

County Council Update
from County Councillor Anne Wight
April 2018

Sajid Javid's "Minded to" Decision for a Single Unitary for Buckinghamshire

As you may have heard, Local Government Secretary, Sajid Javid, has stated that he is minded to create a single unitary authority in Buckinghamshire.

It's important to be clear that - should the government take a final decision to implement a single unitary - the result would be **a brand new council to replace the existing five district and county councils across Buckinghamshire**. An Implementation Executive (made up of elected members from each of the existing five councils) would be established to work together to lead the preparations for the new council and make decisions about future arrangements.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to combine best practice from across our existing councils, join up and redesign services to focus on local residents' needs, and of course to save many millions of taxpayer pounds to plough back into frontline services. The savings assumptions of £18m a year are prudent estimates which have been independently verified by a third party.

The new council would provide access to services at a very local level for residents through a network of community hubs in locations across the county; and the formation of community boards across Buckinghamshire would put real decision-making power in the hands of local people, empowering them to meet the differing needs of local communities.

Town and parish councils are central to any future unitary model and will be key partners in all aspects of this work. We will all need to work together to ensure a smooth transition and make sure we do not lose the expertise and innovative, customer-focused approaches from across all our existing councils.

Key benefits of a unitary council for town and parish councils:

- **A flexible partnership offer** that reflects the differing sizes, geographies and resources of parish and town councils – more choice about which assets and services (if any) you take on, together with a package of funding and support to allow this to be sustainable and successful.
- **A more responsive agile service:** service delivery based locally through community hubs, able to respond more quickly to local requests and your needs for any changes in service delivery.
- **Greater local influence, choice and decision making - putting real decision-making power in the hands of local people:** a new network of community boards with powers and budget to take decisions for local areas, providing greater scope to represent residents in decision-making on the future of local services.
- **The opportunity to take even greater ownership for the local environment,** with associated opportunities to generate local employment.
- **Higher levels of public satisfaction** as a result of enabling services to be more tailored to meet local needs through this approach.
- **More substantial roles** to attract candidates to join the local council.

The New Council would save more than £18 m per year, there would be considerable scale economies from not having duplicate services (e.g. bin collection and waste disposal handled by different councils), and would eliminate a lot of the confusion as to which council is responsible for which service.

Communities will be free to take on the role they want in the services that matter to them, and will not be given accountabilities they don't want and assets they don't need.

We are encouraging people to write to the Secretary of State to confirm their support for this opportunity to make local government in Buckinghamshire sustainable and fit for the future. The new council will save £45m over five years, offer better value to tax payers and be far simpler for them to do business with than the current model of five county and district councils. We are very grateful for the views and contributions to the debate that people have provided so far, and look forward to continuing our discussions to develop the detail of the future approach.

Please show your support for the change by writing to:

sajid.javid@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Potholes and Damaged Road Surfaces

Unfortunately due to the especially cold winter, new potholes have emerged in many of our roads due to the combination of freezing weather and ice in and on road surfaces.

To help improve road surfaces, Buckinghamshire is getting over £1 million from the government for the roads for repairs and road surface maintenance.

I am also pleased to report that we councillors have been given a small fund to be used to improve roads through jet patching over the next few months. I will be discussing with our Local Area Technician the roads most in need of repair throughout our villages so that they get the attention they need.

Children's Centers

Over the last few months, the council has been talking with local councillors, residents, schools and partners, holding public meetings and sharing plans for the new early help service and the suggested future use of children's centres and youth buildings in the local community.

As a result of these conversations, the council wants to do more to capture the views of residents and local families before implementing the new service and will be carrying out a further public consultation in the next few months. As such, the council will not be implementing the decision made by Cabinet on 8 January 2018 in relation to moving to the new service.

Dates for the next stage of the consultation process will be forthcoming soon.

