

East Challow Parish Council District Councillor Report May 8th 2024

A417 and flooding

Mark Stone, VWHDC CEO, has taken up the issue of contacting the two landowners through whose land Childrey Brook runs badly silted since legal issues are now involved. However, I believe that a compromise is being reached to ensure that work can start on repairing the complex drainage system. I have also contacted CCLr Bethia Thomas, who is standing in for Yvoone, to try and move things on a little faster because some residents, including one cyclist, are getting desperate and irate.

Responding to the local flood problems, the County Council has introduced a grant scheme for local flood mitigation projects and a few of the parish councils have submitted proposals. I have submitted one proposal which covers the drainage grips in Letcombe Regis, Letcombe Bassett and West Challow, in addition to the roadside ditches. West Challow has submitted a proposal in association with the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust. We were not able to submit proposals directly related to repairs to highways since this is Highways work. Priority is given to problem areas where there is damage to property. This grant scheme is being organised through the Flood Risk Team at the County Council but it's quite clear from the response that I had from County Councillor Andrew Gant to a question asked at County Council that we will be able to liaise more closely with this team in the future and possibly even obtain a degree of support for minor ongoing flood mitigation measures in our parishes. The County Council is also introducing a volunteer scheme whereby, in the same way that we have pothole champions, they are suggesting that we have flooding champions so that there are eyes and ears on the ground in the parishes who can contact the county council immediately a problem arises.

HOSC (County Health Scrutiny Committee) and health

HOSC met two weeks ago and covered two major topics which were primary care GP practises and local dentistry. Measures are being introduced to improve access to GPs which is good but I'm concerned that the main issue is the number of full-time equivalents (FTEs) in practice. The majority of GP's are female, many work part time and some GP's do private work and it is a concern that we don't have enough GPs per head of population with the local population continuing to expand. There is also a concern about initial triage through receptionists. There is a drive towards community care, not only regarding discharge of patients from acute hospitals back into their own homes but also keeping patients in their own homes rather than getting them into hospitals in the first place. These are measures which are being introduced nationally but concerns include those over insufficient numbers of staff to manage patients in their own homes. We are also concerned about the fact that Oxfordshire is a very expensive area to live and we're not very good at attracting nurses and more junior staff into the area. We have discussed several times that we should be considering pressuring for Oxfordshire to try and improve financial packages for junior staff with something equivalent to London weighting.

NHS dentistry was discussed but with the current national contract dentists always lose money for NHS patients so there's no incentive to increase the number of NHS patients in the practise. I'm not sure how this can be resolved without improving the dentists' contract.

We have identified topics for future discussion including shortages of medicines and the community clinical hubs in Oxford which will be equivalent to Wantage hospital.

Oxford Health and Oxford University Health Trusts held a meeting with key local stakeholders for an update on the development of the ground floor of Wantage Hospital. You may have seen in the

paper that £600,000 of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) from local development in Wantage is available for the refurbishment. More on this as we get further information.

Dog mess

Dog fouling of Childrey Way seems to be an increasingly frequent occurrence again. It is clear from the position of the mess that many of the dogs come from Childrey.

Airband

I may have already told you from information from the County Council broadband officers that Airband are no longer installing equipment for new potential customers. From now on they will only deal with existing customers. Our poles have been removed (thank you, Trevor).

20mph zone

By the time we meet for the parish council meeting, Andy and I will have met Cameron Rae, from the County Council, about aligning the 20mph zone with the position of our SIDS, particularly the ones on the West side of the village towards Wantage. Hopefully, we will be able to get an agreement on this.

East Challow footpaths

For a long time, I've been trying to get the Wasboroughs and their tenant farmers to open up the footpath network between East Challow and Grove Business Park. This can't be done until the five wooden footbridges over the ditches along the footpaths and bridleways are repaired or replaced. I've now been told by Arthur McEwan James, the footpaths officer, that these will be replaced after harvest as they need to get permission to access the ditches. This offers the opportunity of expanding the network of footpaths around our villages.

Paul Barrow
Vale of White Horse District Council
20240502