

Budget Speech – Neil Parkin (Adur District Council)

Chairman I would like to start by thanking the Deputy Leader and all the members of the Executive for their work this year.

I'm delighted to move the District Council's budget for 2015/16.

I do so again this year with real pride at the many things we have achieved over the last 12 months - when I look at what we've done and the impact we have had on the lives on the people in our District.

So what have we been doing over the last 12 months?

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[Public Realm and Regeneration]

- In terms of the public realm, work is underway on the enhancements at Queensway, Lancing which will provide significant improvements and a new events space. Capital funding has been secured for the refurbishment of Lancing Beach Green toilets, delivering the visual improvements outlined in the Lancing Vision document. Five shops have completed the regeneration of their shopfronts, taking advantage of the Lancing Vision Shop Front Grant, with a further three in the pipeline. Wayfinding monoliths have been installed at Lancing Station and in Shoreham.

- £150,000 of 106 Capital funding has been put towards Buckingham Park pavilion refurbishment in partnership with the Rugby club and we supported the community group at Southwick Square Gardens with landscaping and project management of their local community garden, with the help of Cllrs Donaldson and Funnel
- We have over 95% Occupancy of Adur Allotments, and 92% Occupancy of Adur Beach Chalets.
- And Flower drifts, for the WW1 – Commemoration planting, were successfully planted across Adur's parks, cemeteries and open spaces.

Adur continued to experience a high number of gypsy and traveller incursions during 2014. However our liaison with Sussex Police and WSCC is closer than ever, and we saw the police use their powers to move on encampments more than ever. More significantly, the Council, in partnership with all of the Councils in West Sussex, has agreed to support and co-fund the establishment of a G&T Transit site located in Chichester. The transit site is due to open in April and will offer the Police powers to deal with encampments. As a result, I am hopeful we can look forward to a reduction in the number and impact of encampments over the next few years.

We have also been playing a key role in ensuring Adur benefits from *City Deal* investment and from the investment in the Coast to Capital LEP through the *Growth Deal*. For Adur during this last year, this has already meant securing £9.5 million in two flood defence projects and transport access improvements in Shoreham

[Community & Wellbeing]

- We have been working closely with local groups and residents to identify priorities and develop local projects that can make a lasting difference. This included a mentoring project with Shoreham Academy where adults have been trained up as community mentors to work with young people, and the Fishersgate Voice where local residents have been supported to set up and develop a local newspaper and online presence to promote Fishersgate.
- We have just launched our new Public Health Plan, being one of the first district councils to have done this. Over the next few years we will be looking at how we can mobilise our workforce to help improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.
- Building Control has processed 1530 customer applications this year and undertaken over 6000 site inspections all of which will have improved the safety and accessibility of the built environment which has also contributed to the public health agenda.
- Our *Pot of Gold* event last year was entertaining, as ever, with presentations becoming more inventive than ever – we had song, dance & poetry at the presentation evening. £73,891 was allocated to 13 groups as a result of the scheme.
- Pot of Gold has become a regular feature of our work with the community sector BUT the time has come for a refresh. So this year we are focussing the programme on the needs of young people in our communities.
- We supported, amongst other events, the Beach Dreams Festival, Shoreham Riverfest, Adur Art Trail, Adur Arts Forum – Musical Concert, World

Oceans Day Performance of Eternal Light (Boundstone Chorus). And we have continued to support the Adur Festival.

[Housing]

