

District & County Cllrs report 12<sup>th</sup> March US

It has been a busy time recently at both authorities with this Spring's Budget having now been approved.

### **County council**

It has been finalised to cover a net £ 22.2m. overspend in funding. This is in line with many other regional authorities across the country with several like Birmingham having declared bankruptcy and been served with 114 notices from Government. Birmingham residents are facing a 21% tax increase. Happily, we are not in that position but significant pressures have been highlighted in respect of children social care payments, home to school transport and adult social care.

Our County Council's tax precept will increase to 4.99%. in relation to two parts.

2% Adult Social care precept ring- fenced in order to contribute to existing cost pressures due to Worcestershire's ageing population.

2.99% for other Council services to provide financial support for the delivery of outcomes in line with the Corporate plan 'Shaping Worcestershire's Future and the priorities identified by the public and business community.

Council officers have been offered voluntary redundancies to help reduce costs with other cost cutting measures under discussion. It was announced that this will not affect frontline services and that we are still moving forward with existing schemes. The continued year on year increase in the cost of children social care placements emphasize the importance of continuing the drive to recruit foster carers.

Much of County Hall remains closed due to the presence of RAAC being discovered in some of its concrete. Full Council & Planning meetings are being held at District offices to be able accommodate large numbers.

### **Wychavon unveils ambitious new plan for the district**

Supporting residents' health and wellbeing, boosting the natural environment, transforming town centres and increasing access to housing are at the heart of Wychavon's new plan for the district.

The We Are Wychavon Plan includes 29 promises to be delivered over the next four years based on the council's priorities of People, Place and Environment.

Feedback from residents, young people, councillors and information on the local needs of the district have been used to create the plan.

Key promises include:

- Supporting the development of the district's existing health and wellbeing hubs and introducing tailored health and wellbeing support in at least ten villages.
- Identifying households at risk of hardship and providing preventative advice and support.
- Extending Wychavon's social mobility small grants scheme to increase activities and opportunities for more young people.
- Creating a new housing facility in the north of the district to provide support to homeless young people so they can move on to independent homes.
- Driving investment in the key sites identified in the town centre prospectuses including the Riverside Centre in Evesham, Droitwich Spa lido and reconnecting Pershore with the riverside.

- Raising career aspirations for adults and young people including creating school-business partnerships to connect people with local employers and training opportunities.
- Working with partners to develop a plan for reducing traffic congestion in Evesham and deliver a new cycling and walking route between the town centre and the surrounding areas.
- Supporting small businesses to access training, receive specialist support or grant funding to respond to climate change.
- Increasing biodiversity and natural assets in our parks and green spaces and increasing their resilience to climate change while retaining their value for users.
- Continuing to deliver actions in Wychavon's Intelligently Green Plan to reduce the council's carbon footprint including significantly cutting emissions from council-owned leisure centres.
- The plan was approved at a Wychavon Council meeting on Wednesday 21 February. It is available to read in full at [www.wychavon.gov.uk/we-are-wychavon](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/we-are-wychavon).
- It has also been agreed to increase Wychavon's share of the Council Tax bill by £5 a year – the first increase for six years. The average Band D Council Tax bill for Wychavon will rise to £125.08 a year from April.
- "Despite this rise, our Council Tax will still be the lowest in Worcestershire and one of the lowest in the country and we'll work hard to make sure we are using taxpayers' money efficiently and delivering value for every pound spent."

### **New WCC Rail Strategy**

The county council has unveiled a brand-new rail strategy to transform travel across Worcestershire.

The ambitious plan from Worcestershire County Council includes more frequent trains to London, greater country-wide connectivity, a fast Worcestershire to Bristol service, Worcester Shrub Hill and Redditch masterplan implementation and parking developments.

Parkway station which is the first new station to open in Worcs.in one hundred years continues to encourage passengers with more than half a million trips made last year. Plans to extend the parking are being considered.

The county council hope the plans will help deliver better rail improvements across the county and set medium and long-term proposals to support and build on passenger demand until 2050

"The strategy highlights the county's ambitions for driving forward rail improvements, recognising the role that rail plays in connecting people, communities, and businesses."

For more information visit [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/travel-and-highways/transport-strategy-and-planning/strategies-and-plans](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/travel-and-highways/transport-strategy-and-planning/strategies-and-plans)

### **Measles Outbreak**

THE Director of Public Health for Worcestershire has urged people and parents across the county to make sure theirs and their children's MMR vaccines are up to date after measles cases soared across the West Midlands. Figures published on the 8<sup>th</sup> February show 329 of 465 (71%0 cases across England from October to February were in that region.

Around 80 per cent of cases have been in Birmingham, but Coventry, with 10 per cent, saw the second steepest rise.

Worcestershire is currently free of cases but officials want to maintain that status.

Lisa McNally said the full vaccination rates for the MMR in Worcestershire are among the highest in the region, but added: “However there are around 4’000 primary school aged children, and some adults, not vaccinated – and so they are at risk of serious illness.”

UKHSA health professionals are concerned figures will rise quickly as, while most parents ensure their children get both MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) doses, in some communities’ uptake of the MMR vaccine is worryingly low which has led to the spread.

Measles spreads very easily among those unvaccinated, especially in nurseries and schools, and is a nasty illness. In some children it can lead to hospitalisation and in rare cases causes death.

Babies, young children, pregnant women and people with weakened immunity, are at increased risk of complications if they catch measles. To increase the vaccination rate popup clinics are being organised in February at local libraries in Worcestershire on Saturdays especially focussing on vaccinating children.