

# County Councillor Report for Faringdon Division

Bethia Thomas, June 2021

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It is a pleasure to be writing my first report for the town and parish councils of Faringdon Division as the newly elected County Councillor. I hope to be able to continue the high standard of service to the community that we came to expect from my predecessor and am happy to work in partnership with you all to improve the lives of our residents.

My reports will focus on the issues that are relevant to our residents with more general matters being included at the end of each report. General news and information from across the county can be accessed from the county website at: [news.oxfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

While familiarising myself with the website, I did note that the last news update from the area was posted in 2018. I intend to change this and bring a focus back to the area, putting Faringdon Division back on the map. Similarly, while it was great news that local group Farcycles received a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service this month, I did take the time to contact the Oxford Mail, to let them know that Faringdon is spelled with one 'R' and not two.

Obviously this is only a minor matter, and we have many more serious issues to tackle. I know have much to learn and I am happy to receive further suggestions and comments, but please be patient as I learn the ropes.

All the best,

*Bethia.*

## [News from Across the Division](#)

I believe I have made it to at least one meeting of each town and parish this year and have an introductory understanding of the issues that have arisen at each. I am writing a single report for the entire division and have included a summary of all matters that have arisen at each meeting which I may be able to help with. In the coming months I hope to be giving updates on progress on each item, and believe that as many of you share the same issues, this should be a workable format, keeping in touch with items of common concern.

### Buckland

I was very pleased to be able to attend a meeting of Buckland Parish Council prior to the election, but sent my apologies to the May meeting. I am looking forward to attending next time. I have been contacted by a resident who would like to see improvements to the footpath along the A420 making it safer and more accessible. I am looking into this.

### Buscot

I attended Buscot Parish Meeting in the village hall last month. It was lovely to be able to meet face to face and I was happy to hear of the news in the parish and updates from the National Trust. Since then I have had a report from a resident about HGVs and speeding along the A417 – officers have responded to this and I can feedback to the parish should they wish any further information.

### Coleshill

I attended a virtual meeting of Coleshill Parish in the run up to the elections and look forward to the next meeting. I am happy to hear about any further issues affecting the village in the interim.

### Eaton Hastings

I made contact with the parish clerk of Eaton Hastings in the run up to the election. Sadly the meetings no longer seem to be taking place, so I will be looking into the implications of this to the residents in the area.

### Faringdon

I attended the Full Council Meeting of Faringdon Town Council in May to see outgoing mayor Dr Mike Wise stand down and new Mayor Cllr Kiera Bentley and Deputy Mayor Cllr Liz Swallow appointed; congratulations to both, and many thanks to the outgoing Mayor for his years of service to the town.

As a town, district and county councillor I am conscious of my roles in council and am monitoring my commitments to ensure I am doing my utmost to serve the residents of the division effectively. I am working with town clerk Sally Thurston and others to ensure open communication and partnership working between my roles, seeing this position as a benefit to Faringdon town and the wider area.

I am aware of several issues around the town that are currently in review or being progressed. There are others I need to work on further in conjunction with the town council and the district council where relevant. These are mainly highway matters, but of course we will be looking on other projects with interest, including the build of the new school on the site south of Park Rd. A summary of points is listed here, as a starting point, though I am sure there are many more that could to be added.

- Rejuvenating the Town Centre: resurfacing pavements, repairs to roads and reinstating road markings where needed.
- Delivering Civil Parking Enforcement: in conjunction with the district council and investigating parking options for the town.
- 20MPH for the Town Centre: delivering this scheme to historic town centre.
- Safer Schools: working with schools, town and district councils to improve safety and air quality around Faringdon's Schools, safety in car parks, crossings and road markings, and finalising the Safer Ways to Schools network of cycle and pedestrian tracks across the town.
- Other Roads in Faringdon – resurfacing and improving Park Road and other key routes.
- Faringdon Community Bus – continuing to support operations of the service.
- Accessibility to the Countryside: seeking improvements to the footpath at the bottom of Canada Lane leading to Humpty Hill as part of a community project and improvements in infrastructure to the footpath leading from Beech Close to the same point.

### Great Coxwell

I have been able to attend two virtual parish meetings and have been keeping up with things in the village newsletter. I would like to congratulate the efforts of those who contributed towards the defibrillator fund, which I believe will pay for the equipment, maintenance and training associated with the unit. I would also commiserate with those involved in the bid to protect the land known as 'Siberia' for conservation. While unsuccessful, the effort involved was truly heroic, and the continuing efforts of Greener Great Coxwell must surely be a positive for the village. I look forward to being able to support these initiatives as much as I can into the future.

### Little Coxwell

I am looking forward to attending the Little Cowell Parish Council meeting next week. While I am still only able to attend this session virtually, this is clearly the most sensible option until it becomes safer to do so according to central government's guidelines.

### Littleworth

Surely the most idyllic setting for a parish meeting was in Littleworth's Churchyard last month, though admittedly the weather was kind to us. I am looking into various issues raised at the meeting including solutions that would significantly improve safety on the A420 at the Littleworth bus stop and the intersection leading out of the village. I am also investigating the potential of introducing a 20mph zone in the village itself. I will report back on both and invite you to attend the next FATAC meeting to discuss these concerns further (see below).

## [News From Across the County](#)

The elections in May saw Liberal Democrat and Green members who had been working in partnership in the campaign for Oxfordshire, join with Labour members to form a Progressive Alliance, forming the new administration for the County Council. New leader, Liz Leffman, Liberal Democrat member for Charlbury sees this as unique opportunity for Oxfordshire as we work to improve the lives of residents across the county, with a more sustainable vision for the future.

### Covid Updates

As I am sure we are all aware, Covid 19 still poses a significant threat to public health. The variant of the virus which first appeared in India (Delta) is in every part of the country, including Oxfordshire. Our message is consistent: maintain government guidelines to reduce the spread of the disease and encourage all residents to take up the offer of vaccination once invited to do so. It is the success of the vaccination programme in Oxfordshire that means that the steep increase we have seen in cases in the last week of May, up three times from the previous week, has not translated in the equivalent increase in hospitalisation and mortality, and even more a reason to keep to the message of 'hands, face, space, fresh air' and vaccination clear in everyone's minds.

### Other News

Regardless of elections and their outcome the work of the council continues and news items are listed in the website's news page: [news.oxfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

I would also like to remind you of the Councillor Priority Fund which allows me to fund community projects to benefit residents across the division is still available. Details of this fund can be found on the website.

### Councillor Activity Report

It has clearly been a busy time for me as a newly elected councillor. I have been appointed to the Education Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed Members of the Fire Service. I have also been recruited as a substitute for the Council's Audit and Governance Committee, attending my first meeting in Banbury last week.

On a more local level I attended the Faringdon Community Bus AGM and will continue to do my utmost to support this valuable service. I will be attending the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee (FATAC) this week and invite all those who have an interest in such matters to ask to attend these meetings in the future. I will also be attending the Faringdon and Wantage Locality Meeting to discuss issues of importance to the region.

On a more personal level, I have led the of activity Faringdon Litter Pickers at a site in Faringdon, supported the bid for land in Great Coxwell and have entered the Littleworth Virtual Dog Show – fingers crossed!

At the moment face-to-face surgeries are still suspended, but we are working on ways to address this. My full details are available on the website, and I am very happy to you to contact me directly using my council email address: [bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk)