

MARCH 2020 : COUNTY CLLR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS

ALLOCATION OF SUPPORTED BUSES FUND (SBSF)

Most Parish Councils are aware of that Govt has made an immediate grant of £588,000 to OCC to revive supported buses, and every PC hopes for a share of this fund. It seems a lot of money, but nowhere near the £3million we withdrew from 118 bus routes in Oxon in July 2016, and it comes with quite restrictive criteria :

- to restore services where most needed
- to improve existing services - and/or
- start new services

And any spend must also deliver 'additional miles' AND be spent/committed by March 2021 with no guarantee that the funds will be repeated next year, or thereafter. But we expect to get a proper share of Govt's new £5billion rural bus fund, expected by November 2020.

I have discussed this with officers, and with all Cabinet members, recognising that we do not have time to start new services (esp.with no funding commitment next year) and barely time to carry out a proper assessment of all the routes to fairly establish priorities. We have to register OCC's interest by Friday 13th March, so will consult PTRs for local knowledge

Officers have emailed all PCs to be sure all have the same official information (however wordy!) and I report that we will work out the most effective allocation by then, and Cabinet agreed we will present it as a pilot scheme, making clear to all recipients that it is offered for one year only.

CONSULTATIONS from OCC are so many, they risk being confusing. Please respond to those that impact us here in western Vale :

LOCAL TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY STRATEGY (LTCP) - engagement published by next week . This programme refreshes LTP4 (now including digital connectivity) seeking 'engagement' by responses to 31 Topic Papers. The responses will be analysed to inform a final strategy for formal consultation by end of 2020. This is the right time to make yourselves heard.

I have ensured a chapter for A420, which is now the least safe road in the county, but the format invites ideas (to match the other topics) rather than

presenting proposals, so I hope you will not hesitate to make strong suggestions. I think we can require proper bus stops; pedestrian islands; speed limits and safety improvements; bus priority; small Park&Rides along the A420 for villagers to park or cycle to catch the bus – we can require real change and then press for funding. (I will send separately the A420 note I submitted to get officers to highlight A420 in this exercise. Please use all/as much of it as you think useful.)

ZERO-EMISSIONS PLAN FOR OXFORD CITY : This formal consultation was published on Wed 11th March to progress a ZEZ in centre of OxCity by December 2020. It will restrict access to the very centre of the city to vehicles emitting zero emissions, or charge £10 for non-compliance to enter. This is first step in establishing zero emission zones across all of OxCity, and will be the first in UK, probably in the world. ZEZ will be supported by new congestion management project.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT scheme for Eastern Arc of OxCity will be consulted later in the year. By Dec 2022 it will restrict access to the city centre with 5 'bus gates' to ease traffic congestion. Combined with Resident Parking schemes (9 will be installed in 2020 and all OxCity thereafter)) access to OxfordCity will be best by bus, so I mention it here to stress the new importance of bus stops and bus hubs.

MINERALS&WASTE STRATEGY consultation on site allocations closed on 4th March. This strategy sets the sites for extraction until 2030s. The real changes were re-allocating the main extraction from north of the county to the south (where development is due when the SODC delivers their Local Plan) and does not change any sites here in western Vale. (But you will be aware that Grundon, Faringdon, got planning permission to increase their vehicle movements on A420 to 44 per day.

CORONAVIRUS: OCC's Public Health officers are in constant contact with Public Health England, and NHS with a well-tested emergency plan, and will be sure to keep us all informed.

Cllr YVONNE CONSTANCE

