OCC (Sonning Common & Henley South) councillor's report

Shiplake – 16th October 2026

Oxford Traffic Filters

Just a reminder that these have gone live.

You can still drive to all parts of Oxford, but you may need to use a different route if you don't have a valid traffic filters permit.

Everyone in Oxfordshire gets 25 permit days per annum and those in the City get 100 p.a.

In future a car (not commercial vehicles) passing through a filter point without a permit will trigger a £70 penalty (which can be reduced to £35 with prompt payment). For a six month period a first infraction will attract a warning letter, thereafter a penalty fine.

The trial will run until no later than end March 2028, although it could be replaced by a permanent scheme by then after evaluation of consultation and results.

Any resident without a permit can apply online. Each person can have a permit with up to two vehicle registrations for each. I have checked the system – and it works! However once you have set up your account with address and your vehicles it is necessary to go on to register for a traffic filter permit requiring upload of proof of address and of vehicle. To do this you follow the link below and click on apply for traffic filter permit. On the next page scroll down to the very bottom and select the ordinary resident (25) permit option. (On some screens this is initially below the screen and you do need to scroll right down; I have requested an improvement!) Anyone who can't apply online can call by phone – 01865 519800.

Find out more about permits, routes and what the changes could mean for your journeys; more information is here:

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/trafficfilters

Henley HGVs

Meetings have continued on the HGV issues and a report is expected to go to OCC's Cabinet meeting on 20th October at which it is hoped that a programme of options evaluation will be agreed with a view to progressing to action.

Devolution and LGR

As yet there is no further news.

Banking Hub in Henley

A new banking hub will open in the OCC Henley library from 13th October. It will operate under the Post Office brand. Opening hours will be Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. This is a great result for businesses and residents alike.

On one day (each) per week major Bank Brands will additionally provide scope for face-to-face meetings for their particular customers – I believe by pre-arrangement.

(The location in the library is temporary pending a permanent location – which it is hoped will be able to have a street-accessible ATM.)

Henley Town Council (Notably the Clerk Sheridan Jacklin-Edward and the Town Centre Manager(ess) Widge Woolsey) have led the way supported by Freddie Van Mierlo MP, Ian Reissman as Mayor, OCC and of course Stefan and I as county councillors.

OCC succeeds with SEND Plan submission

Children and young people with SEND are to benefit from a plan to deliver better and more expert specialist support that has now been fully approved by Government.

Oxfordshire County Council's response to national education reform for children and young people with SEND was submitted to the Department for Education in June 2026.

This followed publication nationally of the schools white paper 'every child achieving and thriving' and the SEND consultation 'putting children and young people first.'

Almost every local council in England faces a special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) high needs deficit because the cost for support has vastly outstripped the funding provided by central government.

Factors across the country, not just in Oxfordshire, contributing to these deficits include increased demand for education, health and care plans (EHCPs), and a lack of funding for inclusive mainstream and state special school capacity, forcing councils to rely on costly independent and specialist placements.

Not all "Tier One" Councils have gained approval. However Oxfordshire did and scored highly. As a result Government will reimburse £122m of historic (up to end March 2026) SEND expenditure which will materially improve Oxfordshire County Council's Balance Sheet which had previously been instructed to run up a negative "high needs deficit" reserve without help.

Oxfordshire can now proceed to prepare to implement the plan for the future whereby more SEND needs will be met by mainstream schools who will receive extra, specialist staffing to enable it. (Existing pupils in the primary or secondary streams will not have their current arrangements disrupted; the new arrangements will apply for pupils entering each stream in the future.)

Leigh Rawlins

County Councillor (Sonning Common & Henley South)