

“Madam Chairman, Members of the Council,

We have frozen the council tax imposed by Lewes District Council for the last 5 years - and we fully intend to keep any rises to the minimum in the future.

It is clear that we as a council, like many or most others are living in very tough circumstances with a continuing reduction of the government settlement

Indeed by 2019 we are set to receive no Revenue Support Grant and so we will therefore depend on our income from the services which we provide, retained business rates and the Council tax that we collect.

Of course Council tax rises are subject to capping, and we expect that to remain so. So we simply cannot raise council tax to pay for inflation on our costs! But we aim to do what we were elected to do - and that is to keep a tight reign on our spending within this council.

And while work opportunities for people within the District remain relatively healthy general tight wage rises are not giving people lots of extra money so we aim to minimise our council tax rises for them.

We could raise our council tax by 2% (or up to £5) for someone in a band D property. But we decided not to go for that amount. In fact, with Special Expenses aggregated we have elected to raise council tax for a typical band D payer on average by only 0.5% on our precept which is around £1 per annum for that household - a whole 2p per week.

Notwithstanding that very small rise in Council Tax we can continue to deliver improving services without touching reserves, or increasing borrowing. Indeed we are sustaining our contributions to reserves. All the while leaving our hard-pressed Council tax payers with more of their own money in their pockets.

Major savings are coming from sharing backroom services with Eastbourne Borough Council. And this large saving will rise to 1.6 million pounds per annum over the next 4 years and will enable us to minimise council tax rises over the medium term whilst protecting services to the public.

In addition we are looking to the success of Wave Leisure to realise further annual savings working in partnership with their management team to reduce costs and to increase participation in this significant part of local life.

This brings me to an important decision which the Cabinet is proposing.

Each year we are faced with uncertainty over the government settlement for local councils like ourselves. Indeed the final details are still being firmed up as I speak. However, the Government is offering us a settlement for the next 4 years and the Cabinet is proposing that we accept this subject to the strictures in para 59.8. at Page 71 of your papers. And we have agreed to keep members informed of the final outcome of this”.