

County Council Update

- WSCC, like many others - both businesses and individuals - is being impacted by increasing inflation, which will be a real challenge over the coming months. This will obviously impact on our in-year budget, as well as our Medium Term Financial Strategy over the next four years. Of particular concern is the continuing pressure on our social services, with placement costs for both looked after children and for adults of all ages who are in need of support, getting ever more expensive. Of course we are also in limbo regarding what our government funding levels are likely to be going into next year. Despite the new Chancellor's 'fiscal event' last Friday there was no reference to LA funding, but hopefully we will get some indication before too long. Back in June, before Boris Johnson resigned, Michael Gove had announced a two year settlement, which was welcomed. However, that is now very unlikely to happen, so we wait to see what happens going forward.
- We realise that our residents across the county are understandably worried about the increasing cost of living pressures. Those pressures have been relieved slightly by the government introducing a fuel cap, which was obviously welcomed by both households and businesses alike. Also, to help households with the cost of increased gas and electricity, there is a one of £400 grant. There are also a number of other grants available to support people across the board, particularly those who are paid disability benefits or are on low incomes. To check these out there is a useful government website at: <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/> Whilst we have no additional resources to directly help individuals or households address these cost of living pressures - and we are expecting our own financial challenges with additional cost pressures across many of our services - we will however be supporting residents by providing information, advice and support across a wide range of issues through either our libraries (<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/libraries/contact-the-library-service/>) - which are open six days a week - or through our community hub (<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/fire-emergencies-and-crime/coronavirus-covid-19-information/advice-and-support/community-hub/> or call 033 022 27980) which is open seven days a week.
- Despite our financial challenges, our teams continue to deliver excellent services. Early in August we published our **Annual Report 2021 - 2022** and this can be found at; www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/17711/annual_report_2021-22.pdf and I urge you to take a look. The report shows that the County council has made significant developments throughout the year but recognises that there is still more to do on our improvement journey. Some key highlights include:
 - **76,477 people supported by the Community Hub during the pandemic**
 - **3,355 Safe and Well Fire Service visits to homes to improve fire safety**
 - **2,385 enterprises supported to start, revive, innovate and grow**
 - **650 road improvement schemes delivered**
 - **16.3km of cycleways created**
 - **88.8% of schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted**

- **5.81m uses of our libraries' digital and virtual services by residents**
- **10% reduction in CO2 emissions produced by County Council activities from 2019/20**
- **11% reduction of operational property to help make best use of resources and deliver more effective services**

In his foreword, Council Leader Paul Marshall said: "*The past year has been one of real progress for West Sussex County Council as we continued on our improvement journey while delivery vital services for our communities*".

- In July the WSCC school meals team won the **Catering Business of the Year 2022 award**, beating multi-million-pound private caterers. The Council's small team of around 45 Cook Supervisors, Catering Assistants and Officers fought off competition from other councils and private caterers with huge resources to scoop the top prize at the LACA Awards for Excellence. John Figgins, the Council's head of catering, who was also shortlisted for an individual prize, said: "Awards like these shine a light on a group of people that are so dedicated and hard-working, a team that have a 'let's get it done' attitude, who just want to do the best by the children they feed in school, always finding solutions to keep the meals healthy and sustainable."

Local Issues:

- I know that people are often vexed about various roadworks popping up in their parishes. Last month CC Members had a briefing session from our Streetworks Team which was very illuminating. We all just look at the annoying roadworks that pop up in our neighbourhood, but it isn't until you see the whole picture across the county that you realise just how complicated this whole process is. I won't go into all the details, but do you know how many street works permit applications we processed between July 2021 and July 2022 - ?? (I'll tell you on the night!!) It certainly keeps the team busy!
- Just a reminder that from Saturday 1st October the **Westhampnett Amenity site** changes to Winter opening times. The site will be open from **9am to 4pm daily, except Tuesdays when it is closed all day**. A good piece of news is that the Westhampnett - together with a number of our other sites - can now accept hard plastic items for recycling - such as plastic chairs, boxes, pipes, toys and children's slides.
- Finally, please don't forget to keep an eye on our website, especially our news and campaigns page where you can keep up to date with all our latest news.
<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/about-the-council/news-and-campaigns/>

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