

LDC & ESCC March 2024 Report

Cllr Johnny Denis

Yet again please convey my apologies. There is a clash with a portfolio duty so will not be able to make this meeting. I will do what I can to prioritise the next as it feels like a couple of months since I last attended.

This month has seen the end of both this round of local plan making consultations and Local Transport Plan consultations. I was pleased to be able to liaise with your vicechair Cllr Phillips on this.

Many people made their feelings known about the quality of consultation on developing in the Local Plan and I and my colleagues at LDC have passed these on to consider how to better engagement at the next consultation phase.

Lewes District Council considered and agreed their budget on the 19th and among many positive elements, given the financial position of many local councils, I was thrilled that the revenue budget was confirmed to support the running of Ringmer Pool for the next year. It was highlighted by the Leader, Zoe Nicholson, as a vital local asset so I'm really pleased that my work at the Cabinet has paid off. I'll keep you posted on any news as we move towards works in play and eventual re-opening.

The County Council also approved its budget this month and, while it didn't make any cuts in service, it had an initial deficit of £14M. This was drawn from reserves. The prognosis is that each of the next 2 years in the mid-term financial strategy the position gets worse, a 39M shortfall next year and more than £50M the year after. While reserves may be able to support these plans, they can only do so until there is nothing left so this is unsustainable in the longer term.

The biggest costs to the County Council are its statutory services eg. Adult Social Care and Childrens Services. It is obliged to deliver these services yet the funding from central government to carry out these duties has been effectively reduced year on year for over a decade leading to the position we have today while our residents have been sweated for every penny of Council Tax. I will continue to argue at a national level and to whatever government, through the Local Government Association, for a fair funding regime for local government as well as multi-year settlements so that councils like ours can plan services with greater certainty.