

COUNTY COUNCILLOR FOR PETERSFIELD HANGERS

ANNUAL REPORT TO PARISHES 2021-22

As I write this, and as you commence preparations for your Annual Parish Meetings, Hampshire County Council has pivoted amazingly swiftly from pandemic mitigation to refugee preparations. We are working closely with local authority partners, businesses and residents to identify suitable homes for Ukrainians over the coming weeks and months. Hampshire will play a proactive part in supporting the people of Ukraine, as we did for Afghan refugees last year. More information is available on the Ukraine pages of our website at hants.gov.uk/Ukraine

Over the last two years I was very conscious that working from home was difficult for those still struggling with slow broadband. The good news is that most of East Hampshire has been included in the government's £5bn Project Gigabit. This means that many of us will get a subsidised superfast fibre connection in the second half of 2023. The contracts will be tendered this year and a contractor appointed early next year. I will keep Parish Councils updated on progress with this procurement process in my newsletters.

The Levelling Up White Paper was published on 2 February 2022 and has presented an opportunity for Hampshire. We now have clarity on the models of devolution which will be acceptable to the Government. And it is clear that all areas in England will have a devolution deal by 2030. As we move towards a County Deal, it should mean more powers and more resources for Hampshire's elected politicians, which should translate into better placemaking initiatives and better services for residents.

The financial position at Hampshire County Council is not easy at this time. We have been cutting costs for 12 years now, but we still have an annual budget gap (from 2023) of £92m. This is largely a result of price increases in the care sector and growing demand in adult and children's services. The Government is currently reviewing Local Government Finance and we are lobbying to make sure that Ministers and Civil Servants fully understand the pressures on services. Without an improved financial settlement we will face very difficult choices next year. Hampshire is in a better position than many counties: we still have considerable reserves which enable us to invest in building new schools, expanding existing schools and creating new places for children with special needs.

I have nearly completed my first year as Executive Member for Highways Operations. The pandemic was challenging for the Highways teams and for our contractor Milestone but I am proud that we kept people moving and maintained the roads in good condition. In 2021 Hampshire Highways fixed 49,462 road defects and resurfaced 336,500 square metres of carriageway. We also cleared 173,562 drainage assets. The South saw unprecedented rainfall and flash flooding in 2021 and I am keeping my fingers crossed that 2022 will be more of a normal year for precipitation!

This year Hampshire Highways has brought new innovation to the service; battery-powered vehicles such as an electric excavator, an electric telehandler, a battery-powered plate compactor, as well as new materials such “non-crete” sugar-cane bollards have all contributed to the reduction in our carbon emissions. Significantly, the Highways service opened a new materials recycling facility, based at Micheldever. We won a prestigious Green Apple award for this facility in November. Within 12 months, the Micheldever facility aims to deliver a net reduction in CO2 of around 67,500kg by reducing the use of scarce aggregates, replacing some traditional hot mix asphalts with cold lay materials and reducing the total miles travelled for material supply. The cold recycled road surface uses a fifth of the energy of traditional materials and saves 40 per cent of CO2 emissions.

At Hampshire County Council we are investing in walking and cycling schemes through our £500m Capital Programme, as well as developing innovative Active Travel schemes. “Modal shift” away from private cars has been a priority for us since our climate emergency declaration. Modal shift is also good for air quality and the health and wellbeing of communities. We will shortly be consulting on our new draft Local Transport Plan which puts walking and cycling at the top of the hierarchy – a substantial shift in priorities. I hope communities will support this plan in their responses to the consultation.

On decarbonisation, Hampshire County Council has made substantial progress. We are installing solar panels on 300 schools in a £80m scheme following a successful bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund. We have also launched the first Solar Together Campaign in Hampshire – a scheme that offers high-quality solar photovoltaic (PV) panels and battery storage to help residents generate their own green energy - maximising on bulk buying power to offer competitive prices for the purchase of panels. The County Council is also working with Community Energy South to build a network of community energy projects around the county and has invested in the first Community Energy scheme in Overton.

Additionally, in supporting households to reduce transport emissions, the County Council secured Government funding for the installation of 50 on-street residential electric vehicle charge points (in Winchester and Eastleigh) and, there are plans to extend this. We are also investing in tree-planting with our mission to plant one million trees by 2050. This year we are planting a new woodland to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee as well as thousands of new Highway Trees and School Trees.

With all this activity there is a chance for Hampshire to gain a reputation for being the greenest County in the UK. Parishes can play their part by stimulating local retrofit of homes and I am delighted that some Parish Councillors are engaging with PeCAN on this. If anyone else would like to learn more about retrofit, please do not hesitate to contact me or visit petersfieldcan.org . The spike in energy prices makes this the perfect time to reduce those energy bills!

I am really pleased that so many Parishes in Petersfield Hangers have taken advantage of the Community Funded Highways Infrastructure Scheme. I am aware of work completed or underway in Ropley, Sheet, Steep, Froxfield, Liss, Greatham and Hawkley. The priority is usually traffic-calming and these schemes can make a real difference. If anyone would like to learn more about the scheme please visit the website at <http://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/sharedexpertise/cfhi-scheme>

For transparency I always like to use my annual report to share a table of all my County Councillor grants made during the financial year – see below.

SUMMARY OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR GRANTS AWARDED IN 2021-22

Organisation	Project Title	Project Description	Amount
Liss Athletic FC	Replacement Floodlights	The floodlights at the clubs were deemed unsafe. The club need to replace them in order to continue training	£500
Sheet Village Community Trust	Printing and distribution of Sheet News	Sheet News is a local six monthly newspaper produced entirely by volunteers and distributed to the 2000+ residents .	£500
Sheet Primary School	Interactive Screen	The funding will be put towards buying an interactive screen for children in our new library.	£1,000
Flat Spaces Foundation	Mobile Hoist	Replace a 24 year old mobile hoist, which is on loan	£375
Liss Parish Council	Traffic Calming	Interactive Speed Indicator Device that will be hung in various locations for traffic calming purposes.	£385
Home-Start Butser	Home-Start Butser	To be able to continue our vital work with local families who are facing unprecedented challenges	£750
Petersfield Musical Festival	Petersfield Musical Festival 2022	Ten concerts in March, involving local choirs, orchestras, bands and schools,	£500
S.O.S from the Kids	S.O.S from the Kids	S.O.S from the Kids write and perform songs as a wake-up call for climate action.	£1,000
Petersfield Open Air Swimming Pool	To provide a bin store for the Pool	To provide a bin store outside the swimming pool area	£600
Petersfield Walking Festival	Petersfield Walking Festival	The festival will be a week-long event offering a wide variety of free walks in the local area	£750
Sheet Association	Sheet Village Jubilee Big Lunch	A Jubilee Big Lunch to be held in Village Street, Sheet, followed by games, charity stalls etc.	£450
Hawkley/Priors Dean PCC	Restoration of church bells	Hawkley's church bells are in urgent need of repair & restoration.	£390
Hawkley Parish Hall	Hawkley Playground Renovation	The Village Hall needs to replace the swings and play structures otherwise the playground will be condemned	£800

I look forward to working with you all over the coming year as we continue to build our community infrastructure.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER

County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers