

County Councillor Report to Hadlow Down Parish Council Feb24

Budget Council Tax

As reported in previous months local government is facing considerable budget challenges. The Autumn statement brought no new money to the table. The sector continued to lobby the Treasury for additional funding and welcomed the additional £660m of which ESCC will receive approx. £5.3m

ESCC for the first time for many, many, years will be reliant on using reserves to balance the budget. £14.3m will be used but of course reserves can only be used once.

Again, as in previous reports the pressures are on Childrens Services and Adult Social Care. An additional £19m of base funding has been allocated to Children Services with the pressure on Looked After Children. It is not just a question of numbers but the complexity of cases – hence the £1m year cost in some cases.

The increase in minimum wage has had a significant impact on social care costs.

A recent resident survey concluded the county should spend less on ASC and CS and more on roads. However, that sentiment changes when they need assistance with ASC or their children need the specialist help of CS.

Council Tax, including the additional ASC precept of 2%, is proposed at 4.99%. The increase for a typical Band D is 97pence a week (Band A 64p and Band H 1.98).

Net expenditure is £538.1m of which 70% is raised via council Tax.

Despite the pressure the council continues to provide high quality services as recognised by the LGA Peer Review last year.

It will also deliver a capital programme of over £800m in the period to 2033.

Scrutiny Review of Pothole Management

The committee undertook a study of the pothole repair management and agreed a number of recommendations which have been accepted by the Lead member and Director of Transport Economy and Community.

Potholes within the criteria are repaired within the terms of the Highways contract. Patching is an additional cost and is funded through the capital programme.

Funding boost to bolster green skills.

Council bosses have welcomed funding that will help boost green skills and support the county's move to net zero. East Sussex County Council's Employability and Skills Team successfully bid for £240,000 from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) to launch the Retrofit Skills East Sussex project.

Updates on the project as it progresses can be found on the council's website.

Cost of living payment set for February.

Eight million people on means-tested benefits will receive a cost-of-living payment in February to help with high bills. Those on low incomes and receiving benefits such as universal credit are eligible but should be wary of scams – on legitimate payments, there will be a reference on a recipient's bank account of their national insurance number, followed by DWP COL, or the reference HMRC COLS for those who are eligible through tax credits.

The £299 payment will be made directly into bank accounts, without the need to make a claim, between 6 and 22 February.

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