

Daventry District Councillor Annual Report to the Parish Councils 2019

Walgrave Ward - comprising of the villages of Walgrave, Holcot, Old & Hannington

This short report is meant to advise residents of what is happening in and around the District:

1. Proposed New West Northamptonshire Unitary Authority

In March of last year, six weeks before my election, Max Caller, the Government Inspector, brought in to investigate the financial position of the County Council, published his report and concluded that the County Council's position could not be solved by itself. He recommended that plans be worked up for two unitary authorities be introduced, one covering the north and the other covering the west of the county. These would replace the current eight-authority, two-tier system consisting of NCC and the seven District and Borough councils.

During June and July 2018, all eight councils including Daventry District Council held a joint public consultation into future local government reform focusing on the two-unitary model — the only option which met all of the Government's criteria. It is 45 years since Daventry District Council was established, we are now about to start what is expected to be its last year before being abolished to make way for a new Unitary authority

The proposal is for West Northamptonshire, comprising the current area of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire; and North Northamptonshire, comprising the current areas of Corby, East Northamptonshire, Kettering and Wellingborough. The proposal was agreed and submitted to the Secretary of State on 31 August by seven of the county's eight local authorities (Corby Borough Council decided not to).

Draft legislation was to have been finalised in January 2019, presented to the House of Commons and Lords by February and given Royal Assent by April. This would have meant that a shadow authority would now have been up and running in preparation for Unitary status to be completed by April 2020.

Because of Brexit, the Parliamentary timetable has slipped considerably, and it now looks that this timeline will now no longer be met. We are all still awaiting an announcement by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to set out his plans for the Northamptonshire Unitary programme. It looks likely that this programme will be put back a year, and delaying vesting day until 2021 would result in considerable uncertainty for both public and staff. But the details of how the programme will advance is speculative until the Secretary of State's announcement of the Structural Changes Order (SCO) hopefully before the summer recess. The current timescales are acknowledged to be very challenging so behind the scenes cross party reorganisation groups have been set up to push ahead on plans, these work streams include; finance, HR, ICT and data/information governance. Further updates will follow in the coming months.

2) Waste

The new contract for waste management began last summer — a joint strategy with Norse and DDC. The handover period from the previous contract had its issues and this took up a lot of my time sorting out collection problems, however after several months bedding-in time the new system is now dare I say it 'trouble-free' and if any problems do occur they are

swiftly sorted out. Many residents have said they are pleased to have one large recycling bin rather than two very small blue and red boxes.

We have also found that any 'fly tipping' problems are quickly resolved by either constituents contacting myself &/or by using the easy to use online reporting system. In the lead up to the change-over, much speculation was given on the amount of extra fly tipping that could occur owing to the cost imposed on Residents by charging for compost bin facility. Such concerns have proven to be unfounded and overall the uptake on the service was higher than anticipated. This new contract also turned out to be beneficial for Charities, as Councillors fought a campaign and won to get Charities exempt of being charged. Just to remind Parishes, that those who use the compost service, will need to renew their contract with Norse/DDC for 2019/2020. £36 for the year. Go to www.daventrydc.gov/gardenwaste

3) Duties and Casework

As part of my duties I regularly attend pre-Council meetings, General Council meetings, Strategy meetings as well as being a member of the Corporate Governance Committee that scrutinises audit arrangements and ensures the Councils' financial practices are adequate. Constituents casework takes many forms which involve me meeting personally with Council staff to discuss tackling local housing disadvantage issues, anti-social behaviour, community grants, licensing, planning and Local Government regulation.

4) Planning

New Daventry Development Link Road.

It is just over four and a half months since the New Link Road was opened (avoiding Flore and Weedon villages). The link road will release land for housing in the urban area where there is a shortfall as opposed to the rural area where we have exceeded our target, in short this contributes to the 5 year land supply.

Daventry - Cinema Complex in Mulberry Place

Proposals are well under way for the cinema complex, restaurants and cafes. Work is hoping to start in July. The development is expected to comprise a 3/4 screen cinema with 2 restaurants fronting onto/facing a square for outdoor events. Adjacent car parks will provide approximately 300 free car parking spaces.

Local Planning

Our 4 villages have seen many planning applications in the last year most of which are passed by the planning officers unopposed. However we have had some particularly contentious applications with many constituents voting against the proposed plans. After objections made by the Parish Councils and supported by myself these applications were put in front of the Planning Committee for resolution. In all cases, I try to explain what I can and cannot achieve in these areas and where possible intervene on behalf of residents who would prefer not to deal direct with Officers at DDC.

Thank you to all residents for their continued support and as always I consider it a privilege to be your advocate.

Councillor Lesley Woolnough