

COUNCILLOR REPORT TO ABINGDON ON THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

24 JUNE 2020

CLLR ALISON ROOKE – ABINGDON EAST DIVISION

New south facing slip roads for A34 at Lodge Hill, North Abingdon

All the land parcels to deliver this scheme have been identified and negotiations with land owners have been concluded, subject to legal documentation. Ground investigation and drainage surveys were underway but have been affected by COVID-19. Skanska (undertaking the works for OCC) are reviewing the situation to understand the impact on the programme, if any. OCC are in discussion with Highways England and Thames Valley Police regarding the required closure of A34 laybys to facilitate this scheme. Further work is required to determine an outcome acceptable to all.

The Public consultation is soon to be organised; officers are currently reviewing how best to do this taking COVID-19 into account.

Construction is planned to start July 2021 (with allowances for Highways England approvals). Construction completion is currently expected to be May 2022.

Other Transport issues

The County council has carried out an exercise to apply for funding from the government to enhance cycling and pedestrian experience throughout the county. As part of this, all Abingdon county councillors put forward our views on what improvements are needed, as did the town council. I have had confirmation that all Abingdon's submissions have been received and will be considered. I have not heard a date when we will be informed what works will be included.

Oxfordshire is hopeful of being awarded around £600,000 in the initial funding to cover the whole county (approximately £200,000 shared between Vale and South Oxon district council areas). The county is planning to use the money predominantly on cycle parking, lane marking and pedestrian and cycle track maintenance, including weed clearance. I am somewhat disappointed by this as poor maintenance for paths, tracks and road edges should have been carried out in any case. We have not yet been informed exactly where the money for Abingdon will be spent.

There is an application in for a further sum of a few million for the county (for use on larger schemes), but I do not yet know if the county will be successful in this application.

The county council has set up a link to keep everyone updated on the progress of the 'Active Travel Fund'. It can be found at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/active-travel

I am hopeful that Abingdon will become the next town to have a local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP) when the one for Didcot is completed. It would allow network assessment across Abingdon and beyond to look at what is missing, what could be improved and how we can encourage more people, including school children, to actively utilise walking and cycling more.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway / Arc OxCam Expressway

In March 2020, the government announced that work on development of the OxCam Expressway proposal would be 'paused' for the time-being. Further detail on this scheme is given at the following link:

<https://highwaysengland.co.uk/oxford-to-cambridge-expressway-home/>

The Roads Investment Strategy, 2020 to 2025 was also published, and notes that Highways England 'are now pausing further development of the scheme while we undertake further work on other potential road projects that could support the Government's ambition for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc'. This can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-investment-strategy-2-ris2-2020-to-2025>

OxCam Arc work

There was specific reference to the OxCam Arc in the March 2020 budget. This stated the following:

'The Budget announces plans to develop, with local partners, a long-term Spatial Framework to support strategic planning in the OxCam Arc. This will support the area's future economic success and the delivery of the new homes required by this growth up to 2050 and beyond.'

Other news from Oxfordshire County Council

Advice on how to deal with forthcoming heatwaves can be found at

<http://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/scorching-temperatures-set-for-oxfordshire-this-week/>

Useful advice re the Covid pandemic can be found at the county council website at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk, the government website at [GOV.UK/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Director of Public Health's Annual Report

Organization's across Oxfordshire are being asked to come together by the Director of Public Health to intensify efforts to help the most deprived areas of the county in the wake of COVID-19. Oxfordshire may be one of the most affluent counties in the UK, but it includes ten of the most deprived wards in the whole of England (including Caldecott ward in Abingdon) within the bottom 20%. The inequalities that exist in the county, the impact they have on the health and wellbeing of residents and the need for action, are the focus of the Director of Public Health's [annual report](#).

Oxfordshire Trading Standards warn residents of the latest COVID-19 scams

During Scams Awareness Fortnight (15-28 June), Oxfordshire's Trading Standards would like to remind everyone that criminals come in all shapes and sizes and can contact you at the door, by phone, post or online. Anyone who thinks they have may have been scammed should report it to Action Fraud: 0300 123 2040 and if you are in immediate danger, contact the police on 999. To learn more about different types of scams and how to protect yourself and others, visit www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk and complete the free online training. For information about the **latest COVID-19 scams**, please read OCC's [news story](#).

Councillor Priority Fund update

Under the County Council's 20/21 Councillor Priority Fund, each county councillor has a small discretionary budget to award to relevant organisations where possible and appropri-

ate. Information on this scheme can be found at [20/21 Councillor Priority Fund](#). If the application is COVID-19 related, please ensure this is clearly marked as priority consideration will be given to COVID-19 related applications.

Local economy and business

Sources of advice

The Government's [Business Support](#) web pages set out the coronavirus support available to businesses. Oxfordshire's district and city councils are continuing to work very hard to communicate and action the changes passed on by Government to support residents, the economy and businesses in the county through COVID-19.

Quick links are below:

- [Cherwell District Council](#)
- [Oxford City Council](#)
- [South Oxfordshire District Council](#)
- [Vale of White Horse District Council](#)
- [West Oxfordshire District Council](#)

Other sources of advice for business include:

- The Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership (OxLEP) [Coronavirus business support resource](#) and HMRC [tax helpline](#) for businesses affected by Coronavirus.

Links to view all virtual county council public meetings can be found on the [meeting details](#) page on the county council website - click on each meeting in the calendar to view the link.

Recording life in lockdown for future generations

The [Oxfordshire History Centre](#) has taken to social media and set up the Oxfordshire History COVID-19 Facebook group for people to share their experiences of lockdown. So far, more than 100 contributions have been posted and the service would love more people to get involved. People's contributions will provide a publicly accessible legacy of day-to-day life in our county during lockdown for future generations. Please help to promote this interesting initiative among your communities - www.facebook.com/groups/oxoncovidhistory/

My apologies for the wide-ranging topics in this report – I believe the extra information may be useful at this unusual time of pandemic.

Cllr Alison Rooke
Abingdon East Division
Oxfordshire County Council