

## Dorstone Parish Council Update – January 2011

### Budget/Precept 2011-12

The Council held an additional meeting on December to consider the Parish Budget and to set a precept for the next Financial Year 2011-12. Herefordshire Council is being required to make over £40 million savings over the next 4 years. These savings may have a “knock on” effect on the services provided to Parishes such as Dorstone. The Clerk of the Council and I will be attending a meeting with the Leader of Herefordshire Council on January 26 to hear their plans for cutting back expenditure and services.

The Parish Council has therefore only made preliminary decisions on next Years Budget and precept which could be amended in the light of decisions made by Herefordshire Council. The main points with regard to the preliminary budget and precept are as follows:-

- To maintain the current precept at the existing level, which given inflation, means a real reduction, possible because the Council has some reserves to draw upon to fund some additional expenditures.
- The Council has decided to adopt a donations policy, details of which were set out in the October Update and on the website. A provisional maximum expenditure of up to £500 has been set aside for this purpose.
- The Clerk’s remuneration has been reviewed. It has not been changed since 2006 and has been increased by a modest amount, which links it to the National Scale for Parish Clerks. It has also been decided to provide the Clerk with a lap top computer. An annual appraisal and objective setting process will also be introduced.
- Other items, such as insurance, admin expenses remain largely unchanged, although a contingency sum has been set aside for election expenses and new Councillor training – see election item below. Additional Salt Bins are also being purchased.
- It is hoped that Herefordshire Council will maintain the Lengthsmen and Footpaths schemes which are funded by them.

### Parish Plan

A Joint Meeting of the Parish Council and Parish Plan Steering Group was held on January 6<sup>th</sup> to review progress on the Action Items set out in the Plan. Full minutes of this meeting will be placed on the Web Site. The main points discussed were as follows:-

- As reported in the June Update, Herefordshire Council Officials have accepted the case for the introduction of speed limits in

the Village area. However we are on a long waiting list of sites in the County awaiting introduction of limits and no progress has been made since the survey was carried out. The Parish Council will be contacting the Ward Councillor to progress this important issue for the Parish.

- Water Testing of the Pont-y-Weston stream has been carried out and the results will now be analysed in order to assess their implications.
- The Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council of Local Councils attended the Joint Meeting and talked about the Government's new Localism Bill which aims at giving new powers to Parish Councils. She stressed the importance of obtaining "Quality Council" status, particularly in securing future discretionary additional funding from central and local government. Whilst having many of the features required to be a Quality Council, for example having an agreed Parish Plan, Dorstone Council does not formally have that status. However this will probably be an item for consideration when the new Parish Council is elected in May.
- Under the heading of Communications, improvement in the speed of broadband was identified as an Action Item. Herefordshire has been chosen as a Pilot Area to introduce faster broad band speeds and Karen Usher from the Village is part of the team (see "[www.fastbroadband4 herefordshire.org.uk](http://www.fastbroadband4herefordshire.org.uk)") charged with organising this across the County. As part of this project, it is planned to carry out a house to house questionnaire in Dorstone to ask for Parishioners views on the use of broadband and their future needs with regard to speeds etc. This will be carried out within the next month.

### **Parish Council Elections – May 6<sup>th</sup> 2011-01-10**

Parishioners are reminded that Parish Council Elections will be held on Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> 2011. Some of the present Council have indicated that they will not be standing in this Election. Anyone interested in standing and learning about the work undertaken by Parish Councillors can contact any member of the current Council or the Parish Clerk Chris Hendy.

Pat Rye  
Chairman