair the parapets on Tadpole Bridge, went to schedule, finishing within the proposed timescale. A second road closure is scheduled for the 19<sup>th</sup> October on Orchard Rd will see works between 09:30 and 15:30. I am continuing to follow up issues that have been raised previously, and will report them at your next meeting. Please get in contact with any queries or concerns in the meantime.

### Buscot

I do hope you have been enjoying the late summer sun near the river, I have been down on a number of occasions, and participated in Freshwater Watch, sampling river water in two localities around Buscot as part of a biannual survey of the Thames. Several issues relating to the A417 had been reported by Eaton Hastings Parish and I am happy to keep you informed of progress on this.

### Coleshill

It would like to thank Cllr Webster for attending FATAC. While it is frustrating that not all requests can be fulfilled, it is a positive that we were able to discuss progress and plans for the village. I look forward to hearing updates on this. I was lucky enough to attend the Coleshill Heritage Day this month and learnt more about the history of village.

### Eaton Hastings

A submission was made on your behalf at FATAC, requesting the consideration of a reduced speed limit through the village on the A417. I am waiting for updates on this. I have not had a chance to visit the area since I last reported the need for further repairs to the church road and would be grateful for a local update. I had been told additional repairs to the final stretch of the road to the church had been ordered, but am not sure if they have been completed.

### Faringdon

As the largest community in the division there have been more issues of concern raised in Faringdon than other areas and progress on each comes slowly but steadily. Frustratingly I keep discovering what can best be described as “unknown unknowns” and having to unpick the histories around these issues which can go back many years.

An example of this is the recent discovery that the budget for resurfacing the town centre which had previously been reported seems to have been withdrawn. Obviously, I am investigating this, and know the town council continues to do the same. I know this issue is one of the greatest concerns not just to the town centre, but to the town as a whole and it is a high priority to me to get this resolved.

I have also faced difficulties in trying to unpick the history of decisions relating to the future of the Faze Site on Highworth Road. Having been asked to investigate this by the town council, I have come up against many obstacles to resolve the history of any decisions made around this site and will need to work closely with all stakeholders to clarify its future.

With that in mind I am giving a list here of some of the more pressing issues I have been working on, please ask for further details if you would like more information on any item.

- The proposed intersection on the A420 at Great Coxwell – funds secured though no firm date for commencement of works;
- Faringdon Library Refurbishment – attended a session in library to view designs and have fed back thoughts to officers;
- Overhanging Trees on the Portway – met with officers to discuss;

- The Ferndale Street Bridge – no further updates;
- Pedestrian crossing on Henry Blake Way – received an update at FATAC;
- 20mph for the Town Centre – received an update at FATAC;
- Safer Schools Programmes – received an update at FATAC and working with district on different aspects of safety around schools;
- The new school build off Park Rd – have discussed this with officers and members concerning this build as well as all new build schools and the green policies around this – I am also due to meet with the academy;
- Proposed Active Travel Working Group and support for FCB – had a visit from active travel officer and the county’s cycle champion, Cllr Andrew Gant;
- Park Road Resurfacing - to be completed in October as well as works in Marlborough Gardens other areas of the town;
- S106 Social Services Contributions – investigating this, yet to receive an update.

I was very happy to represent the county council at Faringdon’s Big Green Day. I had the chance to show the work the council is doing to address the climate emergency, and I think officers were pleased that we wanted to showcase their efforts in this way. It was a superb event, and I would like to thank all involved in organising it.

#### Great Coxwell

I was able to attend the parish meeting earlier this month and welcomed Cllr MacDonald to FATAC where she raised several issues of concern to the village. We are awaiting updates on these and are hoping to arrange a site visit for county officers to walk the village and get a further understanding of the issues raised.

Following on from my previous report, there was a brief discussion at FATAC on progress around improvements to the junction at the Great Coxwell Roundabout onto the A420. With funds now secured, there does not seem to be any specific trigger for the improvements to commence but would need to occur at the same time as the development begins to be built out – as yet, I believe there are no firm dates for commencement.

I visited the village to inspect the state of the cobbled path leading to the church. There seems to be a considerable history to this which I am investigating with officers at the county, though may also involve conservation officers at the district council. Investigations continue, and I will report back as soon as possible.

I was happy to visit the Great Barn Festival earlier in the month and speak with Greener Great Coxwell, running into them again at Faringdon’s Big Green Day. I am incredibly impressed by the scope and vision of the group with an ambitious work programme ahead of them – if there is anything I can do to assist, please let me know.

#### Little Coxwell

I am so sorry to have to send my apologies again for the parish meeting in October, I had been looking forward to meeting you all in person but have several clashes that evening. If there are any issues raised that I may be able to assist with, please let me know.

#### Littleworth

Many thanks for your submission to the FATAC meeting this month – both points were raised and I continue to find answers for you. Probably the most promising news here is the progress on the roll out of 20MPH zones in villages across the county. The new administration, of which I am a part, consider this a vital safety measure for villages across

the county, and reports on the work programme associated with the roll out are currently going through scrutiny for examination – it is hoped that all villages in the county who are keen to adopt 20MPH zones will be able to implement them within three years. While this may not be as fast as you hoped, I will be lobbying for villages in the Faringdon division to be included in the first tranche if possible.

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

Council life is starting up again after a quieter summer period with meetings restarting and a full programme of events on the calendar.

#### Covid Updates

While life continues to normalise, we are still exercising caution at the council and urge others to do the same as much as possible. Residents are being reminded of the importance of socially responsible behaviours – testing, isolating and taking extra care – to keep themselves and their families safe from COVID-19 as cases in the county have risen.

#### Other News

Smokers across the county are being encouraged to take up the Stoptober Challenge, and resources are available to support this. In the past ten years, Oxfordshire County Council's free local stop smoking service has helped over 26,000 people make the change.

The council continues to support Afghan refugees that have settled in the county. As is the case throughout the country Oxfordshire is playing host to a number of Afghan people in temporary accommodation as a prelude to them moving into more stable accommodation once central Government has allocated families and individuals to appropriate homes either locally or elsewhere. Further details of this story and others can be found at:

[news.oxfordshire.gov.uk](https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

#### Councillor Activity Report

September saw several larger meetings, including the first full council meeting returning to county hall since the beginning of the pandemic. The first of the new scrutiny committee meetings are also starting up and I am happy to have taken place on the committee concerned with education, children's and adult social services, and other services that directly affect our residents. October will see the Faringdon Locality Meeting in which strategic matters in the area are discussed.

Face-to-face surgeries are still suspended, but we hope to restart them in the near future. 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)

I would also 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. Details of this fund can be found on the website.