Parish Report

Well done to the Woodstock Town Mayor, Cllr Brian Yoxall, for organising the snow clearance in the town centre. Once the snow had fallen, Brian made sure there was a group of volunteers ready with snow shovels and the grit spreader, to ensure footpaths in the town centre were kept clear. The job didn’t take too long but would have been even quicker with additional help so please contact Brian if you are willing to join his group of volunteers. I’m pleased to say that Robert Courts has followed in Brian’s footsteps and organised a similar scheme in Bladon, again volunteers will be more than welcome. The County Council aims to clear around 43% of the road network in the County. During the recent bad weather the gritters were out throughout the night, sometimes doing 2 or 3 runs to clear the roads. Full details of the routes they take can be found on the County Council’s website.

The Cabinet proposal for the budget is to have a below inflation rise of 1.99%, which represents an increase of 44p per week for a band D property. I must admit that I would have preferred a freeze on Council Tax but this modest increase will mean we will not have to make unacceptable cuts to council spending. This process followed the government announcement of a £17 million reduction in our grant this year, meaning that we have to make an additional £46 million saving in the coming 4 years. Since 2010 we have taken £127 million out of the budget and this year we are saving £27 million. So over the period 2010 /11 to 2016/17 we will take out £200 million from the budget. Despite these savings we have kept all 43 libraries open, along with the 44 children’s centres and we are about to invest more money into child protection. Producing a balanced budget and maintaining the services that residents want is a very difficult task and I would like to thank the County Council’s finance team for all the hard work they have put into preparing the budget.

The County Council, along with the City and other Districts, were 1 of 20 regions that were invited to bid for a City Region deal. The bid that we put in is based around Oxford’s knowledge-base as we have 2 Universities and the best teaching hospital in the world. The aim of the bid is to ensure that any spin-off companies started in Oxford then have the ability to grow within Oxfordshire to boost economic growth. One of the biggest obstacles is the transport infrastructure in the County. We want to use the uplift in business rates to assist in providing much needed development. One of the aims is to use the money to bid for additional funding to provide a link road from the A40 to the Peartree roundabout. This would relieve pressure on the Wolvercote roundabout, allowing traffic to move along the A40 reducing journey time. This would have the advantage of reducing the traffic on the A4095 relieving pressure in the villages. The bid has been submitted to Government and we should know if we are successful in mid-February

Congratulations to the staff and pupils of Woodstock Junior School for winning a prestigious Eco Schools Green Flag award, which is a great achievement.

Eco Schools is an internationally recognised awards programme that enables schools to embed sustainable practices into everyday school life. It fits seamlessly into the National Curriculum and provides interesting, relevant and fun opportunities for pupils and staff.

Ian Hudspeth

07956 270 318

www:ianhudspeth.com