

ITEM 6 – PUBLIC QUESTIONS Cabinet members to provide responses to the following questions received from Mr Trevor Maroney.

Council Tax frozen as £1.5m is committed to community welfare (Cllr. Richard Millard)

I have just read the East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) News release freezing Council Tax and offering up £1.5m for community and welfare grants. Whilst I commend the Council on the former, I would like to know more about the motives behind the latter, particular the likely long-term impact on our community.

1. It has been the Council's clearly stated aim to reduce Council Tax to zero. If it feels that it can afford give this sum away why isn't this surplus being used to meet this key policy target?

The news release only specifies the creation of two funds for community and welfare grants without justifying the need. Considering the amounts involved, I would have expected to see, before any funding is allocated, a scoping study highlighting the size and extent of the problems to be addressed. Whether they short or long-term issues that might require more regular (annual) funding. I would certainly be looking for the clearly identified long-term benefits through a cost-benefit analysis.

2. Has a scoping study been done to identify the true size and extent of the problems, the total funding needed to address them in both the short and long-term and whether £1.5m is sufficient? If so, could I please have a copy?

I believe that whilst the aim – to help people most in need of support – is laudable I think the sum being put forward is totally inadequate to meet the real needs created by austerity. I believe that a bigger sum will required plus ongoing funding if the aim is to achieve any long-term benefits throughout all parts of the community.

3. Having raised the community's expectations, does the Council plan to give away £1.5m annually and dispense with reducing Council Tax to zero? If so, is the new plan sustainable?