

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT
TO
ALL PARISH COUNCILS
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS**

2 MARCH 2022

1. Ukraine: HCC Leader's Statement

Hampshire County Council has expressed solidarity with the people of Ukraine and has stated its preparedness to support the UK Government, if called on, to help with the unfolding humanitarian crisis.

Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Keith Mans said: "As the world watches events in Ukraine, across Hampshire we all send our thoughts and prayers to the Ukrainian people, including those who are living in Hampshire. None of us would have expected to have seen such hostilities in Europe in these modern times, and we condemn the attacks on Ukraine's innocent citizens.

"Hampshire County Council, in common with the rest of the country, is watching the concerning situation in Ukraine and stands in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and communities affected by this conflict. Should Government seek our support, we will assist as needed - building on our experience of supporting refugees and evacuees from previous conflicts."

I am sure all Councillors will share this sentiment from the Leader. Incidentally Keith Mans will be standing down in May 2022 and this has been reported in local newspapers. HCC will therefore be under new leadership in May following an election process within the Conservative Group.

2. Storms put Hampshire Highways to the test

The consecutive Storms Eunice and Franklin in February were extremely challenging for everyone at Hampshire Highways. We had over 2,000 incident reports and over 1,000 trees down. The clean-up operation is ongoing and may take another week or two. The bill for the response will run to seven figures. When the ground is wet, it is always more likely that trees will come down in storms. Councillors will be aware that the ground is still unusually saturated and so

we are currently vulnerable in the event of further high winds. I would advise people to be very cautious about driving during storms when the ground is so wet.

Sadly there was a fatality in Alton which shows how dangerous these storms are. The bravery and commitment of our Highways teams cannot be overstated. We all rely on our highways to live our lives and these frontline workers are doing a great job this winter, showing considerable resilience. We owe them our profound thanks.

3. 2022/23 Budget is approved by Council

Hampshire County Council's council tax precept for the financial year beginning 1 April 2022 will increase by a total of 2.99%, of which 1% will go specifically towards adults' social care. This equates to an annual charge of £1,390.86 for a Band D property – an increase of just over £40 per year. This recommended increase will generate an extra £21m towards delivering essential County Council services in the next financial year, especially in the care of the vulnerable.

Hampshire still has one of the lowest Council Tax rates in the UK, alongside Somerset. This year's increase has to be seen in that context. Price inflation and demand growth in social care (both adults and children) have put pressure on budgets and mean that a Council Tax rise is the most responsible decision.

Alongside revenue budget plans, the County Council has approved a capital programme worth £556.2m over the next three years to boost jobs, build schools and cycle paths, and improve the quality of the environment. This provision for Hampshire's infrastructure brings the County Council's four-year total investment in the fabric of Hampshire, to £832.6m. Our prudent financial management and strong reserves has made this investment possible. Very few County Councils in the UK have the capacity to embark on such a substantial capital programme.

Nevertheless, the financial challenge facing Hampshire County Council over the coming years looks to be considerable. At HCC we are lobbying the Government to use its review of Local Government Finance to increase funding and to provide a multi-year settlement so that we can plan services effectively.

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County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers