

ANNUAL MEETING WITH HORSHAM ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS AND HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL

I attended the annual meeting of Horsham District Council with the Horsham Association of local councils to which Steyning Parish Council belongs. This was a really valuable evening with top line speakers from Councillor Ray Dawe Leader of HDC, Tom Crowley, Chief Executive of HDC and Ed Dickinson and Duncan Barratt from West Sussex County Council.

The discussion was very wide ranging but of particular interest will be HDC's proposals to address the issues with the budget, by increasing the charges in Horsham town car parks (to be discussed at Full Council on 19th December). As part of this decision HDC stated that they would not make any changes to rural car parks without full consultation with the parish concerned. The latter was to go towards funding their budget deficit for 2013/14.

The other way in which HDC proposes to balance its budget is by planning to make a charge from next year onwards, for green waste collection which we understand is proposed at £29 per house per year, details still to be decided. This will still be cheaper than all neighbouring districts. The net effect of these two revenue streams will be that there will be no increase in the HDC council tax for 2013/2014, which is obviously good news for council tax payers.

The major part of council tax (over 80%) is the West Sussex County Council precept and we envisage that there will be no increase in that precept either.

By comparison, the parish council precept is incredibly small but is not capped at present and the information that Councillor Dawe had was that there was no likelihood of this coming in for 2013/2014 although possibly the year after this might occur but who knows.

Another interesting discussion was around community infrastructure levy which is taking over, from April 2014 from the financial provisions contained in Section 106 Agreements with developers. CIL will bring in a tariff per square metre of development with a "floor" so as not to discourage smaller developments. It is aimed at providing clarity and certainty for developments of a larger nature. Section 106 Agreements will still be used to deal with the provision, for instance of social housing or highway works so will not be phased out altogether.

HDC will be setting up a review of its Horsham District plan (the main planning document) in the coming year which will also have to consider the tariff per square metre for CIL and this will then have to be reviewed by a planning inspector at an open enquiry before it is brought into effect.

Finally, I gave a short presentation on the work being undertaken between ourselves, and Bramber Parish Council and Upper Beeding Parish Council in connection with the possibility of devolved highway works (still a work in progress) and Roger Potter from Bramber gave a short talk on Bramber's perspective on the possibility of our three Parishes taking over the provision of youth services (youth worker plus youth club) next year.

David Barling
Chairman
27th November 2012