

## County Councillor's Report November 2025

The main development has been the publication of the consultation on the [Bicester & Mid-Cherwell Movement & Place Plan](#). This is a very important document for our area, for reasons I set out below; I strongly hope all parish councils formally respond to it, and encourage residents and businesses to do likewise.

The County Council has agreed a new [Strategic Plan](#), with nine priority areas and more specific detail than in such documents in the past. The Cabinet has ratified plans for a temporary Oxford congestion charge. Oxfordshire residents can register for free passage into the congestion charge zone 25 times per year, and there are numerous exemptions: [registration is now open](#). The scheme has started and is being monitored. A move to abandon it after just six days was resisted.

Free travel on Park & Ride services has been announced to support Christmas shopping in Oxford, funded for 3 months through income from the temporary congestion charge. Oxford Bus Company has also provided a number of improvements to bus service as a result of the plan. In particular, journey times for the 700 bus from Oxford Parkway to the John Radcliffe Hospital have been reduced to 24 minutes, and the service will now be 3 buses an hour rather than 2.

### Budget

Both OCC and Cherwell DC are expecting bad news from central Government in terms of council funding. The detail may not emerge until close to Christmas. Humbug!

The County Council is waiting to hear how major changes in the national formula that governs how grant funding is distributed to individual councils will impact its finances as it gets ready to set a budget for 2026/27.

The most significant changes to local government funding in more than a decade were originally due to be confirmed by government in October but have now been delayed until late November. The council will then not hear specifically how much money it is to receive in grant funding until mid-December.

Oxfordshire County Council is currently expecting to lose around £35 million funding over a three-year period but until specific detail is made clear by the government, large uncertainties remain.

### Bicester & Mid-Cherwell Movement & Place Plan consultation

Following the round table in September, County officers have moved swiftly to produce a [draft Movement and Place Plan](#) for the area. I would certainly urge all parish councils to consider and respond formally to this important document which will inform developer obligations for infrastructure, setting out transport priorities. I would also encourage you to make communities aware and feed back as individuals. The intention is to review feedback following the close of consultation on 1 December, with the final document adopted in early 2026.

### Parish/Highways guidance

Cllr Rogers has reminded me of the [Oxfordshire Together guidance](#) that is a useful single resource for parish councils and councillors, particularly those who may be new to it. The [PDF booklet](#) is particularly useful. Thanks to David for encouraging me to recirculate it.

## **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation**

The councils are submitting their proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire to the Secretary of State.

- One Oxfordshire - [oxfordshire.gov.uk/oneoxfordshire](http://oxfordshire.gov.uk/oneoxfordshire)
- Two Councils - Oxford and Shires | Ridgeway <https://twocouncils.org/home>
- Three Councils - <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/three-councils>

In December, a letter of intent will be signed by authorities in Oxfordshire and Berkshire for a new strategic authority that would ultimately have an elected Mayor. The County Council's position is that Oxfordshire and Berkshire should form the basis of this. Buckinghamshire has decided that it shouldn't have to work with other authorities, but may be given no choice by central Government. There has been the suggestion that Swindon be brought into this area. The town does not share key services with its neighbours who are in a different Government region, and Oxfordshire's preferred position does not include Swindon.

## **On-street EV charging systems**

The on-street EV charger scheme (known as gul-e) remains open to applicants. Residents can apply and explore eligibility via [this link](#).

## **Councillor Priority Fund**

The Councillor Priority Fund is now open for the 2025-27 period [with local government reform, there is no guarantee that it will continue beyond that date].

I am particularly keen to use this to add value by supporting projects in the smaller villages, and to use the slightly reduced fund of £10,000 over 2 years in a way that provides maximum lasting benefit (for instance, by leveraging match funding). I'm very happy to have an initial discussion about potential projects.

## **Part night lighting switch off**

After reconsultation, the Cabinet has approved a scheme whereby a town or parish council can request an overnight switch off of street lighting (after 11:30pm), following a process similar to the 20 mph speed limit introduction. Cabinet members emphasised the importance of resident engagement and the flexibility for communities to choose their preferred approach. It is unlikely that applications will come forward from major towns, but has been requested in some villages. Cabinet members emphasised the importance of resident engagement and the flexibility for communities to choose their preferred approach.

## **County Hall**

The County Council has now exchanged contracts with a buyer for County Hall. The move out of County Hall to new premises at Speedwell Street will happen in spring 2027. A recent potentially significant archaeological find at the Speedwell site and pending local government reform has meant a reduction in the scope of the work.

## **Gully cleaning**

I was delighted to encounter the gully cleaning team at work in Deddington recently. They are in the division and working their way around for this first annual gully clean for many years. Please encourage residents not to park over gullies in the next couple of weeks.

## **Infrastructure and community mitigation – M40 Junction 10 area**

I've formally fed back on the OxSRFI plans at Ardley, Puy du Fou and Heyford Park voicing a range of concerns. I've had confirmation that funding is in place for the next stage of the business case for Ardley station; this is essential if developer obligations are to follow. I've also had constructive discussions with Chiltern Railways.

A joint initiative between OCC and CDC has been launched called the [Movement and Place Plan for Bicester and Mid-Cherwell](#). This is a public consultation process where OCC seek our views on their plans for our future. I strongly encourage parish councils to comment in detail on this important plan.

The various documents set out the transport investment priorities for each area and form a key part of OCC's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan. Your input is welcomed, and could help to shape the future of transport and connectivity in this area, and how it will impact our communities.

You have until Monday 1st December to submit comments to the website.

You can contact me at [gareth.epps@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.epps@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

GE 17/11/25