

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS – MARCH 2021 BY CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

It is clear that **COVID is here to stay** and that, long term, we may have to adjust and create a new normal, particularly over the winter months. Remaining optimistically cautious is the name of the game on our path to recovery. So, in Oxfordshire, while the number of new cases, hospitalisations and deaths has fallen this week, the reduction in new cases has dramatically slowed to just five per cent compared with 40 per cent last week. It is in our own interests, and for our families, colleagues and communities, to get cases as low as we can so that we can gradually emerge from lockdown with the confidence that COVID-19 will not restrict our lives in the same way.

Roadmap for the easing of lockdown

We now have a [roadmap](#) from government for the easing of lockdown. This does bring us hope that we can gradually reclaim some control over our lives. However, we know that the roadmap is dependent on continued progress with infection rates, the number of hospital admissions, as well as the rollout of the vaccination programme.

Across all our services the County Council is working to identify how the roadmap will affect our operational activities and what action we need to take. For now, we must continue to ask all staff who can, to continue to work from home, until at least 21 June.

Vaccination programme update

Crucial to this is the vaccination programme, which is continuing at a phenomenal pace in Oxfordshire. To date, over 150,000 people living or working in the county have now received their first dose of the vaccine, including all frontline health and social care staff and all older adult care home residents and staff. Over 95 per cent of those aged over 75 have also had their first vaccination, together with more than 90 per cent of those aged 70 - 74.

New vaccine outreach programme

From next week, Oxfordshire councils will be running, in partnership with GPs and the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, a new outreach service to support the uptake of COVID-19 vaccinations.

The service is aimed at reaching out to residents in the top four priority groups who have not responded to their invitation for a first

dose of the vaccine to help support them if they want to have the jab. There are a range of reasons why people may not have arranged a vaccination – from difficulties in booking an appointment or arranging transport to hesitancy or misunderstandings about the vaccine.

We hope this outreach programme will be a valuable tool in ensuring that everyone who wants the vaccine can be supported to get it and that nobody gets left behind in the rollout of Oxfordshire's vaccination programme.

Symptom-free testing for key workers

Testing also plays a key role in helping stop the spread of the virus, and this week our symptom-free testing programme (launched 8 February) has expanded to include everyone across the council who is in a public-facing role. We have also opened up the programme to public-facing workers across the county who need to leave home to work or volunteer. As before, this also includes childminders.

Testing for people who have COVID-19 symptoms

Across Oxfordshire, we have a range of testing sites for people who have COVID-19 symptoms, including drive-through and walk-in sites. We also have a number of mobile testing units operating in the county and the latest dates and locations for these are below. Booking is required for all testing sites.

Carterton Pavilion, Monahan Way, Carterton, Oxfordshire, OX18 3AN

- March: 3, 10, 17, 24, 31.

Chinnor Rugby Club, Rectory Pavilion, Kingsey Road, Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 3JL

- March 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, 19, 25, 26.

Dalton Barracks, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6JB

- March: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, 31.

Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University, College Close, Oxfordshire, OX33 1HX

- March: 1, 7, 8, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, 29.

Consultation launched on Oxfordshire's draft transport blueprint

Residents and organisations across Oxfordshire are being offered the chance to help shape the transformation of transport and digital connectivity across the county in a new consultation from 15 February to 28 March on a draft blueprint for the future.

With the need for climate action, helping create healthy communities and addressing air quality at the heart of council thinking, the new local transport and connectivity plan (LTCP) sets out a vision for Oxfordshire that will contribute to developing a zero-carbon economy for the county and transform the health and wellbeing of residents.

Oxfordshire is a great success story, but its ongoing performance must address how we travel in a way that can reduce congestion, improve our health and help develop active, connected communities. The County Council needs and will value your input about how we can best do this, working together, so please take time to review the consultation and offer your views.

The vision has been developed following analysis of engagement work with many organisations and through an analysis of transport data and evidence from a survey in March 2020. This consultation will offer residents a chance to give feedback on the content of the plan.

The areas of focus for the new plan are:

- Commitments to de-carbonise the transport system by 2050
- Reducing the need to travel
- Discouraging unnecessary individual private vehicle use by promoting use of public transport and active travel such as walking and cycling
- A push towards quality digital gigabit and/or full fibre connectivity for all
- Enabling the economy to develop, supporting the Oxfordshire local industrial strategy agreed in July 2019
- Public transport operations and network changes amid the impacts of COVID-19.

A second consultation due later this year will cover the development of the full LTCP including an updated vision and goals.

Local Highways Update

Warborough junction Made Safe at Last

The residents of Henfield View Warborough have wanted changes to the road markings at the junction with Thame Road for a long time. There was no line of sight to the right, compounded by people parking to use the village stores on the corner. Finally, after considerable pressure from me, the County Highways traffic team have painted new white lines that afford protection to pedestrians, people parking and the Henfield View drivers.

Culham to get a pedestrian crossing

Culham residents have come a step closer to having a pedestrian crossing at the traffic lights on the A415 by the ex-Wagon and Horses pub. The developer who plans to make the pub into an hotel with some housing behind, has offered to part fund the scheme. This is certain to make it easier for the County Council to fund the balance and I shall certainly be pressing for the project to go ahead.

Flooding and road safety in Garsington

The county council has been tunnelling under an area of Garsington in an effort to solve the problem of repeated flooding at the junction of Denton Lane, outside the School. We must wait for some more heavy rain to see if it works. The Council has agreed to conduct a survey into the numbers of people crossing the road in the same location as a first step towards possibly putting in a pedestrian crossing. They have also agreed to schedule a feasibility assessment of the very narrow stretch of road going up the hill to the pub to widen the pavement and put in a small chicane to slow the traffic and protect pedestrians. I am very concerned about these issues and will push for action to be taken as soon as possible.