

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

CABINET APPROVES £120M ROAD AND BUILDING REPAIR FUNDING PROPOSAL

OCC's cabinet has agreed to borrow up to £120m to invest in infrastructure improvements – easing the spending squeeze on road and property repairs. A report presented to Cabinet in September acknowledged that under-investment has resulted in significant reduction in quality of major and minor roads, as well as pavements, with an increase in car damage and personal injury claims. Residents regularly say that they want to see improvements to the roads, and the investment proposal means the whole county would benefit from a 'growth dividend'. The decision means around £80m could be spent on highway improvements, with the rest of the £120m used to invest in other county council-owned assets especially schools. Detailed business cases will be produced for each proposed project funded from the investment pot. It will be paid for using Oxfordshire's expected growth in homes and consequent council tax income and gives scope to 'borrow to invest' that will, over the long term, save money. As the borrowing will be taken over a number of years, based on individual business cases, the programme of investment can be stopped if the increased Council Tax revenue does not materialise.

CABINET APPROVES PROPOSAL TO MAKE THE COUNCIL 'FIT FOR THE FUTURE'

OCC will get a complete overhaul to ensure it is 'fit for the future' and continues to meet rising demand for services. The changes are crucial to enabling the county council to deliver its vision of 'thriving communities for everyone'. The Cabinet has accepted the business case for a new 'operating model' and will consider how it will be implemented at the October Cabinet meeting. The transformation plan would protect and improve frontline services for residents, while cutting red tape and reducing the costs of 'back office' administration. The proposed redesign of the county council could save between £34m-58m a year and ensure a continued balanced budget, with the possibility of reinvesting in services in the future. The detailed business case for implementing the new operating model currently estimates a potential reduction of approximately 600-890 full time equivalent posts at the council over a two to three-year period. The council's annual staff turnover is about 650 posts so the number of compulsory redundancies is likely to be much fewer. Customer service, supported by new technology, would be at the heart of the proposed new 'operating model' to make the council much more efficient. Residents contacting the council would see improved customer service with use of digital technology freeing up time for specialist staff to provide personalised services where needed.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR DELAYED TRANSFER OF CARE FROM HOSPITAL

The latest snapshot of delayed transfer of care figures on September 13 showed there were 79 delayed patients in Oxfordshire – a 31% fall on the same period last year. The previous week there were 77 representing a sustained and significant fall from 2017 when the highest local recorded weekly figure was 202. Based on the latest NHS published data, Oxfordshire is the 11th most improved system in the country, with a reduction of 58% in the number of bed days lost – more than twice the national average of 25%. This turnaround is attributed to a revitalised joined-up approach between NHS teams and the County Council ensuring that patients leave hospital as soon as they are medically fit to do so.

RESPONSE TO ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE OXFORD-CAMBRIDGE EXPRESSWAY

OCC welcomes the announcement of a preferred Corridor for part of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway as it offers a degree of clarity on where the final scheme would go, but is very disappointed that access to the M40 through Oxfordshire is still unclear. Highways England, who are leading on this national project, have identified Corridor B as their proposal, the central corridor from the three broad corridors being considered. However, there is still no indication on which of the sub-options around Oxford would be taken forward. OCC will now carefully study the Corridor put forward, including the justification and technical detail which has led to this choice, and how it would affect already stretched roads, such as the A34 and interface with other schemes including East West Rail. OCC has set three tests to assess the decision-making process for that corridor and, eventually, the final route choice:

- Impact on the A34: it should provide relief to congestion on the A34 and function as a separate strategic route, allowing the A34 around Oxford to work better for local traffic
- Pressure on existing roads: It should not increase pressure on overstretched roads
- Conflation with other schemes: It should be developed separately but alongside other local schemes, to ensure the highway network works for Oxfordshire overall

Invariably, a project of this magnitude and ambition will have an impact, which OCC will need to ensure is mitigated. OCC will seek clarity on how the corridor choice is developed so that a decision can be made on the best route for the scheme

COUNCILS JOIN UP TO PRODUCE A SPATIAL PLAN FOR OXFORDSHIRE UP TO 2050

Oxfordshire's councils are working jointly on a countywide strategic plan which integrates planning for growth and infrastructure, with a focus on quality of life and health and wellbeing. At the September meeting, Cabinet approved a scoping document for the creation of the joint strategic spatial plan (JSSP), which will be considered by the districts and city council in the coming weeks. The JSSP will address the strategic and cumulative implications of growth and set out a long-term framework covering the whole of Oxfordshire up to 2050. It will set out future housing requirements and identify strategic locations or broad areas for future growth. The JSSP will not allocate specific sites for development (any such decision to do this would require the explicit agreement of all the local authorities). Detailed local policies will be covered by future Local Plan reviews as necessary. OCC's role as highways and education authority, and as a provider of many essential services to the communities and businesses, makes it particularly relevant as a key player in the JSSP preparation process. Sustainable transport that creates places where people can walk and cycle will underpin the JSSP. The six Oxfordshire Councils and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OXLEP) under the Oxfordshire

Growth Board agreed the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal with Government in March 2018. Under the terms of the Deal the local authorities have committed to producing the JSSP for submission to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination by 31 March 2020 and adoption by 31 March 2021. Early stakeholder engagement starts this Autumn and a public consultation is due in 2019 first on preferred options and then a proposed draft of the joint plan.

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

Kind regards



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