

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS

FROM YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

MAY 2015

THE COUNTY COUNCIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS

On May 7th a by-election also took place for the County Council in West Witney & Bampton. It was won by James Mills for the Conservatives. The Conservative Independent Alliance still retains control of the County Council.

Now that there is a Conservative majority in Parliament the Party can implement their Manifesto in full. It outlines a considerable number of policies that will have implications for services run by the County Council, and we will get details as soon as they are available. A pdf of the 2015 Conservative Manifesto can be found at <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/manifesto2015/ConservativeManifesto2015.pdf>

For this Division one of the key policies is a commitment to safeguard the national Green Belt and to protect local green spaces under a new Local Green Space planning designation. For the residents of Garsington, Marsh Baldon, Toot Baldon, Nuneham Courtenay and Sandford-on-Thames who are concerned about the City's plans to build 4,000+ houses at Grenoble Road, this will come as very welcome news.

There is also a commitment to support locally-led proposals for garden cities/towns and prioritise brownfield development, making sure that new developments are always matched by the necessary infrastructure to support them. I am personally in favour of one or even two new garden towns (we don't need cities) in the south of the county to take the pressure off existing communities.

NEW FIRE CONTROL CENTRE GOES LIVE

Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) has joined forces with two neighbouring services to create a state of the art emergency call handling centre. OFRS had joined Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS), and Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service (BMKFRS) to set a new joint Control centre, based at RBFRS HQ in Calcot, Reading. The Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) answers 999 calls and mobilises resources on behalf of the three Fire and Rescue Services (FRS's) to incidents across the Thames Valley, serving a combined population of around 2,253,400. The phased transition to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service (TVFCS) was completed on Thursday 23rd April.

The TVFCS replaces the three FRS's individual control rooms, which were in urgent need of updating following the termination of the Government's national FiReControl project in 2010. After the FiReControl project came to an end, each FRS in England was given up to £1.8m grant money each from Government to undertake this work. For more information: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/apr/new-thames-valley-fire-control-service-goes-live>

NEW PARK AND RIDE AT BICESTER

Work to construct a new 580 space park and ride in Bicester will begin in earnest following the early May Bank Holiday with the whole project still scheduled to be complete before Christmas. The new park and ride, the first in Oxfordshire outside the city of Oxford, will be built off the A41 at Vendee Drive to help tackle congestion coming into the town. For more information: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/apr/bicester-park-and-ride-scheme-progress-further>

CONSULTATION ON SIXTH FORM SCHOOL TRANSPORT

The County Council is consulting on its proposed annual transport policy statement covering young people of sixth form age. The policy statement details **the transport provision and financial assistance with transport that the council believes are necessary for Oxfordshire residents of sixth form age who are receiving education or training.** Therefore this statement covers those young people in Oxfordshire aged 16 to 18 and those continuing learners who started their programme of learning before their 19th birthday.

A key priority of the Government is to close the gap in attainment between those from poorer and more affluent backgrounds, and to ensure every young person participates in and benefits from a place in 16-19 education and training. The Government provides funding to tackle disadvantage both through the Education Funding Agency's (EFA) funding formula and through the £180 million 16-19 Bursary Fund to help young people meet the costs of participating in education and training post-16. 2015/16 will be the fifth year of the 16-19 Bursary Fund. The consultation and supporting documents can be found at:

<https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Post16Transport/consultationHome>

HAVE YOUR SAY ON SOCIAL CARE

Do you use social care services, for example, home support, day services and respite care? Or do you care for someone who does? Please come along and talk to the Director of Adult Social Care, John Jackson, and senior managers. It's your chance to raise issues and concerns which are relevant to you or tell us what is working well. A meeting for South Oxfordshire took place on 7th May in Didcot, but there is still an opportunity to attend a countywide event on Saturday 20 June at the King's Centre, Oxford from 1.30-4.30pm.

Two more local meetings will take place for Oxford and North Oxfordshire:

- Oxford: Thursday 21 May, 10am-1pm, The King's Centre, Oxford. Directions
- North Oxfordshire: Thursday 4 June, 10am-1pm, The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury. Directions.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/hearsay>

FREE SEMINARS TO EXPLAIN NEW CONSUMER RULES TO BUSINESS

Free seminars to help Oxfordshire businesses understand new consumer rules due to be brought in during October are being held by Trading Standards in June. These changes to the rules will affect most goods or services and involve consumer rights relating to what to do if those goods or services are faulty.

The major changes cover:

- What should happen when goods are faulty.
- What should happen when digital content is faulty.
- How services should match up to what has been agreed, and what should happen when they do not or when they are not provided with reasonable care and skill.
- Unfair terms in a contract.
- What happens when a business is acting in a way which isn't competitive.
- Written notice for routine inspections by public enforcers, such as Trading Standards.
- Greater flexibility for public enforcers to respond to breaches of consumer law, such as seeking redress for consumers who have suffered harm.

Kate Davies, Team Leader for Oxfordshire's Trading Standards Service said: "**The changes aim to make the law clearer and easier to understand, meaning that consumers can buy and businesses can sell to them with confidence.** On the rare occasions when problems arise, they will be able to resolve disputes more quickly and cheaply. The changes are relevant to all consumers and every business which sells directly to consumers."

For more information: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/apr/free-seminars-explain-new-consumer-rules-businesses>