

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

GOVERNMENT CASH PAVES WAY FOR MAJOR UPGRADE TO THE A34 IN ABINGDON

Major improvements to the A34 in Abingdon got the green light today on 26 July 2017 after Communities Secretary Sajid Javid pledged more than £9 million of Government funding. Two new south-facing slip roads at the Lodge Hill Interchange will help end years of congestion and pave the way for up to 1,700 new homes in Abingdon. The long-awaited scheme, which will receive up to £9.45 million over 4 years, will also boost growth in the wider Science Vale area, where up to 20,000 new jobs and 20,000 new homes will be created by 2031. This is on top of the £2.3 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund, announced earlier this month, which will pay for local infrastructure across the country to support local housing delivery.

COUNCIL AND CARILLION REACH AGREEMENT OVER CONTRACT

Oxfordshire County Council is to exit a significant proportion of the contract with Carillion that sees the latter provide many services on the council's behalf. Constructive negotiations have been ongoing for many months and both parties have now reached a mutually beneficial agreement, which involves no termination costs for the taxpayer and allows for changes to the contract that were not efficient for either side. The deal was originally signed in 2012 and the vision at that time was that it would last for 10 years through to 2022. Since 2012 the council's policies and strategies – particularly in relation to property and its estate – have evolved in such a way that the tie-up with Carillion makes less commercial sense now than it did in 2012. New arrangements for the design and construction element of the contract that has been terminated will take effect later this year on September 1. They will be procured externally. One element of the contract, strategic asset management, had already been agreed to transfer back to being directly run by the county council. This is on track for a transfer date of August 1. The Council will continue to work with Carillion on a non-exclusive basis to deliver elements of strategic asset management where it is in the Council's interest to do so to meet its corporate and financial objectives. A key area of the contract that will remain in operation is Facilities Management – the work that takes place to ensure the general upkeep and day to day operation of council buildings. A review is to be carried out to ensure that this operates in the best way for the council.

OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE LOCAL PLAN

A plan which will govern how Oxfordshire's minerals and waste needs will be met for fifteen years has received Government support. The County Council's new minerals and waste core strategy, which outlines the planning strategy and policies for the supply of minerals and the management of waste in Oxfordshire until 2031, has received support from the Government's Planning Inspectorate, and following approval by Cabinet on 18th July will now go to Full Council in September. Following an independent examination of the strategy, the Inspector concluded that the strategy, with modifications, meets legal requirements and provides a sound and appropriate basis for the planning of future quarrying and waste management in Oxfordshire for the next 15 years. More information can be found here;
<http://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/inspector-backs-oxfordshire-minerals-and-waste-strategy/>

OXFORDSHIRE COUNCILS NEED £9BN FOR INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT GROWTH

An independent report commissioned by Oxfordshire's six councils who make up the Oxfordshire Growth Board sets out the investment in transport, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure needed to support the predicted growth in population, jobs and homes to 2040 and beyond. The report by AECOM, a professional and technical services firm highlights the need for long-term investment that will be required to plan for and manage growth in a way that supports the local economy and protects quality of life across the county. For the first time Oxfordshire councils are working together to develop a joint infrastructure strategy, detailing the county's key infrastructure requirements. Some of these have been outlined already in individual Local Plans and the Local Transport Plan, but the Oxfordshire Growth Board has looked more comprehensively at what is going to be required further into the future across all areas.

LIBRARIES LAUNCH 'ANIMAL AGENTS' READING CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN

Oxfordshire County Council's libraries are inviting thousands of youngsters to take part in a detective-themed reading challenge this summer. Children aged four to 11 can 'join' the Animal Agents investigative team and solve a mystery by reading six library books and collecting special stickers. All children need to do is sign up at their local library and receive a collector's folder. As they read their books over the summer, they will receive stickers to help them crack the clues and help the Animal Agents find out what's really been going on behind the scenes! When they've completed the Challenge they can claim their medal and certificate. Young volunteers aged 13-24 are also needed to help library staff promote the challenge, talk to children about the books they have read and help them to choose others. More information and application forms for volunteers can be found at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries

SCHOOLS WIN AWARDS FOR SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS

Eight Oxfordshire schools have received awards as part of a county council support scheme for pupils who care for family members at home. The Young Carers Standard recognises schools' efforts to identify young carers and provide targeted support to help them achieve their potential. Since its launch in 2013 more than 60 schools have received training and support to deliver the scheme and earn an accreditation. Any school across Oxfordshire can sign up to the programme run by Oxfordshire County Council Young Carers Team. The team offers free support, advice and guidance for schools to identify and support young carers. Schools can work towards the Bronze, Silver and Gold Award level. Schools interested in taking part should email the Oxfordshire County Council Young Carers team: young.carers@oxfordshire.gov.uk