County Councillor Report for March 2026

The County finally settled on a 2026-2027 budget which will result in a Council Tax rise of 4.99% (equivalent to £1690.11 for a band D property.)
This was on the understanding that using approx. £110m from the reserves in the 26-27 year would put the County Council in a balanced budget. However HCC is at risk of not having enough money to serve Hampshire's needs in the 27-28 year, and they would have to seek a 'section 114' which declares that income is not equal to outgoings for that budget.(This money is collected by WCC as part of your monthly DD. WCC then pass it onto parishes, HCC and other charging authorities.)

Locally, there are implications for this
Worthys school bus to their catchment school is proposed to be cut. The short notice of the Easter cessation of service was a bitter blow to parents but all parties including the Head Teacher (and me) has a strong argument against the cut on safety and access grounds. The route from school to Nations Hill is 2 miles, and to the King Charles 3miles. But the main areas of danger both physical and safeguarding exist in the sections in Headbourne Worthy : I am grateful for the support we have received from both KW and HW Parish Councils. If the plea is unsuccessful, we would like to set up a walking bus and a Bike bus. I hope those Parishes would consider a small grant for this favourably.

The delayed TRO process ground to a halt as the limited team concentrated on the Andover Road /Winchester Avenue issues. I have chased this up and the team tell me that they are now reviewing the Alresford TRO responses. I have asked for the update on the Micheldever & East Stratton TRO too

The Alresford path to the Long Barn has had patching but not a full re-dress.

Details of the S106 funded path improvements from West Street to the Sun Lane development have not been published yet.

HCC Land is being sold if there is no current HCC use for it: Capital raised from these sales can be used to make efficiencies (eg: redundancy programmes and IT upgrades etc) I have been assured that small local Country Parks are not at risk, but I have asked to be kept informed so I can intervene if necessary.

Pothole Problems
I was asked to join a Highways (Potholes) Operations working party as one of the members making the most complaints! They told us that one barrier to their efficiency is multiple reports of the same pothole.
For me, one key is to make the tracking tool easier to find and more effective so the public can see something is being done. Otherwise, I tend to report again, as do the public. This was accepted as one of the recommendations- and we await improvements. Although they say this doesn't affect the speed of assessment, I have yet to find a more effective way of getting the assessment team out to look at the affected area.
The second point is to make the complaint system 'more human' again. The current system is far too geared to online reporting.

The total sum for highway maintenance was reduced by HCC last year when the Government offered additional money: this may now have been a wrong decision, because the Conservative Leader, Nick Adams-King has said publicly that the £60million spent by HCC on roads is not enough. He is quoted saying that even if they had £600 million, they would not be able to satisfy demand for road mending measures. And of course, this includes drainage, footways repairs and maintenance, lining .
Lining on roads is poor- please report lack of lines- letting them decline is dangerous.

Devolution and Local Government Reform.
We expect to hear the detail of Unitaries by mid March. The debt incurred at HCC will be incorporated into the Unitary finances. I expect both the city and the county will provide Parish updates on teams.

Other matters
I have been involved with SW at Sutton Scotney as the pipe burst again at the weekend (28 Feb /1 March) . I have kept the Parish up to date on this, and complained bitterly to Southern Water. They have promised a full review and answer. I just want a new pipe.

A fellow councillor asked if there was any intention for HCC to review its use of X (formerly twitter) or indeed to stop using it. Disappointingly, the Leader said no: it was a useful tool.

M3 Junction 9: progress. I receive regular updates. Alongside Cllr Wolfe, we continue to argue for better transport management of Chapel Lane, Down Farm Lane and increasingly the A33/A33. Neither HCC nor the NH will take responsibility for this.
Work is progressing well: after inserting the new bridge sections (longer to span over more lanes) they are currently digging out the A34 underpass. I have asked for the full details of the sections which will have quieter surfacing.

I have visited one of the smaller schools in my division: Itchen Abbas. There is an LA governor in every maintained school. If you'd like to be a Governor-please let me know!

I am often asked about alarm systems for older people. These can be a watch, bracelet, pocket or lanyard type device, and are often purchased by children but worn by the vulnerable person! I After a troublesome piece of casework, I enquired and have been offered an opportunity for Argentii, the County partner, to come to talk to residents about this. I will also ask HiLS to join (the Meals on Wheels service supplier)the event too. Would this be relevant for your residents too?

At the BSIP capital funding decision day, I asked for the following and have the recording if you'd like to listen/read the transcript.

- A better deal for the number 6 bus : seeking consistency and reliability with more morning services, better afternoon timeliness and secured a meeting on this. I particularly referred to the school bus opportunities and unreliability making this not a feasible option. Officer Andrew Wilson agreed to look at this with me and Stagecoach.
- A complete review of the accessibility of bus stops on the popular routes (eg at Lovedon Lane) and this request was accepted favourably.
- Why there was a Non-School Day timetable on the 67 as this decreased readability of the timetable. I was told it is because of the funding. (more details available if you'd like to hear more) I queried the definition of 'socially necessary' for this service.
- The routing of the services of the 95. It looks like there are four routes but there are in reality only two. This is a tactical process, and allows Stagecoach to claim funds for the 'empty journey from the DfT. This sum adds to the mix of funding for this vital service.

I am hoping that the 75 will increase in frequency as part of the BSIP funding too.
I urge Parishes to attend the Parish Transport Forums held twice a year too.

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