

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS FOR OTMOOR

FROM YOUR COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLOR TIM HALLCHURCH

NOVEMBER 2015

October has been another busy month for council members and very stressful try to make savings for a balanced budget for 2016-17. The press have concentrated on the 44 Children's Centres stating that the council plans to close the centres and leave families unsupported. This is far from the truth. See details below.

I have attended 11 meetings on behalf of the County Council, 7 for Cherwell DC, plus masses of papers to read. There have been a number of very pleasurable events. The ESU welcomed the 2015 intake of Rhodes Scholars at Oriel College where Lord Blair explained the workings of parliament while The Vice Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff explained their roles while I briefed them on the workings of local government. We then had a wonderful ESU Annual Dinner at Pembroke College, where Lord Ian Blair was the speaker.

The next ESU (English Speaking Union) event will be a Thanksgiving Lunch at Studley Wood Golf Club on 22nd November when the speaker will be Sir Curtis Price, Warden of New College, who was originally from Ohio USA. We would welcome visitors and if you are interested email me. See also www.esu.org. I will also be giving a talk on 4th November at 8pm in Islip Village Hall for the OAHs on "English Furniture from the 16th Century".

I travelled to London on 26th October from the new "Oxford Parkway" (Kidlington) station and saw Otmoor from a different view as we passed through Islip to Bicester.



Oxford Parkway on the first day of service.

When the train arrived at Bicester Village station it was boarded by many shoppers from China with their shopping bags.

BUDGET CONSULTATION

OCC has launched a public consultation on options for saving money. It has already saved or has firm plans to save nearly £300m since 2010 but believes it needs to find another £50m of savings over the next four years. Council Leader Ian Hudspeth said: "The government is rightly reducing public spending to tackle the national budget deficit, which means we have to make some difficult decisions about council services."

As well as receiving less money from government, the council faces rising demand for services – particularly for vulnerable adults and children at risk of abuse and neglect. About half OCC's budget is spent on 2% of the population of Oxfordshire, and that proportion is set to rise to as a result of a growing aging population. The council is consulting the public before taking the decisions and delivering a balanced budget on 16th February 2016. *Talking Oxfordshire*, the council's budget consultation, started on 20 October, when all the savings options were published on the council's website. It will close on 30 November.

There are three public events with an independent chair alongside the leader and chief finance officer to provide residents with a chance to find out about the council's budget position and have their say. The first was on 27th October in Oxford, and the second at Banbury Town Hall on 2nd November, and the last at Regal Centre, Wallingford on 5th November. Start time 7.00pm. People need to register in advance to attend the event. To register or take part in the consultation online go to www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/budget. Hard copies of the budget consultation documents will also be available in every library.

CHILDREN'S CENTRE AND EARLY INTERVENTION CHANGES

OCC is also asking for views on its proposal to adopt a new model of children's services in Oxfordshire for children aged 0-19 to save £8 million from the budget by 2016-17. The proposal is to create a brand new service for families and their children aged 0-19 years old, or up to 25 if the child has additional needs. The consultation runs until 23:59 on 10 January 2016.

OCC would open up to eight new Children and Family Centres across Oxfordshire. These centres would support children and their families who need help and will integrate the work of the Children's Centres, the Early Intervention Hubs and Children's Social Care. As well as the new Children and Family Centres OCC would also provide an outreach service so children and families can be supported close to where they live. Furthermore, OCC would work with schools, health and other services to ensure that children and families get the help that they need.

As part of the consultation process OCC would like to identify any potential impact of this proposal. OCC would also like to identify options for the future use of the Children's Centres and Early Intervention Hub buildings. Options about how universal services could continue to be run without financial support from OCC are also to be considered. Hard copies of the consultation are available at all children's centres and early intervention hubs. There will also be three open meetings to discuss the proposals. The events are 6-7.30pm and dates are:

- 18 November - Kings Centre, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES
- 23 November - Didcot Civic Centre, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN
- 30 November - John Paul II Centre, Causeway, Bicester OX26 6AW

OXFORDSHIRE TOGETHER – SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH EVENT FOR PARISH COUNCILS

As referred to above, OCC is looking at alternative ways in which it can deliver a number of different public services, across a wide range of areas. The way public services are delivered will shift towards enabling people and communities to take ownership of local priorities. OCC will

continue to provide community leadership and foster partnership working, but the days when the council could deliver all services to all people have gone. OCC has started talking to town and parish councils to identify opportunities to work together. An initial engagement event for town and parish councils took place on 21st September. OCC's vision for working together is outlined in *Oxfordshire Together – the Model* booklet, with further details on some of the initial services in scope included in the *Transitional Offer of Highway Services* booklet. Both can be found at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshiretogether. The programme timetable is:

September – December

- Initial discussion with town and parish councils.
- Engagement with town and parish councils interested in taking on delivery of some services to develop agreements.

January - April 2016

- Implementation of the first 'tranche' of agreements

April 2016 onwards

- Review viability of approach and consider further roll out.

BETTER BROADBAND FOR OXFORDSHIRE – UPDATE

OCC is on track to achieve the target – agreed back in 2013 – of connecting 64,500 homes and businesses with superfast broadband by the end of 2015. By the end of August OCC had enabled over 56,000 premises to be connected to superfast (24mbps) broadband, and expects to reach the goal of 64,500 premises by the end of the year, on time and within budget.

FREE WI-FI IN LIBRARIES

OCC has been awarded more than £86,000 by Arts Council England for Wi-Fi to be installed in the 28 Oxfordshire libraries that currently do not have it (it is already installed in 15 of the county's 43 libraries). The WiFi fund supports the Arts Council's goals around developing library services, ensuring that they are fit for purpose now and in the future. This is one-off grant from the Arts Council. It is therefore not a substitute for money that may be saved from the Library Service's annual revenue budgets in future years as part of the council's 2016-20 budget savings options. Installation will take place during spring 2016.

PROPOSED SE BICESTER RING ROAD

A new ring road has been proposed to link the A41 from J9 to Bicester to the A41 to Aylesbury running to the South East of Graven Hill. There will be three exhibitions showing the alternative routes as follows:

	ACTIVITY	VENUE	TIME
Thursday 12th November	Public Exhibition	The Lion, Wendlebury Rd, Wendlebury, OX25 2PW	2.30pm – 8pm
Friday 13th November	Public Exhibition	Littlebury Hotel, Kings End, Bicester, OX26 6DR	Noon – 7pm
Saturday 14th November	Public Exhibition	John Paul II Centre, Webb Court, Causeway, Bicester OX26 6AW	10am – 4pm

Graven Hill development moves forward

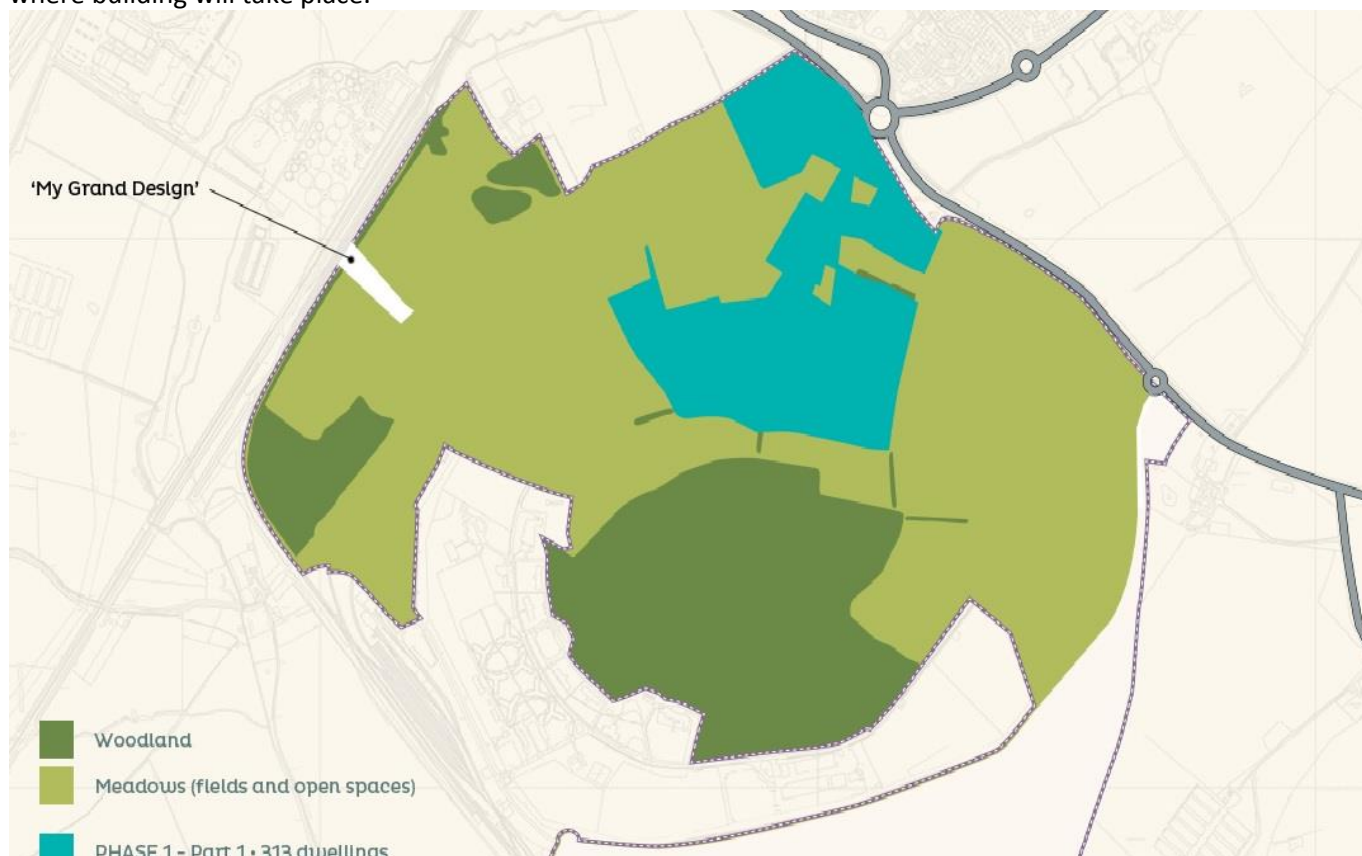
The first homes to be built at the UK's largest self-build scheme in Bicester will be filmed and documented by television star Kevin McCloud

