

County Councillor Report

Chinnor division

1st May 2026

Cllr Georgina Heritage

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Local Matters – What I’ve been doing

The **Lower Road (with Station/Thame Road) junction** in Chinnor has again, and quite understandably, been a main topic of correspondence over the past month. My relief that the much-needed improvements had been brought forward was short lived as I, along with other local residents, enjoyed the beautiful resurfacing for three full days before Thames Water began their own works in the same area.

I was as disappointed as everyone else to witness this. While utilities companies do have the right under the New Roads and Street Works Act to carry out urgent works, it was upsetting to us all to see it happen so soon after the resurfacing, so I’ve since been making enquiries into why Thames Water (TW) needed to carry out works here at this particular time.

I’ve now received a full response from Highways officers... When Highways’ closure notice was submitted, planned works had been checked by a senior Highways officer and nothing had been scheduled by TW on this section of road. During the resurfacing process however, a leak was discovered on the fire hydrant. Instead of leaving it and risking further damage to the newly laid carriageway, Highways asked TW to take action as soon as possible. It was a necessary step to prevent TW from having to return in a few months and potentially cause more disruption and damage.

So why wasn’t TW’s work carried out at the same time as Highways’ work? I’ve been advised that they would not have been able to close off both ends of the road on the same evening. Resident access had to be provided to both Duck Square and Van Diemens side roads, which would not have been possible if all the work had been attempted by both organisations at the same time. Highways had to simply react to the failed section of surface at the Lower Road junction following the winter period.

On Monday 27th April, a senior officer completed the quality assessment of this site with the surfacing contractors and is happy with the standard, though he confirms he’ll be keeping an eye on this road anyway, as there is still more patching work to be completed on Station Road this year.

For reference, the road closure notices I'm aware of for upcoming works in the division are B4009 Aston Rowant 8th – 12th May (surface sealing), Sydenham Road, Sydenham on 8th July (Openreach), Moor Close, Chinnor on 13th July (TW fire hydrant work) and, as I write, the current B4009 Kingston Blount closure for surface dressing.

Further to correspondence over the past few months with parents and parish councils on the **321 and 322 bus services** used by school children, I've been following up on the situation and was disappointed to learn that the 322 service to Icknield Community College has suffered a number of problems since parents first wrote to me, including several occasions in which buses were very late, to the point that some parents had to find last-minute means of collecting their children themselves. The Operations Manager at Red Rose has so far responded as follows:

"I'm sorry to hear about the issues raised and understand the parent's frustration, particularly given the circumstances you've described. I will investigate the concerns outlined in detail and review the service records for the 322 route over the past few months.

I will get back to you as soon as possible with a full response."

With regards to the 321 service to Lord Williams which Sydenham residents had experienced issues with, I understand the service has not suffered disruption however parents have been concerned that there is sometimes only standing room for the children getting on at Sydenham. While this is a commercial service and not a dedicated school service, I appreciate parents' concern about this and approached OCC officers about the legal position. I have received the following advice:

Section 6 of The Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 states that all vehicles used on public passenger transport services must have a Certificate of Initial Fitness (COIF) which will set out its capacity, including standees.

As long as the number of seated and standing passengers on board do not exceed their respective capacities stated on the COIF and as indicated on the vehicle, standing passengers are permitted on vehicles operating public bus services.

Public buses designed for regular service are subject to different rules than dedicated home-to-school provision. There is no restriction on schoolchildren standing on public bus services provided that this is within the stated carrying capacity of the vehicle.

If parents/carers have any concerns that buses to schools are exceeding capacity, please let me know.

I've mentioned in previous reports that I receive a lot of correspondence from residents in **Lower Icknield Way** regarding heavy and speeding traffic. A speed survey was carried out in September 2025, however residents strongly feel that it was not representative of the

current situation. Highways recently agreed to carry out a further speed survey on the same section of road, so the speed situation on this road can be revisited once we have the results.

On **flood project funding** I approached Highways officer Carl Stallwood to request assistance with some expressions of interest from parish councils, and he has been incredibly helpful and encouraging with some potential local projects. My district councillor colleague Ed Sadler recently registered to be a volunteer flood warden for OCC, so he and Carl met up recently to look at some areas of interest in Lewknor and Aston Rowant (and I joined them with Lewknor's parish council chair a few days ago to discuss this particular village project). Expressions of interest close on 4th May and I'm hopeful that there will be several applications from the Chinnor division for this excellent funding opportunity. I'm very grateful to both Carl and Ed for their help and hard work.

It came to my attention recently that some residents have experienced problems with certain members of staff at **Oakley Wood Recycling Centre** being overly zealous in checking residents' items against their completed form. On feeding this back to OCC's manager of the recycling centres, I have received assurance that staff should not be making visitors feel uncomfortable in this way and the problem has been addressed. After all, the aim is to encourage people to recycle, not to put them off using the site!

Just to explain the checklist, information on what wastes customers are bringing is extremely useful, but more importantly selecting DIY wastes (which are chargeable) also provides the means for Oxfordshire residents to claim their weekly free allowance for DIY material. This effectively replaced the old DIY booking system which was in place previously.

