

Report by Councillor Adrian Darby to Aston under Hill Parish Council.

Wychavon's financial situation.

We were given a briefing last week on the financial squeeze that is being put on rural district councils in general and on Wychavon in particular. Between 2010/11 and 2017/18 it is estimated that the government grant funding to Wychavon will have been reduced by over £4.2 million pounds per annum. This is at a time when our costs are rising through inflation.

We were also given a first glimpse of how the Executive Board propose to deal with this huge cut in our funding. They aim to find £2m over the next two years by a mixture of growing saving and charging and a further £2.2m over the following three years.

New Homes Bonus.

The government is proposing to change the basis on which it pays New Homes Bonus to councils. So far Wychavon has handed over a sizeable portion of what it receives to Parishes. Under the new proposals Wychavon will receive less central government grant in recognition of the New Homes Bonus it receives and as a consequence may not be able to afford to hand over so much to the parishes. You should have received an invitation to a meeting at Wychavon on 25 September to discuss the implications of this and should have received a copy of Wychavon's response to the government consultation. You are urged to write your own response echoing Wychavon's arguments.

Gloucester Cheltenham Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy.

The next stage of this plan which covers the whole of North Gloucestershire and therefore affects the south of Wychavon has now been approved for further public consultation by Tewkesbury BC and is due for consideration by the other two councils. The development proposed at Ashchurch camp will certainly increase the traffic flow along the A46, and affect the village roads running parallel to it as motorists look for "rat runs". I am urging all parish councils and Wychavon to make submissions on this strategy.

South Worcestershire Development Plan.

The plan is now with the Planning Inspectorate and the Examination in Public will start on 1 October at Worcester. The first stage of the examination will last three days, will look at major issues such as housing, employment land, and retail requirements and the duty to cooperate with neighbouring councils. The timing of the later stage will depend on whether the inspector thinks that the three councils have got the right answers on these issues.

Five-year Housing Land supply

You will recall that for some time Wychavon had been unable to show that it had a five-year housing land supply judged against the numbers in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. The consequence of this is that the saved housing policies in the old Wychavon District plan were regarded as no longer valid.

At its July meeting the Wychavon Planning Committee was told that we had given so many consents that we could now show a five year housing land supply so long as our SWDP allocations were counted, and, therefore, that our existing policy GD1 (no development outside development boundaries) was once again relevant. However we only just met the target and our calculations might be challenged at appeal by developers. Therefore we were advised to pass planning applications outside the GD1 development boundaries where such development could be regarded as sustainable and where the harm did not outweigh the benefit. At the August planning committee meeting we refused several applications on the grounds that they were contrary to GD1 and could not be regarded as sustainable.

If the inspector agrees with the SWDP housing numbers after stage 1 (see above), we will then have a huge excess supply and we will no longer have to consider sites which do not accord with the plan.

Flooding

At the Executive Board meeting last week we were given details of a new Flood Initiative Support Scheme using a £150,000 fund recently agreed by the council. The report listed villages which had responded to the questionnaire and which were liable to flooding. Ashton does not seem to have responded.

Rural Fair Deal

Wychavon is encouraging all its residents to subscribe to a petition to the House of Commons arguing that the Local Government Finance Settlement is unfair to rural communities and pointing out that urban areas receive 50% more support per head than rural ones despite higher costs in rural service delivery. All members of the parish council are urged to sign this petition.

AMGD

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