

Green Group Budget Amendment 2019/20: Explanatory Notes

All parties in this Council came together again on 28th January 2019 and declared a Climate Emergency. This happened after the consultation budget was formulated, so it is understandable that the administration's budget did not fully reflect the urgent need for action on climate change.

We have taken the opportunity in this proposed budget amendment to realign the Council's spending priorities to show what can be done by the City Council to deliver real carbon reductions.

Revenue

We do not wish to cut funding for frontline services, so have introduced a modest increase in Park & Ride charges – from £2 to £2.50. Only two years ago, the administration sought to introduce a larger increase.

Given the uncertainty, we have also been extremely prudent in estimating the income from our capital investments (described later). We expect them to provide a substantial revenue income stream in future years. With this money, we have:

- Covered the estimated loss of car parking income from cancelling the expansion of the Park & Rides
- Funded a part-time officer (£25,000 per year) to focus on carbon accounting. We believe all Council decisions should be subject to a climate change appraisal
- Established a broad-based £50,000 Climate Change Innovation Fund – running for three years – that will focus on delivering carbon savings.
- Funded a new Climate Emergency Officer role (£50,000 per year) – to take forward partnership working on Climate Change. We need more resources in this area.
- Put money aside for the Citizen's Assembly on the Climate Emergency as agreed by Council on 28th January. Speaking to experts in Ireland, this could cost up to £20,000.
- Increased funds for public engagement on Climate Change – with a £25,000/year education fund.

HRA

Since the HRA spending cap has been lifted, the HRA budget will inevitably change over the next few months to reflect this. However, we have indicated – by doubling the planned year 1 spend on energy efficiency to £1.1m paid for out of additional borrowing – the urgent need to further improve our Council homes; both for environmental reasons and to reduce utility bills, making living in our Council housing more affordable.

Capital

It is in our proposed changes to the Capital budget that we have done most to help tackle the Climate Emergency. Oxford City Council's emissions may only amount to 1.5% of the City's total, but we can do a lot more to promote and support more sustainable transport and energy systems. In doing so, we are helping to transition our local economy to one

based on Clean Growth (defined by the Government as achieving income growth whilst reducing carbon emissions).

Many of these ideas came from a participatory budgeting exercise held in the Town Hall on 7th February 2019 following the declaration of a Climate Emergency. Despite the short notice, 40 people attended - a good cross-section of people - including members of the Greens, Labour and LibDems.

We have cancelled both the £4.2m remaining to be spent on expanding Seacourt Park & Ride (the cost recently jumped up by another £900,000) and chosen Option 5 from the Oxpens/Redbridge Park & Ride business case – removing and selling the staging at Oxpens - saving another £1.3m. The £5.5m saved is diverted to supporting the transition to a low carbon economy:

- £2m to fund more solar installations in Oxford. For example, this money is sufficient to fund solar canopies over about 1,000 Park and Ride parking spaces (enough to power 500 average homes and saving more than £250,000 in energy bills each year).
- £0.9m to massively expand the electric vehicle charging network in Oxford adding up to 360 additional charge points including free-to-use lockable charging points at taxi ranks to incentivise the switch to zero emission vehicles.
- £0.3m investment in the City's car sharing schemes – adding 10 long distance electric vehicles
- £0.5m to create a new freight consolidation centre at one of the Park & Ride sites to improve delivery times and reduce the number of large, polluting lorries entering the City.
- £1m Climate Emergency Fund – to make funds available to further support the ideas above and/or address other priorities as they arise.
- £50,000 to support a new 'city of the future' exhibit at the refurbished City Museum focused on climate change
- £0.7m to extend the Council's current loan to the Oxford Low Carbon Hub to enable them to invest in renewable energy systems *before* the Government's high value Feed In Tariff ends. The funds have been accounted in such a way as to enable this money to be converted into a long-term investment – the Greens preferred option (which will need to be subject to further due diligence).