

Buckden Parish Council 13 April 2021

District Councillors Report

The Valley Land Management Programme

Huntingdon District Council has approved a CIL bid by the Buckden Village Hall Trust for the renovation of the Lake, Pathways, Banks and Scrub below the playing fields. This will provide more open space for our ever-increasing households.

HDC Budget 2021/22

The HDC Council met on 24 February 2021 to review and approve the annual Budget and to review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This was a successful process, and the Budget was passed. Usually there is some discussion, between Councillors about the relative merits of actions or strategies. These discussions are usually made on party lines or by independent Councillors.

In what was a possibly historic moment at HDC, all Councillors approved the Budget, bar two abstentions. Key points were:

1. Financial support will be continued for the £12.4 million re-development in St Neots. The Council Tax Freeze will continue in the 2021/22 Budget with an increase of 2.6% in 2022/3. Current Council Tax for 2021/22 will be £145.86 for a Band D equivalent property.

HDC is financially stable because of the policies of financial prudence run by the Conservative majority over many past years. The Council generates a considerable amount of its own funding from various services it provides, Car Parking, One Leisure, and charging for Licensing and Planning Services.

2. In addition there is income from Commercial Estates which the Council proactively develops to provide a medium to long term revenue stream.

3. Planning for the future is difficult with Covid and Grant income from Government changing year on year. HDC continues to review its assumptions and strategic options on a continuing basis.

4. Services have been and will be continued as usual with no cuts envisaged at this time.

Local Government Association: Role of Data in Local Government

I joined a Zoom conference on the above. Discussion centered on the use of data for Care, Vulnerability, etc. The use of Artificial Intelligence is growing especially to trigger automatic transfer of key issues to higher level decision making. Slides for this and other care topics are available for anyone interested.

Combined Authority

There are a number of recent posts by the Mayor on developments in the area, mostly to the north with little impact on Buckden directly, but useful as background data. The move of the County Council to Alconbury has been completed.

The Hub and Spoke strategy, where the key towns will have administration hubs and dispersed service points is in place and operational.

A428

The Planning Inspectorate has passed the A428 Caxton Gibbet to Black Cat dualling plans into pre-examination stage. This is a 3 tier re-working of the Blackcat junction and 10 miles of new road to Caxton Gibbet

If the BPC want to comment, then it needs to make an application to HE and the Planning Inspectorate within this period of pre examination. The Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, originally part of this scheme, has been cancelled

Hamish Masson