

## **Hampshire County Councillor Update 58**

Dear All

So, here it is, the final County Councillor Update of this term of office. Whether they continue next month is now down to you and the 16,000+ electors of Romsey Rural.

It's been a privilege and honour to serve our communities over the last 5 years. Thank you so much to everyone who has taken the time to share this information through our parish magazines and to the friendship, collaboration and occasional challenge of all of you on our parish councils. It's been brilliant to work with you all.

I very much hope to continue doing so once the results of the election are known early on Friday morning.

### **Highways Information**

#### **M27 set to return to 70mph by late June**

There's some good news on the M27 works. National Highways now expect the motorway to return to the national speed limit by late June 2026.

You might recall I warned that their definition of "Spring" could stretch a little... and it looks like that may just have been the case. But we are now in sight of the finish line.

What to expect in the meantime

There are still a few final stages to complete, including reinstalling permanent signage. For safety, this requires overnight closures (9pm–6am) on parts of the motorway:

30 April: J5 westbound entry slip & J7 eastbound entry slip

2–3 May: J7 westbound to J5

16–17 May: J4 eastbound to J5

30–31 May: J5 westbound to J4

Clearly signed diversion routes will be in place, but there will be some knock-on impact on local roads overnight.

Important to note

Even once the main works are complete, a 50mph limit and lane closure will remain around J8. This is due to separate bridge maintenance, currently planned for 2027.

## Romsey to Ampfield Active Travel Scheme – Works Started 13 April

A heads up that Hampshire County Council are carrying out improvement works on Crampmoor Lane next week. The work will take place between Crampmoor Lane and the first service road towards Ampfield. This will deliver a new section of cycle route, alongside an improved uncontrolled crossing, as part of the wider Romsey to Ampfield active travel scheme funded by developer contributions, not council tax.

Works are due to begin on Monday 13 April 2026 and will last for approximately three weeks, with working hours between 7:30am and 4:30pm, Monday to Friday.

The construction works will include:

- Widening of the existing pavement
- Installing tactile paving (bumpy paving)
- Pavement resurfacing

During the works, temporary three-way traffic lights will be in place 24/7. A pedestrian diversion route will be clearly signed, with a protected walkway provided in the road using temporary safety barriers.

Please allow extra time for journeys and take care when travelling through the area.

You can find more information, including the location plan, here:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/.../romsey-ampfield-phase1...>

### 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.**

## Local Elections 2026

Nominations have closed for this year's Hampshire County Council elections which will be held on May 7th.

Once again I'll be standing in Romsey Rural which includes the parishes of Wellow, Awbridge, Sherfield English, Plaitford & Melchet Park, Michelmersh & Timsbury, Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams, Lockerley, East Dean, East Tytherley, West Tytherley, Frenchmoor, Buckholt and the Abbotswood, Crampmoor, Halterworth and Oxlease areas of Romsey.

Voters here will have a choice of five candidates their county councillor.

Anyone who puts themselves up for election deserves enormous credit. The desire to serve your community is to be very much applauded.

We all hope to do good for our neighbours, we only disagree about the best way in which to do so. I wish them all good luck.

## Splitting Test Valley and the New Forest to create a Greater Southampton

There's been a lot of noise—and frankly some misinformation—about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in recent days. So let's deal in facts.

The reality is this:

- The proposal to split the New Forest, Test Valley and parts of Eastleigh did not come from nowhere
- It was originally put forward and promoted by Keith House, Liberal Democrat leader at Hampshire County Council
- Liberal Democrat administrations across Hampshire—including Eastleigh, Portsmouth, Southampton, Hart and Havant—have supported proposals that split these areas

It is true that some Liberal Democrat councillors in the New Forest oppose this. But their party colleagues elsewhere—and their own county leadership—support it.

That is the contradiction residents deserve to understand.

Even Lorna Fielker, former Labour Leader of Southampton City Council, has confirmed this account is correct and that recent commentary has misrepresented the facts.

## Statement of Persons Nominated

### Hampshire County Council Election of a County Councillor

The following is a statement of the persons nominated for election as a County Councillor for

#### Romsey Rural

Name of Candidate	Home Address	Description (if any)	Reason no longer nominated*
ADAMS-KING Nick	The Little House, Stanbridge Earls, Awbridge, Romsey, SO51 0HE	Local Conservatives	
BURBIDGE Victoria Ann	The Old Cottage Hospital, 3 Birchlands, Greatbridge Road, Romsey, SO51 8FX	Liberal Democrats	
COOPER Gary Michael	(address in Test Valley)	Reform UK	
FIELD Adrian John Paul	25 Webster Road, Winchester, SO22 5NT	Labour Party	
SMITH Matthew	(address in Test Valley)	Green Party	

\*Decision of the Deputy Returning Officer that the nomination is invalid or other reason why a person nominated no longer stands nominated

The persons above against whose name no entry is made in the last column have been and stand validly nominated.

