

## COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT 2014/2015

There will be NO increase in the County Council's share of the Council Tax this year. This will be the 6<sup>th</sup> year of unchanged Council Tax. The government grant to the County Council continues to be reduced, which has meant another round of job cuts, albeit at a lower level than in the past. The County has a policy of selling its services to other authorities and public bodies, and this helps to keep the workforce more stable. Hampshire already runs the Isle of Wight Schools and is taking an increasing role in Oxfordshire. Hampshire's budget of some £702m, not counting the direct payment to schools is now funded 78% by Council Tax and 22% by Government Grant. The Government Grant of some £156m is about one fifth of what the Government receives in Business Rates from Hampshire.

On the capital side, about £184m will be spent next year, of which £64m will be spent on new schools and extension to schools, £67m on new roads, bridges and junctions, £14m, mainly on new Extra Care Housing and £38m mainly of capital repairs to buildings, new vehicles etc.

After the serious damage to Hampshire's roads last winter, caused by the large amount of water, some extra £30m was spent on major repairs and also on filling some 50,000 potholes, and more roads will be dealt with in the next financial year. It is an ongoing problem, not helped by the damage to the edges of a number of roads, caused by heavy vehicles, quite often travelling on roads that they are not supposed to be on – satellite navigation is not always correct in rural areas. In the rural areas it is also a problem getting the verges cut correctly and at the correct time of year. I believe that this is partly due to the operatives not have a feeling for the countryside, and dealing with both urban and rural areas as if they were the same.

New street lights were installed in this area of Hampshire this year, and because they direct the light downwards, the amount of light pollution has been greatly reduced, as proved by recent satellite photos of this part of East Hampshire.

The boundary commission are looking at Hampshire and will be redrawing the boundaries between divisions. This particular Division, Petersfield Hangers, is likely to be increased in size by about 1,200 voters for the election in 2017.

Superfast Broadband continues to be a concern, especially in rural areas. In the last few months connection boxes have been erected in parts of Petersfield, Liss and Greatham. 90% of Hampshire's residents should be connected by the end of 2015. A further £9.2m has been invested to bring that level up to 95% by 2016/17

. The eventual target is to reach 99.9%, but with the cost increasing dramatically for the more remote areas, investigations are proceeding on how to tackle the problem.

Unemployment in the area is low with this Division of the County Council recording figure of between 0.2% and 1.5%, for much of the year, lower than last year and very much below the average for the UK.