

PARISH REPORT JULY 2017

ELECTIONS

Whatever we may think of the result, hopefully electioneering has finished (for the time being). In West Oxfordshire it feels as if we've been campaigning for the last 18 months. The main issue for the Government/Country will be Brexit. The impact that will have on Local Government will become clearer as time moves on, in the meantime the County Council will carry on delivering services within the financial envelope we have.

OCC FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE STATEMENT ON FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH RISE TOWERS

Simon Furlong, Director of Community Safety and Chief Fire Officer of OCC Fire & Rescue Service, made the following statement on 26 June 2017:

"I would like to reassure residents of Oxford's five high-rise towers that Oxford City Council has taken all the necessary fire safety measures to ensure they are safe in their home. Oxford City Council followed our advice to introduce a number of fire safety improvements as part of the recent refurbishment work. This includes the installation of a new sprinkler system in flats and communal areas and a fire and smoke detection system connected directly to the fire service.

"As the owner of the buildings, Oxford City Council carries out regular fire risk assessments, which are audited by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. These audits are up-to-date. In the event of a fire at any high-rise tower in Oxford, we have the resources in place to ensure a rapid response within our target response times."

NEW HOUSEHOLD WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE CONTRACT

Oxfordshire County Council has confirmed that it will keep its entire network of seven Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in the county open in the medium term (with no change to opening hours or days they are open) due to a new management contract that has been awarded to W&S Recycling. The Dorset based firm already manages five of Oxfordshire's HWRC sites which means there will be minimal disruption to residents when the new contract starts on 1 October 2017. W&S Recycling will manage the HWRC sites at Alkerton, Ardley, Drayton, Oakley Wood, Redbridge, and Stanford in the Vale. Dix Pit HWRC will continue to be managed by FCC Environment. Residents will continue to be able to dispose of all household waste free of charge at any of the county's recycling centres. Oxfordshire has had a system of charging for non-household waste which includes soil, rubble and DIY waste for 15 years and has not increased the charge of £1 per item over that time. When the new contract starts on 1 October, W&S Recycling will increase the charge for non-household waste items to £1.50 which is less than other authorities who charge for this service. In the HWRC public consultation carried out in summer 2016, 91% of Oxfordshire residents favoured charges for non-household waste over site closures.

INSPECTOR BACKS OXFORDSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE STRATEGY

OCC'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, is set to be adopted following support from the Government's Planning Inspectorate. 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. Minerals include sand, gravel, limestone, ironstone and clay, which are all naturally occurring materials dug from the ground, and recycled concrete and ash. For more information, see here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/minerals-and-waste-core-strateg>

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MULTI-MILLION POUND BROADBAND BOOST TO BENEFIT THOUSANDS MORE

Nearly 3,000 more of Oxfordshire's most remote households and businesses will get access to high-speed broadband thanks to a £4 million boost for the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme. OCC and BT have announced parts of Ardington, Barford St John, East Hendred, Lockinge, Lyford, Swalcliffe and many more communities will be included in the ambitious roll-out. The funding has come from cost savings made earlier in the roll-out and BT making £2.56 million available for reinvestment in the programme due to a 'Gainshare' mechanism in the contract, which has been triggered by strong demand for the new fibre technology from local households and businesses. With more than 45 per cent of households and businesses already opting to use the new high-speed service provided by the Better Broadband programme, Oxfordshire ranks among the best-connected counties in the country. OCC has also announced that communities not yet able to get superfast fibre broadband through any public or private sector roll-out can benefit from a new scheme – in addition to the £4 million, a separate fund of up to £600,000 from programme efficiency savings has been set aside for co-funding projects where communities are willing to share the costs of the installation work. Under the scheme, the council will contribute up to £1,700 per premise (terms and conditions apply). See <http://www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk/cms/content/co-funded-fibre-broadband-partnerships-cfp>

FUNDING FOR OPEN-ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Start-up funding for a further ten community schemes to run open access services at children's centres has been approved by OCC. The proposals, which stand to receive a total of £258,458, are the latest to be considered as part of the transition from council-funded to community-led services at children's centre locations. Community services will complement the council's new service for 0-19 year-olds, which will meet the needs and aspirations of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Oxfordshire, and ensure that families who need extra help are identified at an early stage. When added to previously considered applications, the approval of these latest proposals would give a total of 25 funded community schemes for services such as 'stay and play' to continue at children's centres across the county. On top of this, open access sessions are continuing at the Children and Family Centres and satellite centres at the heart of the council's new Children's Service.

COUNTY TRADING STANDARDS SAVE £250,000 FOR VULNERABLE VICTIMS

OCC's Trading Standards Service, working in partnership with Thames Valley Police, banks and other agencies, have saved over £250,000 for the victims of rogue traders in the last 12 months. This is the largest amount of money ever saved by the Doorstep Crime team since it was established 12 years ago. The team targets rogue traders who prey on the vulnerable and elderly and claim to be legitimate companies. The doorstep crime team in OCC's Trading Standards Service includes three Trading Standards Officers and a seconded Police Officer from Thames Valley Police. Banks and other financial institutions have also been instrumental in securing these savings, by reporting suspicious large cash withdrawals, allowing the doorstep crime team to intervene and protect vulnerable adults from a wide range of financial abuse. The team also deliver presentations and educational events to community groups to raise awareness amongst both those people who might be targeted, and their friends and family. Those who are concerned that they might have been targeted by a rogue trader, or are concerned that a neighbour or family member has been, should report it to Trading Standards via 03454 04 05 06.

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ADULT DAYTIME SUPPORT CHANGES

OCC is now implementing a new, sustainable model of daytime support for vulnerable adults in Oxfordshire. There are over 200 voluntary and community daytime support services provided across Oxfordshire. The vast majority of the 47 services that are currently funded by OCC are set to continue and have applied for and been awarded grant funding to support their move to more self-sustaining models. OCC is continuing to fund the Wellbeing and Employment Support Service and the Dementia Support Service, and is investing an additional £25,000 per year in increasing the capacity of these services to support people with autism and to train other services in dementia support. County Council provided Health and Wellbeing Centres and Learning Disability Daytime Support services will be replaced by a new council-provided Community Support Service from 1st October 2017. This service will provide flexible, person-centred support to meet a wide range of people's needs, delivered from 8 building bases across the county. Service users will not see any change before August 2017. And before anything changes, everyone using current services will be offered an individual assessment and/or review and support to explore their options. For people who are assessed as not having eligible needs, there will still be a range of options, for example joining a local group, attending community and voluntary sector provided services or purchasing support from the new Community Support Service.

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