

# **REPORT TO BIX & ASSENDON PARISH COUNCIL SEPT 2020 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW**

## **GENERAL OCC REPORT**

### **SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS WELCOME CHILDREN BACK**

Schools, colleges and early years providers have been working closely with OCC to make sure that all children are welcomed back safely in September. Education and childcare providers are following guidance from the Department for Education, Public Health England and the County Council. Risk assessments have been carried out and hygiene measures are in place across all education and early years settings. All Oxfordshire education settings, including our special schools, will be open in September. Arrangements will vary, as what is needed in a small primary will be different from a large secondary or upper school. Classes may be different as measures, such as teaching children in separate groups or 'bubbles', may have to be put in place to help keep children and staff safe. Childcare providers' arrangements may also vary, as what is needed in a childminder's home will be different to a larger nursery or preschool.

### **BRAKES COULD BE APPLIED TO OXFORD'S LOCKDOWN EMERGENCE AS COVID CASES RISE**

Measures that could put the brakes on Oxford's gradual emergence from lockdown have moved a step closer as a result of another week of uncomfortably high rises in COVID cases in the city. The number of cases in Oxford in the week ending August 21 was 41 – which is 26.9 cases per 100,000 and sees the city moving ever closer to figures in parts of the country that have been labelled by central Government as areas of concern or that require intervention.

### **REPORT INTO OXFORDSHIRE COUNCILS REORGANISATION**

Management consultants PwC have taken a fresh look at the different options for local government structures that could emerge for debate among communities and councillors in Oxfordshire as the nation awaits a Government blueprint for the future. During the Autumn the Government will publish a White Paper on recovery and devolution, which will act as a guide to setting out how local government structures may be reorganised across the whole country – taking into account the changed landscape following the COVID-19 pandemic. Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council recently commissioned a piece of work to look at the various options that may be viable in the county. This followed a motion unanimously agreed by county councillors in July. Both councils asked experts at PwC to complete the work. PwC are currently acting in an advisory capacity to Government and other local authorities undertaking similar pieces of work. The options reviewed are:

1. Optimising the existing two-tier collaboration
2. Establishing a new single unitary authority
3. Establishing two new unitary authorities, based on a 50/50 split of the population to meet Government criteria around size.

The report can be downloaded from the OCC website.

## **READING TRANSPORT STRATEGY 2036 (INCLUDING THIRD READING BRIDGE)**

I emailed all clerks in my Division on 17<sup>th</sup> May to advise that Reading was consulting on its Transport Strategy 2036. Several proposals would have major impacts on South Oxfordshire. I urged all parish councils in my Division to respond to the consultation and am delighted that most have, either individually or as part of a cooperative effort led by Kidmore End PC.

OCC and SODC have also submitted their responses.

OCC states:

*“We are opposed to the Plan in its present form, as we do not agree with the proposed schemes and measures it includes for cross boundary travel between Reading and Oxfordshire. We are particularly concerned about the approach proposed to developing large-scale ‘multi-modal schemes’ to the north of Reading, in particular the proposed Thames Crossing, Reading Orbital Route and North of Reading Park & Ride sites.”*

The full response is available on the OCC website here:

<https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/response-to-readings-local-transport-plan/>

SODC states:

*“We are particularly concerned about the approach proposed to developing large-scale ‘multi-modal schemes’ to the north of Reading, in particular the proposed Thames Crossing, Reading Orbital Route and North Reading Park and Rides. We believe that development and delivery of these major schemes is inconsistent with the objectives and many of the policies of the plan, they will not be effective in managing cross-boundary travel movements, and are likely to have significant negative impacts on South Oxfordshire.”*

### **SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BIX & ASSENDON**

#### **OLD CYCLE PATH AT BIX**

Sadly, this proposal did not find its way into the Tranche 2 funding bid. The parameters around the bid were very prescriptive and focused more on new and shovel-ready initiatives rather than maintenance or up-grades. OCC is maintaining a list of all the proposals received and it is likely that further funding will be released by Government over the coming year or so, though timing and parameters are not known at this stage.