

## **County Councillor Report to Hadlow Down Parish Council Mar 24**

### **Childrens Services Ofsted Inspection**

This was completed last year but the final report and public announcement has recently been published. The overall assessment was “good” with two of the 4 headings being classed as outstanding. Indeed, we were informed the overall assessment only narrowly missed being classed as “outstanding.”

Whilst the financial pressures on Children’s services remain it is heartening that the services being delivered are benefiting the most vulnerable children in the county

### **SEN Pressures**

I have stated at previous meetings about the financial pressures on looked after children but this pressure is also increasing on the SEN sector. Last week I attended an online meeting of authorities across the country and all our concerned with the long-term challenge of increasing demands on LA’s. Parents have high expectations of the help they require for their children. The number of EHCP’s has increased significantly in recent years. Whilst new special schools have been built and also extra capacity within the maintained sector, that capacity is soon filled.

Many LA’s have made use of the Safety Valve which loans money to authorities under particular pressure there is a long term cost of such loans. ESCC are not currently in deficit as we transferred funds from mainstream to the High Needs Block (not necessarily welcomed by schools) a few years ago but from 25/26 that extra funding will have been used up.

### **ICAN Exhibition.**

This exhibition is an opportunity for SEN (special educational need) children to talk with and hear the wide range of careers that are available across the county.

### **Finance**

The above reports highlight that the pressures on demand led services are taking up an increasing share of the budget (75%) and reduces the amount for other requirement such as highways. Having said that I am still pushing for extra funds to be made available for the next financial year to add to current budgets.

## **Campaign calling for more Foster Carers**

A campaign to encourage more people to consider fostering for their local authority was highlighted at East Sussex County Council's Full Council meeting on 6 February.

The fostering recruitment film, entitled 'Any of Us', was also shown at the meeting.

The film was produced last year by a partnership of over 80 councils and children's trusts to promote in-house fostering and aims to show that 'any of us' could foster and make a positive difference to a child's life.

For more information on fostering with East Sussex County Council and to view the film 'Any of Us', visit the council's website. Online information sessions about the fostering process are available, as well as in person pop-up events across the county. If you or you know someone who may be interested, please call 01323 464129.

## **Call for volunteers to support people preparing for later life.**

East Sussex County Council's Life Transitions Service (I am not keen on title) is looking for volunteers who can build friendly and trusting relationships and who want to play a part in improving lives. The pilot project aims to help people prepare for significant changes that occur in later life such as retiring, moving home, and changes to health and mobility.

Volunteers will need to complete an interactive training programme before they can meet clients in person or online and will receive ongoing support. They will be asked to commit to being a Life Transitions Service volunteer for at least six months and agree to dedicate around half a day a week to the role. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer can find out more information about the role by emailing [LifeTransitions@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:LifeTransitions@eastsussex.gov.uk) or calling 07724 287034.

## **Amnesty for missing library books begins.**

Residents are being urged to check their homes for overdue books as the East Sussex Library Service launches its annual amnesty. In a bid to recover some of the missing titles, the service will waive fines until the end of March. Books can be returned to any East Sussex library during opening hours – alternatively, most libraries have drop boxes for out of hours returns.

Details of East Sussex libraries, information about renewing books and access to online library services can be found on the council's website.