

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

GROWTH BOARD ANNOUNCEMENT ON HOUSING AND GROWTH AGREEMENT

The Oxfordshire Growth Board comprises the six councils: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, together with the county's Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). On Budget Day it was announced the Board had reached an outline Housing and Growth Agreement with Government. This will see an additional £215 million of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county. This breaks down as: £30m pa for five years for infrastructure; £60m for affordable homes across the county; and £5m to develop a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan. The Board wants the five-year deal to be the first stage in a sustained partnership with Government to secure the ongoing investment needed to deliver properly planned growth and economic development over the coming years. This will support councils to achieve the ambition of 100,000 new homes across the county over the period 2011-2031, as identified through the 2014 countywide Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plans. The bids to the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), to support the development of the Didcot Garden Town, and West Oxfordshire and North of Oxford Garden Villages, are still being considered by Government with decisions expected in the New Year.

OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) has published its report to Government on the Oxford-Cambridge arc. It advised on the need for long-term investment funding for new transport infrastructure to harness the region's economic potential, to benefit local people and boost UK plc in a post-Brexit landscape. For the residents of South Oxfordshire and particularly this Division facing the potential of an expressway cutting a ten mile swathe through our countryside, there were encouraging signs in that the Commission recommended that a more logical route would be to follow existing rail and road routes (to the West and North of Oxford). But the Commission declined to be specific which is frustrating. So the work of the Expressway Action Group continues lobbying locally and at Westminster to encourage Highways England to take this advice. I will continue to do all I can to support them.

QUARRY APPLICATION AT CLIFTON HAMPDEN AND CULHAM REJECTED

I am delighted that after years of diligent and effective campaigning by local residents against the application for a huge quarry at Fullamoor Farm between Clifton Hampden and Culham it was rejected by the County Council's Planning and Regulation Committee on November 27th. The main reason was the unacceptable impact upon traffic and congestion in the area, particularly at peak times. The quarry would have generated 100+ lorry movements per day. A last minute attempt was made by Hills to save their application by agreeing to prohibit lorry movements at peak times. This failed to satisfy the Councillors as did the arguments that the quarry would not impair the construction of the North-South road from Didcot, the new river crossing and the Clifton Hampden bypass all of which now look as if they could be in place by 2025, which is really good news.

OXFORDSHIRE ADULT SOCIAL CARE SETTINGS OUTSTRIP NATIONAL AVERAGES

Older people and adults with disabilities are getting a better level of service from care settings in Oxfordshire than elsewhere in England, official figures have again proved. The number of care homes and home care providers in the county rated as “Outstanding” or “Good” by the Care Quality Commission was yet again comfortably higher than the national average when the latest figures were published on November 1. A total of 89 per cent of the 209 Oxfordshire providers are rated “outstanding” or “good” compared to a national average of 81 per cent. The CQC regularly publishes updated national figures and Oxfordshire has for some time outstripped the national averages.

OCC ANTI-SCAM CAMPAIGN

OCC's Trading Standards is asking people to “Take a Stand Against Scams”. This month, National Trading Standards started offering free call blockers to any person living with dementia that is currently receiving scam or nuisance calls. It's the latest initiative in the Friends Against Scams campaign launched last year to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams and empowering communities. Locally, OCC introduced free training and local awareness sessions, available online and face-to-face to provide people with the confidence and skills they need to identify and prevent scams. Around 100 people have now received training and some have become “SCAMChampions”, which means they are now busy spreading the message and hosting their own sessions to recruit more “Friends”. The campaign aims to inspire action, highlight the scale of the issue by encouraging communities and the nation to talk about scams, change the perception of why people become scam victims and prevent people from becoming or continuing to be a scam victim. More information can be found here: <http://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/friends-against-scams-in-oxfordshire-would-you-like-to-become-a-scamchampion/>. Applications for a free call blocker for people living with dementia can be made via www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk/callblocker

SMOKE ALARM TESTING

OCC's Fire and Rescue Service are urging residents to test smoke alarms regularly. The Local Government Association warned that almost 40% of battery-powered smoke alarms failed to activate in residential fires in England in the past year. Figures show that more than a fifth of households never test their smoke alarm and one in 10 homes do not even have a smoke alarm. More information can be found here: <http://www.365alive.co.uk/cms/content/smoke-alarms-0>