

OCC report to Henley on Thames Annual Town Meeting April 2017

Key County Issues

Unitary Government

At the end of March the new joint proposal for a single Unitary Council for Oxfordshire was submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government, DCLG. This was endorsed by OCC and both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils. This is an exciting opportunity for a new form of local government where strategic and core roles are carried out more efficiently - with a projected saving of £400k per week which can be put to improving existing stretched services - and allowing the devolution of roles and responsibilities to those Towns and Parishes who wish them. Bringing government closer to the people and away from perceived remote District and County Councils. No decision from DCLG is expected for a couple of months. Full details can be found on www.better-oxfordshire.org

Social Care costs

The rising cost of social care is a problem for most Councils and OCC is particularly hard hit. Government allowed Councils to set a 5% council tax increase over the next 2 years to partly offset these increasing costs. Life expectancy is continuing to rise meaning that more resources will continue to be needed to fund this. The County council tax rose 5%, with 3% of this to directly fund adult social care.

Daytime Support Services

OCC is rolling out a new daytime support arrangement which will allow older people and people with disabilities to live independently in their communities. This includes a guaranteed core service for people who require daytime support, alongside financial support to enable community-based services to continue to flourish. People with 'assessed needs' who receive assistance from OCC's adult social services will continue to receive support. There will be additional funding:

- £550k in a transition fund for voluntary sector providers who receive grant funding from OCC
- £100k on fundraising support for the voluntary sector
- £350k grant pot for the 47 community based daytime support services

Carers set to continue to receive personal budgets

OCC currently provides personal budgets of between £200 and £600 per year to more than 1800 people who provide care to relatives and others. An additional £400k is being directly invested in preserving the Dementia Service which supports 120 people in Oxfordshire.

Highway maintenance

Over the last few years, with stretched highways maintenance budgets, carrying out routine road repairs has been a challenge. There have been pavement, gully, drainage and road repairs carried out across the town and at the end of the winter period the highway network is in need of most repair. The repair schedule enables funding and resources to be spread across the year so that the network is in its best condition before the onset of the next winter. This has been a national issue for decades. In Oxfordshire, £160m is needed to bring the highway up to motorway standard and £20m per year to keep it at that level. The current maintenance budget is less than £20m.

Chilterns Court

To allow the Townlands redevelopment business case to succeed, OCC entered into an arrangement to relocate the Chilterns End Care Home to the Townlands site. Chilterns Court is now open and keeps NHS beds on the site. An integral part of the care village in the centre of the town. OCC is looking to dispose of the old Care Home site and this is allocated for mixed housing in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Children's Centre

OCC has worked hard with the Henley community about much valued and much needed children's facilities in Henley. A transition grant of £21,900 has been given to Nomad/D:2, and their business plan shows that they aim to be self sufficient next year. It is important to be aware that the OCC statutory duty to vulnerable and neglected children - and their families - will continue, working within the local community as outreach from the County Hubs.

David Nimmo Smith

1 April 2017