

# District council is fit for the challenge

Despite having its finances cut by around 27% over the next two years, Malvern Hills District Council has continued to balance its finances with no reduction in the level of quality of front line services. The council's finance chiefs also plan to freeze council tax this coming April so that there will be no extra financial burden for residents in 2012.

By careful money management and by listening to the needs of its residents, the council is on course to continue to provide the services that its customers want. The council, which is currently rated 'Excellent' by the Audit Commission, recently cut two senior management posts as part of its efficiency drive. In addition, the total number of staff employed directly has fallen by two-fifths in the past four years and money has also been saved by sharing more services with neighbouring councils.

Councillor Phil Grove, Leader of the council, is confident of the longer term financial plan. "Implementation of these recent efficiency measures is part of our long-term plan to get ever better value for money for our council tax payers. Next year, we shall be undertaking a full review of all aspects of the council's operations to determine how best we can continue to meet the needs of our residents in the years to come."

## Help for Tenbury businesses

Do you run a business in Tenbury and are you worried about the impact the forthcoming bridge repairs might have on your trade? In addition to leading talks about opportunities for companies to apply for business rates reductions, Malvern Hills District Council is also looking at other ways to support you. Discussions are currently taking place with the county council – who are responsible for the bridge repairs - to explore the possibility of additional funding to help support trade throughout the repair works.



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## 5 year plan for car parking

Malvern Hills District Council has a much clearer understanding of car parking needs following a major consultation exercise. The consultation has been vital in helping to understand the demand for car parking and how this is linked to traffic congestion. The study attracted considerable interest from drivers and a range of different organisations with almost 1,300 responses being received.

A number of key issues are beginning to emerge. There was overwhelming agreement of the need for more effective enforcement of on-street parking restrictions to both reduce traffic congestion and increase turnover of on-street parking bays. Also, the need to increase the availability of spaces for one hour or less emerged as very important, especially for local people.

Despite the popular perception of it being difficult to park, over 87% of the drivers surveyed reported being able to park in their first choice of location. Whilst parking difficulties occurred in some areas of highest demand in Great Malvern, there is no evidence to support a lack of parking capacity in the district as a whole.

Other issues include access for blue badge holders and residents' permits, which are valued both by users and local businesses supporting local trade.

All of the findings are being used to develop a car parking strategy for both 'on' and 'off' street parking for the next five years. The resulting strategy will be recommended to councillors at the next meetings of the council's Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.



## Have your say on local services

Do you have something to say about local public services? Whether you are a satisfied customer or an unhappy resident, we need to know!

The latest Worcestershire Viewpoint Survey (WVS) runs until the 18th November and we need your views, especially if you are under 35. The survey includes all the important issues and covers everything from planning services to health care. Your answers are vital as they can help shape future decision-making about which services are provided and how they are run.

Malvern Hills District Council is keen to get more residents to air their views. If you would like to take part in the survey, you need to register on the WVS panel by visiting the website at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/viewpoint](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/viewpoint). If you are not on the internet then pop into one of our customer contact centres in Malvern, Upton and Tenbury or telephone the Hub on 01684 862151.

## Joint plan of action to save youth centre

Councillor Rebecca Massey (Malvern Chase ward) has been in discussions with the Malvern Community Collective (MCC) who are looking to take over the running of the Youth Centre in Albert Road, Malvern. After lobbying the county council over the summer about proposed plans to close the centre, Rebecca and her colleagues at Malvern Hills District Council are supporting the MCC with their business plan, which was presented to the county council in September as part of the recent public consultation on the issue of youth services.



Councillor Massey said "We are committed to ensuring that Malvern retains a suitably sized and well-equipped youth centre and as a district council we are therefore considering offering MCC a large amount of funding – up to £30,000 over a three year period – to help them run the proposed centre.

## Study highlights needs of rural communities

A recent study by the Malvern Hills Partnership has highlighted the key improvements needed by rural communities. Top of the list were better access to transport, having more services available locally, reducing isolation and having access to the right help and advice.

A project is now underway in Martley and Longdon wards to help tackle these priorities. Led by Community First, and supported by the district council, the project aims to make maximum use of local resources and initiatives.

## We need our libraries!

As part of their campaign to persuade the county council to change its mind about Upton Library, district councillors will be inviting top library bosses to a meeting in Upton to hear the views of local people. Malvern Hills District Council is objecting to county plans to downgrade Upton library to a library run either in partnership or wholly by volunteers.

## Local economy surviving recession

The Economic Development team at Malvern Hills District Council is optimistic about the future for local businesses despite the fact that the country is facing one of the worst economic recessions ever recorded. Malvern Hills is weathering the storm better than many others with unemployment still quite low and actual business failures a relative rarity.

The council continues to look at new ways in which it can support the success of existing businesses whilst encouraging new businesses and investment. Two new grant schemes have recently been set up – for more information visit: [www.malvernhills.gov.uk/business](http://www.malvernhills.gov.uk/business).

## Retirement homes boost

Proposed plans for a landmark £20 million retirement village in the district have been welcomed by Malvern Hills District Council. The extra care village will be built in Malvern Link by Festival Housing and will include high quality apartments and a wide range of amenities and leisure facilities.

Councillor David Hughes (Alfrick Ward) said: "With a population whose life expectancy is increasing, this is very good news. Not only will this retirement village mean that local people have the opportunity to live in the next generation of high quality retirement accommodation but in addition the building of this village will boost the local economy by bringing extra jobs to the district."

Contact us on: 01684 862151



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