

Hampshire County Councillor report for Warnford November 2023

Apologies!

I'm sorry I can't be with you on Tuesday and that I missed the last meeting with my ongoing voice issues. I am still very much here and working on your behalf.

Roads

The first summer with the new average speed cameras around the West Meon Hut is over and I would be interested to hear views on whether they have had an impact in Warnford. The police believe that there has been a reduction in bikers racing through the area and I personally feel it has been a lot quieter. There has been some displacement of bikes onto other roads, especially towards East Meon, and this is something we need to watch out for.

I have mentioned before the new HCC policy on reducing speed limits (including down to 20mph income areas). This is now due for approval in January next year and will be well worth a review.

Potholes and road edges continue to be one of the biggest issues in the wider area. The county council has pledged to spend an additional £7.5m a year over the next three years to fix thousands more potholes. This is on top of the £13.5m currently spent a year on reactive pothole and road defect repairs. Progress is already being made, with road defects being fixed at a record rate - in May and June alone, 19,697 potholes and other problems were repaired and 33,671 square metres of surface design and micro asphalt were laid.

The Welborne development between Wickham and Fareham will be getting under way soon, including extensive works on the M27 junction. We need to keep a look out as to whether this will lead to more traffic on the A32.

Talking rubbish

I get a fair amount of correspondence about rubbish disposal. Winchester City Council have been running a survey on recycling habits across the districts, which can be found on their website. This will provide interesting information as they and Hampshire County Council plan for the future. We have a slightly odd structure in Hampshire, in that the district councils collect the rubbish whilst the county council disposes of it. Personally I think that a more joined up approach would be more efficient and cost effective. In any event, the amount that can be recycled at present is limited by the facilities available. However, a new recycling plant is being built in Eastleigh which should open up a whole range of opportunities not currently available.

I'm often asked about the need to book visits to the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Bishops Waltham and elsewhere. The booking system was introduced during COVID to manage safe distancing. It enabled access to be smoothed, avoid queuing and keep visitors a safe distance from other. Broadly it was a success although the programming was not so good.

The whole process was reviewed after the pandemic and it was decided to leave it in place. The main reason was to smooth visits – there were times when large numbers would arrive at the same time (I have spent a long time pre-pandemic queuing at BW) and other times that were dead. The environmental impact was noted of this. So the main aim has been to remove the queues and this has worked.

Of course, people are now cross they have to book and the thoughts of queuing forgotten. So major steps have been made to improve the booking system. The key developments were same day and repeat visits – during the pandemic it was one visit a week and it had to be no earlier than the next day. Now, you can book straight away if there is availability, it only takes moment and you can return. Its not quite at the position before the pandemic without queues but its as close as they get it. And its not necessarily cheaper than before but is a lot more efficient.

Others have asked whether the need to book has led to an increase in flytipping. The evidence is actually that this has reduced post pandemic, although I'm a little sceptical. What certainly happened was as we started to open up post pandemic, building activity started in earnest and there was a lot of building waste dumped. Some have made links between flytipping and charges at HWRCs and this relates to the commercial sector more – residents will not be charged for normal garden waste. WCC bringing in charges for garden waste bins in place of those green bags may also have had an impact, although I'm not sure those green bags are much missed. The government has announced it will be abolishing charges for using HWRCs which may help flytipping a bit but will remove another source of income for underfunded local authorities – the lost money will have to be found somewhere else and that may mean service reductions. So we shall see.

Funding to save the UK's rarest orchids

Hampshire County Council has secured £98,000 funding from Natural England to help rare helleborine orchids to thrive. The conservation project aims to create protected habitats for the endangered plants at sites in East Hampshire. The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust will take part in the project focusing on orchid preservation at a nature reserve east of West Meon.

County Council renews commitment to Hampshire's Armed Forces

I'm writing this on Remembrance Day. Hampshire County Council has underlined its commitment to the Armed Forces, by renewing its pledge that serving and veteran members of the Forces, and their families, are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged when accessing public services such as education and healthcare. Hampshire has a historic and long-standing close relationship with the Armed Forces and has military facilities from all three services. Some 72,000 households in Hampshire include someone who has served in the UK armed forces.

County councillor grants

A reminder of this grant scheme which lets me help local projects, this has included grants locally for tree cutting and wifi in the village hall, as well as support in West Meon for the shop and cleaning the war memorial. Let me know if you have anything suitable.

Useful links and numbers

With the weather at the time of writing becoming increasingly incremental, I thought it might be useful to set out some handy links and numbers to report issues with roads, power cuts and flooding.

Potholes: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/potholes>

Tree/hedge problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/treehedge>

Flooding/drainage issues: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/flooding>

Pavement problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/roadmaintenance/roadproblems/paving>

Problems with rights of way: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/reportaproblem>

Loss of supply or damage to the electricity network: contact SSEN by dialling 105. You can also obtain details of power cuts and restoration times on SSEN's [Power Track Website](#).

For assistance in the event of flooding call 0345 988 1188 or text 0345 602 6340.

In addition, the Definitive Map is useful in identifying and locating rights of ways - www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/definitivemap

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