

March 2021 County Council Report.

At February's full County Council the main topic was this year's Budget proposals. Most were voted for, but with a few surprises. The general rate increase of 1.99% was expected and the proposed 3% extra for adult care was withdrawn. A £12m saving on the previous year had resulted in this proposed increase being now not being required. A proposed £10m increase on road funding was increased on the day to £12.5m and was gratefully received. The winter has taken a toll on our road system resulting in our usual supply of pot holes! Currently we have a back log of around 5000 pot holes to address, although seemingly a large number, back in 2018 we had 20,000 to contend with but extra teams were brought in to deal with these and are still being used today.

The Business Support Grant announced in February was also given the go ahead. This £12m fund invites between 1000 and 2000 business to apply for grants up to £10,000. This allows those businesses which couldn't apply for the government's grants announced during the two phases of lockdown, to apply directly to the County Council. Already the first phase was completed at the end of February and further businesses can apply for the second and subsequent phases.

The latest Green Master Plan was also given the go ahead. The council is aiming to be carbon free by 2050 and has already been implementing some of these policies for some time.

Small property flooding incidents will benefit from a new fund now being set up. In the past only larger flooding issues affecting multiple properties have been the priority but now even single issues can hopefully now be addressed.

A review in the Minerals and Waste local plan is being undertaken and most of the current policies will be reviewed and updated where necessary.

A pre-application planning charge is being introduced by the county council. Currently no council is obliged to do this, but most do and it is recognised that officer time is taken up during this process and a charging policy is being drawn up. The county mainly deals with large applications which will not normally affect householder applications, which normally is dealt with by the districts.

We are now reaching the end of the council four year term and elections will take place in May. With the Covid situation appearing last year, it has changed the way that parishes, district and county councils have had to operate. Technology has come to the rescue with 'Teams' meetings and 'Zoom' meetings being now the temporary normal, although I am prevented from using Zoom by the council, I hope my monthly updates have been useful keeping the parishes and county connected during these unusual times.

Next month we will be in 'Purdah' this is the six week period before the election takes place so information from councillors is restricted, so this is my final 'normal' report to you, next months' may be 'short and sweet'.

Regards Ron