

# County Councillor Report for Faringdon Division

Bethia Thomas, July 2021

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Welcome to my second report as county councillor for Faringdon and surrounding villages. I feel as though I am starting to settle into the role, and with many different irons in the fire right across the division, would like to think I can begin to move forward with more action.

I received positive feedback on the content and layout of my last report so will continue to follow this format focussing on the issues that are relevant to our locality with more general matters being included at the report. I think most of you receive press releases which you can also circulate to residents – these can also be accessed from the county website at:

[news.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

With parish meetings and other news running throughout the month there doesn't seem to be an ideal time to produce a report, so have decided I will be making sure everyone is up to date with a report at the end of each month. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns in the interim.

All the best,

*Bethia.*

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

I am very happy to have been able to attend the majority of parish meetings in an official capacity. It has been a pleasure to get to know you and also to begin to understand the issues that we are facing, with many points in common, mostly related to traffic and highways, being highlighted time and again.

With that in mind I chaired the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee (FATAC) last month. This meeting is critical to our area and I would want your input on this in the future. The next meeting is on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September. Registration for this meeting is through Faringdon Town Council which administers the committee.

Additionally, it may be of interest that the council has just launched an out-of-hours highways service, with a dedicated new telephone number (01223 849731) for Oxfordshire residents to call for urgent out of hours highways related issues. I mention it here as this seems to be affecting all parishes in the division.

## Buckland

I am yet to attend a meeting of Buckland Parish in an official capacity but am looking forward to meeting you all in late July. I have contacted officers about improvements to the footpath along the A420 making it safer and more accessible and am awaiting a reply. I will be in touch with more news as soon as I hear anything. I received notice of the temporary road closure planned for October on Orchard Rd – I trust it will not cause too much disruption and am glad to see a good period of notice being given. It was a pleasure to be able to spend some time in the village on a walk from Faringdon recently – I hope to be able to get to know more about Buckland and its community in the coming months.

### Buscot

After the last parish meeting I updated you on details of The Advertiser in Faringdon – it is the only local publication in print and may be useful for you to advertise any village events you would like to promote to a wider audience. I have been following up some issues about speeding and heavy haulage on the A419 closer to Faringdon towards Eaton Hastings, and will keep you updated of developments if you wish. It was lovely to be able to attend the staging of Macbeth at the Weir, and I have been a regular visitor to the village in the recent hot weather, though I would like to bring my litter picker next time I walk along the river!

### Coleshill

It was a delight to attend the recent meeting of Coleshill Parish and meet the councillors in such a beautiful setting. Since our meeting I have been in correspondence with officers to get an update on the priority system that was being discussed as well as a more general update about the Speedwatch programme and other issues associated with the ongoing speeding issues in the village. I encourage you to attend FATAAC if possible, to address the committee formally. I have also been in contact with the resident in Great Coxwell who led their defibrillator installation recently, so please let me know if you would like any further details from the team there.

### Eaton Hastings

Since my last report I am happy to have contacted new parish representative Raymond Bull. I have been in correspondence with him and another resident about the ongoing traffic issues with heavy haulage and speeding a constant concern along the A419. I encourage you to attend FATAAC in September to talk about these issues and am investigating them further with officer involvement. I was able to join a number of residents at a social event last month and get to know more about their concerns. I am delighted to report that one of these concerns has been addressed, with the potholes on the road to the church recently repaired. I am looking forward to having a look at the finished result.

### Faringdon

Firstly I would like to offer my congratulations to Faringdon Town Council after their gold award announced recently, the first of this kind in the county – this achievement is testament to the hard work of the team, they should be proud of their efforts to put Faringdon first and foremost to better the town for all residents.

I continue as a town, district and county councillor and am learning how best to work at each level to benefit the town. I am learning more about issues around the town that are currently in review or being progressed. I have raised many of these with officers and am awaiting responses. These are mainly highway matters, but I have also commented on planning applications including the new school build and the Rogers Concrete site. A summary of points is listed here, as a starting point, though I am sure there are many more that could be added. I would welcome additions to this if you are aware of any I have missed here, and will use this list as a map of progress as suggested at the last full council meeting.

