

Annual Report to Milcombe Parish Councils
From
Cllr Kieron Mallon Oxfordshire County Council

It has been a privilege to represent Milcombe. I hope that I can continue after 6th May. This year has been uniquely challenging.

Highways

Over the last year there has been an improvement in road surfaces and in our area the safety improvement scheme that I asked officers to bid for from Safety England was successful in granting £4m. the scheme itself was drafted and implemented to their specifications not OCCs. The works took longer than anticipated and I am sorry for the delays and traffic jams on the A361 but I hope that now finished the improvements are welcomed. The shared path is already proving popular with all users especially pupils from Banbury who cycle to The Warriner.

The works were undertaken all along the A361 from Banbury, Bloxham, Milcombe, S. Newington to Chipping Norton.

Parish Council

I hope my interaction with the Parish Council has been fruitful. I think I have supported them on planning applications as the OCC member, but the final decision is of course determined by CDC. I pay tribute to your Parish Cllrs who week in week out give up their time to volunteer on your behalf to keep Milcombe the lovely village it is.

OCC

I also pay tribute to all council staff who have worked on the ground, in the office and at home to ensure services have continued throughout the pandemic. This has been additional to tasks that they have been required to undertake as part of the pandemic response.

OCC and CDC joint working continues in a a positive way as well as delivering on savings. Throughout the year there has been much discussion of unitary councils and I think these discussions will continue, as has been the case over the last four years.

The cost of two upper tiers of local government is prohibitive and to make the savings needed especially post Covid will direct and dictate the way forward. If a Unitary Authority is decided on it will mean that Town and Parish councils will continue and probably have an enhanced role to play.

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Budget

The OCC Budget was passed in Feb. This includes a 1.99% rise in basic council tax rise, plus an extra 1% specifically for adult social care, making a total of 2.99%.

- Frontline services are given higher levels of protection and new investment
- Next year and beyond, the council is committing to strengthening its approach towards climate action.
- An enhanced focus on addressing inequality, developing its youth offer and delivering its COVID-19 recovery strategy.
- A total of £19.6m of savings are being proposed in total across all services. £14.6m of these savings were already planned and are centred on the transformation of services to make them more efficient while protecting the frontline.
- The council is also dedicated to investing in services that will have positive long-term impact for local areas. The budget proposals reflect this with more than £25m of additional funding included. Some of this funding has been previously agreed but £9.5m of this is newly proposed for 2021/22 to help meet additional demands, including adult social care.

New Investments include

- A total of £1m long-term funding would be invested in expanding the youth offer in Oxfordshire. A study is due to report on the needs of young people and how the wider partnership of the voluntary, community and public services can best provide support. An additional £500,000 of one-off funding will also be provided to develop sustainable policies to help tackle the impacts of the pandemic on young people.
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- An extra £4m will be added to the adult social care budget for 2021/22. This includes a total of £1.35m for managing risks and providing sustainability.
- The Better Care Fund (BCF) is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government. It seeks to join up health and care services so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing and live independently for as long as possible. For 2020/21, the county council agreed with health partners that £1.2m of the improved BCF for Oxfordshire would be used to support activities agreed to deliver better results over the winter period in the county. However, it was one-off funding. The council is proposing to continue the funding for 2021/22, which would be used to support measures to help people be discharged from hospital and enable new ways of working and better outcomes for residents.
- OCC has been part of a joint partnership to procure and manage services for single homeless people in Oxfordshire since it was formed in 2017. A further one-off contribution to the partnership of £500,000 was included in the budget, with £250,000 of this allocated for 2020/21 and the same in 2021/22.

