



**Tom McDonald**  
**Conservative District Councillor**  
**- Fladbury Ward**  
**(Bricklehampton, Charlton,**  
**Crothorne, Fladbury and Wick)**

**Spring 2013**



### **Continuous Economic Pecking!**

My wife Barbara was recently bequeathed a fine example of the Victorian taxidermist's art – a stuffed barn owl, totally enclosed in a domed glass case. 'Tweeters', as we

affectionately call him, was duly placed on a bookcase looking out of our front landing window. One morning we were awoken by two black crows pecking furiously at the window trying to get at him. This happened again the following morning and in order to restore peace and quiet we had to move the owl slightly out of sight of the window. In these challenging times of what seems to be continuous economic pecking Wychavon District Council has also had to move ..... on a savings journey that has included £1.911m over the last two years. That journey will not stop as the council continues to protect services wherever possible, minimising impact on communities and staff.

### **Forecasted and achieved savings over the last two years**

Efficiencies and joint working £537,000 - £532,000

Increased income from our assets

£130,000 - £100,000

Management and Staff savings £600,000 - £813,000

Increased income from services £510,000 - £315,000

Service reductions £134,000 - £134,000

Forecasted and achieved savings £1.9m - £1.911m

### **Savings are benefiting residents and services**

District Council Tax has again remained frozen.

The 50p half an hour car parking charge is to be further complimented with a reduction in all the council's long term car parks from £6 to £4 per day with effect from 1 April this year.

Flooding in all its forms remains with us and whilst the recent floods were less severe than in July 2007 they are a reminder that Wychavon must continue to work with residents to improve resilience. We are providing an extra £150,000 over a three year period to match-fund other grants. This funding can also be supportive to individual properties as well as large engineering schemes so please do check them out!

### **Support for a Stronger Economy**

In terms of support for a stronger economy (my portfolio) Wychavon has ploughed in an additional £750,000 of financial support. The aim is to attract more businesses and jobs into Wychavon and secure the retention of existing ones. Only 46% of our startup businesses survive past the first 5 years and to better assist them we are going to grow our business

support services. We also seek to match businesses to locations to ensure we have sites and premises in the right place, provide free planning advice and fast-track planning for businesses.

### **Skills and Qualifications**

To support business growth we need a trained and competent workforce. To this end we are supporting vocational and academic skills for all, providing £500 scholarships to help up to 100 first year students in their study at the University of Worcester in 2013/14/15 and are working with local colleges on a number of vocational and academic training initiatives.

### **Engineering and Apprenticeships**

I am pleased to report we are targeting Wychavon engineering businesses with a focus on supporting new engineering training facilities and apprenticeships. I recently listened to a head girl and head boy at a local college requesting more information on apprenticeships, an area of increasing interest for students as university entrance may not be possible due to the increasing fees – options are needed.

To sustain a more successful economy and grow out of recession we have actually got to design and manufacture more products nationally and locally. Statistics have shown that 20% of the Wychavon workforce is engaged in manufacturing – nearly double the national average!

Get that employment sector right and not only will Wychavon be a good place to live, but also a place that will provide a future for our sons, daughters and grandchildren.

### **Broadband - have you signed up?**

We are supporting the Worcestershire County Council campaign to help bring Broadband to the area as we see it as vital to residents and businesses within Wychavon. If interested you need to register by completing the County Council questionnaire. To be considered for faster broadband over 50% of households/businesses need to show sufficient interest. Returns have been low in this ward with the percentage of households that responded by January 2013 (ranging between 6 – 18%). The county council will need to receive more registrations from everyone and especially from the business community if we are to benefit from an early lead – your support would be welcomed. More information can be obtained from Worcestershire County Council Broadband team, telephone 01905 766432 or by email [broadband@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:broadband@worcestershire.gov.uk).

### **Money for the parishes –**

#### **The new Homes bonus (NHB)**

A lot of comment has appeared in the press and elsewhere re the Wychavon NHB grant so a local ward update may be of interest: So far we have approved 28 New Homes Bonus proposals from 22 parish councils, amounting to a total of £205,147, of which £173,279 has already been allocated.

