

**REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth with Tubney and Little Coxwell) –June/July 2020**

For information, all that is detailed within my monthly reports is already within the public domain and thus in the media. My monthly report is a document of varied information which will be of interest both to locally elected Parish Councillors and to the residents and rate payers of my Division. The report provides both a local news update 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 will have implications locally and thus is “useful” for the local town and parish councillors.

**County Council** - It has been a very busy month in many ways – I have attended a varied plethora of meetings, some 30+ all of which have implications for the County Council, Councillors, residents and thus locally in my Division.

My day can commence at 0800hrs with meetings concluding early evening. The meetings are virtual via “Teams” and many are open to the general public - Political Cabinet, Informal Cabinet, Full Cabinet, 1:1’s with senior officers of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Monitoring Officer, Head of Trading Standards, Unison officers. I have attended Employers Joint Committee Mtg which has members of Unison and County Councillors in attendance and this is where HR issues are discussed. Political Group Leaders - this is non-decision making it is where there is an exchange of information with the Leaders and Deputies of the 3 major parties. I have attended as an observer “Keeping you Connected” and this is where OFRS fire fighters can ask questions of senior officers - this has been invaluable during the Covid-19 pandemic. I have substituted on Planning & Minerals Committee and also at the County Councillors Network and been an observer at the Growth Board and I have chaired the OFRS Employers Joint Committee where in attendance are FBU members. I have done a “Walk about About” with Faringdon’s Town Clerk of the town centre and I have a 1:1 with officers of FTC who service the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee, a “sink hole” in Southampton Street which is a matter for Thames Water and a sewerage leak in Park Road, again an issue for Thames Water.

**Local News:-**

- There are longer-term plans for a permanent increase in cycleways which will lead to a step-change in the County’s cycling infrastructure. £130,000 is set to be spent on bicycles racks across the county and Faringdon will benefit from this. We are to receive government funding from the “Emergency Active Travel Fund”. Residents of all ages can look forward to a step-change in cycling infrastructure aimed at making this green form of transport safer and more attractive for a range of journeys across Oxfordshire. The active travel fund will allow Oxfordshire to address some of the key factors that deter people from cycling and encourage more journeys by bike. Current measures include prioritising road space for bikes to improve road safety; improving signage and road markings for cycle lanes; and creating more cycle parking in all market towns and Oxford. The next stage of the funding will include more 20mph zones to improve road safety where residents want them.
- There are long term plans to increase the number of cycleways across the county.
- More purpose-built cycle parking areas, particularly in market town squares, close to rural bus stops, and at park and rides
- More priority given to cycles, from changes to traffic light timings to prioritise people travelling by bike to adapting the road network to allow more space for bikes
- An upgraded maintenance scheme for cycle paths and cycle routes, with improved signage and route markings
- The Libraries and Registry offices will reopen gradually in the coming weeks.
- Previous changes to lockdown arrangements have seen household waste recycling centres and schools reopened in Oxfordshire – 95% of the county’s schools have been open during the Covid-19 pandemic. All of the county council’s cultural services sites have been closed in Oxfordshire and elsewhere since late March – we are looking to a gradual reopening.

With the hot weather there have been some safety messages from the Chief Fire Officer of Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service the main with regard to water safety to local residents. With the hot weather many have been and will be tempted into rivers and lakes to stay cool over the summer. People are being warned about the potential risks of open water, how to stay safe; and what to do if

someone gets into trouble in the water. It is common for water related activity to lead to various injuries including impact injuries from jumping off bridges, near drowning – which requires hospital treatment – and infections from the water. This puts pressure on emergency services and hospitals. Drowning in the UK is amongst the leading causes of accidental death. I can advise that there has been anti-social behaviour experienced within my Division with **Buscot** receiving an influx of people acting in an anti-social manner, parking dangerously thus making it difficult for the blue light services to access the river where there was an incident. Please respect the water, even if you're a good swimmer and familiar with the river and also ensure that individual behaviour falls within the appropriate bounds.

