



Independent Health Concern



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Independent Health Concern Announce Alternative Budget Proposals

Independent Health Concern have today announced their alternative Budget proposals to those put forward in the Tory Administration Council Budget, due for consideration at the end of February. The overall level of Council Tax increase to that proposed by the Tories remains the same in the Health Concern proposals at 2.5% per annum for the next 3 years.

Health Concern had already announced their intention to shelve current plans to build new offices and depot in the Crossley Park/Clensmore area. This has had the effect of freeing up £2.735m of Capital funds allocated to the office project and enabling it to be spent on other projects, including a new cemetery at a cost of £2.325m. This transfer of funds removes the need to involve the prudential borrowing suggested by the Tories to fund the cemetery and is more cost effective and cheaper for the Council Tax payer, potentially saving hundreds of thousands of pounds in interest charges over the coming years.

Other Tory proposals to fund changing rooms at Habberley Playing Fields and Brownshead Park and refurbish the swimming pool at Stourport Sports Centre have been transferred from revenue expenditure to a more correct Capital cost so freeing up £320k of revenue to be spent on community issues.

Health Concern will also reintroduce the plans they brought forward in 2002, with unanimous cross party support, to transform the Town Hall into a Community Arts Centre and regional entertainment attraction. These plans were shelved by the Tories but the original proposals will be updated from funds already allocated for this purpose.

To help regenerate the three town centres, £150k will be earmarked, over the next 3 years, to provide rate relief for independent retailers wanting to set up business in vacant shop premises.

£50k will be put aside to provide support to a range of community organisations, such as the Talking Newspaper, for instance, which may need unexpected help for funding throughout the year. Another £30k will be made available through continuing funding for Councillors to use in their Wards. This scheme was successfully started this year but the Tory administration has dropped it from next years Budget to divert all available finance to the Single Site.

Health Concern will also propose funding the cost of a Project Co-ordinator for the Horsefair, Broadwaters & Greenhill Partnership to help secure a Government Reward Grant. This was unanimously recommended by Council but has been ignored by the Tory Administration. Also a Capital Grant of £40k will be awarded to Stourport Town Council for the regeneration of Memorial Park.

Health Concern Leader, Howard Martin says “This alternative Budget is robust, sustainable and represents value for money. Our proposals demonstrate how money can be better spent if current office proposals are shelved. The Tory obsession to build new offices has clouded their judgement and they have lost sight of why they were elected which was to represent the community. We will restore that focus if we are returned as the Administration in May and these community based, bottom up proposals, are just the beginning of what we will provide for Wyre Forest in the coming years. The Tories promised the Single Site would not cost the residents of Wyre Forest a penny and they would not borrow to fund it. These Health Concern proposals prove differently, the cost so far will be £2.735m wasted by the Tories who will have to borrow to fund the cemetery. Our Budget reclaims that money and gives it back to the community through better services, improved community support and positive plans to regenerate the whole area.”

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