



## Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

### Thanks

I would like to start by offering my appreciation and congratulations to Her Majesty, The Queen on her Platinum Jubilee. The Jubilee weekend celebrations back at the start of June were absolutely fantastic and a great chance for communities across the whole county to come together – we have some great photos of events in our council magazine ‘Your Buckinghamshire’ which came out a couple of weeks ago. I would like to thank the organisers of local events like the one I attended who worked really hard so that people across the whole of Bucks could take part in local events, all which were a great success.

I would also like to draw attention and offer thanks to our Armed Forces; we recently celebrated Armed Forces Day on 25th June, and I had great pleasure in raising the Armed Forces flags to mark this important date – and the close ties we have with our local Armed Forces representatives.

In mid-June I had the pleasure of visiting the Chilterns MS Centre. This is a fantastic resource and plays such an important role in helping people suffering with MS. I wanted to mention this to raise their profile and increase awareness as they can offer valuable help and support to people suffering with MS and other neurological conditions within our communities.

### Helping Hand for Ukraine

We continue to support new arrivals from Ukraine into our county. 1137 hosts are offering accommodation to Ukrainian guests and arrivals are being supported through our dedicated ‘Helping Hand for Ukraine’ team as they settle into their stay in Buckinghamshire. Over 1500 Ukrainian guests have stated Buckinghamshire as their destination on their visa applications (data correct as of 6/7/22). It is through the kindness of over 577 Buckinghamshire residents opening their homes to families fleeing the conflict that they are able to come here.

The council is working hard to make sure the families can access schooling, work, practical items and emotional support. Officers have been helping practically with administering housing, welfare checks and DBS checks for sponsors who have found guests they would like to stay with them as well as administering the government grant to sponsors. Our web pages continue to be updated as does our welcome pack which is sent to sponsors along with a translated version for the Ukrainian families.

We are delighted to have partnered with our voluntary sector colleagues on this vital work too. Heart of Bucks helped swiftly develop a dedicated local crisis fund and Community Impact Bucks has been commissioned to support with informal interpreters and link with the many community groups. They are helping arrivals with events like coffee mornings for social gatherings as well as telling people what support is available such as language classes, employment webinars and vaccine updates. Members will have a key role to play in helping our guests integrate into the local community groups.

Given Buckinghamshire's large numbers we are working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to make sure our local experiences are understood, and we are offering our insight into enhancing the national programme. We are also collaborating to be able to host a biometric pop-up venue to enable guests to easily access the critical permit documentation needed to work or study. We are mindful that for some of our guests they have arrived with an understanding of being in a family home for six months which, for a few, could be as early as September. We are actively working with government and local partners on longer term solutions as our guests have a right to remain in the UK for up to 3 years.

Sponsors hosting Ukrainian guests are now receiving newsletters with updates from our Partnership Board. Many of our Community boards are holding briefing sessions to keep reflecting on their data and any support needs. We are also working closely with neighbouring councils to share information about the various ways councils are offering support, especially insightful for those of you in border areas.

I'm sure we are all proud of the tremendous efforts made by our staff, and our partners, to mobilise our local response at such a rapid pace. Targeted wrap around support will be critical to ensuring that refugees are facilitated to set up a new life here in Buckinghamshire. Over 100 of the council's staff have come forward to take on sponsor liaison roles, in addition to their day jobs, and are already in contact with sponsor households in preparation for arrivals. I know that they have received very positive feedback from sponsors in appreciation of their work.

If you want to find out more about the scheme, please check the dedicated pages on our website which outlines how our 'Helping Hand for Ukraine' scheme is working.

### **Local Government Association Conference**

I attended the recent Local Government Association Annual Conference, which this year was held in Harrogate. This was the first LGA Conference since 2019 and it was very well attended with more delegates than usual from councils of every type. There was a general feeling of pleasure at being again able to meet and discuss issues with colleagues face to face. A number of senior Government Ministers attended, including the Secretary of State, Michael Gove who majored on the valuable role of local government during the various recent crises but who also reflected on the poor financial management of a minority of councils. Other speakers included the then Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, (now Chancellor of the Exchequer), Gillian Keegan, Minister for Social Care and Richard Harrington, Minister for Refugees.

During the conference I led a session on the implications and impact of the proposed Care Act Reforms.

### **Social Care Funding**

In addition to the LGA Conference, as the Adult Social Care Spokesperson for the County Councils Network (CCN), I have spoken recently with the Minister and with other Stakeholders on the new proposals and continue to express concern that they are likely to have a serious impact on the care sector across the country, widening the funding gap that we are currently facing and creating additional uncertainty about future funding periods.

Further details on this are in Cllr Macpherson's report.

### **Implementation of the Integrated Care System for 'BOB'**

On the 1st of July, the latest reorganisation of the NHS came into effect with the creation of 'Integrated Care Systems' across the country. These are intended to be partnerships between the NHS, local government and other stakeholders. They should also plan in a more integrated fashion

for health and social care. For Buckinghamshire, this ICS is known as 'BOB' as it extends across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and much of Berkshire. The details of how this will be constituted and governed is proving complex and contentious. This is important as the ICS's Board level will determine the funding and its distribution across the region.

### **Strategic Finance**

In June, Cabinet considered the final financial outturn position and was pleased to note the favourable revenue variance despite the many pressures faced by the authority over the last year. Cabinet also considered some of the heightened financial pressures associated with both inflation and social care costs, as well as the risks associated with global turbulence, Local Government Finance Reform, and the introduction of the Adult Social Care Reforms in 2023. To help mitigate some of these pressures Cabinet agreed to transfer the favourable variance from 2021/22 into an earmarked reserve specifically to help address these increased risks, which will help considerably.

In terms of inflationary pressures Cabinet Members recently specifically considered the impact of these on both the capital programme and the revenue budget. Construction inflation is currently running at over 20% meaning that the costs of delivering some of the capital projects has increased dramatically. Mitigations to stay within budget are being considered but it is likely that some re-prioritisation will be needed with some schemes needing to be paused or even stopped. Council will be kept up to date as the position is better understood. Energy costs are expected to rise by 100% when the current contract ends at the end of September. Again, mitigations to keep within the overall budget are being actively reviewed. Cabinet is keeping all financial pressures under constant review.

### **Devolution and Recovery Deal**

Whilst not in the first tranche of devolution deals announced alongside the Levelling Up White Paper, I have continued to lobby government for Buckinghamshire to be part of the devolution framework. In this regard, I recently met with Michael Gove, the Secretary of State, to argue Buckinghamshire's case. Working closely with our colleagues in the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) we are promoting our strengths as a coterminous and functional economic area to secure an enhanced devolution deal as soon as possible. We are seeking an enhanced level 2 deal to reflect our strong local partnership and desire for greater local devolution. This type of deal would give us the greatest level of freedoms and flexibilities, without requiring introduction of new layers of governance such as through an elected mayor or leader.

### **Buckinghamshire Growth Board**

The Growth Board is due to meet in late July. It is being asked to endorse the Buckinghamshire Vision which has undergone extensive engagement with partners and was agreed by the Cabinet on 29th March.

This is the second round of the Fund in which Buckinghamshire is identified as a category 3 (lowest priority) area for access to the funding. So, whilst chances of securing funding remain low, our bids have been developed to align well with our strategic priorities. We focussed our bids on projects relating to town centre regeneration and improving transport connectivity as these were identified as the two most relevant priorities of the fund that fit with our needs here in Buckinghamshire.

The second fund that the Board will consider is the Implementation Plan for our UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation which must be submitted to government by 1 August. Buckinghamshire's funding allocation is extremely small (£5.77M over three years). There is therefore a need to manage

expectations of the funding and to limit our funding to a small number of priorities that can have a demonstrable impact.

### **Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee**

The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee met on 13 April. The agenda included an item on the Levelling Up White Paper which set out detail of the government's objectives of the policy. There was discussion on the devolution agenda and county deal as described in the section above.

The Local Plan was also discussed but at that point details of the new planning legislation changes were not known. The next committee in July will be going through the committee's work programme including when the Local Plan will be next discussed in more detail.

### **Welcome Back Funding**

Final claims for projects were settled in June by the Department of Housing, Levelling Up and Communities (DHLUC) to cover off nearly £1million worth of activities that helped recovery of our town centres. Council Teams have worked with a range of partners including Community Boards to deliver planters and organise temporary road closures so cafes and restaurants can provide outside seating, public art, place promotion materials, welcome back ambassadors and many other activities. For example, some of the public art in Chesham has been well received by the communities who are finding a much more colourful and vibrant town centre to spend time in.

### **Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)**

The LEP Board met on 27 May where it considered this year's delivery plan and new digital innovation plan. The digital innovation plan focuses on how businesses and other organisations in Buckinghamshire can make more effective use of digital resources.

Following the conclusion of the LEP Review and the Publication of the Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP) the LEP Network has established five working groups to work with government to support the integration process of LEPs with local democratic institutions (councils or combined authorities). Bucks LEP is currently registered in the County Deal coterminous boundary work group and will contribute to discussions on integration between the network and government over coming months.

### **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)**

Discussions are continuing with government about the pressure that high inflation is having on infrastructure projects across the county.

The Woodlands development site received planning consent in April 2022. Discussions between officers and the developers of Hampden Fields over improvements to the Aston Clinton roundabout on the A41 are continuing. It is hoped that a planning application for these works will be submitted later in the year, facilitating the start of the works on the Eastern Link Road.

Kingsbrook Secondary School is nearing completion and is creating a fantastic new asset for Aylesbury and the local community.

UKPN has started discussions about siting a substation in South West Aylesbury which will help the drive towards carbon net zero and provide capacity for the new homes identified in the local plan.

Work on upgrading part of the Grand Union Canal Towpath in Aylesbury is due to begin this summer. The work is being led by the Canal and Rivers Trust and will provide the 'missing link' between the town centre and the new developments in the East of Aylesbury.



An updated planning application for the AGT2 site on the West of Aylesbury is expected this summer, and this will set out the proposed route of the South West Link Road (running between the A418 Oxford Road and the new SEALR junction / Stoke Mandeville Relief Road). It is currently envisaged that the planning application will be considered by the Strategic Sites Committee in the winter of 22/23.

### **South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) Update**

The South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) is progressing albeit slowly. The team continues to wrestle with the same supply chain pressures and associated escalating costs. These issues are proving challenging and have caused a slight delay to the project whilst we review internally to make sure the council is getting value for money. Early works, which include vegetation clearance and archaeology works and utility diversions have started on some of the site to de-risk the project. Negotiations with HS2 continue to secure the funding for the bridge and maximise opportunities to secure materials to construct the embankments for the approaches to the bridge.

### **Enterprise Zone Update**

The Enterprise Zone Board recently revised its Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and LEP. This was agreed by Cabinet in June. The split in surplus business rates was updated to reflect the tariff government applies and it was agreed to reinvest income in the Enterprise Zone for the next business plan period (5 years).

### **England Economic Heartland (EEH)**

England's Economic Heartland has published its Three-year Business Plan. It sets out how EEH not only continues to set the transport strategy and identify investment priorities for the region, but also plays a proactive role in progressing the case for individual schemes. During 2022 EEH will also develop its proof of concept for a 'centre of excellence' which will support local authorities on their individual early scheme development.

Work by EEH and the East West Railway Company to reemphasise and update the strategic narrative for East West Rail is due to complete shortly. This includes an assessment of how East West Rail aligns with known local economic and housing plans and drawing up individual station catchment areas to demonstrate the market for the scheme. Another piece of work, funded by the East West Main Line Partnership, involves interviews with leading businesses across the region on the opportunities that East West Rail will unlock for them. In June, the East West Main Line Partnership (for which EEH is secretariat) also agreed to part-fund work to make the case for the Aylesbury link to East West Rail.

EEH's Strategic Transport Leadership Board has agreed the geographies of the next three multimodal connectivity studies. This includes Thames Valley-Bucks-MK-Northampton (to start in 2022/23) and a 'southern east-west corridor' (study starting in 2022/23). The 'Oxford-Milton Keynes' connectivity study is nearing completion and will be presented to EEH's Board in due course. Once approved, it will feed into EEH's investment pipeline for the region.

EEH's bus strategy is due to be published shortly. It includes establishing a regional bus forum which will bring together local authorities and bus operators from across the Heartland, sharing best practice and increasing understanding of cross-boundary issues. Eight of 12 local transport authorities in the EEH region, including Buckinghamshire, did not receive any 'bus service improvement plan' (BSIP) funding. The forum and the delivery framework stemming from the strategy therefore recognises the different situations of local authorities across the region. EEH has also secured additional in-year funding from DfT which includes extra support to those councils which

did not receive any BSIP funding. Additionally, a letter from the leaders of EEH is being submitted to the Secretary of State expressing concern over BSIP funding disparities.

### **South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)**

In April, Leaders met Lord Harrington (Minister for Refugees) to share update and ideas on how central and local government can work together to best support Ukrainian refugees. The meeting was followed up in writing, setting out more detail and additional suggestions.

More recently, Leaders met senior officers of the LGA and the DLUHC to identify and discuss the measures that might be taken in the short-term to support Ukrainian refugees in the longer term, as the conflict in Ukraine continues.

Leaders have commissioned research and a report on what levelling up and devolution mean for the wider South East.

Following a meeting earlier in the year with the Director for Integration and Legislation (DHSC), SESL set out views in response to the White Paper on “Joining Up Care for People, Places and Populations: The Government’s proposals for health and care integration”

In June, Leaders met the Government’s Chief Planner to discuss the Government’s priorities, and plans to reform, land use planning and housing delivery. Leaders also heard about Essex County Council’s strategy for levelling up across Essex and explored ideas for parallel work in other areas.

Leaders also met senior staff of NHS England to share experiences, concerns and ideas regarding the creation of the new Integrated Care Systems. The meeting was followed up through more detailed discussions focused on areas and Integrated Care Systems.

The June meeting included SESL’s Annual General Meeting. Leaders elected a new Management Committee. After my successful chairmanship I stood down as Chairman, I would like to thank the group for their support and commitment and wish the new Chair continued success.

The new Chairman is the Leader of West Berkshire Council, and the new Vice Chairman is the Leader of Hertfordshire Council, and the Lead Chief Officer is the Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council.





## Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources

Councillor John Chilver

### Property and Assets Update



Working collaboratively with other Portfolios including Education, Culture and Leisure, Planning and Regeneration and Housing and Regulatory Services, we have continued to deliver against our significant and substantial capital Programme.

We have now completed works at the Desborough Road Temporary Housing scheme (picture 1) which provides 58 self-contained low energy, good quality temporary accommodation units in High Wycombe.



The Council took Practical Completion of the Brunel Engine Shed, High Wycombe May 2022 (picture 2). The scheme has restored a Grade II listed structure and added a new extension forming c.13,000 sq. ft. The site is available to let, and we have received a high level of interest for this unique property located prominently outside the train station.



We continue to progress works at the Kingsbrook Secondary (picture 3). This is a new Secondary School with SEN provision with completion programmed for August 2022. Works continue at Chiltern Hills Academy (major expansion works); and Misbourne Schools (sports hall works). Procurement is currently underway for designers and commercial teams on the Kingsbrook Primary 2, Green Ridge Primary Phase 2 expansion, and Cottesloe Major Expansion projects.



The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre (picture 4) has now seen the demolition of the old leisure centre and ancillary buildings completed, with a continuation of external works including the new car parks, hard and soft landscaping, and external play areas, which is anticipated to complete in November 2022. Since the completion of phase 1 on 6th December 2021 the Leisure Centre, including the spa and soft play has seen 473,370 visits as at the end of May 2022.

### Recent Lettings and Disposals

Earlier this year the Council completed on a short-term lease to Stage Fifty for film studio development at Wycombe Airpark. The short-term lease was subject to planning for four sound stages and workshops, with the planning decision taken at committee at beginning of June. Filming productions will start onsite later this year.

The Council has let parts or agreed terms for the former Council offices in Wycombe and Denham securing a strong income on underused space as the rationalisation of the Council's accommodation programme progresses following the establishment of the Unitary Authority and changes to working patterns as a result of the pandemic.

The Council has continued to successfully let the remaining vacant retail units at The Exchange in Aylesbury with food and beverage occupiers being secured for Unit 4 and 1 and 2 Long Lionel also in Aylesbury. The scheme is now fully let. Recent successes in Friar's Square include the letting of Unit 25 to Manhattan Ink whilst the Council continues to successfully renew leases across the scheme retaining existing tenants and businesses to deliver a high-quality retail experience for the residents of Aylesbury and the surrounding area.

The Council has completed two major disposals in High Wycombe, following the grant of planning permissions – at Crest Road, Cressex Island, a 2.25ha site for the development of new industrial units and at Handy X Hub, a 1.6ha site for the development of a new Porsche car showroom/workshops. Both involve substantial capital receipts, job creation and significant inward investment.

### **HQube Design Award**



The Council recently won the RICS Southeast Public Sector Project for its innovative development at HQube. Utilising refurbished shipping containers, the Council has created 12 new workspaces to encourage local business growth and bring economic activity to an area of High Wycombe that was formally a yard laid to concrete for many years. Ahead of completion the Council had the majority of units pre-let, and it is expected that all units

will be occupied by the end of the summer.

### **Resources Update**

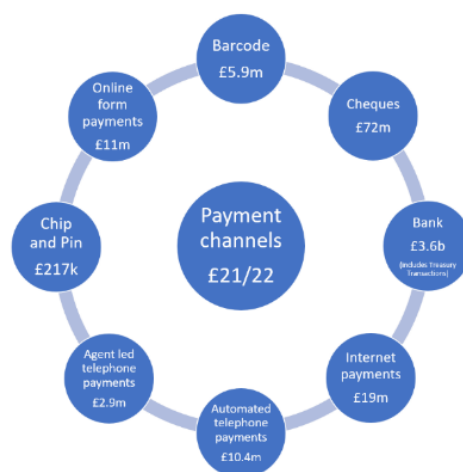
#### **Cash Receipting System Upgrade**

The Council has successfully completed a major upgrade of Capita Pay 360, the system used to manage our customer payment channels and allocate receipts to customer accounts. This nine-month project was necessary to ensure the system meets PCI (Payment Card Industry) compliance standards and continues to be a supported application. It also brings new features such as real time transactions in our database and improved reporting.

The upgrade was a complete rewrite of the system and therefore carried more risk than a typical upgrade project. To mitigate the risk the project held lessons learned sessions both internally and with other authorities who had already been through the upgrade. By applying this learning, the project mitigated the risks through correct resourcing, test planning and supplier management. The project was delivered on time, on budget and with minimum disruption to customer and users.



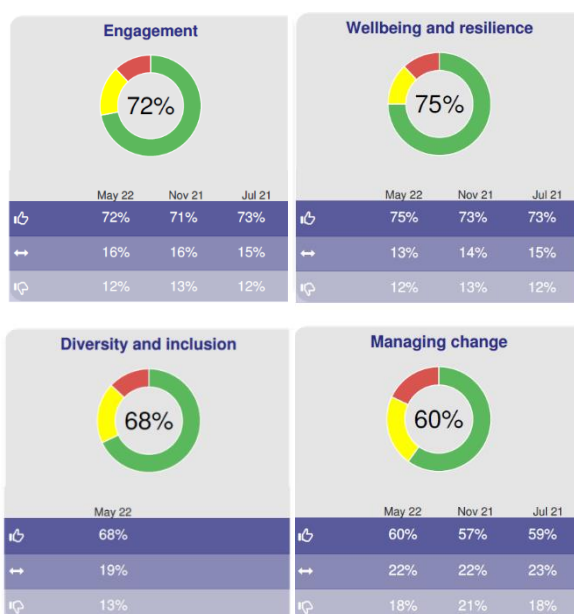
To give a sense of scale here are a few stats about the project and the system.



## Spring

### Together Survey Results

In May, 2,209 colleagues took part in the spring Together Survey to tell us how they're feeling about work and the organisation.



Another strong set of results, with all indicators either going up or staying the same since the last survey in November 2021. Compared to a benchmarking group of public and private organisations, Buckinghamshire Council's Engagement and Wellbeing and Resilience scores are comfortably higher. The Managing Change index is marginally below, but this did see a 3% improvement in this surveying round. A set of new questions was introduced to form an 'Our Council' index score, comprising questions related to collaboration, career development and resources. The index debuted with a very encouraging 73%. A Diversity and Inclusion indicator was also new this time, with 68% respondents feeling that the organisation is doing well in this space, with a further 19% undecided.

Respondents felt most positive about:

- their working relationship with their manager (87%)
- feeling trusted and enabled (84%)
- having the right equipment, systems and resources (84%)
- collaborating with colleagues irrespective of their workstyle (80%)
- their motivation levels (77%)
- their team being managed in a fair and inclusive way (77%)
- feeling connected with their team (77%)
- reviewing personal development and goals with their line manager (78%)

**75%** of respondents said that they're happy to be working for Buckinghamshire Council.

## Council Tax Energy Rebate

Buckinghamshire residents living in homes under Council Tax bands A-D began receiving their £150 rebate payments from the first week of May. This was part of the national mandatory scheme to offset the rise in energy costs.

Some residents who live in homes in Bands E-H who receive benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance are also able to claim the energy rebate under Buckinghamshire Council's own discretionary scheme, which aims to provide extra support for those who need it but who don't qualify for the national bands A-D scheme.

100% of residents who pay council tax by Direct Debit in bands A to D have received their £150 energy rebate by the middle of June.

Residents who pay their council tax by another method in bands A-D were contacted directly by letter and asked to apply. 57% have already applied, been awarded and received the £150.

The Council wanted to go above and beyond the national scheme to offer extra support to Bucks residents, thus designed our own scheme under our 'Helping Hand' programme to help as many residents as possible as households face rising fuel and energy prices. This means some residents are also eligible for an extra £25 payment **on top** of the other payments. 41% of eligible households have received this payment.

Overall, we have paid out £15.4m to over 100,000 Buckinghamshire households so far which we hope will make a difference.

The schemes close at the end of September and every eligible household will receive their payment before then.





## Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles

### Serious Violence Update

As part of our approach to reducing serious violence, Buckinghamshire Council are collaborating with the development of the 'Violence Reduction Unit Thames Valley Together data sharing project'. This is a multi-agency data-sharing and analytical platform which will provide data to drive activity, understand threat, risk and harm at location and personal data level and support a problem-solving approach to serious violence and exploitation issues. The Council has been recognised by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit as a leading partner in this initiative and we are now in the 'Testing' and 'Data Dashboard' development phase of this project with the aim to reach the operational use phase by early 2023.

The Community Safety team coordinates activity to tackle serious violence across council departments and partner agencies, including the police, health, schools, communities, charitable and voluntary sector. We have initiated and supported several projects across Buckinghamshire, including location based 'hot spot' problem solving groups in Aylesbury and Chesham, an amnesty 'knife' bin (where 200 bladed items have been deposited to date) in Southcourt with more planned, awareness and safeguarding projects (such as Hotel Watch and Hospital Navigator Scheme) and supporting young people vulnerable to crime through mentoring and diversionary activities, with over 50 young people receiving support to date.

### Modern Slavery Statement

Under the Modern Slavery Act (2015) certain organisations are required to publish a statement on the steps they are taking to prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains. At present there is no legal obligation for local authorities to publish an annual Modern Slavery Statement. However, it is considered best practice and the Government has noted that it is minded to extend the duty to publish an annual statement to local government, agencies and other public authorities if their annual budget exceeds £36 million. Buckinghamshire Council has updated its Modern Slavery Statement.

Modern Slavery Statements are intended to specifically focus on business practices and describe the steps an organisation has taken during the financial year to identify, prevent and mitigate risks of modern slavery within its operations and supply chains. The wider work we are undertaking as a council is addressed through the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan and joint working with the Safeguarding Boards and Health and Wellbeing Board through the Joint Protocol.

## **Armed Forces**

The Civilian-Military Partnership board met on 15 June 2022 with representation for the first time from the Royal Navy. Commodore Rob Bellfield CBE attended the meeting and highlighted that, although there are no Royal Navy bases in Buckinghamshire, there are a significant number of Navy service families, ex-service personnel and cadets living in the county who are part of our armed forces community. In addition to the monthly drop-in centre at Marlow fire station, which was established last year, a new drop-in centre has been set up at Aylesbury fire station with our partners in Fire, DWP, and NHS to help the most vulnerable members of the armed force community access veteran-specific help services.

The Council supported Armed Forces Week which took place from 20-26 June. On Monday 20 June Council Chairman Dev Dhillon led a flag raising ceremony in Aylesbury, attended by the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, Debbie Brock, and in High Wycombe, attended by Countess Howe, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, as well as Councillors, including our Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Mimi Harker, and representatives from the armed forces community. A staff tea break talk was held on 23 June, where staff were given an overview of the Armed Forces Covenant and support available to members of the armed forces community, as well as hearing from two ex-service personnel currently working at the Council. A Staff Armed Forces Network has also been established and will meet for the first time in July, giving staff an opportunity to come together and share their experiences of being part of the armed forces community within the Council.

## **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

We have now published our latest [Equalities Workforce Profile](#) which explores the workforce profile of council departments (excluding schools) at Buckinghamshire Council (BC). This document helps demonstrate our compliance to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act, 2010) as well as publicly reaffirming our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within the organisation.

## **Community Board Small Grants Scheme**

The Small Grants Scheme is now available providing grants of up to £1,000 to community and voluntary groups/organisations across Buckinghamshire especially those working at grass roots and local community level across a wide range of activities or emergency funding e.g., flood recovery. Each Community Board will determine how much of their existing budget they wish to allocate to the scheme and projects will be agreed by the Board.

It is expected the scheme will support a variety of projects and activities such as purchasing equipment, coaching or training activity, project costs, community events and activities, as well as ensuring facilities and volunteers are able to operate safely and funding to support small groups and community projects to reopen.

The scheme is suitable for small voluntary organisations and membership groups.

## **Community Board Engagement**

The interest and knowledge about the Community Boards continues to grow, with increasing requests for the Boards to be present at various events, which in turn is increasing networking, engagement and partnership working opportunities.

Boards are now holding their own engagement events as part of their planned meeting schedule, but engagement has also taken place with a wide variety of groups and organisations including attendance at Scout AGMs, local markets, fetes and carnivals. Closer links are being made with the libraries generally, but also with attendance at library events such as a wellness day and a community

tea group for older people with physical activities. Regular meetings also continue with the town and parish councils in each board area.

### **Helping Hand/Household Support Fund**

In March we were awarded just under £2.4 million from the Household Support Fund, to utilise between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 30<sup>th</sup> September. The framework for use of this fund requires Local Authorities to spend one third on households with children, one third on pensioner households and the remaining one third for other vulnerable households. This extension of this fund has enabled the continuation of support around food, energy and essential household bills to be provided to financially vulnerable households.

Over £800,000 will be utilised to support eligible families during school holiday periods including through the provision of school holiday food vouchers for eligible children/young people, and over 10,500 digital supermarket vouchers will be distributed for the summer holidays. Direct support is provided by the Helping Hand team, and since 1<sup>st</sup> April the team have supported nearly 1,800 households.

Support is also available through various schemes delivered through the Voluntary and Community Sector including food banks and the crisis grant scheme. Just under £250,000 has been utilised through a crisis grant scheme administered through Heart of Bucks, for over 150 households who required support with household bills and other essential costs. Food support schemes are continuing to experience an unprecedented level of demand and the Voluntary and Community Sector are delivering a range of schemes from community fridges to breakfast clubs and food banks.

We are awaiting further clarification on the further extension to the Household Support Fund that was announced by Government in May, as part of a package of measures to support people with the increasing cost of living. It is expected that this further extension will provide a similar level of funds for Buckinghamshire to be utilised between October 2022 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

In addition, we are continuing to work with key stakeholders including Housing Associations, DWP and the VCSE sector to support residents who are financially vulnerable. We have developed a Money Worries leaflet and webpage to enable residents to have clear visibility of the support organisations that they can access. We will be promoting this through our key library locations and other venues during the next couple of months. We are continuing to develop further activity and campaigns through the Financial Insecurity partnership using #backontrack as an easily recognisable message.





## Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

### Country Parks, Parks and Play Areas

Over the last quarter, a number of play area improvement projects have been underway at Cottesloe Green, Walton Court and Haydon Hill parks in Aylesbury. All three schemes are approaching completion and formal opening ceremonies will take place in due course. A further play area replacement contract has been awarded for Desborough Recreation Ground in High Wycombe and construction start dates are being finalised. Plans are also being developed to improve three further play areas this year at Vale Park (Aylesbury), The Rye (High Wycombe) and Higginson Park (Marlow).

#### Cottesloe Green

After



#### Walton Court

After



#### Haydon Hill (Still under construction)

After



Before



Before



Before





The HS2 works at Denham Country Park have been completed and arrangements are being put in place for the land to be handed back to the Council and the Country Parks team. To date, HS2 and National Grid have removed about 50% of their construction infrastructure and trackway from the site and where this has happened the site is recovering well.

Various works have been completed and further works are planned to enhance the parks habitats for protected species such as various bat species, water voles and great crested newts.

Photos show the progress from last winter where works were still under way, through the spring and tree planting and finally at the beginning of June, where recovery is looking good.

### **Buckinghamshire Archives**

The service is working with Country Parks for Bucks Open Weekend on 30 July. Archives staff will be based at Black Park to interact with visitors about the heritage of the local area.

Buckinghamshire Archives will also run the Buckinghamshire History Festival during November 2022. This will celebrate and promote the county's fascinating diverse heritage and culture. The festival will run a mixture of online and in-person events that aim to engage, excite, educate and empower audiences.

### **Buckinghamshire Libraries Jubilee Celebrations**

Buckinghamshire Libraries hosted an array of diverse and interesting activities to celebrate The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. With over 60 events taking place, Libraries had an inclusive offer for all customers which included poetry, talks with a town crier and a former Royal footman, a performance by Alina Orchestra, crafts galore for children and indoor dementia-friendly street parties.

Libraries also partnered with Buckinghamshire Archives to host a pop-up exhibition demonstrating how Buckinghamshire had celebrated past Jubilees. The exhibition proved popular with schools as we received school visit bookings from across the county.

Local branches collaborated with local partners to deliver exhibitions including Knit and Natter displays, Local History group exhibitions and in Beaconsfield Library we had "Jayantee" (Hindi for Jubilee), a project with CY Projects and Alfriston Special Needs School, which included an exhibition of the various artworks produced by students.

Libraries commissioned three poets to work with residents and schools to create poetry to mark the Jubilee. Exhibitions can be seen in Wendover and Hazelmere, and for Burnham you can listen to the poem on the Sycamore tree here: [www.soundcloud.com/bucks-libraries](https://www.soundcloud.com/bucks-libraries).

For our readers, Libraries participated in The Big Jubilee Read, offering customers great reads from across the Commonwealth to coincide with Her Majesty the Queen's Jubilee, with seventy titles from a "readers' choice" longlist, ten books for each decade of Her Majesty the Queen's reign.

### **Library Partnership Short-listed for National Award**

Buckinghamshire Libraries and Action4Youth have been shortlisted in the 2022 Local Government Chronicle Awards for their partnership 'The Junction Youth Centre', a multi service drop-in centre based in High Wycombe library offering a range of planned sessions and activities under one roof seven days a week. The service caters for young people aged 12-18 years and provides specialist support to those who are vulnerable, as well as a timetable of activities for all young people to get involved in. The Junction is open every day 4pm-9pm and is staffed by Action4Youth youth workers.

BBC Radio 4's Any Questions are also planning to host their programme from The Junction on 29 July. Further details will be available on the BBC website closer to the event.

### **Community Events**

The summer's community events have kicked off successfully with another fantastic Whizzfizzfest on Saturday 2 July in Aylesbury. This year Whizzfizzfest is also touring libraries over the summer with the 'Book Club for Super-Spies' show and town trails. Preparations are well underway for Play Around the Parishes sessions throughout the school summer holidays and we are working with Buckinghamshire Culture to promote the 'Open Weekend' in July. We were also excited to have the honour of welcoming the Queen's Baton Relay to Stoke Mandeville Stadium on 6 July as part of the lead up to the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, with an inspiring event for local schoolchildren made possible through the kind support of our local partners including Leap, WheelPower and the National Paralympic Heritage Trust.

### **Leisure**

Usage across our leisure centres, continues to increase with 2021/2022 seeing a total of 2,368,942 visits to date. We expect to achieve close to 3 million visits this year.

In the first six months since the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre opened, it has continued to receive a very positive response, with 473,370 visits and over 4,000 memberships (some four times greater than the former Chiltern Pools). School swimming is thriving, with 15 schools regularly using the site, and it was a milestone moment when Amersham Swim Club held their first ever Open Swim Meet in the new pool. One of the early challenges, as for many organisations currently, was a difficult recruitment market; following extensive work, our leisure operator Everyone Active has now successfully appointed more staff. Overall, the centre has created the equivalent of 28 new full-time local jobs, including a Sports Activities and Community Development Manager who will engage with the wider community with a focus on improving health and wellbeing (close working with our Public Health partners and Leap, the county's active partnership, has been fully embraced by all our leisure operators, who are working collaboratively so that health-related and rehabilitation programmes can be readily accessed and supported for residents who may need them).

The old Chiltern Pools building has been demolished and the construction of the new car park for the Lifestyle Centre is underway; the first phase which includes the disabled parking bays is expected to be ready for use shortly. At Chesham Leisure Centre, works are ongoing to create a new soft play facility with sensory zone, which is planned for completion and opening in the Autumn.





## Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment

Councillor Gareth Williams

### **South Waste Collection Service**

The waste collection service in the South of the county is delivered through a contractor with Veolia. As part of the agreed contract, Veolia implemented a re-organisation of the collection rounds from Monday 9th May. This re-organisation is expected to deliver a more effective and resilient waste service with fewer missed containers and collection rounds arranged more closely together to reduce the impact if a vehicle breaks down for example. We know that these bin collection changes have caused far greater than anticipated disruption in certain areas as crews get used to the new bin collection days. The Council has been working extremely closely with Veolia to urgently improve the service to residents and additional collection crews, more supervisors, weekend collections and more call handlers in the Council's Customer Service Centre are all in place. Progress is being made and the backlog of missed collections is being addressed, fewer missed collections are being reported each day and the majority of rounds are completing to schedule. We recognise that there is still work to do to achieve a satisfactory service and the Council will continue to work with Veolia until the required service standards are being consistently achieved.

### **Tree Planting**

Plans for the 2022/23 tree planting season (November to March) are well progressed and preparations well underway. This year the programme will adopt three complementary approaches to the establishment of trees.

Three sites identified near High Wycombe and Amersham are projected to accommodate over 40,000 trees which would be planted and maintained by a council employed contractor. Under the Forestry England Woodland Partnership Scheme, a further site toward the northeast of Buckinghamshire is being proposed which could accommodate over 100,000 trees. This would be planted and managed by Forestry England.

All these allow for recreational access by the public, as well as providing climate, biodiversity and (dependant on location) flood management benefits.

Whilst the majority of trees will be planted within newly created woodlands, our approach also includes significant investment in smaller non-woodland locations as well as single trees, for example along roadsides. These projects are undertaken in collaboration with community groups across Buckinghamshire and whilst smaller in number, are typically in locations closer to towns and villages and so are more visible.

### **Progress with Biodiversity Net Gain**

Work has continued to progress with our preparations for introducing biodiversity net gain in the planning system as is required by the Environment Act 2021. The July Cabinet meeting agreed the adoption of a Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide guidance to support policies in the existing Local Development Plans. The SPD explains how biodiversity net gain can be achieved in the planning system in Buckinghamshire and provides clarity and a clear process for developers. It is the first unitary wide supplementary planning document.

Integrating biodiversity net gain into the planning system will provide a fundamental step change in how planning and development is delivered. The adoption of the SPD will help ensure we are fulfilling one of our duties under the Environment Act to embed biodiversity net gain into local planning policy and decision making. It will also ensure we are at the forefront of reversing the decline in nature and ensuring development leaves the natural environment in a measurable better state than it was beforehand.

### **Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre work on new Local Wildlife Site**

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC) works tirelessly in the background, gathering the information we need to understand the impact of climate change on Buckinghamshire's natural environment. The information generated and advice to stakeholders, decision makers and landowners, helps us all make better decisions about protecting our environment for the future.

BMERC have been working with the Chilterns Conservation Board and a conservation-minded farmer who manages part of the National Trust Estate in Bradenham to deliver significant conservation and landscape enrichment through an innovative mix of crops and wildlife. Their combined efforts have resulted in the creation of the second largest Local Wildlife Site in the county at 225 hectares, including five Habitats of Principle Importance which support 24 birds, plants and insects on a Red Data list, and three nationally scarce plants. This is a great example where a commercially viable farm, where rare arable flora and threatened bird and butterfly species, can flourish for the benefit of all.

### **Wilder Road Verges**

The wilder road verges project has had a successful first year and this project has expanded further to six additional rural sites and one urban location. In time, the road verges will support a wider range of plant species and wildflowers that support other invertebrates like bees.

### **Solar Together**

The registration stage of the Buckinghamshire Solar Together scheme has now closed with 6,991 registrations, against projections of 4,998 registrations. This has demonstrated the scale of resident and small business owner-occupiers' appetite for solar PV, battery storage, and/or EV chargepoints. Regular communication with registrants will continue through to installation for those who accept their quotations.

### **Innovative EV Charging Bid**

We have submitted a funding bid to the LEVI fund for £320k to trial a modularised hybrid Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) solution. If successful, this would fund an installation which would predominantly use solar photovoltaic canopies with battery storage and intelligent energy management technologies to provide power to 12 charge points (CPs).



### **Garden Waste Collection Service**

The Chargeable Garden waste collection service is due to commence in the former Wycombe area on 26 September 2022. Residents can begin signing up to the new service although the subscription will not start until 26th September 2022, residents can sign up, or find more information about the service at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/garden-waste](https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk/garden-waste).

### **Exciting upgrade to Reuse shop at High Heavens Household Recycling Centre.**

Residents can now enjoy a new modernised South Bucks Hospice re-use shop at High Heavens Recycling Centre in High Wycombe this summer.

Buckinghamshire Council and FCC Environment worked with the hospice to rebuild the popular shop which stocks an impressive range of re-use goods donated by the public. The replacement shop includes improved outside storage and a new entrance which makes it easier for residents who wish to use the reuse shop without queuing to use the recycling centre.

The old shop closed at 6pm on 9 June before being demolished the following week. The replacement store was then built and reopened at the start of July - to coincide with the ten-year anniversary of re-use shops at Buckinghamshire Household Recycling Centres.

During the renovation period, residents were still able to donate good quality re-used goods at all of Buckinghamshire's Recycling Centres including High Heavens - but weren't able to purchase any items on the site until the new shop opened.

The new shop will help Buckinghamshire reuse even more items, saving them from the bin and raising money for an important local charity.





## Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

### Active Communities Easter Hunts and Jubilee Walks

Earlier in the spring I was delighted to join one of the Active Communities Easter hunts. The walk was delightful and the QR codes along the route worked really well. Together with the Jubilee Walks Council's Active Communities programme, organised through our Public Health team, engaged over 400 individuals and families in walking events over Easter and the Jubilee, despite the wet Jubilee weather.



The Active Communities programme encourages residents in Wycombe and Aylesbury to sit less and move more, and has created nine [Active Park Walks](#). The most popular parks for the events were Desborough recreation ground in Wycombe and Riverside and Buckingham Park in Aylesbury.

Local residents can still take part in the walks any time by visiting the parks and scanning the QR codes on the wooden markers around the park. Each QR code shares information about what's happening in the news and what's on locally. These were Easter and Jubilee themed for the events.



A wide range of partners and community groups are involved in the Active Communities programme, including local schools, early years settings and local community groups. One local resident said: "It's a brilliant idea to take part in and got us all out walking" and another said, "I felt that the walks are a great idea and I love that they're interactive".

### Jubilee Celebrations

Care homes in Buckinghamshire are a vital part of the health and social care system. They provide essential care and support to many residents who are unable to live on their own. The Jubilee weekend gave the staff and residents a fantastic opportunity to celebrate together. These pictures from Fremantle Trust, show how much residents enjoyed the events.



### **Health and Wellbeing Board**

In March, the partners on the Health and Wellbeing Board met for a workshop to consider the work of the Board and its priorities in light of the impact of the Covid pandemic on the health and wellbeing of Buckinghamshire's residents. The event was well attended with partners from the NHS, Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthwatch and voluntary sector.

Attendees agreed that it is vital to put residents at the heart of the Board's work, and to make a visible difference to health outcomes and reduce health inequalities across the county. The outcomes of the meeting were discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 26<sup>th</sup> May, which agreed refreshed priorities and the Health and Wellbeing Board Pledge. You can listen to the meeting and to our commitment to our residents and our next steps here: <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=350>

The Health and Wellbeing Board is required by law to check every three years whether there are enough pharmacies in the local area. This is called the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA). Over the past six months, work has been taking place with pharmacies to understand changes in the need for their services. The consultation on the draft PNA for Buckinghamshire closes on 24<sup>th</sup> July and can be found here: [Buckinghamshire Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2022 to 2025 \(citizenspace.com\)](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/pharmaceutical-needs-assessment-2022-to-2025)

### **Integrated Care System Launch**

The Health and Care Act 2022 established Integrated Care Systems across the whole of the country. The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System has been in existence as a local health partnership for a number of years and as from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, is now a statutory organisation.

The Integrated Care System has two parts: the Integrated Care Board manages the funding to local places, including Buckinghamshire; and the Integrated Care Partnership is a forum for a wide range of partners to consider actions needed to improve health and wellbeing across Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West.

It is critical that the needs of the residents of Buckinghamshire are not subsumed within this complex structure and I, the Leader and Chief Executive continue to raise this with the leaders of the local Integrated Care System and at the Local Government Association level.

### **The Khan Review: Independent Review into Smokefree 2030 Policies**

Dr Javed Khan OBE, who is Chair of the Integrated Care Board for Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System, has published his [independent review](#) setting out a range of

recommendations to support the Government to meet its smoke-free ambition by 2030. The findings will be considered as part of wider plans to improve health and reduce inequalities through the Health Disparities White Paper.

With six million people in England smoking, tobacco remains the single biggest cause of preventable illness and death. Recent data shows 1 in 4 deaths from all cancers were estimated to be from smoking. During the Covid pandemic, the proportion of young adults aged 18 to 24 who smoke rose from 1 in 4 to 1 in 3.

With these statistics in mind, the key recommendations to the Government from the review are:

1. Increased investment of an additional £125 million per year in smoke-free 2030 policies, with an extra £70 million per year ringfenced for stop smoking services.
2. Raising the age of sale from 18 by one year every year, until eventually no one can buy a tobacco product in this country.
3. Promotion of vapes as an effective “swap to stop” tool to help people quit smoking.
4. Improving prevention in the NHS so smokers are offered advice and support to quit at every interaction they have with health services.

Other interventions recommended in the report include a tobacco licence for retailers to limit the availability of tobacco across the country; a rethink of the way cigarette sticks and packets look to reduce their appeal; and a mass media campaign to encourage smokers to quit.

Reducing health inequalities, particularly those resulting from preventable cardiovascular disease, is a priority for the Health and Wellbeing Board. As such, reducing smoking uptake and encouraging quitting will be the focus of actions across the Board’s partner organisations.

### **Government Visit to Buckinghamshire**



Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Hub based at Olympic Lodge in Stoke Mandeville, recently hosted two delegations from Central Government, including the Chief Social Worker for England, the Director General for Social and senior officers from HM Treasury and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Although the centre has now closed, partners are working to develop a long-term sustainable integrated approach to hospital discharge which will build on the benefits from this experience, including reduced bureaucracy, fewer delays and better communication.

## Social care reforms

Work is progressing on preparation for the social care reforms which will be implemented from October 2023. In summary, the reforms are intended to:

- Support sustainability of the care market so the right services are available for residents when they need them.
- Place a limit on the amount that individuals will have to pay towards their social care costs during their lifetime. The 'cap' is £86k but excludes the 'hotel costs' of residential care like accommodation, catering and laundry. We are expecting the Government to publish criteria about the care costs that will be eligible and application of the cap will be subject to a care assessment by the council.
- Make the means-test more generous – from October 2023 an individual will only pay for all their care costs if their assets are more than £100,000. People will also only start to contribute towards their care costs if their assets are more than £20,000 (currently £14,250).

One of the key changes is establishing a 'Fair Cost of Care' for adult social care services – specifically for care home costs for people aged 65 and over; and home care costs for people aged 18 and over. The Fair Cost of Care is a shared understanding of the actual costs of providing those services. This will be used by the Government to determine the extra funding that the council will receive; the rates that the council will pay providers; and to support the sustainability of the care market. To ensure there is a consistent approach to across the country, the Local Government Association has developed Cost of Care toolkits for use by local authorities. We have been in regular discussions with care providers about the Cost of Care exercise, which we will be starting with them in June.

The reforms will have a huge impact on the cost of social care, particularly increasing the cost of care that will be funded by the council. Additional council infrastructure and staffing will also be required to manage the increase in demand. The County Councils Network, together with the consultancy Newton, has published an [impact assessment for the social care reforms](#) which will help inform our own calculation of the additional cost for Buckinghamshire associated with the reforms.

Considerable engagement is happening with our staff, residents, care providers and partners (such as the NHS and voluntary sector) to co-design the new systems that will be needed and to make the transition as smooth as possible for our residents. An all-Member briefing is scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022.





## Cabinet Member report – Education and Children's Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

### Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan

As alluded to in my last Cabinet Member report, the service has been working hard to develop our Post Inspection Action Plan in response to the following recommendations made during the December 2021 Ofsted Inspection.

- The understanding, and reduction of, a high rate of re-referrals and assessments that result in no services being provided for children and their families.
- The consideration and cumulative impact of earlier interventions and family histories in children and family assessments.
- The quality of social workers' direct work with children.
- The support provided to children aged 16 and 17 years who present as homeless.
- The impact of independent reviewing officers (IROs) in decisively escalating children's cases when there is drift and delay in the progress of their care plans.
- The quality of case supervision for social workers in order that it promotes consistently effective work with children.
- The engagement and participation of children in care in the corporate parenting work of the council.

I am pleased to report that the plan has now been submitted to Ofsted and clearly indicates how we will address the seven recommendations highlighted above. In our drive towards achieving consistently good services, we will continue to follow a cycle of improvement, continuously reviewing and testing our practice and oversight to ensure that we are making progress and reviewing actions to address our priority areas. In addition, a suite of key performance indicators will also be used to track and monitor progress against each recommendation and priority area. The independently chaired Improvement Board will continue to meet every two months and will maintain oversight of the progress being made against the Ofsted recommendations and other improvements required across the service. John Coughlan, CBE, will continue to be the Independent Chair.

### Buckinghamshire Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Summer activities

I am pleased to update that the Council is providing a wonderful summer programme of free, fun activity clubs for thousands of children from low-income families through our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) summer programme. School-aged children in Reception to Year 11 inclusive who receive benefits-related free school meals will be able to enjoy, completely free of charge, a variety of high-quality holiday clubs and activities as well as a healthy hot meal at each session. The holiday activity

clubs will be running at over 40 locations right across the county, with the programme running across five weeks in the summer holiday period.

We are also able to offer up to 15% of the overall HAF programme places to other children who are not eligible for benefits-related free school meals but who could benefit from HAF club provision; these groups include looked after and previously looked after children, young carers and children with an education, health and care plan. We are working with service area teams, our schools and our HAF club providers to identify and invite children from these additional groups to attend.

The HAF programme has been funded by central government with all the local arrangements being made by the council. Our Buckinghamshire HAF programme, delivered by experienced holiday club providers, really will offer something for everyone of all ages – from football, dodgeball and a host of other sports, through to theatre workshops and coding. There are clubs for secondary school age young people as well as a range of clubs and activities for eligible children with special educational needs and disabilities; with 17,000 HAF club places on offer in total.

We know that the longer school holidays can be pressure points for some families. 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.

More information on our HAF programme, along with our HAF club activity finder, is available at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf).

### **School Places for Ukrainian Children**

As a Council, we have been working very hard to support families that have arrived from Ukraine, and ensuring their children have access to a school place forms a significant part of the Council's offer. On 9 June 2022, the Department for Education released data in relation to the admission of Ukrainian children into school and at the time of publication, Buckinghamshire had offered a school place to 186 of the 199 applications. This ranked us 8th and 11th nationally for the total numbers of places offered and the number of applications received, respectively.

The response from the school community has been exceptional, with 71 schools admitting Ukrainian children and young people to date. In some cases, significant numbers have been admitted with 21 schools admitting four or more children.

I am enormously grateful to our family of schools for supporting children arriving from Ukraine as they adjust to their new life and their continued hard work to ensure that children access education as soon as possible following their arrival. It is our commitment to ensure that all Ukrainian children in the UK are offered the same access to high quality education and childcare as UK citizens.

### **Participation Strategy for Young People - launch event**

The Council's first Participation Strategy for Young People was launched at the iconic Pinewood Studios on 19 May 2022. The Family Support Service welcomed partners from across the county to explain the strategy and encourage partners to work together to ensure that young people in Buckinghamshire have the skills and opportunities to influence the services we provide to them based on their lived experiences. The common goal is to put the needs and views of our young people at the heart of our development process and demonstrate how their voice has made a difference.

While the Strategy is for Council, there is an ambition to see the principles and practice adopted by partners who are invited to join a network to share best practice and outcomes. The strategy is the initial offer to young people who will now be encouraged to work with the service to develop and refine it and bring it to life. In the summer, we will be holding an event for young people where we will launch a young people's version of the strategy. A new website for young people will also go live in the summer and will include details on all participation activity as well as sharing good practice and news stories. Work has also commenced to explore how this approach can be extended to other council services so that the views and wishes of young people are listened to and acted upon more broadly.





## Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Mark Winn

### **Gypsy and Traveller Service**

Unauthorised encampments have continued to drop over the last three financial years, and I am pleased to report that we currently have no encampments in Buckinghamshire. Travellers continue to live nomadic lifestyles in the surrounding local authority areas including Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes, both of which have more unauthorised encampments than Buckinghamshire. We were expecting to see a rise in encampment numbers after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted although this could be short lived with the criminalisation of trespass. The Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill (PCSCB) received Royal Assent on the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 and has now become an act of Parliament. We have not yet been privy to any National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) guidance as yet off the back of the new law being passed, and as such we are unsure how the Police's role will play out in reality.

There are various factors that may influence TVP's reluctance to act, namely:

- A lack of available resource
- The ability to arrest and detain trespassers (Custody suite impact etc)
- The safeguarding of children under the age of 18 that are collateral to any arrests made
- Caveats including encampments not causing disruption or distress to the wider community.

Buckinghamshire Council will continue to proportionately and robustly deal with unauthorised encampments using legislation under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

### **Trading Standards**

The Service continues to conduct test purchasing and use tobacco detection dogs to locate hidden illicit tobacco. Most recently (in June) over 1,000 packets of suspected illicit cigarettes and 66 bottles of suspected illicit alcohol were seized from a van supplying a shop. An investigation into the business has commenced. Working with Public Health and the Communications team, Trading Standards has been supporting the development of a public awareness campaign around illicit tobacco. This will include roadshows at the markets in Aylesbury and High Wycombe to inform residents of the risks. Vaping – both from the perspective of under 18's buying vapes and the safety/compliance of vape products used by adults – continues to be a concern. Test purchasing is being undertaken with young volunteers to identify sellers who are ignoring the rules, and on the recent inspections looking for illicit tobacco officers seized over 200 bottles of illegal vape fluid.

In June, Trading Standards were announced the winners of the Service Excellence category in the Regulatory Excellence Awards 2022. With the award, the Office for Product Safety and Standards

recognised how the whole service brings benefits to local businesses and residents in Buckinghamshire and Surrey while also achieving a significantly wider reach for consumer protection and business support. We do much of this work alongside partners, from other Service's within Buckinghamshire Council to local and national agencies and with businesses, including associations seeking to support their members in being compliant with the law.

The Government has recently released a consultation on the use of Imperial measures (such as the pound and ounce) which has gained some interest in the media and on social media. As the statutory Weights and Measures authority, the Service will respond on the practical issues but we would also urge residents to have their say. The consultation can be found here: [Choice on units of measurement: markings and sales - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/choice-on-units-of-measurement-markings-and-sales).

The Service has been considering how we can best support communities during the cost-of-living crisis. Among the very broad range of work we do, some examples of work we are doing this year include checking the accuracy of petrol pumps to ensure you get what you are paying for and looking at the safety of products so that you can be sure they are safe regardless of cost. We will continue to raise awareness of scams, particularly those targeting the most vulnerable. If you would like to know more about being a "Friend Against Scams" we run monthly virtual training courses that you can book onto here: [Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Events | Eventbrite](#)

Since the last Cabinet Member report there has been progress in relation to two court cases. In one a trader from Chalfont St Peter pleaded guilty to an offence under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations in relation to home improvement work and was fined by the court. In another case, where guilty pleas to a variety of offences relating to home improvement fraud had already been entered by one defendant, a further defendant has now pleaded guilty to money laundering related to the same matters. Sentencing is scheduled for October.

### **Licensing Services**

The new [Gambling Act Policy](#) for Buckinghamshire came into effect from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and sets a single policy position across the council area for the licensing of gambling premises and activities. Work continues within the Service to harmonise webpages, application routes and service provision across the council area to improve customer experience.

Alcohol and entertainment licence applications have increased since the end of Covid restrictions with many businesses and event organisers looking to reopen, make changes or starting to operate for the first time. The Platinum Jubilee also generated additional licensing activity as communities celebrated over the extra bank holiday weekend. In line with increased application numbers there is also an increase in the number of contested applications requiring decision by sub-committee, with 13 sub-committee meetings scheduled since the start of 2022, in comparison with 17 undertaken for the whole of 2021.

Licensing Committee received the first quarterly enforcement report on taxi and private hire activity at their meeting in June following the implementation of the new Buckinghamshire [Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy](#) in September 2021. The [report](#) provides a detailed overview of the robust decision making approach taken to protect public safety when making licence decisions.

The Service is also working on a review of hackney carriage tariffs at the request of the licensed trade in response to the significant increase in fuel prices seen over the last 12 months.

Fee harmonisation work across the legacy areas continues with recent approval of the harmonisation of fees for the registration of skin piercing, following the presentation of a report to Committee by Environmental Health. Harmonised animal licensing fees will be presented to the Committee in July for decision.

### **Cemeteries and Crematoria Services**

The new [Penn Road Cemetery](#) in Hazlemere is now open with a formal opening ceremony held on the 6<sup>th</sup> July. The cemetery, which was funded from High Wycombe Town Committee special expenses funds, will operate alongside High Wycombe Cemetery as part of a combined cemetery provision, primarily serving the unparished area of High Wycombe.

The £2.3 million capital improvement programme to replace the three aging cremators at Chilterns Crematorium in Amersham is now underway, with construction activity taking place on site now and continuing until March 2023. This [project](#) is funded via crematoria reserve funds which have been set aside over the last 20 years to facilitate planned for maintenance requirements. Throughout the project planning the focus has been to ensure that we can continue to operate the crematorium during the replacement works and to reduce any disruption to our customers. To achieve this, some of the work is being carried out overnight and at weekends with some occasional weekend closures. As part of the project, one of the two chapels on the site, Hampden Chapel, will also undergo major refurbishment to ensure that we can continue to deliver a high-quality service for our customers.

### **Housing**

We have seen an increase in the number of rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire since the end of March 2022 when the Council formally ended the emergency accommodation arrangements that were put in place in response to winter and the Omicron outbreak. We anticipated that we would see this increase and the Council is continuing to work with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors to respond and, where possible, move people off the streets and into accommodation. This includes the Council-funded Rough Sleeper Outreach service (operated by Connection Support) which continues to seek to engage with all rough sleepers who are reported to the Council or via the Streetlink website. However, we are seeing a significant proportion of rough sleeping clients who have high, multiple and complex needs which makes it difficult to secure safe and appropriate accommodation. We also continue to have clients who refuse offers of accommodation and assistance.

The single Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy was formally adopted at full Council on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022. Aside from rough sleepers (see above) we continue to see a high volume of homelessness applications to the Council, with an average of 362 applications per month during the three-month period March 2022-May 2022. This indicates that homelessness applications are now exceeding the levels that we were seeing pre-pandemic (as a comparison, we saw 322 applications in a typical month pre-pandemic).

We are also seeing a very high demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme compared to pre-pandemic levels. We received 913 applications during the month of May 2022 which compares to 236 applications in a typical month pre-pandemic. This upturn in demand is placing significant additional pressures on the Bucks Home Choice service with many applicants facing longer waits and reduced prospects of being rehoused into a social housing tenancy. Following the Cabinet's adoption of the Affordable Housing Position Statement by Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022, we are progressing work to frame the Council's future working relationship with Registered Provider partners locally to maximise affordable housing development opportunities and delivery. A forum workshop is being undertaken with Registered Providers during July to review

current partnership working arrangements and identify who we can best work together moving forward.

The Council continues to operate a significant programme of DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) to support adaptation works. As at the end of May 2022, 427 DFG requests were being processed or awaiting processing.

We have recently seen two significant national housing policy announcements which will have potential impacts locally:

- **Proposal to extend the Right to Buy to Registered Provider tenancies** – There are currently few details on how this will operate. Initial indications are that the scheme will be voluntary and Registered Providers may not be statutorily required to participate, but we await further details and announcements. Any extension of the Right to Buy in this way will result in Registered Providers having to review their business plans and financial models, which may impact on how much new affordable housing development they do in the future.
- **Reforms to the Private Rented Sector** – These reforms will include the abolition of so called “no-fault” Section 21 evictions, changes to the legal re-possession process and increased measures to ensure that landlords maintain tenancies and properties in a good condition. These measures will be phased in over a period of several years but could see significant impacts locally with a potential reduction in private rent properties (if some landlords choose to leave the sector) and increased pressures on the Council’s Environmental Health service due to an increase in the level of housing enforcement work that has to be done.

### **Environmental Health**

Officers within the Commercial Team continue to make progress towards the Food Standards Agency Recovery Roadmap targets. Officers have been working with West Northants Council, Silverstone Circuit Ltd and local campsites on plans for this year’s British Grand Prix which was held on the first weekend in July. Officers attended in the run up to the event looking at food safety in the circuit and campsites and undertaking public safety and welfare checks at the campsites.

The team is currently working on two service improvement areas; the harmonisation of skin piercing registrations and food hygiene inspections. We have also been updating the web pages for these two areas. Licensing Committee agreed the harmonisation of fees for skin piercing registration across Buckinghamshire which will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July and we are now looking at the introduction of consolidated model byelaw conditions. In terms of food hygiene inspections, the team have identified areas where the inspection process can be improved and streamlined making better use of technology and electronic delivery. This will not only save officer time but will provide an improved service for business operators.

The Strategic Environmental Protection Team have led a Clean Air Day campaign in June with comprehensive publicity campaign including internal messaging to BC staff, social media messaging, press releases, culminating in a business event being held at the University of Buckingham in collaboration with Bucks Business First and local businesses. The team is also working with the Climate Change Team, Transport Strategy and Community Boards to take forward air quality actions across the County.

The Housing and Domestic Team are leading on the Home Safety Checks which are required as part of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. To date, in excess of 600 visits have been completed by officers from all teams within Environmental Health and this is where resources have predominantly been focused in the last quarter. As stated in the Housing section, the Government published details within its White Paper regarding reforms to the Private Rented Sector and we are currently reviewing the contents of the Paper to get a better understanding of the implications. We are aware the Government is planning a requirement that there is a central Landlord's database along with a requirement that the private rented sector meets the Decent Homes Standard (a requirement that has been in place for social housing for over 10 years).

### **Registration Service**

The Registration Service is now functioning as business as usual across all its activities. All covid easements have ceased and all appointments have now returned to face to face. Due to this change the service has noted an increase in death declaration appointments (deaths in other districts but the family live in our district and come to us as easier for them. We do not receive any income from this as the certificates are issued from the district in which the death occurred). The service is also experiencing a high rate of uncertified deaths due to the cessation of the Covid easements and this is causing extra time speaking with doctors to clarify who last saw the deceased alive.

The service has continued to see a high demand for ceremony bookings (weddings and civil partnerships) with the diaries across the summer months extremely busy; currently all our ceremony rooms have more ceremonies booked in them this year than since 2018. The service has recruited and trained more staff to ensure ceremony bookings can be maximised wherever possible. Citizenship Ceremonies continue to be booked up weeks in advance and customers are feeding back that they enjoyed attending The Oculus for the ceremony. Having both the Chairman and Lord Deputy Lieutenant has given the ceremonies a more official and ceremonial feel.

### **Coroner Service**

The service is currently working through its Service Review and is at the end of the discovery stage. A review of findings is ongoing. The day to day work is business as usual with no backlogs. Training is being provided to the Medical Examiner Officers to access the portal which is part of the Coroner's Office software. This will allow them and hospital doctors to refer deaths to the Coroner via the portal rather than emailing the referral report. This will save time as the Coroner's Officers will no longer need to input this report to the portal as it will already be done. The service is also collaborating with other Coroner districts on a project looking at the Police also being able to report their deaths to the Coroner via an electronic system, called PRONTO. This is in its early stages and we are looking at how this system can integrate with WPC, the Coroner's software.

The Medical Examiner system extending into community deaths is now expected to be introduced in April 2023. This has been pushed back from September 2022. The Medical Examiner for Buckinghamshire has reported difficulties in locating surgeries that are wishing to participate and we understand this is a national issue.



## Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Peter Strachan

### **Aylesbury Garden Town**

Details of our garden town capacity funding bid were announced in March. We received £250k in revenue funding. This is an expected reduction on previous years funding and therefore the team's work programme this year will reflect the funding available with a particular focus on taking forward our ambitions to regenerate the town centre.

The report on regeneration opportunities in the Town Centre is due to be shared with us in the coming month after which it will be shared with stakeholders and members will consider which projects to prioritise.

Supplementary Planning Documents which support delivery of the Garden Town masterplan are expected to be consulted on in coming months.

### **Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill**

The government announced the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill as part of the Queen's speech in May. It is a wide-ranging bill with implications across a range of council areas.

The key elements of the bill that are currently being discussed through the committee stages in parliament are:

- Procedure for government to report on progress of the 'levelling up missions'
- Simplified devolution proposals and commitment that every area of the country that wants one will have one by 2030
- Direct development towards regeneration of brownfield sites, by streamlining Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and granting the power to local authorities to use CPO for regeneration purposes
- A new type of locally led Urban Development Corporation that will be accountable to local authorities rather than the Secretary of State
- Extension of the right to buy schemes
- Significant changes to the English planning system, including the introduction of spatial Development Strategies and a new Infrastructure Levy.

The Bill is expected to continue its journey through parliament until Spring 2023 and there may be many changes to the content over that period.

### **BIDCo Ballot**

The High Wycombe Town Centre BID went out to ballot for its next five year term to deliver business support based initiatives that helps the town centre and its businesses thrive. The Council have supported the administration of the ballot process by ensuring all democratic voting processes are adhered to. As a major landowner in the area, the Council also has a number of votes to cast in the ballot, for which the Authority voted 'Yes' to the Business Plan that the BIDCo will deliver.

### **Cressex Park BID High Wycombe (Business Improvement District)**

A similar BID has been developed in Cressex Business Park for the first time. The Business Park businesses will be able to collaborate better and invest collectively in the issues and projects that are beneficial for them in the area. Once again, the Council have managed the administration of the Ballot ensuring all democratic voting processes are adhered to. On this occasion the Council does not have any votes to cast due to having no property occupation in the Business Park.

### **Brunel Shed**

The refurbishment of the Brunel Shed at the High Wycombe Station Quarter has now completed. It acts as a fantastic entrance gateway as people arrive at High Wycombe on the train. It is a high-quality space contributing to outcomes that support vibrancy and quality in the town centre. There has been much interest from occupiers who want to lease the Shed. Currently the most appropriate occupiers are being considered with a view to taking a decision on the preferred occupier by end of July with occupancy by end of the year.



### **Building Control Update**

The road to Zero... The Building Control team is positively engaged with the local construction industry, providing seminars and other guidance relating to increased national building standards that have commenced this month. Changes affect all building work in Buckinghamshire moving forward. Many of the changes are a step towards delivering the Future Home Standard in 2025 and eliminating the compliance gap. All new buildings including dwellings with parking are now provided with electric vehicle charging points. All buildings are required to have higher levels of air tightness and fabric insulation. We will require an increased use of renewable energy with electricity as the primary and preferred heating source. High level of insulation is a risk to occupants in summer and there are new regulations relating to overheating and ventilation to ensure people are healthy and safe. Building Control Surveyors are progressing on target with training and assessments aimed at demonstrating professionalism and competence in readiness for the new national Building Safety Regulator.

### **Enforcement Update**

The team continues to improve its established and embedded approach to dealing with alleged breaches of planning control in a consistent way across the Council area. The service also continues to focus on delivering efficient and effective solutions to resolve breaches of planning control and to remedy planning harm.

Our 'no-nonsense' approach to planning enforcement and case management has resulted in continued increase in formal actions taken and a significant increase in case resolutions. As previously reported to Cabinet, the team issued 65 planning enforcement notices in 2021. In March 22, the Department for Levelling, Housing and Communities published tables of the number of Planning Enforcement Notices issued, in which Buckinghamshire Council were the 7<sup>th</sup> most active authority in England in relation to issuing Planning Enforcement notices, and 2<sup>nd</sup> most active outside of Greater London.

It is noteworthy that these statistics do not include all the other work being carried out by the enforcement team including all other types of formal notices, injunctions as well as amicable case resolutions.

In June 2022, the team saw the successful prosecution of a resident breaching a temporary Stop Notice. This is the first prosecution case that we have had to pursue since becoming a Unitary Council and is a welcome reminder that BC will use all the tools available to pursue the resolution of breaches of planning control.

Meanwhile, having identified a number of formal notices which are yet to be complied with, the team have recently allocated an Enforcement Officer to solely concentrate on seeking compliance with formal notices. The team will utilise this officer to pursue compliance with the formal notices that BC have served as well as those issued by the legacy authorities that remain outstanding. Since the commencement of this officer's role, we have already achieved compliance in numerous enforcement notice cases.

### **Local Plan update**

The government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has recently published the new Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which was introduced to Parliament on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2022. We are in the process of absorbing the anticipated incoming changes but our initial hypothesis is that the secondary legislation required to bring in the changes in the Bill are likely to be in place around early 2024. This is likely to include updated regulations which will set a clear timetable for local plan production, such that local plans should be produced within 30 months and updated at least every five years.

Allowing for this timeframe would mean the Buckinghamshire Local Plan would not be adopted until around Q3 2026. This hypothesis means that the adoption of the LP4B is pushed back by 6 months to beyond the April 2025 requirement for Buckinghamshire Council to have a Local Plan in place within 5 years of inception – a matter that we will continue to engage with DLUHC on.

In the meantime, and until such time as new primary and secondary legislation achieves Royal Assent or comes into effect, we continue to operate within the existing legislation but are working to ensure that any work that we do falls within the current and anticipated requirements i.e., low-risk evidence gathering.

As was reported last time, we conducted an Attitudes Survey consultation as part of the 'Discovery and Exploration' phase of the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. This closed on 11 February 2022 and attracted a total of 3,439 responses. These responses were analysed and a summary sent to all members.



## **Brownfield Calls for Sites**

The first call for brownfield sites consultation ran from 16 February to 6 April 2021. We received 275 site submissions. Whilst the appropriateness, viability and deliverability of these sites remains subject to the outcome of assessment, the overall capacity of the sites submitted is considered to have the potential for residential use for approximately 4,900 homes.

A second call for brownfield sites was launched on 6 December 2021 and an additional 55 sites have been submitted for assessment.

On 13<sup>th</sup> June, we expanded the call for Brownfield sites to a 'call for all sites'. This lasts until 11<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Sites are being submitted, including a number of brownfield sites that had not previously been submitted. This has increased the number of Brownfield sites to in excess of 330 but as yet there has been no further analysis of the appropriateness of these submissions or how many homes this land could provide for.

## **5-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) – Updated position statements**

The Local Planning Authority has a duty to provide a rolling supply of land for housing for a period of at least five years. Each year the Council is required to publish its 5YHLS position statement. In line with government advice, Buckinghamshire Council have now published the 5YHLS updated position statements.

In the absence of a 5YHLS for the whole of the Buckinghamshire Council area, these statements reflect the previous and forward looking five-year period for the individual Legacy Council Local Plan areas. The reason for us choosing to publish the 5YHLS statements by legacy area rather than a collective Buckinghamshire Council one is because, in line with government advice, as a new authority we are able to choose which option to take and, due to the combined BC area 5YHLS figure being below five years, then doing so reduces the risk of speculative planning applications for residential development, particularly in the North and Central planning areas where planning constraints such as Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are of a significantly lower coverage.

## **Heritage & Archaeology**

The **Local Heritage List project** has been very successful with over 2,200 sites nominated and lots of volunteer engagement. The team are working with 38 external groups and organisations, 15 parish councils and have 150 registered users on the Local List platform <https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire>. Volunteers are helping the team to identify sites, assess nominations and enrich the records we currently have.

The **Archaeology team** are planning an event on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July at North Marston to showcase and celebrate the county's rich archaeology. The team have been busy dealing with the extensive discoveries along the route of HS2, including one of the country's largest Anglo-Saxon cemeteries with over 140 burials, which included rare objects such as jewellery, weapons and ornaments. Further details are available via the Visit Bucks website:

<https://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org/event/buckinghamshire-council-archaeology-day>



## Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

### **Successful Application for Moving Traffic Enforcement Powers**

Following a pilot, public engagement and a formal application to the Department for Transport earlier this year, it is great news that Buckinghamshire Council has been granted Moving Traffic enforcement powers. Having these powers will help to improve road safety, reduce congestion and promote active travel and clean air policies across Buckinghamshire. The Council will be able to enforce certain moving traffic offences such as, no entry, yellow box junctions, banned turns and stopping on school keep clears. These will be enforced by cameras and will enable the police to concentrate their resources on higher priority policing matters. Parking Services have commenced work to ensure that we can begin rolling out these powers at 14 identified sites across Buckinghamshire from December 2022.

### **Highways Contracts**

The procurement project team, with support from other disciplines from across the Council and externally, have made positive progress with the delivery of the new Highways operating model and are on programme to deliver these key contracts for the Council. One of these contracts is the appointment of a new Term Maintenance Contractor, a key component of the new Highways Service and a paper is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet on 12th July reporting on the outcome of the procurement exercise and recommending the award of contract to the preferred bidder.

The procurement of the separate contracts for the Term Consultant and specialist frameworks for larger scale work, are all on programme to commence on 1st April 2023.

### **Gully Cleansing**

The programme to clear and cleanse all 85,000 gullies on the network is well underway. There has already been a significant reduction in silt level in the gullies this year following the gully cleansing undertaken last year. Despite a late start to the cyclical gully programme in the north of the county due to the ongoing national shortage of HGV drivers, we have already cleaned 14% of the gullies countywide in the 2022/23 programme and we are continuing to monitor performance of the gully teams with regular inspections. We continue to address the defects raised by the gully cleansing gangs such as stuck or broken gully covers and high-pressure jetting to clear blocked drainage pipes. These follow up works are critical to improving/maintaining the drainage asset and our gully teams across the county are sharing lessons learnt and good practice to constantly improve productivity.

### **Highways Capital Programme for 2022/23**

As part of the “£100m Investing in your roads” four-year programme, £31.5m of work will be delivered throughout this year. A variety of schemes will take place including 34 carriageway resurfacing schemes using traditional materials, 34 plane and patch schemes, 32 micro asphalt, three

surface dressing and 20 footways schemes. Safety barriers, complex ITS upgrades, network improvement sites and 12 drainage schemes will be progressed with a planned completion of the full capital programme by the end of December.

Good progress has already been made this year with 13 Plane and Patch schemes now finished together with completions of four footway sites, four drainage schemes. Looking ahead to the summer, the surface dressing programme commenced at the end of June with the micro-asphalt programme commencing at the start of August and preparatory work for next year's surface dressing and micro asphalt programmes continues with nine schemes completed to date.

## Rights of Way



The mid-section of Berry Hill Footbridge across the Jubilee River in Taplow was removed in December. The structure has been closed to the public since May 2021 after suffering unforeseen structural deterioration. Work has been ongoing to finalise the design and start the prefabrication of the replacement bridge section. The Council's contractor is currently seeking design/programme approvals from the Environment Agency (EA). Early indications from the

EA are that it is undertaking its own major works on the Jubilee River this year, which may impact the timetable for replacing and reopening Berry Hill. *Photo– Topbond– Berryhill removal Dec 2021.*



Projects carried forward from last year's capital programme have now been completed including surface works on a byway in Chartridge and bridleway repairs in Taplow and Great Marlow, and the replacement of a footbridge in Oxlane Padbury.

*Oxlane Footbridge Padbury May 2022*

The Bernwood Jubilee Way is a 61-mile walking and cycling route running through 31 parishes and rejuvenating the route is being undertaken in this year of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Surveying and renewing signage along the route continues; a task that is being undertaken by local volunteers from the Ramblers. Additionally, work has been undertaken to produce new social media pages and maps. Further information and maps are available online [here](#).

## Shopmobility Recognised for Support in the Community



Shopmobility is a nationwide scheme that lends manual wheelchairs and scooters to individuals with limited mobility to allow them to visit shops and facilities within the town. Aylesbury was one of the pioneers of the Service and the Shopmobility services, operated from within the Upper Hundreds Car Park in Aylesbury, received a Community Champion award from the Hearing Dogs for Deaf People for their support in helping to train special hearing dogs in the local area. They were recognised for their help with dogs in the parking areas, using the equipment and being out and about in the shops and town.

## School Bus Route Changes 2022/23

The Council provides school buses for children who are eligible for free school transport. Any 'Spare Seats' are made available for sale. The Spare Seat application window for new applicants was open between 29th June and 15th July 2022. Customers will receive the outcome of their applications and eligible students issued with bus passes by 31st July 2022, and Spare Seat customers will be issued with bus passes by 31st August 2022.

This year there are a few changes to the Council's school bus routes starting in September following an annual review of the bus routes provided. These routes are reviewed annually to ensure they are operating effectively to provide transport for children who qualify for support under the Council's Home to School Transport Policy. A written briefing on school transport was provided to all Council Members by email on 14 June 2022, and an all-member session held on 28 June 2022.

Further information on eligibility, free school transport, spare seat scheme and commercial bus routes is available at [School transport | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

## National Walking Month (Walk to School week)



May was National Walking Month and the School Sustainable Travel Team took part in a number of activities for Walk to School Week to encourage parents, children, and young people to make walking to school part of their daily routine. Cllr David King, Deputy Cabinet Member for Transport Delivery, took part in a "walking crocodile" which was set up at Widmer End Combined School as part of their Platinum Jubilee celebrations and to promote walking to school. Crocodiles are organised walking buses offering a way for children to travel safely to school without using the car. They can help to improve children's fitness, develop road safety awareness and reduce traffic congestion and pollution around schools.

## Electric Vehicle Action Plan



Cabinet recently adopted our EV Action Plan, which sets out our ambition to double the number of charge points by 2023/24, and to have 1,000 EV charge points across Buckinghamshire by the end of 2027. The Action Plan includes several short-term aims to increase the level of charge point provision, and a description of our priority locations for charge point installation. To this end, we have made applications to the trial Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund and will be applying to the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) with which we have previously installed 52 EV parking bays in recent years. We will be working with Community Boards, and Town and Parish Councils, to identify appropriate locations for new chargepoints and explore delivery of other supporting infrastructure, such as in-pavement cable channels.

## HS2 and East West Rail

Buckinghamshire Council remains committed to holding HS2 and EWR to account for the impact that the construction of these schemes are having on the local environment and on our residents and businesses. Cllr Steven Broadbent and Cllr Peter Martin attended the hearing of

Buckinghamshire Council's Judicial Review of Planning Inspectorate decisions on the HS2 lorry routes held on Wednesday 8th & Thursday 9th June 2022 at the Royal Courts of Justice, London. The Judge of the High Court presiding over the case was Sir Duncan Ouseley. The timetable for Sir Ouseley's ruling is currently not known.

The lorry routes the Judicial Review relates to are:

- Brackley Road
- Wendover Green Tunnel
- Small Dean Lane, Wendover to the Strategic Road Network
- Small Dean Viaduct, Wendover to the Strategic Road Network
- Chiltern Tunnel North Portal to the Strategic Road Network, and
- Three worksites at Little Missenden, Chesham and the North Portal to the Strategic Road Network

### **Buckinghamshire Council's Intervention Turns around HS2 Vent Shaft Plans**

Buckinghamshire Council met with HS2 Ltd, its contractor, Align, and the HS2 Independent Design Panel in June last year to discuss its major concerns over the proposed design of the Amersham vent shaft which HS2 Limited will be building on Whielden Lane in Old Amersham.

During the last five years a number of iterations of the vent shaft have been presented and discussed but the Council has always believed significantly more work was needed to ensure the proposal is appropriate to the character of Old Amersham and the AONB.

As the Local Planning Authority, we have consistently said that the design needed a completely new direction, including the use of more traditional materials for the external appearance and more landscape screening. This key building needs to blend into the townscape and enhance its framing of the AONB.

The revised design now being presented is a significant improvement on the initial scheme HS2 Limited first submitted. We pushed hard for a better scheme and are pleased that our efforts have resulted in major changes in the proposals.

Due to the HS2 Act 2017, our overall influence and control is limited on much of the HS2 scheme, but we have done everything we can to ensure that the Amersham vent shaft, when built, is in keeping with Old Amersham's distinct style and the AONB. We want to assure residents that we will ensure that we will fully use the limited powers we have.

### **A41 Bicester Road Primary Public Transport Corridor**

Since September 2021 construction work has progressed well and is on programme to be completed in Quarter 3 of 2022/23. Whilst road users have experienced some delays to journey times, the phasing of work along with temporary traffic management arrangements have allowed for two-way traffic flows to be maintained along the A41 during peak times. To help inform local members and residents there are regular project e-bulletins and a project webpage linked [here](#). Road users are also updated via the use of on-site electronic variable message signs.

### **Platinum Way Cycleway**

On Monday 9th May 2022, Phase 1 of the improvement work commenced and the cycleway was officially opened by Cllr Dev Dhillon on 29th May 2022, in time for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebration.



The works included footway widening to accommodate a new shared use cycleway, new shared use cycleway crossing points, and associated signing and lining work along the route. A number of community days were held at Somerville Way and, with the help of Chiltern Rangers and local volunteers, the team managed to plant wildflowers and paint some vibrant nature-based art for the public realm, as well as building and decorating bat and bird boxes to help encourage wildlife.

In the coming months, we will be completing the design of three new cycle and pedestrian crossings in Rabans Lane, Fowler Road, and Fowler Road near Bracken Way. The current programme is to undertake the construction of Phase 2 in autumn 2022. Later in the year, during National Tree week 26th November – 4th of December, we will be planting 1000 bulbs and hundreds of trees as a native hedgerow to make Somerville Way and Haydon Hill better for wildlife and local residents will be encouraged to get involved again.