Channel Four has commissioned production company Boundless to film a six part series which will document the first ten self build homes being delivered at Graven Hill in Bicester.

The site, which is owned by Cherwell District Council, is set to become the largest self-build scheme in the UK with a resolution to grant planning consent for up to 1,900 self-build homes with amenities and employment space.

The Graven Hill site is big enough to accommodate more than 1,000 self-build homes. And there is the potential to provide a really wide variety of types and sizes; big individual plots for grand designers or smaller plots for people on more modest budgets. There could also be opportunities for groups of people to work collaboratively to build their homes, perhaps creating a block of low cost apartments, or a terrace of eco homes. In other countries it's quite normal for people to organise their own homes this way. The Graven Hill site will be the first large-scale project of its type in the UK. So you could be a pioneer – a trailblazer for a new way of delivering customised homes and empowering communities. Registration will only take a few minutes and it will ensure you will be the first to be notified of the opportunities on the site. The information you provide will also help us work out how to plan the future layout of the site, and how much land to allocate to the different types and sizes of self-build homes.

Initial problems involving the Great Crested Newt has been resolved and they can be relocated from wet areas where building will take place.



You can still register an interest at

<http://localselfbuildregister.co.uk/localauthorities/cherwell-district-council/>

Members agree to accommodate hotel extension

An upmarket hotel on the outskirts of Bicester is set to double in size after permission was granted for an additional 62 bedrooms.

At a meeting of Cherwell District Council's planning committee members approved the erection of a two storey extension to the existing hotel at Bicester Golf and Country Club in Akeman Street in Chesterton.

The application will increase the number of bedrooms from 50 to 112 and double the existing hotel floor space.

The Bicester Golf and Country Club is located to the south west of Bicester town, close to the village of Chesterton. The main facilities offered at the club include golf, health and fitness and tennis as well as catering for events, conferences and weddings.

In granting permission for the development, councillors added a condition that work must begin on site within three years of the date of yesterday's (Thursday) meeting.

Hubs reach sold out milestone

Children got into the Halloween spirit during a sold out week of Cherwell District Council's half term holiday hubs in Bicester.

Between Monday, 26 October and Friday, 30 October, a maximum 25 bookings were taken each day for children eager to enjoy an array of activities, sport and crafts.

It is the first time the council has sold 100 per cent of available places following an increasing surge in demand.

The hubs took place at Cooper School in Bicester and were open to children aged between five and 15 years old who enjoyed daily fun and games, multi games and rotating guest activities. Children also took part in daily arts and crafts, which this week had a Halloween theme as did a selection of quizzes and competitions.

This week's sold out attendance follows the council's highest ever booking numbers for its summer hubs in Banbury, Bicester and Bloxham.

For more information on the hubs visit www.cherwell.gov.uk/holidayactivities

North West Bicester heads in the right direction

Planning permission has been granted for the next stage of the UK's most sustainable housing development based at North West Bicester.

Members of Cherwell District Council's planning committee approved an outline application by A2Dominion South Limited for 900 homes and supporting facilities at land adjacent to Howes Lane and south west of Avonbury Business Park.

In addition to the homes the application will also provide primary and secondary schools as well as retail, commercial and leisure facilities.

