

Title	County Councillor's Report
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Energy Bills Support Scheme

On 27 February, the [Department for Energy Security and Net Zero \(DESNZ\) announced](#) that households across England, Scotland and Wales will benefit from the government's £400 help with energy bills, by applying through an online application portal.

Households without a direct relationship to an electricity supplier, such as those living in **park homes** and **care homes**, can now apply through a secure online portal to receive the support as a one-off, non-repayable lump sum under the 'alternative funding' route of the government's Energy Bills Support Scheme.

For those without online access, a dedicated customer helpline is available to assist eligible customers – 0808 175 3287.

The government is urging all eligible households to apply as soon as possible for their support, while also warning households to stay alert to potential scams and report them to relevant authorities where they are suspected.

The government will never provide any links to the application portal or directly ask individuals to apply for the £400 support. The payment will be provided directly into people's bank accounts.

More cost of living support for households in receipt of Housing Benefit

Some Oxfordshire residents receiving Housing Benefit can now claim £300 to help with living costs, thanks to the latest round of the Household Support Fund. We have sent letters to over 4,250 residents eligible for support.

These residents will be in receipt of Housing Benefit but no other relevant state benefits, and therefore do not qualify for the government's cost of living payments.

Supporting Oxfordshire care workers: funds still available

We're funding the Care Workers' Charity hardship fund, which was set up last spring and offers quick financial support to people working in Oxfordshire's care sector.

It has paid out more than £260,000 to over 440 people and there are still funds available for those who need it.

In response to the increased cost of living, the maximum individual funding allowance has now been increased to £750 for requests made by 31st March 2023.

For more information and to apply, go to thecareworkerscharity.org.uk/oxfordshire-grants

Helping residents get digital

Last Wednesday, OxonCC launched the [Oxfordshire Digital Inclusion Charter](#) at Activate Learning's Technology Campus in Blackbird Leys, just opposite Blackbird Leys Library.

The charter has been co-produced with partners and represents the next step for a digitally inclusive county since publishing our [digital inclusion strategy](#) last summer.

The next step is to promote the charter and encourage partners to sign-up.

Although not aiming to make everyone do things online, the County Council wants to make sure people have access to the equipment, data and broadband they need, and have good experiences, when they do want to.

Oxford citizens' jury makes recommendations

Ensuring Oxford residents can travel in ways that are good for their health and the climate was the key focus of a recent Street Voices Citizens' Jury event, hosted in collaboration with Oxford University.

The event brought together 16 people, who were broadly representative of the Oxford population, to explore how can we travel where we need to in Oxford in ways that are good for health and the climate.

The jury's findings were presented to OxonCC Cabinet to inform decisions.

Looking for an affordable long-term place to stay in Oxfordshire?

Our friends at Age UK Oxfordshire have an innovative programme for people who would enjoy living with an older person and are happy to lend a hand.

For more information, [contact Homeshare Oxfordshire](#) through the online form on its webpage.

Financial help still on offer to change lives

Almost 50 organisations have benefited from the first round of our community capacity grants.

The funding is awarded to groups that strengthen adult social care's Oxfordshire Way vision, supporting people to live well and independently within their own communities.

A second round of funding is now open and more community groups are encouraged to apply. https://oxfordshire.org/ocf_grants/community-capacity-grants/

Oxford Station and area upgrade

The [Oxfordshire Connect](#) project is being led by Network Rail to increase capacity at Oxford Station from 2024.

As the local highway authority, we are a key stakeholder and we are working with Network Rail to finalise plans for the work, which includes replacing Botley Road bridge.

The County Council is assessing the impact this may have on the timing of our own schemes in and around Oxford.

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans for Abingdon and Didcot

Residents of Abingdon and surrounding areas are set to benefit from improvements that will encourage cycling and walking in and around Abingdon, now that OxonCC has adopted the town's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which will set out how to improve the local active travel network and cut congestion.

This will soon be complemented by the Didcot LCWIP and the Strategic Active Travel Network plans, currently in progress, eventually forming a coherent network for the whole area.

Have your say on new council ward boundaries

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is currently reviewing our electoral arrangements.

This review will decide how many councillors will serve the council and which communities each councillor will serve, with changes taking effect from the May 2025 elections.

The commission has announced that it is minded to recommend that we should have 69 councillors in the future, representing an increase from 63 currently. It is now looking to draw up a new pattern of divisions to accommodate this number and would like your help to inform where the new boundaries should be drawn.

Do encourage your constituents to have their say by [visiting the LGBCE website](#).

Travel and transport sounding board for young people

We're looking for young people from specific areas of Oxfordshire to join our travel and transport sounding board in Oxford on Saturday 25th March from 10.30am - 4.15pm.

All the [details and registration instructions](#) are on Let's talk Oxfordshire.

Live resident consultations at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

There are several consultations currently open for resident feedback, including:

[Residential short breaks consultation](#). This survey is for parents and carers of children who are currently using Oxfordshire overnight residential short breaks at Viking in Oxford or Sycamore in Banbury. The deadline to participate is 14th March.

[Helping people stay warm and healthy in their homes](#). We are seeking views to help us design and deliver a service for Oxfordshire residents to help them stay warm, safe and healthy at home. The consultation closes on 22nd March.

[Watlington relief road](#). This provides an opportunity for the local and wider community to review and comment on the proposed design of the road. The deadline is 20th March.