

Now in my THIRD TERM as County Councillor for Shrivenham, which includes all the villages west of Wantage to the border with Swindon Borough Council, I continue to be a very active councillor.

The new Oxfordshire Council is now controlled by the FAIR ALLIANCE of the LibDem/Greens/Labour cllrs: I hold no Shadow posts for the Conservative opposition preferring to remain outside the constraints of the Shadow Cabinet: I do not support the thinking of the Group, which tends to be anti-growth, anti-traffic management and sceptical of climate action to deliver the best for Oxfordshire.

I was posted to the PLACE Scrutiny Committee and the Constitution Working Group and by year- end my Questions and contributions on every committee and working group have resulted in being appointed to the Climate Action Working Group, which I chair; and to the Transport Working Group, to be sure that the A420 is always in mind. On the Constitution Working Group I try to get agreement that Motions to Council be within the competence of the Council, in the hope of focusing attention on real County issues and away from vegan food and transgender toilets in 600 Council buildings, but so far no success! It is not surprising that the national press has asked: Is this the **daftest council in Britain?** **THE ADMINISTRATION RISKS FOCUSING MORE ON WOKEISM** than the needs of its residents

We Conservatives were very critical of their decision to raise Council Tax by maximum 5% in a year when residents face the greatest strain on family budgets. We believe that more careful spending could have limited the rise to 2%, especially as they have charged £5million for interest payments on 'prudential borrowing' of £80 million for undisclosed projects. This is profligate spending, and some will have seen the Twitter feed of me up-braiding them for careless spend of other people's money!

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I'm pleased to report that most of the decisions made and progressed by the new administration have been to continue the programmes I started : the main public-facing projects at County.  
on TRANSPORT

1. 20 mph speed limit in built-up areas (where wanted by town/parish)
2. Zero Emission Zone is being trialled in OxCity central
3. one more Low Traffic Neighbourhood installed in Cowley, and more are planned
4. the major Congestion Management plan for OxCity eastern arc, based on Workplace Parking Levy and bus gates to limit through-traffic to deliver a new 24hour bus service from Abingdon to Kidlington is progressing to consultation later this year.
5. OCC's next Local Transport and Connectivity Plan has completed its first consultation, and we expect the second location- based proposals to be presented by end of this summer.

But my successor terminated the HGV weight restriction through Burford, on grounds they plan a wider regional scheme. It was a mistake – there was much learning from that trial which would contribute to the Council commitment to introduce a county-wide strategy for HGVs and enforce it!

on CLIMATE ACTION : the Fair Alliance has declared Climate Change to be its over-riding concern. OCC continues to progress to net zero in OCC estate by 2030

1. Street lighting programme has new contractor for major energy savings by switch to LED
2. OCC fleet transferring to electric on replacement; electric vehicles already in Fire Service
3. Staff transport has been much reduced by COVID, cycling and bus transport encouraged
4. PROPERTY – still to be assessed in light of current need and unused property to be sold off. All property to be upgraded for energy efficiency.

And OCC continues to progress a plan for environmental gain for all Oxfordshire

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LOCALLY I am constantly engaged with key issues:

1. Potholes and road surfaces (resurfacing B4507 a minor triumph - at last)
2. Flooding and drains (A417 at East Challow and Silver Lane West Challow)
3. Footpaths and verges (upgrade for Childrey/East Challow?)
4. Road signs (for safer cycling and horse-riding Childrey and Shrivenham)
5. Broadband installation ( esp in Letcombes )

And I attend to many individual problems – school places for immigrant arrivals; transport to schools; broken pavements etc In Uffington I am a member of the White Horse Hill Action Group, to defend the Hill against any planning application for permanent holiday homes.

PARISH COUNCILS: I have sent a written report to each Parish Council meeting this year and adapted a version for the local Parish newsletters so that as many residents as possible know the work I am doing for the area.

