

County Councillor Report

Chinnor division

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Local Matters and what I've been doing this month

Since most parish councils don't have meetings in August I didn't send a report earlier this month as I usually do. This report is intended to cover a longer period but I'll try not to make it a longer report! I'll still send out any relevant updates by email to parish councils until my next full report.

The past few weeks have been extremely busy with councillors and officers getting to grips with the upcoming **Local Government Reorganisation** and the various deadlines associated with responding to this, now that we know which proposal Government has opted for. As I mentioned in an email last month, both OCC and SODC are disappointed by the decision to opt for Oxford City's 3UA proposal. In South Oxfordshire alone, 25 villages will be lost to Greater Oxford, while Cherwell and West Oxfordshire have been left with some real challenges for the future. This is certainly not the option of choice for most. Oxford City is not familiar with rural parishes and I'm especially disappointed that City's 3UA offer did not even appear to meet the criteria guidance set by Government.

However, I can offer reassurance that the Ridgeway council that Chinnor will be part of is in a stronger and more favourable position than some of our neighbours. Data gathering is now taking place for each proposed new Ridgeway ward (based on existing County divisions) and other Oxfordshire areas. All councils have input on, for example, councillor distribution/coverage. However we are not permitted to move boundaries.

The full details of the three-unitary proposal can be found on 3councils.org and the three new councils in 2028 will be:

- Greater Oxford Council – covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings.
- Northern Oxfordshire Council – covering most of the existing Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.
- Ridgeway Council – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts, combined with West Berkshire.

While it's not the decision any of us wanted, councils are all working together to get on with the job and ensure a smooth transition for residents.

As you may have seen in media reports, OCC leader Cllr Tim Bearder recently wrote to Andy Burnham about LGR and devolution. The letter and a short video from Cllr Bearder can be found here: [Oxfordshire leader writes to new Prime Minister](#)

In July I spent a really interesting and worthwhile day in Chinnor with Freddie van Mierlo MP and District Councillor Ed Sadler. We visited the Red Kite Centre, Chinnor Library, met with volunteers from Christian Aid and residents on Lower Icknield Way. We also took the opportunity to call in to the division's inaugural **Traffic Advisory Committee**, and I'd like to thank all parish councils that have been involved in this. I fully appreciate the organisation undertaken to make this happen, and I hope that the initial hard work will now lead to helpful and fruitful engagement with OCC officers. I think it's an excellent opportunity to take a wider view of the challenges, opportunities and common highways-related themes in the division, as well as discuss specific areas of concern and priority. I also spent a day with Freddie van Mierlo on 12th August, this time in the villages of Sydenham and Kingston Blount as part of Freddie's **Summer Surgery Tour**. I'm pleased that Freddie is holding these surgeries in the smaller villages of our constituency where people often feel less heard, and it was a pleasure to spend time talking with local residents and to be involved in offering advice and support where needed.

Although this is strictly District rather than County work, it's something I'm particularly keen to address in Chinnor, so following on from my email to TVP regarding noisy motorbikes I seconded **Cllr Ed Sadler's motion on Noise Pollution** at SODC's full council in July. As a result of Ed's successful motion, contact will be made by the council with TVP and the Police & Crime Commissioner, and I was amazed to learn that almost every councillor in South Oxfordshire has been contacted by residents about this antisocial problem.

While I'm straying into District territory, I would also like to mention work in my own portfolio as an SODC cabinet member, which was discussed at last month's Community Safety Partnership board. Following the first heatwave in May, the Community Safety Team conducted an environmental visual audit (EVA) of **Chinnor Quarry/Old Kiln Lakes** with representatives from the management company and the Neighbourhood Policing team. The purpose of the visit was to assess current conditions and identify issues relating to unauthorised access. Following this, a series of recommendations and practical suggestions was issued for both the management company and the landowners to consider. These measures are aimed at strengthening site security and preventing people from trespassing and putting themselves and others at risk.

On other matters of safety, there have sadly been several field fires in South Oxfordshire recently (including the Chinnor division). The Fire & Rescue service has issued the following advice: [Oxfordshire fire crews launch wildfire prevention advice](#)

Amongst my **correspondence and casework** with local residents, I've been made aware of further problems with local bus services. Rather than continue to manage this direct with the bus service company, I've now involved cabinet members, because some of the issues (again) involved services that take children to school. Amongst my casework I've also been involved in two separate situations regarding highways adoption, both it seems caused by developers not engaging or returning documentation.

On Saturday I enjoyed a lovely evening at Chinnor Allotments where I was invited to help celebrate the centenary of the Chinnor Allotment & Garden Association. While it's frustrating that Chinnor does not have the infrastructure it deserves for so much housing development over the past few years, Chinnor can certainly boast a strong community, great opportunities to get involved, fantastic community spaces, and some very dedicated volunteers!

