

## Icklesham DC Report November 2017

### 1. Fuel Poverty

I thought I might remind you about the issues surrounding fuel poverty in our district, as winter is fast approaching. I have attached a document in a email to Anna Evett - it might be useful to print some of it off and put it in the village notice board, and perhaps include it on the village website, to inform people of help available to those who are at risk due to the effects of fuel poverty.

Reducing fuel poverty is important. Nine percent of households in Rother and over 22,600 homes in East Sussex (again, 9%) are defined as being fuel poor. In the last 5 years, an average of 300+ people each year in East Sussex have died in the winter compared to the rest of the year - a third of these deaths attributable to cold homes (heart, respiratory, strokes). There is a cost to the NHS. A 2012 study by Age UK found that 'the annual cost to the NHS in England of cold homes is £1.36 billion, not to mention the associated cost to social care services, which is likely to be substantial'.

Like many local authorities, RDC does not have the financial resources to directly target fuel poverty. However, it is part of the East Sussex Energy Partnership (ESEP). ESEP was formed by the local councils in 2007 to promote home energy efficiency, insulation and renewable measures. ESEP aims to help protect individuals and communities in East Sussex from the effects of living in a cold home. As far as communication and identification of people at risk of fuel poverty, going forward, and as part of ESEP, Rother District Council is training frontline staff about fuel poverty, assisting residents to get assistance and promoting various local fuel poverty reduction initiatives for vulnerable residents.

The separate document provides details regarding the East Sussex Warm and Healthy Homes Project and is worth bringing to the attention of all our residents so that they know where to get support

[www.winterhomecheck.com](http://www.winterhomecheck.com)

0800 085 1674

[www.eastsussex.gov.uk/keepwarm](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/keepwarm)

### 2. Cabinet Meeting 5th November 2017, of note:

2.1 Council Chamber Audio/Visual Equipment upgrade. Various options were put forward to upgrade the Audio/Visual equipment in the Council Chamber ranging from bare essentials (replacing the microphone systems) to complete overhaul (replacing projection equipment and installing fixed cameras) to enable video recording of meetings and web casting of meetings. The costs ranged from £34,000 to £68,000, plus £12,000 per annum to webcast. To provide transparency of Council meetings is a legal requirement, whether audio or visual. RDC already has the ability to audio record meetings and publish these on the website via YouTube. Some councils such as ESCC live stream meetings via webcam, but the number of residents accessing this facility is not high. Balancing costs, Cabinet resolved to approve upgrades in both the Conference and Audio and Video/Presentation Systems, but did not approve installing cameras and the purchase of a Webcasting Encoder Installation at this time.

2.2 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/10 to 2022/23. Of note, Cabinet resolved to maintain its policy of maximising the annual increase in Council Tax within the Governments referendum limit. For a Band D home, this amounts to £5.00 per annum. Until recently, RDC managed to provide services without increasing the Council Tax for some time. But needs must; the Government is withdrawing the Revenue Support Grant (for 2017/18 = £570,224, 2018/19 = £110,401, 2019/20 = £49,271 and by 2020/21 = £0) and there is uncertainty surrounding the New Homes Bonus Grant - the 2017/18 Revenue Budget relies on £1 million of the £1.117 million received. RDC is assuming that by 2021/22 there will be no reliance on this funding, but if it does

continue, we could use this to support affordable housing development in the District. In addition, inflation outstrips interest rates. This Strategy must support the delivery of RDC's aims and objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan. Council Tax is a major source of income to the Council and you will remember that I have previously reported that RDC is actively increasing income generation, such as devolving costly non-incoming generating assets and investing £7 million for acquisitions of investment property. The aim is to maximise income in order to deliver services and the Corporate Plan.

2.3 Strategy and Planning. New legislation has prompted changes in relation to neighbourhood planning procedures. This essentially delegates powers to officers (including advising and commenting on neighbourhood plans up to the pre-submission stage), cuts timescales and maintains Members authority at submission stage.

New legislation has also imposed a duty on councils to prepare and maintain a 'Brownfield Land Register' of previously developed land which is considered appropriate for residential development. This will be published by 31st December 2017, and updated at least annually thereafter.

3. Winchelsea Beach Sewage Flooding Meeting, called by our MP, Amber Rudd, was held at the Community Hall in Winchelsea Beach on Saturday 4th November. Representatives from Southern Water, Environment Agency, Icklesham PC, Romney Marshes Internal Drainage Board and RDC attended to update residents regarding the issues of sewage flooding. SW confirmed with the meeting that the public sewer network at Winchelsea Beach has the capacity to take foul flow from the area, but it is not designed to take large amounts of surface and groundwater. SW is responsible for sewer flooding, but not groundwater flooding. Over the past couple of years or so, there has been a more cohesive working together, including communication, between the various agencies and local residents and this has resulted in a much better situation for Winchelsea Beach residents than even a year ago. A significant amount of investment and investigative work has been carried out: camera surveys, Electroscan surveys for submerged sewers (new technology first tested in Winchelsea Beach!) and sewer sealing work should see an improvement this year in the performance of the sewer system. This year has been dry - so the real test will come this winter, but data gathered this year, so far, shows proof as regards successful repairs to sewers. Any issues should be reported to SW Technical Contact Centre (0330 303 0368) reference number **3481429** and/or, of course, your councillors.

**SAH**