

COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT 2015/2016

The drop in the Government Support Grant to Hampshire was far bigger than expected this year, caused by a further shift in resources from the Shire Counties to the Metropolitan areas. Also the Government have built in to their calculations that there will have to be some increase in Council Tax over the next 5 years, to soften the dramatic fall in support, and as a result, the County Council's share of the Council Tax will therefore rise by 3.99% this year, 2% to help pay for the extra care fees with the rise to the National Living Wage for low paid care workers, and 1.99% to help cover part of the extra demand for adult social care places. This is the first rise after 6 years. Despite this, Hampshire now has the lowest Council Tax for any Shire County in the UK.

Being given a Government Support Grant sounds like largess, but this is not the case, for the Government collects all the business rates and the Grant represents about a fifth of these being given back. The Government Support Grant for Hampshire per dwelling is £139, whilst for Manchester it is £441.

On the capital side, we are in the middle of a 3-year, £564m spend, the largest of any county in the UK. It will mainly be spent on new schools and extensions to schools, on new roads, bridges and junctions, new Extra Care Housing and capital repairs to buildings, new vehicles etc.

Because the new street lights, which were installed a couple of years ago, 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 SDNPA is at present seeking this area to be designated a dark skies area. It is certainly easier to see the sky at night without an orange glow everywhere.

The boundary commission have been looking at Hampshire and have been redrawing the boundaries between divisions, so that each division has a very similar number of electors. They have not accounted for the fact that some Divisions are very rural, whilst others are completely urban. This particular Division, Petersfield Hangers, is to be increased in size by about 1,200 voters for the election in 2017, and will now include East Tisted, West Tisted and Ropley, making 12 parishes in all.

Superfast Broadband continues to be a concern, especially in rural areas. In the last few months more connection boxes have been erected in parts of the Division, but there are still areas of great concern to reach the eventual target of 99.9%. Experiments are continuing with different methods to reach the really remote areas.

Unemployment in the area is low with this Division of the County Council recording figure of between 0.2% and 1.2%, for much of the year, lower than last year and very much below the average for the UK.

Life expectancy in this area continues to increase