

The main thrust of my report for this year is about change. We are witnessing change in so many aspects of our daily life and it will be no surprise that public services are in the midst of huge modification.

I have been reporting on the savings that have to be made, because of government grant reduction, and SCC has saved £170ml. since 11/12. However, further savings of £80ml. are required over the next 2 years. These, inevitably, will require reductions in the way we do and manage our services and tough decisions will have to be taken. An example of which is the reduction in the Fire Service. For some time police and the fire service has been collaborating. Six fire stations are shared with the POLICE and have been of great benefit to both. Further efficiencies have to be made and reductions in engines and crews are being proposed in the Integrated Risk Management Plan. A consultation, which finished on 22nd February, will be assessed and a decision made at the May Cabinet.

Partnership and close working between public services are beginning to take hold. The sooner bodies understand that cutting duplication and amalgamating can vastly improve services and save money, cannot come soon enough!

Trading Standards have had a successful year in foiling the selling and manufacturing of counter freight goods. However, more and more counter freight goods are reaching the public on line and Trading Standards advise the public to “make sure the website begins with” https”.

Children’s Services have had a Good report form Ofsted which states that much of the work that the council has done, in looking after vulnerable children, has been exemplary, especially in the area of safeguarding.

Education. Progress has been made in driving up standards but there is still some way to go. The increase in Academies means that the local authority will have less involvement in education.

One of the very good examples of partnership working is done by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub which brings together police, health, social care services for both children and adults. I recently visited their headquarters, at Landmark House, and was impressed by the collaboration and efficiency that is happening.

I chair the Police & Crime Panel that both challenges and supports the Police & Crime Commissioner. At our last meeting, 17th March, we focused on solving crime, one of the PCCs objectives and the ways in which crime, like so much, is changing. Cybercrime has become a huge issue and it was interesting to see data that showed that the age group most targeted is the 55-70. When asked why, the PCC replied that they had the most funds! The under 20’s hardly registered. Child sexual

exploitation, along with domestic abuse, are priorities and have come very much to the fore in the light of the Jimmy Saville case.

The government grant to the police was more than anticipated and has enabled 30 more police officers and PCSOs to be recruited.

Voting for the Police & Crime Commissioner takes place on May 8th.

The subject of devolution is one that is publicised a great deal but it is unclear whether the coming together of Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire will happen. Devolution would mean that a mayor would preside over a committee of representatives from the region; they would have control over planning and transport and promote the region. Cambridge city is not keen and Cambridgeshire is lukewarm. Watch this space!

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