



**Cabinet Member report – Leader**  
Councillor Martin Tett

**Strategic Finance**

In June, Cabinet considered the final financial outturn position for 2022/23 and it was good to note the balanced revenue position despite the many pressures faced by the authority over the last year.

Cabinet also considered some of the heightened financial pressures and risks associated with inflation, demand pressures, and reduced income across a range of portfolios, including Health and Wellbeing, Education & Children’s Services, Homelessness & Regulatory Services and Transport. We are already beginning to see significant challenges to our budget. Cabinet will keep the financial position and pressures under close review throughout 2023/24 with the aim of mitigating these pressures. The recent DEFRA decision on not allowing us to charge for commercial waste will add a further unforeseen financial pressure of over a £1m pa to our budget, including in year pressures during 2023/24. This decision may well force us to review the viability of our extensive network of HRCs which risks an increase in flytipping.

**Buckinghamshire Electoral Review**

The Local Government Boundary Commission published its final recommendations (to Parliament) on 30 May for the future pattern of wards for Buckinghamshire Council. The Commission proposed a Council of 97 Councillors with 49 wards, to come into effect on 1 May 2025 and at the next scheduled local elections. The proposal consists of 10 three member wards, 28 two member wards and 11 single member wards. The Commission has followed some of Council’s suggested changes from recent consultations. The Commission will also make changes to some parish electoral arrangements (parish ward boundaries and the number of ward Councillors) as a consequence to the electoral review. Changes will be made to Aylesbury Town Council; Chalfont St Peter Parish Council; Stoke Mandeville Parish Council; and Weston Turville Parish Council. The Commission’s final report and map are available on The Local Government Boundary Commission [website](#). The Council’s interactive map, which allows you to view the new wards overlaid with the current wards and parish boundaries, is also available on the Buckinghamshire Council [website](#). Links to both of these have been emailed to members. Parish Councils have also been informed.

## **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (and Rural England Prosperity Fund)**

In June we launched a call for projects to deliver activities to provide support to local business. Applications close in July. Funding is for 2023/24 and the next financial year, as part of our Shared Prosperity Fund programme. We are inviting proposals to deliver support to local business on the following themes; business start-up and entrepreneurship; business growth and productivity; business sustainability and journey to net zero and rural business support.

Linked to the Shared Prosperity Fund is the Rural England Prosperity Fund which provides capital funding to local authorities. In Buckinghamshire this funding is focused on grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. We launched our new rural business grants scheme in late June and are keen to encourage eligible businesses to apply. Buckinghamshire Business First are supporting us with this grants scheme given their experience in this area, from the Leader funding previously, and relationships with local businesses.

## **Rural Broadband Contract**

The team working on the Council's Digital Infrastructure Programme helped deliver a £1.8m project to connect residents and businesses in over 30 rural Buckinghamshire communities to gigabit capable broadband. The scheme was delivered in partnership with Openreach using funding secured via the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, managed by The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In total, 723 premises have benefitted from the scheme and now have access to broadband speeds which are 10x faster than the average superfast connection.

The programme has now moved to the closure phase.

## **Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Board**

The new Place-Based Growth Board model is now in place with the sub-boards having their inaugural meetings in May and the overarching new Growth Board having met in June. The Boards are already working on their priorities and forward plans for the next year and the Regeneration Board has already booked site visits to see some of our towns and discuss plans for regeneration opportunities. The June board meeting reviewed the draft Regeneration Framework and considered options for the establishment of the new pooled investment fund.

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

I was unable to attend the LEP Board meeting on 26 May 2023, although my Cabinet colleagues were present.

Discussions took place around the Government's direction of travel to cease funding LEPs from April 2024. The Council, LEP and BBF have all responded to the government's recent survey about LEP future funding with strong support for a new local model and draft integration plan which means we are well placed to manage transition should LEPs cease to exist. Announcements are expected before the summer recess at the end of July.

The LEP also discussed the planned Pooled Investment Fund which will be used to drive change in Buckinghamshire, and with the scarcity of Government capital funding into local priorities. It is expected to be funded from sources such as Broadband Gainshare and Enterprise Zone income.

The Board were shown how evidence generated by the LEP is being used to support policy development and business engagement activity across the county. The proposals are to develop detailed ward level economic analysis for the Opportunity Bucks priority wards. This will support the next steps in the Local Skills Improvement Plan and support proposals for a structured programme of engagement with the top 100 businesses in Buckinghamshire. This will ensure that those involved in business support are engaging with the companies that are making, or could potentially make, the greatest contribution to Buckinghamshire's economy.

The Board also noted contents of the Chairman's report including updates on the Enterprise Zones, core LEP funding, Bucks Health & Social Care Academy and Growth Hub funding.

### **Support to Buckinghamshire Businesses and the Buckinghamshire Enterprise Zone update**

Our Enterprise Zones remain imperative to supporting businesses growth in Buckinghamshire. The Enterprise Zone Memorandum of Understanding between the LEP and Buckinghamshire Council remains in place to support the continued growth of the Buckinghamshire Enterprise Zone (BEZ) sites, facilitating investment, growth, and skills development. Plans for 2023-24 were presented to the LEP Board in March 2023. There will be no new development complete in 2023-24 however annual income will grow from floorspace completed in 2022-23. Focus of activity this year is to accelerate pipeline development opportunities including the Westcott Incubation and Accelerator Programme.

The 'Race to Space' Rocketry competition for undergraduate students from across the UK will take place at Westcott from 3-7 July. This is a key opportunity to attract future talent to Westcott.

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

The Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee met on 6 April with the agenda focusing on the Buckinghamshire Place-Based Governance Model and the Legacy of 'Everyone In, and homelessness in Buckinghamshire.

A report updating the committee on the new Place-Based Governance Model was presented with details of the four sub-boards, the proposed integration of the LEP and the Pooled Investment Fund. Details of this are covered earlier in my update.

It was reported to the committee that in March 2020, the Government asked Councils to move all those, and those at risk of, sleeping rough into accommodation in a scheme known as 'Everyone In'. By May 2020, Government reported that 14,610 people had been provided with emergency accommodation with over 300 individuals being accommodated across Buckinghamshire during the initiative. The Government has now implemented their 'Ending Rough Sleeping for Good' strategy which commits £2bn over the next three years to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping. The

Council successfully brought all Buckinghamshire rough sleepers into temporary accommodation during the initiative but since then, rough sleeping has increased.

The committee heard that evidence gathering sessions were held across April and May and recommendations are currently being developed and will be reported to Cabinet and other key partners. The evidence gathered will include a review of the experiences of temporary accommodation provided, identification of potential gaps in provision and clarity over the funding for homelessness will identify potential improvements to support for rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire and identify improvements to partnership working in relation to rough sleeping.

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

Many people will have seen the works underway in Aylesbury on the Wendover Road and Lower Road to enable the delivery of the South East Aylesbury Link Road. In recent months, major projects have been hit by considerable inflationary pressures. Officers are progressing work on projects whilst we negotiate with central Government to allow us increased flexibility on how we use our allocated Housing Infrastructure Funding.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

We now have over 1600 Ukrainians living in Buckinghamshire, of which a quarter have moved into private rental properties. The team continue to support guests and sponsors in active sponsorships, whilst monitoring the potential end dates and making plans for next steps when these placements end. The sponsors are asked to provide the team and their guests with at least two months' notice prior to the end of the sponsorship and the team are supporting the Ukrainians into a rematch, a private rental property or bidding on social housing where this is the only option.

More than 800 Ukrainians signed up to English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) lessons across Buckinghamshire and are supporting several community conversation classes. We continue to support the guests into employment as a priority focus, to utilise their skills and experience to contribute to the Buckinghamshire economy. To enable this, we are translating their qualifications and providing a statement of comparability to allow the Ukrainians to update their CVs and seek employment in a sector relevant to their employment history.

### **England's Economic Heartland**

England's Economic Heartland, alongside the East West Main Line Partnership, welcomed the recent announcement on East West Rail's route east of Bletchley to Cambridge as another important step towards the scheme's delivery. There continues to be a need to make the case for the Aylesbury link, which was marked as a "potential future section of EWR" in East West Railway Company reports and maps. The East West Main Line Partnership (of which EEH provides officer resource), in collaboration with Buckinghamshire Council, will soon commission work outlining the economic narrative for the link.

EEH is making representations to Chiltern Railways regarding timetable changes which have resulted in a reduction in direct trains to London from Buckinghamshire. This is particularly marked between Aylesbury to London in the off-peak period.

Responses to calls for evidence held in May-June to inform the development of EEH's next two connectivity studies, 'Thames Valley-Buckinghamshire-Milton Keynes-Northampton' and the 'southern east-west corridor' (covering Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire) are currently being analysed. It complements EEH's on-going engagement with Buckinghamshire Council and other authorities regarding the studies. They are expected to conclude in late 2023/ early 2024 when a report will be published setting out the connectivity opportunities and needs in each corridor. The package of interventions identified will form a key part of EEH's investment pipeline for the region.

EEH's annual conference is being held in Cambridge on 1 November.

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

Leaders wrote to the Minister for Immigration, setting out concerns and ideas regarding funding, support and housing for refugees and asylum seekers. We also engaged in correspondence with the Minister for Local Government with a view to discussing strategic authority finance.

Together, we met a senior civil servant to discuss levelling up and devolution, how these might be in the wider South East and what these mean for communities and strategic authorities.

Leaders responded to the Government's consultation on revising children's care "Stable Homes, Built on Love" Implementation Strategy and Consultation for Children's Social Care. Through a discussion with senior civil servants, Leaders explained the pressure on and costs of services to support children with special educational needs or disabilities and the implications of the Government's reform of these services.

Leaders considered demands on, and investment in, the roads network and highway maintenance due to changes in weather and travel patterns, the costs of materials and local government finance.

### **LGA Annual Conference**

The Local Government Association Annual Conference and Exhibition was held on the 4-6 July and I attended alongside two of my fellow cabinet members and our Chief Executive, Rachel Shimmin. There was a wide range of engaging sessions covering high profile issues in local government and showcasing the innovative work of Councils. I Chaired a main session on recruitment and skills.

### **Helping Hand**

On 24 May, I met with the Rt Hon John Glen MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury to discuss how the Council is using funding from the government's Household Support Fund to help local residents facing hardship and challenges brought on by cost-of-living pressures. We were joined by Cllr Arif Hussain,

Cabinet Member for Communities, Henry Allmand, chief executive of Heart of Bucks, and Council officers, at Aylesbury Library, one the county's 'Welcoming Spaces'.

### **Levelling Up**

Lee Rowley MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Local Government and Building Safety) visited the Buckinghamshire Council Gateway offices on 15 June to meet with myself and Rob Butler MP, Aylesbury MP, to discuss national and local levelling up policies. We were later joined by Rachael Shimmin, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council, to discuss local government finances and the role of the proposed Office of Local Government (Oflog).





## Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss



### Buckinghamshire Film Office

The Buckinghamshire Film Office met with National Film and Television School (NFTS) students as part of its aim to support screen skills development in the county. We spoke about ways to source locations, how Buckinghamshire Council supports student filming and best practice when shooting on location. We await feedback but hope to present to NFTS students twice per year and will offer a similar presentation to other institutions' film students such as Buckinghamshire New University and Bucks College Group.



### Play in the Parks



Work to replace the play area in Higginson Park in Marlow commenced on 5 June and is expected to be completed by the summer holidays. The new facility will provide vibrant play facilities for children between the ages of two and 12 and has been designed after consultation with park users about the types of equipment they would like to see.

Following another consultation exercise, tender documents have been released to replace the 'Ropes on the Rye' play area in High Wycombe. The completed tenders should be returned by the end of August and the finished park opened in time for Spring 2024.

Finally, a new junior facility (for ages five to 12 years) will be installed in Vale Park in Aylesbury adding to the existing facilities; this too should be completed in time for Spring 2024.

These three projects will see over £660k invested in outdoor activity/play for children across the county promoting healthy and active lifestyles.



## WhizzFizzFest



Activity is well underway for this year's WhizzFizzFest, the Council's annual family-friendly arts festival. Creative workshops have taken place with artists in schools and Family Centres in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham. The works produced are being displayed at the three WhizzFizz festival events in July. Through the summer holidays, WhizzFizzFest will be presenting theatre shows at libraries across the county. Keep an eye on our [What's On page](#) for further information.

## Buckinghamshire Archives

To celebrate the King's coronation, the Archives Service created an exhibition that toured the libraries to highlight how Buckinghamshire celebrated past Coronations and the King's visits to the county. Members of the Archives team attended a careers event at Cressex School, High Wycombe, to highlight work in the heritage sector. The team has also promoted the county's culture and heritage through delivery of onsite tours and events at libraries for Local and Community History month.

## Discover Bucks Museum

The Discover Bucks Museum in Aylesbury has run an Open Art Exhibition featuring 140 artists and almost 200 pieces. The show has highlighted the huge amount of creative talent there is across the county.

The museum is also using its new community gallery space. Recent exhibitions have included a self-portraiture photography exhibition by an autism charity, and 'Next Chapters' from a literary group founded with prisoners who write poetry. Further information can be found [here](#).



## Rekindle

Buckinghamshire Libraries have successfully bid for Arts Council England funding to deliver a cultural programme from April 2023 to March 2026. Rekindle is a three-year programme formed of libraries and arts organisations to enhance their existing programme of arts, to develop and evaluate locally relevant sustainable arts activity, and to support a confident and skilled library workforce. This will involve all types of arts events or participatory activity including theatre, digital workshop, visual art, exhibition, poetry reading, etc. The project partners include Buckinghamshire, Medway, Sandwell, Norfolk and Blackburn. In Buckinghamshire, the library service will deliver 60 events over three years based on 10 outdoor/digital/larger-scale participatory activities, and 50 indoor/smaller-scale participatory activities.

## Healthy Libraries Pilot Programme

A Healthy Libraries pilot programme between Buckinghamshire Libraries and Public Health took place between February and April. 46 sessions were delivered in conjunction with a wide range of partners, covering children's and adult's mental health, dementia, healthy eating and menopause; and there were 160+ individual training sessions for staff and volunteers to equip them to support people's health and wellbeing.



The pilot also saw reconfiguration of 11 library spaces to create 'Cosy Corners' with resources and information to support families living with dementia, provision of new equipment to support autistic people, health stations installed in Aylesbury and High Wycombe libraries and 92 portable blood pressure kits now available for loan from Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Micklefield libraries.



The evaluation of the pilot will inform future roll-out to other libraries, sharing learning on delivering and promoting activities and identifying other local partners to engage with. Initial response from customers and staff has been positive and the 'Cosy Corners' have seen regular visits from care homes and individuals to access health information and activities.

### **Summer Reading Challenge**

This summer, children aged 4-11 years can visit Buckinghamshire Libraries to join a superstar team and their marvellous mascots and get involved in a Summer Reading Challenge themed around the power of play, sport, games and physical activity. Through taking part in the Challenge, with free materials from Buckinghamshire Libraries and online via the Challenge website, children will be encouraged to keep their minds and bodies active over the summer break. The characters – brought to life by children's author and illustrator Loretta Schauer – navigate a fictional summer obstacle course and track their reading as they go, rewarded by free incentives including stickers.

Through activity challenge cards from the Youth Sport Trust, and an exciting, themed book collection, the Summer Reading Challenge aims to keep imaginations moving over the school holiday. By participating in the challenge at Buckinghamshire Libraries, young people will have the opportunity to explore new reading material, develop skills, and discover new interests. For more information, please visit [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/campaign/summer-reading-challenge](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/campaign/summer-reading-challenge).

### **Self-Service Kiosks**

Self-service kiosks in Princes Risborough, Buckingham and Beaconsfield went live in June. Customers can use this technology for book borrowing, returns and paying charges on their account. The kiosks give customers choice in how they would like to interact with us and offers staff an alternative method to assist customers with transactions during busier times which will improve our service. We have had a lot of borrowers intrigued by the new technology and this is an excellent platform for digital advertising of library services and offers.

### **Leisure**

The new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre is driving up the levels of physical activity amongst our residents and having a real impact. The number of visits across our leisure sites was confirmed for 2022/2023 as 3.526 million, which is an increase from pre-pandemic figures of 3m a year.

Across our other sites, our commitment to improvement continues with work commencing on the Little Marlow Athletics Track. This will see track repairs and resurfacing work alongside new field equipment. Work will be taking place through to early August and we have worked with the main athletic clubs to support them in transferring their regular training and competition events to other nearby tracks at Stoke Mandeville, Brunel and Perivale.



## **Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services**

Councillor Mark Winn

### **Environment Health Commercial Team**

Officers within the Commercial Team have successfully achieved the expectations set out by the Food Standards Agency as part of their Recovery Roadmap following the COVID 19 pandemic. Officers have inspected all compliant and non-compliant high-risk businesses and are now implementing the 2023/24 food hygiene inspection programme. Officers have also started inspecting the lower risk food businesses that had not been inspected prior to the pandemic.

In other work, following a couple of very serious accidents, officers instigated a targeted health and safety inspection project, focusing on workplace transport safety and working at height in local business parks across the county. Suitable business were identified and contacted giving advice and signposting to national guidance prior to an inspection. Over a two day period, 23 visits were made, of which 18 required no further action or follow up, one Prohibition Notice was served for an unsafe mezzanine floor and four Improvement Notices served for safe systems of working and arrangements.

A food business has been closed following an infestation of rats found in the food preparation areas during a routine food hygiene inspection. An Emergency Hygiene Prohibition Order was obtained from the Magistrates' Court requiring the business to remain closed until the infestation has been treated and the premises pest proofed. The business currently remains closed (as of 21 June 2023) and will remain so until they apply to have the premises reopened. We are currently evaluating whether further formal action is required in line with our enforcement policy and national guidance.

Officers have been working with West Northants Council, Silverstone Circuit Ltd and local campsites on plans for this year's British Grand Prix. Officers will be attending 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.

### **Environmental Protection**

The team continues to discharge its statutory Environmental Permitting function through programmed inspections designed to check compliance with permit conditions and provide guidance/support to business operators. For the 2022/23 financial period, the team has achieved a 100% inspection rate.

The Strategic Environmental Protection Team have also been rolling out the air quality toolkits to the community board managers and installing air quality sensors in each community board area as part of the Clean Our Air Campaign. This is a project which has been funded by a Defra Air Quality Grant.

The reactive side of the service is preparing for the summer months where there are increased service requests received concerning nuisance along with dealing with issues associated with large events.

### Housing and Domestic

The Housing and Domestic team is continuing to take enforcement action against unscrupulous landlords operating within the county. In March, a High Wycombe landlord was found guilty of five offences including operating an unlicensed House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and putting tenants at risk. The owner was fined £5,000, ordered to pay costs of £6,878.96, and a victim surcharge of £190, totalling £12,068.96.

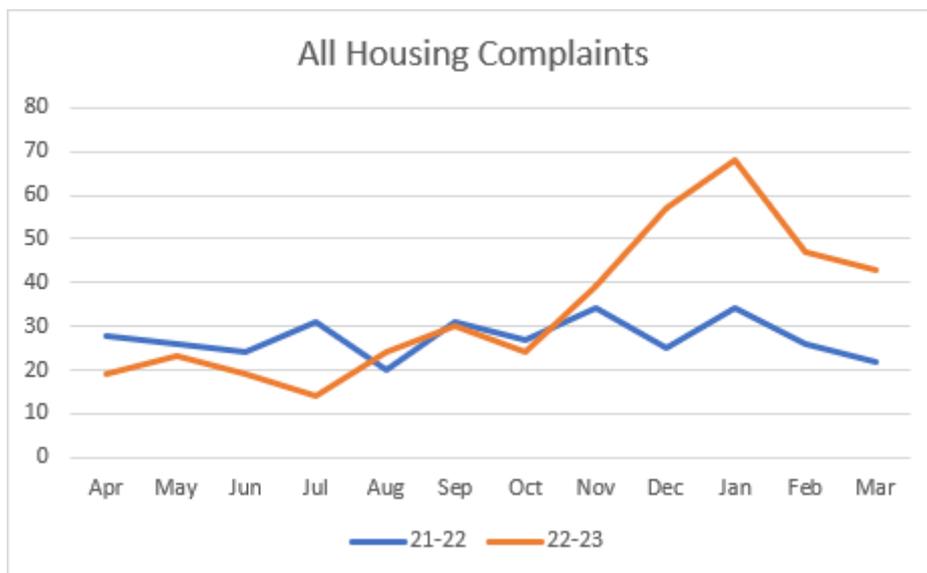
Further proactive work is planned to identify unlicensed HMOs within the 10 Opportunity Bucks wards in the coming weeks. Any suspected unlicensed HMO can be reported to the team for investigation within this programme. In addition, we are also creating a referral pathway for partners to pass on concerns regarding housing conditions for properties within the wards. This does not replace any existing processes that are in place, and tenants are encouraged to contact the council or their landlord directly, but it is hoped it will enable us to deal with issues such as damp and mould by matters being referred with the tenant's consent.

During the winter period the team saw a huge increase in service requests regarding issues associated with damp and mould in rented accommodation in comparison to the previous year. This was following a greater awareness of the issues associated with damp and mould following a Coroner's judgment relating to a two year old boy in Rochdale.

In the financial year 2021/22 the service received 328 requests concerning housing standards in the rented sector, 99 of which related to damp and mould (30%).

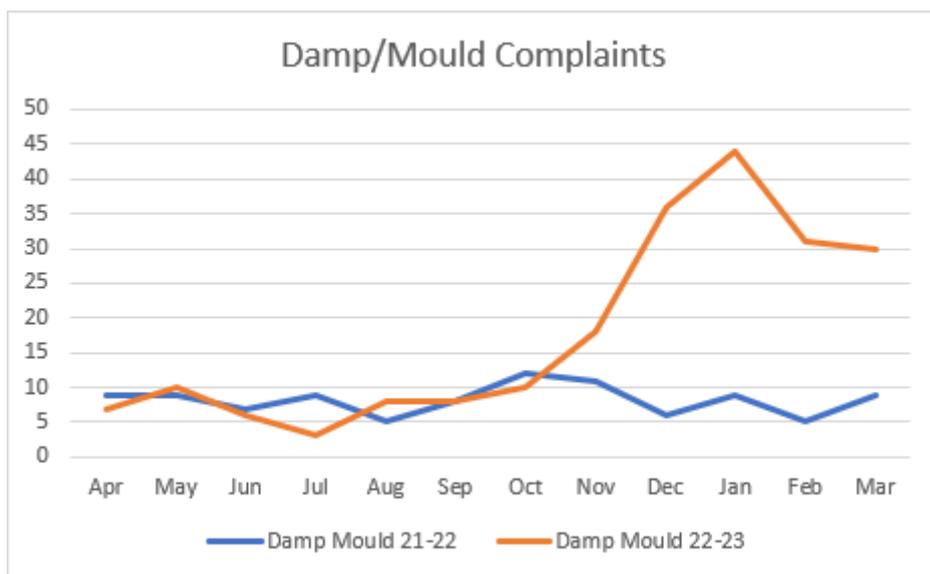
In the financial year 2022/23 the service received 407 requests concerning housing standards in the rented sector, 211 of which related to damp and mould (52%).

