# COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS – FEBRUARY 2020 BY LORRAINE LINDSAY-GALE

## County Council budget offers Oxfordshire residents new investment in social services, schools and roads

Proposals for an "investment budget" to reduce neglect, ill-health and social isolation will be considered by councillors when Oxfordshire County Council sets its budget on Tuesday 11 February, following resident and business consultation.

The proposals include community support for vulnerable people so they can live independently for longer, and more help for struggling families to reduce the chances of children having to go into care.

Funding for children and adult social services would increase by **£30 million** next year, including an extra £8.1 million from the government. This money is needed to support an increase in adult social care needs for both older and disabled people, as well as the increasing number of child protection cases, which has grown in line with national trends.

The budget proposals also include investment in infrastructure across the county, such as an extra **£50 million** for new and existing schools over ten years. Most of the funding comes from housing developers to meet the need for more pupil places in Oxfordshire.

The county council proposes to spend **£30 million** in 2020/21 from its capital budget on repairs to roads, bridges, drainage and footways across Oxfordshire's towns and villages, with major schemes scheduled in Banbury, Abingdon and Witney.

New funding of **£3 million** per year is proposed to improve local road safety and accessibility, including new pedestrian crossings, improved junctions and better bus stop facilities. These measures are designed to encourage walking and cycling as part of the council's commitment to improving air quality and active lifestyles.

Responding to climate change features prominently across budget proposals, including support for sustainable travel such as improving park and ride services on the A40, and the replacement of over 50,000 streetlights with energy-efficient LEDs. However all budget proposals have to consider the climate change agenda and how the county council will meet its carbon neutral target by 2030.

## Go ahead for full business case for project to reduce congestion into and around Oxford

Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council cabinets have approved plans to develop a detailed business case for a project to reduce congestion on routes into and around Oxford, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions.

The aim of "Connecting Oxford" is to make a real improvement to journey times for commuters, other travellers and quality of life for residents and visitors, including improved air quality.

This will be done by reducing the number of cars travelling into and around the city and encouraging more people to travel by buses, walking and cycling. The business plan was informed by a survey run in autumn 2019 on an outline of possible proposals. Over 3000 responses were received from residents, employers and other major city organisations including the NHS and universities.

The plans include:
- Three new bus gates at Worcester Street, Thames Street and St Cross Road/South Parks Road to reduce the number of motor vehicle trips which pass through the city centre
- In the eastern arc of Oxford, an area that covers north, east and south-east Oxford inside the ring road
- A Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) is proposed across the eastern arc,
- Benefits to employers and staff include sustainable travel improvements and parking management; discounts on bus fares, park & ride buses and parking and discounts on bike purchases

Revenue from the WPL will also provide a locally controlled source of funding to be used for new and improved bus services as well as funding for additional Park & Ride capacity and better walking and cycling routes. There will also be a significant and rapid expansion of Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) across Oxford, including nine new CPZ areas.

Plans to go ahead with the steps included in the study will be open to further input by the public, business, employers and other city organisations to address concerns and technical details. This includes the creation of a 'Connecting Oxford Partnership', involving several employers within the proposed WPL zone, to help shape the proposals.

Further public engagement work will be carried during the rest of 2020, with the next public consultation expected to take place in winter 2020/21.


## New community library opens in Barton as part of the County Council's commitment to the service

A new community library has opened in the Barton area of Oxford as part of a community-led project between Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and the Barton Community Association. The new community library is another sign of Oxfordshire County Council's commitment to its library service, with 44 libraries now serving communities across the county and a home library service supporting those unable to get out to their local branch. Botley Library will also move to a new home in the West Way development in February.

Despite the pressure to make saving across local government, with the support of residents and volunteers, Oxfordshire libraries remain open to serve all and at the heart of their communities.

**New online waste information tool launched to help boost recycling rates**

A new online tool has been launched by the council to help tackle the main issue inhibiting residents doing better at recycling; information. The new tool called Waste Wizard offers comprehensive information on what can and cannot be recycled, where to deposit it or if it can be repurposed or donated.

Waste Wizard uses postcodes and allows residents to identify what to do with a huge range of household objects and materials to avoid them being disposed of based on location. It works across all areas of the county, irrespective of district. It aims to inform residents of where and how to get some objects repaired or donated as well as recycled at local authority sites or from the kerbside. Oxfordshire has a commanding lead position in England for recycling with over 58 per cent of all waste is reused, composted or recycled in compared to the national rate of 45 per cent.

The online tool can be found at: [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard](www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wastewizard)