

Hampshire County Councillor Update 28

Hello, I hope this update finds you well.

Here, as usual, is my monthly update, covering September 2023.

Highways Information

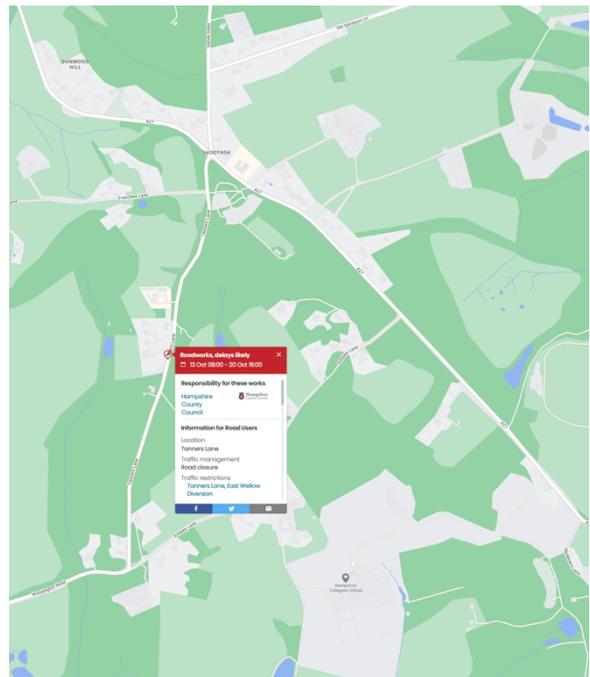
Tanners Lane Wellow - closure for road repair

A heads up about the closure of Tanners Lane from a week on Friday (October 13th) until October 19th for road repairs.

The road will be closed while work is ongoing, which is due to be between 8am and 4pm daily - I currently understand that will include the weekend of the 14th and 15th.

Closure in place between the A27 junction at Shootash and the junction with Embley Lane.

Access will be maintained for residents and those working at the commercial park there. Access to the Frenches will be via the A27 junction at Dunwood.



Highway 'Space' Availability

I wanted to update you on some challenges that are impacting our work to repair the damage caused to our road network last winter and prepare for the coming winter.

In general, these works are progressing well and I hope you will have noticed activity ongoing around the area, most particularly this week around Awbridge.

However, we are facing an unprecedented number of permit requests for works from utility companies which is impacting on the availability of road space and consequently may mean that our own highway repairs are not able to be delivered as quickly as we would like.

It is worth noting that, whilst the County Council is responsible for controlling road-space and coordinating roadworks as part of its statutory duty, it is not possible for us to prioritise HCC works over others as they need to demonstrate parity between all works promoters.

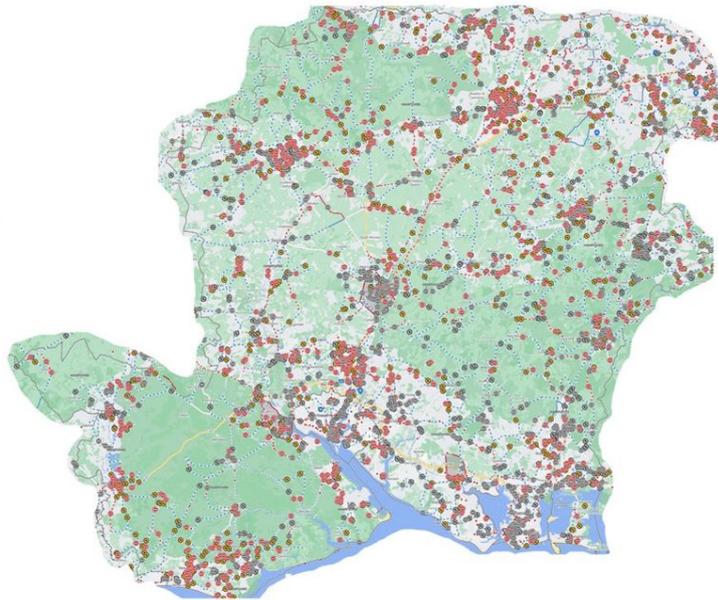
The attached maps illustrate the current volume of ongoing and planned works that are being coordinated by the HCC Streetworks team. These maps change on an hourly basis as new permits come in, works complete, or as contractors make changes to their dates /

method of works. The maps include only works submitted under a permit and do not include planned events or incidents that also require coordination.

As you can see there are significant numbers of works planned and ongoing, finding the 'space' on the road to enable repairs is sometimes challenging, not least as that section of road might have utility works or, more likely, be used as a diversion route for works elsewhere.

