

## **CABINET – 21 DECEMBER 2010**

### **ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Questions received from the following Members:

#### **1.Cllr Tanner to Cllr Hudsepth**

Does the portfolio holder agree that closing half of Oxfordshire's recycling centres will make it more difficult for residents to recycle, risks increasing fly-tipping and will increase car journeys across the county. Will he look again at keeping the popular Redbridge recycling centre, in Oxford, open to the public, as well as to trade customers. Where does he suggest residents of Bicester, Chipping Norton and Faringdon should take their waste in future?

#### **Answer:**

The phased withdrawal (over the next 3- 4 years) of waste recycling centres is possible due to the new collection services introduced across Oxfordshire.

Services at the kerbside have expanded greatly in the last year and fewer people need to visit the sites, reducing the number of trips and associated CO2 emissions. The waste collection authorities have done a tremendous job in expanded recycling services, supported by "no side waste" policies to stimulate behavioural change in the way that residents manage their waste. In addition, the work that the Oxfordshire waste partnership has done on home composting, waste reduction and re-use has seen many people utilising the community action groups, swap shops, making use of free-cycle and donating goods to charity.

The proposal to close some sites is supported by a contribution to district councils to expand and reassess bulky waste charges. There are two authorities working with the county on reuse of bulky items under a trial at present. The services at the kerbside will be regular and economically attractive, meaning that the householder will find it more attractive and cost effective to utilise the services (already passing their home), reducing CO2 emissions and knowing that their goods are following a systematic waste management process.

As for fly-tipping, residents are aware of the law and those currently legally depositing rubbish at the sites are unlikely to turn into law breaking fly-tippers, especially with the choice of services on offer at the kerbside. The proposal is also supported by a contribution to enforcement and education to mitigate any risk.

Redbridge is not fit for purpose and is in need of major investment to upgrade the road infrastructure, concrete and drainage. The Kidlington site will be closer for all those residents in the north of Oxford and will have a reuse shop to maintain the theme of the waste hierarchy, gaining value from commodities rather than labour intensive recycling. It would be very expensive to keep both sites open in the current economic climate and therefore the Kidlington

site will be the primary Oxford City facility. Residents from Bicester, Chipping Norton and Faringdon will all have a facility within their local authority area, making consistent services across the whole of Oxfordshire.

Combined with the above will be the Energy from Waste facility at Ardley, which will generate electricity for 22,000 homes. This will avoid landfill tax and LATs penalties, provide an income stream for the tax payers. To produce a similar quantity of electricity 120 wind turbines would have to be built creating a blot on the landscape of Oxfordshire."

## **2 Cllr Darke to Cllr Mitchell**

"Can the Leader tell us the number of redundancy notices already issued to County Council staff prior to Christmas 2010 and the expected number by the end of this financial year? What is the scale of other redundancy notices relating to indirectly-employed workers involved in County Council-led activities that have been issued already and the number expected to be issued by 1 April 2011? Will he also confirm the overall and anticipated cost to the council of redundancy settlements?"

### **Answer:**

67 employees have been served redundancy notices since 1 April 2010. The total cost of redundancy pay for these redundancies is £1.4 million.

The council is in the process of agreeing a budget for the forthcoming financial year whereby some services are currently proposed to undergo significant transformation. It would be inappropriate to comment on potential future redundancies at this time. Given this, it is not possible to outline any potential costs.

We do not hold information on the number of redundancy notices issued by other organisations and we would not be able to comment on any proposed redundancies for such organisations.

## **3 Cllr Hutchinson to Cllr Mitchell**

How has the Big Debate influenced the council's proposed budget, how much did the Big Debate cost (including the Big Debate t-shirts), and why nowhere in the summary of the debates is there mention of the very many people who expressed fundamental scepticism about the need for these cuts to be made, both locally and nationally?

### **Answer:**

"We gained some insight into the values different members of the public place on different County Council services but the overwhelming viewpoint was for different individuals to seek to protect different services and there was little consistency either within each Group or across it.

It was made clear that the purpose of the Big Debates was not to discuss the coalition government's proposals to address the underlying structural budget deficit. The purpose of the Big Debate was to identify relative priorities for County Council services and to capture any helpful ideas for achieving savings. A number of people did indeed tell us that they did not want cuts but no one suggested a realistic alternative. The summary of the Big Debate only reports the headline issues. A more detailed report has been shared with the group leaders. We were also told that the services people were most concerned about were those supporting the vulnerable - older people, children and those with disabilities. Our budget proposals reflect these views but all members will recognise that the scale of grant cuts inevitably means that there will be some impacts on services to the public despite our efforts to maximise cost reduction among back office functions and employee costs.

Over 1,000 people took part in the Big Debate. Much of the promotional activity was at no cost to the council and officers did their best to keep expenditure down, however there were inevitably some costs, particularly arising from the need to ensure appropriate and accessible venues for public meetings of such a size. The total cost was under £1,500, the most significant of which was spent on venue hire for the five public meetings. The media personalities who chaired the events gave their services at no cost. The cost was funded from the Council's Communications Budget.

I'm sure Group Leaders will make the detailed report available to those who wish to view it.

#### **4 Cllr Stevens to Cllr Fatemian**

The Report by the Director for Social & Community Services indicates that external providers already provide 72% of home support care in the County. It goes on to say that the intention is to transfer 1,800 service users on to personal budgets by March 2011, including all the current users of the Internal Home Support Service.

Will the Cabinet confirm:

- (a) the percentage of current users of the Internal Home Support Service who have been transferred to a personal budget to date (in the light of the target being 100% of such users by March 2011); and
- (b) in view of the fact that people do not have to have personal budgets if they do not want them, the arrangements the County Council has put in place for those service users currently receiving internal home support services who elect not to have personal budgets?"

#### **Answer:**

- (a) Only a few users of the internal Home Support Service have been transferred to Personal Budgets so far. A managerial decision was taken to put users of the internal service into the later stages of transition to Personal Budgets, so that they could be made aware of the proposed closure, and take decisions about use of Personal

Budget in the full knowledge that the service might be closed. If these Service Users do in fact have to change their Provider in 2011, the intention is that only one change has to be made, following the final decision of Cabinet in April 2011.

- (b) As Cllr Stevens should be aware, all eligible Service Users will be allocated a Personal Budget in 2011. The allocation of a Budget is not optional. Service Users do have a choice about how they use that Budget.

They can however, choose how that budget is spent. If they choose not to have a Direct Payment, they can ask the Council to undertake all the arranging and purchasing of their support, according to their own Support Plan. All current users of the internal Home Support Service will be allocated a Personal Budget after their re-assessment, and then offered a choice of how support is arranged.

If they do not wish to take an active role in arranging support, they will be offered a range of alternative Providers to meet their support needs within the budget available. Brokerage advice on the range of support options will be made available from Council staff or external Brokers. The details of how current internal service users will transition into new support arrangements will be refined during the consultation phase, and the plan will be implemented after the final Cabinet decision in April.”

## **5 Cllr Brighthouse to Cllr Waine**

The government has said that it intends to protect education funding but it is becomingly increasingly clear that as a result of the cuts schools will find it very difficult to make ends meet. In particular, will the Cabinet Member confirm whether the pupil premium will compensate for the other funding which has been cut or will governing bodies need to make cuts in their budgets?

### **Answer:**

The government has announced two year funding allocations for local authorities and one year allocations for our maintained schools. The DfE have confirmed they will continue with the current distribution method for funding local authorities.

They have announced that they are simplifying the historic funding system by mainstreaming relevant grants into the Dedicated Schools Grant. In Oxfordshire we know our overall allocation based on per-pupil distribution within the DSG is the same as last year.

Recognising the potential turbulence for schools, including that some schools may see their individual budget vary in cash terms due to pupil numbers or local distribution of funding, the government will be applying a national

protection arrangement for schools, in effect a minimum funding guarantee that no school will see a reduction compared with its 2010-11 budget (excluding sixth form funding) of more than 1.5% per pupil before the pupil premium is applied. We will be working with Schools Forum to look at how the allocations affect our schools.

We have made all Schools aware that the Pupil Premium allocations to Schools, which are designed to close the gaps between deprived pupils and their non deprived peers and also to support service children, will be determined by the School Census completed in January 2011. Children currently eligible for free school meals (FSM) (or service children) and logged as such by the census day will attract the pupil premium. It is vital that Schools ensure eligible pupils are counted and complete their census. We have given information on how our Food With Thought (FWT) team can support them in this and we are providing additional support from the Schools finance team to add capacity for this process. Any primary school who has Oxfordshire School Meals service will already know how to use the FWT team to check and count pupils eligible for FSM.

The announcements by the DfE should now allow Governing bodies to be considering their budget plans for next year, although we know that many governing bodies have already planned ahead given the national budget context. Our schools finance support team will be assisting any governing body that finds it difficult to set a balanced budget, in each of the three months leading up to April we will be meeting with Schools Forum to support them.

## **6 Cllr Pressel to Cllr Heathcoat**

“If the shocking proposals to close 20 libraries go ahead, when will we know what is happening to the various buildings and stock, what provision will be made for school groups who can't afford to travel greater distances to the nearest library, why is the Council simultaneously cutting the mobile libraries and above all why is the Council not protecting the libraries in our areas of deprivation?”

## **7 Cllr Malik to Cllr Couchman**

“Communities Secretary Eric Pickles has recently said that Councils who have balances above 5% of their revenue expenditure should be digging into them to help with adapting to this new age of austerity. Will the Cabinet Member please confirm the level of balances that the Council holds, what that level is in relation to our revenue expenditure, and how the Cabinet intends to utilise those balances to mitigate some of the effects of these appalling cuts?”

### **Answer:**

“The list of balances produced for every council following Mr Pickles announcement showed Oxfordshire's reserves position at 5.05 %, so is on the boundary of the category which the Minister was aiming at. The figures for Oxfordshire are:

Non schools reserves £41.835m

Revenue expenditure £828.125m

Reserves 5.0518%

These figures exclude expenditure and reserves relating to schools.

However, we do also review our reserves on an annual basis to ensure that the purpose for reserve is still valid, and that it is necessary to hold those reserves. The detail of the reserves are published in the statement of accounts, and are monitored on a regular basis through the monthly monitoring to Cabinet.

The reserves at 31 March 2010 total led £60.764m (including schools) the major elements relate to:

Capital Reserve and Prudential Borrowing reserve	£16.6m	Planned
usage within the Capital programme of all funds		

Local Management of school and other schools reserves	£15.1m	A
balance of surplus and deficits, for which the usage determined by the schools who hold the reserve		

Budget reserve & Carry forward reserve	£7.1m	Planned
usage throughout the period of the MTFP		

Insurance Reserve	£6.0m	Held
against known and anticipated claims, a reduction in this reserve is already planned for £2.4m		

Efficiency Savings and Change Fund	£2.8m	Held to
manage investments, change management and handle costs of reductions in service		

Waste Management	£2.5m	Held
against planned expenditure to deliver the waste strategy		

On-Street Parking	£1.6m	Held to
manage the year on year cash flows		

Shared Services	£1.3m	Held to
manage the change in working - planned usage within MTFP		

Other reserves (less than £1m individually)	£7.8m	smaller
reserves under £1m, for a variety of reasons, all of which are reviewed regularly"		

## **8 Cllr Sanders to Cllr Rose**

"Does the cabinet member for transport have any plans to extend controlled parking zones in the City? I ask this question because although I have been assured that there are no such plans, I was also assured that increases to CPZ charges would be limited to the RPI and this has not been the case, with CPZ charges increased by 25 percent."

**Answer:**

“Cllr Sanders will see from the budget proposals that we are not planning to carry out or review any such schemes as there is no funding available. However, if funding were to become available in the future this could be reconsidered depending on priorities at the time.”

**9 Cllr Val Smith to Cllr Chapman**

Have the Cabinet seriously thought through the consequences of changing the youth services?

My concern in the City is that the HUBs, unless staffed with experienced youth workers who are well used to managing the behaviour of troubled young people, will fail.

The provision of therapeutic help and rehabilitation is an important part of early intervention that the Council is keen to promote – this kind of provision needs to be delivered by experienced and professionally trained workers if they are to be successful and create a positive future for young people, their families and the families they will go on to have. Many young people not in training education or work will only connect with the help of trained youth workers

This work, along with that done in my division on sexual health, substance and alcohol misuse and teenage pregnancy, is vital. I feel, by diluting down to the hubs, we are at risk that these services will start to fail, with consequences that we cannot begin to imagine.

**Answer:**

Considerable thought based on local, national and international evidence and analysis of data and other information has gone into the re-shaping of a number of services to create the re-designed new early intervention service.

The new early intervention service will be delivered from 7 hubs and will be funded by joining together resources from youth, connexions, services supporting behaviour and mental health, attendance and engagement services, family and children’s early intervention service and the pre-court prevention team. Staff from **all of these disciplines** will be eligible to apply for the posts in the new early intervention teams. Given that all of these staff already have considerable expertise in working with children young people and families with multiple problems; the skill base of the workforce will be significant and relevant. Rather than a dilution, we see the hub teams as a strengthening of existing arrangements, ensuring that holistic approaches are possible, delivered by a team with multiple skills and experience, allocating the right resources to the needs of each child, young person and family as required.

The model being proposed has been developed by key managers across all of these services aligning with the research evidence on what works for children, young people and their families. We have had very positive early discussions with our partners who are looking forward to working with us in new ways to support young people should the proposal go ahead.

The Directorate has set aside a fund to support further training and development for all staff involved in delivering our new early intervention service; to ensure that skills are transferred, new ways of working are embedded and multi-agency work is effectively supported. (See line 5 in annexe 1 and paragraph 7.4 in the business strategy)

## **10. Councillor Fooks to Councillor Mitchell**

"The Leader appointed Cllr Fatemian as Cycling Champion some time ago. There have been concerns about the lack of quarterly reports from several of the champions and I regret that there is no report since July from the Cycling Champion. Given the enhanced recognition of the importance of cycling in LTP3, this is particularly worrying; what has he been doing in this role since July and should the role be given to another councillor, perhaps a non-cabinet member or even a member of the opposition, to ensure that cycling, which is of course of particular concern in the city of Oxford, is well championed? For instance, there was initial enthusiasm for the Bike Polite scheme; nothing has been heard about this since the elections in May. "

### **Answer:**

I understand the Champion prepared a report for September 2010, sent it the cabinet member for comment but it seems not to have arrived or subsequently uploaded. With the pressures of the Big Debate, the budget cycle and the illness of our political assistant, the report has not been published. Here it is:

### **Cycling Champion's September Report**

I continue to take an active engagement in cycling all over the county. During August, in my capacity as cycling champion I was involved in a series that the BBC did on television and radio on the numbers of people cycling into the City and the provision of facilities for cyclists.

In a private capacity though obviously linked to the role, I was also at the final stage of the Tour of Britain in early September and, more importantly, set an example because, unlike some other councillors, I will not cycle without a helmet and obey all traffic laws.

More recently I have been in communication with officers from E&E and the local group, Cyclox, over the plans for replacing the cycling lanes on the Old Abingdon Road once the work on raising/replacing Redbridge is complete and have also commented on the proposals from E&E for increased bicycle parking in the city – highlighting reasons for and against the different locations suggested.



I would add that Cllr Arash Fatemian is an active Tweeter and I am setting out some of his cycling tweets below:

Dec 8            Having a great day at work - just hope the weather holds long enough that the racing bike can negotiate the Oxford roads home tonight..

Dec 1            On the 1st day of Christmas I cycled into work - froze while doing so but felt good to be back on the bike again...

Nov 30          Due to a combination of being away, being ill and now the bad weather, I have hardly been on my bike at all during November #cyclingfail

Nov 15          My cycle in this a.m. included v.cold weather, roadworks, traffic, & fog - about to leave the office for the return journey - oh joy

Nov 10          Tried to be a polite and responsible cyclist earlier but only got abuse from the bus driver - surely that response encourages bad cycling??

Oct 17          Watching tour of Lombardy highlights & respect given the conditions, though just seen one of the world's best descenders come off his bike.

Oct 13          As @OxfordshireCC Cycling champion this site made me smile at the corner of St Aldates this morning... <http://twitpic.com/2xbucq>

Oct 6            Waterproofs came in handy today - Wet cycle in - wetter than it looked though not as much as I thought, thanks to @106jackfm for the tip...

Sep 20          Good luck to all those taking part in BikeBlenhemPalace at @BlenheimPalace today ... especially in this weather...

Sep 24          Frustrated by the weather...yesterday when cycling 20km [approx 12½ miles] to various meetings it was windy & rainy...on bus today & it's pleasant...

Sep 22          Mildly surprised that my beloved racing bike lasted 2 hours on the Cowley road tonight - Guessing Ox bike thief fraternity on a night off

Sep 11          Caught out by freak hailstorm on cycle to South Hinksey Surgery...Jeans no longer solid & desperately trying to dry out in surgery...

Sep 8            Schoolboy error - left cycle lights at home so forced to leave bike at county hall and now on bus home...

Aug 25          The 'strategic' decision to leave my waterproof trousers at home this morning led to an 'interesting' cycle home - soaked from waist down..