

## **Lighthorne Annual Parish Council Meeting March 13th 2023**

### **County Councillor Annual Report**

2022/23 has also been a challenging year for Warwickshire County Council and the residents of our County. Sudden unexpected expenditures created by the cost of living and the on-going Covid-19 crisis created real challenges for people experiencing financial hardship. Therefore, WCC received many calls asking for assistance. The Council were able to help through the WCC's Household Support Fund who support the most vulnerable residents. £421 million was also made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need to help with global inflationary challenges and the significantly rising cost of living. The objective of the Household Support Fund is to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with expenditures, specifically food, energy and water bills. This phase of the grant runs from 1st October 2022 to 31st March 2023. Warwickshire has been allocated £3.47million, which is being distributed through the existing Local Welfare Scheme. Also, since October 2022, WCC have spent £1.81m on vouchers and grants to community groups and charities plus additional grant to Act on Energy's Warm and Well programme which supports residents with boiler repairs, servicing and fuel debt management. The grant and voucher scheme included: £569k to children eligible for benefits related free school meals for food support. £926k as part of the November/December utilities promotion £250k in grants to community groups and charities. However, the largest spend for WCC is Adult Social Care @£200m per year. Furthermore, WCC paid £2.8m to increase capacity in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

One of the main challenges for the Council has been the displacement of refugees. Warwickshire has a proud history of support for refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and most recently, Ukraine. Several Afghan refugees have been helped by WCC with an Employment Package part of the Fair Chance Employer Program. Similarly, the Council oversaw The Afghan Resettlement Scheme, Afghan relocation Scheme and the Afghan Refugee Scheme. There was a total of 147 refugees who were accommodated at Walton Hall, Wellesbourne. WCC were able to assist with GP registration, school places, benefit claims, housing, and childcare

In summary, Warwickshire County Council rose to the occasion during 2022/23, they were able to assist in supporting the neediest of our residents in these very unsettling times. Even though the number of unexpected problems has created an extra financial burden on Warwickshire County Council, they were nevertheless able to set the Council Tax at 3.94% which is less than the Government have allowed Councils. WCC were not prepared to take more Tax than was needed from our hard-pressed residents. That being, the increase in the Council Tax will generate an extra £3.849m to provide funding to help with the cost-of-living crisis.

Chris Mills, Kineton and Red Horse