The County as a Whole

- Each red circle is planned / ongoing works with a firm start date
- Each grey circle is planned works with a 'vague' start date
- Each dashed red line is a planned / ongoing road closure
- Each dashed blue line is a planned / ongoing diversion route
- Grey polygons are interdiction zones set up to discourage other works as a result of high impact planned works



Reporting Highway Problems

Links to report road issues are here:

Potholes: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/potholes>

Tree/hedge problems:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/treehedge>

Flooding/drainage issues:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/flooding>

Pavement problems:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/paving>

Problems with rights of way:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/reportaproblem>

When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number for the report. If you would like me to follow this up for you then do please forward that message to me and I will chase for you

County Council Budget

You will no doubt have seen the publicity about Birmingham Council 'going bust' in the last few weeks. That's an example of how difficult it is for councils to make ends meet at the moment. Earlier this Summer I included detail of the consultation HCC was running asking Hampshire's residents how they felt we should manage their money in an ever-challenging financial environment.

Hampshire County Council has a legal responsibility to carry out certain functions. We cannot say 'no' if someone asks for support and in many cases we cannot means test or ask for a contribution toward the cost of providing a service. Examples of this are social care costs for older people, support for those with disabilities, the care of vulnerable children and young people and school transport for those who meet the necessary criteria. It's entirely right that we provide these services free of charge for those who need them. The consequence though is a cost that is only limited by the number of people requiring support.

Hampshire is unusual amongst local authorities in projecting our finances up to three years ahead, consequently, we can anticipate where the financial pressures will be. Our projections show that while we will be able to balance our budget for the next two years, by 2025/26 there will be an anticipated shortfall of £120million.

HCC therefore has to consider ways by which we can balance our budget before 2025/6. We very much hope that comes in the way of additional funding from the Government. But it may not, so consequently you will see in the next few weeks publicity about further consultations around the delivery of services.

The feedback from the Summer consultation told us that Hampshire's residents were supportive of service change, but notably opposed to service reduction. We have taken that on board and have prioritised those changes as part of our proposals upon which the County Council will now consult. This will include further internal reorganisation, increased charging for services and the sale of assets.

When a Council can no longer meet its costs, the Government send in Commissioners to run the Council and oversee its return to financial stability. This is what has happened to Birmingham this week. The Commissioner will look at every non statutory obligation and want to understand why the Council might still be operating in that way. Their view will be that the Council should only do that which it is legally obliged, and any other services should be cut.

For that reason Hampshire will also be looking at all non statutory services and reviewing whether they can be carried out differently or at all.

The area of the Council for which I am responsible has already seen reductions in our budget of £117 million in the last 10 years, this being before any reduction in purchasing power for inflation is taken into account. So, when we look at ways by which we can reduce our services, we are left looking at those remaining non statutory services. These include areas which many consider to be vital, and so I am clear that no stone will be left unturned

in our review to find ways by which we can keep service reductions to a minimum. Earlier this week we set out those proposals.

These include:

School Crossing Patrols - HCC do not have a legal duty to provide school crossing patrols. We do have a legal duty to ensure children can travel to school safely. We will therefore carry out a review of every crossing patrol location, reviewing if there is either the capital or developer funding to put safe crossings in place, or whether the continuation of the school crossing in that location is the most efficient way of continuing to undertake our duty to the county's school pupils.

Winter Gritting Routes - These have not been reviewed in many years, so we will be testing whether the current network is needed. The landscape of the County has changed. People now have more winter-resilient cars. There are different bus routes and also very different ways of working. A full review is needed.

Community Transport - There is no legal duty for the County Council to support community transport. However, we realise that where it exists community transport plays a vital role in combatting social isolation and enabling access to vital services. A full equalities assessment will be made of all of the support we give. We will assess whether, in cutting support for community transport, we are simply 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'. Would the reduction of support to these services cost the Council significantly more elsewhere, by way of greater social care or school transport costs for example?

No one stands for election to oversee these kind of changes. We will continue to lobby the Government for greater support, we will relentlessly seek out efficiencies that do not affect our services and we will look for every opportunity to raise money so that service reductions can be avoided.

Ampfield School - potential closure consultation

I'm afraid there is a proposal to close Ampfield Primary School. Not in my division, but I know children from Romsey Rural attend the school.

Ampfield Church of England Primary School is an 84-place primary school for pupils aged 4-11 in Romsey. It is federated with John Keble Church of England Primary School in Hursley. This means that both schools share the same governing body, but are funded separately.

Ampfield itself has seen a consistently low intake of new pupils in recent years and, as at September 2023, had just 26 pupils on its roll. Given this small number, children of mixed ages are taught together and this in turn impacts the school's delivery of the National Curriculum, which requires children to be taught specific sequences of knowledge according to their age.



As school budgets are primarily based on the number of pupils on roll, the school has also experienced growing pressure on its finances. As such, Governors are concerned that the school cannot be sustained financially or without impacting on the quality of its educational provision.

A public consultation will now run from Friday 29 September until Friday 3 November and will seek feedback on a proposal to close the school at the end of the current academic year. Parents, carers and other stakeholders will also have an opportunity to share their views and ask questions at two public meetings, to be held on the following dates:

09 October, 7pm-8.30pm - Ampfield Church of England Primary School

10 October, 7pm-8.30pm - John Keble Church of England Primary School

A report setting out the responses to the consultation and recommendations will be presented at a Decision Day in January 2024. At this stage, the County Council's Executive Lead Member for Children's Services will decide whether to proceed to a statutory consultation (Public Notice) or, alternatively, to undertake a further period of public consultation into other proposed options.

A final decision on the future of the school is expected to be taken in spring 2024. In the event of a closure, parents would be informed of local schools with places available and would need to make an application to one of these or another school of their choice. The County Council's Admissions Team would support each family in this process and offer places at parents' preferred schools where possible. Staff would also be closely supported by the Local Authority in line with the standard processes.

Lepe's Poppy Wave

Can you, or do you know anyone who might be able to, knit or crochet poppies to add to this year's Poppy Wave at Lepe Country Park please?



POPPY APPEAL

Calling all crafters!!

We are asking for donations of poppies to make this years Poppy Wave even bigger!! So please knit or crochet poppies in any style that are at least 8cm wide, then drop them into our visitor services desk in The Lookout.

Lepe
Country Park

RBL
ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Social Care Proposals

HCC are not at the mid-point in our ten-week public consultation on proposals to transform the Local Authority's nursing and specialist care provision.

If you have not had an opportunity to provide your views yet, please do consider doing so by following this link to our dedicated web page where you will find further information and the response form. <https://www.hants.gov.uk/social-care-2023>

The consultation closes on 12 November.

I would also ask for your support in **sharing the consultation** within your local communities to encourage feedback from as many people as possible.

The consultation pack is available in a range of alternative formats, including other languages, as well as 'Easy Read', large print, audio or Braille. Anyone who may require this, is asked to email Hampshire County Council at: AS.Consultation@hants.gov.uk, or call: 0370 779 8102.

The proposals

To recap, a number of suggested changes have been put forward to the existing older adults service portfolio as part of a planned £173 million capital investment over the next five to six years. If pursued, this would enable us to transform and expand the future of nursing and specialist care accommodation directly provided by the Local Authority for the county's growing older population.

The proposals recommend concentrating on the delivery of specialist nursing care, complex dementia care and short-term support – to either prevent a hospital admission or support a hospital discharge. This would not only meet the needs of a growing number of older people in Hampshire in the longer term but would be care that could be provided more cost effectively by the Local Authority in-house.

Transforming in this way would involve the closure of some of the Authority's existing older care homes and a move away from the provision of long term residential care.

Next steps

No formal decisions will be taken in relation to any changes to the County Council's existing residential and nursing care homes before February 2024.

Members of a Working Group established from the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee (HASC), continue to oversee, and are actively engaged in the consultation process, advising on the approach and process.

Hampshire nets £1.8 million for 'Skills Bootcamps'

HCC have secured £1.8m from Government to offer Hampshire residents opportunities to access free, fast-track training to help them upskill and secure higher-paid jobs.

Anyone aged 19 years and over will be able to access employment and skills training for adults through new 'Skills Bootcamps' across the county, to be provided by specially commissioned Ofsted registered training providers.

The training aims to boost Hampshire's economy too, by helping businesses to fill specific skills shortage vacancies and so increase productivity.

The training will be developed in partnership with local employers and many of the excellent training providers already operating in Hampshire, ensuring a joined-up approach to addressing skills gaps and job vacancies across the county; as well as supporting the development of a workforce equipped with the skills to meet the needs of industry and business now and in the future.

Bootcamp courses will last up to 16 weeks and can be undertaken either online, on-the-job or at a training centre base.

We'll be publishing more details about the offer in Hampshire on the County Council's website later this autumn.

Tackling teen vaping

HCC Trading Standards officers have recently seized around 1,500 illegal vapes with an estimated value of £20,000 as part of our ongoing work to help prevent illegal and underage vape sales. Further investigations into this seizure are now underway.

Backing national calls to Government to tighten up laws around the marketing, availability and stricter regulation of vapes, we're sending out a strong message that selling vapes to children is unacceptable. Working with schools, we're helping to raise awareness of the risks of vaping nicotine products, while Trading Standards step up their checks on local premises who risk prosecution for underage sales and illegal vapes.

Concerns have also been raised with all Hampshire MPs on the supply of vapes to young people and the impact of disposable vapes on the environment. All types of vapes can be safely disposed of at our Household Waste Recycling Centres across Hampshire.

County Councillor Grants

It was great to go to the Romsey Show last month, albeit extraordinarily hot. They as usual received a County Councillor grant from my pot, as have this month Romsey Town Council for Christmas lights, St Leonard's Church Sherfield English toward their car park and St Margaret's Church, Wellow toward roof repair.

Getting About

I've been along to Parish Council meetings in Wellow, Chilworth, Sherfield English, Awbridge, Lockerley, West Tytherley and Michelmersh & Timsbury. I've also spoken to the Winchester Association of Town and Parish Councils and visited Aldershot, Farnborough, Havant, Emsworth, Gosport, Lymington, Fareham, Colden Common and Basingstoke with my Cabinet member hat on. It's been a busy month.

Contact

Do please get in touch if I can ever be of any help. For those of you using social media, I post very regular updates on many local issues including roadworks and planning applications on my Facebook page here: facebook.com/nickadamsking



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CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING

Caring for Romsey Rural