

# **REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS SEPT 2016 FROM CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE**

## **UNITARY DEBATE**

There have been reports suggesting that proposals for reform of local government in Oxfordshire are off the table due to the lack of agreement between the City and District Councils, and the County. The Government wants us to proceed by consensus where possible, and OCC hopes that the debate is not over – particularly when a new compromise proposal has been put forward which has yet to be fully discussed. With £200,000 spent on two independent reports, and with both reports showing that savings in excess of £100m are possible over a five-year time period through a single strategic authority for Oxfordshire, it is in everybody's interest that the debate continues.

## **LIBRARIES MINISTER SEES “GREAT EXAMPLE” AT BICESTER**

I was delighted to welcome the Minister for Civil Society Rob Wilson MP to our flagship county council library at Bicester on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. This brand new library offers a wide range of council services and activities, and has attracted more than 2,000 new members since opening in April. Plans to expand Oxfordshire's Home Library Service and joining up services 'under one roof' were among the hot topics discussed during this fact-finding visit from Rob Wilson who has recently taken over responsibility for libraries.

Heralded as a “great example” by Mr Wilson, Bicester exemplifies an emerging identity for Oxfordshire's libraries as focal points for a broad range of services, help and advice. The council recently announced plans to expand its Home Library Service so that people with mobility problems who can't get to a library can have books and other items delivered to their door by local volunteers.

## **SODC LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION**

### **Chalgrove Airfield**

The selection of Chalgrove Airfield as SODC's preferred option as a strategic site for housing appears attractive because it is not in the Green Belt. However, the site has significant drawbacks in terms of infrastructure due to the lack of transport links. While not insurmountable these would be very costly to provide. 3,500 houses on the airfield would relieve the pressure on other local communities to come up with site options.

### **Culham Science Centre**

The County Council's response to the Plan is lengthy. In summary with relation to this area it states: “Oxfordshire County Council supports a focus on growth within Science Vale, which is the area concentrated around the three science parks at Harwell Campus, Culham Science Centre, and Milton Park, which also include two enterprise zones and at the centre of which is Didcot. Although many of the opportunities for growth in that area have already been identified, additional growth at Culham Science Centre would help reinforce the Science Vale focus, deliver a sustainable community, deliver jobs and infrastructure to benefit the wider area. The current development proposal for Culham could be an international exemplar for sustainable communities, fit well with the emerging Didcot Garden Town and enable more success for the Science Vale.” The planned new road from Didcot, the river crossing and a Clifton Hampden bypass would be viable prospects if such a vision was adopted.

### **Berinsfield**

I have always supported the regeneration of Berinsfield and whole-heartedly support the District Council's work to assess potential options for new housing that could provide improved community facilities for the village. Just how many homes would be required will need to be balanced against the plans that are eventually agreed for Culham.

## **OXFORDSHIRE COMET: THE NEW BOOKABLE TRANSPORT SERVICE**

Several communities in my Division are already taking up this new OCC service and I would encourage those who have not yet done so to investigate whether it would be a good thing for their residents too. The Oxfordshire Comet is a not for profit, bookable transport service for those who can't access suitable public transport. It can be booked for any type of trip, whether it's to meet friends in town, travel across the county, attend an appointment or pop to the shops. The service is available 10.15am - 2.30pm Monday to Friday (not Bank Holidays). It uses vehicles that normally take children to school and adults to day care centres. (OCC identified the times of the day when they weren't being used and are making them available so that residents can make the journeys they want.) Because OCC already owns these vehicles, the Council only has to cover running costs, meaning charges are low for passengers. More information can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-comet>

## **CARERS' STRATEGY AND CARERS' PERSONAL BUDGETS CONSULTATION**

OCC and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group work in partnership with other organisations to identify and support many of the 61,000 family, informal or unpaid carers in Oxfordshire. Both organisations do this because they recognise and value the important role that carers have in the lives of the more vulnerable members of our communities. A joint consultation is taking place in two parts: Part 1 of this consultation is about the Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy. This is a document about priorities for carers' support and the outcomes desired for carers of all ages. It also gives an overview of how carers are supported in Oxfordshire. Part 2 of this consultation is about the proposed options for carers' personal budgets. Please take part by completing the online questionnaire here <https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Carers/answerQuestionnaire?qid=4183363> or by attending one of three workshops.

### Consultation workshops

All taking place from 10.30am - 1:00pm on the following dates:

- 13th September at Didcot Civic Hall
- 15th September in Banbury Town Hall
- 29th September in Oxford Town Hall

To attend, please phone 01865 323410 or email [carerssupportreview@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carerssupportreview@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## **RESIDENTS CAN GET THEIR ELECTRIC BLANKETS CHECKED FREE**

Now is the time for residents to book their blanket in for a free check in October. Oxfordshire County Council's Fire & Rescue Service and Trading Standards are urging electric blanket owners to get their blankets tested free of charge ahead of the approaching colder months. Testing electric blankets annually is important as all electrical systems have the potential to go wrong. In 2015 a total of 22 per cent of the electric blankets failed the safety test and were declared unsafe to use. Testing is by pre-booked appointment only, strictly on a first come, first served basis. Residents should call Trading Standards on 01865 815 000 option 4 to arrange an appointment or email [communityengagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:communityengagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk).