

Cllr Jeremy Birch – 01424 425585

January 2011 Report

County budget

Local government is taking virtually the largest reduction of any area of government activity – a 28% cut over four years; defence takes an 8% cut. The cuts in government grant to the county council necessitate a £100 million reduction in spending. For next year's budget they have already started a consultation on tightening the eligibility criteria for receiving a service from the adult social care department. It could mean only those with the very highest need would get a service at all. There are also reductions being proposed on spending for children with special educational needs. And a cut is being considered within the highways department in Winter maintenance despite the weather we have just had. The budget will finally be determined in February.

Highways

The current date being given for the repair of the broken sewer in George Street and the consequent road closure is 21st February for three weeks.

The Courthouse Street saga continues with vehicles continuing not to respect it the pedestrianisation. After an inordinate delay the county highways section has promised to conclude their safety audit of the lockable bollard suggestion by next week.

County highway officers have written to me to promise that the additional school safety warning sign on Old London Road for southbound traffic (as tirelessly campaigned for by my borough council colleague Cllr John Hodges) will be in place by the end of next month.

Older person's care

Following my visit to the Isabel Blackman Centre before Xmas I have had a meeting with the director of adult social care to pass on the concerns and complaints of the users. I am hoping to go back to Isabel Blackman in a couple of months and see if any of the concerns have been dealt with.

As you may recall the Centre was closed for refurbishment and then re-opened to cater for its original users and those from the Moreton Day Centre in St Leonards which had been closed permanently. The Moreton's residential facility had been closed some time ago. As a county councillor I had opposed all this developments.

In December the county council decided that "in partnership with the independent sector to develop new services on all the original Age Well sites and at Hookstead in Crowborough and the Moreton Centre in St Leonards. The business does not support development on the Mount Denys site in Hastings. If the proposals for the Age Well Programme are agreed by Cabinet, the service at Mount Denys would continue, until alternative provision is developed on the other Age Well Programme sites, which is in line with the original plan."

This means Mount Denys residential facility for older mentally infirm and its linked day centre Pinehill will stay as they although their buildings are past their 'sell by date'. There will be attempt to recreate a residential facility at Moreton by the private sector with guaranteed places for county council referrals.