

## Report from county councillor Jeremy Birch February 2013

- **County Council budget:** The government's heavy reduction in grants to local authorities has meant the County Council budget has been severely reduced. The budget has now been agreed for 2013/14 but it is part of a three year plan to cut spending by £60 million, including cutting the adult social care budget by £30 million. When I publicly questioned the director of adult social care he accepted that it would mean a reduced "quality of life" for our older residents. There are also serious reductions in the budgets for activities for young people and for children at risk. I did not support these budget proposals but they were agreed. In this part of Hastings we must be especially vigilant about the future of the Isabel Blackman Centre in the Old Town. It will part of a review of the day care centres for older people that the County Council provides itself. We don't know what the review will come up with but we do know that it will have to find savings of £1 million. I will certainly oppose any suggestion of closing Isabel Blackman.
- **Potholes:** Clearly the wet and icy weather has taken its toll on the road surfaces. Do feel free let me know if there are particular problems that aren't getting dealt with that concern you. The County Council highways department have told me the following: "Out on the ground we have repaired over 1500 potholes since the beginning of January and currently have 16 gangs repairing potholes; double the number of maintenance gangs we would normally have. You'll be reassured to hear we aren't experiencing potholes on those roads we have resurfaced over the past couple of years. We have also introduced 'pothole patrols' where maintenance gangs will patrol designated areas and fix potholes they find as well as those reported by members of the public. This is a more efficient and expedient way to repair potholes given the vast numbers and will mean we can achieve more repairs in a day. The vans will be highly visible across the county with a "Pothole Patrol" logo so that the public will be aware too that we are out tackling potholes."  
The best way to report a pothole is via the Contact Centre on 0345 60 80 193, via Twitter @esscroads, or on-line via a very simple map on the County Council website:  
<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/contactus/reportaproblem/streetproblem>  
<<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/contactus/reportaproblem/streetproblem>> .  
Details about how to make a claim in the event of hitting a pothole can also be found on the County Council website along with a summary of the County Council liability:  
<http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/roads/contactus/injuries.htm>
- **20mph:** Several residents have contacted me about the possibility of 20mph without physical traffic calming measures, similar to those in operation in the Old Town. So far I have had requests for 20mph limits to

be put forward for Asburnham Road, Edmund Road and the Frederick Road/Clifton Road area. Do feel free to contact me on this campaign which I am very happy to pursue with the County Council highways section.

- **Play area:** In my capacity as leader of Hastings Borough Council I was very pleased to be asked to cut the ribbon on the new Boyne Road play area. The ceremonial cutting was done by myself along with about ten children – we all had been provided with scissors which were of course handed back straight afterwards! I know my borough council colleague Cllr John Hodges, the borough council's play development team and the Clive Vale Residents' Association had all put in a lot of work to get us to this point, especially putting together a package of funding from a number of different sources. The play area combines formal and informal play space and I hope youngsters from the wider local area will use it and enjoy it.
- **Broomgrove Road:** County Council officers have told me the following on this on-going saga about the new residential development on Broomgrove Road and the obligation from the planning permission on the developer to make-up the quality of the road: "The works to upgrade Broomgrove Road have now been completed. The developer paid the design check and inspection fee and therefore the specification was agreed and the works inspected to ensure they are to the appropriate standard. In this case however the developer has chosen not to enter into a Section 38 agreement to allow Broomgrove Road to be adopted as public highway. In this situation there is nothing further that can be done as we have no powers to forcibly adopt streets; it is purely the developers' decision. Enquiries have been made about the developer, but they appear to have gone out of existence. It is possible that the road could be adopted if the County Council were to take forward adoption under Section 228. However, this does involve quite a lot of work and is not something that would ordinarily be pursued unless there was an overwhelming desire locally.

The footway that crossed the site was closed during construction as the original route was built over. The approved scheme included the construction of a new estate road across most of the site with a section of footpath to link to Mount Pleasant Road to provide the pedestrian link. The development has never been completed with only the first phase fronting Broomgrove Road being built. Having discussed the issue with Hastings Borough Council, Planning Department, it is unlikely that the developer will be completing the scheme as approved. On this basis in order to reinstate the pedestrian link a new footway has been constructed across the site on a new line and it is suitable to be opened to the public albeit there is no lighting provided.

The footway is currently accessible from Broomgrove Road; however a hoarding is still in place at the Mount Pleasant Road end. So far our attempts to contact the developer to resolve this issue have been unsuccessful so we shall utilise our powers under the Highways Act to

- remove the hoarding from the highway. The Highway Steward will visit the adopted footway to assess what work is required to remove the hoarding and that the footway is in a fit condition for the public to pass and repass once it is re-opened.”
- **Alfred Road:** Here also a developer (this time of the new supported accommodation on the old Clive Vale Hotel site) has a planning obligation to carry out highway works. County Council officers have told me: “There is a planning condition requiring certain highway improvement works, including the provision of a pedestrian refuge at the junction of Alfred Road with Old London Road. Technical approval was granted and instructions were issued to Legal Services last October to prepare a draft Section 278 Agreement to cover the highway works, however to date the developer has failed to complete the Agreement. I have therefore been liaising with the Planning Enforcement team at Hastings Borough Council regarding the completion of this and other outstanding matters and Ability Housing Association have now been in touch to confirm that a contractor will be on site this month.”
  - **Schools:** We will all have read about the very disappointing Ofsted inspection report into William Parker School following on from the poor GCSE results last Summer – unfortunately the poorest in the county. The school is now in special measures and the County Council is proposing replacing the governing body with an appointed interim executive board as has happened at All Saints, after it received a poor Ofsted report. William Parker may well be on the way now to becoming an academy putting it outside the oversight of the County Council, although because of its poor inspection report in will be up to the government to decide which academy sponsor will be appointed. I will be pressing whoever that sponsor may be to maintain existing trade union rights for staff and not to diminish staff terms or conditions, to retain existing pupil admission and exclusion policies and for the school to continue to play its part in the local school partnership arrangements and to still be part of our local family of schools. As for All Saints it continues to make progress since its Ofsted inspection. Its long-term position is still not determined because there is still the expectation of the government that all schools in special measures will become academies.

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