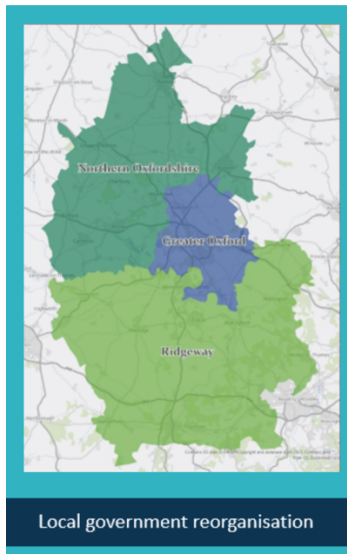


OCC News July 2026

Cllr Gavin McLauchlan (Benson & Crowmarsh)

Email: gavin.mclauchlan@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Mob: +44 7710 255569



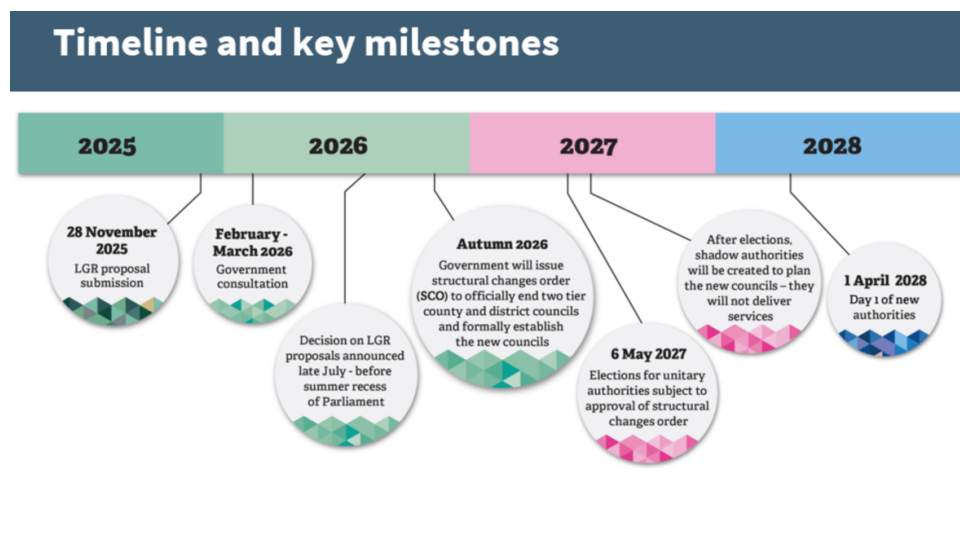
Three new councils

- **Greater Oxford Council** – covering Oxford and its immediate surroundings.
- **Northern Oxfordshire Council** – covering most of the existing Cherwell and West Oxfordshire districts.
- **Ridgeway Council** – covering most of the existing South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse districts combined with West Berkshire.

The result that none of us wanted...

OCC headlines: Welcome to my (slightly longer than usual) July Newsletter.

For those who like their French History (paraphrasing Julius Caesar), or their Asterix books, this month saw the announcement of the unitary structure for Oxfordshire. From April 1st (yes, really!) 2028 - Omnia Oxfordshire in tres partes divisa est! Which is a real shame. Either the one or two unitary structures would have been preferable and would have been more in line with the stated governmental requirements. An election will be held in May 2027 for councillors in this new structure, which will then run in tandem (“shadow”) for a year until the full hand over. This represents a massive landgrab for Oxford whose tentacles will now spread as far as Warborough and Shillingford and incorporate Dorchester. We are told that there is no challenge to this structure, although I do hope that sense will prevail. We’ll see. The Ridgeway unitary will also include West Berkshire. Tim Bearder (the new Leader of the Council) has written to our new PM stating his views on the matter. It is worth pointing out that small Unitaries are known to fail financially and with Oxfordshire being split into three each of the Unitaries are under the governmentally desired level of 500k residents – Northern Oxfordshire (265k) and Greater Oxford (240k) substantially so. At least the Ridgeway unitary will be larger with 430k residents. The timeline to delivery of the new Unitaries is below:



The last Full Council meeting on June 30th saw only three motions, Labour apparently didn't get their act together in time (maybe they had other things on their collective minds)! Unlike many previous debates on motions this was a rather sedate affair with all motions passed with no votes against on any, and with only one abstention (Reform). This was a shame given that some school children were watching to learn how to debate! Without going into detail on everything the motions and the rest of the details of the Full Council can be found [here](#). We were pleased that our motion - embedding climate adaptation activity as part of business as usual was voted through unanimously.

After an abortive attempt in July to get Gareth Epps and Liz Leffman to visit our ward, we now have a new date – August 24th. Gareth is our new Cabinet Member for Highways and Liz is the ex-Leader of the council and is responsible for potholes and resurfacing. Please let me know if there is anything you would like me to raise or show them.

After last months ruling against Raise the Colours we have now, thankfully, seen the flags removed from our street furniture. With the perpetrators now barred from putting up any new flags in Oxfordshire, influencing others to do so, or intimidating those taking them down. One of their members also has a considerably more serious case against him which I won't go into here.

Road Resurfacing: The **£8million** surface treatment for the county's roads is progressing well. Further to this OCC have asked all Councillors to provide a list of three Highways (including paths and pavements etc.) which are urgently requiring attention. We have not heard back from this process yet.

Policing: If you are interested in the crime statistics for our area please see this [URL](#).

Bus Fares: The government have announced a return to the £2 cap on single bus fares. This will come into effect on Jan 1st, 2027.

Councillor Grants: The full £10k of my Councillor Priority Fund has now been allocated.

My roles: No new roles to report.

NEWS IN BRIEF:

Oxfordshire Highways Annual Report: The annual report can be found [here](#).

Drain clearing: OCC has committed to cleaning every roadside gully, drain and manhole every year for the duration the current term. (more [here](#)). **I know some drains have been missed** – so please do report these directly to OCC via FixMyStreet.

Water Safety: Guidance has been issued by OCC on staying safe during hot weather (can be found [here](#)). Thames Water have announced a hosepipe ban effective Thursday 23rd July.

LOCAL QUESTIONS TO FULL COUNCIL:

Questions can be asked of the cabinet at the next Full Council on September 8th. Please contact me (details at top) if you wish me to raise any questions on your behalf in future Full Council meetings or to the Cabinet meetings.

CURRENT CONSULTATIONS:

Draft SEND strategy: OCC has issued a new Draft SEND strategy 2026-2029. Please see [here](#) to comment. Consultation closes on August 3rd.

National Highways and Transport survey: The NHT Network is the UK's leading benchmarking and service improvement partnership for Local Highway Authorities. The survey can be found [here](#). This is a national survey which helps guide councils.

For access to all consultations at any juncture please visit: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

PARISH ROUND-UP

Please refer [here](#) for all Fix My Street queries in your area. There is a huge volume of these and cover the gamut of OCC responsibilities. Completed actions have been removed.

By Parish Council – in alphabetical order.

Benson:

Questions have been raised about:

- Drainage issues continue in Littleworth Road. Longer term TW and Cala need to come to an accord. Thames Water are visiting Benson for a meeting and tour on July 22nd.
- Mobility Hub consultation now closed. Work on monitoring existing traffic flows completed. Should hear results of both (and funding available) soon. Still waiting...
- Cameras to be set up to monitor lorry movements within Benson and Ewelme. Images taken need to be worked through.
- Salt Store – OCC may be willing to rent this area out for a peppercorn rent to the Scouts / Guides etc. Document now supplied to OCC from Scouts / Guides.
- Flags GONE!
- Many people are asking when the Relief Road will be opened...setting up meeting with SODC.

Crowmarsh:

- All plans for Benson Lane questioned at last Full Council. Gareth Epps and Liz Leffman now visiting on Aug 24th. Met with OCC project manager on site.
- Need for a 30mph sign on Port Way (Newnham Manor development dependant...).
- Reduction in speed request for B4009 (in planning for before Spring 2027 along with other speed restriction changes – Part of Vision Zero). Will be part of Gareth Epp's visit.
- Flags GONE!

Dorchester:

- Lighting on path to Reading direction bus stop on A4074 going ahead £2k applied for and received.
- Gulley clearance incomplete as per pictures provided by David Ross. Chasing. This has been "resolved", twice, but is still an issue.
- Continuation of path work to bus stop promised as part of the path refurb – on going.
- Provision of flooding signs to be sent to Mike for Watling Lane. Not yet received. Chasing.
- Local Government Restructure...

Ewelme:

- Cat Lane pathway / road repair / Quiet Lane status discussions on-going.
- Hazell & Jeffries operating hours versus that defined in the CLEUD.
- Hazell & Jeffries traffic volumes – Benson images taken but not yet analysed. Ewelme to redo efforts.
- Bicycle parking stands to be placed at the common and the watercress beds. Money applied for and approved.

Warborough / Shillingford:

- Bollards – now registered on FixMyStreet.
- Shillingford bridge railing repairs in progress – several abortive attempts at meeting.
- Potholes have been chased up – question raised with Cabinet on when Thame Road will be resurfaced as in an awful state.
- Flags GONE!
- New Friday bus service to Wallingford being put into motion.
- Waiting on response re road access to tennis courts.
- Local Government Restructure ...

Days off in August:

I will be taking some time off in August, just not sure when yet! I will put my out of office on my email when taking time off.