

REPORT TO ROTHERFIELD GREYS PARISH COUNCIL JULY 2022

FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

The Conservative Opposition remains concerned that the ruling LibDem/Green/Labour administration continues with its Oxford-centric focus and is pursuing ideological ambitions beyond the remit of the council – and at unknown cost.

STARTLING £12,000 SPENT ON REPAIRS TO OXFORD LTNS IN JUST A MONTH

A startling £12,000 has been spent by OCC on repairs to bollards and planters in the new East Oxford Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) scheme in its first month of installation. There have been reports of repeated vandalism of planters, and bollards have been knocked down or pulled out of the ground by opponents of the scheme who feel they have been ignored. OCC has pledged to keep replacing them. Residents in Oxfordshire's towns and villages may wonder why such freely available money is not spent on rural roads where it is needed, rather than imposing a scheme unwanted by many city residents.

AMBITION TO ELIMINATE ALL ROAD DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES BY 2050

A commitment to Vision Zero – the elimination of deaths and serious injuries from road traffic collisions in Oxfordshire – has been agreed by OCC's Cabinet. The council has set interim targets of a 25 per cent cut in casualties by 2026 and a 50 per cent reduction by 2030 before aiming to reach zero by 2050. Although a laudable ambition, the Conservative Opposition is questioning whether such a target is achievable and what the associated costs are going to be.

OCC LEADER PLEDGES TO MEET AIR POLLUTION TARGETS AHEAD OF GOVERNMENT

OCC Leader Cllr Liz Leffman has signed a letter to the UK Environment Secretary George Eustice pledging to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) targets on deadly air pollution 10 years ahead of [the Government's 2040 deadline](#). Another laudable ambition, but many will question whether the council is working beyond its remit and is attempting to reach another impossible goal at unknown cost.

OCC TO SEEK INSIGHTS TO GUIDE ITS POLICIES ON TRANSGENDER SUPPORT

OCC is to consult local people to gather insight to guide future policies to support transgender residents. The engagement work follows a [motion agreed](#) at a Full Council on 5 April. The resulting action plan would be implemented over the coming years. This approach was agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on 21 June. OCC is proposing to set up focused engagement with residents, utilising methods such as Lived Experience conversations, youth forums and the annual residents' survey, to gather insight that will support the development and delivery of new policies. The council also plans to commission research led by Healthwatch Oxfordshire to engage transgender residents and capture their experiences. Cabinet has approved a review of bathroom facilities in council buildings. The Conservative Opposition supports equality for all residents but has concerns about the amount of resource being devoted to these matters which affect less than 1% of the population, given that the council already has robust equality policies.

RAINBOW STEPS

Complaints were received after steps to the part of County Hall that is a listed building were painted in rainbow colours by OCC to support gay pride. Officers confirmed washable paint or chalk had been used and no damage had been done.

POLICE WILL NOT ENFORCE 20MPH SPEED LIMITS

Thames Valley Police has re-stated its stance on 20mph limits. The following objection was recorded in [a recent OCC officer report](#):

“The current speed of traffic is a reliable indicator of how acceptable a new speed limit would be. If the mean speed is over the proposed limit it is unlikely to be effective without other measures such as engineering or continual enforcement. There is a proven link between road environment/character and drivers speed. Drivers must respect the need for a speed limit. If it is not accepted as realistic it will quickly be abused and be the source of constant demands for police action. The police stance still reflects that 20mph limits and zones should still be self-enforcing. The policy of Thames Valley Police is to use sound practical and realistic criteria (Circular Roads 1/2013) when responding to Highway Authorities in an effort to promote consistency and to reduce the burden of constant and unnecessary enforcement.”

In a [separate report](#), the police noted:

“If a speed limit is set too low and is ignored then this could result in the vulnerable road user being less safe and cause the majority of drivers to criminalise themselves and could bring the system of speed limits into disrepute. There should be no expectation that the police would be able to provide regular enforcement if a speed limit is set too low as this could result in an unreasonable additional demand on police resources. It is also important to set reasonable speed limits to ensure consistency across the country.”

