

# County Council



## Cabinet Member Reports

### LEADER OF THE COUNCIL



#### Unitary

Delivering the new Buckinghamshire Council programme continues to make good progress with five months now until vesting day.

Following the appointment of Rachael Shimmin as Chief Executive in the summer, we have now appointed the Corporate Management team for the new council, following a nationwide search and rigorous selection process. The new team are:

- **Sarah Ashmead**, Deputy Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council. Sarah is currently the Director of Resources and Assistant Chief Executive at the County Council.
- **Richard Barker**, Corporate Director for Communities. He has recently worked at the London Borough of Waltham Forest as their Corporate Director of Communities.
- **Joe O'Sullivan**, Corporate Director for Resources. Joe has undertaken a similar role within the Armed Forces and has recently worked with Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police.
- **Gill Quinton**, Corporate Director for Adult Services and Health. Gill is the county council's current Executive Director for Communities Health and Social Care.
- **Ian Thompson**, Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability. Ian is currently Corporate Director Regeneration and Local Services at Durham County Council.
- **Tolis Vouyioukas**, Corporate Director for Children's Services, moving from his current role as Executive Director Children's Services at the County Council.

This is a really strong senior team for the new Buckinghamshire Council that will put our exciting new organisation in the best possible position as we go live in April 2020 and for the future.

We have also agreed a new logo for the new council. This followed some really high quality design work from a team of officers drawn from the existing councils. We took some of the best designs out to consultation and following this agreed a new modern design, which we will start to see in the new year as part of our communications plan to raise awareness of the new council and how it will operate.

We are continuing to consult on key aspects of the new council. We recently consulted on the new council's budget and priorities, which closed on 25 November 2019. At the time of writing, this consultation had attracted over 2,100 responses.

Work on localism is also taking shape with proposals on Community Boards progressing following a public consultation, and an approach to devolution of assets and services agreed by the Shadow Executive on 12 November 2019. Council Access Points will be in place across the county for day one of the new council, and the locations will be confirmed and communicated in December 2019.

There is still a lot to do, but we remain confident we will have everything necessary in place for the new Council on 1 April 2020.

## **Growth**

### **Luton Expansion**

London Luton Airport Limited (LLAL) is currently undertaking their statutory consultation on their proposed expansion plans to construct a new terminal facility and associated infrastructure to increase the airport's capacity to 32 million passengers per annum from the current 18 million capacity. The consultation is running from 16 October until 16 December 2019. Details can be found at [Future Luton consultation](#). The main areas of consideration for Buckinghamshire are:

1. Airspace impacts from an increased number of flights over northern Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns AONB,
2. Securing improved transport links to the airport for Buckinghamshire residents and businesses, and
3. Securing and improving access to skills and employment benefits for Buckinghamshire residents and businesses.

Buckinghamshire is identified by LLAL as one of the three counties (along with Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire), that would be rewarded with proposed economic benefits of the airport's expansion, including a share of the projected 9,000 new jobs created across the three counties. London Luton Airport is also one of the top 20 private jet airports in Europe and can provide Buckinghamshire residents and businesses with greater international links and investments opportunities.

### **Oxford to Cambridge Arc**

The [Oxford-Cambridge Expressway route options consultation](#) has been officially delayed due to the upcoming election. Highways England has said that they will provide an update on the timeline next year. Highways England had previously asked Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council for assistance to promote the consultation through our channels. However, we have agreed that the councils will not be publicising the consultation and will instead signpost to the Highways England Website.

## **Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Tool (BSIT)**

As part of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board, work continues to develop the BSIT. This tool will be an interactive dataset to collate and profile (cost and delivery data) of infrastructure schemes known to be required to support growth across Buckinghamshire to 2033/36, in line with current Local Plans. Once complete, BSIT will provide a Buckinghamshire picture of the needed infrastructure to support the growth already agreed in local plans to 2033/36. Observations across the full suite of information will be drawn into a single, narrative report detailing identified trends and implications for the strategic vision for infrastructure provision in the County. The BSIT project is anticipated to be completed in March 2020.

## **HS2**

### **Review of HS2**

On 21 August 2019 the Government officially launched a 'go/no go' review of HS2. While it was widely reported that findings would be submitted to the Secretary of State in autumn 2019, it is now widely expected that the review will not be released ahead of the General Election on 12 December 2019.

### **Letters to the Secretary of State for Transport, and protest activity**

Two letters were sent to the Secretary of State for Transport on 27 August 2019 and again on 21 October 2019 to ask the Government to cease all work in the county and the official Notice-to-Proceed to contractors ahead of the results of the review.

A response received on 18 September 2019 to the first letter in essence confirmed that, 'HS2 Ltd will continue limited work in parallel with the review to avoid delaying the project should the Government decide to continue'. At the time of writing this report, no response has yet been received to the second letter.

A large area of vegetation is being removed in the Calvert area despite the actions of local residents, who for 18 days kept the work at bay, until they were threatened with arrest after HS2 produced sufficient paperwork which showed ownership of the land.

Mitigation works to Link Road in Great Missenden were also due to commence on 15 October 2019 but this did not take place as many protesters and local residents objected to the removal of a number of trees, which would have been required to enable the work.

Based on the strength of feeling from local residents, the Council has now secured significant changes following a meeting with HS2 Ltd on 29 October 2019. This means most of the trees will remain untouched and works on Link Road have now been delayed until Feb/ Mar 2020, ahead of peak construction traffic along the A413.

## **Broadband**

We are continuing to improve broadband connectivity in the county through the Connected Counties Programme. Currently 95.9% of all premises in the county can access superfast broadband, which is beyond the original goal of the Connected Counties Programme of 95%.

Recently, Buckinghamshire County Council wrote a letter of support for a consortium, who are seeking funds from central government to trial 5G technology in rural areas such as those within Buckinghamshire. These trials aim to show how better-connected residents can benefit from upcoming technical evolutions to medical and support services; and we will continue to work with those partners to shape this work.

Central government recently announced its support of the Shared Rural Networks paper put forward by Mobile Network Operators (MNOs). This paper proposed that MNOs should be able to pool their resources and funding in rural areas to improve the poor cellular coverage in some areas within the country. We are currently looking at these proposals and will work with the MNOs to better understand how we can ensure that Buckinghamshire's rural areas are included within their plans.

## **Brexit**

As requested by government, and building upon our robust preparations for Brexit, Buckinghamshire County Council, working in close partnership with the district councils, prepared extensively for the possibility of a no deal Brexit on the 31 October 2019, working with partners across the voluntary, private and public sectors.

On 26 September 2019, the Buckinghamshire Councils held a multi-sector workshop bringing together 48 representatives from the county and district councils, Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, NHS Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group, FedBucks, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF). Additional workshops were held with representatives from the local voluntary and community sector on 11 and 18 October 2019, while BBF organised a "Get Ready for Brexit" event aimed at businesses held on 16 October 2019 in High Wycombe.

In addition to supporting the EU Settlement Scheme in Buckinghamshire and undertaking resilience preparations (working in close partnership with public sector partners as coordinated by the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum), Buckinghamshire councils, in partnership with BBF, agreed an innovative programme to boost local Small and Medium Enterprises' (SMEs) productivity and readiness in preparation for a possible no deal exit at the end of October 2019. Although the date for a possible no deal Brexit has now been pushed back to 31 January 2020, our Brexit Readiness Programme continues uninterrupted until the end of 2019 and it is hoped that this will continue to boost business productivity and resilience in Buckinghamshire, whatever the eventual outcome of Brexit.

Please visit the government [website](#) for information on national preparations and guidance on Brexit. For local government preparations, you can visit the County Council's [Brexit pages](#) or BBF's [website](#) for local businesses preparations. Alternatively, you can also contact Marco Dias [mdias@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:mdias@buckscc.gov.uk).

**MARTIN TETT**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**DEPUTY LEADER & CABINET  
MEMBER  
FOR  
TRANSPORTATION**



**Reducing Priority Defect Numbers**

Transport for Bucks (TfB) has seen success this year in reducing the numbers of priority highway defects. The Plane and Patch programmes completed in 2018 and 2019 continue to play a huge part addressing defects before they deteriorate to a priority status. The requirement for urgent treatment following report/identification places a burden on the teams and means that efficiencies are lost, overall outputs are lowered and reactive traffic management must be installed, which disrupts journeys. This is aside to the obvious direct safety implication of high numbers of significant defects on the network. Greater numbers also inhibit our ability to do higher quality, first time permanent repairs.

This is why the success over the last 18 months in reducing the numbers by a factor of around 30 should not be underestimated. Figures for 2019 are shown below (2018 comparative figures in brackets):

- |         |           |             |          |
|---------|-----------|-------------|----------|
| • April | 45 (1219) | • August    | 20 (257) |
| • May   | 39 (960)  | • September | 28 (128) |
| • June  | 75 (440)  | • October   | 74 (121) |
| • July  | 58 (249)  |             |          |

*Note: October 2019 rise is due to the very wet weather experienced in late August and through September.*

Resources are now able to concentrate on full repairs to more minor defects, undertaking preventative work to stop potholes from forming rather than reactive repairs.

**Street Lighting update**

**The following summarises key work undertaken by the Street Lighting team in 2019:**

270 of the 379 columns due for replacement this financial year were completed by the end of October and we will finish the rest during November and early December, replacing life-expired street lights in High Wycombe, Beaconsfield and the South Buckinghamshire areas. In all cases, we have taken the opportunity to install LED lanterns whilst replacing the column. The columns we've changed are primarily those shown by structural testing to require urgent replacement, although the figures also include columns with accident damage.

In addition, we have converted 2,443 lanterns to LED since April; meaning around 18,000 lanterns out of an overall stock of 29,000 are now LED. In November and early December we will be upgrading lighting in the majority of main pedestrian subways in the county to LED technology.

We have successfully repaired more than 95% of all faults within the nationally recommended 28 working days. Overall, the numbers of outages identified monthly are down to around 50% of 2017 figures, due to LED conversions and resultant abilities to programme work more efficiently.

In addition, outstanding stumps (cut down columns) are down to low and manageable numbers with the majority now addressed within a maximum two month period. Traffic islands across the county are also being targeted for repair / upgrade within the current programme.

### **Update of Progression of Weed Treatment**

Since April, TfB's contractors have sprayed just under 10million square metres of hardstanding areas (e.g. footways, channels and kerb lines) with herbicide, to arrest the unchecked development of weed growth seen in recent years across the county. This equates to three sprays cross county.

The herbicide is an approved non-residual spray which kills weeds through direct contact. It is only effective on weeds that exist, does not remain in the ground and does not prevent the formation, or reformation, of weed growth.

Sprays one and two were successful with die back evident across the county. Spray three has been inhibited by wet weather throughout late August and September and has been less effective in inhibiting new growth.

Since June, when die back was evident, mechanical sweepers have been active in the county removing dead growth from channel and kerb line areas. This has the added bonus of removing general detritus in channels, thus further inhibiting repeat growth and removing a source of silt which enters drainage systems. The sweeping activity is however significantly slower than the spraying programme and will therefore continue throughout the winter, complemented by gangs continuing to work by hand to remove more established areas of growth which spraying/sweeping has not been effective in removing.

TfB are also engaging with Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Local Nature Partnership to develop a sustainable strategy for roadside verge management.

### **Winter Readiness**

As usual, preparations have been ongoing for winter, with over 10,000 tonnes of salt used to restock depots and resilience stores, servicing of our fleet of 27 spreading vehicles and preparation of rotas of decision makers, depot managers and drivers ahead of the start of the winter season in mid-October. We successfully completed our first full precautionary salting treatment of the year in late October. Whilst tentative long range forecasts suggest a wet and relatively mild period up to the New Year, we remain ready 24 hours per day to deal with whatever the weather may throw at us to keep the main road network open and safe for use.

### **2019/20 Capital Delivery Programme**

During 2019/20 over £24million is being invested in carriageway and footway surfacing treatments as well as improvements to countywide assets associated with street lighting, parking, casualty reduction, drainage, safety fences, traffic signals and bridges.

Autumn continues to be a very busy period for TfB across all work streams, with multiple activities including the delivery of the carriageway and footway surfacing programmes and the continuation of improvement work across other areas including casualty reduction, drainage, traffic signals and bridges.

Actual spend to the end of October exceeded £18million (around 75% of overall annual budget spend).

A further programme of machine patching/plane and patch works will start shortly and continue up to the end of March 2020 alongside other design and pre-construction activities.

Further information regarding individual schemes across all delivery streams can be found on the Members Portal.

**MARK SHAW**  
**DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORTATION**

**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
& PUBLIC HEALTH**



**Seasonal Flu Campaign**

Influenza is a common winter illness which can be very serious, especially for people with long-term health problems, older people, pregnant women and children. The County Council is supporting the NHS flu vaccination campaign, making free flu jabs available to Council staff and offering vouchers to care home staff and teachers in non-academy schools. So far the uptake has been very good, and extra flu jab clinics have had to be provided in order to meet the demand. The annual school vaccination programme has also started, with school nursing teams this year providing the nasal spray flu vaccine to all primary school year groups.

Greater vaccine coverage produces “herd immunity”, which means that even people who are unable to be vaccinated are still protected to some extent by the fact that most of the people around them will not catch the virus. This is why even healthy people with no risk factors might want to consider getting vaccinated, especially if they have a relative or friend who is high-risk.

The Council is developing a social media campaign targeted at raising awareness amongst pregnant women, parents and people with long-term conditions. The targeting is based on data about which groups in Buckinghamshire had lower uptake of the vaccine in previous years, and research evidence about overcoming common barriers to vaccination.

**Buckinghamshire Tobacco Control Alliance**

A new Tobacco Control Alliance brings together partners in Buckinghamshire to progress the newly published Tobacco Control Strategy. The most recent meeting in October was attended by 13 different organisations.

The strategy aims to:

- 1) Continue to reduce smoking prevalence rates
- 2) Reduce the harms associated with second hand smoke
- 3) Reduce the supply and demand of illicit tobacco.

The Alliance is working to update and develop the strategy’s annual action plan, which is monitored by the County Council’s Health and Wellbeing Board.

**Social Isolation**

On 25 and 26 September a workshop focussing on tackling social isolation was held and was well attended by over 30 key partners. The workshop brought together colleagues from across local government, the NHS (including Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Oxford Health NHS



Foundation Trust, South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and the NHS Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group), the Police, Fire Service and Department for Work and Pensions along with key voluntary sector colleagues.

The sessions were facilitated by the [Design Council](#) (the government's lead advisors on design) and focussed on the challenge of social isolation at key life events and for people with limiting long-term conditions and disabilities.

The ideas from the workshop are currently being reviewed by the Public Health team.

### **Alcohol, Services and Us - Multi-agency Workshop**

It is clear from the most recent Director of Public Health Annual Report 2019, Alcohol and Us, that alcohol is a part of many of our lives. More than 1 in 4 adults (over 100,000 adults in Buckinghamshire) drink at levels above those recommended by Chief Medical Officer for England.

In Buckinghamshire there are specialist services in place to help residents with a level of alcohol dependency, but we need to do more to get people who can benefit from this help into these services. The Council held a multi-agency workshop on 17 October which focussed on increasing engagement with alcohol services including developing and improving referral pathways from a variety of frontline service professionals. The workshop was attended by almost 40 people from a range of organisations and actions have been identified to increase the number of people who are accessing specialist support. This work will be taken forward by the Drug and Alcohol Strategic Group.

### **Promoting Mental Wellbeing**

Buckinghamshire County Council has a programme of work to promote mental health wellbeing. As part of the local 'Time to Change' programme there are currently 49 champions in Buckinghamshire supporting activities in their organisations or communities, and the work of the Time to Change Hub this year has a focus on supporting men.

Mental health first aid training teaches people how to identify someone who is experiencing mental health problems, talk to them about it and then signpost them to where they can access support. Suicide first aid training provides people with the skills and knowledge to identify someone who may be thinking about suicide and then the confidence to talk to them about it.

Buckinghamshire has also recently received funding for one year to implement a suicide liaison support post which the Council will shortly be commissioning. This post will provide practical support to families and friends by actions such as attending Coroners' reviews and inquests with them and helping with the legal aspects. We are expecting the new service to start in the spring.

### **Summer Reading Challenge**



This year over 4,600 children took part in Buckinghamshire Library Service's Summer Reading Challenge. Children had to borrow and read at least six books of their choice between 13 July and 7 September, getting rewards for every two books read, including stickers, wristbands, certificates and medals. More than 70 young volunteers aged 12-24 were also involved with helping to run the challenge this year.

The Council's library staff promoted the programme with a variety of space-themed events and competitions taking place across the county.

## **Winslow Community Library**

Plans are being developed to deliver a new library for Winslow as part of a wider regeneration project that will include new residential and extra care housing, open space provision and buildings for community use.

It had been originally proposed to relocate the existing library to temporary accommodation while the demolition of the site took place as the demolition of all the buildings together was a sensible and workable option, but concerns were raised by both residents and the Town Council. As a result of these concerns, the Council will be looking at an additional option to retain the current library building for the time being rather than its demolition. Subject to costs and other practicalities, this option will form part of the overall business case which will be considered by Cabinet.

## **Trading Standards**

Work continues to take place with Thames Valley Police to tackle under age sales of knives, as part of the Police operation 'Sceptre'. An underage volunteer recently made five attempts to buy knives from shops in Aylesbury. All attempts were refused which is a great improvement on the last round of test purchasing when 43% of sales were made.

**GARETH WILLIAMS  
CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**



**Foster carers Annual Awards**

On Friday 4 October at The Dairy, Waddesdon, we hosted our annual foster carers awards to recognise the huge commitment from our carers to the children in their care. In addition to certificates awarded to foster carers for long service and training achievements, there were also four awards for special achievements: Best Newcomer, Foster Carer of the Year, Willow Award (celebrating the courage and dedication that foster carers bring to their role each day) and the Emergency Award. Nominations for these awards were submitted and the winners were decided by a panel of judges.

This year's awards went to:

- Best Newcomer: Sam Hines and Aidan O'Neil
- Foster Carer of the Year: Rachel and Barry Porter
- Willow Award: Denise and Michael Wiles
- Emergency Award: Rose and Ted Farrar

Our fostering awards evening is just a small way of showing appreciation for all the fantastic commitment from our carers day in, day out. Without this brilliant group of carers, many children's lives just wouldn't be the same. We are extremely proud of everything our carers do to change children's lives for the better and would like to personally thank each and every one of them.

As lucky as we are to have our current group of foster carers, there are still children out there in need of a foster home close to their local community and we need more foster carers to look after them. Our informal fostering information events offer an opportunity to find out what is involved in becoming a foster carer. Please see the upcoming dates below:

- Wednesday 18 December 2019, 7pm to 8:30pm - Buckingham Opportunities Centre, Buckingham, MK18 1EN.
- Wednesday 15 January 2020, 7pm to 8:30pm - Buckinghamshire County Council, County Hall, Walton Street, Aylesbury, HP20 1YU.

**MASH Open Days**

In recent months, the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has opened its doors and invited our partner agencies to spend time with us to see how the MASH functions. Partners can spend time with managers, staff and our Contact and Referral Officers, who handle incoming calls. This shows them the journey of a child/young person and family from the moment they enter the 'front door' to the point in which a decision about the next stage in their journey is made. Partners have the opportunity to ask questions, look at statistical information about the level of contacts we receive, where they originate from and the likely outcomes. We believe that these days offer us a

great opportunity to showcase our work, get to know our partners better and share good practice. It also helps us develop our service and strengthens our relationships.

So far, we had a wide range of visitors from Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) in Schools, staff from the Police and Crime Commissioner's office to environmental health officers. A few examples of the feedback we have received are shown below:

*"I genuinely can't fault the experience. It was honest, transparent, welcoming and educational."*  
(Deputy Headteacher)

*"Having been a DSL for 6 years, this is the first time that I have been given an oversight of what happens when we make a phone call in to First Response or complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form. I could have stayed the week. It was fascinating, eye opening and informative."*  
(Designated Safeguarding Lead in a school)

We will be continuing to run these events throughout next year.

### **Adoption Readiness Checker**

To coincide with National Adoption Week which took place at the end of October, our adoption team launched a new online 'Adoption Readiness Checker' that lets anyone find out whether they are ready to become an adoptive parent.

In Buckinghamshire, we currently have 22 children waiting to be adopted. Many have had a difficult start in life and they need a loving, stable home where they can have a safe and secure upbringing. Being an adoptive parent can be challenging, but also brings great rewards. People often jump to the conclusion that some aspect of their life, whether it is their age, financial situation, sexual orientation or relationship status, will rule them out for adoption, but most of these assumptions are wrong. The checker lets you look at each aspect of your life and find out whether it has any bearing on your suitability to become a parent to one of the children in our care who are looking for a new family.

It has been developed in partnership with public sector technology consultants FutureGov and can be accessed via the adoption pages of the County Council website: [www.buckscc.gov.uk/adoption](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/adoption)

### **Buckinghamshire's Virtual School encouraging care leavers into higher education**

Buckinghamshire's Virtual School, which is part of the County Council, supports the educational achievement of the county's children in care and care leavers. This year, we have more care leavers that have gone on to higher education and university. Currently, 20 of our care leavers are at university studying a range of courses including sports therapy, medicine, health and social care, law and nursing, with a further 14 post-16 students being supported to apply to university in the next two years.

As corporate parents, we want all our children in care and our care leavers to know and believe that they can achieve their goals in life, whatever they might be. And for our students in care who want to go on to higher education or university, we will support them to do that. It is vital that we encourage our young people to reach their full academic potential and we do that through our team of Virtual School specialist teachers and through financial and all-round support.

In addition, I am proud to say that the County Council itself has two young people working in apprenticeships run by the County Council, one in care and one care leaver. Both are doing exceptionally well and this is credit to their hard work and determination to succeed.

To find out more about Buckinghamshire's Virtual School, please visit <https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/education/schools/the-virtual-school/what-is-the-virtual-school/>

### **Christmas present appeal**

I am very pleased that the council is, for the fifth year, running its annual Christmas present appeal. The appeal directly helps Buckinghamshire's vulnerable children and young people.

We invite Council employees and County Councillors to donate Christmas presents for disadvantaged and vulnerable children across the county. The presents will be handed over to children and young people by members of the Council's Children's Services teams in time for Christmas. Various local residents, businesses and organisations are supporting the appeal again this year, for which we are very grateful. It is heartening to know that everyone at the County Council cares and wants to help other people less fortunate, it will really make a difference to the children we work with.

**WARREN WHYTE  
CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR  
EDUCATION & SKILLS**



**Outcomes for Children in Buckinghamshire**

Data released by the Department for Education in October 2019 shows that 5 year olds leaving their Reception year at primary school achieved better than pupils across the rest of the country. 74.3% of our pupils achieve a good level of development, compared to 71.8% nationally. We are ranked 8<sup>th</sup> against our south east neighbours and 34<sup>th</sup> compared to all local authorities nationally.

The recently released provisional Key Stage 2 results for 2019 show that 66% of our pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics compared to 65% nationally. Our results are the same as reported in 2018 whilst national results for state funded schools increased by 1%. When compared to statistical neighbours and all local authorities nationally, Buckinghamshire ranks 6<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> respectively. In addition, 12% of Buckinghamshire pupils reached the higher standard or were working at greater depth across all of reading, writing and mathematics. This is an increase of 1% from 2018. Nationally, 10% of pupils achieved this benchmark, which is the same as in 2018.

Key Stage 4 (GCSE) outcomes are significantly higher than national and we are, by quite a wide margin, 1<sup>st</sup> amongst our statistical neighbours and 5<sup>th</sup> nationally. The long term trend shows a gradual increase of pupils in Buckinghamshire against a decline nationally.

Overall, our results are very pleasing and we will strive to improve these further by supporting schools through our Side by Side Project.

**Preparing for Life Beyond School**

Within the county we have the 'Bucks Thames Valley Careers Hub'. This Hub works with our 21 non-selective secondary schools to ensure that pupils are provided with high quality careers information, advice and guidance, skills development and enterprise experiences. The support is funded for two years from central government.

The schools involved in the Hub receive support in order to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks, which are the key measures used to identify outcomes in this area. Recent performance data shows that progression against set benchmarks has been very strong in the first year the project. Our baseline in 2018 was 1.7 against a national average of 2.5. Following considerable work with the schools, this year's result reached an outcome of 5.1, significantly above our target of 4 and higher than the national average of 3. This made Buckinghamshire the joint best performing Hub in the country.

## **Working in Partnership with the Stephen Spender Trust**

Pupils and teachers from across Buckinghamshire have been involved in the 'Translators in Schools' initiative which has been supported by the County Council for the Stephen Spender Trust. Translators in Schools is the Stephen Spender Trust's flagship education programme and raises the profile of translation, multilingualism and language-learning through:

- Creative translation workshops in schools
- Teacher-training, consultancy and public engagement in the field of multilingual creativity
- Developing creative translation resources for teachers and translators

Primary and secondary schools from across the county were involved including pupils from Haydon Abbey Primary School, Highcrest Academy, The Royal Grammar School, Sir William Ramsay, St Edward's Catholic Junior School, St Louis Catholic Primary School and The Mandeville Secondary School.

The programme has received extremely positive feedback and we hope to continue to work with the Trust in the future.

### **"Shout Out for SEND"**

On 7 November 2019, the service held a conference for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at Adams Park in High Wycombe. The conference was aimed at young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and those who are registered as receiving SEN support. 28 young people attended, representing 13 Buckinghamshire secondary schools and Elective Home Education.

The conference provided an opportunity for young people to review the support available to them and their peers. During the day, young people were asked to provide feedback on their experiences accessing education, their life outside of school and college, as well as their transition into adulthood. The activities generated discussion and some challenging questions which were put to a panel of senior managers from across health, education and social care. The information gained from the day will now be used to inform the development of a new 2020 SEND Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

Reflecting on the day, participants said:

*"It allowed us to convey our views of the systems to those who needed it... I learnt Bucks County Council care."*

*"I felt that my opinions were heard and had an impact."*

*"I learnt employability skills and new words."*

*"I learnt that everyone has a voice, it was really good!"*

*"I learnt a lot about myself and others and about my future and what I can achieve."*

Pupils attending the conference received a certificate to show their participation and I would personally like to say thank you, for their valuable contribution. We plan to make the conference an annual event, bringing together a range of young people with varying skills and abilities to share ideas and have their voices heard.

## **Youth Voice**

Youth Voice brings young people together with professionals to discuss key issues and share ideas for improving service delivery for children and young people. There are five key parts to Youth Voice:

1. Youth Voice Executive Committee
2. Focus groups and consultation Work
3. Youth Voice events
4. Online Youth Voice Community
5. Specialist Participation Team

The Youth Voice Executive Committee consists of 15 young people who represent different schools, communities or youth organisations or specialist forums. Over the last year, the Youth Voice Executive Committee has undertaken a range of activities and events. This has included:

- Hosting two Youth Voice events for secondary schools with 64 young people attending the event, representing the views of 11 different schools. The key priorities they identified were behaviour management in school, mental health support in schools, school transport and lack of accessible and affordable activities for young people.
- Undertaking specific consultation work on Home to School Transport, work experience and apprenticeships and the new Mental Health Support Teams in schools.
- Encouraging 1,945 local young people to vote in this year's 'Make Your Mark Campaign' which is an annual campaign run by UK Youth Parliament.

In addition to the universal Youth Voice offer, over the past year the Specialist Participation Team have continued to engage successfully with children and young people in care and children and young people with SEND in order to get their voices heard and influence service design and delivery.

Highlights include:

- A 'voice of the child' training course to Children's Services frontline workers, giving a unique insight into the perspective of their experiences of the services we deliver. The training received excellent feedback from participants and we are considering how this could be extended further.
- Monthly forums and activity sessions with young people have given feedback on key policy and practice developments such as mental health support, personal education plan meetings, the 'Local Offer' and advocacy.
- Members of the SEND Forum have taken on the role of Young Inspectors, visiting activities and clubs for young people in Buckinghamshire and reporting on whether they are suitable for young people with SEND. Their reports are then published on the Local Offer website.

To find out more about all of the Youth Voice projects, take a look at our website: <https://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org/kb5/buckinghamshire/fsd/youth.page?youthchannel=2>

**ANITA CRANMER  
CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS**



**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR  
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT**



**Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT)**

Progress has been made in confirming dates for the 'Vision' soft launch in November and the Masterplan public consultation in January. The public consultation in January will be for the public, stakeholders and partners to provide comments on the masterplan and shape its content. The Vision 2050 has been published on the Aylesbury Garden Town website and feedback can be submitted online: [https://www.aylesburygardentown.co.uk/Vision\\_and\\_Masterplan\\_2050](https://www.aylesburygardentown.co.uk/Vision_and_Masterplan_2050)

Work is continuing on the short to medium term projects which promote the principles of garden town. The Community Project Funding Pot will be operated as a grant funding scheme which will be open for applications from November 2019-March 2020.

