

Cllr. Malcolm Wade

Hampshire County Council Report 2015/2016

Budget

At the meeting of the full Hampshire County Council today (18 February), the ruling group backed plans to increase council tax for the first time for Hampshire in six years. The increase has been necessary in order to close a £81.5 million funding gap in 2016/17 in Hampshire - resulting from the Government changing its funding formula to local authorities. To help close the funding gap left in the County Council's budget, its share of the Council Tax precept will increase by 3.99% from April (the first Council Tax increase in six years), and greater use will be made of the Authority's reserves (£45 million). The Council Tax increase is the maximum amount permissible, and 2% of this total sum will support the delivery of adult social care.

The Council Tax charge by Hampshire County Council for the year beginning 1 April 2016 will be £1,079.28 at Band D – or just under 80 pence extra per week. The £9 million of temporary transitional funding HCC will receive each year for the next two years, instead of being used to help reduce the service loss in key areas, the administration is putting into reserves.

At the same time, HCC are in a fortunate position to be able to inject £563 million into Hampshire's economy, building plans and jobs over the next three years through our capital budget. Capital projects include creating 11,000 extra primary and secondary school places; investing in Hampshire's roads and bridges; providing new transport schemes to link key employment areas; and grant funding Hampshire organisations that bring economic and cultural benefits to the local economy.

Children's Services - Changes

Children's services has saved £50m since 2010, when the department has worked to a set of principles which have guided the successive budget reduction decisions. These have evolved to reflect the tightening economic circumstances and therefore the ever tighter focus needed in the department on its core business and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable.

The principles are:

- ensure a safe and effective social care system that continues to manage the risks between protecting and caring for the most vulnerable children and providing support to families in need;
- ensure sufficient capacity to lead, challenge and improve the schools system to help ensure improved outcomes for all but particularly more vulnerable groups;
- tightly target limited resources according to the needs of children whether that be support to children and families or to schools;
- secure targeted and co-ordinated early help provision where it demonstrably reduces escalation of need;
- sustain and develop high quality and financially competitive sold services when doing so contributes to our responsibilities to Hampshire; and
- maximise the opportunities to create efficiencies and maintain and enhance services through partnership arrangements

The savings target set for the Department is £23.3m which has been split across seven work streams for the Transformation to 2017.

Social care transformation

The social care transformation work stream covers £52.5m of services including our direct support to child protection and children in care. Savings proposals for this work stream amount to £4m.

Savings would be made through a reduction in the number of children whose needs escalate in severity and cost within the system.

The three strands are:

- *Active Agents for Change* social care innovation programme;
- a new, and transformational social care client and management information system; and
- social care business process review new ways of working will lead to an increase in the number of children and families that can be helped to safely stay together rather than children necessarily coming into care.

Children with Disabilities (CWD) Remodelling

The Children with Disabilities remodelling workstream covers £21.3m of services. Savings proposals amount to £3.2m, however, proposals in relation to short break activities (£1.8m) will be reconsidered following feedback from the Shaping Hampshire - Spending Review Consultation. The proposals with regard to short breaks include improvements to the equity of service for those children/young people and families who need it most and increasing emphasis on co-producing the short breaks offer with the voluntary sector, families and carers.

Family Support Services Remodelling

The Family Support Services remodelling work stream covers £13.4m of budgeted services plus Troubled Families spend of about £2m. Savings proposals for this work stream amount to £8.4m. This includes a target saving of £1m in respect of commissioned youth support services. It is proposed that Early Help Hubs, Children's Centre services and current youth support services, which have all developed separately but work in alignment, are remodelled and transformed to create a fully integrated 0-19 Family Support Service, further developing some of the principles that have been modelled in the County Council's successful Supporting (Troubled) Families programme.

Children Looked After placements review

The placements work stream covers £23.1m of services. Savings proposals amount to £1.6m. It is reviewing in-house and independent fostering, and long-stay non-county residential placements to ensure that the placements are cost effective and deliver high quality outcomes.

Special Educational Needs (SEN), Hampshire Educational Psychology Service, Home to School Transport (SEN) Remodelling

The Special Educational Needs remodelling work stream covers £22.0m of services. Savings proposals amount to £3.6m. The significant legislative changes set out within the Children and Families Act 2014 for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) drives the need to explore business processes to refine the relationships between the Special Educational Needs service and the key internal partners of Hampshire Educational Psychology, SEN Home to School Transport, Children's and Adult social care services, as well as Health.

School Improvement Services Remodelling

The school improvement services remodelling work stream covers £4.4m of services. Savings proposals amount to £1.0m. These services additionally generate income to children's services of approximately £7m (though that income cannot be factored into these savings proposals).

Support Functions Review

The support functions review work stream covers £12.9m of services. Savings proposals amount to £1.5m. There will be a review of the current structures and methods of delivery of support functions and the cost of other activities. Work has already progressed to identify these savings. Staff affected potentially up to 218 FTEs plus 200 in the voluntary sector mostly in Children's centres. The face of Hampshire's Children's Services are radically changing due to these cuts.

Broadband

Hampshire Superfast Broadband Programme which will extend coverage of superfast broadband to 96% of premises across Hampshire by September 2018. The investment is taking place in areas that BT and Virgin Media have not been able to supply via their privately funded commercial investments. The national target is to reach 90% coverage by 2016 and 95% coverage by the end of 2017. The Hampshire programme has reached the 90% target already and will reach 96% coverage by September 2018.

The delivery partner, BT Openreach, has upgraded 345 roadside cabinets serving more than 77,000 premises with fibre broadband bringing the percentage of premises able to access superfast broadband (>24Mbps) up from 80% to 90%. HCC will be building on this coverage and extending coverage further in Wave 2 which started in January 2016. This part of the programme will upgrade connections to a further 48,000 premises by September 2018 bringing coverage to over 96% of premises in the county.

Wave 2 of HCC's programme begins in January 2016 and is a £16.45m investment that will deliver superfast broadband to over 34,000 premises by September 2018. Once complete Wave 2 will make Superfast Broadband available to more than 96% of premises in Hampshire. BT has released delivery phases of exchange upgrades to us and residents in our electoral division can view this on the website: <http://www.hampshiresuperfastbroadband.com/about-the-project/wave-2-information/>. By entering their postcode on our home page, residents can see an update for their area and find out if they are included in Wave 2 and a projected 12 month delivery window. The postcode popups on our website remain the best way for residents to find specific information and are updated when new details become available.

Hampshire has been the pilot scheme for the Government's Universal Service Commitment scheme. Residents experiencing under 2Mbps of broadband can apply for a subsidy code towards the cost of installation of a satellite. There are roughly 5,000 properties (less than 1%) in Hampshire that are unable to access 2Mbps. This scheme is designed to help them and to provide an interim satellite solution capable of providing speeds of around 20Mbps. The subsidy scheme covers the cost of installing the satellite dish and router, to a value of up to £350. Yearly costs for the service are the responsibility of the resident and start at around £400 for a basic service. HCC have emailed over 1500 residents who have registered with them in eligible areas and HCC have issued 70 subsidy codes to date. More details can be found on the website: <http://www.hampshiresuperfastbroadband.com/residents/usc/>

Malcolm Wade