

REPORT TO ADDERBURY PARISH COUNCIL NOVEMBER 2023 FROM CLLR ARASH FATEMIAN

LOCAL ISSUES

I am pleased to see that the 'correction' for the 20mph zones will be made to include the main road through the village, though please see below for info on enforcement.

I raised the issue of the inappropriate positioning and moving of the 20 mph repeater signs at the same time as a number of other villages – the issues have been resolved elsewhere so I am not sure why this has not yet happened in Adderbury.

GENERAL OCC REPORT

DAMNING OFSTED/CQC REPORT ON CHILDREN'S SEND SERVICES

Oxfordshire's local area partnership (LAP) has apologised to families and committed to significant change to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) following an inspection of services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in July. Inspectors identified that there are widespread systemic failings across the local area partnership leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which must be urgently addressed. The LAP is made up of Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) who are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services (across education, health and social care) for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. The partnership also includes Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Angry parents called for the OCC Cabinet Member for Children's Services to resign, but this has now been overtaken by events (see below).

COALITION RUNNING OCC COLLAPSES AND COUNCILLOR RESIGNS LABOUR WHIP – OCC NOW IN NO OVERALL CONTROL

The Fair Deal Alliance of Liberal Democrats, Labour, and Green parties, which had run the council since 2021, was shattered in September when Labour pulled out of the coalition. Following the turmoil, senior Labour figures have claimed there were difficulties from the very start of the coalition and that a 'long sequence of events' had shaken the party's faith in the alliance.

The Oxford Mail has reported that Council leader Liz Leffman dismissed Labour's claims as "self-justifying nonsense" and said the party "could have broken the agreement at any stage" if it was uncomfortable with the alliance. The Mail added that in an email to Labour members on Tuesday, Cllr Michael O'Connor, the secretary of the Oxfordshire County Labour Group, explained the reasons for the party's dramatic departure. He said "Over the last two years, our efforts to transform services and improve outcomes for residents have been persistently watered down by the Liberal Democrats and the Green party. From day one, the Liberal Democrats have been plagued by infighting. Cllr Leffman has been repeatedly challenged from within her own party, resulting in weak and indecisive leadership. A lack of any political agenda means that council time has been prioritised for political posturing." County Councillor Damian Haywood has resigned from the Labour Party over the issue and will sit as an independent.

The council make up is now:

LibDem/Green: 24

Conservative Independent Alliance: 21

Labour: 14
Independent: 3

NEW CABINET

Details of the new Cabinet can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/about-your-council/oxfordshire-councillors/oxfordshires-cabinet>

COUNCIL BUDGET FOR 2024/25 UNDER DEVELOPMENT

The OCC Budget process for 2024/25 is now underway. Given the NOC status of the council, the development and approval process is likely to be especially challenging.

POLICE AND OCC REAFFIRM 20MPH SPEED LIMITS EFFECTIVELY 'VOLUNTARY'

In response to parish council criticisms about the lack of effectiveness of OCC's £8million 30mph to 20mph sign-changing exercise, the Oxford Mail has reported that a spokesperson for Thames Valley Police has said:

"We enforce speed limits based on evidence and threat and harm principles and officers will always deal with situations they encounter operationally. We also rely on the public to provide information and would encourage anyone with information about speeding or poor driving to please report it so that we can gather information about a particular area and take action where appropriate. We would ask people to report online on our website or by calling 101. While we share the council's enthusiasm for road safety and making improvements for all road users, it is also important that the introduction of 20mph speed limits is done in conjunction with Department for Transport guidelines."

OCC confirmed the voluntary nature of the 20mph in its reply:

"Although [OCC] is working alongside Thames Valley Police, who are responsible for legal enforcement of the speed limits, there is an emphasis on drivers adhering to the new limits through a change of mindset, rather than enforcement. It is hoped that as 20mph areas become more common, breaking the limit would become socially unacceptable for drivers."

CONTROVERSIAL LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS (LTNS) WILL REMAIN

The hugely controversial low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in east Oxford are to remain, following a decision by OCC's Cabinet at a packed meeting on Tuesday, 17 October. This is despite the fact that the 18-month trial has been lambasted by residents and businesses. Cabinet also approved the use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras in place of existing physical barriers, which have been repeatedly vandalised.

OXFORD LTNS AFFECTING 'TEACHER RECRUITMENT' – REPORT

Oxford's low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) are among the factors making it difficult to recruit and retain teachers, a report has found. The Oxfordshire Education Commission said the scheme, along with other transport issues and the cost of living and housing, was "fuelling recruitment and retention issues in Oxfordshire." Teacher vacancies in the county are more than double the national average, according to Department for Education figures.

HEAVY RAINFALL AND HIGH RIVER LEVELS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Consistent rainfall in recent weeks has led to higher than normal river levels on many watercourses in Oxfordshire with further wet and windy weather in the forecast linked to Storm Ciaran. Below is useful information for local people to monitor the situation in their part of the

county – especially when the Environment Agency issues flood alerts or the more serious flood warnings. There are also links to the Met Office's weather warning bulletins.

- The Environment Agency's information relating to current flood alerts and flood warnings and the five-day flood risk for Oxfordshire can be found here: <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/location?q=Oxfordshire>. This page also captures flood alerts and warnings from areas immediately adjacent to the county.
- The Met Office issues weather warnings when severe weather is expected. These give an indication of problematic weather that may be on its way to Oxfordshire and could further influence river levels. Details here: <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/warnings-and-advice/uk-warnings>
- OCC has produced a 'flooding toolkit' which provides advice and support for residents and businesses. It can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com>

GOVERNMENT AWARDS £1.9 MILLION OF EXTRA BUS FUNDING FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Sunday single fares in December in the run-up to Christmas are set to be capped at £1 after Oxfordshire was awarded extra government funding to improve bus services. A countywide day bus ticket valid for all operators could also be created after Oxfordshire was promised an additional £1.9 million to improve bus services over the next two years. It comes on top of £12.7m from the government in August 2022 following the council's successful Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) application. The additional £1.9m of funding – known as BSIP+ – is for measures that will increase long-term patronage, help maintain service levels, ensure essential social and economic connectivity for local communities and promote innovation.

FURTHER EXPANSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE TEAM & CLIMATE CHANGE SURVEY

OCC is currently in the process of recruiting a 'Climate Change Outreach Officer'. The position is to 'to develop and deliver our stakeholder engagement and outreach strategy to engage, inspire, motivate, and facilitate action on climate change, and promote resilience to a changing climate, across a wide range of audiences in Oxfordshire'. OCC is also advertising for a Climate Change Team Leader. Additionally, OCC is conducting a survey soliciting views on climate change. Details can be found here: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/climate-change-2023>

RESIDENTS WARNED AGAINST COLD CALLERS OFFERING PROPERTY REPAIRS

Residents are being warned to be wary of cold callers offering to do property repairs after the recent storms. OCC's Trading Standards team is receiving an increased number of complaints about cold callers and leaflets for traders being put through the door, resulting in some reports of overcharging for work, charging for unnecessary work and completing work of poor quality. Jody Kerman, Head of Trading Standards at Oxfordshire County Council says: *"Don't agree to offers of building work, home repairs or maintenance that come from a cold call. Don't be afraid to say no, don't be pressured and check with others if the work is required and what is a fair price to pay. If it's out of the blue, it's not for you! I encourage people to 'take five' – stop and take a moment and think, do I really need this work done? Obtain other quotes and seek advice, and recommendations for trades people from friends and relatives. I would also encourage getting three quotes from different traders before you agree to any work being done."*