

Tough Decisions

Since 2008, when national austerity began, the County Council has had to reduce spending by £340 million but our biggest challenge is yet to come, with a forecast gap in our budget of a further £140 million, by April 2020. Our finances remain under immense pressure as demand continues to grow for County Council services – particularly social care for increasing numbers of older and more vulnerable adults, and vulnerable children. The picture is worsened by the fact that central Government revenue support grant funding to Hampshire will cease altogether in 2019/20. As a result, we will have to make some very tough decisions and will be seeking residents' views in the coming weeks, in order to sustain vital public services for the future.

With less funding and higher demand for some services, particularly social care, reserves have enabled us to weather the storm and plug budget gaps. Using reserves will continue to play a crucial role going forward – but we recognise that this is not a long term solution. The two main reasons are that the majority of our reserves are already committed to fund essential capital investment and one-off reserves cannot be used to solve revenue problems. When there isn't enough income to pay the bills, ongoing service costs still need to be reduced - otherwise funding problems remain and grow for future years.

All of this means that the County Council needs to find more radical ways of making ends meet while ensuring that we protect vital services. As such, the County will be proposing potential options to residents in the summer, to seek their views on what we might do over the next two years to balance the budget. Given that our efficiency programme between 2008 and 2019/20 represents total savings of nearly £0.5 billion we need to continue to ensure limited funds are targeted to where they are needed most and fully maximised to benefit Hampshire residents.

All Hampshire Residents' are urged to complete the Consultation on this matter which runs from midday on 3rd July 2017, and **closes at 11.59pm on 21st August 2017**. Papers copies may be requested by emailing insight@hants.gov.uk A link to the consultation, which can be completed online can be found below: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/news/jul03balancingbudget>

Living Independently

Hampshire County Council's investment to enable the development of Extra-Care accommodation to support the greater numbers of people living into old age, and younger adults with learning and physical disabilities is set to exceed £70 million by 2022.

The challenges facing the Authority in caring for these vulnerable residents requires consideration of the widest range of possible options – including building new schemes and improving a number of existing sites. As such, £45 million is being invested over a decade to stimulate the development of schemes for older people across the whole county, with a further £35million for schemes to support younger adults with learning and physical disabilities.

Library Cards

Parents are signing up their babies to their local Library at the same time as registering their births, as part of a new Hampshire County Council initiative. In the past year, 1,267 new babies have received their very own Library Cards from Hampshire Library Service after visiting Hampshire Registration Service. The voluntary scheme has seen around 20% of all babies registered in Hampshire join the Library Service since May 2016.

Nowadays Libraries are much more than just places to inspire excitement about books. They are the hub of local communities, providing family activities such as baby rhyme time and story time as well as registration and health services, coffee shops and public internet access. More and more families are choosing to sign up their new-borns whilst registering the birth.

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