

County Councillor Report

Chinnor division

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Local Matters and what I've been doing this month

I've written a lot about this on social media and to parish councillors so I won't go into too much details in this report but, as any Chinnor resident (or anyone driving through Chinnor) will be aware, we have experienced problems with the clustering of **roadworks** in Chinnor. Over the past two weeks Chinnor suffered urgent Thames Water work coinciding with extended developer works on the B4009, the closure of the B4445, and problems caused by works on Lower Icknield Way.

I've been actively involved in trying to alleviate the pressure by calling on Streetworks and Highways officers to intervene. They have largely been very responsive, including making site visits, inspections, and amending schemes to improve traffic flow. Having said that, it's no secret that Lower Icknield Way has been a great disappointment. I was delighted and relieved last week when OCC's planned works/closure were postponed due to the simultaneous B4445 closure, however this action evidently didn't prevent UKPN (UK Power Networks) from going ahead with works on the same road. While Lower Icknield Way isn't actually closed due to UKPN, the lights are clearly causing congestion and delays.

As I write, I am still seeking answers on this and have this morning forwarded many residents' comments to Streetworks officers. I've repeated that communication and explanation regarding what happened with Lower Icknield Way are required for both Chinnor's residents and myself. I'll continue to follow this up and report back.

Throughout the roadworks and closures, I've also been aware of and involved in transport issues for children who usually use the bus to get to school. I hope this particular situation has now settled, but I look forward to engaging in person with parents and Sydenham Parish Council later this week, which will give me a better idea of what's happening there.

While on a school-related subject, this morning I have also been trying to get some help with a problem **Mill Lane Community School** is having as a result of their improvements project. The headteacher reported to me that works are underway, which is great news, however due to a delay on the main building, toilet facilities would be inadequate for the number of children. I asked the Director of Property and Assets if the new toilet block can be brought forward (or another solution found for the children), as the remaining existing toilet block is around 50 years old and only has four toilets. He was confident he could help, and I've since been advised that a building surveyor has arranged to visit this week to assess the situation, which I'm so pleased about.

One of the disappointing things about the recent highways problems and closures is that I haven't felt it appropriate to talk as much as I would like about the **B4445 Chinnor Road project**.

While the closure is of course an inconvenience, this road was selected for an exciting project that pilots better performing road resurfacing and substantial carbon reduction.

The project includes verge clearance and drainage repairs and improvements and the resurfacing scheme will pilot a unique package of low-carbon materials while improving the road's performance. It brings together five complementary innovations - collectively expected to reduce embodied carbon emissions by more than 30 tonnes of CO2 compared with conventional resurfacing. The trial is not just about carbon reduction however – it is also an exploration into improving durability and reducing future maintenance requirements.

The largest single carbon saving is expected to come through replacing a conventional asphalt binder course with a bespoke mix of net zero binder course that has been specifically developed for this scheme.

The innovations have also been chosen for their ability to improve construction quality, enhance long-term durability and support biodiversity. These include:

- The use of Breedon's ACLA net zero binder course, a lower-carbon asphalt material that is expected to deliver the largest carbon saving within the scheme.
- Shell Cariphalte ultra carbon sink polymer modified bitumen, which combines carbon reduction benefits with enhanced pavement durability.
- Thermal joint heating technology to improve the quality and longevity of asphalt joints.
- Cold-applied MMA road markings, to be delivered by Wilson & Scott Highways which significantly reduce installation emissions compared with conventional thermoplastic markings.
- A biodiversity enhancement programme, including the creation of habitat features using suitable site-won materials.
- Solar powered welfare cabins and high-tech traffic management to reduce resource requirements, provided by TSM Ltd
- Use of electric plant by sub-contractors Breedon and DJT.

To enable the work to be carried out safely, the road will be closed in three phases:

- **Phase 1: Monday 21 September to Friday 25 September:** Full road closure to allow verge clearance, drainage repairs and resurfacing preparation works.
- **Phase 2: Monday 28 September to Friday 2 October:** Full road closure to enable carriageway resurfacing and the replacement of road markings.
- **Phase 3: Monday 5 October to Wednesday 7 October:** Full road closure to complete drainage improvements and verge reinstatement.

More information is available on the [highways maintenance page](#) of Oxfordshire County Council's website.

Regarding **Chinnor's wider traffic concerns**, our MP Freddie van Mierlo is keen to offer his support and work with me. He has requested a meeting with OCC officers and I in early October.

Earlier in September, I was invited to a screening of the People's Emergency Briefing at the Pavillion in Chinnor and was pleased to have the opportunity to speak about **the work OCC is doing to address climate change, resilience and adaptation**. I'm aware that I squeezed a lot of information into a few minutes, so I'm including that presentation at the end of this report in case there's anything that Chinnor division's parish councils and/or residents might like further information about.

One of the schemes I mentioned that evening was climate grants, and I'm really pleased to learn that 31 Oxfordshire groups have been awarded funding to help kickstart 54 different projects to address the impacts of extreme weather (especially heatwaves) following a summer of record temperatures.

