**REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS JANUARY 2019**

**FROM CLLR LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE**

**BUDGET PROPOSALS**

Tough decisions taken since 2010 have created a route to financial stability at OCC as the council plans to set its 2019/20 budget at a time when all councils face financial challenges. The main budget proposals are:

* Investment of almost £6m by 2023 to increase care packages to meet assessed needs for adults with learning and physical disabilities. (Adult Social Care)
* An increase of £5.8m is proposed to be added to the budget in 2022/23 in adult social care to meet projected increased need as a result of the aging population. The council’s existing planning up to 2021/22 already includes provision for budget increases of £5.0m in 2019/20 and 2020/21 and £5.6m in 2021/22. (Adult Social Care)
* Invest £3.2m up to 2023 (£800,000 per year) to support the increasing number of children qualifying for school transport – in particular children with special educational needs. (Children, Education and Families)
* Invest £17m to support the predicted increasing numbers of children in care, including more permanent care staff (Children, Education and Families)

With regard to Council Tax, the council’s plan – agreed at the last budget in February 2018 – to raise Council Tax by 2.99 per cent in 2019/20 and 1.99 per cent in the years thereafter remains the same in the new budget proposals. However, funding for local government beyond 2020 is currently uncertain, with councils waiting for funding decisions from central government which will not be known until late 2019.

**DELIVERING AN OLDER PEOPLE'S STRATEGY FOR OXFORDSHIRE**

Living longer and living better is the drive behind a new Older People’s Strategy for Oxfordshire.

The strategy sets out how OCC and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group will deliver a positive future for the county’s older population. It was developed following feedback over a three-month period. Residents, health and charity organisations, professionals, businesses, the public sector and community groups were engaged in the strategy development so it could be grounded in what people tell us matters most to them. The strategy’s vision and priorities were specifically co-produced with a wide range of people whose work and lives it affects. The strategy will be used to inform the planning, commissioning and delivery of services across Oxfordshire and will be monitored by the Better Care Fund Joint Management Group reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board. To read the strategy and have your say online visit here https://consult.oxfordshireccg.nhs.uk/consult.ti/OPLLLB/consultationHome or request a paper copy of the strategy by calling 01865 334638. The closing date for comments is Feb 1, 2019.

**DAYTIME SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY GRANT AWARDS**

Twenty-nine organisations have been recommended to receive grants from the county council’s adult social care Sustainability Fund. The fund was established last year as part of measures designed to enable the ongoing delivery of daytime support services in Oxfordshire. A grant pot of £250,000 was approved for 2019/20 and community and voluntary organisations were invited to apply for the fund between September 12 and November 2. To allocate the funding to as many organisations as possible, a panel of county councillors and people representing daytime services recommended that a maximum level of 70 per cent of the amount awarded in 2018/19 should be made where applicable. Among those services recommended for funding are Day Break Oxford (£50,000), Age UK (£27,500), October Club (£14,000) and Aspire (£12,500). Applications totalling £244,847 went before Cabinet on December 18.

**SEND SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY GAINS APPROVAL**

Plans to create significant new provision for Oxfordshire children with special educational needs (SEND) have been agreed by councillors, with a £15m investment set to create 300 new places which will involve a major rebuild for Northfield School in Oxford. The county council has conducted a wide-ranging review of its special educational needs provision in light of the large increases in the numbers of children with such needs entering the educational system in recent years and the forecast for continued increases in the future. The rebuild of Northfield School would be accompanied by a new school at Bloxham Grove in North Oxfordshire (due to open in 2020) and at Valley Park, Didcot (target date 2023) as part of a free school application process. At a national level, the Department for Education will be rolling out a new assessment approach for pupils with complex disabilities, from 2020. DfE has said “The statutory assessment will replace P scales 1 to 4 and will be based on the ‘7 aspects of engagement’, an assessment approach that focuses on pupils abilities in specific areas like awareness, curiosity and anticipation”. A guidance and training package will be developed and delivered to schools, local authorities, Ofsted and parents prior to programme roll out.

**£10 MILLION PROGRAMME DELIVERING ROAD REPAIRS GETS £7M BOOST**

Journeys on Oxfordshire’s roads have already been significantly improved in recent months thanks to an extra £10million being spent by OCC this year on repairing and improving road surfaces. Government announced in November that OCC would get £7.4 in additional funding to top-up this activity. A range of different methods of road repair and sealing are used to extend the life of county roads and reduce the likelihood of potholes forming which include resurfacing, patching, Dragon-patching and surface dressing.

**OCC WELCOMES GOVERNMENT’S WASTE STRATEGY**

OCC has welcomed the government’s new Waste and Resources Strategy for England, describing it as “ambitious”, with the potential to “transform the way that waste is viewed and managed.” Key points within the strategy include:

* Introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers to improve the amount recycled when out and about (known as ‘on the go’ recycling)
* Improved and extended redistribution of surplus food from businesses, and mandatory food waste collections from businesses and households.
* A national recycling target of 65 percent by 2035 (current national recycling rate is 45 percent)

OCC is committed to protecting the local environment as part of its Thriving Communities initiative.

**OCC BEST PERFORMING COUNTY COUNCIL IN ENGLAND FOR ITS RECYCLING RATES**

Oxfordshire has been named the best performing county council waste disposal authority in England for its recycling rates during 2017/18. The success reflects OCC’s commitment to work with districts to protect the environment. Figures published on Tuesday 11 December by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) show that Oxfordshire is the highest performing disposal authority, ahead of Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire.

Oxfordshire is ‘top of the pops’ in two categories:

* The highest proportion of waste which is reused, recycled and composted (57.2%)
* The lowest amount of general waste (non-recyclable waste) produced per household (430kg).

All Oxfordshire Councils recycled over 50% in 2017/18, (the national recycling rate is 45%). The county has seven Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) that provide recycling facilities for a wide range of items, from batteries to clothes, fridges to plastic garden furniture, together with an incinerator complex at Ardley near Bicester. The HWRCs accept over 350 different waste streams, recycling around 60% of the waste accepted.

For further information about Oxfordshire County Council’s Household Waste Recycling Centres, visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/waste)

**REACTION TO SODC’S LOCAL PLAN PROPOSALS**

**J**ust before Christmas SODC councillors voted by a large majority to put their re-worked Local Plan forward for government inspection. As a long-time resident of South Oxfordshire and your County Councillor for ten years, I can only watch from the side-lines. My personal view is one of huge disappointment and frustration. The plan proposes more houses than we need which will completely alter the local environment that residents love and want to protect. However, as a County Council Cabinet Member I am mindful of and accept the County’s vision for growth and economic development. Oxfordshire is already one of the best performing areas in the country offering the prospect of a thriving economy for its residents well into the future. With more jobs come more people, and people have to live somewhere. Working families need genuinely affordable housing, which appears to be an impossible goal in this area. The County Council has ambitious plans to improve our infrastructure which I welcome, but much of this can only be funded by accepting more housing. I just hope the Planning Inspector charged with examining SODC’s proposals is up to the job.

Below is a statement made by Bev Hindle, OCC’s Strategic Director for Infrastructure at the recent SODC meeting. It may explain OCC’s official position:

“*I am here this evening to provide my support and encouragement for you to recommend this Local Plan is taken forward to examination.*

*This emerging Local Plan has been emerging for some time and it has seen many iterations and may yet see some further changes, but I wanted to take the opportunity to explain why now is the right time to proceed:*

*Throughout its evolution, SODC were challenged to develop a robust Local Plan – one that provided:*

*- a strong narrative – a story about what it was trying to achieve, one which put more effort into delivering Plan-led and infrastructure supported development;*

*- a more robust transport network and allocated development which could contribute positively to that network and to the local and county economy;*

*-greater consideration of the needs of the county, including Oxford – this means greater collaboration and compromise*

*-support for the County’s Housing and Growth Deal and also support for our Housing Infrastructure Bid which requires a robust and evidenced plan for growth to underpin the significant financial ask of Government*

*I believe SODC have risen to these challenges and have developed a Plan worthy of submission and testing in public.  As the responsible authority for highways, education and social care, we recognise this Local Plan attempts to help tackle not just the infrastructure deficit in terms of roads, but also helps to meet acute housing needs which have not been adequately met in the past.*

*We are particularly supportive of how the Plan looks to strengthen Science Vale and access to Didcot through strategic sites that can contribute to the local and national economy, meeting housing need, rebalancing demographic deficits and which in turn can contribute to the major infrastructure investment needed for this part of the county.  Without critical national funding to match this local ambition, the Plan will struggle to meet its vision and the county will suffer.  The Housing Infrastructure Fund bid for Didcot Garden Town for example is essential to holding this Plan together. Our bid for funding will be robust and we are working on the principle we will get a funding decision in time to give critical support for the Plan – without this we will of course need to revisit our assumptions and assume SODC would need to re-visit its Plan.*

*The County Council will be taking a very close look at the Plan over the coming weeks to ensure it is meeting the tests of soundness. We will continue to work with the District to meet any challenges arising during examination.“*