A POLL WILL BE TAKEN on Thursday 7 May 2026 between the hours of 7:00am and 10:00pm.

Dated Thursday 9 April 2026

Deputy Returning Officer  
Andy Ferrier

So what's really at stake?

The current proposals would:

- Break up long-standing communities
- Strip business rate income from rural areas
- Leave a "Mid Hampshire" authority financially exposed

That authority would face:

- An older, more costly population
- Hundreds of miles of rural roads
- Two National Parks limiting growth
- No major urban centre to drive the economy

Put simply—it is not a sustainable model.

If I remain Leader of Hampshire County Council after 7 May, I will pursue a Judicial Review. These proposals do not meet the Government's criteria and risk long-term damage to our communities and services.

This election comes down to a clear choice:

If you want a formal challenge—and to protect Hampshire's integrity—you need a Conservative-led County Council.

Anything else risks these plans going through unchallenged.

Residents deserve clarity, honesty, and a council that stands up for the whole of Hampshire—not carves it up.

### **Hampshire County Council - "bankrupt"?**

Let's be clear — Hampshire County Council is not "bankrupt".

We've set a balanced budget, we've issued no Section 114 notice, and we continue to manage our finances responsibly.

But there is a serious challenge — and it's one being felt right across the country. Demand for services is rising sharply and the cost we must pay is only limited by the number of people who are eligible and ask for our help. Imagine social care being like A&E, the NHS must treat everyone who arrives seeking help, just as we have to help everyone who qualifies for our help and asks for it:

Adult social care costs continue to grow

SEND transport costs have nearly doubled in recent years

At the same time, Hampshire receives far less Government funding per head than virtually any other area.

That mismatch is the real issue.

But what sets Hampshire apart is how we're responding. We project our finances two years ahead, so we know the scale of the challenge and we can prepare appropriately to face it. We share that information with all councillors and also with the public. No matter how uncomfortable that might sometimes be.

No hidden financial challenges, no in year emergency savings, no surprises.

And in addressing the challenge, we have:

Built in £94 million of planned savings

Delivered £40 million of efficiencies in-year during 2025/26

Put in place further savings plans for the years ahead

That level of delivery is far in excess of anything being achieved by Reform-led councils, and reflects the scale of the work already underway here in Hampshire.

We also maintain exceptionally low and well-managed borrowing (£154 million, down by £9 million in the last year), using it responsibly to invest in infrastructure and services that reduce long-term day-to-day costs — not to fund short-term spending.

Alongside this, our continued focus on:

- Improving services

- Working more closely with the NHS

- Using technology and new ways of working

is expected to deliver further savings over the next two years.

We plan ahead over multiple years.

We monitor our finances closely throughout the year.

And we've been honest with residents and all councillors about the scale of the challenge — even when that's uncomfortable.

That's not failure — that's responsible leadership.

The easy line is to shout “bankrupt”.

The honest answer is more complex — but it's also far more accurate.

### **Hampshire's school meals - made in Hampshire.**

This local election campaign is seeing some of the most bizarre claims being made.

I've seen some misinformation circulating (and comments have been made on my posts) suggesting that Hampshire's school meals are made abroad — that simply isn't correct.

In Hampshire, school meals are prepared fresh on site in school kitchens.

There are a small number of “servery” schools and settings (such as some nurseries) without kitchens. In those cases, meals are freshly prepared at a nearby local school and transferred a short distance.

It's important we stick to the facts — especially when it comes to something as important as children's meals.

## **New Policy on illegal traveller encampments**

I've been looking at the latest proposals around tackling unauthorised Traveller encampments — and, frankly, this is a welcome step in the right direction.

For too long, residents across Hampshire and beyond have had to deal with repeated disruption: damage to land, pressure on local services, and the frustration of seeing the same sites reoccupied time and again with limited effective enforcement.

Here in Test Valley, we've already taken firm action. The borough-wide injunction has been an important tool in helping prevent unauthorised encampments and enabling quicker enforcement where they do occur. It's made a real difference locally — but it has also shown the limits of what councils can do on their own without stronger national backing.

That's why these proposals matter. They would provide a much clearer and more robust framework — backing the police, strengthening property rights, and closing the loopholes that have made enforcement so difficult in practice.

In particular, the focus on:

- giving police stronger powers to remove those causing harm
- preventing repeated return to the same sites
- and ensuring rules are applied consistently

...is exactly what many communities have been calling for.

This isn't about targeting anyone unfairly — it's about fairness. Everyone should be expected to follow the same rules, and local residents, businesses, and landowners deserve to be protected from persistent disruption.

We've shown in Test Valley what can be achieved locally. With the right national framework alongside that, we can go further — and give communities the confidence that this issue is being properly addressed.



I'll ensure HCC support our district and borough councils in introducing similar injunctions until such time as national legislation can change.

## **HCC's use of 'X'**

I was asked by a Liberal Democrat Councillor at a recent Council meeting whether **Hampshire County Council** would be withdrawing our account from X (formerly Twitter). Her view was that we should.

My response was to highlight that while X has become a “less pleasant” and, in some views, a “darker” space in recent years—I also explained why the County Council is continuing to use it as one of several channels to communicate with residents.

Like many organisations, we have to balance two things:

-  reaching as many residents as possible, wherever they are
-  making sure we're using platforms that reflect the kind of respectful, constructive engagement we all want to see

HCC doesn't rely on any single platform—Facebook, our website, email updates, local media and face-to-face engagement all remain important—my view was that all are valid. More importantly if we withdraw from platforms like X, then that takes away a reasoned, objective voice, just leaving more space for those who may wish to use social media for malign purposes.

### Opening Infinity Labs at Chilworth Science Park

It was a real privilege to attend—and speak at—the topping out ceremony for Infinity Labs at the University of Southampton Science Park in Chilworth this month.

This marks a major milestone in a genuinely exciting project. Seeing the structure now complete brings home just how significant this investment will be for our area.

Infinity Labs isn't just another building. It's purpose-built space for science, technology and R&D businesses—exactly the kind of infrastructure we need if Hampshire is to continue competing on a national and global stage.

Projects like this matter because they create the conditions for growth: attracting high-quality businesses, supporting skilled jobs, and strengthening the link between our universities and industry.

Hampshire already has a strong economy—but we cannot afford to stand still. Developments like Infinity Labs help ensure we continue to grow, innovate and provide opportunities for the next generation.

Proud to play a part in supporting it—and looking forward to seeing it completed and fully operational.

### Half of approved homes still aren't being built — so why are targets being pushed even higher?

A new national report this week, reported by the MJ backs up a point I've been making for some time. Across England, over 630,000 homes have planning permission — but barely half have been built, and more than 200,000 haven't even been started.

That's not a planning failure.  
That's a delivery failure.



And yet, here's the problem for places like Romsey...




The decision by Angela Rayner and the Labour Government to increase housing targets overnight — without any meaningful transitional period is already driving a surge in speculative applications. Developers are moving quickly to exploit the uncertainty. Communities are being told they must accept more and more development — not because existing plans have failed, but because the rules have suddenly changed.

 But the evidence is clear

- Permissions are already being granted
- Land is already allocated
- And yet homes are still not being built


So the answer cannot be to simply approve more and more speculative sites — especially where infrastructure is already under pressure.

 For Romsey, this matters

We are seeing increasing pressure from speculative and inappropriate development proposals that: don't align with local plans; stretch infrastructure beyond capacity and undermine confidence in the planning system;

Let me be clear:

I support the right homes, in the right places, with the right infrastructure. But I will not support a free-for-all driven by arbitrary national targets and poor policy design.

 My position is straightforward

I will use every tool available — through the planning process, policy, and advocacy — to challenge, scrutinise and, where necessary, frustrate speculative and inappropriate developments that are not in the best interests of our community. Because simply increasing targets doesn't build homes. Delivery does. Infrastructure does. Proper planning does. And that's what I will continue to stand up for in Romsey.

### **Proposed Development – Land North of Crawley Hill, Wellow**

Residents may have received correspondence about a potential residential development of up to 51 homes on land north of Crawley Hill in Wellow.

It is important to be clear at the outset: this is not yet a formal planning application.

What has been circulated is pre-application engagement by the developer, Wilson Designer Homes. However, the proposal follows a very familiar pattern.

This is another speculative scheme on a site that has been repeatedly promoted and rejected in the past, including through earlier planning processes and appeals.

The outline being suggested is for up to 51 homes, with only the access fixed at this stage. That access is proposed onto Crawley Hill, connecting directly to the A36 near the junctions with Blackhill Road and Whinwhistle Road.

This raises a significant and fundamental concern:

This stretch of the A36 is a well-documented accident hotspot  
The junction arrangements in this location have longstanding safety issues  
Introducing additional residential traffic at this point would materially worsen risk  
On highways grounds alone, there is a strong and evidenced case that any such application should be refused.

Beyond that, the proposal must be viewed in its wider context:  
It sits outside the plan-led approach to development  
It represents speculative development pressure, rather than growth planned alongside infrastructure  
Previous decisions have consistently found the site unsuitable

If an application is formally submitted, it will be published by Test Valley Borough Council and residents will have the opportunity to comment in full.

For now, this is not an application, but it is right that residents are aware of what is being proposed and the issues it raises—particularly around highway safety and the repeated speculative promotion of this site.

### **Fields Farm / Rownhams – new planning application explained**

A new outline planning application has been submitted for around 230 homes on land east of Broadleaf Park (Rownhams Lane).

It's really important to be clear about one key point:  
This is NOT the same site identified in the Local Plan.  
This is a separate, additional site immediately next to it.

The Local Plan proposes around 100 homes at Fields Farm.  
This application is for a further 230 homes alongside it.

If both were to go ahead, alongside the 320 homes already built at Broadleaf Park, that would mean around 650 homes in this one area.

That is a very significant level of development for a single part of Rownhams — and it raises some serious concerns.

Why this matters

- This is not delivering the Local Plan — it is adding to it
- It represents a clear case of speculative expansion beyond what the council has identified as appropriate
- The cumulative impact on roads, services and the character of the area would be substantial
- The site sits alongside ancient woodland, includes important wildlife habitats, and is subject to New Forest mitigation requirements
- The Local Plan has already concluded that around 100 homes is the right scale here — not more than double that across adjoining land

What about the lack of a five-year housing land supply?

You may hear that Test Valley currently cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply — that is correct. But it does not mean every application should be approved.

Planning decisions must still consider whether:

- the scale is appropriate
- environmental impacts can be properly mitigated
- the overall harm outweighs the benefits

In this case, there is a strong argument that the proposal goes well beyond what this location can reasonably accommodate.

The bigger picture

This is exactly the situation many of us warned about when housing targets were increased overnight in December 2024 with no proper transition. It has left areas like ours exposed to speculative applications, where developers seek to maximise development before the Local Plan is in place.

My view

This is not simply a question of whether we need housing. It is about whether this is the right development, in the right place, at the right scale.

Given this is an additional site, not the one in the Local Plan, and would take the total to around 650 homes in this immediate area, there are very real and legitimate concerns.

If you want to comment on the application, you can do so via Test Valley Borough Council's planning portal or by emailing [planning@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:planning@testvalley.gov.uk)

The planning reference is: 26/00695/OUTS

### **Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan**

Good to see the Awbridge Neighbourhood Plan reaching an important milestone, with Test Valley Borough Council now consulting on the submitted plan.

This is the result of a huge amount of work over several years by Awbridge Parish Council and local volunteers. Neighbourhood Plans don't happen overnight – they are built through detailed evidence, engagement with residents, and a real commitment to shaping the future of the community. Everyone involved deserves real credit for getting it to this stage.

The Regulation 16 consultation is now open until noon on Monday 25 May 2026, and it's an important opportunity for residents to have their say.



You can view the plan and supporting documents here:

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/.../awbridge-neighbourhood...>

There are also hard copies available locally at:

- Former Magistrates' Court, Church Street, Romsey
- Romsey Library
- Awbridge Village Hall

- All Saints Church, Awbridge



Comments can be submitted via the consultation form (preferred), by email to [neighbourhoodplanning@testvalley.gov.uk](mailto:neighbourhoodplanning@testvalley.gov.uk), or by post to Test Valley Borough Council.

What happens next?

Once the consultation closes, all representations will be passed to an independent examiner. They will assess whether the plan meets the required standards and recommend whether it should proceed.

If approved, the final stage will be a local referendum, giving residents in Awbridge the opportunity to vote on whether the plan should formally be adopted and used in planning decisions.

If you have a view, I would strongly encourage you to take part – these plans play a key role in guiding how communities like Awbridge evolve in the years ahead.

### **Support to help rural businesses tackle crime**

Rural businesses across Hampshire are being encouraged to sign up to a new free app designed to help tackle rural crime.

The EyesOn app, funded by [Donna Jones](#), Police and Crime Commissioner and supported by Hampshire Police, provides a direct and secure way for rural businesses, landowners and workers to share information with each other and with local policing teams. It replaces the previous DISC system and has been developed using feedback from those already working in our rural communities.

The app allows users to:

- Report incidents quickly in a police-ready format
- Share information securely with local groups and officers
- Use precise location tools such as what3words for rural areas
- Help police identify patterns and target organised criminal activity

This is a practical step forward in strengthening communication between rural communities and the police, helping ensure that officers can respond more effectively to the challenges faced in more isolated areas.

If you are involved in a rural business or work in the countryside, I would encourage you to download the app and consider joining the local network.

As always, please remember that emergencies or crimes in progress should still be reported via 999.

### **Hampshire's first 'Best Start' Family Hub**

Good to see the launch of Hampshire's first Best Start Family Hub in Leigh Park – an important step forward in how we support families across the county.

This is about making life simpler for parents and carers. Instead of having to navigate lots of different services, these hubs bring support together in one place – from pregnancy and early years through to starting school. That includes things like parenting advice, health visiting, early learning support and help for families with additional needs.

What's particularly important is the focus on early help. By identifying needs sooner and supporting families earlier, we can improve outcomes for children and reduce the need for more intensive interventions later on.




This is just the start. Around 30 hubs are planned across Hampshire by 2029, with more opening over the next year – including in places like Gosport, Alton and Andover.

It's a practical, joined-up approach that reflects something simple but important: giving children the best start in life doesn't happen in silos – it happens when services work together, locally, around families.

### **£850,000 in new support for Hampshire households facing hardship**

The County Council has just approved an initial £850,000 package to help residents through unexpected financial shocks — part of a wider £10.4 million Crisis and Resilience Fund coming to Hampshire this year.

This new fund replaces the Household Support Fund and gives us something we've long needed:

-  Multi-year certainty
-  Better planning
-  Stronger, more preventative support

In the meantime, we're making sure help is available straight away:

- Citizens Advice will deliver crisis payments and financial resilience support
- Social workers, charities and partners can refer residents for emergency help
- District and Borough councils can offer support for housing cost shortfalls

This is about more than just emergency payments — it's about building a system that helps people stay out of crisis in the first place.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out. Help is available now, and a stronger long-term model is on the way.

More details on the County Council website — or feel free to message me directly.

### **County Councillor Grants**

The County Councillor Grant scheme is operating once more, with a lesser amount of £5,000, the window has now closed for applications and I'm pleased to say all that amount has been distributed locally.

Grants made to Sherfield English Netball club, Wellow Lunch Club, Nursling and Rownhams May Fayre, Nursling Village Hall, Lockerley School PTA, West Tytherley Village Shop and Community Hub and Lockerley Scouts.

The scheme will reopen again in June, with a further £5,000 to be distributed by either me or whomever is the new County Councillor for Romsey Rural after the election.

### **Getting About**

I've been to Wellow, Awbridge, Lockerley, East Dean, East Tytherley, Michelmersh & Timsbury, Chilworth, Nursling & Rownhams and West Tytherley Parish Councils. I've also attended the Parish Assemblies at Nursling and Rownhams and Wellow. Public meetings in Liphook, Havant, Gosport and the Waterside.

### **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](https://facebook.com/nickadamsking)

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**CLLR NICK ADAMS-KING**  
Caring for Romsey Rural



## **General Updates from HCC:**

### **Candidates standing in Hampshire County Council elections announced**

The names of candidates standing in the upcoming Hampshire County Council elections have been published ahead of the county-wide vote on Thursday 7 May 2026

[Candidates standing in Hampshire County Council elections announced | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Advance notice of road closures over May half-term to support Botley Bypass construction**

Road users and Botley residents are being given advance notice of road closures needed to build a new roundabout at the junction of the A3051 and A334 - an integral part of the wider Botley Bypass project

[Advance notice of road closures over May half-term to support Botley Bypass construction | Hampshire County Council](#)

### **Primary school place offers confirmed by Hampshire County Council**

Parents in Hampshire who applied on time for a school place for children starting school in September 2026 – either in Reception Year or in Year 3 in a junior school – have been sent the outcome of their application by Hampshire County Council today (16 April 2026)

[Primary school place offers confirmed by Hampshire County Council | Hampshire County Council](#)