### **KEY COUNTY ISSUES of interest to many beyond the locality**

#### **GROWTH**

The OXFORDSHIRE GROWTH BOARD (with cllrs from OCC and all District Council ) unanimously supported application in September for Government funding from Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The bid for £500 million is to progress 3 major development schemes.

1. DIDCOT GARDEN TOWN - £171 m is bid for Didcot Science Bridge, A4130 up-grade to dual carriageway, new river crossing at Culham and by pass at Clifton Hampden, to support delivery of 22,000 homes in Didcot, Culham, Harwell and Berinsfield
2. WEST OXFORDSHIRE GARDEN VILLAGE: £134.4m bid for further upgrades to A40 on A40 Long Term Strategy, to support more than 10,000 new homes in Witney and Carterton and Eynsham.
3. NORTH of OXFORD: £152 m is bid to develop Rapid Transit lines on up-graded A44 and A4260 corridors; a new Park& Ride and strategic cycle infrastructure. Support is also sought for additional education provision (not yet costed) to support 5,570 new houses in Woodstock, Begbrooke/Yarnton and the Northern Gateway.

GROWTH DEAL: an outline agreement for additional £215m for infrastructure to support new homes and boost productivity in Oxon. The Board wants this to be first stage of a proper planned growth and economic development to 2031. The ambition is still to deliver 300,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031 (as identified in the Oxon SHMA in 2014). During this period of development all planning authorities will have 5 year-housing land requirements

reduced to 3 years land requirement for next 3 years. This new Growth Deal has been approved by ALL District Councils.

#### **OX-CAM EXPRESSWAY**

The National Infrastructure Commission published its report to Gov on the proposed expressway to serve the Oxford/Cambridge Arc. Though not presenting the Expressway for installation, the NEC advised on the need for a long-term investment for new infrastructure to harness the region's economic potential. OCC has passed a Motion calling for a Public Inquiry.

#### **SERVICES**

##### **SOCIAL CARE COSTS & COUNCIL TAX**

Rising costs of social care continues to be a problem, despite significant support funding from Gov. Gov has allowed Council Tax to rise by 3% in 2017/18 and 2018/19 for ring-fenced Adult Social Care.; plus 1% in 2018/19 and 2019/20 for Children's Services. The result is that OCC social care rose by 5.99% in 2018/19; 2.99% in 2019.20; and 1.99% in 2020/21.

Increased funding from NI increase will all go to NHS for first years to support catch-up after Covid. There is no date set for increased funding to reach social care. Social care at OCC (adult and children ) is now estimated to use 63% OCC revenue.)

##### **HOUSEHOLD WASTE and RECYCLING CENTRES (HWRCs)**

I have led the charge to keep open the waste tip at Stanford and pleased to report that OCC signed a new contract in July 2021 which secures all 7 HWRCs in the medium term.

##### **ONE MILLION TONS OF WASTE TRANSFORMED INTO ENERGY AT ARDLEY PLANT**

In December, OCC and partner Viridor marked the 1 millionth ton of waste processed at the plant. Burning waste recovers energy to power 38,000 homes and can export up to 27MW per hour to the national grid. This plant is important part of OCC waste programme which places it top of UK disposal league table, recycling 63% of waste with ambition to get to 70% by 2030.

##### **CARILLION; OCC AGREES EXIT DEAL AFTER COMPANY COLLAPSE**

OCC formally terminated its contract with Carillion effective from February 2018. Services previously provided by Carillion continue through a mix of in-house (school meals and cleaning), continuing with same suppliers (catering and working with existing sub-contractors. OCC is now working out the best cost-effective way of completing the works left unfinished by Carillion.

#### **UNITARY GOVERNMENT**

A proposal for Unitary Government was submitted to DCLG in Spring 2017, by OCC and SODC/VWHDC. Cherwell, WODC and the City of Oxford did NOT take part. Since the election there has been no progress on this bid and there is nothing to report.

Cllr Yvonne Constance