

# REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS OCTOBER 2024 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

## GENERAL OCC REPORT

### SECONDARY SCHOOL APPLICATION PROCESS OPENS IN OXFORDSHIRE FOR 2025

Parents and carers of children in Year 6 can now apply for a Year 7 place at secondary school for September 2025. As in previous years parents will be invited to make a first preference along with three other preferences. Applications should be submitted [online](#) by 31 October 2024. Parents and carers will be contacted with the result of their application on national offer day for Year 7 on 3 March 2025. For further information, contact OCC's admissions team by emailing [admissions.schools@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:admissions.schools@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or phoning 0345 241 2487.

### FLOODING ADVICE

OCC has produced a [flooding toolkit](#), which provides advice and support for residents and businesses, including information on preparing for flooding. If you live in an area of flood risk there are a number of flood protection measures you can take as a homeowner, business and together as a community. As the lead local flood authority for Oxfordshire, OCC has a duty to carry out formal [investigations of flood incidents](#) as per Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. OCC undertakes these where they [meet certain criteria](#). For residential properties, OCC undertakes formal investigation where five or more properties have flooded internally and [publish the results of these investigations](#).

### OXFORDSHIRE'S ADOPT ARCHIE CAMPAIGN NEEDS 'FOREVER FAMILIES'

A new campaign is being launched with the aim of dispelling myths around who is eligible to adopt a child while encouraging more residents to consider adopting. The campaign – run by OCC and its partner, Adopt Thames Valley – is themed around Archie, a lively two-year-old who needs a loving home somewhere in the county. OCC welcomes enquiries from both single adopters and couples. Some of the biggest misconceptions around eligibility to become adopters are that single people, older people and those who are LGBTQ+ are not allowed to adopt. This is not the case. The council would like to hear from potential adoptive parents who have Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage as children from these backgrounds traditionally wait longer to be matched with an adoptive family. Having experience of caring for children, whether in your professional or personal life is a bonus when coming forward to adopt. More details here: <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/adopt-archie-campaign-forever-families/>

### ELIGIBLE GROUPS ENCOURAGED TO GET THEIR FLU AND COVID BOOSTERS

People in Oxfordshire who are eligible for annual winter flu and COVID jabs are being encouraged to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

The flu vaccine is available for free to all pregnant women, children aged two to three or in primary and secondary education, anybody in a clinical risk group – such as those with diabetes, heart disease or a weakened immune system and their close contacts – people who live in care homes, carers, frontline health and social care workers, and all those over the age of 65. Those residents in care homes for older people, all adults aged 65 or over, anybody in a clinical risk group and frontline health and social care workers, including staff working in care homes for older people, can also get a free COVID booster. Where possible, the COVID-19 and the flu vaccine will be given on the same day. Find out more about the vaccinations and how to book an appointment by visiting [nhs.uk/flujab](https://nhs.uk/flujab) and [nhs.uk/covid-vaccine](https://nhs.uk/covid-vaccine).

## **NUMBER OF 20MPH SCHEMES APPROVED IN OXFORDSHIRE PASSES THE 200 MARK**

More than 200 requests to reduce speed limits to 20mph in towns and villages have now been approved in Oxfordshire. As reported last month, the police do not generally enforce these limits and OCC's intention is to rely instead on a change of 'mindset'. Given this, and the huge cost of the scheme, critics are concerned that no data has been published in relation to the success or failure of the programme.

## **OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY GROUPS INVITED TO APPLY FOR FUNDING**

Grass roots organisations that help support people to live well and independently in their own communities are being invited to apply for council funding to further enhance the work they do. OCC relaunched its community capacity grants and connected communities fund for 2024/25 on Monday 16 September, with the overall pot now standing at £525,000. The funding is split into two areas. The connected communities fund offers groups faster access to grants of up to £5,000 and is administered by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action and Community First Oxfordshire. The second is the larger community capacity grant fund that will consider applications from organisations looking for £5,000 to £20,000. Administered by Oxfordshire Community Foundation, this programme is for more established organisations to enable them to significantly enhance the work they do. Due to the sizeable sums of money involved in the community capacity grants scheme and the high number of applicants, requests are subject to an assessment panel and generally have a lower chance of receiving funding compared to the connected communities fund. Community groups may only apply for one grant. Simultaneous requests to both funds will not be accepted. Organisations looking to apply for up to £5,000 through the connected communities fund, alongside additional support from [Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action](#) and [Community First Oxfordshire](#), can find more information online. Groups hoping for an amount between £5,000 and £20,000 can apply online to [Oxfordshire Community Foundation](#). More details, including the specific criteria and tips for a successful application can be found at [oxfordshire.gov.uk/CommunityCapacityGrant](https://oxfordshire.gov.uk/CommunityCapacityGrant)

## **OCC PLANS TO MOVE HQ FROM COUNTY HALL TO SPEEDWELL HOUSE ADVANCE**

County Hall in Oxford is officially being marketed for sale following decisions taken by the county council's cabinet in January 2024 to move its headquarters to Speedwell House in 2027. The building primarily comprises office accommodation and was completed in 1973. Old County Hall dating from 1841 comprises the Council Chamber and Coroner's Court and is listed Grade II\*. The sale offers the opportunity for the council to move into modern, net-zero accommodation enabling County Hall to be re-imagined by a new owner as part of the regeneration of the West End of the city centre of Oxford. Receipts from the sale of County Hall will pay for the upgrading of Speedwell House with decisions to be taken on how any surplus would be deployed. The marketing approach to County Hall will not dictate or pre-determine the future use of the buildings and will be designed to encourage as wide a range of interest as possible. The highly controversial inclusion of Old County Hall in the marketing of the site allows the council to assess market interest and to make an informed decision about the future of the building. All offers received will be reviewed in detail with a shortlist of potential purchasers to be selected and interviewed to determine the deliverability of proposals. Decisions are expected to be made towards the end of 2024.