

Focus on Parish Councils – Monthly Update

July 2026

Cllr Ben Higgins

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Dear parish councillors and residents,

Please find below a range of updates. I am not intending to produce an August report, so I anticipate the next update being with you in early September. I hope everyone has an enjoyable summer.



OCC News

1. Local Government Reorganisation

Despite the impending change of Prime Minister, we are expecting a decision on LGR ahead of summer recess, which means by Thursday 16th July. I'm sure it will be covered in the local press as well as via releases from your local councils. I will include more detail on the implications of the decision in my next report.

2. Highways

Highway repairs continue to catch up with the backlog. I have carried out two visits with highways engagement in the last month across 5 parishes, meeting some local representatives to discuss issues.

The visits have been very worthwhile. As well as marking some potholes for repair which are outside of my scope to do as super-user, we have also identified requirements for drain cleaning and repairs, some civils and larger patching work which are anticipated to be completed over summer, and some broader schemes addressing problem areas which were not scoped and will be scoped and added to the programme list as a direct result of the visits.

There has been resurfacing and surface dressing work happening across the division as part of the largest programme of such work in 20 years in the county, and more planned before the end of summer.

3. Flags

The High Court has awarded an injunction to Oxfordshire County council to prevent the continued unauthorised placement of flags on or near the public highway. I support this action, and was involved in pushing for it when I was in cabinet. The timing was unfortunate, in that the work had been going on for several months and was completely unrelated to the World Cup, but came to a head in the middle of the World Cup.

[Why the Council applied](#)

The Council's application aimed to stop repeated interference with the highway and the Council's legal duties as highway authority. It relates to a series of incidents involving named individuals associated with the organisation known as Raise the Colours.

What the incidents involved

This includes the unauthorised placement of flags on highway infrastructure, amounting to a criminal offence. It also includes trespass, obstruction of the highway, and incidents where council teams, contractors and residents have faced confrontation or harassment when items are removed.

This activity has created clear road safety and public safety risks and caused distress in local communities. A civil injunction is a court order that requires an individual or organisation to stop specified activities. It prohibits further unauthorised installations on or near the highway and allows the Council to take enforcement action if the order is breached.

Previous action and community impact

The application follows months of sustained activity involving the placement of flags on or near the public highway without permission. This continued despite a formal legal notice in March 2026 requiring it to stop, and further pre-action letters sent to named individuals in May 2026.

Residents across Oxfordshire, from Adderbury to Wallingford, have complained to the Council about safety risks, intimidation and distress linked to this activity. Council teams have also been subject to abuse and harassment when removing unlawful flags.

The Council has a legal duty to keep the highway safe and ensure that public spaces are safe and inclusive. The ongoing scale and persistence of the behaviour by Raise the Colours has created safety risks, caused distress within communities, and led to abuse and intimidation directed at council teams and residents. The Council has a duty to act to protect those affected.

4. Amber heat health alert

An amber alert is currently in place across the South East and will run until 9pm on 12th July. There is guidance available from both OCC and SODC to dealing with the heat and helping look after vulnerable people.

5. Community Action Groups celebrate another year of local impact

Community Action Groups Oxfordshire, supported by OCC for 25 years, has published its latest annual report, highlighting the continued strength and impact of community action across the county. The network now includes 127 groups. Over the past year, it hosted nearly 8,000 events, attracting around 80,000 attendees.

More than 16,000 volunteers recorded over 87,000 volunteering hours, showing the important role residents continue to play in supporting local climate, community and sustainability activity. Last month, we approved a £306,200 grant to support the CAG network's work in 2026-27.

6. Consultations

There are a range of consultations open on <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>,

Draft SEND strategy 2026-2029

The Oxfordshire Local Area Partnership is seeking feedback from residents and education, health and social care partners on its proposed eight commitments to improve support and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The consultation closes on 3 August 2026.

We are asking for residents' views on a proposed policy that will guide how communities benefit from private, for-profit, new renewable energy projects such as solar farms, wind turbines and battery storage.

National Highways and Transport public satisfaction survey 2026

The NHT Network is the UK's leading benchmarking and service improvement partnership for Local Highway Authorities. Through its public satisfaction survey and performance frameworks, it provides independent insight to help councils understand how their highways and transport services are experienced by residents.

For any queries from members of the public which can't be answered locally, please contact support@measure2improve.com

7. Funding

I have made the majority of my allocations under the OCC councillor priority fund scheme, and expect to allocate the remainder in the coming weeks. I will include a summary in my next report.

Parish Round-Up

I hope to attend Parish Councils in person as regularly as I can. Below are some notes on issues raised at recent meetings:

- Watlington – relief road continued planning delays, CIL funding, Church St/Chapel St/New Road.
- Britwell Salome – expansion of the 20mph area raised in parish meeting, road conditions.
- Checkendon – review of application for extension of 20mph limit; flooding issue by pub
- Stoke Row – road conditions, lotting.
- Pishill with Stonor – mobile phone coverage with retirement of analogue phonelines, road condition.
- Cuxham – Chalgrove New Town and removal of bypass proposal, HGV traffic (including construction traffic), condition of roads.
- Nuffield – Speeding enforcement, speed limits on the A4130, condition of Ewelme junction next to May's farm cottages, Fred's field.
- Shirburn – 20mph limit request, chicane (alternatives after recent trial).
- Swyncombe – issue with unpermitted development on lotted land.
- Nettlebed – community sports facilities, cycle path from Nettlebed to Bix.
- Rotherfield Peppard – repeated issue with drain cover, road conditions, junction of Stoke Row Road/Gallowstree Road.
- Highmoor – flooding issue on Holly close