

# County Councillor Report

Chinnor division

1<sup>st</sup> April 2026

Cllr Georgina Heritage

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Over the past month I've continued to explore areas of concern raised by residents and to invite OCC officers to visit the division, so they can build a level of understanding of the area's needs. A Place director conducted a **patch visit** last month which was also attended by my District colleague Cllr Ed Sadler. Cllr Sadler and I drove him through our villages (including some of the worst potholes and surfacing!), stopped at Lewknor Turn to show the difficulties for pedestrians, and spent some time in Chinnor village and with Chinnor Parish Council. This visit was to provide an overview; I have followed up by inviting Cllr Andrew Gant (Cabinet member for Highways) to visit with an appropriate officer, especially as he too receives correspondence from residents about certain roads in Chinnor (for example the level of HGV traffic entering Chinnor via Lower Icknield Way). Cllr Gant has responded very positively and we're looking for a suitable date. I'm really pleased that a recent visit to meet Towersey PC by an OCC Place officer might result in some meaningful assistance for Towersey village (which is often used as a "rat run" route from Thame), and I'm hopeful that we can also achieve some creative thinking for the rest of the Chinnor division!

I've received several emails from residents who are pleased with the resurfacing works on Lower Icknield Way, including a cyclist who reports much smoother journeys! However I do appreciate that residents are still concerned about speeding and HGV traffic on this road.

I have been a thorn in Highways' side for several weeks about the urgency of the **Lower/Station/Thame Road junction**, as their original intention was to inspect in April and repair around July. This clearly wasn't adequate attention, bearing in mind the deterioration of the junction. Two separate officers visited the junction with me recently, and I'm delighted that Highways officer Carl Stallwood submitted an application yesterday for overnight closure of the junction so that essential repair works can be carried out. The aim is to carry out the work during the night of Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April.

This brings me to another ongoing Highways concern in the division – flooding. I'm delighted that there is another round of **flood project funding** available for our parish councils, which is intended for small scale works to reduce flooding. The kind of projects this funding could be used for might be small flood storage areas, embankments or channels; culvert

(pipe) removal or improvements on ordinary watercourses; natural flood management works; improving community flood resilience through awareness raising / preparedness. Chinnor and Sydenham parish councils benefited from this grant last year, as did one of my District parishes (with BBOWT) for a Haseley Brook project. I can think of a couple of potential projects that parish councils might like to consider for this year's funding.

Information about this is on the front page of the OCC Flood Toolkit [Oxfordshire County Council – Flood Toolkit](#) and the deadline for submission of expressions of interest is **4<sup>th</sup> May 2026**. You can also write to [floodmanagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:floodmanagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk) with questions and queries.

Another grant available through the council at the moment is **The Warm Homes Local Grant**, a scheme run by OCC in partnership with [Welcome the Warmth](#). It's designed to help eligible households improve the energy efficiency of their homes - reducing heating costs and improving comfort - particularly for those on lower incomes and living in less energy efficient properties. Improvements might include insulation, low carbon heating, and solar panels, depending on eligibility and property type.

The scheme is fully funded by the government, and residents who think they may be eligible are encouraged to find out more by visiting the council's [website](#) or by contacting the retrofit team on [retrofit@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:retrofit@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

**Full Council** was on on 24<sup>th</sup> March and a motion was passed which I believe will be of interest to our parish councils, as it is expected to result in the County council re-establishing responsibility for weed clearance routines. The motion from Cllr Tom Greenaway is as follows:

*Pride in the appearance of the public realm is important to our residents. Clean and well-maintained pavements make people feel good about their neighbourhood, reduce accidents, and prevent more costly problems later. Neglect leads to uneven footways, hazards for those with mobility difficulties, and higher long-term repair bills.*

*Routine weed clearance on county pavements was part of highways maintenance until 2007/08, when budget cuts removed the programme. Some parishes now commission their own weed spraying and may be using glyphosate, increasingly opposed by residents because of its risks to health, pets, rivers, and biodiversity. Other parishes are now beginning to trial alternative approaches.*

*Council resolves to:*

- 1. Note the historic withdrawal of routine weed clearance and the resulting concerns about accessibility, safety, and neighbourhood appearance.*
- 2. Recognise the Council's statutory duty to keep pavements free of hazards, and that neglect increases both risks and costs.*
- 3. Request Cabinet to seek an officer report with options for re-establishing pavement weed clearance and scheduled maintenance, including alternatives to glyphosate,*

*and how the Council can support towns and parishes to reduce reliance on chemical spraying.*

- 4. Request that the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation give due consideration to the findings of this report as part of the next round of budget setting.*

In other **meetings**, I sat on the People Overview & Scrutiny panel in which we considered domestic abuse safe accommodation provision in Oxfordshire. And as well as my various parish meetings I was delighted to take part in Chinnor's annual assembly on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Thank you to the community organisations that took time to introduce themselves and chat to me afterwards. I look forward to visiting those organisations and to attending similar annual meetings throughout the parishes this spring.

In **Local Government Reorganisation**, the statutory consultation for residents to have their say closed on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> March. Three Oxfordshire proposals were prepared for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and councils expect to receive the government's decision on the way forward in July.

