

WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL - UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD REPORT – APRIL 2024

Elections

No, not the big one, but all households in the Upper Meon Valley should by now have received polling cards for the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner on Thursday 2 May.

Those in West Meon, Warnford, Exton and Corhampton & Meonstoke parishes may also be aware that Hugh Lumby, the Hampshire County Council member for the Meon Valley Division, recently resigned his seat for health reasons. Hugh has contributed much to the area as both a County and District Councillor over the years, as well as being a stalwart supporter of all things in his home village of Meonstoke. It would be very sad to see Hugh step down at any time but far more poignant given the circumstances. We both wish Hugh all the very best and thank him for his service to our communities. There will now be a by-election for his HCC seat, also on Thursday 2 May. Note that, in these parishes only, electors will shortly receive a second polling card for the by-election – the decision came too late for it to be included on the card for the PCC election.

Finally, Winchester City Council are advertising for overnight count staff to be part of the casual election staff team on election day. No prior experience needed and full training given, together with pay of £17.50 per hour. Anybody interested should visit winchester.gov.uk/elections/working-at-elections-staff-recruitment or e-mail ElectionsStaffing@winchester.gov.uk.

Small Grant Awards

The WCC Small Grant scheme was one of the many that we highlighted earlier in the year. It was good to see three Upper Meon Valley groups recently being successful in their applications for support. Congratulations to Upham Parish Council, for securing funding towards for a thermal imaging camera to aid their efforts at 'greening' their parish, the River Meon Conservation Volunteers based at Warnford, who receive funding for equipment needed to help their work, and Tichborne Cricket Club for their successful bids. The scheme is currently closed but will re-open later in the year. It is understood that the fund was under-bid for in the last round – if your community has a scheme that could use up to £1000 then it would be worth thinking early about a bid for the next.

Spring is (almost) here

As the days lengthen and the weather, we hope, starts to relent, it is a good time to reflect and realise our good fortune to live in the most beautiful ward within the Winchester District and in the South Downs National Park. Our network of waymarked rural footpaths and bridleways are the key to access our most scenic places; for the more adventurous, we have not only the South Downs Way (100 miles) but also the Wayfarer's Walk (70 miles from Emsworth to Inkpen Beacon via Corhampton Down, Kilmeston, Hinton Ampner and Cheriton). For a real challenge, there's also the 625 mile Monarch's Way, designed to trace Charles II's escape route following his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. He passed through Owslebury, Upham, Preshaw and Warnford on his way! Volunteers play a huge role in maintaining our rights of way, helping with the upkeep of our river habitats and generally keeping our countryside as healthy as we can make it. Why not encourage your parishioners to get involved? Ideas for 'microvolunteering' projects are listed at this link:

<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/volunteering/national-park-volunteers/opportunities/additional-volunteering-opportunities/microvolunteering/>

Neil Bolton

Jerry Pett

Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley