

County Council report to Buckden Parish Council, October 13th, 2020

Council structure reorganisation

The County Council was expecting a White Paper on Local Government. This would have initiated the process of converting two tier areas (District and County) into a 'unitary authority'. At the time of writing, it appears that this has been dropped for now. It seems that the combination of Covid and Brexit is taking up the government's available energy. My expectation is that this will return in due course as it seems an obvious way to reduce local government costs and complexity.

County Council budget for 2021-22

The Council's forward budget planning will be beginning soon. This is always a complex and detailed matter but will be even worse this year, given that costs have risen unexpectedly, demand for services is increasing and council income has dropped. An added complexity is that, as it will be a County Council election year, there will be an expectation, stronger in some political groups than others, that the level of council tax must be kept as low as possible to improve electoral chances.

Local development consultation procedures

The other major change for parish councils is the proposal to change the housing development system consultation. I know from contacts with other groups and organisations that this is causing considerable concern that there could be unwelcome development in villages without the necessary attention to and funding for infrastructure, (roads, medical services, school places). Housing development is mainly a District Council function but it also impacts on highways, schools and adult social care which are County responsibilities.

I can provide comments from elsewhere, if desired.

Local issues

The negotiations with the County Council officers about the hoped-for improvements to the cycleway through Brampton continue, with a strongly worded message from both parish councils to the officers dealing with it. By the time of the meeting, we may have had a response.

You will have been informed by the Clerk of the proposed short-term closure of the Mill Bridge to The Offords for major repairs.

The current requirements in terms of social distancing etc make it very difficult for me to carry out my normal expectation in terms of local casework on a personal basis but I have been responding remotely to issues brought to my attention and I have been including Buckden in my regular walks.

Contact me on 01480 509471, peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Peter Downes, October 6th, 2020