

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT to SHEET PARISH COUNCIL

JULY 2017

As mentioned last month, Hampshire faces a shortfall in its budget and needs to find savings of £140m by 2019. This shortfall is as a result of cuts to central Government grants, increased demand for care services due to the ageing population and inflationary pressures. A public consultation on options for achieving cost savings, called Serving Hampshire, commenced on 3 July and will run for 6 weeks until 21 August. It is about broad options rather than detailed policy, but it is certainly worth reading and responding as the responses will feed into the strategic process. The consultation can be accessed at this link:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/consultations/balancingthebudget>

There are three other items which I thought would be of interest to Sheet Parish Council:

- Hampshire County Council's new Road Transport contract with Skanska commences on 1 August 2017. Preparations for the handover are at an advanced stage. Councillors have been briefed to expect one or two teething issues as the new systems bed in, but there is a widespread expectation that the new contract will lead to service improvements. Skanska have invested heavily in a digitally-enabled reporting system. All their crews will have sat nav tablet devices linked to their operations centre. New equipment such as a pot-hole fixing device called a "Dragon" are being introduced to the fleet. We anticipate that overall quality (and speed) of repairs and resurfacing works will be delivered in the coming months.

Parish Councils are encouraged to report any road or paving problems online via this link:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems>

You can find out about all Hampshire roadworks underway, also who is responsible and how long the works will be happening at this link:

<https://roadworks.org/>

- The Rural Communities Fund was launched on 19 June, bringing together four funds which have now been combined to make it easier for Parish and Town Councils to apply for funding. The focus is on countryside access, flood prevention and rural retail projects. The Rural Communities Fund has combined the Community Challenge Fund, the Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Rural Retailers and Community Enterprises Grant Scheme, and the Small Grants Scheme Countryside Access. You can apply online at hants.gov.uk/grants
- The South Downs Local Plan has been approved for consultation by the National Park Authority and will go out to public consultation in September. This Local Plan will become the overarching planning document for the entire Park. In advance of the formal consultation, the Local Plan is already available on the Internet at this link:

https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/PC_2017June15_Agenda-Item-7-Appendix-1.pdf

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers