

Monthly Report - July 2014

Robert Courts, the Bartons Ward, WODC

I have spent my first full month as your District Councillor learning the procedure, law and rules of Council business, and meeting many people who will be important as we work together to resolve local issues.

I visited **Middle Barton School** on the 20th June, attending morning assembly and having a meeting with the Headteacher, Mrs Tailby. I was very impressed with all I saw there, from the behaviour of the children to the range of activities available to them. The enthusiasm of the children is only matched by the enthusiasm of the teaching team; it is very encouraging to see a wonderful school being built day by day and I congratulate all on the school they are creating.

I attended the School fete on the 29th June and this was, as I would expect from my visit, a wonderfully run and well-attended event, demonstrating how important the school is to the local community, and a vivid illustration of the children's skills and achievements.

I attended Sunday worship at **Sandford St Martin Church** on the 22nd June, and was glad to see Rev Graeme again, and to meet those of the congregation that I have not met at other events. It is wonderful to meet such friendly and thriving congregations and I look forward to meeting more parishioners at the other Churches in the Ward in due course.

On a less pleasant note, there have been reports of dog waste being left hanging off the trees in Mill Lane. Sadly this is not the first time this has been reported to me; it has occurred elsewhere in the village, and I am sure that the Parish Councils will join with me in asking those concerned to dispose of their dogs' waste in the bins provided; it is very unpleasant for other residents otherwise. I am liaising with the Environment Team at WODC to deal with removal of the offending items in the meantime.

Many of you have asked me when the combined County Council and District Council plans for **broadband** coverage can be expected in your area. The latter plan is still in development, but there is a helpful interactive map at <http://tinyurl.com/pohsa46> that explains the dates for implementation where they are known, and where further funding is required in other areas, which await the District Council plan. I suggest sorting the map - right hand side of the page - to find your Parish, and then zoom in to where you live.

I have seen some of the results of the Steeple Barton Parish Council **village survey**. There are many excellent suggestions. Could I ask that we discuss the ones that the Parish Council feel are the most popular and/or pressing and I will see whether I can assist?

I would like to remind everyone to make use of the excellent free "**MyWestOxfordshire**" service provided by WODC on their website. Not everyone is aware of its existence but it provides emailed updates and essential information on things like planning applications and rubbish collection times. I would encourage everyone to make use of this service.

Steeple Barton Parish Council have asked me to assist with the provision of housing for local people in **Dashwood House**, to honour an undertaking made by Cottsway. I have had a meeting with WODC Housing Officers, in which I have discussed individual residents' cases, but also asked about Dashwood House. I am told that whilst there is nothing in the agreement to this effect, the allocations policy for this rural site means that 50% of the available spaces will be allocated to the

local area: hence there will be two or three spaces for local people. The mailshot to those on the list will go out pre-allocation, which will be in just under one year's time.

In wider WODC news: grants agreed recently by the District Council's Cabinet will help to secure almost £2m of investment in community facilities in West Oxfordshire towns and villages. A total of £169,238 has been awarded to a variety of projects to help deliver new community facilities and improvements to existing schemes that benefit local residents. Cllr Simon Hoare, Cabinet Member for Resources, said: *"Through careful planning and an on-going commitment to efficiency and savings, and at a time when other local authorities are withdrawing this type of support, West Oxfordshire District Council has been able to continue to provide significant grant funding this year to support vital facilities in our rural communities."*

Lastly, may I remind everyone that the first of my new **monthly surgeries** will be held between 1pm and 2pm, at the Fox Inn, Westcote Barton, on Saturday 5th July?

As always, all residents should feel free to contact me with any local issues, either on 07799 417291, robert.courts@westoxon.gov.uk, or through my website at www.robertcourts.com.