On 8th September I attended **full council** where we welcomed our newest member, Cllr James Hartley (Liberal Democrat) for the Chesterton & Launton division. This followed a by-election caused by the previous councillor moving to Switzerland where his wife has a new job.

Four motions were passed in full council, one of which was proposed by a Lib Dem member and all of which were supported by our group and passed by the council: The first motion focused on cancer care in Oxfordshire; the second called on the Government to match housing targets to genuine infrastructure capacity; the third motion was to support our fire service in light of drought conditions and increased wildfires, and the fourth was to promote the Big Conversation on Care in Oxfordshire and to work together on social reform.

More details of the full council meeting can be found here: [Agenda for County Council on Tuesday, 8 September 2026, 10.00 am | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

I also sat on two **committees**: People Overview & Scrutiny in which we considered the Connect to Work scheme, the Safeguarding Adults Annual Report, and OCC's response to the Care Quality Commission. And on Education & Young People Overview & Scrutiny we considered the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Annual Report, harm outside the home and sexual exploitation, the Youth Justice Annual Plan, and Apprenticeships.

Council Matters

Local Government Reorganisation – or at least the Government's pause on LGR – has of course been the biggest topic of discussion in recent weeks, however Government hasn't yet issued a huge amount of information or advice regarding what happens next (except that we will have District elections next May rather than Unitary elections). Council leaders are involved in ongoing discussions on this and Devolution with MHCLG. While it's likely that parish councillors are as up-to-date as they're able to be on this subject, I will be happy to take questions on this at parish meetings if it might be helpful.

Now that Botley Road has finally been reopened following extensive Network Rail work (and delays), the **Oxford traffic filters trial** has now begun, replacing the temporary congestion charge. Residents should all have received information by post but, just to clarify, there's an extensive range of permits available, including for carers, hospital patients, blue badge holders, pool cars and goods vehicles (amongst others). For those of us in Oxfordshire, the permits we signed up for in the temporary congestion period are still applicable. It's also important to note that Oxford's **Park & Ride fare has been capped at £3** for up to five people of any age and up to 16 hours parking.

The experimental traffic order came into effect on 28th September and there is lots of information available online, including permit information and a map of the filter locations. This can all be found at [Oxford traffic filters | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

In anticipation that there may be questions and queries from both parish councils and residents regarding the current **fridge & freezer recycling crisis**, the council's decision not to accept them from non-Oxfordshire residents and the week-in-advance booking system for fridges and freezers, I thought this quick explainer from Cabinet member Cllr Laura Gordon might be helpful:

Background:

- *Fridges and freezers need specialist recycling because the coolant gases can be dangerous and can also deplete the ozone. This means they are recycled at a small number of national facilities.*
- *Unfortunately over the past 12 months, three sites have closed (two due to fire, one due to bankruptcy). This has severely restricted national fridge recycling capacity and means a backlog is building up.*
- *A new site is in construction but is unlikely to open till late 2027 which means this could be quite a long-lasting situation if it isn't addressed.*
- *Many authorities have suspended collections of fridges and freezers altogether. We are trying to avoid that if at all possible.*

What we are doing:

- *Limiting collections of fridges via bulky waste and via the tip. Out-of-county users will no longer be able to bring fridges or freezers and in-county users will be limited to one visit or one kerbside bulky waste collection every three months (where they can bring up to 2 items)*
- *Limiting booking to one week in advance in case we have to make further changes*
- *Promoting retailer take-back options (where retailers dropping off new fridges take back the old one too – although retailers are starting to run into the same backlog that we are) and donation of working units*

We have also written to government asking them to intervene and reopen the site in Newport that closed due to bankruptcy. There is a very narrow window of opportunity to do this as the equipment is currently still in place, but will be fully decommissioned in the next few months if no-one steps in to prevent it. If this happens the crunch is unlikely to ease until the new site comes online next year.

With so much in the news recently regarding Piddington's protest against **MoD Bicester** being used to house asylum seekers, I would like to share OCC's response.

OCC has raised a series of formal objections to the Home Office's plans to build large-scale asylum accommodation at a site near Bicester as well as saying that the handling of the proposals has "undermined confidence from the outset".

Cllr Neil Fawcett (Deputy Leader) sent the letter of objection to the government setting out a range of serious concerns about the proposals at the MOD Bicester Site A,

The Home Office first announced the plan in the summer – giving local authorities less than 24 hours' notice and with no prior engagement with local residents or partners.

In the letter Cllr Fawcett said: "This application gives limited consideration to the impact on nearby communities, despite acknowledging possible anxiety, protest, demonstration or disorder associated with a non-detained site.

"The proximity to the Buckinghamshire border also gives the proposals wider impact. Thames Valley Police, who have already had to engage with tensions before construction has begun, should be provided with additional financial support to keep people safe.

"The council has not seen a sufficiently developed community engagement plan from government to prevent and respond to misinformation and community tensions. Decisions of this scale must be developed transparently and in genuine partnership with local communities, which has not happened here."

The letter raises objections including:

- Poor connections to surrounding settlements and lack of access to buses, footways, cycleways and street lighting
- Unresolved questions about flood risk, land contamination, wildfire, hazardous materials and risks relating to fire protection between temporary accommodation units.
- The lack of locally agreed arrangements for disease prevention and outbreak management alongside greater clarity on vaccination, prescribing, isolation capacity, contact tracing, room and occupancy and the availability of spare rooms should there be an outbreak.
- Questions about whether shared modular accommodation can remain safe and suitable during increasingly extreme temperatures.
- Insufficient detail on mental health support and privacy for people experiencing poor mental wellbeing or post-traumatic stress
- The lack of clarity about the range, capacity and quality of welfare and health services that will be provided on the site nor how adult social care, safeguarding, public health, fire and rescue, hospitals, transport and other local services would be assessed, funded and mitigated – with the same concern applying to local voluntary and community organisations.

Oxfordshire County Council has "Council of Sanctuary" status, which involves a commitment to ensuring that anyone placed in the county by the Home Office is treated with basic dignity and humanity. The letter to government concludes: "Supporting people in need and standing alongside local communities are not mutually exclusive. A responsible accommodation policy must do both. In the council's view this proposal does neither."

My Notes on OCC's climate work, used at People's Emergency Briefing in Chinnor

There's lots of information available on OCC's website about our climate work but these are a few climate adaptation points on the priorities of **heat** and **floodings**.

Heat Workstreams

Review of heat risk to all services in council:

This is with Oxford Brookes and will inform updates to the council's strategic risk reporting.

We recognise the importance of Community Resilience Training:

- 25 people attended an in-person community heat resilience training in July 2026
- 135 people engaged in online session for heat resilience and 75 people attended an online heat resilience and climate anxiety seminar in August 2026.
- A Community of Best Practise for Building Resilient Communities is being set up.

Community grants:

- Nearly £45,000 has been distributed to 31 communities for 54 different projects addressing heat resilience, climate anxiety and heat safe homes. Grants distributed in July 2026 funded a range of activities including shade, heat resilient playgrounds, community space cooling, floodplain meadow restoration, community designed resilience plans and food growing.

Heat Safe Homes Project:

- Cool packs now available for residents
- With Oxford Brooks, we have heat health training for services working with vulnerable households – there are 4 further sessions open to book if anyone is interested.
- Hot Homes Visits are available through Better Housing, Better Health initiative

HEARTH and ARCADE are 3 and 5 year projects

- In this project, 6 care homes, 2 extra care homes, and 4 flats for older people are currently being monitored in Oxfordshire (working with ~120 residents).

OCC's Cool spaces policy

- Public Health have written an Oxfordshire cool spaces playbook. Early conversations are also taking place as part of Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership adaptation working groups

Budget setting process

- There is a Capital bid for passive measures for most vulnerable buildings
- And Continuation of Heat Safe Homes.

A lot of this is new this year so experimental. We're looking at what works so we can refine for next year.

Alongside this, we are lobbying Government for changes that would allow us to do more – we wrote to the minister in July asking for changes – unfortunately received a reply that didn't answer the question, and we're now contributing to the warm and comfortable homes enquiry.

Our key asks of Government are

1. To expand the warm home grant to include cooling so we can look at how to make homes temperature-safe all year round
2. Changes to planning law so passive cooling measures are allowed through permitted development (for example awnings, and external blinds and shutters)

Flood Workstreams

Our flood work is much better established.

Support for flooding includes:

- Flood warden scheme expansion
- One-stop information page on flooding for households at risk of flooding
<https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/>
- Regular information sessions for those at risk of flooding

Flood Prevention:

- Community Grants – small grants to parishes for flood prevention projects. Often these are layered together e.g. one grant a year over several years and over time they add up
- Natural flood management – We are increasingly focused on using natural features to reduce flooding rather than hard infrastructure.

Rather than rushing the water through the landscape (where it often causes flooding somewhere else) we try to slow the water down to reduce the crisis.

We work with farmers and with BBO Wildlife Trust to develop these projects, which often benefit farming too as it prevents topsoil runoff. Examples:

- o Leaky dams – dams with gaps in them so the water trickles through rather than flowing fast
- o Swales – areas of lower ground where water will sit
- o Trees, grasses and rushes – aid absorption into the landscape
- Larger projects: At a bigger scale we've done some really impactful projects. The flagship is the Evenlode project (I can provide links)... This has had a massive impact on flooding in the area but it's taken up a lot of officer time and resource – so we can't do everywhere at once.

But this approach across the whole county would be transformative. We are working with groups and landowners in the Ock and Thame basin to develop a similar project – it's at a very early stage but watch this space.

Also while led by the Environment Agency, we support the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme [Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme - Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit](#)

- Roads and drains: We've moved back to more frequent gully clearance after the previous administration slashed the work to every four years, plus an additional £700k for the repair of broken gullies.