**Country Parks**

**HS2**

On Monday 4th November, HS2 Ltd and their sub-contractors Babcock International, working for National Grid, formally took possession of parts of Denham Country Park to commence delivery of enabling works for the HS2 railway line. These works will involve the realignment of high voltage power lines that will require the construction of one new pylon in the Country Park and eventually the removal of two existing pylons. It is envisaged that the works will take approximately two years to complete with access to areas of land between the River Colne and the Grand Union Canal being disrupted. Officers are working with HS2 Ltd and its contractors to minimise the impact of these works and to plan appropriate mitigation for after the works are completed.

**Visitor Numbers**

- Another great Halloween event at Black Park saw almost 1,300 children and their families following the clues and walking about a mile on the Spooky trail – current feedback from this event shows customer satisfaction at 75% and the team are also gathering additional customer feedback to help design future events.
- Bookings for the popular Santa's Grotto at Black Park between 7 and 21 December have recently opened and places are booking up rapidly so check out the website to avoid disappointment!
- Unseasonably poor weather, particularly at the weekends, during September and October and the success of some of the home nations in the Rugby World Cup have meant that visitor numbers have dipped slightly below our expectations during this period. However, an excellent year with filming activities and good visitor numbers in the first part of the year mean that we fully expect to achieve income and visitor number targets by year end.

## **District Local Plans**

### **Wycombe District Local Plan**

Since the adoption of the Wycombe Local Plan in August 2019, the authority has received two legal challenges on the Local Plan. It is now for the High Court to assess the merits in the cases brought against the Council's decision to adopt the plan which could lead to a Judicial Review.

The legal challenges have been brought by the following:

1. Keep Bourne End Green (KBEG) – This group is looking to quash the housing target in the plan, the Bourne End proportion of that and the Hollands Farm site allocation.
2. Mr Scott – looking to quash the housing allocation at land off Clappins Lane, Naphill/Walter's Ash.

There are now two stages to this process:

1. The court has to first give permission for a challenge to be heard. This is based on an initial assessment of the claims made by the applicants and the Council's response to those claims.
2. If permission is given, then claims will be heard in the High Court and a judgement will be made whether the contested parts of the plan are quashed and if the remainder of the plan should remain in force or not.

However, the Local Plan remains adopted and it does not change the status of the plan. The Council have progressed work on the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) required to support the Local Plan with the Design Guidance currently out for consultation.

### **Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)**

Aylesbury Vale District Council has published their suggested modifications to the Local Plan which have been considered by the Inspector. The consultation is now open and is taking place over a six week period to 17 December 2019. Representations can only be made on the main modifications. A summary of the main modifications are:

- Revised housing figures – amended spatial strategy with additional site allocation in close proximity to Milton Keynes (Shenley Park). The overall revised housing requirement is 28,600 dwellings.
- Key infrastructure requirements and other standards to be set out in the plan rather than supporting documents or supplementary planning documents (SPD).
- Reducing the number of SPDs referred to in the plan to 8 from over 20.
- Including all transport schemes in the plan text and showing on the policies map.
- Redraft of policy H6 (housing mix) to increase clarity and include C2 allocations.
- Various modifications to eliminate inconsistencies and increase clarity.

It is expected that the plan will be adopted before the end of the financial year.

### **Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan**

The Draft Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan was submitted for independent examination on 26 September 2019. Planning Inspectors Matthew Birkinshaw and David Troy have been appointed to undertake an independent examination into the soundness of the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2016 - 2036.

Matthew Birkinshaw is currently examining Central Bedfordshire's Local Plan (hearings took place in July, formal letter from the Inspector received on 28 October) and David Troy the Allerdale Borough Council's Local Plan (Cumbria, plan at modification consultation stage).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) examination will take place on 5 November 2019. Mr Geoff Salter BA MRTPI has been appointed to conduct the examination.

### **Protocol for Dealing with significant Metal-Detected Finds**

Following the discovery of a large hoard in the south of the county, the archaeology team have produced a new protocol for dealing with metal-detected finds and unexpected discoveries. The protocol was developed in collaboration with Bucks County Museum, the Portable Antiquities Scheme and Milton Keynes Council Archaeologist, and is leading the way nationally in terms of its approach. Our planning archaeologist, Lucy Lawrence, has been invited to speak at a national meeting about the matter.

### **Planning**

#### **New Monitoring and Enforcement Plan for minerals and waste sites**

A new Monitoring and Enforcement Plan was approved by the Development Control Planning Committee on 4 November, to support the recently adopted Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The plan set out the approach to monitoring of approved waste and mineral sites and enforcement against breaches of planning control for minerals and waste activities.

#### **Planning - Waste Enforcement Action**

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) has issued a Stop Notice in Askett against the importation and disposal of waste in response to burning of waste. A full enforcement notice has been issued at Old Rectory Lane in Denham that requires the land owner to clear the land of unauthorised waste that had previously been mass dumped on the land. We have received an appeal against the enforcement notice that BCC issued in June at Bishops House in Farnham Royal that required the cessation of waste transfer activities.

### **Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership update**

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (the "NEP"), of which Buckinghamshire County Council is a key partner, has been working hard with the other Local Nature Partnerships across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Arc to produce a strategic map of landscape-scale environmental opportunities. The map will be finalised in the next month and will be used by all the Local Nature Partnerships in the area for engagement and influencing.

### **Flood Management**

#### **Innovative Natural Solutions to Flood Management on River Leck**

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC), in partnership with Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT), has recently installed 23 'leaky woody barriers' across the headwaters of the River Leck. This is part of a Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project to build evidence of the effectiveness of such measures at reducing flood risk, creating climate resilience and delivering environmental benefits. The leaky barriers are designed to emulate the function of naturally occurring woody debris and storing and slowing the flow of water in upland areas in order to reduce flood risk downstream to communities such as Leckhampstead.

