

Annual Report 2022 of Councillors for Long Buckby Ward

West Northamptonshire Council

It was an immense honour for the three of us to be returned as Ward Councillors for the Long Buckby Ward in the new West Northamptonshire Council in May 2021. We would like to thank every person who put their faith in Cllr Phil Bignell, Cllr Daniel Lister and Cllr Charles Morton. As a team of three Conservative Councillors we took the decision to divide up the Ward with respect to attending PC meetings of which there are 10 a month. Casework is a joint effort in all Parishes where we use our individual strengths – Dan on Education, Charles on Social issues and Phil on Planning. We are happy to be contacted by anyone about anything.

The new unitary council (which combines the duties of county and district councils) inherited a relatively stable financial position but faced and still faces the significant challenge of repurposing services for the geography it now serves. This involves splitting County Council services such as Highways into two and combining the district council services previously managed by Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire into a single operation. With the forthcoming new Highways contract, a combined and better resourced planning system, and efficiencies materialising across most departments we are confident that over the next 2-3 years the benefits of the new local council will become apparent to residents in a way they probably aren't right now.

During this civic year we have had numerous successes in solving issues highlighted to us including planning which seems to generate most problems, Highway issues and signposting services for those in need. We have also distributed nearly £7,500 in Covid support grants to local community groups to aid with their recovery from the pandemic.

The forthcoming civic year will see improved communication with WNC for residents and parishes via our emerging localism model which should see the establishment of local area forums where data-led local needs assessments can be carried out and local needs debated by key stakeholders in each community. More details on this scheme will be provided by the summer. We are also approaching a critical point in the tendering process for the new Highways contract, and public consultation will be included so that residents can make their priorities known. We are incredibly conscious of the frustration felt by most local people regarding the condition of our roads and the inadequate provisions within the current contract, so this represents a fantastic opportunity to break from some of our past failures and deliver visible improvements.

Finally, we would like to thank all Parish Council members and other community volunteers for their ongoing commitment to our wonderful villages. Without this support our job be immeasurably more difficult. As already said we are open to any input and as elected representatives we will strive to deliver solutions when possible.

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