

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JUNE 2023 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

COUNCILLOR FELIX BLOOMFIELD BECOMES NEW CHAIR OF OCC

Cllr Felix Bloomfield (Conservative) who represents the Benson and Cholsey division at OCC has been elected as the new Chair of OCC. As the ceremonial head of the council, the chair must be a serving county councillor but must remain politically impartial. A new chair is elected each May at the annual general meeting of the county council. Born in Oxford, and educated locally before attending university in London, Cllr Bloomfield has lived and worked in Oxfordshire most of his life. He was an SODC councillor for 20 years. He was also a professional photojournalist for many years, specialising in motorsport and the music industry.

NEW CABINET MEMBER

Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of OCC has appointed philosophy student Michael O'Connor as the new Cabinet Member for Public Health and Equalities. His details can be found here: <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=12002>

RATIONALISATION OF PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

There is a surfeit of council-owned properties across the county, with some buildings moth-balled and others having very low occupancy rates since 'Working From Home' became widespread. OCC set up a cross-party advisory group recognising that cross-party consensus is required on this matter which could take several terms of office to resolve. The first (provisional) recommendation is that the council moves its Oxford headquarters from County Hall to a reimagined Speedwell House campus in two to three years' time. It is envisaged that the Speedwell Street offices would be an exemplar for carbon-neutral green offices. The sale or lease of New County Hall would potentially generate significant income, some of which would be invested in the refurbishment of Speedwell House, which is already owned by OCC. Regrettably, South Oxfordshire District Council is not following this lead and plans to spend £25million on a brand-new council HQ.

OCC CELEBRATES BECOMING A CARBON LITERATE ORGANISATION

OCC has received a bronze Carbon Literacy Organisation Award. I am advised a Carbon Literate organisation is an organisation that has been accredited by The Carbon Literacy Project as being 'culturally Carbon Literate'; maintaining a substantial proportion of its workforce as Carbon Literate and demonstrating its Carbon Literacy through its organisational behaviour. Councillor Liz Leffman, Leader of OCC, said: *"We are proud to receive this award, which highlights the importance we place on climate action."*

OXFORD LTNS AND POLLUTION: 'SUFFERING' RESIDENTS FEEL 'TRAPPED'

According to a recent Oxford Mail report, householders living near Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) fear for their health as they bemoan "suffering" from breathing problems from idling cars. Householders have told the paper the traffic reduction measures have contributed towards "breaking the communal spirit", as "some are suffering from increased pollution whilst others are not". Oxford City Councillor Linda Smith (Labour) is quoted as saying householders' concerns about traffic being funnelled down a few roads due to the LTNs "comes as no surprise", as she previously warned OCC about her constituents "tasting fumes".