

## Hampshire Commission of Inquiry - Vision to 2050

### Introduction

The role of the public sector is to enable people to have a good life<sup>1</sup>.

The Vision should be based on a 'good life' as defined by the people of Hampshire. This means all people, not only those who are easiest to hear from, both now and in the future. The County Council must nurture community leadership to "future-proof" Hampshire for future generations.

Healthwatch is an organisation that champions the voice of the public. So we argue that Hampshire residents must be at the centre of this vision.

Ensuring that current and future service users inform the design, development and delivery of services at all stages will help ensure that what is provided meets the real needs of people. Not only will services be better, money will not be wasted.

This can only be achieved by a co-production approach which enables, listens and responds openly. At the same time, we have to be careful that the views of the current older population are listened to but tempered with the fact that the elderly of the future will have different skills and ways of life - familiar with technology, different family styles etc.

Co-production is a big change to the way in which public services are usually planned and delivered, which tends to be paternalistic, patronising and at worst defensive.

### A society which enables people to keep healthy

Health is core to the good life. Without change, our predictions raise several fears.

We fear an ill-health crisis with many people having poor mental and physical health and earlier death, resulting from reduction in effectiveness of antibiotics, an environment and society that discourages exercise, obesity linked to a more mechanised lifestyle and the impact of the food industry's use of fats and sugars, increase of social isolation and a loss of mutual support networks, an older population, the effects of growing air pollution, and the health impacts of higher temperatures.

Health and social care services will be unable to cope.

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<sup>1</sup> An interesting starting point for the Commission might be *How Much Is Enough?* by Robert and Edward Skidelsky, who suggest the seven elements of the good life are health; security; respect; personality; harmony with nature; friendship; and leisure.

Despite an increase in AI, we fear shortages of labour in roles that need to be done by people, as repressive immigration policies keep economically productive populations away from Hampshire.

With demographic change, we hope accompanied by more healthy years, and changing pension arrangements, it is likely that the workforce will be older.

Below we set out how we think the County Council and partners need to respond.

### ***Future Learning***

Countless studies show the positive impact of education on individual wellbeing, throughout life. Learning can involve enjoying life, meeting others, maintaining or learning new skills. These benefits have been lost in successive rounds of funding cuts to educational establishments.

Life-long learning needs to be supported in different ways, and people who may not consider themselves 'learners' need to receive the health and wellbeing benefits of learning throughout their lives.

The use of technology has opened whole new worlds to many people not least disabled people, and learning is no exception. This will become increasingly so in the future.

Life-long learning needs to be carefully planned with clear objectives. Currently quite a bit of money is spent on adult courses of short duration leading nowhere - not enough to mean that people develop a new interest, and too limited to help people in the workplace.

### ***Future curriculum***

By 2050, increasing automation and AI may have replaced jobs at all levels within the workforce. 'Human' skills of collaboration, communication, empathy, and kindness need to play a much bigger role in educating people in the skills they'll need in the future. These skills are important for the health and social care sectors, both areas of growth, as well as other sectors. Moreover, if these 'soft skills', generally the preserve of lower paid women, are given the priority amongst the whole population that is required for the future, this will increase equity.

### ***Future Work***

Employers and employees will need to adapt to more flexible approaches so that older workers, people with young families and those with disabilities or long term conditions enter or remain in the workforce. This will benefit employers who may otherwise struggle to fill vacancies and retain skills.

It will also reduce social isolation, and assist mental health by giving people a sense of purpose. Worklessness is associated with poor health and wellbeing.

Poverty, too, is linked to poor health and disability. The County Council should do all it can to ensure that people are paid a living wage in the county - and that the living wage reflects the local cost of living including housing.

Using digital technology to enable work to happen alongside people's lives will help create a better balance for individuals and communities and could have far reaching environmental benefits on everything from energy use to traffic congestion.

## ***Future Communities***

### **Digital**

Organisations such as the County Council need to retain an intelligent approach to digital: to use it where it improves quality of life, while resisting its use if it reduces wellbeing.

We reject the suggestion that by 2050, we will be living in an 'all digital' environment - see, for example, the resurgence in printed books and vinyl records.

There is plenty of evidence of what increases happiness, and none of it is digital. People flourish if they have live contact and relationships with human beings, animals, and a green environment.

