

# Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

## **COUNCIL PROPOSES FUTURE BUDGET FROM A RESILIENT POSITION**

OCC is planning to set a new budget having made difficult choices in previous years to manage a combination of squeezed budgets and the fact that more people need council services. Since 2010 the council has managed reductions in finances available at the same time as rises in demand for services – especially in children’s social care and adult social care. At the same time the council has in recent years been involving communities ever more in services for their locality – ranging from support for older people and those with learning disabilities to library volunteers. The net result is that the council’s finances are in a resilient position looking ahead to the 2018/19 financial year and planning for years up to 2022. The council has used its agreed vision for the future – supporting thriving people, a thriving economy and thriving communities – as the basis on which proposals have been made for the 2018/19 financial year and the plan for the three financial years which follow. Although proposed budget changes are not as extensive as in many previous years since 2010, like any organisation the council still has rising financial pressures that need to be matched by new savings so that a balanced budget can be proposed. At the time of writing, plans are based on a Council Tax rise of 4.99% (1.99% referendum limit plus 3% social care precept). However, in December, Central Government announced councils could add an additional 1%, should they so choose. This is currently under consideration. The Budget has to be approved by Cabinet, then Full Council on February 13th. The Budget consultation can be found here:

[https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Budget\\_1819/consultationHome](https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Budget_1819/consultationHome)

## **CRIMINALS TARGET PUBS AND CLUBS TO PEDDLE ILLEGAL TOBACCO**

Trading Standards are warning licensees and pub-goers to be on-the-look-out for criminals selling smuggled and counterfeit cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco. The call for vigilance follows recent research revealing that nearly half (43%) of illegal tobacco customers use pubs and clubs as their main source of supply. Cheap illegal tobacco is attractive to some smokers because it is often sold at half the price of the legal equivalent but its availability helps children to start smoking, brings communities into contact with organised criminals and undermines legitimate local businesses. In October HMRC released figures showing illegal tobacco made up 15% of all cigarettes and 28% of hand-rolling tobacco smoked in the UK. Taxpayers lost around £2.5 billion from the illicit trade in 2016-17. This money, for example, could be used to fund over 50,000 new NHS nurses for a year. Anyone with information relating to illegal tobacco being bought or sold, can report this to Trading Standards anonymously via the Illegal Tobacco Hotline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0300 999 6 999 or online at <http://www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk/>

## **1 MILLION TONNES OF RUBBISH TRANSFORMED INTO ENERGY AT ARDLEY PLANT**

OCC and its partner Viridor have marked the one millionth tonne of residual waste received at Ardley during December. The Ardley plant converts waste into electricity, rather than burying it

in landfill. It produces enough energy to power 38,000 homes and can export up to 27MW per hour of electricity to the grid.

## **SNOW GUIDE**

December saw substantial snowfall across the county. OCC has produced a useful guide for snow clearance and a copy is attached to this report.

## **4G INTERFERENCE ON FREEVIEW**

New 4G mobile services have been switched on in parts of Oxfordshire recently. 4G provides faster access to the internet on smartphones and tablets, but may cause interference to Freeview, TV received through an aerial. Signs of interference include loss of sound, a blocky picture, or a 'no signal' message.

[at800](#), a company set up under government direction, provides free support to resolve the issue for households that rely on Freeview for their TV. This ranges from providing a free filter to block the 4G signals, to in-home engineer visits. at800 offers extra support for people who are 75 years of age or older, listed blind or partly sighted, or receive any of the following benefits: personal independence payments (PIPs); attendance allowance; constant attendance allowance or War Pensioner's Mobility Support.

Cable and satellite TV, like Sky or Virgin, won't be affected by 4G signals, but if you have cable or satellite TV and also watch Freeview, at800 can provide free filters and advice, but not in-home engineer support.

If you have noticed new interference to Freeview, get in touch with at800 to find out if it is caused by 4G.

You can contact at800 on 0808 13 13 800 (free from UK landlines and mobiles) or via [www.at800.tv/contact-us](http://www.at800.tv/contact-us). For more information, see [www.at800.tv](http://www.at800.tv).

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

Kind regards



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