- Rejuvenating the Town Centre and other roads in Faringdon: resurfacing pavements, repairs to roads and reinstating road markings where needed – awaiting updates from officers;
- Investigating works to the Ferndale Street Bridge: contacting officers for an update;
- Civil Parking Enforcement: this scheme has been formally accepted by government so changes are now confirmed and expected to begin in November;
- 20mph for the Town Centre: awaiting updates on delivery;

- Safer Schools: awaiting a comprehensive update from officers – this is piece of partnership working for all levels of council, schools and community groups;
- Accessibility to the Countryside: seeking improvements to some footpath in the town and instigate a clear annual programme of works for critical areas;
- Faringdon Community Bus: continuing to support operations of the service;
- Proposed Active Travel Working Group: to bring together groups and individuals across Faringdon to create a plan for active travel across the town and clarify sources of funding - awaiting initial responses;
- Investigating the implications of the South Steeds appeal decision on the funds available for highways improvements.

#### Great Coxwell

It was lovely to be able to join you in person for the parish meeting earlier this month. Since then I have followed up queries regarding the verges on the Holloway and traffic issues around the park; I would encourage a representative of the council to speak at FATAc in September. Earlier I had received correspondence from a resident about the proposed improvements to the Great Coxwell intersection on to the A420. I clarified this and am also investigating the implications of the recent appeal decision on the South Steeds development. I have enjoyed receiving updates through the village newsletter and am also following the Greener Great Coxwell page to keep to date with the activities of the group.

#### Little Coxwell

I was very glad to attend Little Coxwell Parish Council even if it was only virtually – I will be looking forward to the time we are able to meet in person. Again, traffic issues along the A420 dominated concerns. As reported above, I am investigating the outcome of the development appeal which could release funds for intersection improvements. I was interested to hear the idea of lowering the speed limit in this section of the A420 to 50mph I had not heard this suggestion before.

#### Littleworth

Since the last parish meeting, I have attempted to follow up some items discussed. I have researched solar powered crossings, and while I have seen systems like those described at the meeting, I do not believe they are available in the UK. Several companies produce solar panelled belisha beacons, but I wasn't sure that this would be appropriate for this purpose. I discussed some of these issues at the last FATAc meeting and expect updates at the next meeting in September. It was lovely to see you all at the end of lockdown get together in the churchyard, and also to enter the virtual dog show – we are very proud dog owners!

#### [News from across the County](#)

We held a meeting of the full council earlier this month, with members travelling to the Spiceball Leisure Centre in Banbury to ensure covid compliance. At the meeting the new structure of the scrutiny committees was formally agreed. As an administration we want to see increased accountability for all aspects of the council's work and have thus announced three new panels focussing on people, place and the processes of the council. Each of these committees is chaired by a member of the opposition to ensure transparency.

#### Covid Updates

I don't think it is necessary to report here that there are high levels on covid infection throughout the county. While government regulations have been relaxed, please encourage

your residents to follow sensible guidelines and practice caution particularly in crowds and indoor settings. Full details and advice can be found on the council's website.

#### Other News

There have been several news stories released recently, most notably the confirmation of parking enforcement changes coming this November; plans have now been confirmed by the government so we should be seeing changes coming soon. Further news concerning the provision of summer holiday activities and food support for Oxfordshire children, as well as a comprehensive list of activities suggested for the under-fives being promoted to encourage the development of pre-schoolers across the county has also been announced. Details of these stories can be found at: [news.oxfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.news.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

#### Councillor Activity Report

As I have said previously, it has been a busy time for me, but feel as though I am settling into my new role and getting to grips with the activity across the division. With the reorganisation of scrutiny committees, I have now been appointed to the "People" Scrutiny Committee, which will include education, but also social care, which had not previously been overseen by a scrutiny panel. This month I have attended the Joint Consultative Committee for Uniformed Members of the Fire Service and have also been appointed to the Fostering Panel. More locally, as already discussed, I chaired FATAAC and attended the Faringdon and Wantage Locality Meeting to discuss issues of strategic importance to the region. A great deal of focus was placed on concerns about the A420, and I am also tasked to follow up the A420 Safety Committee that has been active in this area in the past.

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 for you to contact me directly using my council email address: [bethia.thomas@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bethia.thomas@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.