

Annual Report to Parish Councils 2015-2016

County Councillor Ken Moon

Petersfield and Butser Division

First of all I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to all of the Parish and Town Councils / Councillors within my division for the enormous support that I've received over the past year.

I have four Parish Councils and one Town Council within my division and, as you can imagine, it is sometimes extremely difficult for me to attend all of the meetings. I do, however, do my very best to do so.

Over the last year I have submitted a written report to Parish and Town Councils within my division each month so that they have at least an update from me, even if I'm unable to be there in person.

Much of my time is spent dealing with casework from residents within the division. A considerable amount of this work is around highways/maintenance and lighting. You may recall I reported some months ago Hampshire County Council has come top of all the county councils in a national survey of resident's satisfaction with local highways maintenance. It also took top spot on the satisfaction with street lighting and highway enforcement and second in winter maintenance and third in the overall condition of the highways. We have been given additional funding to support the Council in its effort to reduce the number of potholes and I'm getting reports from around my division that a considerable amount of work has been done. That is not to say that there is still a lot to do but we are making some progress.

Please find below highlights from the last year.

May 2015

Do you have the ability to stop traffic?

Hampshire is making an appeal for new School Crossing Patrol Officers to come forward. A number of vacancies are proving hard to fill, and with children's safety a top priority, the County Council is raising awareness about how rewarding the job can be.

Extending the life of Hampshire's roads

Hampshire County Council's annual surface dressing programme is underway, to prolong the life of Hampshire's roads.

Surface dressing is when the road is sprayed with bitumen which provides a new waterproof seal to the road, and then a thin layer of stone chippings is applied to the surface to improve its skid resistance. It has to be applied to a dry surface, so the programme gets underway in earnest during the spring and summer months and lasts until the autumn.

June 2015

Hampshire lighting streets with new technology

Over the past five years 150,000 street lights, illuminated signs and bollards have been replaced or upgraded across Hampshire in the biggest private finance initiative in the country.

July 2015

The County Council have just completed a programme of extra maintenance funded by successful bids to the Government's pothole and flood repair funds, which resulted in an additional £17.5 million going into resources and equipment to fix an extra 120,000 potholes across the county in a year. But we know there is always more to do, and we continue to look for innovative and efficient ways to make the most of our resources.

August 2015

Hampshire's economy ready for take off!

A loan of £4.5m to Farnborough International Ltd, to showcase Hampshire's world-class aerospace sector and promote the county's economic prosperity. The loan would be part of a £29m target to develop new permanent conference and exhibition facilities for the Farnborough International Airshow.

Hampshire County Council is committed to the county's economic prosperity and sees the aerospace and defence sector, which is worth £1.5bn each year in Hampshire, and employs 16,500 people - as a significant part of the county's economy, bringing benefits to Hampshire, its residents and businesses. The Airshow is reported to bring in £35m to the local economy. Its profile helps inspire young people to pursue careers in science and technology, as demonstrated by the 5,000 under-21s who participated in its Futures Day last year. Having a successful aerospace industry in Hampshire will provide a higher number of skilled jobs in the area.

Hampshire schools' expansion gathers pace with 5000 places to be provided in the next three years

Growth in pupil numbers at Hampshire's schools continues, and investment in schools to provide the additional places is keeping pace, thanks to Hampshire County Council's strong track record of planning.

Hampshire County Council prides itself on investing in quality school buildings that inspire children to learn. Having our award-winning in-house property services means that we can design and build excellent facilities at very good value to the taxpayer.'

School expansion projects, including two completely new schools, totalling more than £90 million in value will complete over the next three years, providing nearly 5000 places.

These investments are part of the County Council's strategy to provide more than 11,000 new primary school places across the county by 2018. It is part of a wider £248 million schools capital programme, which will ensure that existing buildings are maintained in good condition, there is better provision for pupils with special educational needs and money is made available for other improvements on sites.

September 2015

Changes to grant funding for community projects

Hampshire County Council is looking to make some changes in the way it supports community organisations and initiatives through grant funding.

Its good news that, even though the Council had to make savings, after a thorough review, there is still a way they will be able continue to fund the majority of the community organisations and initiatives they have been able to in the past.

The Council receives half the level of funding from Government it did four years ago, and is having to look at every area of spend to see where savings might be found. Therefore, we are looking to reduce the £1million which went to culture, recreation and community projects last year by £100,000.

October 2015

Help fight winter flooding

Residents are being asked to clear ditches on their own land and play their part, alongside Hampshire County Council, in preventing localised flooding this winter.

Since April the County Council has been hard at work clearing over 60,000 gullies, 4600 catchpits and completed 22 major highways drainage schemes to help prevent localised flooding.

Hampshire County Council can't prevent flooding completely but, there is a lot that can be done to reduce the impact on neighbourhoods. Local residents are being asked if they can regularly check ditches and watercourses on their own land to make sure they are clear of leaves, vegetation and other debris and not blocked up by grass cuttings or other rubbish.

