



## Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 10 May 2022 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.15 pm.

### Members present

M Tett, Cllr A Macpherson, G Williams, S Bowles, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss, N Naylor and P Strachan

### Others in attendance

M Harker OBE, R Stuchbury and A Wheelhouse

### Agenda Item

#### 1 Apologies

There were none.

#### 2 Minutes RESOLVED –

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2022 be approved as a correct record.**

#### 3 Declarations of interest

There were none.

#### 4 Hot Topics

The following topics were raised:

##### Leader

- There was a launch tonight of Buckinghamshire Swans where prominent people had been invited to become ambassadors of Buckinghamshire including Pauline Quirke, Lorraine Kelly and Sir David Lidington to ensure that Buckinghamshire continued to be a great place to live and prosper.

##### Cabinet Member for Transport

- Residents were asked not to park on verges as it was now the Council's grass cutting season.
- In terms of statistics from 2021-22 regarding winter gritting: the Council had

gritted 56,868 miles of roads (equivalent to twice around the world) with 5,690 tons of salt

#### **Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment**

- The introduction of new household waste collections in the south of the Council area had commenced yesterday. Some waste collection rounds had been too big at 1,700 household per day when the industry average was 1,100 collections. Changes had been made to make collection rounds more efficient. The public were asked to be patient whilst the new collection system bedded in. This should led to more flexible services. The Leader also asked for residents to help ensure that the right materials were put in the recycling bins.

#### **Cabinet Member for Communities**

- The Helping Hands team were providing critical help with distributing 12500 holiday vouchers for use during the May half-term holidays. This would help alleviate some of the pressures with regard to the cost of living crisis.
- Some of the Community Boards had their first round of meetings in this municipal year, some of the events were in person rather than being held virtually and included the Proud of Bucks awards. He congratulated the winners and thanked them for their contribution to Buckinghamshire.
- The Community Safety Team had undertaken some work in relation to Violence against Women and Girls and County Lines Intensification week and were training hotel staff on safeguarding issues.

#### **Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

- The Adult Learning Service was providing courses including English language lessons and employment skills for Ukrainian families which were free and flexible to help those families who have recently arrived in the county. The Leader reported that he had just been in a meeting which illustrated the phenomenal amount of work being undertaken by the Council with housing providers, schools, further education and the voluntary sector helping families.

#### **Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure**

- Residents were reminded of the Marlow 'Pub in the Park' event this weekend and the Leader also mentioned the Tour de Vale Cycle event on 12 June.  
<https://www.wheelpower.org.uk/tourdevale22>

### **5 Question Time**

#### **Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services**

"The Affordable Housing paper provides a plan for social, affordable and key worker housing to meet the priorities of the Homelessness Strategy recently agreed at Council. Please could you assure me that the recommendations put forward meet the aspirations of the Notice of Motion on Affordable Housing which was agreed at Council on 9 December 2020 and can we be assured of the feasibility of the Council

delivering affordable and social housing through the use of the property portfolio over the coming years, so as to alleviate the waiting list for houses in Buckinghamshire.”

#### **Response from Councillor Naylor**

“There is an ever growing demand for affordable housing in Buckinghamshire, and nationally. Our register currently stands at around 4800 households, and more recently, applications have started to increase in number, quite markedly. Whilst demand for affordable housing far outstrips supply, the Affordable Housing Position Statement proposes a number of ways in which we can seek to start to close the gap and increase supply of affordable housing, including the potential use of disused sites within the Council’s property portfolio, subject to a robust business case and governance requirements. The position statement highlights sites that are currently under consideration, and we will be examining the feasibility of these sites in greater detail and if viable, they will be brought forward with elements of affordable housing on them.”

The Leader commented that it was important to increase the supply of affordable housing and some sites had been identified for this but where inevitably sites were put forward a local protest group could argue that particular site was not suitable. It was important to have affordable housing for key workers and young people.

#### **Question from Councillor Alison Wheelhouse to Councillor Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration**

“At recent Full Council, you confirmed that alternatives to the Standard Method are being looked at for calculating local housing need, as permitted by the NPPF.

The 2018 ONS household projection data show the Council’s recently produced 5 Year Housing Land Supply to be massively under-stated. Applying the 2018 data to the Standard Method, for example, by my analysis, South Bucks has c. 9 years housing land supply and Wycombe has a 27 year supply.

Can you confirm this to be the case, provide details of the alternative methods being considered, and explain why the alternative methods were not set out in the Council’s recent 5 year Housing Land Supply Statement.”

#### **Response from Councillor Williams**

“In the preparation of local plans, the National Planning Policy Framework prescribes the use of the government’s Standard Method for calculating local housing need unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. The use of the standard method is therefore not mandatory. However, if local councils feel that circumstances warrant an alternative approach, they can expect this to be

scrutinised more closely during the examination of their local plan.

The Standard Method uses as its baseline the DCLG 2014-based national household projections. More recent 2016 and 2018-based household projections have been published by the Office for National Statistics and we have been considering what implications their use might have for the assessment of local housing need that informs the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.

For the purposes of calculating the five-year housing land supply and the Housing Delivery Test, however, the government does mandate the use of the standard method for assessing local housing need in areas where there is no up-to-date local plan, i.e. in the East and South planning areas.

In those areas where the Council has an up-to-date local plan, we must use the housing requirement from the VALP and the Wycombe Local Plan for the five-year supply calculations. Below is an extract from the Planning Practice Guidance on this matter:

What housing requirement figures should authorities use when calculating their 5 year housing land supply?

Housing requirement figures identified in adopted strategic housing policies should be used for calculating the 5 year housing land supply figure where:

- The plan was adopted in the last 5 years, or
- The strategic housing policies have been reviewed within the last 5 years and found not to need updating.

In other circumstances the 5 year housing supply will be measured against the area's local housing need calculated using the standard method.

Paragraph:005 Reference ID 68-005-20190722

Revision date: 22 July 2019

Therefore, our calculations have been based on the figures in the table below:

**Table 2: Annual housing requirements**

Area	Annual Housing Statement	Source of Requirement.
Aylesbury	1430	Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2021)
Wycombe	546	Wycombe Local Plan (2019)

Chiltern	350	Standard method.
South Bucks	433	Standard method
Buckinghamshire	2759	

The Leader referred to mention of the Levelling up Bill in the Queens Speech and a media article on changes in planning from Michael Gove. There was no detail in the article on the five year land supply or duty to co-operate. The Council would look at the implications of the Bill once the details were available.

## **6 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)**

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what Cabinet would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.**

## **7 Community Board Rapid Review**

Councillor M Harker, Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee attended the meeting to present the findings and recommendations of the rapid review into Community Boards. The Select Committee had agreed to establish the review in December 2021. After some initial discussions across the wider Select Committee, a smaller group of councillors had volunteered to participate in further evidence gathering meetings with a number of stakeholders, which took place across two consecutive days in March 2022. The review group had been chaired by Councillor Mimi Harker and comprised of Councillors Bass, Cooper, Mahon, G Smith, L Smith, and Waite. Following the evidence gathering meetings the review group had then met to discuss and agree its key findings and recommendations, which were detailed in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.

Cabinet considered their responses to the scrutiny review and commented or raised the following points during discussion:

- The Cabinet Member for Communities thanked the review group for their report and stated that a number of these recommendations had already been adopted in the Localism service review and that they would work on the other recommendations to ensure that they too were implemented.
- Being a Community Board Chairman required a unique skill set. The Member Working Group had been working on refresh training for Members which included a chairing skills module which was mandatory for chairmen but also recommended for all councillors as many have chairing roles in the community. The Select Committee Chairman agreed that leadership skills were essential for this front facing role and bringing together all partners working towards a common goal. The Leader commented that Community Boards were the foundation in which the Council could act locally and in

- partnership with other organisations. However, sometimes competing demands could be challenging with service requirements and local needs.
- Clarification was given that this would be reviewed on an annual basis as Community Boards would evolve over time and as can be seen from the pandemic it was important to be able to be flexible to meet local and national issues.
  - Concern was raised about using Community Board funding for a highway scheme which was not a priority for the Council. However, it was noted that it was also important for Community Boards to have some funding so that they could make their own decisions about what highways schemes were a priority for local residents even though these schemes did not meet the criteria for highway schemes at a corporate level.
  - A Cabinet Member welcomed that there would be autonomy of funding for Community Boards to agree their own priorities.
  - Better communications regarding the work of Community Boards was welcomed and a suggestion was made that parish magazines would be a good way of publicising meetings and the work of Boards.
  - It was important that small groups could benefit from Community Board funding even though they did not have a bank account. Clarification was given that contributory funding was encouraged but this could only be a small amount. This enabled the Council to work in partnership with local organisations to deliver projects.
  - The Cabinet Member for Transport reported that they were working on the new transport contract award for April 2023. They were currently looking at the framework for service delivery and were particularly looking at improving transparency of costs and timings which should help the processing of Community Board projects.

Cabinet Members thanked Local Members and Community Board Co-ordinators for everything they had delivered locally particularly during challenging times. Their hard work was appreciated. The Community Board Annual Report would detail some of the work that had been delivered which was being discussed at Full Council on 18 May 2022. The Select Committee Chairman thanked Cabinet Members for their response and commented that it was important to be as proactive as possible in raising awareness of the work of Community Boards. She also commented on the delivery of highway schemes and emphasised the importance of managing expectations in terms of funding and what could be delivered.

Cabinet Members agreed their response to the Community Board Rapid Review Group recommendations.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the Community Board Rapid Review Group, as well as the supporting officers, be thanked for their work and subsequent recommendations.**
- (2) That Cabinet's responses to the review and recommendations, as set out and circulated to Members, be noted.**

Note: a complete breakdown of the scrutiny recommendations and Cabinet's responses can be found [here](#).

## **8 Early Help Partnership Strategy 2022 - 2025**

The Early Help Partnership Strategy for 2022-2025 documented what was known about the need for early help, why it was important and what action would be taken to make progress and deliver the Council's vision for children, young people, and families in Buckinghamshire. It had been jointly produced and was owned by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and all its member organisations. The Strategy set out what was already being done (previous Early Help Strategy 2019-2022) and what was planned to develop together in Buckinghamshire to ensure that children and their families received early help when they needed it. The document would steer and enable the priorities detailed in the Strategy to be delivered, while also reflecting the priorities set out by Children's Services as follows:-

Priority 1: Strengthen multi-agency strategic governance and joint ownership of the Early Help Strategy

Priority 2: Further develop the Early Help offer to include a targeted response to the increased risk of long-term disadvantage for children, young people and families due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Priority 3: Work together to provide effective Early Help in line with our strategic objectives and Early Help Partnership Action Plan, that supports children, young people and families to easily access support.

Priority 4: Develop a common understanding of Early Help across the partnership and promote a cohesive Buckinghamshire offer.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- There had been 4000 requests for help in the past year and the refresh of this Strategy would help extend that help working with local partners.
- This Strategy linked well with some areas of development that Ofsted had identified, including reaching out to some of the underrepresented groups across Buckinghamshire. The Corporate Director for Children's Services reported that the service worked hard to engage with young people and seek their views including analysing data to understand where there was a demand for services. They worked with a number of partners including the Youth Offending Service and with young people who were not in education.
- This Strategy also linked well with the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy including the Start Well policy.
- On page 75 of the agenda pack there were some bullet points on areas of concern which related to finance and it was important to work with the voluntary sector to ensure enhanced support was given during these challenging times. The Family Centres have Community Co-ordinators in them who worked to ensure that there were good links at the local level. There were a huge number of services provided by the voluntary and community sector and it was important to ensure that there was good co-

ordination of these services to provide the most effective service for children and young people.

- Previously there was generalised provision offered through Family Centres which had now moved to a more targeted provision where early intervention could reach the cohorts in greatest need which was the rationale for change. It was important to understand whether the increase in demand and contacts at Level 2, including the whole emphasis on a single point of contact had vindicated that decision. The Corporate Director reported that the demand for services had increased particularly since the pandemic and the move to a more targeted provision had provided more flexibility. The evidence suggested that this had been the right decision and the Strategy was building on that success to continue that way of working.
- Reference was made to children not in education or employment and if there was data which looked at those children who had received targeted support to compare with other areas such as the South East Region and the national average. The Corporate Director reported that they did have the data to undertake this comparison but there were peaks and troughs through the year such as when the academic year finished and further education might start in the Autumn.
- In response to a query whether there was adequate funding to support the Strategy the Cabinet Member responded that costs could be met from the core budget which included a three year grant from Supporting Families of £739,000 and if targets were achieved in three years the Council would receive another £248,000.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the achievements made since the Early Help Strategy 2019-2022 was adopted in 2019 be NOTED.**
- (2) That the priorities identified for the Early Help Partnership Strategy 2022-2025 be noted, and the Strategy be ADOPTED.**

#### **9 Participation Strategy for Young People 2022-2025**

Cabinet received a report on the first Participation Strategy for Young People 2022-2025 which signalled the Council's intention to ensure it provided opportunities to engage with children and young people in Buckinghamshire so that their voices were heard, responded to, and acted upon.

The Council's ambition was to provide the best services possible to support children and young people and their families in Buckinghamshire. In doing so the Council was striving to continually develop services and how they were delivered so they were relevant and appropriate. Children and young people had valuable contributions to make in helping the Council to understand what they needed.

The strategy provided a clear framework for Children's Services to use in an inclusive manner, actively listening, acting, and responding to the issues which children and young people informed the Council were important to them. This included involving

them in identifying and providing creative solutions.

During the December 2021 Ofsted re-inspection, inspectors had commented that the inclusion and participation of children in helping to shape improved practice and services was underdeveloped. The implementation of the Strategy formed part of the response to those finding.

This Strategy was co-produced with young people and The Care Leaders, a social enterprise led by experts by experience. The strategy brought together all areas of engagement and participation for young people, including the We Do Care Council, for children and young people in care, and Shout Out For SEND, the forum for young people with SEND. In addition to groups and forums, the strategy included wider engagement through Youth Councils and the Youth Voice Executive. Training would be provided for young people including encouraging them to join these activities including Community Boards. This significant range of activities was Championed by colleagues across children's services, who were supported by specialist staff and a Participation Coordinator, within the Family Support Service. A website would be produced to engage young people.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- A suggestion was made that in addition to the website it would be helpful to have a phone app which young people would relate to. The Cabinet Member reported that there would be a launch at Pinewood Studios shortly where they would be encouraging innovative ideas. The Corporate Director reported that they had hoped to bring this Strategy to Cabinet earlier but it had been delayed by the pandemic because of the importance of co-producing this document with young people. This Strategy was not just for Children's Services but the whole Council with active participation by young people. It was important not to just listen to them, but to act upon their views and respond to them.
- Funding for this Strategy was within the core budget.
- In response to a question about champions for the Strategy and whether this included councillors, the Cabinet Member referred to the Member's role as a Corporate Parent who could offer their services as a champion or mentor.
- A Member made reference to how success would be measured with regard to the Strategy and what key performance indicators would be used. The Cabinet Member reported that it would be measured by 'You said – we did'. The Corporate Director reported that the evidence of participation by young people in different service areas would be monitored including the impact on services.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the ambitions set out within the Strategy be NOTED.**
- (2) That the Participation Strategy for Young People 2022-25 be AGREED.**

#### **10 Moving Traffic Offences**

The Department of Transport (DfT) had invited local authorities with Designation

Orders for parking enforcement to apply to enforce moving traffic offences. This would help improve road safety, reduce congestion, and promote active traffic and clean air policies. Enforcement of moving traffic offences outside of London and Cardiff was currently undertaken by the Police.

Across England, all authorities were now permitted to apply and enforce parking and bus lane contraventions. This was by way of an application for a Designation Order. Buckinghamshire Council currently had five Designation Orders, which in their entirety cover the whole of the Buckinghamshire county. The number of Designation Orders was largely due to the timing when legacy Councils respectively applied for civil parking enforcement powers covering on and off street, and bus lanes.

The powers would enable the Council to enforce certain moving traffic offences such as, no entry, yellow box junctions, banned turns, and environmental weight limits. The powers also allowed stopping on school keep clears to be enforced by camera, as long as they were supported by a valid Traffic Regulation Order. A full list of contraventions that could be enforced utilising these powers is provided at Appendix A of the report.

The new powers did not allow the Council to enforce structural weight limits; these had not been included on the final list and enforcement of these restrictions would remain with the Police. The difference between an environmental weight restriction and a structural weight restriction was provided at Appendix B of the report.

The Cabinet report also contained information:

- On the key benefits of the Council adopting the new powers.
- On the conditions that a local authority must meet and commit to in respect of bringing forward moving traffic enforcement sites.
- That to support the application and make sure local authorities progressed and implemented the new powers in a timely manner, the DfT had requested that specific sites were identified on the applications and enforcement was then introduced to ensure the Order was used. A list of the specified sites was detailed at paragraph 2.19 of the Cabinet report.
- That enforcement was carried out using an approved device. This was a camera with automatic number plate recognition that had been certified by the VCA (Vehicle Certification Agency).
- That the aspiration was to undertake a review of the initial locations approximately 12 months following installation of the cameras. This would enable sufficient time to pass following the six-month period of warning notices to first offenders. In the meantime, compliance levels would be regularly monitored.
- That all new locations, after the initial period, would be agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport. This would include the requirement for a minimum 6 week consultation for every new location, although further approvals from the DfT would not be required.
- That to publicly engage with Members, local businesses, residents, and

visitors a consultation had taken place from 21 February 2022 to 4 April 2022. The outcome had resulted in 477 responses, of which 63% supported enforcement of moving traffic offences in Buckinghamshire. A large number of responders also supported the initial locations. A summary of the responses from the consultation could be found in Appendix C to the Cabinet report.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- The Leader reported that he was previously Chairman of the Local Government Association Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board, the Board had lobbied the Government for a number of years on devolving these powers to Councils. He expressed disappointment that weight restrictions had not been included.
- 14 problem areas (listed in the report) had been identified when looking at road safety data which would be subject to a public consultation and there could be other locations identified in the future with the main aim being changing driver behaviour. In addition to the safety reports and historical data, camera trials took place at Castle Street and Corporation Street in High Wycombe to assess the level of abuse. This showed that on average 480 motorists per day abused the restriction on Corporation Street and 381 motorists abused the restriction on Castle Street.
- In terms of choice of sites there had to be a geographical spread across the County including a variety of offence such as environmental weight restrictions, some turnings and bus lanes. With reference to Handy Cross there were hatchings and box junctions but in order to enforce there needed to be a Traffic Regulation Order and it needed to be in place for that particular site. In addition the roundabout was covered by Highways England which complicated matters so their agreement would be required to obtain the TRO to be able to enforce. Therefore implementation of this particular Scheme would take some time.
- The Cabinet Member had made sure that the Council was in the first tranche of applications to the Department of Transport to obtain these powers and the cut off for this was in 12 days time. If this was not undertaken now the Council could not apply or consideration of the application could not be made until October. If the Council were successful with their applications they could start enforcing by the end of the year.
- The sites on the list would change as they were mobile cameras. It was a rolling programme which would change once good driver behaviour had been established. There would always be a requirement to consult on TRO's and the Council would need to plan where the cameras were moving next reacting to any changes in the road network.
- A question was asked about a licence for ANPR in car parks. The Cabinet Member clarified that the Council was not enforcing in car parks. The use of ANPR was covered by the way that DfT were extending their powers as this was already in use in London. The Council would have the same requirements on usage of data.

- Reference was made to the geographical spread and including Aylesbury on the list particularly Market Square and Kingsbury both of which had current traffic infringements. The Cabinet Member reported that the earlier data which had been used was where cameras were already situated. There were some schemes in the plan for Aylesbury but the schemes were not all related to bus lanes or pedestrian zones. There were 14 locations and 16 cameras and the reason for this was that the Council already had powers to enforce in bus lanes in some instances so two of those cameras would be dealing with bus lane infringements where a TRO does not need to be in place.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) **That approval be granted for an application to be submitted to the Department for Transport for Buckinghamshire Council to apply for a Designation Order to enforce moving traffic offences.**
- (2) **That the cost of the cameras including the processing system, estimated at £276,000, be met from within the existing capital programme.**

#### **11 Business Improvement District (BID) Ballots: High Wycombe Town Centre (HWBIDCo) and Cressex Business Park BID**

Cabinet received a report and was informed that the Business Improvement District (BID) operating in High Wycombe Town Centre (HWBIDCo) would come to an end on the 30 September 2022. HWBIDCo had served notice of its intent to instruct the billing authority (Buckinghamshire Council) to put a new BID proposal to ballot to enable a third five-year term from 1 October 2022. Notice had also been served by the Cressex BID Steering Group of its intent to instruct Buckinghamshire Council to carry out a ballot on a proposal to create a new BID on Cressex Business Park from 1 October 2022.

Legislation required the Council to put ballot arrangements in place and, on receipt of a successful ballot outcome, make arrangements for the billing and collection of a levy payment. The Council was also required to work with the BID proposers to develop baseline service and operating agreements to ensure that activities carried out by the BID was additional to that provided by the local authority and that reasonable charges for levy billing and collection were agreed.

The importance to both the town centre in High Wycombe and Cressex Business Park in achieving BID status was that each BID, over the period of 2022 – 2027, would generate c £1.2m and £1.45m business-led investment to support their respective trading environments and would enable the delivery of a targeted range of improvements to benefit businesses and the local economy.

The Cabinet report set out the Council's statutory obligations in this process along with an overview of the activity carried out by HWBIDCo and the Cressex BID Steering Group to provide assurance that this had been carried out as per the requirements of the 2004 Regulations.

In response to a question the Cabinet Member clarified that the levy rate was typically between 1-3% of the rateable value.

**RESOLVED –**

- (1) That it be NOTED that the Buckinghamshire Council has received two notices of intent to ballot for HWBIDCo (High Wycombe Town Centre) and the Cressex BID Steering Group (Cressex Business Park).**
- (2) That it be NOTED that arrangements are being put in place for a postal ballot and for the Returning Officer, with the support of the Economic Development Manager, to appoint Civica to undertake this.**
- (3) That Cabinet confirms its full support to the creation of a new Business Improvement District on Cressex Business Park and for the continuation of High Wycombe Town Centre BID (HWBIDCo).**
- (4) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, to vote 'Yes' in the HWBIDCo ballot and the Cressex Business Park ballot, subject to ballot offers being satisfactory.**
- (5) That, subject to a 'Yes' vote, authority be delegated to the Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members and Services areas, to agree the detailed service level agreements in line with the business plans submitted and any operational decisions required to enable both BIDs to commence from 1 October 2022.**

**12 Government funding supporting Buckinghamshire Residents**

Government had released funding to support residents in Buckinghamshire since 2020, initially through the Winter Grant and Local Support Grant, and subsequently through the Household Support Fund. For the period November 2021 to March 2022, Buckinghamshire had been awarded £2.4m of funding from the Household Support Fund to provide support for residents in need of help with food, fuel and other essential household costs.

In the Spring Statement 2022, the Chancellor confirmed that the Household Support Fund would be extended, and this equated to a further £2.4m for Buckinghamshire to use to support residents between 1 April and 30 September 2022.

Cabinet received a report summarising how the previous funding allocations were used and setting out a proposed use of the additional fund between now and the end of September 2022 that would ensure it was targeted to residents in need of support and in line with the Government guidance.

During discussion the following points were noted:

- A Member briefing had been organised for 31 May 2022.
- Since November 2020 Government funding was focused on food support. The Winter Grant and Local Support Grant of £2.4million, a holiday activity and food programme fund of £1 million in 2021/22 and another million this year 2022/23.

There was a Household Support Fund of £2.4 million from October 2021 to March 2022 and the latest Support Fund of £2.4 million from April 2022 to September 2022.

- The Helping Hands Team had worked collaboratively across partners to assist residents who required additional support for food, warmth and household living costs. Funds had been utilised in many ways including providing direct support from request from residents but also through holiday food vouchers for families who were eligible to receive free school meals. The fund was utilised by the end of March and the Council has now further funding from the extended Household Support Grant which was announced in the Chancellor's Spring Statement. Section 5 of the report detailed how this funding would be spent.
- The Local Government Association and Department of Work and Pensions were organising sessions in the next few months to ensure good practice was shared with current funding and to look at future plans to help residents to help influence future thinking by the Treasury. The Council would be attending those sessions.
- The Government had borrowed £350 billion to support the Country through covid and had now also provided this additional funding for residents. There was an increase in the national living wage, taper relief on Universal Credit, subsidising the Council Tax rebate and £1.2 million for the Council to operate a discretionary scheme to cover Bands E to H for residents on eligible terms and for people on benefits an extra £25. Some residents may still be struggling but it was important that the £7.2 million of Government funding was being well deployed and the Helping Hands Scheme was doing some fantastic work in helping vulnerable people.
- Cabinet Members welcomed the fact that the Council had distributed the funding very quickly by targeting the most in need.
- In terms of hard to reach groups, the majority of the funding went to residents through food vouchers for children who were eligible for free school meals and there was also some additional funding which was given through the voluntary and community sector to help hard to reach families and through children and adult services. The School could also allocate vouchers to those children who were in financial hardship.
- A press release would be issued to make residents aware of the extra funding.

Cabinet Members paid tribute to the work of the Helping Hands Team.

**RESOLVED that the additional Household Support Fund be used to support Buckinghamshire residents as set out in the report.**

### **13 Outcomes from the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group**

An affordable housing Member Task and Finish Group had been initiated in August 2021 led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services. The group had met on a number of occasions to discuss the issues and challenges around the delivery of affordable housing in Buckinghamshire and to develop an affordable housing 'position statement', with the aim of reporting back to the Leader and Cabinet.

The draft position statement was intended to set out the Council's interim approach

and immediate commitment to bringing forward a development on a Council owned site that provided affordable housing, potentially with an element of specialist affordable and key worker housing. The interim approach was intended to cover the period while the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and overarching Housing Strategies were being developed and was expected to provide early tangible progress for the key Council priority of increasing the delivery of affordable housing.

Paragraph 1.2 of the report set out the immediate objectives for the Task and Finish Group. Some of the longer term objectives of the Member-led TFG were to provide input into the development of the Council's overarching Housing Strategy and to identify learning from completed pilot projects to inform future schemes, thereby maximising delivery, and also complementing existing delivery that occurred through the planning process and registered provider partnerships.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- This Strategy was in line with other strategies of the Council including planning, communities, economic regeneration, climate change and energy efficiency.
- It would cover over five years and an Action Plan would be drafted to support the Strategy.
- A Cabinet Member welcomed the fact that this Strategy was linked to the First Homes Position Statement as this was a challenge in the area with the housing stock available.
- In terms of the assessment of the three sites identified it was noted that this would be completed later in the Summer.
- It was one of the Council's key priorities and important that it was implemented as soon as possible.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the findings of the Affordable Housing Member-led Task and Finish Group, including the proposed interim position statement on affordable housing be NOTED.**
- (2) That the Affordable Housing Position Statement be ADOPTED, and the required activities be taken forward by Officers.**

#### **16 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held at 10am on Tuesday 7 June 2022.