

ANNUAL REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS APRIL 2019-2020 BY COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

HIGHWAYS

October 2019 – Councils commit to cutting traffic congestion and improving public transport into Oxford

In October Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council announced bold plans to tackle congestion on all major routes into Oxford and improve public transport connections into and across some parts of the city, particularly the city's eastern arc.

The key points of the 'Connecting Oxford' proposal are:

- Restricting car traffic by introducing additional 'bus gates' (similar to the restriction on Oxford's High Street) across the city to improve journey times for people travelling into and around the city, and so road space can be reallocated to improve walking and cycling routes
- New high frequency fast bus routes connecting neighbouring towns and the Park & Rides to Oxford's eastern arc, which is seeing the greatest growth in employment but is currently less well served by public transport, particularly around the ring road
- New and improved cycle and walking routes, including utilising space created by removing vehicles from the road to provide safe and attractive alternatives to driving into and around the city
- A charge for workplace parking provided by larger employers in the eastern arc, which would help fund the proposed transport improvements and create a disincentive to drive to work. Discounts for the new bus services would be available for staff of employers paying the workplace parking levy
- Improved journey times for commuters driving into and around the city as a result of less congestion

Roadwork permits will reduce delays for road users

New powers were approved that will give Oxfordshire County Council more control over roadworks. From December the council introduced a new system that means companies wanting to work on roads around Oxfordshire will have to apply and pay for a permit in order to work on the highway.

These will clearly set out how the work will be done, the duration, times of work and how traffic will be managed. While the council will have the power to refuse permission for planned work to take place if it believes the proposed timings or planned approach will cause unnecessary disruption, emergency unplanned work needed for things such as pipe bursts will be unaffected. The council's highways team hope to achieve a reduction in roadwork duration - removing around 8,900 days of work from Oxfordshire's roads annually – around a 10% reduction.

Improving Oxfordshire's Roads

Repairs and improvements on Oxfordshire's roads continued with more than 34,000 potholes repaired over the last year, a 45 per cent increase on the previous year -

and there were more major repairs to come over the summer. The county council announced an extra £13m for road maintenance for the financial year on top of its existing £18.5m programme of work – this follows last year’s additional £12m boost. The strategy was paying off with 34,159 potholes repaired compared to 23,486 the year before. The additional money was to be spent across Oxfordshire’s towns and villages on resurfacing, drainage, bridge repairs and footways

MINERALS AND WASTE

July 2019 – BACHPORT defends the Green Belt at Culham for the Second Time

There can be few local residents who are unaware of the highly visible campaign that was waged against Hills Quarries attempts to extract sand and gravel between Clifton Hampden and Culham over a huge stretch of land running down to the river. A first application to the County Council was rejected by the Planning Committee two years ago. But the company came forward with a second very similar application which was heard on 15th July 2019. I was delighted to be able to speak at the meeting for BACHPORT (Burcot and Clifton Hampden Protection of the River Thames) because I was concerned about the impact on the already congested road network of 100 gravel lorries per day, and the safety implications for pedestrians and school children in Clifton Hampden.

November 2019 – Minerals and waste sites approved in a draft plan for consultation

The ‘core strategy’ for the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan was adopted by the council in September 2017, stating that a site allocations plan would be prepared with a target date for adoption of November 2020.

Following site assessments by council-appointed consultants and a review by council officers, a list of preferred sites was produced. The Cabinet approved that list of preferred sites for inclusion in the draft plan for consultation. The sites for sharp sand and gravel are:

- Land between Eynsham and Cassington
- Nuneham Courtenay

This was good news for some of the parishes in my Division that were also under consideration for extraction but were rejected during the detailed assessment work carried out at the Council. It was, understandably, not such welcome news for Nuneham Courtenay and Sandford-on-Thames where site runs along the Thames, between the two villages. I agreed to work with Nuneham Courtenay and Sandford Parish Councils to help minimise any potential impact upon their residents.