The Council spends more than £2 million a year maintaining 900 kilometres of highway drains and more than 200,000 roadside gullies but there are many gullies and watercourses on private land which can be blocked. These blockages can often lead to flooding on local roads after heavy rainfall. Due to Hampshire communities, reducing some funding by two per cent, and by some projects coming to a natural conclusion.

November 2015

A new Chief Executive for Hampshire takes the helm of a modern business providing public services

Hampshire County Council's new Chief Executive takes up post on Monday 2 November - as the new Head of Paid Service for a local authority now widely regarded as a national leader in shared and traded public services, as well as for the quality of its services to Hampshire residents.

John Coughlan was appointed to the post earlier this month. In taking up the reigns as Chief Executive, he will be responsible not only for managing an overall annual budget of around £2 billion, a workforce of around 37,000 and for providing services for 1.3 million people across the county, but also a modern business operating as part of an 'extended organisation'

Hampshire sees 300th broadband cabinet upgraded to superfast speeds

The Hampshire Superfast Broadband Programme has reached a major milestone with the 300th cabinet in Hampshire now enabled with superfast broadband.

This means that an additional 72,000 Hampshire homes and businesses, which would not have been covered by the commercial market, now have access to new fibre-optic technology providing faster broadband, with most of these premises able to access superfast broadband speeds - i.e. internet speeds greater than 24 Mbps.

In Hampshire, the Government, Hampshire County Council and local partners are providing over £29 million of investment to ensure that more than 97,000 additional homes

and businesses across the county can gain access to superfast broadband, once the programme is complete.

To find out which premises already have access to superfast broadband, or which areas are due to be covered by the Hampshire Superfast Broadband programme, visit: www.hampshiresuperfastbroadband.com

December 2015

Hampshire County Council begins early forecasting of the financial picture for 2020

Ahead of the Government's announcement at the end of next month on future funding for the public sector, Hampshire County Council is already on the front foot - looking towards the end of the decade.

Members of the County Council's Cabinet have approved the savings proposals that will close the budget gap to 2017/18, and are already looking ahead at the prospects for the Medium Term Financial Strategy up to 2020.

With Government needing to find billions more in savings to eliminate Britain's deficit by 2019/2020, it's widely expected that their Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on 25 November will set out more tough times ahead for the public sector. Therefore, it's essential we start preparing as early as possible for the financial picture ahead - taking into consideration the prospect of further likely cuts in our grant from Government, alongside the additional pressures we expect to face on our budgets, by the end of the decade.

None of us can predict the future with any certainty, and indeed, not until the Government's autumn statement which will cover a period, many of us hope will be the final years of austerity for the public sector. However, as we head towards 2020, it's unlikely there will be any let up in the downward pressure on local government budgets that we have been seeing over the last decade. In the meantime, we have to stay focused on the first milestone the County Council must reach, which will be to secure anticipated savings of £98 million by 2017/2018.

The key actions and activities that aim to deliver the £98 million of savings to 2017/18, and on which the County Council sought residents' views this summer were approved by Cabinet. A final decision on the proposals will now be made by the full County Council on 22 October, followed by a number of further consultations with residents and stakeholders where necessary.

January 2016

Hampshire MPs give strong backing to devolution bid

The future of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight was the focus of a Westminster event on 14 December, hosted by the area's devolution bid and attended by a majority of the area's 19 MPs. The session was sponsored by North East Hampshire MP Ranil Jayawardena, who chairs the recently-formed Hampshire and IOW All Party Parliamentary Group. MPs, Council Leaders and Executives from across Hampshire were able to discuss the ambitious devolution plans and speak to the partners involved, including the emergency services, National Parks representatives and the business community.

"Significant support"

it was good to see such significant backing from Hampshire and Isle of Wight MPs. 11 of our 19 MPs were present - demonstrating their firm commitment to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight bid, by show of force. Further backing and support has been expressed by key MPs who could not make the date.

Hampshire County Council Leader responds to proposed cuts to future Council funding from Government

The Leader of Hampshire County Council has expressed his deep concerns following the announcement by Government that funding for councils for the next four years will be significantly reduced.

Within the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, Hampshire County Council's Revenue Support Grant has been cut by £48 million next year - which is a decrease of 37.4% and £29 million more than the Authority was anticipating. The significant reduction is due to a change in the way that the Government distributes money to local authorities.

By 2019/20, the County Council will no longer receive any Revenue Support Grant. The Government's financial plans also assume that all local authorities will put up their council tax by the maximum they are allowed, which for Hampshire would be 3.99% and would include an extra 2% flexibility in order to pay for the increasing costs of social care (NB a 1% increase in council tax would generate approximately £5 million in revenue for the County Council).

The loss of an additional £29 million grant next year is a most unwelcome surprise, less than four months before the start of the new financial year, and the Council is concerned that the council tax payers of Hampshire may have to pay more, but won't see the benefit of this in local services.

The County Council will continue to analyse the figures and respond formally to the Government's consultation in the new year, in the run up to setting the budget and council tax for 2016/17 in February next year.

Cllr Ken Moon