



Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

COVID-19

Having risen sharply, the infection rate has fallen over the past two weekly period and now stands at 453.3 per 100,000. Our hospitals remain under serious pressure as a result of the combined impacts of A&E pressures, winter flu, the need to catch up with delayed operations and Covid. As the situation continues to change, the latest position on COVID-19 will be updated at the Council meeting.

Social Care Funding

Following the last Council meeting I wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care expressing our cross-council concerns at the funding available to support the ongoing provision of social care and the future risks if this was not addressed.

Strategic Finance

The Q2 budget monitoring position was taken to Cabinet on 9 November and this showed a breakeven revenue position compared to a forecast overspend of £500k at the end of Q1. Although this is a solid position to be in, the report did highlight significant risks to the forecast, although we do still hold a number of unreleased contingencies that could help offset some of the emerging pressures over the second half of the year.

The Medium-Term Financial Planning process for the next four years is now well underway with Cabinet Members actively reviewing their budget proposals. Whilst the recent Spending Review / Autumn Budget announced new grant funding of £4.8bn for local government over the next three years, the details of how this funding will be distributed and which services it will be allocated to are still not clear. There is emerging evidence that funding may well be reallocated, in line with the Government's 'Levelling up' priorities to elsewhere in the country. Our best predictions are that a significant budget gap will still exist for all years. We expect to receive Buckinghamshire Council's finance settlement in mid-December, and this will then help Cabinet Members in deciding what actions are required in order to set a balanced budget. The draft budget will then be scrutinised by the Finance and Resources Select Committee in January before Cabinet then recommend a final budget to Full Council in February.

Supporting Refugees from Afghanistan

The Council remains very committed to work with Government as part of our commitment to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) which was put in place to help resettle those who were at risk from the Taliban because of their work with UK forces.

Arriving families will be helped to integrate into society and build a new life - ensuring they do not feel alone and isolated - receiving help with medical needs, arranging English lessons, if required,

finding jobs and getting children into education. Part of the arrival package includes donated furniture, a welcome pack and access to local support networks to help them settle in. The Council has pledged to welcome up to 30 families over the next few years and will continue to work closely with partner organisations and the local community.

Our local community and landlords across the county have responded to the call for much-needed homes, huge offers of support have come in from communities and considerable amounts of money have been donated to the 'Afghan Helping Hand' Fund, hosted by Heart of Bucks, which currently stands at £65,000.

At the same time as welcoming the new families to our area, I would like to reassure our residents that when finding suitable places for the families we are ensuring that they are able to settle in easily whilst at the same time being cautious and not placing any additional pressures on local services such as schools and GPs."

HS2

HS2 Ltd appealed the Council's non-determination of a number of lorry route approvals impacting the A413/A355 and the A422. The Council maintained that HS2 Ltd had not provided enough information to assess the cumulative impacts of the additional Large Goods Vehicles on the route corridor. Unfortunately, the Planning Inspector's recent report found against the Council on two of the appeals. Having taken advice from Counsel we are appealing the Planning Inspectorate decisions.

In quarter Q2, we received 10 Schedule 17 applications. Three were decided within the allowed eight weeks and seven within extensions agreed with the applicant.

We are continuing to challenge and hold HS2 to account.

Buckinghamshire Recovery and Growth Proposal

Buckinghamshire's County Deal proposal negotiations have been affected by the recent central government Cabinet reshuffle that resulted in Rt Hon Michael Gove MP becoming Secretary of State for the rebranded Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. However, during this time, the Council and Buckinghamshire Growth Board partners have been continuing to develop our proposals in greater detail to ensure we are well positioned to resume discussions with government at the earliest opportunity. We are also anticipating the Levelling Up White Paper being launched towards the end of the year.

Buckinghamshire Growth Board

Since the last update, the Buckinghamshire Growth Board met once in November. At the meeting, which was held during the COP26 summit, discussions were focussed on Net Zero and green growth. This included considering the implications for Buckinghamshire of local and national policy, as well as the key challenges and opportunities for Growth Board partners to work collaboratively. The Board also considered the headlines from the October Spending Review and Budget and strategic funding opportunities.

The Buckinghamshire Growth Board have been working collaboratively to develop an ambitious Strategic Vision for Buckinghamshire; Succeeding as a Place: Achieving our Shared Vision for Buckinghamshire to 2050. As part of its development, the Growth Board has been engaging with key stakeholders across the county. The Strategic Vision sets out Buckinghamshire's unique identity and ambitions for our places. It articulates our partnership focus and commitment to addressing the challenges that COVID-19, Brexit, and Climate Change present. It provides the over-arching ambition for all future, strategies, and frameworks across the Growth Board partner organisations. As part of the engagement the Strategic Vision was presented to the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee. Comments received from the Select Committee, along with those

received from key stakeholders, have been reviewed, and a final draft is being prepared for consideration at the next Growth Board meeting.

The Government's Ox- Camb ARC Consultation

Following the launch of the Oxford Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework policy paper in February 2021, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government launched the first consultation focussed on 'Creating a Vision for the Ox-Cam Arc' and the proposed scope of the sustainability appraisal. Buckinghamshire Council responded to the Minister responsible for the Arc to reiterate our position, as expressed in August 2020, and set out a number of queries and concerns about the Arc proposals. These included our concerns that the proposed governance arrangements for the Arc would have undue influence on our ability to make plans for Buckinghamshire and our ambition to lead place-based recovery through setting out our own Strategic Vision and desire to agree an ambitious County Deal for Buckinghamshire with the Government. A response to the consultation was also submitted by the Growth Board in support of the Council's and the partners individual organisational responses.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

The Growth Hub (delivered by BBF on behalf of BLEP) mid-year review took place in October. It highlighted the work of Bucks Business First as our Growth Hub and the continued support for business growth and partnerships and in fostering innovation, low carbon policies, start up and peer network support and training programmes to their 14,000 members and other businesses in Buckinghamshire. Much of this work will be showcased at the Digital Summit and Buckinghamshire Business First AGM. The Buckinghamshire Economic Intelligence Observatory has been developed by the LEP and will be launched in November. Its purpose is to improve evidence-based economic policy decision making by providing a single 'go-to' source of up-to-date economic evidence and increase collaboration between local socio-economic research professionals.

The recent publication of the UK Space Strategy has confirmed Westcott's position as one of the most significant hubs in the country. The LEP responded to the strategy launch highlighting how they could help to promote national growth and support levelling up across the space economy and to reaffirm how they will contribute to the whole of government approach to the sector growth.

Enterprise Zone update

Construction is ongoing and on programme on two Enterprise Zone sites to collectively provide over 60,000m² of new commercial floorspace in the EZ by mid 2022: -

Construction of the commercial units in phase three of the development at Silverstone Park continues at pace, with four new units totalling 24,632m² (<https://silverstone-park.com/new-development-265000sqft>)

At Woodlands (Symmetry Park) three new units totalling 35,803 m², with one unit (8,025m²) pre let to cosmetics company Pangaea Laboratories Ltd, have been completed. (<https://tritaxsymmetry.com/projects/symmetry-park-aston-clinton>)

Additionally, at Westcott construction on Building 4000 is nearing completion ready for fitting out by the Satellite Applications Catapult to provide additional specialist facilities to add to the attraction of the Westcott Space Cluster and Enterprise Zone. The facility, part funded by BLEP through the Get Building Fund, will be operational in spring 2022. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lcQVY5ETBnc>)

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

Following successful bids earlier this year, the council has secured three allocations of revenue funding from **Homes England Capacity Funding** to support its work delivering Housing Infrastructure Fund funded capital projects at:

Aylesbury Garden Town:	£343,000
Abbey Barn Lane, High Wycombe:	£325,000
Princes Risborough:	£174,000

Together the funds amount to £842,000. They are being used to support the cost of a range of work areas including design and survey work; coordinating utilities and other works; developing planning applications; and coordinating landowners and developers. The funds are also supporting staffing and other revenue funding and must be used by the end of March 2022. They are welcome recognition and a boost for the works the Council is doing to bring forward infrastructure to support the delivery of new homes across Buckinghamshire.

South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR)

Further to planning permission being granted in July 2021, the SEALR Phase 1 project team is working to ensure that the pre-commencement conditions are met. Land negotiations continue apace and preparations for the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) / Side Road Order (SRO) / Public Open Space inquiry for Phase 1 are well underway. The inquiry was held 2nd – 11th November at the Gateway. The detailed design has been completed for Phase 1. The preliminary design continues Phase 2 alongside preparing the planning application and land negotiations. The planning application for Phase 2 is expected to be submitted in early 2022.

Cabinet considered a report on this scheme on 9th November to discuss **Princes Risborough Southern Road Links**. Consultation will take place in November and December ahead of the planning application being submitted.

England Economic Heartland (EEH)

Between March and July this year, the England's Economic Heartland Leaders group reviewed the governance structure of EEH as a sub national transport body. Building on the success of the previous format and putting EEH in good stead for the future, leaders agreed that the preferred approach going forward was to consolidate EEH's two political-level meetings – the Strategic Transport Forum and EEH Leaders – into one single meeting.

The newly formed Strategic Transport Leadership Board continues with the same focus as has always been for EEH: driving outcomes and delivering investment for the benefit of the region, ensuring that:

- EEH complements the powers, responsibilities and accountabilities of its partners: collaboration is fundamental to its approach, allowing EEH to speak with one voice on issues of genuine strategic interest.
- the need to adopt a 'whole-systems' approach to connectivity, aligning strategic transport planning with digital connectivity and utilities.
- That all the tools and technical work undertaken by EEH is made freely available to all partners for their own use, providing significant added value, particularly in respect to the tools EEH has developed as part of its regional evidence base.

The Board, and the Government are clear in their shared commitment that EEH must remain a standalone sub-national transport body, working as it does with partnerships across the region. Included in these wider partnerships is EEH supporting and informing the connectivity strand of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc project. However, the Board is clear that the remit of EEH goes well beyond the ambitions of the Arc.

In September, EEH also led the rebranding of the East West Main Line Partnership (previously the East West Rail Consortium) which is chaired by Councillor Steve Broadbent. Please refer to the relevant sections on East West Rail for more information.

EEH awaits the outcome of the Department for Transport's distribution of its settlement following the recent Spending Review. EEH's submission for funding included investment to start taking forward priority schemes into their early stages of business case development; establishing a centre of excellence to boost capability within the region; and a three-year settlement to deliver EEH's wider work programme.

LGA's People and Places Board

LGA's People and Places Board have now held four meetings, the last being in November. Discussions covered the work programme for 2021/22, employment and skills work, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Locally <https://lga.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=250>

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

Since the last update, Leaders have discussed the Government's plans to reform adult social care. The discussion resulted in a letter being sent on behalf of SESL to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, setting out SESL's views on the Government's new plan for healthcare, adult social care, and how to fund them. A letter was also sent to the Chairman of the LGA, providing views on the Government's plans from the perspective of the wider South East.

In their September meeting, SESL heard about the roles and opportunities for strategic authorities in the development and use of advanced digital technology and skills. The assessment was drawn from work by the LGA, with clear recommendations for strategic authorities and their partners in supporting and using advanced digital skills.

SESL members considered, from the South East perspective, the Government's pledges on levelling-up and devolution deals. SESL's Chairman wrote to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities setting out SESL's interest in developing these agendas.

In the September meeting, SESL members also shared news and developments relating to the national programme for resettling families from Afghanistan. Following the meeting, the Chairman wrote to the Minister for Safeguarding and Afghan Resettlement, supporting the programme and setting out SESL's views on how it might best be achieved.





Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Gareth Williams

Aylesbury Garden Town, Town Centre Commission

Building from the adoption of the Aylesbury Garden Town masterplan last year, consultants were appointed in June of this year, to prepare and explore delivery options for proposals to the Town Centre in Aylesbury, including a Delivery Framework for the Station Quarter/Waterside area. Over the summer, they have been progressing their baseline work and undertaking a series of meetings with Council Officers, Members and key stakeholders. This has resulted in the development of 10 principles to frame the options work which will follow in the new year.

RIPA / BoPS update

Members of the Buckinghamshire Council Digital Planning Team have been continuing their work with other local authorities and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to develop two new digital tools to improve the submission and processing of planning applications. The Reducing Invalid Planning Applications and Back-office Planning System projects (also known as RIPA and BoPS), launched the 'Apply for a Certificate of Lawfulness' service into private beta testing at the end of June 2021.

Some of the features of the new service include: a drawing tool to help users create their own site plans, automatic checking of planning constraints, and, if the application relates to permitted development, flagging if the project may require planning permission. It is hoped that this service and its features will help reduce some of the main reasons for invalidation and improve the process for our residents. The new tools have gathered significant publicity, with the projects speaking regularly at Plantech events and news of the private beta being picked up by the national and trade press. Buckinghamshire Council has been recognized as a pioneer council for our work on these digital projects along with the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.

We are delighted to have some of our local agents and residents in Buckinghamshire now using the new service to submit real Lawful Development Certificate applications and share their feedback. This feedback will be used to constantly improve the services and help shape future application types. The tools are hoping to move to public beta testing in the near future.

See an end-to-end demonstration of the tools below by Emily Hadley from the Buckinghamshire Council Digital Planning Team: <https://vimeo.com/624470813>

All information regarding the development of both tools can be found at the websites below:

RIPA: <https://www.ripa.digital/>

BoPS: <https://bops.digital/>

Buckinghamshire Design Code

Work continues on the Buckinghamshire Design Code, a project for which the Council received a grant from MHCLG. This is not about where development goes, or when - that is a matter for the Buckinghamshire Local Plan. The focus of this piece of work is to help us make sure that when development happens, it functions well and looks good. The bucks.place website - launched on 20th September – is the way for everyone to get involved with this project. 71% of responses relate to 'streets and public spaces', which is helpful as we think this will be a key aspect of the Buckinghamshire Design Code. It has had over 1,000 visitors and the top three locations for tags are:

- High Wycombe (22%),
- Amersham (19%) and
- Buckingham and villages (16%)

The project team has planned some focused workshops this autumn to help us understand and find solutions to particularly tricky issues such as accessibility and street design. We are also planning 'code breaking' sessions with developers and agents in January, to help us test the draft code. We look forward to sharing more detail as this work progresses.

Enforcement Update

The team continues to provide a firm but fair service seeking to use the most effective and efficient solutions to resolve breaches of planning control or remedy the planning harm.

Whilst our initial approach to remedying breaches of planning control is usually through amicable negotiation, where that approach fails or where the breach occurring is serious, and where it is appropriate to do so, we continue to take decisive and proportionate formal enforcement action.

The team have now successfully recruited to the two Area Team Leader positions which has stabilised the management of the team. The introduction of these Team Leaders means that more focus has been put on to moving cases forward and to closing cases as necessary, thus reducing the overall caseload. The team have closed 900 cases so far this year, a significant increase on this time last year

Alongside working to reduce the overall caseload, so far in 2020/21, the Council has issued 24 enforcement notices (which is on trend compared to this time last year). We anticipate the total number of formal actions will exceed that of last year.

The team still has a high level of enforcement notice appeals (currently 28 in hand). The high level of appeals is, of course, a bi-product of issuing more notices but the team's performance in enforcement appeals is also very high with 93% of Enforcement Notices being upheld. Clearly, the team's decisions in formal actions are correct and are being backed by the Planning Inspectorate decision notices.

In other work, the team have commenced a programme of increased monitoring inspections to our authorised Waste and Minerals sites. Increased site presence provides the LPA with a greater practical understanding of operational realities of consented M&W sites, which in turn improves our understanding of waste management capacity and aggregate resource within the County.

Member Engagement



The Planning and Environment Service will be setting up one hour bi-weekly member surgery sessions in the new year, provided on a committee area basis, with a view to improve communication and reduce the number of complaints and email correspondence the service is experiencing. The terms of reference for the surgeries and process for booking slots, is being established and will be shared with members ahead of the launch. We will also be setting up Strategic Site Forums for large scale allocations in adopted Local Plans, to be held on a quarterly basis, which will run from pre-application to outline and reserved matters. We are in the process of establishing new posts within the service to support the co-ordination of this activity alongside the Cabinet Member inbox.





Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

HS2 and East West Rail (EWR)

EWR and HS2 construction vehicles are continuing to cause damage to roads and, as such, the Council has now agreed with them a process for road repairs. EWR has already carried out road repairs at Queen Catherine Road, Herds Hill and the bottom of Sandhill Road and Verney Road. We have submitted the first three road repair claims to HS2 Ltd. Two new marshals have been appointed and are out and about on-site monitoring contractor activity, providing coordination on the road network and responding to enquiries and complaints.

