

CONTENTS

1. County councillors back climate action plan to join 'green revolution'
2. Winter plan advice for vulnerable residents
3. New property policy helps local organisations take over community assets
4. "County lines" TV documentary features young people from Oxfordshire
5. Graphene road trial rolls out in Oxfordshire
6. Oxfordshire wins £102m to make major improvements to the A40
7. Oxfordshire reaches top ten in most productive council survey
8. Gritters gear up for winter weather
9. Local assessment of aggregate supply to start
10. Free flu vaccinations for patients with long term conditions
11. Council launches foster carer recruitment campaign
12. Roll-out of broadband for small businesses continues
13. Fire service targets road safety message at sixth-formers

County councillors back climate action plan to join ‘green revolution’ in Oxfordshire

Councillors have approved plans for Oxfordshire County Council to meet its ambitious target of reducing its own carbon footprint to net zero by 2030. ‘[Climate Action for a Thriving Oxfordshire](#)’ explains how the council will reduce its own carbon emissions and supporting the environmental ambitions of others, including schools.

The county council already funds support for 65 community action groups at the forefront of community-led climate change action. The council sees the continued success of these action groups in tackling environmental issues such as waste, transport, food production and local energy generation as vital to reducing emissions in the county.

The council has started planning for major changes to improve energy efficiency and reduce travel-related carbon emissions, with a cross-party group of councillors already working on proposals for change.

The county council has already reduced its carbon emissions by nearly 50% since 2008 and has a target of making its own estate carbon neutral by 2030. You can read more about what the county council is doing and how it aims to help the county as a whole [here](#).

Winter plan advice for vulnerable residents

Oxfordshire County Council is taking a collaborative approach with NHS partners to encourage local residents to have a personal winter plan, so they are prepared when they start to feel unwell with a cough, cold or flu. Advice to residents or friends and family of vulnerable people includes:

- Having a free NHS flu vaccination if you are eligible
- Getting help early before your condition worsens
- Getting repeat prescriptions in plenty of time before bank holidays
- Finding out where your local minor injuries unit is located
- Seeking advice from your local pharmacist and having a well-stocked medicine cabinet
- Stocking up on winter food supplies
- Getting your boiler serviced and keeping your home heated to 18C
- Having a list of emergency phone numbers handy by your phone

You can read the Public Health England leaflet ‘Keep Warm Keep Well’ which provides advice on staying well and covers financial help, healthy lifestyle, flu jabs and heating [here](#).

New property policy helps local organisations take over community assets

Changes have been approved to the county council's Asset Transfer Policy to give greater clarity when we are working with community organisations interested in taking on council buildings.

The county council owns more than 700 assets including land and buildings. When buildings are not needed for county council purposes consideration is given to leasing out wherever possible. Of these properties which are leased out, 85 are leased to community organisations and provide an income to the council of circa £170k per annum.

The revised policy intends to enable greater flexibility to agree appropriate terms with community groups in future transfers, reinforce support for the approach and ultimately maximise the use of our assets for community benefit.

The changes seek to support our vision of thriving communities through a greater level of flexibility in determining appropriate terms regarding rent and repair liability on a case by case basis whilst also ensuring that we do not create an indirect subsidy to a community group by offering them discounted premises costs compared to other groups using non-council properties.

“County lines” TV documentary features young people from Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire social workers used a national TV documentary to put the spotlight on gangs and organised crime networks who ruthlessly recruit local children to sell drugs. Children's services know of about 280 children who are, who could be, or have been, at risk of exploitation, who are being supported by its teams across social care, early help and youth justice.

The social care and early help teams work in partnership with families, schools, health and the police to protect children from exploitation. They engage children and families in activities, delivering protective behaviours work in schools, including raising awareness in assemblies and plays. For young people who are at higher risk, the teams do specialist intensive one to one work with children, and their parents and families, as well as group work.

Working with Channel 4's documentary film makers helped raise awareness of the tell-tale signs of exploitation, and the measures that can be taken to protect vulnerable young people.

Graphene road trial rolls out in Oxfordshire

The county council is testing a new substance that could help keep more roads pothole free for the first time in Britain on a road in Oxfordshire. A joint trial is being held by Oxfordshire County Council and its contractors, Skanska, to lay and test a fully recyclable, graphene-enhanced asphalt on a 750m stretch of busy main road in Curbridge, near Witney.

Graphene is a specially developed ingredient that is added to otherwise ordinary surfacing material and has the potential to extend the life of roads and guard against potholes and other problems.

One lane has been resurfaced using conventional materials - effectively acting as the control measure - while the opposite 'trial' lane was resurfaced using the asphalt enhanced by the innovative additive developed by Italian company Iterchimica. Engineers will monitor how the new surface performs and it will take up to two years to get a full picture of how well it compares to the conventional materials.

Oxfordshire wins £102m to make major improvements to the A40

The government has approved funding that will see one of Oxfordshire's busiest and most important transport routes improved. The Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) is to provide £102m to be invested in major improvements to the A40.

The news comes as a result of a successful bid by Oxfordshire County Council which was put together in close partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council. The announcement means that the county council can deliver:

- An extension of the A40 dual carriageway from Witney to the proposed Eynsham park and ride, including improving cycling facilities along the route.
- An extension of the A40 westbound bus lane from west of Duke's Cut Canal and railway bridges close Oxford near to the proposed Eynsham park and ride.
- A40 capacity and connectivity improvements to widen access at Duke's Cut Canal and railway bridges, extending the eastbound and westbound bus priority lane, prioritising bus rapid transit at this pinch point.

The county council will develop a single preferred option so that preliminary design can begin for each of the three elements of the scheme.

Oxfordshire reaches top ten in most productive council survey

Oxfordshire has been recognised by the annual IMPOWER Index survey as being a top ten council for 2019. The survey acknowledges the improvement to productivity over the past year, taking Oxfordshire County Council from 49th place in the index.

The full report highlights how the council has improved its performance across seven types of services for our residents. One of the key areas recognised was services for older people where were ranked as the fifth best performer in the county in that category.

The council also achieved a higher position on scores on children's social care; all age disability; health and social care interface; housing and homelessness. waste and recycling; and – new for 2019 – children with high needs. The full report can be found [here](#).

Gritters gear up for winter weather

Oxfordshire's team of over 60 staff are on standby throughout the winter to turn out at all hours to make sure that the priority roads around Oxfordshire are salted and kept as safe as possible during freezing and sometimes treacherous weather.

In Oxfordshire the county council grits all A-roads, B-roads and some C-roads. This amounts to 1200 miles per gritting run which is the equivalent of travelling from London to Iceland.

There has been no change to the winter maintenance budget in recent years. The money we spend relates directly to the conditions on Oxfordshire's roads in any given year. Last year we spent more than £1.8m gritting Oxfordshire's roads.

Local assessment of aggregate supply to start

The Local Aggregate Assessment (LAA) is part of a technical survey carried out annually as part of the regional aggregates assessment.

The goal of an annual Local Aggregates Assessment is to review the latest information available to forecast future demand as well as analysing all supply options and assessing the balance between supply and demand.

The LAA sets the level of provision to be made for future supply of sand and gravel and crushed rock from quarries. The NPPF states the LAA should 'forecast future demand, based on a rolling

average of 10 years' sales data and other relevant local information, and an assessment of all supply options.'

The council needs to identify sites for sharp sand and gravel, soft sand and crushed rock to meet the mineral requirements over the Plan Period. This is being undertaken in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 2 – Site Allocations Plan.

In October, the cabinet agreed figures based on this assessment to be used in the Draft Sites Allocation Plan which will go out to consultation in 2020. Full details are [here](#).

Free flu vaccinations for patients with long term conditions

Oxfordshire County Council is working in collaboration with NHS partners to encourage patients to have the free flu vaccine this winter. Patients living with a long-term condition such as diabetes, asthma or a heart condition are urged to have a free NHS flu vaccination to keep them well this winter.

These patients - including children and adults - are more at risk of the complications of flu which could result in a stay in hospital or even death. Patients with the following conditions are eligible:

- Heart problem
- Chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- Kidney disease
- Lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as steroid medication or cancer treatment)
- Liver disease
- Stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- Diabetes
- Neurological condition e.g. multiple sclerosis
- Morbid obesity (BMI over 40)
- Cerebral palsy or a learning disability.

Meanwhile, health and social care organisations across Oxfordshire have joined together to call on healthcare professionals to make sure they are immunised against flu this winter. By vaccinating the county council's front-line staff, we can stop people from catching the virus and passing it on to the sick and vulnerable. It also means health and social care organisations can be more resilient during the coming busy winter months.

Council launches foster carer recruitment campaign

The council's fostering team has launched a campaign to encourage people to consider fostering to increase availability of placement for vulnerable children.

There has been a 66% increase in the number of children looked after in Oxfordshire since 2015. Two-thirds of them are over the age of ten. But the County Council is always on the lookout for more foster carers. Different types of fostering are provided to best meet the needs of both the children and the carer. Facts about fostering:

- You don't need a specific qualification, once approved, carers are supported, and you are provided with training to help prepare you to foster. There are lots of other opportunities for training and learning.
- There is no upper age limit to foster. You must be over 18. Oxfordshire County Council has foster carers who are in their 70s.
- Single? Not a problem - children need stable loving homes by single parents and couples, whatever their gender or sexual orientation.
- Disabilities or not, you can still foster - health problems and disabilities will not stop you from fostering, provided you can care for the children.
- There are children from many different backgrounds needing to be fostered, what is important is that you can meet the needs of the child."

More information about becoming a foster carer in Oxfordshire is [here](#).

Roll-out of broadband for small businesses continues

Oxfordshire County Council has announced two new contracts have been signed to deliver ultrafast broadband to 970 SMEs. This follows a successful application to DeFRA for £6.3m of EAFRD funding to improve broadband for businesses in rural parts of the county.

The suppliers will also connect some 900 nearby residential premises at their own cost. These are all to be full-fibre connections offering speeds up to 1Gb/s and will bring superfast coverage in Oxfordshire to 98%. The work will add several hundred kilometres.

Fire and police target safe driving message at Oxfordshire sixth-formers

Five thousand Oxfordshire sixth-formers and college students attended a special event to learn about the devastating impact of being involved in a car crash this month. Safe Drive Stay Alive was organised by the Road Safety team in Oxfordshire County Council's Fire and Rescue Service – which exists to educate people on how to stay safe on the roads.

Oxfordshire young drivers (aged 17-24) make up around one in eight drivers on the road but are almost twice as likely to be involved in road traffic incidents that result in death or injury. In 2018, 15 percent (1 in 6.5) of all road traffic accident casualties were sustained in an accident involving at least one car being driven by a person aged 17 to 24.

