

**Baddesley division County Councillor's 2016 Annual Report**

Hampshire County Council will need to find savings of £81.5 million by the end of the 2016/17 financial year. Most of these savings have already been achieved through the Transformation programme, by reducing the cost of back office services and functions, a strategy that was introduced to help to prevent cuts to frontline services. The Local Government Finance Settlement for Hampshire, announced on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015, was a further cut of £48 million. This is a decrease of 37.4% and is £29 million more than the Council were anticipating. In February this year the government gave a one off amount of additional funding of £18.69 million to Hampshire, over the next two years, but there will be no more transitional grant funding for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The significant reduction is because more money has been allocated to the authorities in the North of England at the expense of the Southern Shire Counties & District authorities. Over the next four years funding to Councils from central government will continue to be reduced, resulting in further Council Tax increase, above inflation increases on the cost of local authority services and at the same time frontline services will be cut or reduced. During the next financial year we will see increased charges of between 5% & 8% for the County Council's Nursing & Residential homes. The mobile library services will be phased out, and many of the Hampshire Waste & Recycling Centres will be closed down or opening hours reduced. There is no denying that this next phase of cuts is going to be much tougher and people will now start to notice the difference.

The County Council has sought devolution from Government, seeking more powers and funding devolved to elected local government at county, district and parish level in England. If agreed, it would mean the retention of business rates in order to help fund council's services. The shire areas of England are very important to the nation, contributing around £203 billion per annum in terms of Gross Value Added. The County are also seeking more powers back from unelected agencies.

The Chancellor will decide shortly whether to allow this devolution bid. It will then need to go back to all the Councils in Hampshire in order to scrutinise what the package contains.

During December 2015, Hampshire Highways team were busy responding to the heavy and intense rainfall, with emergency crews responding to 95 calls of flooding and removing 18 large trees blocking highways in the first weekend of 2016 alone.

The County Council have invested extensively in support of Superfast Broadband and now almost 97% of premises in the County have access to this facility. The County have been awarded £3.1 million to invest in a digital strategy to help transform, modernise and secure sustainable public services across Hampshire for the future. This investment will help to implement new ways of working digitally, to support the redesign and transformation of services so they try to match people's expectations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The County's capital programme, £563 million over the next three years, will build and improve long-term assets that will position Hampshire as a great place to live and to work now and in the future. Finance will be allocated to provide for more school places. For several years I have highlighted that this is urgently required. Many parents have been unable to gain access to their local schools. At last this situation may be improved.

In February, I placed a motion before the Full Council which urges the Government to introduce a sugar tax and clearer labelling of the sugar content in drinks and food products. These changes are essential for people to make more informed choices and counteract the impending damage to the public's health and resultant impact upon our health services. The Councillors voted unanimously to support this.

The allocation of Grant funding to councillors, has enabled me to help support various community organisations. After attending one of Mountbatten School's concerts, I was pleased to offer them support to purchase more musical instruments.

In order to balance its budget for 2016/2017, Hampshire County Council will increase Council Tax by 3.99%. This will result in a Band D property increasing by £41.40p, resulting in a Band D Council Tax of £1079.28p. It will mean more tax for Hampshire residents to pay, and services cut or reduced. The cost in Council Care homes will rise well above inflation. I, like many other councillors, were unable to support the budget, as there was a lack of detail about the levels of cuts and where the cuts would come.

It seems every year there is something to vote on! and this year we have a very important decision to make about **Britain and Europe**.

**HCC Cllr Alan Dowden**