

Withington Parish Council

Update report - 10 January 2024

Happy New Year.

Budget

We are making good progress with our savings target of £51M for the financial year 23/24. I do not expect to make a 100% of these savings due mainly to inflation however we do aim for 90%. Whilst this is good news, we are also facing in year budget pressures, predominantly around increased demand for Adult and Children's Social care, currently £23M. We are mitigating these demands and are hopeful of bringing this figure down before the end of March.

However, this increased demand does not vanish on the 1st of April and therefore we have had to add this to our budget figure for 24/25. Our Finance Team must also predict the demand going forward which results in us needing to find further savings (estimated at £49M) to balance the 24/25 budget.

By changing the way, we work and offering services in different ways this has allowed us to make savings this year without most residents noticing a difference. Inevitably to save another £49M will be much harder and I urge you to take part in our Budget Consultation [Budget consultation 2024/25 | Shropshire Council](#) to help us prioritise services.

I will continue to lobby government for further funding, but every council is doing this. I know I say this every time, but we are not alone, all councils are struggling especially those who deal with Social Care. Add rurality into it and some councils are very close to the brink. We are not at that point, yet, but I really would value your input on what services we prioritise.

Communications

I have been having discussions with SALC to try and make it quicker and simpler for Clerks to obtain information from the Council. A Clerks Working Group has been set up to look at some of the suggestions. Delighted that Denise has volunteered for this group. More anon.

January Cabinet

There are several long-awaited reports going to Cabinet in January, specifically:

- the Shrewsbury Movement Strategy which is a major piece of the jigsaw for the Smithfield Riverside development. This looks at ways to reduce the unnecessary traffic through the town centre. It is not an anti-car strategy!!
- the Sports Village Transformation which includes a remodelling of the current facilities and the addition of a competition swimming pool and ancillary facilities. As I have said before no decision has yet been made about the future of the Quarry Leisure Centre except to say that we have invested significant funds into the facility to ensure it continues to operate whilst the Competition pool is being built to safeguard swimming in Shrewsbury.
- There is also a report regarding increased car parking charges. I appreciate this is unlikely to make me even less popular. It is, of course, linked to our budgetary situation in that we need to make investments into our car parks and Park and Ride and do not have the finance available to do this, but it is equally about changing habits and encouraging less traffic in Shrewsbury Town Centre by encouraging people to park in the outer loop or better still use Park and Ride.

See you in March.

Lezley