Hampshire County Councillor Update 64

Dear All

I hope you are well.

October has been another very busy month across Hampshire and Romsey Rural. The most significant county-wide issue is the scale of Hampshire County Council's financial challenge, which I set out publicly on 1 November. We have also had a further update on local government reorganisation, a new prevention strategy for adult social care and important news about the future of Healthwatch.

Locally, I have continued to publish regular information about roadworks, planning applications and community matters.

Highways Information

M3 Junction 9 closures

National Highways' update published on 16 October set out the next stages of work at M3 Junction 9. The northern-bridge closure was scheduled for the weekend of 23–26 October. The remaining dates advised at the time of writing are:

• 9pm Friday 6 November to 6am Monday 9 November—full closure of the M3 in both directions between junctions 8 and 9 for demolition of the southern bridge; and
• 9–27 November, 8pm to 6am on weeknights—closure of the M3 southbound exit slip road for planting work.

Please allow extra time, follow the signed diversion routes and check the latest information before travelling. National Highways has asked drivers not to rely on satnavs during closures because they may direct vehicles onto unsuitable local roads or back towards closed sections. Dates can change at short notice, so checking before setting out is especially important.

Latest information: National Highways road closure report

Live traffic information: trafficengland.com

Nursling and Rownhams Footpath 24

On 9 October I reported that Hampshire County Council had extended the temporary closure of part of Footpath 24 while National Grid completed overhead power-line refurbishment and replacement. The order can remain in place until 31 December 2026, but the footpath should only be closed while the work is actually taking place. The work was expected to require only a few days, and no alternative route is available while the closure is in force.

National Grid can be contacted on 0800 099 6087 or at newforest@nationalgrid.com. Hampshire County Council's Countryside Access team can be contacted on 0300 555 1391 or at countryside@hants.gov.uk.

Reporting Highway Problems

Links to report road issues are here:

Potholes: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/potholes

Tree/hedge problems: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/treehedge

Flooding/drainage issues: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/flooding

Pavement problems: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/paving

Broken or missing signs: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/brokensigns

Faulty street lights: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/streetlight

Faded or missing road markings: https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/road-markings

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

When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number. If you would like me to follow this up, do please forward that message to me and I will chase it for you.

Local Government Reorganisation

A revised timetable—but continued uncertainty

A ministerial update on 29 October confirmed that local government reorganisation in Hampshire is still intended to proceed, but the final structure remains unresolved. Hampshire now faces a further three to four months before a decision is likely, with no firm date yet confirmed.

The latest timetable set out in that update is:

- borough and district council elections in May 2027, with councillors serving a two-year term;
- elections to shadow councils and for the regional Mayor in May 2028; and
- the new councils taking responsibility on 1 April 2029.

Ministers previously chose a structure and required councils to begin preparations, but then withdrew the decision following updated legal advice in the face of Hampshire County Council's Judicial Review. That has created more uncertainty and has already absorbed thousands of hours of officer time across Hampshire.

My position remains that further expenditure must be supported by objective evidence and a robust, sustainable business case. Any new councils must be financially resilient, capable of delivering high-quality services and able to demonstrate genuine savings after the full transition costs are taken into account. The priority must remain local care, support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and the other services on which residents depend.

Hampshire County Council's Finances

The £199 million challenge

On 1 November I explained that Hampshire County Council is forecasting a budget shortfall of almost £199 million in 2027/28. Residents rightly expect the County Council to spend public money carefully, and Hampshire has a strong record of doing so: by March 2028 the authority expects to have delivered £770 million of recurring savings over 20 years, while maintaining one of the lowest county council tax rates in the country.

That record has been achieved while Children's Services remain rated Outstanding by Ofsted and Adult Social Care is rated Good by the Care Quality Commission. The difficulty is that demand for statutory services is rising faster than the resources available. Each month around 45 more older residents need support after their own savings have run out, and many people now require more complex care. Almost 90% of the County Council's budget is spent on high-demand services such as social care and waste disposal.

