**REPORT TO THE FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland,Buscot,Coleshill,Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt. Coxwell, Littleworth and Lt Coxwell) JULY 2016**

**FROM YOUR COUNTY CLLR Judith Heathcoat**

**Each month I present my report to you at the beginning there is a general OCC report and the latter part of the report covers specifics for the Faringdon Division – I hope you find these reports of interest?**

**GENERAL OCC REPORT**

**STATEMENT FROM OCC LEADER ON EU REFERENDUM RESULT**

Cllr Ian Hudspeth, the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, has responded to the EU referendum result. He said: "Following David Cameron honouring his pledge to offer a referendum on our membership of the European Union, the British people have voted to take more direct control of the decisions which affect them. That process must not stop at the gates of Parliament. This is an opportunity to remake our democratic system, and must be used to drive, not delay, the process of devolving power from Westminster and Whitehall to England's cities and counties, and from those cities and counties to the towns, villages, and neighbourhoods within them. The priorities of the county council will remain the same – to support economic growth, to protect the most vulnerable, and to drive efficiency in public services. To support these priorities, our work on stripping out another level of bureaucratic decision making by developing proposals for a new council for the whole of Oxfordshire will continue, as will our ambition to win a wide-ranging devolution deal from central government."

**PROPOSALS FOR UNITARY COUNCIL**

As previously reported, Oxfordshire's District Councils have appointed consultants PwC to prepare a report on the future of local government in Oxfordshire, and OCC has appointed consultants Grant Thornton to do the same. Ten workshops across the county were held by OCC over the course of June to obtain input from parish councils about concerns they might have and opportunities they might relish with a change to Unitary local government. PwC were due to report for the Districts by the end of June, but are behind schedule. The Grant Thornton report for the County is still on schedule for July. All councils will then submit proposals to central government in the autumn, following a period of public consultation.

**COUNCIL CONTEMPLATES IDEA OF NEW PARK AND RIDES**

A study which could lead to up to five new park and ride sites being built to serve Oxfordshire has been published. OCC, through the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS), part of Local Transport Plan 4, is proactively working to find solutions to the demands that are increasingly being placed on the road network by current and projected growth. In order to reduce congestion within the city and on the approaches to it, the OTS proposes a major expansion and reconfiguration of the Park & Ride system to intercept more car trips earlier in their journeys and further away from the city. In addition to new park and ride sites, the OTS proposes a network of “Rapid Transit” public transport routes to provide an uplift to transport connectivity in the city, including links between the proposed new sites and the city’s “Eastern Arc” (broadly speaking the Headington/Cowley area). The report is the latest step in the process of delivering solutions. The park and ride study has reviewed the locations proposed as part of the OTS, and made specific recommendations on where new park and ride sites should be located, following an assessment of the corridors. New sites are proposed at Eynsham, Cumnor, Lodge Hill, Sandford, and Oxford Airport, phased over the next 15 years. I shall detail the implications of the LTP4 for the Faringdon Division later in this report.

**INCREASING ADULT AND CHILD SOCIAL CARE COSTS**

Adult and child social care costs continue to increase as a proportion of OCC's expenditure, now accounting for nearly half the council's budget. OCC's obligation to assist with unaccompanied young asylum seekers (UASC’s) has added further added pressure. It’s interesting to note that with existing UASC’s we receive in grant from central government £1.347m but OCC is spending £2.101m thus giving a shortfall of £0.754 for the 12-month period. We are being pressed to take more UASC’s by government and I would advise that children leaving our care are our responsibility until 25 years old. Currently we have 53 youngsters and some local authorities have as few as 2 and there are authorities with “nil”.

**COUNCIL AMONG NATION’S BEST FOR CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE**

Only a quarter of councils – including Oxfordshire – have passed Ofsted’s new harder inspection test for children’s social services, according to the watchdog’s annual report. The remaining three-quarters were found to be ‘inadequate’ or ‘requiring improvement’. [The report](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532288/Ofsted_social_care_annual_report_2016.pdf) ranks Oxfordshire among the best performing of 87 councils so far put to the test, with 64 of these failing to secure a ‘good’ rating. Oxfordshire is also one of just three areas where Ofsted and its partner inspectorates have completed the new Joint Target Area Inspection, which highly praised the council’s work to tackle child sexual exploitation alongside its partner agencies.