The demand month on month as follows for housing complaints:



During 2021/22 there was not particular seasonal variance and it averaged 27 requests per month. For 2022/23 the pattern of the previous year was similar until November when a peak of 68 requests were received.

With respect to cases specifically related to damp and mould the trend is as follows:



The team is working as part of the Opportunity Bucks programme with respect to the continued work required in this area for the forthcoming winter.

### **Disabled Facilities Grants**

As at the end of May 2023, we had 517 ongoing applications for Disabled Facilities Grants for property adaptations. We are currently in the process of revising and updating the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant and Financial Assistance policy. This will include reviewing some of the grant thresholds to reflect the increased costs of contractors and building materials.

### **Housing - Rough Sleepers**

We have seen an upturn in the number of verified rough sleepers across Buckinghamshire as the weather has improved and the additional winter support arrangements are no longer in place. In mid-June 2023 we estimated that there were approximately 20 rough sleepers across the county subject to further verification. We continue to try to work with these clients. The Council and its partners have also put arrangements in place to support rough sleepers during periods of hot weather and the first SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) of the summer for extreme heat was implemented on 13 June.

The Growth Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee is currently undertaking a rapid review looking at "The legacy of 'Everyone in' and homelessness in Buckinghamshire". This review is looking back at the experience of operating the "Everyone In" arrangements for rough sleepers during the pandemic, what lessons were learned and how the Council and its partners currently work with rough sleepers. The Inquiry Group is scheduled to report back to the main Select Committee in September 2023.

### **Homelessness**

The demand for homelessness assistance remains high with 408 approaches to the Council in May 2023 and 406 households in temporary accommodation as of 31 May 2023.

During May 2023, we started moving households into the new Council-owned temporary accommodation scheme at Bridge Court in Wycombe. The scheme will provide 58 rooms in total and we have been moving homeless households into the scheme on a phased basis. By early June 2023, the scheme was nearly at 50% capacity and we were continuing to move more households in. This is

a very significant step in the provision of more good quality temporary accommodation for homeless households and reducing the Council's reliance on expensive B&B style accommodation to meet the current high demands; we are continuing to work to identify ways to reduce expensive nightly placements.

### **Bucks Home Choice – Demand for Social Housing**

We continue to see a high demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme. As at the end of May 2023, we had 5,589 live applications which was an increase of over 500 applications on the figure in December 2023 (4995).

### **Trading Standards**

Following an investigation by Trading Standards, a person has been convicted and sentenced to 30 months in prison in relation to home improvement fraud. The criminal repeatedly visited the home of two elderly Bucks residents and undertook work that was not necessary and was carried out to a really poor standard. We remain optimistic that the victims will receive compensation from the criminal through Proceeds of Crime proceedings that are ongoing. In the last month, the Service has been raising awareness of phone scams and letting residents know how they can get a call blocker on loan for free if they are particularly vulnerable to phone scams. you can email [ts.prevention@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ts.prevention@surreycc.gov.uk) to apply for a call blocker for yourself or on behalf of someone else. Last year the call blockers already installed by the service are estimated to have stopped residents losing over £1.8m and residents who have them report feeling happier at home not being plagued by nuisance and scam calls.

Both unsafe vapes and the sale of vapes to under 18's continue to be significant national problems. The Government is considering new restrictions to make vapes less appealing to under 18's who have never smoked before as everyone is very clear that vapes should not be used by this group. Trading Standards undertake test purchasing with under 18's and unfortunately the most recent results (at the beginning of June) show that there were problems locally with five out of six shops making sales. Trading Standards give advice to the business owners and will investigate where repeat offending occurs.

Around 20% of households are in the private rentals, [spending on average 26% of their income on rent](#), so it is vital that this sector operates fairly and doesn't put these renters at excessive risk. Trading Standards are responsible for ensuring that Letting Agents for private rented accommodation comply with requirements to ensure:

- That client money (for example paid as deposits) is kept safe in a government approved Client Money Protection Scheme (so that it cannot be used by the letting agent for another purpose and be lost) and that membership of the CMP Scheme is visible to prospective renters.
- That lettings agents and landlords treat renters fairly in that only permissible fees are charged, and that there is visibility to prospective and current renters of what those charges are.
- That prospective renters understand the energy efficiency of the property they are considering buying by visibility of a current Energy Performance Certificate at the time of marketing.
- That renters can exercise their rights effectively by requiring lettings agents to have clearly visible which Redress Scheme they are part of.

Trading Standards have been contacting Lettings Agents who did not appear to be complying with these rules. Following advice around 75% of them have moved into compliance. We continue to work with the remainder and are optimistic that the majority will become compliant. If this does not

happen the Service can impose financial penalties, and this is considered in line with our Enforcement Policy. Last year two financial penalties were imposed.

### **Registration Service**

The service has been busy recruiting due to vacancies within the teams and training has been ongoing for new staff on the registration of births and deaths. Once staff are fully trained, we are looking at options to reopen the service access at Buckingham Library that was in place prior to Covid.

The service continues to register all births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships which have taken place in the county and is now planning for the busy summer season of ceremonies in our beautiful venues. Currently we have 796 ceremonies booked between June and September 2023 that registrars will be attending. Out of these ceremonies, 314 are in our own registration offices which highlights that many customers are choosing to consider lower cost ceremonies during this current cost of living crisis.

### **Coroner's Service**

The team continue to see an increase in deaths where a medical practitioner has not seen the deceased within 28 days before death and this is contributing to the current heavy workloads. This is currently being discussed nationally between government and health agencies to try and reduce this impact.

An announcement by the Government advised that the implementation date of the National Medical Examiners system has been put back to at the earliest, April 2024. The service continues to work closely with Registrars and the Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust on our own local Medical Examiner system and this is working very well. Most GP surgeries are now on board with only a handful left to encourage.

### **Licensing enforcement activities**

In addition to routine and reactive enforcement activity, the taxi licensing service runs a busy proactive enforcement programme and officers joined colleagues from Milton Keynes Council (MKC) in April to carry out joint late night enforcement activity. Two private hire vehicles, one MKC licenced and one Buckinghamshire Council licensed, were caught illegally plying for hire and appropriate enforcement action has been taken. In May, officers joined Thames Valley Police in a marked vehicle and conducted inspections on eight licensed vehicles. One driver was issued with a ticket for not wearing a seat belt and one for not having a child seat for his child travelling in the rear of the vehicle. Three drivers were issued with warnings for not correctly wearing badges and one driver was found to have historic DVLA points which he had not declared to the council.

On the 23 May 2023 Cllr Carl Jackson, Deputy Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services, joined officers from taxi licensing and the Client Transport Compliance team at Stoney Dean School, Amersham to carry out joint enforcement activity on home to school contracts.

Officers will be visiting a range of large outdoor events across the county over the summer, checking compliance with both alcohol and entertainment licences well as taxi and private hire licences.



## **Court Appeals**

The council has successfully defended two appeals in the Magistrates Court. The first in April related to a private hire driver who was caught driving without insurance and failed to report the offence to council officers. The magistrate agreed that the council was right to revoke the driver's licence and awarded the council costs of £2000. In June Magistrates agreed to dismiss an appeal by a hackney carriage vehicle licence holder whose licence had been revoked by the council and awarded the council costs of £1238. The vehicle licence holder had already successfully had his driver licence revoked and was subject to police investigation for a serious offence.

## **Draft Animal Licensing Policy**

A new draft policy has recently been consulted on and feedback will be considered by Licensing Committee on 18 July 2023. The council is responsible for licensing commercial activities involving animals such as dog breeding, boarding cats and dogs, using animals for exhibition and performance, the sale of pets and horse riding establishments. The council also authorises licences zoos and keepers of dangerous wild animals. The draft policy sets out the council's role in regulating these activities, provides guidance for applicants and explains the council's approach to enforcement and setting fees. In addition to the specific measures set out in legislation, the draft policy proposes that applicants be required to provide basic DBS certificates to help ensure applicants are fit and proper to be licenced and do not have convictions that would make them unsuitable to hold a licence, for example for animal welfare or cruelty offences. Given that certain activities such as riding schools may involve unsupervised contact with young persons and potentially vulnerable persons, it is proposed in such circumstances applicants to have written safeguarding policies in place, provide relevant staff training and have appropriate vetting procedures in place to vet staff who may have unsupervised contact with children or young persons.

## **Pavement Licence Scheme**

DLUHC has advised they will be laying regulations to extend the current temporary pavement licence scheme for an additional 12 months (until September 2024), pending the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill completing its parliamentary stages. The scheme was introduced in response to the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020 to support the hospitality trade by creating a fast-track licensing process to allow furniture to be placed on the public highway to facilitate the serving of food and drink. The scheme has proved popular and the Government plans to make the scheme permanent through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.

## **Gypsy and Traveller Service**

The lead up to summer has been steady with five encampments this fiscal year. We have received several reports of people from the settled community living in caravans and vehicles, this for many, is due to inflation affecting their ability to be able to cover rent/household bills etc and so living on the roadside becomes a more viable option.

With unauthorised encampments currently at a manageable level the Bucks Gypsy and Traveller Service can efficiently deal with any new reports of encampments by attending the sites shortly after being reported and commencing the legal process for removal almost immediately, this does have a positive impact which is reflected in the low numbers currently in Buckinghamshire.

More Gypsy and Traveller families are now looking to settle permanently since the new Police Section 60C powers became law last year. The power has already been tested several times across the country and has undoubtedly had a noticeable impact on numbers of encampments across the board. The Police's ability to be able to seize vehicles and caravans from groups that refuse to leave occupied land makes trespass a less attractive option.

We do however expect to see some groups travelling through Buckinghamshire as we move through the summer months and the weather improves. Many families are likely to take to the road in search of work before settling down for the winter.

### **Cemeteries and Crematoria Service**

At Chilterns Crematorium a programme of work to replace the aging cremators and associated equipment is drawing to a close with new, more modern and efficient, cremators and abatement plant having been installed.

The replacement of the cremators was taken as an opportunity to further improve the crematorium's green credentials; although already conforming with environmental conditions, in accordance with those contained in PG5/2, investment in the latest technology available has taken this a step further with the addition of NOX abatement equipment. This is currently over and above the environmental conditions that the crematorium is required to adhere to and it ensures that the service can be confident that they are doing everything possible to minimise the emissions being released into the environment.



The decision was taken to line the new cremators with refractory bricks which are more durable than conventional linings, they retain more heat in the brickwork resulting in less gas usage, and the cremators are fitted with smart software that monitors the conditions in the cremators and maintains the required temperature to meet operating conditions.



Cremating in abated mode further reduces gas consumption, as the cremators require a lower secondary chamber temperature to be maintained, which also adds to the efficiency of the cremation process.

The final element of this work saw the installation of a more efficient Plate Heat Exchanger, which forms part of a heat recovery system that repurposes waste heat from the system and transfers it to the Crematorium's boiler circuit, thereby reducing the energy required to heat the crematorium buildings on a day-to-day basis.



## Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Peter Strachan

### Planning Team of the Year

I am absolutely delighted to be able to report that at a ceremony in London on 8 June 2023, Buckinghamshire Council won the national Planning team of the Year. This is a fantastic achievement and great recognition for the hard work officers and members have put into improving our planning service. Of course, we know we still have lots to do, and we have a plan to deliver more improvements, but it is a great opportunity to reflect on all the good changes that we have brought about in the last three years.

Having merged the legacy planning teams and created one single team, during the first Covid lockdown, we have improved the way the planning teams work with users of the service, with members and with town and parish councils. We are also continuing to produce the new single Local Plan for Buckinghamshire; we are at the forefront nationally of digital innovations in planning and we have been part of the national pilot for local Nature Recovery Strategies. We also now have one of the top performing planning enforcement teams in the country and number one outside London.

We should all be very proud of this achievement, and I would also like to place on record my thanks to all members of this Council for your continued support, constructive feedback and scrutiny of the service. Together we can all take a lot of credit for what the Council has achieved.



## **Development Management Update**

The number of new planning and related applications registered has reduced, albeit the overall number of applications determined remains consistent resulting in a small reduction on the overall number of cases in hand. Planning applications (major, minor and other) are being determined above the KPI targets set for speed of decision. The number of planning appeals being received from the Planning Inspectorate continues to be very high, with 20 new appeals registered in April, which continues to place a considerable demand on our resources.

## **Enforcement Update**

Further to my previous reports on planning enforcement matters I am pleased to report a positive position from our high performing enforcement team. Buckinghamshire remains the highest planning authority outside London in terms of issuing Planning Enforcement Notices and our performance has not faltered with the team having issued 60 planning enforcement notices in 2023 so far.

Since my last report, the team has also taken more direct action to ensure compliance with notices and had High Court injunctions granted in Gerrards Cross and Denham preventing serious breaches of planning control occurring.

In the meantime, the team has been pursuing compliance with enforcement notices up and down Buckinghamshire and we continue to see harmful breaches of planning control being regularly remedied.

We continue to take a firm but fair approach to dealing with breaches of planning control and this regularly leads to compliance being achieved up and down the Council area.

Our officers have achieved remedial action in cases ranging from the removal of walls, fences, storage containers and decorative fountains to the removal of buildings in the green belt and clearing untidy land and ceasing airport parking.

The team's no-nonsense approach to dealing with breaches of planning control should act as a deterrent to others and act as a warning that Buckinghamshire is not the place to come if you intend to breach planning control. When we seek resolutions, whilst we will treat perpetrators in a firm, fair and reasonable way but we will not hesitate to use all the tools available to us to ensure harmful breaches are remedied.

## **Planning Policy Update**

As we still await news from the government on the planning reforms our work on the Local Plan continues.

On 4 June 2023, the public engagement on the draft vision and objectives the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire closed and we in the process of analysing the c600 responses received.

The Planning Policy team is also developing the evidence to support the next planned consultation during winter 2023/24. This will be on possible growth scenarios for the spatial distribution of new development across the Buckinghamshire area to meet the assessed levels of housing and employment need within the County. It will be a high-level exercise which looks at possible broad areas for development rather than specific sites. In the meantime, we have been continuing work on the evidence base with work continuing on assessing the 1000+ sites submitted in the call for sites.

In the meantime, our programme of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) also continues to progress with work being furthered on the SPDs associated with strategic site allocations in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan as well as Affordable Housing and Residential Design SPDs.

### **Business Improvement Districts (BID) Update**

The Council remain close delivery partners with the High Wycombe Town Centre BID (HWBIDCo) and the two business park BIDs at Cressex (High Wycombe) and Globe Park (Marlow). HWBIDCo recently hosted an event for the Police and Crime Commissioner to talk about ASB issues and shared work they have instigated with Community Board funding on diverted giving points. Anti-Social Behaviour remains a key current focus for HWBIDCo. Traffic congestion is the key issue for businesses on Cressex Business Park. The BID recently held a session with council officers on road and utility work issues and a further session is to be planned to talk about highways plans. For the Globe Business Park key issues are around car parking. Council officers are due to meet with the BID and key businesses to collectively explore solutions to these issues.

### **Aylesbury Town Centre Update**

The Economic Development Team ran a second successful Aylesbury Town Centre Business Forum at the start of June. The forums will be held quarterly and will rotate venues. The June forum was held at The King's Head and had a focus on 'promoting Aylesbury' picking up on one of the priority themes identified through earlier business engagement. The next forum will be held in September. The team have also established a business e-newsletter which will be used to update town centre businesses on council projects and the wider support it provides to businesses. Ongoing engagement with businesses and stakeholders is helping to identify small scale interventions that will help improve the vibrancy of the town.

### **Visitor Economy Strategy Update**

Workshops, 1 to 1 interviews and stakeholder engagement were carried out earlier in the year as part of the development of a Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan for Buckinghamshire, as well as an in-depth analysis of our visitor economy. These will be key in developing key themes and identifying opportunities for the county and in providing a framework for both council and partner delivery. The strategy and action plan will be vital for the county as it will help us outline our approach to making Buckinghamshire a destination of choice, support our visitor economy businesses and generate greater economic vibrancy.

### **Town Centre Markets**

The Council continues to support our town centre markets and traders. The national picture shows that market trader numbers remain lower than pre-COVID levels and this is the case for Bucks' local markets too. The Council has started a piece of work to review the current state of Buckinghamshire council-led markets and to identify measures that can be taken forward to initiate activities to improve the quality of our markets and increase footfall to them. Markets have an important role in bringing activity and liveliness to our public spaces and also provide opportunities to support the growth of our local business communities. For people wanting to create new businesses, markets can provide that first public trading opportunity to test new products and build an initial customer base. An expansion of the 'On the High Street' pilot in High Wycombe to support start-ups (carried out as part of the 'Welcome Back Fund') is currently being investigated for Aylesbury and Chesham markets. We took part in the 'Love Your Local Market' national campaign in May run by the National Association of British Market Authorities and are now preparing for a 'Be a Market Trader' campaign to encourage more market traders to come to Buckinghamshire.

## **Regeneration**

In Aylesbury, Homes England has indicated that it does not envisage there will be capacity funding available to us to support the garden town programme. This is disappointing so we will be lobbying about this.

In the town centre the teams are working to identify options for regeneration of a number of council owned assets including the former Gala Bingo Hall. It is a priority for us to deliver regeneration on this central site and support a thriving high street. Teams are planning a second phase of work in the Great Western Street tunnel which saw improvements last year. Upgrades to the lightning will enhance the environment further.

Work continues as part of developer negotiations on strategic sites to promote the establishment of the gardenway. Work has also begun to incorporate the gardenway in planning policy as part of the new local plan.

In Chesham, Council teams are continuing work with key partners and stakeholders, carrying out a range of studies to explore which assets within the town are best placed to drive forward key regeneration opportunities in the town centre. The retailer M&Co has recently fallen into administration and had a prominent location on Chesham High Street. Following an acquisition interest by the Council, we are aware that there is a healthy interest from the market to take over the lease. The council will continue to actively monitor this key asset for long-term development opportunities if an opportunity arises for an acquisition.

A number of smaller public realm and incentives to drive forward wayfinding across the town's many key assets, including a new town map at the train station continue to progress.

In High Wycombe, the White Hart Street is a public realm enhancement scheme in the heart of High Wycombe designed to improve the area and support business growth. Visitors to the area will benefit from a much better environment. The scheme is being managed internally, with a delivery consultant to be commissioned this summer. Detailed design is due to complete in Autumn and following a public consultation, construction delivery is due to begin at the end of the year.

Future High Streets Fund activity continues with progress on 16 Church Street (now nearing practical completion), The Guildhall, Little Market House, 22 Queen's Sq. The repurposing of House of Fraser is due to complete by November 2023. The option to purchase has now been signed with the Liberal Club and DLUCH has agreed to add 22 Church Street (repurposing a long-term vacant ground floor unit) to the programme. Internal sign off has been received to progress with the Tesco Newlands project, subject to agreement from DLUCH.





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

Councillor Anita Cranmer

### Buckinghamshire School Awards

On Wednesday 21 June 2023, the winners of Buckinghamshire’s first ever School Awards were announced at a special ceremony at Pinewood Studios. The awards were an opportunity to celebrate the hard work and dedication of school communities across the county. We were delighted with the number of nominations we received across all categories, a true reflection of the outstanding efforts and work going on in all our schools. It is important for all of us to appreciate the dedication and commitment of our school communities and these awards have given us the chance to shine a light on the people who work so hard every day, educating our children, helping them to grow and learn, inspiring them and equipping them with the skills to succeed once they leave school. It is fitting that these awards were also presented on National Thank a Teacher Day, so, thank you to everyone for all your hard work, it is very much appreciated. The full list of winners can be found on our [website](#).



### Foster Care Fortnight



We currently have over 500 children in care who need love, support and guidance to build their future. The council took the opportunity, during national Foster Care Fortnight (15-28 May), to celebrate all that its fostering community does to ensure children are cared for and supported to thrive and is encouraging others to consider whether fostering is for them. Throughout Foster Care Fortnight, Foster with Bucks shared stories, videos and testimony about their children, their carers and their community on Facebook (@FosterBucks) and Twitter (@FosterWithBucks). A highlight for

Buckinghamshire’s fostering community during the fortnight was the annual Foster Walk. Children, carers and members of the Children’s Services team gathered to spend some quality time together. Plus, a Diversity Day lunch was held for foster carers which focused on hidden disabilities. A support network is key to success, which is why we ensure community is at the heart when you Foster with Bucks. We have started supporting our foster carers in a new way, using The Fostering Network’s

innovative Mockingbird family model. This evidence-based model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families, supporting them to build a resilient and caring community. For anyone interested in finding out more, please visit our [website](#) and use the interactive Fostering Ready tool to quickly learn more and to create a personalised plan of things you can do to get ready for fostering.

### **Schools' Coronation Crown Making Competition**

Following the success of last year's Schools Cake Making Competition to celebrate her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, on 4 May 2023, the Service decided to repeat the event to honour the coronation of King Charles III.

All schools up to year nine were invited to take part inclusive of primary, secondary and special schools. To find our finalists, schools picked their favourite of their own entries and our Business Support Team sent these off to the relevant School Liaison Groups who made a final vote on who would be joining us at the Gateway for the final. The winning schools included Lent Rise Primary



School, Hamilton Academy, Woodside Primary School, Heritage House and Amersham Secondary School. Judging our crowns were Rachael Shimmin, Chief Executive Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Dev Dhillon, the then Chairman of the Council, HM Lord Lieutenant, The Countess Howe, Cllr Joseph Baum, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Lorraine Kelly CBE, Buckinghamshire Swan Envoy and Adam Teeuw, Director of Physical Production at Lucasfilm. Winners received £150 voucher for their school from us and from Adam Teeuw and Deputy Lieutenant Andrew Smith, a very kindly donated bag of Lucasfilm merchandise and a tour of Pinewood Studios. The day was a great success.

### **Buckinghamshire's New Education Strategy**

Whatever their starting point, children and young people have the right to access the best quality education and teaching to help them grow, learn and develop so they are able to realise their full potential. That is the commitment we, as a Council, are making to all children and families in the county as we launch our new Education Strategy.

Education is fundamental to improving life chances and can transform the lives of children and young people. It should provide an exciting journey of self-discovery and fulfilment that sets a child up for a lifetime of learning, ambition, and achievement. This is only possible through an inclusive learning environment with excellent teaching within a system that celebrates diversity and champions the individual. Our aim is to build a better future for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire so they can realise their potential whatever their starting point. We want to pay particular attention to addressing the differential of experience between the vulnerable children in Buckinghamshire and their peers. We know there is work to be done to address this gap and we intend to work collaboratively and purposefully to make improvements, ensuring that all our children are given the opportunities to achieve and succeed.

The Education Strategy ties into other key areas of work including the Opportunity Bucks programme which seeks to tackle inequalities within the county, and also the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Plan which seeks to ensure that all children have the right environment and opportunity to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles and that they are safe and protected. The strategy also aligns

with work focused on children with special needs as outlined in the SEND Strategy and work with partners set out in the Early Help Partnership Strategy. The strategy can be accessed on our [website](#).

### **Strengthening our Approach to Corporate Parenting through Youth Participation**

As you will all be aware, when a child comes into care, the council becomes their Corporate Parent. This is overseen by the council's Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP). In early June, in response to increasing interest in youth participation by our Corporate Parenting Panel, members of the panel agreed proposals to strengthen children's voices in the panel, including through the work of the CPP sub-groups. The proposed structure reflects the value we place as Corporate Parents on listening to the views and experiences of care-experienced young people. It gives young people decision-making power within the CCPP, including co-producing the agenda and holding Council decision-makers to account.

