

2014-2015 Budget in Brief

29th January 2014

Rate levy increased by 0.5 per cent to 397p for the 2014-2015 financial year. Equates to a rise of 4p per week for a typical three bedroom semi-detached house.

Annual Review and Presentation of the Budget – key points:-

'Confident' budget broad in scope and long in vision, resilient in the face of mounting costs being passed from central to local government.

Council Leader says achieving savings while 'delivering more for less' combined with prudent use of reserves to reduce borrowing costs central to Council's 'good housekeeping strategy' that faces challenges including increase in waste levy charge for 2014-2015 resulting in additional £283,000 rateborne burden. (Total cost to ratepayer = £1,018,110).

Council Leader emphasises over past five years rate increase only 12p in the £.

- At 3.1 per cent significantly under 21.5 per cent Manx inflation over same period;
- During same five years government passed on increased costs estimated at £800,000 that would have given rise to a 30p in the £ increase representing a 7.8 per cent rate increase.

Council's pattern of consistent capital investment over five years amounts to £10.2 million (excluding housing).

£2.9 million savings achieved over last five Budgets by:

- Limiting pay awards;
- Non-replacement of some vacant posts;
- Reduction in overtime working;
- Restructure of refuse, electrical, housing and street cleaning services;
- Reduction in numbers of vehicle and plant.

More than £850,000 in reserves allocated to:

- Hutchinson Square upgrade;
- Living Promenade scheme;
- Ballaughton Nursery upgrades;

- Anagh Coar upgrades, including parking facilities;
- Town Hall remedial works;
- New skate park equipment;
- Douglas Market Hall roof repairs;
- Improvements in public lighting via plant renewals fund.

Environmental Quality:

- £80,000 heating system to be installed summer 2014 at Ballaughton Nursery saving £30,000 annually in fuel bills;
- Nursery now producing 60-80 tonnes of peat-free compost annually;
- Council steps up bye-laws enforcement;
- Council leads drafting of new legislation for stronger enforcement powers against owners of dilapidated properties;

Town Centre Regeneration:

- Council remains committed to town centre regeneration: £1.9 million investment in public lighting and information signage;
- Regent Street takes 'centre stage' as town's performance area;
- Town's vacant premises rate of 10.2 per cent for last quarter of 2013 below 11.1 per cent average for north west of England. Council Leader cautions: "We can ill afford to be complacent".
- New CCTV system and communications suite installed, funded from Seized Asset Fund.

Housing:

- Willaston damp eradication: successful pilot scheme leads to 60 worst-affected properties refurbished by latter half of 2014, extending life of properties by 25-30 years;
- Pulrose: £12 million investment sees completion of 84 new homes and £750,000 refurbishment of 45 existing properties. Overall redevelopment investment £45 million;
- Sheltered housing: 28 units in Pulrose scheduled for completion November 2014; construction of 40 units in Willaston commencing 2015.

Borough Crematorium and Cemetery improvement scheme:

- £2.5 million non-rateborne scheme to upgrade crematorium to increase capacity and provide new entry and exit to chapel;
- £1 million refurbishment of cemetery's driveways, paths and walls.

Full Annual Review and Presentation of the Budget may be viewed and downloaded at www.douglas.gov.im.