

Devolution Information Sheet

What is devolution?

A change in regional and local governance is happening all over England. In 2011, the Government introduced The Localism Act. This Act of Parliament changed the powers of local government in England to facilitate the devolution of decision-making powers from central government control to individuals and communities. In 2014, the first 'devolution deal' was agreed between the Government and Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Since that time, 'devolution deals' for a 'menu of specials' have been agreed all over England at all tiers of government. The process has been described as one of evolution not revolution.

Why is this happening?

Principal and local councils are experiencing an increase in demand for services, particularly adult social care and education at a time of reduced public spending. To meet service delivery targets with increased financial constraints, new methods of joint working are being developed to deliver local integrated services.

Services work best when they are designed, managed and delivered at a local level, and where they can be readily attuned to local circumstances and priorities.

In practice, the services most commonly devolved are those covering services which maintain the local environment.

How is Hughenden Parish Council affected?

On 1st April 2016, Hughenden Parish Council entered an Agreement with Buckinghamshire County Council to deliver the following Urban Devolved Services:

- **Urban Grass Cutting**
Cutting of urban grass verges (30 mph areas and some 40 mph areas) as defined on the Local Council Overview Map (BCC website).
- **Hedging**
Cutting hedges/trees/shrubs which are a danger to road users/pedestrians. Landowners must be identified/found in the first instance and issued hedge cutting notices. If they still cannot be found or have not cut the hedge, then to cut the hedge/tree/shrub.
- **Siding Out**
Preventing the encroachment of verge soil and growth onto the footway.
- **Rights of Way**
As per Annual Clearance Map (BCC website), surface mowing up to the local council boundary where landowners have not carried this out. The landowner is responsible for ensuring hedges and trees are safe and if they fall across the public right of way they are removed. The landowner is responsible for cutting hedge growth across a right of way.
- **Weed Killing**
Weed control of noxious and injurious types weeds on footways.
- **Maintenance**
Maintenance of BCC street furniture (defined as above street level or on and at rear of footways) including minor repair or repainting. Cleaning of street signs, removal of fly posters and other illegal signs. Checking for obstructions to footways and approval of charity event advertising signage.

How is it funded?

Buckinghamshire County Council has agreed to pay Hughenden Parish Council £11,410 per year for three years to support delivery of services. Buckinghamshire County Council claim that the budget provided is the same as would be spent if the services were not devolved.

To put the budget into perspective, each parish wide urban grass verge cut costs £3,000. The current average number of urban grass verge cuts is six per year costing Hughenden Parish Council £18,000 per annum. Funding received from Buckinghamshire County Council covers only two thirds of the annual grass verge cutting cost and does not cover hedging, siding out, Rights of Way, weed killing or maintenance.

Hughenden Parish Council is funding the shortfall in budget through precept. The current level of funding from Buckinghamshire County Council is guaranteed until 31st March 2019. After that date, there is no guarantee of future funding.

If Hughenden Parish Council had not accepted the devolved Agreement with Buckinghamshire County Council, then there is a possibility that the services provided by the Agreement would cease to be delivered.

Hughenden Parish Council resolved to accept the devolution of Urban Transport Services:

- 1. To ensure continued delivery of services**
- 2. To deliver improved, cost-effective services by local service providers**
- 3. To provide a flexible and responsive service within budget constraints**

Hughenden Parish Council welcomes feedback from parishioners as we continue to develop strategies for delivering services within restricted financial constraints.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we undertake this new and exciting venture.

How do I find out more?

- **Hughenden Parish Council**
Email: clerk@hughendenpc.org.uk
Website: www.hughendenparishcouncil.org.uk
Tel: 01494 715296
- **Buckinghamshire County Council**
Email: parishdevolutionproject@buckscc.org
Website: buckscc.gov.uk/search/?q=DEVOLVED+SERVICES
Tel: 01296 382038
- **Local Government Association**
Email: info@local.gov.uk
Website: www.local.gov.uk/devolution
Tel: 020 7664 3000

How do I report a problem?

To report an issue with urban grass verges, hedges, footways or street furniture, please email clerk@hughendenpc.org.uk or telephone Hughenden Parish Council Office 01494 715296.