

## Update Parish Reports 2016-17

### 1. Finances

Since 2011, the Government has cut its grant to RDC by a total of £5.4 million, including a cut of £600,000 for 2016/17. The Government general grant will be cut by a further £620,000 in 2017/18. In 2016/17, the grant was £1.07 million therefore in 2017/18 RDC will only receive £450,000. By 2020 the Government will not pay RDC a general grant at all.

RDC's latest forecasts expect a shortfall in income over the next five years of around £2.4 million. This calculation takes into account other changes to spending and income generated from other sources. The revenue budget for 2017/18 has been balanced by securing savings and additional income of around £1.2 million.

More detailed information on the Council's finances can be read in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Sustainability and Efficiency Plan sets out how RDC intends to meet the funding challenges ahead, which services to prioritise and how lower priority services might be delivered over the next three years. You can find both documents on the Council's website at <http://www.rother.gov.uk/article/1059/Budgets-and-accounts>.

### 2. Services - Demand

Demand for some RDC services is rising, particularly in the area of housing and homelessness. For example:

- 2.1 Homelessness applications were up by a third and households accepted as homeless were up by 74% in the first six months of the financial year.
- 2.2 Complaints of disrepair for private sector landlords were up 59% on last year.
- 2.3 54% more investigations of reported abandoned vehicles to see if the vehicle has to be removed by the Council, comparing an average month last year to this year.
- 2.4 25% more complaints about food safety and 40% more licensing applications.

ESCC funding has also been significantly reduced over recent years and the strain on their services is likewise leading to increased pressure on RDC's services.

### 3. Services - Successes

RDC has put in place some innovative working solutions to ensure that services continue to perform well, for example:

- 3.1 100% of major developments planning applications were determined on time (in either 13 weeks or an agreed date with the developer).
- 3.2 105 new affordable homes built in 2015/16 in Bexhill and Rye; the highest number for the last 10 years. A further 71 were finished in 2016 in Bexhill and we expect around 80 by the end of the financial year.

- 3.3 29 arts and cultural events and 19 health and sporting events supported by the Council with small grants, staff time and other resources from April to December 2016.
- 3.4 Only an average of 1% of public land and highways were found with unacceptable levels of litter when surveyed.
- 3.5 RDC website was available 99.99% of the time and website use is up by 6%.
- 3.6 Over 28,500 residents receive a My Alerts email and there has been approximately 100,000 clicks through from a My Alerts message on to a website for more information.

#### 4. Devolution

Looking at the next three years ahead, in order to minimise service losses to the public and residents the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Sustainability and Efficiency Plan will seek to continue to work with town and parish councils, along with community groups, in devolving non-statutory functions. There have been a number of good examples where some of these have already been effectively passed over, securing these services for local people and giving local communities more control over public assets in their

For these services to be enjoyed into the future a number of other services will be required to be devolved or they may well be lost. RDC looks forward to continuing the good working relationships with its Town and Parish Councils to secure these services in an ever challenging financial climate.

#### 5. Public consultations

There are several consultations underway at the moment including the Development and Site Allocations Plan, Sedlescombe Neighbourhood Plan and Bexhill Community Governance Review. For further information see the Council's website at <http://www.rother.gov.uk/article/367/Current-Consultations>

I hope that the above report gives an overview of the issues facing the Council - as well as some successes! I report in writing to the Parish Council on a monthly basis and should any resident require a copy of these, I (or, I am sure, your Parish Clerk) would be happy to email a copy. It is important that your Councillors continue to look for best solutions for our residents and react promptly to any changing circumstances affecting policy.

**Sally-Ann Hart**