

## COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT 2016/2017

The Government Support Grant to Hampshire continues to fall at an ever increasing rate, and the real concern for the County is Adult Social Care, as not only is the demand increasing as the age profile of the County rises, but the cost is also rising much faster than inflation, caused by the rise in the National Living Wage.

As a result of this, the County Council's share of the Council Tax will therefore rise by 4.99% this year, 3% to help pay for extra Adult Care and 1.99% to help cover other parts of the budget. Despite this, in real terms Hampshire's Council Tax is lower than it was in 2010, and is the lowest for any shire county in the UK.

Because of the emphasis on Adult Social Care, some of the other services have had to take the brunt of the cuts, but by using more efficient ways of working, these have not been too obvious to the general public. For instance the Library Service, despite having to end the mobile libraries, has seen no library closure or alteration of hours, thanks to using far more volunteers. The Museum Service has become 'The Hampshire Cultural Trust' and is now privately run by trustees with a reducing County grant but with much more investment from business and entry fees. Other services, like property services, I.T. and Children's Services have reduced cutbacks by taking over the work of a number of other counties, or other public services, such as the police and fire service, or by selling their services on a commercial basis.

The greatest part of any councillor's email or phone calls are to do with the roads, usually to do with potholes, and my emails are no different from any other councillor in the UK. Country areas usually have many more complaints because a lot of country roads are just ancient tracks that have been tarmaced over with no real base. Everyone thinks that their area is the worst in the UK, and has to pay out the highest compensation to the public. In actual fact, except for the Isle of Wight, Hampshire has the lowest pothole count and the lowest compensation rate, at £17.50, of any county in the South of England.

The cost of energy is a worry for any major user and some 5 years ago, the County Council set itself the target of lowering its energy requirement by 40% by 2025. It is good to report that the current rate is some 38% below the initial usage. A lot of this saving was caused by installing new streetlights throughout the County and these alone save some £1m of energy a year.

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 continues to be low in this Division of the County Council recording figure of between 0.2% and 1.2%, which is very much below the average for the UK.

After 8 years as your County Councillor I am stepping down to hand on the baton to a younger candidate. It has been an interesting time, and I should like to thank all members of the Parish Council for the time and interest that they have been prepared to give to make life better in your Parish. They deserve your support at all times.

I wish you all well for the future.