

Residents' views sought on proposals for future services in Hampshire

Embargoed until 12:05pm Monday 8 January 2024

08 January 2024

Hampshire County Council has launched a public consultation today (8 January 2024) inviting people to provide their views on the future of some local services, as part of steps by the Authority to help meet a £132 million budget shortfall by April 2025.

The **Future Services Consultation runs from 8 January to 31 March 2024**, and signals the next stage in County Council plans to ensure it continues to support the people who are most in need in Hampshire, while meeting its legal obligations to deliver a balanced budget in 2025/26.

Leader of Hampshire County Council, Councillor Rob Humby said: "As our costs continue to rise, alongside growing demand for vital local services like social care for children and adults, our budgets remain under immense pressure. We have almost exhausted the funding we have previously set aside in reserves to meet major financial challenges - that usually provides us with a financial safety net - and very soon there simply will not be enough money to go around. Delivering local services in future is much harder with much less money available, which is a problem faced by councils nationally, and one which local government cannot address on its own. In line with what residents told us last summer in our budget consultation at the time, we are continuing to press for a better, long-term national funding solution from central Government to address these issues, but we cannot sit back and wait for that to happen.

"Hampshire is in a better position than many other councils, but we know that we need to make some tough decisions and deeper savings in order to find the £132 million we need by April 2025 to ensure we can continue to deliver critical services and help protect and support the most vulnerable children, older people and adults with complex care needs across Hampshire. In this context, all areas of the County Council have been asked to consider what savings could be achieved from only providing those services that we are legally required to deliver, prioritising statutory areas such as protecting children from harm, social care for older people, and supporting adults and children with disabilities and additional needs.

"Residents and stakeholders are now invited to consider 13 detailed options set out in the Future Services Consultation, to help lower costs in future, and what it might mean for them if we were to do things differently after April 2025. This also provides the opportunity for working more innovatively to maximise, for example, environmental benefits such as encouraging people to reduce their waste through the creation of a more sustainable Household Waste Recycling Centre network and lowering Hampshire's carbon footprint by a more intelligent use of streetlights."

The list of the areas being consulted on covers:

Adult social care charges: Proposals to change the way contributions towards non-residential social care costs are calculated, so that the amount someone pays towards their non-residential care and support increases from 95% to 100% of any assessable income

remaining once standard outgoings are paid for and an allowance is made for general living costs such as food, utility bills and clothing.

Adult social care grant schemes: To withdraw funding for three Adult Social Care grant programmes that assist voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations in Hampshire, namely the Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant, the Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant and the Local Solutions Grant.

Competitive (one-off) grant schemes: To withdraw three competitive grant schemes which provide one-off grants to a range of community groups and organisations; namely the Leader's Community Grants, the Rural Communities Fund (including country shows) and the Parish and Town Council Investment Fund.

Hampshire Cultural Trust grant: To reduce the amount of grant given to Hampshire Cultural Trust to manage and deliver arts and museums services.

Highways maintenance: To reduce planned highways maintenance activities, incorporating larger-scale structural repairs, surface treatments on roads, and drainage improvements.

Highways winter service: To comprehensively review and revise the criteria used to determine which roads should be treated as part of the Priority One network to better align with current national guidance and reflect changes in travelling and commuting patterns, and to update the routes accordingly.

Homelessness Support Services: To stop funding services that the County Council does not have a legal requirement to provide, that support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs): To provide a sustainable, cost-effective and fit for purpose Household Waste Recycling service within a reduced budget. This might involve introducing charging for discretionary services, implementing alternative delivery models, reducing opening days and/or hours or reducing the number of HWRCs.

Library stock: To reduce how much is spent on new library stock, such as books and digital resources, each year.

Passenger transport: To reduce the amount of money spent on passenger transport by withdrawing all remaining funding that the County Council is not legally required to provide. This includes funding for community transport services (incorporating Dial-a-Ride, Call and Go, Taxi Shares, Group Hire Services, and Wheels to Work), subsidies for bus routes that are not commercially viable, additional funding to extend the Concessionary Travel Scheme (older and disabled persons bus passes) and a review of the potential impact of reductions on the school transport service and social care budgets.

Rural countryside parking: To introduce car parking charges at rural countryside car parks (such as nature reserves and conservation sites) that the County Council manages, where it is expected that doing so would be commercially viable.

School Crossing Patrols: To review the School Crossing Patrols (SCP) service by looking at each SCP site to decide if alternative safety measures exist or could be put in place that would enable the SCP to be safely withdrawn or be funded by other organisations.

Street lighting: To reduce the brightness of streetlights further and to extend the periods that streetlights are switched off during the night (by 2 hours) – where it is considered safe and appropriate to do so.

How to have your say

The consultation runs from midday on 8 January to 11:59pm on 31 March 2024. There are 13 service change proposals in total and views can be provided on some or all of them, as preferred.

Feedback can be provided by using the consultation Response Form, available via the consultation webpage: www.hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation

Responses can also be emailed directly to Hampshire County Council via: insight@hants.gov.uk or write to Freepost HAMPSHIRE. (Please also write PandO, IEU, FM09 on the back of the envelope).

Copies of the information packs and the consultation Response Form, along with Easy Read versions of these documents, are available to view, download and print on the consultation webpage: www.hants.gov.uk/future-services-consultation

Additionally, each Hampshire library holds a standard reference copy of the Information Packs and a number of paper Response Forms.

Where possible, residents are encouraged to consider completing the consultation Response Form online as this will help save money, both in postage and in staff time in manually entering responses to the consultation.

For any queries about the consultation or if a paper copy of the Information Pack or the Response Form does need to be requested, or a copy in another language or format (such as audio, large print, or Braille) please contact: insight@hants.gov.uk, or call: 0300 555 1375.

Final decisions on the proposals will be made by individual Hampshire County Council Cabinet Members later this year.

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