

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

2 JANUARY 2024

1. DIY waste and the Petersfield HWRC

I mentioned in my last report that from 1 January 2024, residents using Hampshire County Council Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) will no longer be charged for disposing of their DIY waste. I wanted to explain a bit more about this change which has come about following amendments to national regulations.

Up to two 50-litre rubble bags, or one bulky item such as a sink or toilet pedestal, will be accepted for free at each visit, at a maximum frequency of four visits over four weeks. Anything more than this amount will be chargeable at current rates, as permitted by national legislation, to cover specialist disposal costs. Customers must also be able to lift, carry and empty out their DIY waste. The Council estimates that the removal of the charges will impose an additional cost to Hampshire council taxpayers of up to £2 million every year. This is because disposal of DIY waste, such as soil, rubble, asbestos and gypsum board, requires specialist processing. The fees we used to charge helped to cover those expenses.

This extra cost has an impact on our budget situation at HCC. We are still facing a £132 million budget shortfall from April 2025. The Local Government Finance Settlement which was announced on 19 December 2023 contained no new money which was disappointing. HCC has legal and moral responsibilities to look after vulnerable adults and children. Those responsibilities are always at the forefront of our minds and this means that all other services have to be looked at very closely.

A consultation on the future of Hampshire's HWRCs will therefore commence on 8 January, alongside a number of detailed HCC consultations. This will include questions about HWRC opening hours and possible closures. I believe that everyone in Petersfield Hangers appreciates the convenience of having an HWRC in Petersfield. I personally will be advocating strongly for it to continue, working closely with colleagues at EHDC. I would encourage you to look out for the consultation on 8 January and make your views heard. A key point to make is that Alton is not a viable alternative because the road network is unsuitable for the extra traffic.

2. Successful crackdown on youth vaping continues

Trading Standards is one of my responsibilities within the Hampshire Cabinet and I am pleased to say that our campaign to crack down on youth vaping scored a major success just before Christmas.

Test purchase operations took place on Monday 18 and Wednesday 20 December 2023, with visits to 17 different premises. Teenage volunteers (with undercover officers always close by) went into the businesses to attempt to buy a vape, also known as an e-cigarette. These items should only be sold to someone over 18. I'm pleased that this operation has found that most retailers are following the law and did not sell to our volunteers. In two cases where a sale was made, the circumstances are now under formal investigation which could lead to prosecution. A very strong message has been sent to the retail vape market by this operation.

The rise of vaping by young people is a real worry for parents, so we will continue with our activities to crack down on the illegal sale of vapes to under 18s. Since September 2023, Trading Standards has also prevented the sale of over £200,000 of illegal vapes and e-cigarettes by removing them from shops across Hampshire.

3. Local Nature Recovery Strategy consultation

Under the recent Environment Act HCC is responsible for developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the whole of Hampshire including Portsmouth and Southampton. We have launched a consultation to identify suitable areas for nature recovery projects. I hope Parishes will consider submitting a formal PC response. To find out more and complete the survey please click on this link:

<https://lnrs-hampshireonline.hub.arcgis.com/>

4. Highways Service Annual Review

I would like to share with you the County Council's [Highways Service Annual Review](#) for 2022/23 (see embedded link) which offers useful insights into the Highways team's activity over what has been an exceptionally challenging period.

We are continuing with our intensive focus on fixing potholes and other road defects following confirmation of the 3-year Stronger Roads Today campaign in July. This has enabled the deployment of significantly more repair teams and specialist equipment with the primary aim of making our roads better, fixing defects more quickly, and addressing the widespread deterioration from last winter's wet and freezing weather.

You will be aware that in November the Government announced that more funding would be allocated to local highway authorities for highway maintenance. For Hampshire a 'minimum uplift' of £132.3million of funding has been confirmed up to 2033/34, i.e. over an 11-year period from 2023 to 2034. Included within this funding is an extra £4.2million for both 2023/24 and 2024/25, which has already been confirmed, and we await further confirmation from the Department for Transport on how the rest of the uplift funding for Hampshire will be allocated over the remainder of the funding period. This is, of course, welcome news and having such long-term uplift funding confirmed will enable us to plan ahead with greater certainty and commit to longer-term resources from the supply chain.

This year we have seen exceptionally wet weather, with higher than average rainfall in 9 out of the last 12 months. In anticipation of another wet winter, the frontline teams have been undertaking additional checks on highway drains, roadside grips (short channels between the road and ditch) and gullies/chambers in areas where there is a history of high groundwater and/or surface water flooding to make sure the County Council's highway drainage assets are functioning optimally. This is in addition to the year-round cyclical maintenance of our 212,000 gullies and 15,000 manholes/chambers.

Please continue to use our online reporting system to tell us about issues on the road network, including potholes - [Report a problem | Hampshire County Council \(hants.gov.uk\)](#). The online tools have recently been improved to be more user/customer friendly so I would encourage you to take a look.

5. SDNPA announces CIL Funding

I would like to highlight and celebrate the fact that Petersfield Hangers Division has again done very well in the annual round of Community Infrastructure Levy funding from the SDNPA. The successful projects were announced in December and included these ones in our area or highly relevant to our area:

- Newman Collard Playing Fields, Liss – drainage improvements works. £78,000
- Liss Forest Recreation Ground – improvements including replacement play area, drainage improvements and expansion of basketball area. £40,000
- Churcher's College / Penns Place, Petersfield – 430m permissive path linking south side of Penns Place to River Rother footpath. £50,000

- Hampshire-wide – Hampshire County Council’s Parish Pollinators Project increasing diversity in hedgerows and other planting. £50,000
- Petersfield Open Air Swimming Pool – toilet refurbishment. £50,000
- Petersfield Rugby Club – green energy initiative (renewable energy to reduce increasing energy costs) £40,000
- Petersfield Central Car Park, Park Road – installation of Changing Places Toilet. £15,000
- Stroud – replacement bus shelter. £10,000
- Stepping Stones Playgroup, Sheet – improvements to outdoor learning and play area, including creation of covered play area. £4,000
- Queen Elizabeth Country Park – improvements to South Downs Way, increasing access for all. £60,000
- Queen Elizabeth Country Park – restoration of Butser Dew Pond £20,000

I think you will agree that is a pretty good result and I am most grateful to Members and Officers at the SDNPA for their support for the above projects which will make a real difference in our community.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers