Foreword by Leader of Harborough District Council

Welcome to the first residents’ newsletter of 2017 and as is clear from the news items below we have much planned for the year ahead. We have exciting events in the social diary including a very special sandpits event this year promising a journey back in time. We’re also focusing on the excellent work we do with businesses across the district and we’re inviting people to help us improve our website using the latest eye-tracking technology.

We have been busy finalising the budget for the year ahead and have once again set out an ambitious programme of investment whilst protecting the services which are important to residents. This is despite the challenges of significantly reduced funding from Government.

With finances in mind, I am pleased that we continue to get the best out of our assets with an exciting opportunity for The Settling Rooms, improved energy-efficiency at the market and, on one of our former garage sites, we are building new starter homes to help people get on the property ladder.
Harborough District Council's budget for the year ahead promises significant investment whilst protecting services for our residents.

Despite receiving a £750,000 reduction in Central Government funding since last year, no major cuts to public services are planned for the year ahead. Instead we have set out plans for investment into play areas, disabled facility grants, tourism, apprenticeships, community grants, homelessness prevention, flytipping, and a number of other areas.

The increase in our share of the council tax of £5 a year (3.12%), on the average Band D property, equates to less than just 10p a week and is still lower than our council tax precept was in 2014/15. It is the first rise in the district council’s portion of the council tax bill for seven years and still represents excellent value for money in a challenging financial climate.

The Settling Rooms go on market

Historic town centre building The Settling Rooms has been put on the market.

Harborough District Council, which owns The Settling Rooms situated in St Mary's Place, Market Harborough, said it had already received expressions of interest in the Grade II listed building.

Councillors agreed the building should be put on the market for long lease or sale, to achieve the maximum return from its assets on behalf of the taxpayer.

Historically the building was used as a place for 'settling up' after the auctioneer had completed the selling of stock at the livestock market.

View the property on the Fisher German website

Residents and business can now go 'paper free'

Residents and businesses now have the option to go 'paper free' when they sign up to a new online service for council tax bills, business rates and benefits.
Harborough District Council said the move will work in a similar way to internet banking giving its customers greater flexibility and reducing the amount of paper and post they have to deal with. People can log in at any time with no need to phone or visit the council.

As well as the option for paper free billing, the new online service will give customers the opportunity to view their:

- Business Rates account
- Council Tax account
- Council Tax Support claim
- Housing Benefit claim
- Tenants' benefits claims if you are a landlord
- Make payments or set-up direct debits, and much more

You can also make a payment or set up a direct debit online as well as access other useful tools.

Signing up for the service is quick and easy and can be done at [www.harborough.gov.uk/paperfree](http://www.harborough.gov.uk/paperfree)

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**Cast your eyes over our website**

We are asking volunteers to help us identify how easy it is to use our website using special technology which can track reflections in the eye.

Residents are invited to take part in short feedback sessions at The Symington Building in Market Harborough on 17 March 2017 lasting for just 15 to 20 minutes each.

During the session you will be asked to complete three basic tasks on our website and answer a few questions about what you think of the site – it's as simple as that. We will be using some technology that can track reflections in the eye to help identify how easy it is to find your way around the website.

If you would be interested in taking part in a feedback session please email [website@harborough.gov.uk](mailto:website@harborough.gov.uk)

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**On your bike in Lutterworth**
Fun and friendly bike rides are taking place in Lutterworth.

Each session is led by a qualified ride leader and starts with a group bike check, practice time to ride in a group in a safe off-road space, and an explanation of signals and calls.

Bring along your bike, helmet, a drink and some cash for tea and cake afterwards.

Rides are due to take place on **Sunday 26 March 2017** and **Sunday 30 April 2017**. The rides will start at 10am so arrive a little earlier to start bike checks. The session will last for about an hour, covering 10 miles.

Meet at Speedhub, Unit 9 St Johns' Business Park, Rugby Road, Lutterworth, LE17 4HB.

The rides have been organised by Active Harborough District in partnership with Speedhub.

Follow on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com) for full event details or for enquiries email activetogether@harborough.gov.uk

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**Use your vote - in county council elections**

By voting in the County Council election being held on **4 May 2017** you can help shape Leicestershire’s future.

