

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

COUNCIL BUDGET

The council's initial proposals for the 2019/2020 budget will be reviewed by the Performance Scrutiny Committee during December. A key element is the plan to invest up to £120m in roads and schools – a 'growth dividend' as more households mean more Council Tax revenue in future years. Tough decisions in the past have created a route to financial stability at a time when other councils face financial threats. There are new 'Transformation' plans being developed to completely redesign the council to reduce running costs. Making financial savings will enable OCC to support the growing number of vulnerable children and adults – more vulnerable children are coming into council care, both locally and nationally, creating financial pressures. Protecting children remains OCC's top priority.

HOUSING AND GROWTH DEAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAMME

The Oxfordshire Growth Board has published details of the infrastructure projects to receive funding in Year 1 and Years 2-5 of the Oxfordshire Housing & Growth Deal, signed in April 2018. The total £150 million of Growth Deal funding has been earmarked for specific projects. This forward funding is helping unlock projects that will benefit from developer contributions, delivering schemes valued at over £480 million in total, excluding costs of the major rail projects, which are still to be confirmed. The following projects will have a direct impact on this Division:

Year 1 Infrastructure Projects

Watlington relief road

Construction of a relief road for Watlington providing an alternative route from the B4009 east and B4009 west, respectively to the west and north of the parish. This will provide a long term solution to air quality problems in Watlington; an alternative route for LGVs and HGVs. This, in turn, will help create better conditions for walking and cycling in Watlington and improve bus journey times. By providing improved highway infrastructure the scheme releases capacity to support housing growth in Watlington and the surrounding area. Approximately 400 dwellings are planned and allocated through the neighbourhood plan to be delivered in the next 7 years. The project will be part funded by the development.

District: South Oxfordshire

Estimated Growth Deal spend: £1,200,000

Full cost of scheme: £12,000,000

Benson relief road

The relief road will provide traffic with an alternative route from the A4074 and B4009 to the north of the village, particularly for HGVs. There will also be capacity improvements at the A4074/Church Road junction and improved pedestrian and cycle facilities in and through Benson. The road will help unlock development sites to the north of the village along the new route, delivering around 600 new homes, with the Growth Deal forward funding enabling the work ahead of significant developer contributions.

District: South Oxfordshire

Estimated Growth Deal spend: £1,200,000

Full cost of scheme: £12,000,000

OCC CALLS FOR PUBLIC INQUIRY ON THAMES WATER'S RESERVOIR PLAN

Residents' interests come first – that was the resolute message from OCC last month as its cabinet called for a public inquiry on Thames Water's plans for a new reservoir. The council has concerns about the size and need for the proposed reservoir to the southwest of Abingdon, between Steventon, East Hanney and Marcham. It is also concerned about the length of time Thames Water has set itself to reduce leakages. Further clarity is sought from Thames Water on whether other potential sites have been fully assessed across the southeast region. Only when these details are provided in the form of a regional water resource plan for the south east, will the council be able to decide on whether to back the principle of having a reservoir at this location. This is the second consultation held by Thames Water – the county council and others demanded earlier this year that a further consultation should take place and Thames Water agreed to this in the summer.

HIGHWAYS DEFECTS UPDATE

As reported last month, the county council has increased the amount of relatively small-scale work it does to put right local roads that are suffering from potholes, cracks and worn out tarmac. The number of completed defect repairs between January and October this year is 37,219.

SALTING, GRITTING AND SNOW CLEARANCE

December 1st marks the start of meteorological winter. Live updates on gritting and snow clearing can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/street-maintenance-z/salting-and-snow-clearance> Details about how community groups can request salt bins can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/street-maintenance-z/salt-and-grit-bins>

WINTER IN OXFORDSHIRE

OCC provides a useful guide about how to keep safe, how to be healthy and how to be prepared during the winter months. It can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/node/2782>

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

Lastly, it just remains for me to join OCC Leader Ian Hudspeth in thanking all Parish Councillors for their hard work over the last year and wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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

Kind regards



Steve Harrod
County Councillor
Chalgrove & Watlington Division
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Oxfordshire County Council
M: 07944 077 209
T: 01844 278 068
E: steve.harrod@oxfordshire.gov.uk