

## **County Councillor Annual Report - 2026**

Firstly, an enormous thank you to all of you for the support you've given me over my first year on the council. It's been a busy year!

**Maternity Leave:** I was proud to become the first councillor to take maternity leave from Oxfordshire County Council. The Council acted quickly to introduce it and my colleagues were incredibly supportive in helping residents with issues while I was off. Thank you for bearing with me!

**Illegal Landfill:** the biggest story of the year by far has been the illegal landfill outside Kidlington. While early reports were made in the late spring and summer, the world at large – and most residents – became aware of the site in October. There followed an enormous campaign to get the government to clear it up, and I'm really grateful to everyone who signed a petition, shared information or otherwise helped apply pressure. The clear-up started in April and is due to be complete by the end of summer – and then the focus will need to be on learning lessons, and ensuring accountability for those responsible. Oxfordshire is already looking at improving processes, such as by using drones to assess early reports rather than relying on accessing sites on foot, and I will follow this up along with colleagues.

**Gullies:** a full sweep of Oxfordshire's gullies was completed with the vast majority of gullies cleared in a 12 month period, although a few areas have been missed which I am chasing up. This reversed years of cuts under the previous administration who had reduced clearance to a 4 year cycle. Annual clearance will continue next year and an additional £4 million has been invested into gully repair. This should mitigate flooding as well as reducing potholes, as standing water is a major cause of potholes – and is a vital investment in climate resilience as mild, wet winters become more common.

**Potholes and Road Maintenance:** another consequence of the warm, wet winter was a national pothole crisis, with Oxfordshire no exception. Here again, the legacy of past cuts has caused problems, with the disastrous 'managed decline' policy meaning our roads were unable to withstand weather that, while unhelpful, was by no means out of the normal range. I'm grateful to everyone who helped by reporting potholes and especially to Fix My Street superusers – and will be looking at how we can improve things next year. One key step has been the roll-out of surface dressing in some areas – this is preventative maintenance on key routes that will mitigate road degradation. But we also need to look at quality of repairs, holding contractors to account, and speed of response. I will continue to look at this over the summer to ensure we're better prepared for next winter.

**Congestion Charge:** Oxfordshire became the third authority in the country to roll out a congestion charge to deal with gridlock in the city. This has significantly reduced traffic on most arterial routes and while there were initially negative impacts in some areas, including the Woodstock and Banbury roads, this has started to abate. I have been working with bus companies and OCC to try and improve service reliability and will continue to monitor it. The congestion charge has also supported free bus travel on the Park and Ride, which has been popular with residents, with new schemes being rolled out to support key workers travelling into Oxford and express buses from

Oxford Parkway to the Headington Hospitals – a critical route for both commuters and residents needing to access services.

**London Road:** I have supported Calum Miller in his campaign for a vehicle underpass at London Road – we secured an early success when East West Rail announced this as one of the options, subject to funding being received (including some local funding). With the consultation ongoing we should have the outcome soon – but we will continue to campaign until we get the result we need.

### **Next Year**

Looking ahead to next year, I'm planning to keep working on some of the same things (although hopefully not any illegal landfills!). I'll be asking questions over the autumn around preparedness for winter road maintenance, and I'll be looking at the development of a Movement and Place Plan for Kidlington and surrounding areas and the rollout of the Bicester plan. I'll also be doing some work on HGV limits – this is an area that several parishes have raised, and many people across the area would like to see more limits, and greater enforcement of existing limits. Watch this space!