- The council is proposing to continue the council's support for the partnership from 2022/23.
- During the period of the pandemic, more people have chosen to take up drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation services and this has led to the council proposal to put £50,000 more into existing services.
- An extra £400,000 is proposed for highway maintenance focused on additional resource for vegetation and drainage clearance.
- A £300,000 fund to support projects and activities that improve people's health and wellbeing in Oxfordshire is proposed. A total of £150,000 of this will be new funding and £150,000 will come from existing public health budgets.
- An extra £330,000 will be invested into children's services on increasing early intervention services, increasing the skill base of children's social care workers and special educational needs related services.
- A total of £100,000 would be invested in issues linked to digital exclusion.
- A total of £81,000 would be invested in domestic violence services and £150,000 into apprenticeships.

Savings Include:

- The council proposes to carry out more checks to make sure companies who have been granted permits to carry out roadworks finish on time. This will ensure that late finishers are fined (up to £10,000 per day). This should generate £225,000 in 2021/22.
- The council is carrying out a review of its winter service. This would save £100,000. This would not change the current network of roads treated and there would be no change for the winter of 2020/21.
- For adults with care support needs, the council intends to focus on maximising the use of existing contracted work and looking at creative ways to meet needs at a lower cost. This would be done while also helping residents to live as independently as possible. It is anticipated that it will be possible to save £1m (around 1 per cent of the total budget) in each of the adults with care and support needs and Better Care Fund pooled budgets in 2021/22.
- A £430,000 increase was planned in the waste management budget in 2021/22 due to the forecast rise in the number of homes in the county. It was expected this would lead to more waste. However, new homes have not been built at the predicted pace (believe it or not) and this investment can be deferred beyond 2021/22.

- A set of projects are underway to focus on outcomes for children the county council cares for to improve the ability to meet their needs through local placements, particularly children with complex needs. This includes two projects – one looking at providing the right type of foster placements for children and the other looking at the provision of small residential homes (two to three beds). The aim is to be able to provide the placements within Oxfordshire wherever possible. This would save £1.02m.
- Funding was originally allocated for growth in demand for school transport, based on new build housing. However, housing hasn't been developed as quickly as anticipated. As such the council can save £700,000 in 2021/22.
- The county council will benefit from £1.66m of savings it has been able to make through the retendering of its insurance contract. This is based on an analysis of amounts that have been required in recent years.
- Based on activity in 2020/21 and looking forward to working from home in 2021/22, the council estimates it will be able to save £750,000 on staff travel budgets and £100,000 on printing. This would be closely monitored throughout the year.
- The county council's property team will save £1.95m in 2021/22 rising to £3.3m in 2022/23. The focus in 2021/22 will be on joint working with Cherwell District Council to blend the two property teams and jointly find more efficient ways of working

Health Overview Scrutiny Committee

I have served on the HOSC committee for a year , we guide oversight of health service provision throughout the county. Over the past year most of the focus has been on the response to the pandemic, a highly successful locally run test and trace programme, and vaccinations. The local test and trace programme involves using local knowledge and for example, local phone numbers to trace people has delivered much higher success rates than the national programme. The pandemic has also led to fundamental changes in the way care is likely to be delivered, including for example remote out-patient appointments which have been received better than expected by patients.

Horton HOSC

I have served since its inception on the Horton HOSC. This was set up at our insistence to monitor the proposals of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) who pay for services and the Oxford University Hospital Trust (OUHT) who deliver the services we expect at the Horton. Following many meetings I think the chance to work productively with Oxford may at last be within sight. Some of the meetings were fraught and the evidence we heard harrowing as we held those bodies to account. I took personal pride in the serried ranks of the CCG and OUHT asking the Chairman to tone down my cross examination of them.

Katherine House Hospice

though not in Milcombe we are lucky that such a well loved local landmark is on our doorstep. I was briefed early on about proposed changes to Katharine House Hospice. I know both how important a service this provides.

I welcome the proposal to safeguard the future of this hospice, especially at a time when others have been forced to close. The proposal is innovative, will maintain the charitable status of the hospice and the land, whilst also securing the future through the services and clinical expertise provided by Oxford University Hospitals. This partnership is also a very welcome investment and statement of intent by OUHT in this part of the county.

Kieron Mallon

Bloxham & Easington Division inc. Milcombe