

Parish Report: April 2026

Dear Parishes

Happy Spring! It's been a real joy to be back out in the better weather and I've been taking the time to knock on doors around the division to speak to people and pick up any issues. Nothing so far enormously surprising, which is a relief! And it's been great to see the state of the roads slowly starting to improve – with the better weather, potholes are now being filled in more quickly than new ones can form, and the county has announced £8 million of resurfacing, including a few roads in this area, which should help things along further.



I hope you'll forgive me for being slightly smug following an FOI submitted by a member of the public which showed that I was the second-most prolific user of the councillor casework system among the Liberal Democrat group with 51 pieces of casework since I was elected. When OCC introduced maternity leave last year, a Labour Councillor felt the need to stand up in the chamber and say that this risked residents' concerns being neglected. I was determined to make sure this didn't happen - and I'm looking forward to showing her the stats next time I see her!

Lastly, I ran into the gully clearance team out in Kidlington. Officially the whole of Oxfordshire has now had gullies cleared in the last 12 months – but I'm aware a few places have been missed. If that's you, please let me know and I'll chase it up (see below for more information!)

All the best

Laura

What I've been working on:

Quiet Ways: I brought the Oxfordshire Active Travel Champion, Cllr Emily Kerr, out to visit Blackthorn and Wendlebury, both candidates for a pilot. She agreed that these are strong candidates and we have agreed to follow up once the policy is more fully developed. I've followed this up with both parishes and should any pilot go forward there will be a full consultation.



Roads, speed limits and road safety: I have been chasing repairs to some key areas and have been pleased to see this pay off in a few areas, including New Pond Lane outside Charlton, and the road between Bletchington and Islip. I am also

chasing site visits and trying to follow up on previous site visits to Merton and Blackthorn.

Planning: I have been working with officers to update the OCC response to a planning application in Islip, which they have acknowledged did not properly consider the village school, and which also risks further overwhelming the already-overwhelmed sewage system.

Islip Bridge: I managed to track down a contact for the contractor carrying out the bridge repair, and am speaking directly with them around proposed dates and mitigations for farmers affected by the closure. I will follow up directly with the affected farmers as well as reporting here. The closure is likely to take place over the school summer holidays, with final dates to be confirmed.

In County Hall: I spoke at full council in support of paying OCC staff the Oxford Living Wage, and highlighting the impact that high housing costs resulting from constrained supply in Oxford City are having on surrounding districts.



Road and Right of Way Closures

Roads:

Speed Limit Change: the speed limit on Bicester Road heading out of Kidlington will be reduced from 40mph to 30mph to facilitate HGV movements while the illegal landfill is cleared. The temporary speed limit will be in place from 23rd February to 15th March.

22/04/2026-26/04/2026: Wheatley Road, Islip, will be closed for surface dressing works

14/05/2026-18/05/2026: Bicester Road between Launton and Bicester will be closed for a new water supply connection

20/04/2026-24/04/2026 (24h closure): Church Lane in Hampton Poyle will be closing from 20th April to 24th April for fibre laying.

25/04/2026-26/04/2026 (04:00-18:00): the slip road to Weston-on-the-Green and the B430 will be closed on 9th and 10th May for Surface Dressing Works

27/04/2026-01/05/2025(04:00-18:00): the road between Bletchington and Weston-on-the-Green past Tolbrook Corner will be closed for Surface Dressing Works)

09/05/2026-10/05/2026(04:00-18:00): the slip road to Weston-on-the-Green and the B430 will be closed on 9th and 10th May for Surface Sealing Works

Footpaths and Bridleways:

Footpath Closure in Hampton Gay and Poyle/Kidlington: The footpath running from the Islip Road to Bicester Road is closed until further notice due to the illegal landfill

Footpath closure: Footpath between Merton and Fencott/Murcott closed until October 2026 due to an unsafe bridge across the River Ray

County Council Business

Gully Clearance: officially, a full sweep of Oxfordshire's gullies has been completed. In practice, some have been missed – either because of parked cars, because they are not marked on county records, or because of simple error. If gullies in your village have been missed, please let me know and I will chase this up. If it's just one or two in the village, the easiest way to do this is to report it on Fix My Street and send me the enquiry number – if it's the whole village then don't feel the need to do this, just let me know and I'll chase it!

Flood Prevention Grants: grants of up to £25,000 are available to help tackle flooding. Last year, there were more than 80 applications of which 40 were funded. Last year's grants funded surface drainage improvements; natural flood management schemes; ditch clearances and ditch construction; culvert inspections; water pumps; track repairs to reduce surface water flooding; the installation of timber dams; and flood sensors. <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/more-grants-on-offer-to-help-communities-tackle-flooding/>

Fire and rescue: Following the closure of the consultation at the end of January, the responses are currently being analysed by an independent organisation, the Centre for Consultation. This includes over 1,200 responses to the online survey and over 50 emails and letters. The consultation report will be brought to Cabinet for consideration on 21 April.

Road Resurfacing: the county has announced £8 million of resurfacing and surface dressing works for April-June. This is part of the long-term strategy to shift road maintenance spend towards preventative maintenance in order to reduce pothole formation and repair costs. Further sites will be announced later in the spring, and the sites can be seen here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/roadworks/how-we-maintain-our-roads>

Tobacco Control Strategy: Oxfordshire has launched a new five-year tobacco control strategy, offering support to quit smoking. More information on support available here: <https://www.smokefreeoxon.co.uk/>

Flags: Oxfordshire County Council has issued a Cease and Desist order to Raise the Colours Oxfordshire to prohibit the placing of flags on highways property such as lamp-posts following repeated abuse of members of the public, blocking the highway, and threats against council staff. A man has since been arrested.