



# *Independent Community & Health Concern*



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## ***Call for House Building Programme to Aid Local Economy.***

Independent Community & Health Concern leader, Howard Martin has called for WFDC to “show some positive action to help the community” in the wake of the current economic climate and their cost cutting budget announced last week.

Speaking in advance of the ICHC alternative budget, due to be announced in full next week, Councillor Martin said ***“WFDC has considerable sums of money, nearly £25 million, on deposit doing nothing and generating about 1% interest which is about a fifth of what it was generating last year – this money should be put to work to help the community and not left in the bank where it is currently doing very little good.”***

The ICHC proposal suggests the Council should utilise up to £20 million of this money over the next two years to work in partnership with local builders and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to fund and develop a programme of building up to 200 “affordable” houses for rent or purchase. There is currently a serious under provision of new, affordable, homes in Wyre Forest and this programme would begin to address it.

***“The idea is that all the work should be placed with local builders which will help local jobs and the economy. It will provide work for plumbers, electricians, decorators and all those associated with house building. Also materials and fittings such as bathrooms, kitchens, windows etc should be locally sourced wherever possible and the money released into the local economy will have a knock on effect with the retail trade.”*** said Cllr Martin.

The Council money invested will not be put at risk since on completion the properties will either be sold to RSL's or onto individuals looking to buy homes. ***“If, for instance, in simple terms, it costs £100,000 to build a house and it is sold for £150,000 the money coming back to the Council for its £20m investment is £30m, so everyone benefits. Over the next three years up to £10 million is put into Council coffers to benefit the community. However, if it stays in the bank and interest rates stay low, the Council income will be at about £1m.”*** added Cllr Martin.

Clearly work needs to be done to put in place a workable and sustainable action plan but, in principle, there is no reason why the plan is not both workable and achievable.

***“I hope that the Tory administration will see this as a genuine opportunity to take a radically different approach and do something positive in difficult times to help local business and local people. I hope they give it the consideration it deserves. We will do all we can to help make it happen.”*** concluded Cllr Martin.

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