

# Winchester City Councillor Report September 2020

## 1. Pandemic response

The graphic below illustrates Winchester City Council's response to the pandemic, including the scale of Government grants distributed by the Council to businesses.



## 2. Revised Council Budget

Winchester City Council is proposing to consider a revised budget for the current financial year to reflect the impact of the pandemic on its finances and in particular the loss of income from car parking and commercial leasing. Details have not yet been published.

## 3. Opening of Council leisure centres

Winchester City Council currently has two leisure centres, River Park in Winchester and Meadowside in Whiteley, both of which were closed during the lockdown. Both have until recently been operated by Places for People.

The River Park centre is to be closed permanently once the new leisure centre opens in Bar End (currently targeted for spring 2021), with the new centre being operated by Everyone Active.

Both existing centres were re-opened on 1st September. However, in order to assist the transition to the new centre, Places for People have been replaced as operator by Everyone Active. In the case of River Park, this appointment will last until the new centre opens. In the meantime, the Council proposes to retender the operation of Meadowside once conditions allow.

A separate new sports hall to serve the Southern Parishes was cancelled earlier in the year.

#### **4. Flash floods in Winchester**

Winchester city centre suffered from flash flooding on the early evening of August 28th. The flooding was from a high level of rainfall in a short time overwhelming the drainage system. There was no early warning. The worst appears to have been localised to the city centre. No significant issues were reported elsewhere in the District.

Hampshire County Council responded quickly to the immediate issues. Winchester City Council led on the clean up which mostly occurred within a 24 period. Ten businesses were initially closed in the affected area with a need to remove debris and rubbish from outside their premises.

#### **5. New planning rules - meeting on 21 September**

On 6 August the Government published two important consultation documents regarding proposed major reforms to the way the planning system works in England. The first paper asks for views on amendments to the current system whilst the second discusses wide reaching changes which will cover plan making, development management and delivery of infrastructure.

1. [Proposed changes to the current planning system](#)
2. [White Paper 'Planning for the Future'](#)

Initial analysis regarding the changes outlined to the current planning system suggest that these proposals will be particularly important for the Council in relation to the amount of development it will need to accommodate. The paper also covers affordable housing, help for SMEs in the development sector and other technical changes. This consultation period ends on the 1st October 2020. In light of the scale of changes planned, not least in terms of the quantity of new homes that could be needed under a revised formula, the Council has effectively delayed bringing forward its proposals for its new Local Plan (this does not affect areas within the South Downs National Park, which has its own Local Plan).

The White Paper 'Planning for the Future' proposes significant reforms to many aspects of the planning system, including a change in the way in which land is allocated for development, the type of policies which can be included in Local Plans and how controls over that development are implemented through development management. The means of delivering infrastructure via new development (s106 agreements – planning obligations)

and Community Infrastructure Levy would also be changed. The new style of plan will look and feel very different to the current style as it will have digital and interactive format and the identification of land for development will follow a zoning approach based on three designations; growth, renewal and protected areas. This consultation period ends on the 29th October 2020.

Parishes are to be invited by Winchester City Council to a virtual meeting on the evening of Monday 21 September where the Council will provide an update on the consultation documents and the implications for the District's Local Plan. Although much of the Upper Meon Valley ward is covered by the separate South Downs National Park local plan, it may in any event be interesting to hear more about the proposed changes.

**Laurence Ruffell   Hugh Lumby**