

Hampshire County Councillor Update 54

Dear All

Happy New Year!

I hope you enjoyed the festive season. Back to work now that we have reached 2026. Here's my update covering November and December and looking forward to the new year:

Here's the latest update.

New Year's Message

As usual I was asked by the Hampshire Chronicle to provide a New Year Message, so here it is:

As we turn the page on 2025 and look ahead to the promise of 2026, I want to begin with a simple thank you. Public service is a team sport, and nothing we achieve in Hampshire happens because of one person, one department, or one council chamber speech. It happens because residents, volunteers, community groups, officers, councillors, and countless unsung heroes quietly get on with the business of making our county a better place to live. If there's a theme that has run through this past year, it's that Hampshire works best when Hampshire works together.

And what a year it has been. We've opened new school places, expanded support for children with special educational needs, and continued the long, patient work of improving the services families rely on. We've pushed forward on infrastructure—sometimes celebrated, sometimes cursed when it involves roadworks—but always with the aim of keeping our county moving. Best illustrated by the fantastic work ongoing at the moment to build the new underpass at Junction 10 of the M27 in Fareham. Standing watching the work earlier this week was a reminder that progress is rarely glamorous, but it is always worth it.

Of course, 2025 wasn't without its challenges. Local government continues to face financial pressures that would make even the most seasoned accountant reach for a strong drink. Yet despite the strain, we've kept our focus on what matters: delivering essential services, protecting the vulnerable, and planning responsibly for the future. Hampshire has a long tradition of resilience, and this year proved once again that we don't shy away from difficult decisions when they are the right ones.

As we step into 2026, I'm hopeful—not because the challenges have vanished, but because our capacity to meet them has never been stronger. We will continue to push for sustainable funding for local government, because residents deserve services that are secure, reliable, and fit for the future. We will keep investing in the infrastructure that underpins daily life. And we will carry on championing the values that make Hampshire a place people are proud to call home.

But perhaps most importantly, we will do all this together. At a time when national and global debates can feel increasingly polarised, and as we enter what I very much hope is an election year for the county council, it is worth restating something I have said many times: *no one enters politics to do harm; we simply disagree about how we should do good.* That belief has guided me throughout my years in public life, and it remains the foundation of how I try to lead—collegiately, respectfully, and

with a sense of humour whenever possible. (If you've ever tried explaining local government reorganisation and devolution on Facebook, you'll know humour is sometimes essential.)

Division is easy. Unity takes work. But Hampshire has never been afraid of hard work. In 2026, let's continue to choose cooperation over conflict, shared purpose over point-scoring, and kindness over cynicism. If we do that, I'm confident the year ahead will bring not just progress, but pride.

Thank you for your support, your patience, your ideas, and your commitment to our county. I wish you and your loved ones a peaceful, healthy, and hopeful New Year.

Highways Information

Proposed Extension of the 30mph Zone on the Straight Mile

Hampshire County Council has published a Traffic Order proposing a small extension to the 30mph limit on the A3090 Winchester Road / Straight Mile. The change would move the start of the 30mph zone 71 metres further north-east from the current gateway point, making the speed limit clearer for drivers approaching Romsey.

This is a technical update to the existing 2016 Speed Limit Order. Although the old order is being revoked and re-issued, nothing else is changing—the only substantive alteration is this short extension of the 30mph zone. All the other roads that were previously restricted will remain 30mph automatically under national legislation, so residents won't see any difference on the ground.

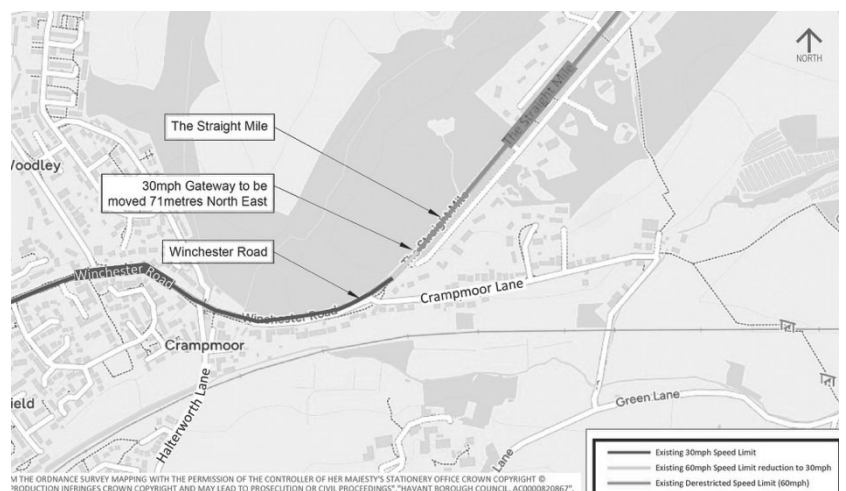
Here's my view on the proposal:

