

**REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS**  
**DECEMBER 2015**  
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**AUTUMN STATEMENT/COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW – IMPACT ON OCC**

Chancellor George Osborne delivered his Autumn Statement on Wednesday 25 November, including details of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). The CSR confirmed that core Central Government funding (comprising business rates and revenue support grant) to Local Government will fall by 24% in real terms over the next four years. When taking into account Office of Budget Responsibility forecasts of other income raised locally by councils, the overall position is a 6.7% real terms reduction, which means difficult decisions will have to be taken by OCC when preparing the forthcoming budget after full details of the Local Government Settlement have been received. Key CSR announcements were:

1. Local authorities responsible for adult social care (which includes OCC) would be given the option to increase Council Tax by 2% to fund the increased costs of adult social care associated with the new National Living Wage. This is in addition to the 2% increase councils are permitted without a referendum, meaning OCC can now consider a 4% rise in Council Tax. However, this has to be seen in the context that most OCC residents will not have had a 4% wage rise.
2. An additional £1.5bn of funding for Local Government from the Better Care Fund will be made available by 2019-20, and ring-fencing of the public health grant will continue in 2016/7 and 2017/8. This must be considered against the background of an ageing population and a 94% increase in demand for home care since 2011, with similar increases expected over the coming years.
3. Confirmation of £12bn Local Growth Fund allocations for 2015/16 to 2020/21 made through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
4. An extra £250m of funding for pothole repairs for five years to 2020/21. However, it has to be confirmed if this is annual or over the review period. The allocation for Oxfordshire would be around £2.5m.
5. The New Homes Bonus is to be reformed with proposals to include a 'sharpening of the incentive' and reduction in payment period from six years to four.

**DEVOLUTION**

OCC Leader Ian Hudspeth, along with the District councils, LEP and Health colleagues, will be presenting the Oxfordshire devolution proposal to Secretary of State Greg Clark in early December. This is an opportunity for Oxfordshire to have devolved powers to provide the infrastructure required to deliver the 86,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes by 2030. The proposal also includes the integration of Health and Social care – the aim is to reduce duplication, improve efficiency and provide a better Health care system for all of Oxfordshire's 670,000 residents.

## **COUNCIL LAUNCHES 'FOSTERING-FRIENDLY' CAMPAIGN**

OCC is joining forces with local employers and other organisations to make the county the most 'fostering friendly' place and encourage more people to foster children. The aim is to create the best possible environment for foster carers by harnessing wider support and building greater recognition for the special role foster carers play in society. Partner organisations are being invited to pledge support by signing a 'Fostering Friendly Covenant', which sets out their commitment to supporting staff, volunteers or members who foster, and to promoting foster care more widely. Details here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/nov/council-launches-'fostering-friendly'-campaign>

## **PROVISIONAL GCSE DATA**

The Department for Education has published provisional GCSE results for 2015. Key Headlines for Oxfordshire schools:

- 59.1% of pupils achieved five or more A\*-C grades, including English and Maths
- 73.1% made the expected level of progress in English
- 70.5% made the expected level of progress in Maths

Across the country performance was down slightly on 2014 levels but Oxfordshire remains above average. (NB the data will not be finalised until early 2016 and may change.)

## **ADDITIONAL BROADBAND FUNDING**

An extra £5.58m of funding has been announced. This comes from: Oxfordshire LEP, £2m; South East Midlands LEP and Cherwell District Council, £120,000; Oxford City Council, £168,000; Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme, £2.2m; BT, £1.1m. This means more than 4,600 additional businesses and homes across Oxfordshire will be able to access superfast fibre broadband. The percentage of county homes and businesses able to get superfast fibre broadband will be increased to more than 95%. More details can be found out at [www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk).

## **SUPPORTED TRANSPORT SERVICES**

On November 10th, OCC's Cabinet met to agree proposals for the future of the county's supported transport services. This followed a consultation held over the summer, which had over 2,600 responses. The proposals were discussed as part of the need to make between £6.3m and £7.5m savings from OCC's supported transport budget. The Cabinet agreed to withdraw bus subsidies from all services, with the caveat that if the Local Government Spending settlement to be announced later in the year is more generous than predicted, some funds would be made available to subsidise off-peak services on key routes. The 100+ subsidised bus services in Oxfordshire make up around 9% of the bus network. This means that more than nine out of ten services run without any public subsidy and are not affected by any of the proposals.

## **PREPARATIONS FOR WINTER WEATHER**

OCC is fully prepared for winter with a full fleet of 31 gritting vehicles, which have been serviced and tested over the summer. They are ready to run on 28 routes, covering a total distance of

1200 miles. Winter depots have been stocked with 12,500 tonnes of salt, which allows OCC to undertake 50 gritting runs of the entire network (at 240 tonnes per run). Since the last major 'snow event', OCC has increased the starting stock of salt by a third and has also restocked the county's 1300 salt bins. Free bulk bags of salt have been offered to all town and parish councils. The take-up so far this year has been minimal, with only 52 requested, as stocks have been retained from previous years. The daily update on whether roads will be gritted is posted on the winter pages of the OCC's web site <http://winter.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/>

## **BERINSFIELD SERVICES AT RISK**

As a result of the proposed budget savings announced by OCC the Berinsfield Information Centre, the Day Centre and the Children's Centre may face having their funding withdrawn in the future. I am working with the Parish Council to see if there are any ways in which the community can support them to stay open such as finding other sources of funding, co-locating with other services and forming clusters with others to share costs. If anyone can help with this work please get in touch with me or the Parish Council.

The consultation detailed in last month's report runs for a few more weeks until the end of Sunday 10 January 2016.

## **CLIFTON HAMPDEN – PLANNING ISSUES**

The application to establish a Solar Farm between Clifton Hampden and the Culham Science Park has been granted.

Hills Quarry Products held a public exhibition on 25th November to explain the details of their proposed quarry site between Clifton Hampden and the railway line. The area has been reduced from 160 hectares to 104 hectares, to accommodate the newly scheduled archaeological site known as Fullamoor Plantation. The projected tonnage has been reduced from 5 million tonnes to 2.5 million tonnes and the time scale for excavation to 10 years rather than the previously proposed 25 years. While these adjustments are welcome none will address the very worrying impact of lorry movements in and out of the site which will be routed through Clifton Hampden and Burcot onto the A4074, or via Abingdon and onto the A34. Routing agreements will be put in place to prevent lorries using Culham and Clifton Hampden bridges, but enforcing such agreements is notoriously difficult. The application will be submitted in the New Year.

The County Council has committed to building a new road north from Didcot, across the Thames to join up with the A415 close to the Culham Science Park. The precise route has yet to be determined and funding found from the central government supplied Local Growth Fund. This new river crossing will link with a new Clifton Hampden relief road that will take traffic away from Clifton Hampden village and onto the Golden Balls roundabout on the A4074.