

Much Birch Parish council

Ward member report, December 2016

Remembrance Day

Thanks must go to all those involved in organising the ceremony on 11.11 at the Millennium green on Tump Lane. It was wonderful to see so many of the parish represented and especially to see the children from Much Birch School reciting the poems they had written. Special thanks to Rosemary Rigby and also to the Pilgrim Hotel (refreshments).

Planning

There have been a couple of planning issues in the parish where I have been actively helping the applicant to liaise with the planning department. The planning process can be frustrating but the officers are simply following the procedures outlined in the Core Strategy and other relevant guidelines. The absence of an adopted neighbourhood plan means that the parish has less influence on planning matters than might otherwise be the case.

Introduction to the Internet

The Parish council may wish to consider organising a free course called 'Introduction to the Internet' which is sponsored by Fastershire. The course is designed for beginners and covers issues such as how to send emails, search for information, shop online & stay safe. The workshops can be organised in the parish & Fastershire will bring the computers (courses take 8 people at a time). For information call 01432 260 609

Council funding

I know that it's the time of year when parishes set their precept for 2017, we are doing the same at a county level and I thought it may be of interest to share some of our thinking; first some background:

In 2010 80% of council spend was funded by central grant, by 2020 all council spend will be funded locally through council tax and business rates. We remain in an austerity period in which the council has identified savings totaling £87m between 2010 and 2020. The council is on schedule to have met the challenge, delivering savings of £70m by the end of 2016/17 (leaving £17M still to go)

We are likely to put up our council tax by 3.9% for the next year which will allow us to keep providing social care to the most vulnerable and to help young people to get a good start in life. Aside from council tax we are putting great effort into increasing our business rate take by launching an 'economic vision' which will be used to push for new investment into the county.

As a local authority our role is to invest money where we believe the private sector will follow – some examples:

- 368 miles of road resurfaced in the last 3 years and over 200,000 pot-holes
- rolled out of Fastershire broadband to over 80% of residents and businesses (helping businesses)
- Enterprise zone established and developed (creating good jobs)
- Moving the livestock market out of town allowing the development of the Old Market

Needless to say we will not have enough money to do everything at county level and parishes are likely to be asked to do more and more in the local communities. I'm available if anyone wants to discuss this in more detail, just give me a call.