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1. Road maintenance budget doubled this year with a £120m long-term infrastructure investment proposal

Oxfordshire's highways maintenance budget has been doubled for this year (2018/19) and investment of a further £120m for infrastructure over the next ten years, including roads and schools, has also taken a step forward, following a Cabinet decision this week (17 July).

This year's increased spend of £10m will be put into road repairs and other highway maintenance work to tackle the winter backlog of potholes. Cabinet members have also given 'in principle' agreement to borrowing £120m for investment, and approved the development of a full business case.

The business case will be considered in the autumn so that, if accepted, the investment proposal could be included in next year's budget and capital programme, which will be agreed by full council in February 2019.

This would be the biggest ever council-funded investment in highways and infrastructure in Oxfordshire, and would address the long-term decline in road condition, which is happening across the country.

The county's extensive network of rural minor roads suffered badly during the freeze-thaw cycle of last winter.

The investment would be funded through the additional Council Tax income that is projected because of population growth in Oxfordshire.

The proposed investment could include:

- Maintenance of highways and other assets such as school buildings
- Match funding for bids for capital projects (e.g. government funded)
- Funding infrastructure to unlock future revenue sooner
- Contingencies for capital investment

News release can be view here. and the Cabinet report can be viewed [here](#).

2. New partnership for investment and service improvement approved with Cherwell District Council

Councillors at Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council have approved a proposal for a partnership between the two local authorities, including the appointment of a joint chief executive.

The partnership arrangement will offer long-term opportunities to join up services for residents, reduce the costs of providing services, and secure investment in Cherwell to enable the continued growth in homes and jobs.

The partnership proposal came after the financial problems in Northamptonshire County Council, which has implications for Cherwell's existing partnership with South Northamptonshire Council, created an opportunity to explore closer joint working.

The joint arrangement was approved by county councillors on 10 July and Cherwell councillors on 16 July, and will come into effect on 1 October 2018.

Partnership arrangements under a single chief executive will make joint working more effective and deepen the partnership arrangements. Spatial and transport planners already work closely together on schemes related to housing and infrastructure, and that will be make day-to-day working simpler as they are working to a single chief executive.

For example, a pilot project involving the county council's head of trading standards working with officer at Cherwell and South Northamptonshire councils to support the environmental health and licensing functions. This pilot is intended to create joined up service activity across all regulatory services for the benefit of residents and businesses.

Over time other services are expected to join up where there are benefits to residents, including improving efficiency and customer service. Before any structural changes are made there will be a full business case developed, and councillors from the county council and Cherwell will decide.

Future joint working arrangements will ensure that the focus is on delivering frontline services and reducing back office costs. This approach underpins the county council's existing Fit for the Future programme and Cherwell council's long-term drive to make council services as cost-effective as possible.

Following a formal internal recruitment process, Yvonne Rees, the current chief executive of Cherwell and South Northamptonshire councils has been appointed to the new post of joint chief executive of Oxfordshire and Cherwell councils, with a start date of 1 October. The post of county council chief executive, currently occupied by Peter Clark, will be made redundant.

In a message to staff, chief executive Peter Clark said:

"I have worked closely with Yvonne and I have absolute confidence in her ability, drive and commitment to make these new arrangements work. Yes, I am sad to be leaving the County Council but at the same time I feel immense pride for the success that we have achieved together and I know that you will continue to achieve even more in the future."

3. County council carries out property review to assess implications of Carillion collapse

Oxfordshire County Council is carrying out a detailed review of the costs and liabilities related to its properties following the Carillion collapse so that a robust financial plan can be considered by councillors in the autumn and included in the council's budget.

Carillion provided services on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council including maintenance of council buildings; property services, and building work such as school extensions.

Members of the county council's Audit and Governance committee will next week consider the process of assessing costs, liabilities and risks to assure themselves that the review of the county council's properties is thorough and comprehensive.

Oxfordshire County Council made a net payment of £10.6m at the end of December 2017 to Carillion to cover work already completed as part of the final settlement to end the contract with the company, limiting any future financial liability.

However, the costs of dealing with ongoing construction and property maintenance problems following the Carillion collapse have not yet been calculated but are expected to be "very significant". Surveys to assess defects in buildings including schools are continuing across the county council's properties.

