



**County Council
Tuesday, 9 February 2021**

ADDENDA

SECTION 1

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S OVERVIEW

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BUDGET SPEECH 2021 IDHv5

Thank you chairman

I start my speech this year by thanking all of our staff, who have worked hard this year. Last year if I had announced that all of our meeting would be virtual and that remote working would be the normal way of operating I suspect you would all thought I'd gone a step too far.

But that is the case. Our staff have adapted to the new way of working to ensure we support not just the most vulnerable in Oxfordshire but all of our residents.

Also, I would like to extend my thanks to all councillors for their hard work in each of their divisions to ensure that residents are protected as best as possible. I know we don't always agree (which might come later) but I genuinely want to thank all members for their work during this pandemic as well as the staff.

Staff has shown an amazing degree of adaptability and flexibility across the organisation during the pandemic including those who have taken on different roles, to help deliver valuable services for the council. There are many examples that I could choose however one that sticks out in my mind is librarians working at the Household Waste Recycling Centres.

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Of course not all librarians are working at Household Waste recycling Centres as Oxfordshire residents have continued to benefit from the county's home library service during the pandemic, with 8,364 library books delivered from April to December 2020. Our home library service is offered free to users in partnership with Age UK to almost 800 residents of all ages. I am pleased to say that once we are able to reopen we'll have 44 library facilities across the county.

I particularly want to thank Lorna Baxter and Hannah Doney for all their work in preparing this budget following the advice of Cllr Bartholomew.

It has been a challenging year for all areas of the council with increased expenditure due to the pandemic which meant we had to make in year changes back in September.

Central Government has provided additional funding to this council of £72 million to date for the year 20/21 with the total funding for all of Oxfordshire's 6 councils of £300 million. I thank the government for providing this additional funding that has helped us and the other councils in Oxfordshire to support residents throughout the pandemic. This funding is to ensure that in addition to contributing towards our own costs and lost income, we can support businesses, care providers, the voluntary sector, schools, individuals, vulnerable residents, homeless people to name but a few of the groups.

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This does mean we are able to propose a balanced budget not just for this year but looking forward in the Medium Term Financial strategy. This is particularly important as we work to protect Oxfordshire's residents. They want the assurance of knowing that we have a sustainable future unlike some councils who are struggling to balance their books.

We are proposing an increase of 1.99% in council tax along with an additional 1% Adults Social Care precept. We had the option to increase the precept by another 2% but we recognise that the pandemic has brought financial challenges to some of Oxfordshire's residents, so we have kept the increase to the minimum to support our services. This brings the overall increase to 2.99%

This year has highlighted the value of partnership working. I'm pleased to say that working with Cherwell District Council has not only produced savings for both councils but more importantly has improved the services that both authorities deliver to residents.

The joint working is not just restricted to Cherwell as we have worked well with the other districts to assist our residents during these difficult times.

We have joint arrangements for testing, vaccinations, homelessness across the counties.

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Joint working is not just restricted to Local Government colleagues we are working as a system with our NHS colleagues to ensure we are providing in the best possible care for our residents.

We must build on this joint working with our colleagues as we move towards an Integrated Care System which will improve the health outcomes for all residents by reducing the inequalities that exist within our current system.

When the pandemic struck there was a worldwide shortage of Personal Protection Equipment which had a major impact on the care homes across the county. Many of our care providers are small businesses without the advantage of bulk buying putting them and care workers at risk. We took the unusual step of purchasing over £1.3 million of PPE which we distributed to our schools and also, where needed, to care providers at cost to ensure they had the PPE they needed to continue to deliver services. In today's budget proposals I'm pleased to say that we are including of £1.35m for managing risks such as provider sustainability. This is part of the additional £4m that will be added to the adult social care budget for 2021/22.

As schools returned at the end of the first lock down, we provided every school with a PPE pack and we were there to provide help and support.

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The county council has been part of the joint partnership to procure and manage services for single homeless people in Oxfordshire since it was formed in 2017. A further one-off contribution to the partnership of £500,000 is proposed in the budget, and we will continue to support the partnership in future years.

We are investing £100,000 to address issues linked to digital exclusion to help reduce inequalities. This is on top of the broadband roll out which has reached 94,000 premises against a target of 64,000

Achieved coverage of 98% Superfast against a target of 90%

All this has been delivered £3M under budget

We are investing an additional £400,000 into highways targeted at key areas that residents are quite rightly concerned about

The recent flooding has caused damage to property as well as affecting resident's peace of mind, I understand the concerns of residents as I saw at first hand when I was out assisting communities within my division. The additional funds for drainage and vegetation clearance which will be targeted to higher risk areas.

The additional funds will also roll out of 20 mph speed limits in villages that want to work together to deliver lower speed limits in their communities.

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The capital programme that is before you today shows that we are investing £1.4 billion into infrastructure across the county that will help with the planned growth to deliver much needed homes especially affordable homes so that residents can look forward to a safe and secure home to live in.

These major capital projects such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund bid for Didcot continue our commitment to promoting the green agenda. We are not simply building for vehicles as first class cycle networks are built into them to encourage more residents to be able to cycle safely around the county.

Over the coming decade we are investing:

£260 million in schools

£617 million in Major Infrastructure projects

£338 Million in Highways improvements

£70 million in property improvements

£9 million in vehicle and equipment replacements with a focus on our target of being Carbon neutral by 2030

It is not just this important target for the county council that highlights our green credentials as we have already reduced carbon emissions by 40% since 2009

We already have recycling rates of almost 60% the best of any county council. The residual waste is then

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used to generate electricity for 40,000 homes with only around 2% going for landfill. Food waste generates electricity for another 10,000 homes.

We will continue our programme of replacing all of Oxfordshire's 59,000 streetlamps with energy efficient LED lights.

The park and charge programme will install 280 electric charging points in 24 car parks across the county encouraging more resident to make the switch to emission free electric vehicles.

I cannot miss out the fact that 1 of the vaccines that is helping lead us out of this pandemic was designed in Oxford proving what a dynamic environment we have; attracting some of the best brains in the world to Oxfordshire. There has been investment of £158 million to fast track a highly specialist facility that will house the manufacturing and innovation centre at Harwell Campus.

These are just 2 examples of the cutting-edge technology that our investment in Oxfordshire is helping to deliver not just for the local economy but the world economy.

We need to continue to help grow these jobs and facilities to enable our children to have a bright future.

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We are aware that the pandemic will affect many of us but in particular our young people who are having to grow up during the lockdowns which has caused disruption to their education and social isolation.

We are proposing a total of £1m long-term funding would be invested in expanding the youth offer in Oxfordshire. A study is due to report in the Spring on the needs of young people and how the wider partnership of the voluntary, community and public services can best provide support. An additional £500,000 of one-off accelerator funding will also be provided to develop sustainable long terms approaches and help tackle the impacts of the pandemic on young people.

To vote against or abstain from supporting this budget is to abandon the future of this county and abandon the future of generations to come

Despite all the financial challenges of the past year this is a budget that is investing in the future of Oxfordshire so that we will build back better

COUNCILLOR IAN HUDSPETH

Leader of the Council