

Liberal Democrat Alternative Budget proposals for 2017/2021

We agree with the Labour administration that local government has been very badly treated by the national Conservative Government. There has been an attack on social housing and on the vulnerable in our society and there is continued uncertainty about future income streams for the City Council.

Nevertheless, the Liberal Democrat view of the situation has led us to slightly different conclusions on the best way forward. We see the most urgent challenges to be faced by the citizens of Oxford to be the impact of the new Westgate development, the loss of transport for some isolated communities and the loss of Children's Centres. The first two we can address with our budget proposals, the latter needs a rethink of how the county is run while help should be given now to those worst hit.

Westgate and John Lewis will attract thousands more visitors, probably millions, which will put great strain on transport and the city centre environment. We need to persuade as many as possible to use public transport, train or Park and Ride as well as service buses. Our Park and Ride sites have a lot of spare capacity at Redbridge and some at Pear Tree. The proposal to extend Seacourt into the flood plain and cause increased congestion at the junctions of the A420 and the A34 and on the Botley Road looks to us like a very poor use of £4m of city money.

We therefore propose not to expand Seacourt, not least because there will be a new P&R site at Eynsham by 2020 to take some of the Oxford-bound traffic. We will use £400k CIL money that was to be spent on Seacourt to fund instead a system of advance information signs round the city, telling drivers where there are spaces, so they can divert to Pear Tree or Redbridge in good time. As the principle of P&Rs is to make it cheaper to use them rather than drive in to the city, we are against raising the parking charge. Other cities charge less or nothing – for example, Cambridge charges £1 a day. Not expanding Seacourt saves £4m in total, £3.126m revenue – we propose to spend £2.756m of revenue funding on supporting the city budget, which leaves £370k for future use as yet unspecified.

We believe that there will be extra revenue at Redbridge in particular from people diverting there following the installation of the information signage, which will help to reduce the loss predicted from not extending Seacourt.

Air quality in the city centre is not good and likely to get worse following the removal of buses from Queen Street, leading to yet more congestion in St Aldate's. The city's refuse vehicles are fuelled by biodiesel, which is 95% diesel, which is known to be a source of very harmful particulates and NO₂. Other authorities are using gas-powered HGVs, Leeds and Reading for example. Oxford will be buying three new refuse trucks in 2018/19 and could save on fuel costs, while removing harmful emissions, by investing in new biomethane-powered vehicles instead of more diesel ones. We have allowed for the higher capital cost and noted an estimated 25% saving in fuel costs.

Trees absorb pollution and we propose increasing tree cover in the city by following Cambridge's example in offering new Oxford parents a tree from a list of suitable native species, to be planted in their garden or in a public space.

All those extra people in the city centre will inevitably generate more litter, so we support the request from Direct Services, refused by the administration, to have two extra street cleaning operatives rather than one to help keep the streets clean.

There is still £40k in the Disabled Transport Contingency. We propose releasing that to a fund to which communities can apply for support with setting up a transport initiative, similar to the Comet which we set up in Cutteslowe, but for any recognised transport need for those communities isolated following the withdrawal of subsidised services.

Oxford's population includes many people for whom English is not their first language, some who have very little or no English at all. This puts them at a huge disadvantage and we propose investing £50k a year to recognised bodies providing tuition in English.

The planning department is overloaded and not able to deal with applications as fast as it should. Too many are way behind their required date for determination. We propose employing an extra planning officer and an extra planning enforcement officer to improve the performance of the department for the public. We also propose the reinstatement of letters to neighbours which much reduce the risk of people being uninformed about applications in their immediate neighbourhood.

A grant to the Canal and River trust to improve the towpath surface north of Elizabeth Jennings Way as far as possible would be of great benefit to people with buggies and people on bicycles.

The Capital programme has Seacourt removed and the new refuse vehicles' estimated extra cost included, also a contribution of £100k each to the refurbishment of Headington Community Centre and a new centre at Five Mile Drive to serve that neighbourhood.

The loss of Children's Centres is a consequence of the straitened finances at the County Council. While communities, including mine in Cutteslowe, have worked hard to provide some open access children's services, they are not able to replace what has been lost without significantly more funding. As long as there are six local authorities with their own administrative overheads and some duplication of responsibilities, the necessary funding to support Children's Centres, subsidised buses, adult social care and homelessness, to name the most obvious casualties in the present situation, there will not be enough in the pot to replace and improve them. As Liberal Democrats we strongly support a reorganisation of local government which has the advantages of strategic management of housing site allocation, planning and transport, but which retains the essential local control of functions which are best decided locally such as housing management, waste collection and local road maintenance .

Our budget amendments respond to the needs of Oxford's population.

REVENUE

LIB DEM GROUP AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONSULTATION BUDGET

