

Annual Town Meeting 7 April 2016

District Councillor Reports

Report by District Councillor Mrs J Bland

The District Council has a strong track record of sound financial planning and efficiencies that is at the heart of good governance and services delivery. Our shared service with The Vale of The White Horse has made huge savings that has enabled us not to increase our precept again this year.

We have joined together with other Oxfordshire district council leaders, and are asking the Government to agree the creation of a new Local Unitary Council, and support an ambitious 'Devolution Deal' for Oxfordshire. The 'Devolution Deal' would bring in significant investment in roads, schools and public transport. This proposal recognises that greater efficiency and coordination is needed than currently exists; for example, better planning for transport and housing delivery, skills development, and a more joined-up approach to health and social care to benefit all residents of Oxfordshire. At the centre of the proposal is the creation of a 'combined authority'. This means, the leaders of all councils in Oxfordshire will work together in the interest of their districts and the county, delivering greater efficiencies countywide. The plan sees the closing of Oxfordshire County Council and its functions transferred to four new Local Unitary Councils, working together with the NHS, Police and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. These changes would simplify local government and bring about significant savings that could be re-invested in public services. The plan is supported by all of Oxfordshire's MP's. The new proposals introduce joint working with the National Health Services and Adult Social Care to improve service quality and deal with increasing demand. This is supported by The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. They wish to work closely with the councils in developing the plans. The councils are now commissioning independent experts to work with them and other stakeholders in producing detailed costed plans for the preferred option. The proposals will be considered by each council prior to public consultation in the summer.

The preferred options for the 4 Local Unitary Authorities are:

1. A Southern Oxfordshire Unitary to cover the area currently administered by SODC and The Vale of The White Horse
2. An Oxford City Unitary Authority would cover the City of Oxford
3. A West Oxford and Cotswold Unitary Authority would be formed.
4. A Cherwell and South Northants Authority would be formed.

Representatives from each 'authority' will work to solve inter-unity problems within the Combined Authority. More details are now going on SODC's website.

Air Quality Consultation

The Air Quality Consultation has come to a close. It is now in the process of being analysed by air quality experts. I will be following its progress with the cabinet member Tony Harbour and will push with vigour any actions that will help Henley's air pollution problems.

Hydro Power

Planning permission has been granted for a hydro-electric power plant at Goring weir. It will generate about £100,000 of electricity a year. This is a step forward in making our district greener. We are looking in all directions to solve our quality of life.

SODC has adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy

We have officially adopted a new way of securing money for infrastructure from new developments. All developers will have to contribute every time they build. The charge, will depends on the size of the project. We will start using it from April 1st this year.

Queen's Birthday

On the 21 April there will be a national beacon lighting event to mark the Queen's 90th birthday. More details will be available soon.

Joan Bland

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