Cllr Michael Gibbard, Cherwell's lead member for planning, said: "This application represents the latest piece of the jigsaw to build up the complete picture for North West Bicester. In total this site will deliver 6,000 new homes and all of the necessary jobs, amenities and infrastructure to accommodate the new residents. However, rather than submit one for the entire site, the developers have chosen to submit proposals in stages as it is such a large site.

"To date A2Dominion has been working on building the first phase of the site, known as the Exemplar, which includes 393 homes. With the first of those homes now on sale and ready for occupation next year, this application will

represent a further stage of the project and will provide some of the necessary facilities and jobs needed to serve the site's new residents."

The current application site extends to about 51 hectares and is currently in agricultural use. In addition to the homes, the consent also covers the provision of a local centre comprising eateries, retail and commercial units. It will also accommodate health facilities, such as a GP surgery and leisure space.

Also included within the application was the delivery of 2.22 hectares of land for a new primary school and 10.45 hectares of land for a new secondary school. These will accommodate the students who are expected to live within this phase of the development as well as other children who will reside across the remainder of the overall site.

In granting consent members also gave permission for the provision of open spaces, play provision, allotments and parks.

The development at North West Bicester is unlike any other in the UK due to the high sustainability standards it is being built to. During the construction phase, A2Dominion have committed not to send any waste to landfill - a feat only matched by the construction of the London 2012 Olympics.

In addition, North West Bicester will be the only site to adhere to a true zero-carbon concept. This will use a heat network and renewable energy sources to ensure net carbon dioxide emissions from all buildings' energy use is zero or below both now and in the future which will reduce the site's carbon footprint and energy bills.

Each home will be designed to maximise sustainability through initiatives including insulation, the installation of solar panels on all properties to generate electricity and using a combined heat and power plant, to provide heat and hot water.

Residents to benefit from online service

Residents are being encouraged to utilise a new online service which will enable housing benefit and council tax reduction claims to be assessed within three working days.

Cherwell District Council has launched the online application form to make applications for housing benefit, council tax reduction and second adult rebate more convenient for residents.

Those who complete the form and then immediately email the supporting documents will have their application assessed within three working days, as opposed to the standard 10 working days when the documents are submitted independently.

To apply, residents can use the online form which can be saved and returned to at a later date if necessary. Upon completion, it can be submitted directly to the council but must be accompanied by an email containing scans of the necessary documents indicated on the checklist.

Canvassers chase outstanding forms

Canvassers will spend the next four weeks knocking on more than 17,500 doors across Cherwell to collect outstanding electoral registration forms.

In August this year Cherwell District Council sent letters to all 61,887 households in the district asking people to confirm their details on the electoral register.

To date 44,303 have responded (72 per cent) and following the issuing of reminder letters in September, canvassers will now knock on 17,584 doors to collect the outstanding forms.

Sue Smith, Electoral Registration Officer for Cherwell, said: "Even if people choose not to vote, it is a legal requirement for them to keep their electoral registration details up to date and failure to do so can lead to a £1,000 fine. The register is used for more than just providing people with the right to vote; it is used to perform credit checks and for jury service selection. Anyone who doesn't return their form could find themselves refused for a mortgage, mobile phone or credit card so it's important to confirm their details and send it back to us as soon as possible."

Between 23 October and 23 November, canvassers working on behalf of Cherwell will visit the outstanding properties to collect the forms and provide assistance. Staff will work between 9am and 8pm seven days a week and will be identifiable by a name badge and high visibility jacket.

If all the household information is correct, people can call 0800 1979871, text 80212 or go to www.registerbyinternet.com/cherwellsouthnorthants and input the form's security codes to confirm their details. Alternatively residents can sign the form and return it using the pre-paid envelope provided.

For those whose information is incorrect this can be amended either by going online at www.registerbyinternet.com/cherwellsouthnorthants or making the necessary amendments on the form and returning it in the pre-paid envelope provided. Alternatively the completed form can be handed to a canvasser when visiting residents' properties.

Recruitment begins for Bicester Job Fair

Businesses looking to fill Christmas and New Year vacancies can promote opportunities for free at the upcoming Bicester Job Fair.

Cherwell District Council is inviting local companies to host a free stall at its fourth job fair of the year at the John Paul II Centre on Tuesday, 17 November.

The event will bring local companies and jobseekers together under one roof in a bid to fill vacancies across the area.

Bag a freebie and avoid the 5p charge

Free bags for life are being given away by Cherwell District Council to help cut the 18 million plastic bags given away across the district in a single year.

