

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT
TO
ALL PARISH COUNCILS
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS
9 JANUARY 2023**

1. Happy New Year

I hope that everyone had an enjoyable Christmas break! With 2022 and all it brought now firmly behind us, let's hope for a more successful year ahead.

2. Schools news

The deadline for school place applications is 15 January 2023. Hampshire County Council is urging parents of children due to start school in reception year in September 2023 to indicate three school preferences on their application.

Over the last six years, 98 per cent of parents secured a school place for their child at one of their three preferred schools, with between 90 and 93 per cent being offered a place at their first preference school.

3. Consultation on revised Minerals and Waste Plan

An updated Minerals and Waste Plan for Hampshire will put climate change and biodiversity at the heart of decision-making. The emphasis on the Waste Hierarchy should lead to the emergence of a more resilient and reliable waste management system across Hampshire.

There are site allocations which form part of the consultation. Parish Councillors may have views on the proposed site for sand extraction at Goleigh Farm. This site is next to the Ham Barn roundabout between Greatham and Liss. I thought I should flag this up for Councillors.

The deadline for responses is 31 January 2023. The proposed updated plan and the response form can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/minerals-waste-update.

4. Potential boost to the status of Neighbourhood Plans

On 22 December 2022 the Government launched a consultation into proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

As has been widely reported, the Government is proposing to remove the strict requirement for planning authorities to have a 5-year supply of housing, with additional buffers for contingency. This is good news for East Hampshire – it will reduce the planning tension between the 57% of the district which is within the National Park and the 43% which is outside the National Park.

Less widely reported has been the proposal to enhance the status of Neighbourhood Plans such as those which exist in Petersfield and Liss.

The Government is proposing additional protections for neighbourhood plans in circumstances where a local planning authority's policies for the area covered by the neighbourhood plan are out-of-date. First, the Government is proposing to extend protection to neighbourhood plans that are up to 5 years old instead of the current 2 years. Second, they are proposing to remove tests which currently mean local planning authorities need to demonstrate a minimum housing land supply and have delivered a minimum amount in the Housing Delivery Test for Neighbourhood Plans to benefit from the protection afforded by the Framework.

These changes would give local communities more control over planning and I think this would be welcome news for East Hampshire. This is not yet firm policy but it would certainly help if the government were to receive a balance of favourable comments in the consultation.

Should you wish to, you can read and respond to the consultation at this link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy>

5. Local Government Finance Settlement

On 19 December 2022 the Government published the Local Government Finance Settlement for the coming financial year 2023/2024.

On the positive side, there was an additional £2bn of funding for social care in recognition of the unprecedented pressures which County Councils are facing. There is also an additional £100m to help support the most vulnerable households. The referendum threshold for Council Tax increases will be 3% for April 2023 with an additional 2% for social care.

This extra funding is certainly helpful. However there is still a projected gap of around £50m in the budget for the coming financial year at HCC. Looking two years ahead to 2025/2026 we face a projected annual shortfall of around £180m.

Inflation and increased demand in the post-pandemic period have combined to create a highly challenging financial environment for all County Councils in England. Hampshire County Council is in a better position than most County Councils and we continue to have the capability to invest in vital new infrastructure. Despite our relative strength, HCC still faces difficult decisions later in 2023 unless there are major changes to the way local government is funded in England.

6. East Hampshire projects benefit from National Park CIL funding

You may recall that Steep, Greatham and Froxfield & Privett Parishes received £10,000 each in the 2021 CIL round towards village highway improvement schemes.

I am pleased to report that many Parishes in the Petersfield Hangers did well from the 2022 round of SDNPA Community Infrastructure Levy funding. Beyond the Hangers there are also welcome awards elsewhere in East Hampshire. It is noticeable that EHDC has done better than Winchester City Council! The full list of projects receiving funding in Hampshire is as follows:

Liss – Newman Collard Recreation Improvements – outdoor fitness equipment and Multi-use Games Area. £118,000

Marwell to Winchester Bridleways – upgrade network of Bridleways in and around Marwell Zoo and Hotel – up to 1.5km of surfacing and drainage works (linked to future project to deliver off-road link from Marwell to Winchester) £100,000

Greatham Village Hall Recreation Ground – creation of all-inclusive accessible playground to replace existing playground. £90,000

Buriton Village Hall Enhancements – energy efficiency improvements – potential for 12kw solar PV and provision of two fast-charge EV charging points. £50,000

Queen Elizabeth Country Park, near Clanfield – Changing Places Toilet. £40,000

Selborne – Traffic calming scheme – improve entrances to Selborne and widen footways £40,000

The Petersfield School – installation of Climbing Wall that will also be open to community groups £29,000

Access Improvements to the Watercress Way, Winchester (such as re-profiling of land, installation of hand rails and changes to existing ramps) – £20,000

Meonstoke C of E Infant School – To improve a wooded area and bark pathways within the school grounds. £18,000

East Tisted – Highway improvements including review and reduction of existing highway signs, bespoke village gateway signs and new fingerposts) £15,000

East Meon – Highway improvements including review and reduction of existing highway signs, bespoke village gateway signs and new fingerposts. £15,000

Sheet – Highway improvements including reduction of junction with Village Green, various measures on London Road – improved crossing points, and decluttering of signage. £15,000

Twyford – Flood Alleviation Scheme (to fund Phase 1 – construct 115m length ditch to replace 90m section of pipe on Hazeley Road). £8,748.26

I look forward to seeing many of you later this month.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers