

# **ANNUAL HCC REPORT FROM COUNCILLOR RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER**

## **TO ALL PARISH COUNCILS IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS AND PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL – 22 MARCH 2023**

### Introduction

This annual report has been prepared for Annual Parish Meetings taking place between March and May 2023. As usual I will try to attend as many of the APMs as I possibly can!

### A memorable year for Hampshire

The historic and emotional events of the last 12 months will live long in the memory. It has been an eventful municipal year with the monarchy at the heart of it:

- The County Council celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee across its services during the summer of 2022. The lighting of a beacon at QE Country Park was a very well attended event, along with events at other country parks and libraries. I also attended a moving Jubilee Citizenship ceremony held in the Great Hall in Winchester, directly underneath the Round Table. All Parishes held their own Platinum Jubilee events which were joyous community occasions.
- The sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in September 2022 came as an enormous blow and all of Hampshire was greatly affected. Hampshire was always close to the Queen's heart. Hampshire was the place where the Queen spent her honeymoon and the County to which she came often to visit Her Armed Forces. The County Council helped residents to pay their respects to the late Monarch by providing public books of condolence at the Great Hall.
- HCC was then responsible for the co-ordination of the proclamation of King Charles III outside Winchester's Great Hall, as well as live-streaming the event to allow people to watch online.
- As the municipal year ends in May this year, HCC will put on a number of suitable events across the County to enable people to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles on 6 May 2023.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has been unsettling over the last year. I am proud that Hampshire has played an important role in supporting Ukrainians fleeing from the conflict. We have taken in the third highest number of refugees of all the English counties, not a bad record. This is predominantly thanks to the generosity of the Homes for Ukraine hosts, to whom we are all very grateful. HCC is providing extra support to Hampshire residents hosting Ukrainian guests as part of the Government's Scheme, with an additional £200 per month beyond the funding already provided by the Government.

HCC has also worked hard to help our Ukrainian guests to integrate. We launched a Ukraine Connects initiative at all our libraries and we have helped to develop language classes and skills support.

The severe weather has had an impact over the last year. We have seen a massive increase in flooding incidents across Petersfield Hangers, and a number of sewage overflows which are very distressing. The rain and freezing temperatures have also taken their toll on road surfaces. I think Hampshire Highways have done a great job in the circumstances.

The severe weather is likely to be a feature of our climate over the coming years. We have to learn to live with it. It is a reminder of the negative impacts of climate change, and we need to redouble our decarbonisation efforts. It is great to see community energy schemes springing up across the Petersfield Hangers division.

### The last 12 months for me

Back in May 2022 I was delighted to be appointed to the Countryside and Regulatory Services portfolio within the HCC Cabinet. I am responsible for five country parks, five National Nature Reserves, two farms and 81 countryside sites. I am also responsible for Trading Standards, Ceremonies and Registration, Hampshire Records Office and Hampshire Scientific Service. So there is plenty to keep me busy.

One of my passions is tree planting and I am delighted to be championing the Hampshire Forest Partnership. We have an ambitious target to plant one million trees by 2050, and we have made great strides over the last year. Ongoing support from Parishes is critical to ensure we keep up momentum.

Apart from boosting nature, storing carbon, preventing flooding, and improving natural beauty, tree-planting can also bring communities together. Young and old alike can get stuck in and then enjoy watching the trees grow with a real sense of pride. Our project officer at HCC would be pleased to hear from any Parish Council that would like to develop a tree-planting programme in their Parish. You can contact her at [treeplanting@hants.gov.uk](mailto:treeplanting@hants.gov.uk)

In my HCC Countryside role, I have been proactive on the BOATs front (Byways Open to All Traffic). I am determined to restore the safety and tranquillity of our green lanes. At HCC we are developing an innovative new policy framework which will be published for scrutiny later this year. New gates, secure noticeboards and technology will be deployed under the new approach.

I am pleased to say that collaboration with the SDNPA on the BOATs issue is gathering pace now. We are anticipating being able to get some funding from their CIL pot and establishing joint working mechanisms amongst the Ranger teams. I met the SDNPA Chair Vanessa Rowlands last week and we were very much on the same page in our desire to keep up the momentum and make a difference. We are awaiting certain Government policy announcements on this issue, which I hope will also give us more tools to protect the byways which are so important in terms of maintaining access to the countryside for everyone.

### Funds available for projects

May I take this opportunity to remind everyone that HCC has two funding streams available for Parish Councils. I would encourage Parishes to take advantage of these funds whilst they still exist by making applications in the coming year.

The **Rural Community Fund** supports Parish Councils, groups and organisations in rural Hampshire and small market towns. The fund can provide contributions of up to £5,000, with at least 50% match funding required. The grant fund provides support under the following four areas:

1. Climate Change Resilience (including Flood Alleviation);
2. Countryside (we want to help rural communities improve their local natural environment, enhance biodiversity or increase access to the countryside);
3. Rural Economy and Business (we want to help Rural Businesses and Community Enterprises grow, increase their productivity, and ultimately improve the services that are offered to communities);
4. Other – we are keen to support any other projects or initiatives that will help build community resilience and/or encourage self-help in rural areas.