HEALTH

December 2019 – County Council backs proposals for integrated health and social care system

Proposals for a new ‘integrated care system’ for Oxfordshire designed to improve health and social care services were welcomed by the county council’s Cabinet. The new joined-up health and care system will also cover Buckinghamshire and

Berkshire West. A draft of the five-year plan for an integrated care system has been published and is due to be submitted to NHS England in November.

In the draft plan, the NHS and local authorities in the three areas have committed to planning health and care services around individual needs. Health and care organisations will work collectively to help people enjoy better health by focusing on preventing illness and improving care for those who need it.

The principle of 'local first' has been established, with community-run services a vital part of the integrated care system. GP practices will become part of 'primary care networks' that serve communities of around 30-50,000 people. By working together, GP practices will offer access to a wide range of local services, such as NHS and social services, as well as services provided by voluntary groups.

These care networks will also be part of larger 'integrated care partnerships' – one for each of the three county areas, including Oxfordshire. The partnerships will join up local hospital and mental health services with, council and community services.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SERVICES

Radical changes that improve the lives of families are set to be introduced in Oxfordshire

A pioneering approach that has radically changed the way children's social care operates in Hertfordshire has been adopted by Oxfordshire County Council. The "Family Safeguarding" model has seen the number of children on child protection plans by fall 55 per cent in 30 months in Hertfordshire. Social workers have been working in small integrated teams centred around individual families in need alongside experts providing specialist mental health, drugs and alcohol, and domestic abuse services.

There has been 80 per cent rise in children in care in Oxfordshire from 2011 to 2019. There were 780 children in care compared to 425. On current trends and without the changes we plan, children in care would rise to around 915 by 2023. This new approach that has been pioneered in Hertfordshire will offer a way of beginning to reverse those trends.

EDUCATION

Culham and Clifton Hampden Primary Schools to merge

Informal consultation had been taking place into merging Culham Parochial Primary School and Clifton Hampden CE Primary School. Sadly, after all the efforts that were made to save the school some years ago, the numbers have been dwindling and had reached the critical level of under 30.

A statutory notice was served in September, and a public meeting held towards the end of the month. In the final event, 15 children transferred, who could be accommodated at Clifton Hampden, following some minor internal works to make better use of space. The County Council arranged transport for these children.

Free school transport for disabled young people is retained

Young people with special education needs and disabilities will continue to be funded by Oxfordshire County Council, following a decision by Cabinet members on Tuesday, 16 July.

A cross-party group of councillors worked as a Cabinet Advisory Group, chaired by myself, and reviewed the service for students with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) aged 16 or older to find savings needed by the council in response to reduced government funding. We worked with 14 SEND schools to identify the necessary £300,000 of savings for post-16 home to school transport; removing any current need to change existing SEND free transport arrangements. A separate fund has also been created to provide transport for children to go to after-school activities.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Oxfordshire County Council works on action plan to go carbon neutral

Oxfordshire County Council confirmed its commitment to reducing its own 'carbon footprint' to zero by 2030.

The council started a long-term programme five years ago to cut carbon emissions but accepts that young people have challenged organisations such as the county council to move faster.

Since the county council motion in April 2019 acknowledging the climate emergency, the council has been working on a new action plan to accelerate the climate action programme to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The council has already delivered an average 6% per year reduction in carbon emissions since 2011 – double its target - but is determined to do more. Oxfordshire County Council is delivering a series of 'green' initiatives, including helping install more solar panels on schools.

As part of its 'big switch', the council is committed to replacing street lights with low energy lighting over the next four years. This will reduce Oxfordshire's greenhouse emissions from streetlighting by 70%. The investment will also include a communications system between streetlights, allowing dimming of groups of lights when they're not needed.

INFRASTRUCTURE

January 2020 – Oxfordshire is named top waste recycling authority in England

Oxfordshire has been named the best performing County Council waste disposal authority in England for the sixth year in a row, thanks to residents' commitment to the environment. In 2018, residents recycled or composted a larger proportion of their household waste than the previous year, while the national average for recycling fell, according to new government figures.

Recycling officers at Oxfordshire County Council point to residents recycling more of their food waste as an important reason for the increase. Nearly 20,000 tonnes of food waste were recycled in 2018-19 – up 6% on the previous year. The district and city councils operate the kerbside collections of household recycling and waste, which Oxfordshire County Council then disposes of.

Overall, 58% of household waste was recycled in Oxfordshire last year, compared to 57% the previous year. The national average was only 44.8%, according to the new

figures from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Individually, the five District and City Authorities in Oxfordshire have also achieved excellent results above the national average.

Council waste officers said that there is still a lot more to be done to improve recycling rates and the county council is keen to see further improvements as part of its goal to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The Oxford Environmental Partnership of the Oxfordshire district, city and county councils has a target to increase recycling to 70% by 2025.

February 2020 – Go ahead for full business case for project to reduce congestion into and around Oxford

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council cabinets approved plans to develop a detailed business case for a project to reduce congestion on routes into and around Oxford, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions.

This will be done by reducing the number of cars travelling into and around the city and encouraging more people to travel by buses, walking and cycling. The business plan was informed by a survey run in autumn 2019 on an outline of possible proposals. Over 3,000 responses were received from residents, employers and other major city organisations including the NHS and universities.

Revenue from the Work Place parking Levy will provide a locally controlled source of funding to be used for new and improved bus services as well as funding for additional Park & Ride capacity and better walking and cycling routes. There will also be a significant and rapid expansion of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) across Oxford, including nine new CPZ areas. Further public engagement work will be carried during the rest of 2020, with the next public consultation expected to take place in winter 2020-21.

Investment in Repairing Oxfordshire's Roads Continues

OCC committed to spending an extra £13m on capital funding on road maintenance in the coming financial year. This is on top of its existing £18.5m programme of work and follows last year's additional £12m boost which saw more than 37 extra miles of road being resurfaced through a range of methods including surface dressing and micro-asphalting – both of which make road surfaces waterproof and extend their life. This year's additional money will be spent across Oxfordshire on resurfacing, drainage, bridge repairs and footways. One of the major projects confirmed for later this year will see the A40 from Thornhill to Headington Roundabout (inbound) resurfaced, benefitting thousands of road users every day.

BUDGET

February 2020 – County Council to Invest in Schools, Transport, Youth and Streetlighting in 2020-2021 Budget

Youth Provision across Oxfordshire was given a £1 million boost in the approved budget in February. Young people and their families in Oxfordshire will now benefit from improved community-run youth services. Youth groups will be invited to bid in to a £1m fund over two years, with encouragement to find match-funding from their local communities.

Other measures include highway improvements, new school buildings and energy-efficient street-lighting thanks to a £1 billion investment over the next ten years. However, the county council warned that funding pressure on services remains as demand for social care for vulnerable children and adults continues to grow and continued financial prudence is required to meet those demands.

Nearly £20m will be invested to increase the provision of school places for children with special needs in the county, including rebuilding Northfield School in Oxford with more pupil places. The capital programme includes a £41m street-lighting improvement programme with traditional lanterns being replaced with more energy efficient LED lighting, saving money in the long-run.

Pressure on funding for day-to-day council services continues as the council increases funding to support of Oxfordshire's most vulnerable children and adults. To make sure the growing number of children at risk of abuse and neglect are protected, the children's social care budget has increased annually. It was £46m in 2011 and is forecast to be £95m in 2022/23 – more than doubling in ten years. The council's budget for adult social care will increase by £5m in 2019/20, with further annual increases reaching nearly £6m by 2022/23.

APRIL 2020 – COVID-19

The impact of the virus was so sudden. It was not until 24th March that the national lockdown was announced. Having set a positive, invest to save budget, the Council immediately adopted an emergency footing, as is well rehearsed, to provide emergency services to Oxfordshire residents.

Our main area of work in Social Care for both adults and children has to continue on a 24/7 basis protecting around 7,000 residents. We expected the number of people requiring care to increase as informal carers became ill and are unable to continue care. In April we completed 1000 adult social care assessments and reviews. This work was vital as it's important to keep as many people as possible out of hospital.

We have been working closely with the NHS to provide care and facilities for those patients that do not require acute care to be cared for away from hospitals or at home freeing up beds for those that most need them. This includes the group that needed to be 'Shielded' from the virus who were thought to be most at risk. The County Council set up a hotline and has kept in touch with all our Shielded residents at a rate of about 50 per day ensuring that their needs are met.

Right from the start over 94% of our schools stepped up and have remained open to provide care and teaching to the children of key workers and those we see as deprived or vulnerable. 100% of all requests for a school place were met by our specially established Brokering Service. This has enabled key health workers, teachers, drivers, supermarket staff and many others to keep working. We are very grateful to them all for their commitment to help others.

To assist in the logistics across the country Local Resilience Forums were set up.

We are in the Thames Valley and are based around the Police authority area. These are where the blue light services (Police, Ambulance, Fire) link in with the NHS and local authorities to consider high-level strategy. These then delegate down to the County to work with SODC and other Districts to coordinate the local volunteering hubs. The Government have seconded military planners to assist in the hubs which is where all the local community groups liaise in to the local networks. This is about

all working together to ensure that we do not duplicate provision or even worse miss a vulnerable resident.

The organic growth of the community networks or hubs that we have seen set up is fantastic. These groups are providing some excellent services to local residents who are self-isolating or do not have relatives locally. It's important that they are community led but to avoid duplication, so the County Council and Districts have worked with Oxfordshire Volunteers to list them all and provide support where needed.

MY PORTFOLIO

I am the Cabinet Member responsible for the Education Service and our Cultural Services (Libraries, Museum & History Services, County Music Service and the Registration Service) During the pandemic I have been self-isolating due to my age and physical condition. However, thanks to the wonders of Zoom and Teams I have been busier than ever.

I am extremely proud of the schools and their staff who have shown enormous flexibility and compassion in the face of this pandemic, and our own staff who have worked night and day to ensure that families that need child care through the schools find a suitable place, together with transport and a hot meal.

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Our Registration Service had to stop all but death registrations, even new parents had to delay the registration of their babies since it is a legal requirement that this is done face to face. All the offices across the county closed except the Head Office at Tidmarsh Lane in Oxford. The Coroner's Service set up a huge temporary mortuary facility – three aircraft hangers at Upper Heyford – in case our hospitals and funeral directors became overwhelmed.

Our 44 Libraries, the Woodstock County Museum, the History Service, the Resource Centre at Standlake, the County Music Service were all closed. All waste recycling centres were closed. All our offices were closed including County Hall, for all but very essential staff.

Library staff were seconded to help with death registrations and the Shielding Service. And meanwhile there has been a 63% rise in library joiners, with 46,000 items being borrowed online. The number of people buying eBooks and Audio has doubled.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S PRIORITY FUND APRIL 2019-APRIL 2020

I am delighted to have been able to contribute towards the following activities in my Division:

Item	Amount
Berinsfield Information and Volunteer Centre	£ 2,000.00

Item	Amount
Berry Youth Centre	£ 2,000.00
Dorchester St Birinus Primary School	£ 1,800.00
Culham speed limit reduction	£ 1,300.00
Oxford Playhouse Trust	£ 1,500.00
Sandford-on-Thames Village Hall	£ 1,800.00
Warborough and Shillingford Pre-School	£ 5,000.00
Total for Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale	£ 15,400.00

Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale
Cabinet Member for Education & Culture
Oxfordshire County Council
Berinsfield & Garsington Division