

Council Tax freeze recommended for second year running

Wychavon's Executive Board are recommending a Council Tax freeze next year, meaning a Band D property will again pay just £120.08 for the district council's services. If approved this will be the second year the Council Tax has been frozen. Last financial year this meant Wychavon had the eighth lowest Council Tax in the country out of all the district councils.

Alongside this, the Executive Board have agreed to recommend 11 new promises for the year ahead and beyond.

Cllr. Bradley Thomas, Leader of Wychavon said "We are delighted that our strong financial position means that we are able to recommend a Council Tax freeze for the second year running. We've also agreed to a package of new promises that focus on exciting areas of work from charging points for electric vehicles to taking decisive action on social mobility."

He continued "I'm also very pleased that we have made a strong financial commitment to our towns with an additional £50,000 per town to kick start masterplans to promote their futures. We're also committing to improve design quality for new buildings through the creation of an urban designer role and I'm very keen that we become more design led in our new developments."

He added "We are looking forward to another busy year working hard for those who live and work in our wonderful district."

The promises being recommended for Council approval later in the month are:

- Work with partners to increase levels of cycling and walking by supporting the delivery of new routes in Evesham and the development of cycling and walking plans for Droitwich Spa and Pershore by 31 March 2021.
- Work with partners to improve social mobility across the district and invest a further £200,000 over three years to support and improve outcomes for free school meal eligible children and their families.
- Work with partners to reduce the crimes most affecting our district through supporting communities, delivering education and awareness campaigns, coordinating community days of action and property marking events.
- Over the next two years install at least 20 additional electric vehicle charging points in car parks across the district and publish a plan setting out how we will encourage businesses, developers and communities to install more charging points.
- Invest £200,000 over the next two years to improve play areas, equipment and paths in our parks.
- Work with partners to promote and support delivery of the emerging Worcestershire Pollinator Strategy including the creation of new and improved habitats for bees, butterflies and other insects in council managed green spaces by 31 March 2021.
- Create a new urban designer role to lead work on delivering well designed, high quality and locally distinctive development.
- Build small business units for rent and create a Wychavon business hub to pilot providing support to at least three businesses at key stages of their development by 31 March 2021.
- Work with partners to help transform and revitalise our town centres so they are fit for the future and establish an initial seed-fund of £150,000 to help develop masterplans for our three towns by 31 March 2021.

- Deliver the first phase of our tourism action plan through producing a targeted marketing plan, arranging business networking events and planning a familiarisation event for journalists and group travel organisers by 31 March 2021.
- Deliver a three year programme of funding, mentoring and advice to strengthen and improve a range of community-led rural transport options.

Final decisions on Council Tax and promises will be made on 20 February 2019.