

Supplement to the agenda for

General scrutiny committee

Friday 15 January 2021

11.00 am

Online meeting

Supplement 2: Budget Setting Additional papers

Pages

6. 2021/22 BUDGET SETTING

3 - 8



General Scrutiny Committee 15th January 2021 Supplementary paper

Rural Services Delivery Grant

It has been recognised for some time that the cost drivers behind the following council services are affected by the super sparse nature of Herefordshire, similar impacts can be linked to all council services.

- Parking – there is a greater dependency on car use to travel the county
- Passenger transport – higher costs to provide these services
- Regulatory Services – a wider network of compliance visits
- Waste Collection - more journeys are required to complete services
- Economic Development – barriers to economic development like broadband
- Homelessness – harder to identify and support
- Libraries – greater community dependency for services
- Children's Social Care – harder to provide targeted services
- Highways Maintenance – a larger network to maintain
- Adult Social Care – limitations on availability of support services coupled with a significantly larger older population

Central Government provides a Rural Services Delivery Grant (RSDG) to recognise this additional cost burden the council faces. The 2021/22 provisional settlement announced a total increase of £4m, from £81m in 2020/21 to £85m in 2021/22, increasing Herefordshire's funding by £252k to £5,353k.

This is welcomed however it is also recognised that those most in need of public services reside in rural areas who are earning lower than average incomes whilst paying more in council tax than urban councils. The composition of funding for rural and urban councils are very different. Rural councils still receive less funding per head from the central government and are more reliant on income from council tax. Nationally it is estimated that the total grant value is required to be increased to £130m to fund the additional financial burden that sparsity places on rural councils.

It is vitally important that the pressures specifically facing rural authorities are recognised both in the final 2021/22 Settlement and in the fair funding review.

Clarification – reference to Rural Sparsity Delivery Grant on page 3 of the budget setting report should state "Rural Services Delivery Grant".

General Scrutiny Committee 15th January 2021 Supplementary paper

Growth bid - Armed Forces Covenant Support Officer

It is the Council's responsibility to support the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in Herefordshire and more specifically to support the Covenant Partnership which is made up of representatives from a wide range of service providers, charities and stakeholders.

Historically there has been officer support available, in 2017 the Forces In Mind Trust's self-assessment tool identified that there were a few areas of weakness based mainly on the integration of the covenant into policy and service delivery and communication and publicity both internally and across the county. A successful cluster bid with Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire, led by Herefordshire Council, was submitted to the Armed Forces covenant fund which enabled the employment of a support officer from November 2018 covering 2 days each week in Herefordshire and another 2 days each week covering Worcestershire. The job purpose is to support the work of the partnership in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire to ensure that they are meeting the aims of the covenant in those areas. The role specifically picks up crucial pieces of work being:-

- Development and delivery of Communication Plans;
- Armed Forces Needs Assessment development;
- Support the development of and delivery of the respective Action Plans;
- Support the set up and co-ordinate the delivery of the pilot Veteran Hubs.

Two years on, we've reviewed the self-assessment tool and can demonstrate the difference that this post has made to the partnership, addressing those identified areas of weakness and in addition, the development of a training package for all frontline staff, an increase of covenant signatories in Herefordshire's local business community from approximately 30 to 70, support to ensure Herefordshire Council achieved the Gold Award for the Employer Recognition Scheme, increased publicity through press and social media coverage, co-ordination of events and activities, cross border working and shared resources / links with Worcestershire.

This post attracted grant funding which comes to an end in March 2021. Worcestershire County Council has committed to funding the post at £10k with an annual review scheduled 31st December 2021, this growth bid is asking for Herefordshire Council to **match this funding with £10k revenue base budget**.

Retention of this post will enable:-

1. The council to meet its obligations for the Armed Forces Community identified as being up to 25% of our population in Herefordshire. Particularly as outlined within the Equality Policy, through roll out of the training package that has been developed for frontline staff and ensuring identification of those veterans, serving personnel, their families and carers;
2. In turn, this will enable the Council to also meet its obligations under the terms of the new Covenant Legislation which is due this year whereby we have to pay due regard to needs in particularly health, education and housing;
3. Maintain all communication channels internally and externally including webpages, social media, which in turn supports the visibility of how the covenant is being delivered in Herefordshire;
4. Review and refresh the Armed Forces Needs document and maintain the Partnership Action Plan based on the identified needs/issues;
5. Continuing the links with profiling Herefordshire Council's successful delivery of the covenant with the Office of Veteran Affairs and managing to gain regional and national presence of what 'good' looks like in the way that we are delivering;
6. Build on the benefits of cross-border working where we are jointly gaining knowledge and information, sharing best practice, etc.

Briefing Note 12th January 2021

2020/21 Covid 19 related grants

During 2020/21 there has been an unprecedented amount of grant income from central government being received by the council in response to the national pandemic. The majority of this income has been passported to various organisations outside of the council to manage the financial impact these external organisations and individuals have been facing. The rest has been held internally to fund new council costs and compensate for losses of expected income as a direct consequence of the virus.

Below is a list of central government grant receipts. This list is taken at a point in time, more grants are expected, for example to support businesses in the January lockdown period, so this list is not a final outturn position.

Grant	£000	Brief explanation
Small Business Grants - first lockdown	64,310	Paid to businesses
Discretionary Business Grant - first lockdown	3,216	Paid to businesses
Council Tax Reduction Hardship Grant	1,076	Paid to CTR claimants
Business Rates Additional Relief Grant	25,982	Paid to businesses
PPE Grant	1,359	To fund PPE costs
Test & Trace Support Payment Scheme	154	Paid to individuals
Test & Trace Service Support	845	Fund council costs
Compliance & Enforcement Grant	92	Fund council costs
Control Outbreak Management Fund (November Lockdown)	1,542	Fund council costs
Infection Control Fund 1 (Tranche 1)	1,359	Paid to Care providers
Infection Control Fund 1 (Tranche 2)	1,359	Paid to Care providers
Infection Control Fund 2 (Tranche 1)	1,168	Paid to Care providers
Infection Control Fund 2 (Tranche 2)	1,168	Paid to Care providers
Emergency Assistance Grant for Food & Essential Supplies	199	Paid to individuals
Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme	538	Paid to individuals
Covid-19 Emergency Funding for Local Government 1	5,675	Fund council costs
Covid-19 Emergency Funding for Local Government 2	5,345	Fund council costs
Covid-19 Emergency Funding for Local Government 3	1,526	Fund council costs
Covid-19 Emergency Funding for Local Government 4	1,513	Fund council costs
Compensation scheme for lost sales, fees and charges	1,883	Fund council losses
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) November	4,195	Paid to businesses
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) December	943	Paid to businesses
Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) December	39	Paid to businesses
Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs	147	Paid to businesses
Additional Restrictions Grant November	3,856	Paid to businesses
Emergency Active Travel Fund Tranche 1	20	Fund council costs
School & College Transport Capacity Funding	288	Fund council costs
TOTAL TO DATE	129,797	