Compliance with health and safety requirements is also being considered, with any safety issues that emerge being dealt with quickly. One of the problems that came to light after Carillion collapsed was that records of building assessments were not kept properly. This means that building maintenance requirements are emerging for the first time.

Where possible, unfinished work by Carillion as the council's property maintenance and building contractor has restarted, with new contractors in place.

The hardest cost to quantify are 'latent defects' – problems that emerge after building work is completed that would normally be dealt with as part of the contract with the builder. With some – but not all - Carillion businesses in liquidation, claiming for the cost of these defects is not straightforward, and may lead to legal action.

The county council is surveying the structural condition of buildings and does not include the general condition of buildings, including schools, which schools manage themselves through their delegated budget.

Many councils and other public service organisations were hit by the collapse of the Carillion, and Oxfordshire County Council believes that those organisations need to band together to deal with the government and the company's liquidators.

The county council is now gathering support for a national stakeholder event in October organised jointly with the Local Government Association to consider opportunities for joint action to minimise the costs to local council tax payers.

The county council's Audit and Governance Committee meets on 25 July to review the process for estimating the council's financial liabilities that emerged following the collapse of Carillion. The council's Cabinet is expected to receive an assessment of the costs in the autumn, along with a long-term plan for dealing with the problems identified in surveys.

4. Streetlight upgrades set to be accelerated

A £40m investment may be made into upgrading more than 50,000 streetlights in Oxfordshire, following a decision by the county council's cabinet on Tuesday July 17.

The council wants to accelerate its replacement of old streetlighting columns with modern and more energy efficient LED lighting. There are almost 60,000 streetlights in Oxfordshire – around 9,000 of these have already been upgraded to modern LED lighting in recent years.

The £40.8m funding for the work will be borrowed by the council with the entire cost paid back within nine years from cheaper energy bills as a result of having more modern lighting (£39m) and less of a requirement for maintenance given more modern lighting (£1.8m).

Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor Yvonne Constance, said: "This proposal is a sensible use of borrowing with a clear plan for the money to be paid back as a direct consequence of the investment made."

In addition to the saving and energy efficiency, residents will notice higher quality streetlighting that is less likely to fail.

More information on streetlighting can be viewed [here](#).

5. 'Thriving communities' formally adopted as the council's vision

County councillors last week agreed the corporate plan, called "Thriving Communities for Everyone in Oxfordshire", which sets out the council's strategy for the period 2018-2021. 'Thriving communities for everyone in Oxfordshire' is the council vision statement, and the corporate plan describes our main priorities and the specific actions that will be taken up to March 2019.

The council's vision statement after feedback from residents who are passionate about where they live. The vision statement is supported by three priorities that are set out in the corporate plan:

Thriving communities

- We help people live safe, healthy lives and play an active part in their community.
- We provide services that enhance the quality of life in our communities and protect the local environment.

Thriving people

- We strive to give every child a good start in life and protect everyone from abuse and neglect.
- We enable older and disabled people to live independently. We care for those in greatest need.

Thriving economy

- We support a thriving local economy by improving transport links to create jobs and homes for the future.

The priority outcomes and indicators for measuring performance against the corporate plan were presented to Cabinet for information on the 19 June 2018 and considered by Performance Scrutiny in detail on the 5th of July. These indicators will be used to assess the county council's performance against its agreed priorities.

Read the new corporate plan [here](#).

6. National Infrastructure Commission report calls for £150m Government cash for cycling in Oxford

The county council has welcomed a report commissioned by the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) into improving cycling in Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge as part of the evidence base for the proposed Oxford-Cambridge Expressway project.

The report highlights the need to increase the number of journeys that are made by bike by improve cycling infrastructure and makes several recommendations for improving provision for cyclists in Cambridge, Oxford and Milton Keynes, including new separated cycle tracks on main roads, new off-road routes and remodelled junctions to make them safer for cyclists and pedestrians.

The report was written by former London Cycling Commissioner Andrew Gilligan, who calls for Queen Street to be re-opened to cyclists and a network of segregated cycle lanes to be set up across the city. Gilligan estimates the total cost of full implementation of its recommendations at £150m although the county council has pointed out that none of these measures currently have funding. The NIC makes clear that the author's conclusions are his own.