During Covid-19 there have been some serious "Road Traffic Collisions" and this in many cases has been due to drivers speeding on the empty roads. Please do drive at appropriate speeds for any given road and also take note of weather conditions and drive appropriately and safely. Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have had to attend some truly horrendous accidents, locally.

Also during Covid-19 people have built bone fires. The bone fires have been lit on windy days and close to hedging. In one incident the fire spread to the hedging and then to a property which it destroyed. There was a fatality. Please be careful when lighting a bone fire check wind directions.

On 18.06.20 there was a burst sewerage pipe on the A417 Park Road, Faringdon. Skanska, OCC Highways contractors closed the road. I contacted Thames Water and they were on-site immediately and the OFRS attended to help. I have had lengthy conversations with Thames Water and feel I should report on their findings. I was advised that the situation in Park Road was not uncommon. Thames Water have been dealing with similar situations – at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak people panic purchased toilet rolls and where there were none on the shop shelves, non-flushable wipes and kitchen rolls were purchased which were then flushed down toilets. Thames Water advised that many people use their toilet(s) as "waste disposal units"! The problem in Park Road was not a burst sewage pipe in Faringdon, it was a regurgitation of human waste caused by a blockage made by non-flushable items. The lesson is of course, that sanitary towels, babies non-disposable nappies, kitchen rolls, non-flushable wipes and toys must not be put down the toilet!

I know that many residents locally in the Division have anxiety that the sewerage treatment plant on the Lechlade Road will not be able to cope with the increase in new housing – but Thames Water has made an investment of £3.6m upgrade which will ensure that the capability of the treatment plant will be adequate and the number of households in the local area is estimated to increase to 11,200 by 2026. The upgrade, which ran from January 2019 to March 2020, means the site will now be able to process increased volumes of wastewater.

**An important note for you all from an area of my Cabinet Portfolio of Community Safety from Trading Standards.** Traders in Oxfordshire are being warned not to sell low-tech face coverings as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or make claims they provide protection against COVID-19. Face coverings on public transport and for hospital staff, outpatients and visitors became compulsory in Oxfordshire, and across the country, from 15 June. However, a face covering mainly protects others from infection rather than the wearer from infection from others. Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards team has seen an increase in reports of face coverings being offered for sale, particularly among online traders on Facebook Selling Groups, often apparently manufactured by the seller themselves. Trading Standards legislation controls the sale of these products and requires producers and sellers to ensure:

- There are no claims made on the product labelling and marketing about any level of personal protection from COVID-19
- There are no hazards associated with this type of product including strangulation, suffocation, choking, sharp points or rough edges
- The fabric used does not shed fibres that may be inhaled

- The material used is suitable to be worn against the skin and does not contain dye with chemicals containing harmful content that could be ingested
- That the product or packaging has sufficient traceability information including the name and address of the producer
- That no registered trademarks or designs are used without consent

Anyone involved in making or selling face coverings should in the first instance visit:

[https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/coronavirus/guidance\\_for\\_producers\\_of\\_face\\_coverings.pdf](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/coronavirus/guidance_for_producers_of_face_coverings.pdf) Follow-up advice can be requested by contacting Trading Standards on **01865 895999** (Option 2) or email [TradingStandards@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:TradingStandards@Oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Councillor Judith Heathcoat, Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet member for Community Safety**, said: "I would like to thank everyone in Oxfordshire for playing their part in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19. "A reminder that the most effective way to protect yourself and others from infection is to follow social distancing rules, avoid touching surfaces and your face, and wash your hands regularly. Face coverings are not a substitute for these measures but may help to protect others by reducing airborne transmission."

I hope that the above report is of interest I can be contacted on 01367 241468, or [Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk). I am more than happy to meet constituents but of course observing the social distancing regulations.

**I should like to close by thanking everyone for all their hard work and community support during Covid-19. I know that so much has been done by the Faringdon Town Council staff, by the Parish Council staff together with a hard core of volunteers. So many of you have gone over and above in your service of support to your neighbours and friends. Thank you.**

Judith Heathcoat

C/Cllr Faringdon Division

Cabinet Member Community Safety and Deputy Leader

July 2020


