

County Council Update from County Cllr Anne Wight November 2019

Home to School Transport

As a few families have contacted me regarding the recent changes for some students towards the commercial bus services, I thought it might be useful to summarise some of the key points here.

Last week the County Council [announced the roll-out of over 1400 commercially-run school bus places](#). These places will convert from the current arrangement of being commissioned by the Council to be provided by external, commercial operators from Monday 4 November.

We have set up some [commercial routes Q&A webpages](#) to help parents and carers understand these changes and address any questions or concerns they may have about how the new commercial routes will work.

How will the transfer to commercial routes work?

Parents of children who are moving to commercial routes from 4 November have been informed that they will need to make contact with the new operators by early December to confirm and pay for their transport arrangements for the term starting in January 2020.

We have written to all parents moving to commercial routes with detailed information on the changes and what they need to do. This letter also reassures parents that they do not need to take any action immediately because their transport is already confirmed on the new commercial route from 4 November to end December.

For those parents who have already paid the County Council in full for an annual school transport bus pass, we are arranging refunds for the remainder of the school year from January 2020. The refunds will be processed during November so that parents have cleared funds returned to them before the end of November, before needing to pay anything further direct to the new operator in early December. We are also making transfer arrangements for those who currently pay by direct debit.

All temporary bus passes currently in use will remain valid for this term until end of December, when families will receive an updated pass from the operator for the January term, after having confirmed their travel with the new operator.

Commercial route timetables:

Some of these commercial services will run on a different timetable. For the passengers the timetable changes apply to, we have contacted families in advance to make sure they understand the changes to their particular service and are prepared for when the changes come into operation on 4 November. A small number of journeys are lengthened by 20 or 25 minutes, but the majority of journeys (55.6%) will stay the same with no changes, with 21.5% having a shorter journey time overall.

Commercial routes open to the public to use:

A number of the commercial routes will be open for the wider public to use and therefore will not be dedicated for school children. We have been successfully placing children onto public routes for some time as part of our standard practice and many other councils across the UK operate on the same basis. In practice, we find the majority of passengers using public school routes are school students.

We have ensured there is a commitment from the commercial route operators that they will deliver to the standard we would expect from our commissioned routes. This includes a commitment to ensuring appropriate safeguarding of children whilst travelling, and assurances that operators will not make major changes to route timings or prices part-way through the year.

There are a number of benefits to the use of commercial bus services for school age passengers; ticket prices are often cheaper for all users of the bus services and the services are more sustainable in the longer-term. Importantly, these services also provide additional travel options for the wider community including those residents who only have access to public transport.

More information on this can be accessed on the BCC webpage at the links below:

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/news/over-1400-commercially-run-school-bus-places-to-be-created-for-students/>

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/school-transport/commercially-run-school-routes/>

London Luton Airport Expansion Consultation and information

Luton Airport's Statutory consultation for the proposed expansion from 18 to 32 million passengers per year will run from 16th October until 16th December.

Residents might wish to review expansion proposals and reports on the Future

Luton website below in order to fully understand the key issues under discussion during the consultation.

<https://futureluton.llal.org.uk>

I was happy to see so many residents in attendance and engaging the Luton airport representatives at the Dagnall Village Hall consultation event on 29th October. The informative displays provoked a fair few questions from residents regarding the expansion and new plans for improved surface access, air quality issues and many other aspects of the expansion.

Do please come along to these for the chance to ask your questions directly to the airport representatives and to learn more about the consultation process.

In our area these are as follows, although the complete list can be accessed via the link below.

Thursday 14 November – Aylesbury The Gateway, Gatehouse Road 4 – 8 pm

Wednesday 4 December – Tring, Nora Grace Hall, Faversham Close 2 – 8 pm

<https://futureluton.llal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/LLAL-consultation-dates.pdf>

Street Lighting fault reporting

As we have now set the clocks back, we are all facing the return of darker shorter days and longer nights. In preparation for this, Transport for Bucks has been working on improving street lighting through two distinct areas of work, which have been taking place alongside the normal maintenance operations:

- LED street lighting replacement and
- Lamp column replacement programme.

As some residents have asked me specifically about BCC's programme to put LED lighting in place, I am pleased to say that BCC successfully bid for 'SALIX' funding to enable the installation of even more energy saving lighting LED lighting across the County. This will see the replacement of 2443 lanterns in residential areas. Work commenced in late July and will be completed by the end of October.

Over the previous 2 years, 14,000 lanterns were replaced with LEDs - an energy saving of 1.4M kW/h, which helps to counter increasing energy prices, as well as reducing carbon emissions. The additional replacements will give a further 650,000kW/h of energy savings.

By the end of the 2019/20 financial year, a massive 66% of the lighting stock will be LEDs, with an additional project taking place in early 2020 to replace a further 2500 lanterns.

TfB teams have also been working tirelessly to replace age expired lamp columns. By the end of November, over 400, which have been identified upon inspection as age expired, will have been replaced.

Where columns are inspected and are found to have significant damage, it may be necessary to cut the column down to a stump for safety reasons. If this is the case, TfB will make every effort to replace these units as swiftly as possible. In addition to columns on the annual replacement programme, a constant rolling programme is in place to install new columns where they have been damaged, for example, in road traffic collisions. So far in 2019/20 over 140 such lighting columns have been replaced. An additional 40 are also due for replacement.

When the problem lies with the electricity supplier

Sometimes members of the public report failed lights to us that have stopped working due to an underground electrical supply fault. When this is the case, TfB is not able to repair the fault, because the cables are owned and maintained by the electricity companies for the area and only they are allowed to carry out repairs. However, TfB works closely with all three electricity companies who have equipment within the County to try and get these repaired as quickly as possible, but these repairs can be complex in nature and take some time to fix. This is why, occasionally, a reported street light could be out of service for some time. When this occurs, new temporary signs will be fixed to the lighting column to alert the public that TfB is aware of the problem but that they are waiting for the electricity company to address the issue. This will reduce the need for the public to repeat reporting such faults.

How to report a fault

Residents can report street lighting faults using the link below:

fixmystreet.buckscc.gov.uk

TfB does not maintain every streetlight in the County, however when trying to report a street lighting fault via fix my street, this will be made clear. It may be the responsibility of the Town or Parish Council in which case a link, which directs you to find owner is provided.

**New Buckinghamshire Council Budget Priorities Consultation
running until 25 November, 2019**

The major services that our councils provide in Buckinghamshire play a part in all of our lives in some way on a daily basis. Whether that's through waste and recycling collections, roads and transport, education and learning, health and social care, planning where new housing goes or making use of our many parks, libraries and leisure centres.

As we plan for the new Buckinghamshire Council, which will replace the county and district councils from April next year, it's important that we take a look at our priorities and focus on the needs of all the people of Buckinghamshire and the future challenges we face as a county.

As one council, there will be many opportunities for us to bring services together better and improve the lives of our residents, businesses and communities.

We continue to face some very big challenges across the county:

- Our population is growing rapidly, which means more young children needing school places and more people needing our services .
- People are living longer, which means more elderly people needing help or care and the type of services that people need from us is getting more complex.
- The number of houses in the county is growing, which means more people who need every day services like waste and recycling collections, as well as the additional pressure on us to provide new roads, schools and other infrastructure to serve these new and growing communities.
- The lack of affordable housing means some people are struggling to afford to own or rent a home privately, which leads to an increase in people needing social housing.
- We are amongst the increasing number of councils who no longer receive any central government funding for day to day services.

As one council, there will be many opportunities to improve services, making it simpler and easier for you to get the services you need. In keeping the new council local, you will also be able to access information and advice about services from places close to where you live across the county.

There is no doubt that having one organisation across the council will reduce costs and duplication, but this will take time. We expect that over the next 4-5 years we will begin to see the fruits of coming together as one organisation, reducing costs by £18m by working smarter together.

But for now, we still have a job to do in balancing the books next year.

We have statutory responsibilities – things we that we must legally do, like safeguarding vulnerable children and adults, and providing schools and education. These are our biggest and growing areas of spending.

It is also important to note that the day to day money for running of our schools is not set or controlled by the council; this goes directly to schools from government.

We are now working to set the priorities and budget for the new Buckinghamshire Council for the next financial year, 2020/21 and beyond. In doing this we will need to make some difficult decisions about the level of spending across the board – making changes in how we provide some services by working smarter together, improving and ensuring a consistent level of service for residents across the whole county . We will also be investing in working closely with the community and local partners to ensure they are involved in decision-making and can influence the direction of the new council through new Community Boards.

We want to hear from you to help shape the new Buckinghamshire Council, tell us what you think we should be focusing on across all the services that you receive.

You can complete the online survey using the link below (open until 25 November) which will take less than 10 minutes. You can also drop into one of the main council offices or our main libraries to take part – these are Amersham, Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Chesham, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, Marlow and Princes Risborough.

We are ready and waiting to hear your views.

<https://shadow.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/consultations/budget2020/>

For more information on building the budget, residents can also look at the link below:

<https://shadow.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/consultations/budget2020/building-the-budget/>

