**BUDGET**

Whatever the outcome of the General Election, the settlement for Local Government will be even later than usual most likely after Christmas making this year’s budget process even harder than usual. There are still significant pressures on the largest spending areas of our budget in Adults and Children’s Social care due to extra demand. I’m sure that there will be short term proposals for next year however a longer-term funding solution needs to be found. In my role at the Local Government Association I have said that we will work cross party to help find that solution.

**CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030**

Councillors have approved plans for Oxfordshire County Council to meet its ambitious target of reducing its own carbon footprint to net zero by 2030. ‘Climate Action for a Thriving Oxfordshire’ explains how the council will reduce its own carbon emissions and supporting the environmental ambitions of others, including schools.

The county council already funds support for 65 community action groups at the forefront of community-led climate change action. The council sees the continued success of these action groups in tackling environmental issues such as waste, transport, food production and local energy generation as vital to reducing emissions in the county.

The council has started planning for major changes to improve energy efficiency and reduce travel-related carbon emissions, with a cross-party group of councillors already working on proposals for change.

The county council has already reduced its carbon emissions by nearly 50% since 2008 and has a target of making its own estate carbon neutral by 2030. You can read more about what the county council is doing and how it aims to help the county as a whole [here](https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/county-councillors-back-climate-action-plan-to-join-green-revolution-in-oxfordshire/).

**GRITTERS READY FOR THE WINTER**

Oxfordshire’s team of over 60 staff are on standby throughout the winter to turn out at all hours to make sure that the priority roads around Oxfordshire are salted and kept as safe as possible during freezing and sometimes treacherous weather.

In Oxfordshire the county council grits all A-roads, B-roads and some C-roads. This amounts to 1200 miles per gritting run which is the equivalent of travelling from London to Iceland.

There has been no change to the winter maintenance budget in recent years. The money we spend relates directly to the conditions on Oxfordshire’s roads in any given year. Last year we spent more than £1.8m gritting Oxfordshire’s roads.

**A44 & B4030**

I am working with various groups to look at safety issues on both the A44 through Woodstock and the B4040 through the Bartons. The improvements for the A44 could be delivered by working with the developers to ensure there is a safe route from Old Woodstock into the town and school. Likewise, the B4030 could benefit from developer funding to make improvements. If you have any suggestions, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

**WINTER PLAN ADVICE FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS**

Oxfordshire County Council is taking a collaborative approach with NHS partners to encourage local residents to have a personal winter plan, so they are prepared when they start to feel unwell with a cough, cold or flu. Advice to residents or friends and family of vulnerable people includes:

* Having a free NHS flu vaccination if you are eligible
* Getting help early before your condition worsens
* Getting repeat prescriptions in plenty of time before bank holidays
* Finding out where your local minor injuries unit is located
* Seeking advice from your local pharmacist and having a well-stocked medicine cabinet
* Stocking up on winter food supplies
* Getting your boiler serviced and keeping your home heated to 18C
* Having a list of emergency phone numbers handy by your phone

You can read the Public Health England leaflet ‘Keep Warm Keep Well’ which provides advice on staying well and covers financial help, healthy lifestyle, flu jabs and heating [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keep-warm-keep-well-leaflet-gives-advice-on-staying-healthy-in-cold-weather).

I wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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