

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

7 JANUARY 2019

1. Local Government Finance Settlement

The Local Government Finance Settlement was published on 13 December. It contained nothing especially surprising, 2019/20 represents the final year of the current spending review period and as such the majority of grant figures are in line with the four year settlement that was released in 2016/17.

There were previous announcements in the Autumn Budget on 29 October for additional funding in adults' and children's social care in 2019/20, which will provide around £12.9m of additional funding to Hampshire, together with current year funding for pothole repairs of just under £12m. New announcements were as follows.

Council Tax - the referendum limits for 2019/20 are:

- Up to 3% for HCC and HFRA (no further social care precept increase for HCC this year). This is in line with our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) assumptions.
- £24 band D increase permitted for Police.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

Hampshire's RSG was reduced to zero in 2019/20 as part of the original four year settlement. On top of this we also lost a further £1.6m as a result of 'negative RSG' which reduced our top up grant from business rates.

The Government has announced that there will be no negative RSG in 2019/20 and this therefore represents a benefit of £1.6m to the Council next year.

Business Rates

A £180m surplus from the business rates levy account will be distributed on the basis of need, of which Hampshire will receive just over £1.8m. There will be fifteen 75% business rates retention pilots. Hampshire's bid was unsuccessful

but Southampton, Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight have had their existing pilot extended, albeit at a lower retention level (2018/19 was 100% retention).

Rural Services Delivery Grant

In 2019/20 this has been increased by £16m (keeping it at the same level as in 2018/19). HCC won't receive anything from this. Winchester City Council is the only council in Hampshire which benefits from this grant.

New Homes Bonus

£20m has been added to the settlement to maintain the New Home Bonus baseline at 0.4% (only growth in new homes above this baseline level attract the New Homes Bonus). Hampshire will receive £4.9m from the New Homes Bonus and this is already factored into the MTFS for next year.

- A package will be developed to help councils improve their efficiency, such as the publication in spring 2019 of an 'improvement tool'.
- The adult social care green paper will be published "soon".
- The Government may take further action against councils which are still borrowing to fund investment property purchases.

2. Opening of new relief road in Whitehill & Bordon

I was pleased to attend the opening of the new relief road today in Whitehill & Bordon. Executive Member for Environment and Transport Cllr Rob Humby cut the ribbon together with Dave Axam, the Chairman of the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership who funded the construction of the road.

The new road is effectively a by-pass which allows motorists to avoid driving through Whitehill & Bordon. It is a pleasant and interesting drive surrounded by forests and construction sites for all the new housing.

The road will improve connectivity which will be good for the local economy. Residents will also benefit from faster journey times up the A325.

3. Recent measures at Hampshire County Council

Parish Councillors may be interested to note the following:

- Hampshire County Council has set up a new body to co-ordinate public safety issues: The Hampshire County Strategy Group for Community Safety. The new group includes District and Borough Councils, the Hampshire Constabulary as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner. The early priorities of the new body will be to focus on tackling “County Lines” drug groups, social media vulnerabilities and cyberbullying and the interconnectedness and impact of mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse and adverse childhood experiences.
- As part of our resilience planning, the Cabinet at HCC have received a report on Brexit issues which sets out the potential impact for Hampshire of a no-deal Brexit. Contingency reparations are being made for disruption at the Port of Portsmouth and the Highways network, as well as the impact on the local economy.
- On 2 December three London Boroughs were “on-boarded” to Hampshire’s Shared Services Partnership: Kensington & Chelsea, Hammersmith & Fulham and Westminster. Functions such as payroll, IT, HR and Finance will now be provided to these London Boroughs by Hampshire County Council staff. This makes Hampshire the largest shared services partnership in the country. The shared services team is a great success because it brings an income stream to HCC as well as extra resilience for Hampshire taxpayers.

4. South Downs Volunteer Conservation Fund

A new fund has been set up by the South Downs National Park Trust which provides funding as well as volunteer support for conservation projects. There are now three ways to apply for funding from the South Downs National Park and I thought it would be helpful to summarise them and include relevant links:

South Downs Volunteer Conservation Fund

Grants of up to £5,000 are available for non-profit organisations, parish councils and landowners in 2019 for projects that care for and enhance the South Downs National Park and promote opportunities for people to understand and enjoy it.

Almost any project which helps to conserve or enhance the National Park is eligible, provided it fits with the National Park Partnership Management Plan and makes use of the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Project examples include refurbishing a community pond, creating a sensory garden, creating wildflower meadows and butterfly banks.

The deadline to apply for the first round of funding is 31 March 2019 and the first grants will be awarded in June 2019. Find out more at www.southdownstrust.org.uk/volunteer-fund

South Downs Sustainable Communities Fund

Any partnership or other not-for-profit organisations which include social enterprise, community interest companies, voluntary organisations and ‘for profit’ organisations (these projects cannot be for financial gain to the business) can apply for funding if they believe their project is bringing social, environmental, economic or cultural benefits to a community within the National Park.

Grants are available for up to 50% of the project cost from £250 to a maximum of £10,000. Please note that the criteria of the fund are regularly reviewed and may change without notice. The National Park Authority is not obliged to consider applications under criteria which were in place when an enquiry or expression of interest was made.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan Projects

The SDNPA has now opened the call for projects for the next round of CIL spending. The closing date for bids is 15th February 2019.

“Infrastructure” consists of the services and systems that our communities need to function including the natural environment, roads, schools, community services, sports and leisure facilities and green spaces.

The CIL Infrastructure Delivery Plan lists all infrastructure needed to support sustainable growth in the National Park, as set out in our emerging Local Plan. Projects identified on the IDP will be considered for funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Projects may include the provision of new infrastructure, or the improvement, replacement, operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

The IDP is a 'live document' that will be updated over time as infrastructure needs change and more information becomes available.

Applications to both the Sustainable Communities Fund and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan can be submitted via 'Projects for the South Downs', the online application process, which can be accessed using this link – www.projects.southdowns.gov.uk .

Any queries relating to the use of the Projects for the South Downs system should be directed to grants@southdowns.gov.uk.

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