While staff do need to make a quick sense-check on arrival (for example, to apply charges where appropriate, identify prohibited waste, and ensure trade waste is not accepted), this should be a relatively quick and straightforward process. In all cases staff should be courteous and respectful at all times.

I understand this has now been addressed by management and there should not be further problems of residents being made to feel uncomfortable about their waste being checked. However, if residents experience anything other than courtesy at this recycling centre, please do let me know.

On other local visits, I was recently invited to spend a morning with the **CCC Mums and Tots** group. I thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity, it was a lovely way to spend a Friday morning! It was important for me to hear what the priorities and concerns are for parents of young children in Chinnor, and I learned that many of the mums who attend have moved to Chinnor and don't have a local support network. Groups like this, which bring people together and extend a hand of friendship, reinforce my view of Chinnor's great community spirit. I'm looking forward to experiencing more of Chinnor's community spirit when I spend some quality time in the village with our MP Freddie van Mierlo in the next few weeks!

Finally, **many thanks to Chinnor PC** for facilitating the first meeting to set up a Traffic Advisory Committee in Chinnor!

Council Matters

I often like to include updates from cabinet members and senior officers in my monthly reports, and I hope you will be interested in the following news from **Clr Tim Bearder, cabinet member for Adult Services**:

“The Director of Adults, Karen Fuller and I were pleased to join Clr Bethia Thomas in Faringdon for the opening of the new Fern Meadows Extra Care housing scheme — a really positive addition to our local care offer, helping residents live independently for longer. I’ve recorded a short video from the visit which you can watch here:

<https://vimeo.com/1183781290/7715ec3837?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>

I have also written to Stephen Kinnock raising serious concerns about proposed changes to overseas worker rules and the impact this will have on our already stretched care workforce. As highlighted in my letter, Oxfordshire relies heavily on international staff and there is no domestic workforce available at scale to replace them. Without changes, this risks reducing care capacity at a time of rising demand.”

Withdrawal of fire station closure proposals

Following a public consultation that asked communities to help shape how Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service operates, no fire station closures are now being recommended.

As a result of feedback received by Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service between late October 2025 and January 2026, a proposal is being made to continue focusing on recruitment and community engagement at Eynsham, Henley and Woodstock fire stations. The three fire stations had been considered for closure due to persistent low availability of on-call crews. However, residents’ feedback made it clear how important local fire stations are with communities showing strong support for retaining them.

The main proposal in the public consultation was to address ongoing challenges with fire engine availability during the daytime, when demand and risk are highest. As part of this, the consultation explored proposals to improve daytime fire and emergency response cover across Oxfordshire.

Work will continue to identify how Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service can deliver its key objectives of improved first response times, increased daytime cover, stronger service resilience, and an increased amount of fire prevention work.

Further engagement with employees and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) will take place to help shape how proposals could work in practice.

Cabinet was also asked to agree to withdrawing the proposal presented in the public consultation to remove the second fire engine at Thame fire station. This was put forward based on low availability of crews and because the vehicle had been attending less than 20 incidents a year.

This will allow time to consider consultation feedback alongside similar proposals recently consulted on by Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, particularly given the proximity of Thame and Haddenham fire stations.

Proposals relating to the building of a new fire station north of Oxford will require further work before any decisions are made. While the long-term potential remains, the proposal is being paused for now due to uncertainty around developer negotiations and the need for further engagement.

Government recognises improved services for Oxfordshire's SEND children

OCC has received news that the government has lifted the improvement notice for services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), issued following a local area partnership inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in 2023. On 15th April, Oxfordshire County Council and NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board received a letter from The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, Secretary of State for Education, recognising ongoing improvements in services for Oxfordshire's SEND children.

The secretary of state noted that Oxfordshire's local area partnership (LAP)* has strengthened how the views of children and young people with SEND, as well as parents and carers, are gathered and used in strategic planning.

There have been improvements in communication and information sharing across the partnership, including monitoring the impact of the partnership's actions and enhanced timeliness of education and health care plans (EHCPs).

The secretary of state also acknowledged significant progress in jointly commissioning services and reducing waiting times for critical support.

Councillor Sean Gaul, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, said: "The government's decision to remove the improvement notice is encouraging. Close partnership working has helped us to review, reset and rebuild services.

“The government does, quite rightly, expect the services and support we collectively provide to keep getting better. We are committed to this and will continue to engage and listen to children, young people with SEND and their families as part of our improvement journey.”

*The LAP includes Oxfordshire County Council; NHS Thames Valley Integrated Care Board (formerly NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board); Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust; Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust; Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum; and professional subject matter leads.

