



Cllr Chris Brant, District & County Report

Cropredy & Hook Norton Division, Oxfordshire County Council
Cropredy, Sibfords & Wroxton Ward, Cherwell District Council

May 2026

Annual Report to Parish Meetings

To begin, I would like to congratulate and warmly welcome Nicola Borkmann, our new Liberal Democrat District Councillor for the ward, who was elected last week. I am looking forward to working closely with Nicola across the ward and continuing to serve residents collaboratively and effectively.

Since being elected last year as your County Councillor for the Cropredy & Hook Norton Division, it has been a real privilege to serve such a wide rural area and work with so many engaged parish councils and residents.

Across both roles, my focus has remained on strengthening communication between parishes and the County and District Councils, and ensuring rural communities are properly heard and properly served.

Roads and highways

Like many of you, I stood for election because of deep frustration with the condition of our rural roads.

Since becoming your County Councillor, I have consistently raised the condition of roads across every parish in the division with Highways officers. I have been clear that our rural network has suffered over more than a decade of decline and underinvestment, and that we need sustained, long-term improvement.

This spring we have already seen a significant programme of surface dressing works across the division, including full stretches of road treatment in parts of the following parishes:

Cropredy, Wardington, Mollington, Hanwell, The Bourtons, Horley, Shutford, Sibford Ferris, Epwell, and Milcombe.

Looking ahead, further schemes are planned before the summer on:

- A422 Stratford Road, Drayton
- Oatley Hill from The Firs junction to the county border near Hook Norton
- A422 / B4100 Warwick Road, Banbury
- A422 Banbury

Later in the summer, surface dressing is also planned in parts of the following parishes Sibford Gower, Hornton, and Swalcliffe, alongside drainage repair works in Claydon.

You can view all current and planned schemes here:

[Oxfordshire Highways Live Schemes Map](#)

There is still a long way to go, but since becoming your County Councillor I have been consistently pressing for proper investment in our rural roads, and I will not stop until we begin to see and feel lasting improvement.

Recycling, waste services, and fly-tipping

At Cherwell District Council, we have introduced kerbside glass recycling, a long-overdue improvement to our waste and recycling services. Residents can now simply place glass bottles and jars into their blue bins for collection at the kerbside, making recycling easier and more convenient. Bottle banks will continue to be available in larger supermarket car parks in Banbury for anyone who still wishes to use them.

The county council has introduced a booking system for all Household Waste Recycling Centres, including Alkerton. This has been implemented across the county to help manage demand, reduce queues, improve site safety, and ensure a more efficient service for residents and staff.

I am closely monitoring how this system is working in practice. While there are clear operational reasons for its introduction, I also have reservations about how well it is working for some residents, particularly around ease of access. I am continuing to engage with officers and will push for improvements where needed to make the system as user-friendly as possible.

On fly-tipping, we continue to see an increase nationally, and our district is no exception. While it is important to be clear that a significant proportion of fly-tipping is linked to organised criminal activity, we are also working to ensure enforcement remains robust and visible.

People do not become criminals simply because they are required to book a recycling centre slot, however, we must make sure our systems do not inadvertently create barriers that discourage proper waste disposal. Cherwell District Council is closely monitoring fly-tipping incidents, and we will continue working with partners to strengthen enforcement and pursue those responsible, particularly where organised groups are involved.

Flood resilience and drainage

One of my first priorities after being elected was to engage directly with local flood resilience work across the division. I have met with the Hook Norton Flood Resilience Action Group and worked closely with parishes across the wider area, including Swalcliffe, where important progress has also been made.

Hook Norton and Swalcliffe also received County Council funding for flood prevention works. Across the division, we have improved coordination between parish councils, volunteer groups, and Oxfordshire County Council officers.

Flood resilience grant applications were reopened this spring, and I know a number of parishes have already been in the process of applying. This is important work, and I will continue supporting every parish seeking funding to reduce local flood risk.

Community safety and rural crime

Crime, particularly break-ins to sheds, garages, and outbuildings, continues to be an issue across a number of our villages in recent months.

Many parishes are already working closely with Thames Valley Police to organise public meetings to improve communication, share information, and help residents take practical steps to protect their property.

Over the past month, I have also been working in a number of villages alongside local Police Community Support Officers, helping to organise community events and giving residents the opportunity to directly question the police about local concerns. These sessions have been well attended and valuable in strengthening engagement.

The advice from Thames Valley Police remains clear:

- If you see a crime in progress, call **999** immediately
- If a crime has already taken place, report it via **101** or through the Thames Valley Police website

Secondary school places

You may have seen in the media recently reports about around 50 children being allocated school places in Bicester, despite living in the Banbury area. Some of you may know families affected by this issue.

I have been working closely with the Cabinet Member at Oxfordshire County Council to ensure that more appropriate, local school places could be found where possible. I am pleased to report that all of the affected families have now been contacted and are in the process of being reallocated places much closer to home.

However, this issue remains very much live, particularly given the Government's approach to housing growth without the infrastructure needed to support it.

We are seeing increasing pressure on school places, and this reinforces the need to plan properly for infrastructure alongside development. I will continue to fight for a clear "infrastructure first" approach for our district.

Libraries and community infrastructure

It is also important to highlight positive progress in our community infrastructure.

In Hook Norton, the County Council supported the Friends of Hook Norton Community Library through a matched crowdfunding scheme, contributing £3 for every £1 raised. An incredible £61,234 was raised, helping transform the library into a more flexible, modern, and welcoming community space.

In Banbury, I am also pleased that plans are now underway for a new library at Castle Quay. This is a major opportunity to deliver a modern, accessible town-centre library, and I will continue to support its development as it progresses.

Closing remarks

In summary, it has been a busy year across both my County and District Council roles, covering a large rural area with many different priorities, from roads and flooding to waste services, community safety, education, and infrastructure.

I would like to thank all Parish Councils I work with for their continued cooperation and engagement, and I would also like to thank residents for continuing to raise issues and stay involved.

There is still a great deal more to do, but I will continue to be a strong voice for our rural communities and keep pushing until we see real, lasting improvements on the ground.

Finally, why not join my WhatsApp group for parish councillors?

I share regular updates and important alerts to help keep you informed between meetings. If you would like to be added, please email me your mobile number and I will include you in the group.

As always, if there are issues you would like raised at District or County level, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

With best wishes,

Chris

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