

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018/19

–Atcham Parish Council

Budgetary Pressures

For some time now the annual increase in cost pressure on Adult Social care has been running at some £8m per annum and on Children's Social care at some £3m per annum. This is against an approximate Council Tax income of around £1.6m for each percentage point increase.

Central Government dictate the maximum percentage increase that can be charged without holding a local referendum (2%) and Shropshire Council has been raising by that percentage for the last few years. In addition, Government permitted an extra 1% for inflation pressures plus a maximum of 6% over 3 years specifically for Adult Social Care. Shropshire raised tax by 2% in 2017, 3% in 2018 and so raised the final 1% in 2019.

Given that 1% raised around £1.6m and given that the extra pressure from Adults is around 6 times that figure, you can see that we would need 6% extra each year just to stand still, hence the continuing pressure on other budgets as we make ends meet.

Council Tax in Shropshire is below the national average and there has been a 3.99% increase for 2019/20. This increase is made up of a 2.99% general increase and 1% Social Care precept and will deliver additional funds of approximately £6.5m, of which £1.625m is the social care precept. This will help to offset the growth in social care costs (in Children's and Adults Services) which amount to £12m in a single year, but not entirely cover them.

Despite this Shropshire Council continues to maintain a balanced budget, however in order to do this further cut have been made and more will no doubt follow. We continue to maximise income rather than make cuts and have been relatively successful in this, however it is not enough. It is recognised across England that Councils, especially rural councils, are now down to the bone with nothing further to cut. There have been strong rumours from Westminster that the local government funding package will change as from 2020/21 and it will be based on a fairer funding programme. We also await a green paper on the future of Adult Social Care funding, the outcome of which could have a major positive effect on Shropshire Council's budget. Both important programmes have, of course, been held up by the small matter of Brexit!

There have been a number of one-off grants from government for pot holes, high streets and litter picking which are welcome but do not replace vital core funding.

The administration of the Council has forecast a balanced budget for this financial year and next but with the current financial formulae to balance the budget over a five-year term until 2022/23 there is a budget deficit of £40m.

Adult Social Care (ASC)

Balancing the ASC budget is challenging. As a statutory service that works within strict legislation, we face the continual challenge of using finite resources in order to meet the needs of a growing number of people as effectively as possible. The amount of money needed to fund our services grows each year. The net budget for ASC in 2018/19 was £93.152m and we are estimating a £500k overspend on this. The 2019/20 budget is £103m. We are hoping that the government's Fairer Funding Review will result in an increase in funding that will help us meet the growing levels of demand for our services.

Shropshire's Adult Social Care is high-performing and delivers services at a cost that is lower than that of other local authorities. Our performance is measured in several ways and an area that is of particular interest is how efficiently and effectively we support people to safely come home from hospital and continue to live there without having to go back into hospital. We work very hard to do this and have very low numbers of what is called 'delayed transfers of care'.

Children's Services

- **Children's Services Gross budget is £187m**, however £89m of this is ringfenced for schools (DSG).
- 2019/20 Gross Budget for Children's Services excluding Schools = £89.4m
- **2019/20 Net Budget for Children's Services excluding Schools = £50.0m:**
 - Children's Social Care = £30.4m (of Which £18.4m relates to Placements including Placements Staffing and Adoptions)
 - Early Help = £2.1m
 - Learning and Skills = £17.0m (of which £10.6m relates to Home to School Transport)
 - Other Staffing = £0.4m
 - Central DSG = £0 net budget (£38.1m Gross Budget – High Needs Block approx. £20m and Early Years Block £15m)

Looked After Children (LAC) figures increased by 49 children in the past 12 months just over a 30% increase on last year which in itself was a 30% increase on the previous year, average cost for a looked after child is roughly 45k per year which is an increase of approximately £2.25m which accounts for a large percentage of the £3m overspend shown in 2018/19.

Highways

In the last financial year, on top of the base budget, we received additional grants from the Department for Transport of approx. £7million - this was spent on additional resurfacing works. The 2019/20 programme of work is being collated and programmed; once it is completed this information will be shared with the Local Member and affected Parish Council.

The Highways and Transport service has undertaken a major restructure; this new structure will go live on 1st June 2019. You may have different people working in your area now, updated contact information will be shared with you shortly.

Shropshire Council's Digital Transformation team have been working with Highways colleagues and have developed the MyShropshire portal which allows members of the public to report any issues from streetlights not working to potholes directly to us from an online portal. The account you have on MyShropshire logs all the enquiries raised but it also works with our Highway systems and at each stage of the process it will update the enquiry, so you know what's happened with it i.e. work ordered, work completed etc.

Local Plan Review

Shropshire Council are continuing with the preparation of the Local Plan Review during 2019. A consultation on 'Preferred Site options' in Shropshire's towns and proposed Community Hubs concluded in February, and a summary of issues raised will be published in June. In the summer the Council will be consulting the public again on a number of large strategic sites, such as Clive Barracks at Tern Hill and the former Ironbridge Power Station site. Having considered all views expressed, and considering any other emerging evidence, the Council then intends to produce the full draft

'pre-submission' version of the Local Plan in October 2019. This stage will include a further formal opportunity for town and parish councils to comment on Community Hubs and on a number of proposed policies for the management of development. We then intend to submit the Local Plan, along with responses made, to the Government for independent examination in December 2019. At this stage the Council expects the examination of the Local Plan will last around a year, and if the appointed Inspector decides the Plan is 'sound' we expect to adopt the Local Plan in early 2021.

The Parish Place Plan will become a very important document as we move forward. It is important to capture all the aspirations for the Parish in this document. Atcham Parish falls within the Shrewsbury Rural Place Plan area.

Ironbridge Power Station

As many of you will be aware the Ironbridge Power Station site has been designated as a Strategic Site within Shropshire Council's Local Plan Review. Harworth, the site owners have had a number of public sessions to encourage local residents and interested parties to comment upon their proposals. There will be further open days towards the end of May. More information can be found on the site-specific website www.ironbridgeregeneration.co.uk

The current position is that a request has been submitted for an EIA scoping opinion linked to the proposed re-development of the former Ironbridge Power Station site. This is not a planning application. Instead the applicant Harworth Estates is seeking advice from Shropshire Council on the information to be submitted in support of a future planning application to re-develop the site. Any such application will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (a dossier of detailed reports covering relevant environmental issues). The Council's EIA scoping response will advise the applicant on the contents of these reports so this information can be collated in advance of submission of a future planning application. In providing its response the Council will take account at this stage of the comments of statutory consultees including Telford & Wrekin Council and the Environment Agency. Public comments are not being sought at this stage. However, any future application will be subject to a full planning consultation process. Any queries in relation to the current scoping opinion application should be directed in the first instance to Shropshire Council's Planning Business Support team (planningdmc@shropshire.gov.uk)

Local Matters

The redevelopment of Ironbridge and the impact of increased traffic is of concern. The Parish Council and I are working with Shropshire Council and Harworth to highlight the worries and anxieties of our residents.

Elsewhere, speeding traffic, planning issues, highway matters (or more specifically pot holes) and dog fouling are still hot topics for my inbox.

The latest consultation on the reduction in bus services closes on 6th May. I feel very strongly that there should be no reduction in services and no changes to the concession fees on Park & Ride. I have made my thoughts known at Shirehall.

I've very much enjoyed working with you all and I look forward to the coming year.

Claire Wild

Shropshire Councillor for the Severn Valley Division