PARISH REPORT FOR HOLFORD PARISH COUNCIL OCTOBER/NOVEMER 2023

As I said in my last report it is my duty as your Councillor to tell you that the finances of the Somerset Unitary Authority are desperate, the predicted overspend for the current year is £27.3 million including £14.9 million in Adults and £12 million in Children Services these overspends may go down slightly but our reserves will have to be used to plug the gap.

The budget gap for next year 2024/25 is expected to be £100 million which represents 20% of the total budget. £70 million is within social care, this means we have not sufficient reserves to cover the budget gap. Difficult decisions will have to be made if the County are to avoid a Section 114 notice being issued. If a Section 114 notice is issued it will mean that all new spending will be prohibited whilst protecting vulnerable people, statutory services (although what these are have not been defined as yet) and any pre-existing spending commitments.

I have been monitoring flooding in October and understand that we have not received a repeat of the problem we had in September.

I attended the start of the Hinkley Main Site Forum on .19th October but it did clash with the LCN for Minehead, I have also attended a meeting convened by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Mark Shelford, in Woolavington which gave us a view on the Bridgwater and West Somerset Area but it did concentrated on Bridgwater. I did chase up a problem locally that I had reported.

Your parish should have also received an update about devolution of assets, I am unclear how the sale of assets can influence the financial crisis that the Somerset Council has got itself into because any sale will give us Capital receipts and our problem is with revenue.

Councillor Rosemary Woods

Watchet and Stogursey Division

Somerset Council.

9th November 2023