



News Release

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Protecting Frontline Services

District Council remains committed to protecting services, and could even start building houses

South Hams District Council says it is absolutely committed to protecting frontline services and for the first time in many years this could also include building houses.

A future budget deficit of £0.6 m by 2020/21 is still looming for the District Council and this is the first budget the District Council has set since its Revenue Support Grant was reduced by £4 m a year to zero.

This has meant that some services the Council provides will have to change in the next financial year and the Council has also confirmed that it will be exploring income generating ideas such as building houses.

Cllr John Tucker, Leader of South Hams District Council said: “For many years we have tried to encourage more affordable housing in the District. I believe the time has now come to start building houses.

I have asked our officers to produce a paper for Members to review the idea of this Council building houses. This would provide much needed homes that our residents desperately want”.

At the meeting of the Full Council this week, South Hams District Council also agreed that it will be increasing Council Tax by £5 for the next financial year. Councils are allowed to increase Council Tax by up to 3% or £5, whichever is higher, without triggering a Council Tax referendum.

Cllr Tucker continued: “It is not easy for people to understand just how little of the money they give in Council Tax actually comes to South Hams District Council, because our name is on the whole bill. For example, on an average band D property, this year we will keep just £160 of the total amount of the bill. That is just over £3 a week per band D household.”

When it comes to reducing services, there are some services that councils must provide, they include collecting household recycling and waste, licensing , planning , street sweeping, and collecting Council Tax and Business Rates.

Then there are services that councils fund but do not have to provide. These include running public toilets, maintaining parks and open spaces, offering a free garden waste service, and supporting additional services through grant funding.

At the Full Council meeting, South Hams District Council agreed to make the proposed changes that were discussed at a meeting of the Executive earlier in the month. These include no longer accepting cash and cheque payments at Council premises; changing how public toilets are provided such as by charging pay on entry or asking the local community to take them on; reducing funding to partners; and redesigning the frequency of other services to provide efficiencies.

These changes will save the Council approximately £689,000 per year and allow the Council to balance its budget for next year.

The Council has also reviewed the fees and charges it places on some services such as boat storage, parking, planning advice, and commercial developments to ensure that it is commercial in its approach.

This year the Council will also benefit from rental income generated from new employment units at Burke Road, Totnes and Admiral Court, Dartmouth.

Cllr Tucker concluded: “The pressure on our budget is not going away. The work we have done with our transformation programme and by working closely with West Devon Borough Council, has meant that we have so far managed to absorb the majority of the funding cuts from Central Government without cutting front line services. Sadly this is no-longer the case. But rest assured that we will continue to bring forward proposals, think innovatively and re-examine our services so that we can protect the statutory frontline services that you rely on.”

Now the 2018/19 budget has been set, the Council will be considering its future spending immediately and working hard to make sure its spending on services reflects the needs of its customers.

[Click here to view the services that South Hams District Council provides](#)

[Click here to hear from Cllr Tucker on the Budget](#)

[Click here to hear from Cllr Gilbert about public toilets](#)

[Click here to hear from Cllr Wright about fees and charges](#)

[Click here to hear from Cllr Bastone about cash and cheques](#)

Notes to Editors:

Savings being made:

Stopping accepting cash and cheques £35,000 per year

Transfer public toilets £90,000 per year from 2019/20 (£180,000 by 20/21)

Reduced grant funding £60,000 per year

Dartmouth Lower Ferry (service improvements) £75,000 per year (£100,000 by 19/20)

Income to be generated:

Beach Huts £31,000 per year from 19/20

Commercial development (Totnes /Dartmouth) £30,000 per year (£50,000 by 2019/2020)

Pay on entry for public toilets £16,000 per year (£36,000 by 19/20)

Public toilets local contribution £10,000 per year

Fees and Charges:

Batson Boat storage £6,100 per year

Winter Boat storage £8,200 per year

Planning fee income £110,000 per year

Duty Planning Fee £5000 per year

Car parking Fees (2% increase) £38,000 per year

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