

CABINET – 21 JUNE 2022

ITEM 4 – QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Questions	Cabinet Member
<p>1. COUNCILLOR FREDDIE VAN MIERLO</p> <p>Streetlights around Cuxham Road roundabout, industrial estate and Willow close in Watlington have not been working for 9 months. SSE had been contracted to fix the lights on 06/04/2022 but have failed to do so, despite requests by myself and officers to do so. Will the cabinet member for highways write to SSE to urgently rectify the issue?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR ANDREW GANT, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT</p> <p>We echo your concerns with this issue and as you will appreciate that as SSE own this network, we have to rely on the timescales they present. However, we have contacted them again and pushed for them to confirm when the work will be carried out and that they endeavour to prioritise this work.</p>
<p>2. COUNCILLOR SALLY POVOLOTSKY</p> <p>The Household Support Fund, how much is being requested from government to support our most vulnerable, and increasingly vulnerable families and individuals in the county, what agencies are we working with and how is this funding being distributed into our society given the funding has to be committed between April 2022 and September 2022? Also what % of increase does this council project will need additional help, and how will be resource that assistance, throughout our services and the wider community initiatives that are being</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR CALUM MILLER, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE</p> <p>Residents in Oxfordshire, as across the UK, are facing a cost of living emergency. As food, fuel and transport costs rise well beyond the planned increases in welfare payments and the proposed increases in wages the Council does expect many households to be increasingly affected. As an example, many households are now struggling with the costs of fuel and power – which together account for a higher proportion of family spending in low income households. Extrapolating from national data (The rising cost of living and its impact on individuals in Great Britain - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)), and adjusting for Oxfordshire's levels of deprivation, we estimate that 24,000 adults in Oxfordshire would state that they are behind on payments for gas and electricity. The scale of the challenge is beyond the means of the Council so we will continue to press for a more ambitious and sustained</p>

created by the week and lifelines to their local residents.

response from national government. For now, direct support from government is limited and time-bound. Taking account of this, the Council has can play a role in directing our support to the most economically vulnerable in our communities.

Government determines the allocation of Household Support Fund (HSF) to each upper tier local authority. Oxfordshire will receive £3.4m in the second round (approximately £5 per resident). The previous round of £3.4m (October 2021-March 2022) was 100% utilised. For the second round, we will continue our approach of funding free school meal equivalent support in school holiday periods through schools, colleges and early years provides. This works alongside the delegation of funds for emergency welfare schemes delivered through the city and district council in partnership with the voluntary and community sector. FSM support was funded for May half term and the City and District schemes will formally relaunch in mid-June. In developing plans we have engaged with county-wide and local advisory services and the wider voluntary and community sector.

In addition to HSF, Council agreed £500,000 of annual revenue funding for emergency welfare support for 2022/23-2025/26. In response to the cost of living emergency we are focussing our limited funding on where we can make the most difference to the most vulnerable through two schemes. Firstly, plans are well underway for a rapid expansion of the Better Housing Better Health scheme (BHBH). BHBH works with the most at risk households to identify energy and cost saving measures that can improve quality of life and help mitigate the impact of energy price rises. Phone consultations will increase from 400 to 2700 during the year and home visits to the most vulnerable from 200 to 500 reaching in total approximately 10% of fuel poor households. The BHBH steering group are building relationships with key partners who serve residents who are likely to be in fuel poverty, such as the Agnes Smith Centre in Blackbird Leys and Citizens Advice. BHBH are training frontline staff about fuel poverty and promoting the BHBH service. The provider of the service is an expert in the field of fuel poverty and is able

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	<p>to triage the offer of home visits and use data to ensure we are reaching those who are most likely to be in need. Secondly, we have agreed to support the critical debt and money advice teams from our partners at Citizens Advice with a grant of £210,000 to maintain capacity through 2022/23. Details of these schemes will be fully announced in the coming weeks as details are finalised with the providers.</p> <p>In addition working in partnership with the Oxfordshire Community Foundation, Community First Oxfordshire, Good Food Oxfordshire and OCVA, the Council has used one off grant funding to provide a further round of community resilience grants which will support grass-roots organisations who play a critical role in supporting the most vulnerable remain sustainable into the winter period. £300,000 will support projects across the county. The deadline for applications closed on Thursday 16 June and will be reviewed by a cross-sector grants panel. As part of this grants round, the VCS led a number of workshops to expand access to the scheme.</p>
<p>3. COUNCILLOR FREDDIE VAN MIERLO</p> <p>The Watlington Relief Road is an important piece of local infrastructure that, when delivered, will relieve heavy traffic through the centre of the historic market town, which can then be remodelled to prioritise local business and people.</p> <p>Concerns have been expressed by some that the route would see an increase in HGV traffic. Can the cabinet member confirm that the Watlington Relief Road will fall within the existing area weight restrictions around Watlington</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>OCC can confirm that the Watlington Relief Road scheme has no plans to amend or alter the current weight restriction that is currently enforced around Watlington. The Watlington Relief Road will remain within the existing area weight restriction band which is currently 7.5 tonnes.</p>

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<p>thereby preventing through traffic of HGVs, and confirm that there are no plans to change the weight restrictions around Watlington?</p>	
<p>4. COUNCILLOR JOHN HOWSON</p> <p>How long do you anticipate the 'pause' in the Woodstock Road corridor scheme will last?</p>	<p>COUNCILLOR DUNCAN ENRIGHT, CABINET MEMBER FOR TRAVEL & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY</p> <p>The Woodstock Road scheme has been paused to take into consideration the Oxford Core Transport Schemes proposals (traffic filters, workplace parking levy and expanded zero emission zone), which would impact traffic levels on the radial routes into the city including Woodstock Road. The Core Transport Schemes are currently being developed prior to consultation later this year. If approved and implemented, then a plan for the next phase will be developed, which will include consideration of Woodstock Road. The responses from the consultation on the Woodstock Road scheme and the input from co-production will be used as a basis for continuing the design of the route. Unfortunately, this may be outside of the Housing and Growth Deal funding window, but alternative funding will be found.</p>