Payments range from £250 for improvements to Abbots Morton village hall, to the largest of £110,132 for a package of community projects in Badsey, which include a play area, refurbishing changing rooms and a disabled unisex toilet for public use. So far Fladbury parish has received £1,250 (out of its current NHB reserves) for a defibrillator project but all our other parishes have some level of NHB monies allocated for both now or in the future.

The New Homes Bonus is benefitting local communities by providing new or improved facilities, strengthening existing groups, and helping tackle local priorities, such as speeding traffic. It is also raising the profile of parish councils and strengthening their role in their local communities. To obtain a grant there has to be evidence of need and community benefit. For proposals over £1000 there has to be community consultation and support”.

### **Social Housing and the homeless**

Over the past months I have been increasingly involved with a number of social issues and have been pleased to support residents. There have been some positive outcomes and whilst I cannot be case specific, some details do still need resolution.

### **Opportunity Vale of Evesham**

A relatively new project is underway at Wychavon known as Opportunity Vale of Evesham and who better to provide an overview of what it's all about and the implications and advantages to my ward than the officer responsible David Manning:

*“Thanks Tom for the opportunity to highlight the work I and colleagues have been doing over the past few months. Opportunity Vale of Evesham is a very relevant project aiming to help hard pressed communities improve their health and skills and tackle fuel poverty. Already we have worked with nearly 1400 households in and around Evesham helping families back to work and to develop new skills, all of which ties in with your Stronger Economy portfolio mentioned earlier. It's also about getting people more physically active and helping people to keep their homes warm, again this is an integral part of our Strong Communities programme. A project of this type cannot be done in isolation; it is about partnership working and our partners are the County Council, Rooftop Housing, Act on Energy, Age UK, South Worcestershire College and NHS Worcestershire amongst many others.*

*We are one of six such projects based around the county but the only one with a focus on rural areas. Rural deprivation is present in pockets right across the district and it can affect people of all ages in a variety of ways. Whether it is people struggling to find jobs, keep their homes warm due to increasing fuel costs or older people feeling socially isolated and*

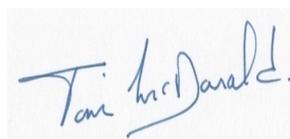
*excluded, “hidden” deprivation is present in all our communities. It can be very easy to look at our rural areas and not notice those households that might need support. There are things, however, that we can do to help, some measures can be really quite simple but effective, many of which are about supporting care in the community. As an example a group of residents in one village have set up an over 50s lunch club through the local pub and this has gone from strength to strength ensuring that older and, in many cases, isolated people can develop a good social and support network. Alternatively a befriending or good neighbour scheme can help to ensure people do not get forgotten. If your residents have any queries or needs please have them contact me by phone on 01386 565000 or by email*

*[david.manning@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:david.manning@wychavon.gov.uk) Again my thanks for the opportunity to be included in your Round Up and we will listen and try to help within your ward”.*

### **Planning Compliance**

Planning can often be a very controversial subject and it is an area where many of us come into direct contact with the council for the very first time. When an application is given planning approval it is often subject to a number of underpinning planning conditions. The council grants in excess of 1000 planning application approvals each year and it would be impossible for every condition to be checked for compliance. Monitoring can often depend on feedback from a parish council or a resident. For some time I have been advocating that the council has a dedicated compliance officer to undertake, on a risk based approach, the monitoring of conditions and I hope that further news in relation to this post will come forward soon. Notwithstanding this, the planning enforcement team at the council will look into any concerns you may have in relation to compliance or other planning enforcement matters.

As always in support of Fladbury Ward residents.



Tom McDonald  
Conservative District Councillor  
(Executive Board Member –  
Economic Development, Skills and Transport)

 **WYCHAVON**  
**DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
*good services, good value*

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My 'mini round-ups' and other information can also be accessed via my website at [www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk)

