

Hampshire County Councillor Update 51

Dear All

Here's my monthly report for September/October. Local Government Reorganisation submissions are finally settled, and devolution discussions are progressing well, so now the focus turns back to more usual and much more productive matters.

Here's the latest update.

Highways Information

Bus Services

I'm grateful as usual to the [Hampshire Chronicle](#) for printing my column this month. Given the amount of publicity about bus services being cut - some as a result of subsidies ending from the county council, others as a result of commercial decisions by operators - I've tried to explain how the subsidy system works.

Here it is:

As Leader of Hampshire County Council, I'm committed to applying a "good housekeeping" principle across our budget. Faced with rising social care costs that have pushed us toward a deficit, every pound must deliver clear value—whether that's repairing roads, supporting older residents, or subsidising public transport.

There has been much concern recently and the removal of subsidies for some bus routes, and consequently the loss of service.

Bus service subsidies are finite, targeted interventions to bridge the gap between launch and long-term viability. When the council commits funds, it's with a clear agreement: subsidies last only for a defined period. After that, operators must sustain routes commercially. If passenger numbers don't grow, we redirect funding to services that benefit more people.

This approach is already reducing our shortfall. Routes transitioning to commercial operation free up resources for social care, highway maintenance, and support for special educational needs.

Take Service X7R in Romsey: under our Bus Service Improvement Plan, the 2025/26 subsidy was just £0.53 per passenger journey. Rapid ridership growth meant the operator continued without further council funding—precisely the outcome we seek.

By contrast, Service 46 between Winchester and North Baddesley carried 3,544 passengers in 2024/25 but required a subsidy of £9.20 per passenger per journey. With patronage too low, we ceased funding on 1 September and enabled community transport providers to fill genuine demand.

Similarly, Service 49 from Damerham to Salisbury ran at £5.63 per passenger, and Service 20 between Wickham, Knowle, Funtley, and Fareham carried 49,077 trips at £2.19 per ride. Each remains under our "use it or lose it" policy—future support hinges on growth and local partnership.

Where routes miss commercial thresholds, we champion community-led alternatives. Test Valley Connect, Eastleigh Connect, Fareham Connect, and New Forest Connect deliver demand-responsive transport that aligns subsidy with actual use.

Service 74 between Overton and Basingstoke exemplifies successful collaboration. Jointly procured with Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council and local parishes, it carried 3,536 passengers in 2024/25 at £3.92 per journey. External partners now sustain it entirely, preserving this vital link without tapping the county budget.

Service 44 (Eastleigh to Chandlers Ford) enjoys a temporary reprieve funded by partners, giving communities breathing space to explore long-term solutions.

We're also pursuing a community-led model for Service 61 (Eastleigh – Winchester), which has been costing the taxpayer an extra £1.57 per passenger per journey. This route possibly best typifies the challenge. At what point does a route's social benefit outweigh the burden on the majority who don't use it? Could its £136,000 annual subsidy be better spent on pothole repairs, drainage clearance, or social care?

Our "use it or lose it" principle is straightforward: public subsidies exist to kick-start services, grow ridership, and foster commercial self-sufficiency. If growth doesn't materialise within the agreed timeframe, funding stops.

We also recognise the importance of mobility for all residents, which is why we continue to invest in targeted demand-responsive schemes and community transport alternatives. Savings from discontinued subsidies let us improve road surfaces, expand family hubs, and bolster adult social care—benefiting thousands instead of dozens.

This strategy depends on collaboration. Parish councils, boroughs, local businesses, and community groups have stepped up to co-fund and manage services. Their involvement reduces costs and ensures routes reflect genuine demand.

Tough decisions are never easy, but they're guided by our duty to use public funds wisely. As local government faces ongoing financial pressure, our commitment to transparency and innovation remains unwavering.

We encourage residents to use the bus services and community schemes available. Ridership growth today secures services tomorrow. In Hampshire, smart investment and community partnership are the keys to a connected, sustainable future. When it comes to bus services, it truly is "use it or lose it."

