

Focus on Parishes with Cllr Bethia Thomas

Faringdon Division

February 2023



February means just one thing for most councils, with must work focusing on creating a budget that's fit for purpose, reflecting our priorities. More locally the focus has been on road safety, with the first FATAc dedicated to the A420. As always if you have any questions or would like to meet with me, please get in touch.

Parish Round-Up

Not all items are covered here, with a selection of the main updates listed below. Please get in touch for further details on these or other items.

Buckland

- **40 MPH Zone Buckland Marsh:** Consultation now closed.
- **Signage on the A420:** Meeting with officers in March.
- **Speeding near Gainfield:** Reports of speeding between Gainfield and Pusey.

Buscot

- **Snowswick Lane Fingerpost:** Chasing this up with officers for repair; I would like to review issues around Snowswick Lane, including signage and passing places.

Coleshill

- **Speed Reduction Chicane & SIDs:** Now installed, with new static SIDs on order.
- **Signage Review:** Signage and road markings reviewed and updated.
- **20MPH Stickers:** Waiting to hear confirmation of funding for these.
- **TVP:** Put TVP in touch with parish, with a representative to visit the next meeting.

Eaton Hastings

- **Speeding on A417:** Having written to the cabinet member for highways I know he fully support initiatives to lower speed limits in residential areas, including Eaton Hastings; an invitation to apply for a 40MPH may rest on the formal status of the parish – I will investigate further.
- **Potholes:** After visiting the church, it was noted that many potholes have reappeared, I hope to get these reported.

Faringdon

- **20MPH Zone:** The consultation has for the proposed 20MPH Zone Expansion has now closed; objections to the proposal will be heard at the delegated decisions meeting held on 23rd February; I will be writing in support of the expansion of the scheme.
- **London Rd Speed Survey:** A speed survey will be installed at the top of London Road over the coming months.

- **Faze Site:** A local developer has been in contact interested in this site as a mixed use development; directing them to officers, they have been informed that the disposal of the site is still under consideration
- **Folly View Primary:** Residents have created a petition expressing their concern regarding the safety of children crossing Park Rd which will be presented to FTC for further discussion; this issue has already been added to the next FATAAC agenda, and I am organising a site visit for further investigation.
- **Ferndale Bridge:** Received response with further work to be considered by FTC.
- **S106 Social Service Contributions:** The social care team is looking carefully at funds available to ensure that these are used appropriately as soon as possible; the team to make contact to discuss any specific plans they may be developing for the Faringdon area.
- **Folly Path Bench:** Waiting to hear confirmation of funding for a replacement.
- **Pavement Works:** A long running issue in Marlborough Gardens is now scheduled for repair, with works to the pavement to remove a tree root causing a tripping hazard.

Great Coxwell

- **Traffic Lights at A420 Junction:** Reading an initial report, it was suggested that the installation of these lights may be completed by the end of 2023, this is earlier than expected.
- **Other Highways Matters:** Continuing to progress. A speed survey will be installed at the top of the Hollow Road over the coming months.

Little Coxwell

- **Grundon Liaison Group:** A date has been set for the first meeting of the group which will meet on 28th February; I will be chairing.
- **40MPH Zone:** Was approved alongside the 20MPH Zone for the village.

Littleworth

- **Crossing:** A street lighting scheme and a dropped kerb are being progressed and will be delivered in the 2023-24 financial year.
- **Footpaths:** A report on FMS will be investigated to clear a footpath to Barcote Cottages along the A420.

Activity Report

My recent meetings:

- 9th January: Coleshill Parish Council, Apologies
- 9th January: Faringdon Town Council, Full Council, Apologies
- 11th January: Buscot Parish Council
- 12th January: People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 17th January: The Place AGM, Apologies
- 23rd January: FATAAC A420 Special Meeting
- 30th January: Faringdon and Wantage Locality Meeting

Upcoming meetings:

- 6th February: Buckland Council, Apologies
- 6th February: Great Coxwell Council, Apologies
- 9th February: Meeting at Coleshill
- 13th February: Faringdon Town Council, Full Council
- 14th February: County, Full Council
- 28th February: Little Coxwell Liaison Group

FATAC Report:

Last month we held an additional meeting of FATAC dedicated to issues around the A420. Many improvements that are planned were reviewed during the meeting. Other suggestions were recorded, including a proposed speed reduction, removing the national speed limit around Faringdon and dropping it to 50MPH. Cllr Yarwood, Chair of Little Coxwell Parish has taken on the task of reviewing RTC data to get a better picture of the pattern of collisions on the A420 and will be reporting to the next meeting to be held in March.

Highways News:

- Traffic lights at Great Coxwell Junction may be installed by the end of 2023.
- Coleshill Chicane installed with the 20MPH Zone – the first in Faringdon Division.
- Consultation closed on Faringdon’s 20MPH Zone.
- 40MPH Zone in Little Coxwell approved alongside the 20MPH in the village.
- 40MPH reduction for A417 at Eaton Hastings given informal approval.
- 40MPH Zone proposed for London Road coming off the A420; speed survey ordered.
- Speed survey on order for the B4019 near Badbury Clump.
- A street lighting scheme and a dropped kerb to be delivered in Littleworth.

OCC News – Budget Special

Oxfordshire County Council will set its 2023-24 budget at its February full council meeting. The budget is delivered within a context of high inflation and rising pressure for services, particularly in adult social care and children’s services.

The administration will propose a 5% rise in council tax, including a 2% adult social care precept. Judicious savings, a rising council tax take from increased population, and a better-than-expected government settlement also support the budget and mean drastic cuts can be avoided, despite the gap between the council tax rise and the rate of inflation.

Children’s Services & SEND: I am delighted to say that children’s services will see an inflation busting boost of 12.3% (£18.8m), providing a real-term increase (+1.6%) to children’s services, particularly for special educational needs and other vulnerable children in care; this has been difficult to achieve, but reflects the priorities of the administration. £500,000 will be spent to speed up needs assessments (EHCPs) for children with SEND.

Adult social care: Accounts for approximately half of OCC's budget and is particularly sensitive to inflation due to the labour-intensive nature of care. Because of the size of the budget, it is difficult to provide an inflation matched rise, however, adult social care will get a 6.8% (£14.4m) increase to support its work, which will soften the impact of inflation. The 'Oxfordshire Way' reforms also support more efficient use of budget.

Highways and travel: We will be investing an additional £1.6m to reduce flooding on roads – clearing ditches and cutting through red tape that prevent action on the ground. Monies will also be used to clean signs and improve road markings. By investing in flooding prevention, we can reduce damage to road surfaces and save taxpayers money. However, it remains the case that successive grant reductions from government means that we have too little money to manage such a large network.

Climate: Amongst other initiatives, there is increased funding for trees planting (essential not only for carbon capture, but also localised climate resilience).

Voluntary organisations, libraries, and other services: Library services will be supported as they account for the loss of income from DVD rentals etc. Voluntary organisations will again be given a year's rent holiday where they pay rent to OCC.

News in Brief

Sustainable warmth grants: Home energy efficiency grants can be applied for online (Deadline: March 2023). OCC secured funding from the government's Sustainable Warmth Fund. Homes connected to the mains gas grid can apply for up to £10,000 and homes not connected can apply for up to £25,000 (means tested).

Call for hosts - Homes for Ukraine: A campaign encouraging people to come forward who are willing to accommodate families from Ukraine has been launched. While the government is reducing payments from the current £550 to £350 in April, or £500 for those hosting beyond 12 months, OCC has committed to maintaining the current rate of £550.

Active travel: OCC has secured over £0.5M from the government's Active Travel Capability Fund to invest in improving access to active travel. The county is also developing a plan for a 'Strategic Active Travel Network' that will link towns and villages. While only a plan at this stage, the data collected and planning done puts OCC in a good position to bid for government money when it arises.

Potholes: Freeze-thaw conditions over the past couple of months has seen a large number of potholes emerge. OCC are dealing with the backlog but will take some time. Please continue to report potholes using fix my street (reporting each pothole separately).

Coronation: Apply for up to £10,000 funding from the national lottery.

www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/news/blog/2023-02-03/how-you-can-commemorate-the-kings-coronation

Electric buses: First vehicles in a fleet of 159 electric buses set to arrive in September.

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