Defence ● Highways ● Schools

A brief summary of Hampshire County Council and related issues

Cllr Chris Dorn, Hampshire County Cllr



Hook Parish Council

I must start by congratulating Hook Parish Council for the Hampshire Association of Local Councils: "Best Recreational Facilities 2026" and "Village of the Year 2026" (runner up, but it sounds like there was nothing in it!). Fantastic work by the whole parish council team and councillors, these things don't happen by themselves, they need dedication and effort.

Focus on Defence

By the time you read this, National Cadet Week will have finished, but I took time to make sure it was properly recognised in our area. Hart raised a special flag to mark the week and I've visited a range of cadet units in the area. It was so impressive to see the range of activities on offer and huge personal and team achievements. And they were all so polite and enthusiastic. A real pleasure to meet them all and they do give me so much hope that they will make great citizens, a change from so much negative press.

Early October saw the first meeting of the pan-Hampshire Civil Military Partnership Board, co-Chaired by myself and Cllr Miller. This was a soft re-start of a body that hasn't been as active as we'd like over past years. It brings together civil organisations (councils, police, NHS etc) with local military to deal with strategic issues to support local serving personnel, their families and veterans. We'll be developing a work plan and looking at how we can best work with the Hampshire and Solent Combined County Authority (mayoral area).

I was also pleased to attend the Army Air Museum at Middle Wallop, to receive the Gold award for the Militar Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme, on behalf of Hart District Council (very much for our hard working officers).

Making the case for fairer highways funding

Hampshire has around 5,500 miles of roads to maintain, one of the largest local highway networks in the country. It the equivalent of London to Edinburgh 17 times! But we do not receive enough stable, long-term funding to keep that network in the condition we all want to see. The estimated maintenance backlog is now between £550 million and £600 million.

The County Council's Cabinet has agreed to strengthen our case to Government for a fairer share of Vehicle Excise Duty to be invested back into local roads, together with greater freedom to target highways funding where it will make the biggest difference.

We are not waiting for Government action. Since April, highways teams have

- Delivered 42 resurfacing schemes, with 101 planned during 2026/27
- Completed 122 preventative surface treatments
- 154 planned patching schemes covering more than 32,000 square metres.

- 17,590 reactive defects, including potholes repaired by teams between April and July.

The long-term answer is to move increasingly from reacting to potholes to planned, preventative maintenance. Hampshire's highway assets are valued at around £17 billion, and looking after them properly is basic asset management as well as being important to residents and businesses.

Hampshire County Council's Finances – Challenging Times

During September, the Government confirmed more than £90 million of in-year Exceptional Financial Support for councils facing serious financial pressures, including £6 million for the Isle of Wight and £5 million for West Berkshire. But not Hampshire.

Hampshire has not had to make a similar request because the County Council acted early. Over the past year, we delivered £95 million in savings, with a further £40 million of efficiencies built into this year's budget. That work enabled us to set a lawful, balanced £3.3 billion budget and manage this year's pressures without seeking exceptional permission to borrow or use capital resources for day-to-day costs.

That does not mean everything is fine. This year's budget relies on £108.5 million from reserves (almost twice the amount used last year) and those reserves can only be spent once. School transport costs, particularly for children with special educational needs and disabilities, have risen from £43 million to £83 million in four years, while demand for adult social care continues to increase.

In 2025/26 Hampshire received £91 per resident in general Government funding, compared with an English average of £205! The new funding formula reduces support by £10.9 million this year and by £42.9 million annually by 2028/29. Hampshire will continue pressing for a fair, long-term settlement that protects essential services without exhausting reserves or placing an ever-greater burden on local taxpayers.

Back-to-School Support

Hampshire's back-to-school resources bring together advice on preparing for the first day, walking, wheeling, cycling and school transport, before- and after-school childcare, SEND support, vaccination, mental wellbeing, attendance and free school meals.

All children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are entitled to a free school lunch. Families receiving certain benefits may also qualify for income-based free school meals beyond those years. A successful application can unlock extra support for a child and additional funding for their school.

Family information and support: https://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/family-information-and-services-hub-fish/best-start-in-life/toddler-to-pre-school/getting-ready-for-school/

No tricks, just three choices: apply for a secondary school place by Halloween

Parents and carers in Hampshire are being reminded not to let the secondary school application deadline give them a fright this Halloween

https://www.hants.gov.uk/News/20260904secadmissions

Hampshire Cllr Grants

Hampshire County Cllrs receive a modest £5,000 grant to be distributed through the year there's a little bit left. The details are here:-

https://www.hants.gov.uk/community/grants/grants-list/county-councillor

Contact

I'm always happy to talk to people, but the best way to contact me is to email: chris.dorn@nehc.org.uk and follow my Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Cllr.Dorn

Cllr Chris Dorn

Hampshire County Council for Odiham & Hook Division and District Cllr for Odiham Ward and Western Parishes on behalf of the Conservative Party

Just to caveat: Cllrs can't provide definitive planning or legal advice, but I'm usually able to share my personal thoughts on matters while asserting my open mindedness to any related future planning applications or formal council decisions.

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