

## **March Report 2024**

### **Healthy People : Healthy Economy : Healthy Environment : Healthy Organisation**

#### **1. Finance**

The Council has managed to save £41 million of spend in this financial year which is more than has ever been achieved in a single year. The Council is seeing unprecedented demand in Social Care in the current year with demand estimated at £26 million over and above predicted increase in last years budget. It is being created by Demand pressures by more people needing care mixed with the type of complex care they need plus major inflationary pressures in the delivery of the care. This has been mitigated by the use of reserves this year but makes up a part of the further £62 million of savings we have to make in the next financial year 24/25.

The finances are already cut to the bone and the proposals set out in the budget will see more visual changes to residents than have been seen to date. Council tax will rise by 4.99% the maximum allowed by Government 2.99% general and 2% for social care. A charge will be introduced for your green bin of £52 a year. The Green bin is not compulsory and if you do not want the service the bin can be collected . Further details will be forth coming in the new financial year. Parking fees will rise as will all discretionary fees the Council can charge . There will also be a review of all car parks and their sustainability .

There will be a complete review of Library services and Leisure services the Council delivers with savings of around £600,000 to be taken out of the service may result in some facilities closing if the local Councils do not wish to precept to support them locally.

Household recycling centres will reduce from 5 to 3 with a booking system being introduced to ensure only Council taxpayers in Shropshire are using the facility.

There will be at least 300 plus redundancies and the size of the Council will shrink. Other trading services such as the Theatre and Museum, Enable and Shire services will hopefully become independent trading companies or trusts outside the Council and we would estimate this will see the Council reduce its overall staff number by a third.

We will leave Shirehall as we will be a much smaller organisation and this will save £1.5 million a year in running costs. The Council is looking at temporary accommodation for the Council before the Multi Agency Hub is built in the Riverside development, which is the current proposal.

There will be reductions in staff in regulatory services which may result in a reduction of service levels in most areas.

We will be moving into an era where there will be an opportunity for local Councils to deliver more services locally if desired and precept accordingly as Shropshire Council will not be in a position to deliver much outside of Regulatory services and Care.

We are constantly Lobbying our M P s and talking with the Government departments for Local Government.

The Capital Programme continues and this is different to annual revenue spend and is funded by developers contributions and external grants .This incudes £84 million for housing ,£27 million for schools and £40 million for highways .

**2.CIL and the Neighbourhood Fund:** As you know, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is paid by developers of new residential development and spent on infrastructure priorities necessary to support development identified through the Place Plans.

The Government supports a local focus to infrastructure delivery and has determined that a proportion of total CIL monies arising in an area should be provided directly to the relevant Town and Parish Council as a Neighbourhood Fund.

Where the Neighbourhood Fund applies to a development it represents:

-25% of the total CIL liability where there is an adopted formal Neighbourhood Plan.

-15% of the total CIL Liability where there is no adopted formal Neighbourhood.

Shropshire Council has agreed to make Neighbourhood Fund payments to Town and Parish Councils once a year in April, in order to coincide with precept payments.

The Council has shared the amount of Neighbourhood Fund payments received for each Town / Parish since 2012. If the Chair, who is unlikely to have been in situ since 2012, would like to know what their Town / Parish has received over that period please let us know.

**3.Health and Wellbeing:** The Council continues to develop a 'prevention framework' designed to assist in ensuring the general health of Shropshire people: providing support ie brief interventions; sign posting where to access support for self help; and helping with referrals to specialised services. While Shropshire may appear affluent there are pockets of deep deprivation and isolation – please let us know if you would like to see the full presentation.

**4.Refugees and Asylum Seekers :** We are briefed from time to time on the Council's ongoing response to refugees and asylum seekers. There are currently 190 Ukrainians with host families that receive monthly assistance payments; others fleeing from the Russian invasion have found work and are renting privately. 8 Afghan evacuee families have been settled in housing that was once RAF Cosford – this is not a Shropshire programme. 22 Syrian families have settled in Shrewsbury and there is no expectation that this number will increase. The Council believes that there are 30/40 Hong Kongers in the county, but this group tend not to seek assistance. The central Government has billeted 56 people in the Lion Hotel – again this is not a Shropshire programme.

**5.Disposable Vapes :** The Government has now advised that it is its intention to ban disposable vapes by the end of 2025. In the meantime the Council's Trading Standards team have successfully prosecuted a Cleobury shop owner for selling disposable vapes (ie tobacco) to under 18s. we can only stress that if you believe that tobacco products are being sold to children report the vendor to Trading Standards 01952 381999

Simon Harris and Gwilym Butler Cllrs Cleobury Mortimer Division

4 March 2024