

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

GENERAL OCC REPORT

LARGE RISE IN COUNCIL TAX PROPOSED

The previous Conservative-led administration had put in place a Medium-Term Financial Strategy featuring a maximum of a 4% increase in Council Tax for 22/23. The new left-wing administration is proposing to increase this by a quarter to 5%. They intend to use the extra increase to fund a variety of proposals including £0.83m on climate action, £4.4m extra for adult social care, a £0.8m subsidy on assessed care needs, £1.2m extra on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and £1.15m extra on children's social care. The extra 1% increase in Council Tax could potentially be avoided altogether as the council has received an unexpected and generous grant of £6.1m from central government, equivalent to 1.5% Council Tax. My mailbox is dominated by issues relating to roads and drains and I am disappointed that there is no mention of these matters in the preliminary budget statement, which can be found at <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/budget-202223/>

LEFT-WING ADMINISTRATION BANS MEAT & DAIRY PRODUCTS FROM EVENTS

The left-wing administration moved a motion at the Full Council meeting on 14th December to ban meat and dairy products from all council-catered events and meetings. I recognise that veganism is a choice to be respected and moved an amendment to say that a vegan option should always be available at council events and meetings, but meat and dairy products should not be banned. My amendment was not accepted and the ruling parties forced the proposal banning meat and dairy products through. The decision has to be ratified by Cabinet and I would urge those who believe in freedom of choice and those who wish to support our local farmers to lobby Cabinet Members. Their email addresses are on the OCC website.

OXFORDSHIRE AT TOP OF RECYCLING TABLE FOR EIGHTH YEAR

For the eighth year in a row, residents in Oxfordshire have topped the table nationally when it comes to recycling, reusing, and composting. Oxfordshire County Council has once again been named the best performing county council waste disposal authority in England. In 2020-21, residents recycled, reused, or composted 59.5 per cent of their household waste, an increase on the previous year's figure of 58.8 per cent, according to government figures. The total amount of household waste produced in Oxfordshire was 310,479 tonnes for 2020/2021. And 186,052 tonnes were reused, recycled and composted, which created a carbon benefit of 126,603 tonnes of CO₂e compared to disposing of it through landfill. Oxfordshire's five district and city councils, which operate the kerbside collections, also achieved excellent results in their national categories. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse came second and fourth respectively, while West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, and Oxford City were all in the top performing 25 per cent.

MAKE HENLEY SHINE CAMPAIGN (ILLUMINATING HENLEY BRIDGE)

A campaign in support of illuminating Henley Bridge is gaining momentum, resulting in positive noises coming from OCC, according to the Henley Standard. However, I am aware that many parish councils and residents are in support of 'dark skies' and are opposed to unnecessary illumination and consequent light pollution; indeed, this is my own view. Provisionally, I intend to OPPOSE the illumination proposals but welcome input from parish councils before coming to a final decision.

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BIX & ASSENDON

MAKE HENLEY SHINE CAMPAIGN (ILLUMINATING HENLEY BRIDGE)

Should the PC wish to make its views known to OCC, the relevant emails are:
nick.mottramr@oxfordshire.gov.uk (officer for culture/heritage)
neil.fawcett@oxfordshire.gov.uk (Cabinet Member for Cultural Services)

HUMANE DISPATCH OF DEER INJURED ON ROADS

Across all my parishes, I often get enquiries about what can be done to prevent deer getting injured on roads. Unfortunately, there is little that can be done other than erecting signs in appropriate places. I was therefore concerned to learn late last year that it appeared the process for the humane dispatch of injured animals by a volunteer group was not running smoothly. As a result of this, I asked the OCC Director of Community Safety to make contact with Thames Valley Police so that the matter could be investigated. This was done, and a senior TVP officer has now re-established contact with the volunteer group and I hope the problem is resolved.

HENLEY TO NETTLEBED CYCLE PATH

In the light of the sad news last year about the death of a cyclist, I am attempting to get more impetus behind this proposal which I first engaged with nearly two years ago but has progressed little due to staffing/resource shortages. I am pursuing two options:

Option 1 (original and most likely): 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 siding-out/upgrading to form new shared use path.

Option 2 (new but likely to be very difficult): 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.

When I last pressed the Group Manager Traffic & Road Safety for an update, he assured me the matter is in progress, with attention focused on Option 1, as Option 2 is considered too problematic. With regard to timing, the officer 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.”*