

Oxfordshire County Councillor David Bartholomew

Report to Highmoor Parish Council APM 2024

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 eleven 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 my Division and my place on Full Council, I am the Opposition spokesman for Finance, Investment & Property. I sit on four committees: OCC & Employees Joint Consultative Committee; Property Strategy Cabinet Advisory Group; Remuneration Committee and Chilterns Conservation Board.

Key County Issues

From the May 2021 election, when the Conservatives lost control, to September 2023, the county was run by a coalition of Labour, LibDem and Green councillors. The coalition collapsed in September 2023, since when the Liberal Democrats and Greens have run the county as a minority administration. However, there was some form of rapprochement when the LibDems, Greens and Labour agreed a joint budget in February 2024. The Conservative Opposition remains concerned that there has been a shift away from addressing the core functions of the council in favour of national issues outside the remit of the council. The administration is also very focused on the city of Oxford, and rural matters suffer as a consequence. Many £millions have been committed to Oxford traffic schemes, including the £6.5m four-sector traffic plan. On a county-wide basis, the 30mph to 20mph sign-changing exercise has divided opinion. The police have made it clear that they will not enforce the 20mph limit unless there is evidence of a specific problem. The county issued a press release acknowledging this and stated that “...*the emphasis is on drivers adhering to the new limits through a change of mindset, rather than enforcement.*”

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
- Road closures
- Deer incidents

I have also assisted residents directly on an individual basis.