

REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS

FROM YOUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR **OCTOBER 2014**

FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE MEETS CHALLENGING TARGET TWO YEARS EARLY

Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service set a challenging ten-year vision in 2006 to help reduce the amount of deaths from fire and road traffic collisions, cut the cost of fire and highway accidents to society and **educate 840,000 people** to make them safer.

It did this via educational programmes which were designed to create safer communities and the task has been achieved two years ahead of schedule.

365alive was launched in October 2006 with the aim of **saving the economy £100,000,000** and ensuring **365 more people were alive** in a ten-year period via targeted practical awareness-raising initiatives with people of all ages.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/sep/365alive-safety-targets-met-two-years-ahead-schedule>

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

On Friday 5th September, **Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police co-hosted a briefing event for councillors** and other local stakeholders on the issue of child sexual exploitation. The event was attended by over 150 people, including representatives from District Councils, health professionals, the voluntary sector, faith groups, neighbourhood action groups and schools.

The briefing provided an **overview of Operation Bullfinch** to date, with presentations from Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police, Crown Prosecution Service and Oxford City Council on what changes have been made over the past number of years to ensure that Oxfordshire's children are safer from sexual exploitation than ever before.

The Leader of the County Council, Ian Hudspeth, has had a **private meeting with the Home Secretary, Theresa May** to talk about this horrendous crime and how Oxfordshire are tackling the issue.

COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CARE ACT CONSULTATION

Oxfordshire County Council recently submitted its response to the consultation on the draft regulations and guidance for implementation of Part 1 of the Care Act. We have also been working with the Department of Health to test the eligibility criteria, and with the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to model the likely costs of implementation.

We fully support the Act's vision of a reformed health and care system characterised by integrated, person-centred care and support and a fairer approach to funding. We therefore welcomed the opportunity to identify areas where we think the regulations and guidance could be strengthened to reflect this. For example, the language used is currently local authority driven; we believe an approach which is user friendly and puts people themselves more in control must come out more strongly.

We also took the opportunity to emphasise the importance of ensuring these **reforms are fully costed and fairly funded**, to enable us to deliver our duties as set out in the Act. In particular, we share the concerns expressed in various platforms that the Government has under-estimated the number of carers and self-funders who may come forward for an assessment and the cost of meeting their eligible needs. We would welcome your support in calling for these to be revised and shared with local authorities.

Nonetheless, **we are well placed to deliver the Care Act reforms in Oxfordshire**. We already offer Deferred Payment Agreements, have a high proportion of individuals choosing Direct Payments and provide a wide range of support to carers. Our Adult Services Improvement Programme is developing this further, to enable individuals to have more choice and control over their lives as we believe that people themselves are best placed to determine what they need. This includes streamlining our adult social care processes and developing supported self-led options, creating an e-marketplace and developing the Oxfordshire-wide social care workforce.

BUDGET

Work is continuing on the budget for 2015/16. After two years of difficult budgets where County Councillors have had to find demanding savings totalling £265 million, we had hoped it would be easier this year. Unfortunately that is not the case with **increased pressures coming from both Adult and Childrens services**. Yet again there will be some very tough decisions to be taken to deliver a balanced budget in February. There will be further updates as we progress.

BETTER BROADBAND

Residents and businesses in Weston-on-the-Green celebrated as they became the latest village to benefit from the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire programme, and marked the **10,000th premise to be enabled**. Better Broadband for Oxfordshire is a multi-million pound partnership between Oxfordshire County Council, BT and BDUK. The programme is on track to enable over 90 per cent of the county to access superfast broadband by the end of 2015, transforming life for residents and businesses.

NEW ASSESSMENT CENTRE TO PROTECT VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

Plans for a new assessment centre for children at risk of coming into the care system are set to be unveiled in Eynsham.

The centre would enable more of the county's vulnerable young people to stay closer to home and **reduce the need to send children to costly out-of-county settings where the council also has less control over the quality of placements**.

More information at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/sep/assessment-centre-will-help-protect-vulnerable-young-people>



OXFORDSHIRE REMAINS ONE OF THE BEST FOR WASTE DISPOSAL

Oxfordshire County Council has been named as one of the best performing county councils in the country for waste disposal and recycling, coming **top in 3 of the 7 categories**. Figures compiled by the Department for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs (Defra) show that Oxfordshire was **top of the tables for recycling and composting, and had the lowest amount of residual waste produced per household** in the country.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/sep/oxfordshire-county-council-remains-one-best-counties-waste-disposal>

BE WELL THIS WINTER: FREE FLU JABS

Local doctors and Oxfordshire County Council's public health directorate joined forces today to challenge people to play their part in the fight against flu by boosting vaccination rates.

A free seasonal flu vaccination, which must be done annually to be effective because different strains of the flu virus evolve each year, is now available for:

- **women who are pregnant**
- **children aged 2, 3 and 4** on 1st September 2014
- people **under 65 years of age who are at greatest risk** because they have one of the following conditions – diabetes, weakened immune system (e.g. HIV or cancer patients), heart disease, chronic respiratory disease (e.g. severe asthma), kidney disease, liver disease, chronic neurological diseases such as Parkinson's
- **frontline health and social care workers**

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/oct/join-fight-against-flu-%E2%80%93-get-your-free-jab-today>

BE WELL THIS WINTER: FREE ELECTRIC BLANKET TESTING

Free checks from Oxfordshire County Council's Fire and Rescue Service; its Trading Standards team and partners are available to book at locations throughout Oxfordshire to help ensure county residents have a safe and warm winter.

More information at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/news/2014/sep/free-electric-blanket-safety-checks-offered-across-oxfordshire>

FREE LOCAL INFORMATION SERVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN OXFORDSHIRE

AgeUK Oxfordshire has contacted me to remind residents of their free advice service, the **Community Information Network**, supported by Oxfordshire County Council.

The Community Information Network is about:

- Reaching more older people, particularly those who are most isolated and frail
- Ensuring they have the information, opportunities and support to help them stay independent and feel life is worth living
- Supporting new and existing Good Neighbour Schemes
- Building strong local partnerships

For more general information on the service call 0345 450 1276 or view www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire.

MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE CONSULTATION

The County Council has recently reviewed our mobile library service and found that whilst the service is clearly valued, many of the stops we currently offer are not very well used, and some are not used at all. We believe we can better serve the needs of people who find it difficult to get to library buildings by **joining up our mobile services and delivering them in a different way**.

The consultation document sets out our proposal, including the proposed stopping places, frequency and suggested times, for the mobile library service vehicles. **We are not proposing financial cuts to the mobile library service budget** and everybody who currently uses our mobile library service will continue to receive a level of provision. **It may however be offered in a different way**.

More information at:

<https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/mobilelibraryserviceconsultation/consultationHome>

CONSULTATION CLOSES: 31st December 2014

Cllr Patrick Greene – Didcot East & Hagbourne Division – Oxfordshire County Council