

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – Annual Parish Assembly – report 14th March 2021

The covid pandemic has put immense pressure on Hampshire County Council as it continues to provide quality services despite reduced income and increased demands on staff. The work and dedication of our teachers and ancillary staff in over 500 County maintained schools has been remarkable. Schools were kept open during the lockdown periods to accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Our social workers worked tirelessly with young children and the elderly to ensure they were safe, well fed and looked after. They are truly the Heroes of Hampshire and I thank everyone, including the numerous volunteers and community groups who stepped forward to help wherever they could.



Winter Grants

- In my role as the Cabinet member with responsibility for Children's Services & Young People [including Apprenticeships] I have been able to authorise the distribution of £3 million funding in order to relieve some of the pressures on families as a result of the pandemic eg job loss and difficulties paying for basics like food and fuel.
- Community Pantries have been set up across the County, over 78 slow cookers have been distributed free to families who have no cooking facilities.
- Free school meal vouchers have been issued to all eligible children to cover the half-term holidays, whilst holiday club activities and free meals are being provided during the Easter break.
- Community grants are widely available to support the local community and full details are available on the connect4communities webpage at www.hants.gov.uk

Schools

- Last year 12.8 million school meals were provided by our in-house catering service.
- All food is locally sourced and we provide for 2,600 children with medically proven food allergies.
- For the period 2013 – 2020 we delivered 12,765 new school places that include 12 new schools and 70 school expansions costing at around £290 million.
- For the period 2021 – 2025 we are developing schemes for a further 14 primary schools and 2 secondary schools at a current value of around £250 million. These figures include an additional 600 special educational need school places.
- 93% of our schools are good or Outstanding
- Over 90% of children get first choice primary place – 2021 placements to be announced on 16th April
- Over 98% of children get first choice secondary place – received 14,483 on time applications
- Over 10,000 children have Education and Health Care Plans – they require additional support
- Around 370 schools and several corporate buildings are going to benefit this coming year from a £6.7 million programme for the installation of solar panels and a £20.2 million window replacement programme.
- Home to school transport continues to be a significant expenditure for the Council, my budget for this being £32 million and rising each year.
- Free school transport is available for a child in the term following their 5th birthday provided their nearest school is beyond 2 miles away [if below the age of 8 years] or beyond 3 miles away [if aged between 8 and 16 years].
- We currently operate 1,000 different daily routes involving around 10,000 children.

I am pleased to remind people that we operate a Spend to Save scheme. We offer brand new mini-buses to schools, we tax, insure, service, MOT and provide breakdown cover for the mini-bus. Schools must provide a properly trained and insured driver, but we also offer funding towards fuel and MIDAS training for the driver. Although the mini-bus must be used for home-to-school transport, it is kept on school premises and can be used for other school activities eg field days.

Children in Care

- During 2019-2020 there were 125,413 contacts and referrals made to our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub [MASH] of which 26% were from the police and 25% from teachers/schools, the remainder came from the health service or the community.

- From 2010 – 2020 our child protection investigations showed an increase of 80%. In February last year we had 1,602 children in care across Hampshire and those numbers are expected to rise as we emerge from the covid pandemic [abuse or neglect may go unnoticed during lockdowns].
- In Hampshire we have eight children’s homes and a special secured unit for children who need extra protection.

In addition, we have in Hampshire -

- ❖ Over 1,400 young carers – young people who have to look after another family member.
- ❖ An award-winning Youth Offending Team who work with children and young people aged 10-17 years and who are subject to Court Orders. The Team work in partnership with the Police and Probate Services to prevent [re]offending. 450 – 500 children are involved at any one time.
- ❖ 490 fostering approved fostering households who look after c711 children [numbers fluctuate]
- ❖ As of December 2020 we had 66 unaccompanied child asylum seekers [under the age of 18 years] and 208 between the ages of 18 – 25 years. Children’s Services has the responsibility to support them until they reach the age of 25 years.

Apprenticeship Skills Hub

As well as responsibility for Children’s Services & Young People I also hold Cabinet responsibility for corporate apprenticeships. I recently helped to launch a £3 million Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, partly funded by a grant from the European Social Fund. Working with the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, the Hub will provide an impartial brokerage service to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and will work with businesses to match unemployed people with apprenticeship opportunities and tackle skill shortages.

