

January Report 2024

Healthy People : Healthy Economy : Healthy Environment : Healthy Organisation

1.The Mid term Financial strategy for 2024/25-2028/29 was passed by Cabinet and will go out for consultation with the budget; which will include an increase in Council Tax of 4.99%. The Council the need to find further new savings in the next year 2024//25 of circa £49 million on top of the reduction in spend of £51 million in this year - of which already 80% has been delivered. The consultation will be on the Shropshire Council Web site and will be circulated to all Town and Parish Councils and we would urge as many people as possible to respond to the consultation - we will be asking where you think the savings should come from. To date residents have not seen any difference in the services the Council provides, however moving forward there may be hard decisions to be made on the services you do see .

2.The annual Council Tax base was agreed at Cabinet ie to enable the Council and Parishes to set Council Tax and the Precepts respectively. Across the county we have seen an uplift in the number of taxable properties of 0.92%, slightly down on previous years over around 1%. This is partly due to the delay in the Local Plan by inspectors and the lack of allocated land to build on .

The Council Tax base also included an increase in Council Tax of a further 100% on Second homes. To be clear this levy is not on full time Holiday Lets; which the Council sees as vital to our tourism economy.

3.Part of the pressure on the Council's budget is the amount of children in care. Shropshire's figures are currently just over 700 which prior to Covid were running at around 300. The problem is not just about poverty, but is also around addictions. These are more and more becoming prevalent around working and professional adults with their subsequent actions putting their children at risk. In England alone the number of children in care is 84,000.

4.If any Councils which have 'neighbourhood fund' sitting in their reserves they now have an opportunity to work with Crowdfund Shropshire to hopefully double their money. If Councils have any schemes they wish to support to benefit their communities with the Voluntary and Community sector the crowdfunding team at Shropshire council can support the administration of such schemes - and look at getting further external funding.

5.Flooding Grants. Grants may be available if premises were damaged by Storm Barbet 19-25Oct23. Households can apply for grants up to £500 as well as Council Tax relief. There is also a Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme of up to £5k. Applications MUST be registered by 21Jan2024 – <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/StormBabetFloodRelief>

6.The Task and Finish group on cleaning up our rivers has concluded and its report is available; please contact Simon and he can e-mail it to you. This is still very much a work in progress and it is hoped that the Group will continue to meet and work towards ensuring that the amount of sewage that goes into our rivers is reduced. It is disappointing that STW have declined to advise whether they release sewage on dry days – they have suggested that this is due to an ongoing general investigation by the regulatory authorities.

7. Licensing. The Council has renewed its licensing policy for another 5 years; there are no significant changes. As background to this decision a report was commissioned on alcohol related harm and the economic costs. In addition to the obvious health impacts, the economic impact nationally is estimated to be £21 billion: £11 billion alcohol related crime; £7 billion lost productivity through

unemployment and sickness; £3.5 billion cost to the NHS. The report analyses these issues in the context of Shropshire. Please let Simon know if you would like a copy.

8. Suicide – January can be a very difficult month the Council has issued contact advice from the Samaritans which you should consider making as public as you can: Call 116123; Text SHOUT – 85258 and if you are concerned about young people the Papyrus Helpline is 08000684141 or TEXT 07860 039967.

9. Rough Sleeping. As the winter starts to bite we often think of the plight of those that sleep rough (for whatever reason). The Portfolio Holder covering this area has advised that : “ The number of people sleeping rough in Shropshire can vary from day to day. Part of the community is transient so will come into and move out of the area sporadically. The Council works on an ongoing basis to get people into temporary accommodation; - during the winter months this can be more successful as there is a dedicated Cold Weather Provision service throughout the winter that is constantly encouraging members of the rough sleeper community to take up offers of accommodation. Individuals do take up that offer at varying points during the winter, but sometimes only for brief periods. People also leave accommodation that has already been sourced for them without warning, or are asked to leave due to certain behaviours. It’s not straightforward understanding the number and needs of our rough sleepers. In mid Dec there were 21 individuals sleeping rough in Shropshire. The majority of those are in and around Shrewsbury but there are small numbers in some of the market towns. The Council does not publish location details for a couple of reasons, firstly a number of these people have multiple bedding down spots, or if transiting through the county won’t be remaining in one location. Secondly, whilst we know where we are most likely to find many of these individuals bedded down, we don’t want to encourage people to seek them out.”

Simon Harris and Gwilym Butler Cllrs Cleobury Mortimer Division

We hope that you have had a Happy Christmas and wish you a Healthy and Prosperous New Year