

## **PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **LABOUR & CO-OPERATIVE GROUP BUDGET AMENDMENT 2024/25**

After fourteen years under the Conservatives, Britain is broken.

People are thousands of pounds worse off. Mortgage costs are soaring. Public services are on their knees. Many Councils are on the verge of bankruptcy.

Politics is about choices.

Things don't have to be this way. Labour's plan is focused on getting Oxfordshire's future back with a mission driven approach to tackling the big challenges facing the County and the services residents rely on. Ending sticking plaster politics by delivering a Council fit for the future.

**Labour is focused on tackling the priorities of the people of Oxfordshire.**

**Building a financially resilient Council** by securing the long-term financial health of the Council and maximising the social impact of every pound spent. Labour is choosing to invest over £4.4 million in improving how the Council delivers services – whether that be supporting vulnerable residents or keeping Oxfordshire moving, whilst tackling long-term cost pressures.

**Tackling the Conservative cost of living crisis** by putting funding towards restoring local advice centres, delivering a Community Wealth Building Strategy so more of Oxfordshire taxpayers' money is retained in our local economy as well as expanding the local co-operative economy through supporting the creation of new care co-ops.

**Making our services for children fit for the future** by investing in children's early development, supporting more children to remain with their families; and building new children's homes to bring more children we care for back to Oxfordshire from expensive out of county placements.

**Taking back our streets** by putting more money into fixing our broken roads and pavements, bringing buses back under public control, and giving the public a greater say on the future of transport.

**Getting Oxfordshire moving** by tackling congestion at source, providing more affordable options to get around, and making walking and cycling safer.

Leader of the Labour & Co-op Group, Liz Brighthouse, said: "Our full-costed Amendment reflects Labour's plan to tackle the long-term issues facing services in Oxfordshire. This includes investing £3 million in building a care and education system fit for the future – supporting children's development at an early age, helping families stay together and ending the scandal of expensive out-of-County placements for children in care. By taking action early we can better ensure that children from all backgrounds have the best start in life – boosting opportunities and tackling inequality at source."

Labour & Co-op Finance Spokesperson, Cllr Brad Baines, said: "The Labour & Co-op Amendment is honest about the difficulties facing our County. With demand for statutory services growing faster than Council funding, something needs to change. Rather than using the outdated spreadsheet

politics of the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, Labour's plan focuses on how we can invest in tackling problems at source to both improve services and reduce long-term costs. This financial leadership allows us to improve the financial resilience of the Council, whilst investing in supporting our most vulnerable children, those suffering with the Conservative cost-of-living crisis, and fixing our roads."

#### **Notes to Editor:**

The budget papers will be published here on the morning of 15th February 2024:

<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/jelListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=7194>

The key lines in Oxfordshire Labour's budget proposals are:

#### **Tackling the Conservative cost of living crisis, through:**

- Restoring £300,000 in annual support grants to local advice centres across Oxfordshire
- £60,000 for a new Social Value and Community Wealth Building Strategy, ensuring Council spend supports more local businesses and suppliers
- £55,000 for a new Co-op Employment Hub to support care workers to set up new care co-ops - providing greater control and security in their working lives

#### **Building a financially resilient council, through:**

- Delivering increased financial resilience with over £3 million of additional savings as a result of up front investments in prevention and tackling social problems at the earliest opportunity

#### **Making our services for children fit for the future, through:**

- £1.3 million for increased support for children with special educational needs and disabilities in early years settings and primary schools to support the transition into mainstream education
- £1.3 million for more family help social workers to help keep families together and stop children being taken into care
- £6 million to build brand new children's homes

#### **Taking back our streets and getting Oxfordshire moving, through:**

- £5 million to fill more potholes and fix pavements
- £6 million for projects to cut congestion
- £150,000 feasibility and implementation strategy for bringing buses back under public control via a franchising system
- £320,000 to develop and support new 'Pick Me Up' style Demand Responsive Transport solutions in both urban and rural settings
- £6.5 million for safer walking and cycling infrastructure and more School Streets
- £150,000 for a citizens assembly, giving the public more say over the future of transport in Oxfordshire

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