

### **County council budget agreed, with cash for social care, SEND and highways**

A budget for 2024/25 has been set at Oxfordshire County Council following the annual budget setting meeting of all county councillors on Tuesday, 20 February.

The budget contained real terms increases for both adults and children's social care. There is a ten per cent real terms increase for children's services aimed at helping children stay at home where possible and in Oxfordshire when they need residential support and to support improvements in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

There is also extra money for highways, including more gully maintenance.

An amendment was accepted which included extra funding for early intervention work in early years and primary school settings to respond to SEND needs, investment in the Family Help Team, cost of living funding to support local advice centres, and £5m additional funding for scheduled highways maintenance funded by additional borrowing.

Although central government came up with extra cash for local councils in England, this was very late and not enough to resolve the financial challenges facing the sector as a whole. Councils continue to look towards the remainder of the 2020s with concern.

### **Other key information about the county council budget for 2024/25**

The net budget for 2024/25 will be: £611m

- Council tax will rise by 4.99 per cent – as it has at almost all county councils
- Spending on both adult and children's social care will rise in real terms

### **County Council takes on Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership**

Earlier this week, cabinet agreed that the County Council will be taking oversight for the [Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (often known as OxLEP), as long as its board agrees in March. It comes after the government announced LEPs will cease to have official recognition from 31 March 2024 and their functions should be transferred to local authorities. OxLEP has previously been responsible for some county-level economic planning and support.

### **Cycle path extension and new crossing proposed for Garsington Road**

People who use Oxford's busy Garsington Road (B480) are invited to share their views on proposals designed to make cycling and walking safer, funded by the government's Active Travel Fund.

The council is proposing a new 200 metre stretch of cycleway, linking the existing sections between Hollow Way and John Smith Drive, along with safer crossings. The proposals include replacing a crossing on the western side of Garsington Road/John Smith Drive Roundabout with a wider crossing with lights to give more

space for people walking, wheeling, pushing prams or with bicycles; and installing a new crossing on the northern (Oxford Business Park entrance) and southern (John Smith Drive) arms of Garsington Road/John Smith Drive.

People can take part in an online survey on the county council's digital engagement and consultation platform, [Let's talk Oxfordshire](https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk). The consultation closes at 11.59pm on Wednesday 27 March 2024.

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/garsington-road-cycle-way>

### **Let us know your priorities for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is a new strategy designed to target actions that help nature in locations where they are most needed. The goal from these actions is to provide the best outcomes for nature and wildlife across Oxfordshire. Local Nature Recovery Strategies are expected to help join up national efforts to reverse the decline of biodiversity. This initial survey closes on 31<sup>st</sup> March: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/lhrs-phase1>

### **Councillor Priority Fund**

Over the last year I've supported:

Berry Youth Centre - Berry Camps - Holiday Scheme

Newington PC - Solar Defibrillator for Newington

Berinsfield PC- Supply and installation of 2 rugby posts on the recreation ground

Dorchester on Thames Parish Council - GreenDoTs hedgerow tooling

Garsington PC - Replacement of boundary sign

### **Didcot HIF1 planning inquiry**

The public inquiry is continues at the end of March at [Bee House in Milton Park](#).

The remaining sitting dates of the inquiry are:

- 26 to 28 March
- 16 to 19 April
- 23 to 26 April
- 8 to 10 May (set as reserve days)

If you wish to view any of the sessions from the first sessions, you can play back recordings via this link - <http://www.youtube.com/@HIF1Didcot>

### **Flooding financial support for residents and businesses (managed by SODC)**

Residents whose homes were internally flooded and businesses who were affected by flooding as a result of Storm Henk in January can now formally apply for financial support in South Oxfordshire.

They might also be eligible for support if the flooding meant they had to leave their home or close their business for a period of 48 hours or more.

The money comes from government funding schemes, which the local district councils are administering. Find out more at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/henk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/henk)