

Buckden District Councillors Report

Dear Residents and Parish Councillors,

As we move into the new year, I want to extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you for a prosperous and joyous 2025.

This past year has been a journey filled with both challenges and triumphs, and your resilience and community spirit have been truly inspiring. As your district councillor, I am filled with hope and excitement for the opportunities that the new year will bring. Together, let's continue to build on our successes and work towards a brighter future for our parish.

May 2025 be a year of health, happiness, and fulfilment for you and your loved ones. Here's to a year filled with new adventures, growth, and shared accomplishments.

Happy New Year!

HUNTINGDON DISTRICT COUNCIL TO BECOME PART OF A NEW UNITARY AUTHORITY

My notes from a recent meeting to brief District Councillors on the changes:

1. **Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) will not exist in 3 years time:** Within this parliament all local authorities that are not currently Unitary Authorities will be converted to Unitary Authorities. This means that HDC and Cambridgeshire County Council will no longer exist as a separate administrative entities.
2. **Move to unitary authority:** A unitary authority is a type of local government that operates as a single tier, responsible for all local government functions within its area. This means that instead of having separate county and district councils, a unitary authority handles everything, including services like education, transportation, social services, housing, planning, fire, police, and health.
3. **County Council elections currently planned to go ahead in May:** Despite the proposed changes, the elections for the County Council are almost certain to take place in May 2025.
4. **HDC is in Wave 2 – submit a final proposal in Autumn:** Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is part of the second wave of councils required to submit their final proposals for the new local government structure by Autumn 2025.
5. **CPCA is only combined authority with 2 tiers:** The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is unique in that it operates with two tiers of local government, while all other combined authorities operate with just one tier.
6. **Peterborough City Council is included:** Peterborough City Council will be part of the new local government framework, working alongside Huntingdonshire and other authorities within the CPCA.
7. **Outside Cambridgeshire and Peterborough boundaries?** This point raises the question of whether the new local government framework will extend beyond the boundaries of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, potentially impacting neighbouring areas.
8. **Impact on capacity likely to be an issue – evidence gathering required to support proposal:** There are concerns that the proposed changes may strain the capacity of local authorities. Evidence gathering and analysis will be necessary to support the proposal and ensure that the new framework can be effectively implemented.

PROCUREMENT FOR PRECEPT-FUNDED BUS ROUTES, KNOWN AS THE 'TIGER' ROUTES DELAYED

On Wednesday 8th January, the Combined Authority announced it is restarting the procurement process for the final 7 precept-funded bus services. This is in response to news that a bus operator – who cannot be named for legal reasons – has withdrawn all of its winning bids to run these services.

As a result of the withdrawn bids, the tendering process for the remaining 7 routes – covering places including Peterborough, Cambridge, Ely, Huntingdon, Wisbech and surrounding villages – now has to start over, meaning the services are not expected to launch until May/June.

The route likely to affect residents by the withdrawal of bids is the Tiger 1 – Huntingdon to Cambridge

<https://www.cambsnews.co.uk/news/stagecoach-please-sir-i-want-some-more-cash-plea-rejected-by-combined-authority/34107/>

Questions at Council

I asked the following questions at HDC's full Council in December:

I understand that the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has recruited the entire Economic Development Team from HDC, creating a significant gap likely to impact our strategic thinking and local plan. As HDC is a partner with the CPCA, and with our leader sitting on its board, is this the action of a friend? What measures are our partners taking to help us mitigate this situation?

Additionally, I would like to ask how much the CPCA staffing budget has increased over the last two years. Given that the CPCA is less burdened by statutory obligations than the District and County Councils, is it appropriate that they are compensating their staff better and taking staff from these councils?

I'm afraid that I didn't get an adequate response to the first question and unfortunately the Leader of the Council had omitted to pick up her notes and was unable to answer the second question on the night – she is going to come back to me. As I write this note I have yet to receive my answer. This makes me suspect that CPCA staffing costs have ballooned over the last two years.

Unfortunately, there's a recurring issue where staff frequently move between authorities, leading to wage inflation. While this is a natural outcome of market forces, in areas where two authorities serve the same residents, in my opinion, adopting a shared service approach could provide better value, increase continuity and reduce the loss of vital knowledge. Perhaps this will be one of the advantages of moving to a Unitary Authority.

Buckden Landfill

I am pleased to note that our local MP, Ben Obese-Jecty, has raised the issue of odours from the Buckden Landfill site with the Environment Agency. He has asked them to provide further information on the actions being taken and provide reassurance to residents that the issue will be resolved.

Wishing you well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

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