

Title	County Councillor's Report
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Community tree planting opportunity

The tree planting season begins at the end of the year and Oxfordshire County Council is looking for community tree planting projects that will benefit people and nature. Please pass on to any groups who may be interested. More details are available on the [Climate Action Oxfordshire website](#).

Special educational needs and disabilities Ofsted report

Oxfordshire's Local Area Partnership (LAP) has apologised to families and has committed to significant change to improve support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) following an inspection of services by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in July.

The inspection formed part of a new national framework of inspections for children and young people with SEND introduced in 2023. Inspectors identified that there are widespread systemic failings across the local area partnership leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which must be urgently addressed.

The LAP is made up of Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) who are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services (across education, health and social care) for children and young people with SEND in Oxfordshire. The partnership also includes Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Areas identified for improvement include:

- Agencies within the local area partnership need to work cohesively to ensure that children and young people get the right help at the right time
- Too many children and young people are unable to access the education provision they need; and while many schools prioritise

transition work, when there are delays to decision making and naming suitable placements, this work is undone

- The inspection recognised that the timeliness of education, health and care plans has recently improved, but frequently they do not describe the child or young person accurately enough to ensure that their needs are met effectively.

Given the report also stated better leadership is needed, and also reports of a breakdown in communications with parents, OxonCC leader Liz Leffman asked the cabinet member for Children's Services and Labour group leader, Liz Brighthouse to step down from that particular role. Rather than do so, Labour decided to leave the county administration.

An Extraordinary General Meeting of the County Council on the topic of SEND is being held on Friday 13th October.

New OxonCC Cabinet members

Following the withdrawal of the Labour group from the County Council administration, a number of new Cabinet members have been appointed from the Lib Dem group, and Green Party Councillor Pete Sudbury has been appointed Deputy Leader.

- Councillor Kate Gregory: Cabinet Member for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) improvement
- Councillor John Howson: Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services
- Councillor Neil Fawcett: Cabinet Member for Community and Corporate Services
- Councillor Nathan Ley: Cabinet Member for Public Health, Inequalities and Community Safety
- Councillor Judy Roberts: Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Development Strategy.
- Councillor Calum Miller has decided to step down from the role of cabinet member for finance and will be replaced by Councillor Dan Levy.

At the top of the new Cabinet's list of priorities is the subject of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) following the recent Ofsted and CQC local area partnership SEND inspection judgement.

The creation of a new Cabinet role dedicated to SEND will ensure that the whole council has a constant and permanent focus on turning the situation around at pace.

The Lib Dem-Green administration will also prioritise rebuilding trust with parents and children, communicating better with them, listening to

them and delivering better outcomes for the most vulnerable children in the county.

Oxford United proposal for use of County Council land for its new stadium

At its meeting on 19th September 2023, the council's Cabinet approved in principle the leasing of land at the 'Triangle' to the football club to develop a new stadium. The leasehold comes with several conditions:

- The club must be given planning permission by Cherwell District Council
- The club must produce a net-zero plan that is fully costed and comes with clear timescales and outcomes from design, construction and full operation of the stadium
- The club must provide details of how it will meet the commitments made in its submissions to the County Council so far
- Restrictive covenants will be put in place that will set aside the use of the land for football/community sports and leisure/sports stadia for the term of the lease, with limited commercial activities permitted only within the stadium footprint.

HIF1 planning application update

Following a recent planning and regulation committee meeting, the council as Planning Authority has decided to take a neutral position at the forthcoming inquiry on the HIF1 road project, although maintaining some objections on specific planning issues.

It has also emerged that the July call-in was requested by Defence Minister Grant Shapps on the basis of the growth plans for the UK's nuclear fusion industry at Culham Science Centre.