Reporting Highway Problems

Links to report road issues are here:

Potholes: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/potholes>

Tree/hedge problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/treehedge>

Flooding/drainage issues: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/flooding>

Pavement problems: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/paving>

Broken or missing signs: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/brokensigns>

Faulty street lights: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/streetlight>

Faded or missing road markings: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem/road-markings>

Problems with rights of way:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/rightsofway/reportaproblem>

When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number for the report. If you would like me to follow this up for you then do please forward that message to me and I will chase for you.

Update on Sewerage Charges & Aster Contact

As you will know, for some years now I have been working on behalf of residents who own homes attached to sewerage treatment plants managed by Aster. I've recently update residents and as usual am sharing it here. Some important progress to share — and thankfully, we start with good news.



Replacement Sewerage Treatment Plants – Cost Agreement Reached

After pressing Aster on the lack of provision for replacing ageing sewerage treatment plants, I'm pleased to confirm they've now agreed to cover the full cost of any replacements. These costs will be spread fairly over the lifespan of each new plant — meaning no large upfront bills for residents. This is a much more affordable and equitable approach, and I'll be urging Aster to apply this principle to all future capital costs.



Sewerage Account Arrears – Ongoing Concerns

Many residents have raised concerns about aggressive arrears collection. My advice remains: agree only to what you can afford, and don't accept the full amount claimed without scrutiny. We continue to challenge the figures — especially those linked to the former maintenance contract and its management — and I'll be raising these issues again in our next meeting with Aster in October.



Condition & History Reports – Help Needed

I've reviewed all recent site reports and compared them with those carried out in 2014 assessments, identifying discrepancies and cost concerns. However, I'm still missing a few reports. If you live in one of the following areas and have access to the relevant documents, please do get in touch:

Aylwards Way, Nether Wallop – 2014 report

Green Pond Lane, Ampfield – 2025 report

Pound View, Smannel – 2025 report

Stevens Drove, Houghton – 2025 report

Verlynch Cottages, Longstock – 2014 report



Meetings with Aster – Next Steps

Our MP [Caroline Nokes](#) met with Aster's directors in July alongside other MPs, raising serious concerns about transparency and charges.

She and I will meet Aster again next month to go through each site report, challenge the maintenance charges, and push for clearer, fairer billing.

I'll keep you updated as soon as that meeting takes place. In the meantime, if you have questions or need help with your individual case, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Together, we'll keep pushing for fairness and accountability.

Local Government Pensions – the bigger picture

In recent years, the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) has been a real success story. The most important measure — whether funds can meet their future pension promises — has improved dramatically:

2013: average funding level 79%

2022: 106% (and set to rise again this year)

That means many funds can reduce employer contributions, saving councils — and taxpayers — millions. The situation in Hampshire is even better than that, thanks to the great stewardship of my colleagues Cllr Mark Kemp-Gee and Cllr Tom Thacker. The Hampshire LGPS looks after the pensions of the many thousands of people who work in the local government sector across Hampshire.

(Personal declaration here - councillors don't get pensions, so I don't get one, I only have my own private pension, I have no employee pension having always worked for myself or run my own business.)

But the system is under threat from both Labour, who want to insist that pension schemes merge together and invest in mayoral infrastructure improvements. The question is how do these then pay a return to the schemes to ensure the pension scheme can continue to meet its commitments?

And also from Reform UK who at a press conference last week raised concerns about investment fees and performance. Scrutiny is welcome, but these issues aren't new — fees have been under the microscope for years, with reforms already delivering £870m in savings through pooling and greater transparency.

Calls to radically simplify investments may cut costs further, but could also increase risk and reduce returns — potentially costing councils more in the long run.

The LGPS is complex for a reason: diversification protects against market shocks and supports long-term stability. As reforms continue, transparency and accountability must remain front and centre — but we should be wary of quick fixes that ignore the bigger picture.

£850 MILLION risk to taxpayers – why Hampshire must be cautious on reorganisation

The BBC's report last week revealed the Government has done no new analysis of the costs of local government reorganisation — relying instead on a 2020 PwC study.

PwC's updated figures show:

- The wrong model could cost £850m over 5 years and deliver no long-term savings.
- Smaller unitary councils (populations ~300,000) risk piling up unsustainable costs.

As I've said before — in Hampshire County Council statements and to the press — these changes aren't just about lines on a map. They affect complex, life-changing services like adult social care, which Hampshire already delivers to 1.4 million people every day. Fragmenting them risks higher costs, reduced resilience, and disruption for residents.

