

Hampshire County Councillor report

Cllr Jan Warwick

October 2023

1. HCC financial planning this autumn

The financial challenges facing the County Council, and local government nationally, are well documented. Each year, it costs more to deliver public services, but the money received from central Government and council tax increases is not enough to meet the extra costs, which results in a deficit. High inflation and growing demand for local services means that in the two years up to the 2025/26 financial year, the revenue budget shortfall is expected to rise considerably to £132m, one of the biggest deficits the County Council has ever faced.

Proposals this autumn set out options for how Hampshire County Council could close this budget gap and comes on top of over £0.6bn of spending reductions already delivered since 2010. Hampshire is in a better financial position than most other county or unitary councils with responsibility for adult social care, and while the Authority's finances are stable until 2025/26, future stability relies on central Government fundamentally changing the way that local government services are funded.

In the absence of any immediate Government action in this regard, Hampshire County Council must plan on the basis of closing the budget gap itself. This will mean applying a combination of options to help balance the books, including changing or reducing services whilst continuing to deliver those services which the council must legally provide and protecting the most vulnerable in our community.

Final proposals will be made by the full county council in November, and some proposals will be subject to further, detailed public consultation.

2. Transforming in-house nursing and specialist care

A ten-week public consultation is underway on proposals that would see £173 million invested over the next five to six years to transform and expand the future of nursing and specialist accommodation directly provided by HCC 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, so ensuring care can be provided cost effectively.

The proposals include:

- building new nursing homes in Havant, Winchester and the New Forest
- modernising and expanding care at existing homes in Basingstoke, Aldershot and Emsworth
- withdrawing over time from the direct provision of residential care, with the closure of a number of the council's older homes.

More detail and a link to the consultation can be found at

<https://hampshirecc.welcomesyourfeedback.net/s/HCC-Care2023>.

The consultation closes on 12 November 2023 with a final decision expected in February next year.

3. Countryside Services - Parish Pages

Parishes, town councils and other local groups may find the Parish page www.hants.gov.uk/community/parish-pages on the HCC website a useful source of countryside information, including opportunities for grants and funding, information about Parish Pollinators, becoming a Volunteer, Countryside Canines, definitive maps and a guide to rights of way for parishes and communities.

4. Funding to save the UK's rarest orchids

Hampshire County Council has secured £98,000 funding from Natural England to help rare helleborine orchids to thrive. The conservation project aims to create protected habitats for the endangered plants.

5. Older Driver Awareness Week

2 October marks the start of Older Driver Awareness Week. Hampshire County Council runs older driver appraisal courses and assessments. You can find out more information at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadsafety/drivertraining/driverskills>

6. New police stations for Hampshire

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Donna Jones, has announced a plan to open ten more police stations and front counters over the next eighteen months, with the aim of increasing police visibility and making them more accessible to the public.

The number of police front counters will increase from 13 to 23, with new front counters in Cowes, Portsmouth Central, Park Gate, Petersfield, Totton, Ryde, Yateley, Eastleigh, Cosham and Gosport.

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