

## **Cllr Liz Leffman: Report to Shipton Parish Council March 2023**

**I don't have anything to report specific to Shipton, but please see my report from the County Council below. Please let me know of any issues that you would like me to take up on behalf of the village.**

**OCC Budget:** The Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance 2023-2024 budget was passed at full council in February. The budget sees above inflation investment in children's services, and significant increases for adult social care and highways. The budget also includes funding for rural bus services, and community bus services.

The Conservatives presented a vision for a council stripped back to statutory obligations only. To achieve a rise in council tax 1% lower than the administration proposed, the alternative Conservative budget proposed cuts to libraries, the fire and rescue service, buses, funding to parish councils for 20mph schemes, a 25% cut to the councillor priority fund, and ending the joint parking and bus ticket for park and rides. Officers reported to council that the Conservative proposal, which also included increased borrowing from reserves to fund free parking at 2 Oxford Park and Rides, would have weakened the council's financial position.

**5-year highways network management plan:** A 5-year plan was agreed at cabinet on how the highways network is used. The document (among other things),

- Aligns highways policy with new transport and environment policies
- Sets out the rules for work on the highways and increased fees and fines for e.g., broadband utilities
- Prioritizes ensuring walking, cycling and bus travel is possible during road works
- Aims to reduce inappropriate use of local roads by freight

The Council has also started the process of reviewing the Highways maintenance contract which is up for renewal in 2024/5

**Verges:** A new verges and vegetation policy was adopted at cabinet to improve the management of roadside nature reserves and support for areas of local community managed biodiversity. The policy also instructs that footpaths and cycle paths are kept accessible and not restricted by grass and vegetation growth, and that visibility is maintained at junctions and other high-risk areas.

**Cost of living support:** Residents receiving housing benefit, but not in receipt of other state benefits, can claim £300 to help with living costs, thanks to the latest round of the Household Support Fund. Oxfordshire County Council has sent letters to residents eligible for support. Claims need to be made by 28 March 2023

**Grants for care workers:** Cost of living grants are available for care workers, available from the Care Workers' hardship grant – funded by Oxfordshire County Council. Up to £2000 can be applied for. The process is light touch and can be paid within two weeks.

**New Chief Executive:** OCC's new chief executive, Martin Reeves started on March 1st