

REPORT TO BIX & ASSENDON PARISH COUNCIL JANUARY 2018 FROM CLLR DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

GENERAL OCC REPORT

COUNCIL PROPOSES FUTURE BUDGET FROM A RESILIENT POSITION

OCC is planning to set a new budget having made difficult choices in previous years to manage a combination of squeezed budgets and the fact that more people need council services. Since 2010 the council has managed reductions in finances available at the same time as rises in demand for services – especially in children’s social care and adult social care. At the same time the council has in recent years been involving communities ever more in services for their locality – ranging from support for older people and those with learning disabilities to library volunteers. The net result is that the council’s finances are in a resilient position looking ahead to the 2018/19 financial year and planning for years up to 2022. The council has used its agreed vision for the future – supporting thriving people, a thriving economy and thriving communities – as the basis on which proposals have been made for the 2018/19 financial year and the plan for the three financial years which follow. Although proposed budget changes are not as extensive as in many previous years since 2010, like any organisation the council still has rising financial pressures that need to be matched by new savings so that a balanced budget can be proposed. At the time of writing, plans are based on a Council Tax rise of 4.99% (1.99% referendum limit plus 3% social care precept). However, in December, Central Government announced councils could add an additional 1%, should they so choose. This is currently under consideration. The Budget has to be approved by Cabinet, then Full Council on February 13th. The Budget consultation can be found here:

https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Budget_1819/consultationHome

CRIMINALS TARGET PUBS AND CLUBS TO PEDDLE ILLEGAL TOBACCO

Trading Standards are warning licensees and pub-goers to be on-the-look-out for criminals selling smuggled and counterfeit cigarettes and hand-rolling tobacco. The call for vigilance follows recent research revealing that nearly half (43%) of illegal tobacco customers use pubs and clubs as their main source of supply. Cheap illegal tobacco is attractive to some smokers because it is often sold at half the price of the legal equivalent but its availability helps children to start smoking, brings communities into contact with organised criminals and undermines legitimate local businesses. In October HMRC released figures showing illegal tobacco made up 15% of all cigarettes and 28% of hand-rolling tobacco smoked in the UK. Taxpayers lost around £2.5 billion from the illicit trade in 2016-17. This money, for example, could be used to fund over 50,000 new NHS nurses for a year. Anyone with information relating to illegal tobacco being bought or sold, can report this to Trading Standards by anonymously via the Illegal Tobacco Hotline, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0300 999 6 999 or online at <http://www.stop-illegal-tobacco.co.uk/>

1 MILLION TONNES OF RUBBISH TRANSFORMED INTO ENERGY AT ARDLEY PLANT

OCC and its partner Viridor have marked the one millionth tonne of residual waste received at Ardley during December. The Ardley plant converts waste into electricity, rather than burying it in landfill. It produces enough energy to power 38,000 homes and can export up to 27MW per hour of electricity to the grid.

SNOW GUIDE

December saw substantial snowfall across the county. OCC has produced a useful guide for snow clearance and a copy is attached to this report.

SPECIFIC REPORT FOR BIX & ASSENDON

POTHoles

The Dragon-Patcher visited the parish in late October/early November to repair potholes. In addition, the Defects Gang visited White Lane late November to repair potholes in areas inaccessible to the Dragon-Patcher.

BROADBAND UPDATE

Henley on Thames P37: Expected to go live in January 2018. This cabinet will deliver ~85 superfast premises to postcodes mostly in the Bix part of the parish.

Henley on Thames P38: Expected to go live in January 2018. This cabinet will deliver ~94 superfast premises to postcodes in the Middle Assendon part of the parish. It was ready to go live last year but some systems issues caused a delay. As of 05/12/17 these issues were fixed,

THIRD READING BRIDGE

The Chair of Highmoor PC has convened a meeting at 7.00pm on 18th January at Highmoor village hall in order that affected parishes can review the current situation. I have arranged for an OCC officer to attend to answer technical questions.