The scheme is being funded by a £50,000 award from the Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs secured by the County Council's Flood Management Team, and £35,000 from the County Council's flood management budget. The local member, Cllr Warren Whyte, was instrumental in supporting the initial funding bid. Flood risk modelling undertaken

helped to determine the most effective placement and spacing of features, and estimated that the cumulative effect of all 25 barriers should reduce the peak flow through Leckhampstead village by approx. 9%. For such a relatively low project cost, this is a very positive return.

The work on the Leck is one of the first practical examples of Natural Flood Management to be completed in lowland southern England. The scheme is truly a local enterprise, working with three landowners - one of whom provided the timber for the project for free - and former local farm manager who now runs an agricultural and landscaping contractor who undertook the construction. Working in partnership with the Parish Council and with the local community allowed the project to benefit from their detailed knowledge of the land, access requirements etc, ultimately reducing time and costs spent. The scheme will now be monitored in partnership with landowners during the next couple of years to measure effectiveness, with a view to replicating it in other parts of the county.

## **Waste Management**

### **Household Recycling Centres**

You are probably aware of the changes Buckinghamshire Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) have undergone in the last 6-7 months. All the changes have been implemented and the service is now settling into the new rhythm. The HRCs are one of the most visible services that the Council provides so it's important we understand the impacts the changes have had. The closure of Bledlow HRC and the reduction of opening days at three other sites and the introduction of charges for disposal of non-household waste is helping us to stay on track to reach the £1.2million expected savings this year. Whilst we are still yet to see any link between these changes and increases in fly tipping, we continue to work hard to prevent fly tipping and prosecute those who choose to break the law. It's a difficult task when you consider that most of the waste fly tipped comes from commercial sources and many fly tippers come from outside Bucks. The annual customer satisfaction survey is now closed with over 4,000 responses which are now being analysed. The survey helps us to understand how residents use the service and what they think of it. It's likely to be the most important survey for a number of years and we look forward to reviewing the results.

### **Commissioning**

The Waste Management team manage numerous contracts handling the 230,000 tonnes of waste produced each year from Buckinghamshire's homes. This means a constant cycle of commissioning different contracts. The HRC contract and the bio-waste (food and green waste) contracts require a significant lead in time to bring new contracting arrangements in place for the future Buckinghamshire Council. The HRCs are very visible to the public whereas the bio-waste disposal is not, but both are important to manage costs and ensure we manage waste safely and in the best way for the local tax payer and the environment. Meanwhile, central government is busy with major changes to waste collection and disposal across the UK. Changes which aim to boost recycling, create more products from recycled materials and make them easier to recycle at the end of their life.

**BILL CHAPPLE OBE  
CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR  
HEALTH & WELLBEING**



**Social Care Workforce Update**

The recruitment of senior social workers remains challenging. We have been extremely successful in recruiting to occupational therapists posts as a result of targeted recruitment campaigns and the 'try before you apply' initiative. This approach has resulted in the replacement of five agency workers with permanent employees over the last 12 months.

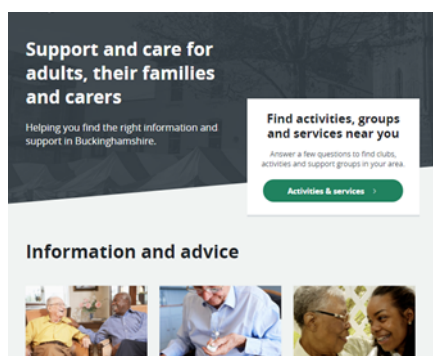
The same approach will now be taken with social work roles. 'Try before you apply' days are already scheduled to take place every Thursday for four weeks from 14 November and there are already a number of potential candidates lined up to attend.

**Access All Areas 2019**

The second annual 'Access All Areas' event was held at Stoke Mandeville Stadium in October. The event is a health and wellbeing event exclusively for people with a learning disability or autism and their families. The event was very well received and gave people the opportunity to try out healthy food and meals, accessible sport, drama and yoga. Over 50 stalls provided a wide range of information and a 'chill out space' made sure the event was easy for everyone to enjoy.

**Digital Developments**

**New Digital Website**



The redesigned 'Digital Front Door' for Care Advice Bucks was launched on 1 October following several months of intensive user research, feedback and workshops. Designed using revised data principles, the website has been future proofed and is leading the way for other areas across the Council.

The website provides a better user journey based on what the public, external professionals and internal staff fed back during the design and discovery work. It gives a modern feel and updated, easy to read content that enables users to find information and

support quickly and intuitively.

The new system also has activity reporting which provides information on how people are using the site. This will help us to improve the design and update the site based on the information and guidance for those areas most commonly searched for.

Over the coming months, data and content will continue to be added and updated. The new website is found at [www.careadvicebuckinghamshire.org](http://www.careadvicebuckinghamshire.org)

## **Digital Supplier Day**



On 25 September, staff, partner organisations, providers and residents were invited to a Digital Supplier Day, where they could see demonstrations from a number of providers of home care equipment.

Providers were showing a huge range of products and solutions from phone apps to artificial intelligence empowered plug sockets. Attendees could sample the products, and help advise the Council on how they could be integrated into care strategies.

## **Seeleys House Respite Care**

Seeleys respite service was temporarily suspended from 4 September for all users because of concerns regarding the quality of care being delivered. Following intensive work with staff, the service is planning on re-opening on a phased basis from 18 November. This is subject to:

- The outcome of an independent mock inspection
- An internal inspection (using a regionally recognised inspection tool)
- Recruitment of good quality staff
- Up to date client care plans and induction in place for each client before they return.

A senior manager and a practitioner from an external organisation are also completing a deep dive in November based on the Care Quality Commission 'safe' rating.

All families have been offered alternative respite provision whilst the service has been temporarily suspended. Families have used a range of alternative respite provision such as Shared Lives, support in the home and additional day service provision (extra days, evenings, and weekends).

A small number of families took the decision to delay respite until the service re-opened. These families have been supported by social care staff to ensure the families are coping as the majority of these clients attend day services five days per week. These families have been prioritised with regard to the phased reopening provision.