**MULTI-MILLION POUND BOOST FUELS EXPANSION OF HIGH-SPEED BROADBAND**

The second phase of Better Broadband for Oxfordshire is now underway after the first part was completed on time and under budget. The first phase of the broadband programme exceeded many of its targets and, as a result, the county is expecting up to £6.75 million of funds to be made available to extend the fibre network to even more remote communities. Since the roll-out began more than two years ago, Better Broadband for Oxfordshire has made faster fibre broadband available to more than 70,000 county premises – 64,500 of which have access to superfast broadband speeds of 24 megabits per second (Mbps) and above. There are several villages within the Faringdon Division where Gigaclear have been working for which I am very pleased.

**GRASS VERGE CUTTING PROGRAMME 2016**

Financial pressures have forced OCC to reduce its overall verge mowing in recent years; just one general cut a year is now carried out across the whole of the road network. This includes cutting all visibility splays at junctions and cutting grass verges to a distance 1m back from the kerb. The general cut started on 20 June, although visibility splay issues have been dealt with earlier if they have been reported or observed by highway inspectors. More information can be found at: [https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/grass-verge-cutting-programme-2016](https://mymail.oxfordshire.gov.uk/owa/redir.aspx?C=6sa4Y2AffJh9FiBrqt6NIKw-Iay--Za0aS32xvQ04YlHHpl_iaHTCA..&URL=https%3a%2f%2fwww.oxfordshire.gov.uk%2fcms%2fcontent%2fgrass-verge-cutting-programme-2016)

I have reported the problems being experienced in the Faringdon Division particularly along the Coxwell Road, and the roundabout on the A420 at the top of the A417 and have been advised that these areas will receive attention.

**SPECIFIC REPORT FOR THE FARINGDON DIVISION**

Since my last report I have attended meetings in my Division and also undertaken my usual case work. I am aware that my monthly report can be lengthy so this month I shall take two items specific to the Division, the plethora of road signs appearing on the highway and the A420 only.

I have noticed that with the summer progressing there are advertising roadside posters being erected on the highway. I would advise that advertising boards, stones or posts are such articles are an obstruction and are not permitted on the highway and they should be removed. The OCC as the Highways Authority is entitled to carry out works to keep the streets safe and can recharge costs to you if the matters are not dealt with. Such posters can be a distraction to drivers and may cause accidents. This also applies to overgrown trees and vegetation on pavements.

**LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 4 (LTP4)**

The draft plan was presented at Cabinet on 28th June and is going forward to Council on 12th July.

This plan is refreshed each year and following on from my last monthly report which highlighted that I sit on the A420 Working Party at County Hall I should like to list for you the local items noted in the report for the Faringdon Division for which I’ve worked hard to get included.

Maintaining easier and safer access onto the A420 is paramount for me and I have been championing our area as follows:-

1. “Secure a new junction improvement at the A420 junction with the Coxwell Road to accommodate known housing growth in the area. A full signalisation of the junction is an agreed solution in principal”.
2. “Investigate upgrading of the “T”-junction at the Lt. Coxwell/Fernham Road on the A420 junction to a roundabout or other upgrade to improve access, safety and the vision through this junction.”
3. “Review the Buckland Road/A420 junction, to include assessment of the junction splaty and right-turn lane on the A420”.
4. “Investigate speed limit changes on the Faringdon “bypass” between the Lt. Coxwell and Littleworth reduce from 60mph.
5. “Review footway access, pedestrian signage and hard-standing facilities at bus stops on the A420.”
6. “Investigate deterring rat running through Gt Coxell by replacing “Village Only” sign with a “no right turn” sign and accompanying Traffic Regulation Order at B4019 junction with the Holloway.

All the above are proposals with exception of 1) above which will be partially funded by developer funding and OCC. Points 2-6 will of course be consulted on in due course and are subject to feasibility and option studies.

I would advise that my monthly surgery held on the 1st Saturday of each new month will not take place in the month of August but, will resume in as usual in September. I can of course be reach by email on Judith.Heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk or telephone me on 01367 241468.

Judith Heathcoat

County Councillor – Faringdon Division

Cabinet Member – Adult Social Care

Oxfordshire County Council

July 2016