

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT  
TO  
ALL PARISH COUNCILS  
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS  
1 FEBRUARY 2023**

1. Highways Update

The recent severe weather has placed unprecedented strain on the road network. We continue to ask for your support in reporting issues promptly on the website and for your patience as the Highways Team seek to triage and fix road defects as fast as they can.

Whilst the weather has improved slightly in the last week, the overnight freezing temperatures have continued to exacerbate the pothole situation with many more now appearing, particularly in rural areas. Service demand across the county remains extremely high. Both our officers and contractors continue to work extended hours (including weekends) to try and keep on top of the situation. However, demand far exceeds capacity at the present time and consequently all work is having to be prioritised so that the highest risk issues are repaired first, and this will include the continued use of temporary ‘infill’ repairs. Milestone are doing everything they can to secure more gangs and equipment for Hampshire and when more resource becomes available it is being deployed immediately. It will be many weeks, if not months, before we are back to anything like business-as-usual.

Some of our senior officers attended a briefing session with both the Met Office and the Environment Agency last week. Unfortunately, it looks like there is more unfavourable weather on the way. The Met Office are suggesting that the weather in February is most likely to be unsettled, with the potential for more periods of stormy conditions and some further cold spells.

Heavy and prolonged rainfall during late December and early January has resulted in saturated catchments in many Hampshire areas with consequential surface water flooding (and ice problems) on some routes. The Highways Team is currently prioritising gully/manhole cleansing and ditch/grip clearance in those areas likely to be most vulnerable to ensure that, at the very least, our highway drainage systems are clear and operational.

We are very grateful to Parish Councils and to communities for your understanding of this challenging situation.

## 2. Lengthsman Funding

I am pleased to be able to officially confirm that the funding to Parishes for the Lengthsman Scheme will continue for the coming financial year 2023/24. This follows the extension of the Milestone contract and an agreement for them to provide funding for this.

The Lengthsman scheme is a good example of successful joined-up government in Hampshire and I am delighted that it will continue.

## 3. NEU Industrial Action

You will be aware that the National Education Union is taking industrial action today (1 February) as part of a dispute with the Government regarding pay. Any decisions to close schools as a result of striking are for individual Headteachers to make and will be based on their ability to open the school safely, and to maintain a full or revised curriculum.

As a County Council, we have communicated with Hampshire schools to reiterate the national guidance on managing strikes provided by the Department for Education, and to support schools in preparing as far as possible for any strike action by staff.

Teaching staff do not have to declare their intention to participate in a strike until the day itself. Consequently Headteachers may not be in a position to gauge the potential impact of planned strike action in advance. However, Headteachers were asked, where possible, to ascertain whether any staff will be striking so that they could determine the likely impact on their school and whether the impact is likely to mean that the school will need to implement a full or partial school closure.

Schools have been advised to declare closures using the [County Council's emergency closure system](#), where you will see a number of schools have already notified HCC of their plans to close.

#### 4. Major investment in Hampshire Schools

On 12 January 2023 the Exec. Member for Children's Services Cllr Edward Heron approved a total planned investment programme in Hampshire schools of £221m over the next three years. The programme includes a number of proposed school expansions; projects for special schools, early years settings and children's social care; as well as other improvements and modernisations across existing buildings.

Ongoing pressure for school places is largely driven by major new housing developments. Additionally, there has been a substantial increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who need a specialist school place. The proposed capital programme includes plans for new schools linked to new housing developments, and a number of special school projects, to respond effectively to demand and ensure that sufficient school places remain available, in line with our statutory duties as a County Council.

#### 5. HCC extends its support for Community Energy projects

A grant of £100,000 has been awarded by HCC to Community Energy South (CES), ensuring continued support to resident groups, helping them develop and manage community-based renewable energy projects in Hampshire. The funding will be available over the next two years as part of the Authority's activity to support the county to become Carbon Neutral by 2050 and be resilient to a two degree rise in temperature.

Further support includes a revolving community energy fund which can invest up to £25,000 in any individual community project in Hampshire. Any profits are reinvested to support further community schemes. Communities interested in generating renewable energy can find out more at [Community energy | Hampshire County Council](#)

Renewable energy currently generated in Hampshire is only 5% of the total used, so there is a sizeable opportunity to generate local, low carbon energy.

The funding awarded to CES will enable them to train and guide a growing number of Hampshire communities who want to come together to buy, manage, and generate low carbon heat and power. Examples of ways this might be achieved could include setting up a residents' home energy advice service or building community solar power facilities.

6. SDNPA is recruiting a new Authority Member

There is a vacancy for a Secretary of State Authority Member at the SDNPA and the appointment process is being run by DEFRA. The closing date is 20 February. If anybody is interested or knows somebody who might be interested please find below the link.

<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/secretary-of-state-members-to-national-park-authorities-and-aonb-conservation-boards/>

It is definitely in our interests to encourage strong Hampshire representation on the Board at the SDNPA.

7. Grant pot

I seem to still have £900 in my HCC grant pot. These funds need to be allocated by 18 February so please do get in touch with me as soon as possible if you have a scheme which you think could be suitable for funding.

**RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER**  
**County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers**