

PARISH REPORT MARCH 2017

EXTRA FUNDING SECURED IN ADDITION TO 2017/18 BUDGET PROPOSALS

The County Council set its budget for 2017/18 on Tuesday 14th February. Ahead of the meeting, it was announced the Council had £1,957,000 extra, over and above the position reported to the Cabinet in January, as a result of better than expected business rate collections, council tax collection fund surpluses and a higher than expected grant. The County is proposing to hold £926,000 of this until the 2018/19 financial year, to deal with future pressures. Cabinet proposes to spend the rest of the money (£1.03m) in this financial year in the following ways:

- £170,000 to be spent on additional grass-cutting work on highway verges. This is an area of spend that has been reduced in recent years.
- £250,000 one-off funding initially for a pilot Communities Fund for parishes and towns to bid for matched funding schemes following changes/reductions for funding for services.
- £600,000 additional funding for children's social care – a part of the council that has been exempted from cuts since 2010 but has continued to experience significant rising demand on services in common with children's social care departments across England.
- £11,000 increase on the Council's Flood Defence Levy.

OPEN ACCESS CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO CONTINUE AT 34 BUILDINGS

Start-up funding for 12 more community schemes to run open access services at children's centres has been approved by OCC. The proposals, which will receive a total of £305,883, are among the latest to be considered as part of the transition from council-funded to community-led services at children's centre locations. Community services will complement the council's new service for 0-19 year-olds, which will meet the needs and aspirations of children at risk of abuse and neglect in Oxfordshire, and ensure that families who need extra help are identified at an early stage. When added to previously considered applications, the approval of these 12 schemes means funded plans are now in place for services such as 'stay and play' to continue at 18 children's centres, with business cases at a further six centres supported in principle but deferred to the final round of the Transition Fund for more work. Added to this, open access sessions will also continue at the eight Children and Family Centres and two satellite centres at the heart of the council's new Children's Service. In total, it means a combination of council-funded and community-led solutions for open access services are now confirmed or supported in principle at 34 buildings across the county – with more to come when applications for the final round of transition funding are considered.

'FIX MY STREET' WEBSITE UPGRADE

Over the last six months OCC has been working hard to make Fix My Street work more effectively. The new service will launch this month. It will improve the quality and consistency of public reports, as well as OCC internal processes for closing down reports, making it easier to reliably see what's going on in a given area. Members of the public who consistently give good information can be rewarded with 'trusted reporter' status, meaning OCC will fast track future reports to the contractor, resulting in quicker resolution for the resident and reduced effort for the inspectors. Before the new system launches, OCC needs to deal with reports that are still marked as 'open' in the current version. This means: 1) Leave open anything which has been active within the last 12 months; 2) Close anything older than 2 years; 3) For reports between 1 and 2 years old, notify the reporter by email that OCC intends to close their report, but give them the option to 're-open' the issue if they believe it is still a problem.

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EXTENSION OF FIRE & AND AMBULANCE SERVICE CO-RESPONDING

OCC Fire and Rescue Service has been working in partnership with South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) co-responding in the community for over 12 years. More recently OCC has also been working with Thames Valley Fire and Rescue partners to undertake a collaborative co-responding trial. (Co-Responders are firefighters trained by SCAS to provide a 'first response' to specific medical emergencies where there is an immediate threat to life prior to an emergency ambulance arriving on scene.) The trial has been a success with crews attending approximately 1500 medical emergency calls per year. To further support communities Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service are working in partnership with SCAS towards all fire engines within communities being available for cardiac arrests, so that casualties across Oxfordshire can receive the quickest available defibrillator and casualty support.

CADDY CAMPAIGN TO REDUCE OXFORDSHIRE'S FOOD WASTE

Residents are being urged to do their bit to make sure food waste doesn't end up on the scrap heap. At the moment it is thought that around 30% of the county's food waste is put in waste bins rather than the food caddy – a figure all Oxfordshire's councils hope to cut significantly. To do this, the councils have launched a campaign with Agrivert, the company who process the county's food waste, to encourage residents to recycle more of the food they would otherwise throw away. It is two and a half times cheaper to process food waste if it is put into a food waste caddy for recycling or composting than if the same waste is put in the general rubbish bin. There's lots of advice on how to reduce food waste and information on how it is recycled at www.recycleforoxfordshire.org.uk/lovefoodhatewaste



County Councillor David Nimmo Smith, Cabinet member for Environment, said: *"It is as easy to recycle food waste as it is to throw it in the main rubbish bin – but the benefits of recycling can be quite startling. Food waste collected for recycling is treated at Agrivert's anaerobic digestion plants in Oxfordshire, and used to generate enough electricity for over 9,000 homes, as well as making fertiliser for use on local farms."*

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UNITARY UPDATE

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 could work. The full proposal can be found online at www.oneoxfordshire.org. Since then, there have been meetings with the Leaders of South Oxfordshire and Vale Districts Councils and it has been agreed that the three councils will move forward with a joint proposal for a single unitary council across Oxfordshire. A statement has been issued to parish councils.

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