The East West Rail Consortium, which has campaigned for the reinstatement of a railway between Oxford and East Anglia for more than 25 years, has relaunched as the East West Main Line Partnership. I chair this partnership in my role as Cabinet Member for Transportation. With construction of the Oxford-Bletchley/Milton Keynes section of East West Rail well underway, the Partnership is championing the long-term opportunity for true, coast to coast connectivity, achieved through an East West Main Line, with services running from Norfolk and Suffolk all the way through to South Wales. Supporting the delivery of East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge and making sure there is appropriate mitigation for local communities during its construction remains fundamental to the Partnership's purpose.

Rights of Way

In the annual condition survey of the rights of way network, volunteers surveyed 5% of the network to ascertain how easy the paths are to use, check if structures such as stiles and gates are in good condition; and check direction signage is in place. This year the survey found that 75% of the paths walked were easy to use, 94% of structures were accessible and 94% of direction signage at roadside was in place.

The Rights of Way Operations Team have recently undertaken several capital works to repair and replace bridges, structures and footpaths in the Claydons, Wing, Waddesdon and the Thames Path. Surface improvement works, on a section of the Ridgeway in Wendover where the bridleway was hazardous, have been carried out in partnership with the Ridgeway Office making this important National Trail safer and more accessible.



The warm and wet conditions over the summer encouraged considerable growth of surface vegetation. In response, two extra clearance crews were commissioned for 12 weeks to work on the annual clearance schedule. Most scheduled clearance jobs have now been completed and additional works reported by the public, including winter clearance, will continue over the autumn and winter.

Transport Strategy

In line with the Government suggestion, we have extended the duration of the three e-scooter schemes in High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Aylesbury until end of March 2022. These continue to be popular with over 100,000 rides across the three trails since the schemes were launched.

Look out for Be Bright Be Seen and our Commute Smart campaigns on the backs of buses and in the media in November as we encourage commuting by more sustainable travel modes through the winter.

Construction of the A41 Bicester Road Primary Public Transport Corridor

In September, the existing roundabout at the junction with Jackson Road and Dickens Way was removed. Whilst road users have experienced some delays to journey times, the temporary traffic management arrangement has allowed for two-way traffic flows to be maintained along the A41. With construction work progressing well, focus will now switch to carriageway widening work on the westbound approach to the signalised junction with Paradise Orchard. From November to the start of the festive period, lane closures will be in operation to safeguard road users from the close proximity of deep excavations and provide a safe working area for site staff. There are regular project e-bulletins, a [project webpage](#) and electronic Variable Message Signs for road users and the project is still expected to complete in Summer 2022.

The A404/A4155 Westhorpe, Marlow project

This project is currently progressing through the detailed design approval phase involving National Highways and this process is expected to conclude before the end of the year. Subject to approval from National Highways, construction is due to commence in March 2022 with completion expected in the Autumn. Site works are closely co-ordinated with the Marlow Bridge project team.

Upgraded Crest Road junction

I was delighted to officially open the upgraded Crest Road junction on 21st September which unlocks commercial and retail development on the adjacent 'Cressex Island' development and replaces the outdated, small roundabout configuration with an 'intelligent' traffic light-controlled junction to help improve traffic flows and reduce congestion, especially at peak times. The £3M scheme includes a new 600 metre shared use cycleway and footway running from Handy Cross to Holmers Farm Way roundabout and the whole junction has been resurfaced and relined.

Parking Services

Buckinghamshire Council has become one of the first to trial a pioneering electric car club with innovative induction charging. The trial scheme, which is part of the Council's commitment to tackling climate change, makes a hire car available to local residents in Marlow to test the latest technology and gain experience of driving an electric vehicle (EV).

Pilots have begun at three locations to address the level of traffic violations. Legislation is being passed through Government to allow local authorities to enforce some moving traffic offences that are currently dealt with by the police. Temporary cameras have been installed at Marlow Bridge

and two locations in High Wycombe to give a better idea of the number of vehicles that are currently breaking the rules, causing danger to others and damage to our roads.

The team has been working hard to bring together one parking service for all of Buckinghamshire and efficiently deliver the service. The transition to bring on-street enforcement in house has gone well and the team successfully TUPE'd in at the end of September. Alongside this, a new parking management system went live in September and the permit system is now online, giving customers more flexibility in managing their permit.

Transport for Buckinghamshire

The summer months were very busy for TfB teams delivering many capital works across the county. The surface dressing programme was undertaken at 25 locations during July and August. The popular plane and patch programme continues each month and a further phase of 32 sites has recently started on the ground. Drainage schemes are also being delivered every month since the summer through to the end of March.

A key focus throughout the summer months has continued to be on gully cleansing. TfB has suffered multiple challenges over the period associated with the HGV driver shortages and COVID/sickness absences but, throughout, has adapted and frequently revised working arrangements to improve productivity. Additional supply chain partners have started work in recent months to increase capacity.

The summer weather encouraged active grass growth and crews were busy across all rural and urban sites. Alongside summer activities, a key task is preparing for the winter season. Salt was purchased earlier this year to avoid any potential of disruption to delivery. All the salt to be used in road gritting has been delivered and the salt barns are full. We have held a start of season introduction session for the drivers including preparatory runs and the gritter fleet fully checked and ready for service. Supplementary winter resilience plans are in place to ensure that this critical front-line service is prioritised and maintained.

The road safety team has been working with various partner agencies (Thames Valley Police, National Highways, Bucks Fire & Rescue) to promote key messages such as anti-drink drive/anti-drug drive or tyre safety and encouraging older driver assessments.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan was agreed by Cabinet on 19th October, submitted to the Department for Transport and published on our website by the Government deadline of 31st October. It has been developed in partnership with bus companies with priorities set by councillors and the public. Government will review all the plans submitted and we expect confirmation by the end of the year of new funding to help deliver what is an ambitious plan to improve bus services. Find out more [on our website](#).

Bee Friendly bus shelter in Aylesbury

A "Bee Friendly" bus shelter with a living green roof is being installed outside the new Sainsbury's store on Bicester Road, Aylesbury. This is the first living green shelter we have put up in Buckinghamshire, funded by the developer. Topped by sedum grass and wildflowers it will encourage pollination and capture particulates from the air to positively contribute towards biodiversity and climate resilience.

School term start – key headlines

The start of the new academic year in September saw several improvements:

- Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) are now live as an alternative option for SEND students, giving families freedom and flexibility to make their own transport arrangements, as well as supporting children's independence. We have seen a strong take up from parents with over 300 PTBs now in place. The average payment agreed is £3,000 per academic year. They are also cost effective to the Council, as otherwise the Council would need to pay for arranged taxi transport.
- A major retendering programme for all school transport contracts was completed. The annual saving from the retendering exercise is estimated at £3.14m (SEND taxi contracts is £2.07m and of all Mainstream bus and taxi contracts is £1.07m).
- The introduction of 14 new commercial school bus routes which run independently of the Council, enabling parents to buy tickets directly from bus operators without any need rely on Council provision.
- 83 new Council-run bus routes in place. The Council commissions transport for eligible children and the new routes have enabled an increase in the average occupancy on Council buses by eligible children from 39% last October to 74% in October 2021.
- The improved online spare seat application process has enabled parents to have better information on the availability of spare seats before they apply. This has improved the success rate for parents to secure seats from about 50% last year to 84% for September 2021.

Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2022-23 consultation

Our Post-16 Transport Policy Statement sets out transport arrangements for students aged 16 and over. The Statement specifies the arrangements for transport that the Council considers necessary in order to facilitate the attendance of sixth form aged students receiving education or training. We have a duty to consult on our Statement annually and are proposing minor updates for 2022-23. [The consultation](#) runs for 6 weeks, ending on 29 November 2021. For more on School Transport visit our website at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport.



Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

Culture



The successful Story Stall project (see photo) continued over September and October, with artists running storytelling workshops with interested schools, community groups and Youth Action.

Buckinghamshire Culture is now registered with the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation; and has submitted an application to the Rothschild Foundation for another three years of funding from January 2022. The Bucks Cultural Leaders Course formally concluded in October; the network that has developed through this programme will continue.

Recruitment is underway for a Film Officer to support the new Buckinghamshire Film Office which is being developed in collaboration with key partners and the film industry, including Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF), Buckinghamshire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Pinewood Studios and Creative England. The Film Office will support production companies and filming crews with information on Buckinghamshire locations, obtaining permits for filming and production advice and guidance. It aims to maximise the economic and social benefits to the county through increased inward spend, employment opportunities and as a boost to tourism, while also ensuring local residents and businesses continue to benefit from filming in Buckinghamshire and that any disruption from filming is minimised.

