

County Councillor's Report September 2011

- The East Sussex decision to redistribute the Excellence Cluster money, previously earmarked for Hastings schools, to all schools in the county will lead to significant local redundancies and the redundancy notices will be issued imminently. The Hastings Excellence Cluster will be reduced to about 17 staff by Xmas. They will continue to be employed by the County Council till March after which time a locally-established educational trust managed by Hastings schools will employ them. This will of course mean they will be able to support a lot less local children and families in the future.
- The coalition government reversed the previous government's provisional funding decision and did not approve the Hastings-Bexhill Link Road's financing but put it into a Development Pool as one of 45 schemes bidding for a total of £950m against a budget of £650m. As a result the County Council has now submitted a bid to the government for just half of the likely cost of the road and accepted that the rest of the cost will be met locally. That means the County Council being forced to find an additional £25million. The success of the bid should be announced by the government before Xmas.
- The new Hastings Academy is now open in the Hillcrest buildings with the construction of the new school continuing on the site. In its final year Hillcrest recorded 43 per cent of students gaining 5 GCSEs at grades A-C including in English and Maths; last year the figure was 38 per cent. The Hastings and the St Leonards Academies still do not have a chief executive to oversee them both.
- Last month the Care Quality Commission has issued a very critical report of Mount Denys on the Ridge - the County Council's care home for the elderly mentally infirm. CQC inspectors made an unannounced visit in July because of evidence of possible concerns. Inspectors found there had been 44 incidents of violence between residents and 26 incidents of violence towards staff. The County Council's Adult Social Care Department is working on an action plan, to include additional staffing, to respond to the CQC's report.
- The County Council has cut its spending on youth from £8.1m to £5.6m. This will mean the end of nearly all youth club funding. Instead the County Council will only fund activity aimed at the most vulnerable individual young people – about 850 across East Sussex.
- The Old Town 20mph is now up and running and seems to be working well. We have now discovered that West Street is not included and I am pressing to incorporate it into the scheme.
- The yellow box junction at the Sussex Arms (at the junction of Mount Road and Old London Road) was agreed some months ago and we are pressing for it the decision to be implemented on the ground as soon as possible.
- I will be presenting a petition to the County Council meeting on 18th October on behalf of the Hastings Old Town Residents' Association. The petition with over 600 signatures calls for improvements to road safety in High Street and for a report to be prepared on it.
- I have been informed that the outstanding highway works on the Broomgrove Allotment site will now be completed by the developer and therefore a diverted footpath running from Priory Road down to Hurrell Road should be in place by mid-October. We await progress with interest.