

Dear Residents,

As I write this, I hear on the news that East Anglia has had the wettest February on record. Despite our improved situation after the High Street flood mitigation works, some properties and gardens still face flooding – Taylors Lane and Hardwick Lane are the areas of most concern, though groundwater issues can be seen on the new Lucks Lane, Bloor Estate. It's also concerning that we appear to be only at the beginning of the climate crisis, which suggests more preparation is needed.

Along with the Parish Council, I continue to meet with the LLFA, National Highways, HDC, etc. and lobby for better flood defences. We are currently waiting for the results of an Environment Agency study that we hope will identify measures that will better defend us going forward. The situation is complex and it's vital that all agencies, residents, and landowners with riparian rights work together to take action.

On a separate topic, I note that both nationally and locally, disillusionment with politics and politicians is on the rise. Many residents perceive minimal distinction between the main parties, leaving them with limited choices. Enter the growth of independent politicians and Councillors across the country—a refreshing shift? Huntingdon District Council's Joint Administration exemplifies this cooperative spirit, where Independent, Liberal, Labour, and Green Councillors unite to serve our residents. Notably, many Independent Councillors are former Conservatives who've grown weary of the increasingly antiquated behaviour of being whipped to support a single party's political view.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL DELIVERS A STABLE BUDGET

Huntingdonshire District Council's (HDC) 2024/2025 budget was presented at a meeting of the Full Council on Wednesday 21 February and approved for the forthcoming financial year.

The new financial plan sets out how the council will balance its budget and continue to protect vital frontline services despite decreasing government funding, along with rising costs and inflation.

To enable the council to carry on providing vital statutory services, Huntingdonshire Band D Council Tax is set to go up by £5 a year to £160.86 from the new financial year starting on April 1 2024. The rise, which amounts to less than 10p a week, or 3.21%, means that the average household will pay around £3 a week for all the services provided by Huntingdonshire District Council.

As more and more councils across the country grapple with financial challenges, I take pride in our commitment to long-term fiscal sustainability. Most residents are aware that the Joint Administration inherited a multi-million-pound budget gap from the previous administration and we've now made the tough, but necessary, decisions to ensure that we remain steadfast in serving our residents and meeting their needs.

From assisting people with the cost of living and establishing warm community spaces to investing in our market towns and advancing climate initiatives, the Joint Administration has achieved significant progress over the past year. Additionally, our efforts to enhance biodiversity in our open spaces have not gone unnoticed. As we step into 2024, I eagerly anticipate continuing this journey toward a greener and fairer Huntingdonshire for all.

In summary, we've built a strong financial foundation, which is balanced, does not spend reserves and, importantly, protects frontline services. We believe in safeguarding services for our most vulnerable residents, ensuring that individuals and families don't face crises. Our ongoing efforts, which include the new Council Tax Support Scheme, move us closer to our vision of a future where sound finances drive positive outcomes.

This budget takes us another step closer to our goal for a future focused on outcomes which are enabled by sound finances."

Wishing you well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

District Councillor for Buckden, Diddington and Southoe

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