

BUDGET 2016

Mr Chairman, Councillors, and Members of the public this is an historic moment, the first time a Budget speech has been recorded for everyone to enjoy and here again online.

Just think it could go viral.

Recently, Jonathan Carr-West, Chief Executive of Local Government Information Unit, said: "Local government finance is a mess. Our research shows that right now councils are cobbling together their finances by using reserves and increasing charging wherever they can."

This is not what we're seeing in Adur (although I might have used the M word recently myself, only to be corrected by the ever vigilant Cllr Dunn). The financial settlement from the Government is tough - they're taking our money away and a lot faster than anyone expected. Thankfully we're in a stronger position than many thanks to years of prudent spending, investing and focusing on the services that our residents value and most important of all our partnership with Worthing. which this year saves over £13m

Your Council - our progress

BUDGET 2016

This has been a busy year for the Council in which we have continued to deliver on a challenging agenda .

But continue we have - you might even say that we've thrived under the pressure.

We've moved house - which is apparently one of life's biggest 'Little Dramas'. This wonderful new building is already proving to be a solid investment, and I'm delighted that we're sharing it with our local voluntary sector partners, making it a real centre for the Shoreham and Adur Community. Soon an Art Gallery showing local artist works will appear on those white walls I am sure the SKYWAY GALLERY will be a great success.

And, as anyone who has sold a property in the last few years will know, chains don't always run smoothly so while our old abode is back on the market, I'm thoroughly reassured by the fact that we've got tenants in there making use of the space to grow their business. While we seek to be masters of our own destiny.

Whenever when anyone moves house, they want to know when the bins will be collected - you know

BUDGET 2016

that we've fought to keep our collections weekly and have won that battle where others have failed. Some Councils have now gone to 3 weekly collections for household waste.

Our Waste & Recycling service is highly regarded by our communities and the team have kept the weekly collections up thanks to a business minded approach which generates over £800,000 of income each year, subsidising the household waste collections.

Many people also want to register to vote - it's good for the credit rating (as well as democracy!). Over the past year, our Electoral Services team have implemented the new national Individual Elector Registration system, tidying up our databases and reducing any opportunity for electoral fraud. They've also done a huge amount of work to open up voting to those who have never been in a voting booth before.

We've made huge strides in our digital service provision, with more to come in the next few months with a specific focus on improving the customer experiences of interacting with the Council. Our officers are now benefitting from a more stable and reliable IT system which they can

BUDGET 2016

use from anywhere, and smart phones so that I can get hold of them day or night. In the next few months, we're going to see a new telephone system installed, to start the digital transformation of our housing and planning teams and save even more money through turning off old systems and doing things more efficiently. I'm told that we'll put more of our services 'in the cloud' too, making them easier for our residents to access with simpler 'self service' options, removing the need to phone someone or wait for an email to arrive.

Our car parks team have caught the digital buzz too - our customers can now purchase their season tickets online, which makes life easier for everyone. While I'm talking about car parking, we're looking into pay & display and season tickets for the old Staff car park on Ham Road - and in so doing will assist local businesses, visitors and residents by making more parking spaces available in the town will we wait to develop it.

Our Officers are carrying on the Catching the Wave programme with gusto, now forming a range of 'boards' to capture new ideas to become more entrepreneurial and identify new opportunities to bring before the Council to make life in the District

BUDGET 2016

even better. One of the boards has identified over £750,000 of potential new income - we won't get all of that (we'll have to share it with our friends in Worthing), but it goes to show that the fruits of the Council's belief in Catching The Wave is being picked.

I couldn't review this year without thinking back to the Shoreham Airshow Tragedy, the like of which I hope that we never have to see again. A lot has already been said about it, but I'd like to extend my thanks, again, to the many hundreds of people involved in the initial response and the ongoing recovery phase. When all is said and done, the reaction from the communities of residents, businesses, council and other agency employees demonstrated just how strong the sense of community is throughout Adur. We will never forget that terrible day or the way that so many thousands of people came together to mourn and support each other.

Places to live

Over the last year, I've been heartened by the progress made in making the District an even better place to live.

BUDGET 2016

We have made substantial investments in our open spaces - Sompting has new outdoor gym equipment, Buckingham Park's play area has been improved using contributions from property developers and the new Shoreham Board Walk opens up access to our beautiful coastline.

If you've been to Queensway in Lancing recently, you'll see the benefits of some well thought through regeneration work - it's looking absolutely superb and the markets held there are getting busier by the month. We've also spent a penny or so on refurbishing the public conveniences on Lancing Beach Green - it's a popular site with holiday makers and local residents and it's now looking much more inviting.

