

Council tax to rise as draft budget is approved

13.5-per-cent increase will enable continued spending on vital local services

THATCHAM Town Council has approved its draft budget for the next fiscal year, as well as a tax increase.

The council proposed to increase the Band D tax base by 13.52 per cent to £125.98 per annum (or 29p a week), from £110.98 per annum, providing a proposed precept of £1,179,921.

There is an expected overspend of £6,801 for the next financial year end, which will be funded from the council's general fund working balance.

Chairman of the council's finance and general purposes committee Mike Cole (Lib Dem, Thatcham North East) said: "Despite considerable headwinds we faced this current year, and which we will be facing in the new financial year, I am very pleased to introduce a budget that keeps our finances strong, as well as introducing a range of measures that will improve the services our residents have come to expect.

"We also don't shy away from the fact that this comes at a cost which can only be met partially from reserves.

"But not everything can be met



Former Thatcham mayor Mike Cole chairs the town council's finance and general purposes committee

from reserves.

"We have a total and indeed increasing commitment to keep

our play areas safe, absolutely vital for our younger residents.

"We will be replacing equipment, as we have done this year, as it ages and becomes non-viable.

"We do face a number of unavoidable pressures; that's in common with every council up and down the land.

"We are going to have to find money to pay for the increased employers' national insurance contributions (from April 2025).

"And although we do not directly employ anyone on the national minimum wage, most of our contractors do and inevitably that is going to push up the costs of the services they provide to us, including the largest one, which is our grounds maintenance contract."

The council has set aside £10,000 in grant money for local charity organisations to bid for if it is needed.

It also upping its spending on plants, shrubs and trees by 20 per cent to £6,000 under its street furniture programme (the term used to describe products and equipment in public and outdoor

spaces).

The council's events programme will also be preserved in full.

Jeff Brooks (Lib Dem, Thatcham West) also expressed his support of the proposed budget.

He said: "You have done a splendid job in very difficult circumstances.

"You say we can manage the pressures and invest in some enhancements in our playground, our events, our communication to residents.

"That's a good place to end up.

"Everybody is grown up enough to know how difficult public finances are.

"And here we are delivering a budget that invests, improves and protects, and I heartily commend it to this council."

Everybody is grown up enough to know how difficult public finances are

THATCHAM

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Eyes down for bingo

MAYOR of Thatcham Suzanne Adamantos is hosting a bingo evening to support her two chosen charities – Thatcham Youth and Cruse Bereavement Support.

The charity event will take place at 7pm on Friday, February 28, at the Frank Hutchings Hall in Thatcham.

The evening will feature six games of bingo and a raffle, with a selection of prizes up for grabs.

"We're thrilled to bring the community together for a night of fun and philanthropy," said Mrs Adamantos. "This bingo is a chance for everyone to play a few games of bingo, all while supporting two great causes."

Doors open at 6.30pm, with the first game starting at 7pm. Group bookings are welcome.

Email enquiries@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk for tickets.

Entry costs £10 per person, which includes a playing grid for each of the six games. Raffle tickets will be available to buy on the evening.

Plaque to honour former surgery

THATCHAM will unveil its next blue heritage plaque at the end of the month.

The community is invited to witness the unveiling of a new blue plaque at Bradley Moore House, a former doctors surgery located at 3 Bath Road.

A ceremony will be held on Saturday, February 22, from 1.30pm in the garden of the house, led by mayor of Thatcham Suzanne Adamantos.

The unveiling will be followed by refreshments and a short talk by Thatcham historian Nick Young at the town council's offices in Brownsfield Road.

Dr Young's talk will focus on the building's contributions to the town's medical and social history.

The event is free and open for all and will be livestreamed on the town council's Facebook page.

RSPV to events.officer@thatchamtowncouncil.gov.uk

Bradley Moore House was used as a doctor's surgery from 1909 – and was the first in Thatcham to provide NHS services.

The surgery remained until Dr Bradley-Moore retired in 1977. But Dr Young says he has



A historical image of Bradley Moore House along the Bath Road in Thatcham

Image supplied by Thatcham Town Council

found other surgeons who worked at the practice before that.

Robert Skeen, born 1760, was followed by Mr Palmer and Mr Reeves.

John Arrowsmith was a surgeon and medical officer during the first part of the 19th century, while George Watts served the village from 1830 until he died in 1871.

But perhaps the best known are the Irish brothers, Richard and Francis Lyon, who worked as doctors from 1880.

Francis lived at Sydney

Lodge, in Station Road, and cared for the wealthy while Richard, who lived in Chapel Street, tended to the poor.

The Thatcham Nursing Society was formed in 1900 to support the doctors, which also covered Crookham, Cold Ash and Bucklebury.

■ Do you have memories, photos or connections to anyone who visited or worked at the first surgery or the later NHS practice?

Share your stories with mirek.gosney@newburynews.co.uk

Police looking into Cold Ash burglary

A BURGLARY has been reported in Cold Ash.

The incident took place in Thirtover between 5pm on Friday and 1pm on Sunday.

Access was gained to the land by cutting through a mesh metal fence.

The door was forced open the door by gauging the lock and

petrol leaf blower was stolen.

Contact the Police Enquiry Centre on 101, quoting reference 43250055188, if you have any information.

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