Yes, reform at the right scale can work. But rushed, poorly-designed reorganisation could leave Hampshire taxpayers paying more for less — and frontline services under greater strain.

We must demand evidence-based decisions, rigorous scrutiny, and a clear plan that protects both services and value for money.

You can read the BBC report here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj9wxnlrxdo>

Plan Submitted

Hampshire County Council's Cabinet have now approved our submission to Government for Local Government Reorganisation across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

We have put forward what we believe is the strongest option—one that gives the new authorities the best chance of financial resilience, safeguards and enhances the services people rely on, and offers residents confidence that, wherever they live—countryside or city, village or town—they will be able to understand, engage with, and influence their council.

At the heart of our proposal are the people we support. To you, I give this assurance: while we remain in place, your care and wellbeing will continue to be our priority.

To our staff, whose dedication and professionalism underpin everything we do: we see your hard work, we value the service you provide, and we will stand with you through the uncertainty and disruption ahead.

To the people of Hampshire, we commit to managing this process with competence and professionalism—never forgetting that it is your money we spend, and you whom we serve.

And to my fellow leaders: our task is complete. This should no longer be a source of division. Now is the time to move forward together—with competence, professionalism, and kindness. Because this is not about us. It is about the staff for whom we are responsible, the residents we represent, and above all those who depend most on the services we provide.

Recommended option

- **North: 655,528 (32.2%)**
Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Hart, Rushmoor, Winchester
- **South-West: 706,519 (34.7%)**
Eastleigh, New Forest, Southampton, Test Valley
- **South-East: 532,519 (26.2%)**
Fareham, Gosport, Havant, Portsmouth
- **Isle of Wight: 140,906 (6.9%)**



Flags

Flags around our area have sparked a range of reactions—some proud, some concerned. I've heard from many of you about the Union Flags and Flags of St George flying locally.

I understand these symbols mean different things to different people. In times of celebration, they often go unnoticed. But today, they're drawing attention—and questions.

So here's my approach as far as HCC is concerned:



If a flag is dangerous or obstructive—covering road signs or blocking junction views—we'll remove it.



If it's safe and not causing issues, it stays.

This isn't about politics—it's about practicality. Our highways teams are focused on potholes, drainage, and vegetation. That's where their time is best spent rather than removing flags.

If you've put up a flag, please keep an eye on it. Autumn weather can be rough, and no one wants tatty flags flapping from lampposts. A garden flagpole might be a better option—and yes, there are sensible rules around that.

Thinking of installing one?



No planning permission needed if it's under ~4.5m and flying a recognised flag.



You'll need permission for taller poles or promotional flags.



When in doubt, check with the planning team.

Let's keep our community safe, respectful, and tidy.

Hampshire Cultural Conference

I had the pleasure of opening the Hampshire Cultural Conference — with 250 brilliant minds from across our county's creative, cultural and heritage sectors.

Yes, I'm usually the “boring local politician” in technical meetings... but today felt different. Surrounded by artists, makers, storytellers and innovators — my tribe — I shared a few tales from my past (including some very cheeky pantomime titles from my drag cabaret days... don't ask about Jack and his... well, you had to be there!).

But behind the glitter and laughter was a serious message: culture and creativity are not just nice-to-haves — they're vital to Hampshire's identity, wellbeing and economy.



£5.25 billion GVA from creative industries



60,000 jobs supported by our visitor economy



£8 billion in annual wellbeing value from cultural engagement across the UK

These aren't just stats — they're a call to action.

With devolution on the horizon and a new Mayoral Combined Authority coming in 2026, we have a real opportunity to shape a system that works for Hampshire's creative future. Skills, careers, regeneration, growth — culture belongs in all of it.

Thank you to everyone who made the conference happen, especially [Hampshire Cultural Trust](#) & Culture Connects for championing a collaborative, inclusive approach. This is your moment to lead, and I'm proud to stand alongside you.

Let's shape Hampshire's future together — with creativity at its heart.

Help Shape Hampshire's Climate and Weather Resilience Inquiry

Hampshire's coast is one of our greatest treasures—and one of our most vulnerable assets. With rising sea levels, more intense storms and an ever-changing shoreline, coastal erosion and landslips threaten our homes, heritage and local economy.

