

October Report

1. As part of our Annual Financial review we are reviewing our Capital Programme which are the big projects we wish to deliver moving forward. Included in these are major infrastructure projects which may open up other opportunities for Economic development and building such as the Mile end project in Oswestry. Major funding can be attracted from other sources if we take a lead. These projects also include School expansions where needed, Drainage projects, Broadband etc and link directly into our Local plan for development. Culture, Sport and Leisure are also included like the major development of the Assembly Rooms in Ludlow. However where we have to borrow money to fund these items we have to understand the cost of repayment and that pressure on our revenue budget against balancing the budget against Adult and Children services and Highways etc

The Capital programme will be clarified into committed projects in place, Opportunities to save costs and revenue strain, Income creative and those falling outside that will be prioritised on when we can get alternative funding or afford within house, the so called nice to do projects but not essential. We effectively have to live within our means.

2. I am A director of a charity called Impetus T/A MRRT which is an organisation who can lend to help businesses where they are unable to get funding from the Banks. It is an organisation supported by Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Councils and if you are aware of any start ups or businesses that may need help please pass on their details www.impetus-marches.co.uk.

3. Shropshire Council is working towards becoming a member of White Ribbon Campaign. This is all about The Council as an employer of over 3500 people reviewing its policies in relation to Domestic Abuse/Bullying and Harassment /Code of conduct policies -raising awareness and improving support available. I believe Shropshire Council needs to lead by example in such matters.

4. We are currently in the process of developing the Budget Strategy for next year and the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next 4 years. Currently we are looking at the need to make cuts and or raise revenue to cover a shortfall of £25 million. The initial review of the recent Government Budget has not helped the shortfall in Government grant to help our finances neither has it to date taken of the cap to which we can raise council tax currently 2% plus adult social care Of 1.99%. We will be considering raising Council Tax by circa 6-8 % to enable us to deliver a balanced budget against making cuts in essential services. To deliver this may have to undertake a referendum under the current government guidance. This is a constant changing picture and we believe that the government may change their distribution of the 1.25% increase in National Insurance next year with more being distributed to Local Authorities for Adult Social care which may ease our Budgetary issues. I will keep you updated.

5. As part of the budgetary review we are looking at going cash less to save costs of handling cash, this can be from emptying car park ticket machines to how children pay for school meals. Very often the cost of the transaction is more than the money collected. This will also help our climate change targets by getting rid of a lot of unnecessary paper trails.

6. It is probable there will be a review of car parking charges across the county with an aim to increase revenue. At present the Car Parks in Cleobury are free and it maybe a case that they start charging for parking. If this is proposed it would be open to full consultation and weighed up against the cost of collection and monitoring against revenue raised. I see both sides of this argument charging helps keep the car parks fluid so people can get a space where very often some cars are parked for days on end when no charges are involved. It also encourages more people to walk. If charges were imposed we would see more enforcement in the town both on parking in car parks and double yellow lines etc. Cleobury is one of the few places left that has free parking. Places like Much Wenlock, Ellesmere and Wem already pay.

7. We are currently continuing to see repairs to the roads across the ward. There is still along way to go but I am pleased that investment is being made here in the South prior to the Winter. Lets just hope we have a mild drier winter to help these repairs to continue. I am particularly pleased to see the lane down to Ditton Mill down for major work where we have many residents in Over 55s accommodation and need good access for carers and medical assistance.

Best Wishes, Gwilym