

Hampshire County Councillor report

January 2024

1. Household DIY waste charges ended

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 - in line with the Government policy changes.

Up to two 50-litre rubble bags, or one bulky item such as a sink or toilet pedestal, will be accepted for free, 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. DIY waste can be accepted at all HWRCs in Hampshire except New Alresford due to its restricted size. Customers must also be able to lift, carry and empty out their DIY waste.

The Council estimates that the removal of the charges could impose an additional cost to Hampshire council taxpayers of up to £2 million every year. This is because recycling or disposal of DIY waste, such as soil, rubble, asbestos and gypsum board, requires specialist processing and the fees we currently charge help to cover these expenses. This will need to be taken into account as part of the Council's savings proposals to help meet a £132 million budget shortfall faced by the local authority from April 2025. This will include a review of Hampshire's HWRCs.

2. Schools

Parents with children due to start school or move to a junior school in September 2024 are reminded that they have until **Monday 15 January 2024** to submit their primary school applications. Parents will have the best chance of being offered a place at one of their preferred schools by applying on time and naming three preferences on their applications.

A recent survey across secondary schools and colleges in Hampshire shows a large increase in the percentage of young people both experimenting with, and using vapes. The survey shows that experimentation with vapes increases from 4% in year 7 to 53% in year 13. Similarly, vape use increases from 7% in year 10, to 18% in year 13. The Council is therefore continuing its clampdown on shops selling vapes illegally to underage buyers. Test purchase operations took place in December 2023, with visits to 17 different premises with teenage volunteers helping officers by going into the businesses to attempt to buy a vape, also known as an e-cigarette. Since September 2023, Trading Standards has prevented the sale of over £200,000 of illegal vapes and e-cigarettes by removing them from shops across Hampshire.

3. Fire and Rescue Authority Mid-Year Update

The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire & Rescue Service has published its mid-year update on their annual performance. This provides useful (and positive) insights as to the activities of the service and is well worth a look. The update can be seen at <https://www.hantsfire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/HIWFRS-2023-24-Mid-Year-Performance-Update-Report.pdf>

4. Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan consultation

The consultation on the updated plan is expected to start during the week beginning **8 January 2024** and to last for eight weeks. Details can be found at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/minerals-waste-update>

5. Climate change and nature recovery

The Council has published its [Climate Change Annual Progress Report](#) which highlights the progress of council backed community initiatives and its own efforts to tackle climate change. One example is the Solar Together scheme - over the past two years, 2,100 households have purchased competitively priced solar panels, resulting in the installation of 7,400kw of rooftop solar power, which has the capacity to save an estimated 46,000 tonnes of carbon emissions.

Separately, the Council is launching a survey asking residents where they would like to see improvements for nature recovery, their views on nature priorities and what action they may be taking locally to help nature in their area. This is an important first step in the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy which is intended to create a blueprint for the recovery of nature in Hampshire – outlining what we can do, where the opportunities for doing it are, and considering how it can be delivered alongside wider positive environmental outcomes for people and nature, such as reduced flood risk. It will provide organisations with a framework for developing nature recovery projects and help prioritise funding and investment in Hampshire's nature's recovery. Here is a link to the [online survey](#).

6. Roads

A reminder that part of the A32 Droxford Road near Wickham – from the crossroads junction with the B2177 Southwick Road and Bridge Street to north of Rookesbury Park Farm – will shut for one week starting on Monday, January 8.

A final report for your perusal, this time the County Council's [Highways Service Annual Review](#) for 2022/23 which offers useful insights into the Highways team's activity over what has been an exceptionally busy and challenging period. You can access the review via the link. You will notice the continuing 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.

7. Happy New Year

My best wishes to everyone for 2024, I look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Councillor Hugh Lumby, Meon Valley Division