

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

UNITARY DEBATE

There have been reports suggesting that proposals for reform are off the table due to the lack of agreement between the City and District Councils, and the County. While it is true that Government wishes to proceed by consensus where possible, OCC hopes that the debate is not over – particularly when Grant Thornton has put forward a new compromise proposal, which has yet to be fully discussed. With £200,000 spent on independent advice, and with both reports showing that savings in excess of £100m are possible over a five-year time period through a single strategic authority for Oxfordshire, it is everybody's interest that the debate continues. The OCC Leader has asked officers to bring a paper to Council on 13th September, and Cabinet on 20th September, to ensure that Councillors have been able to express a view on this debate, and how OCC should move forward.

LIBRARIES MINISTER SEES “GREAT EXAMPLE” AT BICESTER

Plans to expand Oxfordshire's Home Library Service and joining up services 'under one roof' were among the hot topics at Bicester Library, during a fact-finding visit from Minister for Civil Society Rob Wilson MP. The flagship county council facility offers a wide range of council services and activities, and has attracted more than 2,000 new members since opening in April.

Heralded as a “great example” by Mr Wilson, Bicester exemplifies an emerging identity for Oxfordshire's libraries as focal points for a broad range of services, help and advice. The council has also announced plans to grow its Home Library Service so that people with mobility problems who can't get to a library can have books and other items delivered to their door.

RESIDENTS CAN GET THEIR ELECTRIC BLANKETS CHECKED FREE

Now is the time for residents to book their blanket in for a free check in October. Oxfordshire County Council's Fire & Rescue Service and Trading Standards are urging electric blanket owners to get their blankets tested free of charge ahead of the approaching colder months.

Testing electric blankets annually is important as all electrical systems have the potential to go wrong. In 2015 a total of 22 per cent of the electric blankets failed the safety test and were declared unsafe to use. They can be perfectly safe to use provided they are in good condition and have the necessary overheating safeguards incorporated into the design. Station Manager Chris Barber of Oxfordshire County Council's Fire and Rescue Service said: “Like any other piece of electrical equipment, it is vitally important that electric blankets remain in safe working

order, last year nearly a quarter.” Testing is by pre-booked appointment only, strictly on a first come, first served basis. Residents should call Trading Standards on 01865 815 000 option 4 to arrange an appointment or email communityengagement@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

SUPPORT FOR YOUNGSTERS MAKING NEXT STEPS AFTER EXAMS

Help is at hand for young people considering their next steps after receiving exam results this month. Oxfordshire County Council is giving advice and support for 16 to 19-year-olds about staying in learning, finding a job or starting an apprenticeship. Throughout the results period and beyond, staff will be available via the web chat service on the Oxme website or over the phone (01865 328460) to talk to young people and parents about the wide range of learning and employment opportunities available in Oxfordshire, and to help with applications.

OXFORDSHIRE COMET: A BOOKABLE TRANSPORT SERVICE

The Oxfordshire Comet is a not for profit, bookable transport service for those who can't access suitable public transport. It can be booked for any type of trip, whether it's to meet friends in town, travel across the county, attend an appointment or pop to the shops. The service is available 10.15am - 2.30pm Monday to Friday (not Bank Holidays). It uses vehicles that normally take children to school and adults to day care centres. (OCC identified the times of the day when they weren't being used and are making them available so that residents can make the journeys they want.) Because OCC already owns these vehicles, the Council only has to cover running costs, meaning charges are low for passengers. More information can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/oxfordshire-comet>

CARERS' STRATEGY AND CARERS' PERSONAL BUDGETS CONSULTATION

OCC and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group work in partnership with other organisations to identify and support many of the 61,000 family, informal or unpaid carers in Oxfordshire. Both organisations do this because they recognise and value the important role that carers have in the lives of the more vulnerable members of our communities. A joint consultation is taking place in two parts: Part 1 of this consultation is about the Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy. This is a document about priorities for carers' support and the outcomes desired for carers of all ages. It also gives an overview of how carers are supported in Oxfordshire. Part 2 of this consultation is about the proposed options for carers' personal budgets. There is no longer enough money for OCC to carry on doing things in the existing way, so OCC wants to find the best way of spending the funding available to meet the needs of as many carers as possible. Please take part by completing the online questionnaire here <https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Carers/answerQuestionnaire?qid=4183363> or by attending one of three workshops. Please first read the strategy and supporting documents available as part of this consultation. If you require a paper copy of these documents, please contact OCC by email on carerssupportreview@oxfordshire.gov.uk or phone 01865 323410.

Consultation workshops

All taking place from 10.30am - 1:00pm on the following dates:

- 13th September at Didcot Civic Hall
- 15th September in Banbury Town Hall
- 29th September in Oxford Town Hall

To attend, please phone 01865 323410 or email carerssupportreview@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Kind regards



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