

County Council

12 February 2019

Additional Papers Pack 1

**Amendments from the Labour Group
(CC8 Labour)**

**Amendments from the Liberal Democrat Group
(CC8 Lib Dem)**

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Labour Group Budget Amendments 2019/20 Leader of the Opposition Overview

Liz Brighthouse - Leader of the Labour Group
February 2019

- 1. We were told by the Prime Minister in September that 'Austerity had ended': but, again this year, Local Government must make cuts to budgets. The additional short-term money made available in the Budget for Local Government is not enough to adequately fund services cut during 8 years of 'Austerity'. Over the same period Oxfordshire has had a £140m reduction in grant and it has also had to fund the increase in the number of children and older people needing Social Care as well as additional unfunded responsibilities. This has meant cuts of £400m from elsewhere in the budget to fund these pressures. These cuts must stop as all services are buckling under the strain. The Leader of the Council has said that services are now at breaking point. This fact has heart breaking consequences for children, families and older people who turn to Oxfordshire County Council for support. The budget agreed this year can only be short term as we have no idea about the impact of the Fairer Funding Formula or the Business Rate Retention Fund from 2020. This "short termism" in Funding coupled with services at breaking point, massive additional demand, staff shortages and the known and unknown likely consequences of Brexit have crippling consequences on the most vulnerable people in our society as well as on the depleted workforce struggling within every service to deliver more services without sustainable funding streams.*
- 2. The funding available for health services, specialist support services and Children's and Adult's Social Care is woefully inadequate. Much has been said about how the integration of Health and Social Care will help but this will be like moving the deckchairs on the Titanic. The iceberg of inadequate, unsustainable funding must be removed. The financial arrangements vary significantly between Health and Social Care as does the statutory basis of the services. One free at the point of delivery and the other means tested. The increase in Mental illness across all age groups but particularly among children and young adults has been significant. Until we start treating those with Mental illness or Mental Trauma in the same way we do those with physical illness or trauma, those with Mental Illness will continue to be left in long queues for services and services withdrawn, if because of their disability they find it difficult to engage. A properly funded Mental Health Service easily accessible in a crisis is a basic requirement. The police when responding to questions at the County's Performance Scrutiny Committee talked about being the sole point of contact for those in Mental Trauma. Without proper funding or diagnosis those with the most serious of illnesses are being left in the most traumatic circumstances with many becoming homeless and involved in crime.*
- 3. That is why the Labour Group has interrogated the pressures and savings in this budget from the position of those who are most in need of services. We are opposed to cutting any money from services which will leave those with Mental Illness in a worse situation than they are already experiencing. We must ensure that we are providing properly for Social and Community needs alongside Health Provision. Engagement with Oxford Health is crucial to ensure that their services and the services we commission are complementary and appropriate to the*

Diagnosed Healthcare and Social Care Needs of Children, Young People and Adults. The provision of services we commission needs to be scrutinised thoroughly by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee. Much of our spend on Mental Health Services is contracted out to other organisations.

- 4. In relation to the Adult Social Care Budget Savings we support the removal of the cut to the Budget which enables VCS groups to support in many ways those suffering from Mental Illness. Making this cut would make the lives of the users of these services unbearable and could lead to further significant trauma or loss of life. We do however need to ensure those supported are getting the Social Care they need and again Scrutiny should play a role.*
- 5. In relation to the Mental Health Contract for People of Working Age with Oxford Health we have seen that the changes in a similar budget for Older People has enabled Oxfordshire to concentrate this budget on Adult Social Care responsibilities. We recognise that the £300k cut in 2020/21 with a further £300k the year after needs to be carefully scrutinised and reported to the Performance Scrutiny Committee as happened with the change to the Older Persons Budget. If satisfied that Social Care needs required in the contract are being met then we would hope that next year this cut is removed from the budget.*
- 6. We would further wish to work closely with the Oxford Health and VCS to find ways in which parents with poor Mental Health or Trauma (many of these parents will have suffered the disabling impact of domestic violence) are supported to avoid children being taken into care.*
- 7. In relation to the reassessment of people with home care packages, we are concerned about the impact of reassessments which are designed to bring down costs. We accept that for some people the use of new technologies and neighbourhood networks may be better for their quality of life than the traditional short visits scheduled over the course of the day, but we would like to be able to see the outcome of the assessments as they proceed. We believe that carrying out reassessments is crucial to ensure older people are getting the support they need and that they have access to the changing solutions available. When this is done in an atmosphere of cuts, this may lead to a worse rather than a better quality of life for Older People.*
- 8. We look forward to seeing the Business Case for the changed Operating Model in Children's Social Care and hope that we can with the support of other agencies have better co-ordination of interventions in Families where poor Mental Health could lead to children being taken into Local Authority Care. Breaking attachments in vulnerable families can lead to further Mental Health problems and therefore does not necessarily lead to better outcomes for children. All families need support but some more than others. It is not just Mental Health problems, including addictions, which we need to address but isolation, domestic violence and poverty all of which contribute to children being removed from their parents. Removing children should be the very last resort and it is hoped the new Operating Model will lead to better outcomes for children and their families but this will only happen if we have the engagement of others. We look forward to seeing if the appointment of a Director of Housing with Cherwell District Council changes the life chances of these families who often need appropriate intervention and support in relation to housing. There is an African saying "it takes a whole village to raise a child". Where that*

“village” isn’t available - and it usually isn’t for poor isolated single parents who “do not engage”- then we need to create it. Homestart and People create networks very successfully for families with under 5s this needs to be replicated for vulnerable families with older children.

9. *The Transition Fund, which the Labour Group was successful in getting others to support has funded Open Access Sessions for families with under 5s across the County. For many families this is the only provision available to give support and encouragement in their parenting roll. There is £124k still available to spend and the Labour Group are now proposing that Groups which received funding but are now struggling to attract sustainable funding and those who only received 2 years of funding are asked to apply again. In addition to the £124k we would add a further £76k increasing the funding to £200k.*
10. *Currently there are 8 members of the Cabinet plus a Leader and a Deputy. This group meet in private to discuss and agree public policy which is then voted on in the public Cabinet later. Establishing a system of a Leader and Deputy and 5 Committees covering the various Directorates of the Council would be more open and democratic and ensure the involvement of a wider group councillors in policy making. It would also release money from the Special Responsibility Allowance Budget to be spent on Detached Youth Workers.*
11. *The Labour Group is committed to resurrecting Youth Work funded by the County Council and accountable to local democracy for supporting young people. Since Youth Workers became Hub Workers in 2011, openly accessible Youth Workers have become non-existent. The crisis facing young people has never been greater: this manifests itself in the rising number of exclusions from schools, part-time timetabling of young people by Schools, truancy, Mental Health issues and crime. Many young people are not connected to any responsible concerned adult and few make relationships with any adult in schools where they do not fit in, often because of difficult behaviour. The Labour Group proposes that 8 Detached Youth Workers are employed in the Children and Family Centres across the County to work in local communities supporting vulnerable young people in the places they congregate. With the support of Children’s Social Care TVP have been successful in getting a small amount of funding for detached Youth Workers and it is hoped the County Youth Workers would collaborate with them as well as with Hub Workers, Schools and other VCS provision. There is an urgent need to respond to the needs of these young people who feel hopeless and often without any stake in society. Not intervening will simply lead to greater heartbreak for these young people and for the schools, families and communities where they live. Putting money into a fund so that existing groups can bid will not lead to better outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalized young people in society. Oxfordshire needs to employ skilled professional youth workers who know and understand how to engage with marginalized young people.*
12. *In relation to the Capital Budget. The Labour Group is pleased that we are at last moving forward on several schemes which will make an enormous difference to the most vulnerable. It is good to see that Northfield School will be rebuilt and that a network of special units will be built to provide facilities closer to home for SEND Children and so reduce the cost and trauma of long taxi journeys. We are pleased to see that we are to use assets to reduce revenue costs and hopefully in the future to provide sustainable revenue streams.*

13. *The bankruptcy of Carillion has had a significant impact on many projects and it has taken too long to get to the bottom of what Carillion were doing in relation to building maintenance but we are pleased that we are now moving forward. It would be hoped that any outstanding costs we have in relation to the failure of Carillion will be paid by the administrator. Continuous Scrutiny of this 3rd Party Spend in Carillion meant that Oxfordshire was in the process of ending our relationship with Carillion before it collapsed. We must be more active in ensuring the vast amount of our squeezed budget which goes to others to spend is accounted for transparently and meets the requirements of the Contract. To that end we hope that this whole area of work is strengthened through our contracting and scrutinising processes.*
14. *Getting around in the future must focus on walking, cycling and rail and bus services which are accessible to those with mobility impairments. We hope that we will soon see the opening of the Cowley Branch Line and that the Oxford to Cambridge Line, will after decades, become a reality. This new route will open up opportunities for car free developments along its length without the need for a costly road which will not fulfil our aspirations to reduce car journeys and lower pollution.*
15. *I ask you to support the Labour Budget amendments which are attached at Annex 1. Although the Labour Group has to operate within the constraints of a budget which has suffered almost half a billion cuts and where the need for Social Care and Support for all ages has never been greater, we have given council options to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and in particular to provide a resource which will provide real support for our most excluded young people.*

Recommendation

The Council is RECOMMENDED (in respect of revenue) to approve a budget for 2019/20 and a medium term financial plan for 2019/20 – 2022/23 as amended in Labour Group Annex 1;

*Liz Brighthouse
Leader of the Labour Group and the Opposition
Oxfordshire County Council*

Labour Group Budget Amendments 2019/20 - 2022/23

Revenue

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Cabinet Position as per Council report	0.000	15.581	0.180	1.577	17.338
Removal of Cabinet proposals					
Remove 20CM24 : Youth Provision Fund	-1.000	1.000			0.000
Adjustment of Cabinet proposals					
Reprofile 20AD12 : Impact of reviews of older peoples home care packages - delay savings by one year to ensure the assessments are able to deliver the savings required	1.200	-1.200			0.000
Reduce 19RES18 : Councillor Priorities Fund - remove remaining unallocated element of 2019/20 funding	-0.700	0.700			0.000
Increase 20CM13: Additional contribution to Contingency in 2019/20 and 2020/21.	0.027	0.073	-0.100		0.000
New Savings Proposals					
NEW - Savings from Changing the Governance Arrangements and introducing the Committee System (Leader, Deputy Leader and 5 Committees with Executive Power). Savings from reduction in Member Allowances and assume they would be implemented in May 2019	-0.083	-0.017			-0.100
New Investment Proposals					
NEW - Funding for 8 Detached Youth Workers (1 per hub). Assumed in post by September 2019	0.160	0.160			0.320
NEW - Youth Workers' reserve	0.320	-0.320			0.000
NEW - Use Youth Workers' reserve to contribute towards costs in 2020/21 due to funding uncertainty that year		-0.320	0.320		0.000
NEW - Additional Funding for the Transition Fund for Children's Centres in 2019/20 to support those centres who did not receive funding for 3 years and others requiring further support to remain sustainable. Takes total funding available to £200k	0.076	-0.076			0.000
Revised Overall Position	0.000	15.581	0.400	1.577	17.558
Difference to Cabinet Position as per Council report	0.000	0.000	0.220	0.000	0.220

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Liberal Democrat Group Budget Statement

February 2019

“The period of Austerity is over???”

(Only apparently for the Conservative Cabinet)

Under Transformation plans, Oxfordshire County Council is losing up to 25% of its staff. Meanwhile, the Tory administration has seen fit to expand its Cabinet posts by more than 25%. The Liberal Democrat Group believes that this is costly and unjustifiable. Cabinet should be cut by the same proportion.

We understand the pressures that face this Council as it strives to come up with a balanced budget for 2019-20. As with recent years, there is little room for manoeuvre.

In recent years, we have proposed funding for Children’s Centres, additional resources for Youth provision, and using prudential borrowing to bring an end to the hopeless “managed decline of our roads” policy of this administration. Liberal Democrat ideas ridiculed when first presented, were then taken up later. Whilst we are happy to be used as a source of good ideas (there is certainly a desperate need for them), the knee-jerk rejection of such ideas simply because they are someone else’s cannot be in the best interests of Oxfordshire residents.

In the case of prudential borrowing to address the pothole crisis, had the administration taken on the idea when we first suggested it, we would have fixed the problem before yet more miles of county roads fell into the red category.

Still, better late than never.

We must not give up on Unitary

In his very brief letter to the Leaders of SODC and VWHDC, the Rt. Hon Rishi Sunak MP explained that the government will be “pausing” its consideration for an Oxfordshire unitary council while other changes to local government in Oxfordshire take place.

The Oxfordshire/Cherwell link up is expected to achieve savings of around £2m per annum for Cherwell which is required to balance its budget – yet this initiative is being used as the main reason for delaying a Unitary decision which could still produce savings many times greater. Meanwhile Councils all around us are going Unitary. All the evidence is that Unitary councils have survived the challenging years of austerity much better than others.

Only the outstanding efforts of our own Council’s finance team has prevented us from going the way many others have gone or will be going in the coming months and years. And yet our reward for financial competence is to be told we cannot go Unitary and make those much-needed savings. What kind of message is that sending out? To be allowed to go Unitary – just go bust?

The Liberal Democrat Group will continue to point this out to HM Government and to the ruling administration at every available opportunity. It is the *only* long-term solution to local government finances and every year we duck the issue is another year of savings missed. A pause there may be, let's make sure it is only a pause.

What the Liberal Democrat Group would like to do

There is a creeping habit of using the pots of money derived from last minute small windfalls to plug holes produced by progressive austerity-induced cuts.

Such an idea is the 1m provision for a youth clubs. It is encouraging that the administration are finally listening to calls to do something for young people, but there is a limit to what the voluntary sector can do with short term pots of money that requires match funding.

We believe that we can find additional savings to re-establish a council run Youth Service, funding 6 new posts on an ongoing basis. This new team will sit within the Fire Service alongside their education and community safety work and deliver open access and detached youth work across the county.

We will use the £1m that we have released to establish a reserve of £750k for our OCC bus officer to co-ordinate and improve the provision of bus services particularly those for rural areas and £250k to pilot a loan scheme for 16-18 year old's to purchase the most economical bus passes upfront.

Money saving/income generation proposals

1. **Cutting 3 Cabinet posts** from our increasingly bloated Cabinet. We would point out that under the Transformation process, we are likely to lose up to 25% of our staff and that a similar scale of cut to the Cabinet would set the right example.
2. **Cutting 3 posts from our communication team** and
3. **Business parking rates** should be raised from £100pa to £200pa (tax deductible).
4. **Hiring out Ground Floor rooms in County Hall in evenings and weekends** to raise a conservative £20K pa

Recommendation

The Council is RECOMMENDED (in respect of revenue) to approve a budget for 2019/20 and a medium term financial plan for 2019/20 – 2022/23 as amended in Liberal Democrat Group Annex 1;

Richard Webber Cllr
On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group OCC

Liberal Democrat Group Budget Amendments 2019/20 - 2022/23
Revenue

	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	2022/23 £m	Total £m
Cabinet Position as per Council report	0.000	15.581	0.180	1.577	17.338
Removal of Cabinet proposals					
Remove 20CM24 : Youth Provision Fund	-1.000	1.000			0.000
New Savings Proposals					
NEW - Remove three Cabinet Posts	-0.060				-0.060
NEW - Savings from use of Council properties for income generation in the evenings and weekends	-0.020				-0.020
NEW - Reduction of three posts in the Communications Team	-0.140				-0.140
NEW - Increase in Business Permit Parking Charges:	-0.025				-0.025
3 month permit from £25 to £50					
6 month permit from £50 to £100					
12 month permit from £100 to £200					
New Investment Proposals					
NEW - Funding for a pilot scheme to assist 16-18 year olds purchase the most economical bus passes.	0.250	-0.250			0.000
NEW - Funding for 6 Youth Support workers	0.245				0.245
NEW - One-off fund for seed funding Community Bus Services	0.750	-0.750			0.000
Revised Overall Position	0.000	15.581	0.180	1.577	17.338
Difference to Cabinet Position as per Council report	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

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