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Council introduces a charge for school-age students home to school transport

The county council's cabinet has agreed changes to charges for a home to school transport for children and young people that would bring Oxfordshire into line with legal requirements and the way services are delivered elsewhere in England.

The council currently provides transport to students beyond its legal obligations and beyond what councils elsewhere in the country provide. Meanwhile, the number of children receiving free school transport is continuing to grow, in line with Oxfordshire's rising school-age population.

Changes will affect around 130 families, changes – many of which will not come into force until September 2019. The county council's cabinet discussed the proposals on Tuesday, June 19.

The council is not cutting transport for special educational needs children aged over 16. It is introducing a charge where the council continues to provide transport. Some children will continue to receive it for free – including children who receive free school meals.

Director for Children's Services Lucy Butler said: "We're simply proposing to provide what we are legally obliged to provide - which is how most of the rest of the country already operates.

The report can be viewed [here](#).

Site allocations – 'issues and options' consultation on Minerals and Waste Local Plan

The council reached a new milestone in the ongoing planning process to decide where minerals can be extracted and waste management facilities can be located this week with cabinet asked to approve a consultation exercise.

A consultation on site options to take place in July-September and it will be open to all interested organisations and individuals to respond. All parish councils, environmental and community groups, organisations and individuals who have previously asked to be informed about the plan will be notified when the consultation starts, where the consultation documents can be seen and how to respond.

A core strategy was adopted by the council in September 2017 and it was always planned that work on specific site allocations would follow this.

At this stage in the plan preparation process, no decisions are made as to the sites that should or should not be included in the plan or on any other policy matters. The issues and options consultation is about inviting views on what the plan should cover and what the issues the plan

should address are, and establishing the options (particularly the potential minerals and waste sites) and seeking information that will help in the assessment of those options.

The stages of making decisions on site proposals and policies, and consulting on these, will come further on in the process – the first being consultation on a draft plan in early 2019. The target date for the adoption of the sites plan is November 2020.

The report can be viewed [here](#).

County Council and Cherwell District Council consider joint working proposals to improve services

Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council are considering a proposal for shared service arrangements under a joint chief executive while retaining separate councillor bodies, budgets and decision-making processes. The principle of joint working was agreed by the county council's Cabinet and Cherwell District Council on Monday 4 June.

Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, said:

“The problems in Northamptonshire have created this unique opportunity for a county-district shared service arrangement. I am confident that if we can reach an agreement that would be good for Cherwell and good for the rest of Oxfordshire.”

The local government review in Northamptonshire has required the Leader and the administration of Cherwell District Council to reflect upon its future and to consider what is best for its residents. As a result, they are minded to formally end their successful partnership with South Northamptonshire and are looking at future options that will best suit the interests of its residents.

It is a statutory requirement that the Chief Executive, as head of paid service, is appointed by the full councils of each council and formal appointment processes will be followed. Peter Clark, chief executive of Oxfordshire County Council, has said he would step down if and when the joint working arrangement was agreed.

You can read the Cabinet paper on the joint working proposal [here](#).

New 30-hour offer will change government's funding for 25 hours of Early Years Funded Places

The county council's Cabinet has been notified that government funding for 25 hours of early education for reception age children deferring or not taking up a maintained school reception place will end nationally after the end of March 2019.

However, in September 2017 the Government implemented a new childcare entitlement for working families – the 30-hour offer. This increases the free funding entitlement for qualifying 3 and 4-year-old children.

Due to the new 30-hour offer, the cohort of families who may be affected by the withdrawal of the 25 hours funding is significantly reduced as they will be able to continue to access a free full-time place through the new funding route.

The 2016/17 financial year is the one for which the most recent take-up figures are available. A total of 290 families took up the 25 hours scheme in Oxfordshire during Autumn 2016, reducing to only 92 children by the Summer term. Take up declines naturally through any academic year as children progressively become of statutory school age.

