

## **Hampshire County Council Divisional Report for: Hambleton Parish Council**

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### **Spotlight on Covid-19 costs - County Council takes stock of latest financial forecasts for tackling the pandemic**

On Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September, HCC's Cabinet reviewed the current picture, the result of significant unplanned additional costs during the outbreak, as well as lost income from areas such as school meals, country parks and registration services (births, deaths and marriages). Latest predictions put these extra costs and losses at around £160 million this financial year – with around £83 million of that unfunded.

The overall costs and losses rise to over £210 million over the next three years, and despite a potential financial response package having been agreed earlier this summer, a further £80 million of savings will still be needed in the budget by April 2023, in order to meet rising demand in services such as social care for vulnerable children and adults.

Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Keith Mans explained: “The job of forecasting the financial impact of coronavirus is an immensely difficult task, not least because of the uncertainty caused from such a fast-moving, evolving pandemic. We continue to monitor the figures closely, and report them regularly to Government, while taking stock and making our own financial mitigations.

“Our exposure to Covid-19 is currently expected to cost us in the region of £83 million this year. Fortunately, Hampshire was in a strong financial position before coronavirus hit, thanks to our strong track record of careful and consistent budget planning alongside the prudent use of our reserves. As such, we have put plans in place so we can weather the storm this year, but a council smaller than Hampshire might not have been able to cope with such challenges. “We have had some additional, welcome funding from Government in the form of grant and reimbursement of lost income, to support local authorities’ response to the crisis, and together with some additional savings secured across our departments, the financial liability of coronavirus for this year is slightly less than we predicted earlier this summer. However, moving into the medium term, the situation worsens as we also take stock of growing demand in adult social care which we expect to increase further as a result of the pandemic, further lost income and council tax revenue, and the costs of responding to any subsequent coronavirus outbreaks. It means that our total unfunded costs and losses rise to around £210 million over the next three years – with the need for at least £52 million from Government in order to remain financially viable in the future.

“We have remained steadfast in our representations to Government on the severity of this unprecedented situation and continue to stress the need for a sustainable funding solution to help us through the current financial crisis we face from coronavirus, and into the future – including opportunities that allow local authorities greater freedoms to charge for some services, and flexibility around setting council tax. I sincerely hope Government addresses these concerns in the next Comprehensive Spending Review, set to be announced later this year, and looking ahead to the next three financial years. This would deliver a much-needed step in the right direction towards providing local government with a more stable financial outlook for the years ahead and safeguarding crucial local services to the people of Hampshire and beyond.”

## **Overwhelming majority of Hampshire pupils back at school following lockdown**

It's been a successful start to the autumn term, following lockdown leading to many school children learning from home for nearly five months

Attendance at Hampshire schools is exceptionally good and above the national average, despite the fears relating to COVID-19. The week ending 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020 saw: 91% of primary aged children attending Hampshire schools compared to 86% nationally; and 92% of secondary aged pupils compared to 88% nationally. Many absences are explained by the need to continue shielding because a pupil has a serious medical condition, or a pupil has one of the more usual childhood illnesses.

Councillor Roz Chadd, the Executive Member for Education and Skills at Hampshire County Council, said: "As a parent myself, I can fully understand that there may have been anxiety about the return to school following lockdown and the school summer holidays. It is fantastic to hear that any apprehension seems to have rapidly dispersed leading to such a high number going back to school at the beginning of the autumn term.

"I'm most especially pleased, to hear from schools, that any impact on pupils' health and wellbeing, including their mental health, appears to be minimal. Pupils have settled in well and have quickly adapted to the new arrangements in place at school to prevent the spread of infection. More importantly, children have been telling me how happy they are to be back in the classroom with their class-mates and teachers, not to mention how good it is for them to be with their friends again."

In preparation for the new term, all schools carried out detailed risk assessments to put in place whatever they needed to, to welcome children back to a COVID-19 safe school and prevent the virus spreading. Those arrangements vary from school to school, depending on the size and layout of their sites, as well as the ages and number of children attending, but they include:

- Placing children in distinct 'bubbles' (groups) to be maintained throughout the school day
- Operating a one-way system around the school site
- Staggering the start and end of the school day
- Staggering break times
- Building time for frequent handwashing in the daily timetable
- Additionally, providing hand sanitiser in strategic areas of the building
- Frequent reminders to Catch It, Bin It, Kill It
- Additional cleaning of school buildings.

Ahead of children returning to school, the County Council's Director for Public Health, Simon Bryant, stated that children are far less likely to be affected by coronavirus, citing a

Public Health England Study which showed that those aged under 16 years old, accounted for just 1.1 per cent of 130,000 confirmed coronavirus cases during the first wave of the virus.

## **Hampshire sets out clear actions to reduce carbon emissions**

Hampshire County Council's Cabinet reinforced its commitment to tackling the causes and impact of Climate Change when it agreed an Action Plan 2020-2025, as part of the overall Climate Change Strategy. The Action Plan details how the organisation will strive to meet its carbon reduction and resilience targets and includes a new Framework which focuses on the significant programmes of activity needed

The Action Plan and Framework shows how our ambitious approach and combined efforts can bring about significant progress in mitigating against, and building resilience to, climate change. We have the evidence, research and tools in place to focus on this challenge, and it is now absolutely imperative that everyone gets on board – from individual lifestyle changes to industries adopting new technologies.

Council Leader, Cllr Mans said “Together, we can make the changes needed to bring carbon emissions in Hampshire down to net zero – but without national action and Government funding to support local initiatives, the County Council's commitment alone is not enough. We can do so much more together – indeed, only by doing so will we have a chance of leaving the legacy we want for future generations.”

The County Council's Cabinet approved the Climate Change Action Plan and Framework 2020-2025. It is based on a carbon baseline produced by the Carbon Trust which established that the greatest sources of emissions in Hampshire, and therefore where efforts must be focussed to reduce them. These are from industry and commercial operations (38.89%), transport (36.98%) and housing, such as energy use and heating (23.66%)

The plan includes input from collaborations with organisations, specialist groups and experts to better understand their priorities and capture ideas on how Hampshire can reach its carbon neutral target, and how we can all work together effectively to achieve this.

Cabinet also approved new decision-making tools, created by the Carbon Trust, designed to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impact of all significant decisions made by the County Council at the start of all projects. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets; and will ensure climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

**Cllr Roger Huxstep**  
**Member for Meon Valley Division**  
**Hampshire County Council**  
**2020**

**5<sup>th</sup> October**