

20180315 Shropshire Council report to Barrow PC

Shropshire Council tax increase	<p>I referred to the likelihood of a 6% Shropshire Council Tax increase when I presented my report to the Parish Council in January. I mentioned my question to the Council Leader about a failure to generate or save £3m since his election in May 2017 and his admission that this was an opportunity missed. I now believe that figure to be nearer to £5m which, coincidentally, is equal to the sum stripped from the highways budget for each of the next two years.</p> <p>The Council has to set a budget. Failure to do so is an abdication of our responsibility and might lead to government commissioners stepping in. Nonetheless, my concerns about this mismanagement were such that I felt compelled to voice my concern again at our February meeting and to vote against the increase. I was joined by three other Conservative members in this protest.</p>
Shropshire Councillors' allowances	<p>Continuing my theme of discontent, at the same meeting, the Council considered allowances. All Councillors receive a basic allowance of £11,514 p.a. Those with special responsibility, such as the Leader, Portfolio Holders and Committee chairmen receive additional allowances.</p> <p>I spoke against the increases, especially for the Council Leader and the leaders of the Opposition Groups, at a time when a Council tax increase of 6% was going to be unpalatable to all – especially the low-paid. The report was sent back to the independent remuneration panel (who immediately resigned en masse). I subsequently learned of one Deputy Portfolio Holder (receiving a special responsibility allowance of 0.5 – i.e. £17,271) whose attendance record is 14%.</p>
Highways and snow	<p>The early March snow, as you know, had a big impact on our country lanes. At the same time, the cold weather undid much of the pothole repair work that had been undertaken following the early December snowfall. And it seems likely we'll see more snow this weekend.</p> <p>If there are outstanding concerns about highways repairs, please let me know. In the light of the £5m taken out of the Highways budget you may also wish to address them to Cllr Steve Davenport, Highways Portfolio Holder, and Council Leader Peter Nutting – in fact I urge you to do so.</p> <p>I have advised Bridgnorth Highways that Morris Corfield should be approached to be on standby for snow clearance, and this was welcomed.</p>
Advice surgery	<p>I'm holding my next advice surgery on 21st April 2018 at Shipton Village Hall.</p>