

HCC Cllr Alan Dowden's Baddesley Division 2017 Report

I have now represented the Baddesley division on the County Council for over 25 years and in that time I have seen the continuance of reductions by Central Government of Local Government Funding.

The settlement last year covered four years from 2016 to 2020 and, following the acceptance by the DCLG of the County Council's Efficiency Plan for the period, the expectation was for minimal change to the figures published last year.

The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for 2017 to 2020 is unchanged compared to the forecast position, and confirms a further reduction in grant of £37m for 2017/18. By 2019/20 the County Council will no longer receive any RSG from Central Government.

Councils core reason for being is to deliver local services, not central government cuts.

Local Authorities have all needed to reduce costs and a result of this has seen a massive redundancy programme of employees at the County coupled with reductions and cuts to service provision.

This year's Hampshire County Council Tax will increase by 4.99% and 3% of the rise will be ring fenced and allocated to Social Services. Therefore a Band D Council Tax for County Council services will rise to £1133.10p and at the same time residents will see, many services being reduced or cut altogether.

The failure of the Central Government's provisional local finance settlement not to find any new funding for social care was hugely disappointing.

The results of less Social Services funding put far more pressure on the NHS. We hear of hospital beds being blocked by older patients who could be cared for, but there is insufficient Social Care finance in order to provide the adequate packages of care.

Council Tax and how we pay for social care both need a major overhaul.

Funding for Adult Social Care

Last year the Government introduced a social care Council Tax precept of 2% a year for the current Comprehensive Spending Review period 2016 to 2020, no indications have been given thereafter. This year Government has granted local authorities the flexibility to **bring forward** some of this increase and to raise the precept by up to 3% this year and the year after within the cap of 6% over the next three years to 2020.

Taking up this flexibility would yield, **on a one off basis**, additional income of £16.6m for the County Council in the next two years to put towards meeting the huge pressures facing adult social care needs.

New Homes Bonus

The New Homes Bonus is currently paid 80% to District Councils and 20% to County Councils and last year the Government consulted on potential reductions in the level of grant paid in order to divert resources into adult social care.

The Government has now published its response to the consultation on cuts to the New Homes Bonus. The main changes reduce the number of years for which legacy payments are made and introduce a baseline for housing growth set at an initial level of 0.4% of the council tax base for 2017/18. From 2018 the Government will also consider withholding payments from local authorities that are not planning effectively.

The County Council has received slightly less New Homes Bonus than predicted and this was largely but not wholly allocated to fund highways works under the Operation Resilience Programme.

This has been extended, but the changes in funding announced do not impact on this previously agreed investment..

Hampshire County Council manages 3000 miles of footpaths, Bridleways, Rights of Way and cycleway as well as having five beautiful Country Parks. There is something for everyone to enjoy in Hampshire's beautiful and diverse countryside.

My County division borders Eastleigh and there is a new recycling centre that opened towards the end of 2016. It is located off Chestnut Avenue at Stoney Croft Rise, Chandlers Ford, SO53 3YU.

Last year **charges** were introduced at waste & recycling centres but this is being legally challenged. However I fear introducing charges and shorter opening times will cause a further escalation in Fly Tipping.

Despite the strong business case for a single county authority in the Deloitte report. This did not gain public support. In respect of the review of local government the County Council's position for the immediate future is to maintain our historic support for the current two tier arrangements for county & districts, and to seek opportunities too enhance the system, including a greater role, where desired, for Town & Parish Councils.

In the meantime the Government, preoccupied as it is with **Brexit** and other domestic challenges, has yet to set any clear direction on its view about devolution.

I always enjoy the North Baddesley over 60's Christmas lunch and this year was no exception. It was enjoyed by everyone who attended, so it is a pleasure to be able to financially fund this event. In Chandlers Ford I was invited to attend the Happy Bunch over seventies club after supporting them with a large grant so that entertainment & activities can be provided to prevent many from feeling isolated..

Along with Primary School children from Valley Park, I attended the Test Valley in Bloom ceremony and jointly accepted two Gold Awards for the Valley Park Parish Council floral displays. The children help each year with planting spring bulbs along the verges around Valley Park. After gaining business sponsorship It is my intention to carry out a planting scheme of 4000 daffodils on Botley Road, North Baddesley next Autumn. Matt Le Tissier has kindly offered to come and assist. I hope both the Junior and Infant school will be able to provide children to do the planting next Autumn..

The approval of permanent extensions at both the North Baddesley Infant & Junior school was very good news. This well designed project, costing well over £4 million, will be completed in April 2018

Volunteering at the Knightwood Youth Club, running the football slot on Friday evenings and being amongst young people helps keeps me active and fit. They are our future and those teenage years are when they can need the most support.