

## **Press release – Monmouthshire County Council announces launch of budget proposals for 2021/22**

*For immediate release*

Monmouthshire County Council launched its budget proposals for 2021-2022 on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January. The proposals have been set after an unprecedented year that has brought with it unavoidable pressures, most notably including the pandemic and repeated flooding incidents. Whilst the council presses the Welsh Government to continue its full funding of COVID related costs and income losses through this year and next, the council is facing £10.1m of unavoidable service pressures that continue to bear heavily on the Council's finances. These service pressures continue to result from increased demands in supporting looked after children, vulnerable adults and children with additional learning needs. In accommodating these pressures this demonstrates the continued investment the Council is making in frontline services and in line with its priorities.

Councillor Peter Fox OBE, Leader of Monmouthshire County Council said: "The past year has been very challenging, and the next 12 months will continue to be so for a number of reasons. After several years of making significant savings, the means of achieving further savings becomes increasingly more challenging. This situation has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the serious flooding incidents, which have required emergency response and the need to ensure vital services are delivered effectively in difficult circumstances. This year's budget proposals need to accommodate £10.1m of pressures on services. Having to address this significant level of pressure, we have been careful and thoughtful in putting together a funding package that seeks to minimise and in most cases prevent any impact on key services areas.

"The budget proposals are now available to view on our website and I would encourage everyone to send in their thoughts and feedback via the online form, which can be found alongside the proposals on the website. In addition, we are hosting a webinar on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January, which will be an opportunity to ask questions and give feedback in a live online setting. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic our traditional face-to-face engagement sessions are not possible this year, so we are doing everything we can to reach out in other COVID-safe ways," said Councillor Fox.

Councillor Phil Murphy, Cabinet Member for Resources said: "We are pleased that Welsh Government has acknowledged the difficulties of the past year and for the first time in many years we have received an above average increase in our settlement (3.9%, against an average increase of 3.8% across Wales). However, Monmouthshire still receives the least funding per head of population (£1,067) compared to the rest of Wales (average £1,471), which has led us into having to propose a 4.95% council increase for next year.

"We are making use of our limited reserves and capital receipts to assist the budget, and proposing a package of savings coming forwards, which covers decisions made already over the course of the past year. These include the increase in charge for green garden waste collections, the introduction of reusable recycling bags and reduction of landfill, all of which contributes to a saving of £685,000. In addition, the previously announced closure of Mounton House school will result in a saving of £1.258m. The closure of this building has not resulted in a withdrawal of service and alternative provision has been provided and

supported by significant investment in an in-county model that sees children supported in mainstream schools whenever possible.

“However, even with these savings we still have significant pressures to address and are proposing an increase in council tax of 4.95% and introducing some new charges and to increase fees and charges in a number of areas in line with inflation, the details of which will be available on our website. The council tax reduction scheme, which offers mitigation for those on low incomes and those in receipt of benefits, will still be in place. Single person households are also eligible for a 25% reduction on council tax. Charges for domiciliary and residential care are also means tested and capped to mitigate the impact of those on the lowest incomes.

“The Council continues to lead by example in committing to paying its lowest paid staff in line with the Real Living Wage set by the Living Wage Foundation.” said Councillor Murphy.

“Previous years’ budgets have seen frontline services facing notable reductions, however this is not the case this year. We will continue to work hard to protect frontline service areas and tackle key issues that impact on our communities” said Councillor Murphy.

Residents are invited to register for a special budget livestream that will take place at **6pm on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January**. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the face-to-face budget engagement that would normally take place would not be appropriate at this time, so the process is moving online. Register to take part via the council’s website and an email will be sent with a link to join the event . For those unable to join the livestream, the session will be uploaded to the website to watch after the event.

As part of the consultation process, which is open until 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021, residents are also being asked to share their thoughts a feedback survey on the budget proposals, which can be found alongside all the proposals at [monmouthshire.gov.uk/budget-2021-2022](https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/budget-2021-2022).

ENDS

Editor’s note:

Direct link to register for the livestream event on

27/1/21 <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=eQBNLCzFs0uzytjq8ba31VHPtFUcPjFJsdm8gcXsEI9UN1dHTFhQMkpCWklyN0ZNRzMxQ0NNSzc2NC4u>

Direct link to feedback on the draft budget proposals

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=eQBNLCzFs0uzytjq8ba31VHPtFUcPjFJsdm8gcXsEI9UMjBDTIRGMzdNV1BQWldVN1M4N1UzNDNWMi4u>

Issued by Jan Whitham, Communications & Engagement Officer

**This press release** will feature on our website/ **Bydd y datganiad i'r wasg hwn** ar ein gwefan:

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/>

<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/cy/>

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