

REPORT TO ROTHERFIELD GREYS PARISH COUNCIL

MARCH 2019 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

COUNCIL BUDGET PASSED ON 12TH FEBRUARY

1. COMMUNITIES TO BE OFFERED HELP WITH YOUTH SERVICES

Youth Provision across Oxfordshire was given a £1 million boost by the Conservative Independent Alliance at the budget-setting meeting on February 12th. It was disappointing that both the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups voted against this proposal, which could have had cross-party support. Young people and their families in Oxfordshire will now benefit from improved community-run youth services. Youth groups will be invited to bid in to a £1m fund over two years, with encouragement to find match-funding from their local communities. Details of the application process will be published shortly.

2. COUNTY COUNCIL TO INVEST IN SCHOOLS, TRANSPORT AND STREETLIGHTING

Other measures that form part of the approved Budget include highway improvements, new school buildings and energy-efficient street-lighting thanks to a £1 billion investment over the next ten years. However, the county council is also warning that funding pressure on services remains as demand for social care for vulnerable children and adults continues grow and continued financial prudence is required to meet those demands.

Transport schemes across the county will improve journeys for drivers, pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. Nearly £20m will be invested to increase the provision of school places for children with special needs in the county, including rebuilding Northfield School in Oxford with more pupil places.

Capital funding is for large one-off projects such as highway repairs or building work to assist the council meet its obligations, such as creating extra school places – as opposed to the normal revenue budget which covers funding for the costs of day-to-day services. Most of the funding for capital programme is made up of government funding and developer contributions, which cannot be used for any other purpose.

The capital programme includes a £41m street-lighting improvement programme with traditional lanterns being replaced with more energy efficient LED lighting, saving money in the long-run.

Pressure on funding for day-to-day council services continues as the council increases funding to support of Oxfordshire's most vulnerable children and adults. To make sure the growing number of children at risk of abuse and neglect are protected, the children's social care budget has increased annually. It was £46m in 2011 and is forecast to be £95m in 2022/23 – more than doubling in ten years. The council's budget for adult social care will increase by £5m in 2019/20, with further annual increases reaching nearly £6m by 2022/23.

The planned redesign of the council around the changing needs of residents and communities will maintain or improve services, with investment in digital technology enabling us to save money in the process – OCC is now reviewing the digital technology needed to make the council run more effectively and efficiently, including improving customer service by making it easier to access services online. The council has identified savings of £50m from changing the way services are delivered and has already started implementing these changes, including improving online 'self-service' HR and finance systems used by staff. As part of the partnership with Cherwell District Council, legal services for the two councils are being joined up.

INVESTMENT IN REPAIRING OXFORDSHIRE'S ROADS CONTINUES

OCC will be spending an extra £13m on capital funding on road maintenance in the coming financial year. This is on top of its existing £18.5m programme of work and follows last year's additional £12m boost which saw more than 37 extra miles of road being resurfaced through a range of methods including surface dressing and micro-asphalting – both of which make road surfaces waterproof and extend their life. This year's additional money will be spent across Oxfordshire on resurfacing, drainage, bridge repairs and footways. One of the major projects confirmed for later this year will see the A40 from Thornhill to Headington Roundabout (inbound) resurfaced, benefitting thousands of road users every day.

HEALTHWATCH OXFORDSHIRE PUBLISHES FINDINGS OF DAYTIME SUPPORT REVIEW

OCC's Adult Social Care department asked the health and social care watchdog to undertake an independent review of the services after major changes in how they were delivered in October 2017. On that date, OCC's Health and Wellbeing Centres and Learning Disability Daytime Support Services were replaced with a new Community Support Service as planned, securing the services for the future. The services are located in Abingdon, Banbury, Bicester, Didcot, Oxford, Wallingford, Wantage and Witney. They provide daytime support for both older people and those with learning disabilities. The review focused specifically on user experiences during the process of change to help evaluate the impact it had on people. The service has been working hard since the launch to ensure that people are at the centre of all service developments. The review found that people said that daytime support made a difference to their lives and they valued it for: social connection and friendships; meaningful activity; independence; reducing isolation and loneliness; and supporting carers to continue caring.

DELAYED TRANSFER OF CARE IMPROVEMENTS

The latest published figures on people who are unnecessarily in hospital while they await care have been published. The figures for December 2018 show that on average 85 Oxfordshire residents had their hospital discharge delayed. This is five fewer than in November and 20 less than the same time last year. Oxfordshire's improvement remains better than nationally. In the last 12 months delays have dropped by 19% locally compared to 11% nationally.

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR ROTHERFIELD GREYS

DOG LANE RESURFACING & SIGNAGE

I am still awaiting the following from officers:

1. Report on outcome of officer visit during the first week of December.
2. Copy of letter to residents about future repairs and liability in respect of public mishaps relating to unknown specification. (Draft is with Legal Services.)
3. Decision on sign funding.

DIVERSION OF PUBLIC FOOTPATH NO 1 (PART) THE ROSARY, SHEPHERDS GREEN.

I have been invited to comment on this application and seek the views of the PC.

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND

I am advised that my contribution of £500 towards line marking works (dragon's teeth and roundels) from my Councillor Priority Fund 2018/19 has been processed. I would be pleased to offer similar match-funding of 3500 for 2019/20.

THIRD READING BRIDGE

As previously reported, the enthusiasm of Berkshire councils for this project is undimmed. I will be attending another Reading Area Transport Forum on 20th March and the bridge is an agenda item. Independently of Oxfordshire councils, Berkshire commissioned further work to support the 'business case' and I hope to get an update. The work is being conducted on a pro bono basis by consultants hoping to move the project forward. Reading asked SODC to 'safeguard' the proposed site of the bridge in the SODC local plan, but this has been refused on the basis of lack of detail and certainty the project will proceed. OCC supports the refusal.

TOWN AND PARISH LIAISON EVENT THURSDAY 17TH JANUARY 2019

This event was well attended and a report on this and similar meetings throughout the county will be issued shortly.