The county council has a track record of successfully securing significant funding for cycling improvements, including the separate cycle lane on The Slade and a £5m improvement to Botley Road. We also produce guidance for planners and developers to ensure cycling is designed into new developments across Oxfordshire, which has been praised by cycling campaigners. Other improvements include:

- The £12.5m Access to Headington which includes measures to improve cycle comfort, safety and priority such as a stepped cycleway along the Slade, which has now been completed.
- The overhaul of the junction of Broad Street, Parks Road, Holywell Street and Cattle Street so that it now features a 'junction table' with roundabout style surfacing like Frideswide Square. This scheme was delivered with the city council and Oxford University and has enhanced the cycling environment making it easier for all road users to navigate what is one of the city's most beautiful streets.
- The Plain as part of the Governments Cycle City Ambition Grant
- Oxford's Riverside Route, being delivered as part of the Governments Cycle City Ambition Grant,
- Frideswide Square with its off-road cycling areas and Cutteslowe and Wolvercote roundabouts with enhanced cycle and pedestrian facilities, they show our commitment to improving the amenability and safety of infrastructure for cyclists.

The county council will continue to push for more investment to improve cycling provision.

Andrew Gilligan's report is [here](#).

7. Heatwave wildfire safety advice from the Oxfordshire fire service

The prolonged dry spell caused an increased risk of wildfires across the county and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service has attended many incidents all of which were successfully contained.

The two most common causes are motorists discarding cigarette butts and poorly extinguished campfires and picnic BBQs. Using a mixture of PR and social media, the fire and rescue service asked residents to avoid picnic fires and BBQs except in designated areas and not to dispose of smoking materials through vehicle windows.

Firefighter and the county's high-volume water pump were put on stand-by to help the Lancashire fire service tackle the moorland fires, but were not called up.

More information on fire safety advice is [here](#).

8. Single-use plastics commitment and plans campaign to increase public recycling knowledge

County councillors voted last week to phase out single-use plastic cups, stirrers and straws from all county council premises.

The motion, brought by Councillor Suzanne Bartington, follows the Secretary of State for the Environment's commitment to reduce the use of plastics in the UK. The county council's Cabinet will work on a realistic timeframe for this to be implemented at the council.

A recent public consultation highlighted the confusion among residents about which types of plastics can be recycled and that residents would like more information on this topic (see the recycling report above).

All six Oxfordshire councils are currently considering plans for a information campaign to improve the public's knowledge of plastic recycling.

9. SEND transport decision called in after scrutiny review

Oxfordshire County Council's Performance Scrutiny and Education Scrutiny Committees have both raised concerns about special educational needs transport proposals approved by cabinet in June. The most recent meeting of full council also passed a motion calling for proposals to be deferred.

As such the cabinet has today asked officers to reconsider the elements of the proposals that county councillors specifically raised concerns about. Elements of the proposals that did not raise concerns (ending of subsidised travel to post 16 students to Henley College; free travel for students placed at an alternative education provider; increased charges for the spare seat scheme; continuation of free travel for children of secondary school age who live at RAF Benson to Icknield Community College) will continue as planned.

Officers will in coming weeks reconsider elements of the proposals raised as areas of concern by county councillors and there will be a report to the cabinet during the Autumn.

None of the proposals involved taking transport away from children. The proposal was to introduce charges to contribute to costs for some families.

Scrutiny committees exist to examine cabinet decisions and policy proposals and this has been a good example of that process in operation.

10. Kerbside collection recycling rates fall with real opportunities to improve, including food waste

In line with national trends, the county has seen a drop-in recycling rates although Oxfordshire continues to out-perform most other counties.

Detailed analysis of bin contents following a [report](#) considered by the council's Performance Scrutiny Committee into recycling for the county council's performance scrutiny committee showed that around half of what householders put in the general waste bin could instead be recycled using existing facilities and arrangements. The report concludes that residents are confused by what they perceive as complicated rules about what can and cannot be recycled.

Results of a recent waste analysis¹ indicate around 48% of waste in people's general rubbish bin could have been recycled using kerbside services. The largest portion of this recyclable material is food waste. The Council is working in a directive way with 'Love Food Hate Waste' to encourage food waste reduction and collection.

If all of this recycling was put in the correct bin, the County Council could save around £3 million annually and the countywide recycling rate could rise to around 80% (it is currently 58%).

The county council is working with the five district councils via the Oxfordshire Environmental Partnership to increase public awareness and to harmonise recycling regimes across the county. Other measures that the county council have introduced include:

- Working with districts to make it cheaper and easier for residents to use their food waste caddies following feedback from residents, aiming to increase the amount of food waste going to anaerobic digestion to be recycled. Stickers, leaflets and liners were provided for distribution to residents. Cooking oil is also now sent to anaerobic digestion
- Reprocurer the Household Waste Recycling Centre contract keeping all seven sites open seven days a week
- Introduced hard plastics recycling at the HWRCs
- Supported promotions on real nappies, junk mail, textile reuse and refill.

The county council is focusing on explaining the cost advantages of recycling to residents; improving support for "re-use, recycle" to avoid materials getting into the waste chain in the first place; working with local collection authorities to create greater synergy in waste collection services and creating a strategy for effectively communicating with residents and manufacturers about what they can recycle and how, particularly food waste.

More information [here](#).

11. Major transport projects update

Detailed updates on all major road projects being undertaken across Oxfordshire can be found in Annex A. The key highlights are:

- Access to Headington Phase 3 and 4 main works continues on schedule. Phase 5 to follow later this year.
- Science Vale Cycle Network lighting column installation on Milton Road has commenced. Due to complete at the end of July.
- Woodstock Road improvement works commenced 25 June 2018.
- Connections to Oxford Station - Worcester Street / George Street junction works to start in October to avoid impact on congestion in parallel with Woodstock Road works.

Further updates on all road schemes can be found on our Travel Choices website, including progress, road closures and diversions and expected completion dates; <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/travelchoices>

Below is a table showing start/end construction dates for those major projects in construction, scheduled for construction within 24 months, or largely construction ready but awaiting land purchase. Dates specified within this report are current programme dates which are subject to change if there is an unforeseen event/s including bad weather.

Project	Start date	End date
Access to Headington (Phases 1-2 – The Slade)	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Access to Headington (Phase 3, 4 & 5 – Headley Way)	28 March 2018	30 March 2019
Connections to Oxford Station (Phase 2)	8 January 2018	31 March 2019
Oxpens, Oxford Riverside Route to City Centre (Phase 2)	8 January 2018	31 March 2019
Science Vale Cycle Routes	20 November 2017	31 March 2021
Woodstock Road, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter	25 June 2018	31 August 2018
Botley Road	21 October 2019	24 July 2020
Didcot Northern Perimeter Road	14 October 2019	24 September 2020
Harwell Campus Entrance, A4185	3 September 2018	21 December 2018
Loop Farm A40 – A44 Link Road	TBC	TBC
A40 Bus Lane & Eynsham P&R	22 April 2019	25 September 2020
A34 Hinksey Hill Bus Lane	26 July 2019	10 July 2020
A34 Lodge Hill Slips	4 March 2019	4 May 2020

A361 Safety Improvements	15 September 2018	31 March 2020
Featherbed Lane and Steventon Lights	Subject to land acquisition, possibly requiring compulsory purchase	

Projects in Construction

Access to Headington [Phase 1-2: COMPLETE. Phase 3-5: 28 Mar 18 – 30 Mar 2019]

The improvements are being implemented in phases. Phase 1 and 2 of the works has completed. Phase 3 Headley Way and Phase 4 started 14 May 2018. Phase 5 Old Road will start later this year if traffic flows can be maintained.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/access-headington

Connections to Oxford Station – [Phase 1 - Queen Street COMPLETE Phase 2: 8 Jan 18 – Mar 2019]

Phase 1 completed ahead of Westgate opening. Phase 2 junction changes completed in May 2018 including changes to Speedwell Street junction and a bus build-out in High Street. Consultation on the improvements to the junction at George Street and Worcester Street ran from 10 May to 10 June, and will be reported to Cabinet Member decisions in July. Any works to this junction will be completed as part of this project from October 2018, after Woodstock Road works are complete to minimise the impact on congestion. End date of works has changed due to possible additional scope for changes that may be required to Castle Street in early 2019.

