

Focus on Parishes with Cllr Bethia Thomas

Faringdon

Feb 2025

There has been a lot going on at council recently, passing a balanced budget at our meeting earlier this month. There has also been much discussion about Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation. As always, happy to answer any questions you may have.



Parish Round-Up

Wall Repairs on Stanford Road – After the long-awaited repair to the wall owned by Sovereign was completed last month, another wall has collapsed along the same stretch. We are investigating ownership and seeking repairs.

Issues on the Highworth Road – The streetlights have now been restored on the Highworth Road after a long running repairs were completed; after having a walk around the estate recently there are several issues still needing to be investigated, including the state of the highways and pavement, street lighting and adoption matters.

Adult Social Care S106 Payments – See section on this below; I am pursuing this closely and separate to any correspondence I have had on this subject, I have had conversations with officers and have asked whether we could have a more consultative approach taken.

Bromsgrove Day Centre – Separate to the above, I am pursuing ways in which we can fund the day centre to keep it operational for our older residents.

Fernham Road Pedestrian Refuge – Completed; have had positive feedback to the improvements including the refuge, new pavements, and gate onto the play park.

Wicklesham Quarry Application – Still awaiting updates from highways before the application can go to the county planning committee.

Speeding in Marlborough Gardens – After the speed survey, the town council has been invited to suggest a location for a SID which would be installed by highways officers.

School Crossing Signage on Park Road – Still chasing this matter.

Bollards on Park Road – The bollards around Tesco have been reported directly to officers

Faringdon Highways, Parking & Traffic Issues – Correspondence has come in highlighting a variety of different issues in and around Faringdon, all of which will be followed up.

Traffic Lights onto the A420 – No further updates.

Repairs to Radcot Bridge – A road closure has been ordered to facilitate repairs to the bridge where existing stonework will be dismantled and a new parapet rebuilt from 17 March.

Adult Social Care S106 Payments

As stated above, I wanted to give a fuller description of the latest information I have received from officers on this matter and also the options I have suggested for this funding, namely a boost to the existing day centre, renovation of the first floor of the library rooms to provide services to the community there, and partnership work with extra care providers; I am waiting to hear back from officers on these options. Separately I am pursuing a boost to funding the operations of the day centre In Bromsgrove.

“Spending the S106 requires a compliant plan and project to be in place. In the case of day care, it has long proved difficult to deliver against as these forms of agreements as delivering new or renovating existing purpose built day care facilities is both complex and expensive (ie beyond the level of the total of S106 money held for the purpose when looked at on a local scale). In addition, in many cases these agreements date several years, and were written when adult social care provision was planned in a more “building based” way. With a new delivery model, it is harder to come forward with a scheme in line with the services business plans against the original agreement.

Adult social care is aware of this and therefore looking at innovative ways to spending the money to achieve the same intended outcome by developing capital business cases that are:

- *aligned to the [Oxfordshire Way strategic approach](#) and current delivery model*
- *complement future service development intentions*
- *cost effective to implement, e.g. requiring no additional staffing resource to make them viable*

A recent example of this approach was for the service to purchase electric mini-buses to provide specific community support services at sites in Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Oxford, Wallingford, Wantage and Witney. A further project that is being developed is a Safe Space building that once built will service the whole of the Oxfordshire population. It is these sorts of projects that the service will be focusing on to ensure the money is spent to provide the adult day care originally envisaged from the developments in the Faringdon area.

On your specific query on where the funding sits, it remains with us and has not been claimed back. That is a risk, and one which we take seriously, but we completely agree with you, we need to ensure the funding is allocated into the capital programme as soon as possible to mitigate that risk.

We do need to find more creative ways to ensure this funding is deployed to support services and communities and Karen and my teams would be very happy to discuss ideas you have here.

I will respond separately on your email in relation to the Faringdon Day Centre and have a conversation with Adult Social Care colleagues where a proposal would need to originate. However I should say now, it is very unlikely s106 could be used to support here where the need is for revenue support. The funds available are not able to be used to support the council's (or partner's) general revenue services and need to support the capital infrastructure pressures of development.”

I am following this up and will ask again whether Faringdon Town Council can also be included in the conversation on this matter.

General News

- **Budget:** OCC has set its budget for the period for 2025/6. The Council had greater flexibility to invest in services this year with an improved settlement from the new government. However, this was conditional on setting council tax at the maximum 4.99%. Additional funding is being put towards our highway network with £50m for maintenance, including on pothole prevention work like reducing flooding and earlier resurfacing. The administration also delivered another year-on-year increase for SEND and children's services, as well as £1 million for early years support.
- **Devolution and local government reorganisation:** Oxfordshire was not selected by the government to be in the 'fast lane' for reorganisation and devolution. This means the changes will likely take place in 2027/8, rather than 2026. Councils are preparing to put forward proposals for local government reorganisation, with options including a whole Oxfordshire unitary authority, or multiple smaller unitary authorities. These drafts will be submitted by 21 March 2025 with final proposals due in November.
- **Local elections 2025:** The government confirmed that elections to Oxfordshire County Council will take place in 2025. This will take place on the previously agreed new boundaries that include divisions for Faringdon which will be reduced in size, with Littleworth and Buckland now linked with Stanford in the Vale and Kingston Bagpuize.
- **Rural inequalities:** The county would like to hear from residents their experiences of rural inequalities, including difficulties in rural areas in accessing health and social care, housing, employment, and infrastructure. This is part of the 'Oxfordshire Marmot Place' initiative (after Sir Michael Marmot). Please send your insights to marmot@oxfordshire.gov.uk
- **Bus services:** Changes are being made to some of the subsidised services for rural areas following a retendering, including Service 68 run by Pulhams Coaches between Faringdon and Wantage via Uffington; minor changes to route and timetable to better suit students at King Alfred's Academy and an additional morning journey between Wantage and Uffington.

Live Public Consultations

- **Pharmacies:** Input to an assessment of the need for community pharmacies in Oxfordshire by 9 March. [Input to assessment.](#)
- **Home to school transport:** Add to the important topic of home to school and post sixteen transport policy by 2 March. [Input to survey.](#)
- **Free period products:** Add your voice to the discussion about providing menstruation products in all council buildings. [Input to survey.](#)
- **SEND Conversations:** OCC is hosting further information sessions on improvements to SEND services on 18 and 25 March. [Add to the conversation.](#)

Grants

- **Green grants:** Grants are available to support activities for Big Green Week, applications close 14 March. [Apply here.](#)

Councillor Surgeries

I will be available for face-to-face surgeries between 10.00-11.00am at Faringdon Library on the following dates:

- 8th February
- 8th March

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