
BRENT DAVIS
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Town Hall, Nuneaton,
Warwickshire, CV11 5AA

Our Ref: KB

Your Ref:

Date: 14th September 2023

Telephone Committee Services: (024) 7637 6204
Fax No. (024) 7637 6596
Typetalk Registered
DX Nuneaton 16458
e-mail: committee@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk
If calling please ask for: Committee Services

Dear Sir/Madam,

Finance and Public Services OSP – Thursday 21st September 2023

I refer to agenda item no 9 – Work Programme Suggestion Form and attach a submitted form for consideration by the panel at the above meeting.

Yours faithfully,

Brent Davis

Chief Executive

To: All Members of the Finance and
Public Service Overview and Scrutiny
Panel

Councillors D. Brown (Chair), C. Watkins (Vice-Chair),
R. Baxter-Payne, L. Downs, B. Hammersley, S.
Harbison, J. Kennaugh, K. Kondakor, M. Tromans and
Mrs D. Ross.



SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME SUGGESTION FORM

Suggested Work Programme Item

For officers to bring forward a report and for the District Council to:

- (a) Create a Town Council for Bedworth
- (b) Establish a Neighbourhood forum for Bedworth
- (c) Hold a Public meeting to bring a representative of NALC to present the opportunities a Town Council offers for Bedworth and;
- (d) Provide support for residents and those connected to Bedworth to petition for a Town Council
- (e) make funding and advice available to assist residents to get a Town Council established for Bedworth, to hold a public meeting, produce leaflets, etc.

Reasons for this suggestion

The Conservative Government in 2015 made it easier to set up a Town or Parish Council which can now also be called community or village councils. Every other district in Warwickshire has a Town or Parish Council!

Government encourages new community councils to be set up as part of the localism and levelling up agenda. Nuneaton and Bedworth shouldn't lose out.

Further information on starting a council can be found at : [Create a Council - 'Power to the People' \(walc.org.uk\)](http://walc.org.uk) and [Create a Council \(nalc.gov.uk\)](http://nalc.gov.uk).

Other Councils in Warwickshire have created new Town Councils since 2000, such as Royal Leamington Spa Town Council formed in 2002.

The benefit of Town Councils to the local economy, best value, and decision making is well known. Some reasons why a Town Council is needed for Bedworth is set out in appendix 1. Rhyl Town Council also explain the benefits of a Town Council at the cost of just £7.57 per household [benefits of a community or town council.pdf \(rhyltowncouncil.org.uk\)](http://rhyltowncouncil.org.uk/benefits_of_a_community_or_town_council.pdf) Thurrock also explore the benefits of a Town Council [here](#) as does the NALC [here](#) along with a number of case studies showing what can be gained and [here](#) in respect of how local Councils can benefit from the levelling up agenda.

Previously a report came to a Council OSP which I submitted in May 2021. At that meeting Councillors refused to look at developing (a) Create a policy on supporting residents to establish a Parish Council; and how the Council will support residents who wish to petition the district authority for a review or the establishment of a Parish in line with statutory legislation or (b) Agree to undertake a governance review and to look at creating a pilot Parish/Community Council to improve the local community.

One of the comments Councillors appeared to cite at the OSP and in response to a question at Full Council was the cost. Councillors raised that there is no cap on the level of precept that can be levied and another Councillor who previously promised voters a Town Council, cited Councils that have very high taxes and even some figures were misquoted or not comparable. One Councillor even suggested that a Town Council for Bedworth would cost more than residents pay the Borough Council in tax, which was untrue.

Across Warwickshire other districts have Town Councils. Conservatives, Labour and other parties vye to get elected to these Councils so their existence must be good for residents as Atherstone, Warwick, Leamington, Stafford and other Town Councils which would be abolished if they are really as bad as NBBC Councillors make out. The opposite is true, Town Councils bring money to an area and actually end up costing residents more by not having them.

A Town Council in Bedworth would not have significant costs, but important decision making powers and small resources that would go far in tackling the inequality the Town faces when compared to investment in neighbouring areas. For example Bedworth does not have a Youth Hub. In the case of the Civic Halls woes recently, if there had been a Town Council, then a similar arrangement to the one made in Stourport could have been undertaken. Town Councils can bring community and voluntary groups together, access funding the Borough Council can not, and take on service provision, providing services at less cost than the Borough Council or other bodies. Meaning Town Councils can actually cost tax payers less money. Especially as Councillors are unpaid, and that would save hundreds of thousands of pounds in the cost of elected Members allowances.

A Town Council will be able to set out a plan to build a better bedworth, a plan that will listen to local people or those who use the town, and respond to what they want. Transforming Bedworth would be improved from oversight of local residents and those who work, study, volunteer in the town. Its local people who should have the ultimate say on plans for Bedworth and where money goes, in Bedworth, not at meetings in Nuneaton.

Because there appears to be no existing policy currently setting out any information or support by the Borough Council, for Residents who wish to petition for a Parish or Town Council we are unable to put together the correct legal wording.

Parish and Town Councils do a job District and County Councils do not. They are rooted at the heart of their community localities. There are huge advantages for parished areas evidenced within academic research including better consultation and decision making.

Other areas across Warwickshire benefit from Parish Councils. With each house just paying 20-50p extra a week. Communities can see hundreds of thousands of extra funding in the local community, with volunteer Councillors and powers to be a strong voice for local people. As well as extra staff such as youth workers.

As Councils need to do more with less, and as we see the emergence of a new big society, local devolution has an important role to play in levelling up, by providing very local services that meet community need.

As an expert in Local Government, an academic and former Councillor; I have seen the potential for a Town Council; especially in Bedworth.

In May 2021 I said in a work programme suggestion that a Town Council would “play an important role in funding and organising community activity to protect Civic life for future generations. As well as a role in listening to the community and giving local people a greater voice on issues in their local area”. Over the last year as residents came together to save the Civic Hall, we have seen how important a Town Council would have been in that process and that it would have offered residents support in putting together a bid to take over a service from the Borough Council and access to Millions in funding such as through the Community Ownership Fund.

As Bedworth moves forward, and local government has to do less with more, a Town Council and a Neighbourhood Forum could set out the peoples priorities and a plan for my home town.

There is no need to wait until local Government re-organisation, if it ever arrives, the need is there now. We only need to look at every other district in Warwickshire, to see everyone who levels up, has a Parish or Town Council.

If the Borough Council develops a policy or undertakes its own review to implement a pilot to create some Parishes, we could understand whether the Council could then roll out Parish Councils across Nuneaton and Bedworth; giving power back to local people and ensuring every part of our Borough is listened too.

Parish and Town Councils need to have the support of their community and the suggestion needs to come from local residents. It should be up to local people if they want to have one created. That’s why if the Borough Council committed to a governance review, community consultation would be critical.

I want to campaign in Bedworth for a Town Council, but at present there is very little, or no information or support provided by this Borough Council, from officers or in policy, to help undertake a community

consultation process led by residents. I hope a change in administration will change this approach and empower local people without the previous fear of NBBC losing power or control of residents.

There are a number of examples where areas in the last decade have created new Parish Councils. Even in areas that are urban or previously have not been parished.

These proposals are not party political. They seek to put in place lasting structures that fundamentally shift power to local residents and to meet the needs of individual communities.

There are also other exciting ideas or plans that could take place with the right funding and governance arrangements that a Parish Council would provide. From protecting green space, to employ youth workers or even preventing the demolition of Bedworth Watertower or Civic Hall.

I believe in localism. I believe that Bedworth should have a greater say on its future.

I want to secure a Town Council for my home town. It's something I care greatly about. I believe it is a failure of all past politicians not to deliver this or for those who broke promises on this issue. It impacts decision making, access to funding and the long term plan for Bedworth and it's people.

I was first elected 20 years ago at 21 for Poplar, before that I have always been a community campaigner. This has been an issue I've raised in all that time and even as recently as 2018 residents were promised a Town Council by some Councillors who then went on to be elected.

I really hope in time both main parties will see a Town Council for Bedworth is sensible, cost effective and advantageous.

The benefits a town Council could bring to Bedworth is huge and it is seen in other areas across Warwickshire.

I hope you can support the above proposals and action to get Bedworth a Town Council.

Desired outcome of the review

For officers to bring forward a report and for the District Council to:

- (f) Create a Town Council for Bedworth
- (g) Establish a Neighbourhood forum for Bedworth
- (h) Hold a Public meeting to bring a representative of NALC to present the opportunities a Town Council offers for Bedworth and;
- (i) Provide support for residents and those connected to Bedworth to petition for a Town Council
- (j) make funding and advice available to assist residents to get a Town Council established for Bedworth, to hold a public meeting, produce leaflets, etc.

Name: Mr Samuel J Margrave (Resident)

Date: August 2023