

Parish Report: February 2026

Dear Parishes

Thank you for your feedback on my last report – I will stick to the new format! This month the illegal landfill has (thankfully!) been taking up less time, so I have focused on chasing up old enquiries and trying to get on top of ongoing issues. I've also spent a lot of time driving around and looking at roads.

All the best

Laura

What I've been working on:

Kidlington Illegal Landfill: This will be cleared beginning from February. We don't have the start date or timeline yet but contractors are already on site carrying out preparatory works and a meeting is scheduled for 3rd February where I should get a more detailed update. We also had news of two arrests.



Roads: The cold and wet weather has caused a spike in potholes as well as throwing up some issues with blocked drains. I have escalated several unactioned Fix My Street requests as well as submitting new ones of my own – if you have an outstanding FMS request please send me an email and I will chase it. The council has also increased the number of pothole repair teams to try and get on top of the issue (see below). I am also trying to identify roads that are badly deteriorated to try and get them reviewed for more comprehensive repair. I have already raised: Woodperry Hill near Horton-cum-Studley; Oakley Road in Horton-cum-Studley; New Pond Lane outside Charlton-on-Otmoor and Islip Road on the way into Bletchingdon. I

have so far been doing this on a fairly ad hoc basis so please let me know if there are areas you would like me to come and look at.

Fire Service Changes Consultation: I visited Kidlington Fire Station along with Cllrs Lesley McLean and Gareth Epps to discuss their concerns about the proposed changes in more detail and to see the rescue tender, which they use for water rescues and rescues at height. The consultation closed on the 31st of January. I have appreciated the constructive engagement by firefighters despite the pressure they are under, and my intent over the next month is to ensure that issues raised in the consultation receive thorough consideration and that communication with firefighters is prioritised.



Buses: I am continuing to work on solutions to mitigate the traffic and bus issues to and from Kidlington and Oxford Parkway Park and Ride. Service improvements for the 700 are planned, which I hope will improve reliability. A resident also raised the issue of unreliability of the number 29 bus between Arncott and Bicester. Stagecoach have planned service improvements to the number 29 from 22nd February, so I have asked Arncott residents to keep track of bus delays and update me, so that I can push for further action if needed.

Road adoptions: I had a briefing on the process for road adoptions, which has put me in a better position to support residents trying to get roads adopted.

Blue Badges: a resident raised with me that Oxfordshire does not allow blue badges to be transferred from other authorities when residents move into Oxfordshire, forcing them to start the application from scratch. The Council told me that this was banned by the Department for Transport, so I asked Calum Miller MP to raise it with DfT. They confirmed that it is not banned, so I have gone back to OCC asking for this policy to be reconsidered.

Social Media: I lobbied hard for Oxfordshire County Council to stop posting on X (formally twitter) after the integrated AI system ("Grok") began posting deepfake pornographic images, largely of women but also in some cases of children. The site's value as a communications tool has also been limited due to algorithmic changes that suppress our posts, and a policy change which means posts on X are now harder to see without an account. I am delighted that Oxfordshire will now limit engagement on X to minimal communications and will be posting on Bluesky as well as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

In County Hall: I substituted for a colleague on People Scrutiny Committee, where we discussed support for unpaid carers and supported independent housing for adults with learning disabilities.

Road and Right of Way Closures

Roads:

02/02/2026-06/02/2026: Green Lane and White Way in Kidlington will be closed to lay duct and install new FW boxes.

23/02/2026-25/02/2026: Brill Road near Horton-cum-Studley will be closed to facilitate a new water connection

24/02/2026: Thame Road in Piddington will be closed to facilitate replacement of a pole in the verge

25/02/2026-27/02/2026: an unnamed road outside Horton-cum-Studley between Oakley Wood and Waterperry Wood will be closed for tree pruning and felling

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

Bicester and Surrounding Villages Movement and Place Plan: The Bicester and Mid-Cherwell Movement and Place plan has been renamed and updated to have a bigger focus on surrounding villages. It includes a stronger emphasis on HGV restrictions, support for walking and cycling routes into Bicester and between villages where the distances are viable, more frequent and reliable buses as well as bus infrastructure improvements (bus stops, bus lanes, and routes to and from buses).

Congestion Charge: monitoring data is now available for the first two months of the congestion charge. This shows major improvements in some routes, particularly bottlenecks into Oxford that have delayed bus travel, Abingdon Road, and St Clements. Unfortunately it shows an increase in traffic and delays particularly outbound in the evening rush hour on Banbury and Woodstock roads, as well as bus delays. Park and Ride use is significantly up compared to December 2024. Visitor footfall numbers are not available yet but I will share when they are. You can dive into the figures for yourself here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/oxfords-temporary-congestion-charge-cars/temporary-congestion-charge-monitoring-data/monitoring-data-december-2025>

Healthwatch Survey: At the request of Oxfordshire County Council, Healthwatch are carrying out an anonymous survey for rural Oxfordshire residents on how they interact with health and social care services:
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/rurallivingpublic/>

Lane Rental: it's always annoying when utility companies dig up the road, and then take ages to do the repairs while causing traffic chaos. To mitigate this OCC implementing a lane rental scheme, which means that for key arteries, the utilities will be charged £2,500 per day to carry out works during the working day. This should incentivise them to carry out works quicker or carry them out at night – and when they are not able to do this it will give us a new source of funds we can reinvest into the highways. We are only the second council in the country to do this and are excited to see the effects! In this area, the road through Islip will be one of the key arteries covered.

Budget cuts: Changes to central government funding formulas designed to benefit urban areas over rural areas will leave Oxfordshire with a £24 million funding shortfall over the next three years. Budgets are already strained due to the growing costs of social care and special educational needs, which together make up the majority of Council spend, and this will be difficult to find. We are doing everything we can to protect essential services and identify funds to invest in key priorities around roads and transport. We have also managed to protect our commitment of annual gully inspections and clearance and are investing capital funds in repairs of gullies which have been identified as needed through the clearance programme.

Pothole teams: following wet weather and the opening up of a large number of potholes, the council has increased the pothole repair teams from 7 to 16 to try and get on top of the backlog. Please keep reporting through Fix My Street and escalate to me if it is not addressed within a reasonable period, or escalate to me straight away if you believe a pothole is dangerous.

National Highways and Transport Network 2025 – Final Call: Oxfordshire is taking part in a nationwide survey on public satisfaction with transport and road services. We're asking for residents' views on: accessibility, highways maintenance, public transport, road safety, tackling congestion, walking and cycling and business uses. Residents can take part in one or all of them. The surveys will be open until 28 February 2026 at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/nht-2025>

Future Generations: The Council is holding two events on Wednesday 4th March and Tuesday 10th March for Primary Schools entitled '**What does the council do? A Future Generations event for primary schools**'. Schools can bring up to 12 pupils from years 5 and 6. Spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis through the booking form. Schools should complete the online registration form by 12 noon on 11 February 2026:
<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/what-does-the-council-do-a-future-generations-event-for-primary-schools/surveys/registration>