

Buckinghamshire Councillor's 2020 Annual report to parishes

The 2019/2020 year has again been not only extremely busy but a year of extraordinary change, the historic formation of a brand-new Council, and unforeseen circumstances; the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic.

As your local councillor for Grendon Underwood ward representing nineteen parishes and parish meetings, I was also the Leader of AVDC and was on the Shadow Executive of the new Buckinghamshire Council. I am now the Deputy Leader of the new Council and responsible for adult social care.

The year and workload leading up to the formation of the new Buckinghamshire Council from the five councils, county and districts, involved a tremendous amount of 'behind the scenes' work and decision making including legal, finance and systems, IT, HR and recruitment to the top three tiers of management to name but a few areas. As you are aware the local elections for the new unitary and for parish councils and the police and crime commissioner were postponed until May 2021. Fortunately, a great deal of work was done before vesting day and then the Covid 19 pandemic overshadowed everything.

The coronavirus is of great concern to everyone in Buckinghamshire. We are working together, across all the partner organisations in Buckinghamshire, with Public Health England and the Department for Health and Social Care to tackle the outbreak to support our residents, communities, businesses and schools during this difficult time. This is an incredibly fast-moving situation and the council is closely following government guidance to provide accurate and up to date information. We are well-prepared for these situations and have robust plans in place to focus on keeping essential services running to look after our elderly, the most vulnerable, children, and safeguard local communities.

As the impact of Coronavirus increases, we may need to make some temporary changes to some services. For example, we had temporarily closed the household recycling centres and country parks, additionally we had suspended green waste collections, but following guidance have now been able to reintroduce these services carefully following government guide lines. This is so we can protect people from infection and use our staff and resources where they are most needed. The Council will communicate any changes to residents and ongoing engagement with communities will be a priority. Information about any service changes will be released to the press and published on our website www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk Do check the Council website as it has many useful links to Government policy and what is happening locally and where you can get help.

Despite Covid there were many other significant matters of concern to me as your local councillor.

In the north of my ward particularly affecting Calvert Green Steeple Claydon Twyford Edgcott and Charndon, HS2 continues apace. I have spent many many hours writing to ministers, peacefully protesting, engaging with our new MPs and supporting the community but sadly the Notice to Proceed with the main works has been issued and it looks as if the project will continue despite spiralling costs exceeding £100billion. One can only hope that in the current circumstances Westminster might reconsider and use the resource to support people and businesses following the impact of the coronavirus.

Continuing on the campaigning theme I was particularly active this year in campaigning against the proposed new 'motorway' - the Expressway which we heard is planned to join up Oxford to Cambridge and 'unlock' growth across the area. There were many reasons to oppose this which I did vigorously - not least its environmental impact, its business case and the potential to bring vast numbers of unnecessary and misplaced housing to our rural area which is not included in the emerging VALP (Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan) Instead the council has lobbied for much needed improvements to the existing roads network.

A snapshot of some of the other things I have been involved in over the last year is leading the district council in environmental initiatives such as tree planting schemes, protection of wildlife, wildflower meadow development and supporting the reduction of carbon emissions.

Recently I have been very involved as a Trustee of the Bernwode Community Bus (Bernie!) in collecting for the food banks in both Buckingham and Aylesbury and we have visited several villages in my ward who have been immensely generous.

It is a pleasure working with parish councils. Thank you and take care in these very unusual times.

Your Councillor
Angela Macpherson
19th May 2020