Once elected, your county councillor will be involved in making decisions about how the services the council provides are delivered during the next four years.

To make sure your vote counts you must be on the electoral register. You can register to vote or update your details online at GOV.UK. ([https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)) You must be registered by 13 April, to be able to vote on 4 May.

The deadline for new applications to vote by post or proxy and to change existing postal or proxy votes is 5pm on 18 April 2017.

To check if you're registered you can contact the electoral services office at Harborough District Council. Email e.services@harborough.gov.uk or call 01858 821372.

If you are interested in becoming a county councillor the deadline for you to be included on the ballot paper as a candidate is 4pm on Tuesday, 4 April 2017.
Visit [www.leicestershire.gov.uk](http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk) for more information on how to become a county councillor.

**Harborough by the Sea goes back in time**

The hugely popular Harborough by the Sea event is going back in time this year and is set to be the biggest and best yet.

This year's event – being held in Market Harborough from Friday 28 July 2017 to Monday 31 July 2017 – will have a vintage theme, with the clock turned back to the 1950s and 1960s. There will be live music, historical trail, Punch and Judy, and a 'Summer Holiday' food and drink tasting tour.

Activities on the Sunday will include the town's first Classic Car meet throughout the town centre; an attraction not to be missed.

Roads in the town centre will be closed to showcase this exciting display of cars, motorbikes and other classic vehicles.

Look out for retailers' seaside themed window displays, the giant sandpits on the town's square and striped deckchairs to sit back and soak up the atmosphere. There will also be stall trading opportunities - visit the website for details if you'd like to get involved.

More details at [www.harborough.gov.uk/harboroughbythesea](http://www.harborough.gov.uk/harboroughbythesea)

**Thousands sign up for garden waste collections**

Thousands of people have already signed up to have their garden waste collected – more than at the same time last year.

Residents can sign up for an annual subscription fee of £40 per green bin. Those who sign up for the service will have their garden waste collected on a fortnightly basis between the months of April 2017 and November 2017 and during March 2018.

Garden waste collections will not take place during the winter months of December and February. A one-off garden waste collection will take place in January 2018.
Last year, nearly 19,000 residents in the Harborough district signed up to the garden waste collection service.

Sign up to the garden waste service online at www.harborough.gov.uk/green-bin or call 01858 828282.

**Businesses - we're here to help you**

Working in partnership with others, we help businesses across the Harborough district in hundreds of ways. Not only do we offer free workshops and seminars, we are able to signpost businesses to funding pots and opportunities to help your business grow, develop, find accommodation or employ more staff.

Ways we provide support include:

- **Pioneer 10** at Harborough Innovation Centre which seeks and supports innovative businesses
- Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's **Business Gateway** detailing everything about starting or running a business and all the support and advice available
- **Apprenticeship grant** offering up to £750 to encourage businesses to take on apprentices
- Our **monthly business update** which contains up-to-date business information
- **LinkedIn page** which is regularly updated with useful information and policy changes affecting local businesses
- Rural business support available via [East Leicestershire Leader Programme](#)

Our Business Support Manager can be contacted at business@harborough.gov.uk or on 01858 821055 to help answer any questions or arrange to meet and discuss any issues you may be facing.

**Improved lighting at Harborough Market car park**

Energy-efficient lighting has been installed at Harborough Market car park - adding to the solar panels
and environmentally-friendly internal lighting already introduced.

The old lighting posts have been removed to make way for two new energy-saving LED lighting columns to spread light more effectively across the car park.

The improved lighting will require less maintenance and will improve the area for market traders and the public.

It is also expected that the energy-efficient lighting will provide even more savings for the council-owned building.

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**New starter homes help people get on housing ladder**

Work has begun to transform a former council garage site into much-needed starter homes to help people get on the housing ladder in Leicestershire.

Harborough District Council is redeveloping its garage site in St Cuthbert’s Avenue, Great Glen, to create four attractive, two-bed semi-detached houses.

Working with a number of partners, the council is turning the St Cuthbert’s site into new homes which will be available at low market value as part of the Government’s ‘Help To Buy’ scheme to assist people finding it difficult to get on to the property ladder.

[View the St Cuthbert's Avenue properties online here](#)