

Oxfordshire County Councillor David Bartholomew

Report to Highmoor Parish Council AGM 2023

Introduction

I am in my third term as your County Councillor. I represent what is known as 'Sonning Common Division'. This Division comprises the nine parishes that curl around Henley, including Highmoor, but does not include Henley itself. Over the last ten years I have attended most parish council meetings. For each meeting, I supply a written report in advance about general OCC matters, then follow this up at the meeting itself with a verbal report about local items. This local report is then also supplied in writing after the meeting.

Responsibilities

In addition to representing the interests of residents in the nine parishes in my Division and my place on Full Council, I am the Opposition spokesman for Finance, Investment & Property. I sit on three committees: OCC & Employees Joint Consultative Committee; Property Strategy Cabinet Advisory Group; and Chilterns Conservation Board.

Key County Issues

Since the May 2021 election when the Conservatives lost control, the county has been run by a left-wing coalition of Labour, LibDem and Green councillors. The coalition has stated its over-riding concern is climate change (<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/council/our-vision-0>). While this is unquestionably an important issue, the Conservative Opposition is deeply concerned that there has been a major shift away from addressing the core functions of the council. The administration is also very focused on traffic issues in the city of Oxford, and rural matters suffer as a consequence. In recent months, £millions has been committed to Oxford traffic schemes, including £6.5m to divide Oxford into four sectors for traffic purposes (the start of this has been delayed until next year). On a county-wide basis, the plans to switch 30mph signs to 20mph signs in many areas at a cost of £8m has divided opinion. The county has recently issued a press release re-stating that “...*the emphasis is on drivers adhering to the new limits through a change of mindset, rather than enforcement. It is hoped that as 20mph areas become more common, breaking the limit will become socially unacceptable for drivers.*”

Key Highmoor Issues

Local matters I have been engaged on over the last year include:

- Pot holes (of course!)
- Flooding and drains
- Accidents on the B481
- Improved signage
- Traffic calming
- Damaged and missing signs
- Footpaths and verges
- Vegetation clearing
- Deer incidents

I have also assisted residents directly on an individual basis.