

Dear Residents,

After careful consideration and reflection, I have decided to step down from my position on the Cabinet at HDC. While it was a challenging choice, feedback from residents has indicated a preference for a District Councillor whose commitment is undivided by multiple roles.

Taking this into account, I aim to refocus more of my time and energy on the specific needs and concerns of Buckden, Diddington, and Southoe. I believe that by relinquishing my role in the Cabinet, I can better dedicate myself to addressing the unique challenges and aspirations of our community and work towards fostering positive change.

Going forward I will be taking up a position on the Development Management Committee (DMC) at HDC, which should, in the fullness of time, enable me to better advise residents on planning matters.

BUCKDEN PAVEMENTS ARE GETTING BETTER



When I was campaigning to become your District Councillor, one of the main complaints I heard from residents was about our pavements. The 'before' photo shows how bad it was – an elderly resident couldn't leave her home because the pavement outside was in terrible condition. Even though fixing pavements isn't directly my responsibility, I can speak up for you. After sending lots of messages and getting support from the Parish Council, County Councillors, and residents, we finally got the pavement in Springfield Close, Buckden, fixed. People had been waiting for this since before 2013. This shows that even when things are tough, we can still make a difference if we stick with it and work together.

Thanks to everyone who helped lobby and sorry for being a bit late in taking photos as the work was completed before Christmas. I also note that this is very much work in progress - our pavements are still not what they should be!

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

REVISED BEST VALUE NOTICE

On the 30th of January 2024 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) issued the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) with a revised Best Value Notice for another six-month period. The revised Best Value Notice replaces the notice issued by DLUHC on 24th January 2023.

The CPCA, it was set up on 3 March 2017, and was established as a Mayoral Combined Authority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. The mission of the Combined Authority is to make life better, healthier, and fairer for all. HDC is one of the constituent councils of the CPCA and it is a source of funds for local projects.

Most people might not fully grasp the importance of the Best Value Notice, but it's a big deal for all of us. It means that government funding to the Combined Authority is on hold and will probably stay that way until the Best Value Notice is lifted. I'm a member of the CPCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and in our January meeting, we found out that £2.4 million in funding has been paused so far.

In the revised Best Value Notice, DLUHC state: "we recognise the Authority's progress in delivering its agreed improvement plan." This is good news; however, I am concerned about the behaviour of some of our local politicians who, by trying to score political points, may cause unintended consequences for the region, including the loss of access to investment and devolution powers. This sentiment was echoed in a recent note from Richard Carr, Chair, Independent Improvement Board to the CPCA Board who has highlighted that cultural change was needed at Board level.

SHOP FRONT GRANT SCHEME EXTENDED TO ST NEOTS

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is pleased to announce that the Shop Front Grant Scheme is being extended to St Neots town centre.

The scheme is funded by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and is being delivered jointly by BID Huntingdon First and HDC.

The grants can be used to support local businesses to repair and improve their shop fronts. The scheme aims to improve the aesthetics and accessibility of our high streets, encouraging residents to shop locally and attract more local businesses to the area.

For more information on eligibility and an application form, businesses can visit:

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/people-communities/market-towns-programme/shop-front-grant-scheme>

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL IS PLANNING TO BRING BACK CHEMICAL WEED KILLING

I note from the Cambridges Evening News: *'Chemical weed killing is due to start again across the county after Cambridgeshire County Council admitted it had "not got it right" on its policy. The authority stopped using chemical weed killers last year, instead planning to only physically remove weeds if they "presented a hazard or nuisance" to people.*

The county council said at the time of the change that it would save the authority £120,000 a year, would reduce its carbon footprint, and would reduce the use of "potentially harmful chemicals".

However, a review found many people were unhappy with the change and that the policy was not delivering the benefits hoped for.

A report published by the county council said the net saving of the change was around £101,000, lower than expected, with more money now needing to be spent in the coming year to clear weeds that have built up. It added that the need for council officers to travel out more frequently to physically remove problem weeds meant there had also not been the reduction in carbon emissions hoped for.'

I hope that in reintroducing chemical weed killing it is done judiciously and that there will be an expanded focus on increasing biodiversity elsewhere to make up for the loss that will be created by reintroducing chemicals.

Wishing you well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

District Councillor for Buckden, Diddington and Southoe

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