**District Councillor’s Report for The Mordens Ward SCDC March 2019**

**South Cambs Budget**

The budget for SCDC was put to the council in February. The budget report raised many concerns from my perspective because despite increasing council tax, increased funds from government, the introduction of new charges, increasing over 30 current charges, spending considerable amounts of reserves and identified cuts of £2.5 million pounds over the next five years, £3 million pounds worth of cuts or income needs to be found to make the budget workable.

It has been suggested that the £3 million gap would be solved from an investment strategy that involves borrowing £100 million over the next five years and using the monies to make commercial investments. I appreciate the need to find alternative sources of income to fund local government services and am supportive of the concept of doing this via investments. Initiatives taken previously in Ermine Street has been successful and produces around £2 million per annum worth of income. However, the decision to invest in Ermine Street was taken by full council (this means that all councillors were consulted and voted to make the investment decision) more recently the decision to invest in an Ice Rink in South Cambs was taken by full council and went through a full scrutiny process. The investment strategy presented to us in February enables the investment decisions surrounding the £100 million pounds of money being borrowed to be made by 4 individuals (2 councillors and 2 officers). I personally was uncomfortable with this proposal from a governance perspective, I proposed an amendment that enabled a method of scrutiny to the investment decisions being made, unfortunately this was voted down and the original proposal was successful.

There are many factors that contribute to uncertainty in Local government finance. The Budget indicates over a 60% decrease in the reserves the council holds, leaving a reserve of £3,371,000. However, there is £3 million shortfall in the calculations which could then result in reserves dropping even further and below the recommended minimum of £2.5 million. All of this amounts to a high risk and economically frail budget in my view, I therefore did not feel that I could, with a clear conscious, take such risks on behalf of the residents I serve and voted against the budget.

**Former Chief Executive of SCDC**

There has been much media interest around the departure of Beverly Agass, the former Chief-Executive who was appointed in July 2017. For legal reasons councillors are restricted on what we can say, but I can confirm that a payment of cica £202,500 has been paid into Mrs Agass’ Local Government Pension Scheme by the council, in order for her to have early access to her pension and retire. I am also allowed to confirm that I voted against this proposal.

**Cllr Heather Williams**



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