

# REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS APRIL 2023 FROM CLLR **DAVID BARTHOLOMEW**

## GENERAL OCC REPORT

### HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SPARE SEATS SCHEME CANCELLATION

Dear Parents/Carers

#### **WITHDRAWAL OF SPARE SEATS SCHEME ROUTES 2-WT05 and 2-WT08: The Baldons, Blackbird Leys, Garsington to Wheatley Park School**

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) provide school transport where there are children who qualify for free school transport according to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

Prior to the Full Council meeting on 14 February, councillors were bombarded with emails from concerned parents and pupils alarmed by the administration's decision to withdraw the 'Home To School Spare Seats Scheme' in certain areas. At the Full Council meeting on 28 March, many concerned parents spoke passionately against the proposals. The Conservative Opposition then moved a motion containing the words *"This Council apologises unreservedly for its decision to send 'withdrawal' letters to parents under its Spare Seats scheme without parental or wider public consultation. The wording of its withdrawal letters caused significant anxiety and distress to parents in predominantly rural areas, with up to 235 children affected in the short term and as many as 1,384 students in the medium term."* The administration voted down the wording and passed a diluted motion, which Conservatives voted against.

### OXFORD TRAFFIC FILTERS (THE FOUR SECTOR PLAN) MOTION

At the same council meeting, concerned residents and businesses had earlier spoken against the 'Traffic Filter' scheme that will divide Oxford into four sectors for traffic purposes, and questioned the consultation process. Conservatives then moved a motion to re-run the consultation but were voted down by the administration.

### COST OF OCC'S COUNTY HALL CAR PARK REPAIRS

OCC has spent around £15,000 repairing the County Hall carpark. Shadow Cabinet Member for Highways Liam Walker said: *"I think residents will be frustrated as to why the car park outside county hall has been resurfaced whilst roads across Oxfordshire best resemble the surface of the moon in places. It's yet again clear that the coalition's focus is in the wrong place. They waste funds on projects like this, which could have fixed nearly 300 potholes instead."*



## **OXFORDSHIRE AWARDED £6.4M TO TACKLE ENERGY INEFFICIENCY**

Hundreds of Oxfordshire households struggling with fuel poverty will benefit from energy efficiency improvements after the county was awarded £6.417 million by the government. The [Home Upgrade Grant \(HUG2\)](#) funding will deliver whole-house retrofit installations to at least 310 properties across Oxfordshire that are not heated by mains gas – instead heated, for example, by electricity, liquefied petroleum gas, coal or oil.

## **OXFORD ZEZ ANNIVERSARY: OCC RAKES IN £700K FROM TRAFFIC SCHEME**

A scheme which charges motorists to drive through the city in an attempt to reduce emissions has raised almost £700,000 in fines in the year since it was launched. Britain's first Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) began in Oxford in February 2022. The pilot scheme covers just a handful of city centre streets. Vehicles are charged between £2 and £10 per day depending on their emissions. There are discounts and exemptions for some road users. Zero emission vehicles, such as electric cars, can enter the pilot area free of charge. Initially warning notices were issued to drivers but from April 2022 OCC started handing out fines. Given the amount of money raised, critics are saying that the scheme has failed as a ZEZ, but succeeded as a cash generator. Controversial proposals are now being developed to extend the ZEZ to a wider area of the city. These measures are on top of the controversial Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and the even more controversial 'Traffic Filter' proposals that will split Oxford into four sectors for cars without a permit.

## **HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES: SET FOR REFRESH IN MARCH AND APRIL**

People planning to visit Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) during March and April are being warned about a series of short closures to enable deep cleaning and essential maintenance to take place. This includes jet washing the sites and structures, repainting lines and safety areas, as well as other general work to improve the customer experience. The closing dates are:

- Alkerton, near Banbury: Monday 20 and Tuesday 21 March
- Ardley, near Bicester: Thursday 23 and Friday 24 March
- Dix Pit, Stanton Harcourt: Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 April
- Drayton, near Abingdon: Thursday 30 and Friday 31 March
- Oakley Wood, near Wallingford: Thursday 20 and Friday 21 April
- Redbridge, Oxford: Monday 17 and Tuesday 18 April
- Stanford, near Farringdon: Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 March.

More information can be found on OCC's [website](#), including details of nearest alternative sites during the closures.

## **HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRES: DIY WASTE PRICES TO RISE**

The cost to customers of disposing of DIY and other chargeable waste at HWRCs will rise this month. While most items brought to OCC's seven HWRCs can be left free of charge, DIY waste – items such as rubble, soil, fence panels, work tops and sinks – is legally classified as industrial waste and incurs a charge. From 1 April, all items currently charged at £1.50 will now cost £2. This covers most waste generated through home and garden renovations, including loft insulation, guttering, decking and fitted furniture. A list is available on the council's [website](#). The cost of disposing of bags of plasterboard will rise from £2.50 to £3.50, tyres from £5 to £6, but plasterboard sheets will remain at £10. Cash is not accepted, so visitors have to pay electronically before travelling. People who are unable to pay for items will not be permitted to deposit them. The Conservative Opposition is deeply concerned these measures will lead to an increase in fly tipping and will also present payment problems for those who do not have electronic payment facilities – contrary to OCC's 'Digital Exclusion' policy.