

Additional report 20220314 from DC Paul Barrow

Wantage Beacon car parking

Motorists parking in district council car parks in Abingdon, Faringdon and Wantage have now been informed that from **Monday 4 April**:

- Free parking will still be available but reduced to one hour a day*
- New fees will apply if you want to stay for more than one hour
- Other fees will go up by 40p
- New and renewed permits will be valid for the specific car park they are issued for and will not be transferable.

*except for Southampton Street car park in Faringdon, which will continue to offer two hours free parking a day. This will reduce the subsidies for car parking.

County health Overview Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

The committee met on March 10th. A number of topics were discussed.

CAMHS (Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health Services). Levels of child and youth mental health issues are higher in Oxfordshire than elsewhere but this difference may not be statistically significant. Significant issues included greater involvement of the voluntary sector, which is vital since they often understand the community better, inequality and lack of coordination of services (they are starting to map inequalities between urban and rural provision), families not being aware of services and unacceptably long waiting lists, even for urgent cases. The link between autism and mental health is strong. The remedy to the above is seen to be improved access to information, training including e-training and a single point of access. Problems have been exacerbated by staff shortages, a feature across all health provision in Oxfordshire. Some additional funding is being found for school nurses. Mental health services are under-supported financially compared with the rest of the UK.

Access and waiting times. Concerns remain over closure of the Wantage maternity unit. This apparently is due to staff shortages and sickness. ENT, Ophthalmology and some other services which were closed to referrals during the pandemic re-opened for referrals in December and are working to reduce waiting times some of which are still at >104 days; this is now falling but still excessive. Again, staff shortages, improved workforce planning, international recruiting and advertising were issues that are being addressed.

BOB ICS (Bucks, Oxon and West Berks Integrated Care System). Progress is being made to weld a considerable amount of health care provision across these three counties much of which gives the committee cause for concern. Advertisements have gone out for senior positions but concerns were raised about this additional administrative layer to NHS provision in terms of costs and increased bureaucracy. There were also concerns over the constitution since the ICS will cover integrated care including services currently provided by LAs. Public access to Board Meetings was regarded as essential – these may be online.

Community Health Services Strategy. You may remember that after our highly critical report on this review for OX12 as a pilot we said that OX12 cannot be reviewed in isolation and it must be done at county level. The current review is making progress, albeit slow. The number of staff on this exercise has now been increased. Member of the OX12 Task & Finish group discussed progress of this with the new staff member who will be doing much of the analysis

work. We noted that this review has taken much longer than originally intended, Covid being one factor but a huge and hugely complex analysis is needed. The fate of community hospitals will be a key feature of this review which we will monitor closely.

Covid update. Cases are once again increasing after all restrictions were removed. The data presented only went as far as mid -Jan so not so much value (the Oxfordshire dashboard www.phdashboard.oxfordshire.gov.uk) gives figures daily). As we know, deprivation and ethnicity are factors in high rates which may related to housing quality and density. Some individual cases were mentioned including one patient who lost their place on a transplant list as a result of infection.

Oxfordshire Healthwatch. GP access remains a major feature. This will be dealt with in the next meeting. The result of the report on rural isolation will be published in April. I will look carefully at that since it will cover many areas of the county.

North Wessex Downs AONB

The Council of Partners (The Vale of White Horse DC is one) met on March 8th.

Councils are now asked to give brief reports. We reported on the joint Vale/SODC climate action plan part of which will include grants for climate change mitigation which will be available to local groups. The fund is £50,000 and projects of up to £5,000 will be funded. I also mentioned (i) the problems that we had had with contractors who are rolling out optic fibre, (ii) the work being done between parishes, OCC and the Vale to reduce flooding from the roads running down from the downs, and (iii) the need for the AONB to receive information on all planning applications affecting the AONB

The new chair (Sarah Nicholls) is making a point of contacting all the MPs covering the NWD AONB to raise its profile. She is hoping that a parliamentary sub-group will be set up to promote the AONB's interests.

The NWD AONB is consulting on its own Nature Recovery Plan for the AONB.

A dark skies festival was run in Marlborough during last October and was deemed to be a success. They are looking to see whether similar smaller festivals might be run elsewhere.

A number of major national changes are obviously under way.

The Glover report proposes that all AONBs and National Parks now be regarded as national landscapes and more will be expected in terms of deliver more for nature, climate, and people, and increased national scrutiny. It is clearly hoped that government financial support will be increased.

The government response to the report has now been published and can be seen at www.gov.uk/government/publications. A pilot project is being set up by the NWD AONB to establish how best to respond to the proposed changes. The public and relevant organisations are asked to contribute comments on the government's response by April 9th and this can be done at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/landscapes-review-national-parks-and-aonbs-implementing-the-review>.

Farmers are key partners in the changes taking place. The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) project enabling funding for work leading to environmental improvement is now well under way. This is part of Defra's Agricultural Transition Plan (The Path to Sustainable

Farming.) This is separate to existing Farmer Clusters groups in the AONB some of whom have been involved in improving stream quality and hedge and tree planting.

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