

Annual Report for District Councillors 2022

This last year has been full of challenges with the ongoing issues created by the pandemic. Whilst many will now have returned to some normality, for some life is still difficult and there remain difficulties in getting on with daily life. We are mindful that the impact of two years of Covid has left a big imprint on all of us – some has lost loved ones, others are suffering from ill health, many have ongoing mental health struggles, and the financial impact is still present for many residents. As the local councillor team, we have been supporting residents in any way we can – we've helped some when they have needed help to access financial support and others where they have needed wider local services. We are pushing hard for there to be better support for all: for many the challenges of rising prices will mean some tough choices ahead as the money we have has to stretch ever further.

Huntingdonshire set its Budget with an increase in Council Tax. The Conservative Group have not raised Huntingdonshire District's Council Tax for the last four years. The Liberal Democrats have consistently cautioned this risked not prudently planning for a 'rainy day'...and then the rainy day arrived in the form of the pandemic. Now we are in position where we are eroding the reserves to an uncomfortably low level. Whilst the budget is technically approved as being financially sound by the chief financial officer, if you read his report, he makes it clear that it requires the committed savings to be delivered in full and on time – i.e., failure to do this and we will not be in a sound financial position.

The floods of December 2020 have stayed at the forefront of our minds all year as we have supported the Parish Council to ensure that the works that needed done were completed. The Parish Council and residents have worked tirelessly to do all they can to ensure we do not have repeat and for our part with have worked with the statutory bodies to ensure they have played their part in full to meet their obligations. There are two good practical outcomes that we have secured: Firstly, you can now report any public flooding issues (blocked ditches, culverts, and road drains) on the County Council's website, and they will sort out who needs to act so you, and we, don't have to! <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults> And secondly, the District Council website have pulled all the information you need into a single page on their website: <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/environmental-issues/flooding/> Please take a look and make sure you share this information with neighbours who may not read this report or have access to the internet.

We all desperately hope that none of us see a repeat of the floods but with our climate changing, we are being told this could be more a common occurrence. HDC have produced a set of 'Environmental Principles' which were endorsed at the December Council Meeting. Such is the interest in environmental issues that, unusually, a member of the public addressed Full Council in the debate (allowable but rarely called upon). Council agreed to the proposal to adopt the aspiration of a net carbon zero Huntingdonshire by 2040 and to adopt the OxCam Arc environmental principles. The report noted that the principles will be followed by a refreshed Environmental Strategy within 12 months. We, and fellow opposition members, pushed to secure a 12-month earlier delivery but were not supported by the majority group.

We've picked up a number of transport and highway related casework. We have secured agreement from Highways for the repainting of the lines at the Offord Crossing but are still waiting for the promoted work to be done. We've had the Highways Officer out to inspect road surfaces

and to deal with pavements. We've helped to sort out streetlamps without owners (that's a saga in itself) and issues with signage and vegetation.

The system can be complex and difficult to navigate, and we've taken on casework to assist when it's become impossible for people to get to the help and information they have wanted and needed.

We do this all year round and are happy to help in any way we can. We can be contacted directly, should you need our assistance:

Sarah.Wilson@huntingdonshire.org.uk 01480 412747

Mike.Grice@huntingdonshire.org.uk 01480 383213

Sarah.Conboy@huntingdonshre.org.uk 07831 807208