

COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR PETERSFIELD HANGERS

ANNUAL REPORT TO PARISHES 2020-21

11 March 2021

Over the last year, the Public Health team at HCC have done an amazing job of working with the NHS to keep us safe. Infection rates in Hampshire were lower than in neighbouring counties thanks to everyone pulling together. HCC and EHDC worked tirelessly – with incredible support from local voluntary groups – to ensure that vulnerable people in our communities were protected and supported. At HCC we were all very sad when Fareham County Councillor Keith Evans died from Covid-19 at the end of December. I extend my sincere sympathy to all those who have lost friends, family members and colleagues to this dreadful virus.

The Hampshire Highways Team have managed to keep the roads safe despite the challenges. HCC managed to get our Household Waste and Recycling Centres operational again with a new booking system to ensure social distancing. With support from HCC, our schools have kept going throughout the last year for key workers. Schools were made Covid-safe and ready to welcome back all pupils this month.

The financial costs to HCC of the pandemic are still being counted. As well as the extra costs of looking after people, there is also lost income from services such as Country Park cafes and cancelled ceremonies. The Government has provided some emergency funding, but we still face considerable budget shortfalls.

Nevertheless, due to sound financial management and forward planning, Hampshire County Council is in a much stronger position than most other County Councils. We have strong reserves which enable us to invest in new schools and infrastructure. Our Capital Investment programme runs to over £750m for the coming four years. This will help with the Green Recovery. That capital programme includes:

- £68million in new and extended school buildings to ensure there is a local school place for every child in Hampshire
- £118million for structural maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges in Hampshire over the next three years
- £91million for integrated transport schemes including over £18 million specifically focused on walking and cycling improvements
- £33million for decarbonisation schemes covering solar PV and single to double-glazing window replacements.

This last bullet point forms part of our Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which was approved by Cabinet four months ago. We will plant one million trees and millions more wildflowers on County Land and verges. We also have a group-buying solar scheme called “Solar Together”. It is a great scheme. Even if you have solar panels already, you can still use the scheme to get a discounted battery. I had solar panels installed last Summer, so this is what I am doing. You can register for solar, battery storage or both by 26 March at solartogether.co.uk/hampshire

Everyone in Hampshire can be proud that HCC Children’s Services are still rated “Outstanding in all Areas” by OFSTED. Only one other Council has achieved this accolade and it is a much smaller one than Hampshire. This is a tribute to our outstanding social workers.

To boost local jobs and support the recovery, HCC has doubled funding to Apprenticeships and set up a Skills Hub. We are determined to do everything we can to get young people into work and training.

In February 2021 HCC secured funding to continue our highly successful Supporting Families Programme. To date, positive outcomes have been recorded for 1,923 families who have accepted support and achieved changes within the family as a result, such as sustained employment or improved school attendance. Independent evaluation by Solent University demonstrated that between 2015-19 the support given to families to get back on their feet translated into savings of £27million to the public purse.

On transport, we face a real challenge to rebalance our streets towards walking and cycling. It is a challenge we are determined to meet. This is crucial for our own health and wellbeing as well as for the climate and the health of the planet. We have started consulting on a bold new Local Transport Plan for Hampshire which puts Active Travel first. That consultation will resume later this year when we publish the draft plan.

Finally, for the sake of good accountability I would like to use this report to share a table of all my County Councillor grants made in the financial year – see next page.

Each year I do my best to spread the grants around the entire Division. But Petersfield Hangers is a large Division and so this is not easy! If re-elected, next year I will be looking to fund projects in villages that I did not manage to support with a grant this year. The next County Councillor grant round opens in early June 2021.

SUMMARY OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR GRANTS AWARDED IN 2020-21

Organisation	Project Title	Project Description	Amount Awarded
Hawkley Parish Council	Coronavirus Support Programme	We have established a group to deal with the impact of Coronavirus on the local community. It supports self-isolators and also addresses other unforeseen impacts of the current situation.	£1,000
Petersfield Youth Theatre	Elf - the Musical	To support the performance of 'Elf - the Musical', (Project was delayed but will be brought back)	£750
Steep and Stroud Newsletter	The Steep and Stroud Newsletter	We publish the newsletter ten times a year and it is delivered free to every household in the two villages. It is a much valued link for the community	£300
Home-Start Butser	Home-Start Butser support for families in Liss	We urgently need funds to be able to continue our vital work with local families who are facing unprecedented challenges during the Covid-19 Coronavirus outbreak.	£1,000
Petersfield Open Air Pool	upgrades to admin/change room building	We will replace and upgrade the guttering, soffits and fascias of the pool admin/ change room building.	£1,500
Federation of Liss Infant & Junior School	Dining Tables	There are issues that we need to overcome when pupils return to school. The pandemic has heightened our need to replace the existing dining tables & chairs.	£1,500
Greatham Parish Council	Improvements to traffic/ transport	We have applied to HCC for various traffic improvements to help ease speeds of traffic in the village and make improvements for pedestrians.	£1,000
Funding to Community First	Emergency funding to food banks	Emergency funding to support Hampshire's most vulnerable children and families.	£2,000
Hawkley Parish Council	Fingerpost Refurbishment Project	The refurbishment and repair of traditional iron fingerpost signs situated around the parish	£400
The King's Arms youth project	Youth Project	We have purchased and are setting up a new hub in Petersfield. We are in the process of changing the building from a restaurant to a youth club/hub.	£544

I would like to acknowledge the resilience and dedication of all Parish Councils and Petersfield Town Council, who kept going impressively throughout the pandemic despite the challenges, serving the local community and taking forward important projects. Thankfully we can all look forward to a better 12 months ahead.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER

County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers