

Nigel Simpson

FEBRUARY COUNCILLOR REPORT

PROPOSALS FOR 20MPH SPEED LIMIT ACROSS OXFORDSHIRE TOWNS & VILLAGES

The first of the 20mph trial sites went live at Cuxham during November. The administration intends to spend £8m on the cosmetic exercise of switching signs from 30mph to 20mph on 85% of the county's roads with a 30mph limit. The Cabinet report notes at para 9 that the 20mph limit is in effect voluntary as it will not be enforced by the police. The hope is that it will become socially unacceptable to break the 20mph speed restrictions as the strategy is reliant on people's conscience. The report goes on to note at para 19 that there are a couple of aspects that should be taken into account:

- The first is the impact of using just signage to enforce the 20mph limit: whilst in some areas, compliance with the new speed limit may be well observed due to the existing environment, in others, without physical changes to the road, speed compliance may be poor. This may mean limited benefits to the community are delivered and potentially put the credibility of strategy in question.
- The second is the fact the DfT guidance clearly states that 20mph must be self-enforcing and that the 85th percentile should be 24mph or below. Without physical changes to the environment many 20mph locations could be well above this.

Diligent drivers who currently observe limits will continue to do so, but speeders will continue to speed.

OXFORDSHIRE AT TOP OF RECYCLING TABLE FOR EIGHTH YEAR

For the eighth year in a row, residents in Oxfordshire have topped the table nationally when it comes to recycling, reusing, and composting. Oxfordshire County Council has once again been named the best performing county council waste disposal authority in England. In 2020-21, residents recycled, reused, or composted 59.5 per cent of their household waste, an increase on the previous year's figure of 58.8 per cent, according to government figures. The total amount of household waste produced in Oxfordshire was 310,479 tonnes for 2020/2021. And 186,052 tonnes were reused, recycled and composted, which created a carbon benefit of 126,603 tonnes of CO₂e compared to disposing of it through landfill. Oxfordshire's five district and city councils, which operate the kerbside collections, also achieved excellent results in their national categories. South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse came second and fourth respectively, while West Oxfordshire, Cherwell, and Oxford City were all in the top performing 25 per cent.

MORE ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGERS COMING TO COUNTY'S CAR PARKS

The roll-out of hundreds of electric vehicle (EV) charging points in council-owned car parks in Oxfordshire has begun. Following the installation of the first park and charge EV hub at Bicester's Cattle Market car park in May, the locations of the remaining 19 sites have been announced. Work started earlier this month and is due to be completed by March 2022.

The park and charge scheme allows residents without off-street parking to park for free overnight and charge up using a 'fast' 7 - 22kw EV charging point. The chargers will also provide much needed battery top-ups to commuters and visitors during the daytime. Unfortunately, the only ones in this area will be at Kings Road and Greys Road car parks.

REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS ON NORTH OXFORD PROJECT

As part of its commitment to tackling the climate emergency, Oxfordshire County Council is working together with contractor Milestone Infrastructure to deliver the council's first diesel-free construction project. Milestone has been using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) at the council's A40 north Oxford site, between the A34 overbridge and the Wolvercote roundabout, since construction work began in the summer.

OXFORD HOMECARE WORKERS REACH RESIDENTS QUICKER BY ELECTRIC BIKES

Homecare workers providing support to adults in Oxford city can now benefit from the use of e-bikes free of charge to reach residents and conduct care visits more quickly and efficiently.

Care Outlook, a service commissioned by Oxfordshire County Council, provides care as part of the county council's Home First initiative, and has initiated the e-bikes scheme.

Oxford United request land near Kidlington for a new stadium

Oxford United Football Club has requested land to develop a new 18,000-capacity football stadium, with linked leisure and commercial facilities, on land owned by us near Kidlington. The club has asked to lease 18 hectares of land at Stratfield Brake for 250 years. Alongside the stadium, the club's proposal also includes facilities such as a hotel, retail, conference facilities, and training and community grounds. Cabinet will discuss the proposal at its meeting on 15TH March. You can [read more](#) about the proposal online.

Trading Standards

Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards Service recently undertook some work in the area you represent. As this was a high-profile activity, I wanted to give you a brief update about it.

