**REPORT TO THE FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gt. Coxwell, Littleworth, Lt. Coxwell)**

FROM YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR

**FEBRUARY-MARCH 2015**

**It has been a busy month with 37 meetings, radio interviews and a TV interview regarding the “Big Plan” which has been out for consultation. The “Big Plan” is the future strategy for Learning Disability. When this went out to consultation last year, I also undertook both TV and Radio interviews on the proposals. We have listened to concerns from those who have taken part in the consultation process, the workshops and public meetings and there will be changes to the proposal going forward. This is now in preparation to come to Cabinet for final decision and ratification.**

**THE ANNUAL BUDGET**

On the 17th February, Oxfordshire County Council met to discuss and agree its annual budget.

From 2010 to the end of 2015, the council will have achieved savings of £204 million, and savings are set to reach £292 million. The Council relies on grants from Central Government and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer indicating a further £49 billion reduction for Whitehall departments; Councillors expect a need for further savings.

With this in mind, the Authority has decided that the council tax will rise but that it will be kept low at 1.99%, equivalent to 46p a week for a Band D property. We have also begun investigating the potential for savings from a Unitary Authority and agreed to remove the position of Chief Executive as soon as this is legally possible.

The County Council has reduced the number of directors by 50% and senior management by 40% alongside an overall staff reduction of 30% but we remain committed to delivering the Living Wage for our lowest paid staff.

We are fortunate to have a real boost to the transport network and economic growth from the investment of millions of pounds in the City Deal and work with our partners at the Local Enterprise Partnership.

All Councillors have listened to comments from stakeholders and the Leader and Cabinet have been as transparent as possible with opposition leaders and taken on board comments from the Performance Scrutiny Committee. Following consultation, Councillors have decided to reinstate the £70,000 required for Community Action Groups.

Can I please confirm that we as an Authority, and most importantly my own Portfolio of Adult Social Care, fulfil our statutory duties and we will continue to meet individuals eligibility criteria for social care services.

**SERIOUS CASE REVIEW INTO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Oxfordshire County Council fully accepts the findings of the serious case review into child sexual exploitation and apologises that the child protection system failed to prevent horrific abuse of six girls.

The Independent Serious Case Review into Child Sexual Exploitation in Oxfordshire was published on Tuesday 3 March 2015 by the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. The serious case review followed **a trial in 2013 in which seven men were imprisoned for a total of 95 years for their crimes which took place from 2005-2011.**

**The conclusions of the report follow on from an inspection by children’s services inspectorate Ofsted in 2014, which rated Oxfordshire’s child protection system as ‘good’ and described its approach to tackling child sexual exploitation as ‘high quality’.**

Jim Leivers, Oxfordshire County Council’s Director for Children, Education and Families, said:

“If we knew then what we know now about the grooming process, this would have been stopped much sooner. Before Operation Bullfinch people didn’t believe something this horrible could happen. We are under no illusions about child sexual exploitation now.

“This was organised crime on a massive scale that we had not seen before. Girls were systematically groomed to think their abusers were their boyfriends. Social workers tried to protect individuals, as the Serious Case Review acknowledges.

“However, in some cases children were treated as wayward teenagers consenting to sex. That was wholly wrong. Our whole approach has now changed – children are believed, we can spot the signs of grooming and sexual exploitation and the Kingfisher team embodies that huge change.

In addition to setting up Kingfisher, other action taken to tackle child sexual exploitation in Oxfordshire includes:

• 7500 staff now trained to spot warning signs of CSE and take action – including police, teachers, care workers

• Around 18,000 school children seen drama about child sexual exploitation and discussed the risks of grooming in class

• School nurses in every secondary school with role in identifying children at risk

• Building four new children’s homes to keep most vulnerable children in Oxfordshire

**PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT PRAISES OXFORDSHIRE SCHOOL NURSE PROGRAMME**

A joint report by Public Health England and the Local Government Association has outlined the achievements of councils since responsibility for public health returned to local authorities.

The report, ‘Local leadership, new approaches: how new ways of working are helping to improve the health of local communities’ uses Oxfordshire County Council as its key example for promoting public health in schools and now other local authorities are taking note of our innovative approach.

When the County Council took over responsibility for commissioning the school nursing service from the NHS, the Cabinet decided it wanted something altogether more ambitious: a dramatic ramping up of the service to promote public health in a way that hadn’t been tried before, throughout all of Oxfordshire’s secondary schools. The vision was not only to expand the service but to ensure nurses were really part of the fabric of the schools.

“We thought the school nurses should be part of head-teachers’ teams, and that they should develop plans that responded to the specific needs of each school .

*The report can be viewed at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/407060/2014712\_Local\_leadership.pdf*

**CONSULTATION ON CONNECTING OXFORDSHIRE OPENS**

Oxfordshire County Council is inviting the public, businesses and stakeholders to contribute to the final consultation for Connecting Oxfordshire.

Connecting Oxfordshire sets out the council’s ambitions for transport improvements across the county to 2031, over which time up to 100,000 new homes and 85,000 new jobs are likely to be created.

The plan features a range of short, medium and long term solutions for road, rail, bus, cycle and foot, which have been shaped by discussions over the last year. This includes the Oxford Transport Strategy, which sets out ambitious plans for transport in and around Oxford city, including looking at mass transit solutions like rapid bus services along strategic routes, integrating transport modes by transforming the park and ride network and making it easier to cycle by introducing cycle super routes across the city.

There are also strategies aimed at all the main conurbations across the county including Witney, Bicester and Banbury as well as plans for the Science Vale and key strategic routes like the A40 and the A420. I have been working hard to raise the profile of this particular road – with the proposed developments along the A420 corridor from Swindon, the Faringdon Division through to the city of Oxford there will be even more daily traffic and commuter times will see huge increases in traffic flows as school children are delivered to school and adults make their way to work. Many folk will live in Swindon (a cheaper housing area), and commute for work into Oxfordshire to Science Vale/Harwell/Culham/Abingdon/Wantage and Oxford City

**The consultation closes on 2nd April.**

*To read and respond to the consultation please look at:* [*https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/connecting-oxfordshire*](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/connecting-oxfordshire)

**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

At its meeting on 17th February, the Council agreed to make the post of Chief Executive redundant. There have, however, been questions regarding the process from Councillors. The Leader of the Council, Cllr Ian Hudspeth, still believes the Council can operate effectively without a Chief Executive but **is to review the process before action is taken.**

*The Leader has provided a statement which can be viewed at:* [*https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/statement-chief-executive-position-council-leader*](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/statement-chief-executive-position-council-leader)

**OXFORDSHIRE CHOSEN FOR NEW FOSTER CARE SUPPORT SCHEME**

Oxfordshire County Council is one of just eight authorities to benefit from a £1.6m Government grant to develop support ‘hubs’ for foster families, with dedicated workers offering respite care, peer support and social activities.

The innovative ‘Mockingbird Family Model’ was first developed in the United States where it was shown to be successful in improving outcomes for looked-after-children. The scheme is now being piloted in the UK, and will be delivered by leading fostering charity Fostering Network.

*More information at:* [*https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/oxfordshire-chosen-new-foster-care-support-scheme*](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/oxfordshire-chosen-new-foster-care-support-scheme)

**NEW £5.1 MILLION DEAL WILL DELIVER HIGH-SPEED FIBRE BROADBAND TO THOUSANDS MORE HOMES AND BUSINESSES ACROSS OXFORDSHIRE**

Around 6,500 additional homes and businesses across Oxfordshire will be able to receive high-speed fibre broadband following additional £5.1 million funding announced today.

The project will extend the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire partnership roll-out which began connecting the first homes and businesses to faster fibre broadband just over a year ago.  Since then it has enabled more than 30,000 premises to have access to high-speed fibre broadband.

The partnership is part of the Government’s Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme, which today announced two million homes and businesses around the country are now able to connect to superfast broadband as a result of BDUK.

*More information at:* [*https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/new-%C2%A351-million-deal-will-deliver-high-speed-fibre-broadband-thousands-more-homes-and*](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2015/feb/new-%C2%A351-million-deal-will-deliver-high-speed-fibre-broadband-thousands-more-homes-and)

I hope that you find this general report on the business of the County Council useful ? As a County Councillor and Cabinet Member I have a wide remit, from attending the usual full Council and full Cabinet meetings, to attending Informal Cabinet, taking Delegated Decisions for Adult Social Care, Cabinet Members Briefings, discussion with Oxford University Health Trust as an appointed Governor of their Board and I have substituted in the last month for Cabinet Colleagues - Cllr. Hilary Hibbert-Biles, Cabinet Member for Public Health and the Voluntary Sector for her Delegated Decisions on the “Chill Out Fund”, and I have substituted too for the Leader, Cllr Ian Hudspeth at the Induction session for new staff. I have Chaired the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Scheme, which is the joining of Buckinghamshire, Royal Berkshire and Oxfordshire’s Fire Authorities control rooms to be sited at Calcot – RBFRS HQ. The “go live” for this tri-service control room is 25th March 2015. (I kept this role, after the changing of my Portfolio in May 2013 from Community Safety to Adult Social Care. It was felt with my experience of the Fire Service that it would be best if I saw this project through to a successful conclusion). I am a Governor on the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and the meeting on 4th March is held in Thame. Discussion at this meeting is focussed on more integration of Adult Social Care and Health, Outcomes Based Contracting and Finance of Health and the Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, plus up dated reports are given from ancillary committees. I have also in the last month since writing my report undertaken both a Radio and a TV interview which was related to the Learning Disability “Big Plan” and I’ve had a letter published in the Oxford Mail with regard to the Care Act. Oxfordshire County Council is an exemplar of good practice with regard to the implication work for the Care Act and Surrey County Council’s Director for Social Services and their lead member visited us to see how we are taking the work forward ready for when the Care Act is implemented in April 2015.

I would advise that the atrocious service delivery at a near fatal accident in April 2013 on the Snowswick Lane and my constant agitation with South Central Ambulance Service seems to have had some minor success. SCAS have attended a Coleshill Parish Council meeting to explain the 90 minute delay in attending the accident, I have spoken twice at two Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny meetings about the poor service. The JtHOSCS have invited SCAS to attend their next meeting to present to the committee on their failings and SCAs is to improve their service! The Oxford Mail published an apology from SCAS on 20th February some 10 months after the Coleshill accident!!

I shall be Chairing the Faringdon Area Traffic Advisory meeting on Friday 6th March at 0930 in the Old Town Hall Faringdon and I shall be holding my monthly county Councillor’s surgery on Saturday 7 March at 100-1130hrs in the Faringdon Library.

Judith Heathcoat

C/Cllr Faringdon Division

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