

## **Oxfordshire County Council Report from Mike Fox-Davies**

**your Oxfordshire County Councillor for Blewbury, Upton, Chilton, Harwell, Steventon, East Hendred, West Hendred and Ardington.**

Your District Councillors for my parishes are Janet Shelley (Ardington and both Hendreds); Matthew Barber (Steventon); Sarah Medley and Hayleigh Gascoigne sharing Harwell, Chilton, Upton and Blewbury.



Although I regularly attend the Parish Meetings for all eight of my Parishes, I am aware that the information from those reports does not necessarily reach all the residents of my division. So, when possible, I will be providing a summary of my activities as your County Councillor, as well as any noteworthy County developments.

Over the past couple of months, I have attended meetings of the Full Council and the three main committees of which I am a member. These are the Joint Health Overview Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC); the Performance Scrutiny Committee (PSC); and the Planning and regulations Committee. I also carry out duties as Deputy Chairman (Back Benchers).

Additionally, I sit on several sub-groups which have also met several times during the same period: the Transport Cabinet Advisory Group; the Transformation group of the PSC and Audit and Performance Committees; and the Task and Finish sub group of JHOSC which I chair, scrutinising the progress by the NHS Project Group following the 'temporary' closure of the overnight beds at Wantage hospital some 3 years ago and how best to serve the healthcare needs of the population of OX12.

I will give more details on the progress of these sub-groups in future reports.

I also continue to support local events and organisations within my eight parishes by contributing my time and business expertise as well as participating in and attending fund raising events for local charities. It's always a pleasure to meet you at these. I have much admiration for the enthusiasm and generosity of those who support their community's efforts.

One major success for residents was a motion I presented in July to Full Council as I have had many complaints from parishes about the slow adoption by the County of infrastructure on new housing developments, where the Contractors had finished the housing, but was not finishing the ancillary works necessary for OCC to sign off on the infrastructure as complete.

I was initially planning to request financial pressure such as a bond to help accelerate the works but was surprised to find that such powers currently exist but were not being applied by the officers responsible. So, the motion changed to DEMAND that the OCC Directorate responsible used ALL the powers at their disposal to ensure the contractors delivered on their responsibilities ASAP.

This issue is one that all Councillors were experiencing so the motion was passed unanimously (and worth noting that it was passed in less than 5 minutes, a record for efficient use of time within the Full Council). It is my strong belief that motions put forward should be neither frivolous or ill informed and should be expedited with efficiency for the benefit of the electorate rather than be used for political posturing.

Other developments within OCC are:

**Oxfordshire County Council starts planning to replace Kennington bridge.**

Oxfordshire County Council has announced that the A423 Kennington Bridge is to be replaced at an estimated cost of around £40m. The bridge and road will remain open for at least two years before construction work starts while design takes place.

**More charging points to support electric vehicle**

The electric car revolution is set to continue in Oxfordshire thanks to a successful county council bid for a slice of a £37m government fund. Oxfordshire is set to host two major initiatives to provide more charging points for electric vehicles (EVs)

Park and Charge will see up to 300 chargers installed in residential ‘charging hubs’ using car parks located in residential areas where properties don’t have their own off-street parking and VPACH (Virgin Park and Charge), will use existing Virgin Media cabinets to reduce the cost of installing roadside EV chargers and minimise the amount of street clutter needed for power supply.

**Growth in New School Places across Oxfordshire**

Since 2011 more than 6,000 new places have been created in Oxfordshire secondary schools, including Aureus School and UTC Oxfordshire, in Harwell Parish. Further planned changes in the 2020s – including Whitelands and a new all-through school in Grove Airfield – will see the overall number of school places created since 2011 rise to around 8,000.

Around 88 per cent of children and their parents achieved their first choice of school in Oxfordshire in 2019 despite continued rising demand for places. The county is consistently ahead of national averages for first places being awarded.

**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 is set to be adopted by Oxfordshire County Council.

By taking a “whole family approach” rather than focusing on just the child, families have been able to access the support they need from within that one team of experts. As a result, in Hertfordshire, there’s been a 39 per cent reduction in the number of days children spent in care, a 53 per cent drop in hospital admissions for adults in the families and a 66 per cent reduction in contact with the Police for domestic abuse.

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

**Free school transport for disabled young people is retained**

I am delighted to report that Free school transport for 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.

The council has 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.