

REPORT TO BIX & ASSENDON PARISH COUNCIL MARCH 2021 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

ANNUAL REPORT

I am now coming to the end of my second term as your County Councillor but will be standing for re-election in May. Over the last eight years I have attended almost every single parish council meeting. For each meeting, I supply a written report in advance about general OCC matters, then follow this up at the meeting itself with a verbal report about local items. This local report is then also supplied in writing after the meeting.

Local matters I have been engaged on over the last year include:

- Pot holes (of course!)
- Flooding and drains
- Traffic calming (including Councillor Priority Fund contributions)
- Restoration proposals for the Lower Assendon to Bix cycle path (more later)
- Vegetation clearing
- Deer incidents
- Reading Transport Strategy (including Third Reading Bridge)
- Henley HGV ban proposals

I have also assisted residents directly on an individual basis.

Although we have now been constrained to virtual meetings for nearly a year, I try to maintain as close a relationship with the parish council and residents as possible.

GENERAL OCC REPORT

FRONTLINE SERVICES GIVEN PROTECTION WITH NEW INVESTMENTS

Details of OCC Budget proposals were given in last month's report. All 63 county councillors met on February 9th to debate the proposals which were then passed with minimal amendment. The council is dedicated to investing in services that will have positive long-term impact for local communities. The budget reflects this, with more than £25m of additional funding included. Some of this funding has been previously agreed, but £9.5m of this is new for 2021/22 to help meet additional demands, including within adult social care. A total of £19.6m of savings will also take place in total across all services although £14.6m of these savings were already planned and are centred on the transformation of services to make them more efficient while protecting the frontline. A 1.99 per cent rise in basic council tax will take place from April plus an extra one per cent which would be required to be spent on adult social care under national rules, making a total of 2.99%.

OXFORDSHIRE ELECTRIC VEHICLE INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY (OEVIS)

This currently being developed and will be progressed to Cabinet in due course.

STAY AT HOME AND DRIVE COVID CASES DOWN

Oxfordshire residents, together with the nation, are being advised to continue to stay at home and follow the existing COVID-19 rules, which will begin to gradually ease from 8 March as part of the government's roadmap to bring England out of lockdown. The number of COVID cases across the county is continuing to fall, but the week-on-week reduction is now much smaller than it was earlier this month. For the week ending 19 February, the number of cases across Oxfordshire fell by just 5% compared to a drop of 40% in the previous week

RAPID SYMPTOM-FREE TESTING AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC-FACING WORKERS

OCC is working in partnership with the city and district councils to provide regular rapid testing for people without COVID-19 symptoms who work and volunteer outside the home. The free tests are for people who do not have access to workplace testing through their employer. This includes the self-employed and people who work for small businesses, for example taxi drivers, independent retailers, and tradespeople such as plumbers and electricians. People can [book a free test](#) online and go to one of three locations:

- Spiceball Leisure Centre in Banbury (OX16 2BW)
- The Beacon in Wantage (OX12 9BX)
- King's Centre in Oxford (OX2 0ES)

The tests take just 15 minutes using lateral flow devices and involve taking a swab of the back of the throat and inside the nose. The swab is then given to trained staff at the test centre who process the test on-site. Results are given within an hour by text message or by email. Anyone who tests positive is told to self-isolate and follow the national guidance. They are provided with detailed [advice and support on self-isolation](#).

NEW PARTNERSHIP HELPS CHAMPION THE CLIMATE CAUSE

Plans to turn Oxfordshire into a zero-carbon county by 2050 will benefit from the announcement of a new link-up which will champion the cause of sustainable and low-carbon business. OCC has joined Oxfordshire Greentech (OG) as its local authority innovation partner. Business network OG was set up in 2019 to bring together a wide range of commercial interests, academia and other organisations to encourage innovation, collaboration and knowledge transfer as a response to the climate emergency. Details [here](#).

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BIX & ASSENDON

RESTORATION OF OLD CYCLE PATH FROM LOWER ASSENDON TO BIX

I met with the parish chair, the clerk, Cllr Robb and SODC officers to discuss this proposal. The idea now is to expand this to become a cyclepath from Henley to Nettlebed. There would be three sections:

- The Henley to Lower Assendon section which already exists as a shared use path
- The Lower Assendon to Bix section which was the original subject of discussion
- The Bix to Nettlebed section that already exists as a path but needs siding-out/improving

SODC officers have indicated that 50% of the costs could be covered by CIL monies, subject to agreement by OCC officers, to whom I have relayed the proposal and met with an encouraging response.

ASSENDON SPRING RISING

I was notified by the clerk that the spring is rising and suggested it would be very helpful if she notified the landowners via BAG as ditch-clearing is their responsibility under 'riparian rights'. OCC is responsible only for ditches on Highways land. There has been considerable confusion in the past about who is responsible for what. If there are blocked ditches known to be on Highways land, these should be reported on FMS asap. Some grips will be re-cut over the next couple of weeks.

POTHoles AND FLOODING – FMS REFS: 2284334, 2324000, 2385642

In response to a resident's enquiries, I escalated three reports and received these answers:

2284334: Three pothole repairs were raised and completed at this location

2324000: Defect notices were raised to clear the blocked gullies

2385642: Pothole repair raised and completed