County Councillor's Report September 2025

August is a relatively slow month in local government; there are few council meetings and many people use the opportunity of the school holidays. [And so it proved].

However, others have been busy. Planning applications for Puy du Fou and a new town at Heyford Park [9,000 homes plus commercial] have been submitted. I touch on the impacts of these and others below.

I was delighted to see Oxford United FC receive planning permission for their new stadium at The Triangle after a marathon meeting.

The County Council met on 9 September. The Cabinet met on 10 September and ratified plans for a temporary Oxford congestion charge. Oxfordshire residents will have 25 free entries into the congestion charge zone per year, and there are numerous exemptions. There is also likely to be an offer on the Park & Ride services to support Christmas shopping in Oxford. I'm happy to clarify details on this.

County Hall
The County Council has now exchanged contracts with a buyer for County Hall. The move out of County Hall to new premises at Speedwell Street will happen in spring 2027. A recent potentially significant archaeological find at the Speedwell site means staff may not be able to occupy that building from that time.

Speeding and the A4260
The proposed speed reductions were approved by the Cabinet member on 4 September. The consultation responses showed an unusually high number of objections. The figures were inflated by considerable local feeling from Duns Tew and North Aston that the changes don't go far enough. Most of the objections were from Banbury or out of the area.

Further to this, I've been asking Thames Valley Police for more information about the non-operational cameras in Deddington and at the Duns Tew/North Aston crossroads. Disappointingly their policy is now to avoid putting in new fixed speed enforcement devices anywhere in the area, and they have no intention of reinstating the cameras. They claim – counter to local evidence – that there have been no collisions on the road in recent years in which speed was a factor. (There have been

four serious collisions in recent years at the Duns Tew/North Aston crossroads, and some minor accidents at the Deddington crossroads.)

Local government reform: community governance
OCC has had the first meeting of a cross-party working group to look at aspects of the change to unitary councils as they affect communities. This will in due course include town and parish council liaison. The work is at a very early stage.

Infrastructure and community mitigation – M40 Junction 10 area
A planning application has now been submitted for Puy du Fou. In addition, an application has been lodged (but not yet validated) for 9,000 new homes plus commercial uses on the former USAF airfield at Heyford Park. With the return of the Ardley railfreight interchange proposals [due to go out for pre-submission consultation for 6 weeks with a starting point believed to be September 23], the potential impact on the surrounding rural communities of these speculative planning applications is colossal.

I've got agreement for the County to proceed, at pace, with putting in place a spatial plan to influence mitigation for this area, in parallel with a new plan for the Bicester area. The County Council has never looked at the rural Mid-Cherwell area in such detail in terms of infrastructure, and I am determined that lessons are learned from previous major applications. With this in mind, I am organising a round table event for affected parishes to share concerns and explore potential mitigation measures.

Plan for Rail 2040
The County Council has just published an ambitious [Plan for Rail](#) which is out for consultation until 1 October. Among its proposals are the bringing forward of plans to reopen Ardley station, in part to mitigate the impact of growth in the area.

Speeding, enforcement and Thames Valley Police
I have been pressing Thames Valley Police for information on speeding and enforcement in our area. To say I am underwhelmed by their response would be an understatement.

I have sought figures for the number of speeding fines issued in built-up areas [by speed limit] in Oxfordshire, but have had a flat refusal to provide the information. I have, however, had figures from across the force area which show a 30% reduction in the number of fines issued in 30mph zones since 2019, with the number of fines issued in 20mph zones still under 200 – less than one a day across the whole Thames Valley.

Separately, I have asked for figures at the one location where they tell me they are regularly siting enforcement vans; they are currently refusing to share these. They have confirmed they have no plans to make either of the fixed cameras in the division operational, even though they expect OCC to bear the cost of maintaining the casings. This follows yet another serious collision at the A4260/North Aston/Duns Tew crossroads in mid-August.

I will be pressing Thames Valley to pay more than lip service to their commitment to work with local councils in partnership on road safety.

Electric blanket checking
Residents are being encouraged to take advantage of free electric blanket testing later this year.

In 2024, of the 743 blankets tested, more than 30 per cent failed the safety test.

Sessions will be held by Oxfordshire County Council's trading standards teams at locations across the county. The full address and a specific time slot will be provided at time of booking:

September 2025:
22 September: Rosehill, Oxford City
24 September: Bicester, Cherwell
25 September: Chipping Norton, West Oxfordshire
26 September: Abingdon, Vale of White Horse

October 2025:
6 October: Risinghurst, Oxford City
8 October: Banbury, Cherwell
9 October: Witney, West Oxfordshire

Spots can be prebooked by calling 01865 519800 (option 4), by emailing duty.officer@oxfordshire.gov.uk or by booking online.

You can contact me at gareth.epps@oxfordshire.gov.uk.
GE 8/9/25