

Sue Chandler – Kent County Councillor for the Sandwich Division

Report to Ash Annual Parish Meeting 2019

There has been much publicity during the past year of the difficult financial situation in which many councils, county and District find themselves, I am very pleased to report that whilst we certainly have challenges Kent County Council is financially stable, although at the Council meeting to set the budget for 19/20 the Council Leader acknowledged the need for the local government funding from government to increase substantially.

Again the Council has regrettably had to include an additional 2% increase in Council Tax for adult social care bringing the total increase to 4.7%. **Social care** is still the biggest challenge facing the Council, the total budget for this in the coming year is around £433 million. We are continuing to make improvements to the quality of care people receive, partnership with our NHS colleagues, the training and pay of those employed by care providers and enabling residents to remain independent. Just over 12 months ago the headlines were about delays in the elderly being discharged from hospital because care wasn't available. Really excellent work has resulted in the targets for this being met by KCC for over 12 months now. The enabling service which people coming out of hospital receive for 6 weeks is also showing good success rates with around 80% of people receiving the service being totally independent at the end of that time.

For **children, young people and their families** work continues to secure the best outcomes. Our schools continue to do well and in the last year KCC launched The Education People (a Local Authority Trading Company) to deliver education support services to all schools in Kent.

There is an increasing demand in Kent for support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability. While this is a national issue, it seems particularly high in East Kent where the incidence of Autistic Spectrum Disorder is rising. A more integrated approach to the early help provision and children's social work should mean better outcomes. A mix of direct services and commissioned services provide out of school support and activities for young people. In Dover and some villages including Ash, Pie Factory Music offer some great opportunities.

I continue to Chair the Dover District Local Children's Partnership Group, bit of a long winded name but it actual describes what it does. By bringing together many of those who deliver services for children and young people in our District, including schools, we can look at some of the very local issues, help provide better services with better linking and fund some very targeted project work which this year is focussing on family resilience and healthy eating

I am pleased to report that for **Highways** maintenance the budget for the current year and the next year will see the biggest investment in Highways ever made. This has risen from £70m in 17/18 to £89m in the current year and will rise next year to £95.7m. There is also an additional £28m from the DFT for highways improvements material affected by Brexit preparedness. The Pothole blitz continues, as always if you report potholes and they do not seem to be getting fixed let me know. Highways have also at long last recruited 5 additional drainage engineers. Like many County Councillors with rural divisions, I have lobbied hard

that improved maintenance of drains and ditches would not only reduce flooding but would also reduce the deterioration of the roads, particularly small rural ones. A new initiative of Highways Improvement Plans for Parishes should see a more organised and effective approach. It should do exactly what it says – bring improvements to highways in the Parish. I recently met with your Parish Councillors and Highways Officers to progress the plan for Ash.

The **Kent Resilience Forum** and each KCC Department have also been working on their plans in the event of significant road congestion following Brexit. Clearly everyone hopes they will remain just plans which is now looking increasingly the case. They are on the whole the plans that are in place anyway for severe weather or other extraordinary events and focus on protecting the vulnerable and maintaining services. As I have reported, I have consistently voiced my concerns for our villages in the event that the former Manston Airfield is used for lorry parking (Phase 3 of Operation Brock).

As well as more than maintaining **frontline services**, KCC is able to deliver some £40m worth of non-statutory services including community wardens, country parks, Young Persons Travel Pass, housing related support for the most vulnerable and Member Grants. I have been able to support a huge range of local activities, initiatives and events through my Members Grants and look forward to doing more in the future.

During the year I have been happy to support your Parish Council, when and where possible and also to take up issues and problems for individual residents.

SC/18.03.19