

Hampshire County Councillor report

November 2021

1. Covid-19 guidance

At the time of writing, three cases of the new Omicron Covid variant have been confirmed in the Basingstoke district, including at a local school. It is expected that the number of cases across Hampshire will increase.

Simon Bryant, Hampshire County Council's Director of Public Health has reiterated that the council will encourage the public to adopt safe behaviours to prevent further spread. His advice is to "get vaccinated – first dose, second dose, booster. Wear a face covering on public transport, in shops and crowded places. If you have symptoms, then isolate immediately and get a PCR test.

"Ahead of social events, take a lateral flow test, meet outdoors if possible, or if indoors, open a window to let in fresh air. All of these individual actions can make a difference to help slow the spread of infection and help keep each other safe in the run-up to Christmas."

2. Child school/nursery attendance guidance

Separately, new advice was published last month to help parents and carers decide whether to send their child to school or nursery if they are feeling unwell. Produced by Hampshire County Council in collaboration with the NHS and local authority partners, the resource provides quick access to information that will help someone identify a possible health condition from a range of symptoms and whether the child should remain at home.

The new easy-to-follow guidance lists a range of common childhood illnesses and conditions from conjunctivitis to head lice, as well as symptoms such as a high temperature and a sore throat and what these might mean. It includes details about actions to take and when a child should return to education after being treated.

The information is provided on the [Should your child go to school/nursery today?](#) web page; it is a general guide and has been checked by health professionals. However, if someone is unsure about a child's wellbeing they should contact their GP, call the NHS helpline on 111 or visit their nearest pharmacy.

3. Waste reduction

Community Waste Reduction Grants of up to £5000 are available for community organisations. Grant funding is available to community groups, small businesses, schools, charities, and parish councils to fund projects which will introduce a new waste prevention, reuse or repair project to the local area. The fund that has supported more than 60 projects across Hampshire since 2017. Among the exciting projects are repair cafes, cookery and upcycling classes in schools, reusable nappy libraries, swap events and many more that have contributed to helping people to reuse more and reduce household waste in Hampshire.

Potential applicants are asked to discuss their ideas with the Waste Prevention Team before applying - contact the team at waste.prevention@hants.gov.uk to arrange an informal discussion. The deadline for applications is 5pm Friday 18 February 2022.

4. Fair Funding

County Council Leader, Councillor Keith Mans has written to Hampshire's MPs to seek their support for a more equitable funding solution. Rural councils like Hampshire have historically received lower funding from central Government than the metropolitan authorities. Although major funding reform at the current time is difficult, a change is needed in the short term otherwise those authorities at the bottom end of the funding tables will continue to be hit the hardest as we recover from the pandemic.

A temporary solution might be to introduce a 'floor' into the methodology, so all authorities receive a minimum level of core spending power. This could be done as part of the provisional local government settlement and would cost around £300m nationally – to help benefit approximately 26 lowest funded councils – including Hampshire. In the meantime, Hampshire County Council has now approved the financial strategy needed to help meet a budget shortfall of at least £80 million by April 2023.

5. 20 is Plenty

Hampshire County Council have announced a review of the evidence for 20-mph zones in residential areas and this will be undertaken by the Environment, Transport and Economy Select Committee in early 2022. Hampshire Constabulary and the Police and Crime Commissioner will be invited to take part.

6. Additional climate change support

Hampshire County Council has welcomed news of a successful bid for over £205,000 from the Government's Community Renewal Fund, which will enable the authority to expand its work with communities to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. I reported on the current work being undertaken by the council last month.

Separately, a Hampshire County Council scheme, which enables young people to hire mopeds at an affordable rate so that they can get to work or vocational training, is going green with the addition of five electric mopeds to its fleet of conventionally powered bikes. The electric mopeds are now available to hirers through [Wheels to Work](#) - a scheme which helps young people aged 16 to 25 years old in some rural areas of Hampshire by loaning them their own form of transport, especially in areas where public transport options may be limited.

7. Highways maintenance update

Statistics have been published by Hampshire Highways for September this year. In that month 301 emergencies were attended, 59,055 square metres of carriageway were resurfaced and 13,797 gullies and other drainage cleared. In addition, 9,912 square metres of footway were repaired or resurfaced and around 8,420 potholes were fixed.

Councillor Hugh Lumby, Meon Valley Division