

## Budget Proposals Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Summary

### Introduction

1. This annex sets out the key messages from Oxfordshire County Council's three public and stakeholder consultation exercises carried out to support the Council's Service and Resource Planning process for 2014/15 to 2017/18. It also provides a high level summary of stakeholder engagement regarding the council's Service and Resource Planning process for 2014/15 to 2017/18 and makes reference to the detailed response from Oxfordshire's five district council's that can be found in its entirety at the end of this report (Appendix 1).
2. The three public consultation exercises were:
  - **Talking Oxfordshire** - a county-wide exercise to inform residents about the level of additional savings the council would have to make and to listen to their views and suggestions. It was designed to inform the 2014/15 service and resource planning cycle. Talking Oxfordshire ran throughout October and November 2013 and its aim was to provide an opportunity for people to share their views at a formative stage in the budget setting process.
  - **Budget Telephone Survey** – an independent survey with a broadly representative sample of 600 residents aged 18 and over between 7 December and 20 December delivered by SPA Future Thinking on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council. The objectives of this survey were to explore awareness of the council's financial situation; views on how the council could save money including service priorities; Attitudes to levels of Council Tax increase and Council Tax referendum; and reputational impact of council's approach to budget management.
  - **Feedback on Budget Proposals** – an open opportunity to comment on the Directorate Business Strategies and savings proposed for their service areas, which were detailed in the papers published for consideration by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 16 December 2013. An online feedback form, hosted on the council's eConsult portal and widely publicised was open from 6 December 2013 to midday on the 3 January 2014. Comments submitted by letter and email were also accepted as part of this exercise.
3. Consideration of feedback from the Performance Scrutiny Committee is also an important part of the consultation process. The Performance Scrutiny Committee met on 16 December 2013 to consider the new revenue pressures and proposed savings alongside the Service and Community Impact Assessments. It met again on the 9 January 2014 to consider the treasury management strategy statement and capital proposals. At the meeting in December the committee heard representations from a number of members of the public about the impact of the proposals. These views were taken into consideration in the comments that the

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committee is making to the Cabinet. Comments from the Scrutiny Committee are not included in this annex but are set out in annex 12.

4. All views expressed in the public consultation exercises, the feedback from Performance Scrutiny and stakeholders has been considered carefully, including reviewing Service and Community Impact Assessment for individual proposals where it has been appropriate to do so. The Cabinet has taken account of all feedback when proposing its budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
5. Full copies of the reports of the public consultation exercises are published on the county council website ([www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/budget](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/budget)) and an indexed collection of all comments received in response to the council's budget proposals and petitions submitted are placed on deposit for all councillors to review.
6. The petitions submitted to date are as follows:
  - Petitions to Save Oxfordshire's Children's Centres (Approx. 15,000 signatures across a range of petitions)
  - Online petition on proposed funding cuts to Pegasus Theatre (1,534 signatures)
  - Online petition on proposed funding cuts to Refugee Resource (still open for signatures)

## **Part A: Summary of the results from Talking Oxfordshire**

### **Introduction**

- A1. Talking Oxfordshire was a county-wide exercise to inform residents about the level of additional savings the council would have to make and to listen to their views and suggestions. It was designed to inform the 2014/15 service and resource planning cycle. It ran throughout October and November 2013 and its aim was to provide an opportunity for people to share their views at a formative stage in the budget setting process.
- A2. This annex sets out a summary of the feedback received. A more detailed report will be published on the county council website ([www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/talkingoxfordshire](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/talkingoxfordshire)) alongside a summary note of each meeting.

### **Approach**

- A3. Talking Oxfordshire comprised of:
- Explaining the council's financial situation and budget pressures using an easy-read summary of the council's budget position provided as a leaflet and on the council's website
  - Hosting a series of public meetings, one in each district council area
  - Supporting a public meeting organised by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) focussing on rural issues
  - Providing a structured online feedback form hosted on the council's website
  - Giving other opportunities for people to engage via email, letter, petition or social media
- A4. Talking Oxfordshire was publicised throughout the county via posters in council buildings and community noticeboards; a street team handing out flyers; media and outdoor advertising, the council's Your Oxfordshire newsletter, press releases and social media tweets and messages.
- A5. The council informed the following stakeholders about Talking Oxfordshire:
- all county and district councillors
  - Oxfordshire's MPs
  - Oxfordshire Partnership Board
  - parish and town councils
  - Oxfordshire Lieutenancy
  - members of the Oxfordshire public involvement network (who comprise a wide range of groups, organisations and individuals with different circumstances, including 'hard to reach' groups)
  - individuals who had registered an interest in receiving information and consultations

A6. Key questions that people were asked to consider and debate as part of Talking Oxfordshire were:

- Should we (Oxfordshire County Council) only provide services we have to?
- Should we increase fees?
- Should we charge for more services?
- Should people and communities do more from themselves?
- Would you support a Council Tax increase?
- What services could you live without?

## **Main Findings**

### **Part A: Public Meetings**

- A7. In total, nearly 1,000 people attending the five Talking Oxfordshire public meetings. Each meeting was chaired by an independent host from the local media who was asked to focus on the key questions. Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Leader of the Council and Joanna Simons, Chief Executive, introduced the council's budget position and proposed approach to making savings, and took questions.
- A8. The key theme for these meetings was concern about the future of the Early Intervention Service and children's centres. This was in response to very recent media reporting based on a 'worst case scenario' for budget savings in the service. Strong support was shown for children's centres as integral, local institutions in the community. Service users and professionals talked about their value as a safe place for parents and carers to seek and receive support and to meet others. They also set out their role in protecting vulnerable people.
- A9. Audiences wanted to find out more about plans for the Early Intervention Service and children's centres and whether other options had been considered; and some people expressed concerns about the potential impact of reducing these services on child protection and adult social care. Some attendees suggested charging and other ways to generate income. It was emphasised that no decisions had been taken and Cabinet would publish proposals in December.
- A10. The other main talking points common to at least two or more of the public meetings were:
- protecting the most vulnerable in society so they are not further disadvantaged
  - not compounding rural isolation and forgetting the needs of rural communities
  - Council Tax increases
  - the need to lobby/challenge government and make representations about the council's financial situation
  - increasing collaboration and joint working between the council and other local authorities, including sharing resources and for some exploring the potential for unitary authorities in Oxfordshire
  - using the council's reserves to plug funding gaps
  - exploring opportunities for increasing the capacity of communities

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- more collaborative working with the voluntary sector
- income generation such as private sector investment and sponsorship or 'crowd funding'

A11. A number of specific concerns, points and questions were raised at each meeting. These were often issues specifically relevant to the local area and are captured in the summary reports.

### **Part B: Oxfordshire Rural Community Council Talking Oxfordshire Event**

A12. Approximately 70 people took part in the Talking Oxfordshire 'rural' event organised by Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC). Councillor Ian Hudspeth and Joanna Simons provided contextual information and took questions from the floor. At this session, people took part in round table discussions to encourage an ongoing flow of conversation.

A13. Subjects debated at the tables included:

- use of county council reserves to plug funding gaps
- Parish Councils delivering grass-cutting services
- potential savings for setting up a unitary authority
- reviewing the competitive tendering process of the County Council
- cutting of school transport subsidies
- communities taking responsibility for filling potholes

The services that were identified as being especially important to rural residents were:

- rural transport
- social care for adults and children
- children's services
- road maintenance
- support for the voluntary and community sector.

### **Part C: Online Feedback Form**

A14. The council received 472 responses to the Talking Oxfordshire online feedback form. 444 people identified themselves as residents, with three-quarters of the responses were from women; around two-thirds were from people aged 25 - 44 years. There was a good spread from across the five district council areas. However as this was a self-selecting group it cannot be considered as truly representative of the county's residents.

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A15. The results are summarised below. Please note that not everyone chose to answer each question, so the total numbers vary (the number of responses to each question is shown in brackets). A number of comments were made about the need for more information to enable people to answer the questions; we have made a note of this as part of the evaluation Talking Oxfordshire and will seek to improve this in future exercises run by the council.

| Question   | Yes                   | No           | Don't know   | Comments  |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|---|
| Should Oxfordshire County Council only provide services it legally has to? | 10%<br>(49 responses) | 80%<br>(375) | 10%<br>(46)  | The comments associated with this question included: 39 people saying that non-statutory services are still important and that the council should provide what people need, 23 people saying the council should attend to the needs of vulnerable people, and 21 people saying services should exceed the statutory minimum.  |
| Should Oxfordshire County Council increase fees?                           | 43%<br>(200)          | 31%<br>(143) | 26%<br>(120) | The comments associated this question included: 31 people saying yes, if it saves services, yes, but only if it is affordable and 19 people saying no, they already pay council tax and that the council should make efficiencies.  |
| Should Oxfordshire County Council charge for more services?                | 45%<br>(208)          | 30%<br>(139) | 26%<br>(120) | The comments associated with this question included: 71 people saying yes, a small amount, 36 people saying yes, for those that can afford it, and 33 saying it depends on which services.  |
| Should people and communities do more for themselves?                      | 59%<br>(269)          | 25%<br>(115) | 16%<br>(73)  | The comments associated with this question included: 63 people saying that delivering a community response requires support, money and training, 43 people pointing out that a lot happens already, and 22 people saying that a lack of free time prevents people's involvement.  |
| Would you support an increase in the Council Tax?                          | 55%<br>(255)          | 34%<br>(160) | 11%<br>(51)  | The comments associated with this question included: 53 people saying yes, if it saves vital services, 32 people saying yes, a small, proportional increase, and 21 people giving a caveat saying it depends on what it is spent on. Fifteen people asked the council to means test any rise to protect those that can't afford it and 15 people felt they already paid too much and could not afford it. |

A16. The online feedback form also asked two open ended questions. When asked which services they could live without, those most frequently mentioned were:

- libraries and museums (31 mentions)
- highways maintenance/street lighting (26 mentions)
- early intervention services including children's centres (18 mentions)
- 47 responses called for the council to cut back on internal bureaucracy and cost of 'politics'

A17. The final question on the online form provided a free space for people to share their views on county council services. The comments given broadly echoed those shared at the public meetings.

- Concerns were expressed that the most vulnerable in society (older people, children, those at risk, children with special needs) should not be put at further disadvantage as a result of cuts, and should be protected
- Concerns were expressed that cutting back on Early Intervention services would mean more expense to the council in future years
- There was a feeling that those who can afford to pay more through Council Tax and fees and charges
- People felt that the county council should be lobbying central government and questioning the budget cuts
- Some people suggested that a unitary authority approach would be a good way to save money and have less bureaucracy

**Other correspondence**

A18. A few letters, emails and social media posts were also submitted as part of Talking Oxfordshire and these continue to be received even after the consultation has closed. For the most part, this correspondence focuses on children's centres although some stakeholder responses address other specific issues. Redacted copies of all emails and letters will be made available to all councillors to review as part of the budget setting process and an analysis will be included in the full Talking Oxfordshire report.

A19. Finally, a petition of over 15,500 signatures in defence of children's centres was handed to the Leader of the Council on 28 November, the day before Talking Oxfordshire closed. This is available to all councillors for review.

## **Part B: Executive Summary of Budget Telephone Survey**

(Provided by SPA Future Thinking)

### **Background**

- B1. Oxfordshire County Council's budget is being reduced as part of the government's plan to get the nation's finances in order. Between 2010/11 and 2017/18 the Council's government grant will have reduced by 40%. At the same time, demand for services is rising – particularly from older people with social care needs and from children with care needs. The County Council will have saved £200 million by 2017, but now it has to find another £65 million over the next four years and these savings will be harder to make. There will be less money to spend and public services will have to change as a result.
- B2. With this in mind, Oxfordshire County Council commissioned SPA Future Thinking to undertake a representative survey of people living in Oxfordshire to examine the public's views regarding the Council's budget situation.
- B3. The overall aim of the research is to find out the public's views regarding the Council's budget and reputation.

### **Objectives**

- B4. The objectives of the research are to examine:
- Awareness of the Council's financial situation;
  - Views on how the Council could save money including service priorities;
  - Attitudes to levels of Council Tax increase and Council Tax referendum;
  - Reputational impact of Council's approach to budget management.

### **Methodology**

- B5. A representative telephone survey was conducted with Oxfordshire residents as follows:
- 600 CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) interviews were conducted with Oxfordshire residents aged 18+ by experienced telephone interviewers.
  - Quotas were set on gender, age, work status, District and area (i.e. urban/ town & fringe/ rural). A spread was aimed for in terms of disability and ethnicity.
  - A pilot survey took place Friday 7<sup>th</sup>- Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2013. Some questions were removed after the pilot due to the length of the questionnaire.
  - The main fieldwork was conducted between Monday 9<sup>th</sup> – Friday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013.



- Data has been weighted according to the latest population statistics for Oxfordshire by gender, age, District and area.
- Figures may not add to 100% due to computer rounding or multi-coding.

## **Executive Summary**

### **Service usage and importance**

- B5. Two-thirds of respondents had used non-universal services provided by Oxfordshire County Council in the past year.
- B7. Universal services top the list in terms of general importance to Oxfordshire residents. Over nine in ten rate waste & environmental services and highways maintenance as important (both 93%). This is followed by 87% who rate Public Transport as important.
- B8. However, if we examine the services considered very important by residents, then two non-universal services top the list. Indeed, around two-thirds (67%) rate child protection as a very important service to Oxfordshire residents while 61% rate services for older people as very important.
- B9. The importance of planning and school organisation, support & access reflects usage levels.

### **Dealing with the budget deficit**

- B10. There is a good level of awareness among Oxfordshire residents regarding the financial challenges facing the Council, with seven in ten residents aware of the budget situation. The media (60% TV news; 54% newspapers; 33% radio news) and word of mouth (33%) are the main sources of information. Over one in ten (16%) mentioned the 'Talking Oxfordshire' campaign
- B11. Opinion is split regarding the best approach towards making savings. A third (34%) think that cuts should be made equally to all services, while the same proportion (32%) suggest that cuts shouldn't be made at all. Opinions are equally split regarding whether cuts should be made only to universal services (14%) or just to targeted services (15%).
- B12. When faced with the difficult decision regarding which services should be protected and where less money should be spent, child protection (56%) and services for older people (42%) stand out as the services which residents would most like to see protected. Conversely, over half would be prepared to see less spent on cultural & community services (53%) and planning (52%). While just 14% said that cuts should only be made to universal services, 78% put forward a universal service for savings.

### **Attitudes towards council tax levels**

- B13. When asked specifically about the possibility of increasing council tax levels to deal with the budget deficit, there is strong support for this. Indeed, eight in ten would be

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prepared to see a council tax increase of 2% or more in order to reduce the £64m savings required. This compares with just 19% who would not like to see a council tax increase. Views are pretty much unanimous across all sub-groups.

- B14. A third (34%) of Oxfordshire residents would be supportive of the Council's proposed approach of a 2% increase in council tax levels, meaning that the Council would have to find £64 million worth of savings.
- B15. Over two in five (45%) would be prepared to see an increase in council tax of 5% or more. Among service users, this rises to over half (52%).
- B16. Those with children are most willing to see services protected with higher increases in council tax - a third support an increase of at least 10%.
- B17. Oxfordshire residents are also generally supportive of the Council holding a referendum in Oxfordshire regarding the level of Council tax, with seven in ten saying that they would support this and a notable nine in ten saying that they would vote.

