

The Future of Service Provision by NSDC

This was an invitation for Parishes to work with NSDC in different ways but in essence take over services that are at risk because NSDC have to save £47million pounds over 4 years.

Despite what residents might think trying to save £47million pounds over 4 years appears to me an impossible task without simply stopping or severely reducing services. The residents are living longer (social services) kids have to be educated (costs more by the minute) so what is left. Roads, Environment, Libraries, Leisure activities. These are small budgets when compared to the Social and Education departments and add to that NSDC are a small Unitary Council. Are you going to leave a dementia patient on the streets or cut the grass, I think we all know the answer to that.

Many Parishes were simply too small, with very small budgets and were only likely to take on services if they joined together and many had different priorities. It is likely that the larger Parishes are the ones to gain or lose. There may be scope for smaller parishes to join forces with a larger Parish for some services. From my reading of the situation some Parishes will opt to do nothing. The key to this appears to be two fold; Is this an opportunity to do a service better with some grant or will we face a cut in the service or simply a closure.

Looking to a certain extent into a crystal ball and judging where this could affect Kewstoke leads to the obvious: Grass and verges cut less often, dog bin emptying less, no youth service, car park maintenance and possibly part closure of toilets. Less maintenance on roads, more street lights out for longer, rubbish bin emptying less and a whole raft of increased charges.

The Government has frozen Council Tax increases and despite our own views on ways of saving money this is very serious particularly for the Rural Parishes.

Where do we go from here?

It was obvious that Kewstoke were ahead of the game with its grass cutting contract work.

We could talk to NSDC about other options which could involve toilets, car parks, dog bin emptying, street lighting, maintenance and beach cleaning provision. It appears youth provision has gone already.

The other issue is revenue raising.

Apart from putting up the precept to cover costs (seen as double taxation) and remember Parishes are not capped, there are other issues such as the Toll Road and Concessions which could raise the Parish revenue to pay for services.

The Council cannot ignore the situation, it will I suspect opt to talk to NSDC, I would suggest doing nothing will not be an option

What I think is clear, in my opinion a rocky ride is ahead for local government services

Colin