Cabinet approves new Equalities Policy 2018-2022

The council's cabinet has approved a new equality policy covering the period from 2018 - 2022. It sets out how the council is approaching its responsibilities for ensuring that the principles of equality, diversity, fairness and inclusion are applied to its own workforce and the services it commissions and delivers to residents.

The policy demonstrates how the council is meeting the requirements placed on public bodies under the Equality Act 2010, including setting eight objectives for the next four years.

A draft of the policy went out for public consultation between January - March 2018 and the policy was amended following feedback.

An annual action plan has been developed, this will be monitored and reported quarterly as part of the Council's overall performance management arrangements.

The report can be viewed [here](#).

Consultation on two options for Northfield School

There will be a consultation on the future provision of education for boys with social, emotional and mental health difficulties who currently attend an Oxford school.

Northfield School in Oxford caters for more than 70 boys but recently partially closed due to the condition of the main school buildings including repair and maintenance problems and also concerns that the layout, size and shape of classrooms may no longer be suitable for the current curriculum and the needs of pupils.

The council had already commissioned a wider comprehensive review of Special Educational Needs and Disability provision. The council's cabinet has approved a consultation on two options for the future. They are:

- Close the Northfield School, placing current students in alternate and more suitable provision, pending the outcome of a wider review in to special educational needs provision.
- Continue to operate Northfield School as is, pending the outcome of the Review

The consultation will take place during Summer. A decision is expected in Autumn and resulting implementation at the end of 2018.

The report can be viewed [here](#).

Thank you to the 3000 volunteers who support county council services in their communities

The county council marked Volunteering Week highlighting that volunteering is in the genes of local residents and the 3000 volunteers who work with and are supported by the council contribute to building and maintaining thriving communities.

Volunteers work with the council, helping to deliver a wide range of services - from delivering books to people who can't get to libraries and teaching children how to code to organising activities for adults with disabilities.

They also work in less well-known areas such as being appropriate adults to youths and adults in police custody, acting as school governors, driving community transport minibuses, supporting vulnerable young people as advocates and providing emergency support in floods and harsh winters as well as many more.

Cabinet member for communities, Cllr Mark Gray presented the Awards and said that it was volunteers like those at the event who "make Oxfordshire a shining example of community spirit and thriving communities."

A social media campaign highlighted the range of roles volunteers cover combined with a call to action for potential volunteers to visit [Oxfordshire Volunteers](#) - a dedicated website working with 4000 charities and community groups which is run as a partnership by the county's three volunteer centres and largely funded by the county council.

Oxfordshire's new domestic abuse service launched

A new domestic abuse service for Oxfordshire launched on 4 June. The new service was set up by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with District Councils and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley.

The service is designed to be highly inclusive to address emotional and practical support needs for any victim suffering or fleeing domestic abuse in Oxfordshire. It incorporates a single access point for victims and professionals, community-based Outreach Workers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and includes specialist workers to support young people and Black Asian Minority Ethnic and Refugee (BAMER) communities. There is also a program to support victims with complex needs.

Victims fleeing abuse will be able to access refuge in Banbury and in one other location, located in either Didcot or Oxford. In addition, the service launches a new model of refuge, delivered from dispersed locations across Oxfordshire, benefiting those unable to access conventional refuge services including male victims, victims with live in carers and families with older male sons.

To report concerns, please use the A2Dominion ODAS helpline (0800 731 0055) or oxfordshiredomestic@a2dominion.org.uk

On track to becoming 'Fit for the Future'

We are on track with our Fit for the Future programme. This programme is changing the council, to ensure we are in a sustainable and resilient state in the future. The programme is focused on efficiency and saving money, addressing the increasing demand for many of our services and ultimately ensuring that we can deliver better outcomes for residents.

Working closely with PwC we are now testing our proposed operating model across different service areas. Our operating model describes the way we work to deliver front-line services, our business capabilities and the best possible outcomes for residents.

As a part of the new operating model design phase, we held several workshops, forums and away days with colleagues across the organisation. We are continuing to work with PwC to work out how we can improve our processes to enable colleagues to spend more of their time delivering front line services.