Freight Strategy Consultation

The next phase of the Freight Strategy Consultation has just finished on 9 April, 2018 and I hope to share the results of that with you once they have been compiled.

Road works on Cooks Wharf, Cheddington

There will be a road closure on High Street, Cheddington some time between **9th April and 13th July, 2018** for the distance from the 30 mph sign to Cooks Wharf. This will affect traffic on Cheddington High Street, Mentmore Road, Long Marston Road, Cheddington Lane, Tring Road, Wingrave Road, Lower Icknield Way, Cheddington Road and vice versa.

Diversions will be in place as indicated below, and I will confirm exact dates once those are made available to me.

Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week

I would also like to remind everyone that Maternal Mental Health Matters Awareness Week will run this year from 30th April - 6th May. Last year, the first ever UK Maternal Mental Health Awareness Week was held in line with World Maternal Mental Health Day and it was a huge success with coverage across the whole of the UK.

As I was one of those mums who suffered with perinatal anxiety and later postnatal depression, this is an area where I feel that I have a duty as a county councillor to champion this cause and ensure that any mum who is similarly affected gets all the help and support available. The Perinatal Mental Health Partnership (PMHP) will be running events throughout the week aimed at raising awareness of mental health issues in new mums and mums-to-be. For more information follow the PMHP as detailed below:

Twitter: Follow us at @PMHPuk

Facebook: Like our page - <https://m.facebook.com/PerinatalMHPPartnershipUK/>

LAF Traffic Calming Feasibility Study Funding

As was mentioned at the last LAF meeting in March, some funding money has been granted to EPC for studies into traffic calming in the parish.

It was agreed that, assuming EPC is happy to match the funding, the sum of £3,146 would be granted to EPC by the LAF resulting in the total sum of £6,292 to be put towards a Traffic Calming Feasibility Study.

As EPC may remember from the LAF, the summary of options as detailed in the LAF report is below:

5.16 Edlesborough Traffic Calming Feasibility Study

5.17 This proposal has been submitted by Edlesborough Parish Council to look into a number of safety concerns throughout the villages. The main areas of concern are the junction of Pebblemoor with the B440, the bend in Pebblemoor at the junction with Ford Lane, and speeds outside Dagnall School.

5.18 The junction of Pebblemoor with the B440: This is one of only two routes from the village onto the B440. The road carries the National Speed Limit of 60mph. Turning left or right out of the junction onto the B440 is often hazardous due to the incline of the road and speeds of oncoming vehicles which are often in excess of the speed limit. When turning onto the road visibility is reduced in part due to the growth in vegetation from the hedge and the trees together with the fact that there is a bend on the road that limits visibility.

5.19 The bend in Pebblemoor at the junction with Ford Lane: This is a blind bend with a 30-mph limit. It has a small 'bend' sign on the road from the B440 is obscured by vegetation. Traffic from the B440 into the village often exceeds 30 mph around this bend and several cars have over the years missed the bend and hit the perimeter wall of the house on the opposite side of the road. Traffic leaving Edlesborough also speeds around the bend in the opposite direction. Many vehicles do not keep within the centre line of the road so it is common to have to swerve to the side to avoid cars entering Pebblemoor. Cars are often parked outside the houses at the corner that increases the hazard.

5.20 20mph limit at Dagnall School: Traffic through Dagnall and particularly past the school either enters the school zone from Hemel Hempstead at speeds well in excess of the 30- mph limit and traffic exiting past the

school towards Hemel Hempstead speed up knowing that the National Speed limit is just around the bend. Thames Valley Police often positions a speed van in the lay-by past the school, but this only address the issue when the van is present.

5.21 TFB have reviewed the proposal and the issue currently taking place and have provided a cost estimate to carry out feasibility on the above outline issues.

It was also mentioned that further discussion was also needed to determine Edlesborough Parish Council's priorities for traffic calming as the feasibility study currently covered three separate locations, and that it may be desirable given the funding amount available to prioritise locations for study.

