The County Council set the budget 9th February with investments in key priority areas for residents despite all the challenges of the pandemic. There is £200,000 for the roll out of 20 mph speed limits for towns and villages that want to work with the council and see this as a way for safer streets. I have registered the request that all councils in the Woodstock division are part of the programme. Also, there was an additional £200,000 for drainage and vegetation clearance targeting particular areas prone to flooding. I have asked that the additional funds be targeted in areas that are prone to flooding as we recently saw over the last few months.

There is an investment of £1m long term funding in expanding the youth offer in Oxfordshire with an additional £500,000 one-off accelerator funding to develop sustainable long terms approaches and help tackle the impacts of the pandemic on young people. The Liberal Democrat County councillors voted against these proposals to invest in the future of Oxfordshire.

There was a 1.99% increase to ‘core’ council tax along with a levy of 1% for Adult Social Care making the total to 2.99%. Given the level of uncertainties, including around COVID-19, we will continue to take a cautious and measured approach towards managing our budgets. We are very conscious that the need for extra funding must be balanced against the pressures on residents' incomes during the pandemic. This is not an easy time financially, or otherwise, for businesses, residents and families.

The road resurfacing programme will be starting soon with (hopefully) the better weather. There are the following road closures, although local access with be allowed:

12th April – 15th April

The Woodstock Road in Stonesfield

Castle Road and Castle Street in Wootton

15th May – 19th May

A4095 in Bladon

The reduction in the number of COVID-19 infections is welcome news as there is then a reduction in the number of hospital admissions reducing the pressure on the NHS. The vaccination programme is being rolled out at pace and again I want to thank those helping to ensure everybody gets a jab. Oxfordshire County Council is working with its partners to assist where required and will continue to help protect vulnerable residents across the county.

The road map set out by the Government gives us a view of the way forward which is welcome news. However, we must all continue to play our part by observing the guidelines so that life can return to what will be a new normal as quickly as possible.

Cllr Ian Hudspeth

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