

**Local Government News. July 2019.**

 **County**

County finances for 2018/19 were better than anticipated with an £8m underspend although, of course, there have been some cuts to services. The aim, however, is to provide a good level of service but in a different way;for example, more social care at home rather than residential care.

Our big local issue is the threatened closure of Fletching School and the community will be fighting this with my wholehearted support.

**Wealden**

 The new Biffa contract has started well.I have recently been appointed as Chairman of the Joint Waste and Recycling Committee which oversees the contract for Wealden Rother,Hastings and County Councils.

At July’s Council, I will be putting forward a report which accepts there is a climate Emergency and that we should do all we can locally to put in place measures to move to net zero carbon emissions.

**The Fire Service.**

For the last 6 years, I have been privileged to serve on the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority which covers not only the County Council area but also the City of Brighton and Hove.

It has been a challenging time. We have to maintain a competent and highly trained workforce whilst the number of fires have reduced by about half in the last 10/15 years. We have made significant efficiency savings,turned the focus increasingly to Fire prevention and attended many more road traffic collisions.

In June, I was elected as Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority which is an exciting challenge.

We have 379 full-time firefighters and 150 retained firefighters supported by another 150 technical and administrative staff. They are based in 24 Fire stations. Of these 6 are manned 24 hours,6 operated over 12 hours and 24 evening stations for retained staff.

We attend about 9000 incidents a year. Not all are fires. There are road accidents, animal rescues, water rescues and false alarms.The budget is £38m.

Our 3 big challenges are-

 1.Changes to our Control Centre whilst maintaining a capability to react to all Fire emergencies. This is a long story but we have to change the mobilisation system without any risk of failure to attend an incident.

2. Carry out a detailed operational review of our Fire stations and equipment to make sure they are adequate and in the right place.

3. Update our ’culture’. It has been a rather militaristic,inflexible management style but we are changing it to be more inclusive,giving more personal responsibility, encouraging initiative and innovation.

Lots happening.

Roy Galley

July 10th 2019.

 Your local Councillors.

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