On Monday 5 October new legislation was introduced across England which meant companies employing more than 250 staff would now have to charge customers 5p for each carrier bag, with profits donated to good causes.

The move is intended to reduce the 7.4 billion carrier bags given away across England in 2013, of which 18 million were handed out in Cherwell.

Figures released by the Government showed that in 2013, the major supermarkets gave out over 7.4 billion plastic bags, equating to 133 bags per person. In Cherwell, this works out to be an average of 18 million bags issued across the district during the same period.

The new carrier bag charge has been introduced at all companies which employ more than 250 people, regardless of individual branch sizes. Smaller companies have the option to opt in or out.

The money raised is not a tax and cannot be profited by stores. Instead it must be given to a worthy cause/s of the business' choice.

Exceptions to the charge include when purchasing fresh meat or fish, prescription medicines, fresh flowers and unwrapped blades.

Cherwell has 50 free bags for life to give away on a first-come-first-served basis. Simply email charlotte.smith@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk and include your name, full address and contact number under the subject heading 'bag for life'.

Partners win a P.E.A green award

The on-going efforts to create an environmentally-friendly and sustainable community in Bicester have been rewarded at a national awards ceremony.

Cherwell District Council and sustainability charity Bioregional collectively took the Best Town/ City award at the P. E. A. (People. Environment. Achievement) Awards which recognise efforts by individuals and organisations to support a green agenda.

To take the accolade, Cherwell and Bioregional had to demonstrate measures which had been implemented to reduce the carbon footprint of the town.

Appetite needed to reduce food waste

Community groups in Bicester are being encouraged to nominate their town to receive up to £1 million of funding to help reduce household waste.

Sainsbury's is offering community groups across the UK the opportunity to nominate their town for the five-year investment as part of its £10 million Waste Less, Save More project.

In a bid to help secure the funding, Cherwell District Council is offering to support organisations with an application for Bicester as part of its One Shared Vision initiative which promotes sustainability across the town.

To qualify, the successful town must have a population of between 15,000 and 300,000 and have a Sainsbury's store within a five-mile radius. The town must demonstrate a strong sense of community and be keen to tackle the issue of household food waste while working with Sainsbury's to devise a year-long investment plan.

During the first 12 months the store will invest £1 million in the town to create a blueprint so that communities across the UK can benefit from the findings. The funding could be used to develop initiatives such as fridge innovations to advise when food is beginning to go off; reward programmes to encourage recycling or new packaging to help keep products fresher for longer. Alternatively, the money could be used to develop educational programmes for schools and community centres.

Applications must be led by community groups and will be assisted by Cherwell District Council. Alternatively several organisations from the town could work together to submit a joint application.

For more information about the scheme visit www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/wasteless

To speak to a member of Cherwell District Council's Eco Bicester team email gabi.kaiser@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or call 01295 221779.

Frosty reaction to freezer flytips

A farmer has been forced to pay an undisclosed amount to remove more than a dozen fridge freezers which were dumped on his land.

Sometime overnight between Saturday, 26 September and Sunday, 27 September, offenders dumped about ten large fridge freezers and six smaller fridge freezers on private farmland in Stratton Audley.

Cherwell District Council is now appealing for help to trace the culprits to recover the costs on behalf of the farmer and prosecute those who are responsible.

The incident was reported to Cherwell District Council at the end of September. It is known to have taken place sometime between late on Saturday, 26 September and early on Sunday, 27 September when the farmer took a break from working on the land.

The offence took place on private land off Launton Road where the culprits would have gained access to the site.

As the flytip took place on private land, responsibility and costs for clearing the mess lies with the landowner.

Anyone with information about the flytip should contact Cherwell District Council on 01295 227007. Calls will be treated in confidence.

Bicester Transport Strategy continues to drive forward

Work to deliver a sustainable transport network in Bicester is continuing to move forward with councillors agreeing to the development of a detailed action plan.

At a meeting of Cherwell District Council's executive, members received the latest Bicester Sustainable Transport Strategy and endorsed its vision to create a network of sustainable infrastructure and proposals for the town.

The document sets out a 20 year vision of how to reduce reliance on private car journeys by increasing opportunities for improving cycling and pedestrian routes as more sustainable transport as the town grows.

Cherwell commissioned the strategy last year and will now begin work on an action plan to deliver the strategy's objectives. The document includes solutions which can be delivered within two years, such as increasing bicycle parking and removing barriers along existing cycle ways, and long term projects such as town centre improvements to encourage walking and cycling and improved connections to bus and train services.

The plan takes forward Cherwell's adopted Local Plan and will support other development documents, including Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan, all of which focus on improving transport infrastructure and securing sustainable journeys.

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