

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO HAWKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

1 NOVEMBER 2017

1. Serving Hampshire consultation

The next phase of the County Council process to find £140m of savings by 2019 is for the Cabinet to bring forward detailed cost-reduction proposals.

As is public knowledge, a wide range of options is being considered including raising council tax, removing subsidies for some bus services, closing some household waste and recycling centres and withdrawing school crossing patrols.

The County Council is lobbying central Government hard to give us more powers to raise revenue by charging for certain services and we are also pressing Government to clarify the future of adult care funding which is a major part of our expenditure here in Hampshire.

The Full Council will be meeting this week and following that Meeting a further 6-week public consultation on the specific proposals will be undertaken.

2. South Downs Local Plan consultation underway

The Pre-Submission version of the South Downs Local Plan opened for public consultation on 26 September and runs for 8 weeks until 21 November 2017. This will be the last opportunity for the public to comment before the plan is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate in Spring 2018. You can read the plan and respond to the consultation online at: www.southdowns.gov.uk/localplan

A key message which all NPA Members wish to stress is this: when responding, please comment on aspects of the plan which you support as well as those you wish to challenge. For example, if you support the proposed 50% affordable housing allocation please say so!

The South Downs Local Plan will, on adoption, replace more than a thousand existing local plan policies currently operating in different parts of the National Park with one set of 96 consistent policies.

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is asking people to give their final comments this autumn and while they are mainly looking at the soundness of the plan they will also listen to comments on all other aspects of the plan. Every comment will be passed to the Planning Inspectorate who will respond to them as part of their examination into the Local Plan.

This is a landscape-led plan, based on the statutory purposes and duty for National Parks as specified in the Environment Act 1995. These nationally important landscapes are the reason the South Downs were designated a National Park and must sit at the heart of every planning decision which the SDNPA makes.

3. Campaign to protect BOATs from being damaged

I have this week written to the Chief Executive of the SDNPA calling for a Public Inquiry into the use of motorised vehicles on BOATs in the East Hampshire section of the National Park.

I believe that a Public Inquiry held in accordance with the provisions of the National Park Authorities' Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England) Regulations 2007 would be likely to conclude, on the basis of the evidence, that the purposes and duty of the National Park would be served by a ban on motorised vehicles on all East Hampshire byways.

At present, motorised vehicles are banned on byways in West Sussex, which means that many 4x4 drivers and bikers come to East Hampshire. The damage caused by this small number of people creates three serious and severe problems for the South Downs National Park:

- i. Wildlife is damaged including destruction of wildflowers and damage to the trees on the verges of the BOATs. Noise pollution and air pollution also disturbs the tranquillity of the park and damages the wider environment.
- ii. The byways are so severely cut up that they become dangerous and impassable for other users including walkers and cyclists.

- iii. The cost of repairing the byways places an unacceptable burden on the local taxpayer – funding which could be used to support communities elsewhere.

It follows that restricting motorised vehicles would support the conservation of the environment whilst improving opportunities for people to enjoy the National Park. Vehicle restrictions would also support the economic well-being of communities.

I have support from several other members of the National Park Authority so I am optimistic that we will get some traction. I will keep you posted on the progress of this campaign.

4. Future Skills Centre opens in Whitehill and Bordon

The Future Skills Centre is the latest in a series of new, world-class technical training facilities which we at HCC are delivering across the County with a view to transforming the skills infrastructure in Hampshire. This facility has the potential to be a great resource for young people across East Hampshire.

The innovative new building, built by Hampshire County Council and substantially funded by the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), was officially handed over, on 13 October 2017, to Basingstoke College of Technology, which is operating the centre, and providing its comprehensive range of vocational training courses in the construction sector, including apprenticeships.

The Home and Communities Agency secured an award of £3.8 million to fund the project, through the Local Growth Fund Grant from the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, and then selected the County Council to build the new facility and identify an operator. The County Council also put £250,000 towards the building costs for the new centre.

Although the focus is on training for the construction sector, the centre is the new local hub for technical training and will host a broad adult and community learning programme for the wider community.

The first cohort of students is already taking courses at the centre, developing skills in carpentry, brickwork, plumbing and the built environment. Both full time and part time study options are available, as well as apprenticeships.

At the opening ceremony, Damian Hinds MP said: “I was delighted to be part of the official opening of the Future Skills Centre, and to meet students already at work in the new facility. It’s certainly an exciting time for the area and I would encourage any young person with an interest in construction to take a look at the courses available.”

5. Hampshire Supporting Troubled Families Programme (STFP) on track

There has been a positive evaluation of this crucial area of Council activity. A report to the Hampshire Cabinet has highlighted that Hampshire’s STFP programme is on track to meet the Government’s new and more challenging targets around the number of families that need to be reached, and the intervention criteria achieved. By 2020, 5,540 Hampshire families will need to have been supported through the programme - more than double the number supported during the first phase of the scheme from 2012-2015.

By working closely with partner agencies, including the Police, schools and the Health Service, we are able to help families who are on the verge of crisis to make positive changes in their lives. They have been helped to get back into and stay in work, their children now attend school regularly and keep out of trouble outside of school, whilst their home lifestyles are safer and more settled. The benefits of this support are not only felt directly by the families on the programme, but also across the wider communities in which they live. Independent evaluation of the second phase of the Hampshire programme is being carried out by Southampton Solent University.

6. One-stop community shops for those needing mental health support.

New plans will see extended opening hours during evenings and weekends, and social care and NHS mental health specialist staff brought together within the centres. A ‘one stop shop’ approach will also be developed for more areas such as crisis support and support for young people and families.

Support from the centres can be accessed by dropping in or through GP referral.

The plans for the Wellbeing Centres will make it much easier for people to access support in their local community as they will be able to drop in to their nearest centre. Our priority is to ensure that mental health is afforded the same attention and priority as physical health, which is what we are working on with our partners in the NHS to achieve.

The improvement plans are part of a new £8 million contract funded by the County Council and Hampshire's Clinical Commissioning Groups, awarded to Andover Mind, Solent Mind and Havant and East Hampshire Mind. These voluntary sector organisations, with mental health expertise, will work together to run the Wellbeing Centres across the county, from this month.

Havant and East Hampshire Mind operate from their centre at Leigh Park Community Centre in Havant. They can be contacted for advice on 02392 498916.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers

1 November 2017