

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND KEY PART OF BUDGET PROPOSALS

A key proposal for the upcoming Oxfordshire County Council Budget is to have a Councillor Priorities Fund – all County Councillors will have a £15k fund each to support parish council Highways needs and community group projects. In addition, the county council is choosing to prioritise children's social care with £1.9m extra being put in to this service. Overall this means £8.5m is being added to the budget for children's social care in 2018/19. This follows the central government announcement in late December that it would allow councils to raise council tax by an additional 1% primarily to address financial pressures in children's social care. Earlier in December the council had proposed a 1.99% Council Tax, with an additional 3% precept for adult social care bringing the total proposed rise to 4.99% the same as last year. The additional 1% that has now been allowed would take the total rise for 2018/19 to 5.99%, with a proposed 2.99% rise in 2019/20. Other calls on funding include the local government national pay settlement where a total of £2.9m extra is required over 2018/19 (£1.4m) and 2019/20 (£1.5m) for staff pay across all of its services, including employees such as librarians, care workers for vulnerable children and adults, highways staff, trading standards, the Registration Service etc. OCC is able to fund this from reserves over these two years. The Budget proposals go to Full Council on February 13th.

GROWTH DEAL

As detailed in the December report, the Oxfordshire Growth Board* has reached an outline Housing and Growth Agreement (Growth Deal) with Government. This will see an additional £215m of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county. This breaks down as: £30m pa for five years for infrastructure; £60m for affordable homes across the county; and £5m to develop a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP). The Board wants the five-year deal to be the first stage in a sustained partnership with Government to secure the ongoing investment needed to deliver properly planned growth and economic development over the coming years. This will support councils to achieve the ambition of 100,000 new homes across the county over the period 2011-2031, as identified through the 2014 countywide Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plans. During the period of development all planning authorities will have their five-year land supply requirement reduced to a three-year land supply with that condition in place for the first three years of the new JSSP. The Growth Deal is coming to the stage that it will soon go through the six councils' democratic processes to be agreed.

*The Oxfordshire Growth Board comprises the six councils: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, together with the county's Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).

CARILLION: OCC AGREES EXIT DEAL AFTER COMPANY COLLAPSE

OCC has formally terminated its contract with Carillion LGS Limited effective from 1 February 2018, following the collapse of the parent company. This brings forward the already agreed end of the contract set for the end of June 2018. OCC made a net payment of £10.65m to Carillion to cover work already completed as part of the final settlement to end the contract with the company. Carillion provided services on behalf of OCC including school meals and cleaning; maintenance of council buildings; property services, and building work such as school extensions. Carillion staff in OCC's maintained schools who contracted their services via OCC will be transferred to OCC under staff transfer arrangements known as 'TUPE', and services will continue as normal. Services previously provided by Carillion to the county council will continue through a mix of bringing staff in-house (e.g. school meals, cleaning); continuing with suppliers (mainly catering), and working with existing sub-contractors (mainly construction and property services). Like every other Carillion customer, OCC is now working out the most cost-effective way to complete work left unfinished by Carillion. OCC will now take over direct responsibility for commissioning future construction work and service delivery. County council officers are reviewing the uncompleted works under the Carillion contract and talking to sub-contractors about the best way forward. Carillion sub-contractors and suppliers will be financially exposed to the collapse in Oxfordshire, as is happening across the country. OCC is establishing a process to assess, on a case-by-case basis, the impact on companies in the Carillion supply chain involved in providing county council services such as building maintenance.

NEW FUNDING BOOSTS SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN

Extra funding to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) living in Oxfordshire has been received by the county council. A government grant worth £335,000 has been awarded to help strengthen the support services available to UASCs over the next two years. It is part of a wider [national funding announcement of £29 million](#). OCC has the same responsibilities for looking after UASCs arriving in the county as it does for all other children and young people in care. Young asylum-seekers are among the most vulnerable groups in society – often with no connections or family in the UK, little spoken English and having made long and traumatic journeys. The new money is not for covering the cost of care placements themselves, but for additional support to help UASCs adjust to living in the county, and integrate with local communities. The council currently looks after 52 UASCs. These young people have predominantly travelled from Afghanistan, Albania and Eritrea.

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

Kind regards



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