

REPORT from DISTRICT and COUNTY COUNCILLOR for 2018/19

VALE DISTRICT COUNCIL

- LPP2 : made progress to final stage of adoption of LPP2, which enables the Council to control development within the consulted and approved Local Plan
- GOV FUNDING : uncertainty about the future form of NewHomeBonus(NHB) payments (which are replacing the Gov Rate Support Grant) led to the decision to 'pause' the development of the new leisure centre on Mabley way. It now seems probable that NHB will be replaced by a Housing Delivery Grant and as Vale is an outstanding deliverer of new houses, this is likely to replace fully NHB and the leisure centre can go ahead
- HOUSING : development west of Wantage is now well advanced in Grove, at Monk's farm and on Crabhill. There will be about 5,500 new houses west of Wantage, with no route west out of the town except through East Challow. Traffic modelling indicates that traffic through the village will increase by 30%. I have supported the approach by the developer Dandara to build about 700 new houses west of East Challow, and deliver the long awaited (25/30 years) Western Relief Road to link up with the Eastern Relief Road also funded mainly by the developers' contributions. The East Challow Neighbourhood Plan group is consulting with residents about this scheme.
- GROVE/WANTAGE STATION : The County Council and the Vale have 'safeguarded' the land for a Grove/Wantage rail station, but the project is not on Network Rail's next capital programme, so there will still be a long wait. Current thinking is for a new line from Bristol/Swindon West/ Swindon East/ Grove/Wantage to Oxford to join up with the EWR (Oxford to Cambridge) about to start construction. It could be an important cross-country connection not radial into London, and fit well with the development of the Arc between Oxford and Cambridge.

OVO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CYCLE RACE 12 June 2019 :

County Council has agreed to host this event which will bring huge international attention to Oxfordshire. I have recently had notice from OVO that the race will ride through East Challow on the A417 which is a great opportunity for a celebration and a village party, provided there are no road works. The Parish Council is invited to organise a village event.

COUNTY COUNCIL (OCC)

HIGHWAYS

- OCC has focused all possible resources on mending potholes : about 40,000 have been repaired and four teams are out every day patching roads (higher standard than before) OCC is listed among the top 10 repairers of roads in national league tables. £32 million was spent on our roads last year.

We approved a scheme to borrow up to £10 million p.a. for next 5 years, against future growth of Council Tax, to resurface or micro-asphalt, stretches of road to raise the standard of our roads and bridges as fast as possible. Icknield Way will be resurfaced mid July 2019.

WASTE

- OCC is top recycling County in the UK (57% of all waste is recycled)
- OCC and Districts/City have agreed to fund a new officer to promote still better recycling – we have a target of 65% by 2025, and aim to support the Gov new Waste and Resources consultation which sets out proposals to impose costs on manufacturers in proportion to their use of non-recyclable packaging, and to organise recycling nationally

CARBON EMISSIONS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- OCC will review its energy strategy this year, with a target to achieve zero net emissions by 2030 : currently target is 2050 at 3% per year, but we achieve double that -40% so far
- 50,000 new LED street lamps will be installed from now as they become due for replacement
- Fire Service has 7 and OCC has first 2 electric vehicles and will replace the whole fleet with electric vehicles as they come up for replacement

TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

- OCC has joined with Ox City to install the first Zero Emission Zone in centre of City from 2020, and is working towards traffic congestion management (congestion charge and/or work place parking levy) to better manage the growth in traffic as we build more houses.
- OCC plans to manage the Park&Rides in p'ship with Ox City : one season ticket to be valid at any site
- OCC will consult now on installation of 9 more resident parking zones in OxCity, and encouraging the District Councils to acquire Civil Parking Enforcement powers to control parking locally in their towns and villages.

INFRASTRUCTURE for GROWTH in Oxfordshire

OCC has taken the initiative to bid for Gov funding for infrastructure to serve the growth of housing and businesses in the county. Two bids granted so far :

- GROWTH DEAL : £150 million over 5 years to deliver the needs of 100,000 new homes; £60m of this fund for affordable homes
- DIDCOT HIF (Housing Infrastructure Fund) : £218 million for development north of Didcot, incl. new Thames crossing and Clifton Hampden by-pass for up to 15,000 new houses
- A 40 HIF (still to be decided) : up to £115 m to extend A40 bus lane, and access through Duke's Cut to Oxford City, to connect about 10,000 new houses

In the REGION;

- East West Rail (Oxford to Cambridge) : £1 billion to build rail from Bicester to Bletchley, about to start construction
- Oxford /Cambridge Expressway : route to be decided to connect 1 million homes to be built in the arc, described as England's Economic Heartland. Major opportunity for improvements to A34 in Oxon.

In the District

- A420 : we 3 County Cllrs on A420 set up a safety committee to press for improvements on this major local road which has become a commercial corridor. We intend pedestrian islands and proper bus stops be included in the next local transport plan (LTP5)
- A420 : temporary road will be built to connect construction site on Highworth Road. Permanent roundabout will follow for 500 houses
- Safety at Major's Road junction with Longcot Road will be improved with better signing and lining

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 5

Work will start at County in the autumn to develop the next transport plan, enabling us to rethink the priorities and the services we need after 8 years of significant growth since LTP4. We may decide to build smaller park&ride car parks at more destinations to encourage more to use buses into the city/towns. I hope you will be consulted next year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OCC is working to increase its engagement with communities across the county, encouraging volunteers to come forward to engage with delivering services. A big team of volunteers already provide OCC's major library service; keeps open more children's centres than was possible with funded centres; has major involvement with AGE UK to deliver adult social care and is now hoping to develop community transport, highways wardens for road inspections, 'safe and well' visits with the Fire Service, to make best use of the skills and experience of willing volunteers and maybe end some social isolation too.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The demand for social care grows and grows. OCC already spends 52% of its revenue on adult and children's social care, which is 2% of the population. Gov is reviewing social care funding, and there is a major local government spending review due to report this year.

OCC has developed every initiative to manage care to the highest standard, and CQC reports that some of OCC's care is 'outstanding'.

Best news is that 93% of school children got their first choice of primary school, and OCC is increasing its focus on schools and pupil experience after big increase in 'home schooling' last year.

Cllr Yvonne Constance

April/May 2019