"I'm supportive of this modest adjustment to the 30mph zone. It will make the speed limit far clearer for drivers travelling along the Straight Mile and should encourage motorists to slow down as they approach the Crampmoor Lane junction.

Although the old speed camera boxes have now been removed from this stretch, it would be an ideal location for Romsey Town Council to position one of their Speed Indicator Devices to reinforce safer driving.

I'm aware some residents are worried this might signal future development. That is not the case. The whole package of works—including the improvements to the Halterworth Lane junction completed over the summer—has been funded entirely through developer contributions already secured from existing developments on this side of Romsey. This is about making the road safer for current residents, not preparing for new housing."

If you'd like to read the full notice, view the map, or submit comments, you can do so via



Hampshire County Council's Public Notices page.

M27 Update: Junctions 5–7 – Works Update

National Highways has confirmed that the major resurfacing of the westbound M27 between J5 and J7 is now complete. The project will pause over Christmas (20 December–2 January), but the roadworks and 50mph limit will stay in place for safety.

Work resumes in early January as the scheme moves into Phase 4, the final stretch of the project.

What's happening in January

To prepare for the new layout, National Highways will be removing the large metal barriers and carrying out final surfacing and marking works.

These jobs can only be done overnight under full closures, so expect some disruption between 9pm and 6am.

Overnight slip road & carriageway closures

Here are the dates National Highways has provided:

6 January 2026

- J8 eastbound entry slip

7–9 January 2026

- J4 (M3 link), J5 & J7 westbound exit slips
- J7 & J8 westbound entry slips

10 January 2026

- J8 westbound → J4

11 January 2026

- J9 westbound → J4

12 January 2026

- J5 westbound entry slip

13–26 January 2026

- J4 eastbound → J8

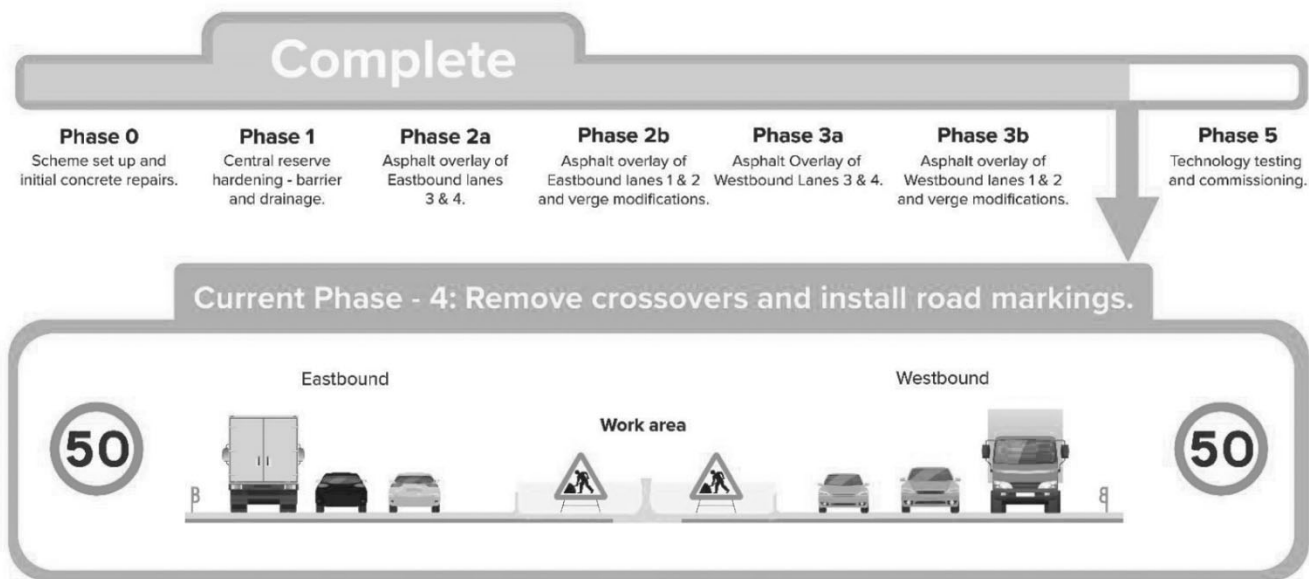
Diversions will be in place throughout. All dates may change depending on weather and operational needs.

