

Liberal Democrat City Council Budget Proposals 2014/15

Liberal Democrats are keen to provide the services that people want and need. In these times of austerity we must ensure that we do all we can to support those who are struggling to make ends meet. With Central Government grant being severely reduced year on year, and the particularly large cuts being made in the County Council budget, there is a risk that support will not be there for many vulnerable people. So we will provide £60k in the year 2014/5, and £100k each year thereafter, to help to fund essential support services which prevent homelessness.

On the energy front we will extend the energy efficiency officer post for at least the next three years to lever in outside funding. We will add a half-time Air Quality post from mid-2014/5 for 18 months. We will transfer £50k each year to the Flooding Reserve fund.

On Planning we will reintroduce letters to residents about new planning applications. To support the new Planning Design Panel, we will provide £25k pa for two more years. We will reintroduce Area Committees to bring local decisions back to local people. To engage the public in key decisions we will hold two Citizens Panels each year.

We will extend the opening hours of toilets in district centres as well as in the city centre.

Because we believe that more people should be encouraged to use our Parks we will allow free parking for one hour in City parks. We will also provide extra money for tree planting across the city.

Oxford will gain significantly from the East-West Rail Project and we are dismayed to note that, despite including it in the Corporate Plan, Labour are refusing to contribute. We will pay our contribution towards it from 2015/16 onwards.

In the Capital Programme we will provide an extra £50k for the Covered Market. We are deferring the proposed refurbishment of the Town Hall toilets as unnecessary at this stage.

All these benefits to Oxford's citizens can be funded by small savings in staffing, by reducing publication of Your Oxford to one issue a year and by using the interest on the £7m transferred from the HRA but so far not used to buy property as expected. If that money is spent on property, there will be further savings for general use.

Our proposed Council Tax increase is 1.99% in 2014/15 and 1.49% thereafter. It is a prudent budget which will help to support those at risk from cuts elsewhere, improve the environment and reduce carbon emissions. I ask Council to support these amendments.

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