

Leader's announcements

13 December 2023

Yesterday, the draft medium term financial strategy for 2024-27 was published. It sets out a balanced budget across the three years, and provides resources for a number of Cabinet proposals including several that address priorities in the corporate plan that Council adopted in September. After consideration by Cabinet next week, there will be public consultation for four weeks and all members can assist by encouraging local residents to take part and let us have their views.

We look forward to the provisional local government finance settlement, which will be published on Monday or Tuesday, and hope that it will build on the announcements in last week's policy statement from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Progress continues apace with the major regeneration schemes. Refurbishment of the former magistrates' court into a creative hub is scheduled for completion in September 2024 and a marketing brochure to promote the space to businesses will be launched shortly. Demolition works for the Worcester Street Connectivity and Public Realm Project are almost complete. The planning application for the new urban park will be considered by the Planning Committee next week. If permission is granted for this important scheme, completion of the works is expected in the summer of 2024.

I informed Council that we would organise a corporate peer challenge from the Local Government Association. I can confirm that this will take place in early March 2024. The members of the LGA team will want to speak to a number of councillors as part of their visit to Wyre Forest and arrangements about that will be made in the next few weeks. If you are asked to take part, I would be grateful if you would make the time available.

Free Christmas parking has been in operation since 1 December at our car parks and offers free parking from 3pm to 6pm, Mondays to Fridays. It will continue until Friday 29 December.

As we come towards the close of 2023, I would like to extend thanks to staff and members of the Council for their contribution across the year, and in particular to thank those staff who will continue providing essential services in the period between Christmas and New Year. It remains for me to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.