

Buckinghamshire Council Report for July 2020
(Edlesborough)
Cllr Anne Wight

I hope everyone is staying safe during this very challenging period as we transition from total lockdown to the “new normal”. I thought I might take this opportunity to fill in residents as to what the “new normal” looks like during the first few months of the new Buckinghamshire Council. While we definitely didn’t get off to the smooth start which was envisaged back before the Covid crisis and consequent lockdown, on 1 April, 2020 the new council was officially launched. However, with no elections possible after the lockdown, all existing councillors from all the district councils and the county council were automatically made councillors of the new Buckinghamshire Council.

For Ivinghoe Ward, this means a total of five councillors rather than the three originally envisaged including myself—Anne Wight—along with my new unitary council colleagues, Cllrs Peter Cooper, Sandra Jenkins, Derek Town and Chris Poll. With seven parishes and with Cllr Cooper technically straddling both Ivinghoe and Wing Wards, we all agreed that we would divide up the parish work to reduce duplication of effort and to ensure that each parish had two dedicated councillors able to focus their attention on the specific needs of each parish and its residents. For Edlesborough, Northall and Dagnall Parishes, Cllr Chris Poll and I will be working together throughout the coming year to make sure that residents have a definite voice in the new council as the new authority takes shape.

As we move forward into the “New Normal”, I also would like to remind everyone that we all need to be very vigilant since this pandemic is sadly far from over. In addition to social distancing measures, it is essential that everyone remember to wear face masks or coverings while using any public transport. This is particularly the case for bus passengers and parents of children using school transport. The government has got more advice on how to wear and how to make a cloth face covering on its website which you can find on this link below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering?dm_i=5438,7OP8,30S0KB,U1G6,1

While the Covid public health crisis has definitely been challenging, one of the greatest things to come out of it has been the way in which our communities pulled together to ensure that no one was left behind. The individual community volunteer

groups were assisted by the Aylesbury Hub coordinators to make sure that help, food, and supplies got to self-isolating or shielding residents in need. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has participated in the many volunteer groups throughout our local area, which have been highly successful in helping shielding and self-isolating residents to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

I am pleased to say we councillors were able to assist those efforts through our Covid fund which was made available through the new Community Boards. We have already been able to provide over £8000 in funding across the Wing and Ivinghoe wards to help our volunteer groups defray their expenses. As we do still have some funding still available for use by volunteer groups helping shielded or self-isolating residents, do please get in touch with one of us Buckinghamshire Councillors in your area if your volunteer group would like to be considered for funding to help defray expenses.

As for council meetings, during lockdown unfortunately we were not able to hold our first full Buckinghamshire Council meeting. However, we do have a virtual full meeting of the council scheduled within the coming weeks. Our local area planning committees have already resumed in online meetings, and so I am happy to report that planning applications are still being processed. I've also attended a Noise and Track Subcommittee for London Luton Airport online recently, and I know Cllr Poll and my other colleagues have also been busy as committees are now resuming online. If residents have any concerns or questions, it is still business as normal, so do please get in touch.

I would like to also remind residents that they can still use Fix My Street and the online Rights of Way reporting tools to report any maintenance issues to the council. Both of these reporting tools can be found on the Buckinghamshire Council website link below:

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

Finally, I would like to draw everyone's attention to the new Community Boards which will help us to deliver services in partnership with parishes and residents in a totally new way. As the Chairman of the new Wing and Ivinghoe Community Board, I am very excited about the opportunity to improve the way that we work with residents and parish councils to deliver results and better address local needs. I will be working with Cllr Peter Cooper who has kindly agreed to be the Deputy Chairman on the Board, as well as with the other local members - Cllrs Sandra Jenkins, Chris

Poll and Derek Town representing Ivinghoe Ward, and Cllrs Netta Glover and Ashley Bond from Wing Ward.

Together we will be working with parish councils, Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue, and local health organisations to address a wide variety of local priorities. While we will be looking initially to ensure that we continue to be responsive to those shielding due to the Covid Crisis, other local priorities we might focus on could include things like tackling environmental issues, addressing mental health or anxiety within the community, reducing doorstep scammers, raising awareness of how to help avoid vulnerable people falling victim to doorstep scams and cybercrime, improving road safety, improving community transport options, and anything else residents feel is important to them.

With a dedicated Community Board coordinating officer in place, we hope to be able to engage residents who may have felt that their needs previously had been overlooked or who may not have had time to attend parish council meetings due to work commitments. The Community Boards are for all residents. We will be looking at new ways of gathering resident input, encouraging participation via new channels, and making sure everyone who wants their voice heard has a say in setting local priorities for the board to focus on.

While Buckinghamshire will have 16 Community Boards in total, no two boards will be alike. This is an organic, new and ever-evolving concept in local government. As we don't want to be restricted by the full Community Board meeting dates in order to get to grips with key issues affecting residents, we will be setting up sub-committees to work in depth and get results. The number and nature of sub-committees won't be determined by a top-down type of government model but instead will be determined by local stakeholders themselves. Sub-committees can then report their findings, concerns and funding requests to the Community Board for projects that are driven directly by resident needs and priorities.

I will be keeping parish councils informed about how the new Community Boards are progressing, so do please keep checking their websites and bulletins for more information as to how you can become involved so we can hear your ideas about how you would like to see our communities develop and thrive. Even if you don't have time to attend meetings themselves, your voice still counts, so do please get in touch as we go forward together.