

County Councillor Report: August/September 2026

Cllr Maggie Filipova-Rivers

Goring, Goring Heath, Woodcote, Whitchurch, South Stoke, Kidmore End and Mapledurham



This report highlights recent County Council updates that are most relevant to residents and parish councils. I have kept the focus on practical changes, local services and issues where PCs residents may need to take action.

Please do follow me on Facebook for more frequent updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/maggiefilipovarivers/>

Contents

Local Government Reorganisation	2
Transport and Highways	2
20mph: Parish and Town Council Review	2
A4074 Gas Main Works	2
Goring to Wallingford Greenway: Encouraging Progress.....	2
Goring Gap Local Cycling and Walking Plan	3
Gully Cleaning and Flooding Reports	3
Grass Cutting and Highway Visibility.....	3
Oxford Traffic Filters: Trial Starts 28 September.....	3
Public Health and Wellbeing.....	4
Free Electric Blanket Safety Checks	4

Rural Health and Making Every Contact Count.....	4
Children and Young People.....	4

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has announced that it will review the preferred local government reorganisation decisions made across England. Ministers have said they remain committed to reorganisation and devolution but want to check that decisions have been reached correctly, are sustainable and can be implemented successfully. The scope of the review is still being finalised, with Government aiming to complete it around mid-October.

For Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, this is likely to push the timetable back. Shadow elections for the proposed new councils now not in May 2027, meaning elections to existing councils are expected to proceed instead (district council elections for SODC). Work directly related to establishing the new authorities is being paused while the review takes place, although councils can continue sensible preparatory work. I will provide a further update once Government confirms the outcome and revised timetable.

Transport and Highways

20mph: Parish and Town Council Review

Around 280 parish and town councils took part in Oxfordshire's 20mph programme, and some schemes have now been in place for three years. The County Council is asking local councils for feedback on where the lower limits are working well, where they are less effective and what might improve compliance. The council is also monitoring reported collisions and traffic speeds and can provide local data where requested.

Parish and town councils are invited to send observations by the end of November. Where physical traffic-calming measures are needed, these are not funded through the original 20mph programme, but highways officers can advise communities on possible measures and the use of local funding such as Section 106 or CIL.

A4074 Gas Main Works

Following a very disruptive second closure of the A4074, the road has reopened to through traffic and from Monday 14th Sept three-way temporary signals will operate at Rokeby Drive while SGN continues urgent gas-main replacement works. Around 550 metres of main between Rokeby Drive and the Pack Saddle slip road needs replacing after concerns were identified about the condition of the pipe and the risk of further failure. The overall works are expected to take around 12 weeks as they progress along the A4074 and into the off-road network.

Fourteen advance warning signs have been installed to discourage HGVs from using unsuitable village routes, with additional traffic-management staff during the initial set-up. OCC will carry out regular site inspections and remain in contact with bus operators. If inappropriate HGV routing or poor driver behaviour continues, CCTV may also be considered. Bus services will be maintained, and OCC is now in close contact with them should anything changes. I will continue to press for disruption to be minimised and would ask residents and parish councils to keep flagging problems to me.

Goring to Wallingford Greenway: Encouraging Progress

There has been another positive step forward on the proposed Goring to Wallingford Greenway. As previously reported, the preferred route would create a largely off-road link along the western side of the B4009. Making

it continuous requires agreement from two private landowners, and discussions with both have been progressing well. The route itself is already recognised within Oxfordshire's wider Strategic Active Travel Network as a proposed Wallingford–Goring connection.

A further site visit took place on 11 September, including Savills, acting as agent for Christ Church, alongside the relevant parties. This allowed us to work through the remaining practical and land issues on the ground. The discussions were very positive, and we expect to have a definitive answer, subject to final agreement, within around two weeks.

For the first time, this is starting to feel like a route that may actually happen! OCC officers have been very supportive and are beginning to explore potential funding routes and how the Greenway can be embedded in relevant active-travel and rights-of-way planning documents, strengthening the case for future investment. That matters because inclusion in strategic plans can help support subsequent funding bids

Goring Gap Local Cycling and Walking Plan

There has been a significant step forward on plans for a Goring Gap Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Funding to develop the plan has now been brought forward by a year and is included in this year's County Council budget, allowing work to begin sooner than originally expected.

The newly established Goring Gap Active Travel Group is already engaging with OCC officers to identify what preparatory work can be done while consultants are appointed and contracts finalised. The precise geographical coverage of the LCWIP is still being considered, including how best to capture the important connections between Goring and surrounding communities.

There is still a process to work through, but bringing the funding forward and beginning the local work now is very encouraging progress.