I am also happy to report that not only have our school and corporate apprenticeships continued despite the pandemic, at the end of 2020 we surpassed the milestone of 1000 County Council apprentices funded by the Apprenticeship Levy. A year ago, most of our apprenticeship training was delivered face to face, but in response to lockdown, we worked with training providers to change to completely online learning. Since then, we have welcomed nearly 200 new starts in 37 different apprenticeships – a fantastic turnaround in a very short time, thanks to the efforts of our staff, managers and services. Visit <https://www.hampshirefutures.co.uk/course/index.php?categoryid=176>

Children’s Mental Health

During Children’s Mental Health week and as the County’s Mental Health Champion I was pleased to highlight the support available to children, young people, their parents and carers. The County Council’s website includes advice for parents/carers/guardians – <https://www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/coronavirus?second=education&third=resources-wellbeing> - and our educational psychology team provides expertise, training and support to schools to enable them to help pupils to maintain good mental health and well-being. The Educational Psychology Team also has a telephone line which parents and carers, as well as teachers and other professionals working with children, can call for advice: ring 02392 441497 on Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursday between 9.30 am – 11.00 am.

Freephone Crisis Line

A Freephone Crisis Line is also available for children and young people, across Hampshire, aged from 11 to 17 years old. Operated by Havant and East Hampshire MIND, the line provides access to help, support, and advice for young people experiencing difficulties with their mental health. For more details visit <https://www.easthantsmind.org/cyp-crisis-line/> or ring Freephone 0300 303 1590 between 3.00 pm – 8.30 pm on Mondays/Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursdays or email them at cypcrisisline@easthantsmind.org

Hampshire’s Rights of Way

The County Council has adopted a new enforcement policy for Rights of Way in the County. Hampshire County Council looks after 4,600km of footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way and has a statutory duty to protect these routes. The adoption of an Enforcement Policy is designed to support the County Council in taking the appropriate course of action and to make the process publicly available for reference by residents and landowners. The policy will be available at

www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway Remember, you can report a problem on a right of way at www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway

£2.1 billion Spending on Local Services 2021/2022

- At the last full Council meeting budget plans for the forthcoming financial year were agreed, which will see funding focused on the County's ongoing work in tackling COVID-19, support for vulnerable children and adults, and key investments in Hampshire's roads and infrastructure to support economic recovery, as well as climate change mitigation.
- We will be investing a total of £13 million to maintain the County's 5,500 miles of roads and mend potholes.
- Furthermore, and building on our commitment to become carbon neutral by 2050, an extra £1.2 million will be invested in carbon reduction measures across the County Council itself, aligned to the aims of our wider Climate Change Strategy.
- We have a capital programme worth £418 million over the next three years to help boost jobs and the quality of the environment. This provision for Hampshire's infrastructure brings the County Council's four-year total capital investment in Hampshire, to £744 million – one of the largest capital programmes anywhere in the country.
- The annual council tax charge for a Band D property will be £1,350.45 – an increase of £1.23 per week, equating to 4.99%, of which 3% is ring-fenced for adults' social care at Government request. For further information visit
- <https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=163&MIId=656>

Retirement

Hampshire County Council's Chief Executive, John Coughlan CBE has announced his intention to retire this summer, so the process of finding a successor will begin shortly. As Head of the Paid Service, the Chief Executive is responsible for managing the Authority's overall annual budget of £2.1 billion, a workforce of around 37,000 (including staff in over 500 Hampshire schools) and for delivering services to 1.4 million people across the County.

John joined Hampshire in 2005 as its first Director of Children's Services, to oversee the integration of Education and Children's Social Care services into the current Children's Services Department. In 2008, he was awarded a CBE in recognition of his work for children's services, helping to improve outcomes for children both locally and nationally. John was appointed to the post of Chief Executive in 2015.

Update on Local Work

In addition to my wide and varied Cabinet responsibilities I have always endeavoured to keep in close contact with the local community and keep residents up to date with news and information. Covid has prevented my regular face-to-face surgeries taking place across the Division but I have continued to publish regular reports in parish magazines plus reports directly to parish councils. I have learnt much about the use of social media and now put out regular notices across twelve Facebook sites.

I have kept in touch with community groups and awarded funding across the Division to local Scouts [laptops], Community Centres [new kitchen and front door]; Church [tool shed]; Lunch Club [annual outing]; local businesses [for business fayre]; parish councils [defibrillator, bench]; sports association [for fun day, tea party]; CAB for support they give to local people; young musicians; local Band; Girl Guides and Flashing Speeding signs by Newtown Infants School.

It is always a great pleasure to support local groups and activities and I hope that soon, very soon, we will all be able to meet up again and life will return to its new normality. Meanwhile, thank you for reading this rather long report but I hope you found it interesting.

With all best wishes for sunnier days ahead.

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