### **Other options for tackling the budget deficit**

- B18. In terms of other options for dealing with the budget deficit, there is some support for involving others in tackling the budget deficit. In particular, encouraging more community involvement in the running of services (73%, rising to 82% among those living in rural communities) and paying other organisations under contract to deliver services if they can be provided more cost effectively (63%).
- B19. Service charging (i.e. increasing existing service charges or introducing new charges for more services) would be less popular. Less than two in five would be supportive of this (39% and 38% respectively). However, parents are significantly more supportive of charging for services – 54% would support an increase in current service charges and 60% would be supportive of introducing new charges for more services.
- B20. Just a third (34%) would be supportive of the Council stopping service provision where it is not required to do so by law. Women in particular are the least supportive (27% of women vs 41% of men would support this idea).

### **Perceptions of Oxfordshire County Council**

- B21. Oxfordshire County Council is generally viewed favourably regarding the Council's performance in the current economic climate. Positively, over three in five (62%) agree that Oxfordshire County Council does a good job despite the difficult financial situation – 17% strongly agree with this.
- B22. Similarly, over half (54%) agree that they trust Oxfordshire County Council to do what's right for Oxfordshire.
- B23. However, residents are less inclined to agree that Oxfordshire County Council provides value for money (43%). Younger residents are the least positive in this respect.

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- B24. Mirroring the earlier findings, just three in ten (29%) agree that it is right to cut spending on local services while 45% disagree (one in five strongly). However, this does differ significantly by age, with older residents aged 55+ significantly more likely to agree with spending cuts (38% versus 24% of 35-54 year olds and 26% among those aged under 35). Those living in market town and surrounds are also more likely to agree with this approach (40%).

### Part C: Summary of Feedback on Budget Proposals

- C1. An open opportunity to comment on the Directorate Business Strategies and savings proposed for their service areas, which were detailed in the papers published for consideration by the Performance Scrutiny Committee on 16 December 2013. An online feedback form, hosted on the council's eConsult portal and widely publicised was open from 6 December 2013 to midday on the 3 January 2014. Comments submitted by letter and email were also accepted as part of this exercise.
- C2. Members of the public were invited to view the proposals, which were detailed in the scrutiny papers for the meeting on the 16th of December. They were then asked to give any comments. 73 responses were received, primarily from Oxfordshire residents, but a quarter of responses were from people representing a group or organisation. In addition some members of the public made representations in person at the scrutiny meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> December.
- C3. There were two clear areas that were commented on most. These were the proposed phased reduction in grant funding for Pegasus Theatre from £68,266 to £22,755 and the proposed concerning housing related support (Reduction in line with central government reduction in the Supporting People funding). 43 people commented about Pegasus Theatre, opposing the proposed cuts, and 17 raised concerns about the proposed reduction in funding for housing related support (many of these concerned that the most vulnerable in society would be affected).
- C4. Areas people commented on included:

| Category                      | Number of mentions |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Pegasus Theatre               | 43                 |
| Housing related support       | 17                 |
| Services for older people     | 5                  |
| Service for vulnerable people | 5                  |
| Councillor allowances         | 3                  |
| Highways / transport          | 3                  |
| Icelandic banks               | 2                  |
| Mental health services        | 2                  |
| Refugee resource              | 2                  |
| Broadband                     | 1                  |
| Children's centres            | 1                  |
| Council tax                   | 1                  |
| Health and safety             | 1                  |
| Laundry services              | 1                  |
| Planning                      | 1                  |
| Properties                    | 1                  |
| Registration                  | 1                  |
| Street lighting               | 1                  |
| Unitary council status        | 1                  |

**Part D: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement and feedback on proposals to reduce grants that the council awards**

- D1. As part of the Service and Resource Planning process for 2014/15 to 2017/18 the council identified specific external stakeholders who will be affected by the proposed changes. These were:
- Existing providers of county council services to which changes to services are proposed
  - Voluntary and community sector organisations who currently receive grants, which are proposed to change or stop
  - District councils were the council acts in close partnership on delivery of a service to which changes to services are proposed
  - Other key partners who may be impacted by specific budget proposals.
- D2. Individual letters were sent to individual organisations, a number of face-to-face were held and specific briefings and discussions took place for district councils via the Oxfordshire Leaders meeting, and the Treasurers meeting.
- D3. A summary of the correspondence received by directors and councillors, including members of the Performance Scrutiny Committee referencing specific proposals is set out below. This is in addition to a detailed response from Oxfordshire's five district councils that is published in its entirety at the end of this report (Appendix 1).

**Summary of correspondence**

| <b>Group/Organisation</b>                           | <b>Subject</b>   |
|---|--|
| Appleton Village Hall Management Committee          | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Kennington Village Hall                             | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Little Milton Village Hall Management Committee     | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Hinton Waldrist Village Hall                        | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Member of Village Halls Advisory Group              | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Finstock Parish Council                             | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Great Milton Recreation Ground Management Committee | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Duns Tew Village Hall Committee                     | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Letcombe Bassett Parish                             | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15 |
| Leaffield Village Hall                              | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village                        |

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|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Stoke Row Village Hall                      | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Upton Village Hall Amenities Trust          | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Kingham Village Hall                        | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Finstock Parish Council                     | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Great Milton Parish Council                 | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Resident                                    | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Category of respondent unclear              | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Steeple Ason Parish Council                 | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Sibford Village Hall Management Committee   | Concern about proposed removal of £59,000 for Village Hall Grants in 2014/15   |
| Two Saints                                  | Acknowledgement and willingness to engage with council about proposed funding in line with central government reductions in Supporting People funding              |
| My Life My Choice                           | Acknowledgement and willingness to engage with council about proposed withdrawal of grant funding - specific concerns about continuation of self-advocacy contract |
| My Life My Choice                           | Concern about proposed reduction in budget for people with learning disabilities by £3.4 million   |
| Refugee Resource                            | Concern about proposed withdrawal of £45K grant funding in 14/15 to Refugee Resource   |
| Oxford Community Work Agency                | Concern about proposed withdrawal of support for mainstream welfare rights advice and advocacy (Oxford Community Work Agency £117K)                                |
| Blackbird Leys Neighbourhood Support Scheme | Concern about proposed withdrawal of support for mainstream welfare rights advice and advocacy (BLNSS £15K)  |
| Oxford City Citizens Advice Bureau          | Concern about proposed of support for mainstream welfare rights advice and advocacy (Oxford City CAB £25K)   |

## Appendix 1

### **Oxfordshire County Council Draft Budget Proposals 2014/15 to 2017/18: The key issues for District Councils**

Thank you for inviting the District Councils to set out their comments on the proposed Oxfordshire County Council Budget for 2014/15 to 2017/18. These are provided below.

#### **15SCS11 - Reduction in line with central government reductions in Supporting People funding for Housing Related Support**

This is a 38% cut to this budget, which is likely to have a high impact on vulnerable groups. The cut is likely to put increased pressure on many other services, including adult social care, family support services, statutory homelessness, health (accident and emergency, physical and mental health services), police and criminal justice services, public health and social landlords etc.

Given the size of the cut there is likely to be a reduction in bed places for single homeless people and this will almost certainly increase the incidence of rough sleeping, predominately in Oxford City.

Changes to the adult homeless pathway will require a long transition period. Current contracts expire in Jan 2015, and the County Council will need to take action to extend contracts to cover any transition periods.

The recently revised commissioning plan intention was to devolve funding away from the city for single homeless people towards the other districts for local provision. Failure to provide this funding will have serious impacts locally and is likely to increase further the pressure on the city.

Floating Support is a crucial element of this funding. A reduction in floating support is likely to significantly increase pressures on the other budgets mentioned above. Rural areas depend highly on floating support and if there is a reduction in this service it will have significantly worse outcomes for rural clients. A reduction in this budget could also have an adverse impact on drug and alcohol misuse and other targets in the District Community Safety Plans.

Reduction in the domestic violence budget is likely to lead to lower number of beds and support services for this client group. Although these services cater for some out of area need this is on a reciprocal basis. Lack of provision is likely to result in increased risk to victims of domestic violence, homelessness applications to the district councils, and increased responsibilities for social care.

#### **15SCS12 - Stop providing the Social Fund (except care leavers) from 2014/15 £500K**

The Social Fund provides a valuable complement to the housing service enabling some homeless applicants to buy necessities and without this fund the council may find applicants cannot be reasonably placed in our unfurnished second stage accommodation leading to longer stays in first stage accommodation which is more expensive. Funding has also been accessed for rent in advance.

There is the potential for additional impact on front desk reception, council tax and housing rent arrears and increased demand on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's). This may also accentuate the impacts of welfare reform.

**15SCS6 - Continuing to fund information and advice for people who may need or are eligible for social services, but withdrawing support for mainstream welfare rights advice and advocacy.**

This will significantly affect the ability of key organisations to provide essential advice services across the county. The advice sector is reporting a significant increase in footfall this year, particularly in relation to issues concerning debt. Given the on-going reductions in welfare support, and cost of living increases, it is hard to imagine that demand for debt advice will lessen significantly in 2015/16. This could put people at risk of losing their home due to defaulting on rent or mortgage payments which would see a rise in rough sleeping or families being housed in temporary accommodation. This will have a consequent impact on other services such as social care and housing services, health and community safety.

It is likely that concerned individuals will approach the District Councils directly, creating an increased workload and burden for them. However, there may be some possible re-commissioning options under the new Local Support Frameworks and there is an opportunity to look at how advice services can be better coordinated and designed.

**15SCS15 - Cease funding provided to local Community Safety Partnerships (with £44K retained by Oxfordshire County Council to continue to support the Domestic Abuse Coordinator post) from 2014/15. Funding to each partnership from the Police and Crime Commissioner is expected to remain unchanged.**

Our understanding is that there is a reduction in the Police Crime Commissioner grants and a reduction in Thames Valley Police funding for CCTV, and that these reductions will continue over the next few years. The combined effect will be a significant reduction in community safety initiatives and activity across the districts.

We welcome the continued funding for the domestic abuse co-ordinator. However, a number of District Council and Local Police Area initiatives and posts are affected by these cuts. Inevitably this will impact on our ability to address community safety and anti-social behaviour issue problems. Removal of low level interventions could cause some issues to escalate to a more serious level and bring with it additional costs for the District Councils and Thames Valley Police. This may also lead to a reduction in external funding to some of the Community Safety Partnerships.

**5SCS16 - Cessation of dedicated Community Safety coordination work through the Safer Communities Unit**

The Community Safety Unit co-ordinates the countywide community safety works. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on Oxfordshire's coordinated approach to community safety and may impact on funding levels from the Police and Crime Commissioner. It is likely to place as yet un-quantified antisocial behaviour costs onto the District Councils and Thames Valley Police.



District Councils will need to review the level of funding they provide for community safety work to ensure that we continue to meet our statutory obligations in relation to community safety and to determine which services they wish to continue.

**15EE27 - Reduce Road Survey Budget/other network maintenance/Network management general restructure/joint workings/Further other network maintenance.**

***Gully cleansing***

Highways gully cleansing is of critical importance in controlling surface water and flash flooding and we have concerns that reduced cleansing could result in highways and property flooding. We understand that a targeted approach is proposed based on a risk assessment model, rather than to routinely servicing all gullies. However, if the proposed savings result in more frequent gully blockages it is likely that there will be an increase in flooding, adverse environmental impacts and additional costs to the District Councils. Therefore it is critical that any changes are kept under review.

***Verge maintenance***

Reduction in verge maintenance is likely to result in complaints from the public, towns and parishes regarding the condition of verges. If the reduction in verge maintenance means no agency funding to the District Councils for urban highway verges, this will result in a significant deterioration in urban areas. There are also potential safety risks for motorists in some locations if overgrown verges obscure highway visibility

There are also potential implications for existing Landscape Management contracts. South Oxfordshire and the Vale of the White Horse District Councils would like to enter into discussions about taking responsibility for highway grass cutting under an agency agreement starting in 2015.

***Inspection and maintenance of signs and lines***

We understand that the Section 42 budget has never been increased to deliver the maintenance requirements associated with the numerous Car Parking Zones (CPZ) that have been implemented in the last few years. Subsequently if we don't maintain the CPZ signs and lines the County Council can't enforce and thus lose income. If lines and signs are not clear and correct, they may be unenforceable and certainly open to challenge at the Traffic Penalties Tribunal.

***Inspection and cleaning of street lighting***

Increased failures in lighting or effectiveness of lighting may result in increasing complaints and potentially creating poorly lit areas which may increase anti-social behaviour/crime.

**15EE14 - Supported Transport Project savings which includes review of: transport contract management; Dial a Ride; bus subsidies; home to school transports including SEN**

This will have a detrimental effect on a large number of people who use this service by reducing access to essential services. It will make rural communities become even further isolated

**15EE14 - Supported Transport Project savings which includes review of: transport contract management; Dial a Ride; bus subsidies; home to school transports including SEN**

We have concerns about the potential impact of reductions in subsidised bus services at evenings and weekends, particularly for those living in rural communities and those without car or second car. We are also particularly concerned about the impact on young people not being able to access training and support services and sports and leisure opportunities.

**15EE25 - Withdraw contribution to Oxfordshire Waste Partnership**

There may be a loss of current efficiencies in joint promotional initiatives aimed at reducing waste and increasing recycling, reuse and composting – this may result in an increase in residual waste. However this may be offset by a direct budget saving for the District Councils.

There will be redundancy costs of the staff affected which Cherwell District Council will incur as the employing authority on behalf of OWP and which OWP will be expected to fund.

This proposal needs to be considered formally by the OWP as it is likely that this will result in the dissolution of the partnership and the existing financial model. There is also a need for assurances that the County Council will honour the phased reduction of incentive payments to District Councils.

**15CEO9 - Withdrawal of grant to The Mill Arts Centre and phased reduction of grants to Pegasus Theatre, Oxfordshire Youth Arts Partnership and Oxfordshire Visual Arts Development Agency**

**15CEO14 - Take out military and local grants (Locality Grant to Choose Abingdon and Refugee Resource Grant)**

Oxford City Council is particularly concerned about the reduction of grant to Pegasus Theatre and the potential loss of valuable services for young people and the match funding that the service brings into the city.

The Vale of White Horse District Council was aware that the county's grant to the Choose Abingdon Partnership (ChAPs) would cease from 2014/15. This does not affect their contribution.

Withdrawal of Mill Grant and phased reduction of Oxon Youth Arts Partnership funding will result in a likely reduction in the services that the Mill can offer. In 2017/18 it will need to be 100% self-sufficient because the £40k funding from Cherwell District Council is then expected to cease.

There is a general concern about the need to have the ability to package partnership funding together and to use this to draw in additional funding and resources into the county

from other agencies, for example the Arts Council and Police Crime Commission and the Lottery.

**Other**

***Increased refuse disposal charges***

The City Council has been made aware of increases in refuse disposal charges in respect of schedule 2 properties (halls of residence) which will have a significant adverse financial impact on the Council. This does not form part of the County Council consultation budget.

***Savings not closures of Children Centres and Early Intervention Hubs***

These are included in the Business Strategy but not in the savings summary. Clarity is needed on the nature of the funding cuts for each centre.