**East Hampshire District Council response to Hampshire County Council Future Services Consultation**

**Introduction**

East Hampshire District Council welcomes the public consultation on such a critical matter. The District Council appreciate the challenge the County Council face. The ongoing reduction in funding from National Government places Local Authorities in a difficult position. Creating a balanced budget, with ever decreasing financial resources is an impossible situation. However, the District Council has significant concerns regarding the proposed reduction in spend on future services which will significantly reduce non-statutory services. These services are vital to Hampshire’s most vulnerable residents, and the proposed cuts will disproportionately impact those living in rural districts such as East Hampshire where many LSOAs are in the lowest deprivation deciles for access to services and living environment.

We believe that the analysis that has been undertaken into the long-term impact of these reductions in spend should be made available so that residents and partners can understand how they will impact statutory services such as adult social care. Most of the cuts proposed (such as voluntary, community and transport services) will reduce the ability of residents who are geographically and / or socially isolated, whether due to age, low income or additional needs, to lead fulfilling lives with good social connections with access to services. World Health Organisation’s commission on Social Connection identifies that loneliness and social isolation can increase the risk of developing dementia by 50% and the risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease by 30%. EHDC therefore believes that the likely impact of these cuts will be a substantial increase in demand on costly statutory services delivered by Hampshire County Council and partner organisations (primarily NHS trusts). Whilst we appreciate Hampshire County Council’s challenging financial position, we would urge the County Councillors to reconsider their approach.

Residents’ long-term outcomes and the amount of support they require in later life is impacted by the wider determinants of health (social, economic and environmental factors). A resilient community and voluntary sector are key to preventing poor health outcomes. The proposed cuts will result in a weaker voluntary and community sector with fewer community and voluntary sector organisations supporting our residents close to home. The transport cuts will make it nearly impossible for some residents to access equivalent services in neighbouring towns or out of district, this will have a significant impact on mental health of our residents, or their ability to access key services, such as Household Waste Recycling Centres. A strong and effective voluntary sector can support residents to stay in their own homes longer, can support residents in staying connected to neighbours and friends, tackling social isolation and loneliness, ultimately reducing demand on statutory services such as adult social care.

East Hampshire District Council is going through a process of transformation, and as part of this we are looking to strengthen our voluntary and community sector, which will in the long-term lead to savings for the council, as the community are better placed to support themselves and each other. This has included reviewing the outputs, outcomes and impacts of all funded projects to ensure that projects will actually deliver stated benefits. We believe that resilient communities, which are well connected, can sustain themselves and call upon the support of statutory services only in times of crisis. We are developing an Asset Based Community Development approach to build stronger and more resilient communities. We would welcome engagement with the County Council to explore how short-term investment can lead to long term savings, enabling our communities to do more for themselves, and allow Local Authorities to focus on their key role, allowing for a more targeted focus on ever decreasing resources.

The following section sets out EHDC draft comments on the HCC Budget consultation proposals.

**Adult social care charges - None**

**Adult social care grant schemes (Proposed cost saving - £620,000)**

Hampshire County Council has responsibilities to prevent or delay people developing care and support needs ([Care Act 2014](https://legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted)). This is of particular interest to EHDC as we seek to create vibrant and resilient communities, and to support the vulnerable members of our society. To deliver this responsibility the County Council fund a number of services to increase volunteering capacity in voluntary preventative services, EHDC also provide funding to a number of these services, if funding is lost, it is anticipated that EHDC could not help to meet the funding gap, which would result in the loss of these services and a significant impact on our Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. Our key concerns regarding the funding cuts in this area are set out below:

**Council for Voluntary Services Infrastructure Grant (£495,000)**

A key aspect of this grant is the funding for the Council for Voluntary Services, which for East Hampshire is Community First East Hampshire (CFEH). Currently we have a service level agreement with CFEH to provide advice and support to the community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations which exist across the district. Our agreement with CFEH means they have dedicated officers in the district actively providing advice to community groups and organisations including advice on governance, external funding, financial resilience, and volunteering. The work CFEH do on our behalf will form a key part of our Transformation to Asset Based Community Development as they will be able to support community and voluntary sector organisations to take more responsibility in shaping their communities and supporting themselves.

Currently EHDC fund CFEH £60,000 per annum. This ensures a dedicated officer to provide advice and guidance to community and voluntary sector organisations. This is expertise in governance, financial and legal support as well as supporting groups in identifying and securing external funding. We also use the CFEH service to support the Supporting Communities Fund, Community Lottery and Councillor Grant programmes. They provide independent advice to groups applying to these funds as it would not be appropriate for EHDC officers to provide that advice as we assess applications.

If the funding is withdrawn from the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS), it will not be possible for EHDC to supplement this loss in funding. If the CVS cannot identify and secure external funding to meet the funding gap from April 2025 it is anticipated that the service will cease. This will have a significant impact on EHDC’s aspirations to transform to an Asset Based approach to Community Development. However, what is more concerning is that this cut in grant funding is likely to have a dramatic effect on the current community and voluntary sector in East Hampshire. As Council budgets are under more and more pressure we are looking to our community and voluntary organisations to help in supporting those in our communities that are vulnerable or need more support. We are fortunate to have a very active voluntary and community sector in East Hampshire, and we want to build on this, expand the number of active groups and explore what other aspects of community support they could take on (maintenance of open space, litter picking, street cleanliness, neighbour support, voluntary transport services etc). However, this will be more challenging if we do not have an active CVS to which we can signpost existing groups, and more importantly those groups who are looking to get established or set up.

EHDC feel that this cut in funding will place additional pressure on statutory bodies, with a reduction in community and voluntary sector groups, the vulnerable members of our communities will have less opportunity to seek support and advice from their peers, neighbours and community organisations where they live. Ultimately this will lead to those individuals seeking the support of statutory services. We would welcome discussion with the County Council to see how we can work with Town and Parish Councils, voluntary sector organisations and other stakeholders to ensure a strong and fit for purpose VCSE sector in East Hampshire. In the longer term this would realise cost savings for all sectors of Local Government and create more sustainable, self-sufficient and resilient communities, less likely to call upon the services of local councils. EHDC consider that the relatively low level of savings proposed here do not warrant the potential impact of these cuts on future demands placed on all tiers of Local Government. An effective and well-resourced VCSE sector has the potential to reduce the demand on Council services and this should be considered carefully in any potential cost savings. Hampshire County Council recognise the value of a strong voluntary sector, outcome 4 of the Hampshire Strategic plan sets out that the County will support and work in partnership with a thriving and diverse voluntary and community sector and body of volunteers, this will be a significant challenge if the proposed funding proposals are progressed.

### **Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant (£63,000)**

This grant helps to fund an organisation which supports the 12 local Citizens Advice offices in Hampshire. It funds the delivery of training and development to staff and volunteers, and it helps to generate further fundraising to support service delivery.

Currently EHDC fund £186,000 per annum to the Citizens Advice East Hampshire (CAEH) service. This funds the advice service across the district. There are currently 3 offices, in Petersfield, Alton and Bordon. The CAEH service provides essential support and advice to our most vulnerable residents. They offer a wide range of advice on a variety of subjects including debt, homelessness, health and community care, benefits, repossession, unemployment and domestic abuse. The service employs 16 part time members of staff and over 50 volunteers. On average the service sees more than 10,000 clients per year with over 16,000 separate issues. Between October and December 2023, the service helped East Hampshire residents gain over £200,000 in income (mainly through unclaimed benefits) and over £80,000 of debt was written off following advice from CAEH.

It should be noted that the service funded by EHDC will not be directly affected. The Citizens Advice Infrastructure Grant provides funding to a centralised Citizens Advice service. However, the loss of this income will place a financial pressure on the district advice centres to provide training for staff and volunteers. Currently the funding from EHDC does not cover the cost of providing the training service in East Hampshire and EHDC do not consider funding this aspect of the service would be appropriate. CAEH supplement EHDC funding through external funding and winning other contracts such as the Household Support Fund contract awarded by HCC.