Recently, at Kidlington Market, officers from the service took part in a planned activity, targeting the sale and supply of illegal tobacco. This included the search of a vehicle at the market. One individual was arrested and a significant seizure of smuggled and suspected counterfeit cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco was seized from the car. Trading standards officers were also supported by the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit.

A warrant was also executed by officers at a residential premises in Gloucestershire.

Investigations are on-going, so we will not be making any public announcements at this point. However, if anybody in the community reports concerns regarding the sale of illegal tobacco, they can report anonymously to the illegal tobacco hotline on 0300 999 6 999, or visit www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk

BUDGET MEETING OVERSHADOWED BY FARMERS' PROTEST



At the County Council budget-setting meeting on February 8th the administration forced through a whopping 5% Council Tax increase. However, the meeting at County Hall was overshadowed by a farmers' protest outside. As previously reported, the administration is trying to impose a vegan diet at all council-catered

events. Richard Binning, a beef farmer from Steventon, said: "The message they are sending out is really dangerous - they are suggesting it's ok to eat avocados from Brazil, instead of our wholesome British beef." The farmers' protest received national press coverage. The motion to impose the vegan diet has to be ratified by the OCC Cabinet at its meeting on March 15th. Conservatives will be addressing Cabinet and urging them to seek change through education, persuasion and choice, not diktat.

BAD WEATHER IS THE PERFECT STORM FOR ROGUE TRADERS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Residents are being warned to be wary of cold callers or leaflets offering to do work on roofs after the recent storms. OCC's trading standards team believes it is a perfect opportunity for rogue traders to take advantage of residents who have a leaking roof or broken tile. Any Oxfordshire resident who has concerns about cold calling or potential scams can contact the Citizens Advice National Consumer Service on **0800 144 8848** or by visiting its website citizensadvice.org.uk.

CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSALS FOR RESTRICTIONS ON CARS IN OXFORD

OCC and Oxford City Council last month revealed highly controversial joint proposals to cut car use in the city with the introduction of a city-wide workplace parking levy, traffic filters and a wider Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ) to cover the entire city centre. The chairman of Oxford High Street Association condemned the proposals and said: "I am totally depressed by what these two councils are doing to our city." More details on ZEZ below.

BRITAIN'S FIRST ZERO EMISSION ZONE (ZEZ) BEGINS IN OXFORD

Britain's first ZEZ started on 28 February. Launching as a pilot, the streets included in the ZEZ are: New Road, Bonn Square, Queen Street; Cornmarket Street, New Inn Hall Street, Shoe Lane, Market Street, Ship Street and St Michael's Street. The ZEZ pilot is a precursor to the introduction of a larger ZEZ covering most of Oxford city centre next year (2023), subject to further public consultation. The ZEZ pilot will operate from 7am - 7pm, all year around. All petrol and diesel vehicles, including hybrids, will incur a daily charge unless eligible for a discount or exemption. However, zero emission vehicles, such as electric cars, can enter the pilot area free of charge. The charge will vary from £2 to £10 per day depending on the emission levels of the vehicle. Automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras have been installed to enforce the zone. The scheme has been criticised as being a tax-raising measure and not a true ZEZ, as all vehicles are allowed into the zone as long as they pay the tax.

BID SUBMITTED TO DELIVER 159 ELECTRIC BUSES FOR THE OXFORD AREA

A new fleet of state-of-the-art electric buses could be coming to Oxford and its surrounding areas after a bid for government funding was submitted. OCC last month applied for £32.8 million from the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme. Along with £6m from the council and £43.7m from bus companies Go Ahead and Stagecoach, the scheme could deliver 159 electric buses and the infrastructure to charge them in a package worth £82.5m.

If successful, the electric buses would operate in an area stretching from Kidlington in the north to Sandford in the south, and from Cumnor in the west to Wheatley in the east. There are no proposals to support the south of the county.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CHERWELL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Efforts to unpick the agreement between OCC and Cherwell District Council continues. A joint officer working group has been established to review the extent and cost of the current arrangements. The group reports to the member-led Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee, and is made up of the two chief executives, monitoring officers and s151 officers. Once the group has completed its initial review, it will then prepare a transition plan. The Conservative Opposition continues to press for transparency in relation to the costs when they have been identified and quantified.