OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
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Title	County Councillor's Report
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1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Latest Update

The Government has issued a new "minded-to" decision to replace the seven existing councils across Oxfordshire and West Berkshire with three new unitary authorities: Greater Oxford Council, North Oxfordshire Council, and Ridgeway Council. A three-week period has been opened for further representations (OCC is still pushing for a single Oxfordshire Unitary) from council leaders and other interested parties before the Government makes a final decision, expected before Christmas.
If confirmed, elections for the new shadow authorities will take place in May 2028, with the new councils formally coming into existence on 1 April 2029. Existing district council elections in South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire and West Berkshire will still proceed in May 2027. During the transition period, residents should continue to access services through their current councils as normal.
Meanwhile, Oxfordshire County Council is reviewing the Government's latest decision and considering its next steps, having previously sought further evidence to support the proposed reorganisation.

2. Thames Valley Devolution and Mayoral Authority

Alongside local government reorganisation, Government has announced plans to progress a strategic mayoral authority for the wider Thames Valley area. The initiative aims to bring additional powers and long-term funding for transport, infrastructure, housing, economic growth and skills development. The proposed authority would operate across council boundaries and be led by a directly elected mayor. Oxfordshire's leaders have argued that such an arrangement could strengthen the region's ability to attract investment and coordinate major strategic projects.

3. Transport and Infrastructure

Transport remains a major area of investment for Oxfordshire County Council. During October, Cabinet agreed the next phase of the A40 improvement programme, approved plans to improve sustainable transport in West Oxfordshire and continued work on the Oxford Greenways network

designed to improve walking, wheeling and cycling connections across the county. Consultation is also underway on a proposed active travel route between Thame and Haddenham, while a strategic study has concluded there is a strong case for a future railway station at Wantage and Grove.

4. Nature Recovery and Climate Action

The council has unveiled a wide-ranging programme of nature recovery initiatives intended to support biodiversity, habitat restoration and environmental resilience across Oxfordshire. This work complements the county's broader climate ambitions and ongoing efforts to support sustainable growth while improving the natural environment. Many projects will require collaboration with landowners, local groups and community organisations to deliver long-term environmental benefits.

5. Fire and Rescue Service

Cabinet is currently considering proposals relating to the future development of the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. The review is intended to ensure the service remains effective, resilient and able to meet changing risks and demands across both urban and rural communities. Further discussion and consultation are expected as the proposals are developed over the coming months.

6. SEND and Children's Services

Improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) remains a key priority for the council. A new SEND Reform Plan has been approved which aims to strengthen early intervention, improve outcomes for families and create a more sustainable system of support. In addition, the council is investing in the "Out Loud" programme, significantly expanding speech and language support to schools across Oxfordshire. Early results from the programme have shown encouraging improvements in children's communication and language development.

7. Waste and Recycling

Plans have been unveiled for a new recycling centre in Bicester to serve growing communities in northern Oxfordshire. The proposal is intended to improve capacity, accessibility and resilience within the county's waste management network. The facility forms part of longer-term planning to meet future population growth and increasing recycling demands across the county.

8. Community Safety and Public Health

Recent enforcement work by Oxfordshire County Council Trading Standards has resulted in successful action against businesses involved in illegal tobacco advertising and the sale of illicit tobacco products. These prosecutions form part of wider efforts to protect public health, tackle organised criminal activity and reduce access to illegal nicotine products. The council also continues to support national smokefree initiatives and wider public health campaigns aimed at improving long-term health outcomes.

9, Local Issues Updates

The 40MPH speed limit has now been implemented on Oxford Road, which happened sooner than I had expected. Weight Limit is currently scheduled for decision on 17th December. Will keep you updated.