

# Wealden News

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from the



Conservatives

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## DEALING WITH A WHOLE PILE OF RUBBISH

*There is a lot happening about waste at the moment and Cllr Roy Galley (pictured) is right in the middle of it as the Wealden Portfolio Holder for waste management, otherwise known as 'bins and muck'.*

FIRSTLY, we are negotiating a new waste-collection contract to start from July 2019 in association with Rother and Hastings Councils. This will mean the usual fortnightly collection of rubbish and then recycling material in the alternate week. Glass will be mingled with other recycle to make it simpler, so no separate container. The new contract will undoubtedly cost more and we have decided to charge for the collection of garden waste. This would cost about £400,000 a year if it remained free. The decision came down to whether we ask all taxpayers to fund this service or just those use it.

Our local recycling record is very good and, thanks to everyone's efforts Wealden, is now number 62 out of 350 in the national recycling league. There is a lot more to do and my thoughts are turning to what a local council can do on its own to stem the plastic tide. We need to involve local businesses such as McDonalds, Costa and the supermarkets to help us. We also want to talk to them about the increasing amount of mess by the side of the road as a result of people throwing their products out of the car window.

### Roadside litter and waste sites

Kier, our current contractor, is letting us down



badly by not picking up litter by the side of the road. I have been in discussion with them for some weeks; they are a very frustrating organisation who keep changing their local managers on a far too regular basis. They say they were not resourced to pick up the litter; they have recruited more staff -- then they had to train them on highway safety. I have been promised action but am still waiting, as of the end of February.

Another important issue is the County proposal to make savings in its waste disposal budget (just to avoid confusion -- County is responsible for waste disposal, Districts for collection). They are consulting on the possible closure of Household Waste Recycling Sites in Forest Row and Wadhurst. I think this is a retrograde step when environmental issues and recycling are high on the agenda. Wealden Council will be objecting to the plan and I hope some of you will consider doing so.

## Why has Council Tax had to rise? By Cllr Bob Standley

AS Conservatives we don't like to see tax increases as we believe as much of our residents' earnings should be left for them to spend as they choose. However we also need to supply the essential services our residents require.

### Wealden District Council

For many years Wealden froze the Council Tax but last year and this coming year have increased the tax by 2.7%, roughly in line with inflation. It may surprise you to know that the cost of running the Council has reduced from £16.337m to £15.872. The running costs have been assisted by increased revenue from the investment in part of Hailsham High Street and also the Crematorium in Horam, due to be completed during 2018.

So why the increase in Council Tax?. Simply that the grants from Central Government, known as

Revenue Support Grant, has been removed as the nation has to balance its books. Wealden's share of the Council tax is 10.2% of the total charged.

### East Sussex County Council

The County Council has a greater challenge given the huge demands on Children's Services and Adult Social Care. Despite cutting £17m from its budget on top of previous deductions, the Council has still had to raise Council Tax by 5.99% -- 2.99% on the General Fund and 3% ring-fenced for Adult Social Care.

With the loss of central government funding the challenges for ESCC are considerable with another £30m to save over the next two years. Difficult decisions, such as proposals to close seven libraries, will have to be taken.

## More money for our police

**There's been increased funding to Wealden Community Safety Partnership as Police and Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne explains.**



*Increasing public confidence is a key measure for police forces and for PCCs, which is why I have been so keen to support local community safety initiatives.*

*There are two potential funding streams that I have the discretion to use to help local people make their areas safer: large-scale annual Community Safety Partnership funding, and smaller, discretionary grants of around £5k. In my time in office, I have funded nearly 200 such neighbourhood projects with over £1.5m.*

*At a more strategic level, there are 13 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across Sussex. The Wealden CSP has benefited from consistent PCC funding of £26k for each of the past six years, amounting to over £156k.*

*Following a comprehensive review of funding allocation to all the CSPs across Sussex, it became apparent the distribution of funds no longer matched population and crime figures, or the overall funding that some CSPs were able to access, including their available reserves.*

*I have revised the funding formula to arrive at a smarter allocation of the grant that would be fairer to taxpayers and also to the communities that each CSP is there to help by more closely following demographics and crimes per 1000 head of population.*

*This year, Wealden CSP will receive a 48% increase in funding from my office.*

*In order to get some more effective and lasting impact in key areas, I am also proposing to ring-fence some of the funding to support county-wide initiatives. One of these could tackle anti-social behaviour for example, which I know will be welcome news to those Wealden towns experiencing outbreaks of anti-social behaviour.*

*To find out more about how your police budget is spent visit [www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk](http://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk)*

# A Precious Wealden Asset



**Richard Stogdon, Chair of the Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest, writes about one of our most precious assets in Wealden.**

**T**HE Wealden Parliamentary Constituency is privileged to embrace the bulk of Ashdown Forest, a unique and particularly beautiful area of lowland heathland forming part of the High Weald of East Sussex. Favoured by early medieval kings as a hunting ground, the Forest was, for a long time, in the ownership of the De La Warr family, although largely occupied/used by a significant number of Commoners, with rights of grazing and estover (gathering firewood, bracken etc).

The relationship between the Forest owner and the Commoners was and is regulated by Act of Parliament, currently the Ashdown Forest Act 1974. The Board of Conservators of the Forest is made up of appointees of East Sussex County Council & Wealden District Council, and Commoner Conservators elected by the Forest's Commoners.

