

ESCC annual report for Mountfield

Once again I shall begin with the money. The County Council's portion of this year's Council Tax will rise by 4.49%. This is made up of 1.99% of "normal" tax rise plus an extra 1.5% for Adult Social Care from last year and 1% for this year. Unlike in previous years we are not allowed to be flexible about when we use the money. The council will also receive some extra government funding to help to mitigate the extra costs involved following the legislative changes to Adult Social Care. Local Government is expecting a funding review from central government.

The County Council has a target to be carbon neutral by 2050 and is committed to reducing its carbon output by 13% a year. County Hall is to have a further 128 solar panels on its roof and it is estimated that these will generate all the electricity used in the building and save 11t of CO2. The County Council is keen to stress that all its climate change mitigation work is evidence based. Currently work is centred on those areas over which the council has direct control but the highways contract is being reprocured and this presents an ideal opportunity to influence the sustainability plans of a major supplier of services to the council.

The council is working on sustainable transport and has a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan which aims to make these activities safer and therefore easier for us to leave our cars behind. All such schemes have to be compliant with Department for Transport rules. The council is also working with partners to improve bus accessibility.

The County Council has been judged outstanding for its children's social care and here I will put in a plea for foster carers: we need more! This rewarding work is well supported by the County Council and the East Sussex Foster Carers Association which has worked hard and successfully in spite of the pandemic to enrich the lives of both children and carers. The Children in Care Council which is made up of young people in care is an integral part of the service and provides valuable advice and insights. The council's residential homes are small and intimate and are real homes for the young people who live there; a new one is opening in the east of the county.

Locally plans are moving forward, slowly, to install a safe crossing point on Battle Hill; there have been considerable legal matters to resolve. Following the start of the building of 50 homes at Lillybank Farm the County Council proposes to move the 40mph north to protect the development. I am campaigning to have it extended even further so that it includes the junction with Canadia where, as many of you will know, there have been accidents and fatalities over the years.

The Highway Maintenance contract is being reprocured and 3 bidders have been shortlisted. It is to be hoped that the new contract will address sustainability and enable the mending of potholes which do not meet the criteria but are close to a hole which does.

The County Council has a target of carbon neutrality by 2050 and has a group working on this. It is concentrating on measures which are in the Council's control.

Kathryn Field
April 2022