**REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth and Little Coxwell) – November/December**

**For information, all that is detailed within my monthly reports is already within the public domain and thus in the media. My monthly report is a document of varied information which will be of interest both to locally elected Parish Councillors and to the residents and rate payers of my Division. The report provides both a local and a wider picture of the work that Oxfordshire County Council undertakes and thus involves me both as your local County Councillor and also as Deputy Leader for the County Council. I try to make my report both varied and informative for all.**

**Highways** - Government announcements of a successful Infrastructure Fund bid of £102m will ensure that the A40 has a series of major improvements to this key route which is a single carriageway road between Witney and Oxford carrying up to 32,000 vehicles daily. Motorists, bus users and cyclists who regularly use one of the busiest and most important transport routes have reason to celebrate with this announcement .The news came as a result of a successful bid by Oxfordshire County Council which was put together in close partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council and will ensure the extension of the A40 dual carriageway from Witney to the proposed Eynsham park and ride and will include improved cycling facilities along the route.

**Social Care** - our social workers have linked this month with a Channel 4 TV documentary “Britain’s Child Drug Runners” to put the spotlight on gangs and organised crime networks who ruthlessly recruit local children to sell drugs. OCC’s social care and early help teams work in partnership with families, schools, health and the police to protect children from exploitation. They engage children and families in activities, delivering protective behaviours, and they work in schools, raising awareness in assemblies and plays. For young people who are at higher risk, the teams do specialist intensive one to one work with them, their parents and families, as well as group work.  The county council knows of around 280 children who are at significant risk of exploitation by drug gangs. Of these, 36 are being supported by the council’s early help teams, 26 by the youth justice service, and the rest by children’s social care. There is already a close working relationship between the county council and other organisations such as the police, NHS and district councils to protect children.

**Trading Standards -**.is responsible for trading standards/animal welfare/weights/and measures/weight restrictions on highways. I have reported previously that the staff conduct and review the licencing of premises and undertake undercover work. A shop where fake and smuggled cigarettes were seized during a raid has had its licence to sell alcohol suspended for 12 weeks and the premises supervisor removed. This came after Trading Standards swooped on the shop in June, seizing nearly 3,000 illegal cigarettes following two earlier test purchases when Marlboro Gold cigarettes were sold for £6.50 a packet to undercover officers. Trading Standards officers are serious about taking action whenever anyone is found to be selling illegal tobacco. Its sale avoids taxation, it can affect health and thus the NHS especially as young people may be attracted to buy cheap cigarettes/tobacco, it also undermines legitimate businesses in Oxfordshire and puts money into the hands of criminals. Tobacco fraud is reported to cost the UK around £2 billion a year whilst treating smoking-related illnesses costs the NHS over £2 billion annually. Anyone with information about the illegal sale of tobacco should contact **0300 999 6 999** or report it anonymously via the website [www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk](http://www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk)

**Climate Action** – At full council on 5th November councillors approved plans to meet its ambitious target of reducing its own carbon footprint to net zero by 2030 **:** Climate Action is a top priority in all decision making, and we will maximise solar generation on our buildings and land, buy local green power for our estate, electrify our vehicles and seek alternative fuels, support the staff to use zero carbon travel options and challenge our suppliers to match our ambition. In Oxfordshire we will manage land capture carbon, enable schools to reduce their carbon footprint, reduce carbon from streetlighting, provide charging points for electric cars, invest in cycle paths and safe walking routes, reprioritise road space for low carbon travel, invest in community energy, support communities to take climate action seriously, team up with innovators to test new solutions, work with partners so that more can be achieved. It should be noted that Oxfordshire County Council has already reduced its carbon emissions by nearly 50% since 2008!

[**‘Which Councils Are Best’**](https://www.impower.co.uk/reports/which-councils-are-best-2) Oxfordshire County Council has been recognised as increasing its position in the Impower survey to the Top Ten from 49th in 2018

IMPOWER bases its [‘Which Councils Are Best’](https://www.impower.co.uk/reports/which-councils-are-best-2) rankings on a collation of service-based data from 30 different public datasets to create an index of productivity for the 150 upper-tier authorities to provide a better measure than the verdict of inspectorates. It measures performance against outcomes (per pound invested) in seven areas:

children’s social care/children with high needs/older people/all age disability/health and social care interface/housing and homelessness /waste and recycling.

November is always a very special month and I have, attended the Royal British Legion Faringdon & District Branch – 9th Annual Festival of Remembrance held in the Corn Exchange, this event was so very well attended with the Corn Exchange being full. I attended the Remembrance Sunday Service and Parade and laid a wreath on bahalf of the Chairman of the County Council in Faringdon and I also the service held in Gt Coxwell. These acts of remembrance were very well attended by so many people drawn from our local communities and this participation is not only heart-warming and emotional too but also ensures that there is full recognition and remembrance of the fact that so many local service personnel lost their lives serving their country.

Monday 11th November there was a Ceremony of Remembrance at County Hall, (this is an annual event), where staff, officers and members gather in The Common Hall – wreaths are laid by the Chairman of the County Council and by the Chief Executive. In both the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars, Oxfordshire County Council lost staff killed in action and their names were read out.

I attended the two “Long Service” awards evenings for our staff who have worked for the County Council for 25 years. These occasions are very heart-warming to see so many men and women receiving their awards, supported by family members. The staff are drawn from the various areas of the County’s workforce. Teachers, Fire Fighters, Social Workers, Librarians and staff from the museum and music services.

My next monthly surgery will be on Saturday 7th December in Faringdon Library, from 1000-1130hrs. My phone number is 01367 241468 and my email address is Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk. There will be no surgery on 4th January 2020 but there will be a surgery on 1st February 2020.

By the time this report is published it will be close to Christmas and I should like to take the opportunity to wish everyone, local councillors and residents a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Judith Heathcoat

Deputy Leader Oxfordshire County Council

28th November 2019