

At last our budget is done for 24/25 and what a task it's been. We've had 3 workshops during the year for us bank benchers to have our input and although some will be disappointed I am sure we now have a balanced budget and no cuts to our Services.

As I have said before this is not only achieved by making cuts it is much about doing some things differently and most of the time we have found ways to perform our responsibilities without making cuts but doing things in a different way and this year we had a new Director of Finance who looked at every issue and did just that.

One of the good things is that although we don't like using our reserves we had put in the budget that we would be using some very limited reserves that we knew could be replaced. However, good news. Just days before making budget decisions and of course after releasing the original papers the Government came up with another 16 million plus and the upshot was that we did not have to touch the reserves.

Just some headlines

An additional £31.2m for vulnerable children and young people

£18.3 million more for adults social care

An extra 4 million to maintain the county's 4000km of roads

An extra £27.8m to manage increased costs, as inflation levels remain high and the increase in minimum wages.

All very well received and put to good use for the residents.

You will be aware that this has kept us pretty busy for the last few months and at the end of the day it is a 4.99% increase in County Council Tax which equates to £1.57 per week on a Band D property.

There's also been a very busy period at South Downs National Park.

I have said before but both South Downs and County are looking to get new Chief Executives. In County's case the current excellent Chief Executive is returning to East Sussex full time and will remain at West Sussex until we have replaced her.

In the case of South Downs National Park the Chief Executive officer left on the 1st of January and we are in the middle of a long process to get a new Chief Exec. Judging by the experience of other National Parks who have also needed new CEO's there are large amounts of people applying for these positions so we expect many applicants which will have to be sifted through and a short list obtained. It is probably unlikely to have a new CEO until at least July/August.

On top of this both organisations have also had to replace key Directors and in the case of SDNP this has already been achieved but at County Council we have only recently been appraised of our great Finance Director obtaining a new position in a London Borough. She really has been an asset to County and we are sorry to lose her. She has been great with this budget programme.

Apart from the above not a lot to add.

Highways have had a very difficult time with the weather conditions etc as you can imagine and some of the hot spots I have in my division. That said I am in competition with 69 other Councillors so need to keep working at it.

If you would like to contact me my email is here and if by mobile 07979152898.

See you soon.

Janet

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