Changes to the layout

Before Christmas, traffic will move back to lanes 1 and 2, giving drivers wider lanes again.

In January, the contraflow will be removed, and Phase 4 will focus on taking out the old crossover points and installing permanent road markings.

A 50mph limit and a coned-off lane will remain until the scheme finishes (expected mid-February 2026).



M27 J10 update

Great news to start the New Year.

The M27 between Junctions 9 and 11 reopened a full 24 hours ahead of schedule, at 4am, Saturday 3 January — an extraordinary achievement after one of the most complex engineering operations Hampshire has ever delivered.

Over ten days, around 130 people worked day and night through the Christmas period to install a brand-new underpass at Junction 10 using an innovative “box slide” technique. A 60-metre concrete structure — weighing 8,500 tonnes — was slid 65 metres into place with millimetre precision, avoiding months of lane closures and disruption.

I want to pay particular tribute to:

- Our outstanding Hampshire County Council highways and engineering teams
- The main contractor, VolkerFitzpatrick
- The many skilled local subcontractors who brought their expertise, machinery, and sheer determination to the job

Their professionalism, teamwork, and relentless effort — in all weathers, at all hours — are the reason the motorway can reopen earlier than planned.

This phase of work is a major milestone toward the new, free-flowing, all-moves Junction 10, which will support the Welborne Garden Village development and strengthen Hampshire’s infrastructure for years to come.

Thank you to residents and drivers for your patience during the closure. And an enormous thank you to every member of the team who made this possible. This is Hampshire engineering at its best — public and private partners working together to deliver for our county.

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.

Election Postponements

Two successive reports of election postponements in the last month.

You may have seen reports suggesting that next year's Mayoral elections will be postponed for two years, until 2028.

It is massively disappointing. It's important to note that this does not affect the County Council and other local elections which will still go ahead on May 7th 2026.

I spoke with the Devolution Minister to obtain clarity on these reports. I understand a formal statement will be made later today.

It is important to separate two distinct issues here. While the election of a Mayor may be delayed, the creation of the Combined Authority — and the transfer of powers and funding from Westminster that comes with it — remains vital.

I have been reassured that this process will continue as planned, and that the delay to the Mayoral election will not affect the establishment of the Combined Authority, the commencement of devolution, or our ability to begin exercising those powers for the benefit of Hampshire and the Solent.

Of course, it is disappointing that the Mayoral election has been postponed — not least for those candidates who have already declared. But the real prize here is devolution, and that must be delivered next year. I therefore await confirmation in the coming days of both the statutory instrument to create the Combined Authority and the announcement of the infrastructure funding that will underpin it.

Where the delay to the Mayoral election intersects with the creation of the Combined Authority is in our ability to influence national policy. The Mayor would normally sit on the Council of Nations and Regions. Given the size and importance of Hampshire and the Solent, it is vital that whoever chairs the Authority should take that seat until such time as a Mayor is elected.

Our economy contributes as much to the UK as Wales, and our population is comparable to Northern Ireland. We deserve — and must have — that influence and voice at the national level as soon as possible. While it is deeply regrettable that this role will not initially be exercised by a directly elected Mayor, the council leaders who will form the Combined Authority board are equally capable of representing our area until the election is held.

And then, the Government suggested Councils should consider whether the local elections scheduled for May should proceed, given Labour's plans for Local Government Reorganisation.

I'm sure you are by now as bored of this merry go round as I am.

For clarity, my statement in response to today's announcement is this:

"I have been clear that County elections are vital for local democracy and accountability. They ensure strong local representation for our 1.4 million residents across Hampshire in how we use over £3 billion of public funds to serve our local communities each year.

The Government have set the timeline for Local Government Reorganisation, it is they who need to decide whether their plans can be delivered to that schedule. I have not, and will not, ask for an election postponement. We are working towards our elections taking place, as planned, in Hampshire on 7 May 2026."

Securing the Future of Casbrook Recycling Centre

Many of you will have seen the recent news that Hampshire County Council has submitted a planning application to extend the time permitted for the Casbrook Household Waste Recycling Centre. This is an important step to ensure that the site can continue serving residents in Romsey and the surrounding area for years to come.

I have consistently fought for the retention of Casbrook HWRC, it is a vital facility for our community – helping households recycle responsibly, reduce waste going to landfill, and protect our environment. Without this extension, we risk losing a centre that thousands of residents rely on every year.

I urge you to support this application. By backing the extension, we can secure the future of Casbrook, maintain local access to recycling services, and continue our commitment to sustainable waste management across Hampshire.

You can read more about the application in the Hampshire Chronicle here:

<https://www.hampshirechronicle.co.uk/.../25654150.future.../>

You can also see the application itself and comment on it here:

<https://planning.hants.gov.uk/Planning/Display/HCC/2025/0754>

Let's make sure Casbrook remains open and accessible for our community. Your support matters.

Planning Update – Timsbury & Wellow

I joined Michelmersh & Timsbury Parish Council, who confirmed their ongoing objection to the proposal for new homes on land south of Manor Lane, Timsbury. Although the number of houses has been reduced from 60 to 41, the principle of objection remains unchanged. This comes alongside proposals for 60 homes at the former Choice Plants nursery and other emerging sites along the A3057 Stockbridge Road.

In better news, Test Valley Borough Council has today refused the application for 26 houses at Maurys Mount, Slab Lane, Wellow.

This site has been brought forward and re-applied for several times over the years, but once again Wellow's Neighbourhood Plan has proved its worth in protecting valuable green space from speculative development.

I'm very grateful to the planning department for listening to local concerns and reflecting the strong objections of the parish council in their decision.

Winter Fuel Payment Scam Warning

As Winter Fuel Payments of £100–£300 are being sent out across Hampshire and the UK, criminals are trying to take advantage. Please be on your guard:

- ✓ Payments are automatic – if you're eligible, the money goes straight into your bank account.
- ✓ No need to apply – you'll get a letter in October/November confirming the amount.
- ✓ The Government will never ask for your bank details by text, email or phone.
- ✓ Don't click links or reply to suspicious messages.
- ✓ Report scam texts by forwarding them to 7726 (free of charge).

If you receive a message asking you to “confirm” or “update” your details, it's a scam. Delete it and tell friends and family so they don't get caught out.

Let's keep Hampshire safe this winter — please share this warning widely.

Footpath Update – Nursling & Rownhams / Totton & Eling

Hampshire County Council's Countryside Service has issued a further closure to part of Nursling and Rownhams Footpath 16 and Totton and Eling Footpath 12. This is to allow repair works to take place, as the boardwalk along a section of the route now needs replacing.

I realise how important this route is so have been pursuing some more details.

The project is currently progressing through procurement. Encouragingly, it looks as though Environment Agency permission may not be required, which means once the contract is awarded the works can begin without delay.


From what I can see, we're likely looking at early Spring for the start of repairs – but I'll confirm timings once the paperwork is complete.


Thank you for your patience while this important work is carried out. I'll keep you updated as soon as there's more news.


Chilworth Public Meeting – Update


I joined **Caroline Nokes** at Chilworth Science Park for a public meeting on local crime concerns — from recent burglaries, to criminality in Lordswood, and speeding along the A27.


Donna Jones, (Police & Crime Commissioner), the Test Valley borough commander, and neighbourhood officers from north Southampton were all in attendance along with local TVBC councillors Phil Bundy and Terese Swain.


 Key points from the meeting:

 Burglary warning: Watch out for random paint marks on kerbs outside homes — these can be used by crime gangs to mark properties.

 Report everything: Please report suspicious incidents, including dangerous driving and speeding. Call 101 or use this link: <https://www.hampshire.police.uk/.../soh/seen-or-heard/>

 Speeding: The Parish Council has purchased two new Speed Indicator Devices, due to be deployed on the A27 in the coming weeks.

 Trail bike patrols: I pressed the need for police trail bike teams to be deployed more often in Lordswood — both to deter anti-social behaviour and to prevent the woods being used as a getaway route for criminals moving stolen items and vehicles from Chilworth through to Lordshill.

 Police presence: The police committed to holding regular beat surgeries in Chilworth.

Thank you to all who attended and raised concerns — and to the police for their commitments. Together we'll keep pushing for stronger action and safer communities.

New Community Resilience Grant – Helping Local Communities Prepare for Emergencies


Test Valley Borough Council has launched a Community Resilience Grant to support local groups in planning ahead and strengthening their ability to respond when emergencies strike — from flooding and power cuts to extreme weather and other unexpected events.

 What's available?

Up to £1,000 funding (covering up to 100% of project costs)

Support for practical items like first aid kits, wind-up radios, snow shovels, emergency blankets

Improvements to local rest centres or activities that bring people together to plan for the future



 Who can apply?

Constituted community groups

Parish and town councils

Schools with a wider community role

Resilience-focused organisations

 How to apply: Speak to the council's team before submitting your form with a clear breakdown of costs. For advice and application details, email communityresilience@testvalley.gov.uk or visit  www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityresiliencegrant

This is a great opportunity to make sure our communities are ready and resilient when it matters most.

Securing a Greener, Healthier Hampshire

Last week we launched Hampshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy — a shared blueprint for restoring and protecting the natural environment that makes our county such a special place to live.

Like the rest of the UK, Hampshire has seen a significant decline in biodiversity over the past 50 years. This strategy brings together the expertise of partners across the region and sets out practical steps to reverse that decline and ensure that at least 30% of our land and sea is secured for nature by 2030.


I'm incredibly grateful to all the organisations, landowners, community groups and residents who helped shape this plan. It reflects the views and ambitions of people right across Hampshire.

As part of our Hampshire Pledge, we're committed to looking after and enhancing our rich natural environment — and making sure our countryside remains open and accessible for everyone to enjoy. But this is something we can only achieve together.

- Making nature-friendly choices at home
- Getting involved in local conservation
- Simply spending time outdoors and valuing the landscapes around us

Every action, big or small, helps build a greener Hampshire.

This strategy will guide land-use decisions, support planning, and encourage investment in nature-based solutions to challenges like climate change and flooding. Most importantly, it gives us a clear, shared path to restoring habitats, reversing wildlife decline, and protecting Hampshire's natural heritage for future generations.

If you'd like to read the full strategy, you can find it here: 
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/.../nature.../hampshire-strategy>

Together, we can make Hampshire a place where nature thrives and people thrive with it.

AI Training Opportunities for Local Businesses

Test Valley Borough Council has organised two great opportunities to help business owners and employees get to grips with AI:

Introductory Webinar



Wednesday 4 February, 10–11am

Led by Luke Williams (Intergage)

Covers:

Current state of AI

How large language models (like ChatGPT) work

Basic prompting techniques

Ethical considerations, risks & opportunities

👉 Book here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ai-for-small-businesses-introductory-webinar-tickets-1968183584082?aff=oddtcreator&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery

Romsey AI Workshop



Wednesday 11 February, 9:30am–12:30pm

Romsey

Free half-day workshop for businesses ready to take the next step with AI in operations, marketing, customer service and growth.

Includes real-world examples, developing use-cases, pilots, and measuring impact to ensure AI is a worthwhile investment.

👉 Book here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ai-for-small-businesses-workshop-in-romsey-tickets-1968170181996?aff=oddtcreator&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery

Feedback from the Andover workshop was unanimous: every attendee recommended it and planned to apply the content in their business.

Note: The Romsey workshop assumes a basic knowledge of AI — if you're new to the subject, please also sign up for the Introductory Webinar first.

