

## **District Councillor Report for East Challow Parish Council March 12<sup>th</sup> 2025**

### **Flooding on the A417**

This remains awful.

I and Lectombe Regis parish council submitted Fols for the A417 costs and also those for the flooding on the back road to Letcombe Regis. The projected costs for the A417 are estimated to be a minimum of £139K and this does not include staff costs.

I contacted the Vale (Leigh Travers) and county (Gordon Kelman) officers with whom we normally discuss this to ask for them to outline their strategy but John Backley (Leigh's manager) at the Vale suggested I mail Clare Mills at OCC. I mailed her on Feb 14<sup>th</sup> outlining the problem placing emphasis on the water flowing off the field and its inadequate drainage piping and attached photos. I heard nothing. I mailed her again on the 21<sup>st</sup> offering to show her around if she would like to come down for a site visit. The response was no response. These mails were copied to the leader of the district and county councils and Cllr Andrew Gant. On the 26<sup>th</sup> I had what I regarded as an unsatisfactory mail from the district leader saying there was little that the district could do and the Olly Glover's office had it in hand. I replied on the following day with rather a shirty email indicating that the whole response to this has been unsatisfactory. Within an hour I had a call from Olly's office to say that they were due to meet with OCC about this on the same day and that they hoped to come up with a plan which is what we have asked for. His office would call me to outline their response. For me one of the main issues is one of communication. They haven't responded to my mails and no residents know what is going on and all are appalled. I am therefore waiting to see what "the plan" is. I have said that if there is major work to be done it needs to be done before the autumn (as it could have been done last summer!).

One interesting aspect of this is that Wasboroughs desilted their stretch of the brook and I counted a number of fresh water mussels that had been brought up with the silt. I suspect that there are many more both downstream and upstream where the water is crystal clear.

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

This is still very much up in the air There are ongoing discussions about the size of the larger administrative unit i.e. whether it will be Oxfordshire, larger Oxfordshire involving parts of Berkshire and later Bucks of The Vale, South Oxfordshire and West Berks.

### **Broadband**

Roll out of Full Fibre to Premise (FFTP) is still in chaos in Oxfordshire. Openreach are supplying Childrey, West Challow have no proposed supplier. Airband have been banned from further work in Oxfordshire. We are waiting for the result of a phone call between several county council representatives and BDUK who are the government agency overseeing roll out. More in due course but we don't have to worry about poles from Airband again!

### **Wantage Hospital**

A public meeting was held on Feb 27<sup>th</sup> at the Silver Band Hall to outline to residents the services that will be run out of the Hospital and that work will start in the next month on the refurbishment. The first new collection of services are expected to be available to the public later this summer.

### **No 68 bus service**

The new service with the earlier start for school children and the extra stop at KAs West Site will start at the end of March. I have not yet received the formal final timetable. I would like to see further

changes to include a loop from the Camel Roundabout to the Mably Way Surgery and a stop along Seesen Way closer to the Hospital. This will be discussed sometime in the future.

#### **Presentations by Future Flood Resilience Group and local policeman Tom Walcott Smith.**

The Future Flood Resilience Group, the group of councillors and experts looking at the background to the flooding, will make a public presentation sometime in April in Letcombe Regis Village Hall. It is likely to be the 24<sup>th</sup> but this is not yet confirmed. I have also asked Tom Walcott-Smith to make a public presentation to our villages on the main local problems. This will take place in East Challow Village Hall but we do not yet have a date. I will keep the Parish councils and villages informed once dates are fixed.

#### **Grove Business Park**

I had a meeting with Alastair Thomas of ATLP Consulting who is over seeing the transformation process as Grove Business Park expands. Items discussed included sewage treatment. This has been being done via a filter bed systems but after expansion the Park will be connected to the mains sewerage. I hope that Thames Water has sufficient capacity. They are also speaking to Persimmon Homes about a northern access point from the housing estate for pedestrians and cyclists to avoid the long way around via the airplane roundabout.

One sad piece of news is that one of the big companies there, EMS Physio, which sells physiotherapy equipment to the UK and abroad has closed after three generations because of hikes in NI, rates and as a result of Brexit.

#### **Health and Wellbeing Event The Beacon April 26<sup>th</sup> 12-4**

A mixture of organisations are funding an event at The Beacon to highlight the variety of activities available for increasing fitness and improving health generally.

Cllr Dr Paul Barrow  
Ridgeway Ward  
Vale of Whitehorse District Council  
28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025