

# **Oxfordshire County Councillor David Bartholomew** **Annual Report 2018 to Rotherfield Greys Parish Council**

## **Introduction**

As County Councillor, I represent what is known as 'Sonning Common Division'. This Division comprises the nine parishes that curl around Henley, but does not include Henley itself. I am delighted to make this report to you and would like to wish the parish council (and residents!) every success for the coming year. If there is anything I can help with, all my contact details are on the OCC website here:  
<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=7527>

## **Responsibilities**

In addition to representing the interests of residents in the nine parishes in my Division and my place on Full Council, I am Cabinet Member for Finance & Communication. I am also Chairman of the Conservative County Councillor Group.

## **Parish Council Meetings**

Most of the parish councils I am responsible for meet every month (Rotherfield Greys is unusual in that it only meets every two months) and I attend most meetings. If ever I can't attend, I send a written report. At each of the parish meetings I attend, I give a general report on County matters, then follow this with a report on matters specific to that parish.

## **Infrastructure Funding Bid**

The Oxfordshire Growth Board\* has provided unanimous support for an application to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) as part of a package of investment to deliver transport infrastructure. The funding bid for up to £500 million was submitted on 28 September by OCC as the county's transport authority. Money is sought to bring forward infrastructure investment to pump-prime three major development schemes:

1. Didcot Garden Town – £171m is bid for transport improvements including a Didcot Science Bridge and A4130 dual carriageway, a new river crossing at Culham and Clifton Hampden Bypass. This would support the delivery of over 22,000 homes in Didcot, Culham, Harwell and Berinsfield. Additionally up to £70m of cycle and other sustainable transport improvements are proposed for inclusion in the bid plan.
2. West Oxfordshire Garden Village – £135.4m is bid for further upgrades to the A40, building on existing schemes and based on the approved A40 Long Term Strategy including development of the Rapid Transit network and additional highway capacity on A40 transport corridor. This would support the delivery of over 10,000 homes in Witney & Carterton, and around Eynsham.
3. North of Oxford – £152m is bid for the development of Rapid Transit lines on upgraded A44 and A4260 corridors, a new Park & Ride, and strategic cycle infrastructure plus. Support is also sought for additional education requirements (as yet un-costed). This would support the delivery of 5,570 homes in Woodstock, Begbroke/Yarnton and the Northern Gateway.

\*The Oxfordshire Growth Board comprises the six councils: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, together with the county's Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).

## **Growth Deal**

The Oxfordshire Growth Board has also reached an outline Housing and Growth Agreement (Growth Deal) with Government. This will see an additional £215m of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county. This breaks down as: £30m pa for five years for infrastructure; £60m for affordable homes across the county; and £5m to develop a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP). The Board wants the five-year deal to be the first stage in a sustained partnership with Government to secure the ongoing investment needed to deliver properly planned growth and economic development over the coming years. This will support councils to achieve the ambition of 100,000 new homes across the county over the period 2011-2031, as identified through the 2014 countywide Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plans. During the period of development all planning authorities will have their five-year land supply requirement reduced to a three-year land supply with that condition in place for the first three years of the new JSSP. The Growth Deal has gone through the six councils' democratic processes and been agreed.

## **Social Care Costs & Council Tax**

The rising cost of social care continues to be a problem for most councils and OCC is particularly hard hit. In partial recognition, Government has allowed councils to set an additional 3% Council Tax rise for 2017/18 and 2018/19 in respect of Adult Social Care plus 1% for 2018/19 and 2019/20 in respect of Children's Services offset these costs. The nett result of this is that OCC Council Tax will rise by 5.99% in 2018/19, 2.99% in 2019/20, then 1.99% in 20/21.

## **Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) update**

When I first joined OCC, the HWRCs were under threat and it was planned to have just three centres for the whole of Oxfordshire. Our HWRC would have been in Didcot! I campaigned hard against this. In July OCC signed a new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) contract that secured all seven existing sites in the medium term, with no change to the sites opening hours or days.

## **1 million tonnes of rubbish transformed into energy at Ardley plant**

OCC and its partner Viridor have marked the one millionth tonne of residual waste received at Ardley during December. The Ardley plant converts waste into electricity, rather than burying it in landfill. It produces enough energy to power 38,000 homes and can export up to 27MW per hour of electricity to the grid.

## **Ox-Cam Expressway**

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has published its report to Government on the Oxford-Cambridge arc. It advised on the need for long-term investment funding for new transport infrastructure to harness the region's economic potential, to benefit local people and boost UK plc in a post-Brexit landscape. Oxfordshire County Councillors are concerned about the proposals and have passed a motion calling for a Public Inquiry. This has been rejected by the Chairman of the NIC.

## **Unitary Government**

A proposal for Unitary Government for Oxfordshire was submitted to DCLG in the Spring of 2017 by OCC, SODC and The Vale. Cherwell, WODC and the City of Oxford did not take part. Since the General election, Government appetite for such proposals seems to have faded and there is no update on the situation.

### **Carillion: OCC agrees exit deal after company collapse**

OCC has formally terminated its contract with Carillion LGS Limited effective from 1 February 2018, following the collapse of the parent company. This brings forward the already agreed end of the contract set for the end of June 2018. Carillion provided services on behalf of OCC including school meals and cleaning; maintenance of council buildings; property services, and building work such as school extensions. Carillion staff in OCC's maintained schools who contracted their services via OCC will be transferred to OCC, and services will continue as normal. Services previously provided by Carillion to the county council will continue through a mix of bringing staff in-house (e.g. school meals, cleaning); continuing with suppliers (mainly catering), and working with existing sub-contractors (mainly construction and property services). Like every other Carillion customer, OCC is now working out the most cost-effective way to complete work left unfinished by Carillion. OCC will now take over direct responsibility for commissioning future construction work and service delivery. County council officers are reviewing the uncompleted works under the Carillion contract and talking to sub-contractors about the best way forward. OCC is establishing a process to assess, on a case-by-case basis, the impact on companies in the Carillion supply chain involved in providing county council services such as building maintenance.

### **Key Rotherfield Greys Issues**

#### **Potholes, general road defects and vegetation cutting in the parish**

I work closely with the parish council on a wide range of local Highways issues and keep councillors informed of matters in the wider area that may have some impact on the parish.

#### **Third Reading Bridge**

Berkshire councils and enterprise groups continue to push this proposal with vigour. The Strategic Outline Business Case was published in June and reviewed at an MP summit in September. The objective is to take 55,000 cars a day out of the centre of Reading. The bridge would join the M4 via the A329M to Caversham Park Road. From there traffic would only have two onward routes: via the A4155 through the heavily congested streets of Henley, or via the B481 through Nettlebed on to Watlington and the M40. Both these options are unacceptable to most Oxfordshire residents and I continue to press the case that if the bridge goes ahead, a relief road must be built. I assisted in organising a multi-parish meeting in January to review the situation.