

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT
TO
ALL PARISH COUNCILS
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS**

1 SEPTEMBER 2023

1. HCC Meeting with Southern Water

I would like to report back following a high-level meeting I attended in early August between the CEO of Southern Water and the Leader of HCC, as well as senior officers from both organisations. As you all know, HCC is the Lead Local Flood Authority for Hampshire.

There is a new management team at Southern Water under the leadership of CEO Laurence Gosden. This new team inherited a number of difficult issues and they are focused on addressing them. They now have £1.5bn of equity funding from their Australian owners Macquarie which will be invested in infrastructure. Following recent criticism of their period of ownership of Thames Water, Macquarie are apparently determined to restore their reputation as responsible infrastructure investors.

The main issue affecting areas in Petersfield Hangers is sewage overflow during heavy rainfall. These overflows are not just distressing for residents, they are also very bad for the environment. This sewage pollutes rivers and makes its way into the sea where it kills fish and adversely affects the marine environment. Sewage overflows are a national issue and there is a Storms Overflow Taskforce at DEFRA developing proposals. Why is this suddenly happening now? The answer is that the frequency of severe rainfall events has increased due to climate change whilst continuous development in the UK (especially concreting) has also played a part.

Southern Water blame this sewage overflow phenomenon squarely on excess surface water flowing rapidly into the sewage system during flash floods. We all have a job of work to do to make sure that rainfall does not enter the sewage system. Rain from roofs should go into soakaways, planters, flowerbeds or a sustainable drainage system (SuDS). This sort of thing is standard on new housing estates, but older housing stock is often set up incorrectly. HCC has agreed to play its part by retrofitting our entire estate of 10,000 buildings including all our schools, and by improving sustainable highways drainage.

I raised the Sheet pumping station replacement issue with Southern Water and they are looking into this now. Three further points I wanted to highlight are as follows:

- In certain cases Southern Water will fund “slow water butts” for entire villages which are very effective at reducing sewage overflow by withholding rainfall during flash floods. Even if they cannot fund the water butts they will provide guidance and advice for free.
- I now have a direct contact point at Southern Water who I can contact about local issues. Please feel free to ask me to raise issues.
- Southern Water are investing nearly £5m in upgrading the Wastewater Treatment Works at the very end of Durford Road. This is excellent news for the local environment. But I should mention that the Southern Water press notice states: “This work will involve increased vehicle movements to the site. We would like to apologise in advance for any inconvenience our work may cause to those people living in the area.”

I would invite PTC and Parish Councils in our area to consider whether there are actions they can undertake at the local level to improve sustainable drainage and thus reduce sewage overflows.

2. HCC launches consultation on future of care homes

On 4 September 2023 a consultation will commence on proposals that would see some £173million invested over the next five to six years to transform and expand the future of nursing and specialist care accommodation directly provided by Hampshire County Council for the county’s growing older population. The consultation will run for 10 weeks, closing on 12 November 2023. From 4 September the consultation will be available at this link: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/social-care-2023>

The proposals put forward 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 meet the needs of a growing number of older people in Hampshire in the longer term. Specifically, the proposals to be consulted on include:

- Building three brand new nursing homes – Oak Park in Havant, Cornerways in Winchester, and a site in the New Forest (location to be determined)

- Significantly modernising and expanding care at three existing County Council homes: Oakridge in Basingstoke, Ticehurst in Aldershot and Emsworth in Havant.

Withdrawing, over time, from the direct provision of standard residential care, with:

- the permanent closure of two residential care homes, temporarily closed since 2021 - Copper Beeches in Andover and Cranleigh Paddock in Lyndhurst
- the closure of three existing residential care homes at Bishops Waltham House, Solent Mead in Lymington, and Green Meadows in Waterlooville
- the closure of two further homes in the longer term (not before the end of 2026) - Westholme in Winchester and Malmesbury Lawn in Havant, with the services seamlessly moving to the new local facilities at Cornerways and Oak Park at the point that they are operational
- the ending of standard residential care services at Oakridge, Ticehurst and Emsworth (not before the Autumn 2025 at the earliest).

The County Council's seven remaining nursing and short term 'step-down from hospital' care homes will remain in operation. The changes would be phased over time and would help to increase the overall number of directly provided Local Authority beds to around 1,000 from the current position of just over 900 beds.

Annually, the County Council sources care home places for around 1,600 clients, more than three quarters of whom go into private care homes. The investment proposals would enable a similar ratio of care provision to be maintained.

We are at an early stage of consultation and decisions will not be taken until February 2024. Your support in not only providing your own views, but in promoting the public consultation to your local populations would be greatly appreciated.

3. Government planning consultations

I would like to draw attention to two planning reform consultations launched recently by the Government which could potentially have a far-reaching impact on our area.

Firstly, the Government is consulting on changes to plan-making. This will make the process quicker and it will also require planning authorities to review plans every five years. You can read more about this and respond to the consultation here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/plan-making-reforms-consultation-on-implementation>

Secondly, the Government is consulting on changes to Permitted Development, including within protected landscapes. This consultation covers changes to certain permitted development rights that allow agricultural diversification and development on agricultural units. The SDNPA is not very happy about this proposal. I suspect there will be mixed views amongst Parish Councillors. Whatever your views I hope you will take the time to respond to this important consultation. You can read more about this and respond to the consultation here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/permitted-development-rights>

Both consultations close on 25 September 2023.

4. Emergency Contact Numbers

I would like to draw attention to a helpful new page on the HCC website which lists emergency contact numbers for a range of different organisations:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/contact/emergency>

The contact number for the HCC Emergency Planning Team is 01962 846 846 and Clerks may wish to save this number in case it is ever needed.

Hopefully Parish Councils are already aware of the Community Emergency Plan Toolkit which can be downloaded from this page:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/community/emergencyplanning/prepareyourcommunity>

5. Pulens Lane Traffic-Calming Project

The design work has been making good progress over the Summer. Cllr Mocatta and I have seen some of the emerging proposals and we were impressed. A workshop for local stakeholders will be held on MS Teams on Tuesday 12 September, at 4pm. At this workshop the designs will be showcased and feedback will be sought.

6. Closure of footpaths due to Esso pipeline

HCC has made an Order under Section 14(1)a of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, to allow for works in connection with the Esso London to Southampton Pipeline works. Some footpaths in Ropley and West Tisted will be closed until mid-November. The Esso pipeline is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project so I do not think there is any alternative to these footpath closures.

If you wish to examine a pdf showing the affected routes, please click on this link:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/getPublicNoticeAttachment?attachmentFileName=14712.pdf&attachmentTitle=TEMPORARYCLOSREMULTIPLEROUTESACROSSHAMPSHIRE.pdf>

7. Energise South Downs event at Bedales on Fri 6 October

Our local community energy social enterprise Energise South Downs (ESD) are holding a Future Energy Forum at Bedales School on Friday 6 October. This is a great opportunity to learn more about these important issues.

The evening will be chaired by John Palmer, Deputy Director, Energy Performance of Buildings, Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities. He will oversee a panel of expert speakers across the renewable energy, sustainable finance and housing sectors, including Steve Waygood, Chief Responsible Investment Officer, Aviva Investors; Ollie Pendered, Chief Executive, Community Energy South; Rupert Meadows, Campaigns & Engagement Officer, Power For People and Mark Gaterell, Prof Sustainable Construction, University of Portsmouth. That is a really impressive panel of speakers, in my opinion.

This is a free, non-party political event aimed at informing the community. To book a place please visit Bedales Events - <https://www.bedales.org.uk/event/energise-south-downs-future-energy-forum> & for more information about ESD see <https://esd.energy>

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers