**REPORT TO THE FARINGDON DIVISION (Buckland, Buscot, Coleshill, Eaton Hastings, Faringdon, Gainfield, Gt Coxwell, Littleworth and Lt Coxwell FEBRUARY 2018**

**FROM CLLR Judith Heathcoat**

**GENERAL OCC REPORT AND FARINGDON DIVISION**

**COUNCILLOR PRIORITY FUND KEY PART OF BUDGET PROPOSALS**

A key proposal for the upcoming Oxfordshire County Council Budget is to have a Councillor Priorities Fund – all County Councillors will have a £15k fund each to support parish council Highways needs and community group projects. In addition, the county council is choosing to prioritise children’s social care with £1.9m extra being put in to this service. Overall this means £8.5m is being added to the budget for children’s social care in 2018/19. This follows the central government announcement in late December that it would allow councils to raise council tax by an additional 1% primarily to address financial pressures in children’s social care. Earlier in December the council had proposed a 1.99% Council Tax, with an additional 3% precept for adult social care bringing the total proposed rise to 4.99% the same as last year. The additional 1% that has now been allowed would take the total rise for 2018/19 to 5.99%, with a proposed 2.99 % rise in 2019/20. Other calls on funding include the local government national pay settlement where a total of £2.9m extra is required over 2018/19 (£1.4m) and 2019/20 (£1.5m) for staff pay across all of its services, including employees such as librarians, care workers for vulnerable children and adults, highways staff, trading standards, the Registration Service etc. OCC is able to fund this from reserves over these two years. The Budget proposals go to Full Council on February 13th.

**GROWTH DEAL**

As detailed in the December report, the Oxfordshire Growth Board\* has reached an outline Housing and Growth Agreement (Growth Deal) with Government. This will see an additional £215m of investment over the next five years to build infrastructure, support the delivery of new homes and boost economic productivity across the county. This breaks down as: £30m pa for five years for infrastructure; £60m for affordable homes across the county; and £5m to develop a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP). The Board wants the five-year deal to be the first stage in a sustained partnership with Government to secure the ongoing investment needed to deliver properly planned growth and economic development over the coming years. This will support councils to achieve the ambition of 100,000 new homes across the county over the period 2011-2031, as identified through the 2014 countywide Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Plans. During the period of development all planning authorities will have their five-year land supply requirement reduced to a three-year land supply with that condition in place for the first three years of the new JSSP. The Growth Deal is coming to the stage that it will soon go through the six councils’ democratic processes to be agreed.

\*The Oxfordshire Growth Board comprises the six councils: Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council, together with the county’s Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP).

**CARILLION: OCC AGREES EXIT DEAL AFTER COMPANY COLLAPSE**

OCC has formally terminated its contract with Carillion LGS Limited effective from 1 February 2018, following the collapse of the parent company. This brings forward the already agreed end of the contract set for the end of June 2018. OCC made a net payment of £10.65m to Carillion to cover work already completed as part of the final settlement to end the contract with the company. Carillion provided services on behalf of OCC including school meals and cleaning; maintenance of council buildings; property services, and building work such as school extensions. Carillion staff in OCC’s maintained schools who contracted their services via OCC will be transferred to OCC under staff transfer arrangements known as ‘TUPE’, and services will continue as normal. Services previously provided by Carillion to the county council will continue through a mix of bringing staff in-house (e.g. school meals, cleaning); continuing with suppliers (mainly catering), and working with existing sub-contractors (mainly construction and property services). Like every other Carillion customer, OCC is now working out the most cost-effective way to complete work left unfinished by Carillion. OCC will now take over direct responsibility for commissioning future construction work and service delivery. County council officers are reviewing the uncompleted works under the Carillion contract and talking to sub-contractors about the best way forward. Carillion sub-contractors and suppliers will be financially exposed to the collapse in Oxfordshire, as is happening across the country. OCC is establishing a process to assess, on a case-by-case basis, the impact on companies in the Carillion supply chain involved in providing county council services such as building maintenance.

**NEW FUNDING BOOSTS SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN**

Extra funding to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) living in Oxfordshire has been received by the county council. A government grant worth £335,000 has been awarded to help strengthen the support services available to UASCs over the next two years. It is part of a wider [national funding announcement of £29million](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/29-million-extra-to-boost-councils-support-for-vulnerable-children). OCC has the same responsibilities for looking after UASCs arriving in the county as it does for all other children and young people in care. Young asylum-seekers are among the most vulnerable groups in society – often with no connections or family in the UK, little spoken English and having made long and traumatic journeys. The new money is not for covering the cost of care placements themselves, but for additional support to help UASCs adjust to living in the county, and integrate with local communities. The council currently looks after 52 UASCs. These young people have predominantly travelled from Afghanistan, Albania and Eritrea.

Since the beginning of this year I have been visiting, with the Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officers fire stations in the County. It is rewarding and interesting meeting both the whole time and the retained fire fighter crews. It gives staff the opportunity to question me on County Council policies and strategies in an informal atmosphere over a cup of tea. My last station visit was to meet the Fire Cadet company at Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ in Kidlington. Several of the group in their mid-teens have already decided on becoming firefighters for a career. I never cease to be continually impressed with the staff of OFRS who have a superb “can do ethic”.

I have attended a plethora of meetings many of which will have a far-reaching influence across the whole county and thus the Faringdon Division. I have attended Performance Scrutiny and been “scrutinised” by councillors on the work for the Corporate Plan that I have led on and I have chaired various meetings. One such meeting is a working party examining the Governance of the County Council. A group of us visited Cambridgeshire to see the governance process of this County Council and will be will visiting other authorities – the next visit being Nottinghamshire. I have had my usual 1:1’s with senior officers – the CFO, the Head of HR, the Chief Executive, the Director of Environment and Economy and UNISON. These individual meetings insure that I am fully informed and of course allow for an exchange of knowledge and ideas.

This last month there has been the Faringdon and Wantage Locality meeting. This meeting is held on a bi-monthly basis and takes place in venues across the Faringdon and Wantage geographic area. This time the meeting was held in Gt. Coxwell. On the agenda there were applications from communities across the locality for funds to support community schemes. The locality has 6 county councillors sitting on it and this is has political proportionality. There are 4 Conservatives, 2 Lib Dems no Labour as we do not have a Labour County Councillor in this locality. I am pleased to advise that the bids made in the Faringdon Division for financial support were successful in their applications.

* Faringdon Town Council will received a total of £2,875 for the purchase of mobile CCTV units and for Communities work.
* Farcycles will receive £2,500 for an innovative project to equip young people with the skills to become good cyclists and traffic aware. This project is particularly aimed at youngsters who may have physical disabilities where exercise on a cycle will help co-ordination.
* Gt Coxwell £2,000 to support work that is part of a wider project to improve connectivity for walkers/cyclists/school children and adults to walk from the village to the bus stop on the Coxwell Road the current pathway is an earth track behind the local stables.

I have attended my local parish meetings this last month but, would advise that if you have a concern or problem you can reach me on 01367 241468, or Judith.heathcoat@oxfordshire.gov.uk or at my surgery held in the Faringdon library from 1000-1130hrs on the first Saturday monthly. The next surgery will be on 3rd March 2018.

Judith Heathcoat

C/Cllr Faringdon Division

Deputy Leader – Oxfordshire County Council

February 2018