

FOCUS on

Whickham, Sunnyside, Marley Hill & Byermoor



March 2020

£39M in reserves - but Labour still puts up Council Tax

Gateshead Council have set their budget for the year and residents now face another hike in Council Tax - for the sixth year in a row.

The increase will be 3.99% - the maximum that the Council can set without holding a public referendum on the charges - but residents have already endured a 27.5% increase in the last 6 years.



And this comes despite the news that the Council has been building up huge reserves. Lib Dem Councillors, who are the only opposition to Labour on the Council, have discovered that Labour bosses have been building up vast reserves which now stand at £39 million.

And Labour-run Gateshead Council already charges the highest level of Council Tax of any metropolitan borough in the country and the highest rate in the whole of Tyne and Wear.

Residents have been asking us "How do other councils cost the taxpayer less than in Gateshead - but still provide a better service, for example spending more on better street cleaning or on flower beds?"

"And why do the Council need such a high level of reserves?" Lib Dems say that it is right to plan ahead, but taxpayers deserve a break.

Piling up huge sums of money in the bank while local residents struggle to pay their Council Tax and public services are worse than in other Council areas just isn't right.

CUT COUNCIL TAX

Lib Dems have launched an online petition to call for the Council to cut council tax. Contact us via jonathanwallace329@gmail.com and we will give the link to where you can sign the petition.



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Bank House update



Work could start again on the unfinished house on Whickham Bank if the Government approves changes to the building plans.

Cllr. Marilyn Ord reports "Planning permission for the house was given by the Council in 1998 but building work stopped when concerns were raised that neighbouring properties would lose their privacy.

Gateshead Council was then asked to intervene to get changes made to the house, so that the views of neighbouring residents could be addressed. There is a long and difficult legal process that has to be gone through to achieve this.

The final stage of negotiations has only now been reached and agreement is being sought with the building's owner to modify the design to reduce its height, reduce overlooking of neighbouring homes and alleviate local residents' concerns.

"Gateshead Council are proposing to serve a "Section 102 notice" which would amend the existing planning permission and approve a new design. The notice will need to be confirmed by the Secretary of State who may invite interested parties to comment. At this stage, local residents will be able to put forward their views and have these taken into account."

Polling Stations

2019 saw a total of four different elections held in Gateshead. Although this was an unusually high number, the disruption to schools that are used as polling station was significant.

By coincidence, the Council was due to carry out a review of polling stations. The review has made a number of suggestions for changes in the Whickham area and these have now been agreed by the council.

- **Fellside Primary School** will no longer be used as a polling station. Voters will now vote at Fellside Methodist Church.
- **Whickham Parochial School** will no longer be used. Voting will now occur at the Coachman's pub, Burnthouse Lane.



A minor change to a polling district has also been agreed.

- Residents at Fell Close and The Crescent, Sunnyside, will now vote at Marley Hill Community Centre instead of Sunnyside Social Club.

Cllr **John McClurey** said, "We felt it was important to move polling stations out of schools wherever this was possible so that the disruption to children's education is kept to a minimum."



Liberal Democrats - Six to Fix



Making Gateshead Cleaner, Greener and Fairer

Liberal Democrats have a great vision for Gateshead. Our team of councillors, who are the official opposition to Labour on the Council, are battling to make Gateshead cleaner, greener and fairer. We are battling to improve six key issues in Gateshead:

1 Cut council tax

- Gateshead residents pay the highest level of Council Tax of any metropolitan borough in the country. Our plans would give residents a break from 6 years of Council Tax rises.

2 End Labour's waste

- For example, Liberal Democrats will reduce the size of the Council to 44 councillors and replace annual elections with one every four years, generating a saving of £400,000 a year.

3 Make Gateshead the green capital of the North

- Liberal Democrats are leading the battle to make Gateshead greener. The Council has now agreed to support Liberal Democrat calls to plant trees on appropriate land in the borough.

4 Provide the homes people can afford

- Labour have focused on building executive homes on our countryside, failing to address the housing needs of the many while they focus on the aspirations of the better-off few.

5 Give Gateshead a voice

- Labour stopped Gateshead Council from being part of the new devolution system. Lib Dems will ensure the people of Gateshead can vote for the North East Mayor and have access to the £600 million the government are giving the region.

6 Improve street cleaning

- There are too many streets full of litter under Labour. We will carry out a spring clean of the borough.

Knitting Time

Knit 'n' Natter group meets at Sunnyside Methodist Church on 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 2pm. All residents are welcome to call in and take part.

The group however is now expanding to give those who are housebound or working the opportunity to join in with community projects. Currently angels (aiming for 1000 for next Christmas) and poppies (for the VE weekend and Remembrance Sunday) are being knitted but other ideas will be considered. Patterns are provided and also wool if necessary.

If you want to get out your knitting needles and join in at home, email sunnysidemethodistchurch@gmail.com or leave a note in the Church letter box, with contact details.

Gritting Bins

In the winter weather it's important that local salt bins are kept full. If you are aware of salt bins that need to be topped up please contact Gateshead Council by phone on 0191 433 7000 or by email on customerservice@gateshead.gov.uk.

Chase Park Photographic Competition



A monthly competition has been launched by the Friends of Chase Park in conjunction with Gateshead Council and Whickham Photographic Club and this is open to the general public.

Photographs must be of (or within) Chase Park, Whickham. There are two categories: 17 years and under; 18 years and over. A £25 gift card prize for each category will be awarded every month.

Send your photograph(s) electronically (jpeg preferred) to tracyevans@gateshead.gov.uk.

Please include your contact details (name, e-mail and mobile telephone) and which of the 2 categories you wish to enter: 0-17 years or 18+ years. The competition runs monthly from January until June 2020. Entries to be received by the last day of the month (to be included in that month's competition).

Lib Dem tree planting call backed by Council



Cllr Jonathan Wallace planting trees on Kingsway,

A Liberal Democrat motion calling for land to be used for planting new woodland has been agreed by Gateshead Council. In a bid to tackle global climate change, the motion, which now becomes Council policy, sets out to identify Council owned land suitable for tree planting.

Moving the motion, Lib Dem Leader of the Opposition Cllr Jonathan Wallace said, "Tree planting is one of the most effective ways to soak up the carbon produced by burning fossil fuels which is leading to global climate change."

"The Council owns many sites throughout the borough which have been left to turn to scrubland.

Such areas could be planted with trees. This will help to clean our air and make Gateshead a more attractive place to live."

Cllr Wallace will be launching a scheme to grow hundreds of trees from seeds later this year. He will be collecting seeds from trees in the borough and planting them on his smallholding near Sunnyside. After a few years he will be giving away the resulting saplings to residents and volunteer groups to plant up around Gateshead.

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Whickham South & Sunnyside Focus Team - working for you, all year round