

Dear Residents

Borough Council Tax –The Borough Council has announced a freeze on its tax at £141.41 for a Band D property. The Council is very aware of its need to look for alternative ways of investing given that the funding from central government will cease completely for the year 2019/2020. Hence the Council set up its investment portfolio a few years ago, Project Enterprise, and has been investing very successfully in property. This is now really bearing fruit. This year the Council received £1.9 million from its investments, that is £1.7m more than if it had kept the money in the bank and an additional £442k compared with last year. This increased income has successfully offset some of the reduction in central government funding this year and has enabled the Council to avoid leaning on taxpayers. Due to its sound financial management, our council tax remains one of the lowest in the country - and is £43 lower than the average in the rest of England –all whilst sustaining frontline services.

County Council Tax - Meanwhile at County level, the County Council agreed an increase of 2.99 per cent for its element of the tax, for the financial year beginning 1 April 2019. This will result in the second-lowest precept in the country. It equates to an annual charge of £1,236.87 for a Band D property – an increase of just under £36 per year or 70 pence a week. It will generate an additional £18 million for County Council services.

Taxes for the Police and Fire services make up your total tax bill.

Better broadband service – Last month, I provided information about possible options to alleviate slow broadband speeds in both the Chilworth Old Village and Heatherlands Road areas. The use of a 4G router with mobile signal and SIM card may help to resolve the first of these issues. Thus far, insufficient numbers have shown interest to attract suppliers to the second group so please ensure you let me know if interested. The more who register (without obligation) the more likely a faster solution will be found. Meanwhile, agents of BT/Openreach were digging in Birch Road to connect to the Science Park. This has resulted in faster broadband connectivity being provided on a telegraph pole in that road. One resident there has availed himself of this faster rate (FTTP) by employing Cerberus Networks Ltd to make the connections from home to pole. (tel 0345 257 1333 or www.cerberusnetworks.co.uk). Other suppliers are available. Check availability via the BT DSL checker but note that this may show FTTP availability in the chart but may deny this below it. For the worst situations, help may be found through Hampshire County Council Better Broadband scheme, through which residents with broadband connections of less than 2Mbps can apply for a subsidy of up to £350 towards the set-up of a satellite or fixed wireless broadband solution.

Fly tipping – The Borough Council is successfully prosecuting those responsible for this blight on the Test Valley area on a regular basis. I am grateful to residents who have notified me of recent incidents which are being actively pursued. In most cases, it is the responsibility of the landowner to remove the problem, which usually takes rather longer than if the Borough Council team were to deal with the matter.

Tennis Club – Open Day, Sat 6th April 10am till 12:30pm- The club in the Old Village will be offering coaching for juniors and seniors including newbies who sign up. Tea, cake and new keys available. Rates £65 per family, £50 couple, £40 single, students (age 16-21yrs) and OAP's- £20. Info from chilworth.tennis@gmail.com .

Chilworth Old Village Fete Early reminder – Sat 8th June – ever-popular event – **additional helpers needed** please. Contact Wendy (wendydoherty1963@hotmail.co.uk) or other Old Village residents for more information

March dates for your diary:

Tue 5th March – Gardening Club –at Chilworth Manor at 7:30pm Ray Broughton – ex-Sparsholt Principal Lecturer speaking on Bugs & Diseases- all welcome - £3 for non-members.

Fri 29th March - Moviola at Chilworth Hall at 7:30pm - First Man - *A look at the life of astronaut Neil Armstrong and the legendary space mission that led him to be the first man to walk on the Moon on 20th July 1969.* Starring Ryan Gosling and Claire Foy

Sun 31st March – Mother's Day and Summer time begins.

Sun 31st March – French Market in Romsey – 9:30am till 3:30pm

Best wishes, *Alison*

Please contact me at alisonf@btinternet.com to be on the mailing list for more frequent updates about burglaries, utility failures, local news etc, Tel: 023-8076-9987