

Buckden Parish Council 9 March 2021

District Councillors Report

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. 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.
5. Financial support will be continued, notably for Buckden 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.

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.

There were useful case studies from Dagenham and South Shields Councils, on using local data to trigger economic growth.

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, although home working makes it difficult to comment at this time.

Hamish Masson