Council Matters

Following the introduction of the **Household Waste & Recycling Centres booking system** trial, we now have some meaningful data to offer about how it's been working and whether there has been the increase in fly tipping that many feared. I do appreciate the new trial system wasn't popular with everyone but I hope some of these key information points will be encouraging news to many residents:

- The booking system has allowed the council to catch and ban 67 traders who were illegally using the tips to dispose of trade waste. This costs taxpayers thousands and is unfair on legitimate traders who are paying to dispose of their waste. The booking system allowed us to track unusual usage patterns (such as visiting different tips in short periods, frequent visits etc) so was instrumental in allowing OCC to do this.
- We have saved £130k in waste disposal fees and taxes as well as bringing in £10k from out of county visitors – this is great given the severe budget constraints.
- Overall number of visits are down but amount per visit is up.
- Recycling is up. This may possibly be because:
 - People are sorting their waste before arrival which makes it easier to recycle at the sites;
 - Staff on sites are now checking waste and encouraging people to recycle;
 - Scrolling through the list of things reminds people that some things that they might not have expected to be recyclable actually are;
 - Reduced trader abuse which was mostly going into general waste.
- So far there is no overall increase in fly-tipping. There are some increases in certain areas in Oxfordshire but this is offset by reductions elsewhere. This is fairly normal as fly-tipping tends to fluctuate year on year. So far there is no evidence to indicate that any of the fluctuations are related to the tip booking system.
- No decisions will be made about the future of the booking system until a full review is completed in December, which will look at six months of site data, fly-tipping and other waste data, including the summer months (which tend to be busiest), and the council will also consider user feedback.

I'd also like to note that a national crisis in recycling capacity has prompted Oxfordshire's household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) to only accept fridges and freezers from Oxfordshire residents. OCC sites will temporarily stop accepting these items from people living outside the county in order to prioritise Oxfordshire residents.

Some good news is that an additional **£4m has been approved to repair and replace Oxfordshire's broken gullies** over the next two years... In April 2025 OCC launched a programme to inspect every gully and catchpit in the county over 12 months, resulting in 135,254 gullies being cleaned at least once (around 92% of the total). Some couldn't be cleaned despite repeat visits, due to parked cars or other issues such as seized lids, and have been flagged for follow-up visits. Others were found to have more complex defects and have been added to the latest programme for further investigation and repair, which is where the focus for this funding will be.

We also have good news about road safety, with **Oxfordshire bucking the regional trend, as casualty figures fall.** Newly published provisional government statistics suggest that Oxfordshire is seeing significant improvements in road safety, with serious and fatal collisions falling sharply while the wider Thames Valley area has seen increases. The Department for Transport published its provisional personal injury collision and casualty statistics for Great Britain on 28 May 2026. While the figures remain provisional and may be revised as additional data is confirmed, the early trends are encouraging for Oxfordshire.

Analysis of the data indicates that people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on Oxfordshire's roads fell by around 18 per cent compared with the previous year. Across the Thames Valley area as a whole, KSIs appear to have increased by approximately 20% over the same period.

After speaking at several parish meetings last month about the upcoming **traffic filters trial scheme** and the reopening (finally) of Botley Road in Oxford city, it was disheartening to learn that Network Rail again delayed the opening of Botley Road. The reopening was planned for the end of August (when the programme, involving the upgrading of Oxford Station and local infrastructure, was reviewed and amended in January 2025). However, during excavation work relating to drainage for the new road, three minor gas leaks were identified on part of the gas network, owned by SGN. On 29th July Network Rail confirmed that Botley Road in Oxford will now reopen to traffic on Sunday 20th September 2026. The traffic filter trial will now start on Monday 28th September and will operate in a similar way to the temporary congestion charge, with the traffic filters operating in the same six locations and a permit scheme in place.

The key difference is, from 28th September, car drivers will no longer be able to pay the £5 congestion charge to pass through the traffic filters - only permit holders will be able to do so.

The majority of people with congestion charge permits don't need to take any action as their permits will be automatically transferred to traffic filter permits. All permit holders will be informed directly by email and/or letter about how their permit is being handled.

For people who don't yet have a permit, applications are [open online](#). The council is also sending a leaflet to households and businesses in Oxfordshire to inform residents about the traffic filter scheme.

The traffic filters are being introduced as a trial. A public consultation will open on 28 September, with residents and businesses invited to give feedback on how the scheme is working for them. People's feedback is very important as it will help us shape the future plans.

More information about the traffic filter scheme is available here: [Oxford traffic filters | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Finally, as we're suffering several weeks of heat and drought, OCC has called on the government to introduce a **Cool Homes Grant** to retrofit vulnerable homes at risk of overheating in extreme heat. In summer 2025, there were 1,504 heat-associated deaths in the UK. The council believes that these deaths are unnecessary and avoidable. Now experts estimate that nearly double this number may have died due to heatwaves in England and Wales so far this year.

Under the Warm Homes Local Grant, the council currently receives funding from central government to install adaptations in homes to retain heat in winter. However, there is no funding specifically designed to support the retrofit of homes that suffer from overheating. Not only do we need to adapt to climate change, but we also need to consider health inequalities, where those most at risk from heatwaves are often least able to afford effective home adaptations to prevent overheating, while also being more likely to have pre-existing health conditions, mobility limitations or social isolation.

The council believes that the government should consider expanding this Warm Homes Local Grant to include a Cool Homes Grant to protect our most vulnerable residents from overheating in their homes.

The council has also called for the government to review current planning policies and building regulations which are currently constraining the uptake of external shading and ventilation measures.

With this summer's heatwaves, the associated dangers and the clear impact of climate change, you might be interested in OCC leader Cllr Tim Bearder's short video on what we're doing in Oxfordshire on climate action:

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-leading-the-way-on-climate-action/>