

REPORT TO FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland with Gainfield, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth and Little Coxwell – July/August

For information, all that is detailed within my monthly reports is already within the public domain and thus in the media.

General OCC Report - The decision by the new Liberal/Green coalition at South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) to defer endorsing the emerging Local Plan has serious implications for the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid which would provide £218 million of vital infrastructure for the Didcot area.

The preferred options of the coalition at the council meeting on 18th July were to either revise or withdraw the emerging Local Plan although any decision was deferred. Should either of these options be taken then the probable outcome is the collapse of the HIF bid with the consequent severe impact on the Didcot area infrastructure. This would then probably mean South's existing Local Plan would come under pressure and large-scale speculative planning applications might come forward on inappropriate sites. Neighbourhood Plans that many town and parish councils have spent time working on will continue to provide some protection, but there is a real danger that developers might seek to exploit the situation as there would be no new Local Plan for Neighbourhood Plans to align with.

Problems are not confined to SODC; if there is no HIF then the Vale Local Plan could also fail.

This could mean that within months of the new administrations in South & Vale taking office, both Local Plans might fail due to the loss of £218 million for vital infrastructure in Didcot. A further consequence could then be the failure of the £215 million Growth Deal which contains £60 million for much needed affordable homes.

The only way to protect both Local Plans and deliver £433 million funding for Oxfordshire is for SODC to confirm it will not withdraw the emerging Local Plan but will satisfy its ambitions by seeking a review at an appropriate time in the future.

This month, for a change I thought I would give a small sample of the format of two typical days of my life at County Hall this last month. I could of course give you a full day-by-day report for the entire month but that would make the report too lengthy so I have chosen to highlight a Council day and a Cabinet day.

Full Council is timed to commence at 1030, (there are Group meetings prior to Council starting) and it concludes at 1600hrs any items not discussed are carried over to the next full Council meeting. If there is exceptional business to discuss or an urgent decision required then the Chairman seeks members permission to continue the meeting beyond 1600hrs.

Council meetings are conducted in a similar manner to the format for the House of Commons, we have a "divisional bell" which is rung for the commencement of business and when votes are to be taken to ensure that all councillors are in the chamber to cast their vote. There are two sets of papers – the agenda papers + the order paper for the day – which is a timed order of business for that day with named proposers/seconders and a list of speakers – the day ran thus on 9th July :- Apologies, Declarations of interest, Official Communications, Appointments, Petitions and Public Address, Questions with Notice from Members of the Public to Cabinet Members, Questions with Notice from Members of the Council to the Cabinet Members (questions are printed on the order paper with answers but a subsequent question can be asked). There is a section on the agenda for papers requiring, under the constitution, full Council debate for approval/amendment or rejection, a paper on the report of the Cabinet and this is where members have the opportunity to question the Cabinet Member responsible for the specific areas within this report, and then there are motions from councillors to conclude the Council meeting. At full council we are of course microphoned, there is a media gallery, a public gallery and votes are taken electronically and votes are recorded. (We are frequently filmed for TV & there is frequently radio representation present). All votes are recorded electronically.

Full Cabinet day starts at 1000hrs with **Informal Cabinet** in the morning where forward planning and strategy and policy are discussed, this is a closed meeting and no decisions are made. We have a working lunch with Cabinet commencing at 1400hrs and this meeting rises on the conclusion of business. The agenda for 16th July's Cabinet with supporting papers was some 312 pages long. the agenda ran thus:

Apologies for absence, Declarations of Interest, Minutes, Questions from County Councillors, Petitions and Public Address, Business Management & Monitoring Report (which I present), Capital Programme Monitoring Report, Treasury Management 2018/19 Outturn, Investment Strategy, SEND Home to School Transport Cabinet Advisory Group, Bus Access to Queen Street – Oxford, Family Safeguarding Plus Social Care Model, Strategy & Plans to Re-Design Oxfordshire's Fostering "Offer" to become the "Provider of Choice", Joint Housing & Homelessness Strategy for Vulnerable Young People & Families and Re-Commissioning the Young People's Supported Housing Pathway, Transition Fund for Open Access Children's Service: Underspend Bidding Round Recommendations (**Faringdon Town Council had submitted an application for "The Place" and this was supported by Cabinet and "The Place" was awarded a grant of £11,300**), Senior Joint Leadership Roles – Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council, Delegated Powers, Forward Plan and Future Business. There is, as for Council meetings, a media gallery and public gallery at Cabinet and members of the public and elected members (who give notice) can speak to ask Cabinet Members questions and speak on agenda items – speakers are detailed on the order paper.

On the rising of Cabinet there is Growth & Infrastructure for me to attend this is an information sharing meeting with senior staff from the Communities Directorate, the Leader, me as Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Economy.

Specific Report for the Faringdon Division

I have had a wide variety of meetings this last month – the Faringdon and Wantage Locality Meeting, a meeting that gives local councillors from these two areas the opportunity to discuss with officers pertinent items to their Divisions. There are locality meetings across the whole Council so all members have a similar opportunity.

This last month, I have visited “The Place” and had a lovely morning meeting people who were “employed” in an eclectic mix of activities. I have been able to support this work through a grant from the County Councillors Fund.

I attended with the Mayor and lots of local people, adults and many young people the Farcycles official launch and opening. The weather was kind and it was super to see the benefits that Farcycles will bring to young and old folk alike. The County Council has grant funded as have I from my County Councillors fund this exciting project.

I have also attended again with the Mayor the “Groundbreaking Ceremony in Faringdon for the new 74 room Travelodge and Homebargains Store. The ceremony marked the commencement of construction. This development joins Waitrose, Aldi and Costa and will generate circa 40 full and part-time jobs and thus benefit the local economy.

There has been the launch of the Faringdon Museum this month and I was thrilled to be able to attend – this is a very important project for the town – we should be proud of our local heritage. I have long supported the project for a museum in the town and once again, I have been able to provide some funds out of my County Councillors Fund to help this project to develop.

Once again, with my Cabinet Portfolio of Community Safety, I have noted that the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service have been very busy this month with domestic fires (please have a working smoke detector in your home) – remember also, that all doors should be closed throughout the house over night as part of a bedtime routine – a closed standard internal door should hold a fire back for 10-15 minutes allowing smoke detectors to alert occupiers giving them plenty of time to evacuate and call the fire service. There have been road traffic accidents (frequently caused by poor driving) – there has been a fatality on the A420 near Littleworth and this was caused by speeding. There is an added safety message this month too! With the hot weather there are now two scenarios that our fire service staff are employed with – undertaking water rescues from our rivers and extinguishing fires caused by the dry weather in our countryside – some of these fires have been started deliberately.

There will be no surgery in the month of August but I shall have a surgery on Saturday 7th September as usual in the Faringdon Library from 1000-1130. If you are unable to get to my surgery I can be contacted on 01367 241468 or Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk

I hope you all have a lovely summer and enjoy your time with your families and friends.

Judith Heathcoat
Deputy Leader to the Council,
Cabinet Member for Community Safety
Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr. Faringdon Division (Buckland with Gainfield, Littleworth, Faringdon, Eaton Hastings, Buscot, Coleshill, Gt Coxwell, Lt Coxwell)
01865 815284
01367 241468