

County Council – 16 February 2016

Item 9 - Service & Resource Planning - 2016/17 – 2019/20

Councillor Hudspeth Motion

Thank you Mr Chairman, it has been a very interesting day so far really, just to clarify the position I am going to be proposing the budget with the amendments as on the paper that is being put round and that is in relation to the additional funding for £1.5m with a full review of the day service for older people, put in £2m in order to insure in terms of service and geography of the needs of the children in Oxfordshire are met. Transition funding which I will talk about later. The work place charging to a full review and implications and review of Cabinet Members, then I will request a separate free vote for all councillors on whether we propose that a full and timetabled consultation for unitary government to put in place to discuss the issue on a cross party basis with district, town and parish councils with the clear aim of bringing it to fruition.

Seconded by Councillor Brighthouse

Chairman – Do I have approval of Council for this amended proposals

Full Council agreed.

Thank you Mr Chairman I hope that the time can be a little bit lacked because I might have so additional in here. Each year I have said that I hoped that the budget would be easier than last year. Sadly it never seems the case but this year it has been more interesting I must admit. The County Council faces a paradox, the county we serve is thriving, unemployment is low, new jobs are being created. At the same time the County Council has to make cuts to services that are having a real impact on people and communities, the savings we have to make are unprecedented in local government and we will need to make more savings for at least another four years and more importantly with the amendments we have just put forward.

For the County Council that means two contrasting priorities, firstly protecting the most vulnerable people in Oxfordshire that means providing services for adults who cannot look after themselves and protecting children from abuse and neglect. Secondly or other very different role is to manage growth effectively as the strategic planning and transport authority.

We have a thriving economy it is predicted that 85,000 new jobs will be created in Oxfordshire over the next 15 years with 100,000 new homes delivered by City and District Councils through their local plans. Previously residents would complain that we weren't addressing the transport needs of the County. Ironically now the complaint is that we are doing too much. We have a clear planned working programme and see the benefits already. Kennington roundabout, London Road, Frideswide Square. Work is ongoing at the Milton Interchange, Wolvercote and Cutteslowe Roundabouts, a new junction at the A34 at Chilton, Harwell/Oxford entrance. The next big challenge is the A40 including the Collingwood Road to A40

signalised junction. We have starting consulting on £100m scheme to reduce congestion, but we are looking for longing terms solution.

Back to the paradox we are all see that investment while having to cut services. The Council has been very honest in acknowledging that this budget will have a real impact on service users, we have to remove bus subsidy for bus routes which is worrying people particularly in smaller rural communities. The Council is working on an innovative scheme to provide a service using its own vehicles and will be announcing a pilot. This is about delivering more for less. Withdrawing funding from children's centres will also have an impact on some families, though we are doing everything we can to encourage communities to help centres carry on providing services. The paper going to Cabinet next week for decision reflects the fact that we have listened and adapted the proposals. The Children & Families Centres are based on families' services for both children and adults, targeting resources particularly at the most vulnerable.

We live in an era where demands placed on social care both for adult and childrens as part of a national trend growing, already half our budget is spent on just 2% of the population. The cuts that we have to make are a reflection of not just having less money but having to manage with these huge increasing in demand. It is about delivering more for less. We are now in the 6th year of cuts in the process of saving £292m from 2010-2018 fortunately we have a team who are well on top of the numbers. I would like to thank Lorna Baxter, Chief Finance Officer who has been invaluable in helping to prepare this budget. She has been enabled assisted by Katy Jurczynszyn and the rest of the team. I would also like to thank Councillor Stratford who in the second years Cabinet Member for Finance has presided over some very difficult decisions. I would also like to thank all Councillors today for being involved in the budget process particularly over the last few hours, it has been very interesting. I think actually that it shows that what the residents really want is some stability and actually working for a County Council budget rather than anything else.

We know we have to save another £69m over the next four years on top of that we have received £9m of temporary transitional funding from central government – very welcome. It was only announced last week we will create across party board of members to consider maximum benefit for the use of temporary funds across services and across geography of Oxfordshire. This fund will be for 2016/17 will total £4m with £1m allocated for creating a one off pump priming fund for one year for districts and parishes inviting them to commit more money to support children's centres. £1m for income generation pump priming also the homelessness budget should be looked alongside all budgets, day services, anything we should be looking really hard there.

It is welcome news in the Autumn we are allowed an extra 2% on Council Tax rise however, that has been eaten up by the national living wage and it's gone straight away. And if you think about the increase that we have had in home care of 63% over the last four years you can see the real challenge we have.

This means the Council will have to continue to become more efficient and really change the way we work. We must leave no stone unturned. We have reduced the

number of buildings we use, last year we left Clarendon House, this year it will be Speedwell. In previous years we vacated other properties.

Council staff are going agile, that means hot-desking so we need less office space. Working from home or the office of partner organisations. Utilising digital technology to teleconference to avoid travelling to meetings. Where office space can be used more efficiently or leased out to raise income we will do that. Where it cannot we will sell the properties investing the capital in services, Last year we joined a partnership with Hampshire County Council to reduce costs of our back office services such as finance and HR. I see more partnership working as a way forward. Two weeks ago the all Oxfordshire councils along with the Local Enterprise Partnership and Clinical Commissioning Group submitted a devolution deal. The process of agreeing that bid has shown the possibilities of all working closely together linking up particularly the Health Services and Adult Social Care. Whether the devolution bid is agreed or not our plans to joint up with Health will continue. I think we should work closer with the City and district councils particularly in respect of planning to get the maximum benefit from developers. At a much more local level we are forcing important partnerships with parish councils where the County Council is to reduce services such as verge cutting parishes have already stepped in. I hope more will do so. The use of the transitional funding received from Central Government will help us in terms of pump priming those services that communities can take on themselves. I strongly believe in communities helping themselves.

Our commitment to the Library Service can be seen in the fact that after 6 years of cuts we still have 43 libraries open thanks to the valued help of volunteers. We are placing libraries at the heart of the community by making them the digital front door to services with Wifi in all libraries. Do we have to provide those library services from exactly the same premises at present, look at the new Bicester library where the building will be shared with Cherwell District Council offering a range of Council services, the days of libraries being silent and solemn places of study are over. Is there any reason why a library couldn't be in the same building as a service for the elderly or children. A hive of activity at the heart of the community in a multipurpose building that brings people of all ages and backgrounds together could there even be a coffee shop. This is an example of how we need to think about services differently making the most of buildings already in the heart of communities. Of course people are at the heart of communities they have proven that they value the services by becoming ever more involved in them as volunteers. Volunteering in our libraries has been a success story. Volunteer transport groups are also becoming more common. Local people for some time now have been stepping up to the plate to help out because the County Council no longer has the finances that it had in 2010. Sceptics said that it couldn't happen but it is why because people want to be involved they love there town or village and want to thrive. We share that ambition, none of what the reduction in finances to be allowed to get in the way of our business. It may seem doom and gloom however we have to remember that Oxfordshire County Council will still be a very large organisation at the epicentre of life in the County we will still access the care needs of over 10,000 vulnerable people and rising. Fund long term social care for 6,500 adults, purchase a million hours a year of support as well as assessing thousands of informal cares looking after friends and families. Respond to referrals of almost 4,000 children including 1,500 protection issues. Support 600 looked after children another 600 on protection

plans. Register 20,000 births, deaths and marriages. Dispose of over 300,000 tons of waste. Respond to 5,000 fire and response incidents. Roll out superfast broadband to 95% of premises. I know that making cuts is not the reasons any of us came into local government, however we have to be pragmatic today we have shown we have been pragmatic I commend this to the Chamber.

Councillor Brighthouse second the motion.

Councillor Hudspeth summing up...

Thank you very much, I would like to thank all members who have supported the budget today it has been a challenging process especially the interesting discussions we have had. I have always been clear with the opposition parties I was willing to find a formula for an agreed budget today we are putting the residents of Oxfordshire first. I would like to thank Councillor Mallon for his input and support today and I can assure you that at every opportunity I have pressed Government regarding our financial position, what I don't do is come back and tell everybody what I do, I do it privately behind closed doors. I'm not sure any of us want to make these cuts and would really like to have real choices about the services we provide. Unfortunately we don't have that luxury we have to be pragmatic to reach a balanced budget which will mean that we can work with all the services to see how we can do things in a different manner. I mentioned in my speech earlier we cannot leave any stone unturned and we have to think differently something I have consistently said at the public meetings. As Councillor Handley has stated the plans for a fire station was in budget, one pump is planned to be moved from Chipping Norton we have shown we are all working together from this. Once again I would like to thank all the members of the public who spoke today along with members of the council I think we have come to a tremendous conclusion. Ideally I would have like to proposed a smaller increase along with some real choices however we have got to be pragmatic and realistic and that realistic vision is that next year we have a savings target of £10.374m. So don't be under any illusion that this is easy, next year are savings target it £10.374m we have got to make some tough decisions. I hope that all members will vote for the amended budget which has been agreed by the relevant financial and legal officers and the associated risks so that all residents can see we are putting their interest first and putting party politics aside. In fact there will be two votes the first will be the amended budget as per 4.22 with a review of cabinet positions and I will just clarify point 3 and I think I can see where Councillor Fooks was making the assumption if you read it, it says "this fund will be for 2016/17 a total of £4m with £1m allocated for creating a one off core pump prime for districts and parishes inviting them to commit money to support children centres which could help save and then £1m added" and I think it is the word added because it is added to the allocated amount so it is £4m total with £2m already allocated – for income generation pump priming. Homeless budget also to be considered. So I hope that has clarified that so that will be the first vote. Then the second vote will be regarding the unitary authority which we will have a debate later on rather than a debate today about it, so we can all get our facts and it will be "we propose that a full and timetabled consultation for unitary government to be put in place to discuss this issue on a cross party basis with district, town and parish councils with the clear aim of bringing it to fruition." Is that clear for everyone. I just hope that everybody supports those two motions.