

Dear Councillors,

Public consultation on proposed changes to Local Council Tax Support Schemes in North Northamptonshire goes live on Monday 5th October.

Public consultation on the proposals for the new Council Tax Support Scheme for North Northamptonshire will go live for an eight-week period, beginning on Monday 5th October, until Monday 30th November 2020. The final scheme will be agreed by the North Shadow Executive Committee on 28 January 2021.

Residents and stakeholders across Corby, Kettering, East Northants and Wellingborough, along with countywide stakeholders, will be invited to have their say on the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support Schemes (LCTSS).

The schemes, also known as Council Tax Reduction Schemes, provide a reduction for working-age people and households on low incomes, to help them pay their council tax bill. There are individual schemes in place for Corby, Kettering, East Northamptonshire and Wellingborough, which are administered by the councils in each area.

Each council currently offers a different level of support through their LCTSS scheme, but on 1st April 2021, the formation of North Northamptonshire Council means that the existing four schemes need to be brought together into one scheme which is affordable, consistent and fair to all our residents wherever they live, not only for those that receive support but also for those that depend on wider services.

Currently, the minimum Council Tax contribution that working age people must pay ranges from 8.5% to 45% across the four Councils. One proposal to bring the schemes together is for the minimum contribution to be set at 25% (therefore a maximum discount of 75%). There are also another six proposals outlined in the consultation document.

Those of pensionable age are protected by the prescribed regulations set out by central government therefore will not be affected by the changes proposed to the LCTSS in North Northamptonshire, and will continue to receive the same level of support that they have been used to getting from their current council.

Full details about the scheme, how the proposals were developed and the other options considered, along with the online consultation questionnaire, are available online at the following link:

<https://futurenorthants.citizenspace.com/lctss-north/2021-22>

(Please note this link will go live on 5th October)

Please encourage those in your area to take part until 30 November. All responses are anonymous, and participants are not required to submit their name or address.

Coronavirus

The big change this week is the introduction of **NHS Test & Trace**. Parish and town councils that own and operate buildings that allow public access such as community centres, must have a system in place to request and record contact details of their customers, visitors and staff and register for an official **NHS QR code** and display it at the venue (<https://faq.covid19.nhs.uk/category/?id=CAT-01027>). National ACRE yesterday published a handy guide, which is available at <https://acre.org.uk/cms/resources/appendix-m-test-trace-qr-code-24.09.20.pdf>.

A handy poster describing the **different symptoms of cold, flu and Coronavirus** is available to download and share at: <https://www.northantscalc.com/uploads/difference-colds-flu-covid-poster.pdf>. It is particularly useful at this time of year, when colds and sniffles are commonplace anyway. My thanks to Jayne Bunting, Clerk to Boughton Parish Council, for bringing it to my attention.

On Wednesday next week, **30 September 2020 at 9:00 a.m.** I am hosting a one-hour catch up session for any clerk that wants to share intelligence, ideas and tips on how to operate council facilities and services in a Covid secure way, or ask any questions of me or other clerks to find out what others are doing. To join the session visit <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82966713730?pwd=OFFKQ0pkTTJrb3IKZDU3Y0NlV0laUT09>.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Last week's LGR Q&A sessions were extremely useful and lots of actions were taken away by Northants CALC and by the shadow council Leaders and Chief Execs. One of our actions was to write up the questions and answers and report back to member councils. You will find the report for the **North Northamptonshire** event held on 14 September 2020 at <https://www.northantscalc.com/uploads/north-northants-lgr-qanda-14sep20.pdf>, and the one for the **West Northamptonshire** event held on 18 September 2020 at <https://www.northantscalc.com/uploads/west-northants-lgr-qanda-18sep20.pdf>. Thank you once again to all the council that sent delegates, which made the events so useful. The date for the next LGR Q&A for West Northamptonshire has already been fixed for Monday 18 January 2021, 10 – 12, so clerks and councillors in the west please put that date in your diary now. It will be a special "Meet the new WNC Chief Exec (Anna Earnshaw)". The date for the north will be confirmed soon, but hopefully that same week. On Tuesday this week I attended the WNC Shadow Exec and Lesley attended the north equivalent on Thursday. You can find all the papers for the meetings at <https://cmis.northamptonshire.gov.uk/cm55live/Home.aspx>. One of the items discussed was the awarding of a contract to a web site supplier for the new councils, so expect to see an announcement soon!

Electricity Buying Group

On Tuesday we launched our electricity buying group in partnership with Northamptonshire-based **Clear Utility Solutions (CUS)** (<https://www.clearutilitysolutions.com/ncalc-partnership>). Enquiries and requests for quotes have already started being received. CUS has promised us that they will search for the best prices possible for member councils, and that they will provide top-notch customer service. No more wasted hours for the clerk spent on the phone explaining what a parish council is!!

Kettering Town Council

At a meeting of Kettering Borough Council (KBC) held on Wednesday evening, it was formally resolved to create a **new town council for Kettering**. It will come into legal existence on 1 April 2021, the day KBC itself is dissolved. There's a lot of detail to work through over the next months, but it's great that the decision has finally been made. Corby Borough Council (CBC) is expected to make a decision soon to create a town council for Corby. New town councils for Northampton and Wellingborough were created on 1 April 2020 but, due to the postponement of the 2020 local elections, have not yet started providing services.

That's all for now. I hope you have a good autumnal weekend.

Best regards,

Notes to Cricket Club after free solicitor appointment regarding leases June 2020

Any lease over 7 years would need to be registered with the land registry and that would call into question the current PC freehold title registration of the land issue - still with the land registry. So it would make sense to wait until we receive that before we ask the solicitors to check the lease to the cricket club.

The cost of this further checking would be in the region of £800-900 (the same as if they were starting from scratch really). This is more than we thought, and were told previously (£500), and so we will have to ask the full council at the next meeting to vote on spending this money on getting the solicitors to make the lease more watertight, when we have the freehold title. There also needs to be a clear statement about shared usage and reserving rights for third party usage when there are no matches etc.

But it is doable and the best way still of securing funding via grants for the CC.

They ensure us it is worth the money as other organisations spend lots more resolving disputes over land and leases! Not that we anticipate lots of problems with the CC but who knows in 10, 20 years?! It may be that the cricket club are asked to contribute in some way towards the lease cost either with increased rent or a one off contribution if you are able.