County Councillor Grants

The County Councillor Grant scheme is operating once more, with a lesser amount of £5,000 and new criteria as follows:

Hampshire County Councillor Grants – Updated Criteria (September 2025)

Following a comprehensive review, Hampshire County Council has revised its County Councillor Grants Scheme to reflect budget constraints and improve effectiveness. Key changes include:

- **Reduced Allocation:** Each County Councillor now has an annual grant budget of **£5,000**, down from £8,000.
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- **Eligibility Restrictions:**
 - Grants are only available to **organisations**, not individuals.
 - Organisations **cannot apply for the same project** in consecutive years.
 - Applications must demonstrate **community benefit**, especially if from religious or statutory bodies.
- **Funding Limits:**
 - A **maximum of £1,000 per project** is now in place.
 - Grants for **seasonal or time-specific events** must be awarded **before the event date**.
- **Transparency and Branding:**

- All funded projects must **acknowledge County Council support** in promotional materials.
- **Application Assessment:**
 - Previous grant awards (from the last two years) will be considered during evaluation.
 - Preference may be given to organisations without access to other funding sources.

These changes aim to ensure the scheme remains fair, transparent, and aligned with the Council's strategic priorities while managing financial pressures.

Grants already made to Sherfield English Netball club and Wellow Lunch Club, there is still funding available though so do please get in touch if I can help.

Getting About

Through the last couple of months of the year I attended a number of Parish meetings; West Tytherley, Michelmersh & Timsbury, Nursling & Rownhams, Chilworth, Wellow, Sherfield English, attended a meeting arranged by Caroline Nokes MP in Chilworth with Test Valley Police and PCC Donna Jones, appeared on BBC Sunday Politics and spoke at an event for the National Council of Voluntary Organisations in Parliament and attended a number of meetings to lobby ministers about devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Westminster.

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

Contact me:
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CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING
Caring for Romsey Rural



General Updates from HCC:

Could you give a child a safe home this winter?

This winter, Hampshire County Council is calling on residents to open their hearts and homes to vulnerable children through its new fostering campaign, which highlights the life-changing impact fostering can have – not only for children in care but for the families who welcome them

[Could you give a child a safe home this winter? | Hampshire County Council](#)

Standing strong for Hampshire's most vulnerable residents

Children and adults at risk of harm in Hampshire continue to be protected and well cared for, thanks to the County Council's strong safeguarding practices

[Standing strong for Hampshire's most vulnerable residents | Hampshire County Council](#)

Securing a greener, healthier Hampshire for everyone – County Council launches new blueprint for nature recovery

A thriving natural environment is at the heart of Hampshire's future, supporting the wellbeing of residents, strengthening communities, and ensuring that wildlife and green spaces can be enjoyed for generations to come

[Securing a greener, healthier Hampshire for everyone – County Council launches new blueprint for nature recovery | Hampshire County Council](#)

Have your say: Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan updates

Hampshire County Council and partner authorities responsible for Hampshire's Minerals and Waste Plan are inviting people to have their say on proposed modifications to the Plan

[Have your say: Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan updates | Hampshire County Council](#)

Tips for staying healthy this festive season

Whatever your plans this festive season, Hampshire County Council has practical advice to help our whole community stay well and make the most of the celebration

[Tips for staying healthy this festive season | Hampshire County Council](#)

Don't miss your chance to shape the future of councils across the Hampshire and Solent area

There are still a few weeks left for people to take part in central Government's public consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across Hampshire and the Solent area

[Don't miss your chance to shape the future of councils across the Hampshire and Solent area | Hampshire County Council](#)

One week to go: drivers reminded to plan ahead as final preparations underway for major M27 closure

With just one week to go before the full closure of the M27 motorway between Junctions 9 (Whiteley) and 11 (Fareham), Hampshire County Council is reminding drivers to plan ahead and allow extra time for journeys over the Christmas and New Year period to avoid severe delays and disruption

[One week to go: drivers reminded to plan ahead as final preparations underway for major M27 closure | Hampshire County Council](#)

Hampshire County Council welcomes national funding to improve bus travel

People across Hampshire are set to benefit from a funding boost to bus travel, following the Government's announcement of the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG)

[Hampshire County Council welcomes national funding to improve bus travel | Hampshire County Council](#)

Final decision to be made on future of Smannell and Enham Church of England Primary School, Andover

A final decision on the future of Smannell and Enham Church of England Primary School on the edge of Andover is due to be made later this month

[Final decision to be made on future of Smannell and Enham Church of England Primary School, Andover | Hampshire County Council](#)