

REPORT TO BURFORD TC AGM– May 2023 FROM CLLR NICHOLAS FIELD-JOHNSON

GENERAL OCC REPORT – ANNUAL REVIEW

It is appropriate to review the year and OCC's performance. Some readers believe that I am critical of the current administration, and I am, as we are in opposition, and will point out the mistakes the current Administration continues to make. **The biggest error was the cancellation of the HGV ban in Burford and the continual focus on Oxford City** with its controversial policies on bus gates, LTNs and using traffic filters to divide the City into six "15 minute" zones as well as highly ambitious aims relating to climate change. I will not even linger on the wasted Council time on discussing the issue of serving vegan food at Council events. There is little focus on our rural communities which is very frustrating.

REVIEW OF HGVs IN OXFORDSHIRE

We continue to campaign for a lasting HGV ban for Burford and OCC has agreed to review HGVs routes throughout Oxfordshire, but this continues at a slow pace. This is extremely hard to tolerate given all the work that has gone into the Burford HGV campaign.

OCC WORKING TO RETAIN BUS SERVICES IN THE CITY OF OXFORD

Following Oxford Bus Company's announcement of the withdrawal of bus services to parts of the city, recognising that this will adversely affect many local residents, OCC has launched a tender process for replacement services. Earlier in the year, the council set aside up to £2.5 million over the next two years to protect previously commercial services at risk of withdrawal as a result of lower passenger numbers and spiralling bus industry costs. The news has been received with anger by rural communities (such as in Brize Norton) with failing bus services who question why they don't get the same level of treatment.

COSTS OF LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS (LTNs) IN OXFORD SOAR



OCC has acknowledged spending £73,000 repairing vandalised plastic bollards used in Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes in East Oxford. The total may have risen since that figure was

released. Steel bollards are now to be installed at a cost of £100,000 after the "unprecedented levels of vandalism". It has to be questioned the vast sums of money being poured into this divisive scheme that might benefit a small number of residents in Oxford, while rural residents are complaining that budgets for mundane matters such as drain repair are inadequate.

OCC BUDGET

The OCC Budget process is now completed and the administration has imposed a 5% increase in Council Tax on residents.

The unexpectedly generous Local Government Funding Settlement left OCC with £9m more than anticipated at the time the draft Budget was drawn up. This presented the administration with an opportunity to cut the proposed Council Tax increase from 5% to 4% which they failed to take. The administration is continuing with pet projects which are indulgent at a time when household budgets are under pressure.

PLANS TO SPLIT OXFORD INTO FOUR SECTORS WIDELY ATTACKED

As previously reported, OCC plans to spend £6.5m on traffic filters that will split Oxford into four sectors: North, South, West and East. When the traffic filters are operating, for cars without a permit, movement within each sector is unrestricted, but direct movement between sectors is not possible and requires use of the ring road. Affected motorists will face much longer journey times and distances. The intention is to force a change in behaviour. Grave concerns have been expressed about these sectors proposal and the traffic chaos that may well ensue.

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SPARE SEATS SCHEME CANCELLATION

Dear Parents/Carers

WITHDRAWAL OF SPARE SEATS SCHEME ROUTES 2-WT05 and 2-WT08: The Baldons, Blackbird Leys, Garsington to Wheatley Park School

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) provide school transport where there are children who qualify for free school transport according to the Council's Home to School Transport Policy.

Prior to the Full Council meeting on 14 February, councillors were bombarded with emails from concerned parents and pupils alarmed by the administration's decision to withdraw the 'Home To School Spare Seats Scheme' in certain areas. Councillors understand that 235 children could be affected by bus service cancellations between now and September, with as many as 1,384 children facing their school bus service being taken away as bus contracts are retendered. The Conservative Opposition proposed an additional £100,000 in their budget to fix this problem, however, this was voted down by the administration.

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