

## County Councillor Report June 2013

- **The new county council:** Last month's election leaves no one party with a majority on the council, though the Conservatives are the largest single group. They now have 20 councillors (a loss of nine), the Lib Dems 10 (a loss of three), Labour seven (a gain of three), UKIP seven and there are five Independents. The Conservatives have minority control of the council but clearly could be defeated on any matter should the other parties all agree. In Hastings seven of the eight county councillors are Labour with one Conservative. I remain Labour's county spokesperson on financial and budgetary matters and sit on the Audit Committee. But primarily I still see my task as to speak up for the needs of the Old Hastings and Tressell division and of Hastings as a whole which are very different to those of most of East Sussex.
- **Education:** Very pleasingly the Hastings Academy on the old Hillcrest site and the St Leonards Academy have both been graded "good" following their recent Ofsted inspections. This is a long way from the very disappointing results being recorded by Hillcrest three or four years ago. Dudley Infants along with two primaries in the town has decided to become an academy under the umbrella of the Academy Trust led by Brighton University that already manages the Hastings and the St Leonards Academies.
- **Isobel Blackman Centre:** It was agreed earlier in the year that the day care unit would move back downstairs (as has been requested by users and their families) and the community hub would move upstairs. This had been earmarked to happen in May but has been put back a bit. Having decided to implement the change then the sooner it can be done the better otherwise it can lead to unnecessary confusion and uncertainty. It appears that the community hub will be operating at a lower level of activity, certainly in the immediate period after the change around.
- **Harold Road:** The county highways department are still progressing with the replacement of the retaining wall outside of nos 75/77 Harold Road. Orders have just been issued to BT and UKPN (electricity) to divert their cables out of the way of the works. A date is still awaited by when these companies will do this. The highways section have a completed design for the replacement but cannot yet give a date for completion beyond saying it will be this year. I am pressing them first of all for a timescales and for it to be as speedy as they are able to make it.
- **Mount Road:** Traffic chaos took over Mount Road a week or so back due to the water company's contractor trying to locate the source of a leak. While we have to accept emergency work has to be carried out by public utilities their record of liaising with the highways authority (and of properly making good the affected area of road before they leave) is not especially good. Emergency or not it shouldn't require resident association representatives, myself as county councillor and the county highways staff all to get involved. The County Council has decided to

implement a permit scheme whereby instead of just informing the highway authority about its intention to carry out works in the area, a public utility will need to book time on the highway through a permit. This wouldn't necessarily cover emergency works like leaks but hopefully it will lead to a more ordered relationship between the highway authority and the public utilities and them working to an agreed standard.

- **High Street:** Plans are being worked up by highways staff following the petition presented by myself on behalf of Old Town residents to make High Street more pedestrian friendly and to deter rat-running along it. These plans will emerge over the Summer and a consultation will be held in September.

**Cllr Jeremy Birch – 01424 425585**

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