Finally, while Oxfordshire has **not** experienced an outbreak situation, a couple of parents have approached me to ask if there any advice has been issued regarding the type of **meningococcal disease** affecting university and A-level students in Kent. I appreciate many parents may have concerns so, while it's important to recognise that no cases have been reported in Oxfordshire, it might be helpful to read the following briefing from OCC's director of Public Health Ansaf Azhar:

*Meningococcal disease can cause inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord, as well as severe bloodstream infection that can lead to organ failure. Although many people carry the bacteria harmlessly in the back of the throat, it can occasionally lead to serious illness. In this outbreak, the infections appear to be caused by Meningococcal Group B bacteria (MenB). As of 18 March, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is investigating 20 cases of meningitis in Canterbury since 13 March, including two deaths.*

*This situation is highly unusual. Outbreaks and deaths from meningococcal disease have fallen significantly since the introduction of the MenACWY vaccine for pupils in Years 9 and 10 in 2015, and the MenB vaccine as part of the routine infant programme. The MenACWY vaccine helps protect against four other types of bacteria linked to meningitis and can be given up to the age of 25. The MenB vaccine is routinely offered only to children under 2 years of age. Information on routine NHS vaccination schedules is available here: [NHS vaccinations and when to have them - NHS](#).*

*Meningococcal infection does not spread easily. It typically requires prolonged or very close contact, for example, living in shared accommodation, sharing vapes, or extended kissing. While meningococcal disease can affect all ages, recent outbreaks have shown that older children, teenagers and young adults, particularly those in shared settings such as schools, colleges and universities, are more likely to be affected.*

*Vaccination remains the most effective protection against serious meningococcal disease and helps prevent future outbreaks. If you, your child, or any young person you support has missed their vaccination, please contact your GP practice to arrange a catch-up dose.*

*The overall risk to the wider population remains low, and no cases have been reported in Oxfordshire. UKHSA is actively contact tracing to identify anyone at risk and is offering prophylactic antibiotics to close contacts of confirmed cases.*

*Although meningococcal disease is rare, it is important to be aware of the signs and symptoms, as early treatment is crucial. These include:*

- *High fever*
- *Stiff neck and headache*
- *Vomiting*
- *Confusion or extreme sleepiness*
- *Seizures*
- *A rash that does not fade when pressed with a glass*

*Further information on Meningitis can be found here:*

*[Quick 2 page guide to protecting yourself against MenB](#)  
[Meningitis – Signs & symptoms of septicaemia](#)*

Title:	District Cllrs Report	
Chinnor District:	Aston Rowant, Chinnor, Sydenham and Towersey	
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Date:	31 March 2026	

## **Town & Parish Council Forum – Save the Date**

Town and Parish Councillors are invited to attend an online Town and Parish Council Forum on: Tuesday, 21 April 2026 6:00–7:00pm Online via Microsoft Teams  
This session will provide an overview of the upcoming changes to our Planning and Land Charges systems. We will explain the reasons behind the new system, outline the improvements being introduced, and demonstrate how to navigate the updated online registers and processes.

### **The forum will also cover:**

- What Town and Parish Councils can expect during the transition
- How to support residents through the change
- Where to find help, guidance, and ongoing support
- An opportunity to ask questions about the new system

Please add this date to your diaries. Full joining instructions, including the Microsoft Teams link, will be circulated a few days before the event.

If you have any questions ahead of the forum, please contact [delivery@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:delivery@southandvale.gov.uk) Further information about the system changes is also available on the council's website.

## **Everyone Active Grant – Applications Now Open**

The **Everyone Active Grant** is now open for applications and will remain available until the £50,000 budget has been allocated, or until midday on Friday 22 May, whichever comes first. Local organisations can apply for grants of up to £1,000 to support projects that improve the physical and mental wellbeing of residents across the district.

### **What the funding can support:**

Projects should help communities become more active or sustain existing activity.

Funding can be used for a wide range of initiatives, including:

- Purchasing new **leisure or playground equipment**
- Introducing or improving **physical activity programmes**
- Running **training courses** for volunteers or staff to support wellbeing
- Creating a **community garden** to promote the benefits of growing fruit and vegetables

### **Who can apply**

The scheme is open to:

- Not-for-profit groups
- Sports clubs
- Pre-schools
- Town and parish councils
- PTAs
- Local authority schools or academies (for non-statutory activities)

#### **Further information**

More details are available on the council's website. Organisations can also contact the Community Enablement team with any questions:

- Phone: 01235 422405
- Email: [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk)

### **Update on Local Government Reorganisation Consultation**

The consultation on Local Government Reorganisation has now closed, and South and Vale's responses were formally submitted on **26 March**. The process now moves into the hands of central Government, which will review all responses to the three Oxfordshire proposals before deciding on the next steps.

We expect an announcement on the outcome during the summer, most likely in **July**, ahead of the parliamentary summer recess.

### **Support for Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use**

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils have been working with owners of empty properties to understand why their homes are unoccupied and to offer practical support. While some properties are empty for good reason, such as undergoing major refurbishment or awaiting sale, others may benefit from additional help to bring them back into use. The councils provide a range of information, advice and support to homeowners, including:

- Guidance on improving energy efficiency
- Support with refurbishment, including advice on VAT reductions for renovation and alteration works
- Opportunities to generate income by renting the property to someone in housing need, with financial assistance available for minor works required before letting
- Advice on letting privately
- Support with selling the property, whether privately, through an estate agent, or via auction

Property owners can find out more about the help available — and how to report an empty home — on the council websites:

- [southoxon.gov.uk/empty-homes](https://southoxon.gov.uk/empty-homes)
- [whitehorsedc.gov.uk/empty-homes](https://whitehorsedc.gov.uk/empty-homes)