The **Parish and Town Council Investment Fund** can provide up to £30k investment.

The funding can support schemes which:

- Respond to local needs and which can demonstrate an easing of pressure to County Council Services.
- We have a particular focus on improvements to Community Buildings to address carbon reduction and climate change resilience. E.g. Solar panels and insulation for village halls.

### HCC Performance Highlights

I know that the financial crisis affecting local government is well understood by all Parish and Town Councillors. The increased cost of care and the increase in the number of elderly adults needing care has put pressure on budgets. In Hampshire we are lucky to have a County Council that is in a relatively strong position. We have a great team of officers who deliver for residents – day in, day out. We have substantial reserves which enable us to invest. And we continue to be able to prioritise young people by focusing on schools and skills.

There is a lot of other good stuff which goes on behind the scenes, some of which does not make it into press notices. I thought it would be worthwhile to take the opportunity to list some highlights from the last year at HCC which you may not have heard about:

- Hampshire Futures, which provides career guidance and support to young people, being awarded the Matrix Quality Standard for a third time. The service's delivery of information, advice and guidance was described as 'exemplary,' and the service's objectivity, impartiality, client focus and aspirational nature was also praised.

- The County Council investing in projects to help people dependent on alcohol and drugs, by increasing the capacity of the Criminal Justice and Substance Misuse Teams, commissioning a new specialist Alcohol Team for community-based treatment, and continuing its support for the harm reduction team.
- 100 library staff, across 10 Hampshire libraries, receiving 'Safe at Home' training to enable them to provide guidance and conduct sensitive conversations with victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Library stock and IT resources in libraries were also updated to support victims of domestic abuse and direct them to other resources available to assist them. The project was nominated for a Police and Crime Commissioners Victim Services Award.
- The County Council launching its 'Keep Warm Keep Well' scheme to protect vulnerable people who are struggling with their day-to-day bills. The support available includes guidance on claiming free school meals and getting advice on managing finances, and links to warm spaces in Hampshire open to residents who may struggle to pay heating bills over the winter.
- All five of the County Council's Country Parks being re-awarded Green Flag status for 2022, plus a new Green Flag being awarded to Wellesley Woodland.
- Completion of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, delivering solar energy collection, building insulation, and boiler conversions at hundreds of schools, care homes, libraries, outdoor centres, and other publicly owned buildings across Hampshire.
- Shortlisting of Micheldever's highways materials recycling and reprocessing facility for Carbon Project of the Year in the 2022 Construction News Awards. It was praised for its approach to reducing the carbon cost of highways construction and maintenance.

I hope this gives a flavour of the progress that we are continually making at HCC, despite the financial challenges.

#### Grants awarded by me during the municipal year 2022-23

I always include a grants summary in my annual report. Please find overleaf a table showing all grant awards by me over the last year. I always do my best to achieve a geographical spread. I really appreciate it when Parish Councils put good projects to me, please keep it up!

I look forward to working with you all as your County Councillor over the 12 months ahead.

**RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER**

County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers

**LIST OF COUNTY COUNCILLOR GRANTS AWARDED BY ME DURING THE GRANT YEAR ENDING FEBRUARY 2023**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Project Description</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
Steep & Stroud Newsletter	Keeping communities informed and engaged	This application relates to the production of an enhanced monthly newsletter, distributed freely to the residents of the villages of Steep & Stroud in East Hampshire, and closely adjoining residents.	£400.00
Froxfield & Privett Parish Council	Parish Verge Cutting	To take on the verge cutting in the Parish of Froxfield & Privett with a view to cutting at a time to improve the biodiversity in the area.	£1,000.00
Home-Start Butser	Safeguarding Training	To provide Safeguarding Training for Home-Start Butser volunteers	£1,000.00
Petersfield Musical Festival	Petersfield Musical Festival 2023	Ten concerts in March, involving local choirs, orchestras, bands and schools, rehearsing and performing alongside professional musicians of local, national and international standing.	£500.00
Hawkey Parish Hall	Hawkey Playground Renovation	The current equipment was installed over 20 years ago and now requires complete replacement due to degradation of the wooden structures. The severity of the damage necessitates work starts in 3 weeks.	£1,000.00
Sheet Village community trust (Winter warmer cafe)	Sheet winter warmer cafe	To provide a free of charge Winter warmer cafe Friday pm in Sheet village hall throughout the coldest months.	£150.00
Energise South Downs	Solar PV for Bridge Meadows Liss	The aim of this project is to carry out a feasibility study for solar PV on 6 blocks of flats which house 39 households.	£750.00
Liss Parish Council	Map of Liss village	The aim of a bespoke map of Liss is to signpost people (both visitors to and residents of Liss) to local facilities and showcase what the village has to offer.	£700.00
Newman collard playing fields trust	LED lighting upgrade to pavilion	To upgrade lighting installation in the pavilion building to led	£900.00

Stroud Parish Council	Playground refurbishment	Playground maintenance and ongoing improvement	£700.00
Ropley Parish Council	Improving Ropley Footpaths	Replace stiles with kissing gates to improve access to local footpath network. This is in line with Ropley Neighbourhood Plan	£900.00
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>£8,000.00</b>

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