

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

Elections

Following the recent County Council by-election the Meon Valley Division, which encompasses West Meon, Warnford, Exton and Corhampton & Meonstoke parishes, we welcome Cllr Malcom Wallace of the Green Party as the new Divisional Member and look forward to him attending those Parish and Parish Council meetings.

Consequences of the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA 2023)

The umbrella body for the English National Parks, unsurprisingly called 'National Parks England', lobbied hard to firm up the duty that constituent and neighbouring local authorities have towards the statutory purposes of the Parks. Until recently, those authorities had a duty to 'have regard to' the purposes of 'their' Park. A clause in LURA 2023, which became law on Boxing Day last year, amended the original Act that created the National Parks, the 'National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949'. Its effect is that Winchester City Council and other authorities, including Hampshire County Council, now have actively to 'seek to further the purposes' of the South Downs National Park when taking any decision that affects the Park area.

So much for the legalities – what is the practical effect? In both a recent planning and a licencing application we have invoked this new duty to have applications refused, against officers' advice. We have also found that there is an urgent need for a common understanding between Park and City on how to apply this new law, that will, we hope, shortly be addressed. Similarly, we are unconvinced that the "Section 101" agreement, under which Winchester City Council assesses planning applications on behalf of the Park Authority, is working as well as it might. That said, clearly all parties are acting in good faith; rather, there is a clear need for more effective 'checks and balances' to be put in place and we will continue to push for these.

Roads

On the odd day, when the rain has relented, we have started to hear the noise of more "recreational traffic" on the A32 and A272 across the Ward. Whilst the average speed cameras are clearly having some welcome effect we would encourage assiduous reporting of clear cases of 'nuisance' noise. Altered exhaust systems or excessive acceleration on leaving village speed limits should be reported to the police on 101, noting the registration numbers of offending vehicles whenever possible. Similarly, on other roads, such as the B2177 through Upham and the B3046 through Cheriton, don't hesitate to report clear cases of excessive speeding, supported, if possible, with video evidence, to the Hampshire Police on 101. A strong evidence base will be necessary to support applications for reduced speed limits and other, better, enforcement measures.

Summer Approaches (?)

The season of village fêtes and fairs is nearly upon us again. We look forward to getting out and about and meeting as many people as possible at these over the coming weeks, and hope for some drier days ahead!

Neil Bolton

Jerry Pett

Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley