

Labour Group Budget Amendments 2018/19 Leader of the Opposition Overview

Labour Group Budget Statement

When elected in 2017 Labour Councillors committed themselves in their Manifesto to protect services for the most vulnerable in Oxfordshire and to meet the challenges faced by the rise in demand for both Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

We will continue to champion and campaign for the NHS which has its 70th Birthday in 2018. The interface between Adult Social Care and the Health Service has been the subject of much debate particularly in relation to those people who get stuck in a hospital bed because the appropriate Social Care is not available. This, however, is a small number in comparison to the number of people cared for daily by Adult Social Care. The impact of the closure of Hospital Beds particularly in the community means that there are fewer beds available overall and as the number of those needing health care rises it is counterintuitive to be closing even more beds without putting in resources to ensure older people in health crisis can be cared for quickly and appropriately by Health Professionals in their own home.

The changes in how Day Care is delivered by Adult Social Care has caused distress to many residents and their family/carers. Much of this distress relates to changes in charging and reassessment. Labour councillors will continue to monitor these changes as they go forward and we will oppose any further reassessing of vulnerable people or changes in charging policy until we have considered carefully the provision of equitable delivery of Adult Social Care across the County. It is monstrous that an elderly vulnerable person in one part of the County should pay more than a resident in similar circumstances in another. It is now over a year since this council passed a motion in relation to the delivery of Home Care to adults across the County. We are still no further forward in considering how best to ensure we have a service where the cost is equitable across the County and where those who care for our most vulnerable residents have decent terms and conditions of service with continual professional development and support. No wonder it is difficult to employ care workers when they are subject to a variety of different terms and conditions of service by the different organisations in the market and where market failure is a real threat. We understand the unrealistic pressure which has been put on officers to implement cuts and to respond to inspections but until we have our own directly employed care workers a proportion of our Adult Social Care Budget will continue to be put towards the profits of commercial organisations and our officers will continually be on the lookout for likely market failure. It is this vigilance which has ensured many vulnerable people at risk have not been left in unsafe positions as companies go under.

The funding of Children's Services which includes all children and young people is now stretched to the limit and much of the responsibility for early intervention is being shifted to schools who do not have the resources to offer the sort of interventions the most vulnerable young people and families need. The Labour Group will work with the 8 Children and Families Centres by giving them the resources needed to arrange

activities and other support for children and young people struggling emotionally. Unless there is appropriate intervention in place we will continue to struggle with increased numbers of children being taken into care.

The Labour Party committed itself in its manifesto to setting up a Secure Unit for Young people with severe issues which mean they are a threat to themselves and others. We want to see work started to deliver this facility which will remove the need for hard pressed Children's Social Workers going out to the market to find places for these vulnerable young people. A market where those selling places can charge what they want. It would be hoped that Oxfordshire could not only reduce the cost of placements for our own children but could also offer placements to neighbouring authorities.

The Labour Group are particularly concerned about the number of families with small children who are being evicted across the County. As housing costs escalate and poverty increases it is incumbent on Children's Social Care to work with the Districts/City to stop evictions of families with children for rent arrears. Being poor is not a reason to have scores of children referred as needing safeguarding when the problem is housing and finance not love and care. Oxfordshire, as it isn't a Housing Authority, finds it impossible to find places within the County for these families to live. The same is true in relation to our Looked After Children: it is virtually impossible to find these young people leaving care somewhere to live. The need is the same for other young people who now live in sheds in their parents' gardens as Oxfordshire becomes socially cleansed of the poor. The people, most of them young, sleeping on our streets are evidence to our housing policies going wrong. There is a need for Oxfordshire to consider how we can work with others to provide integrated housing and education for all young people and not just for the most privileged young people at Oxford's two universities.

The group are committed to making the governance of Oxfordshire more inclusive, accountable and transparent by moving to a new committee system where the maximum number of Councillors are engaged in decision making at a lower cost. The Cabinet system of government at local level leaves many councillors without any role or responsibility. These Councillors are close to the communities they represent and their residents rightly feel they should be able to influence and take decisions which impact on their lives. Our present system in Oxfordshire comes from medieval times when advice was given in secret to the sovereign in a small place hence the Cabinet. The committee system which came into being in the 19th Century was slow and tedious as it was developed in the heyday of Local Government when the system needed to consider a much wider range of services than we have to-day and when the local councillors were usually the landed gentry doing their bit for their local community and had only a limited amount of time to give to the process of governance. Attitudes have changed, the functions of local government have changed and the role of strong and stable individual leaders taking decision without the involvement of locally elected representatives has become a slow canker destroying local elected democracy by alienating communities as their elected representatives have no say or influence in decision making. No wonder it is difficult to get people to stand for local government. Again, Council agreed that a new form of governance should be investigated. Money spent on the current arrangements could be cut and the money saved spent on our most vulnerable residents.

This budget has not had some of the headline cuts which people in Oxfordshire have suffered for 10 years. But in it are damaging proposals in relation to Adult Social Care and there is no evidence that the budgetary changes in Children's Services will deal with the enormous budgetary pressure caused by austerity cuts and the increasing demand from distressed families, children and young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council is RECOMMENDED (in respect of revenue) to approve a budget for 2018/19 and a medium term financial plan for 2018/19 – 2021/22 as amended in Labour Group Annex 1.

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

Labour Group Budget Amendments 2018/19 - 2021/22

Revenue

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Cabinet Position as per Council report	0.000	0.000	0.000	-7.876	-7.876
Removal of Cabinet proposals					
Remove 19RES18 - Councillor Priorities Fund	-0.945		0.945		0.000
Remove 19RES19 - Parish Council Engagement	-0.025	-0.030	0.055		0.000
Remove 19PA6 - savings from changes to the adult social care contributions policy	0.750	0.750			1.500
Adjustment of Cabinet proposals					
Adjust 19CM8 - Reduction in level of Contingency required over medium term as a result of additional investment and removal of saving 19PA6		-1.200	-0.250		-1.450
Adjust 19CM17 - Further use of Budget Prioritisation Reserve - total draw down over medium term £1.579m compared to final Cabinet proposals of £1.059m and draft Cabinet proposals of £2.996m	-0.500	0.480	0.020		0.000
New Savings Proposals					
NEW - Transition Fund Reserve - change of use	-0.185	0.185			0.000
NEW - Savings from introducing the Committee System	-0.230				-0.230
NEW - Increase the savings to be made from the transformation programme in 2020/21			-1.270		-1.270
New Investment Proposals					
NEW - No longer use the Transition Fund for new grants, instead reassign as a contingency to ensure the sustainability of transitioned services	0.185	-0.185			0.000
NEW - Establish an Emotional Wellbeing Service	0.500				0.500
NEW - Investment in Early Intervention & Prevention through the 8 Children & Family Centres	0.350				0.350
NEW - Work with the District/City Councils to ensure no child is referred to Children's Social Care solely because of rent arrears associated with poverty	0.100				0.100
NEW - Invest in Homelessness Pathway with prioritisation for care leavers			0.500		0.500
Revised Overall Position	0.000	0.000	0.000	-7.876	-7.876
Difference to Cabinet Position as per Council report	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000