

Leader's Report

This is our first meeting since May as I had the agreement of the Minority Group Leaders to drop our July meeting. I am especially pleased to see Councillor Edgar back with us and recovering his health. The major item we would have considered back in July as now is the Financial Strategy.

As European Commissioner M. Barnier regularly says the clock is ticking. For Westminster that is to BREXIT. For us it is to making sure we have a Balanced Budget for 2019/20. Neither is easy.

As far as possible I try to keep HCC out of the Brexit debate but we will certainly need to have our own assessment on the impact on the county especially in the possible event of a no deal Brexit. That is being done and will be reported to Council when it is clearer what the national position will be.

As for finance we are all aware of financial problems in Counties not just in Northamptonshire but local government press refers to problems in counties such as Somerset, East Sussex, Oxfordshire and others - even Birmingham the biggest local authority is facing problems. I can assure you many of my fellow county leaders look with envy at Hampshire. We are in a better position than most because we have planned ahead and resisted temptation and the siren voices urging us to keep spending at the same level by drawing on reserves to tide us over - that leads to a worse predicament when the reserves run out as they inevitably must. We have taken difficult and tough decisions early.

As well as managing the finances the world goes on and I can report the Commission on Hampshire 2050 announced at the AGM is up and running. I am grateful for the Commissioners who have offered to serve and we have now had 2 sessions. The first dealt with important presentations from the OS and ONS to get a feel for population changes - we are getting older and Hampshire is still 85% rural.

The second meeting last week was looking at the economy and the importance of place in shaping the economy. The interdependence of the economies of the county and the two cities was a clear point in the expert presentations. I would encourage members to follow the work of the Commission on the website. The meetings are held in public and the public are invited to make contributions via the website.

The aim of the Commission is to help us look at the horizon, to see what changes are coming and how we play our part to keep Hampshire prosperous and with a good environment.

We maintain close links with our MPs and Ranil Jayawardena MP for NE Hampshire is a member of the Commission as well as chairman of the APPG. The week before last Cllr Liz Fairhurst and I met Caroline Dinenage MP the Care Minister. And last week I was a guest of the PM at No 10. We continue to alert ministers and MPs by various means to the financial pressures on local authorities especially those with the statutory social care responsibilities.

At Cabinet this week in a move to enhance our work we announced we are launching a new recruitment venture for temporary agency staff in partnership with Kent County Council. In common with local authorities across the country, Hampshire is facing unprecedented demand for services, particularly in adult and children's social care. 2000 extra over 85 yr olds every year and in the last 10 years children in care has risen from 900 to 1400. Therefore, our need to recruit good quality, skilled, temporary staff to supplement our permanent workforce increases, but the challenges of recruiting staff are significant. By creating what is effectively our own in-house agency, and drawing on the expertise of our partners in Kent who have a similar set-up locally, we aim to attract and retain good temporary staff over a longer period. In doing so, we would hope that many will take the opportunity to convert to permanent employment with us. This will ensure a more cost effective solution to providing the good quality care Hampshire residents deserve.

There are successes to report as well as some sad losses:

- Cllr Reid will report more fully later but GCSE and A Level results in Hampshire were once again above the national average. That is not something to be taken for granted.
- Our Music Service flourishes and I hope members will take the opportunity to attend the concert this November in Romsey Abbey to be given by the County Youth Orchestra and a School Choir from Giessen in Germany.
- We have opened the Lookout at Lepe Beach and the refurbished Chapel at the Royal Victoria Country Park at Hamble - and another concert is planned there on the 10th November as part of our commemoration events to mark the centenary of the end of World War I.
- The head of the Hillier Gardens at Ampfield Mr Wolfgang Bopp has been headhunted by the New Zealand national botanical service and left us to go to New Zealand in August. I hosted a lunch for Wolfgang and Lord Sainsbury who is the patron of those magnificent gardens. We are now working on appointing a worthy successor to Wolfgang.
- On your behalf I attended the funeral in August of Mr Stephen Lugg, Chief Executive of the Hampshire Association of Town and Parish Councils. That was in Ferndown where he was Town Mayor
- Only last week was the Funeral of Enda Ryan, Head of our Outdoor Service who was the inspiration of Poppy Pods making those camping pods at Tile Barn Brockenhurst available to military personnel and their families at weekends. A contribution on Hampshire's part to the Military Covenant. We are exploring ways of permanently linking Enda's name to the Poppy Pods.

On a personal note I advise members I have been elected Chairman of South East Councils - this is a grouping of over 80 councils (districts, counties and unitaries) across the south east of England. Not to be confused with SESL or SE7. One of my objectives will be to get those 3 bodies to work more closely together so we don't just hear about Northern Powerhouse or Midlands Engine but we add "**THE SUPER SOUTH**" into the national reckoning. The South East already puts more in net terms into the national exchequer than any other region and with better infrastructure we could contribute even more.

Next full Council on 29th November will be the last day of Karen Murray's service to the Council as our Director of Culture Community and Business Services but I want to place on record today this Council's appreciation of her 40 years unbroken service to Hampshire. Now is not the time for the speeches but 40 years of unrivalled service from Management Trainee to Director is a magnificent achievement. Karen, thank you for all you have achieved. You will be missed but not forgotten.