

County Council Update from County Cllr Anne Wight November 2018

Local Government Reorganisation

The Secretary of State, James Brokenshire, has decided that a brand new county-wide unitary council will be established in Buckinghamshire. The announcement by Secretary of State James Brokenshire has been hailed as a 'truly historic day' by County Council leader Martin Tett.

The new council, which will replace the county council and four districts, will be simpler, better value and more local to Buckinghamshire communities than the current two-tier system, ultimately moving to a more sustainable future for the county.

Services which complement one another but are currently divided between the district and county councils such as bin collections, waste disposal, planning and roads, would be brought together under the single unitary council, resulting in more efficient, joined-up services for residents.

The Secretary of State said in his statement: "Having assessed both proposals against the criteria that we announced to the House on 28 February 2017 (PQ 65271), I have concluded that whilst both proposals meet the criterion for a "good deal of local support", only the proposal for a single unitary council satisfies the criteria for "improving local government" and for "being a credible geography" and that in any event the proposal for a single unitary council is better able to meet the criteria overall.

"Accordingly, I am today announcing that I have decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, the locally-led proposal to replace the existing five councils across Buckinghamshire – the two tier structure of Buckinghamshire County Council and the district councils of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe – by one new single unitary district council, and that I have decided not to implement the proposal for two new unitary councils."

The full statement of the Secretary of State can be found at this link:

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2018-11-01/HCWS1058/>

Remembrance Day Services and Events

I was delighted to have been able to attend the Remembrance Day services at Ivinghoe and Pitstone this year, where I laid wreaths to remember all those who fell in the service of Buckinghamshire and the nation. I am sure that the Edlesborough services were equally poignant and am only sorry that I was unable to attend them this year, although I was very glad to have been able to donate a wreath for the village war memorial. It was lovely to see such support for the events to commemorate the Centenary of the Armistice, both in Ivinghoe Division and throughout the entire nation!



School transport consultation

A ten-week consultation on planned revisions to Buckinghamshire County Council's home to school transport arrangements was agreed by Cabinet members on Monday, (22 October).

The consultation, which launches on Wednesday 31 October, will seek people's feedback on options for modernising the service to make it more sustainable.

The service, currently costing £15.1 million, takes more than 9,000 Buckinghamshire children to and from school. Of this, £12.7m pays for statutory provision, for children eligible for travel assistance. The remaining £2.4m pays for transport where the County Council has applied discretion and agreed to support young people.

The Council says the level of spending is unsustainable and aims to use its limited resources to support those who need it most. The review of the County Council's transport offer would include:

- Improving the mix of council-provided and commercial transport to provide more flexible options and save money.
- Applying statutory requirements to all Buckinghamshire schoolchildren, which would include phasing out local free transport arrangements in Ivinghoe and Iver.
- Requiring parents of post-16 Special Educational Needs students to contribute towards their travel costs.

There would be no change to arrangements for more than 5,000 pupils who are eligible for free travel. Proposed revisions would apply to children and young people who are not eligible for free statutory home-to-school transport.

The finances supporting home to school transport are causing the county serious problems since costs are rising which requires BCC to look at how we can continue to get children to school safely. This might mean, for example, using public transport instead of dedicated school buses. In many cases public transport and school transport use the same routes. We are looking at a number of options to reduce costs, which limit the need to increase prices.

We would very much like to encourage feedback from residents on how best to implement the proposed options so that the future offer meets the needs of families, communities and schools. The aim is very much to make changes considerately in order to limit the need to increase prices.

As part of the consultation Mike Appleyard will hold 11 face-to-face meetings as detailed on the website with those who use the service, and will also meet parents of SEN students. Results of the consultation will be reported to the County Council Cabinet in March before a final decision is made.

Don't Pay Twice

'Don't Pay Twice!' is a Transport for Buckinghamshire campaign which aims to encourage staff, Local Area Technician's, operatives, Members, Parish Councils, bus drivers and the general public to report damage to the highway asset which they might be witness to.

What does this mean?

When we talk about the asset, we are referring to things such as bollards, street lights and signs on the highway. When a member of the public damages the asset, we need to be made aware of this as soon as possible so that we can repair it and make the area safe as soon as possible. We also need to know

about any damage so that we can make a claim against the person who caused the damage.

A good example of this would be if you saw somebody drive into a bollard and subsequently knocking it over. Another example is fly tipping on the highway.

What should you do?

If you are a witness to someone damaging the highway asset, you should take a photo and report the incident using this link page:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/transport-and-roads/report-a-highways-problem/dont-pay-twice/>

If you're unable to take a photo, you should still report it to us with as much detail as you can.

When trying to take a photo it is important not to put yourself in any confrontational or dangerous situations and to keep yourself safe at all times.

Once submitted, your report will be reviewed by the TfB Green Claims Team. If required, you may be sent a Witness Statement form to provide further details.

What the 'Don't Pay Twice!' campaign doesn't include

The 'Don't Pay Twice!' campaign is the chance to report damage to the asset to us. It should not be used to report highway defects, such as potholes, resurfacing issues or a street light that's gone out. These can be reported via [Fix My Street](#)

Adult Social Care Consultation

Overview

BCC is consulting on proposals to change the amounts we charge for some social care services. The charges ONLY apply to people who can afford to pay the full cost of their care or part of the cost. We are interested in hearing from Buckinghamshire residents who use adult social care services, their families and carers. As well organisations that provide adult social care services or support users, their families and carers.

Dates

This consultation is open for responses from **15 October** until **10 December 2018**.

Background

Every year, we look at what we charge customers for social care services to make sure we receive enough money to pay the bills for these services.

To decide who should pay the charges we ask customers to tell us about their income, savings, investments and expenses. This is so we can decide whether or not they will be asked to pay towards their care costs. In simple terms, these are the rules:

- If you have less than £14,250 in savings and investments, we will only look at your weekly income to decide if you have to pay anything towards the care you receive
- If you have between £14,250 and £23,250 in savings and investments, we will look at this amount as well as your weekly income to decide how much you need to pay towards the care you receive
- If you have £23,250 or more in savings and investments, you will be asked to pay the full charge for the care you receive.

Also, the Department of Health are changing the national minimum rate for some adult social care charges and this will affect the amount we need to charge some of our customers from April 2019.

Further Information

For more advice and guidance you can visit the following websites:

Care Advice Bucks www.careadvicebuckinghamshire.org

Eligibility for support <http://bit.ly/2f8qXzN>

Finance and paying for care <http://bit.ly/2wO6GJa>

Independent financial advice <http://bit.ly/2wPoh1K>

How to have your say

Please complete our short online survey at this link:

<https://www.research.net/r/ASCcharges2019-20>

Paper copies are also available for download on the BCC website.

Early Help Consultation

Just a reminder that the Early Help Consultation launched on 4 October and will run for 10 weeks.

There will be three options which are being considered, and your views will be especially important to help BCC make the best choice to help families in need of early intervention and help.

For more information, please consult this link on the website:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/care-for-children-and-families/improving-early-help-services-for-children-young-people-and-families/consultation-process/>