

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JULY 2023 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

LTN IMPACT REPORT LEADS TO GROWING CALLS FOR RESIGNATIONS

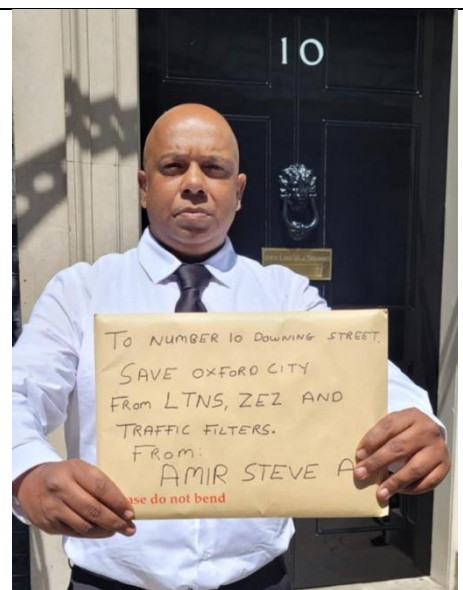
Leading OCC Cabinet members have faced calls to resign after a council report revealed modelling which showed Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) lead to ambulances experiencing delays when responding to “life threatening” calls. The council report analysed the impact of LTNs in East Oxford and Cowley on South Central Ambulance Service’s response times and found the traffic measures cause delays of between 35 to 45 seconds to response times for life threatening, emergency, and urgent calls in East Oxford. County councillor and leader of the Conservative group at the county council, Eddie Reeves, has since called for Andrew Gant, cabinet member for highways management and Duncan Enright, Cabinet member for travel, to resign for not releasing the information in an “open and transparent manner”.

THREE ROADS IN OXFORD TO BE MANAGED BY ANPR IN PLACE OF BOLLARDS

OCC has approved proposals to install automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) cameras at three low traffic neighbourhood (LTN) closure points in Cowley, Oxford. The decision was made on Thursday 22 June by the Cabinet member for highways management at a delegated Cabinet member decision meeting. Motor vehicles without exemptions who drive through these points will be subject to a penalty charge notice.

PETITION DELIVERED TO DOWNING ST CALLING FOR NO CONFIDENCE VOTE IN OCC

Community champion Amir Steve Ali delivered a petition to Downing Street which calls for a no confidence vote in OCC due to its role in pushing ahead with Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs), the Zero Emissions Zone (ZEZ) and traffic filters (the four-sector plan). The petition on Change.org had been signed by more than 3,600 people on June 19 and it claims that the council’s traffic measures have caused more pollution and have led to emergency vehicles becoming stuck behind gridlocked traffic. The petition describes the council’s traffic measures as a “big threat to members of public freedom and businesses”. An Oxfordshire County Council spokesman said: “We are aware of the petition on Change.org. This is something for central government review subject to it meeting parliamentary petitions criteria.”



DECARBONISING PENSION INVESTMENTS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Pension funds invested for local government workers at Oxfordshire councils and a large number of other local organisations have been re-shaped to align investment decisions with the administration’s aim of creating a “greener, healthier and fairer county”. At its meeting earlier in June, the Pension Fund Committee agreed to reduce its allocation to the UK market and in particular to the FTSE100 companies that have links to major oil, gas and mining companies. The committee also chose to end investments in emerging markets reflecting concerns about social and governance issues – specifically within China and Saudi Arabia.

HOME UPGRADE GRANT LAUNCH

OCC was recently awarded £6.417m of funding from the government's Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2 (HUG2). HUG2 follows on from the Sustainable Warmth funding that officially ended in March this year, and is a two-year scheme running across Oxfordshire (with the exception of Oxford City, which has its own scheme) until March 2025. HUG2 publicly launched in June and is aimed at low-income owner occupier or privately rented households living in off-gas homes rated EPC 'D' or below, to enable a range of energy efficiency improvements to be retrofitted free of charge e.g. cavity wall and loft insulation, heating upgrades and solar PV. More information about the funding and the eligibility criteria can be found on the OCC website.

OCC SEEKS GOVERNMENT PERMISSION TO ADOPT LANE RENTAL SCHEME

Utilities and other companies who close Oxfordshire's roads could be encouraged to minimise congestion and disruption when they carry out their work or face financial penalties of up to £2,500 a day. OCC will ask the government to allow it to introduce a lane rental scheme (LRS) which allows organisations working on the county's busiest roads at the busiest times to face extra charges. If approved, the LRS would encourage those working on the highway to prioritise off-peak hours and to complete the work as quickly as possible to reduce their costs. Surplus money raised by the council would be used to help manage and improve the highway network.

POTHOLE INNOVATION TRIAL

After a winter that saw the number of potholes reported in Oxfordshire double compared to the same period last year and heavy criticism from the public, a trial has taken place aimed at improving the repair process. On Monday and Tuesday, 26 - 27 June, OCC and its highways contractor Milestone Infrastructure used the road between Steventon and East Hanney as a test site to trial seven different methods of filling in potholes or repairing minor defects requiring 'patching'. Some of these methods are already used in Oxfordshire – including the Milestone [dragon patcher](#) – while the others were new ones sourced by Milestone. The Hanney/Steventon Road was closed and a 1km stretch was divided into sections. Each section had a different type of pothole or patch repair carried out to get a direct comparison of the various methods. Last year, Milestone Infrastructure, a part of M Group Services, repaired 31,413 road defects. This was against a backdrop of perfect pothole-forming weather conditions – a prolonged freeze over winter followed by a protracted period of wet weather, which led to an unprecedented increase in the number of emergency pothole repairs. The trial will allow comparisons of the type of repair, equipment, material, and labour used, and the time taken. This would include an understanding of the potential results, longevity of repairs, waste generated, carbon impact, use of recycled content and productivity that may be achievable. The next stage will involve contractors returning for at least four more days of work and additional testing and analysis to enable a longer-term review of the methods.

MONEY-SAVING STREETLIGHTING PROJECT SET TO BE COMPLETED NEXT YEAR

All of Oxfordshire's streetlights are scheduled to be converted to energy efficient LED units in the next 12 months, saving millions of pounds and thousands of tonnes of carbon. The programme commenced under the previous Conservative administration. A total of 86 per cent of lights have now been converted. When completed, the £38 million project is expected to lead to energy savings of millions of pounds over the next 20 years. The LED lights will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide being produced by 70 per cent. Before the conversion programme started, the county's streetlights accounted for around 7,596 tonnes of CO2 every year – representing nearly 35 per cent of the council's total emissions.