

POLITICS – OUR REPRESENTATIVES

Member of Parliament

By Robert Courts MP

As we head into Autumn, I am glad to be enjoying the last few days of sunshine here in West Oxfordshire during Parliamentary Recess. I write to you having just completed my volunteering week around the constituency.

I have been helping to maintain our public spaces and our beautiful countryside, both in Chimney Meadows at the south of the constituency and maintaining the public footpath along the river Thames in the east. I have joined gardening projects for those with mental health or learning disabilities in rural Wilcote at Bridewell and in a hidden oasis with Guideposts in the Bromag Industrial Estate in Witney. I have met with Age UK and the Witney Dementia Action Alliance to run a class at the Witney Methodist Church for service users and met with the team at Base 33 to talk about how they got involved with the charity. Over this past week, I have volunteered 13 hours with people all over the constituency who give many more on a regular basis. If you find yourself at the loose end looking to fill some free time, there are so many excellent groups here in West Oxfordshire with whom you can get involved. On www.robertcourts.co.uk/volunteerweek - you can find a list of all those I have volunteered with, which is only a sample of the countless groups helping in our community. More widely, Parliament is back in full swing in October, where I will be hard at work representing you all.

District Councillors

By Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt

Cabinet discussed WODC's Local Plan and Cherwell DC's Local Plan Partial Review on 20 September. The Department of Communities and Local Government's new method for calculating housing needs suggests Oxford and Oxfordshire need fewer homes than previously estimated. Regrettably, however, the Secretary of State has decreed that alterations to housing requirements using this methodology will not be accepted for plans sent in before April 2018. So, no change here. Changes that have been made to the draft WODC plan following its inspection include amendments

to ensure that proposals for the three Woodstock sites take into account the impact of cumulative development on the Blenheim Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) particularly regarding air quality and hydrological effects. Further public consultation will follow. But it is hoped the plan can be agreed by the end of 2017. WODC needs the plan in place as protection against even greater speculative development.

Cabinet's comments for Cherwell DC on the Partial Review expressed real concern at the impact of the proposed Woodstock urban extension on the setting of important heritage assets. More efficient use of the Green Belt sites could deliver sufficient homes to eliminate need for the proposed Woodstock urban extension and make the Woodstock allocation contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Cherwell's public consultation closes on 10 October. Do respond. Relevant documents are on display in the Town Hall foyer and Woodstock Library.

The Mayor

By Trish Redpath

This year, the Town Council followed the common practice of other town and parish councils in not holding a meeting in August - giving members and staff time to catch up on outstanding business. It meant however that behind the scenes, members and the staff were still beavering away on important issues.

The September meeting considered; the important issues of instructing the various consultants appointed to respond to the planning proposals for Woodstock; its objections to a proposal by Burford Town Council to remove lorries from their town, which it believed would have a detrimental knock-on effect on Woodstock, as well as other A44 communities; the effect on traffic on the A44 of Blenheim events, but with positive feedback on the traffic impact of the 2017 Countryfile event; Barclays Bank's planned closure, asking why there was no public consultation; environmental issues; and Town Council land and property.

In addition, the Council discussed sundry issues raised by residents and considered forward planning for the Town. The Town Council also expressed its frustration at the lack of parking enforcement within the town and its effect on local trade.