

## COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

**Quarry:** I wasn't surprised to see another speculative application for quarrying at New Barn Farm. I was very surprised to see our officers recommending approval, not least because mineral extraction is in my Cabinet portfolio and I had not been briefed on this change of policy, or the background to it: had I been briefed (as should have happened), I would not have agreed, because encouraging the "casino capitalism" of speculative development is not anything anyone would want. I also have concerns that highways officers are too relaxed about putting extra traffic onto the most crowded sections of the bypass. I spoke against the proposal at the planning meeting, and following an intelligent and sensible debate, it was rejected.

**Thames Water:** have accepted an offer to meet with me and a resident who lives by Slade End Roundabout, and happens to be a highways engineer with clear and highly critical views of the way they have operated around that area. I'll report back on what insights they take away.

**Community Transport:** I'm glad to see a proposal put forward by Jacqui Bradney regarding how we might run this. If there is anything I can do to facilitate that happening, please let me know.

### Highways:

Following a senior management reorganisation at OCC, the head of highways is Paul Fermer, with whom I worked on the 20mph pilot. I love working with him, as he has an exceptionally clear way of cutting through blocks to action, so we can expect movement. He's agreed to look at why the *Hithercroft resurfacing* went from being in the program 2 years ago, to nowhere to be seen, and what has gone wrong with getting the *crossing to Brightwell* built. I'm aware we've also been trying for some time to get senior highways input into how we best *manage traffic within and around Wallingford*, and asked Paul if he would help. He said he personally would very much like to visit and take a tour/ work through ideas with us, and bring another senior highways planner (Hannah Battye, who is outstanding), and I have a long-standing agreement from Cllr Gant to visit. If we can put together a delegation and an agenda, I'll get it arranged. This is an opportunity to explain, to people with both the ability and the authority to make changes, things that have gone around in circles for a long time, including:

1-way system

(part)-Pedestrianisation of the Town Centre

Preventing Didcot traffic cutting through from Shillingford

Use of ANPR

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**"Dark Skies"** (Part-night lighting....ie "switching off lights when there's nobody on the roads"). Paul has also moved this program out of an extended internal discussion phase into getting on with it. They have agreed to start in January with the Wallingford Bypass lights by Brightwell (howls of protest over which were the driver for writing the policy in the first place), and then Wallingford itself, on the basis that I should be picking up any flak for a policy I've designed. I asked Matt Archer, who is running the program, if he'd come and speak to WTC, or those who are interested, and he jumped at the idea. Please let me know when would be a good time.

**Verges and pathways:** As it's in my Cabinet portfolio, I have regular meetings with the very small group of County Officers responsible for trying to keep verges, vegetation under control and 2,800km of Public Rights of Way open. The last 2 years, where rainfall spread throughout the summer interspersed with warmth has provided perfect growing conditions for grass, shrubs etc. have made it extremely difficult to keep up with demand. These weather conditions are probably related to record N Atlantic Sea Surface Temperatures: warmer seas evaporate more water, and what goes up must come down. Given the acceleration in the rate of global warming since 2014, it is likely this will get more severe over time. I've agreed with Paul we'll look to put more into keeping footpaths clear as we budget for next year.

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