

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL – UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD

PARISH UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2024

Hampshire County Council (HCC) Consultation

HCC issued a consultation document in early January seeking views on a range of measures designed to achieve savings of £17.5M to contribute to buying out their currently predicted £132M deficit by April 2025.

The measures proposed cover a range of services that they currently provide but are not covered by their statutory duty to deliver. In some cases “statutory duty” has become so ill-defined over the years that it is now open to a degree of interpretation. Nonetheless, in common with a number of local authorities of all political colours across the country, the core duty of delivering social care has increasingly swallowed up the latitude that previously existed to deliver more discretionary services.

Within our Ward, the measures that would likely have greatest effect is the proposal to close the Household Waste Recycling Centres (the ‘tips’) at Bishops Waltham and Alresford. The reasoning behind this is that, as they serve relatively smaller populations, they are inevitably less efficient to maintain than the site at Bar End in Winchester. But, of course, the effect on this Ward would be dramatic, not least as their closure would almost certainly increase the amount of fly-tipping, already a very significant problem and, of which, more below.

Another measure would remove all HCC funding from local bus and community transport services that cannot be run commercially. This includes Bus 63 to Morestead and Owslebury, support for the Wednesday Meon Valley Community Bus service to Petersfield Market and Bus 67 serving Cheriton, Bramdean and West Meon. Since the 67 serves as school transport for Perins at Alresford and The Petersfield School the school journeys would continue to operate, but they may be restricted to school pupils only. All other journeys would be withdrawn

Other proposals could affect gritting of roads in the winter, filling of potholes and introducing fees for car parks at countryside sites. As with the Hospital consultation we covered last month, the important thing is to read the consultation document

(<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/consultation/future-services-consultation-full.pdf>)

and have your say, both as a Parish Council and as individuals, encouraging others to do so. There are no “done deals” as yet so all contributions have the potential to affect the decision-makers. The consultation closes at 2359 on 31 Mar 24.

Fly Tipping

There appear to be an increasing number of anti-social individuals prepared to dump their rubbish in our beautiful countryside, sometimes seeing it as a business opportunity. The statistics show that the number of recorded incidents in the District as a whole has reduced since Covid – but our lived experience suggests that there has been an increase in the rural areas. Whilst the City Council’s contractor is set targets for the clearance of tips once reported, clear-ups seem to be taking significantly longer. Both of us are working hard to secure an improvement in the monitoring of the contract and will continue to do so. You can help us by prompt and, if necessary, repeated reporting of fly-tips in your parishes, and encouraging others to do so through the ‘Your Winchester’ portal:

https://iweb.itouchvision.com/portal/f?p=customer:category_link:::::CUID,LANG:ACD0BCE67C4A043D378E50531407B1AF8C09DB25,EN&P_LANG=en

When apprehended, fly-tippers can either be given a fixed penalty notice (FPN) of up to £400 or prosecuted. Winchester has decided to target its limited resource on prosecuting fly-tippers where there is evidence to support the case over issuing FPNs. Consequently, it has issued relatively few FPNs. There have been two successful prosecutions in the past two months resulting in fines of £1900 and £2245 respectively with, in each case, the offender receiving a criminal conviction. There is an argument that the more 'professional' fly-tipper who receives an FPN simply prices its cost into their 'business plan' but a criminal conviction hurts – or would a higher risk of an FPN deter more 'one-off' tips? We would welcome your views on which route should be preferred.

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Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley