

## **Kidlington Parish Council**

### **Chair's report: November 2022**

At last there has been some movement on the Stratfield Brake issue, though in a somewhat unexpected direction. At the time of writing I have just received a circular to stakeholders from the County Council to say that they are now considering an alternative site for Oxford United's proposed new stadium on the triangle of land across Frieze Way from Stratfield Brake, on the West side of the main Oxford-Kidlington Road between Frieze Way and the A34.

The Parish Council now has to evaluate this option alongside the Stratfield Brake proposal—which however we have still not seen. The site is less than half the size of Stratfield Brake and has considerably less amenity value, but will have significant iconic importance, after the new housing developments, as the last remaining piece of the green Kidlington gap West of the Oxford Road. The big difference is that while the site is still within Kidlington Parish, we do not have a lease on it, and therefore do not have the deciding say on its future use that we have in the case of Stratfield Brake. The County Council intends to take a decision on whether to enter into negotiations on this on 24 January.

To turn to other matters, the Parish Council has been very concerned about the service on the 2/2A bus route since the introduction of the new timetable and the takeover by Stagecoach. The new timetable in itself is not unreasonable, and the elimination of the old 2B/C services probably acceptable. The big issue, as users will be well aware, is reliability. The Council convenes a regular Traffic Advisory Committee which a Stagecoach representative attends. At the last meeting we expressed our concerns about this, and were told that a new timetable with more buses will be introduced in the New Year: apparently delays were in part due to queues at the bus stops being too long. We also expressed our concern about the absence of the important 700 service to Headington at the weekends. Apparently the service receives no public subsidy and is already operating at a loss, so a further extension is not possible. The difficulties with the existing services increase still further our worries about the impact on traffic of Oxford City's traffic reduction plans and the 4,400 new houses impending in our area.

Finally, let me respond to the proposal in the last issue of the *Kidlington News* that Kidlington should become a town. This could be done if the Parish Council requests it, and I accept the argument that it would give us greater clout with outside bodies, even though there would be no change of powers. But given the outcry that occurred a few years ago when the Council implemented the change and then had to retract it, we need to wait for an appropriate moment to put the proposal forward again. This might have come had our proposed merger with Gosford and Water Eaton taken place. However, as readers will remember, this was turned down by the District Council, even though a majority of the respondents to their consultation voted in favour.

DAVID ROBEY