**PARISH REPORT JULY 2015**

Since 2010, Oxfordshire County Council has saved £204 million, with a further £88 million of savings to be made by 2018. A report to Cabinet on 26th May stated that there could be another £50 - £60 million of saving to be found. We should have more clarity on this figure after the Budget on 8th July. This will be a challenge to the County Council, with the increasing pressure on both adult and children’s social care; currently around 50% of the budget is spent on just 2% of the population.

Joanna Simons will be stepping down as Chief Executive in September. in order that the Council can carry out a review of senior management arrangements. The aim is to reduce costs in the light of further funding cuts announced by the government.

Earlier this year the Council had a series of robust debates about whether to remove the post but concluded that a permanent change required further consideration. Following further cross party discussion, it has been decided to put an interim arrangement in place pending a senior management review. The Council has reached an amicable agreement with Joanna to step down so this can take place.

She has steered the Council successfully through unprecedented changes in local government and leaves the Council in very good shape to meet the challenges ahead. In my time as Leader, I have valued her wise counsel and ability to look ahead, which ensured that we have been able to prepare for difficult times and take opportunities. I would like to thank her personally for that advice and support and wish her the very best for the future.

I have to pay tribute to the Finance team as the final out turn for the 2014/15 year was an underspend of £0.196m on a budget of £424,185m; this is an impressive achievement despite all the pressures that were on the budget.

The good news is that there has still been investment in Highways with a capital expenditure for 2014/15 year of £43.1m. This was £17.8m higher than in 2013/14. Major projects completed include Kennington Interchange, Witney Ducklington/Station Lane Junction, Oxford London Road, A4130 Bix dual carriageway and A420 Shrivenham Bypass. With

£14.8m spent on highways structural maintenance programmes.

At the July Cabinet meeting Connecting Oxfordshire, the Local Transport Plan for 2015 – 2031, will be considered following public consultation. Also the Business Case for delivering the A40 bus lane scheme and developing the long-term A40 strategy will be considered.

Currently consultation is taking place regarding Supported Transport Services which includes proposals for service changes to subsidised bus services and Dial-a-Ride.

The Council needs to save more than £6 million on supported transport services. We can save money by running existing services more efficiently, however that is not enough. Savings will also have to come from reducing the current £4 million a year the Council pays in bus subsidies and to run the Dial-a-Ride service. The consultation closes on 14th September and Oxfordshire County Council have asked that the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC), a not-for-profit, community development organisation, are the independent facilitator during the consultation. If you need support in commenting on the County Council’s proposals or are interested in attending one of our 5 public consultation events, please get in touch with the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council on 01865 883488 or email orcc@oxonrcc.org.uk.

There will be a summer of engagement with partners regarding the Early Intervention service and Children’s Centres; currently the budget is approximately £16m. As part of the service and resource planning process for the period 2014/15-2017/18, savings of £6 million were identified for the Early Intervention Service, to be achieved through integration with Children’s Social Care. A cross-party Cabinet Advisory Group (CAG) was established to support development of proposals to achieve a £6m budget reduction and fundamental redesign of early intervention services was agreed. This was debated at the Cabinet meeting in June, with full proposals to come back to Cabinet in September to go out for consultation.

Thank you

Ian Hudspeth