CAEH provide an essential service to our residents, we understand the financial pressures facing HCC, and subsequently the reasons for finding cost savings. We believe the loss of this grant will have a minor impact on the CAEH service, but EHDC will not be able to fund any shortfall. The loss of this grant should be weighed up with the very minimal impact the saving will have on the overall deficit of the County Council.

**Competitive (one-off) grant schemes (Proposed cost saving - £481,000)**

The County Council provides grant funding to a range of community and not-for-profit organisations through the Leader’s Community Grants, Rural Communities Fund, and Parish and Town Council Investment Fund grant schemes. Organisations can apply to HCC throughout the year for grant funding for one-off projects under these schemes, providing the organisation and the project meet the relevant eligibility criteria.

The services that could be affected by this proposal are not provided directly by the County Council, so any service decisions would be taken by the organisations currently in receipt of the grants. Reduced funding opportunities may mean organisations would need to seek alternative forms of funding and investment from other sources. This may include greater reliance on funding from national bodies, increasing income generation locally through voluntary donations or charging a service contribution. If sufficient alternative funding cannot be identified, this may result in a reduction in community service provision, which will have an impact on the voluntary and community sector in the district. This has the potential to weaken the sector at a time we’re seeking to build capacity in the Voluntary Sector to support the most vulnerable in our communities.

Community organisations in areas with high levels of unemployment or people on low incomes may be less likely to have access to alternative sources of local fundraising

**Hampshire Cultural Trust grant (Proposed cost saving - £600,000)**

Arts and culture venues including museums provide vibrancy to local communities and to places such as town and village centres as venues to bring people together. The withdrawal of this grant will negatively impact the ability to promote culture in its broadest form to the public.

The proposal from HCC is to cut the Hampshire Cultural Trust grant by £650,000. There are currently two facilities in the district that are managed by the HCT including the Curtis Museum in Alton and the Allen Gallery in Alton. The proposed cut to the Hampshire Cultural Trust grant probably doesn’t result in the closure of the above facilities (although Curtis Museum is indicated as a possible closure in the longer term) it may have implications in how the trust supports them.

It is worth noting that EHDC supported the Allen Gallery with CIL funding in 2023 for £450,000 for the creation of a flexible and accessible community spaces and enable the venue to sustain itself into the future: through its café and retail offer, through environmental improvements to the fabric of the building.

The CIL team anticipate more requests for funding to come in for CIL 2024 from the Allen Gallery. We hope that investment into the infrastructure will enable the building to run more efficiently and reducing the risk of long-term closure.

**Highways maintenance (Proposed cost saving - £7,500,000)**

If HCC are proposing significant cuts to the maintenance of highways, cycle routes and footpaths to the point that some areas become impassable due to lacking surface repairs or overgrown vegetation, it would result in fewer members of the public engaging active travel. This would be contrary to the aims of HCC’s LTP4 and the EHDC draft Local Plan objectives of residents becoming less reliant on the private car and instead encouraging “living locally” by travelling shorter distances by active travel modes, where feasible. The continued planned maintenance of public highways contributes to better walking and cycling environments which encourage travel by these means and not to drive, an objective of the LTP4, this also aligns with the District Council’s Climate Change Strategy and Welfare Strategy. Any proposed cost savings in relation to highways maintenance should seek to avoid detrimental impact on active travel routes, therefore encouraging these forms of transport. It is also important to consider the possible cost savings and impacts on areas of growth.

**Highways winter service –** No Comment

**Homelessness Support Services (Proposed cost saving - £2,000,000)**

In 2002 the Supporting People grant fund was set up through maximising the support element in Housing Benefit for supported housing. At the time Hampshire authorities amassed a total of 32 million, including an administration fund.  It was agreed that to ensure consistency and share the administration costs, a consortium would be set up with HCC acting as the administration body on behalf of the districts and boroughs.  Over the years the fund has been absorbed into the County’s baseline and as a consequence over the latter years reduced year on year.

Although the statutory function relating to homelessness lies with the councils, it is clear that the prevention agenda ensuring everyone has a home is beneficial to so many organisations. Investing in support services relieves the pressure on social care, health, local authorities’ Bed and Breakfast budgets, but most importantly ensures that those who face homelessness spend little or no time in B&B.