Parliament's Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee has launched a call for evidence on Climate and Weather Resilience, and they want to hear from people who live, work and care for our coastline.

What they'd love you to tell them by 10 October:

- The scale and nature of risks from coastal erosion and landslips in your community
- Existing strategies or gaps in research and policy (including the FCERM Strategy)
- Social, economic and psychological impacts on affected families and businesses
- How well current support (financial compensation, relocation help, wellbeing services) meets local needs
- Whether emergency services and local authorities have the resources and training to respond, especially in remote or rural coastal spots
- The threats to landscapes, heritage sites and public access—and how to safeguard them

Hampshire County Council is already stepping up to the challenge.

Our highways teams are:

- Installing sustainable drainage systems to reduce flood risk on key routes
- Reinforcing vulnerable road corridors against extreme weather events
- Integrating climate resilience into every new road and bridge project

Meanwhile, our countryside projects are:

- Restoring wetlands and natural floodplains to absorb storm surges
- Strengthening shingle ridges and saltmarshes that buffer wave energy
- Replanting native vegetation to stabilise cliffs and slopes

Your lived experience and local expertise can help shape stronger, fairer policies—and make sure Hampshire leads the way in climate resilience. Submit your written evidence to the EFRA Committee by 10 October:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3748/>

Please share this post with neighbours, community groups and organisations that have a stake in protecting Hampshire's coastline. Let's make our voices heard!

New Schools Open

Thanks to Hampshire County Council, three brand-new primary schools are set to welcome pupils this month — the biggest expansion of school places we've seen in years.

Here's what's coming online in September:

Hounsme Fields Primary in Basingstoke

Stanhope Primary in Aldershot

Newlands Primary west of Waterlooville

These openings kick off the first phase of a three-year, £502 million investment in school buildings, delivering 10 new schools and 3,175 extra places by 2028. Of that, £390 million is ring-fenced for brand-new schools and expansions, adding over 19,000 pupil places since 2014.

What's more, each new primary will include an eight-place SEND unit from 2026, and the programme also funds three special schools, further expansions, and enhancements for children with special educational needs.

These schools aren't just bricks and mortar — they're designed for energy efficiency and modern learning, with Hounsme Fields even meeting Passivhaus standards to keep classrooms comfy all year round.

Despite our financial pressures, Hampshire County Council remains committed to sourcing external funding wherever possible, ensuring our communities get top-quality education close to home. We may not be able to do everything we would like, but that which we can do will be done to the absolute highest standard.

Let's give a warm welcome to the youngest members of our communities and celebrate this huge investment in our children's future!

Adult Social Care Funding in Hampshire

Hampshire County Council is under huge financial pressure, and one of the reasons is that the NHS, through the local Integrated Care Board (ICB), is not contributing enough funding to cover the rising costs of adult social care.

What this means is that the Council is being forced to pick up the bill for services that are really the NHS's responsibility — like hospital discharge support, reablement after illness, and specialist mental health placements for younger adults. These are not statutory duties for the Council, but without them, hospitals would struggle even more.

The result? Millions of pounds are being diverted from other vital services, leaving the Council's budget stretched to breaking point. Unless the NHS fully funds the health-related care it is responsible for, Hampshire residents will face cuts elsewhere.



Put simply: the Council is paying for NHS services out of local budgets, and that's not sustainable.

At our Cabinet meeting this week I warned that this situation cannot sustain. We are out of step with other Councils in southern England, who receive much greater support to deliver these services.

Have Your Say on Expansion of the Port of Southampton to the Waterside

Associated British Ports (ABP) has launched public consultation on its Solent Gateway 2 proposals – plans to expand port facilities reclaimed land between Marchwood and Hythe.



The proposals include:

- A new sustainable automotive terminal to meet growing demand
- A direct access road from the A326, reducing port traffic through Marchwood
- Creation of a major new country park and green corridors linking local communities
- Environmental enhancements to protect and enrich local habitats



The consultation runs until 13 October 2025, with a series of in-person events and online sessions giving residents the chance to share their views.

ABP says the expansion would strengthen Southampton's role as a world-class port while delivering community and environmental benefits.



