

**Arun Budget** – The administration passed their budget on 26<sup>th</sup> February, whilst this contains some good elements including the capital money for the Bersted Brooks, it includes some terrible additions. For example, the council is looking to charge NEW service charges on residents in council properties, this has been capped at up to £520 a year. Residents will receive no additional services for this charge. My view is this is wrong, here is why. 74% of these residents are on housing benefit or universal credit, so we know from the outset they cannot afford these NEW charges. (yes, the benefits will raise in line with the new charges, but all this will do is create a bigger hole for residents to get out of; to better themselves and their circumstances). The residents who are to pay these NEW charges live in places like the Trees Estate, which the original report stated that the wards of Marine, Bersted and Courtwick with Toddington are among the **10% most deprived in the COUNTRY**.

The **Conservative group proposed a hardship fund of £75,000** to assist these residents with these new charges. The coalition stated that this “will” happen, however they had 9 months to get this in the budget and failed to do so. However, even though they were adamant it was going to happen, they couldn’t come to vote for it. We shall see if this comes forward and if it is as helpful to residents.

A second Conservative amendment was raised to **double the revenue expenditure for land drainage and coastal protection** (60K and £35K respectively). So, this was to increase funding for ditch clearance and groyne repairs, for example. Much needed in our area of the district. The coalition argued that it wouldn’t make much difference, and one councillor deemed it a “waste of money”. The relevant Group Head confirmed this money would be spent.

This second amendment also included **support for small struggling businesses** with the new business rates hike coming this April. How would we pay for this? 1. From an excess government grant for employers national insurance (98K), which was unbudgeted. And 2, taking some money from a new unallocated contingency fund. This was all checked and validated by the S151 officer. Again, the administration rejected **all** these laudable amendments, which would have tangibly helped with the residents’ problems.

**Owl Statue** – myself, Cllr Yeates and Cllr Lury attended Nursery Fields to unveil a new wooden sculpture which was commissioned. This was created by local artist, Simon Groves. We also had the opportunity to ask the developers about their site and enquire about who is interested and buying the homes.

<https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/community/councillors-unveil-local-artists-owl-statue-in-north-bersted-5009613>

**Youtube** – I have set up and uploaded a few videos to Youtube ([www.youtube.com/@cllrkeirgreenway](https://www.youtube.com/@cllrkeirgreenway)). These videos include drone footage including a voiceover describing some of the things going on in the area.

**Trees Estate** – I have raised with Officers at Arun about the services received in the Trees Estate. I went for a walk around on Sunday and I was embarrassed that little has changed after raising these issues continuously. I have escalated this with the Director of the Environment and

Communities and requested a meeting to get some of these issues resolved. To make matters worse the District Council has cancelled the next Environment Committee, due to lack of work. I take issue with this, there is so much we could be talking about, scrutiny of the cleansing contract to name one suggestion I made in November 2023...