

COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT TO STEEP PARISH COUNCIL

6 NOVEMBER 2017

1. Serving Hampshire consultation

At the Full Council meeting on 2 November 2017 the County Council approved a report on implementation of £140m of savings. In the short term, this involves some immediate spending on IT investment in order to gain efficiencies. HCC will also be investing in more social workers with a view to better supporting troubled families and thereby reducing the number of children taken into care. In the medium-term, the detailed cost savings as a whole are subject to further consultation and executive decision-making. A detailed public consultation is now expected in the New Year. Two further points are worth noting:

- Councillors have backed a new £500,000 fund to help Parish and Town Councils to provide more services themselves. This could for example help increase the frequency of grass verge cutting or could help with purchasing equipment. Details of the scheme's application process are currently being developed.
- The Council passed a resolution calling on the Government to give Hampshire the powers to undertake a trial scheme that enables the Council to charge OAPs a nominal £10 charge for bus passes. This would raise around £3m and we believe that the public would prefer this charge than to see unviable bus services cut.

The County Council is lobbying Government hard to give us other powers to charge for other services and we shall also be watching the Budget closely on 22 November to see if the Chancellor provides any meaningful additional support for local government.

2. 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 wild flowers 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 for this campaign. I will keep you posted on progress.

3. 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.”

4. 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

6 November 2017