



Cllr Paul Redstone  
Email: [Cllr.Paul.Redstone@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.Paul.Redstone@eastsussex.gov.uk)  
Phone: 07510 074267  
Address: Edgingtons  
Cripps Corner  
Robertsbridge TN32 5RY

29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

## **Report to Parish Councils – December 2022**

This report is written in late November and is for Parish Councils meeting in December, It is for all 7 parishes in Northern Rother.

Some of the items here are from information circulated by ESCC but which may not have drawn the attention of parish councillors and others.

Some parishes do not meet in December but I will be happy to answer questions on this report in January.

### **Medium Term Financial Plan and Funding**

The budget deficits forecast in the medium term at county remain a major concern. The autumn statement provided some news on this. Local authorities can now increase council tax by 3% without a referendum (previously 2%) and additionally the adult social care premium by 2%. Of course, at a time when many are facing financial hardship any increase is undesirable.

The budget also depends upon the settlement from the government. We expect this to be known on about 21<sup>st</sup> December.

### **Fire and Rescue Service Budget**

The East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) is managed by the Fire Authority which has ESCC and Brighton and Hove Councillors. I am a member of the Fire Authority and have also just become chair of the Policy and Resources Panel following the sad death of the

Brighton and Hove councillor who previously chaired it. ESFRS is funded by a separate precept, collected with council tax.

The service faces significant financial challenges with a forecast deficit of about £3m next year out of a budget of about £42M. Some of this could be funded by increases in the precept but this is limited, so some changes to the service are being discussed as you may have seen in the media. However, there is some misleading information being circulated so I would be sceptical of any scaremongering stories you read. I would encourage you to the proper assessments and strategy.

### **New Strategy for SEND children**

A new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) strategy to enable young people to reach their full potential in every area of life has been launched. The strategy will be used to inform the work of everyone with children and young people with SEND across the county, providing them with the opportunities and support they need to achieve their ambitions and prepare for adult life.

Families, schools, and other professionals from services in areas such as social care and health took part in a ten-month consultation process to develop the strategy, including extensive work with children and young people to identify areas for improvement.

An East Sussex SEND Strategy Governance Board has been established which will oversee SEND work across the county and monitor the delivery of the strategy.

The SEND Strategy 2022-2025 is available online. [here](#)

A short video about the strategy can be viewed [here](#).

I have a particular interest in SEND children in East Sussex as a member of the ESCC Discretionary Transport Appeal Panel which decides on some individual cases concerning free transport for school for children or young adults, most of whom have SEND. I am also a governor of two schools and have special reporting responsibility for SEND. Providing for the needs of a growing number of SEND children is a challenge and taking an increasing budget, but such children deserve our support.

(In the interests of disclosure, I should add that I have a granddaughter with Down's Syndrome, though she is not in East Sussex).

### **East Sussex residents encouraged to discover their past at The Keep**

Residents across the county are being encouraged to find out more about their family history with free access to over six million digitised Sussex parish records. The digitised documents span 457 years of Sussex history and include details of baptisms, confirmations and marriages alongside birth and death records. These records are now available to search online via Ancestry, the world's largest genealogy website, with free access available at The Keep.

The entire Sussex Parish Registers collection has been brought online through an exclusive collaboration between the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office, the West Sussex Record Office and Ancestry. The records were digitised over the course of the pandemic whilst visitor access to The Keep was limited.

Those interested in researching their family background but are unsure where to begin may

benefit from attending one of the centre's visitor induction sessions, whilst 'Welcome Wednesdays' offer an opportunity for first-time visitors to learn more about The Keep and the specifics of research conducted at the centre. More information about these sessions can be found here. Free access to Ancestry is also available at all libraries across East and West Sussex.

## **Cases**

Each month I will give updates for a sample of current cases across Northern Rother. I currently have about 20 which are being progressed. I now only show updates or new information on significant cases. Please look at previous reports for the full background.

### **Flooding in Northbridge Street, Robertsbridge.**

Recent bouts of heavy rain have given some concerns to residents, but it does appear that the improvements made to the A21 and layby are helping. Leaf fall partially blocking some drains in the layby has not helped. I have been checking regularly and liaising with local residents, particularly during heavy rain. One local resident deserves particular praise for clearing leaves from some drains. The layby is the responsibility of Highways England. Our MP's office has continued dialog with Highways England to give more frequent clearing of leaves and other improvements.

More actions are needed, in particular a permanent solution to diverting any overflow from the layby. I have suggested to Highways England a 'speed bump' to ensure that runoff does not reach Northbridge Street itself rather than the current temporary sandbags.

### **Development off the Paddocks, Northiam**

The major issue at the moment is contractors parking in the Paddocks or Goddens Gill. Whilst this is legal in most cases, it causes inconvenience to local residents. I have continued liaison with the site manager and developer. This has helped in some cases. Some contractors have parked on the A28 but this in itself causes other issues. The use of the parking by the scout huts has been suggested and this sounds ideal, but does not yet appear to be being used.