## **A Strategic Approach**

Adult social care services are working on a range of improvements to services to ensure they develop to support people in line with the Council's Better Lives approach. Two strategies currently being developed and which will shortly be presented for decision are an All Age Mental Health Strategy and a new Carers Strategy. These have been produced with involvement from service users. They will set out the Council's approach to better help people understand how the Council can support them in maximising their independence and achieving their own goals.

**LIN HAZELL  
CABINET MEMBER HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR  
RESOURCES**



**IT Services Update**

The focus of the IT Team remains on upgrading the Council's core IT capabilities and preparatory work for the new Buckinghamshire Council.

Nearly 2,000 desktop screens at New County Offices (NCO) have been replaced as part of a project to standardise the IT equipment used by all staff. With NCO completed, the project will move on to the area offices. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with staff appreciating the larger, high-quality screen display. The new screens have an additional advantage in that they are far more energy efficient than the ones they are replacing.



We are also currently moving all council provided mobile phones to a new service provider (EE). This project not only made considerable savings for the council, but also enabled us to upgrade and standardise the phones provided to staff. In parallel, we've made it far easier for staff to use their own phones to access their work email, calendar etc. Fully conscious of the need to keep council data secure, this project included implementing the latest technology to manage and keep devices secure.

The next step to improve staff IT user experience is to move all council devices to Windows 10. This roll out to over 3,500 staff is already in pilot stage and the full rollout will commence after Christmas. We will use this opportunity to replace the myriad of existing legacy staff laptops with a new lighter, more powerful and flexible laptop.

Colleagues in the district councils have agreed to standardise on the same laptops being deployed by the county council and they are also part of the new mobile phone contract.

The final step in upgrading the IT user experience will see all IT users move to the Microsoft Skype For Business online platform for telephony and collaborative working. This work will be completed by Christmas and for the first time it will mean all Buckinghamshire County Council IT users are on one single telephony platform.

Behind the scenes, key work continues on the council's core infrastructure. The final key systems like SAP are being moved off a legacy platform that was at its end of life and at risk of failure. We are also continuing the roll out of our cyber security service with the big additional bonus that our district colleagues have also agreed to join us.

Having already achieved our Public Services Network (PSN) security accreditation the council has also just passed the Government's Cyber Essentials classification.

We have reduced our dependency on Udata who manage our IT network. Since September some of those services have been brought back in-house realising major savings for the council and giving us the ability to do things faster and operate in a more flexible way. The remaining parts of that contract expire next year so the council will be going out to tender for a new partner who can work with us on building a new layer of connectivity across Bucks. That tender includes the districts and NHS partners.

On the unitary front we continue to work closely with our district colleagues. Major work continues on the following areas:

- All staff having a @buckinghamshire.gov.uk address.
- Joined up IT network between BCC and district councils (making SAP available to all partners)
- Seamless call transfers between councils
- Single address book
- New Service Desk for IT, HR and Finance

### **Legal Services update**

The new legal service successfully went live as planned on 1 October, following the end of the contract for legal services with HB Public Law. The new service is in response to the forthcoming unitary transition, and has been developed in close collaboration with district council colleagues. The circumstances were unique, and presented a real opportunity to build a joint team across council boundaries ahead of the formal transition next year.

A significant amount of scoping work was undertaken in order to identify likely service demands and appropriate levels of staff resourcing. Recruitment efforts focused on legal roles that would build capacity in the right areas with minimal future duplication in the new council. It was highly beneficial to be able to draw upon the expertise of district council colleagues in this respect, allowing decisions to be made in the wider context of current overall provision across the County. The team is now fully staffed, including roles that are traditionally difficult to recruit to, and the team can work flexibly across the various council offices as needs dictate. The project is currently forecast to be within the approved budget, with headroom built in to cover any ongoing risks, and projected legal hours currently cover the ongoing staffing and running costs.

Phase 2 of the project has now commenced, and is intended to refine service provision in readiness for 1 April 2020. Legal provision to the new unitary council will need to encompass the requirements of all five existing councils, for 'both business as usual' work and any additional work associated with unitary transition. The aim is for the new legal service to work efficiently and consistently across the county, offering comprehensive legal support to meet the extremely diverse needs of client teams across the whole range of local authority functions.

### **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Digital Fund**

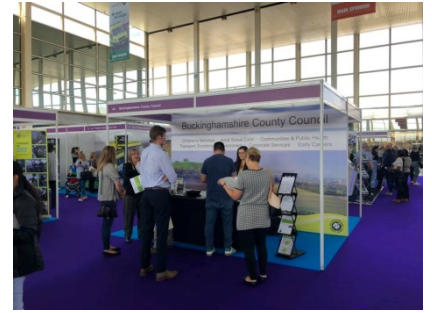
Buckinghamshire County Council has been awarded £50,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Digital Fund. The funding is to do some collaborative work with other councils in the UK to improve the data we hold about local community based services. By improving the way we collect, manage and store this (non-personal) data we can make it easier for people to find local services, groups and activities.



## **Milton Keynes Jobs Fair**

In September, the Employer Branding and Resourcing teams represented Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) at the Milton Keynes Jobs Fair for the second time this year.

The event was held over two days and was attended by thousands of local jobseekers and students. It was a great opportunity to showcase Buckinghamshire County Council as an employer and inform the public about the wide range of careers on offer here.



As a result, we collected the details and CVs of over 200 potential candidates, which have been passed onto the relevant resourcing consultants. The Employer Branding Team were thrilled to win the award of 'Social Media Superstars'. This was the only award exhibitors could compete for and it was given to the team who had the most engagement and best content on their social media pages. This was a fantastic achievement as they were competing against over 60 other exhibitors including McDonalds, Vodafone, Mercedes Benz and the NHS. They are looking forward to exhibiting again in 2020, where they will continue to promote BCC as an employer of choice.

**JOHN CHILVER  
CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**