

Cllr Jackie Porter's County Report for Parish Councillors: March 2018

The County Council Tax is one element of the council tax bill: this element will rise by 5.9% in 18/19, also using reserves to prop up Adult and Children's social care.

The County's statutory functions include the maintenance of highways, footways and footpaths. But this is being severely eroded by cuts although they have received a small cash bonus to help with this.

Winter /snow/frost maintenance is budgeted for at £3m: it is likely that a significant sum will be used during and after the cold snap in late February. Even short bursts of bad weather bring more potholes onto the roads.

The 'Dragon Patcher' has been heralded by the County as the solution for rural roads, but I have had complaints from Parishes and many holes appear to be missed, and so I am on another drive round with the HCC engineer to quality assess the work: please drop me a note if there are any areas you'd like me to raise specifically. (I already have Micheldever's comments)

Footpaths are in a dreadful state too. There are volunteer groups, especially the Ramblers putting in new stiles to replace footpaths. If you want to report the poor condition of a footpath, you may like to go to 'Pathwatch', the Ramblers own site. (equivalent of FixMyStreet).

We heard a presentation on the **first findings of the Winchester Movement Study in February**- but no solution. I can update you on request.

Although approx. 96% of the county division now has reasonably good broadband, there are pockets which do not. I have held another meeting with HCC and BT Openreach to update information, and press for the gaps to be filled. I have attached the result on a separate sheet. If there are areas not mentioned here about which you have concerns, please let me know. One reason for poor speeds is that the residents may not know they are now connected to faster speeds and so haven't upgraded their own contract. For example: East Stratton residents have been complaining for some time, but I understand from BT Openreach that they *are* connected and should be getting good speeds. If they are not getting the speeds that are advertised, they should go back to their provider. Kings Barton residents continue to move in and *how* they access Superfast broadband may affect *what* they can access. A33/A31 residents have different possible solutions. You can check your speeds on www.dslchecker.bt.com

Flooding mitigation work is continuing, and I am told that the North Winchester catchment is high on the priority list now. Parishes will know the work seems achingly slow, but the team are anxious to find pictures of the flooding to the west of the main railway line. Do you have any?

The Watercress Way is seeking residents who have mobility difficulties who like to walk! We need a focus group to help us design and develop the route as an all-access path.

Alresford Library will be closed in April for several weeks to install new 'self help' units to log books in and out. More details in April report.



School closures I attended a chilly but elevating passing-out parade at the St John Moore barracks. Just 57 young people passed out, but at least it went ahead, despite the snow. I am asking the county to find more ways to keep schools open on snow days, as I am concerned that the economy suffers (estimated £1m loss to GDP in recent snow) when parents have to find childcare at such short notice.

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