

# Will Monday See £+ Rate For Boro'?

## Local Rate Up 6d. - County Recommend 1s.6d. Increase

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**CHRISTCHURCH** ratepayers will face a total rate increase of 2s. in the £ if the County Council on Monday approve a recommended 1s. 6d. increase in the County precept. If approved it will mean that the general rate will jump from 18s. 8d. to £1 0s. 8d. in the £ for the forthcoming year.

The County precept will have risen from 12s. 6d. to 14s. and the local rate from 6s. 2d. to 6s. 8d.

The local increase of 6d. was approved by members of Christchurch Borough Council on Tuesday evening. An attempt by Coun. W. Bingham to have this referred back to the Finance committee for further consideration was defeated.

In his budget statement, Coun. K.L. Smith, chairman of the Finance committee, said that each year he had to report the growth of county expenditure. This year it was no less than £21½ million. After deducting all sources of income other than the general government grants the net expenditure amounted to £16¼ million. The general grant and rate deficiency grant were estimated at nearly £8 million, thus reducing the rate borne expenditure to £8½ million, equivalent to a rate of 15s. 3d. in the £. The equivalent of a 1s. 3d. rate had been taken from balances in order to limit the County precept to 14s.

### BELOW AVERAGE

Precepts for the county had been below the national average for many years but this position would not be continuing. It had been estimated that the expenditure for all counties would increase by just over 6% during 1961/62, but in Hampshire the figure was over 11%. This reflected the growth in population and the development in the services. To make matters worse the growth in the general grant to Hampshire was not as great as that of expenditure. The increase in the grant was 8.8%.

None of the principal County services showed less than a 10% increase on last year, but the range was considerably more than this. Roads and Bridges showed an increase of £309,050 (10.01% increase); Education, £1,172,455 (10.21%); Health, £131,620 (12.52%); Police, £154,300 (24.80%); Libraries, £52,395 (29.33%).

Coun. Smith said he need not give the reason for the Police increase, but they would no doubt be surprised at that of the Library. The Roberts' report on the Libraries of the country contained recommendations as to the desired standards of staffing, book purchase, etc. Hampshire was well below these standards and the County Library committee had commenced to remedy this short-coming. Additional staff, mobile libraries and accommodation were to be obtained.

### LOCAL AFFAIRS

Dealing with local Council affairs, Coun. Smith continued: "When the estimates for 1960/61 were prepared it was anticipated that £18,000 would have to be taken from balances. Now that the revised estimates have been prepared this figure will only be £10,000. The difference of £8,000 will be used as a relief for the rate levy for 1961/62.

"The Finance committee met on Feb. 14 to consider the draft estimates which at that time indicated an increase of 1s. 3d. in the borough rate. This naturally caused concern to the members. It was inevitable that the committee should undertake their critical examination with one object in view.

"The committee have agreed to finance further projects from the Capital Fund. The fund will finance projects amounting to over £28,000 by March 31, 1962. Other capital projects will be met from loan." These are: new convenience, Fairmile area, £1,500; enlarged sewer between Humphries and Somerford bridges, £17,000; pumping station, Jumpers, £5,500; compressed air main to Mudeford, £1,800; land rear of Town Hall, £3,500; nursery land, £3,000; various street improvement schemes, £14,400; Avon Run Road car park surfacing, £2,750; mechanical road sweeper, £2,900; Mudeford Quay, sea defence work, £5,000.

## HEALTH

Dealing with health, Coun. Smith said the increase in the number of premises and the reduction in working hours had made it necessary for the recruitment of two additional refuse loaders at a cost of £1,000 p.a. The pressure at which the loaders had had to work during the past had been great and ratepayers should be appreciative of their efforts in the arduous task.

## SEWERAGE

On sewerage, Coun. Smith said loan charges were down for the current financial year because capital expenditure had been incurred more slowly than was anticipated. This was, of course, only a temporary saving. The loan charges for this service would probably reach a peak next year.

The sewage works was still not receiving the sewerage from the whole borough, so that it was not yet possible to estimate the true cost of operation. The figure of £14,100 was the best that could be determined on the information available at the present time.

The County grant for sewerage loan charges continued at approximately 51% of the excess over a 6d. rate. It was for this reason that the expenditure on sewage development was being financed by loan.