There is a clear programme of member engagement planned between now and September when a decision on implementation is to be made.

County council budget outturn hits the mark

Oxfordshire County Council managed its net budget with 99.8 per cent accuracy for 2017/18, with an underspend of just £1m (0.2 per cent) on an overall service budget of £422m. The council's Cabinet received final budget figures for the 2017/18 financial year at its meeting on Tuesday, June 19.

Councillor David Bartholomew, the council's Cabinet Member for Finance, said: "Despite exceptionally difficult circumstances, the council has delivered financial results almost exactly on budget. Managers at the council have worked hard to deliver this positive outcome.

"There is a record of strong budget management at Oxfordshire County Council. This shines through despite the size and complexity of the organisation and significant reductions in funding at the same time as increasing demand. We have managed the difficult budget situation in a similarly disciplined fashion in all of the previous years of a challenge since 2010."

Delayed transfers of care – Oxfordshire figures are improving

Delayed transfer of care (DToc) cases are now at the lowest level for many years in Oxfordshire. The latest national figures published by the Department of Health showed that the average number of people delayed has fallen from 168 in April 2017 to 117 this April. Since April 2018, the number of delays has fallen further and is currently only 78 - more than halving in just over a year.

Effective and sustained joint working by the county council and the NHS across Oxfordshire has seen consistent and on-going reductions in the number of people delayed in hospital. Working alongside our NHS clinical colleagues we have sped up the process of leaving hospital, making it as efficient as possible for patients.

Department of Health figures showed a 44% decrease in the number of social care delays, and a drop in the overall number of days delayed in a hospital. Only 13% of delays were attributable to social care, which is down from 15% in March 2017 and from February 2018 – 32%.

This is encouraging for Oxfordshire as the national position for social care delays was an increase and our sustained joint worked has enabled improved performance. Building on this success we are working with NHS colleagues to look at "stranded patients" who have been in a hospital for more than seven days, and are starting to see encouraging signs of improving performance in this area.

Further details are available from NHS England [here](#).

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 restarted Monday 14 May. Phase 5 to follow later this year.
- Science Vale Cycle Network lighting column installation on Milton Road has commenced.
- Connections to Oxford Station High St build-out works complete, and Worcester Street / George Street junction works to start later in June

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
Backhill Tunnel, Milton, A4130 (phases 1-5)	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Access to Headington (Phases 1-2 – The Slade)	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Harwell Link Road	COMPLETE	COMPLETE
Access to Headington (Phase 3 & 4 – 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	15 August 2018	15 September 2019
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
Featherbed Lane and Steventon Lights	Subject to land acquisition, possibly requiring compulsory purchase	

Projects in Construction

Backhill Tunnel, Milton, A4130 [Phase 1 -5: COMPLETE. Phase 5: April 2018]

The official opening of the tunnel was on 17 November 2017. Two additional items of scope have been requested; Phase 4 to provide a new shared path was completed end-October, and Phase 5 civil works were completed in April 2018 to provide a new toucan crossing. Electrical connections will be installed end of June. www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/backhill-pedestrian-and-cycle-tunnel

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

A34 Harwell Link Road Phase 1 [4 Jan 17 – 28 Mar 18]

Works complete. Final lighting connections due to being completed 12 July.
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/harwell-link-road

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

Phase 1 completed ahead of Westgate opening. Junction changes (phase 2) complete in May 2018 including changes to Speedwell Street junction and a bus build-out in High Street. Improvements to the junction at George Street and Worcester Street 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&b) have completed design. Route 6a has commenced installation of lighting columns, route 6b will follow Network Rail works much must precede it. 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. Detailed design complete and works will be coordinated to with maintenance works and avoid conflicts with Worcester Street and Access to Headington works. Small change to the end of construction date to coordinate with St Giles Fair works.

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

Botley Road [21 Oct 19 – 24 Jul 20]

A new scheme 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.

[Project webpage to go live in June 2018](#)

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>

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