

OCC Councillor Parish Report: January 2026

Dear Parishes

I'm trying a slightly different format for my reports over the next few months, including more information on road closures as well as what I've been working on. I'll also be sending this to all parishes together – the idea being that I'll be better able to keep track when issues come up between reports, and to make sure that the parishes that don't meet every month get the same information. Please let me know if you have any feedback!

All the best

Laura

What I've been working on:

Kidlington Landfill: I was relieved that the government announced that it would fund the clean-up of the illegal landfill outside Kidlington and mandating the Environment Agency to take this on. However, this is likely to take 7-10 months from when the work starts, not including the planning and preparation work that will be needed before it begins, and at the moment we don't have a timeline for the work (or a timeline to develop a timeline). We are arranging a meeting between the Environment Agency and local councillors for mid-January, which I am hoping will create pressure to produce a timeline. I am therefore hoping that I will be able to provide a more detailed update in my next report.

Roads: following a meeting with Blackthorn residents highlighting serious road safety issues in the village and surrounding area, I met with officers to highlight the need for action. This was quite helpful as the issues had clearly not been considered in the round before, but I'll keep following it up.

Drains: several attempts to clear blocked drains in Thrupp had failed due to parked cars. I convinced the council to work with their contractors to get a specific date for the next attempt, which allowed residents to self-organise to keep the area clear. This was a lot of work, especially for residents, but it worked and the drains are now clear (see photo!) – everyone was delighted, including the contractor who used it as a positive story for their Christmas newsletter! If you've got a similar problem in your parish please let me know and we can talk about whether we can do anything similar.



Bicester and Mid-Cherwell Movement and Place Plan: this includes areas around the north of Otmoor, including Wendlebury, Arncott, Piddington, Merton and Blackthorn. However, the initial draft included almost nothing on the rural

areas, and the consultation also focused heavily on Bicester. After robust feedback from myself and other councillors representing the rural areas, the consultation has now been reopened. You can view it here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/movement-and-place-plan/bicester-and-mid-cherwell>. I will also be in touch later in the month as I am working with other local councillors to try and organise a meeting for parishes to discuss what we'd like to see in it, and proactively make suggestions as well as feeding back on the existing proposals.

Fire Service Changes Consultation: I intervened to get more clarity for Kidlington firefighters affected by the proposed closure of the Kidlington fire station. They live in tied housing next to the station and were worried about needing to move. They have now received clarification around the earliest potential dates of any changes, and assurance that they will be able to stay in their homes after that, allowing them to plan for children's schooling. I have also raised concerns about the proposed merger of Kidlington and Rewley Road fire stations, both for Kidlington and concerning the need for rapid response to fires in heritage buildings in central Oxford.

Buses: I am concerned about the increased congestion on Banbury and Woodstock roads since the congestion charge was introduced and the impact this is having on buses to Kidlington. Cllr Lesley McLean and I met with Cllr Andrew Gant (the cabinet member for transport) before Christmas to discuss potential mitigations to improve the reliability of the bus services. He promised to come back to us in January with more detailed data and feedback on some of the options.

Islip Bridge: after repairs to the Islip Bridge were delayed last year due to the Council not starting preparatory work in time, I have been in touch with the relevant officer to ask whether this is in hand for this year. The closure of the bridge will be extremely disruptive to local communities across Otmoor, and the council will be doing our best to balance the different needs of different groups (specifically, the work can only be done in the summer due to flooding risk, but this poses challenges for farmers in harvest time)

Full Council: I spoke at full council on the successful-passed Liberal Democrat motion on Community Cohesion. Baby Felicity was in a sling and was extremely tolerant!



Road and Right of Way Closures

Roads:

09/01/2026-12/01/2026 (night-time only): the A41 will be closed between Bicester and the Bicester Road towards Ludgershall to facilitate pre-surface dressing roads

12/01/2026-13/01/2026: Mill Street, Islip Road closed for drainage investigation works. Diversion in place via North and Middle Roads

19/01/2026-30/01/2026: A section of North Road in Islip will be closed to allow for gas works. Diversion in place via Middle Road.

23/03/2026-27/03/2026: Church St, Kidlington will be closed to facilitate clearing pole blockage and laying duct in footway and carriageway

Footpaths and Bridleways:

Footpath Closure in Hampton Gay and Poyle/Kidlington: The footpath running from the Islip Road to Bicester Road is closed until further notice due to the illegal landfill

County Council Business

Fire and Rescue consultation: the fire and rescue service consultation closes on 20th January. The key issue for this area is the proposed merger of Rewley Road Station in Central Oxford and Kidlington Fire station, with a new location in 'North Oxford' (the indicative response times suggest this is Oxford Parkway, but this is not confirmed). You can respond to the consultation here:

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ofrs-consultation>

Household Waste Recycling Centres (The Tip): a booking system for the tip will come into force from 14/01/2026. You will need to bring proof of address, and arrive in the vehicle specified in your booking form. You can book a slot up to 30 minutes before your planned arrival time. If you arrive without a booking, you may be able to make one on-site, but this is subject to availability. You can book here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste-and-recycling/book-recycling-centre-visit>

Warm Welcome Campaign: For the fourth year running, Oxfordshire libraries are partnering with the Warm Welcome Campaign, which supports a network of over 4,000 warm spaces across the UK. The campaign seeks to open up more community spaces for free for those who may be feeling isolated, or whom need a warm place to stay during the colder months. Oxfordshire's libraries are also delivering a range of other support for residents including free cultural activities, advice sessions and signposting on helpful topics.

Flags: Oxfordshire County Council has updated our statement on flags on lampposts, which can be viewed here: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/flags-on-the-highway/>. These are being placed by a small number of individuals and pose hazards, especially in wet and windy weather. To report flags or other potential unauthorised items, please use Fix My Street, and removal will be prioritised according to risk.

Thames Valley Devolution Expression of Interest: Oxfordshire County Council and the five Oxfordshire District and City Councils have submitted a joint expression of interest with the Berkshire authorities in a mayoral strategic authority covering Oxfordshire and Berkshire. The expression of interest sets out a shared

ambition for an MSA – a new combined authority led by a directly elected mayor and made up of a number of councils – to secure new powers and funding for the area. This would enable local councils to plan and deliver more integrated and effective transport, infrastructure, the right type of housing – with an emphasis on social housing – creating the conditions for faster, more inclusive growth across the region. Read more: <https://www.reading.gov.uk/eoi/>

Electric Vehicle Charging: The delivery of what is believed to be the UK's largest programme of electric vehicle (EV) cable channel charging installations for homes without off-street parking has moved a step closer. ODS, the company behind the innovative Gul-E cross-pavement charging solution, has been awarded a contract by Oxfordshire County Council to deliver up to 500 cross-pavement EV charging installations. The project will see Gul-e units installed across Oxfordshire's residential streets, enabling safe, trip-free charging directly from people's homes to parked electric vehicles at the kerbside.

School Admissions: a consultation is open on school admissions until the 31st of January. These are generally 'tidying up' of existing rules without major changes; there are some changes to the rules affected separated parents, which affected families may wish to review and contribute to the consultation accordingly. It is available here: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/school-admissions-consultation-2027-28>