

District Councillor's Report – February 2023

General

The District Council is in process of setting and agreeing its budget (Medium Term Financial Plan) for this year and to 2027/28 – it will be agreed at a Council Meeting at the end of February. As I write this report the MTFS has been released for review on the HDC website and subsequently by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Buses and the Combined Authority

At the Combined Authority Board meeting on 25 January the Board approved the Mayor's draft budget for 2023/24 incorporating a Mayoral General Precept to support buses across our region.

The Mayoral General Precept, will be an annual charge of £12 for a band D property and, based on forecasts from collection authorities would raise £3.6m in 2023-24.

The precept is in response to the financial pressure facing the Combined Authority across its



supported bus services. This has resulted in the reinstatement of our local Route 66 bus after it was threatened by the withdrawal of Stagecoach.

I can also report that a new contract with the company, Vectare, was entered into from

27th November 2022 for an extended period, from the original 6-month trial, of up to 3 years to deliver our Ting service. So far this has been a successful pilot, however, usage needs to be stimulated to reduce the cost per passenger.

For residents that are not aware of Ting it is a form of DRT (Direct Responsive Transport). Ting covers the West Huntingdonshire area including key towns such as St Neots, Huntingdon, Sawtry and surrounding villages. The service has been introduced to West Huntingdonshire to improve transport links for those living in rural areas, removing young people's dependence on parents for lifts and allowing local residents to lessen their reliance on cars.

To give Ting a try, simply download the Vectare DRT app to your phone, book your trip and your bus will pick you up at your chosen time. Plus, you can travel anywhere within the service zone for just **£2 for a single fare, £4 return. OAP and disabled concessionary passes accepted for free travel.**

A report examining the balance between the use of TING vs. other bus services is being reviewed along with punctuality, reliability, education services, etc. is due to report in the autumn. Lessons learnt exercise with other councils underway.

Wishing you well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

District Councillor for Buckden, Diddington and Southoe

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