A range of factors undermine our ability to forge and maintain relationships. Digital is one element. Social media replaces face to face relationships. People email or text instead of talking, whether by phone or face-to-face.

But the growth of digital is by no means the only reason for unhappiness and can be beneficial for many people who otherwise may lose contact with friends and family (e.g. the ability to Skype family members living abroad, the housebound keeping in touch with friends and family through social media etc.). Smart housing can benefit much of the population enabling people to live in their home for longer, without or reduced need for social care.

### **Social isolation**

The changing nature of work and increasing specialisation means that the traditional status of working full time for one employer will become less common. Work will become more skills based with people having more flexible work arrangements - more self-employment, part time contracts, project work etc. In-work poverty means people with low level skills need to take on more than one job. Where families have two parents both are likely to work. Such households may find it hard to have time or energy for making friends, talking to neighbours, building networks of support for themselves and others.

Emphasis on exam results from Key Stage 1 upwards leads to a school curriculum that has reduced the time for children to develop skills to build relationships.

Unfounded fear of crime makes parents afraid to let children play outdoors. Increased road traffic has the same effect.

Reliance on the car means people are less likely to be acquainted with their neighbours, leading to increased social isolation and reduction of informal support networks.

Older and disabled people are most vulnerable to social isolation and therefore structures need to be put in place for what will become a rapidly growing problem.

The County Council already says that it is concerned about social isolation but this is not reflected across its policies and decisions. We suggest that the Council should, immediately, assess all its decisions about their predicted impact on the health and wellbeing of residents. For example:

- Maintain public transport so that people can access social and healthy activities
- Support people to stay in work longer
- Support local non-profit groups that build supportive communities
- Enable involvement in voluntary activity

### **Healthy lifestyles**

The County Council should adopt an evidence-based focus on how to tackle the health inequalities that mean that people who have least, also have the worst health. There is little evidence that individual exhortation has much effect - the County Council needs to use “nudge” techniques to make it easier for people to make healthy choices. This requires a consistent, partnership approach across those who plan and structure the public realm: the County Council, Districts and health. Some simple examples are:

- free water fountains not sale points for sweet drinks in plastic bottles
- provision of footpaths so that people need not get into a car to move safely in rural areas

### **The environment**

#### *What might happen?*

Without fundamental change, we predict dramatic increases in the levels of pollution, both in urban areas and as background pollution across Hampshire

Without a very quick and profound change, average global temperatures will continue to rise, probably doubling the current increase by 2050 and fundamental changes to Hampshire’s climate.

This will lead to

- a rise in sea level causing increasingly frequent flooding of low-lying coastal areas in the Solent Area
- extreme weather events (e.g. flooding, heat waves) leading to death and morbidity
- likely shortages of fresh water
- a reduction in species of plants and animals
- the death of parks and open green spaces

*How will that affect / impact on what the County Council does and how will the County Council and Partners need to react?*

We refer the Commission to the Joseph Rowntree collaborative study with the Council a few years ago which showed the impact on global warming on people in Hampshire, with biggest impacts on those who depend on the County Council and its partners - the old, poor, ill, disabled, and children.

We appreciate that the County Council has had a strong focus on reducing its own carbon footprint; we suggest that it needs to take on a leadership role to ensure that others do the same. It also needs to examine the impact of its own policies on both air pollution and global warming, in particular its approach to transport.

With the shift from fossil fuels, continuing demand for energy for transport and increasing energy use (including for air conditioning), there will be considerable pressure on energy sources. The emergence of wind power as the source of the cheapest zero-carbon energy, and the need to maximise all zero-carbon energy will force HCC to reverse its policies on on-shore wind power.

The electricity grid will need significant strengthening. There may be a role for County Council local heating/cooling networks.

Daily travel patterns will change in unpredictable ways and there will be a need to rethink transport infrastructure regularly, with a view to promoting change towards active transport and low energy forms of transport.

People living in rural areas will become increasingly isolated, and will find it harder to access facilities, including those provided by HCC.

The location of HCC facilities (e.g. schools, care homes) will need to be reviewed regularly to reflect changes in the geography of users' homes and their ways of life.

The countryside service will find it necessary to introduce schemes dedicated to preserving habitat to reduce the destruction of animal and plant species.