

## Report to Abingdon Town Council – 16 March 2023

Cllr Alison Rooke, Abingdon East Division, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

### TRANSPORT

The draft Abingdon Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was approved on the 23rd February 2023 and will now allow OCC to identify improvements for future investment, ensure priority is given to active travel in local policy and strategy and make the case for future funding for good quality walking and cycling infrastructure in Abingdon. <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/abingdon-lcwip>

The decision to approve the proposal to make all streets within the ring road in Abingdon 20mph was deferred on the 23rd February 2023 to the delegated decisions by cabinet member for highway management meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

The proposed pedestrian and cycle crossings and shared use footway / cycle track plans at Radley, Kennington Road and Whites Lane were approved on the 23rd February 2023.

The proposed toucan crossing plans on the B4017 Wootton Road were approved on 23 February 2023.

The A34 Lodge Hill Interchange planning application has been submitted and consultation done. The submitted application includes, among other things:

- Extended cycle/footways at the junction
- Extra and improved crossings
- Cycle route priority over pond access service road

Up to date information on the project can be found on the OCC website at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/roadworks/future-transport-projects/a34-lodge-hill-interchange>

A 5-year network management (highways) plan was agreed at Cabinet on how the highways network is used. The document (among other things):

- Aligns highways policy with new transport and environment policies
- Sets out the rules for work on the highways and increased fees and fines for e.g., broadband utilities
- Prioritizes ensuring walking, cycling and bus travel is possible during road works
- Aims to reduce inappropriate use of local roads by freight.

OCC has submitted new bids for funding to the Department for Transport (tranche 4) for more active travel money following on from its previous successful bids. Schemes proposed include improvements in Abingdon, Bicester, Witney and Oxford. Money will also be spent county-wide to improve cycle parking and wayfinding routes.

A new verges and vegetation policy was adopted at Cabinet to improve the management of roadside nature reserves and support for areas of local community managed biodiversity. The policy also

instructs that footpaths and cycle paths are kept accessible and not restricted by grass and vegetation growth, and that visibility is maintained at junctions and other high-risk areas.

## **ABINGDON BRIDGE**

The second phase of repair works to Abingdon Bridge are due to commence on 20<sup>th</sup> March, lasting for an anticipated 6 weeks. The vast majority of the works will be undertaken from specialist scaffold beneath the bridge without any impact on the travelling public.

There will be a period of the works when it is necessary to expose the sewer that runs over the arch of the bridge to have visual confirmation that the structural coring being laterally drilled into the bridge from the river does not breach the sewer pipe, as the two are thought to potentially interface with only less than 50mm clearance. To expose the sewer it will be necessary to have temporary lights over one lane of the bridge whilst that particular part of the work is undertaken.

Whilst the disruption is relatively minimal, OCC is nevertheless working to reduce its impact and a plan for the absolutely minimal footprint of excavation necessary has been proposed to reduce the required duration of the temporary signals. Due to the nature of that work, the proposal requires appropriate sign off to ensure conformity with the OCC contractor's health and safety procedures.

## **OCC BUDGET**

The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance 2023-2024 budget was passed at full council. The budget sees above inflation investment in children's services, and significant increases for adult social care and highways. The Councillor Priority Fund has been maintained at £15k total covering the two council years 2023-2025. The opposition presented a vision for a council stripped back to statutory obligations only. To achieve a rise in council tax 1% lower than the administration proposed, their alternative budget proposed cuts to libraries, the fire and rescue service, buses, funding to parish councils for 20mph schemes, a 25% cut to the councillor priority fund, and ending the joint parking and bus ticket for park and rides. Officers reported to council that the Conservative proposals, two of which also included increased borrowing from reserves to fund free parking at two Oxford P&Rs, would have weakened the council's financial position.

## **NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE FOR OCC**

OCC's new chief executive, Martin Reeves, has now started work at the council.

## **GRANTS AND COST OF LIVING SUPPORT**

Residents receiving housing benefit, but not in receipt of other state benefits, can claim £300 to help with living costs, thanks to the latest round of the Household Support Fund. Oxfordshire County Council has sent letters to residents eligible for support. Claims need to be made by 28 March 2023.

Cost of living grants are available for care workers, from the Care Workers' Hardship Grant – funded by Oxfordshire County Council. Up to £2000 can be applied for. The process is light touch and can be paid within two weeks.