## PARKS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

"This service shows little change from the estimate for 1960/61. The Council are now becoming responsible for gardens and open spaces, and the time has come for the establishment of a horticultural nursery.

"I must warn members that they must expect a heavier rate charge when the scheme is first commenced because of the need for equipment which the Council does not possess yet in the long run the scheme should prove an economy because at present all our garden needs have to be purchased retail.

"The income from the parks and pleasure grounds is over £1,000 up on the estimate for 1960/61. The increase in charges for boat rights accounts for £620, the Quay car park £100, Pit Site increased rental £145, and the contribution from the Hampshire County Council for the use of open spaces by schoolchildren £100.

## TOWN HALL

"It has again been necessary to provide for additional improvised office accommodation at a cost of £450, only 18 months after the last extension.

"£500 has been allowed as a capital fund repayment for the cost of architect's fees incurred on designing the proposed town hall and £70 for interest on the loan required for the purchase of the land at the rear of the existing buildings.

## TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

"This provision is intended to meet part of the cost of the Civic Trust's scheme for High Street and neighbouring roads.

## HIGHWAYS

"The Finance committee deleted several proposals from the estimates for improvements. It is appreciated that this is only a temporary remedy, and these proposals will have to be considered again next year together with additional schemes that the Borough Surveyor has already indicated will be necessary.

"It is probably time for the spending committees to consider formulating a policy of development over a period (say) five years, instead of annually. It is appreciated that such proposals could not be binding on the committees but they would be useful as a guide to policy.

"The surfacing of Avon Run Road car park caused some heart-searching among members of the committee, but the chairman, of the Highways committee emphasised that proper layout would increase the

capacity of the ground 80/100 cars and might also be an essential preliminary to the prohibition of parking along Friars Cliff.

## BEACHES

"The wet weather during the past 12 months affects this service in different ways. Highcliffe has been affected by cliff subsidences, necessitating extra maintenance on the paths and steps, and it is not yet known what effect this may have on the availability of sites for letting during the coming season. The income shows a reduction of £600 on the estimate, this decrease is shared by the car park, day huts and deck chairs.

"Mudeford Quay car park was apparently not affected and takings showed an increase of £200 on the estimate. The Borough Treasurer is optimistic enough to hope for a further increase of nearly £200.

"The income from Friars Cliff was better than anticipated, and if we have fine weather it is reasonable to assume that the takings will continue to increase.

"Once again it has been necessary for the Beach committee to incur expenditure on sea defence work. This time at Mudeford Quay. The expenditure of £5,000 will be met by loan and a grant will be available from central and county sources.

"The charge to rate for 1961/6: will be £2,163 as against £3,696 originally estimated for the current financial year.

"Last year I referred to the effect of sea defence work expenditure on the accounts of the Beach undertaking. I feel that I cannot let this occasion pass without again referring to this burden on coastal authorities. During the year the Government were requested to reconsider their attitude, but there was no change of heart.

## CONTINGENCIES

"Local government manual workers are among the lowest paid groups of workers according to the returns of the Ministry of Labour. It is therefore to be expected that the unions will continue to press for substantial increases in basic rates. An application has been submitted to the national negotiating body for a substantial increase.

"In view of this, provision has been made for a 5 per cent, increase in pay throughout the estimates.

"According to custom provision for general contingencies has been included at £1,800 (approximately 1d. rate)."

Coun. Smith ended: "The amended estimates provide for a Borough rate increase of 6d. in the £. This may be a surprising result in view of the increase in sewage disposal costs of 6d. in the £ and other services showing increases. The reason for this limited increase is because the saving of £8,000 in 1960/61 has been augmented by approximately a 5d. rate taken from balances.

"These balances have been built up over recent years by prudent financial control, but the time has now come for a limited release of them, thus preventing too violent increase in the Borough rate levy. It must be emphasised that this relief cannot continue for ever.

"The penny rate product continues upwards each year, at a satisfactory pace. It should be noted that with well planned development the town will become even more attractive and the effect will be an even greater rate product. This is the town's dividend on investment." He expressed the Council's sincere thanks to Mr. Scott, the Deputy Borough Treasurer, who owing to the illness of Mr. Preece, had prepared the whole of the estimates before the Council. "There have been, as everybody knows, considerable amount of work involved **and** we should thank him most sincerely, also his assistant Mr. Vickery."