

## **New Councils – New Beginnings**

The creation of the new West Northamptonshire (WNC) and North Northamptonshire Councils (NNC) is the first major local government re-organisation in the County since 1974 and heralds the fourth generation of district councils since their inception in 1894. 1894 was also the year in which Yardley Hastings Parish Council came into being.

Local government at the parish level has existed in various forms for centuries, but historically central government has been reluctant to devolve its powers. The comprehensive reforms enacted in 1972 however removed many of the restrictions which had previously limited Parish Councils' freedom of action.

So, what is the “raison d’etre” of a Parish or Town Council? In simple terms a Parish or Town Council exists to provide certain public services which the higher tier authority (in our case the West Northamptonshire Council) chooses not to. They are growing in importance – nationally well over a thousand new Parish Councils have been created since 1974, and with the creation of the new WNC and NNC there is now no geographical area in Northamptonshire which is not served by a Town or Parish Council or a Parish Meeting.

In 2011 Parliament passed the Localism Act, the first line of which states: “A local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do”. This is commonly referred to as the “General Power of Competence”, and at our first meeting after the recent elections we for the first time resolved that the Yardley Hastings Parish Council is eligible to exercise it.

So where do we go from here? Currently your Parish Council provides a number of services, which you will have read about on the previous page. There are other activities which the Parish Council engages in, and you can get a good idea of what we already do from our website: [www.yardleyhastingsparish.org.uk/](http://www.yardleyhastingsparish.org.uk/)

But change is in the air – now that the Parish and Town Councils in the County are the second-tier authorities (rather than the third tier, as previously) their importance can only increase. The financial pressures on the WNC and the NNC have not gone away, and it seems almost inevitable that the cost of providing some services will shift from the unitary council's budgets to the Parish and Town Councils' budgets. So,

the next few years will no doubt give rise to a number of new challenges which your Parish Council will need to address and engage with.

Many people have expressed the desire that we should build back better, and differently, now that the effects of the recent pandemic are easing. This doesn't just apply at the national level; it applies at the parish level too.

In Yardley Hastings there are currently three vacancies on the Council. So, if you think that you have something to contribute, and are willing to get involved in the work of the Council, we would love to hear from you.

Geoffrey Gill