

Hampshire County Councillor Update

October 2023 Tom Thacker

1. HCC financial planning this autumn

The financial challenges facing the County Council, and local government nationally, are well documented. Each year, it costs more to deliver public services, but the money received from central Government and council tax increases is not enough to meet the extra costs, which results in a deficit. High inflation and growing demand for local services means that in the two years up to the 2025/26 financial year, the budget shortfall is expected to rise considerably to £132m, one of the biggest deficits the County Council has ever faced.

Proposals this autumn set out options for how Hampshire County Council could close this budget gap and comes on top of over £0.6bn of spending reductions already delivered since the start of national austerity. Hampshire is in a better financial position than most other county councils, and while the Authority's finances are stable until 2025/26, future stability relies on central Government fundamentally changing the way that local government services are funded, or reducing what councils are legally required to deliver.

In the absence of any immediate Government action in this regard, Hampshire County Council must plan on the basis of closing the budget gap itself, applying a combination of tactics to help balance the books, including changing and reducing services and delivering only those services which the council must legally provide.

A final decision is to be made by the full county council in November. After this, some proposals may then be subject to more detailed public consultation.

2. Transforming in-house nursing and specialist care

A ten week public consultation is now underway on proposals that would see £173 million invested over the next five to six years to transform and expand the future of nursing and specialist accommodation directly provided by HCC for the county's growing older population. The proposals recommend concentrating on the delivery of specialist nursing care, complex dementia care and short-term support – to either prevent a hospital admission or support a hospital discharge, so ensuring care could be provided more cost effectively.

The proposals include:

- building new nursing homes in Havant, Winchester and the New Forest
- modernising and expanding care at existing homes in Basingstoke, Aldershot and Emsworth
- withdrawing over time from the direct provision of residential care, with the closure of a number of the council's older homes.

More detail and a link to the consultation can be found at <https://hampshirecc.welcomesyourfeedback.net/s/HCC-Care2023>.

The consultation closes on 12 November 2023 with a final decision expected in February next year.

3. Countryside Services - Parish Pages

Parishes, town councils and other local groups may find the [Parish Pages](#) page on the HCC website a useful source of countryside information, including opportunities for grants and funding, information about Parish Pollinators, becoming a Volunteer, Countryside Canines and a guide to rights of way for parishes and communities. In addition, the Definitive Map is useful in identifying and locating rights of ways - www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/definitivemap

4. Increased payments to local residents hosting Ukrainian families

The county council has announced that it will be paying an extra £200 per month to all Hampshire residents hosting Ukrainian guests as part of the Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme, until the end of March 2024. This takes the monthly payment to £700, which is above the Government's current guidance for local authorities.