

REPORT TO FRITWELL PARISH COUNCIL JANUARY 2024 FROM CLLR FATEMIAN

GENERAL OCC REPORT

BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2024/25

The Liberal Democrat/Green administration at OCC has revealed its first draft of Budget proposals for 2024/25.

Proposals to save more than £9.8 million in 2024/25 have been set out by the administration as it seeks to set a balanced budget. The council continues to experience demand-led pressures and the effects of the growing nationwide costs of supporting children and young people; the rising cost of social care and care placements for both children and adults; and a national shortage of social care workers leading to a reliance on agency staff and higher costs. All of these pressures combined amount to approximately £29.8m. The council proposes to add to contingency funding for risks including inflation by £6.2m meaning an overall pressure of £36m. After taking account of proposed savings, funding changes and other factors that help meet pressures, the county council currently has a £9.1 million funding gap. It will work to close this and present a revised draft balanced budget in the new year after the government has confirmed its financial settlement for local government before Christmas and further financial information has been received from the city and district councils.

New for this year, residents can [take part in the budget consultation \(for 2024/25\)](#) until 10 January using an online budget simulator, which will be hosted on the council's digital consultation and engagement platform Let's talk Oxfordshire. The simulator allows residents to try to balance the council's budget, weighing up tough choices and impacts. People will also be able to comment on the [council's proposed budget](#) with feedback captured using an online form or in writing by Freepost.

The opposition parties have criticised the administration for failing to engage with them at an early stage, given the Budget cannot pass without opposition support, and are currently developing their own Budget proposals.

The Conservative Opposition is calling for cuts to vanity projects and will put forward its arguments in future debates.

A meeting of Full Council on Tuesday 20th February will vote on the options.

OCC SPENDS £10,000 ON COLOURING-IN BOOKS PROMOTING 20MPH SCHEME

OCC has come under criticism for spending £10,000 on colouring-in books for schoolchildren promoting its 30mph to 20mph sign-changing exercise. Opponents say that not only is it a waste of money that could be spent repairing potholes, but it also fails to provide children with a balanced view of the controversial scheme.



PRIORITY ACTION PLAN PUBLISHED TO IMPROVE SEND SERVICES

On 18 December) OCC published [the local area partnership priority action plan](#) to improve services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and

disabilities (SEND). The plan responds to [Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission's inspection](#) report of SEND partnership services in July. A draft plan was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) on 24 October and was approved by Ofsted on 12 December. The plan sets out what will be achieved across five priority action areas.

1. Gathering and acting on the views of children and young with SEND and their families.
2. Developing effective communications systems across the partnership to ensure coordinated approaches.
3. Improved timeliness and quality assurance of education, health and care plans.
4. Commissioning of services to meet the needs of children and young people and their families.
5. Producing plans that are coproduced with children and young people and their families, which are rigorously monitored.

The local area partnership includes Oxfordshire County Council, NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and the parent carer forum (PCF), the official body for the voice of parent carers. The PCF will be directly involved in activities in the priority action plan that lead to improving services and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

COUNCILS FAILING TO GET TO GRIPS WITH CHILD CARE COSTS

Local authorities in England are reportedly paying as much as £63,000 a week for single children's social care placements, according to figures published by the Local Government Association (LGA). The data reveals that the number of placements for the care of vulnerable children costing over £10,000 a week has risen to more than 1,500, equivalent to at least £780m a year. The LGA has described the market for children's social care placements as broken. Association of Directors of Children's Services president John Pearce said: *"Local authorities are the sole purchasers of placements...It cannot be right that the largest 20 independent providers of children's social care homes made more than £300m of profit last year, every penny of which came directly from the public purse."* OCC is projecting to overspend by £11.8m on Children's Services, taking the total to a staggering £180.9m.

OXFORDSHIRE RESIDENTS URGED TO RECYCLE VAPES

Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council will together provide new vape recycling services across the county. They want to prevent the disposal of single-use vapes in litter bins, general waste or mixed recycling where they can contaminate other recycling and, in some instances, cause fires in bin trucks or waste facilities.

New vape recycling points in public spaces offer convenient and easy access for recycling vapes. This is one of more than 40 UK projects funded by Material Focus, the not for profit leading the Recycle Your Electricals campaign who have provided over £40,000 for Oxfordshire to be one of the first county councils to lead the way by recycling vapes. The funding is part of a wider initiative to make it easier for 10 million UK residents to recycle their electricals.

The Recycle Your Vapes campaign will:

- Add up to 60 new recycling collection points for vapes at small retailers, shopping areas, bars and cafes across Oxford, Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. Look out for the three-foot high, clear plastic tube vape recycling collection points. The tubes have bright pink recycle your vapes posters and images of vapes on the posters.
- Provide new public recycling bright pink bins at each of the seven household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) in Oxfordshire.
- And introduce a new separate kerbside collection for vapes in Cherwell.

The new household waste recycling centre (HWRC) bright pink vape bins were installed on Wednesday 29 November, which will also see the roll out of collection points in other locations.

In all other areas of Oxfordshire, vapes can be recycled at the kerbside with other small electrical items. How they are collected in each district council area varies, residents should check the [Waste Wizard](#) or their district council's website to check the local area's collection service.