Find out more and have your say at: solentgateway2.co.uk

Planning Appeal Dismissed – Spencer's Farm

Some good news this week in respect of planning locally.

A Planning Inspector has rejected plans for 14 homes at Spencer's Farm, King's Somborne.

Key reasons:



Suburban layout didn't fit the village edge or rural setting



Wrong housing mix – too many large homes, not enough 2–3 beds



Affordable housing offer failed to meet local needs (no rented/shared ownership)



Risk to important trees from building too close to roots

Despite the council's housing shortfall, the harms were judged to outweigh the benefits.

This offers some hope that similar applications locally might be judged in the same way. I'm going through the detail carefully to see what precedents are set and how this might help with a number of other larger speculative applications that have been lodged.

Getting About

Back to Parish Council meetings in September, I attended meetings at Awbridge, Lockerley, East Dean, West Tytherley, Chilworth, Wellow, Sherfield English and spoke at public meetings in Farnborough and Havant.

Contact

Do please get in touch if I can ever be of any help. For those of you using social media, I post very regular updates on many local issues including roadworks and planning applications on my Facebook page here: facebook.com/nickadamsking

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CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING
Caring for Romsey Rural



General Updates from HCC:

Ready for lift off! Hampshire's three new primary schools countdown to launch

The buildings are complete, classrooms are equipped, and the grounds are landscaped – Hampshire's three brand-new primary schools are all set to welcome pupils this month, marking the county's largest expansion of school places in recent memory

[Ready for lift off! Hampshire's three new primary schools count down to launch | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire County Council statement on the death of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent

Hampshire County Council is deeply saddened by the news of the death of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent

[Hampshire County Council statement on the death of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Kent | Hampshire County Council](#)

Don't get spooked by the deadline – apply for your child's secondary school place by 31 October

Parents with children due to start secondary school next year can now apply for their child's school place

[Don't get spooked by the deadline – apply for your child's secondary school place by 31 October | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire County Council prepares to finalise plans for simpler, stronger and more secure local councils

Hampshire County Council is entering the final stage of shaping its proposal to central Government on how councils across Hampshire and the Solent could be reorganised to better serve local communities

[Hampshire County Council prepares to finalise plans for simpler, stronger and more secure local councils | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire County Council to consider car parking proposals at Danebury Hill Fort

Proposals to introduce car parking charges at Danebury Hill Fort are set to be considered by Hampshire County Council later this month

[Hampshire County Council to consider car parking proposals at Danebury Hill Fort | Hampshire County Council](#)

Your Voice, Your Services, Your Future: Hampshire sets out its plan for Local Government reform

Hampshire County Council has today published its final proposal for the future shape of local government across Hampshire and the Solent area

[Your Voice, Your Services, Your Future: Hampshire sets out its plan for Local Government reform | Hampshire County Council](#)

Opening the way for greener travel in the New Forest and Winchester

Hampshire County Council has unveiled new plans to make walking and cycling easier and more accessible in future in both the New Forest and Winchester, representing a major milestone in promoting sustainable travel and healthier communities

[Opening the way for greener travel in the New Forest and Winchester | Hampshire County Council](#)

New Cabinet Member announced for Health and Wellbeing at Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council has announced that the elected Member for Basingstoke South West, Councillor Stephen Reid, has taken up the role of Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

[New Cabinet Member announced for Health and Wellbeing at Hampshire County Council | Hampshire County Council](#)

Help to support residents facing barriers to employment

Hampshire County Council has unveiled plans to help more residents across the county into meaningful, sustainable work, especially those who have faced barriers such as long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, or lack of qualifications

[Help to support residents facing barriers to employment | Hampshire County Council](#)

£100,000 funding boost to help more people make a splash

Swimming is set to become more accessible across Hampshire, thanks to a £100,000 funding boost approved today by Hampshire County Council

[£100,000 funding boost to help more people make a splash | Hampshire County Council](#)

Shaping a stronger future - transforming local government across Hampshire and the Solent

Hampshire County Council has today submitted an ambitious and carefully-considered proposal to central Government, setting out a new model for local government across Hampshire and the Solent area that delivers better local services and stronger communities

[Shaping a stronger future - transforming local government across Hampshire and the Solent | Hampshire County Council](#)