

Reports to February 2016 Meeting.

County Council Report to North Nibley Parish Council

1st February 2016. John Cordwell

County Council budget 2016/2017

The County's Cabinet meets on Wednesday to recommend a budget to the County Council on 17th February.

The public consultation resulted in a preference for a 3.99% increase in council tax of which 2% is ring fenced for adult social care in line with the Chancellor's announcement last year.

As a result Cabinet is expected to recommend a final revenue budget for 2016/17 of £417.98M, a reduction of £2M on the current year due to the significant reduction in Government grant funding. This leads to an increase in Band D council tax of £43.51 to £1134.01, as previously indicated.

Review of Public Transport, Community Transport and Concessionary Fares

The Cabinet will also be considering the feedback from the public consultation on options to change the way the council invests in local bus services and other issues. I have raised a question on the future of service 201 where the public preference seemed to be to maintain a direct Wotton-under-Edge to Gloucester service, but the officer recommendation seems to require changing buses in Dursley. The appendix giving this information was published after the rest of the Cabinet papers were issued leaving little time to study the proposals and raise questions on them.

Adverse Weather Plan 2015/16

I at last obtained an electronic copy of this last month. I am concerned (not for the first time) that parish snow wardens and plough operators are not properly informed of what is expected of them and have raised this through the council's Highways Contract Advisory Group. At the

same meeting concern was expressed that the advice given by Gloucestershire Highways on planning applications to district councils was often buried in quite long responses and there was a need for a summary sheet at the start of the response.

EU Referendum Task Group

At its October meeting the council agreed to set up a cross-party task group “to establish and identify the social, economic and cultural benefits and disadvantages that membership of the EU has on Gloucestershire” and to make the results available to residents before the referendum. The first meeting was held last month when it was agreed to tighten the timescale for reporting back, given the possibility of a June referendum.

District Councillor Report to February 2016 Meeting.

The Stroud District Council, Full Council, Budget Meeting was held on 28th January.



This included a motion to adopt a revised scheme of polling districts and stations following the Electoral review of the District. From May 2016, Wotton-under-Edge ward will comprise of Wotton-under-Edge, Divisions 1 and 2, but with an amended boundary to the south of the polling district to reflect changes to the district ward boundary; North Nibley parish and will also include Stinchcombe parish. The North Nibley polling station will remain unchanged at North Nibley Village Hall.

The Treasury management activity half year report and Treasury management strategy were approved. Update on the canal project. The Cotswold Canals Trust is making a bid for approximately £15m to restore the canal between Stonehouse and Saul Junction. If successful, this would allow boats from the national waterways to reach Stroud and ultimately Brimscombe Port, with economic and leisure benefits. Cashflow financing of Phase 1B of the canal project (up to a limit of £1m) was carried.



Revised estimates for the Housing Revenue Account were carried. Including a 1% reduction in social and affordable rents in line with the Housing Bill; Garage rents to be increased by 1%; General needs landlord service charges to remain unchanged and Sheltered Housing schemes landlord service charges to be increased by 1%. Land at Fountain Crescent in Wotton-under-Edge will be sold on the open market.

The General Fund Revenue estimates and Capital Programme were approved. After further debate the General Fund Revenue Budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2015/16 to 2019/20 were approved, including a 1.99% increase in the council tax. The Council Tax setting meeting will be held on 25th February.

On the 21st January we received a Devolution update from the Chief Executive of Stroud District Council. A Government response to Gloucestershire's devolution bid is expected and the first date for a public announcement if a deal has been reached would be 16th March. Unlike many other bids Gloucestershire's bid does not include an elected mayor. It has been made clear that any deal has to be fiscally neutral. The update also stated that –'We are continuing to liaise with our Members of Parliament and they are continuing to lobby on behalf of Gloucestershire.'

On the 5th February our Member of Parliament, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, will lead a public meeting in North Nibley Village Hall to discuss the future provision of broadband in the parish. The meeting was organised by North Nibley Parish Council and representatives of British Telecom/Openreach are expected to attend. A report from this meeting will follow.

Lesley Reeves, District Councillor for Wotton-under-Edge and North Nibley