

**Green Group Budget Amendments
Oxfordshire County Council
18th February 2014**

**Moved by Cllr David Williams
Seconded by Cllr Sam Coates**

The Green Group move the following amendments to the proposed County Council budget for 2014/15. The amendments are presented in Annex 1 to this report.

The Green Budget amendments generates extra income in a number of ways and focuses the use of the bulk of that new money in non-implementation of savings identified in the proposed budget moved by the ruling group. The Green budget also includes a small number of Green initiatives in the capital budget. The central objective is to generate extra income to protect a range of front line services especially in Adult Social Care.

We propose a Council Tax increase of 4.5%. This would cost the average Council Tax payer an additional £29.74 for the year or 57p a week. With an average of 2.5 people per household, this is under 23p per person per week. This would generate **£7.592m** over the medium term and have no impact on those who are exempt. We are happy that it would require a referendum to achieve this increase. We believe that the people of Oxfordshire, faced with the consequences of continued cuts, would choose to pay this modest increase. If they do not, we would put the additional income raised from increasing parking charges and other charges into Adult Social Care. The cost of holding a referendum has been budgeted for.

We propose to increase the charges at the County's two Park & Ride sites by £1 per day and increase all other parking charges by 4.5% to generate an additional **£0.610m**. We also propose to increase the charges for processing licenses and planning applications and all other general charges (where the charge is not set by statute) by 4.5% to generate **£0.055m**.

As the service range is being reduced by 25% over a 4 year period the range of responsibilities of individual senior managers will also diminish. As all local authorities are in the same position, we see that there is an opportunity to join together with another Council and have a shared senior management team to save **£0.400m**. If senior officers are being reduced then councillors (Cabinet members and backbenchers) must also take a similar cut as the same argument about diminished responsibilities apply. The number of Cabinet members could be reduced by two and all salaries of Cabinet members and backbencher allowances cut by an average of 20% to save **£0.200m**.

Our budget amendments restore some of the proposed savings in the Cabinet budget and as a result we would be making fewer people redundant. We should save at least **£0.350m** as a one-off sum by making fewer redundancy payments.

Following Nottingham City Council's lead, we propose to introduce a Large Employers Parking Levy. Initial research suggests that this will generate **£1.5m** in Oxfordshire. To allow for further research and consultation, the charge will be introduced from April 2016. The income generated will be spent on a Benelux Cycle network system and elimination of cycle accident black spots in order to encourage cycling and reduce congestion. These would be capital schemes, funded by the revenue income generated and have been added to the capital programme.

To generate **£0.100m** of additional funding for the capital programme, we propose to sell some of the cultural assets owned by the County Council to local art galleries and museums.

Children, Education & Families

In Children, Education & Families there is an amendment to restore the **£3m** cut to Children's Centres proposed in 2017/18. We will not proceed with an 'integrated adolescent and early childhood service'.

Social & Community Services

In Adult Social Care, we commit to spending **£2.7m** to reverse the proposed reductions in the Learning Disability service. We will also spend **£0.140m** to keep the Shopping, Laundry and Meals service, **£0.600m** to save the Brokerage service and **£0.500m** to support the very poor through the Social Fund. The mainstream Advice and Advocacy service which for a small cost to the authority generates millions of pounds in benefits to the community is also given back its full subsidy of **£0.100m**.

We will protect the homeless by fully restoring the proposed cut to Supporting People Housing Related Support of **£1.5m**.

Environment & Economy

In Environment & Economy, we will reduce the proposed cuts for Home to School Transport and Rural Bus Subsidies by **£1.403m**. This will be sufficient to pay for transport for parents who may struggle to pay for their children to go to a school of their choice and will mean that more rural communities do not lose their local bus.

Chief Executives Office

In the field of culture there is a commitment not to withdraw the grant to the Mill Arts Centre of **£0.080m**. The Green budget also seeks to restore **£0.090m** to Refugee Resource in order that this organisation continues its excellent work with those who arrive as refugees in Oxfordshire. There is also a commitment to restore the grant of **£0.059m** to improve Village Halls and other community buildings that are often at the centre of local community life.

Capital Programme

We will spend **£0.400m** of revenue in order to borrow **£10m** for the capital programme to be spent on the following schemes:

- i) A formal insulation scheme of £6m with monies given to local Low Carbon Groups to fund programmes in deprived areas. For every pound invested Energy Companies are obliged to match the funding 3:1 therefore £6 million invested would generate £18m in actual work done.

- ii) A new Benelux Style (separate surface) cycle network to ease congestion and elimination of accident black spots with an investment of £2m. This level of funding will be increased when the Employers Parking Levy is introduced.
- iii) £2m of funding for new Flood defences.

Conclusion

For a modest increase in Council Tax and other charges, we can restore over **£10m** of proposed cuts in the Cabinet budget and protect some of the most vulnerable people in Oxfordshire.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We RECOMMEND Council to approve:

- 1) **A budget for 2014/15 and medium term financial plan for 2015/16 – 2017/18 as amended in Green Group Annex 1;**
- 2) **The council tax and precept calculations for 2014/15 set out in Annex 2 and in particular:**
 - i) **a precept for 2014/15 of £284,568,868m; and**
 - ii) **a council tax for Band D equivalent properties of £1,238.15**