

REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth with Tubney and Little Coxwell) September 2020

All that is detailed within my monthly report is in the public domain and thus in the media. My monthly report is a document of varied information which will be of interest both to local Town/Parish Councillors, residents and rate payers. 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. Most of the strategic work will have implications locally and thus is "useful" for the local town and parish councillors.

I'm sorry my report is coming a little late this month but September has been so busy! I have notched up over 40 meetings with a plethora of diverse subject matter. All OCC meetings are held on "Teams" which is a helpful and secure programme. The meetings have covered Informal Cabinet – which I chair, full Cabinet, full Council, Oxfordshire Employees Joint Consultative Committee – this is where Unison members and councillors meet with HR officers. There have been three "all members" briefings one by England Economic Heartland on the Draft Transport Strategy, one an "SEND" (Special Education Needs) and the third "Unconscious Bias Training for Councillors". I have attended Performance Scrutiny (this scrutinises Cabinet) and received briefings from senior officers. I have chaired the Thames Valley Fire Committee (the fire control room for the Thames Valley is based at Calcot, Royal Berkshire's fire HQ and supports our own fire service). I attend the County Councils Network meetings which Ministers attend – this gives County Councils a strong link back to Government. Diverse subject matter is discussed - the Covid pandemic, home to school transport, the financial situation of local authorities and social services are the main agenda items for discussion currently! Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Fire & Rescue Service (HMIC FRS), has been examining Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service and I have been interviewed as the Cabinet Member for Community Safety. This examination is exploring how effectively we have performed during Covid, lessons learnt and the state of play within our fire service. I have attended Thames Valley Police "Safer Streets" meetings – I was asked to sit on this by the DPCC representing the County Council. Discussion is based on safety within the city of Oxford with geographic reference to the Cowley area and The Plains where break-ins of multi occupancy student accommodation and bicycle thefts are "hotspots" – TVP have received a Government grant to undertake this work which is to be completed by March 2021. I have chaired the Oxfordshire's Joint Consultative Committee for the Fire Service councillors and FBU representatives sit on this.

County Library Service – we continue to re-open our Libraries and Faringdon's re-opened on 28th October there will be limited hours of opening and numbers and 'length of visit' in the branch... 7/8 including staff/volunteers, 30 minutes for browsing or computer use. I would advise that the Faringdon library renovation scheme is progressing and we are within a week or so of appointing a contractor for the design work. It is estimated the design work will take up to 8 weeks depending on how we manage the community consultation. There is a lead time of up to three months for the furniture/shelving so this means the library will require a shutdown sometime in 2021 up to a month maximum to undertake the wiring, the decorating and the installation. I will let you know when we have the contractor appointed. However, one concern for the Faringdon Library is that we really do need extra volunteers in the library, as increased safety measures will require more volunteer hours. If you could email me on Judith.Heathcoat@Oxfordshire.gov.uk I will let officers know of your interest so that training etc. can be organised. Please check Oxfordshire Libraries website for the current opening hours as they may not be the same as pre-Covid-19 and may be subject to change.

Each year I have reported on my use of my **County Councillors Priority Fund** and the benefit to the whole of the Faringdon Division. This year the following grants have been issued:-

"Be Free Young Carers - £500.00 (most county councillors have contributed to this work, too through their own Priority Fund), Oxfordshire Play Association - £1,000 (with Covid this is to be spent by 2021), Spurgeons, "The Place" - £4,887.04 (to help with building works),"Citizens Advice" - £1,397.94,"Invicta Academy - £500.00,"Farcycles" - £3,500.00, Pump House Project - £2,000 and finally, Littleworth Parish Council - £1,215.02

Covid-19 Safety Message - as you will have seen in papers, heard on the TV and radio the numbers of confirmed cases have increased in the county specifically in the city. Please follow the guidance as we all have a vital role to play in keeping Oxfordshire safe and in preventing local outbreaks. Make sure you follow these simple steps to keep safe and stop the virus spreading. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available wear a face covering on public transport, in all shops and in places where it is hard to stay away from people.

Adoption - In Mid-September I circulated publicity relating to vulnerable children in Oxfordshire and a new campaign, which has been launched. It is designed to dispel myths around who is eligible to adopt and encourage more residents to consider the role. Oxfordshire is playing a key role in the national **#YouCanAdopt** campaign, which explores what the adoption process involves and highlights the need for more adopters. Since

early April, there has been a 14% increase in enquiries to adopt with Adopt Thames Valley. However, considerable delays to court processes due to COVID-19 means there will be many more children who will need adopting come the autumn. We desperately need more adopters from across our diverse communities, who can offer children a permanent safe and loving home. Some of the biggest misconceptions around eligibility are that single people, older people, and those who are LGBTQ+ are not allowed to adopt. This is not the case. **Teresa Rogers, Head of Adopt Thames Valley**, said: "We are very excited to be supporting this campaign and keen to encourage more people to explore adopting with us. While welcoming all to apply, we would particularly like to hear from potential adoptive parents who can consider adopting older children, sibling groups and those with complex health needs or a disability. We would also love to hear from more potential parents from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, as these children traditionally wait longer to be matched with a new adoptive family. To find out more visit www.adoptthamesvalley.co.uk

School News School pupils and their families in Oxfordshire are being invited to join in the fun of using a new free smartphone app that offers rewards for exercise. Called "Street Tag", the app was highlighted at the launch of this year's National Walk to School Week between 5-9th October. "Street Tag" is a family-friendly game app that rewards primary school pupils, communities and schools for their physical activities such as walking, running, cycling, among a number of other fitness activities. Funded by Oxfordshire County Council as part of its active travel plans to increase exercise and improve air quality, "Street Tag" is aimed at children, parents schools, leisure venues and community groups. Oxfordshire County Council is supporting "Street Tag" to bring people together to participate in outdoor physical activities. The technology of the app also means that players can remain safely socially distanced from one another.

Safety Messages:

- Drivers have been told to "slow down" it has been revealed that 12 people have died on the county's road in just two months – OFRS usual respond to two fatal car accidents in a month!
- Scammers in Oxfordshire are being tracked by our Trading Standards experts. It is all being done in a way to protect the spread of covid-19.
- We have adopted new powers to shut down shops, events and to enforce coronavirus measures and we will be able to delegate them to the city council and the district councils. To stem the tide of coronavirus but, will be used sparingly.

May I once again thank you for all that you have done and continue to do on behalf of our communities as Covi-19 is still with us. It has been so challenging for all of us and I should like to make a special thank you to all those working for the benefit of our local communities in our shops and our super markets these people are ensuring, sometimes at risk to their own safety, that the shelves are full of fresh food for us to buy. Please do not "panic buy"!

Judith Heathcoat

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