

Hampshire County Council (HCC)

Meon Valley Division

County Councillor Roger Huxstep's Annual Report 2016-17

February last year saw the launch of "Your Hampshire" (sign into www.hants.gov.uk/news/yourhampshire) a substitute for the tri-annual 'Hampshire Now'; keeping residents connected to the County Council's latest news and activities. It is another way of maximising the opportunities provided by technology to deliver up to date information more quickly and easily to residents, supporting the digital strategy and at the same time making significant savings.

Last May, the council welcomed Councillor Keith Chapman as our incoming Chairman. He is a keen champion of the County Music Service and has arranged many music events. The Youth Orchestra had an amazing tour of Hungary, even earning praise from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. And, the Hampshire Music Education Hub made it to the last 7 of organisations recognised for success by the Music Education Council (MEC), for their Music Education Awards 2016 from an entry of 123 hubs across the country.

Three new Directors have been appointed in the last year namely Mr Graham Allen now Director of Adults' Health and Care; Mr Steve Crocker now Director of Children's Services and Dr Sallie Bacon as Director of Public Health. All Directors have tough roles but we all know these officer appointments are critical for the services this County offers the people of Hampshire.

You will know a number of Hampshire MPs have now joined the Government or promoted to higher ministerial rank; so, Hampshire is well represented in the Government. Our Meon Valley MP, George Hollingbery, whilst not joining the Government per se, became Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Prime Minister.

At the Farnborough Air Show, HCC jointly hosted a reception with the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Rushmoor Borough council to mark the financial support – by way of a £4million loan from Hampshire, for a permanent exhibition centre at Farnborough. This will not only avoid the need to erect and dismantle temporary facilities for the Air Show at the site every two years, but will give Hampshire arguably the best exhibition centre in the south of England outside London. Aerospace is a major industry and employer - right across Hampshire employing over 10,000 people and contributing £1billion to the Hampshire economy. The University of Southampton is also a major partner in the industry. Aerospace is by no means confined to north Hampshire and the whole county benefits. Over 30% of the South East's aerospace industry is in Hampshire.

By way of an £8.5million loan from HCC, matched funding has enabled the Solent LEP to submit a formal bid for the Stubbington by-pass to help with a much-needed solution to their traffic problems. This £34million scheme will be added to the £28million bus rapid transit scheme, over £3million for the Peel Common roundabout - £4.6million on A27 at the St Margaret's roundabout and £6.9 million scheme at Newgate Lane North.

Our 5 Country Parks: Lepe, Queen Elizabeth, Royal Victoria, Manor Farm and Staunton have all been awarded Green Flags for their high standards. The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens has won three gold awards; including winning the South East in Bloom Awards.

HCC was awarded the Ministry of Defence Employers' Gold Award in recognition of its work with the Armed Forces Covenant and the Civilian Military Partnership. Of note, are the 'Poppy Pods' at Tile Barn, Brockenhurst, opened by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall where military families are offered free weekend access to the camping pods.

The GCSE results last autumn indicate that 60.3% of Hampshire's school pupils achieved 5 good GCSE's (an improvement of 0.6 percentage points since 2015) when the England average this time around is 57%. And, since it is reported that nationally there was a slight decline in attainment, in Hampshire we saw a rise, it would seem the schools have again well exceeded the national average. At A level, 18% of Hampshire Pupils gained 3 good A Levels (A and B Grades) compared to Kent on 16.5% and the English State school average of 15.9%. Incidentally, Kent has Grammar Schools, Hampshire has none.

The County Council hosted a reception for our Hampshire Olympians and Para-Olympians to congratulate them on their achievement. In the medal tally if Hampshire had been a country we would have been 37th in the Olympics ahead of Ireland, Austria and Norway and 26th in the Para-Olympics. They really were a great success for the country.

HCC Budget 2017/18

At the County Council meeting held on 16th February members approved recommendations to balance the budget for 2017/18 – prioritising funding for vulnerable children and adults, and on track to deliver £98 million of savings, as set out in proposals agreed in 2015. The County Council spends around £1.9billion per annum on serving Hampshire's 1.3million residents – a responsibility which it takes very seriously, and one that requires meticulous management of taxpayers' money, and responsible planning for the future. Ever since national austerity measures began in 2008, we have applied a two-year financial planning strategy. This involves delivering significant savings early, and reinvesting them into more modern and efficient ways of working, while making careful use of reserves to meet gaps in funding, to protect services as far as possible. Residents have told us they support this approach, and to date, it has served us well - delivering £340million in savings, in total, so far. We have kept Council Tax the lowest of all County Councils nationally, and delivered value for money for Hampshire taxpayers - sustaining some of the strongest essential services in the country. Up until the last municipal year, we had frozen Council Tax at the same level for the previous five years. Over the next two years, the funding picture gets no better, and by April 2019, we will need to find a further £140 million in savings to balance our budget, on top of the £340million we have already saved. Meanwhile, demand continues to go up in areas such as social care, especially for Hampshire's growing older population - and Government now expects councils to increase Council Tax by a maximum of 6%, over the next three years, to specifically address these social care pressures. HCC has agreed to accept the Government's invitation – but bring forward the 6% increase over a two-year period instead. This would enable us to prudently use the money upfront, on a one-off basis, and help offset the major pressures we know are coming our way, especially in adult social care. By now you will have received your Council Tax Bill for 2017/18. There is a 3% increase in County Council's Council Tax precept to address the adult social care funding pressures, plus a 1.99% general increase –

representing a 4.99% increase overall. However, the money generated will still not be enough to deal with the expected increases in demand for social care over the next few years. As an example, a Band D property attracts a bill of £1,133.10, or around £1 extra per week for some of the best public services in the country. Whereas for a Band H it is £2266.20. These figures of course exclude the precepts for WCC, Hants Fire & Rescue Authority and the Police & Crime Commissioner as well as your parish precept. In any case Council Tax in Hampshire remains well below the rate of inflation taken over the last five years and is the second lowest in the country after Somerset.

The capital budget proposes significant investment in Hampshire's economy, building plans and jobs, totalling £520million over the three years. The funding in Hampshire's infrastructure and long-term assets, up to 2019/20 includes proposed £179million investment in new and extended school buildings to provide a further 10,915 new primary and secondary school places. This investment will ensure a school place for every child in Hampshire, while boosting jobs and the local economy, and maintaining Hampshire's high position in parental choice. £122million is also set aside for major repairs, maintenance and improvements to schools and other public spaces. £109million has been earmarked for structural maintenance of roads and bridges, with £100million scheduled for integrated transport schemes to improve access to key employment areas, and smaller local projects to improve safety and traffic flow on the roads. This includes seven major infrastructure schemes totalling £85million.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)

For clarification, the charges that have been notified are confirmed whereas the introduction of revised opening hours and Thursday closing, scheduled for 1st January 2017 have been deferred until 1st October 2017, pending verification from government. It has been alleged that the revisions are illegal. HCC disputes this as many other local authorities have introduced similar cost-saving measures pre-dating Hampshire's. And, do not forget you can be liable for fly-tipping if you commission waste removal from someone who does not have a licence!

Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)

As a reminder, the LGBCE has now approved the pattern of divisions for the county for implementation in this year's County Council elections to be held on Thursday, 4th May. The revision for the Meon Valley division retains the settlements of Corhampton, Droxford, Exton, Hambledon, Meonstoke, Shedfield, Shirrell Heath, Swanmore, Warnford, West Meon and with newcomers of Curbridge, Curdrige and Whiteley. The electorate for Hampshire's divisions in the district of Winchester is projected to be 101,315 by 2021 of which 14,512 are in this revised Meon Valley division, up from just under 12,000. The division has therefore lost Beauworth, Bishops Sutton, Bramdean & Hinton Ampner, Cheriton and Soberton. Bramdean & Hinton Ampner will be drawn into the Bishops Waltham Division comprising the settlements of Beauworth, Bishops Sutton, Bishops Waltham, Bramdean & Hinton Ampner, Cheriton, Colden Common, Durley, Kilmeston, Owslebury, Tichborne, Twyford and Upham. Soberton and Newtown are now part of Winchester Southern Parishes.

Devolution and Combined Authorities

The past year of local government has been dominated by the devolution issue and elected mayors and clarion political egos. The latest is that there are no active deals on the table. There are noises off that Portsmouth is still trying with other Solent City pretenders. The government

position appears to be that they are unlikely to support any changes without there being general agreement across Hampshire and that means the agreement of HCC. The current administration has no wish to see the fragmentation of Hampshire and a concomitant risk of increased local government overheads by duplication or even triplication of essential services: highways, education, social services etc. It does mean however that the original combined authority deal without an elected mayor could be revived?

Good News

The County Council's Chief Executive and Children's Services Department have been appointed by the DfE to the role of 'Commissioners' for Torbay Council's Children's Services, effective from 11th May 2016. They will act as expert advisers to support Torbay Council's improvement journey in children's social care, following an Ofsted inspection in autumn 2015 that found Torbay Children's Services to be inadequate. This is another accolade for Hampshire's Children's Services and of course John Coughlan CBE, the erstwhile director and now Chief Executive of HCC.

The County website has been ranked top in an independent survey of all UK LA websites for its readability, with 60 million page views, it is the most visited county website in the UK.

Hampshire County Architects who designed the Winchester Cathedral's new Learning Centre have won a Regional Award from the RIBA and now go forward into a national competition.

HCC Children's Services have been asked by Department of Education (DfE) and the Association of Directors of Children's Services to be national co-ordinator for assessing national demand for secure accommodation for children in need of care and protection. The DfE are paying the County to do it.

SPACES Civic Building of the Year Joint Overall Winner: Westgate School, Winchester for the conversion of the former boarding house, Rothley House, into the superb primary school wing of Westgate, our first all through 5-16 school.

Heritage Building of the Year Winner is the HMS M33 Project, The National Museum of the Royal Navy Portsmouth.

The County Council also received the Highly-Commended Innovation Award (Engineering) for its SCOLA Reclad Programme for school buildings. This programme of updating school buildings is certainly helping us meet our environmental targets of reducing our 2010 carbon emission levels by 40% by 2025 and to be carbon neutral by 2050. We are now already at 35.8% reduction in carbon emissions since 2010 so almost made our 2025 target. That programme has now saved nearly £3million in energy costs plus £200,000 a year saving from carbon tax avoided.

Cllr Roger Huxstep
Member for Meon Valley Division
Hampshire County Council

21st March 2017