

## **County Council Report 2016**

The last 12 months have been a continuous round of chasing potholes with other highway issues and numerous other requests from the council, clerk and residents.

I really am very appreciative of the large amount of personal correspondence I receive from our residents with requests for help on a number of issues, such as surface water flooding, location of temporary traffic lights, problems with school placements for their children to name but a few. I find this individual case work very rewarding, especially when common sense prevails, and working with parents manage to find a place at the correct school for their children. One particular difficult case concerned separated parents with a child requiring special educational needs; I am pleased to say that this is now going through mediation and the special educational package will involve both parents.

On my previous report I mentioned working to help low income families to take advantage of the free child care for two year olds. This free care has now been extended to 3 and 4 year olds and I'm pleased to report that many more families within the three parishes I represent are now taking advantage of this extra help.

Another issue that I was asked to help with was the mobile library service. This came about by two very elderly ladies from Over, who wrote to me explaining that they had heard the weekly visit from the library van was due to be cut to make savings. These two ladies have limited mobility and for them, and I am sure many others, this weekly visit is a lifeline which they depend on, and the removal of this service would have a drastic effect upon their lives.

I have also worked with vulnerable adults and the elderly to assist with placements and to help with benefit applications. I am also a Trustee of the Over Day Centre, which does fantastic work with the elderly of our surrounding villages. They too have had to change how they work and finance themselves and we have had many meetings with the County Council to ensure that this valuable local asset is not lost.

With the passing of the Adult and Social Care Act, the County Council along with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT) have created 16 new neighbourhood teams across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire to act as local hubs for community health services for older people and adults with long term conditions. These teams are made up of community and mental health nurses and therapists. Social care staff in Older People's Services are being aligned to the neighbourhood teams to improve working relationships with CPFT colleagues. Work has also begun on a number of work streams to foster collaboration on integrated solutions to prevent, delay and reduce ongoing need for health and social care. These include:

- Shared points of access for professionals and service users
- Arranging joint reviews and creating one plan for older people with complex needs

- Developing pathways from CPFT's new JET service (Joint Emergency Team) to other intermediate tier services
- Sustaining an integrated Occupational Therapy Service
- Promoting co-location for CPFT and CCC staff

### **Council Budget 2016/17**

After many weeks of discussions and a mammoth 12 hour full council meeting, the County Council budget was passed.

There were several options on the table, three groups wanted to raise the County Council contribution to the Council Tax by as much as 4% per year for the next 3-4 years, one group wanted a raise of 0% for one year, and one for a raise of only 1.99%. The council was presented with a full and balanced budget based on an increased tax of only 1.99%.

The 4% raise failed to get through as did the 0%. Then the group who wanted 0% went in with the others for a raise of 4%! But after some heated discussions this rainbow coalition failed.

At the end of a very long day, the tax was raised by just 2%. This 2% raise will be ring-fenced for adult health and social care which the County Council now has extra responsibility for.

Within this budget:

- We will save the School Crossing Patrol lollipop people
- We will keep the streetlights on until 2.00am
- We will maintain the vital community transport grant.
- We will retain the mobile library service
- We will maintain the road maintenance funding
- We will continue the Fenland Learning Centres

I believe that this was a good result, as many of our residents are low paid and cannot afford any excessive tax rises.

The council has continued to lobby government and explain to them that increasing taxation locally to offset an unfair national funding formula cannot be justified. That lobbying paid off, and Cambridgeshire will receive additional transitional grant funding from government of £3.20 million in 2016/17 and £3.17 million in 2017/18. Also, the unfair funding issue will be reassessed by Central Government in a new review on the local funding formula.

It is essential that the County Council continues to change how it operates even more than it has done over the past few years. The shared Chief Executive and shared services with other Local Authorities are saving many millions of pounds. This has to be taken much further to enable a slimmed down, transformed, highly efficient council, to provide the highest level of services to our residents at the lowest possible cost.

***Peter Hudson***