

**Jenny Poole**

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**From:** Andrew Tubb <andrew@cirencester.gov.uk>  
**Sent:** 06 February 2019 15:40  
**To:** Jenny Poole  
**Subject:** RE: Cotswold Budget Consultation

Afternoon Jenny,

I just wanted to say that we are in the process of writing to the Leader of the Council in response to CDC's budget consultation which was considered by the Town Council at its most recent meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019.

We have also recently consulted with the public on our own budget proposals and medium term financial plan, providing a range of budget infographics, in addition to hosting a workshop and opportunity for the public to meet with Councillors and officers.

We had around 100 responses from local residents, business, young people and visitors to the town and on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Town Council's element of local council tax was approved at an increase of 0.77%, an increase of 96 pence for a Band D equivalent household.

Taking into account the responses to the consultation and subsequent consideration by Council, we would like to make the following comments in respect of CDC's budget proposals:

**Council Tax Support Grant**

Cotswold District Council continues to receive central government funding for town and parish councils.

*'The Government's clear expectation is that billing authorities will work with parish and town councils to pass down funding so that increases in their precepts can be avoided. As the tier of local government closest to their communities, parish and town councils have an active and important role to play in local government decision making.'* Rishi Sunak MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, January 2018

It is therefore misleading to suggest that this funding is no longer being received, it has simply been reallocated through a different funding mechanism, including business rate retention.

Whilst CDC has indicated it is no longer passing on the grant to towns and parishes, it is noted in the letter dated 21st December 2018, from Chris Megainey, Deputy Director at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, that CDC will continue to receive a 'Localised Council Tax Support Administration' subsidy of £63,271 to cover costs of administering the overall scheme.

In light of towns and parishes receiving no business rate support and CDC continuing to receive a grant for administering the Local Council Tax Support scheme, the Town Council strongly disagrees with the proposal to phase out and not pass on this grant and urges CDC to reconsider providing a grant which is intended for town and parish councils in recognition of the continuing gap in the tax base.

**Garden Waste Collection**

There was a general discussion about proposed changes to collecting garden waste and a consensus that the service should not be reduced over the winter months.

**Voluntary Sector Grants**

Whilst it is noted that there are no planned changes to voluntary sector grants, we would ask that the social, economic and environmental impact of this decision be carefully considered.

**New Homes Bonus (NHB)**

The New Homes Bonus funding of £1.845 million should not be used to protect the delivery of existing services or to ever subsidise council tax. The House of Commons Library briefing paper on New Homes Bonus explains that this funding is a fundamental part of the Government's initiative aimed at encouraging local authorities to grant planning permissions for the building of new homes in return for additional revenue.

The Local Plan identified a single strategic housing and employment site for the District in Cirencester; the NHB is intended to mitigate against this and contribute towards vital infrastructure and community well being.

Therefore NHB should directly contribute towards the social, economic and well-being of local communities and we would ask CDC to engage in a meaningful discussion with towns and parishes across the District on how this funding should be allocated and spent towards meeting real needs and priorities.

### **Longer Term**

In respect of the longer term priorities and financial pressures on principal authorities, there was some concern raised in respect of direct investment in commercial property; whilst the Town Council invests in the CCLA property fund, investment in commercial property and the overall asset portfolio of CDC should not be solely capital focused at the expense or compromise of partnership working and establishing vital community assets for the long term viability and vibrancy of towns and parishes across the District.

Whilst fully understanding the reasoning behind innovative business models for the delivery of services in to the future such as Ubico, SLM and Publica, the Town Council seeks assurance that the models provide value for money and democratically accountable scrutiny.

### **Further Comments (Community Led Housing)**

In 2016, CDC received Government funding from Homes England of circa £882,000 to support community led housing schemes and is required to submit an annual return as to how funding from this grant has been spent. Co-housing is referenced within the Local Plan and forms an integral part of the Chesterton strategic site along with the need for affordable housing provision.

As part of this important budget consultation we would like to ask for information as to how CDC has used this funding to support community led co-housing and affordable housing schemes in Cirencester and how much of this funding remains available in 2019/20.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment and look forward to continuing to work positively with CDC across a range of projects.

All the best and regards, Andrew

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