Unfortunately some parts of the District have been to inviting in the past. This last 12 months has seen Traveller incursions reduced to almost zero. I must thank two West Sussex Officers, Ester and Roy I am sorry I do not know their surnames. Ester runs the Transit site and Roy comes out at any time in all weathers to serve papers. Were there has been delay it is Sussex Police who have let the side down. I would like to say thank you Roy.

BUDGET 2016

Collecting Council Tax and Business Rates is, of course, one of the things that makes this all possible and our collection rates stand at over 97% for Council Tax and over 96% for Business Rates.

And, of course, we have maintained our Council Tax Support scheme to provide financial support to those most in need in our communities. There have been some complicated changes to the benefits system this year (and these will continue into next year as the Government moves things around) but our Benefits team have worked really hard to ensure that these have been introduced sensibly and with plenty of information available to those who might have been concerned about how the changes would affect them.

We have also seen improvements in our Adur Homes service with fewer empty properties, the development of a sound business plan, establishment of a quarterly Management Board, better maintenance performance and, I'm pleased to say, excellent performance on rent collection and arrears repayments as well. We have tackled issues that have arisen and agreed to use our land to build new homes for the first time in

BUDGET 2016

years. We're also about to start redeveloping Cecil Norris House in my ward.

In the next few weeks, we're also going to be launching the last phase of the Adur Local Plan, a very significant piece of work which will guide the development of new homes and businesses throughout the District in years to come. Let me be clear on this point - this is not a 'developers' charter' as some have called it - having a strong Plan in place allows us to maintain control over developments, protecting what's special in our District while preparing for a vibrant future where people can buy a property, found a business and enjoy what we've got to offer here.

I am very pleased to see the progress made on the Adur Tidal Walls scheme - once completed it will protect a large area of the District from flooding and enable us to build homes for families and space for businesses to grow into. This is the most significant civil engineering project that our area has seen for many years.

Places to work

We have continued to offer a supportive environment for businesses to flourish in the

BUDGET 2016

District, and I've very pleased to see local firms such as Pasante and Bidvest expanding (between them they've retained around 450 jobs and added around 70 new jobs). I understand that Higgidy are also looking to significantly expand in the very near future - these are all examples of local companies really making the most of what the District has to offer and growing as a result.

As you'll know, I'm the Chairman of the Greater Brighton Economic Board - and that partnership is really pushing ahead with some significant plans which will benefit our businesses.

There's the plans for the superfast digital infrastructure, the development of an Education and Skills promise to ensure that our young people have access to the skills that growing businesses need and the development of Living Wage Housing, ensuring that workers can afford to settle here to make the most of the attractive business scene.

Yet again we've seen a reduction in the number of people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance - it's down to 1.1% from 1.3% and 1.8% the year before that. This shows that the District is continuing to prosper, to add jobs and to strengthen the

BUDGET 2016

economy year on year - and I have no doubt that this will continue for many years yet.

Places to enjoy

Our social calendar has been pretty busy over the last year as well - after all we did host the UK's Best New Festival last June. It certainly wasn't a *rudimental* task getting the festival here and off the ground but, in the spirit of *disclosure*, I think that our events team - working in partnership with many others - did a great job which will be remembered for *years & years* (especially as it's returning this summer).

This summer, we've got Gorilla Circus arriving in Lancing - I'm told that there's opportunities to give the High Wire Trapeze a try. Not sure that's for me, if I'm honest - maybe Cllr Beresford . However, it is going to be something really new and different - and I think that it should be a great addition to the summer.

I was delighted to see that there were over 80 events held in our Parks and Open Spaces last year - but then when you think about how much our communities like getting together, it's not that surprising!

BUDGET 2016

Over the past 12 months, we've also been working to improve those parks and open spaces and have developed a Greenspaces Network across Adur which has led to Groups sharing resources, knowledge and expertise. At the same time, we have increased the number of Parks and Open Spaces Friends Groups in Adur - this means that the people who use the spaces have much more of a say in how they're run, how they're managed and how they're maintained for everyone to enjoy.

Community spirit is certainly not dead here!

We've also been offering support to community groups looking to get access to funding - and one of the biggest successes came when we learnt that Shoreham Fort had gained £50,000 of Government funding with our help. The Fort is iconic, much loved and now, thanks to a huge amount of work from the Friends of the Fort and your Council, ready to develop into the next phase of its life.

The last financial year was incredibly busy, and productive. It also laid out the blueprint for what

BUDGET 2016

we're going to achieve next year - keeping our refuse and recycling collections up, driving forward on the digital agenda, moving forward with key regeneration sites and housing plans. For an average of 9p a week extra on the Council Tax next year (after five years of Council Tax freezes or reductions), I think that's pretty superb value.

In closing I would like to thank the Officers for all their efforts. My Cabinet colleges and Deputy for the hours they put in for so little reward .

I commend the budget to the Council