What do you think about our budget plans?

We are planning for the 2016/17 financial year (which runs from 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017) and would like to hear your views on the Cabinet’s budget proposals. Please help us continue to provide high quality local services by completing our questionnaire by **Thursday 21 January 2016**.

Wyre Forest District Council is responsible for providing a wide variety of services to local residents, from parks to planning, from emptying bins to supporting major regeneration schemes.

The council has made savings of more than £5 million since 2010 – delivered through its ongoing Efficiency Plan - at a time when there have been challenging economic circumstances including reductions in Government grant. The savings programme continues with a new proposal to save a further £100,000 in 2017-18 and £750,000 in 2018-19 as part of a balanced sustainable budget proposal that aims to protect key services to the public for the next three years.

Here in Wyre Forest we have looked for new ways to offset ongoing financial pressures and protect the quality services we know our residents value. This includes generating external income to protect frontline services.

Our approach is working. Careful financial management and successful efficiency planning means we continue to progress well with savings and can propose to freeze our element of council tax for the next two years. This helps householders across the district.

However it remains important that we prioritise our spending and concentrate on services that residents value the most. That’s why we would like to hear your views on our proposals for the new financial year 2016-17.

We are putting forward proposals to freeze council tax rates for the next two years, which will see the Council’s net revenue budget reduce from £13.2m in the current year to £12.6m in 2016-17 and £12.6m in 2017-18.

Our proposals include investing £500,000 to revitalise the Worcester Street area of Kidderminster town centre, building on the £2 million invested to improve Vicar Street, High Street and Exchange Street. The proposed budget also includes a £50k fund to provide financial incentives for parish and town councils and other community groups to take over and run local assets and grass roots services.

To help us reach final decisions, we would like your views on the following questions by **5pm on Thursday 21 January 2016**.

**This survey can be completed online at** [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/budgetconsultation](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/budgetconsultation)

You can download and print off a copy from the website or pick up a paper copy (available from week commencing 4 January 2015) from:

- Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster
- Worcestershire Hub, Kidderminster Town Hall
- Kidderminster Library
- Stourport-on-Severn Library
- Bewdley Library
- TIC, Bewdley
- Stourport Civic Centre
- Stourport Sports Centre
- Wyre Forest Glades
- Wyre Forest Community Housing
Please post copies back to: Budget Consultation, Wyre Forest District Council, Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY11 7WF or placed in the box provided at the Worcestershire Hub, Kidderminster Town Hall.

Council Tax

We collect Council Tax on behalf of a number of other public sector organisations, but we only get 13% of the whole bill to run the Council.

This year we increased Wyre Forest District Council’s element of the Council Tax bill by 1.94%. A Band D household in Wyre Forest currently pays £205.36 Council Tax, that’s £3.95 a week.

Most of the money for providing services to you comes from council tax, business rates and central Government and other grants. In Wyre Forest, around £6.5 million is collected through Council Tax.

Wyre Forest District Council collects the Council Tax on behalf of all of the authorities shown on the pie chart below. The total amount is then split to provide the services that are part of your everyday life.

A Band D household in Wyre Forest is currently paying £1,562.76 on average to their local authorities including Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service – that’s a total of £30.05 a week.
Welcome to Wyre Forest District Council’s annual budget consultation. We hope you will let us have your views on our spending proposals for the new financial year running from April 2016 through to March 2017.

Please help us continue to provide high quality local services by completing our questionnaire by Thursday 21 January 2016.

In 2016/17 and 2017/18 we plan to freeze the Wyre Forest District Council part of your Council Tax bill. This means a typical Band D household in Wyre Forest would continue to pay £3.95 a week to the District Council towards protecting services that local community’s value.

1. Do you support a Council Tax freeze for the District Council part of your bill in 2016/17?
   - Strongly Support
   - Support
   - Neither Support nor Oppose
   - Oppose
   - Strongly Oppose

2. Do you also support a Council Tax freeze for the District Council part of your bill in 2017/18?
   - Strongly Support
   - Support
   - Neither Support nor Oppose
   - Oppose
   - Strongly Oppose

3. Revitalising our town centres and driving economic growth

   We are proposing to spend £500,000 to revitalise and improve the Worcester Street area of Kidderminster town centre, building on the investment already in hand in Vicar Street, High Street and Exchange Street.

   Do you support the continuing regeneration of Kidderminster town centre?
   - Strongly Support
   - Support
   - Neither Support nor Oppose
   - Oppose
   - Strongly Oppose

4. Helping our communities provide services

   We propose to set aside a fund of £50,000 to Parish and Town Councils and extend this to community groups. They can apply for grants to run assets and provide services in their area, including services the District Council may have traditionally carried out.
Do you support the proposal to set up a single fund for Parish and Town Councils and extend this to other community organisations?

- Strongly Support
- Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

5. The Community Leadership Fund

At the moment Councillors are allocated £1,000 each from the Community Leadership Fund each financial year. This costs a total of £33,000. It gives them the opportunity to provide financial support for worthwhile initiatives and projects in their ward or for the benefit of the district.

Do you agree that the Community Leadership Fund should continue in 2016/17?

- Strongly Support
- Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

6. Generating Income and Efficiency Savings

The Council has already made £5 million in savings since 2010 through measures such as: reducing the number of managers; moving to fortnightly collections for domestic waste; reviewing employees’ terms and conditions; sharing service delivery with other local authorities and devolving responsibility for local assets and services to parish and town councils and community organisations.

The Council needs to continue to make savings to balance the books taking into account government proposals to reduce funding. The savings target increases by £750,000 in 2018/19.

It is not just about making savings through efficiencies, we are always looking at ways to generate income too. In 2015 we introduced a new charging system for some of the extra services we provide and that people value. Examples of this include provision of a premium bulky waste service and charging for some of the events we put on. We are also looking at selling more of our services to other organisations.

Do you agree that, as part of the £750,000 additional savings target, the council should continue this more commercial approach to raise extra income to protect services that everyone uses and local community’s value?

- Strongly Support
- Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Oppose
7. Do you agree that, as part of the £750,000 additional savings target, the council should continue its drive to make services as efficient as possible?

- Strongly Support
- Support
- Neither Support nor Oppose
- Oppose
- Strongly Oppose

About you (these questions are optional)

The questions in this section are optional. All the information you give is confidential and will not be used to identify you.

Q7 What is your age group?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>17 or under</th>
<th>35 – 44</th>
<th>45 – 54</th>
<th>65 – 74</th>
<th>75+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>18 – 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8 Please tick which town do you live in:

- Kidderminster
- Bewdley
- Stourport-on-Severn
- Other area (please state)

Q9 Any further comments?

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Have you seen ‘WyredIn’ the Council’s free online newsletter for residents?

If you would like to receive WyredIn, you can sign up online www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/wyredin

Thank you for taking part in the consultation