

# **Local Government Reorganisation - Stopped**

*A brief summary of Hampshire County Council and related issues*

*Cllr Chris Dorn, Hampshire County Cllr*

## **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

The important point is that the Government's previous decision for Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton has been withdrawn, not paused.

That matters.

The decision taken earlier this year to replace the existing councils with the proposed new unitary authorities no longer stands. The Government has instead announced a review of the wider LGR programme and will need to decide afresh what, if anything, it wishes to propose for Hampshire.

That does not mean LGR can never return. It may well do. But any future proposal will need to be considered again on its merits. My personal view is that any new proposal is unlikely until after the next General Election.

It's important that the breathing space created by this decision is used to bring councils, communities and Government together and properly consider the future of local government across Hampshire and the Solent. There is no reason to rush this.

Reorganising councils serving more than two million people is a once-in-a-generation decision. Whatever eventually replaces the present system needs to be financially sustainable, protect the services residents depend upon and properly reflect the communities it serves.

There is also a separate question which the Government now needs to address: who pays for all the work undertaken on the previous proposals? And the lost opportunity costs of the hiatus?

Over recent months councils across Hampshire have spent considerable amounts of money preparing for LGR. Just as importantly, large amounts of officer time have been diverted from normal council business to meet Government deadlines and prepare for implementation.

That work was not undertaken on a whim. Councils were responding to a process and timetable set by Government. The abortive costs of LGR should therefore be borne by Government, not by Hampshire council taxpayers.

We will now establish the full cost to Hampshire County Council of the process to date and will be asking Government to reimburse those costs. At a time when local government finances remain extremely challenging, money spent preparing for a reorganisation which has subsequently been withdrawn is money which could otherwise have been used to support the services our residents rely upon.

I don't believe our present structures must remain unchanged forever. But change of this scale has to be based on evidence rather than deadlines, and it has to leave local government stronger and more sustainable than it was before.

For now, I think the withdrawal of the previous decision is a very positive outcome for Hampshire and gives us the opportunity to approach the question again in a much more considered way.



The Government has also confirmed that the local elections due in May 2027 will proceed on the existing council boundaries (that means Hart District Cllrs for Hook).

It's also worth noting that the Hampshire and the Solent Combined County Authority (HSCCA) (aka "devolution" - to draw powers and money from Westminster) continues and we await clarity on when we'll get the chance to elect a Mayor for the wider area.

I will, as always, keep you updated as things develop.

### **Highways – Preparing for Winter**

As we head into autumn, our highways teams are already thinking of winter. You will have noticed plenty of work locally, making best use of the good weather and longer days to repair and resurface our roads. As you may recall, we'd need x10 funding to do them all, so the strategy is repair and preserve where we can and temporarily fill dangerous features.

It's really important to report via the Hampshire Highways portal, the links are:

- 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>
- All other options are under: <https://www.hants.gov.uk/transport/highways/report-a-problem>

When reporting an issue, you'll be sent an email confirming a reference number for the report. If you need me to follow this up, please forward that message. Facebook is not a reporting tool and while I can pick some up, the famous algorithm doesn't always highlight them to me, so it's quicker if you can report directly - please!

FixMyStreet does pass reports to Hampshire, but the process often loses some key data, hence we prefer you report to us directly. But FixMyStreet is the reporting tool for many Hart issues, including fly tipping.

### **Hampshire Cllr Grants**

Hampshire County Cllrs receive a modest £5,000 grant to be distributed through the year (£100 - £1,000 per grant). The details are here:-

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/community/grants/grants-list/county-councillor>

The rules give us quite some latitude, but I would like to ensure that these grants are focussed on:-

- Things that are happening within the Division
- Have clear outcomes
- Delivered or completed this year
- Deliver on the 4 priority commitments in Hampshire County Council's Strategic Plan (see link above)

I will have a preference for those that highlight these points, but the scope is broad, so good cases are always welcome!

I would like to consider as many as possible in parallel to make the best possible choice that fits within the funding limits and avoids any "left over" at the end of the financial year.

Clearly, you can't all be successful, but I hope to help as many worthy causes as I can. So please do provide outlines, either catch me when you see me or via email to [chris.dorn@hants.gov.uk](mailto:chris.dorn@hants.gov.uk) so we can complete an initial view on suitability.

### **Contact**

I'm always happy to talk to people, but the best way to contact me is to email: [chris.dorn@nehc.org.uk](mailto:chris.dorn@nehc.org.uk) or follow my Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Cllr.Dorn>

Cllr Chris Dorn

Hampshire County Council for Odiham & Hook Division and District Cllr for Odiham Ward and Western Parishes on behalf of the Conservative Party

*Just to caveat: Cllrs can't provide definitive planning or legal advice, but I'm happy to share my personal thoughts on matters while asserting my open mindedness to any related future planning applications or formal council decisions.*

<Ends>