In East Hampshire the proposed cuts will directly impact on the community support offered throughout the district and the supported accommodation for adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness which is based in Petersfield.

The Supporting People fund now known as Social Inclusion was originally funded through Hampshire County Council, as they recognised that generic community support services would provide crisis and prevention support to vulnerable people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

It was identified that care and support needs may be required as these service users cut across Health, and Social Care and Housing, therefore the aim was to have a recognised partnership approach to support these service users and therefore make savings in these other areas and provide individuals with positive options and improve outcomes for them.

If no alternative funding is identified there is no doubt that this will increase demand for other services across health, Adult Social Care, Criminal Justice (Police) and especially Housing Services and result in additional expenditure in all these areas.

The support offered at the stage 2 accommodation in Petersfield, along with the Community Support service plays a pivotal role in alleviating the burden on other council-funded services.

At the present time East Hampshire has achieved low numbers in B&B and only placing in emergency accommodation when there are no other alternatives.  Rough Sleeping is also at an all-time low.  However, once the support is withdrawn from the Petersfield accommodation, we are very concerned that we will be unable to refer anyone facing homelessness there without the community support.  When the accommodation was initially identified as use as temporary accommodation, we had no community support and within weeks of occupying the rooms we had issues of anti social behaviour and complaints from neighbours, internal disputes and of most concern residents’ mental health deteriorating. There was an increase in rent arrears and damage to the building and then tenants often left with nowhere to go and ended up rough sleeping.  Officers worked with County to ensure appropriate funding was allocated and support put in place.  This support has made such a difference that we no longer have any issues with ASB or internal disputes. Any concerns are dealt with quickly and residents supported in such a way that they are ready to move to alternative housing in a prepared way and do not revert back to rough sleeping.  The removal of this fund is of a great concern and its impact on East Hampshire ability to ensure suitable supported accommodation for potentially single homeless residents.

Therefore, finding a long-term solution to sustain these services not only safeguards vulnerable individuals, but also contributes to wider benefits for our communities. Cutting funding is a dangerous and short-sighted decision and in the long run will not achieve savings.

**Household Waste Recycling Centres (Proposed cost saving - £1,200,000)**

The proposed cuts to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) by Hampshire County Council are a matter of concern for EHDC. These cuts are likely to have detrimental effects on waste reduction and recycling rates in our area.

Reducing the number of accessible recycling centres can discourage residents from properly disposing of their waste in an environmentally friendly manner. With fewer convenient options, there is a risk that more waste will end up in general landfills, contributing to environmental pollution and harming the community's overall health.

The importance of HWRCs in promoting recycling cannot be overstated. These centres play a crucial role in encouraging residents to separate and recycle different types of materials, diverting them from landfills. When these facilities are reduced, the burden falls on residents to find alternative ways to dispose of their waste, which may lead to increased illegal dumping and improper waste disposal.

Furthermore, the proposed cuts may hinder efforts to meet recycling targets and environmental sustainability goals. Reducing recycling infrastructure could impede the progress towards a circular economy, where resources are reused and recycled to minimise environmental impact.

Retention and improvement of Household Waste Recycling Centres are essential for the long-term well-being of both residents and the environment.

Has consideration been given to the increased travel required in such a large district to dispose of waste effectively. The proposals could see Petersfield and Bordon HWRC close, leaving only Alton HWRC in the district. The result of this is likely to see an increase in private car journeys (longer journeys) to access the nearest facilities, and possible implications for those facilities with the increased traffic and capacity. We expect this will lead to an increase in fly tipping.

Consideration should also be given to the contamination of household recycling that is likely to occur as a result of the closure of HWRC. This will impact our ability to improve recycling rates and ensure no contamination of recyclable materials which are disposed of by residents.

It should be noted that HWRCs infrastructure plays a role in supporting growing communities such as in Bordon. Losing a household waste disposal facility at Whitehill & Bordon does not align with the planned regeneration of the town and development allocation in the East Hampshire draft Local Plan that will result in more homes being built in the settlement. The timing of the potential loss of the HWRC at this location does not align well with these intentions and we would encourage the County Council to consider the implications of planned growth in their decision making on cost savings.

