

Annual Report by Jeremy Hunt, County Council Member for Chichester North

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last year I have, once again, very much enjoyed representing the residents in my Division, Chichester north, and particularly the residents of Singleton. This community is lucky enough to have a very active parish council, who put an enormous amount of time and effort into looking after the interests of their residents.

I obviously represent WSCC, and although I know that we are no longer able to provide the extent of services we once did, I hope you feel that generally we are able still to do enough to ensure that the fabric of your parish is maintained - although I do appreciate that the recent grass cutting does leave a lot to be desired! This situation of ever reducing grant funding from the Government is going to continue, so a strong parish community is going to become even more important. For example, resilience planning. This is something that many parishes, including Singleton, have undertaken with support from both WSCC and the CDC. I can't emphasise enough how important Community resilience planning is, because in times of emergency it could be quite a while before relief comes, especially if the 'disaster' is widespread.

Another project we are promoting and supporting is community volunteers. Going forward I believe that the work of volunteers will become even more essential in order to support your community.

Moving on to finance, I'm sure that you are all now aware that in February the WSCC Budget was approved, and this included a proposal to increase our share of the council tax by 3.95% from April 1st. This has meant an increase on an average BandD property of £45.90 per year/£0.88p per week. I would like to point out that WS has not raised its tax for five consecutive years, which means that you have enjoyed six years of no increases, a saving to a BandD tax payer of approx £525 over this period, assuming a tax increase of 2%pa.

Now some of you might be aware that until this year we were not able to increase our council tax by more than 2% without triggering a referendum. So what has changed to allow us to now increase our tax by 3.95%? Well, as part of the governments funding strategy going forward they have now allowed us to raise our tax by an additional 2%, providing that 2% is ring fenced for adult social care. So 2% of the increase will indeed be used to support funding for adult social care and the additional 1.95% will be used to support other services across the council.

Despite these spending pressures it's not all bad news, as despite the fact that we are having to find savings of nearly £18m on top of the tax increase, we are still

increasing spending on some key front line services, such as social care and various children's services. We are also investing an additional £5.5m in our highways budget.

We will also be continuing with both our CIF grants - which I believe the Village Hall Committee will shortly be submitting an application for a defibrillator - and our BSF awards. So please spread the word amongst any local groups that might be looking for funding - especially any group that look to prevent social isolation in your parish, such as weekly 'tea and chat' groups.

Just touching on a couple of other local issue in the parish. Firstly I did manage to get our Rangers team to clear the footway from Singleton to West Dean, and in fact right through West Dean itself. We did miss a very short section by the flint wall on the A286 - why I really don't know - but thanks to Nick Conway to getting that final piece cleared.

Obviously I was less successful getting the railings by the river repaired, and as reported last month our officers deemed these to be 'safe' although I agree they are not 'pretty'. I will continue to 'pester' our highways team about this issue, but please don't expect any instant results. I believe that your Clerk has written to the owner of the railings opposite Town Lane as these are not WS property. We have also said that we do not currently have any funding to repaint the railings alongside the river, but we have offered some advise and assistance if you wish to set up a volunteer group to carry out this task. I have recently updated Cllr Parish who I understand is now overseeing these particular issues.

Some time ago there was a desire for a 20mph speed limit in the village. At a recent East Dean, PC meeting a similar question was asked. WS have recently launched a new system which allows communities to apply for TRO's. The details and forms can be downloaded on: www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/traffic-regulation-orders/

I believe that if you and ED put in a joint request, covering ED, Charlton and Singleton, it might have some chance of success. However, only 2/3 TRO's per CLC area will be approved per year, so it won't be easy - but a TRO that covers multiple villages in one go will probably stand a greater chance of success than individual applications. I will leave the thought with you.

In case you hadn't heard, we have just started a consultation on proposed changes to the Household Recycling sites across the County. This consultation runs until June 12th. The Westhampnett site will remain open for 7days a week, but hours reduced to 8.30 - 4.30pm all year, including bank holidays. For full details, and to make a comment, please go to the website, which is www.haveyoursay.westsussex.gov.uk/waste-management-services/hwrs

Lastly, I would of course point you towards our website which has a wealth of information and guidance on the services WSCC provides. Apart from the details on our services there is also a section containing all our press releases which cover the many initiatives and campaigns we promote. These range from our West Sussex Matters campaign - where on Facebook and twitter we are releasing many facts about what we do and the services we provide - to subjects as varied as, and I quote from some of our headlines - 'promoting the recycling of old or worn out textiles', 'schools join the solar generation', 'West Sussex Voices concern over Government's Academy plans' and finally a campaign to fight against Child Sexual Exploitation - something that happens far more often than you would believe.

Well, I think I have gone on long enough, so once again thank you all for your support I very much look forward to representing you for another year.

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