

Update from Hampshire County Council – February 2023

Hampshire County Council sets out £2.6 billion spending plans for local services amid difficult economic times in 2023/24

Spending plans for 2023/24, totalling £2.6bn, to deliver hundreds of local services to Hampshire's 1.4 million residents will be considered by Hampshire County Council's Cabinet.

At their meeting on Tuesday 7 February, the Authority's Executive Members will review spending proposals for the coming financial year which aim to continue to deliver vital public services while supporting the most vulnerable children and adults in Hampshire.

The continued cost of living pressures on Hampshire's households is at the forefront of our budget considerations for the year ahead. At a time when we know residents are having to make difficult decisions about their spending, the County Council is also grappling with profound financial challenges. Like all councils nationally, years of underfunding from central Government, alongside continued growth in demand for social care for our county's most vulnerable children and adults is stretching our budgets to the brink. The funding awarded by Government for this coming year, although welcome, still won't be enough to meet the growing pressures in social care over the next year. We also have to factor in workforce pressures and inflation which is pushing up the costs of delivering local services across the board to our residents.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/31012023Cabinetbudgetproposals>

It's 'Time to Talk' about mental wellbeing

On this national Time to Talk Day (2 February 2023), Hampshire County Council is reminding residents about its Chat About scheme that aims to help people connect with others to alleviate loneliness and improve wellbeing

When it comes to our mental health and wellbeing, having someone to talk to can significantly relieve stress and loneliness. But it's not always easy to take the first step. Joining a Chat About scheme near you is an easy way to get started in opening up if you're having a tough time, feeling lonely or if you want to connect with others.

The County Council's Chat About scheme currently operates out of 23 libraries, providing welcoming, inclusive spaces where people can gather to connect and talk. Specially trained staff are on hand to help introduce people into a group or to have a one-to-one conversation, and they are also able to signpost people to resources to support anyone looking for help.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/020223chatabout>

Free access to 1921 census in Hampshire County Council libraries and Record Office

Residents will be able to delve into history free of charge from 1 February when the 1921 census becomes available at all Hampshire County Council libraries and the Record Office in Winchester

The County Council has arranged for access to FindMyPast, which holds the latest available census data for England and Wales, and is making it available for no charge.

The latest available census data offers a fascinating snapshot of life back in the early twentieth century, so I am delighted that we can now offer free access to this information at libraries and at Hampshire Record Office. Through the 1921 census we can get an insight into a time when people were adjusting to life after the trauma of World War I and the aftermath of a devastating influenza pandemic. Through the click of a button, we can search for information about own family members, our street or neighbourhood and this is all now available without charge.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/270123census1921>

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Latest County Council Leader’s grants to benefit culture and communities across Hampshire

The Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Rob Humby has today awarded £67,800 in one-off community grants to five organisations across East Hampshire, Winchester, Test Valley, and Fleet.

These community grants support local organisations to help provide life-enriching opportunities for residents, whether through learning, creative expression or by being physically active – all have a positive impact on wellbeing. Making sure community activities are accessible is important.

A County Council Leader’s Community Grant of £25,000 has also been awarded to Test Valley Arts Foundation for a pilot project to provide opportunities for greater community cohesion, including a finding friends network, an internationally themed food festival, pop-up performing arts, music and visual arts workshops, and an ‘artists in residence’ programme.

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20230119LeadersCommunityGrants>

20mph zones in Hampshire

At the Transport and Environment Select Committee on the 23rd January, the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group into the introduction of 20mph zones across Hampshire were discussed.

The Highway Authority, Hampshire County Council has an over-riding responsibility to our residents when ensuring road safety. This must be paramount in the consideration of any revision of existing policy. Any revised policy must be transparent, fair and accessible for communities, and of course deliverable by the County Council.

The officer team will now begin investigating how HCC can deliver on the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group. There is also much that can be learnt from policies introduced in other areas, and HCC will be looking to those authorities for suggestions and options regarding delivery of an effective, accessible and workable policy.

The hope is that proposals for a new policy can be brought to the T&E Select Committee, and then on to Cabinet, in June or July this year.

<https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=822&MId=10909>

Cllr David Drew

Test Valley Central Division, HCC