Parish Report

The big event in February was the budget; my natural instinct is to cut or freeze tax, however I also have to produce a sustainable 4 year Medium Term Financial Plan. The last 2 years have seen an additional government grant to freeze council tax, they then drop out of the base budget in 2014/15. Over the last 3 years central government have reduced the support grant by 32%.  If we'd taken a 3rd freeze grant we would face a hole in the budget in that year, resulting in more and deeper cuts, something that the residents of Oxfordshire would not wish to see. We consulted with a cross section of the public during the autumn and full details can be found on the website at Oxfordshire Voice. One of the results was that 75% thought a below inflation rise was acceptable. This is what we put forward, a rise of 44p per week for a band D property.

The Liberal Democrat party agreed with the increase and proposed some additional spending via hard to achieve savings. The Labour party did not put forward any financial proposals, only a motion asking me to write to the government. The Green party proposed an increase of 3.75%.

The amendments were not supported and the Cabinet budget was passed. A full copy of my budget speech is on my website. I'm pleased to say that the Councillor Community budgets were included in the budget with each councillor having £10,000 to assist projects, available after May.

The other good news for the County was the acceptance of the Oxford/Oxfordshire City region bid. We now have up to 9 months to provide details of how we are going to grow Oxfordshire. This will mean significant improvements to the infrastructure. One of the key aims from my view is to sort out the Peartree/Wolvercote/A40 junction along with the A34 in general. By freeing up the junction it would improve the flow of traffic along the A40 reducing the amount along the A4095. I will be working closely with all my City and District colleagues as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership (business-led) to ensure we get the best deal for Oxfordshire. Having the view of business on board is vital to ensure we get the balance of development and housing along with the correct infrastructure.

Ian Hudspeth

07956 270 318

www:ianhudspeth.com