

The County Councillor's full report is appended to the minutes and can be found via the website www.sheetparishcouncil.gov.uk

24/24 District Councillors Report – Cllr. Drew spoke on the following items:

- **Grants** – Although Cllr. Drew has used his grant pot for this financial year, other District Councillors still have money left which can be accessed. Please liaise with Cllr. Drew if you have a community project which requires funding.
- **Speed Cameras** – The first tranche of community Autospeedwatch cameras available from EHDC has now been allocated but Cllr. Drew hopes there will be more available in the new financial year.
- **Access Issues in School Lane** – Cllr. Drew suggested that temporary lining in School Lane might be appropriate to assess whether it would resolve the current issues.

24/25 School Lane Access Issues – A letter to residents of School Lane about access issues being experienced by the Refuse Team, and the solution suggested by EHDC of installing double yellow lines, has elicited a good number of responses which have enabled members of the Parish Council to understand the situation better. The Clerk has written to EHDC requesting a meeting to pinpoint specific areas in the lane which are causing problems. Once this is understood, a meeting of School Lane residents will be called to see if the issue can be resolved without having to resort to further double yellow lines as this would be very much against what residents and the Parish Council wish to see.

24/26 Leaf Sweeping – EHDC has confirmed that roads in Sheet are swept every 13 weeks although sometimes this is not possible due to parked cars. A pavement sweep is due in mid-February.

24/27 Roads and Traffic

- (a) **Fatal Accident at the London Road/A272 Junction** – Following the accident at the A272/London Road junction in which an elderly lady had lost her life, accident statistics for the London Road had been requested from Hampshire Highways – these had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting but showed only several minor incidents. Cllr. Martin advised that she has written again to Nick Adams-King (Lead Cabinet Member for Highways at HCC) about the dangerous speed of vehicles on the London Road but not received a response. The Clerk advised that Steep Parish Council are in the process of liaising with residents from the Westmark Hamlet on the A272 Midhurst Road about speed and are keen to engage with Sheet PC about any action proposed (as the road runs between both parishes). In the meantime, speed on the London Road will be monitored via the Speed Indicator Devices.
- (b) **Village Gate** – Cllr. Martin advised that Alistair MacAdam, HCC Highways Engineer, believes there would be merit in progressing a CFI to install a village gate just after the roundabout on the London Road, to help reduce speed of vehicles entering the village. His quote of £3000 for the project to be completed by Hampshire Highways via a HCC Community Funded Initiative was approved.
- (c) **Speedwatch and SIDs** – Cllr. Steven's detailed report about positioning of the SIDs on the London Road and Pulens Lane and the potential purchase of an additional SID for the London Road as well as the purchase of solar batteries for the SIDs had been circulated prior to the meeting. The report also covered feedback from Beech on the positioning of the autospeedwatch cameras. Because of the level of detail and potential expenditure involved, it was agreed that this would be looked at in detail by a Working Group consisting of Cllrs. Chris Wilton and Gail Martin, and the Clerk, to fully understand the proposal. This item will be discussed further at the March PC meeting.
- (d) **School Lane/Farnham Road Junction** – Cllr. Martin advised that she had liaised with Alistair MacAdam about the possibility of installing a mirror at the junction to improve visibility for emerging vehicles, but this is not permitted by HCC. In view of concerns being raised about poor visibility, Cllr. Martin will request a site meeting to investigate concerns.

24/28 Planning – Current applications were discussed:

SDNP/243/ 05008/TCA	Various tree works – Chestnut sapling, Holly Oak Bush, Cypress, Catalpa, Loquat, Mulberry Tree, Acer, Magnolia, Prunus, Bay Tree, Ash Chestnut, Oak and Pear	Sheet House, Village Street, Sheet GU32 2AQ	No Objection
SDNP/24/0 0252/TPO	Red Oak – Reduction of Crown	Dunstaffnage House, Love Lane, GU31 4BP.	No Objection

24/29 HCC Local Nature Strategy Consultation – Cllr. Biddlecombe was asked to respond on behalf of Sheet PC

24/30` SDNPA Call for CIL Projects – As Cllr. Oppenheimer has reported that improvements to the Pulens Lane junction are now not likely to be funded as part of the central; funding for the Pulens Lane improvement scheme, it was agreed to put forward a request that this essential part of the project is considered for CIL funding.

24/31 Finance

- (a) **Interim Internal Audit** – A couple of minor points had been raised which the Clerk will follow up on.
- (b) **Bank Reconciliations** - The December and January bank reconciliations had been checked by Cllr. Plant and were approved and signed.
- (c) **Cheque Payments** - February payments were approved as follows:

Chq No.	Amount	Payee	Service
301618	£60.00	M. Harvey	Allotment deposit refund - plot 9
301619	£954.00	MJS Fencing Ltd	New gate and post - Recreation Ground
301620	£120.00	DNE Services	Installation of new defibrillator at the Scout Hut
301621	£81.00	Inspired-IS	E-mail licence costs + support costs
301623	£100.00	Fair Account	Remote internal audit to end of December
301624	£100.00	A. Bowdell	Allotment deposit refund - plot 67
301625	£192.00	Hart Landscaping	Mulch for tree project - Millennium Field
301627	£168.48	Petersfield Town Council	Bin Contract - October
301628	£37.47	Business Stream	Waste Water - V. Hall
301629	£100.00	No Fuss Catering	Volunteer lunches - tree planting project
301631	£650.00	Sheet Music	Caretaking and cleaning - Village Hall
301632	£898.51	Jenny Hollington	Clerk - February
301633	£379.08	Petersfield Town Council	Bin contract - November and December
301634	£726.00	Michael Smith Ltd	Grass Cutting contract
Total	£4,566.54		

24/32 Mill Lane Sewage Issues –A meeting between Southern Water, affected residents and representatives of Sheet Parish Council has been arranged for 10.00 am on 6th March – it was agreed that Damian Hinds MP should also be invited to attend to add weight to this on-going issue.

24/33 Sheet Assets

The Old Billiard Room – There has been no response from EHDC in respect of the planning application.

Sheet Common –

- **Tree Work** – A quote in the sum of £1080 from Sequoia to cut back 3 Oak trees overhanging a resident's garden was approved. The resident has agreed to contribute 50% towards the cost of the work.
- **BMX Track - Change of Councillor Responsibility** - Cllr. Biddlecombe asked to be relieved of responsibility for the BMX track. New Councillors, Craig Stevens and Liz Hartley will visit the track in the following week or so, to look at it with fresh eyes. Cllr. Forrest will also attend to provide background. This item will be discussed further at the March PC meeting.
- **Legal Advice** – Discussion about legal advice received in respect of passing responsibility/leasing the land to the BMX User Group will be discussed further at the March meeting.

Millennium Field –

- **Tree Planting Project** – Cllr. Biddlecombe was congratulated on his organisation of the successful planting of over 1,200 whips in the Millennium Field. A detailed report will be made available via the PC website.
- **Lighting Request** – In Cllr. Bird's absence the request for lighting in the car park was deferred until the March PC meeting.
- **Byelaw to Prevent Illegal Occupation of the Car Park** – Cllr. Plant will draft the clauses required for the byelaw, for consideration by Sheet PC at the March PC meeting.

Sheet Recreation Ground – The defibrillator has been installed at the Scout Hut and a training session arranged.

Sheet Allotments – The Clerk will chase up quotes for a new pedestrian gate.

Sheet Village Hall – Following the decision to increase hall hire charges by approximately 10% from 1st April, an up-dated list of charges had been circulated prior to the meeting and was approved.

24/34 Date of Next Meeting – The next Parish Council Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 12th March 2024 at 7.00 p.m. at Sheet Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT
TO
ALL PARISH COUNCILS
IN PETERSFIELD HANGERS**

1 FEBRUARY 2024

1. Highways update and weather impacts

Hampshire Highways coped well with a difficult month in January due to the high number of storms. The teams have been on virtually constant duty clearing fallen trees and branches. Ground water is also 5 metres higher than usual at this time of year which has led to a surge of flooding issues. The seasonal challenges are not interfering with routine maintenance thanks to pre-emptive work clearing gullies and storm drains. I am extremely grateful to the Highways teams for their dedication and professionalism in difficult conditions.

Luckily the two-week cold snap in January did not coincide with rainfall. We have not seen the same weather pattern as last year which involved heavy rain followed by overnight freezing, and which led to a surge in road defects. I am hopeful that we are past the worst now this year and that the overnight temperatures will remain above zero as we head into the Spring. Time will tell if I am being overly optimistic!

2. New 20mph policy approved at HCC

At his Decision Day on 15 January, Executive Lead Member for Universal Services Cllr Nick Adams-King approved a new policy on 20mph speed limits. The development of this policy followed a review by the Select Committee. The Decision report, including the new Position Statement, can be read at this link:

<https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s115742/Report.pdf>

A process whereby Parish Councils can nominate their area for consideration will be in place on the hants.gov.uk website by April 2024. This helpfully gives some time for Parish Councils to consider formally whether this is something they want to do.

3. Hampshire Forest Partnership update

The Hampshire Forest Partnership is having a busy planting season. So far, we have planted 24,300 trees and hedges which is more than double what we achieved in our first year. We have an ambition to plant one million trees by 2050 and so we are determined to keep building each year. I would like to highlight two exciting opportunities to work with the Hampshire Forest Partnership:

- **Free Elm Trees available!** We have purchased 700 disease-resistant elms and we are still looking for homes for about 600 of them. Please help us by coming forward with a request for up to 20 Elm trees in your patch! The English countryside was once dominated by elms, but since the 1960s these trees have been ravaged by Dutch elm disease, accidentally introduced to Europe in the early 20th century. The Hampshire Forest Partnership with support from The Tree Council are funding disease resistant hybrid elm trees to help local nature recovery. Selective breeding of elms now means that we can bring these back to Hampshire; trials have shown that these hybrids show resistance to the disease and also support our native wildlife. We are particularly interested to plant the trees within hedges, in community spaces and as specimens in areas that have lost trees from ash dieback.
- **Shoots along the Routes** scheme seeks more projects. This scheme aims to improve landscape connectivity outside woodland areas. We'll be providing free trees to landowners and land managers to create over 630km of new green networks across the county. These networks will follow the routes of several A and B-roads across Hampshire. The scheme will also support eligible tree planting schemes within a 2km wide corridor along the routes to boost nature recovery.

If you are interested in proposing a location for either of the above, please email treeplanting@hants.gov.uk. And by the way, it is the same email address for Community Orchards and Mini Forests! We have funding for both so we can provide trees, stakes, guards and even information panels.

4. Ashford Hangers: closure of contour path

It has regrettably become necessary to close the contour path (also known as the middle path) at the Ashford Hangers National Nature Reserve. I went up there last week with Pete and Hazel from the Countryside Service to see the situation for myself. At this time, the path is incredibly dangerous due to fallen trees and surface damage to the path caused by uprooted trees and erosion.

These two photos illustrate the issues:



The steep slope means that anyone who falls could potentially end up falling quite a long way down. And we all know that the chalk and clay get slippery. I have therefore agreed that HCC has to take the difficult decision to close the path. HCC is the owner of the land and so we have extra responsibility for safety here. We have a duty of care to ensure that people do not access dangerous parts of the site. The closure of the contour path will come into effect from 2 February 2024. I would strongly encourage people not to side-step the closure. It is really not safe.

I would like to explain that the contour path is a “permissive path” – it is not a formal Right of Way and so does not appear on the definitive map. The bridleway along the bottom will remain open, and the permissive path across the top will also remain open.

The cost of removing fallen trees and removing trees which pose a clear threat to the contour path has been estimated at £40,000. The cost of resurfacing the path is unknown. It may be difficult to find a contractor willing to undertake the work, as there is no vehicular access. HCC will explore the costs further and see what funding may be available from partners. The Countryside Service is facing budget cuts and does not have funding available in-house, so external funding will be required.

I realise that the Ashford Hangers is a much-used and much-loved site and that many people will be disappointed by the situation. I give my commitment that I will continue to work with the Countryside Team and with all key stakeholders to try to find a way to

get the path made safe and re-opened, however long it takes. Finally I am pleased to report that this Summer HCC will reconstitute the Ashford Hangers Consultative Committee and we will invite local representatives to attend a meeting in June.

5. Future Services Consultation

As mentioned in my January report, HCC commenced a consultation on 8 January about possible service changes which are needed to bridge our budget gap of £132m. I would like to stress that no decisions have been made yet. The consultation is designed to garner views from the public and elected representatives. The responses will then inform the decision-making process. In my experience, HCC is genuinely good at consultations (unlike some public bodies). All responses will be carefully analysed by the Insights and Engagement Team and the HCC Cabinet will meet to discuss the analysis. Parish Council responses will be grouped, so I would encourage Parish Councils to submit a collective Parish Council response. Councillors can also then submit their individual responses.

The consultation questionnaire at this link must be completed by 31 March 2024:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/consultations/future-services-consultation>

You may have seen that the Government announced on 24 January £500m of extra funding for social care. We believe that Hampshire will receive about £10m of this which is very welcome. It is not enough to fix our budget problems but it certainly makes it a bit easier for HCC to bridge the gap through the use of reserves.

6. Dark Skies Festival gets underway

In February the South Downs Dark Skies Festival gets underway, celebrating our National Park status as an International Dark Skies Reserve. There is an early evening event taking place at QE Country Park on 15 February called Walk the Planets, where the planets will be laid out to scale and stargazing through telescopes will be happening. Please help us to spread the word about this! You can book tickets at this link:
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/countryparks/qecp/visit-us/whatson/SDNPA-dark-skies-2024>

The SDNPA page which lists all the events during the Festival can be found here:
<https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/dark-night-skies/dark-skies-festival/>

Let's hope we get some clear skies so that we can all enjoy looking up at the stars.

RUSSELL OPPENHEIMER
County Councillor for Petersfield Hangers