

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

## **UNITARY DEBATE**

The report commissioned by OCC from Grant Thornton came up with an option that suggested a single unitary council but with some decision making devolved to different parts of the county based on the current boundaries of the five district and city councils. A recent meeting of OCC's Performance Scrutiny Committee saw County Councillors from across all parties interested in exploring this option further – and the OCC Cabinet has now agreed to do that. The key features are:

- A strategic unitary council with overall responsibility for determining a framework of delegation of powers and budget.
- Constitutionally established area boards reflecting the administrative boundaries of the current city and district councils exercising these delegated powers and budgets.

This model is still a single unitary, but builds on existing strengths and familiar geography, rather than starting from scratch. At this stage it is just a possible option that OCC is keen to explore further while acknowledging that there needs to be a lot of detailed negotiation in the weeks and months ahead.

## **GRANT SCHEME LAUNCHED FOR OPEN-ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

A £1m start-up fund has been launched by OCC to help community groups develop and deliver open-access children's services. Local solutions for open-access provision – such as 'stay-and-play' - will complement a comprehensive new service for 0-19-year-olds across Oxfordshire, which ensures the most vulnerable children are protected and that families who need extra help are identified at an early stage. As part of OCC's continuing investment in early intervention, and in addition to the £1m fund, new teams of 'locality workers' will advise and support community groups delivering open-access sessions – as well as other universal services such as schools, health and early years providers. Council-funded open access provision will continue to be offered at the new children and family centres, and other buildings as part of the new 0-19 service from next year. I will continue to support the Berinsfield Children's Centre support group who are working hard to find a way to maintain services in their village as it is one of the centres that OCC will not be funding under the new arrangements.

## **CHANGES AT PROPERTY & FACILITIES**

Since taking over the Property & Facilities portfolio in May, I have been working with Bev Hindle, the Acting Director, to bring about some fundamental changes to the way OCC works with Carillion, the contractor that manages OCC's property portfolio. This includes renegotiating the contract to ensure that OCC regains oversight and control of development projects to improve performance. Carillion will be investing up front in developing OCC assets and the two organisations will develop an investment portfolio with the aim of making far better use of OCC assets than has been achieved in the past. We intend to double the disposals earnings over the next three years and provide new income to support service priorities. A 'placed based planning' system will be introduced that involves Councillors right from the start, taking advantage of their local knowledge on potential development opportunities.

## **MINERALS & WASTE PLAN EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

The long-awaited Examination in Public of the proposed Minerals & Waste Core Strategy for Oxfordshire was held in Oxford from September 20<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> which I attended. The Inspector conducted a very thorough investigation and I am pleased to report that he took serious notice of the issues that PAGE, OXAGE and BachPort have been working so hard to bring to the

fore: the proposed Local Area Assessment figure for sand and gravel being too high, the level of minerals re-cycling in the county being under-estimated, the balance of extraction between the West and the South of the county being unnecessarily skewed, and the inadequate consultation conducted by OCC running up to the publication of this latest version of the Strategy. OCC has already offered to make changes to the Plan, however these modifications were very minor. The Inspector has decided to issue an Interim Report by the middle of October outlining his reaction and requirements going forward. By the time of my next report we should know where we stand.

## **PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT BERINSFIELD**

I think many people know how long I have been campaigning for a pedestrian crossing between the bus stops on the A4074 – nearly eight years. During that time I have managed to get a 40 mph speed limit on all the roads approaching the roundabout. This and street lighting are prerequisites for the installation of a crossing. However the financial squeeze prevented me from being able to help fund a crossing when our Councillor's Stewardship Fund was withdrawn. So I am really delighted that SODC have agreed to find the money. Both councils are now working together to get plans drawn up as quickly as possible. If all goes well Berinsfield could have a crossing in the New Year. Fantastic.

## **WHITE LINES IN WARBOROUGH**

It isn't often that the county council gets praised and thanked! But since I managed to pressure OCC Highways into putting intermittent white lines on the A329 outside the primary school many people in the village have come up to tell me that they have worked and wanted to thank OCC for solving the most upsetting traffic congestion problem the village has had to deal with for a long time. I hope anyone travelling through the village at peak times will have noticed the difference!

## **HOUSING PLANS FOR OXFORD REJECTED BY SODC**

Plans to build thousands of homes to deal with Oxford's housing crisis were rejected by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) when the Oxfordshire Growth Board, made up of council leaders, met in September to approve plans to deal with the city's housing need identified in a 2014 report. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment said neighbouring councils needed to provide 14,850 houses to help Oxford cope with its increasing demand. Oxford would look to build another 550 houses, while Cherwell would contribute 4,400, Vale of White Horse 2,200, West Oxfordshire 2,750, and South Oxfordshire would build 4,950.