- In the past year, we have established the Adur Homes Management Board. The Board consists of members, residents and independents. It ensures that social housing in Adur continues to be owned and managed by the local authority, but also allows residents to have far greater say in the way that the service is delivered. So that residents have a far greater say in the type of improvements they want to be seeing in their neighbourhood. This means we need to be ramping up the conversations we have on a local level, to properly understand the type of things that will make a difference locally and not think that we know best.
- We do know however that the thing that makes the biggest difference to people living in an Adur Home property is how good our repairs service is and, from March, we are moving to a new appointment based system and we will be introducing a programme of estate walkabouts to provide far greater transparency.
- Acknowledging that some of our housing stock is in need of investment, not only have we have set aside resources to do this, but we are about to undertake a stock condition survey - that will provide the information we need to move this from a 5 year investment programme to a 3 year investment programme.
- I'm pleased to report that the Sompting gas installation project has also got off the ground. This is major investment in one of our most deprived areas, where we will be offering to connect over 200 hundred homes to the gas mains for the first time. This kicked off with a community event on 18 February

to provide more information to residents, but will also develop a range of offers that will not only connect people to the gas mains but also assist them in making their homes more energy efficient.

- We have also implemented new Introductory Tenancies, and supplemented this with additional support for incoming tenants, so that they are best prepared for living in an environment that might mean close daily interaction with their neighbours and understand what they need to do to make their tenancy a success in the longer term. We know that for many of our residents, when they move into an Adur Homes property it is a relationship that will last for the rest of their lives, and by getting that right in the first instance, and by showing respect by making sure that we let good quality housing and are responsive to people's demands, then we will be building strong and engaged communities for future generations.
- We are also about to launch a new fund with the West Sussex Credit Union to provide financial support to households who may otherwise find themselves going down the slippery slope of going to pay day loan companies, and loan sharks. And we are about to begin a partnership with the YMCA to carry out decorations in people's homes who are vulnerable or elderly, not only breathing new life into drab surroundings, but also to provide a springboard to young people that may help them in a future career or even start up their own business.
- Finally, building on the huge success of our first ever Adur Homes Fun Day in June, which was attended by hundreds, the second Adur Homes Fun Day is being planned for 31 May 2015 and promises to be even bigger and better.

[Waste]

- Across both Adur and Worthing, we have retained all the features of our successful weekly refuse & fortnightly recycling service, with large numbers of additional houses have been absorbed into the service without incurring significant additional financial burden. The weekly garden refuse service goes from strength to strength; 1700 new customers signed up for bins during 2014-15 and garden sack sales have remained steady in spite of the increase in bin customers. The EU funded project 'SWAP NOW' was successfully concluded and resulted in a 40% reduction in flytipping in Adur and Worthing. More than a dozen **areas of private land were cleaned up by local** residents and their continuing involvement has meant that these areas continue to be looked after and do not revert to being dumping grounds.

- [To enable us to achieve all of what I spoken about, I'm pleased to report that we expect to collect 98% of £32.3 million of Council Tax in 2014-15, and 98% of £17.1 million of non-domestic rates. This is incredibly important.]

[Restructuring & Reorganisation]

Many of you will be familiar with 'Catching the Wave', the strategic level road map for the Council, ratified by Members in January last year. 'Catching the Wave' gave us the opportunity to examine where we were as a Council, where we wanted to be and how to help us to move best from the former to the latter.

This led to four new Directors, identified within 'Catching the Wave', taking up their posts last summer and, just before Christmas, a further restructuring of the third tier (or 'Heads of..') posts across the Council. Together, this reorganization will bring a stronger leadership focus to a number of our key commitments but at the same time save us significant funding in senior management costs.

[The next step is the publication of a document - titled 'Surf's Up' - which sets out a series of top level outcomes and commitments that will lead us through the next two years.

In order to transform the Council and deliver on the 'Surf's Up' programme, we are exploring and investing in digital futures, identifying new and untapped community resources and, as I have already mentioned, deepening our relationships both with our electorate and also those sectors who are keen to invest in our places and communities.]

Digital & Resources

Digital

Following the JSC decision in December, the digital councils programme began on January 12th. A number of work-streams are underway:

- Google Apps for Work, providing secure access to email, calendar, document collaboration and internal social networking from ANY device. 115 soft launchers are being trained for switch over March 3rd and all staff will transfer on April 14th. 60 staff have come forward to be Digital Champions across the organisation to help support colleagues with Google and with future technologies.
- Citizen Platform. The citizen platform will allow the councils to handle customer enquiries from all channels, including social

media, as well as provide the ability to build end-to-end digital self-service. Being internet based, contact centre agents will be able to work from anywhere, including from home. The first two projects are well underway for the contact centre and green bins. These projects help establish key capabilities such as payments that will then be readily available for use in further digital products on the platform. The newly formed Enterprise Strategy Board has confirmed that it will target the remaining AWCS processes after the initial two products, enabling the switch off of the Lagan CRM system, delivering a saving of £20k per year.

