

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

TOEAST TISTED PARISH COUNCIL

25 JANUARY 2018

1. Local Government Finance Settlement

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was issued by the Government on 19 December 2017. In a nutshell, this settlement will enable Council Tax to be raised by an extra 1% meaning that the maximum permitted increase from April 2018 will be just below 6% instead of just below 5%.

To be more specific, the settlement will give all authorities the ability to levy a council tax increase of 2.99% (excluding the social care precept) before a referendum is required. There is still then the option to apply an adult social care precept of up to 3%, taking the total permitted increase to 5.99%.

No decision has yet been made by Hampshire County Council on the rate of Council Tax increase from April 2018. However, given the well-known funding pressures, an increase of 5.99% seems a high probability outcome. The additional 1% per annum would provide additional recurring funding of £5.7m from 2018/19 and £11.4m from 2019/20 onwards (assuming that the extra 1% is implemented in both years). The County Council will set the increase for April 2018 at its meeting on 22 February 2018 and this will be announced in a Press Release.

The settlement also gave extra flexibility to Police and Crime Commissioners. For example a Band D increase of up to £12 will be permitted for all PCCs (this equates to 7.25% for Hampshire and Isle of Wight). There is still no restriction on the increase which Parish and Town Councils can seek to their precept. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid stated that:

“The government intends to defer the setting of referendum principles for town and parish councils for 3 years. This is subject to the sector taking all available steps to mitigate the need for Council Tax increases...and the government seeing clear evidence of restraint in the increases set by the sector as a whole.”

2. Transformation to 2019 (“T19”)

The County Council has made progress in identifying the £140m of savings needed within the coming two years. I am pleased to be able to report that at Cabinet on 11 December 2017 three important local services have been taken out of the scope of T19:

- School Crossing Patrols
- Community Transport
- Housewold Waste & Recycling Centres

This is very welcome news for all residents who place great value on these services.

However, the savings do still need to be found and it looks inevitable that implementation will stretch beyond that two-year period due to the complexity of delivering the efficiencies. 11 separate service specific consultations are planned to take place in 2018 with the bulk of the exercises likely to occur in the second half of the year. We will have to look at the detail to see what the impact will be for residents and for Parish Councils.

3. Review of National Parks announced

The 25-Year Environment Plan “A Green Future” which the Prime Minister launched on 11 January 2018 included a commitment to undertake a major review of National Parks along the lines of the Hobhouse Report which led to the creation of the first National Parks 70 years ago. This review presents an opportunity for the South Downs and the National Park Authority is looking forward to engaging with DEFRA and the Review Panel as the review proceeds.

4. New electric vehicles are reducing costs whilst also cutting carbon emissions

We want Hampshire to be at the forefront of electric vehicle technology and two new initiatives ensure that we are leading the way in encouraging people to switch to electric vehicles. I am considering it myself actually.

Firstly, a new electric delivery van and pool car based at Bar End, Winchester, will cost 97% less to ‘fuel’ than equivalent diesel vehicles. The County Council is also reviewing which other vehicles in its 156 small vehicle fleet could be replaced with electric equivalents – which could save £210,000 every year.

The other initiative is to install charging points, which make it easier for people to use electric vehicles. 40 new charging points are to be installed by the County Council across Hampshire. The County Council and its partners have already installed 14 charging points across the county - Petersfield Festival Hall car park is one of the locations which now has an electric charge point. A tender process is underway to appoint a private sector partner to install and operate additional charging points.

The County Council has already saved nearly £30 million in energy costs over the past seven years after cutting its carbon emissions by 38.1% since 2010. The local authority has now set a more ambitious target to cut carbon from 40% to 50% by 2025. Hampshire has a strong claim to be one of the greenest councils in the UK.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers