

Hampshire County Councillor report

November 2023

1. HCC budget reductions

Public consultations will now begin on the implementation of budget reductions approved by the County Council at its meeting in November, to reduce its £132m budget gap forecast by 2025/26. It identified that £90.4m could be generated through the savings proposals, of which £75m is expected to be delivered by 2025/26, leaving a forecast unmet budget gap of £57m in 2025/26.

Increases in fees, changes in how services are offered as well as more use of smart technology are planned as part of the budget-cutting measures. The council also said it would continue to use its reserves, which have dropped by £38m since 2021/22. As part of the plans, school crossing patrols would be removed from routes considered "safe" or where other pedestrian facilities could be installed in order to save £1.1m. All non-statutory local bus and community transport services would also be suspended. I will update you on the consultations as these get underway.

2. Schools

Hampshire parents and carers with children due to start school in Reception Year or move to Year 3 at a junior school next year, can now apply for their child's school place for September 2024. School applications are open until 15 January 2024. Parents are being reminded to name three schools on their applications, to give them the best chance of being offered a place at one of their preferred schools.

Three Hampshire schools (located in Fleet, Chandlers Ford and Eastleigh) are set to benefit from greener energy following the approval of a scheme to install ground source heat pumps and provide low-carbon heating systems. The project is being financed from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and the council's school buildings improvement budget.

The council is separately consulting on proposed changes to the admission arrangements for 2025/26 for community and voluntary controlled schools within its area. Check whether local schools are effected and how to respond, at <https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/consultations/admission-arrangements25-26>. The consultation will run until Friday 29 December 2023.

3. Roads

The County Council has secured a further £132 million for Hampshire over the next ten years to tackle the issue of potholes and invest in longer term, proactive road maintenance. A ten-year settlement allows the council to plan ahead carefully with more certainty, and to allocate and prioritise resources more effectively. The money will help to tackle the challenges of unprecedented demand, soaring inflation, and the impacts of heavy rain, flooding and sub-zero temperatures. The County Council has already allocated £22.5 million of its own money over the next three years to repair potholes and other defects and this is already helping to make our roads stronger ahead of another potentially difficult winter period.

4. Mini-forests

Thousands more trees are set to be planted across Hampshire as a permanent reminder of His Majesty King Charles III's Coronation following a successful bid by the County Council for £100,000 from a national funding pot to mark the historic occasion.

The national grant has been awarded from the Government's Nature for Climate Fund via Defra's Coronation Living Heritage Fund. The County Council has secured a £50,000 award for the establishment of Coronation micro-woods in urban areas – this applies techniques that enable dense woodlands, usually the size of a tennis court, to grow up to ten times faster than normal. Another £50,000 grant is available for Coronation Community Orchards. Groups or communities interested in planting a mini forest or orchard can contact the Hampshire Forest Partnership via its [website](#). The Forest Partnership's Coronation fund is open for projects that can be planted by March 2025.

Three mini-forests have been planted in Hampshire so far, in Havant, near Petersfield and in Hedge End.

5. New HCC app

The County Council's has launched its new mobile app, 'OurHants', which is available for Apple and Android mobile devices. The intent is to offer many online services through the app, beginning with the full range of County Council web pages, to allow residents to access all services.

It also contains new functionality to book appointments for Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs). Details can be saved to make future booking quicker and the app will allow people to see and manage their bookings in one place and will notify the user of any important updates about their booking. So why not give it a try?

[OurHants - Get it on Google Play](#)

[OurHants - Download on the Apple App Store](#)

6. Police

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Donna Jones, is carrying out a consultation on her precept and priorities for the year ahead. The consultation closes on **10 December**. You can find the survey here: <https://survey.alchemer.eu/s3/90633344/Precept2024-25>. You can also read Donna's annual report here - <https://www.hampshire-pcc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Annual-Report-2023-Online-Version.pdf>

7. Seasons greetings

December is here already, I'm not sure where the year has gone! I hope everyone has a great Christmas break and my best wishes for 2024.

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Division

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