

Hampshire County Council

Divisional Report for Hambleton Parish Council

Hampshire County Council Meeting – 7th November.

Hampshire County Council will meet in full on Thursday 7 November, to consider the financial strategy to help meet an anticipated £80 million budget shortfall by April 2021 - due to rising costs and inflation, growing demand for council services such as social care from an ageing population, and higher numbers of vulnerable children needing care.

Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Keith Mans said: “The sheer size of the savings target for April 2021, coupled with growing service demands, and almost £0.5 billion of cost reductions already made over the last nine years - makes this our greatest financial challenge to date.

“This week’s meeting is the culmination of a long and detailed planning process in response to this prospect. It has included seeking important feedback from residents over the summer and incorporating their views into the proposals.

At the heart of the plan is our tried and tested strategy of investing savings early to deliver more efficient and cost-effective ways of working, maximising income generation opportunities and carefully using our reserves to address funding gaps to meet one-off demand pressures. It has served us very well to date and residents have told us they support it.

Some welcome funding from central Government, announced in September, has also provided much-needed financial breathing-space in our planning, which will partly help us meet the increasing demand pressures in social care services for next year. But it is only for one year.

In the meantime, we have an opportunity to influence future funding decisions by central Government beyond the next year – by pressing for a fairer deal for shire councils such as Hampshire, and a long-term national funding strategy to help local authorities address growing social care pressures.

Continuing to engage with our MPs - to garner their support on these big-ticket issues will be crucial in helping to secure a more equitable financial settlement - and I’m grateful for their involvement to-date. Essentially, we want to secure the best deal for Hampshire’s residents.”

Hitting the cold spots – help for people struggling to keep their home warm

As winter sets in, families and vulnerable people who struggle to keep their homes warm can get help from Hampshire County Council’s Hitting the Cold Spots initiative.

Keeping warm is about far more than just being comfortable – it’s an essential part of keeping healthy. Cold weather can present a very real risk of serious health problems, especially for older people, the very young and those with long term medical conditions. If anyone is struggling to keep warm this winter, I urge them to pick up the phone and call the Hitting the Cold Spots team, who will be happy to help.

Now in its ninth year, this county-wide affordable warmth project offers advice and support to people who are having trouble staying warm during the winter, including home visits, help to access funding for boiler repairs and replacements, temporary heating and first-time central heating. Hampshire residents can also receive advice about tariff switching and the Warm Home Discount, and get referred to other services for further help, including ‘safe and well’ visits.

Some of the services have eligibility criteria, but the phone advice line is open to all Hampshire residents. The advisers will be able to talk through the best possible solutions for each caller.

Since the start of Hitting the Cold Spots in 2011, over 3,400 households have benefitted from the advice and information provided by the team. In this financial year, more than 175 Hampshire households have already received support.

If you or someone you know is struggling to stay warm and well this winter, please contact an adviser on Freephone 0800 804 8601 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) or email staywarm@environmentcentre.com. For more information about the service, visit the Hitting the Cold Spots.

Cllr Roger Huxstep

Member for Meon Valley Division

4th November 2019