

Oxfordshire County Council Parish Briefing

June 2018

GROUND-BREAKING SHARED SERVICE ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN COUNCILS

OCC and Cherwell District Council (CDC) are considering a proposal for shared service arrangements under a joint chief executive, while retaining separate councillor bodies, budgets and decision-making processes. The proposal follows a decision by CDC not to join the a proposed new unitary with its existing partners, South Northamptonshire District Council. The proposal will be considered by the county council's Cabinet on Monday 4 June. OCC is keen to work with Cherwell to ensure its residents continue to receive good services. The county council also believes a joint arrangement would help to secure investment in the infrastructure needed to support increases in jobs and homes. The exact arrangements for sharing services and joining up functions will need to be worked out in detail and then agreed separately by each council. They will be implemented incrementally. It is a statutory requirement that the Chief Executive, as head of paid service, is appointed by the full councils of each council and formal appointment processes will be followed. The joint appointment is expected to be made from one of the existing chief executives. The proposed partnership is not connected to unitary reorganisation proposals, and would instead offer an innovative opportunity to make two tier local government more effective.

OCC RETAINS 'GOOD' OFSTED RATING FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Despite the increase in cases of children at risk of neglect and abuse, the OCC children's service has received an overall 'Good' rating from Ofsted, the children's services watchdog. This is the third time running OCC has received the 'Good' rating from Ofsted. The report was published on Tuesday, May 22. It praised the way staff had dealt with a huge rise in the number of children needing protection from abuse and neglect since 2015, and the rise in admissions to care, driven by better reporting and awareness by people working with children and families. Ofsted praised OCC and found that when children are at risk of harm, prompt action is taken to understand their circumstances and protect them. Children in care and care leavers receive a good service. However, the report said more still needs to be done to ensure children suffering from neglect are getting the right help at the right time, to reduce its impact on their lives. While most children needing help and protection are well-served, this needs to be more consistent. There has been a 45% increase in the number of cases of neglect since 2015 and this has presented a challenge to OCC, at a time of budget pressures. OCC acknowledges Ofsted's findings and is committed to improving its handling of neglect cases. Neglect often occurs in families where drug and alcohol misuse, domestic abuse or mental health issues are prevalent, but it describes any situation in which a child is being put at risk of serious harm because their needs are not being met.

FROM AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL ASSISTANT TO COUNTY COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

Gill Sanders last month became the new Chairman of OCC. She was once one of the nation's first female air traffic control assistants and the time spent in that role gave her the confidence to progress in life. She later worked in Oxford city schools for 25 years and eventually as an HR and Administration Manager at a large Oxford city comprehensive school. Councillor Sanders has been a county councillor in Oxford since 2012 but had been a city councillor for 26 years until standing down this year. She has been Vice Chairman of OCC in 2017/18 and worked closely with her husband and fellow county councillor John Sanders during his spell as Chairman in 2014/15. Councillor Les Sibley, who represents the Bicester West division at County Hall, has been elected Vice Chairman for 2018/19.

TAKING CARE BACK TO ITS ROOTS IN OXFORDSHIRE

Care in Oxfordshire looks set to go back to its community roots with teams of very local people set up around older and vulnerable people in an innovative project originally inspired in Holland and so far tried in only one other place in England. Teams are to be set up around people who need care in Abingdon and Wallingford as part of a £100,000 trial to be managed by a specialist Manchester based company called Wellbeing Teams who have already set up the new teams in Wigan. Only people who live within a five-mile radius of those for whom they'll care will be recruited to the new teams – but they don't have to have any experience in the care industry – they just need to be able to offer up to 21.75 hours of time per week and have a clear commitment and pride in their local area and community. People recruited to teams would be supported by Wellbeing Teams through a buddying system and the usual DBS and safety checks would be required before recruitment could take place.

MAKING ADULT SOCIAL CARE CHARGES MORE FAIR, CONSISTENT & TRANSPARENT

A series of changes to the way people contribute to the cost of their care in Oxfordshire will see some people charged more so that resources can be targeted better at those who cannot afford to pay and will bring OCC more in line with how things operate elsewhere in England. All councils are allowed to charge for care and support to recover the costs incurred in line with the Care Act 2014. This means that people receiving social care across the nation may be expected to contribute towards the cost of their care depending on their individual financial circumstances. The changes are estimated to save £1.8m per year. This will be used to provide social care for people with significant care needs and who are unable to pay for care themselves. This is not a saving to the council's bottom line. Full details can be found here:

<http://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/changes-would-make-adult-social-care-charges-fair-more-consistent-and-more-transparent/>

BETTER BROADBAND FOR OXFORDSHIRE UPDATE

Oxfordshire now has 96.5% superfast broadband coverage, increasingly enabling digital infrastructure in the most rural parts of the county, with adoption of the newly available fibre broadband services running at over 54%, which is well above national average.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Kind regards



Steve Harrod
County Councillor
Chalgrove & Watlington Division
Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Oxfordshire County Council
M: 07944 077 209
T: 01844 278 068
E: steve.harrod@oxfordshire.gov.uk