

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

OCC BUDGET 2018/19

OCC agreed its budget at a Full Council meeting on 13 February following a five-hour meeting of all 63 county councillors. Council Tax will rise by 5.99%, the maximum amount allowed without a referendum. Key points include:

- Finances are sound compared to other councils, with difficult decisions having already been taken;
- The Council Tax rise will deliver extra money for adults and children's social care;
- Proposal to extend £500,000 contribution for homelessness for an extra year in 2019/20 (subject to consultation);
- 10-year programme to improve transport network and release more money for road maintenance;
- £15,000 for each of the 63 county councillors to spend on local priorities in their area.

GROWTH DEAL

As detailed in the December and February reports, the Oxfordshire Growth Board* has reached an outline Housing and Growth Agreement (Growth Deal) with Government. This will see an additional £215m of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county. The Growth Deal has now been agreed by the six councils.

*The Oxfordshire Growth Board comprises the six councils: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, together with the county's Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).

OCC STEPS UP POTHOLE WORK AS WINTER HITS THE ROADS

Repeated cycles of ice, thaws and snow created the worst possible weather conditions for roads over the last few months leading to a rise in reports on Fix My Street from 3,000 pre-Christmas to 7,000 during January. OCC has drafted in more staff to carry out inspections and contractors Skanska are sending out more teams to carry out repairs. An additional Dragon-Patcher is now in action on the road network travelling round on an 'inspect and fix' basis on the rural network. There is also good news in the form of almost £1m in extra funding from the Department for Transport in recognition of damage done to the roads by bad weather. This money will be spent on road patching later this year as that will give longer lasting benefits and better value for money. Defects that make roads hazardous will be dealt with within 24 hours as usual. Remember, if a defect has paint markings around it then it has already been scheduled for repair and does not need a new report.

OXFORDSHIRE'S LIBRARIES ARE THRIVING – NOT JUST SURVIVING

Libraries Minister Michael Ellis MP attended the official opening of Oxfordshire County Library in February. The newly refitted facility welcomed more than 100 guests including staff, volunteers and community groups who have helped ensure the county's 43 branches have a bright future. Mr Ellis toured the library and spoke with staff and volunteers about its transformation and wider network of Oxfordshire branches. He said: *"This is a wonderful example of a library that is an integral part of the community. We want to see libraries thrive - not just survive - and this is an example of a library that is clearly thriving. This is a classic example of how to do it and protect our libraries, and they are still greatly valued by many people."*

CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) REVIEW IN OXFORDSHIRE

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) visited Oxfordshire in November 2017 to carry out one of 20 targeted reviews taking place in England. The CQC report, published on Monday 12 February says: *"People were treated with kindness when they moved between health and social care services. Frontline staff were dedicated and provided person centred care, going the extra mile for people they cared for."* Across all areas of health and social care, an above-average proportion of services achieve a 'good' or 'outstanding' CQC rating in Oxfordshire, compared to the national average. However, there remain significant challenges to join up services across organisations in Oxfordshire. The final report has provided areas of action for senior managers in the NHS, social care and other bodies to act upon to make the whole health and care system work better. All of the CQC's recommendations for actions have been agreed by the five organisations involved which are:

- Oxfordshire County Council (local authority)
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT)
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (OCCG)
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUHFT)
- South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SCAS)

CQC inspectors found the problems of recruiting care staff in Oxfordshire were holding back improvement. Incompatible computer systems also hampered integration of services. The inspectors did find that Oxfordshire had made progress in tackling 'delayed transfers of care'. Health and social care leaders from the five organisations involved in the inspection have already met with the CQC to develop an action plan. The key points of the action plan are:

- Making services more local by using a 'place-based' approach to design and delivery of care
- Improving information available to people who fund their own care so they can get the support they need more quickly
- Investing more in recruitment and retention of care staff so more care packages can be delivered, particularly for older people.

PLASTIC POLLUTION IN OXFORDSHIRE

Residents in Oxfordshire have been amongst the best at recycling (including plastics) and composting for a few years now, and the countywide recycling rate is around 60%, one of the best in the country. However, the ambition is to do better. Plastic is a topical target. The OCC Recycling Team has put together top tips to kick the plastic habit:

- Remember your reusable bags when shopping.
- Invest in a reusable water bottle (stainless steel bottles are more sustainable than plastic)
- For takeaway coffee, use a reusable mug. Collapsible ones that fit easily in a bag are obtainable, or there are ones made from bamboo to avoid more plastic. (Disposable coffee cups are lined with plastic and hard to recycle.)
- Look for products with less packaging, or no packaging, such as fruit or vegetables.
- Buy concentrated products and refill packs instead of fully packaged products, such as fabric conditioner, washing powders and some beauty products.
- Recycle the packaging where possible. While 90% of packaging is recycled in the kitchens, only 50% is being recycled in the bathroom. Shampoo, conditioner, make up, hand wash and cleaning product bottles can all be recycled (pump trigger must be removed).
- Buy larger or economy sizes of goods such as breakfast cereal, tomato ketchup, toilet rolls and soap powder. This saves money and creates less packaging in the long run.

All the councils in Oxfordshire are working together to seek views on reducing waste and increasing recycling. Respond to the consultation here: www.recycleforoxfordshire.org.uk

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

Kind regards



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