

Weobley Ward
2018 January / February Report

Budget, 2018/19

At full Council, held on Friday, 26th January, the 2018/2019 budget was debated and set. This included a core increase of 2.9% plus the additional ring fenced increase to the precept, in respect of adult social care, of 2%. This therefore represented a combined increase of 4.9%. This increase was against a budget total of £144m.

The Council collects in £98m in Council Tax and £33m in Business Rates but spends immediately 76% of this on adult social care. This amounts to 3,500 residents that is around 2-3% of the county's population.

With respect to savings (keep in mind that the Council is being forced to be self-funding come 2020) there has been savings of £77m that have been achieved between the trading years 2010/11 to 2017/18. A further £19.2m of savings in required for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21 in order for expenditure over income to balance.

Hereford Transport Plan

Consultation on the proposed bypass is progressing. The short list of options are down to 7 routes within the corridor as per the Core Strategy. The recommendation is to start the consultation on these routes in early February with the intention to choose the preferred route to go forward for final deliberation later in the year.

Winter highways

The reserves of salt and grit are being maintained effectively and the usage has not depleted stocks. There will need to be some replenishment and this is in hand.

The weather continues to be changeable and this makes the entire system all the more difficult, especially when there is that period of snowfall and laying. Notwithstanding, the work is ongoing around gritting and salting of primary and secondary routes and the plans are reportedly progressing well.

Hereford City - Parking Scheme

The current parking scheme, introduced on 6th November 2017, has caused some concerns from residents and shopkeepers in Hereford City. There were some particular concerns raised by shopkeepers in Church Street, with them advising that their businesses were under threat. A subsequent meeting determined that the major cause for concern was the

introduction of free road side parking in and around Castle Street. As an amendment the Council have agreed to introduce a voucher scheme to allow shops to provide customers a greater time to park than the presently permitted 30 minutes. In addition, at weekends, the car parks at the Town Hall and Greyfriars would be made available within this voucher scheme. This voucher system would be in place until the end of December 2018 when the situation would be reviewed.

Waste Update

The waste to energy facility at Hartlebury continues to consume the County's Waste and to provide huge amounts of electricity back into the National Grid. The plant is performing well and in advance of expectations.

Leisure

Leases on the county's sport centres are being finalised with Halo Leisure who will be responsible for all expenditure on the centres, in the future, and who will pay rent to the council as the lease period progresses.

Property, Heritage

Within 'museums , library and archives' work is continuing to reduce staff costs and make provision for roof repairs at Hereford Library . Some soft market testing is also going forward in respect of a possible Trust for this service. Early responses seem positive and it appears that there is some interest by third parties in taking over this service – thereby contributing to the Council's savings plan.

Small Holdings Disposal

Currently completions equate to over £27m. These includes 20 completions from the 35 contract sales. All further contacts are expected to complete before the end of the financial year with another £16m expected as additional revenue.

Amey Dispute – Claims for defective works

As previously advised a further claim for potentially substandard works has been made by the Council against the previous contractors for road repairs in the sum of £9m. An adjudicator has been agreed, and whilst a time table is awaited, the Council expect a decision no later than the spring of 2018.

This completes my report.

Kind regards

Regards

Cllr Mark Cooper