- Enterprise Telephony. The citizen platform will be implemented in the contact centre alongside new internet based telephony (expected April). The telephony solution will then be rolled out in phases to the rest of the organisation.
- Mobiles. We have developed a “smartphone first” strategy and are in the process of letting the contract. The majority of fixed handsets will be removed and staff given a smartphone which will use an app to access the enterprise telephony, providing true flexible, mobile and home working, with easy access to email and internal social networking as well, keeping staff far better connected to each other.
- Wifi. Assessments are being undertaken on the network and wi-fi system. This is to ensure the system is able to perform to the level required to handle voice calls and greater use of internet services. It is anticipated that the wi-fi system will need to be replaced to introduce greater coverage, stability and easy access. It is possible some improvements will be required to the network.
- Design & Digital Team. The Head of Design & Digital is currently being recruited to (interviews Feb 27th). The Head of Service will produce proposals for a new team to provide the following services: service design, technology development / support, data analytics and performance management. A “design lab” will be set up which will provide a resource for all services to re-design how

they operate, involving external partners, communities and customers in rethinking our services. A Digital Road Map for our places will be written with participation of businesses and communities by July 2015.

Legal Services

Work is continuing on the business case for a “NewCo” which would be created by September 1st 2015, in a partnership with Aylesbury Vale DC and iESE. This will be presented to Joint Strategic Committee on March 31st. A&W are undertaking a “leaning” exercise to focus legal service provision by NewCo on the more critical areas requiring legal support, asking service areas to undertake more for themselves using a risk-based approach.

Human Resources

A restructure consultation has commenced with staff in order to create a stronger strategic and business partnering offer to the organisation, better data and increased self-service by staff and managers. This is expected to deliver 10-15% savings.

Engineering & Surveying

The Head of Business & Technical Services (Steve Spinner) was appointed in December and is now in the process of appointing an Engineering & Surveying Manager. Once completed the new leadership will undertake a review with the support of iESE in relation to team structure (ensuring full integration of the engineering, corporate surveying and Adur Homes surveying teams), improved use of external contractors, a review of the capital programme process and stronger programme and project management. A Strategic Asset Management Board is being considered as a vehicle for ensuring overall strategy and delivery.

Procurement

We are working with iESE to explore membership of their shared procurement service which would provide the vehicle to undertake a strategic procurement review (a category management strategy) to deliver savings. A proposal is expected to Committee in March or April.

The new service would provide an amount of support each year to undertake improvement projects, with engineering and surveying being the first alongside the category management review.

The budget paper before you that I am moving sets out in detail through tight financial management by officers and Members alike that we find ourselves in a reasonably stable financial position. The bottom line is that we are continuing to do more for less. And we can be very proud of our achievements in the light of that.

So, Adur District Council proposes to freeze council tax for the coming year. We should be proud of our track record in this respect.

At the outset of this budget round the council faced the challenging prospect of finding savings of around £0.5m. This challenge has been successfully met and the council is now in the position to balance the budget, freeze Council Tax and reinvest back into priority services to promote economic growth.

Nevertheless we must not forget that the austerity measures are set to continue in the next Parliament. The Council is likely to face further reductions in government funding over the next 5 years irrespective of who wins the General Election.

So, the Council must continue to focus on finding ever more efficient ways of working if we are to continue to balance the budget and protect our front line services. [With this in mind we have recently invested heavily in a new digital strategy which should help us to transform how our services are delivered to the public in the future.']

I started by saying that I was delighted to move the budget for 2015. I would urge you Council to support it.

Mr Chairman, thank you.