

County Councillor Report for Faringdon Division

Bethia Thomas, November/December 2021

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It is feeling increasingly wintery outside, and I hope you are keeping warm and cosy in your homes during the freezing weather we have been seeing lately.

Obviously the county council is responsible for gritting the roads and I was concerned recently that during an unusually fierce cold spell this had not been done adequately, with black ice along the A417. This caused significant disruption in Faringdon particularly, and I wanted to investigate this further. So far, reports indicate the road was gritted and it may have just been the unusual conditions that caused this issue, but I will report back if I hear anything further. If you do see this again on any of our 'A' roads, please report it on Fix My Street or let me know directly so I can keep a record of this.

As I am sure you are aware, the fire service is often busier at this time of year with an increased number of road traffic incidents due to inclement conditions, plus other hazards such as chimney fires to contend with. I once used to write the fire reports for the local newspaper in Faringdon and am always reminded of these hazards at this time of year. If you ever need further information on staying safe, please visit the fire safety website: www.365alive.co.uk

As always, I have given a general update for the division followed up by specific updates for each parish. I would encourage you to get in touch with me directly if you have any queries; any major news stories will be available through the website at: news.oxfordshire.gov.uk

All the best,

Bethia.

[News from Across the Division](#)

Many of the parishes in Faringdon Division are affected adversely by the increasing hazards we see on the A420. As has been pointed out, this is only going to get worse as the number of developments along its length increase. Several parishes have discussed the possibility of reinstating a working group or similar to look at the future of this road, including safety and strategic issues. I have been in touch with neighbouring councillors, Yvonne Constance, Juliette Ash, and Judy Roberts, to see if we can work together to improve the situation. We have requested officer involvement to give us an overview of safety statistics and key issues from the council's point of view and are getting dates together for an inaugural meeting. I will keep you posted on further details over the coming months.

Buses have not been running as scheduled of late, mainly due to the lack of HGV drivers as we have seen in other services nationally. I have been in touch with Cllr Tim Bearder, cabinet member with this responsibility who is helping me discuss temporary solutions to this problem with Stagecoach until normal service has renewed. This is particularly important over the winter period when passengers should not be left waiting at bus stops in cold, dark conditions.

Civil Parking Enforcement went live on November 1st to improve the flow of traffic, to improve the pedestrian experience and increase safety all round. Recently I have had reports that live ticketing has occurred on London Street in Faringdon and I will continue to monitor the situation. The OCC website link [Reviewing parking restrictions](#) allows you to report problem areas. I have heard that new restrictions have been suggested around Bromsgrove in Faringdon. I was not aware of these changes but will be investigating these reports as soon as I can.

The next Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for December 17th. As the name implies it deals with issues from villages outside Faringdon and is a great forum to discuss specific traffic concerns, and I am happy to represent you there, or for you to submit points to be raised to officers.

On a different note, we are happy to announce that the consultation period for residents' views on the Faringdon Library refurbishment is now open. If you have views on the future of the library and the designs we choose for its new look, please have your say at: [Faringdon Library Enhancement | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

Buckland

I was very happy to come along to your parish meeting in November. As stated in my introduction I have been in touch with the county councillors on either side of our division to see if we are able to establish a group concerned with improving safety along the A420 – we discussed this at your meeting and hope to follow this up in the coming months. I am also happy to pursue the establishment of 20MPH Zones should you decide this is right for the village. To follow up on some of your questions, measures supported will be from a simple change of speed signs to more complex solutions in areas that can range from a whole village or a single street. Speed cameras and road humps will not be used. Further details of this can be found at: [Requesting 20mph | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Buscot

I hope you are keeping well in Buscot. I am always thinking of you and any continued concerns of speeding along the A417, shared by the residents of Eaton Hastings. Please let me know of any issues you may have that I could help with.

Coleshill

I visited Coleshill recently in and took note of the concerns you quite rightly have raised about speeding through the village. I have forwarded on the application details for the 20mph zone which I hope to discuss at your next parish meeting. Further details of this can be found at: [Requesting 20mph | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Eaton Hastings

It was a great honour and pleasure to be invited to attend a service at St Michael and All Angels and have a chance to meet some more residents there. While visiting, I noted the last few potholes that still need to be repaired and I will be reporting them on Fix My Street as soon as I get a chance. After speaking to residents, I will also be reopening concerns held about speeding along the A417 and the possibility of getting a 40MPH zone put in place, similar to that at Buscot.

Faringdon

It was a pleasure to welcome Chair of the Council, Cllr John Howson, to Faringdon in November. We had a tour of the town centre, visiting the market and local businesses, the Pump House Project and the Farcycles Shop as well as the fire station and town council meeting several town councillors along the way, as well as the Mayor, Cllr Kiera Bentley. We discussed many issues that Faringdon faces which could be influenced by the council and I think it contributed significantly to his understanding of the town.

Currently here are two live consultations running till the end of the year, concerning Faringdon, that you may like to contribute to. The library refurbishment consultation, as mentioned previously, will allow you to have your say on the new designs of the library, and the consultation is also open on the proposed 20MPH Speed Limit Zone in Faringdon's historic town centre. It is the aim to report this scheme to the Cabinet Member for Highways Management on the 27th January if there are not any objections found in the consultation. The links for each consultation are below.

[Faringdon Library Enhancement | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

[Faringdon - proposed 20mph speed limit zone | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#)

I have been pursuing a few issues in Faringdon with interest, and these will form the basis of two of my questions to council this month – namely, the resurfacing of the footways in the town centre, and the fate of the Faze building on the Highworth Road. There are other issues to report on though, and I am giving a list here of some of the major items here, please ask for further details if you would like more information on any of them.

- Ferndale Street Bridge & The Portway – will organise a site visit to investigate;
- Proposed Active Travel Working Group – have been in contact with David Williamson on this, awaiting response;
- Park Road Resurfacing - completed except for the sections where we are waiting for developers to finish works;
- Town Centre Road Resurfacing – completed, as stated, investigations continue into the state of the footways;
- Faringdon Infant School – no further information received;
- S106 Social Services Contributions – reopening investigation.

Great Coxwell

I was sorry to have missed your last parish council meeting. I am happy to follow up anything that was raised there as normal, and to discuss any feedback from the officer site visit if needed. I am still pursuing some issues, including the history around the cobbled path, but unfortunately have not heard anything new come from this.

Little Coxwell

I am looking forward to meeting you all at the parish meeting in December. I have suggested the possibility of applying for a 20MPH Zone for the village and am happy to follow that up with you should you wish to pursue this scheme.

Littleworth

I am looking forward to attending your next parish meeting in December. I have already suggested that a report be drawn up to submit in support of your planned application for the 20MPH Scheme and I will be happy to write in support of this submission as well. I am pleased to report that I have been in touch with neighbouring councillors to instigate an

A420 action and safety group to investigate any strategies for improving safety along this stretch of road. I have also been investigating the bad service we have been recently experiencing on the Stagecoach S6 and will reporting back on both as soon as I hear any news.

[News from across the County](#)

Covid Updates

With the emergence of the new Omicron variant of Covid, with confirmed cases in Oxfordshire, we continue to encourage you to take sensible precautions: get a PCR test if you have symptoms, self-isolate when asked, wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces (following government guidelines), ventilate rooms, and get your vaccine and booster as soon as you can. We are also asking people to follow instructions about testing and self-isolating if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace. For further advice and support visit the website: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

Other News

It is getting to the time of year where everyone is talking budgets. Residents can have their say on the council's budget proposals, including our proposed council tax level for 2022/23 and the strategic priorities by visiting [Budget consultation 2022/23 | Let's Talk Oxfordshire](#) and completing the online survey. The survey opened on 2 December and closes on 5 January 2022.

Councillor Activity Report

In preparation for December's full council meeting, I have submitted three questions to further investigate issues that are relevant to the division. The first concerns the future of the Faze building in Faringdon, asking for clarity on this matter. The second asks for clarification around the status of funding for Faringdon town centre pavements – this is mired in much confusion and I wanted to understand this further. The third concerns the efforts the council is taking to work with Stagecoach and other bus companies after the spate of cancellations and poor service on the S6 Service.

It is important that these questions are raised at council and I would like stress that members of the public and town and parish representatives are also able to address the council should they wish, and I would urge them to do so with important issues like these. Representatives of Shrivenham Parish addressed the council at the last meeting and made a significant point about the use of gas boilers in new schools, which is also an issue here in the Faringdon division. If you would like any advice on this, I would be happy to have a chat about any issues you may want to raise.

I would 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. Face-to-face surgeries have recommenced both for the county and district, with appearances at the first Saturday Market of the month in Faringdon Town Centre from 11.00am. My full details are available on the website, and I am very happy for you to contact me directly using my council email address:

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