The new galleries in the Discover Bucks Museum in Aylesbury are nearing completion with a view to opening to the public early in the new year. The reopening of theatres in early September has seen very good audience numbers at both the Aylesbury Waterside and Wycombe Swan theatres.

Buckinghamshire Archives

The [Buckinghamshire History Festival 2021](#) is running from 30 October to 27 November. Over the month of the festival, we have been posting a new collection of podcasts to add to the archive we started building last year, but the special feature of this year's festival has been the series of live online events held via Zoom for free. Our headline act has been a podcast with Jay Blades from BBC's 'The Repair Shop'.

A One Public Estate feasibility study is underway in conjunction with the Property and Assets service and relevant partners, to investigate potential accommodation solutions for the Archives and other partners' collections and records into the future. This will consider a range of options that the Council and its partners can develop into a preferred solution.

Libraries

Buckinghamshire Libraries and Action4Youth have worked in partnership to deliver youth services from High Wycombe Library; The Junction @ The Library launched in September and is the place for all young people in High Wycombe. The service is open 4pm to 9pm, seven days a week, and offers a timetable of weekly activities (boxing, yoga, HIIT, nutrition advice); a space for socialising and leisure activities (pool tables, PlayStation, hang out spots); and crisis support clinics (providing advice, help and support for young people). All sessions are free of charge and are drop-in with no need to book. Action4Youth also provide counselling in a safe and confidential environment. This initiative has transformed High Wycombe Library's service offer to young people and will provide future partnership opportunities to engage young people in the wider library offer including the development of cultural programmes.

Work has been taking place to increase usage at Micklefield Library by working with local people to organise more activities at the library. A community day to celebrate the 12-year anniversary of the library took place on 16 October; activities included interactive storytelling, artist workshop, advice/information and a theatre production. The celebration was attended by Councillor Andrea Baughan and the Mayor of High Wycombe, and supported by the Family Information Service, local Family Centre, Community Impact Bucks, Surrey and Bucks Trading Standards and local police. The event was a great success with the library packed out throughout the day.

Leisure

The recovery of leisure centres has been continuing positively and we have seen over one million visits since reopening. There has been a strong return to the autumn swim programmes that has lifted income across all our contract areas. This is a really encouraging return so far and one that we will continue to build strongly on with our leisure operators.



We have also seen the completion of the repair and rebuilding of Chalfont Swimming Pool, which reopened to the public on 18 October (see photo). Chalfont Otters have been able to return to their home pool and the swim programme has been eagerly booked by local parents.

At the time of writing this report, we are keenly awaiting the opening of the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre; we look forward to seeing the true impact the new centre will have in encouraging residents to be more active and take part in the wide range of activities it has to offer. We will provide more on the new centre in the next report.

The South Buckinghamshire Golf Course continued to be busy in September and October with over 7,000 rounds of golf played, bringing the total rounds this year to 26,360 which is the highest number for the same period since 2007.

Farnham Park Playing Fields welcomed back football and rugby during September, and there are now nine adult teams and eleven junior teams playing on a regular basis, generating over 2,000 participants since the start of the season. Softball and baseball have finished for the year although there may be a few junior Academy training sessions during the winter months.

Country Parks

Visitor numbers remain significantly above pre-pandemic levels but are now slightly below last year's all-time highs; numbers for the year to date are 842,000, compared to 871,000 last year and 679,000 pre-pandemic.

The annual Country Parks Halloween Trail attracted 1,320 children and their parents to complete a 1km puzzle-solving route that proved extremely popular; this was a pre-booked event, to ensure that numbers could be more easily managed. Tickets for the Christmas craft activities will be released in the next couple of weeks.

Construction of the new pylon at Denham for HS2 enabling works is now complete and the lines have been rerouted out of the park using the new tower. The removal of two now redundant towers is dependent on the overnight closure of the Chiltern Line in early December so that the old power lines and towers can be removed safely. Ecological improvements for the site including new habitats for water voles, bats and great crested newts have now been agreed and will be implemented as the main contractor retreats from the site. The site should be returned to the council by the end of January 2022.

Landscape and access improvement works at Langley Park, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund in a joint project with Groundwork South, were completed in September; unfortunately, a number of sculptures linked with these improvements were stolen from site and it has not been possible to identify the thieves. The Country Parks team is currently exploring options, with local sculptors, to carve new sculptures from timber recovered from tree felling works at Denham Country Park facilitating the power line realignment.

Langley Park Country Park woodland has been nominated by the team to be one of the 70 Ancient Woodlands to be dedicated as part the Queen's Green Canopy project. Additional veteran tree surveys are underway to assess the 100+ veteran trees in the park and plan work to ensure that these trees remain in good health for future generations to enjoy.

Surveying has commenced to try to understand the impacts and implications of the spread of ash die back through the parks.

Parks and Play areas

We are pleased to report that Green Flag Awards have been retained in six parks and four towns across the county; Heartlands in Buckingham, Bedgrove Park and Vale Park in Aylesbury, The Rye and Hughenden Park in High Wycombe and Higginson Park in Marlow all retained their green flag status; for many of the sites these awards have been held for at least the last 10 years.



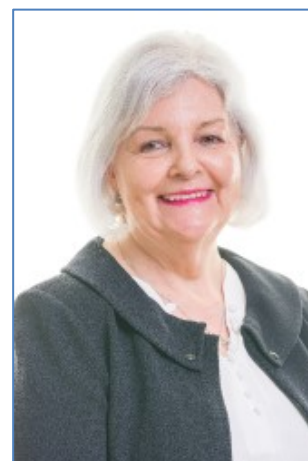
Councillor Sarfaraz Khan Raja, Chairman of High Wycombe Town Committee, joined me on 22 October to officially open the new Boathouse Café at The Rye park in High Wycombe following a £400,000 revamp. The rebuild was managed in partnership with High Wycombe Town Committee. The café includes brand new facilities and completely updates the old corrugated metal shed café which had fallen into disrepair. It also has a 'living' green plant roof, which provides natural insulation to reduce fuel bills, absorbs 80% of the rainfall and filters out pollutants. It also stores CO2

and provides a habitat and food for birds and insects. The café is open 7 days a week from 9am to 4pm now the clocks have gone back.

Following a tendering exercise, contracts are due to be awarded for play area replacements at Cottlesloe Park, Haydon Hill and Walton Court in Aylesbury. Outline designs are expected for the U8s area at Desborough Recreation Ground in Wycombe to allow a similar tendering exercise to be completed there.

The replacement of decommissioned play area items, identified in the independent annual inspections, has now been completed at Denby Walk, Riverside Walk and the Paddocks. Further improvements to ball courts at Bedgrove Park and Oakfield in Aylesbury and Calvert Green are planned to be delivered by the end of the financial year. Work has commenced on the installation of the brand-new NEAP play area (for toddlers, juniors and teenagers) at Calvert Green; works also include the removal and hard surfacing of two existing play areas. We hope all works will be completed before Christmas.





Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

Shout Out for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Conference

The 2nd Shout Out for SEND conference themed around “Preparation for Adulthood” took place on Wednesday 13 October 2021. 51 students from across Buckinghamshire schools attended the event at Adams Park, High Wycombe, and took part in interactive workshops based on their own interests and ambitions for the future.



Workshops were delivered by a range of organisations, reflecting our partnership approach to achieving the aims of Buckinghamshire’s SEND and Inclusion Strategy. Workshops included:



The event was planned alongside groups of young people who tested out activities and steered the content. Illustrators captured the event as it took place, drawing out the key themes as they emerged.

To close the event, young people described their journeys into adulthood, delivering inspirational speeches to their peers. Louise, aged 19 said:

"A few years ago, perhaps like some of you, I was ashamed of the labels I was given. Perhaps like some of you too, I hated school. I remember getting up each morning going into an environment that was a sensory nightmare After college, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do so I decided to take a gap year. During this time, I eventually realised that there was a need for disabled children and young people to feel less alone, so I decided to set up an Instagram account where I documented my experiences as an autistic adult existing in a world that wasn't built for people like me. It is powerful that people are willing to listen to my voice and shows how much of a need there is for disabled voices to be heard. More recently, I have just started university, studying education studies, and am hoping that I can use my experiences to help others. I want to leave you with one message and that is, you are capable of building the life that you imagine for yourselves, whatever that looks like and that things always get better no matter how hard they initially seem."

Following the conference, animated clips will be created and published on Buckinghamshire's Local Offer. These are intended to explain the range of options open to young people with SEND and inspire them to take the next step.

Participation Strategy for Young People

This participation strategy has been developed to ensure we capture the views of all young people in Buckinghamshire so that their experiences influence service development at an individual, operational and strategic level. We have worked alongside a wide range of stakeholders to create a strategy that is effective, maximises ownership and has Buckinghamshire's strategic aims and the profile of need of young people at its heart. The Council has a statutory duty, set out in The Children's Act 1989, to consider the wishes and feelings of children when decisions are made about them. How well the Council listens to and acts upon the views and experiences of children and young people is part of Ofsted's inspection framework. Specific actions in place include:

- Champions Programme - A forum of individuals from children's services focused on developing opportunities for young people to develop themselves and the services they and others receive.
- Activities that bring young people together to experience new things and have fun whilst getting their voices heard.
- Forums that engage young people in conversations about the services they receive, sharing their views, opinions and ideas about how to develop them.
- Training for service areas that supports them to engage with their young people.
- Youth Voice Buckinghamshire Executive Committee - Engaging with young people from all 16 Community Boards across the county. We are aiming to have two Ambassadors from each Community Board area identified who would then join the Youth Voice Executive Committee. They will then be able to represent their board at meetings and feedback relevant information/opportunities to their relevant boards for further discussion and actions. This may then also lead to discussions at Youth Voice where key trends are identified that the Youth Voice group as a collective can take forward as a countywide action as well as area specific opportunities.

Children's Home Inspection

In September 2021, Ofsted carried out an inspection at one of our in-house children's homes, The Elms, and judged the service to be "Good". Ofsted commented that all the previous requirements and recommendations from the last inspection has been met. Work has begun and an action plan is in place to address the recommendations made. Inspectors spoke to young people in the home and their judgement is reflective of the difference we have made to their lives. These outcomes are testament to the hard work of the staff in the homes, social workers, Independent Reviewing Officers and other partners.

Buckinghamshire Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Summer activities

I am pleased to report that the council has been able to provide a wonderful summer of holiday fun for thousands of children from harder-pressed families, thanks to the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) summer programme. Children aged 5-16 who are entitled to free school meals were able to enjoy, completely free of charge, high-quality holiday clubs and activities as well as a healthy meal at each session. The sessions, which have been running right across the county, have been delivered by experienced local holiday club providers across five weeks of the summer school holidays.

The HAF programme has been funded by central government with all the local arrangements being made by the council. Over 1500 children and young people in Buckinghamshire attended a session during the summer holidays. At one holiday club in High Wycombe, celebrity chef Tom Kerridge dropped in to surprise the children and give them a masterclass in making healthy coleslaw.

We know that school holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs, such as food and childcare, as well as reduced incomes. This can lead to a holiday experience gap, with those children being less likely to access organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and more likely to experience social isolation. The HAF programme is designed to tackle these issues by providing free holiday activities through clubs and organised sessions. The programme also helps to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people, encouraging them to engage in enriching and fun holiday activities and providing them with access to a healthy meal. Information and support for wider family members is built in to all HAF holiday clubs and sessions.

We are now currently finalising our Christmas holiday HAF programme, working alongside the voluntary and community sector; and we are aiming to broaden even further the number of places and range of activities available.

More information on our HAF programme is available at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf.





Cabinet Member report – Finance, Resources, Property and Assets

Councillor John Chilver

Capital Schools Project

Property Services continue to work with colleagues in Children's Services to bring forward the development and delivery of our substantial new schools and expansion programme. Since our last report we have held the opening events at Kingsbrook Primary and Buckingham school and the Topping Out of the Kingsbrook Secondary School. We continue to progress the Kingsbrook Secondary; Chiltern Hills Academy (major expansion works); Holmer Green and Misbourne School (major expansion and sports hall works). Further projects are now at the early stages of procurement development, these include Kingsbrook Primary B circa £13 million.



Leisure facilities

Property Services continue to work with colleagues in Culture, Sport and Leisure on the development and delivery of new leisure facilities including the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre in Amersham and the installation of a new swimming pool in Chalfont Leisure Centre. The latter is complete and successfully opened on 18 October; at the time of writing, the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre building is approaching Practical Completion.

Brunel Shed, Wycombe

Work is continuing with colleagues in the Economic Development and Regeneration Team on the regeneration of the Brunel Shed, a Grade 2 Listed redundant railway shed, and extension on adjacent land for commercial rent. The project continues to move towards practical completion.

Horns Lane development

A report on the proposed Horns lane development was considered by West Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee on 12th October 2021.

The resolution was to grant conditional delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Environment and the Service Director for Property to grant permission subject to a Memorandum of Understanding for:

Up to 50 dwellings including affordable housing (48% of total units on site).

The mix and tenure of houses will be provided in accordance with the current evidence at the time (currently a split of 80% affordable rented with up to 20% as intermediate products).

Income grows from filming opportunities

Enquiries for filming in the courts complex in Aylesbury are now being received for January – March 2022.

Current income from the courts building stands at £100k since April 2021. We have potential enquiries for other Aylesbury based assets which are in the early stages of negotiation.

Lettings - Aylesbury

66 High Street

A new tenant moved into the 2nd Floor of 66 High Street in mid-October.

Terms are currently being finalised with a new tenant to occupy the Ground and First Floors.

Occupation is expected by the end of November.

The Exchange

Legal terms are expected to complete in November for a new Turkish restaurant in the one vacant remaining unit. The pressures in the construction industry and the scope of the fit-out works mean that it is likely to be summer 2022 before the restaurant is open.

Long Lion

Two proposals have been received for the use of one of the small units in Long Lion (the other side of the Exchange). A final decision will be made by the end of the month.

Aylesbury Community Centres

Since September there has been a steady increase in bookings at all venues with most regular hirers returning to hire. Children's parties have also been popular and continue to be so in the next few months.

I am pleased to confirm that a new Preschool opened at the Alfred Rose Community Centre in September 2021 and attendance is gradually increasing. This has been an excellent cross department project, working with the Children's Services team, to ensure this valuable community service can be continued in the Elmhurst area.

Kickstart Programme

To support local young people with their first steps into permanent employment, Buckinghamshire Council has signed up to the Government's Kickstart Scheme by creating 50 new fixed term work experience placements, funded by the Department of Work and Pensions DWP for six months. Each service has been asked to offer up at least one placement before the scheme closes next March, with the spread across the directorates being as follows:

Directorate	Total placements	Number started (or starting imminently)	Roles still being advertised
Adult's and Health	6	2	4
Children's	4	3	1
Communities	5	2	3
Deputy Chief Executive service	12	4	8
Planning, Growth and Sustainability	8	3	5
Resources	15	9	6
Total	50	23	27

We have been working hard to attract candidates and have advertised our roles on the Council website and on social media, whilst also attending numerous local and countywide job fairs, job centre days and employability sessions.

Our dedicated kickstart co-ordinator is working closely with those who have already started as they reach their first month of employment, gathering feedback and discussing training and development needs. We have planned networking sessions and tailored team building workshops starting in November and will be providing further career planning workshops in the new year. We are also holding workshops and webinars to support line managers on the kickstart process and on getting the best from young people.

To date, all our kick-starters have spoken very highly of the inductions provided to them by their line managers and most are keen to find a job with us after their placement ends: ***"My kickstart role has already taught me so much in just a few weeks. I'm excited to continue to learn and gain more skills within the amazing group of employees at the council."*** Our managers have also been impressed with how well the participants have been settling in, and how talented and ambitious the participants have been. In sessions with our kickstart co-ordinator, some managers have indicated that they will consider participants for permanent roles once placements are coming to an end. This would be managed through our normal recruitment process.

Customer First Update - Customer Call Back

As part of our ongoing Customer First improvements, we are introducing queued Customer 'call backs', to ease the wait times on some of our busiest queues and provide convenience for our customers. This will go live initially on our busiest lines including Revenues and Benefits and Waste.

When a customer calls and there is a queue on the line, they will hear a message asking if they would like to have a call back which will hold their place in queue. When they reach the top of the queue the customer will automatically be called back, and the customer's name will be presented to the agent to support the call. If it reaches voicemail the agent can end the call and the call will remain in queue and re-present 10 minutes later. On the final attempt it will advise that this is the final try and if it is a voicemail a message will be left including the switchboard 0300 131 6000 as the outbound number for all these calls.

We will monitor the success and usage of this initial trial and then implement on our other high demand lines – on the first day of operating this system we had over 50 successful call backs.





Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

Legislation and Policy Update

The Government published Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care in September 2021. The Plan sets out the Government's proposals to address the following challenges in the health and social care system:

- For individuals, the unpredictable cost and inconsistent quality of care
- Backlogs in the NHS, the need for sustainable NHS funding and increasingly complex needs, and
- The need for reform to achieve a sustainable adult social care system.

The plan outlines actions to tackle the NHS electives backlog, develop sustainable funding and to focus on prevention. For adult social care, the Plan's proposals are:

- To introduce a cap on personal care costs so that from October 2023, no person with eligible adult social care needs will pay more than £86,000 for personal care
- For self-funders to be able to ask their local authority to arrange their care, to secure better value arrangements
- To raise the capital limit beyond which an individual will fully fund their care, from the current limit of £23,250 to £100,000, and
- To provide additional investment to support and develop social care staff.

Work is currently being undertaken to understand the impacts of the changes. In addition, two White Papers are expected by the end of the year. The first will focus on a vision for adult social care and set out a path to long-term financial sustainability. The second will address integration between health and social care.

Health and Wellbeing Board

Earlier this year, the Health and Wellbeing Board agreed its Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, *Happier Healthier Lives*. Work has since been taking place to develop three underpinning action plans, *Start Well*, *Live Well* and *Age Well* which together will deliver the Board's ambition. In October a workshop was held to develop the Age Well action plan. The workshop was well attended by all partners with contributions from NHS, Voluntary and Community Sector and Healthwatch colleagues, as well as the Council. The action plan will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board in January and the Board then will take an active role in monitoring progress on the plan and its outcomes.

The Health and Wellbeing Board held on 18th November focussed on topical issues including access to GPs, the Director of Public Health Annual Report on domestic abuse, the Better Care Fund (a joint fund between the NHS and the Council), the health and social care winter plan and the Board's communication and engagement strategy.

Adults Safeguarding Campaign Update

In September the Adult Safeguarding campaign, 'See Something, Say Something, Do Something' was launched. The aim is to encourage residents to contact the Council if they have concerns about a vulnerable adult.

Since September, there have been over 1,300 referrals from both professionals and members of the public. In terms of the source of referrals, there has also been an increase of 65% in the number of concerns reported by family members, neighbours, or the person themselves in quarter two this year, compared to the same period last year.

Regular posts are being shared across all social media platforms, reaching nearly 80,000 people in total. Just over 380 of those who viewed these posts then visited the Council website to seek further information. Posters are visible on community notice boards, videos played in GP surgeries, adverts placed in resident magazines and newsletters, and daily radio adverts.

With a multi-agency approach, partners, communities and colleagues are thanked for their continuing support in promoting this campaign.

Community Boards – Health and Wellbeing Profiles

One of the most important factors for health is the community and local environment within which people live. Where communities have strong social ties, feelings of togetherness and a sense of belonging, communities thrive. Strong communities will also be a key driver for recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest health profiles for Buckinghamshire's 16 Community Boards went 'live' on 11 October (<https://www.healthandwellbeingbucks.org/local-profiles>). The indicators included in the profiles provide a high-level overview of the important markers of the health and wellbeing of communities such as life expectancy, proportion of children who are overweight, or adults who are physically inactive. They highlight areas where things are going well but also importantly where improvements can be made. The Public Health team has written recommendations for each Community Board as an aid to identifying some immediate actions they can take to improve health and wellbeing in their communities.

A Buckinghamshire Approach to Obesity

Obesity is a complex problem with multiple causes and has significant implications for health. With the majority of adults in England being overweight or obese and a substantial number of children on the same trajectory, particularly those in the most deprived areas, national and local action is needed. By looking at the issue as a system, all partners are able to come together to understand the challenge and identify opportunities for change.

To start the approach, earlier this year Leeds Beckett University was commissioned to undertake a health needs assessment and a mapping exercise to assess the existing problem and the current actions and services across the county that are in place to address obesity. At the end of September, this was followed by a workshop which brought together sixty-five people from a wide range of areas including, planning, transport, leisure and community organisations and had good

engagement from Councillors. The information from this first workshop is being used to create a comprehensive map of obesity in Buckinghamshire which will illustrate the complexity of causes locally and to help identify opportunities to intervene.

A second workshop took place on 10th November to develop a shared vision for the approach to obesity and explore actions that could provide the greatest benefits.

Grow to Give

Grow to Give was formed as a local sustainable response to Covid-19 and local food insecurity, asking people to grow more food in their gardens or allotments and donating this surplus to the Aylesbury Vineyard Storehouse food bank, One Can Trust (High Wycombe) and Buckingham Free Meals. Food banks are seeing an increased demand caused by the pandemic, which for most of our food banks is still at about 150% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Since Grow to Give started in June 2020, 4.6 tonnes across 14 allotment sites has been donated, with over three tonnes this growing season to date. The scheme has 178 volunteers who regularly donate produce and 30 allotment champions to help run the scheme on the ground.

Veggies in Containers

With approximately 20% of adults in the UK facing food insecurity annually, and the pandemic highlighting the need for a more resilient UK food system, our Public Health team commissioned a pilot 'Veggies in Containers' project.

The aim of the project was to encourage more people to grow their own produce and either use existing outdoor/indoor spaces more creatively or actively participate / set-up community growing sites. The project encouraged healthy diet choices and increased awareness of how easy it is to grow produce in small spaces.

Delivered in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham through the community organisations Vineyard Storehouse Food Bank, Women's Cultural Arena and Restore Hope, participants were given a growing kit of their choice (windowsill, balcony or small garden) providing all the equipment and 'how to guides'. Recipe cards were also provided to help people make nutritious meals with their produce.

A total of 246 growing kits were distributed, with the majority for small gardens. The overwhelming majority of participants loved the project and said they would try to grow herbs/salad/vegetables again. Having their children alongside proved very popular as did tasting freshly grown produce.





Cabinet Member report – Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Nick Naylor

Environmental Health

Food Safety

Following success in securing funding from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to triage and assess the risks posed by new food businesses, additional staff have now been employed and are working through a list of approximately 900 new food businesses, whilst allowing permanent officers to focus on the highest risk food businesses which are currently trading. The FSA has published a recovery roadmap which the service is following rather than its usual established inspection programme. Environmental Health colleagues are also working closely with Trading Standards regarding Natasha's Law and providing advice to businesses.

Events Safety

Officers have been working closely with a number of event organisers this summer, for example, Pub in the Park and PennFest, to ensure that Covid security measures are in place. Event organisers are encouraged to notify the Council of any events via the Safety Advisory Group (SAGs) irrespective of whether the event requires a licence. The SAGs officers have been encouraging organisers of firework displays to be mindful of neighbours who may not enjoy fireworks.

Air Quality and Climate Change

The Strategic Environmental Protection team continues to identify funding opportunities to support air quality projects. We have recently submitted two bids to DEFRA, one of which, if successful, would create a toolkit for Community Boards and schools to monitor air pollution. The outcomes of the bids should be known by March 2022.

New mobile home parks licensing 'Fit and Proper' requirements

Licensing Committee has recently approved a 'Determination Policy' and fee structure for a newly required register for persons 'deemed fit and proper' to manage mobile home parks. The policy and the associated fees will be reviewed after a year. This will be done alongside a review of caravan site licensing policies which require harmonisation from the legacy councils.

Enforcement Work

Environmental Health has, in the last few months, successfully taken three prosecutions. One was in conjunction with the Licensing team and included a combination of 'smoke free' and licensing offences. Counsel was complementary of the work of Council officers in respect of this case. The remaining two cases concerned breaches of Covid regulations. In 2020, certain premises were not permitted to be open to the public after 10 pm. However, after warnings and written

advice two premises were served Fixed Penalty Notices for continuing to trade. These fines were not paid and as a result matters were escalated to court.

Registrars and Coroners Services

Registrars

The Registration Service is now working at usual demand levels and as of 1 November restrictions on capacity in the ceremony rooms and use of waiting rooms have been lifted. Death registration appointments remain by 'phone, but all other appointments are taking place on a face to face basis. The service has coped very well with the increased pent up ceremony demand across the summer and into the autumn; additional staffing secured from amongst volunteers within the Council workforce has worked well to provide a resilient team, able to deliver extra ceremonies to a very high standard.

Coroners

The Coroner's service also continues to operate at usual demand levels whilst still continuing to work through inquests delayed due to Covid restrictions. The five-year body removal contract has been extended and will now end in October 2023. Negotiations are complete with the bidder for the mortuary and pathology services, with a start date anticipated in the coming months.

Housing

"Everybody In" arrangements were put in place at the start of the Covid emergency to bring all rough sleepers off the streets. Over the last two to three months, notices have been given to any remaining clients who remain accommodated under "Everybody In", and the Council and its partner agencies have been working actively with these clients to help them secure alternative accommodation. In some cases, clients have not engaged with the housing team and have left the accommodation at the end of the notice period. Only one case has been found so far, where a client has unfortunately returned to rough sleeping. Although "Everybody In" has ended, the Council continues to offer and deliver ongoing support to all rough sleepers in partnership with other agencies via the ongoing Rough Sleeper Initiative. This includes outreach support and emergency accommodation where appropriate.

All of the additional protections for tenants (including extended eviction notice periods) that were introduced in response to the Covid emergency have now ended. There are indications that there is an upturn in the number of clients seeking homelessness assistance and landlords serving notice, and we are continuing to monitor this.

Work is underway to develop the new Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy and consultants have been appointed to lead and co-ordinate this work, which will include a range of stakeholder sessions and engagement.

Trading Standards

Natasha's Law

In October, a significant new food labelling law known as "Natasha's law" came into effect to help people, particularly those with life threatening allergies, to make safer choices about the pre-prepared foods they purchase and consume. Natasha's Law requires ingredient and allergen labelling for foods which are prepared and packaged where they are sold (for example sandwiches from a canteen).

In preparation for the new legislation, as well as putting out general information through a press release and our social media sites, we have also been working with businesses through our Primary

Authority Partners, including school meal providers and the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) who have over 30,000 members nationally. This has included helping the ACS put together [a one page information leaflet](#) for their members, developing a video explainer to support them to prepare for this change and ensure this important information is given to people so they can make safe informed choices. We will be making use of our volunteers to undertake some market surveillance once the new law is in place to understand where businesses may be struggling to adapt to the new laws so that we can direct some further resources specifically at supporting these businesses to make the changes needed.

When officers visit relevant businesses, they will be providing advice on the new requirements, and will follow up on complaints about non-compliance. This will include working closely with colleagues in the Environmental Health teams across both areas.

New Primary Authority Partnership

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards have now engaged with a new Primary Authority Partner – WWF Trading Ltd. The mission of the World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund) is to stop the destruction of nature and help it to recover. Making sure that products sold as part of fundraising activities are safe is incredibly important to WWF. Product safety is just one of the many areas that the partnership will be able to provide support to WWF and help it to succeed.

Gypsy & Traveller Service (GTS) Update

Unauthorised encampments across the last three fiscal years show a steady decline – 38 encampments in 19/20, 18 encampments in 20/21 and 13 encampments in 21/22. This is a combination of the impact of the pandemic alongside a holistic and proportionate local approach. The GTS continued to deal with encampments following government guidance during the pandemic, balancing both the welfare needs of the Travellers and the rights and freedom of the settled community. Robust action was taken on groups when required and rationalised levels of toleration to families that adhere to the Council's code of conduct. Development of the forward looking strategy is due to start this year and will build on existing good work, ensuring a long term plan is in place to manage the GTS.

Licensing

The new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy was implemented on the 6th September 2021 and harmonises requirements for the licensed trade and for users across the Buckinghamshire Council area. This is a significant achievement and, whilst there have been some inevitable challenges; the Service is continuing to work hard to bed the new Policy changes in. Information on the new Policy and on taxi and private hire licensing can be found [online](#).

The draft Buckinghamshire Council Licensing Act Policy was reviewed by Licensing Committee on 20th October 2021 and recommended to Full Council for approval at the 24th November meeting. The recommended implementation date is likely to be early in 2022. At the same meeting Licensing Committee also approved the draft Buckinghamshire Council Gambling Act Policy for public consultation which will commence imminently. Under transitional arrangements both of these policies must be in place for the new council by 1st April 2022 and we are progressing well with a view to meeting this deadline. As we harmonise licensing policies, we will simultaneously look to harmonise customer experience and application processes, focusing on digital improvement and system changes to support this.

The Service has had some recent positive prosecution and appeal outcomes in the Magistrates Court across both commercial and taxi licensing. The team have worked closely over several months with colleagues in the Environmental Health service to prosecute the persons responsible for a shisha bar in the South Bucks area following numerous offences and significant disturbance to nearby residents. A guilty plea was entered in relation to both Licensing Act and Health Act offences and fines and costs of in the region of £6k were awarded to the Council. This was a time-consuming and complex case and is a good example of collaborative working across services to achieve the right outcome.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

Recruitment to the Service is ongoing. The new management team is now recruited and in post with one remaining person joining at the end of November. The team will be working together over the next few months to align the crematoria and cemeteries services more closely, providing a single service across the whole Council area and resulting in a more consistent and accessible service for our customers. The Crematoria team have been working hard to train and support new staff joining the service to ensure that we are effectively prepared and resilient for any additional winter pressures, if required.

The contracts for the design, supply, and installation of three new cremators and the ongoing maintenance contract at the Chilterns Crematorium has recently been awarded to Facultatieve Technologies who are a well-established supplier in this field. The contract includes the provision of additional environmental abatement plant for nitrogen oxide which is not currently required by DEFRA but will likely be soon. The installation of this plant in advance of the requirement to do so supports the Council's wider environmental objectives and priorities. Work is currently underway to tender the associated construction works contract with award due in February 2022.

At Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens the team have run a number of successful recent events including taking part in Heritage Open Day in partnership with the National Trust and a 'Fungus Foray' with an expert from the Mycological Society, aimed at both adults and children who want to learn about different fungi growing in the Gardens.

Service Reviews

Following service review earlier this year, the Environmental Health service is recruiting to several vacancies and officers are transitioning to new roles. Recruitment is also ongoing in the housing service. Officers are looking at opportunities for process harmonisation. The Service Review for Registrars and Coroners services is underway.





Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles

Award for Equalities

As part of our ongoing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, the Buckinghamshire Council undertook an internal benchmarking exercise (ENEI's Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation (TIDE)) during the summer of this year, to calculate the Council's current performance against various measures. I am happy to report that we scored highly in many areas and as such we were awarded with a Bronze TIDE award. In an area where we are striving for consistent progress, we are very pleased with the score and we are already using the exercise outputs to plan for additional improvements.

Armed Forces

The Civilian-Military Partnership board had held its second meeting in September. The Civilian-Military Partnership Board's four task and finish groups have been set up and are now working on delivering for the armed forces community across Buckinghamshire. The Veteran's task and finish group has set up their first walk-in centre in Marlow Fire Station with an intention to set up further ones in the coming months. In October, the Armed Forces Champion visited both RAF Halton and RAF High Wycombe with an aim of further strengthening relationships with our military partners.

Community Safety Survey

The annual community safety survey was launched on the Buckinghamshire Council website in September and ran for four weeks. It is a statutory requirement of Community Safety Partnerships, and measures the community's concerns in relation to crime, anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol. The results of the survey are currently being analysed and will be taken to the Safer Buckinghamshire Board meeting on 16th November 2021.

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent on the 29th April 2021 which gives more resources to tackle this critical issue. We want Buckinghamshire to be a place where few people as possible are affected by domestic abuse, but those who are can get help to end the abuse and go on to live the lives they want. Work has been underway to publish a Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment which helps inform local strategic priorities and programmes of work designed to address unmet needs, reduce risk, and prevent future tragedies.

The Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Board met on the 6th October 2021; this new Board takes a partnership approach to tackling domestic abuse and will oversee plans for compliance with the new duties and strengthen work linked to wider support for all those affected by domestic abuse in

Buckinghamshire. The Board have supported the co-design of a Domestic Abuse Strategy due to be discussed at Cabinet in December.

Community Boards

There has been a great deal of Community Board activity since the last Full Council meeting. The first edition of the Cabinet Member newsletter was issued in October which highlighted various projects being delivered, this was also shared with town and parish councils keen to know what other boards are doing. Two Chairman and Vice Chairman's sessions have been held, both were well attended and have provided for good discussions across a variety of topics.

The latest round of Community Board meetings is underway, summaries received of the meetings so far reinforce the amount of activity across the Boards. The Funding Panel meeting that I chair, to enable oversight of projects across all boards or where cross board collaboration ideas come through centrally, have needed to be moved to fortnightly due to the pace of activity in all the boards. There is a lovely variety of projects coming through linked to Board action plans, they range from protecting our environment to supporting good physical and mental health. Contributory funding levels vary but to-date c£590k has been secured. I'm looking forward to seeing the boards focus on their engagement plans in the next few months.