REVENUE

| £1000's | 2017/18 £000'S | 2018/19 £000'S | 2019/20 £000'S | 2020/21 £000'S |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Consultation Budget Net Budget Requirement | 21,281 | 22,212 | 21,877 | 22,298 |
| Changes since the consultation budget | | | | |
| Sub total changes since the consultation budget | (618) | 61 | 35 | 30 |
| <u>Additional Savings proposed</u> | | | | |
| 1 Reduce members on CEB from 10 to 6 | (29) | (29) | (29) | (29) |
| 2 Elections every four years | (13) | (13) | (13) | (13) |
| 3 Reduce communications team from 6 to 4 | (86) | (86) | (86) | (86) |
| 4 One off use of disabled transport reserve | (40) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 5 Vacancy factor | (50) | (50) | (50) | (50) |
| 6 Use of capital reserve as opposed to spending on Seacourt | (254) | (834) | (834) | (834) |
| 7 Reduced fuel costs due to biomethane fuelled refuse vehicles | 0 | (5) | (5) | (5) |
| Total additional savings proposed | (472) | (1,017) | (1,017) | (1,017) |
| Cumulative additional savings | (472) | (1,489) | (2,506) | (3,523) |
| <u>Additional costs proposed</u> | | | | |
| 1 Reinstatement of issuing letters to residents on planning applications | 40 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 2 Extra street cleaning operative | 27 | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| 3 Disabled transport - use of reserve | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 Additional resource English for Speakers of Other Languages | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 5 Provide first year of free internment for stillborns, babies and children | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 Loss of revenue from Seacourt extension | 110 | 270 | 270 | 270 |
| 7 Cancel increase of park and ride fees | 0 | 500 | 500 | 500 |
| 8 Additional planning enforcement officer | 40 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 9 Additional planning officer | 40 | 50 | 50 | 50 |
| 10 Grant to Canal and River Trust for towpath repair | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 Trees for babies - a tree offered for every newborn | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| Total additional costs proposed | 472 | 1,017 | 1,017 | 1,017 |
| <u>Net effect on budget in-year of proposals</u> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>Cumulative effect on budget</u> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Additional Budget transfer to/(from) reserves | 392 | (219) | (167) | (165) |
| Alternative Budget Net Budget Requirement | 21,055 | 22,054 | 21,745 | 22,163 |
| <u>Financed By :</u> | | | | |
| Revenue Support Grant - Consultation Budget | (1,515) | (630) | 0 | 0 |
| Changes to revenue support grant | 55 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Council Tax- Consultation Budget | (12,949) | (13,339) | (13,740) | (14,154) |
| Additional council tax | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Retained Business Rates - Consultation Budget | (6,816) | (8,243) | (8,138) | (8,144) |
| Additional business rates | 170 | 158 | 133 | 135 |
| Total | (21,055) | (22,054) | (21,745) | (22,163) |
| (surplus)/deficit | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <u>General Fund Working Balance</u> | | | | |
| Working Balance 1st April | 3,621 | 4,013 | 4,554 | 4,260 |
| Consultation Budget | 0 | 760 | (127) | (635) |
| Transfer to/(from) balance | 392 | (219) | (167) | (165) |
| Working Balance 31st March | 4,013 | 4,554 | 4,260 | 3,460 |

CAPITAL

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIONS CONSULTATION BUDGET

CAPITAL

| | 2017/18 £000'S | 2018/19 £000'S | 2019/20 £000'S | 2020/21 £000'S |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| CAPITAL PROGRAM AS PER CEB 17TH DECEMBER - General Fund and HRA | 60,759 | 60,838 | 40,099 | 33,588 |
| Changes since the consultation budget | | | | |
| Sub total of changes since consultation budget | 1,405 | 7,525 | 3,435 | 11,291 |
| CHANGES PROPOSED | | | | |
| 1 Cancel Seacourt park and ride extension | (3,376) | (500) | | |
| 2 Car park messaging | 400 | | | |
| 3 Increased cost of converting to Green vehicles | | 150 | | |
| 4 Headington Community Centre | 100 | | | |
| 5 Five Mile Drive Community Centre | 100 | | | |
| Sub total | -2,776 | -350 | 0 | 0 |
| REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAM | 59,388 | 68,013 | 43,534 | 44,879 |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| FINANCING | | | | |
| FINANCING AS PER CEB REPORT 17TH DECEMBER | 60,759 | 60,838 | 40,099 | 33,588 |
| Changes since the consultation budget | | | | |
| Sub Total of changes since consultation budget | 1,405 | 7,525 | 3,435 | 11,291 |
| ALTERNATIVE BUDGET PROPOSALS | | | | |
| 1 Capital Financing reserve re Seacourt -(£400k CIL) | (3,376) | (500) | | |
| 2 CIL for car park messaging- (£400k CIL) | 400 | | | |
| 3 Increased cost of 3 refuse vehicles fuelled by biomethane | | 150 | | |
| 4 Headington Community centre refurbishment | 100 | | | |
| 5 Contribution to new Five Mile Drive pavilion to enable community use | 100 | | | |
| Sub Total | -2,776 | -350 | 0 | 0 |
| Total Financing | 59,388 | 68,013 | 43,534 | 44,879 |

(surplus)/deficit

0 0 0 0

Head of Finance – Section 151 Comments on Lib Dem Group Alternative Budget for 2017-18 to 2020/21

Date 15-02-17

I have reviewed the budget submitted by the Liberal Democrat party as an alternative to the Labour Administrations budget and can conclude that it is arithmetically correct and could be implemented if voted through.

There are no changes to the Administrations HRA budget.

On the Capital Budget an additional £0.75 million of schemes have been included with £3.876 million deleted. A detailed business case would be required to substantiate the plans for the additional schemes. The deleted capital expenditure refers specifically to the Seacourt Park and Ride extension and this in turn would release resources of an equivalent value to be used to fund the additional schemes and other revenue spend.

On revenue the main features of additional cost relates to cancellation of plans to increase park and ride charges with effect from 1/4/2018 and also the loss of additional income at Seacourt Park and Ride in line with the proposal to cancel the scheme. There are a number of additional savings together with the use of £2.756 million of the resources used to finance Seacourt Park and Ride to balance the plan in each of the four years over the medium term.

Whilst the plan could be implemented there is one issue of concern

- use of one-off resources from the cancellation of Seacourt Park and Ride does give cause for concern over the sustainability of the plan in the longer term, if the additional ongoing expenditure of £1.017 million is to continue. Plans will need to be considered of how deficits could covered in future years once the one-off saving is exhausted.

Nigel Kennedy

Head of Financial Services (Section 151 Officer)

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