Although 20mph speed limits are welcomed by some parish councils, these police statements do call into question the wisdom of OCC’s £8m cosmetic speed-limit sign-changing exercise.

ATTENDING COUNCILLOR MEETINGS REMOTELY

In his weekly update, Stephen Chandler, Interim Chief Executive Officer, has confirmed all non-statutory OCC councillor meetings will continue to be held either virtually or hybrid.

ATTEMPT TO REVERSE IMPOSITION OF VEGAN MEALS

Conservative Councillor Yvonne Constance will ask members at a full meeting of the council in July to reinstate meat and dairy on to the menu and to support local producers. This follows the decision to move to a vegan offer earlier this year and the subsequent controversy surrounding the provenance of the vegan dishes. Cllr Constance will tell colleagues: “Given the privileged position in which this Council finds itself and the potentially damaging effects of its motion dated 14 December, this Council resolves to offer locally produced menus at Council-catered events, including meat, dairy and vegan options, or to make alternative provisions for members, staff and attendees to facilitate personal choice.” Cllr David Bartholomew, who is seconding Cllr Constance’s motion, will say: “We are not opposed to vegan food, but we do want to help our local producers and serve local food rather than flying in mangoes from abroad. And we want there to be a choice. It is not right to impose personal dietary opinions on others. We are happy to be educated about veganism, but people still must be allowed to make their own choice as to what they do or do not want to eat.”

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR ROTHERFIELD GREYS

APPLICATION FOR AN ORDER TO MODIFY THE DEFINITIVE MAP

A decision has now been made on an 'Application for an Order to Modify the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way for Oxfordshire' by adding two footpaths in the parishes of Rotherfield Greys and Henley on Thames. One has been rejected, the other accepted in part. A copy of the determination report and appendices can be downloaded from the OCC website at: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/henley-on-thames-and-rotherfield-greys-03024-03025>

FMS ENQ22914277: POND AT DOG LANE/TREE CAUSING FLOODING

Please advise me if this has been resolved; if not, I will escalate.

FMS ENQ22920002 BROADPLAT: GIVE WAY SIGN FLATTENED AFTER ACCIDENT

Please advise me if this has been resolved; if not, I will escalate.

PAVEMENT THROUGH VILLAGE

At the May PC meeting, I advised that initial thoughts from officers are as follows:

- Cost likely to be in the region of £50k (based on 1.5m width, assuming £120 p/m2).
- Some isolated damage / loss to private hedges fronting the highway is likely, either due to current encroachment or from the necessary excavations.
- It would be necessary to cross the road at least once, for some twice, in order to use the f/way to access the main amenities (church and pub) when coming from the east, which might be ignored given the short distance and likely habitual current behaviour of walking in the road.
- The footway could be criticised for 'urbanisation' of the current semi-rural setting.
- A section outside the church looks to have a grass-crete / mesh type earth stabilisation for parking cars – need to understand how this area is used for routing of f/way etc.

An in-depth assessment with costs is to follow. Officers have apologised for the length of time this matter is taking to progress – is down to staffing resource issues.

As a reminder, OCC has previously indicated it could not justify funding such a footpath, so the parish would need to draw on its own resources, perhaps CIL monies.

I have chased again, but there is no update to the previous response, which was:

I apologise for the length of time that this has taken to progress.

At the present time the Traffic Team in the South are working hard on a number of key maintenance matters that have been taking up the majority of their time.

We are happy to assist with a parish funded scheme at this location and the team will undertake an in depth assessment and costing for it when they are able to do so.

We will also discuss the scheme with our colleagues in the highway operations team to ascertain the potential for them to assist the parish sooner than we currently can as a team.

The authority are keen to progress such parish led schemes and we will ensure that the scheme can be developed as soon as reasonable practicable.