

ROBERT COURTS

**District Councillor, The Bartons Ward, West Oxfordshire District Council
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities**

Monthly Report - November 2015

Locally

Bus - the bus subsidy comes to an end shortly on November 30th. The consultation is going to OCC's Cabinet on 10th November, and we can expect to know the results shortly afterwards: <http://tinyurl.com/owcrmj9> I have made my views clear as have others in the villages. Chris Puttick (07908 997 146 - chris@twoten.is) has put in a lot of work on the Community Bus project, but the response from the villages seems to have been underwhelming. There can be no community bus without people to help run it. Think of the possibilities - the route could be - Duns Tew, Sandford, Wooton, Glympton and onwards to the train stations. However - a committee is needed, people with business and organisational experience being particularly welcome, but all are welcome. Without help, the project cannot happen. Please contact Chris if you would like to help.

Remembrance Sunday: ordinarily I would attend Remembrance Sunday in The Bartons, particularly in a WW1 commemoration year, when we wish to remember those from our area who laid down their lives for our freedom. This year, however, I have been asked to lay a wreath on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council at Woodstock, and therefore must send my apologies, but my thoughts will of course be with our local Churches and communities.

District Council

I attended a meeting of the **Oxfordshire Safer Communities Partnership** on the 9th October, discussing the future role of the group, which is very important in terms of information sharing between the parts of the County on current community safety issues.

On 14th October it was announced that **unemployment in West Oxfordshire** has fallen to 0.4% (JSA claimant figures 0.4%: 297 claimants). This is the lowest since 2001 and reflects the nationwide trend, where the employment rate is the highest since records began. For the figures, see: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157327/report.aspx>

Also on 14th October, in Cabinet I seconded the proposed Cabinet/WODC response to OCC's consultation on the **future of the A40**, commenting that I hoped WODC's voice would be clearly heard on this issue, and that progress would be made on this issue that is of paramount importance to the residents of West Oxfordshire.

Another important issue was the approval of the **2020 shared working programme** that will deliver additional annual savings of over £1.25m by the end of 2018/19. This will extend existing shared working with Cheltenham Borough Council and Cotswold and Forest of Dean District Councils. The four councils already share a human resources, finance and payroll service and are working towards building a common ICT structure. Residents will not see any changes to their Council and the services it runs: each Council will retain its own separate identity and its own democratically elected members. Staff will continue to work at each location; some will provide a service predominantly to one Council, whereas others will provide a service for more than one Council.

This was approved at Full Council on the 21st October, when I spoke to introduce WODC's proposals for helping to house **Syrian refugees**: <http://tinyurl.com/or7b32v> , <http://tinyurl.com/o3c9sq3>

My **surgery dates** for 2015 continue on 7th November, 5th December - all at the Carpenter's Arms, Middle Barton. Please note the change of venue.

Robert

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