



How restructure will affect you

There have been recent media stories about the postponement of local elections.

This would have been undemocratic and totally unacceptable – and we can reassure you that CCH have never sought to postpone Hart elections. The issue is related to Local Government Restructure, something which is soon going to radically change the way local services are delivered to you.

What's really happening

The Labour government has claimed that the current two-tier structure of County Councils with District / Borough Councils is inefficient and confusing. They have mandated replacing the current structure with new single tier 'Unitary Authorities' which will have responsibility for all these council services from 2028.

CCH see pros and cons with this idea. It presents an opportunity to eliminate duplication, providing a single point of contact for all local authority services. Services such as highway maintenance and school provision could be more accountable to a specific area (not controlled out of Winchester with a focus on the south of the county). However, planning *policy* (where the new houses go) would most definitely be decided by new councillors, the majority of whom will live elsewhere, in areas unaffected by their decisions.

Options being considered

There are two competing proposals. One combines our Hart district with neighbouring Rushmoor and Basingstoke districts, to make a new North Hampshire Unitary Authority. This would be big enough to be efficient, whilst small enough to still be accountable to local concerns.

CCH believes that as North Hampshire is more urban and economically active than the rural south, your council tax should go a lot further, as it would not be subsidising as many costly rural services.

The alternative proposal from Hampshire County Council favours gathering most of Hampshire in a single authority based in Winchester. This would not



We're on the path to a new 'Unitary Authority'



only preserve their current inefficient way of working but also crucially take the overall power to determine local issues, such as planning policy and local schooling, far away from those it directly impacts.

The Government is considering these proposals and are due to announce their decision in March.

Choose well, to keep the local focus

Hart will hold our regular local elections in May this year. There will also be elections for the Hampshire county divisions, which were postponed last year.

CCH feel that it is especially important to have locally focussed candidates elected this year, to ensure that your best interests are carried forward during the transition into the new Unitary Authority. ■

Our Best Protection

Before the last general election, CCH predicted that whichever party won would increase the housing targets in commuter districts, like Hart.

This is exactly what the Labour Government have done. By increasing Hart's housing target from 297 to 771 dwellings per annum, a huge rise of 160%, they made Hart's Local Plan redundant overnight.

Our Plan had allocated sufficient sites to meet the 297 annual target up until 2032, with NO new large sites being needed. But with these new housing targets, Hart now has a shortfall, effectively giving developers freedom to build wherever they like.

We need to have a say

Without a new Plan to show where these houses and flats can go, Hart has no defence against speculative planning applications on any valued greenfield site.

To stop this planning free-for-all, Hart need a new Local Plan covering the next 10 to 15 years and find sites for a possible 13,000 new homes.

What is particularly galling is that higher targets allow developers to 'landbank' even more sites but will not address the real housing crisis. There are already sufficient UK sites with existing planning permission to meet the Government's ambition to build 1.5 million new homes by the end of this parliament – as developers are sitting on these undeveloped sites and not building them out until convenient.

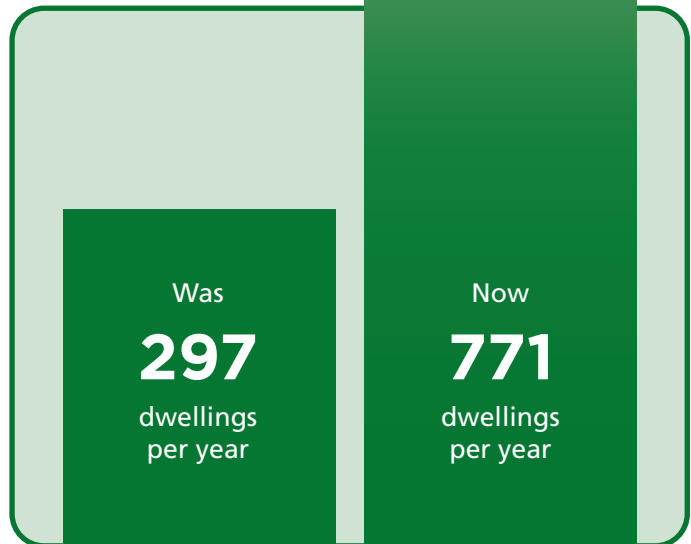
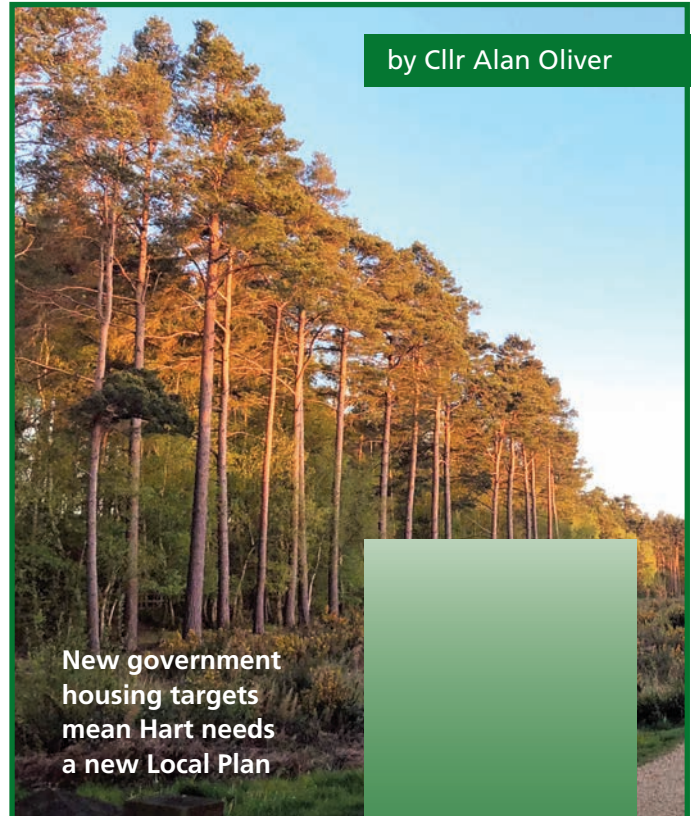
Where developers are building in Hart, they are releasing limited numbers of houses to the market slowly, sometimes as few as one per week. This is due to a combination of factors: fewer buyers able to afford the high cost of a new build, a shortage of skilled tradespeople and a lack of materials.

We feel that there is no justification for this extra stress on our planning system, nor for the threat to our highly sensitive and ecologically important sites. Developers should be encouraged to build what they already have approval for.

The only way to take control

In Hart, we fear that one mainstream political party may try to persuade people that creating a new Local Plan is an unnecessary distraction and cost. We must remember that they represent the wishes of their land rich rural backers who will benefit from allowing what is left of the green lungs around Fleet and the Crookhams to be condemned to the bulldozers.

by Cllr Alan Oliver



Development on the edge of Crookham Village is going ahead because of procrastination by Hart's previous administration in getting a Local Plan in place. Once CCH became part of the administration, we were able to drive the current Local Plan to completion, where it protected us for some years.

CCH say that the urgent creation of a new and robust Local Plan is the only way to ensure Hart isn't spoiled by excessive bolt-on development.

If you agree, support us in fighting for this priority. ■

Formidable Finances

With regular reports about other authorities in dire financial straits, as your CCH cabinet member for Hart District Council's finance, I have been surprised and disappointed to hear that many people think the same must be true for Hart.

I can reassure you that this isn't the case; your council is financially sound, run in a highly cost effective way and has a solid financial foundation to work from.

Award-winning finance team

In fact, in the 2025 Public Finance Awards, Hart's own finance team were publicly recognised for their excellent service in local government finance and had the honour of receiving the prestigious national 'Finance Team of the Year' award, of which we are all rightfully proud.

There are various reasons why some local authorities are in financial trouble. For some, it is of their own making, having borrowed vast sums of money. Woking Borough Council faces a massive borrowing deficit, declaring effective bankruptcy in 2023, due to being over £2 billion in debt from investments in commercial projects made under their Conservative administration. Other councils, such as Hampshire County Council, struggle with underfunding to cover the high cost of adult social care. An issue that the new unitary council will also have to wrestle with.

An enviable position

Under this current CCH & Lib Dem administration, Hart has avoided borrowing money with volatile interest rates to make risky property investments. Instead, we have prioritised using our own funds to make sound strategic investments. The Hart Leisure Centre was built without incurring expensive debt. It provides excellent sport facilities whilst the management fee paid by Everyone Active makes a significant contribution to Hart's revenue stream.

We have also sought to address the housing challenge faced by many in the area. An example being the 41 flats on Edenbrook, obtained by Hart, which are rented out at below market rates exclusively to local key workers. This rental income still makes a valuable contribution to the provision of other Hart services.

Maintaining front line services

Hart can no longer rely on funding from central government, especially when we learned that their settlement grant for 2026/27 does not include the promised funding for the recently introduced food waste collection; This has meant Hart having to find

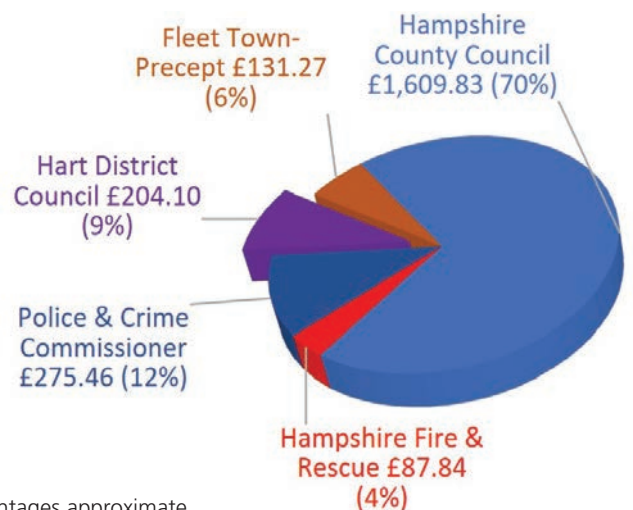


an extra £1.3m from our already stretched budget, adding close to 10% to Hart's annual net running costs.

Despite this, we have been meeting all our challenges head on, without having to cut any front line services. We are able to do this in part by further restructuring the senior leadership team, tightening budgets for employing new staff and keeping a tight reign over expenditure growth.

As Hart's cabinet member for finance, I never lose sight of the fact that we are substantially funded by taxpayer money – be it through government grants or directly through our share of your council tax. I remain committed to ensuring that Hart runs as a lean and efficient council with the resources available.

A reminder that, whilst collected by Hart, the great majority (around 70%) of your Council Tax actually goes to Hampshire County Council. Hart District Council is run on just 9%. ■



Percentages approximate.
2025-6 council tax example for a Band D house in Fleet town area.

Supporting local residents

Whether you're new to this community or a long standing resident, here's a little about who CCH are, what we stand for – and most of all, how we can help you.

Founded in 2004, your Community Campaign was born out of a concern that the proposed large new development at Crookham Park would fail to deliver necessary infrastructure that the area deserved.

With no school or new community centre planned as part of the original proposals, a small group of us started a campaign to draw attention to the need for additional facilities, for a fairer outcome.

Representing you and the place we live

We soon realised that the best way to influence local decision making and make a difference would be to stand for election to Hart District Council. Hence the Community Campaign Hart (CCH) was formed.

We set out our key principles, the main one being to stand for local issues and we promised not to get embroiled in national politics, focusing instead on the issues facing the local community we served.

Over 20 years later, we stand by these principles and have achieved a great deal for residents.

CCH currently has 11 councillors and now forms part of Hart's administration. While all councillors have a responsibility to make decisions on district-wide issues, we believe that our primary responsibility is to represent you, in the communities who elected us.

Even though Hart District Council will only exist for another two years, CCH will continue to serve our community by working to preserve quality of life for you – and to secure a legacy into the new authority.

by Cllr Gill Butler

A few local initiatives:

- We help run the council efficiently, with a balanced budget each year, without loss of core services
- Proactive in delivering results, like driving forward the new crossing into Calthorpe Park school
- We pushed to finish Hart's Local Plan to help protect our countryside from inappropriate development
- We support well proven climate change proposals
- We advise and support residents to have their say and engage with the planning process



We hope you find this newsletter informative and enjoy our local images. This newsletter is self-funded and hand delivered by your local CCH team.

Putting your interests first

Your local Community Campaign councillors can easily be contacted by email, so please get in touch with any local issues that concern you. We all prefer the more personal approach, meeting our residents face-to-face, listening and then doing what we can to help address issues of concern. ■

Contact your local CCH ward Councillors

For Fleet Central

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