

For the fifth year running, the County Council has **not** increased your Council Tax.

This is set against a background of a Government Grant reduction of £42 million, and accumulated savings over the past four years of £450 million. This year we plan further savings of £100 million.

Key services remain protected.

Reflecting an aging population, Adult Social Care has an additional £5m added to its £400 m budget.

Children and Families decrease by £6m to £116m recognising the early intervention work that has successfully reduced the number of children placed in care.

Highways has had a boost of nearly £10m on its £213m budget, with £17.5m of this targeted towards road repairs and £130m for new schemes to encourage economic development. This summer will see a high level of road repairs and resurfacing activity, to ensure the roads are back in good order.

Other priorities include continued investment in Schools, and here in Uttlesford, the schools are outperforming the rest of the County in terms of exam results. Over the next few years new schools will be built in Dunmow and Saffron Walden in response to increased housing numbers occurring there.

Across the County £23m is to be spent on a variety of flood defence schemes, particularly by the coast. £2m will be used to resolve small local problems.

The second phase of the energy switch has attracted 5000 expressions of interest. Superfast Broadband aims to have 65,000 connections by the end of 2016.

The way waste is managed changes this year, with the new waste treatment plant already processing domestic waste. This investment will save £20m a year in landfill tax costs. The rate of recycling is stalling a little, but Uttlesford remains one of the top performers in the County. Any that gets missed will be picked out at the new plant, and this will boost the figures here.

Local bus routes are the subject of a consultation, , 'Getting around in Essex'. Although completed, ongoing reviews will involve seeking local views on their bus services.

The Tour de France proved a great success, with many thousands of visitors arriving in Essex, as well as world-wide exposure on television.

I continue to chair the Place Services Scrutiny Committee. This deals mostly with highways and economic growth matters, but also environment, county parks and waste. It is a wide but interesting brief and keeps me very busy. I also chair the Scrutiny Board which has oversight of all of the scrutiny committees. I serve on the County's planning committee and the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority.

Simon Walsh

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