Title:	District Cllrs Report	
Chinnor District:	Aston Rowant, Chinnor, Sydenham and Towersey	
District Cllrs:	Ali Gordon-Creed Ali.Gordon-Creed@southoxon.gov.uk +44 7770 935579	Ed Sadler ed.sadler@southoxon.gov.uk +44 7887 825788
Date:	27 APR 2026	

Note well – bin collections

Normal collection day	Revised collection day
Monday 4 May	Tuesday 5 May
Tuesday 5 May	Wednesday 6 May
Wednesday 6 May	Thursday 7 May
Thursday 7 May	Friday 8 May
Friday 8 May	Saturday 9 May

Additional Garden Waste Collection

For those who hold a garden waste permit, you will be able to have extra garden waste collected for free, on your normal collection day only, between **20 April** and **1 May 2026**. To be eligible for a collection, please follow the guidance found on [garden waste page](#)

Renters’ Right Act

From 1 May 2026 the Renters’ Rights Act will start to come into effect. This will bring about the most significant changes to the private renting sector in nearly 40 years. The Act introduces new powers for councils and new standards required for landlords and their properties. We will have a statutory duty to enforce the new landlord legislation, and we are anticipating an increase in demand for housing needs services from May. We are doing everything we can to prepare for the changes and the impact it will have on housing services – including raising awareness of the new legislation amongst private sector landlords and helping them get on top of the changes – as well as raising awareness with private sector renters in our districts. We are supporting a national campaign ‘Renting is changing’ – please share our social media posts over the coming weeks. We will also send out targeted communications to landlords and tenants ahead of 1 May.

You can find out more about the changes on our websites www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/renters-rights-act / www.southoxon.gov.uk/renters-rights-act

[act](#) and at [gov.uk/rentingischanging](https://www.gov.uk/rentingischanging) If you have any questions about the Renters' Rights Act please email housing@southandvale.gov.uk

Recycling Centres cleaning and repairs programme of works

The county council is warning people planning to use Oxfordshire's household waste recycling centres about a series of short closures to enable essential work to be carried out. For safety reasons, Oxfordshire County Council will be shutting the centres for two days each to allow for deep cleaning and essential maintenance.

The closure dates in our districts are:

Oakley Wood, near Wallingford: 7 and 8 May

For more information, please see [the county council's press release](#).

Thame Leisure Centre Refurb;

The work to revamp the lower gym and dry changing rooms at Thame Leisure Centre will start on **Monday 27 April**. During this time there will be no access to these areas, customers wanting to use the gym asked to come gym ready. The Better UK team who manage the centre on behalf of the council will keep customers updated via [their Facebook page](#) and emails to members. This project will cost £350,000 and is being funded by developer contributions (S106). The work is expected in the summer.

Off-Street Parking Orders

South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) is undertaking a comprehensive review of its Off-Street Parking Orders covering all council-owned car parks across the district. The review forms part of the council's ongoing work to modernise parking infrastructure, improve user experience, and ensure that parking arrangements remain fit for purpose in supporting local communities and town centres.

A public consultation on the proposed changes is currently open and will run until Friday 8 May 2026. Residents, businesses, and stakeholders are encouraged to participate and provide feedback.

SODC proposes to introduce a ticketless parking system across all council-owned car parks. Under this model:

Drivers will no longer be required to display a physical ticket in their vehicle.

Users will enter their full vehicle registration number (VRN) at the payment machine.

The system will apply both to:

- The free one-hour parking period, and
- Paid parking for longer stays.
- Payment options will continue to include coins, contactless card payments, and the PayByPhone app, ensuring accessibility for all users.

This change is intended to streamline parking operations, reduce machine maintenance, and improve enforcement accuracy.

Proposed Changes in Thame

Several adjustments are proposed to car parks in Thame:

Southern Road Car Park: A reclassification from short-stay to all-day parking is proposed to increase flexibility and support longer-stay users.

Cattlemarket Car Park: Layout changes are planned to accommodate redevelopment of an adjacent commercial building. Key impacts include:

- A reduction of 15 parking spaces, and
- Relocation of disabled bays, with the total number of disabled spaces maintained.
- These changes aim to balance development needs with the continued provision of accessible parking.

Proposed Changes in Wallingford

In Wallingford, the council is proposing updates to the charging structure in two long-stay car parks. The objective is to:

- Improve consistency with charging arrangements in other local car parks.
- Provide clearer, more flexible options for long-stay users.
- Support the town centre by ensuring parking remains accessible and appropriately managed.

Rationale for the Proposed Changes

The proposed updates reflect several strategic priorities:

- Modernisation of parking infrastructure through digital and ticketless systems.
- Improved operational efficiency, including reduced reliance on paper tickets and lower maintenance requirements.
- Enhanced user experience, offering multiple payment methods and simplified processes.
- Support for local economic activity, ensuring parking arrangements align with town centre needs.
- Adaptation to development pressures, particularly in areas undergoing redevelopment.

Consultation Process

The consultation period runs until Friday 8 May 2026. During this time, members of the public and local stakeholders are invited to:

- Review the full draft Off-Street Parking Order.
- Consider the rationale and expected impacts of the proposed changes.
- Submit comments, objections, or suggestions for improvement.

Feedback gathered during the consultation will inform the final decision-making process.