

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JANUARY 2017 FROM CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

PLANS TO TRANSFORM ADOPTION SERVICES ACROSS THAMES VALLEY

OCC is joining forces with neighbouring councils to create a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) for the Thames Valley. The agency will improve outcomes for both children and adopters – including the ability to match children with families more quickly and improve support services for adopters. The Government has advised that a grant of £300k will be made available to help set up the new service. OCC will be the host authority within a partnership known as 'Adopt Thames Valley', alongside six other councils (Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Wokingham, Swindon and Reading) and two Voluntary Adoption Agencies (PACT and Barnardo's). All partners have begun work to develop the new shared service across the geographical area covered by the councils.

LAUNCH OF NEW ONLINE FLOODING 'TOOLKIT'

A new online 'toolkit' has been launched by OCC which provides information and advice for those wanting to take action to safeguard their homes or businesses against the effects of flooding. Visitors to the site can use its tools to determine whether their home or business is in an area at risk at flooding, and links to a series of 'How To' guides. The toolkit also explains the different types of flooding that can occur with bespoke guides on how to deal with them and, for those responsible for things such as drains and streams running across their land, guides on how to carry out preventative maintenance. Interactive illustrations give visual inspiration for ways people can protect their properties and highlights often forgotten areas such as garages, airbricks and cable holes. The toolkit can be found at www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE ABOVE NATIONAL AVERAGE

The delayed transfers of care (DTC) figures released in December show Oxfordshire improving significantly on the situation a year ago: total delayed transfers of care were 11% lower, and those due to social care delays were 19% lower. This compares with a rise in numbers nationally of 25% in total and 41% due to social care. Nationally over a third of all DTC cases were attributable to social care delays, but in Oxfordshire it was less than a fifth.

HOME LIBRARY VOLUNTEER SUCCESS AND NEW LIBRARIES E - NEWSLETTER

In September OCC launched a county-wide campaign for Home Library Service volunteers. This successful campaign has led to 150 volunteer applications so far, and the campaign was shortlisted for a public sector communications award. Home Library Service volunteers choose and deliver books to those who are unable to get to a library. More information about the scheme, including details of what volunteering involves and interviews with those who benefit from the service, can be found at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/homelibrary

The Library Service has also recently launched a bi-monthly newsletter sent to 6000 library service users. It contains the latest libraries news, events, book recommendations, volunteering opportunities and more, including information about Zinio (free electronic magazines), eBooks, People's Network (free public access to computers) and Wi-Fi in Libraries. Parish councils are requested to inform residents that they sign up at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/librariesnewsletter

GRANT FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR 'OPEN ACCESS' CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Community-led schemes will complement a comprehensive new service for 0-19-year-olds across Oxfordshire, which ensures children at risk of abuse and neglect are protected and that families who need extra help are identified at an early stage. Applications received during the first round of the £1m grant scheme were assessed by a cross-party working group of councillors which made recommendations to the council's Cabinet. Six community groups planning to run 'open access' children's services were successful and will receive funding worth £163,000 from the scheme. They are:

- Butterfly Meadows (Bloxham) - £29,384
- Carterton Town Council - £30,000
- Bridges (Oxford) - £30,000
- Grandpont Nursery (Oxford) - £35,600
- St Nicholas Primary School (Marston) - £8,000
- Sharing Life Trust (Thame) - £30,000

A further eight bids were supported in principle by the working group, but deferred to the second round of bids so that further work can be carried out on their business models. The panel refused just three bids – in these cases the eligibility criteria were not met.

OXFORD PARKWAY/CITY CENTRE OPENING

The link between Oxford Parkway and the city centre was opened at the beginning of December with a journey time of just 8 minutes. The Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, attended the opening. OCC Leader Ian Hudspeth took the opportunity of talking to him not just about railways, but also the road problems in Oxfordshire, particularly with regard to the A34, A40 and A420. Ian went on to remind the SoS that if we are to have the projected extra houses and jobs, then OCC needs the funding for the infrastructure to deliver sustainable development.