

County Councillor Report for July 2020 meetings (*sorry, very long this time...*)

The lockdown is unwinding, and we are all determined to make changes to extend the feeling of community that has built up since the 23rd March. We have all enjoyed the birdsong, less cars on the road and if we have them, our gardens and footpaths. We have produced more waste at home, though restaurants and commercial uses have less. This is the time for communities and individuals to look at how lightly we can tread upon the planet in our daily lives, whilst still ensuring that our local businesses and services can adapt to survive.

Digital connectivity for ALL- not just the 97% target previously held by HCC, has become vital for access services and work, as more go online. Zoom and similar online platforms has meant we travel much less often. Distance and availability of transport doesn't restrict participation, however strange it seems at first.

The County Council had just started **a review of the Minerals and Waste Plan**. This is a 'light touch' review, but one focus is inevitably linked to the future of domestic waste management, relating it to our need to 'tread lightly' on this planet and the 2019 Government waste consultation outcomes that I have mentioned before. With 67 days of no-coal powered electricity, HCC has relaxed its ban on wind power. Details TBC

Libraries have been used in different ways- so many residents have used the online service. This service was under threat, with thousands of responses (>15,000) to the consultation- but now a look at the digital offer during Covid 19 lockdown will be a big part of the review.

At **Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee** on the 25th June, we heard that the 'cost of Covid' to May had been around £200m. Although the Council had received approx. £53m, the County Council would be £109.7m off budget as a result of Covid in 2020-21. This would delay the actions already planned to counteract govt funding cuts. The 0333 370 4000 line is still in place and expected to be so for the future. A triage system meant that approximately 50% of the calls had been referred to Adult or Children's services. I know it worked well: I used it often in the last few weeks, developing a good relationship with the **Meals on Wheels team!** Any adult who is unable to cook their own food is entitled to use the Meals on Wheels which provides a hot lunch, and can provide a packed tea too. A number of urgent cases were referred within 24 hours.

For those in care, the situation was extremely worrying, and although I'm angry at the distress this has caused, I hope this will bring the deficiencies of the national situation to light. The NHS has now commissioned **HCC to provide a 'recuperation home' for patients leaving hospital after** an extended stay because of Covid, rather than send them back to their care home or to their own empty home.

Child safeguarding is a key schools' role and no school means that problems for children go undetected. Some very serious cases came to light- and the numbers are rising. I attended an information session on protection of children at risk of FGM- which, like Domestic Abuse, was a challenge to identify during lockdown. More foster carers are urgently needed. Go to hants.gov.uk for more information.

Black Lives matter brought the uncomfortable issue of slavery back to the fore for us all. The Safeguarding teams are concerned about Modern Slavery. There is now a **Modern Slavery helpline 08000 121 700**

Highways and Transport: the post Covid changes have been rapid and far reaching for urban areas.

HCC has put up a website for suggestions- please put yours on the map! I was not able to stop the closure of Hyde Street for cars into Winchester, even as a temporary measure; this has been a long term aspiration of HCC but I know this will create real challenge for residents and businesses in my division. However, **for rural areas and market towns**, the help is not so timely. I know that you have been struggling with **overgrown footpaths** and footways and in light of our new interest in activity outdoors and in health, I will be raising this as a budget issue at HCC at every opportunity. Our own Countryside Access Ranger,

Abby Sullivan has over 1000km to manage 'in her patch'. The delay on the Worthy Down to Winchester path is because of an objection, and is not Covid related.

Meanwhile, case work continues and planning goes on. For those Parishes not already affected, a new system has started for 'cross boundary' applications. If an application crosses into the National park, the City 's section is managed by HCC (due to a 1999 ruling). This means that we will have to keep a sharper eye on three lists now! I will be detailing this separately to clerks, but I have asked for these lists to come to you now, as the others do.

And in the last few days, the lockdown has been relaxed further: cafes pubs and restaurants are opening. HCC's Country Parks have been open for a while without the cafes, but now the play areas, MUGA's and Skateboard parks can be opened too. I know that you will want the parish messages to be consistent with other public play areas: Simon Finch at WCC has more information if you require it.

A 'Pavement Licence' scheme is soon to be introduced for eating establishments to expand onto the public land- details of how to apply will be published once Royal assent has been given, likely to be in the next week. This will streamline several processes for road closure and licensing currently undertaken by the County and the City Councils during the 'Covid period ' to September 2021.

Village Halls can open from the 4th July, though I have yet to see one that is doing so. The cleaning regime is a real barrier to multiple use. I was pleased to see that HCC has granted funds to some in this division. I am always asked to comment on the efficacy of a grant by HCC, so please warn me if your village has made an application!

Local Lockdown is being managed by the Public Health teams locally. Please contact the Director of Public Health, Simon Bryant if you have a specific query. Simon.bryant@hants.gov.uk

Alresford is one of the market towns where traffic management is being put in place to improve distancing, but we'd like it to aid the economy too.

John Harvey is our HCC direct link for Traffic Regulation Orders for Alresford.. For other suggestions, please go to the Hants Covid Travel Map. Can I suggest you look at it for your Parish area to check what people have submitted? And let me know the PC's views. You may want to advertise them widely so that residents can like or disagree with suggestions.

HCC has also placed a temporary traffic ban on Hyde Street. Although not in this division, I know many of you (including me!) use it to get into the city, and it will be interesting to see how the closure changes traffic flow and journey lengths/times. The advantage of all these Covid changes is that they can be used to experiment. I'd be pleased to pass on your thoughts after we have all used them for a while.

Scrutiny meetings have restarted- all are televised on the hants.gov.uk website. Although delivered via nurseries, pre-schools and childminders, **ensuring sufficiency of under 5 child care places is a County Council responsibility.** The extremely poor furlough arrangements has created an extremely difficult financial situation for most settings and many are at risk of closure. The County Council is aware of this pressure and the subject will be one of the agenda items at the next Scrutiny meeting on the 8th July.

Our schools have never closed, staying open over Easter and the current arrangements are to say the least, challenging. Staff have worked continuously since Feb half term, though most took the May half term as an opportunity to deep clean the school premises. We await news of the next phase of opening. Some schools cannot even have back years R,1 and 6 completely.

I apologise for the length of this report- things are changing daily, and I'm happy to take questions, though you are welcome to link up with me separately at any time during the month if you wish.

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