

## County Councillor's Report March 20<sup>th</sup> 2018

The meeting of the full council on 23<sup>rd</sup> February was to set the budget for the next two years. The full budget document is available online, but I will lay out a few of the details here: -

**Finance:** The Rate Support Grant will fall by another £14m in the next two years so LCC is having to look elsewhere for funding. You will already know that we are also fighting hard to increase funding for rural counties through the 'Fairer Funding for Lincolnshire' campaign, which has shown that each rural home is deprived of £239 of funding by comparison with urban areas. Equal funding would provide an extra £116m and would allow us to make extensive improvements to services. This inequality started with the formulation of the Barnett Formula in 1978 and has continued ever since.

Lincolnshire has been accepted to take part in a 'one-off' business rates pilot scheme, during which we will retain all of our business rates and this should be worth about £7.5m to LCC for services. There is a possibility that, if the scheme is successful, it will be extended for another year. We have had to achieve savings of £290m since 2011 and will have to achieve a further £34m in the next two years. Some councils are now on the brink, but this is not true of LCC, where finances are very, very tightly and carefully handled, keeping the council afloat. However, we will now have to draw on our reserves, which is not good because that money is then gone forever. Most of our drawing will be on the volatility reserve and is likely to be in the region of £35.8m. Our general reserve is £15.8 and that level of reserve needs to be retained. LCC services will cost £455 million next year.

The increase in council tax will add 74 pence per week to the bill for a Band A property and £1.12 to the bill for a Band D property. This will bring in £2.6m over the next year.

Executive councillors and senior officers continue to lobby for extra funds and LCC has recently been awarded: - £2.1m to support Adult Care, £1.4m for rural services and £1.7m from the pothole action fund, which will fill another c.30,000 holes. Despite this and other financial efforts, we will still be the third-worst funded council in the country, so our campaign needs to continue.

**Potholes:** You will be aware of the extensive exchanges on social media about the state of our roads. There is a very good sense of collaboration in the village, with people reporting holes and writing letters to MPs and to LCC. Repairs do seem to be increasing and I've advised that people should report on health and safety grounds, not just as potholes. The repairs for Brookfield Avenue were not due to be done until Quarter 4, but some work has been done already to make the road safer. I'm now using that to push for Scothern Road on the basis that Scothern Road is actually worse than Brookfield Avenue, so now Highways must do some work there as well.

**Snow:** During the snow period we saw an incredible spirit where people pulled together to help each other out. The work done by farmers and 4x4 drivers was generous and public-spirited and saved a number of people from being stranded in dangerous conditions. However, it also became obvious that many homes don't make preparation for periods of bad winter weather. People reported that they'd run out of essentials such as milk and bread, so would the Parish Council consider it a good idea to compile a list of essentials which people could use as a guide for winter preparations? This could include boxes of long-life milk, part-baked bread which lasts for several months, essential medicines, nappies for babies and things like tinned goods in case there are power outages. This is something which could be published in the village magazines in the late autumn and could make life much easier during periods of bad weather. People would probably only need to make sure they always have enough supplies for a week or so, but this sort of preparation helps to take stress out of a difficult situation.

**Councillors' IT:** The situation with emails seems to have improved a little with thousands of missing emails now downloaded onto my iPad (more than 3,800). I'm working my way through them and I'm hopeful that the improvement will continue.

**Linelands:** Nothing further to report at present.

Jackie Brockway.