Gully Cleaning and Flooding Reports

The next programmed round of gully cleaning in the Goring and Woodcote division is currently scheduled for February and March 2027. If a blocked drain or gully is causing, or is likely to cause, flooding before then, please report it through FixMyStreet rather than waiting for the scheduled clean. If a safety-critical or persistent problem is not being resolved, please send me the report reference so I can escalate it.

Read more: [Report a highways problem on FixMyStreet](#)

Read more: [South Oxfordshire gully cleaning programme](#)

Grass Cutting and Highway Visibility

Highway verge cutting is primarily a road-safety service rather than a general tidying programme. Junctions, bends and other locations where visibility is critical are prioritised and may be cut more frequently, while some other verges are deliberately left longer to support wildflowers and wildlife. If overgrown vegetation is restricting a driver's, cyclist's or pedestrian's sightline, it can be reported through FixMyStreet.

Oxford Traffic Filters: Trial Starts 28 September

From Monday 28 September, Oxford's traffic-filter trial will replace the temporary congestion charge. The congestion charge will no longer be payable. All parts of Oxford will remain accessible by car, but drivers without a permit may need to use a different route rather than passing through a filter.

Existing congestion-charge permits will automatically transfer to traffic-filter permits, so current permit holders do not need to reapply. Permits are available for a range of groups including residents, Blue Badge

holders, community health and care workers and mobile traders. Applications can be made online, or by phone on 01865 519800 for people unable to use the online service.

Read more: [Traffic filters and permits](#)

Public Health and Wellbeing

Blood Pressure Checks in Libraries

A new joint Public Health and Libraries initiative is being rolled out this month, placing a blood pressure monitor in every Oxfordshire library. Residents will be able to use a familiar community space to check their own blood pressure, with library staff available to support people in using the equipment. The aim is to make basic health checks easier to access and help identify high blood pressure earlier.

Thrive at Work Oxfordshire

From 21 September, Oxfordshire is launching Thrive at Work Oxfordshire, a free programme helping employers improve staff wellbeing and create healthier, more inclusive workplaces. Employers can access practical guidance and tools alongside staff Health MOTs and personalised wellbeing advice. The programme is intended to support employee health, reduce sickness absence and help organisations recruit and retain staff.

Read more: [Thrive at Work Oxfordshire](#)

Free Electric Blanket Safety Checks

Free electric blanket safety checks are available again this autumn. They are popular and need to be booked in advance. Local sessions include Thame on 21 September and Didcot on 5 October, with further sessions across the county. Residents with older blankets, or blankets that have been stored for long periods, are particularly encouraged to have them checked.

For South Oxfordshire, the two sessions are:

- Monday 21 September – Thame Fire Station, OX9 2DP
- Monday 5 October – Didcot Fire Station, OX11 8RX

Rural Health and Making Every Contact Count

Two new pieces of work on rural health, the Oxfordshire Rural Areas Data Pack and a report on health and wellbeing in rural towns and villages, are due to go to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 24 September. This should give us a stronger evidence base for understanding where rural communities experience different health outcomes or barriers to services.

Work is also continuing on Oxfordshire's five-year Making Every Contact Count strategy for 2026–31. MECC helps staff and volunteers across public and community services use everyday conversations to support people with healthier choices and connect them to appropriate help. A new training cohort is being developed and recent evaluation work will inform how the programme's impact is measured.

Children and Young People

Home to School Transport

The start of the school year has been particularly difficult for some families waiting for home-to-school transport arrangements. Of around 8,500 applications received on time, 44 children did not have travel plans

in place at the start of last week. The service was also dealing with around 550 late applications and approximately 250 post-16 cases where timetables were still missing, creating a very concentrated period of demand and a large volume of enquiries.

Additional staff have been brought in from elsewhere in Children's Services to help resolve cases and respond to families. The immediate priority is to get outstanding eligible children onto appropriate transport as quickly as possible. Once this period has passed, the council will undertake a lessons-learned review, with input from the Parent Carer Forum and scrutiny, looking in particular at why applications were late, the impact of late school placements and tribunal decisions, and the recurring problem of missing post-16 timetables.

Spare Seats and Accessible Vehicles

The council continues to offer genuinely spare seats on school transport routes once places for children entitled to council-funded transport have been secured. This year the number of spare-seat users has reduced from around 300 to around 150 as routes have been planned primarily around eligible pupils rather than historic spare-seat demand.

A further complication is national accessibility legislation: fare-paying spare-seat passengers can only use vehicles that meet the relevant accessibility requirements, unless the operator has secured an exemption. Some operators have not yet completed that process, limiting the seats the council is legally able to sell. Officers are working with operators to resolve this wherever possible.