Last year's Proud of Bucks awards were fantastic and a great way to recognise Buckinghamshire's community spirit and wonderful community support. This year the Community Boards will run the awards as they are best placed to know their communities and the great people and organisations within them. It also means the Boards can give it their own local flavour, they will shortlist, judge and present the awards. These will launch in November with awards being made in February. There are three categories for each Board – adult, young person and community organisation. There will be a winner for each category and a highly commended. We are delighted that The Clare Foundation is sponsoring the awards.





Cabinet Member report – Climate Change & Environment

Councillor Peter Strachan

COP 26 Regional Roadshow Event

Our Green Wheels in Motion Regional Roadshow event in support of the COP 26 Climate Conference was held on 10 November at the Lunaz Group facility in Silverstone Technology Park. The event showcased a range of technologies and innovative approaches to decarbonising transport emissions, which are either being developed or deployed in Buckinghamshire. This was a fantastic event and really showed how much excellent work is being undertaken in Buckinghamshire. The event was also live broadcast online and a recording will shortly be available via the [climate change](#) page of our website

Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and Tree Planting

On 19 October, Cabinet adopted the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and we are now focusing on its delivery. Over recent months we have focused on supporting nature based solutions to address climate change, including supporting the Queen's Green Canopy initiative, securing over £200k from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, going to market to plant the first of our own tree planting projects and simplifying the process to request tree planting along road verges. Depending on the outcomes of the procurement exercise, we hope to be planting the first trees in February 2022.

Local Heritage List

The Local Heritage List Project launched in September with funding from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This is a great opportunity for members of the public to nominate non-designated heritage assets (buildings, monuments, public artwork, parks and gardens) to be included on our Local List. The web platform sets out examples of the types of sites that can be included and the criteria by which they will be assessed. We already have nearly 2000 sites nominated, and the team have begun assessing these. Sites that end up on the Local List will become a material consideration in the planning process, affording them some protection, and helping to preserve Buckinghamshire's special historic environment. More information is available [online](#).

Greatmoor Energy from Waste (EFW) Contract Update

The last 18 months have been challenging in terms of issues to be dealt with in relation to the EFW contract. Starting in the spring of 2020, the Covid pandemic saw a number of impacts on the EFW contract, with electricity income in particular suffering a huge price fall. Nevertheless, the facility still generated significant quantities of electricity with the amount exported being nearly 190,000 MWh, enough to meet the needs of over 40,000 households.

A further impact of Covid was increased residual waste being taken to the EFW facility. Kerbside collection services for food waste and to a lesser extent garden waste were suspended during the Spring of 2020, along with closures of the Household Recycling Centres. This resulted in waste being diverted into the residual waste stream and ultimately led to a 10.7% year on year increase in waste treated at the facility across 2020/21. In the current contract year (2021/22) a similar narrative is unfolding; HGV driver shortages have resulted in the cancellation of food waste collections across most of the south of the County and this food waste is going into the residual waste stream. This will again incur additional costs for the council, but that will be offset by the savings made from not collecting food waste separately.

Despite the above challenges, the day-to-day contract operation has worked very well, with 100% of residual waste being sent to the facility being successfully treated there, with no diversion needed to other facilities such as landfill. The facility has proven to be a robust method to deal with residual waste which, despite some of the extra costs incurred, is still vastly cheaper than the historic alternative of landfill. In addition, the EFW contract also continues to deliver benefits on reduced mileage for the Council's refuse vehicles with the operation of the High Heavens Waste Transfer Station saving some 139,000 miles on delivery of waste to the Greatmoor facility from the south of the county. Furthermore, the dedicated access road to the facility continues to divert some 130 HGVs per day away from villages in the immediate area.

Household Recycling Centre (HRC) Contract

The HRC contract has this year (2021/22) moved into its final contractual year and overall has continued to operate well, despite the impacts of the Covid pandemic. Spring 2021 saw the remaining car parking restrictions being lifted in line with government guidance on social distancing and since then the sites have operated more or less as normal. Social distancing messages continue to be prominently displayed and regular cleaning remains on each site.

That the service continues to operate well is perhaps best demonstrated by the latest HRC customer survey carried out in June 2021. This showed that 99% of respondents said they were satisfied with the service overall with just over half (52%) saying they were very satisfied and 100% said they felt safe when visiting the sites during the pandemic.

With this being the final contractual year, the team are working closely with FCC to ensure the contract has a smooth transition into the new contract. Meanwhile the procurement of the new HRC contract is at an advanced stage, the new contract will cover the management, operation and running of all nine HRCs, a new service contract is required to be in place by 1st April 2022. There will be further updates in the coming months as Cabinet makes the decision in December to award the new contract.

Garden Food Bulky Wood Waste (GFBW) Contract

February 2021 saw the start of the new five-year GFBW contract with Spanish company Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas (FCC). This replaced the four separate biowaste contracts that previously managed food and green (garden) waste as well as the shredding of bulky waste.

The key feature of the new contract is that FCC do not process most of the waste streams themselves, rather they sub-contract them to a range of third-party contractors/suppliers. Having this range of suppliers means the contract has strong business continuity measures in place in the event of an issue impacting any individual supplier. In addition, this allows the contract the flexibility to deal with future changes in tonnage flows and material streams. A further new element

of the GFBW contract is that the treatment of wood waste becomes part of the contract from April 2022.

The separate processing of food waste, garden waste, bulky waste and ultimately wood waste has demonstrable CO₂ benefits against historic landfill disposal options. These CO₂ benefits are measured as part of the contract reporting.

Fly-Tipping Enforcement Update

Despite recent difficulties relating to the pandemic, enforcement against fly-tipping in Buckinghamshire has continued at a high level. 59 cases have been fully investigated so far, this financial year, resulting in 18 offenders reported for prosecution, the issue of 39 fixed penalties and the seizure and destruction of two commercial fly-tippers' vehicles. Since March 2020, 127 cases have been investigated and were found to comprise 65 (51.2%) household waste (free at HRC site), 51 (40.2%) trade waste (chargeable status unchanged at HRC site), and 11 included some element of chargeable item(s) (8.7% only). 88 of the cases (68.8%) involved waste brought into Bucks from elsewhere, while 40 were Bucks-produced waste (31.2%).

Buckinghamshire fly-tipping has fallen each month since March 2021 away from a very significant 'Covid' peak level towards levels consistent with pre-pandemic dumping.

Demobilisation of the Biffa Waste Contract in the South of Buckinghamshire

Biffa have successfully delivered waste collection and cleansing services in Buckinghamshire, and the legacy South Bucks area, for the last 14 years. Following an extensive procurement exercise in 2018/19 a new contract was awarded to Veolia covering all Southern areas of Buckinghamshire. On 7 September 2020 Veolia took over waste services in the former Chiltern and Wycombe area from Serco, on 1 November 2021 Veolia will take over delivery of waste services from Biffa in the former South Bucks area.

Staff on the Biffa Contract are subject to applicable TUPE regulations. Wages will increase for Biffa staff across the board as Veolia have a higher rate of pay as Veolia are committed to a minimum Living Wage Foundation rate under the contract. TUPE sessions were expertly supported by Council HR and Waste colleagues – the success of this is reflected in the high number of individuals who will TUPE to Veolia.

Waste vehicles that Biffa use are owned by the Council, Biffa are required to fuel and maintain the vehicles under the contract. A third party fleet assessment in August deemed these vehicles to be in good condition when age is accounted for. The same vehicles will be used from 1 November, although re-badged from Biffa. Veolia are bringing in replacement new vehicles in late 2021, which are diesel 6, will have electrically operated bin lifts, rather than the run of the main motor making them more fuel efficient and environmentally friendly. Driver diagnostics will also be introduced with the new vehicles to prevent speeding, harsh braking, over revving etc. Some capital following sale of the old Biffa vehicles will be available to the Council.

Importantly residents will notice very little difference after 1 November 2021. The same vehicles will be driven the same routes by the same crews. A Veolia badge will replace the Biffa badge on vehicles and uniforms – this is the extent of the change residents might notice.

Veolia are super-resourcing the first two weeks of November to ensure standards are maintained in terms of collection and cleansing. Indeed, it is encouraging to see there has been almost no deterioration in service delivered by Biffa in the final week of their service.

