

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT  
TO  
ALL PARISH COUNCILS  
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS  
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020**

1. Green Recovery boost from “Active Travel” measures

Over 40 new temporary footpath and cycleway measures have been installed in Hampshire since June, providing people with the space to travel by bike or by foot. As well as helping people to keep their social distance, these schemes are also helping to tackle the climate emergency and the obesity crisis. At HCC we are planning an online Active Travel Summit in October to which many Town and Parish Council representatives will be invited. Please let me know if you have a particular interest in attending (virtually).

The temporary “pop-up” scheme in Petersfield received a mixed response and the barriers in Lavant St and Chapel St were consequently removed. The temporary barriers on the High St will be replaced by planters later this year which will look a lot better.

A bid to HM Government for a further £3.45 million has been submitted by Hampshire County Council to deliver a range of schemes to help redesign roads and high streets to support social distancing, assist economic recovery and support people who want to continue walking and cycling more. The outcome of this bid is expected in the Autumn.

2. Back to School Safely campaign

Hampshire’s schools are preparing to welcome all children back this month, with support from the HCC team. On 17 August the Government launched its #backtoschoolsafely campaign, which aims to reassure parents and students that schools and colleges are ready for their return in September. The campaign, which forms part of the Government’s wider Stay Alert campaign, will show teachers welcoming students back into school in a range of newspaper, digital, radio and billboard adverts.

### 3. GCSE and A Level results

At this time of year I have always mentioned the exam results of Hampshire pupils and congratulated both schools and pupils for their strong performance. This year I would like to do the same.

Although exams did not take place this year, there were plenty of other sources of stress for pupils, not least the uncertainty over the results process. I feel that pupils fully deserve their grades and I would therefore like to congratulate them and their teachers for their hard work and strong performance.

### 4. Careers guidance for young people

Hampshire Futures and the Hampshire Careers Partnership have launched a new website called “Flying Start Hampshire” to support the county’s young people, especially Year 11 students as they prepare to move on from secondary education to further and higher education, training or employment, having secured their GCSE results.

Flying Start contains links to resources that will help when considering a course at sixth form, college, apprenticeship or future employment options, and helps young people explore their options and achieve success. Young people who may be feeling anxious either due to the pandemic or any other reason can find, on the website, a section dedicated to improving mental health and wellbeing. The website can be accessed at this link:

<https://www.sunoutreach.org/resource-category/flying-start-hampshire/>

### 5. Libraries consultation concludes

Parish Councils will recall that HCC launched a consultation on the future of the Library Service in January 2020. Over 21,200 people and organisations responded which makes it one of the most successful consultations in Hampshire in recent years. As a result of feedback received, the decision has been taken to close 8 libraries (rather than 10 originally proposed) and reduce opening hours by an average of 20% in all libraries (rather than the 15% originally proposed). The 8 libraries set to close are: Blackfield, Elson, Fair Oak, Horndean, Lee-on-the-Solent, Lyndhurst, Odiham and South Ham. Uptake of HCC’s digital library offering has continued to increase in 2020 which supports the Library Transformation process. Residents can borrow books and audiobooks via the BorrowBox app.

## 6. Financial position of HCC

There has been a lot of comment in the media about the financial difficulties facing local government, so I wanted to say a few words about this.

Hampshire County Council is facing exceptional costs from the Covid-19 crisis due to the extra care costs involved in looking after the elderly and the lost income during the lockdown (e.g. at the Country Parks, which were all closed). These costs are still being counted but will certainly run to over £100m. A key question for us now is how much of these losses will be compensated by Government. So far, HCC has received three tranches of emergency payments from central government, totalling £61.5m. We are hoping for further compensation.

The crisis has understandably delayed implementation of our Transformation to 2021 programme under which HCC was identifying needed annual savings of £80m. The Hampshire Cabinet and officers are working hard to get back on track.

Hampshire is not in imminent danger of going bust, as Northamptonshire County Council did last year. We are one of the best-run County Councils in the country with services that are rated good or outstanding across the Board and strong reserves which enable us to invest in new schools and infrastructure.

Nevertheless, the future funding of social care clearly needs to be resolved in order for HCC to maintain its strong financial position. There are signs that the Government intends to put forward a new plan for social care in the Autumn. The Comprehensive Spending Review launched in July is another opportunity to put local government onto a sustainable financial footing, as is the Devolution White Paper (also promised for the Autumn). I am therefore optimistic that our County Council will get through this challenging period in relatively good shape.

**RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER**  
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