

Oxfordshire County Councillor David Bartholomew **Annual Report 2017 to Rotherfield Greys Parish Council**

Introduction

As County Councillor, I represent what is known as 'Sonning Common Division'. This Division comprises the nine parishes that curl around Henley, but does not include Henley itself. I am delighted to make this report to you and would like to wish the parish council (and residents!) every success for the coming year. If there is anything I can help with, all my contact details are on the OCC website here:
<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/mgUserInfo.aspx?UID=7527>

Responsibilities

In addition to representing the interests of residents in the nine parishes in my Division and my place on Full Council, I have a place on each of the following committees: Audit & Governance Committee; Planning & Regulation Committee; and Cabinet Advisory Group on Income Generation. Additionally, I am Deputy Leader Backbenchers for Conservative County Councillors and in this capacity attend Informal Cabinet.

Parish Council Meetings

Most of the parish councils I am responsible for meet every month (Rotherfield Greys is unusual in that it only meets every two months) and I attend most meetings. If ever I can't attend, I send a written report. At each of the parish meetings I attend, I give a general report on County matters, then follow this with a report on matters specific to that parish.

Key County Issues

Unitary Government

Over the course of the last 12 months there has been much debate about the future of local government in Oxfordshire, with the County Council and the District Councils putting forward competing proposals. At the end of January, OCC launched 'A Fresh Start for Oxfordshire', a draft of OCC's intended proposal for DCLG on how and why a single unitary authority for Oxfordshire with strong Area Boards based on existing Districts could work. The full proposal can be found online at www.oneoxfordshire.org. Since then, there have been meetings between the Leaders of the County Council and South Oxfordshire and Vale District Councils and it has been agreed that the three councils will move forward with a joint proposal for a single unitary council across Oxfordshire. An amended bid document will be submitted to DCLG during the course of March.

Social Care Costs

The rising cost of social care is a problem for most councils and OCC is particularly hard hit. Government is allowing councils to set a 5% Council Tax rise over the next two years to part offset these costs. Proposals for how this £3.4m of temporary funding can be spent were discussed at Cabinet on 24th January.

Daytime Support Services

OCC is proposing a new daytime support system that would enable older people and people with disabilities to live independently in their community. Having listened to more than 1,000 responses to a consultation that ran during November and December, OCC's original proposals have changed to reflect comments made – with £975,000 extra being spent. The proposals continue to include a guaranteed core service for people who require daytime support, alongside financial support to enable community-based services to continue to flourish. People with 'assessed needs' who receive help from OCC's adult social services would continue to receive support under a new proposed structure for daytime support in the county. The proposal now includes the additional money to be spent as follows: 1. An additional £550,000 in a transition fund for voluntary sector providers who receive grant funding from the council. This is in direct response to providers who responded to the consultation to say more time was needed. 2. An additional £100,000 on fundraising support for the voluntary sector. 3. Replacing current annual funding for 47 community-based daytime support services with grant pots totalling £350,000 a year.

Response To CCG's Consultation About Oxfordshire's Health Services

The Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group has now launched the first phase of its consultation on proposed changes to health services in Oxfordshire. OCC is a consultee in the process. OCC officers are currently examining the detail of the proposals, and Cabinet will consider these alongside the emerging public view. The Cabinet's view will also be fed into the full debate on the consultation, which the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) is hosting on the 7th March. HOSC is an independent joint committee, which includes representatives from the four District Councils, the City Council and County Council. The issue is also scheduled to be debated at the full Council meeting on the 21st March to ensure that all County Councillors are given the opportunity to voice local concerns.

Carers Set To Continue To Receive Personal Budgets

OCC currently provides personal budgets of between £200 and £600 a year to more than 1,800 people who provide care to relatives and others. A consultation was undertaken during 2016 about discontinuing these personal budgets to save the county council £690,000. However, after having listened to consultation responses, a new proposal has been made for annual personal budgets of £300 targeted at those carers with the highest needs. It is estimated that only one-third of those who received a personal budget in 2016/17 would not do so at all in 2017/18. The revised proposals will save OCC £588,000, with £400,000 of this to be directly reinvested in preserving the Dementia Service which supports 120 people in Oxfordshire.

Key Rotherfield Greys Issues

To be delivered at meeting