

ROBERT COURTS

District Councillor The Bartons Ward

Monthly Report - March 2015

Locally

I am dismayed to hear that **Stagecoach** propose to withdraw the S4 bus from Middle Barton. I wrote to Stagecoach in December when the service was first “reviewed” and am disappointed that this has had no effect. There will hopefully be a meeting with Stagecoach in the near future, at which I would like to present them with a petition, which is live on my website with (at the time of writing,) over 80 signatures, with attached documents of approximately a further 150. I shall also write again to emphasise the point, and to ask them to reconsider this decision and to consult with the local community. Please sign the **petition** here: <http://tinyurl.com/okzqgew>

If this is not successful, it is unfortunately the case that neither the County nor the District Council can require Stagecoach to run a bus service directly to the Bartons; we will therefore have to make the best of the County Council’s proposed Shuttle bus, or investigate a different solution, such as a community bus. The Parish Council are considering the same and would not doubt welcome suggestions and assistance.

The **signs at the Westcote Barton ford** have been removed and attached to underneath the red and white triangle signs at each end of Fox Lane. Removal of the posts awaits funding, which I am afraid may not be until April, i.e. the new financial year, but it will take place. I will continue to monitor the situation to ensure that this work is carried out.

The **Hollier's Crescent** sign had not been repaired yet - I have chased the same up and hope it will be repaired in the next few weeks.

District

This has been an important month at WODC.

Firstly, the **budget** has been set. **Council Tax is being frozen for the fifth year running**, first-class services will continue and there will be no reductions in grants for the voluntary sector in West Oxfordshire. WODC’s tax is set at less than half the national average, equating to just £1.50 per week per household for all services provided by the Council and represents a real terms cut of around 17% over the five year period. The freeze is expected to keep the Council’s position as the second lowest charging Shire district council in England. The Council is also the lowest levying of all five district authorities in Oxfordshire and charges less than some local parish councils.

Secondly, the final version of a **Draft Local Plan**, which sets out how West Oxfordshire should develop until 2031, was approved at a meeting of the Full Council on 25 February. This follows consultation last summer on housing issues, including a new target and strategy to meet this, which attracted comments from more than 500 individuals and organisations.

The final draft continues to propose an annual housing target of 525 new homes during the Plan period (10,500 in total); lower than the figure of 660 homes per annum suggested by the 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and is supported by more recent evidence and analysis carried out since the SHMA was published last April.

The plan envisages the majority of the housing to be built at the three main towns of Witney, Carterton and Chipping Norton, with strategic housing sites at west, east and north Witney, east Carterton and on MOD land within Carterton, and land to the east of Chipping Norton. Outside of these main towns, a focus on development predominantly on larger centres and villages including Eynsham, Woodstock, Long Hanborough, Bampton, Burford and Charlbury. Development elsewhere is to be on a smaller scale with new homes in other villages to meet local housing needs. There are measures to increase the supply of affordable housing.

The final version of the Draft Local Plan will be published for six weeks from mid-March, during which time representations on its soundness and legal compliance can be made. It will then be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination later in the year.

In addition to approval of the final draft Plan, the Council also agreed an updated five-year housing land supply, required by the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which identifies development sites that will ensure the District can meet at least five years' worth of development requirements.

The full report considered by Full Council can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/nk9l5og>

West Oxfordshire District Council has seen a huge increase in its **food waste recycling** rates after placing stickers on householder waste bins in December 2014, reminding people to use food containers for leftovers and unwanted food rather than putting food in the household rubbish bin.

Other Matters

My latest **In Touch** newsletter is being delivered to all houses and is attached, and can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ooyvudr>

I have also produced a handy **2015 calendar** with lots of useful telephone numbers which is also attached, and which you can also download from the front page of my website: www.robertcourts.com

My **surgery dates** for 2015 continue on the 7th March, 11th April, 9th May, 6th June all at the Fox Inn, Westcote Barton.

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