

Report from Cllr Chas Pearce, Rother District Council

My first year as a Councillor has seen Rother District Council having to make many very difficult decisions and sometimes controversial ones. Cost savings have had to be implemented in many areas notably, the closure of several public conveniences, increases in Car Park charges the which were last adjusted in 2015. Towards the end of this year parking ticket machines will not accept cash so they will be accessed by card or via Ring go, this will save £30,000 which is the contract charge for collecting the cash. Obviously you will be aware by now that Council Tax also been increased, interestingly during the Budget consultation a number of respondents would be in favour an increasing Council Tax to help provide the services that are needed.

We faced a Budget deficit of £3.8 million for the current financial year hence the need for these cost saving exercises. One the major contributing factors was the need supply Temporary Accommodation for Homelessness, this has tripled over the last eighteen months. To offset this RDC now own 50 houses this consequently avoids very expensive Hotel costs, we do have statutory obligation to supply this service. In addition other costs have risen, waste costs increased by 14%, Staff 20% since 2020/ 2021 and of course interest charges. One advantage of the rise in interest is that our Financial Officer has created a plan to invest in many financial areas which has led to a very good income stream which is helping towards our costs.

A financial resilience programme is now place namely Fit for Future, this is targeting a cost saving £3.3 million which results in only £0.6 million being taken from reserves. Many projects will be reviewed to establish need and viability they are varied and some innovative for a Council of our size. We are better placed than many other Councils having adopted this plan.

It's not all bad news we recently received £20 million from the levelling up fund which will be spent on various projects around Bexhill, unfortunately not a great will be allocated to Rural area's. The only thing that will come into operation is a Rural Mobile Community Hub details will be announced in the near future. A Town Board is in process of being established to take control of the fund.

It has been a pleasure and an honour to represent Dallington Pc along with my other Parish Councils, Ashburnham, Catsfield and Crowhurst