

My report is in three sections. The first highlights the three major building projects being undertaken by SBDC. The second concentrates on BCC and the queries which the majority of residents send me and also explains how the mechanism for obtaining additional parking restrictions works and the third section is an update on the position with regards to the new Unitary Council.

SBDC

This has been a very busy year including three major projects. The first is the building project to provide temporary accommodation in Bath Road for vulnerable families so that the use of emergency bed and breakfast accommodation can be minimised. The second is building 34 rented apartments on the site of the old Gerrards Cross police station. In line with council policy 40% of these will be at affordable rents. Clearance of the site for the rented apartments has started. The name of the large block is to be Edith Smith House after the first ever female police officer and the Road is to be called Robert Peel Close again reflecting the police connection (historic nicknames for policemen were bobbies and peelers after Robert Peel who was the PM when the first police force was instigated).

The third project is the car park in Station Road.

SBDC needed to address three basic questions with respect to car parking in Gerrards Cross.

* Is there adequate provision for car parking in the Town to satisfy present and future need?

* If not where could a car park be sited and

* If a new car park is required can a sound business case be written for its provision.

Independent experienced Consultants were engaged to answer to the first question. A current and an ongoing increasing need was identified.

The site in Station Road was chosen. This is already a surface car park and has been identified for development for a number of years. Studies show that there is insufficient parking capacity in Gerrards Cross. Station Road already has high rise buildings on both sides.

The business case was prepared by senior Council Officers who have, over the years, safeguarded the balanced running of the SBDC budget as is their statutory duty.

The business plan has followed the Council's governance process fully. It was considered at the Policy Advisory Groups, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the full Council.

Additionally the decision was subject to a call in by Councillors and was subsequently considered by a specially convened meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee. As is part of the Council's practice, the process included consultation, applying for planning permission and using approved Contractors.

Incidentally but importantly, the business plan includes the provision of affordable season tickets for local workers and residents. The new car park development will offer a long-term solution to the increasing demand for car parking in Gerrards Cross. This needs to be met in order to ensure the long term viability of the town centre and its businesses, in the best interests of local residents and visitors.

BCC

The two major issues which residents are concerned about are the state of the roads and footways and the provision of additional double yellow lines to restrict parking.

BCC has put additional funding into maintaining the roads following a small extra allocation from central government. It is still insufficient to remedy the backlog and it is this which leads to the stringent criteria which need to be met for both roads and footways before there is intervention.

(There is a separate allocation for emergency repairs.)

BCC highways department has an overall strategy for where it is to put double yellow lines. If residents request additional double yellow lines on top of those in the plan there first has to be a feasibility study. This has to be funded by asking the LAF (local area forum) to pay. The LAF has an allocation of funds to be spent across Gerrards Cross and Denham and decisions about how this should be spent are made by a committee comprising Town and Parish councillors. Bids are written and these are considered by the committee. Once a feasibility study has been funded (if it is) and it has been conducted, if the outcome is positive, then there is a statutory consultation. Subsequent to this funds have to be allocated to change the parking restrictions and the additional yellow lines are then painted.

Unitary update

The draft Order has now been laid and will be considered and debated by both Houses of Parliament, and provides for:

- A new unitary council comprising of 147 elected councillors in three councillor wards
- A shadow authority made up of all councillors from all five Bucks councils
- A shadow executive comprising of 17 councillors – the county leader plus eight councillors nominated by the county council and two councillors nominated by each of the four district councils; the county leader is to be the leader of the shadow executive unless the executive elects another of its councillors to be its leader
- The shadow executive to have regard to the proposal being implemented i.e. the Bucks County Council case for a single authority, as well as the recommendations of the Children's Commissioner (this relates to BCC's Children's Services)
- Designation of the interim senior officers to be the responsibility of the shadow executive (i.e. the monitoring officer, returning officer and finance officer), and
- The leader of the implementation team to be the Chief Executive of the County Council

There are to be elections for the new Council in 2020. The first Council will serve for five years in the first instance and then for four years going forward.

All five existing Councils will work together to achieve a unitary Council which is of the highest quality and which will endeavour to provide the best possible services for residents as efficiently and economically as possible.

Councillor Barbara Gibbs
April 2019.