The proposal centres on supporting and upskilling a cohort of young people – our Care Ambassadors – to take a leadership role in ensuring children and young people's experiences, priorities, and ideas are listened to, acted on, and responded to. Its ambition is that the voices of young people with Buckinghamshire care experience become consistently, effectively, and indisputably integrated into the work of the CPP.

We are looking forward to introducing these changes as we continue to strengthen and capture the voice of our children and young people so that their lived experience helps shape the work of the CPP.

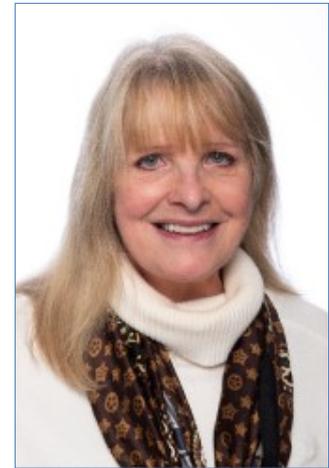
### **Increase in Two Year Olds Attending an Early Years' Provider**

Eligible two-year olds are entitled to 570 hours of funded early education and childcare per year if their parents choose to apply for and take up a place, which also helps to prepare children for school. At the end of the spring term (March 2023), 86% of eligible two year olds were attending an early years' provider. This is above target and above latest published national average. The Early Years' Service has increased publicity around the two year old take up to families and professionals and delivered additional training to colleagues across a range of internal council services, and external partners who are working with eligible families. This has increased engagement and there has been a significant increase in take up and ability to monitor places for sufficiency and planning. Support and initiatives are also focused on areas within the Opportunity Bucks programme to further improve take up in these wards. For further information visit: [Apply for funded childcare for your 2-year-old | Family Information Service \(buckinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#).



## Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson



### CQC Assurance of Adult Social Care

As many members already know, the Health and Care Act 2022 reintroduced Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of how well local authorities are delivering their Care Act functions. The previous regime of CQC annual assessments of local authorities ended in 2010. Buckinghamshire County Council was last inspected 2008 - assessed as "performing well" overall. The CQC is also required to provide similar inspection of Integrated Care Systems (ICS).

152 local authorities are in scope across England and, starting in September this year, the CQC is expecting to complete the first round of inspection in the following 24 months and publish ratings. At present there is no indication of when Buckinghamshire may be inspected. At present, the CQC is conducting five pilot assessments with five councils (Birmingham and Nottingham City Councils, Suffolk and Lincolnshire County Council and North Lincolnshire Council) along with national benchmarking of local authority adult social care performance, using published information.

The CQC's interim guidance on local authority inspection, along with the draft framework, can be read [here](#). The CQC has made it clear that the approach and framework will evolve, and we expect that changes will follow from the current pilots. Earlier this month, I held a briefing for all members which covers this in more detail which is available for members on the intranet.

### Demand on ASC care

Pressure on our adult social care service continues to grow – this is a national trend although it is more pronounced in areas like Buckinghamshire with an older population. This is driven by a number of factors:

- More people asking for help - even if they are not eligible for council-funded support, we will spend time with them to understand their issues and provide advice.
- More self-funders approaching us whose funds have "depleted".
- People living longer and with more complex conditions.
- A continuing increase in safeguarding concerns.
- An increase in people in residential and nursing care which costs considerably more than community services.
- Inflation exceeding driving up costs across the whole of the service and adult social care provider market.

At present, there is no sign that demand is stabilising. For example, in 2022, we received about 3,000 contacts on average from residents each month and are expecting to exceed that number by 10% or

more this year (actual numbers can vary significantly from month to month). However, our Better Lives Strategy continues to help us to meet this demand with 79% of people approaching us being provided with information, advice and guidance rather than ongoing statutory support. The Home Independence Team also works with residents, to maximise their independence and reduce the need for ongoing packages of care.

### **Update from the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board**

The Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board is responsible for driving joined up working across services in Buckinghamshire to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

The focus of the Board over at its last couple of meetings has been to review and approve action plans to deliver the priorities of the [Buckinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#). At the most recent meeting on [June 22<sup>nd</sup>](#), the Board agreed the detailed plans:

- To improve the outcomes for women and babies during maternity and early years with a focus on reducing smoking amongst mothers in pregnancy and afterwards, school readiness of young children especially amongst deprived communities, and increasing the number of children who are breast fed.
- To improve mental health support for children and young people, adults and older people with a focus on older adults who are particularly at risk of poor mental health, reducing social isolation amongst older people and increasing early mental health support for children and young people.

Targets and action plan milestones have been set to enable the Board to track delivery of the outcomes. The next meeting in September will be focusing on the Age Well element of the strategy which is about how we improve the health and wellbeing of older residents.

As part of the development of the Healthy Ageing Strategy (which supports the Age Well element), residents and community groups are being asked for their views – the survey is being promoted directly to residents aged over 40 who live in Buckinghamshire. I am keen for members to contribute to this from their experience, and also encourage residents to participate. You can share your views via our online survey at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/ageing-well](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/ageing-well) or complete and return a printed version of the survey by midnight on Monday 17 July.

### **Autism Strategy Consultation**

The council is developing an all-age autism strategy which will be going out to consultation later in July or early August – we know that the summer is not a good time for public consultation and so it will last 12 weeks to take it into the autumn. We are really keen to receive input from members to this strategy and I will make sure that it is drawn to your attention when the draft is published for consultation.

### **Dementia Toolkit Launch**

Buckinghamshire Council successfully launched the online [Dementia Toolkit](#) during Dementia Action Week. The event was attended by both professionals and individuals. The toolkit was developed following a recommendation from work undertaken last year to help transform and improve the way dementia related information is communicated and shared in Buckinghamshire.

The Dementia Toolkit can be found on Buckinghamshire Council's website and provides a wide range of free information, advice, and guidance for those concerned about their memory, those living with a dementia diagnosis, carers or concerned family members of someone with a dementia diagnosis

and professionals. Local dementia events and sessions are also promoted on this resource page for individuals to be made aware of and to attend. The Dementia Toolkit will be updated regularly with the help of various partners and individuals to ensure that it reflects information that is current in Buckinghamshire.

The Library Service is working with the Public Health team as part of the [Healthy Libraries](#) project, which facilitated a cosy memory corner at Buckingham, a space designed to be a home from home and with resources such as the Memory Bags, games and photographs. Buckingham library staff have engaged with the local residential homes who are borrowing these resources and planning to visit with some of their residents. We are currently setting up 10 more cosy corners in libraries across the County, these launched in May and we will be engaging with local residential homes as part of this work.



The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee recently undertook a review into the dementia journey and the support services available for people living with dementia and their carers in Buckinghamshire. The review has made some recommendations which have my support and I look forward to improvements for our residents as a result of this valuable review.

### Love Exploring

Buckinghamshire Council Public Health have partnered with [Love](#)

[Exploring](#) to create a new free app that encourages people to be more physically active in their local area, parks and green spaces. Children's augmented reality games (Dinosaur Safari and Mega Mini Beast) and quizzes get people hunting for clues as they explore the place they are visiting. [Locations](#) have been developed in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham with more to come across the county.



### Play Streets

A Play Streets session allows residents to close their road for a few hours at a time, so that local people and their children can meet up and have fun outdoors. An organised Play Streets trial event in High Wycombe took place and it was found to have really helped bring neighbours together.

Residents can apply free of charge to see if their street is suitable for a Play Streets session on Buckinghamshire Council's [Play Streets webpage](#). Support around making an application and putting a play street into practice is also available.



## Health Kiosks

The 'Pump it up! Make a start to a healthy heart' campaign raises awareness of high blood pressure as a risk factor of cardiovascular disease, stroke and dementia. The Public Health team are encouraging everyone of all ages to get into the habit of checking their blood pressure regularly.

Aylesbury and High Wycombe libraries have Free Health Stations (Health MOT including Weight, Blood Pressure, Heart Age) installed and portable blood pressure monitoring kits available to borrow (kits also available to borrow from Micklefield Library).

To celebrate World Hypertension Day on 17 May 2023, Public Health provided a blood pressure measure station at the Buckinghamshire Council Full Council Meeting - 22 Council Members got involved with 18 people having their blood pressure taken.



## Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds



Supporting the Smokefree playgrounds initiative, Millbrook Combined School ran a 'Design a Sign' competition for bespoke signage for the Desborough Road Recreational Ground and play park. Signage designed by local children builds further awareness and support from the local community for the Smokefree Parks and Playground initiative. The winning designs were announced in the school's awards assembly on 19 May 2023 and will be installed at the playpark in July.

## Smokefree Sidelines

Smokefree Sidelines is a collaboration between Buckinghamshire Public Health and the Bucks and Berks Football Association (FA). It aims to introduce a culture of not smoking on football match sidelines across Buckinghamshire and therefore reduce harm to young people. Young people are most at risk of becoming smokers themselves if they grow up in communities where smoking is the norm.

Adopting Smokefree Sidelines is about asking current smokers to be aware of their visibility to children while they smoke. The idea is to encourage smokers to either refrain from smoking during the match or to move away from the sidelines and smoke where children and young adults are not present.



The Flackwell Heath Festival of Football tournament took place on 3–4 June 2023, in which over 50 youth teams participated. This tournament was ideal for promoting the launch and wider scheme. In three hours, four clubs showed interest and talks are currently in progress, one of those Beaconsfield Town Youth FC officially signed up as a new member of the campaign, taking the total to eight clubs signed up so far. Also, on the back of the Festival, the campaign will be further promoted at the South Bucks Mini Soccer Conference.

## Healthy Ramadan

The Healthy Fasting 2023 campaign ran from 22 March to 22 April 2023 to support residents who are fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadan. This included awareness raising booklets, posters, a Healthy Fasting campaign page with reflections from internal staff partaking in Ramadan, and social media activity.

At the end of day one, social media posts had reached almost 5000 people. During Ramadan, the webpage was visited 323 times, this is three times more than the amount of visits to the campaign page had in 2022 (page views from 2022 were 83).

A digital Healthy Fasting survey had been run in advance with faith settings, community organisations and WhatsApp groups, to establish the health needs of fasting residents. The campaign was anchored on these survey findings, ensuring that key messages are current and identified by the community, for the community.



## Hepatitis C Outreach Programme

Public Health is working with the Thames Valley Operational Delivery Network (ODN) to support a mobile outreach hepatitis C screening van visiting Buckinghamshire. The van will be visiting twice a month over the next two years. The aim of this mobile outreach service is to identify areas of at-risk and seldom heard groups – such as people who are homeless or using drugs (currently and previously) – and deliver services directly into their community.

The initial locations for the van in May were homeless hostels across Buckinghamshire, working in partnership with homeless organisations, and two days were arranged for the van to be located at the All Saints Church in High Wycombe in June. The plan is for the van to visit Chesham and Aylesbury for two days in July, with assistance from the community safety officers, street wardens, and parking services. Other lines of enquiry include Aylesbury Vale Park, identified as a common area for potential clients to congregate. We are also identifying town centre locations through work with the community safety street wardens and parking services.

## Buckinghamshire New Sexual Health Service

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and the charity Brook launched a new sexual health service in Buckinghamshire on 1 April 2023. The partnership, bSHaW (Buckinghamshire Sexual Health and Wellbeing), offers a wide range of sexual health services, including access to contraception advice, including emergency contraception, pregnancy testing, sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing and treatment, HIV prevention, treatment and support.

There are clinics in Aylesbury and High Wycombe, satellite clinics will also be available in Buckingham, Amersham and Chesham. A digital service is also available for testing and treatment of STIs. A series of online sessions for parents to help support relationships and sex education outside of the classroom will soon be available. For further information contact [Buckinghamshire Sexual Health and Wellbeing \(sexualhealthbucks.nhs.uk\)](https://sexualhealthbucks.nhs.uk)

**bSHaW**  
bucks sexual health and wellbeing



## Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Arif Hussain

### Armed Forces



June was a very busy month with various armed forces activities taking place. On Monday 12 June we hosted a conference at the Gateway to promote the benefits of businesses and organisations signing the Armed Forces Covenant. The conference included presentations on the Armed Forces Covenant and its benefits, as well as first-hand experiences of being a reservist and running a 'Forces Friendly' business. Guests also had the opportunity to visit stalls run by military

charities, cadet groups and local employers who have already signed the covenant. Several organisations signed the Armed Forces Covenant on the day, demonstrating their commitment to supporting the armed forces community.

We marked Armed Forces Week with flag raising ceremonies taking place in Aylesbury and High Wycombe on Monday 19 June, led by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council, with various members of the armed forces and civic dignitaries in attendance.

Our staff network marked armed forces week by hosting a tea-break talk on Thursday 22 June, where staff shared their personal experiences of family life in the armed forces. Members of the network also took part in a fundraising walk on Saturday 17 June, walking over 16 miles from the Queen Victoria Road offices in High Wycombe to the Walton Street offices in Aylesbury to raise money for Scotty's Little Soldiers, a charity which supports bereaved military children.



## Helping Hand

The Helping Hand team continues to provide much needed support to those residents who are experiencing significant financial difficulties utilising funds from the fourth tranche of the Household Support Fund (April 2023 – March 2024), provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. The team provides both direct support through the application based Helping Hand scheme and through other key initiatives and schemes led by both the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

During April and May 2023:

- Over 14,600 digital food vouchers have been issued to eligible families to provide support during May Half Term.
- Over 1,600 applications for support have been managed by the team with over 2,492 provisions of support delivered including white goods, essential furniture and emergency food and fuel support.
- Funding has been provided to support over 22 Voluntary and Community Sector initiatives/schemes for residents across Buckinghamshire.

## Community Boards

After receiving just under 400 nominations, the Community Boards have been organising and holding their Proud of Bucks Awards over the last few weeks, celebrating local winners and highly commended across three categories – Local Community Champion – adult and young person and Local Community Group. There were some amazing stories and work being carried out across the County.



The Award events have been very well attended and had a great celebratory atmosphere; they have also taken the opportunity to showcase work of some community organisations in the area.

The Boards are also reviewing and setting their local priorities for 2023/24, Board members and residents have been encouraged to get involved and talk about where the Boards should focus their work to bring improvement or change to their local place. Where priorities have been set, work is now underway to see how these can be delivered through engagement and facilitation in the community and where appropriate provide community board funding.

## Water Safety campaign

Following on from the death in the Jubilee River (now Jubilee Flood Relief Channel) in 2022, the community safety team were contacted by the local Neighbourhood Policing Team to see how we can raise awareness around the dangers of swimming in rivers and lakes.

Since then, we have worked with the Environment Agency to install 'No Swimming' signage on designated bridges; a video has been produced with Olympic gold medallist swimmer Tom Dean, who speaks to Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service about the dangers of swimming in open water; South Bucks Neighbourhood Policing teams have received throw line training from Bucks Fire and Rescue Service and they now also have throw lines and safety vests in their police vehicles; and three water safety events have been planned in order to raise awareness with the local community. Work is also being undertaken with local schools to raise awareness of the dangers, and the video that has been produced is being shown on school buses in the Burnham area when children are on the way to school.

## VCSE Sector Resilience Fund

In June we celebrated Volunteers Week (1-7 June) recognising the contribution volunteers make to our communities and saying thank you for all their efforts. Volunteering comes in many forms from helping at local food banks, volunteer drivers, litter picking and helping run local clubs. You can register as a volunteer through the Volunteer Matching Service [Buckinghamshire Volunteer Matching Service - Community Impact Bucks](#) and find the right opportunity for you to help support your local community and become part of the army of amazing volunteers.

To celebrate Small Charity Week (19-23 June) and the invaluable work carried out by small charities in the county, Community Impact Bucks has announced new training opportunities for charities and other not-for-profit organisations in Buckinghamshire. To find out more about the free training, [visit Community Impact Bucks' training and workshops webpage](#).



The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Resilience Fund remains open for applications. Organisations can apply for grants of up to £10,000 with additional priority given to organisations aiming to reduce inequalities amongst residents living in the most disadvantaged areas of the county. More details can be found on The Heart of Bucks website - [Voluntary Sector Resilience Fund - Heart of Bucks](#)

[Community Foundation](#)

## Community Safety Accreditation Scheme Accreditation

Our Street Wardens have recently received Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) powers from Thames Valley Police. CSAS promotes closer working with the police by granting a limited range of legal powers to accredited persons.

The powers will enable our Street Wardens to tackle a wider range of issues during patrols, helping to improve the environment within our town centres, making it safer, cleaner and more welcoming.

CSAS will complement their existing powers and will support investigative work under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.



## Resilience Service Webpage

We are currently planning for 30 ways in 30 days which will highlight a different activity on each day across the month of September. Through our engagement with local Town and Parish councils we have been able to signpost them to the webpage for information and support to create local community emergency plans. We are also looking to use our webpage at the forthcoming Bucks County Show to engage those attending the show and provide some interactive activity.

### **Summer Readiness and Response Framework**

Building on the One Council Approach we have developed a council summer readiness and response framework that has been in place since 1 June 2023 and will conclude on 15 September. This framework provided an overarching review of the council's summer preparedness utilising 15 front line services which included Service Areas dealing with vulnerability(health), Social Care and Housing. Service Areas dealing with front line operational activity' waste management, Transport for Bucks (TFB), country parks and Service Areas dealing with emergency or risk (e.g., Resilience Service, Business Assurance and Community Safety). We also have a number of external partners taking part in this process.

### **Afghan Resettlement**

We continue to provide support to Afghan families, of which there are 15 in Buckinghamshire currently. Families are all linked in with services in their local areas, including health services and children are accessing education. A further nine new families are expected to arrive during July into properties leased from the Ministry of Defence (MOD). The MOD had to withdraw seven of the initial properties offered to accommodate service families, so we continue to look for additional properties to achieve the target of 36 families.

Our focus is very much on the integration of these families into their local communities and supporting them to gain employment.





## **Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment**

Councillor Gareth Williams

### **Fly Tipping Enforcement**

Since 1 April 2023, the team's attention has focussed on smaller scale fly-tips. Enforcement Team investigation data continues to show that over 70% of Buckinghamshire's fly-tipping concerns waste which was brought into the county from elsewhere prior to being dumped. 46.1% of the dumped waste was carried commercially as trade waste and 46.5% of it could have been recycled without charge at BC's Household Recycling Centres (HRC's). This means that under 8% of the dumped waste included any items which would have been chargeable at HRC sites in Bucks. The team investigates small scale dumping as a crucial part of the 'zero tolerance' response to fly-tipping in Bucks and 11 fixed penalties (FPNs) have been issued regarding fly-tipping offences in Bucks in April and May. These offences are detected using evidence found at the scene, by following up eye-witness reports (usually including vehicle registrations) and surveillance work targeting fly-tip 'hotspots'.

### **Littering**

As well as continuing our zero tolerance approach to fly-tipping, developments have also been made in the processes and procedures for investigating littering offences. Six Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued for littering offences so far this year (since 1 Jan 2023).

Work is also being carried out to develop an Enforcement Strategy against littering offences in Bucks and we hope this will lead to a county-wide campaign including enforcement responses. Details of the Enforcement strategy will be released when we are closer to its completion.

### **South Waste Collection and Street Scene**

Since the last report we are pleased to say Veolia are continuing to improve, with round completions and missed bins reducing to reach contractual SLA levels. Veolia have successfully recruited into four additional senior management roles, working with the Council to support continuous service improvements.

As we move into peak season for garden waste collections, tonnages of waste collected are increasing as have subscriptions. We have an additional 6000 more subscriptions since February 2023.

With a focus on street cleansing the team are working to improve the quality of public realm under the Opportunity Bucks programme as well as delivering enhanced cleansing services on high-speed roads through Big Bucks Tidy Up funding.

### **North Waste Collection and Street Scene**

Since the last report, we have taken delivery of seven 26 tonne vehicles and two 12 tonne food waste vehicles. These vehicles replace an aging fleet and ensure the operation is running efficiently. I am

also pleased to announce that the conversion of a diesel refuse collection vehicle to an electric vehicle was awarded to Lunaz following a procurement exercise. The conversion begins this summer and will be completed by 2024 and is being funded from a Defra project.

The in-house Workshop has also appointed the Council's first frontline Apprentice as the team have welcomed a recent college graduate to train as a Mechanic over a three year period.

Summer operations are in full swing, meaning garden waste collections are in their peak season. This year between February and May alone we saw 10.95% more waste collected than the same time last year. This is due to both the weather changes promoting growth and new builds becoming new subscribers to the service. Meanwhile, the football season has come to an end and the grounds maintenance team are focusing on pitch renovations following the close of Green Flag judging which occurred in May, I will report back on the results once they are in later in the year.

Street cleansing activities are involved in improving the public realm as part of the Opportunity Bucks programme whilst this year's Big Bucks Tidy Up investment sees high speed litter picks increase to once per quarter rather than 2-3 times per annum.

### **Energy From Waste (EFW)**

The Greatmoor EFW facility continues to operate very successfully, treating all of Buckinghamshire's household residual waste and producing electricity in the process.

1. Now in its eighth year of operation, the facility is an asset the Council is proud to own, having invested nearly £180 million back in 2016 to ensure the Council's waste is managed to the highest regulatory and compliance standards for 30 years.
2. The net savings for the council is some £30 million to date versus landfill costs.
3. Savings do not include the income the council receives as part of the contract, as it is not guaranteed.
4. The investment is sound and on track to deliver savings of over £150 million across the 30-year contract. This saving is over and above the £180 million already invested including all the annual contract running costs.

The EFW facility has a dedicated visitor centre which has now welcomed more than 8,000 people to take in a tour and see in detail all the key parts. The tours are a great opportunity to understand how the whole process of treating residual waste works, covering areas like how emissions are controlled to meet Environment Agency standards. More information on all of this, including how to book a tour can be found on the dedicated EFW website [www.greatmoor.co.uk](http://www.greatmoor.co.uk).

### **Household Recycling Centres**

The Government has announced (18 June 2023) that it will remove the ability for Councils to charge for non-household waste streams (often referred to as DIY waste) by the autumn of this year. Currently Buckinghamshire Council, along with around a third of all the Councils in England, levy a small charge for items like plasterboard, rubble, baths or similar items. This charge is currently allowed under the Controlled Waste Regulations 2012 and so the Government intend to legislate to amend this, albeit allowing some restrictions on the following basis:

- Free disposal of DIY waste up to two 50L rubble bags (or one bulky or fitted item no larger than 2,000mm by 750mm by 700mm, the approximate size of a bathtub or shower screen).
- At a frequency of four visits per household over a four-week period.

These changes will have a significant financial impact for the Council, work needs to be undertaken to fully understand the costs but, based on historic waste tonnages, the full cost could be in the region of £1 million per annum.

Our Household Recycling Centres were visited over a million times last year and we strive to make each visit a good one. In May/June the annual customer satisfaction survey was conducted at each site and this will help us understand where we can improve, what users think of their sites and, ultimately, whether they are happy with the service. Previous years have seen over 98% of the 2,500 users surveyed were satisfied with their site, and we hope to match that again this year.

Our High Wycombe site was recognised nationally as the best Civic Amenity Site of the year at the national Let's Recycle Awards for excellence. A fantastic achievement for the site and I am sure that high quality is replicated across all sites.

### **Project Groundwater**

Project Groundwater is now moving to its delivery phase and has begun to make plans for increasing its publicity and engagement with local communities. Over 400 responses were received to the awareness survey and the results are being analysed to form the engagement plans, specific to each community. In Buckinghamshire, the three pilot communities are Chesham, Marlow and Chalfont St. Peter. Recent publicity has included a press release which was picked up by several local media outlets and was followed up with three live interviews with the project spokesperson, Mary Dhonau MBE.

In terms of technical progress, the project has confirmed new advanced modelling techniques for producing improved groundwater flood risk hazard maps. These hazard maps will be produced for all of Buckinghamshire over the next 18 months and will be made freely available. Initial scoping work has been completed for the monitoring, placemaking and resilience workstreams. These workstreams will be moving into delivery over the coming months – this will include repurposing of military drones for groundwater monitoring and developing trials for property flood resilience measures and nature based solutions.

The project is working collaboratively with two other groundwater focused projects (which have adopted the name Project Groundwater too and are in Lincolnshire and Northumbria respectively). The three projects are forming a network which will become a new national level organisation that will be a focus of knowledge, expertise and aim to disseminate the learning and outputs of the three projects. The new organisation will also look to influence national change to improve how groundwater flood risk is understood and managed.

### **Energy Doctor Scheme' (Domestic Resource Efficiency Service)**

Since the 'Energy Doctor scheme' was approved at a Cabinet meeting on 5 January 2023, considerable efforts have been made to mobilise and promote the Domestic Resource Efficiency Service. This includes:

- The recruitment and training of three Domestic Resource Efficiency Officers ('Energy Doctors') and an administrator; and formalising referral and visit processes, including the use of Better Housing Better Health to help assess the eligibility of those interested in the service.
- Launching the scheme on 2 March 2023 with a new webpage and paid social media campaign (targeting those eligible in Opportunity Bucks areas) and sending out information letters to over 1200 domestic properties.
- Securing commercial storage facilities in Aylesbury and sufficient quantities of low cost easy retrofit resource efficiency (LCERRE) measure (e.g., draught proofing for windows, doors, letterboxes and chimneys; hot water cylinder insulation jackets; reflective radiator panels;

secondary glazing film; portable solar generators; electricity consumption monitors; thermometer cards; LED lights) materials.

- Running three request for quotation procurement processes that will help achieve savings of over £30k for materials (£5,234.38 per year for reflective radiator panels; £3,972.90 per year for LED lightbulbs; and £20,860 for 90 portable solar generators).
- Creating a customer relationship management system that calculates the estimated energy, cost, and carbon emission savings from each measure installed and performing the first Energy Doctor visit on 5 April.
- Saving each household on average 830 kWhs, £113, and 372kgs of CO2 emissions per year from the visits made so far.

On 23 May 2023 we expanded the criteria of the scheme so that it includes owner occupiers and domestic properties where a member of the household is disabled. (N.B. To qualify for a visit all of the following criteria must now be met:

- The property is rented through a private rental agreement; or the individual owns and is resident in the property.
- Household income is £30,000 or less (before tax) or the household is in receipt of means tested benefits such as Universal Credit and Council Tax Support; or a member of the household is disabled.
- The domestic property has an energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of D, E, F or G. Domestic properties that do not legally require an EPC can also be considered as compliant with this criterion.)

A second social media campaign and another postal mailout to homes identified as being eligible under the new criteria (in Opportunity Bucks areas) is underway; and it is envisaged that a Team Leader for the service will be appointed by the end of the summer.

### **Tree Planting**

It has been another successful year regarding the [Bucks Tree Mission](#). Over 39,000 trees have been planted on Council land holdings this year against our target of 543,000 trees. This includes:

- New woodland, composed of 14,300 trees, at Bury Farm, Amersham
- 14,700 trees planted at Grange Farm, Hazlemere
- 4,038 trees and shrubs planted along The Platinum Way (an active travel route)
- A new Miyawaki ('tiny') forest of 600 trees planted at Princes Risborough School
- Transport for Bucks planting 100 street trees

In addition, over 109,000 trees have already been planted this financial year in Wing by Forestry England under a Woodland Partnership scheme. We are the second local authority to participate in this arrangement that will see a total 132,000 trees planted at this location in east Buckinghamshire. As such, we will again exceed the annual tree planting targets for the Council Land Tree Planting Programme, achieving 35.8% of the 543,000 target by the end of the '23/'24 planting season. Eligible projects have been registered on the UK Land Carbon Registry and it is estimated that they will sequester 14,800 tCO<sub>2</sub>eq by 2124.

Regarding tree planting on land not owned by the Council, we have supported the planting of 1,456 trees. This has been made possible as a result of another successful bid to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LATF) that has helped organisations such as Dorneywood Scout Camp, Releaf Marlow, and Buckingham Parish Council realise their tree planting objectives.

The £184k received from the LATF is in addition to the £216k secured from the England Woodland Creation Offer (regarding the projects at Grange Farm and Bury Farm), and £144k from the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund. The latter is being used to add additional human resource to help deliver our tree planting work.





## Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

### Buckinghamshire Highways

With one of the most damaging winters for our roads on record, our priority for the first quarter of 2023/24 has been dealing with these impacts. We now have 15 pothole crews, plus three jet patching crews and a Pothole Pro Machine on the network and when combined these have resulted in almost 10,000 defects being repaired by mid-June. Pothole crews are working seven days a week and defect numbers will reduce significantly with the delivery of our summer capital works programmes.



Since launching the new Buckinghamshire Highways structure on 1 April 2023 to deliver Highways Maintenance services, the service has streamlined the design and planning process, and appropriately used emergency powers to accelerate over 50 of the most urgent surfacing schemes, with over 160 more to follow this year. This is part of almost £30M of capital investment this year, which includes an extra £5M Council allocation and £2.3M DfT funding recognising the need to tackle road repairs. Work has also commenced on routine maintenance, including gully cleansing, grass cutting and street light repairs and have been combined where high-speed road closures are required. The first rural cut is complete, with more grass cutting programmed, to tackle the very quick growing conditions. Over 900 streetlights have been repaired as of mid-June.

### HS2 and EWR

The Council continues to hold both HS2 and East West Rail to account for the impact of their construction and their contractors on our environment, residents, communities and businesses.

The Leader of the Council, my Deputy Cllr Peter Martin and I joined a high-level roundtable at the Department for Transport with Huw Merriman MP, Minister for Rail and HS2 to demand improved cooperation and more funding from both HS2 and EWR to repair roads damaged by both projects.

The meeting was set up at following an adjournment debate called by Greg Smith MP.

During an honest and open discussion, we sought to achieve greater action and funding for road repairs that can be done urgently and for longer term reinstatement post-HS2 construction.

## **Rights of Way**

The Rights of Way Operation Team has shortlisted capital works projects for this financial year. This includes 12 sections identified for urgent surface repairs and the installation of seven bridges, including the Berryhill Footbridge in Taplow which is set to be replaced over the winter/spring.

Overgrowth on public rights of way is also one of the main concerns for path users, particularly in the summer when vegetation growth accelerates, and some paths become obstructed. The summer clearance schedule for Rights of Way has commenced, with four crews, which is an increase from two last summer. The delivery of this programme aims to give users trouble free walking. This compliments the work of the Definitive Map Team who have created a number of new routes and worked to mitigate the effects of development on the network and achieve positive outcomes for less mobile users.

## **Changes to Spare Seat fees from September 2023**

From September 2023 the service will change the current Spare Seats charging structure of 13 different price points to a flat fee approach for the 2023-24 academic year (September 2023 to July 2024). This change follows a public consultation on the options for charging and a decision was taken on 19 April 2023 to simplify the previously complex price structure and provide better payment options for customers. There will be one subsidised flat fee for all Buckinghamshire residents (£868) and another flat fee for customers that live outside the county (£1,200) that is not subsidised.

## **School Transport preparations underway for the new school year**

7,500 eligible students use council commissioned school transport on a daily basis. Each year the Client Transport team make school transport arrangements for hundreds of students who are newly eligible for transport assistance under the Council's policy. The team are hard at work processing over 600 referrals for students moving to year 7 at our mainstream secondary schools, and almost 300 children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. More referrals of eligible students are expected over the next few months.

More information on school transport, including timelines, is available [from our webpages](#) and all queries can be logged at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/askclienttransport](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/askclienttransport).

## **Public Bus Services**

The Government announced the extension of the £2 bus fare cap until October 2023, after which it will be run for a further year at a cap of £2.50. Operators not currently part of the scheme will have the ability to join going forward.

The Government have made funding announcements for the bus industry which sees continued financial support post-COVID to bus operators into 2025. This is in addition to subsidies to services provided by the Council into bus routes where costs have increased, and passenger numbers have decreased.

To promote and support local bus services, from 1 April to 31 August 2023, all bus operators in Buckinghamshire will offer pre- 09:00 use of the Concessionary Fares (Older and Disabled Persons) bus pass. This means it will cost £1 to use the pass before 09:00 on weekdays instead of paying the full single fare. Bus use with a concessionary pass remains free between 09:00 and 24:00 on weekdays and all day at weekends. This will be reviewed during July and August.

## 70 Years of the School Crossing Patrol Service



The School Crossing Patrol (SCP) service celebrates its Platinum Jubilee in 2023. There are 46 crossing patrol sites at schools across the County and this is an impressive milestone as patrollers are often at the heart of their local community.

On 29 June 2023, a celebratory event was held at the Hub in High Wycombe to mark this occasion and to thank our patrollers for their hard work in helping our children get to school.

### Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5)

A public consultation on the draft Local Transport Plan 5 (and Local Plan for Buckinghamshire) Vision and Objectives was undertaken from 19 April – 4 June 2023. Together these plans set a clear vision for the way we live, travel and work in Buckinghamshire by 2040 and how this vision can be achieved. We are aiming for a strong link between planning for new growth and the transport infrastructure and services needed to support this.

The Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) vision focuses on three key areas: connecting our economy, decarbonising our transport system, and building places for people. This includes sustainable and active travel, minimising the impacts of car travel, net zero progress and our priorities for improved connections within and outside Buckinghamshire.

The feedback received from the Vision and Objectives consultation will be used to develop LTP5 policies and an Implementation Plan setting out how the policies will be delivered. The draft LTP5 will go to public consultation in Winter 2023, with the aim to adopt the final plan in Summer 2024.

### High Wycombe Transport Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Council carried out a public consultation in Winter 2022 on the draft High Wycombe Transport Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). These plans propose a future ambition for the town's transport system and consider a range of schemes to support all forms of travel in High Wycombe. The LCWIP focusses on ways to make cycling and walking in and around the town safe, accessible, and attractive for all users.

249 responses were received and the draft plans are being amended. The plans are due to be presented to Cabinet for adoption in Autumn 2023. These are strategic plans, setting out the Council's ambitions for travel and transport in High Wycombe in future years. The delivery of the interventions outlined in the plans will be subject to availability of funding and will require further development, engagement, and public consultation in their development.

### Micromobility Progress of the E-Scooter Trial and E-Bike Hire

We are taking the opportunity to introduce some e-bikes to the Aylesbury and High Wycombe schemes before the government's broader e-scooter trial in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough ends on 31 May 2024. 50 e-bikes are gradually being introduced to the Zipp Mobility hire system. We will monitor their usage to establish how popular they are and if they are well used, further e-bikes may be added to the network.