**Library Stock –** No libraries closing or reduction in hours are being proposed in East Hampshire.

**Passenger Transport (Proposed cost saving - £1,700,000)**

We foresee that the proposals will have a detrimental impact on our rural communities and increase isolation and loneliness for our residents. The social and environmental impact should be considered for each route that is proposed to be cut and related costs to this longer term. This also goes against HCC's Local Transport Plan 4, and we find it hard to understand how HCC will meet its strategy whilst making such significant cuts. Transport is the largest contributor to East Hampshire (and Hampshire's) carbon emissions and reducing initiatives that support the reduction of single occupancy car use contradicts our Climate Environment Strategy and national Net Zero Targets.

Passenger transport services that are not commercially viable are vital to isolated communities where access to services and facilities is difficult. Supporting other forms of passenger transport enables people to get to education, work, to access health facilities and social activities that play a huge role in wellbeing.

**HCC supported Bus Routes**

East Hampshire District Council is concerned by the proposed reduction in funding of bus routes in general. The HCC LTP4 places an emphasis on residents being less reliant on the private car and instead using sustainable travel for more journeys. This is incredibly challenging in a rural district such as East Hampshire that has limited rail connections between settlements in the district, but with the prospect of reduced bus travel this becomes an almost impossible task. The consultation specifically states that it will be largely rural bus services impacted by potential withdrawal of the services, this is likely to have a significant impact on East Hampshire residents in particular the ageing population. An ageing population in a rural district with a diminishing public transport service could make for a very isolated and socially disconnected society, resulting in the older generation confined to their local areas of residence. It should be considered that the older and younger generations or those who do not own a car, may rely on a bus service, and without it their life opportunities could be limited i.e. employment, retail, physical and mental health opportunities. As a Council we do not want to have a district of isolated settlements lacking connections and opportunities to travel sustainably for distances greater than what can be undertaken on foot or by cycle. East Hampshire would like the cost savings proposed by HCC to consider the benefits of a well-connected district, connected by appropriate public transport and active travel opportunities, that offers great opportunities for regular alternative travel to the car for employment, leisure, retail and health purposes.

More specifically, the potential loss of Bus routes 38 (Alton to Petersfield), 94 (Buriton/Froxfield to Petersfield), 206 (Alton to Bentley), 208 (Alton to Medstead), 240 (Ropley to Alresford) and 250 (Liphook Local Service) will have a significant impact on the connectivity of some of our smaller settlements with the main service centres of Petersfield and Alton, as well as the smaller services centres such as Liphook. The loss of the 67 service from Winchester to Petersfield will also have a signficant effect on many of our smaller settlements and their ability to access Petersfield for the services and facilities it provides, as well as allowing Petersfield and its surrounding villages to access Winchester on a sustainable mode of transport. The loss of the 67 will also have a significant impact on young people accessing local schools by bus.

Many of the smaller settlements In East Hampshire are home to our older residents with limited or no access to private transport. The loss of these HCC supported services would have a detrimental impact on these residents further exacerbating social isolation and issues of loneliness. As a Council we want to ensure our residents can access health and wellbeing activities, from clubs at local leisure centres to activities in community buildings. Often these services are only viable in our larger centres, so the loss of connectivity through cutting subsidised bus routes would be concerning.

The Council is aware that many of its residents are already dissatisfied with the current level of public transport provision in the district. This dissatisfaction is amplified in Whitehill & Bordon, as the Town grows the proposed reduction in funding on bus services will only further dissatisfy residents and will make it very challenging to try and get any new patronage to this transport sector in the future. The loss of the 23 service from Bordon to Haslemere will be of significant concern to the District Council.

As part of the draft Local Plan, in alignment with LTP4, the policies and development of site allocations have been produced with the aim of integrating land use planning as much as possible to ensure the proposed development sites selected for future allocation are those that have the highest potential for providing opportunities to travel sustainably to local daily services and facilities. However, the Council acknowledges that not all daily tasks can be undertaken in a local vicinity and travel to neighbouring settlements will still be required. To reduce the reliance on the private car and in the absence of wide spanning rail connections, longer journeys would be most appropriately encouraged to be undertaken by bus, but with reductions to an already limited service in East Hampshire, this is unlikely to be attainable.

Cuts to the bus services facilitating school travel could have significant implications in the rural district of East Hampshire, as highlighted above in relation to the loss of the 67 service. Not all settlements in East Hampshire have a secondary school and therefore travel facilitated by school bus services is essential for some pupils to reach their education setting. If school bus services were to be withdrawn would HCC instead have to pay for the travel of those pupils, they are legally bound to support. Would this be a saving for HCC if it was to pay for travel, by for example private taxi, instead? Implications of reducing any school bus services should be considered carefully, particularly with the implications that this could have on achieving sustainable locations for future housing development in the district. School travel can be a big contributor to local highway congestion in the school drop-off and pick-up peak hours. As such HCC always encourage development to be in the most sustainable locations, with the desired aim of as many pupils travelling by sustainable modes, including bus. For example, Four Marks does not have a secondary school, but instead residents’ children travel to nearby secondary schools, namely Alton. With a reduction in school bus travel and the education authority instead having to fund the travel would any future developments proposed in Four Marks be objected to by HCC on the grounds of it not being a sustainable location? Would the only solution to HCC then permitting development in Four Marks be the provision of an additional secondary school in the Four Marks settlement? But which would come at a larger cost, provision of more education settings due to the lack of school bus travel or to continue funding school bus services that currently run? The implications of removing school bus travel are wide-reaching and could impact on where in the district future development would be objected to or not by HCC.

Another result of a reduction in bus services could be an increase in car dependency – the opposite to the objectives of the HCC LTP4 and East Hampshire draft Local Plan. An increase in car usage could cause congestion to become worse in known locations as well as increase carbon emissions from the already dominant transport sector. An increase in carbon emissions would be detrimental to the national and local targets of carbon neutrality.

A cut in bus service financing would be detrimental, primarily socially and environmentally, to those residents of rural East Hampshire.

**Community Transport Services**

In addition to the proposed cuts on HCC supported Bus routes, the cost saving proposals for passenger transport also affect the provision of Community Transport services, this includes the Connect: Dial a Ride Call and Go services, Taxi Share, Group Hire Services and the Wheels to Work programme. The District Council has concerns about the proposed cuts in relation to these services which will see all funding withdrawn from 2025, meaning there will be no Dial-a-Ride Call & Go, Taxi Share, Group Hire or Wheels to Work services operating in East Hampshire.

**Dial-a-Ride Call and Go**

In East Hampshire the Call and Go Service includes East Hampshire Connect: Call and Go (including Alton Dial-a-Ride) and Havant Connect: Call and Go which serves the southern parishes of the district. The Call and Go service is a bookable door-to-door accessible transport service which provides an alternative to a bus network for individuals that do not have private transport and cannot access the public transport network. The service operates in locations between Alton, Four Marks, Petersfield, Liss, Liphook, Medstead, Whitehill & Bordon and surrounding villages. The service also operates monthly day trips to Portsmouth, Southampton, Chichester. Currently the main service operates every Tuesday from Bordon to Alton, every Wednesday from Bordon and surrounding villages to Petersfield and the last Saturday of every month a day trip to a different destination each month (including Winchester, Southampton, Portsmouth, Chichester). All services must be booked in advance. The East Hampshire Call and Go service ran over 1700 passenger journeys in 22/23 and enables many of our residents to access services and facilities which would have otherwise only been possible by private taxi. This service allows more vulnerable users to access the main towns of East Hampshire, and carry out essential tasks, such as visiting GP or health care appointments, shopping, or visiting classes or activities. The service offers an accessible transport solution which is often not possible via taxi or public transport. Whilst the use of this service may appear low, it is on the increase, and it offers an essential service for many older residents, particularly where they have limited mobility or other disabilities.

EHDC currently fund 44% of the cost of operating the service in East Hampshire, and the loss of HCC funding will inevitably mean the service has to stop. Whilst the impact will be limited in terms of the number or residents affected, the impact on those using the service is likely to be significant, as they will have no other means of accessing services in the main towns and villages of East Hampshire. We would strongly advise the County to consider the implications of cutting such an important service to save approximately £17,000. In the longer term the District Council is keen to use our Asset Based Community Development approach to enable more resident led community transport schemes. Supporting and enabling local community groups and organisations to support their less mobile neighbours to access essential services. This will take time, and we would welcome the opportunity to work with HCC to develop a strong network of community led / neighbour transport schemes to support the current community transport offer. The District Councils views on the Havant Call and Go service are the same as set out above, accepting that there is less use on this service with just over 1200 passenger journeys made in 22/23, and the cost of operating the service is higher for the County Council.

The connect Minibus hire service provides a fully accessible minibus service, that can be hired out by Community First membership organisations. The minibus can be hired for regular or one-off trips, providing door-to-door service if needed. The bus can be hired with a driver, or groups can provide their own qualified driver. In 22/23 there were 235 minibus hires, which enabled many of East Hampshire’s voluntary and social enterprise organisations to arrange day trips for residents of East Hampshire. We believe that this service will increase in use as we seek to develop the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. Looking for our voluntary sector community groups and organisations to take a more active role in supporting East Hampshire residents and enabling them to live fulfilling and active lives. The District Council fund 34% of the cost of this service, and whilst the level of use is comparatively low compared to more urban centres in the County, the cost to HCC is relatively low at £11,000. We would, however, accept that this service is not as crucial as maintaining a subsidised bus service and call and go service in East Hampshire.

Due to the district’s rural nature and ageing population, community travel options are used in the district. Often these services are critical due to the relatively poor public transport network in the district. Without such a service, travel for some parts of the community will just not be feasible and could have wide -reaching implications i.e. non-attendance to GP appointments; poorer health and well-being by not being able to see a GP or access pharmacy; increased financial burden for having to instead pay for a private taxi; social isolation due to residents not being able to travel; lack of independence. The provision of subsidised public transport and community transport makes a significant contribution to the County Council’s strategic objectives, to enable communities to be more resilient and connected.

**Wheels to Work**

Wheels to Work is a moped loan service which allows young people in East Hampshire to independently get to work, apprenticeships, training or job interviews.

The service is available for people with no access to suitable transport aged 16+ in East Hampshire. East Hampshire has the largest fleet of bikes in Hampshire with 10 bikes currently available to hire. We are currently looking to expand the fleet with two new mopeds (one electric) being added to the fleet from March 2024. This is an essential service in a rural district, with many young people facing barriers to access training and employment opportunities due to the lack of public transport. East Hampshire has actively promoted the Wheels to Work programme with local young people and businesses across the district. We have seen great success in the programme enabling young people to access work and training, and ultimately gain income which enables them to fund their own work transport solutions. The District Council has recently invested in expanding the fleet of bikes available in the district as this programme contributes to our environment, climate and economic development objectives. This project also makes a significant contribution to Hampshire County Council’s own strategic plan to maximise opportunities for employment and inclusion by equipping people with the right skills now and in the future as well as the priority to enable all children and young people to have the best possible start in life.

**Rural countryside parking –** No sites impacted in East Hampshire.

**School Crossing Patrols –** No services impacted in East Hampshire.

**Street Lighting (Proposed cost saving - £500,000)**

The proposals for increasing the hours of switching off and/or dimming street lighting is understandable in the context of reducing energy usage amidst the climate emergency. It is also understood that HCC have a criterion to determine where this is not suitable i.e. town centres etc. EHDC believe caution should be used regarding reducing street lighting as it could have implications on residents’ decision to walk or cycle instead of using the private car. Street lighting has a large input to perceived safety of walking and cycling in the dark and the absence of street lighting could be a large deterrent in engagement of sustainable travel.

Adequate streetlighting contributes to better walking and cycling environments which encourage travel by these means and not to drive, an objective of the LTP4.

It should also be noted that adequate street lighting contributes to residents feeling of safety, this needs to be considered, in areas where residents travel using active travel modes (walking and cycling) after dark.