

County Councillor Report West Hendred Parish March 2026

Budget

The County Council budget was passed on 10 February. The government has taken at least £24 million from grants to Oxfordshire and obliged the county council to increase Council Tax by 4.99% per annum for the next 3 years, meaning that there will need to be substantial deductions in some areas of spending. 70% of the County Council's revenue spend is on adult and children's social care. We passed a balanced budget, with additional sums going into social care and into road maintenance, particularly into gully clearance, where £3.2 m will be spent next year.

Roads

The record amount of money into roads is partly from central government, but very much topped up by the County Council. The government has said it is giving £168 m (PM response to Ollie Glover MP February), without mentioning that the amount is over 4 years (£35 m for one year coming up) backloaded and not guaranteed. At today's prices, it costs about £50 m pa to keep the roads from getting worse. My colleague Nathan Ley has written an essay on why road failure was built into changes to government funding and local choices in the past, why it happens every year, and can't be fixed without substantial additional money. We all need big improvements to our roads and that must be our focus, but understanding the problem of the national systemic issue is worth a read by way of background [How the Conservative Party Baked a National Pothole Crisis](#)

The increasingly wet and cold weather over our winters worsens potholes across the country. The County Council is working hard to fix these issues, with individual patches and wider areas of patching. Of 1,179 potholes fixed last week, 232 were in the Vale.

There have been 45% fewer safety incidents reported across Oxfordshire.

Using the Fix my Street specific requirements for evidence I added photos along the A 417. Priority fixes e.g. where there was exposed iron (at one of Ardington junctions, A417 Ginge Brook, and junction Portway Close) were fixed immediately. I have had response that latest OCC inspection has scheduled more work to be done on A417. We included state of roads in discussion with officers on 26th January.

Steventon Lights

Improvements were initially carried out over a 57-hour weekend closure to resurface the poor road surface, involving more than 70 different operatives and supervisors, and including 9,500m² of resurfacing A34/A4130 and all exits. Concerningly, there were some incorrect road markings. One lane heading towards Didcot was incorrectly labelled as Wantage.

The incorrect road markings were grit-bladed and redone correctly overnight on Tuesday. The contractor has agreed to cover the costs, so it won't be taxpayers paying for the error. This is not in my division but like other local Councillors who had residents affected I escalated serious concerns to officers at Oxfordshire County Council on Monday.

For more detail on the scheme www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/steventonlights

West Hendred Crossing A 417

Permanent installation of the crossing will finally be starting on the 16th March - May. This is good news for West Hendred residents who have urgently needed a safe crossing. The work is expected to last ten weeks and residents have had a communication. Our contractors will also be taking the opportunity to clean out the existing surface water drainage in the location of the new crossing.

Officers have informed me that to keep traffic disruption to a minimum, and to carry out the work safely, the works will be carried out using 4-way temporary traffic signals controlling traffic movements at the

junctions of the A417 Reading Road, The Greenway and the access of the Extraordinary Hare public house. These signals will be in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During the hours of 7.00 am to 8.00 pm the temporary signals will be manually controlled by staff on site. I have asked for a meeting to give feedback from parishes about the measures and if the works can be done in less than ten weeks.

Local Government Reorganisation

The government has commenced the statutory consultation relating to the reorganisation of local government in Oxfordshire. You will recall there are three options-

- 1) a whole Oxfordshire Unitary Council
- 2) two unitary councils with West Oxfordshire, Cherwell and City in one unitary and West Berks, South Oxon and Vale of White Horse in another, and
- 3) a three unitary option promoted by the City Council, which would see a Greater Oxford as a unitary, a tiny West and rump of Cherwell one, and a Vale/South/West Berks unitary too.

I support 2) as the best option because of the clear synergies across these largely rural districts. Option 3) creating a Greater Oxford would dominate city over rural issues.

Option 2) is supported by 5 Councils (South Oxfordshire; Vale of White Horse; West Oxfordshire; Cherwell and West Berkshire) for reasons that I share, and which are given under this link which also gives details of the consultation which is open until 26th March.

[Residents urged to respond to government consultation on once-in-a-generation opportunity to change local councils - Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

Buses

A reminder that free bus travel from the Park and Rides continue, and that an all Oxfordshire, all bus company ticket, MyBusOxfordshire remains priced at £6.50 for an adult day ticket.

Cllr Jane Hanna

Charlton, Ardington and Hendreds