## Active Travel Fund Tranche 4

The Council has been awarded £477,199 through Active Travel England's Active Travel Fund 4 (ATF4). The funding from ATF4 aims to support local authorities to develop and deliver active travel infrastructure schemes that meet the defined fund criteria and align with local strategies.

Most of Buckinghamshire's funding is allocated to the Keep Hill Woods project in High Wycombe, which aims to create a surfaced path and crossing point, connecting new development sites with The Rye and the town centre. The project will be designed in a way that is sensitive to the woodland environment. A portion of Buckinghamshire's funding will also be used to develop design proposals for active travel improvements in Buckingham town centre. These projects will be developed further through engagement with local members, stakeholders and communities.

## Aylesbury Canal Towpath Improvements



The Aylesbury Canal Towpath improvement works are now complete. This project was a priority in the Aylesbury Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and has been funded through the Housing Infrastructure Fund and S106 contributions from three development sites in the local area. Upgrades include widening and resurfacing the towpath to 2m, plus vegetation clearance, improving accessibility onto the towpath and installation of new signs along the route. There is also a connection into the new Kingsbrook development at Bridge 13 with the new route forming part of the Aylesbury-Tring-Wendover Triangle project. The route was opened on Monday 26 June 2023, with key stakeholders attending to celebrate the upgraded route and wider improvements.

## Electric Vehicle (EV) Action Plan

We have been provisionally allocated funding of £2,394,000 from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. This includes funding for additional officer resources for two years which means we will be better able to prioritise the delivery of more chargepoints as set out in the EV Action Plan in 2022, as well as manage the delivery of our growing EV charging network. We will confirm to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) to set out our intentions for how we would utilise this funding over the next two years, which must be used primarily for the provision of new 'on-street' chargepoints in residential areas without access to off-street parking.

We are pushing forward with our trial of on-street charging solutions in Wendover and published a call for interest from Wendover residents on 8 May 2023. Residents are able to request an in-pavement cable channel outside their home which will allow households to charge their EVs on-street without any trailing cables. The trial aims to assess benefits to users and identify any potential issues with installation, compared to public on-street chargepoints.



## Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources

Councillor John Chilver



### Buckinghamshire Council and Society Works - Fix My Street Pro Service

We have successfully implemented an innovative new technology to help our residents more easily engage when reporting issues which span between devolved Parish/Town and Buckinghamshire Council, by unifying the fault reporting process across the county on the Buckinghamshire Fix My Street platform. This is one of our Unitary Council ambitions “...to deliver a single point of contact and a single website for residents, businesses and town and parish councils.”



- LGC short listed 2023 for the Technology Award
- iESE 2023 for the Public Sector Transformation Award
  - Although our submission was not shortlisted as a finalist, due to the exemplary standard of the work demonstrated by our submission in the difficult climate of the past year, Buckinghamshire Council and Society Works and 'Fix My Street Pro Service' were awarded with an iESE Certificate of Excellence.

### Human Resources and Organisational Development Awards

In 2023, HR has so far been shortlisted for seven awards, of which it has won two and received a highly commended for a third. These awards recognise the innovation and impact of the Council's resourcing and well-being work.



HR&OD won the PPMA (Public Services People Managers Association) award for the best candidate experience with its work on candidate focused assessment centres, support to Ukrainian refugees, care leavers and work with local prisons. HR's Resourcing team supported employability and information events for Ukrainian refugees, followed by tailored sessions on CV writing and interview skills. Adverts and information packs were created in Ukrainian and to date we have employed 11 refugees within the Council. As a result of our work, other refugees have also gained employment elsewhere in the county.

Care leavers are historically disadvantaged in employment and education. The Resourcing team supported over 20 care leavers by delivering employability workshops which included CV writing, interview skills, job-hunting. The workshops also included 1to1 time with each individual to provide tailored support. This was a huge success, and we now offer follow-up support to our Care Leavers in Buckinghamshire. The impact of these workshops is that the confidence of these care leavers has

significantly improved and many who previously struggled to be offered interviews have secured roles.

The Resourcing team worked with Contact Centre Managers to create an interactive and applicant centred information and assessment centre for the recruitment of our Customer Service Advisers. The role involves supporting residents with a diverse range of questions and needs from safeguarding concerns to schools' admissions procedures. With such a diverse service offering, it can be a challenging role supporting customers and does not suit everyone. The assessment centres allow candidates to gain insight to the role through listening to real time calls to get an honest feel for the role before then being interviewed in a less formal way at the end of the day with a focus on transferable skills and induction support to help them in their new role. As a result of the day 11 appointments were made for the Customer Service advisor team. Candidates told us they felt valued as we had invested time in them, they felt relaxed at the interview as it was less formal and allowed them to perform at their best.

These activities have made a genuine difference to the local community and positively impacted the perception of the Council as an employer. In the current challenging recruitment market, we have put candidates at the centre of our process, which has improved the ratio of offers to starters and reduced turnover of staff new in teams that participated in this work.

The HR&OD service also won the Make a Difference/Evening Standard award for best provision of women's health and well-being and received a highly commended award for its financial well-being support. The judges were particularly impressed with the commitment from senior leaders and the diverse range of initiatives that were put in place.



### **Single Revenues and Benefits System – LGC Awards**

The Revenue and Benefits team were finalists in the LGC awards under the Technology category for the Single Revenues and Benefits System project (December 2021-October 2022). The project merged four legacy Revenue and Benefit and document management systems into one system, helped establish a new staffing structure that maximised efficiencies gained from merging the systems and contributed to the savings target for the authority.

The project was delivered on time and within budget and achieved the anticipated outcomes including, a more efficient and consistent service to council taxpayers, benefit recipients and business rates payers, reduced print costs and delivered the project savings for 22/23 and is on track to deliver £725k of savings by the end of 23/24.

The single revenues and benefits system has delivered huge benefits to the user by:

- Removing the need to select postcode to access legacy online functions.
- Providing a consistent single set of functions for the whole of Buckinghamshire.
- Providing new functionality online including:
  - View your council tax account and go paperless billing
  - View your housing benefit payments
  - Discretionary housing payment applications.
- Introducing a landlord portal for landlords to see their housing benefit payments.
- Including new information to support residents managing cost of living pressures.

Set in the context of being a new unitary authority, operating through COVID and undertaking significant new demands in processing test and trace payments, business grants and council tax energy rebates, it is truly a remarkable achievement to have made these technology changes, which have improved the user experience and have increased service efficiency to make the expected savings.

### **Buckinghamshire Address Gazetteer – Geoplace Exemplar Awards**



The gazetteer is a land and property database of our area (it is a geographical index of all addresses, streets and some land parcels). It holds 14,397 streets and 317,254 Basic Land and Property Units (BLPUs). The 317k records are maintained by members of the Information Systems Team, which sits within ICT.

Changes to the address data from Buckinghamshire is sent daily to a national hub managed by GeoPlace\*. They combine our data with all other Local Authorities' address data, creating a national dataset. Each month our data is judged against 11 national criteria levels, which change and tighten each year to encourage improvement. At the beginning of our Unitary journey, our newly merged Buckinghamshire data achieved the minimal rating of 'Achieves National Standard'. Through the first two years of Unitary, Buckinghamshire's data ranking moved through the ratings of Bronze, Silver, and periodically Gold.

Last year we maintained our Gold ranking against all of the address Improvement Schedule criteria for each month, qualifying us for a one-off national Platinum award in May 2023. The award looks to acknowledge the authorities that have improved and maintained the highest level of data quality.

*\* GeoPlace is an organisation established in 2010 that oversees the production and maintenance of national address and street gazetteers created and maintained with input from all local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland.*

### **Property and Assets Update**

#### **Construction**

Working collaboratively with other Council 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.

The second new Primary School at Kingsbrook: Work has progressed on the procurement of this project with a competitive tender via the SCF Construct Framework. The Council entered into a Pre-Construction Agreement with the successful contractor in June to develop and agree design. The target date for commencement of works on site is June 2024.

The Major extension at Green Ridge Academy at Berryfields: Work has progressed on the procurement of this project with a competitive tender via the SCF Construct Framework. The Council entered into a Pre-Construction Agreement with the successful contractor in June to develop and agree design. The target date for commencement of works on site is May 2024.

The Major extension Cottesloe School in Wing: Work has progressed on the procurement of this project with a competitive tender via the SCF Construct Framework. The Council entered into a Pre-

Construction Agreement with the successful contractor in June to develop and agree design. The target date for commencement of works on site is May 2024.

Chiltern Wood School (Cressex site, High Wycombe) Remodelling Demolition and New Two Storey Teaching Block project which comprises Six Classrooms, Five Group/Therapy rooms, Pupil WCs, Staff and Disabled WCs. Procurement of external teams has commenced via the NHS SBS Construction Consultancy Services Framework. The target date for commencement of works on site is currently March 2025.

The new Kingsbrook Secondary School: the project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Phase 2 of the Kingsbrook Secondary School to provide an expansion from six to eight form of entry. Work has progressed on the procurement of the project's external consultant teams. The school has been designed to be able to be expanded from the current 6fe, to 8fe and ultimately up to 10fe should demand necessitate.

Major expansion works at Chiltern Hills Academy: the project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Major expansion works at Holmer Green: the project is currently being managed through the rectification periods with various sections being completed with final sign off planned for July 2023.

Misbourne School and the new Misbourne Sports Hall project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for July 2023.

The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

## **Investment and Development**

### **Brunel Engine Shed**

The restored Brunel Engine Shed has been let in its entirety to Bucks New University (BNU) on a 25 year lease subject to planning permission for their proposed use. At present, the University proposes to use the property to showcase art and culture and support businesses and community uses. The original listed engine shed space will house the university's furniture archive and have a flexible gallery space. There will also be a café and gallery shop supporting this main function. The new extension will contain the university's business innovation centre which is currently located in the main university building. BNU are expected to complete their final fit-out in early 2024, once all necessary planning permission is in place.



The letting to BNU generates rental revenue for the Council which will support council services and BNU's use meets council regeneration objectives for this area of High Wycombe town centre, which will have a positive impact upon the local economy.

## Old Wycombe Library

Following the completion of the staff relocation from Old Wycombe Library, we have successfully completed a new lease to Patch for a 10 year term. The staff relocation in accordance with the Worksmart Estate Strategy results in significant savings to the Council and the lease to Patch adds to the rental revenue generated by the property portfolio which goes towards the delivery of council services. Patch are completing their office fit out and will be launching their new 'work from home' initiative in the coming weeks. They will be delivering work stations, offices and spaces for communities to come together, and have also partnered with a local coffee operator, Django's, to deliver a facility which further supports regeneration initiatives around the town centre.



## Special Projects Update:

Two significant disposals in Wycombe town centre have been completed, to facilitate major redevelopments:

- Oxford Road and Bridge Street, where Bucks Colleges Group are to develop a large new FE college
- Collins House, Desborough Road, where Hightown Housing Association are planning a 54 unit affordable housing scheme

Remaining phases of the Council's Handy X Hub site are nearing completion – a new Bentley showroom has opened, soon to be followed by a large Porsche dealership and Access are developing a large new office and self-storage building, between Handy Cross roundabout and the Hampton by Hilton hotel. On the other side of the roundabout, the Council's nearby 'Cressex Island' site is undergoing transformation, with Goya's 115,000sqft 'Crest Distribution Park' development nearing completion and adjoining, the start on site of an Aldi and McDonald's development.

## Asset Management

The Asset Management Team continue to improve our operating model to ensure that the portfolio performance is best supported in terms of people, processes, and systems. Focus over the last quarter has been to improve management and visibility of our underlying workflow, data and systems and also to review our external suppliers and advisors. We are mid-way through researching a refreshed Strategic Asset Management Plan which will deliver a clear statement of our objectives and plans for the entire property estate, including the investment portfolio, our operational portfolio, and our Agricultural and strategic land holdings.