With the help of public subscription, the Forest was purchased by East Sussex County Council in 1988. On purchase, the County Council declared the Forest to be subject to Charitable Trusts, ("Ashdown Forest Trust") of which the County Council remains the charitable Trustee. Notwithstanding the Trust, the Forest continues to be managed under the 1974 Act by the Board of Conservators.

The Conservators are charged under the Act "to regulate and manage the Forest as an amenity and place of resort subject to the existing rights of common upon the forest and to protect the rights of common, to protect the Forest from encroachments and conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty."

To enable the regulation and management

of Ashdown Forest, the Conservators are given a number of significant powers. In the exercise of such powers, the Conservators are able to levy rates, make charges and issue fines for breaches of Forest bye-laws. In practice, a team of officers is employed by the Conservators to carry out those functions, very ably assisted by a team of enthusiastic volunteers (to whom the Queen's Award was issued last year).

Although long recognised as a special wildlife habitat, since 1974, the Forest has become subject of a number of special designations (SSSI and SSAP) to which a veritable raft of legislation relates. Thus, in addition to the duties envisaged by the 1974 Act, the responsibilities of the Conservators have greatly increased along with an attendant education role. All that has made funding issues particularly acute.

More recently, the County Council, in its role as Trustee of the Ashdown Forest Trust, was asked by the Charity Commission to review current Forest governance arrangements. In response to that request, the County Council instigated a review and public consultation. A number of different models came under review and were compared with arrangements in place with other similar bodies. Broadly, the public consultation showed that retention of the Ashdown Forest Act was preferred, though it was apparently accepted that streamlining of the Forest's general administration is now necessary.

However all that may be, the Forest continues to be one of the great, if not greatest, jewels in the crown of the High Weald, visited by large numbers of people, including riders and dog walkers from all over the Wealden area and well beyond, as a place with unparalleled views across the Weald of Sussex to the South Downs and across part of the Weald of Kent to the North Downs.

## In the role of ...

**In the first of a series, we look at those responsible for our essential services. This month -- Sylvia Tidy who is East Sussex County Council's Lead Member for Children's Social Care.**



**"This is the only statutory role in the Council that can lead to imprisonment, along with Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive, so you can see I take my responsibility very seriously.**

**We are very fortunate in East Sussex to have a department that has been judged by Ofsted to be Good with Outstanding for Fostering and Adoption; not once, but on three separate occasions. This is down to the dedication of the staff, be they social workers, office staff, managers, assistant directors or the director.**

**Foster Carers play a huge role in helping us manage the 500 to 600 Children that, through no fault of their own, find themselves in the care of the council. They are truly dedicated to giving that young person the love and care that has been missing in their lives. Adopters are also critical to giving a child a permanent home.**

**We have six residential homes that also help with keeping safe vulnerable teenagers. Some of these young people have been missing education and excluded from school; in most cases we ensure that they attend school and can go back to live with their families.**

**My role in all this is to keep abreast of all that is going on in the department, challenge when necessary, support the staff, attend prize-givings. Prize-giving is a wonderful celebration of all our looked-after children who have come through their adversities and are able to look forward to a promising future.**

**It is very sad that children have to be taken in to care, but believe me leaving them at home is not an option. Many a young person says: thank you, I would not be full filling my life if I had not been taken into care."**

## Strengthening Local Police – an update by the PCC

*As your elected Police and Crime Commissioner, one of my responsibilities is to set the budget for policing. That is why it is so important that I continue to listen to Sussex residents so that the issues that matter most to you are reflected in the delivery of policing.*

*Although most people understand the need to tackle wider national policing and security issues, such as terrorism and organised crime, most Sussex residents - like most Wealden residents - tell me that they want to see their financial contributions fund more visible, local policing.*

### Safe at home

*You rightly want to feel safe at home, in public spaces, at night-time and on the roads. You also expect your police force to be easily contactable when you need to reach them.*

*I have always maintained that protecting neighbourhood policing is a top priority because you tell me it matters so much to you. Wealden residents in particular responded to my precept consultation saying you were prepared to pay more in your police precept to sustain local policing, so I am delighted to announce that*

*Sussex Police will be recruiting 200 police officers each year for the next four years.*

*This has been made possible because the Government have given PCCs greater flexibility in setting their local police precept. I am particularly grateful for the public's support to pay more for local policing but I don't underestimate the impact of any increased costs for any household. The additional funding that the rise gives us means the Force has to save less money over the coming years so we can protect 476 police posts that would otherwise have been lost.*

*The good news is that the Chief Constable assures me that officer numbers can be sustained and the new, local policing model can now be scaled up, despite the ongoing need to continue driving out realisable savings.*

**Katy Bourne**

## Conservative Party Forum (CPF) Skills & Training for a 21st Century Workforce

*by Christopher Wynne, Wadhurst Branch.*



A CPF meeting was held in Wadhurst on 20th February. A lively discussion took place among those attending who included a retired doctor, a lady with district nursing experience, retired members of the teaching profession and others with business backgrounds and some local councillors.

Lengthy responses to the questions were submitted, and it is to be hoped that these will be taken into account by the CPF Team and those in CCHQ who advise Ministers on policy.

We would like to see more participation in CPF Group Discussions as they are members' opportunity to discuss and hopefully influence future Conservative policies. Contact the office if you are interested in becoming involved: 01273 937661.

