

ROBERT COURTS

District Councillor The Bartons Ward

Monthly Report - July 2015

Local

Litter picking - congratulations to those who organised this Sandford St Martin community event, which was well-attended and a lot of ground was covered. I am glad to report that I worked along Mill Lane, which is clearer to the tune of several bottles and cans, some polystyrene, plastic and a car bumper!

Middle Barton School Fete - I enjoyed this event, which was well-supported as always and I am glad the rain just about stayed away. Congratulations to all those involved and I look forward to next year.

Bus - the new shuttle bus service is now well bedded in. I have received positive feedback. Please do let me or the Parish Council know your views, positive or negative.

West Oxfordshire District Council

Broadband: I apologise for mentioning this again but it is very important and many people may have missed earlier reports. Work continues on the WODC plan, as reported here: <http://tinyurl.com/lghdygq> . Cotswold Broadband have begun work, and the following websites remain the place to monitor to see when your area will be connected:

- you can find out which plan (OCC or WODC,) you fall under by looking here: <http://www.cotswoldsbroadband.co.uk/who-is-doing-what?>
- you can see the currently anticipated timescale by looking here: <http://tinyurl.com/pohsa46>

A report measuring **budget expenditure and performance** targets showed that West Oxfordshire District Council had delivered very positive results and made considerable savings during 2014/15. Overall the Council's operational budget was underspent by nearly £1m – around 8.5% of the total. Some of the savings were down to changes in policy and increased income from fees such as planning applications and commercial property rentals. Other significant savings came from good internal housekeeping and the early delivery of some of the managerial and cost savings of the shared working 2020 Programme. West Oxfordshire District Council's council tax has been frozen for five years consecutively, services have been protected and grant levels safeguarded.

Further, West Oxfordshire District Council welcomes your comments on proposals that will help to reduce the costs and overheads of running its services. These proposals are being made because the funding we receive from Government is reducing and yet our running costs are increasing.

The Council is working with Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council and the Forest of Dean District Council on a complex programme of work known as the **2020 Vision Programme**. The aim is to reduce the cost of providing services by making better use of IT, sharing management and 'back office' staff while maintaining the full range of services that we currently provide, and retaining our own identity. Decisions on what is best for our District will continue to be made by elected Councillors.

Bringing various services together across four Councils will require significant investment in new IT systems. We will also need to seek specialist advice on complex legal and governance issues, HR matters and pensions. And there will also be a need to fund redundancies.

The Government has demonstrated its confidence in our proposal by granting a total of £3.8 million to help us fund the necessary work. Over the coming years the 2020 Vision Councils will have to spend around (£8.7m to make the change happen but this will save us (£5.2m) per year, thus paying back the investment in around two years. It is estimated that the savings to each Council is around £1.3m.

Implementing all these changes will take time; our aim is to complete them by 2020 - hence the name of our programme.

We have considered and discounted a number of other ways of making savings - these included increasing council tax; cutting services; forming a unitary authority; and buying services from the private sector.

As an initial step the Council is proposing that the following services should be shared:

- IT
- Public Protection
- Building Control
- Legal
- Property
- Customer Services
- Revenues and benefits
- HR, finance and payroll (a shared service already established)

In September and October this year detailed proposals regarding the next steps for 2020 Vision will be going to each Council for consideration. Before we reach that stage we'd like to hear your views.

How you can comment: including the area where you live, please let us know:

- If you agree with this approach?
- If not, how do you think the savings could be made?
- Any additional comments?

Email: feedback@2020partnership.uk

Oxfordshire County Council would like your views on its service change proposals for subsidised bus services and Dial-a-Ride.

OCC needs to save more than £6 million on supported transport services. They can save money by running existing services more efficiently, however that is not enough. Savings will also have to come from reducing the current £4 million a year the council pays in bus subsidies and to run the Dial-a-Ride service. Currently Oxfordshire County Council subsidises over 100 bus services in Oxfordshire, which makes up around 9% of the bus network. This means that more than nine out of ten services run without any public subsidy. The proposals in this consultation will affect some bus users and all Dial-a-Ride users. Read the consultation document and complete the online feedback form to register your views, here: <http://tinyurl.com/q2kmt8j>

My **surgery dates** for 2015 continue on 5th September, 3rd October all at the Fox Inn, Westcote Barton. (Please note there is no August date.)

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