

Title	County Councillor's Report
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Parish	Thame Town Council
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Change in political control:

The ruling Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance collapsed following the withdrawal of the Labour Party. This followed multiple failures of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services (Liz Brighthouse), and her refusal to take responsibility around children's education and SEND provision. A minority administration has been formed with new cabinet members announced (see below)

New SEND improvement cabinet position:

The new minority Lib-Dem-Green administration has created a specific cabinet position dedicated to SEND improvement. Kate Gregory has been appointed to this position. A priority SEND action plan is being drawn up. Experienced former teacher and school governor, Cllr John Howson, has also been appointed to the Children's portfolio (see below).

Cabinet reshuffle: Cabinet positions are now as follows,

- **Leader** – Liz Leffman
- **Deputy Leader and Climate Change Delivery & Environment** – Pete Sudbury
- **SEND Improvement** – Kate Gregory
- **Children's Services** – John Howson
- **Community and Corporate Services** – Neil Fawcett
- **Transport Network Management** – Andrew Gant
- **Infrastructure and Development** – Judy Roberts
- **Finance** – Dan Levy
- **Adult Social Care** – Tim Bearder
- **Public Health, Inequalities & Community Safety** – Nathan Ley

OCC to decarbonise vehicles

Funding has been made available to switch OCC's fleet of vehicles to electric vehicles, in line with the council's 2030 climate action framework. The switch will also provide an opportunity to modernize OCC's fleet management.

Empty properties for Ukrainians

People with vacant properties are encouraged to consider letting them to Ukrainian refugees. People with suitable properties will receive, one month rent in advance, a security deposit payment; and a £1,000 thank you payment. Contact:

oxfordshirehousingcapacity@southandvale.gov.uk

Freight strategy:

The Atkins study into area weight restrictions has been [published](#). Two further studies will be pursued into area weight restrictions covering Henley-on-Thames and the Windrush Valley. The study outlines a process for all villages and towns to request further work to reduce HGVs on inappropriate roads. The process will be published on OCC's website for parishes and towns to apply to.

New countywide air quality website launched for Oxfordshire:

A new Oxfordshire air quality website has launched – providing air quality guidance and resources across the county. The website oxonair.uk, which has been created in partnership between Oxfordshire County Council and district councils, aims to integrate all relevant air quality-related information in Oxfordshire under one single platform.

Permission granted for release of land for new Oxford United stadium:

Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet has agreed to the release of a parcel of land at 'the triangle' north of Oxford near Kidlington. This will now be on a leasehold basis. Oxford United Football Club (OUFC) will be required to meet a series of conditions and secure planning permission from Cherwell District Council.

Pothole innovation trials:

Results from a [maintenance trial](#) in Berrick Salome suggest a recycling-based technique reduces carbon by 71% and speeds up the scheme by 60%. 'In-situ cold recycling' reuses the existing surfacing material and saves hundreds of tonnes of carbon.



Boundary review:

The Electoral Commission has issued its draft recommended changes to boundaries of County Council divisions, which would be in use for 2025 local elections. The Commission agrees with the recommendation of OCC to increase the number of councillors from 63 to 69, in line with population growth. A consultation will be open from 3 October to 11 December. <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/>

Buses:

In December in the run up to Christmas, single fares in Oxfordshire will be capped at £1.

OCC Budget 2024-2025:

Cabinet agreed an approach to setting the 2024/5 budget. Continued inflation and demand pressures (particularly in SEND and adult care) mean the council is currently forecasting £30-40 million in additional costs in 2024/5.

The council's financial strategy includes a 4.99% rise in council tax for 2024/5 with 2% ring fenced for adult social care. Details of the proposals will be published in November.

Oxfordshire tops table for county councils tackling climate change:

Oxfordshire was rated the best performing county council in the UK on climate change by the Climate Emergency UK climate action scorecard.

Reducing disruption caused by utilities & developers:

The County's new plan for charging an increased daily fee of £2500 (instead of the £300 fixed fee) to utility companies that dig up major roads is being consulted on. By law it is restricted to 5% of Oxfordshire's roads and so will focus on busy, critical parts of the network. Surplus funds will be reinvested. The DfT is encouraging all councils to adopt schemes like this.

Homes Upgrade Grants:

Money is available for off-gas grid homes to improve energy efficiency (including solar). To qualify a resident (renter or owner-occupier) must live in a home rated EPC D or lower, and have a household income of less than £39,000

*****GRANTS AND COST OF LIVING*****

Councillor Priority Fund

Applications to the Councillor Priority Fund are still open. This is a fund of £15,000 to be used over two years on projects in Thame, Chinnor, Tetsworth and surrounding villages

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/community-and-living/thriving-communities/councillor-priority-fund>

Hardship fund: OCC's hardship fund (Resident Support Scheme) was launched in June.
Phone: 01865 804171

Home Upgrade Grants: OCC & its partner AgilityEco is reaching out directly to households who will qualify to benefit from Home Upgrade Grants (to improve energy efficiency for 'off-grid' homes)