

Eynsham Annual Parish Meeting 26 April 2016

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – 2015/16

This year has been eventful; apart from the normal reports of Highways matters, planning issues have continued to dominate the horizon – in particular for the future of the A40, Swinford Tollbridge and the B4449 through Sutton. Much effort has been expended in ensuring that these and other infrastructure matters are / were duly and extensively considered in relation to all residential development projects and this continues.

The zebra crossing was completed on Witney Road in October and this has been welcomed as successful by Bartholomew School. My thanks to the School and the Parish Council for their financial support in this matter; the remainder of the cost comes from Section 106 monies. The Children's Assessment Centre off Merton Court is progressing towards completion in the autumn and this will become a great help to the facilities available to Oxfordshire County Council in their role as carers for children in Oxfordshire.

Discussions are underway to explore the possibility of a 20 mph zone within Eynsham and monitoring of the traffic and speed will be taking place in the near future – this being the precursor of getting such a speed limit approved.

The Draft OCC Core Strategy Minerals and Waste – 2031 is currently in the hands of the Inspector Mills, who has asked for clarification and further information- this means that the Examination in public is now planned for November. This section does not cover site allocation, which will follow once the policies are agreed. My opinion remains that the current document is unsafe and I am very unhappy with the way matters have progressed or not progressed – depending on your point of view.

I view the work being done on the future structure of Eynsham through Eynsham Futures with great respect and will continue to attend as spectator their meetings and help where this is requested.

I continue to work with our District Councillors, our Parish Council and Council Officers to try and ensure that sensible solutions are reached in matters of concern but this has been made even more difficult in the last years by the diminishing support in the funding of Oxfordshire County Council by the Government. More than half of OCC income is spent on Children in care and OAP support in Social Services – both of which are continuing to experience rapid expansion and are statutory duties of the County. The result is that many of the services, which the County Council has previously offered, have had their funding diverted to pay for them – for instance the rural bus subsidies and the Childrens' Centres.

Neither myself nor any of my colleagues find this satisfactory but sadly we are legally bound to ensure the books balance annually. This situation will in my view continue to lay waste to many of our services. Many will say that OCC needs to be more efficient and should have woken up to the impending financial pressures earlier. I believe that there are still changes which OCC could make to soften these pressures and I continue to make myself unpopular in promoting them!

Major adjustments in responsibility and process are needed to provide the Council services and I am hopeful that this will in the next few months become clearer. I do not however feel that

duplicating consultation documents, as is presently envisaged, can at any time be in the interests of the residents of Oxfordshire and to me the extra burden of that cost to the Councils of Oxfordshire is totally unacceptable.

Let us hope that discussions will proceed on a positive note to ensure that the future of services delivered by the councils of Oxfordshire meets the current needs of everyone in the county and are not self-centred.

Thank you for your support in the last year and I look forward to helping achieve the correct result to retain the numerous advantages of living in the Eynsham division within Oxfordshire.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel that I can help; I will happily answer any questions at the meeting

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