

REPORT TO BIX & ASSENDON PARISH COUNCIL MAR 2022 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

BUDGET MEETING OVERSHADOWED BY FARMERS' PROTEST



At the County Council budget-setting meeting on February 8th the left-wing administration forced through a whopping 5% Council Tax increase, despite the Conservative Independent Alliance showing how the increase could be limited to 3.5%. However, the meeting at County Hall was overshadowed by a farmers' protest outside. As previously reported, the administration is trying to impose a vegan diet at all council-catered events. Richard Binning, a beef farmer from Steventon, said: "The message they are sending out is really dangerous - they are suggesting it's ok to eat avocados from Brazil, instead of our wholesome British beef." The farmers' protest received national press coverage. The motion to impose the vegan diet has to be ratified by the OCC Cabinet at its meeting on March 15th. Conservatives will be addressing Cabinet and urging them to seek change through education, persuasion and choice, not diktat.

BAD WEATHER IS THE PERFECT STORM FOR ROGUE TRADERS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Residents are being warned to be wary of cold callers or leaflets offering to do work on roofs after the recent storms. OCC's trading standards team believes it is a perfect opportunity for rogue traders to take advantage of residents who have a leaking roof or broken tile. Any Oxfordshire resident who has concerns about cold calling or potential scams can contact the Citizens Advice National Consumer Service on **0800 144 8848** or by visiting its website [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk).

CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSALS FOR RESTRICTIONS ON CARS IN OXFORD

OCC and Oxford City Council last month revealed highly controversial joint proposals to cut car use in the city with the introduction of a city-wide workplace parking levy, traffic filters and a wider Zero Emission Zone (ZEM) to cover the entire city centre. The chairman of Oxford High Street Association condemned the proposals and said: "I am totally depressed by what these two councils are doing to our city." More details on the ZEM below.

BRITAIN'S FIRST ZERO EMISSION ZONE (ZEM) BEGINS IN OXFORD

Britain's first ZEM started on 28 February. Launching as a pilot, the streets included in the ZEM are: New Road, Bonn Square, Queen Street; Cornmarket Street, New Inn Hall Street, Shoe Lane, Market Street, Ship Street and St Michael's Street. The ZEM pilot is a precursor to the introduction of a larger ZEM covering most of Oxford city centre next year (2023), subject to further public consultation. The ZEM pilot will operate from 7am - 7pm, all year around. All petrol and diesel vehicles, including hybrids, will incur a daily charge unless eligible for a discount or exemption. However, zero emission vehicles, such as electric cars, can enter the pilot area free of charge. The charge will vary from £2 to £10 per day depending on the emission levels of the vehicle. Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras have been installed to enforce the zone. The scheme has been criticised as being a tax-raising measure and not a true ZEM, as all vehicles are allowed into the zone as long as they pay the tax.

BID SUBMITTED TO DELIVER 159 ELECTRIC BUSES FOR THE OXFORD AREA

A new fleet of state-of-the-art electric buses could be coming to Oxford and its surrounding areas after a bid for government funding was submitted. OCC last month applied for £32.8 million from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEM) scheme. Along with £6m from the council and £43.7m from bus companies Go Ahead and Stagecoach, the scheme could deliver 159 electric buses and the infrastructure to charge them in a package worth £82.5m. If successful, the electric buses would operate in an area stretching from Kidlington in the north to Sandford in the south, and from Cumnor in the west to Wheatley in the east. There are no proposals to support the south of the county.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Efforts to unpick the agreement between OCC and Cherwell District Council continues. A joint officer working group has been established to review the extent and cost of the current arrangements. The group reports to the member-led Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee, and is made up of the two chief executives, monitoring officers and s151 officers. Once the group has completed its initial review, it will then prepare a transition plan. The Conservative Opposition continues to press for transparency in relation to the costs when they have been identified and quantified.

CONSULTATIONS

OCC is currently conducting a wide range of consultations at the moment. Residents can make their views known by responding. Current consultations include: Local Transport and Connectivity Plan; Location of cameras to enforce traffic regulations; Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); and Library and heritage services. An interesting recent example is the proposal to make permanent the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in parts of Oxford. The consultation showed that 74% of respondents objected to the measure or had concerns, with just 26% in support. This has resulted in the administration putting the brakes on the scheme at the last moment, which was due to be approved last month. It will be reconsidered by Cabinet later in the year. <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BIX & ASSENDON

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND

I am pleased to have made a £500 contribution towards the parish celebrations for the Jubilee.

MOTORBIKE RACING ON A4155 & A4130

Both Bix & Assendon PC and Eye & Dunsden PC have previously complained about motorbikes racing on the A4130 and continuing on to the A4155. The problem is particularly acute on Sunday mornings. I have always advised that this is a matter for the police, not OCC. However, Eye & Dunsden PC has been told by the police that speed data would be helpful when addressing the issue. In response to this, I have arranged for a speed survey, which is currently underway. I am funding this from my Councillor Priority Fund. I will forward the results to both PCs in due course.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR NEW ADMINISTRATION

The chair has raised important questions about how the new administration is going to measure its success in addressing its priorities. The OCC Comms director has responded as follows: *We're currently in the process of finalising our key performance indicators and targets for 2022/23, which will be coming to the council's Cabinet for approval on 15 March. They will then be published on our website in our outcomes framework for 2022/23, and we will report on progress against them on a bimonthly basis. We don't yet have a link to share, but do let me know if you would like me to drop you a line once they're published and I will send you a link.*

ROAD CLOSURE NEAR GREENMARSH FARM

At last we have some progress on this matter! The owner of Greenmarsh Farm has agreed for OCC to drain the water from the road into their field. OCC will be installing a new gully on the road above and then piping this into Greenmarsh Farm field. This pipe will pass under their access to a large 4m x 4m gravel soakaway. There will also be work to the verge of the A4130 where a new drainage ditch will be installed to collect any additional water which may come from Greenmarsh Farm's field. The aim is to allow the water to follow its natural path but to give it plenty of space to drain before it arrives at the A4130. The works will commence 17/04/2022.

HENLEY TO NETTLEBED CYCLE PATH

I have been pursuing two options for nearly two years:

Option 1: Link existing Henley to Assendon shared use path to old Assendon to Bix path (which would need substantial repair/upgrading), then link this path to the existing Bix to Nettlebed path which would need upgrading to form new shared use path.

Option 2): As above, but instead of repairing the old Assendon to Bix path, convert to the existing eastbound (downhill) section of the dual carriageway to single track and create a new two-way shared use path on the redundant carriageway.

The Group Manager Traffic & Road Safety had assured me the matter was in progress, with attention focused on Option 1, as Option 2 was considered too problematic. He had stated: *"We have included the scheme for an optioneering report/design for delivery in the 22/23 council year. We are currently about to share out design list with our service provider and I can confirm it's on the list."* However, I have today been advised that both options have been deferred for resource and cost reasons, and the latest officer update is as follows: *"Both of the incidents have been due to poor visibility from the sun shining into drivers' eyes. The incidents occurred within 200m of each other. To mitigate this, we are installing some cycle markings on the inside lane of the hill and adding in some cycle signs to help make drivers aware that cyclists are present. This design has been done with the road safety teams, TVP and my traffic team."*