<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/connections-oxford-station>

Oxpens, Oxford Riverside Route to City Centre [Phase 1: COMPLETE. Phase 2: 8 Jan 18 – Mar 2019]

Construction has been split into two phases, and the first phase is the reconstruction of the towpath, which completed in October 2016. Phase 2 is a series of further towpath improvements which is due to complete end of July. Phases 3 & 4 are to be completed in partnership with Environment Agency and be complete by March 2019. Any new bridge will require additional planning and be implemented as part of a separate project.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/riverside-cycle-route-project

Science Vale Cycle Routes [20 Nov 17 – 31 Mar 21]

The first two routes (6a & 6b) have completed design. Route 6a has commenced installation of lighting columns, route 6b will follow Network Rail works. Routes 1, 2, 7 & 8 are under review as a land purchase is limiting progress.

<http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/science-vale-cycling-network-schemes>

Projects scheduled for construction within two years

Woodstock Road, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter [25 Jun 18 – 6 Sep 18]

Planned works to improve footways and reduce an impact of the carriageway, in partnership with the University. Works have started onsite in June and will be coordinated to avoid conflicts with Worcester Street and Access to Headington works. Small change to the end of construction date to coordinate with St Giles Fair

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/woodstock-road-projects

Botley Road [21 Oct 19 – 24 Jul 20]

A new project being reported on following a successful National Productivity Investment Fund bid award. Designing has started. Existing proposed upgrades to cycling and bus facilities are currently being reviewed following the completion of surveys to identify constraints and opportunities based on the previous high-level design. Key stakeholder engagement will continue in the summer of 2018, and Public Consultation will follow in the autumn of 2018.

<https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/botley-road-corridor-improvements>

Didcot Northern Perimeter Road [14 Oct 19 – 24 Sep 20]

Preliminary Design and modelling is in progress and planned for completion in July 2018 when a planning application is proposed to be submitted. Delays to date are due to a new improved traffic model which will provide more accurate forecasts. The funding required to progress the project through to the end of construction is £15.2m, South Oxfordshire District Council has been awarded £6.2m from the Homes & Communities Agency to help progress this.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/didcot-northern-perimeter-road

Harwell Campus Entrance, A4185 [3 Sep 18 – 21 Dec 18]

The project is to deliver an improved junction for the A4185 and Thomson Avenue. A signalised junction would provide the most suitable solution with least land take. The project has completed Preliminary Design.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/harwell-campus-entrance>

Loop Farm A40 – A44 Link Road [tbc]

Planning and transport modelling work on the project has been extended in order to take account of Local Plan work currently being undertaken by West Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Council. This additional planning assessment work has extended the timetable of the project by several months. Design work has been paused until the completion of this assessment.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/a40-a44-strategic-link-road-loop-farm

A40 Bus Lane & Eynsham Park & Ride [24 Sep 18 – 25 Sep 20]

A new 5km eastbound bus lane from a new Eynsham P&R site at the junction of Cuckoo Lane to the Duke's Cut Bridge / Loop Farm junction. The Preliminary Design is being progressed with further investigations being undertaken on more complex programmes of construction in particular on the proposed foot and cycle bridges and commercial Park & Ride development.

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/a40

Hinksey Hill Bus Lane [26 Jul 19 – 10 Jul 20]

The project will unlock capacity, particularly for express bus services through extending the A34 Northbound off-slip road with bus priority, widening carriageway around the interchange, and widening A423 eastbound approach to Old Abingdon Road, for all traffic. Traffic modelling is informing the optimum design and is forecast to be completed in May 2018, with 3 options to be assessed over the summer before agreeing on a preferred option for public consultation.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/hinksey-hill-interchange>

Lodge Hill A34 Slips [4 Mar 19 – 4 May 20]

The project will design and construct south-facing slips with a roundabout to form diamond interchange A34 / A4183 at Lodge Hill. Preliminary Design is progressing alongside land purchase discussions.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/lodge-hill-interchange>

A361 Safety Improvements [5 Sept 18 – 20 Oct 19]

This project will reduce accidents and injuries on the A361 between Banbury and Chipping Norton through a series of minor interventions – including new signage, relining, resurfacing, vegetation clearance, drainage upgrade, speed limits, safety fencing and two junction upgrades.

Construction ready projects awaiting land acquisition

Featherbed & Steventon Lights [TBC]

Upgrading Featherbed Lane and signal junctions at either end to improve capacity and support future growth. The design is complete. Suitable modelling and planning justification evidence is currently being gathered in preparation for Compulsory Purchase Order due to a lack of progress with acquisitions directly from land owners. www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/featherbed-lane-and-steventon-lights