

Parish Council, meeting Monday 9th March 2020,

County Councillors report.

BUDGET

The Council set its budget for 2020/21 on 13th February. This will see £9m of savings, but these will come from the current transformation programme that largely sees back office services changed and efficiencies secured, there are no direct impacts on front line services. It also saw money invested in Roads, footways and streetlighting (£11m); a further £5m into reducing road congestion (on top of £5m from last year); £1m for flood prevention; £0.2m for Public Transport; and provided for 150,000 trees to be planted. Overall this means an increase in Council Tax of 3.99% (1.99% General + 2% Adult Social Care) which is less than £1 per week for a band D householder. Worcestershire will remain in the lower quartile for level of Council Tax.

FLOODING

There are currently 500 homes and 200 businesses known to us that have flooded. The Council has announced a Flood Fund of £250,000 and is just working through finalising that and other measures. It is likely to focus on resilience. Recovery grants of up to £2,500 and resilience grants of up to £5,000 are available to help businesses which have been affected. Recovery grants of up to £2,500 and resilience grants of up to £5,000 are available to help businesses which have been affected.

We also want to reassure people that whilst we are responding to dynamic and evolving situations in particular places, we recognise that there are many places that are still flooded and have been for some time. There are still teams on the ground in those places.

The Government has issued funding for those homes and businesses affected. The current river levels remain high but are now dropping but slowly and the Council and all its partners are continuing to respond and monitor the position.

We would like to reassure everyone that the emergency multi-agency flood response is currently on-going within the villages and towns across [Worcestershire](#) and Shropshire and will remain in place for some time to come.

Since February 15, the fire service has rescued 185 people, 19 dogs, 10 cats, 55 sheep, one pony, one parrot and one snake.

In total, 204 people have been evacuated from buildings, as have 11 dogs and two cats.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Public health continues to work alongside Public Health England to distribute timely and relevant **preventative advice on the spread of Covid-19**. Guidance has been issued to schools, care homes and carers, and a page of information and links has been added to the Worcestershire County Council website.

Worcestershire Children First has been working with schools to offer advice also. Public health England has stressed the importance of sharing the **'Catch it, bin it, kill it'**, messages around the spread of germs, and the Communications team has been broadcasting these key messages across all social media channels for the Council.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Worcestershire Parkway opened on Sunday 23rd February to a flurry of excited passengers from far and wide, keen to be first to use the first new station in the county for over 100 years.

The station is a key part of the council's commitment to improve rail infrastructure around the county. Better rail connectivity allows easier travel into and out of the county, supporting the business and leisure economy.

The station will also help to remove traffic from the county's main roads and motorways. Currently there are many commuters that drive the entire journey or drive to larger stations out of county. They do this to access better parking facilities and faster services to major cities. With its 500 space carpark and fast services to Cardiff and London Paddington, many of these commuters will now choose to travel from Worcestershire Parkway.

Find out more www.worcestershire.gov.uk/worcsparkway

5G will help to continue the progress and development of technological innovation for Health services and Adult Social Care in parts of rural Worcestershire.

The West Mercia Rural 5G project which will test and trial the benefits of 5G in rural areas, will launch on the 1st April following a successful bid which was led by Worcestershire County Council.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) announced on 20th February the award of £3.3m to Worcestershire County Council who will be the lead partner for the project.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

9 in every 10 pupils across Worcestershire will be attending their first-choice secondary school this September. The total number of children offered one of their preferred places has increased from last years figures and has risen to 96.1% compared to 94.8% in 2019. This year saw the County Council received 6,015 applications, which was 130 more than in 2019. Every child, for whom an application was submitted to the County Council, has been offered a school place.

A **survey** has been created by Worcestershire Children First and Families in Partnership to find out **what parents and carers of children with SEND** in Worcestershire think about the services available to them. The survey closed on Friday 28th February and was an ideal opportunity for parents and carers to share both their personal and their children's experiences, and their thoughts on how services have changed across the county.

PHIL GROVE