

Ian Middleton – County and District Councillor report – Begbroke Parish Council

OCC

As you no doubt will already be aware, the new administration on the county council is an alliance between the Libdems, the Greens and Labour, now known as the Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance (OFDA).

A new Cabinet was elected at the first council AGM on 18th May although the ultimate aim of the new administration is to revert to a more open standing committee structure.

No other business was transacted at that meeting.

I am on the Performance and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee. We are about to agree that the scrutiny committee will be split into 3 as we have recognised that there is a huge amount of the council's operations that are not properly scrutinised. Both committees have had one meeting since, but I was unfortunately unable to attend either as all meetings are now face to face and I was away dealing with some personal matters.

I have been to internal briefings though and I understand the work programme for the Scrutiny Committee is being ramped up to deal with many issues outstanding from the last administration, not least things such as procurement, care funding other governance matters.

The next full council meeting was on the 13th July where the above proposals were accepted along with the final reports from the outgoing administration.

I have subsequently attended meetings of the Performance and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee along with a number of internal briefings. These have set out the forward plan for the OFDA which include increases in funding for Special Educational Needs and a renewed focus on the environment.

You will have seen in the press that the OFDA have laid out a number of aspirations and proposals for the next 4 years which I look forward to playing an active part in as well as representing everyone in Begbroke as their county councillor.

Highways

This is unsurprisingly one of the biggest local issues of concern and I've already had one site meeting with OCC Communities and highways officers along with Keith and David from YPC looking at road repairs and other matters. We looked at the problems with the layby on the A44 and the damaged road surface on Sandy Lane. These issues have now been addressed and there has been some resurfacing work done.

I also raised the matter of some of the more overgrown pathways and cycle paths, especially on the A44 and this has been remedied. There is quite a bit of work going on within OFDA to look at more long term methods of dealing with verges. Whilst we're keen to allow verges to become more of a haven for insects and wildflowers, I think there needs to be some balance struck between that and the effective use of these active travel facilities.

I've also met with Tim Bearder, the cabinet member for highways, to discuss a number of local concerns including the Sandy Lane crossing and the proposals for a crossing on the A44 at Begbroke. I'm committed to pushing that project forwards, but we are at an early stage of dealing with the financial implications of how highways management was left by the previous administration. That said, as we now know the judicial review into CDC's LPPR has been dismissed it seems likely that the

most forthcoming source of funding will be developer's contributions or Section 106 monies. I will be ensuring that Begbroke gets its fair share of that and that part of that will be towards the provision of the long-needed crossing.

I'm happy to raise any other concerns if anyone wants to pass those on to me. I have asked that we set up some dates for a walkabout in each parish to look at current highways and road repairs issues. That is something to consider for the future.

Planning

Hot on the heels of the dismissal of the judicial review (in fact in advance of it) I have been invited to a briefing on plans for site PR9 by CDC. I imagine things will be at an early stage, but these developer PR events seems to be a fairly common thing now. I have attended a couple already and I'm not really sure how valuable they are. As I'm not the district ward councillor for Begbroke I won't officially be representing this area, but as a local resident and county councillor I will be. It looks like being a very difficult time for all our communities in the coming years, especially with the recent news that the Science Park intend to massively expand its operation and turn our area into a new university campus with no input from, or consultation with, us.

Airport Consultative Committee

I attended a meeting of this committee on 8th June. This is the first such meeting I've been to as none have been convened in the past 2 years. I am the liaison person for KPC and YPC on this committee.

I believe the minutes have already been circulated, but I can provide a copy if required.

The meeting itself was reasonably well natured, although there was a degree of pent up anger being released about development proposals and overflights. I can make the minutes of the meeting available if members have not already seen them.

We are hoping to have another meeting in September and I am also trying to arrange a full public meeting for all interested residents to attend when a suitable venue becomes available in the near future.

Obviously if anything else comes up under either my CDC or OCC remit, you know where to contact me. Apologies again for missing another meeting, but I hope to be at the next one.

Ian Middleton