At the same time, Government support is falling. The figures I published show an annual grant reduction of £42.9 million by 2028/29, while the proposed Fair Funding arrangements would remove around a further £28 million in 2027/28. This is why the gap cannot be closed through efficiency savings alone. Reserves can only be used once and do not provide a sustainable answer to recurring costs.

A public consultation opens on 2 November. It is important that we explain the choices honestly and listen carefully to residents, staff, service users and partner organisations before decisions are taken. I will continue to press for a fair settlement for Hampshire and for essential services to be protected as far as possible.

Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority

Mayoral election to remain in May 2028

The Government has declined the Combined County Authority's request to bring the inaugural mayoral election forward to May 2027. That is disappointing. As Chairman, I have argued that residents should have an earlier opportunity to choose who leads a new authority which is taking on substantial responsibilities and funding for our region.

The mayoral election will therefore remain scheduled for May 2028. That does not mean we can afford to sit still. We will continue preparing the region's Local Growth Plan, developing its strategic approach to skills and working with businesses, colleges, universities and councils to identify investment and job opportunities.

Our ambition remains to make devolution work for the whole region — from our cities and coastal communities to Hampshire's towns and rural villages and the Isle of Wight. The true measure of success will not be new committees or structures; it will be tangible improvements in skills, transport, investment and economic opportunity.

Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan referendum

The Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan referendum is taking place on Thursday 12 November 2026. The question is whether the plan should be used by Test Valley Borough Council when deciding planning applications in the neighbourhood area.

A neighbourhood plan cannot prevent every development or override national planning policy, but a successful referendum gives the document statutory weight. The Awbridge plan identifies valued rural views and Local Green Spaces, supports the separate identities of the village's settlements, and contains policies on design, dark skies, heritage, biodiversity, trees, hedgerows, wildlife, flooding and drainage. It also addresses affordable and community housing, safer walking and cycling, local amenities and small-scale employment.

The plan has been independently examined and recommended for referendum subject to modifications accepted by the Borough Council. I support a Yes vote so that local evidence and community priorities carry proper weight in future planning decisions. More information is available from Test Valley Borough Council, with paper copies at the Church Street offices and Romsey Library.

£123,975 investment in Sherfield English recreation hub

I am particularly pleased that Test Valley Borough Council's Community Delivery Fund has awarded £123,975 to the Sherfield English recreation ground and pavilion. The facility is an important part of village life, supporting an impressive range of sports, community events and activities, and serving as a resilience hub for the parish.

The funding will help replace an ageing sewage system, improve sports-pitch drainage, provide new fencing and improve access and security. These are not glamorous improvements, but they are precisely the practical investments that allow a valued community asset to thrive for years to come.

I have seen the dedication of the volunteers involved with this project over many years. They have listened to the community, improved the facilities and continued to plan for the long term. They deserve real credit for what has been achieved, and I am delighted that this investment will help them take the next steps.

More nesting opportunities for tawny owls

There has also been encouraging local wildlife news. Following the success of tawny owls breeding at Mill Lane Meadows in Sherfield English earlier this year, another tawny owl nest box has been installed in the reserve's wet woodland area. It will be monitored alongside the existing box to see whether the birds take up residence.

Test Valley Borough Council's countryside team also identified Tadburn Meadows in Romsey as suitable for another nest box, with installation planned for October after tawny owls were heard and seen locally. These projects are a welcome reminder that protecting and improving habitats can produce real, visible results.

My thanks to the countryside team, the Hawk Conservancy and everyone involved. Fingers crossed we will see another successful breeding season next spring.

Adult social care—Prevention First

On 30 October I welcomed the launch of Hampshire's new Adult Social Care Prevention First Strategy. Its purpose is to help people remain healthy, active and independent for longer by bringing together health, housing, local government and the voluntary sector, and by making information, community support and practical help available earlier.

Over the next five years the strategy will focus on preventing falls and avoidable hospital admissions, supporting unpaid carers, strengthening community-based services and using technology to help people remain safe and connected at home. The best results will come from partners working together and listening to people with lived experience of care and support.

Healthwatch England

I shared the welcome report that the Government intends to retain and strengthen Healthwatch England and its local network. I had joined Conservative colleagues on the Local Government Association's Health and Wellbeing Committee in arguing for an independent voice for patients, families and people who use social care.

Healthwatch gives people a route to share experiences and concerns and to challenge services when improvement is needed. The reported change of direction is encouraging, but the detail still matters: the network must have the independence and resources to do its job, and feedback must lead to action and better care.

National Adoption Week

National Adoption Week, from 19 to 25 October, has been a particular opportunity for me to reflect on the importance of adoption. I wrote about our family's experience and the simple but profound truth that building a secure, loving family is about the everyday moments — consistency, patience, honesty and being there when it matters.

Adoption is not always easy. Children may have experienced trauma and loss, and they need lifelong understanding and support as they grow. But it is also a source of immense happiness and belonging. I am very grateful to the adopters, foster carers, social workers and adoption professionals who help children find safe and loving families.

My National Adoption Week column: https://www.bordonherald.com/opinion/cllr-nick-adams-king-adoption-showed-us-that-love-makes-a-family-963754

Hampshire and the Solent Economic Update

Encouraging growth, alongside continuing pressure on businesses

The October Hampshire and the Solent Economic Dashboard, prepared by Hampshire County Council's Economic Intelligence team, shows the region's economy growing by an estimated 0.7% in the three months to August, in line with the UK. Knowledge-intensive services performed strongly, although construction remained weaker.

Business survey evidence was encouraging. September marked a sixth consecutive month of private-sector activity growth in Hampshire and the Solent, and the volume of new business increased for a third successive month. This suggests that many of our businesses are continuing to find opportunities despite a difficult economic climate.

There are, however, reasons for caution. Business input costs rose at their fastest rate in three months, with energy prices adding to the pressure. Prices charged by local firms also continued to rise, although at a slower rate than the UK average. National CPI inflation reached 3.5% in September.

My thanks, as always, to Hampshire's Economic Intelligence team for a detailed and genuinely useful report. Good data helps public bodies, employers and investors understand the opportunities and challenges facing our economy. Supporting investment, skills and business confidence must remain central to our work.

County Councillor and Test Valley Councillor Grants

A reminder that the grant window remains open, and with Test Valley elections due in May it's important we use all of our grant allocation up before the end of February. If you are aware of any schemes or organisations requiring support then do please let me know.

So far I've supported grants from Lockerley and East Dean Memorial Hall and Prescription Art Test Valley this year.

Getting About

I've been to PC meetings in Awbridge, Wellow, Michelmersh and Timsbury, Nursling and Rownhams and Chilworth.

Contact

Do please get in touch if I can ever be of any help. For those of you using social media, I post very regular updates on local issues including roadworks and planning applications on my Facebook page here: facebook.com/nickadamsking

Contact me:
t : 07771 727402
e: Nick.Adams-King@hants.gov.uk
facebook.com/nickadamsking

CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING
Caring for Romsey Rural



General Updates from HCC

Bickerley Green care home named 'Residential Home of the Year'

A Hampshire County Council care home has been named 'Residential Home of the Year' at the 2026 Hampshire Care Awards

Bickerley Green care home named 'Residential Home of the Year' | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council honours new Aldermen

Former Hampshire County Councillors have been recognised with the award of the title of Honorary Alderman, celebrating their distinguished service to the people of Hampshire

Hampshire County Council honours new Aldermen | Hampshire County Council

National recognition for Hampshire's young jazz musicians

Hampshire County Council's work to help young people learn, perform and develop as jazz musicians has been recognised nationally

National recognition for Hampshire's young jazz musicians | Hampshire County Council

Essential improvement works to temporarily close Casbrook Household Waste Recycling Centre

Residents are being advised that Casbrook Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) will temporarily close from Monday 12 October to reopen on Thursday 12 November while essential safety works are carried out

Essential improvement works to temporarily close Casbrook Household Waste Recycling Centre | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire adult social care services rated 'Good' by Care Quality Commission

Hampshire County Council's adult social care services have been rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with inspectors recognising a range of strengths including helping people remain independent, a commitment to listening to residents and carers, and early support so people get the help they need at the right time

Hampshire adult social care services rated 'Good' by Care Quality Commission | Hampshire County Council

Further phase of M27 Junction 10 improvement scheme opens next week

The next phase of the new M27 Junction 10 scheme will open to traffic on Monday 12 October 2026, marking the near completion of the main construction works on Hampshire County Council's £100m+ improvement scheme

Further phase of M27 Junction 10 improvement scheme opens next week | Hampshire County Council

Government gives go ahead for major plan to transform SEND support in Hampshire

A new landmark plan to transform support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Hampshire has been officially approved by Government, paving the way for a more inclusive education system from early years right through to adulthood

Government gives go ahead for major plan to transform SEND support in Hampshire | Hampshire County Council

Connect to Work: an opportunity for Hampshire businesses to find local talent and build an inclusive workforce

Employers across Hampshire are being invited to work with Hampshire County Council's Connect to Work programme, which helps local businesses fill vacancies, retain valued employees, build a stronger, more inclusive workforce and access skilled local talent that may otherwise be overlooked

Connect to Work: an opportunity for Hampshire businesses to find local talent and build an inclusive workforce | Hampshire County Council

Statutory consultation to be requested on future of The Clere School

Further discussions are due to take place about the future of The Clere School in north-west Hampshire

Statutory consultation to be requested on future of The Clere School | Hampshire County Council

Halloween warning: Hampshire Trading Standards stops unsafe products before they reach shoppers

Consumers are being urged to stay alert for unsafe Halloween products after Hampshire County Council's Trading Standards team identified two products that failed safety testing and have since been stopped before reaching the UK market

Halloween warning: Hampshire Trading Standards stops unsafe products before they reach shoppers | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire's Music Education Hub hits the right note with national jazz award

Hampshire's work to help children and young people discover jazz, perform with others and develop as musicians has received national recognition

Hampshire's Music Education Hub hits the right note with national jazz award | Hampshire County Council

Plans to improve coastal resilience at Royal Victoria Country Park

Plans to invest £950,000 in repairs to a key section of sea wall at Royal Victoria Country Park are due to be considered later this month

Plans to improve coastal resilience at Royal Victoria Country Park | Hampshire County Council

It's not too late to go smokefree this Stoptober

As Stoptober reaches the halfway mark, Hampshire residents are being encouraged to stay committed to their goal of quitting smoking, with free local support available to help them remain smokefree

It's not too late to go smokefree this Stoptober | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire secures £1million boost for Skills Bootcamps

Hundreds more Hampshire residents will be able to gain in-demand skills and access new job opportunities thanks to more than £1 million of additional Government funding secured by Hampshire County Council

Hampshire secures £1million boost for Skills Bootcamps | Hampshire County Council

Plans progress for new specialist bases at four Hampshire schools

Plans for more specialist provision in mainstream schools across Hampshire have taken a step forward, with up to 42 places proposed for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Plans progress for new specialist bases at four Hampshire schools | Hampshire County Council

Families encouraged to have their say on proposed updates to School and Post-16 Transport Policies

Families are being invited to share their views on proposed updates to Hampshire County Council's current School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy for the 2027/28 academic year

Families encouraged to have their say on proposed updates to School and Post-16 Transport Policies | Hampshire County Council

New outdoor learning space opens at Runway's End to inspire next generation of environmental champions

Hampshire schoolchildren are set to benefit from a brand-new digital classroom at Runway's End Outdoor Centre near Aldershot, which has been officially opened following an event attended by students from Frogmore Community College, alongside representatives from Rushmoor Borough Council and Blackwater Valley Scouts

New outdoor learning space opens at Runway's End to inspire next generation of environmental champions | Hampshire County Council

What's on guide - 'Spooktacular' adventures await across Hampshire County Council's outdoor attractions this half term

Get set for a bumper half term Halloween extravaganza at Hampshire County Council's parks, farms and outdoor centres, with a host of activities to fright and delight people of all ages

What's on guide - 'Spooktacular' adventures await across Hampshire County Council's outdoor attractions this half term | Hampshire County Council

End of the line for ageing Havant footbridge spanning railway as major crane operation due to begin

A major crane operation to remove Havant's existing 79-year-old footbridge is due to take place later this month as part of plans to replace the ageing structure with a modern, more accessible crossing

End of the line for ageing Havant footbridge spanning railway as major crane operation due to begin | Hampshire County Council

County Council backs biodiversity banking scheme to support nature recovery

Proposals agreed by Hampshire County Council are helping unlock new opportunities to support nature recovery across the county

County Council backs biodiversity banking scheme to support nature recovery | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council set to consider parking clock trial for Lymington High Street

A proposal to trial the use of New Forest District Council parking clocks on Lymington High Street is set to be considered by Hampshire County Council following a review of the current parking arrangements

Hampshire County Council set to consider parking clock trial for Lymington High Street | Hampshire County Council

Funding approved for Hampshire's holiday activities and food programme for 2027/28

Thousands of eligible children and young people across Hampshire will continue to enjoy free activities and nutritious meals in the school holidays, after Hampshire County Council approved more than £3.6 million for the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) in the next financial year

Funding approved for Hampshire's holiday activities and food programme for 2027/28 | Hampshire County Council

New Travel Safe Scheme launched to help passengers travel with confidence

A major new partnership aimed at helping passengers feel safer and more confident when travelling by bus has officially launched across Gosport and Portsmouth

New Travel Safe Scheme launched to help passengers travel with confidence | Hampshire County Council

Statutory consultation to go ahead on future of The Clere School

Hampshire County Council will open a statutory consultation on Friday 6 November on the proposed closure of The Clere School, a secondary school in Burghclere

Statutory consultation to go ahead on future of The Clere School | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council set to consider proposals to enable household recycling changes in line with Government standards

Proposals to help all Hampshire households recycle a wider range of household materials in future, including more types of plastic packaging, will be considered by Hampshire County Council on 2 November

Hampshire County Council set to consider proposals to enable household recycling changes in line with Government standards | Hampshire County Council

Making prevention everyone's business – Hampshire partners unite to help people stay independent for longer

Agencies from across Hampshire's health, care, housing and community sectors have come together behind a shared ambition to help more residents stay independent for longer, as growing demand places increasing pressure on the health and care system

Making prevention everyone's business – Hampshire partners unite to help people stay independent for longer | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire residents face a further wait for Government decision on council reorganisation plans

Residents, businesses and public services across Hampshire and the Solent area face a further wait to learn what local government will look like in the future, following an announcement today by the Government

Hampshire residents face a further wait for Government decision on council reorganisation plans | Hampshire County Council

www.bluestarbus.co.uk/new-route-bluestar-26

A new bus service operated by Bluestar linking Whiteley and Southampton is already proving a success, with passenger numbers growing every week since it launched just two months ago

www.bluestarbus.co.uk/new-route-bluestar-26 | Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council sets out scale of future financial challenge

Hampshire County Council has outlined the significant financial challenges it faces over the coming years as it plans ahead for budget setting in February 2027 and beyond

Hampshire County Council sets out scale of future financial challenge | Hampshire County Council