

Cabinet Member Question and Answer Session:

The Cabinet Members were asked about their vision for growth in Buckinghamshire:

Cabinet Member for Transportation: Members heard that Bucks was a rapidly growing county, had a strong economy, and there was an unprecedented number of houses to be built. Bucks was an attractive place to live and jobs are available. The challenges were to maintain assets and service those needed in the future for growth. Bucks Asset Management policy approach had won a gold medal. Aylesbury Link Road – Stocklake finished at Christmas 2016. Working on building a route to avoid traffic in town centre. Mr Shaw said that Buckinghamshire County Council was taking a full part in HS2 and East West Rail, East West Expressway to shape the county for the future.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Environment: Would be looking at all parts of infrastructure – environment, flood alleviation, waste. EfW was working well. The Council was working with the District Councils on Local Plans. The Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan was also being worked on. Energy Saving was under consideration – both electric and water being consulted on. Batteries may be installed alongside roads in the future. A broad view needed to be taken of how the growth would be accommodated; there was a need to think of the consequences of the decisions being taken now. The aim would be to retain the good parts of the County, ensure the economy and environmental issues were taken care of. Heathrow expansion had implications to the south of the county. Buckinghamshire had more infrastructure changes planned than any other county.

The Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing: Members heard about the Cabinet Member's vision for Public Health. Growth through new developments, could lead to younger demographic in the county. There would be a need to keep the older community healthy and active and to keep older people in their own homes. For Communities the demand on libraries was currently falling. Archives, Local Studies, Leisure would become more important in the future. Coroners was a busy service and the Museum needed to cater for a younger demographic. Registrars would need to be able to service a younger population. Sports and tourism needed to cater for young and old alike. Community Engagement would need to work with District colleagues in encouraging people to take part. Trading Standards had had good successes recently; demand would increase through increased population and more scams. The Contact Centre would need to cater for a greater population.

Other Transportation Questions:

- **Members asked how the Council intended to maintain and develop existing and new infrastructure.** Members heard how s106 agreements, money from developers, could be used for growth. This money had funded the A355 extension in Beaconsfield and the Link Road in Aylesbury. Needed to look at the money spent on potholes, kerbstones and vegetation cut back. Members were told that of the aim to use ratepayers money wisely and that the Council's spend on maintenance was equal to 10 years ago. The poor state of unclassified roads was of most concern.

- **Members asked about increasing spend on roads and the issue of the condition of unclassified roads.** Members asked if Cabinet had given thought to 106 income generation to allow more investment in roads and the potential of borrowing. Concern was raised around HS2 and the maintenance depot which would generate both worker and construction traffic. Members learned that HS2 were not going upgrade the roads to accommodate additional traffic. Members heard that it would take £260m to upgrade all unclassified roads. Borrowing would mean that all services across the Council would be affected by the pay back. The optimum amount of spend was £30m - £35m per year to keep the traffic flowing. There was a need to ensure that the Council spent money wisely and Members were advised that 'plane and patch' was ideally suited to repairs on minor roads.
- **Members asked about maintaining assets and mentioned pavements and walk ways.** In response, Members heard that in certain areas the pavements may become a priority to encourage people to walk more. Members were told that the Cabinet Member was keen to promote cycling and walking. The Winslow to Buckingham Cycle Way had been built and was being well used. Members heard that there was £1m in the budget to patch and plane pavements where appropriate.

Other Planning and Environment questions:

- **Members asked about placing batteries in the streets to supplement the national grid.** Members heard that the electricity supply relied on the supply being shipped around the country to deal with demand. The Cabinet Member said that ideal sites would be unused laybys and corners of fields and that the batteries were not like massive buildings, with lithium batteries just being developed. Members were told that the County had small pockets of land, not in the AONB or green belt, that could be used and could bring in income. The Cabinet Member was investigating options and hoped to have more information in a years' time, including the possibility of putting batteries into new developments.
- **A Member asked about roads, commenting on the lack of infrastructure for Aylesbury and possibility of energy from the EfW plant, wind farms and solar farms.** Members were told that 22 megawatts of energy was coming from EfW at any time, peaking at 28 megawatts at timeshas and that the capacity of the plant was currently underused. Members heard that the Cabinet Member was visiting all household waste sites in August to look at the best use of the assets. Members heard that a bio mass centre was coming into High Heavens and that the intention was to maximise the energy that could be extracted for the benefit of the county
- Reference was made to the Tesla battery being built in Australia to provide free energy for the area
- Members also heard that the Country Parks had a million visitors last year and currently covered its costs. No building was taking place on country parks but countryside activities were being developed at the parks.

Other questions for the Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing:

- The impact of the Paralympic legacy would depend on where development took place and that grouping of developments would be key and would involve joint working with other agencies and communities.
- It was suggested there were opportunities to work together on community safety partnerships with the Districts, a relationship that was currently working well.
- The Cabinet Member hoped that new developments would take community safety into account. Members heard that the Cabinet Member was working closely with the Police and the Districts to be supportive of community involvement.
- **Members asked about leisure facilities** an example was given of Black Park and noted they had ambitious plans to develop the leisure facilities.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Members for attending.

The Growth Agenda:

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council and asked for his views on growth.

The Leader explained that there would be unprecedented growth in the next 15-20 years in Buckinghamshire -not just housing but in population and hopefully economic growth. Members were told that 54000 new houses would be built across the County in the years to 2033 and that there would be significant addition to population, congestion and infrastructure demands. Mr Tett explained that HS2 would entail more congestion whilst it was being build and in the south of county Heathrow expansion would have the same effect. Members heard that East West Rail was committed but not funded and that East West Expressway was currently being debated. Mr Tett told Members that significant growth would impact the environment of Buckinghamshire and that there would be a physical impact in terms of congestion, not just in the expansion areas but the impact of increase traffic flows around the county. The Committee learned that the nature of the population would change; it is likely there would be a relative decline of the working population available to support increasing numbers of elderly. In terms of the economy, Mr Tett explained that Buckinghamshire had a low level of unemployment and therefore created a lot of money for the Exchequer – with a large number of start-up companies and small and medium enterprises in Buckinghamshire needing the Council's support. Members heard that there were currently Enterprise Zones at Silverstone and Arla and (west of Aylesbury) but that the County had challenges because its productivity was below average and it was hard to obtain the skills needed by business. Mr Tett reported that graduates from the county tended not to return because of the lack of affordable housing and that broadband and 5G availability in the County would need to improve.

Mr Tett told Members that the driver for growth came from the Districts as planning authorities but that the County Council needed to be closely coupled to those drivers for growth to understand the impact on infrastructure. The Committee was told that £4bn was needed to fund infrastructure and that developers were targeted for funding. Mr Tett explained that Local Growth funding, although relatively small, was available from the LEPs, and that applications could be made to government schemes for sustainable infrastructure, but this was unlikely to cover needs.

The Leader was asked about the housing structure fund, students not returning to the County and the appetite for the County Council to become a developer. The Leader drew attention to Woodlands which was being developed in association with AVDC and explained that although the County Council did not own the land, it was involved to ensure that the link road would be provided. Members were told not to underestimate the amount of time, effort and money needed to support the scheme and that it was also important to have a division of duties for Members to ensure good governance.

In relation to other Member questions, the Leader made the following points:

- The £4bn had been calculated by officers of the District and County Councils.
- The infrastructure fund required the Council to demonstrate that it was an ambitious Council. Although headline money was good, there was a lot of competition for it. Districts and Counties could bid for money although there were limits applied. The Districts were responsible for approving the number of the houses to be built and the County would support the Districts in this.
- That although the County was economically very good at the moment, there were three skills areas of concern: scarce skills; professional people diverting their skills to a new area; and stem skills – 50% of young people were not going to university. There was a need to ensure that young people are trained in the appropriate skills and ready for work skills were also important – businesses reported that issues like punctuality and attendance were a challenge for some young people starting work. Working was being undertaken with schools to address the last problem and whilst the types of jobs available in Bucks could not be dictated, the Council needed to make sure good transport was available and that it attracted good employers.
- The Woodlands Project offered opportunities in controlling the development and infrastructure, and capturing land value, and that Aylesbury Garden Town gave the opportunity to ensure good quality developments being built and avoid future sink estates.
- Members heard that the Council worked very closely with District Council Planning and that dialogues were held with key ministers and debated at a national level. The Council was also in contact with South East Strategic Leaders and LGA.

The Executive Director, Mr Gibson, explained that there was a distorted view of Buckinghamshire, with a perception that was rural with no major routes through it. Members learned that Buckinghamshire was seen as a preventer of growth but that the reality was that the County was an active promoter of development, although clear that growth needed to be in the right place, at the right time and for the right reasons. Mr Gibson reported on hard negotiations with the private sector to ensure the right quality of development had taken place and that there had been a £60m contribution from a large development in Aylesbury for provision of infrastructure. Members heard that Buckinghamshire did not have much control over growth; for example network rail, commercial investments etc, came from outside bodies, and that direct planning controls were restricted to minerals and waste. Mr Gibson said that HS2, Heathrow and East West Rail was outside the Council's control and that how the authority influenced the debate around these would be key for the future. Mr Gibson reported that his Business Unit spent about £100m of taxpayer's money per annum, half revenue half capital with nearly two thirds on transport, roads and waste disposal. Members heard that waste disposal sites were expensive to run and that as the Council had never had the funding to meet everyone's expectations, priorities needed to be made. Mr Gibson explained that the financial plan for the Business Unit was signed off by the Council in the February budget and that the Unit was trying to leaver income into the budget. Members learned that facilities were run at zero cost to the ratepayer where possible and that the Council was investing £1m every year into East West Rail, totalling £10m over a number of years, to support a £1bn project.

In response to questions, Mr Gibson made the following points:

- The Council was as ready as it could be, but as it was not the planning authority it could not control growth but did anticipate the scale of growth. The timing of National Infrastructure projects was determined elsewhere.
- The TEE Business Unit was formed two years ago and lived within its budget whilst aiming to bring a more commercial focus to services. Since that time skills within the Unit had been reengineered the skills with talented people brought into the services to support the challenge ahead and training for staff already in the services. There was an 8% vacancy rate at present.
- The entire organisation of the Council had changed over the past decade to respond to the changing agenda and TEE had been a part of that journey. In projecting 5 – 10 years ahead the business would need to change as the environment was constantly shifting. For example, the Business Unit was involved with building a new rail link with a multi-agency partnership – East West Rail, and Aylesbury Vale Advantage, now the Aylesbury Enterprise Zone, was supporting the Woodlands Development. With smaller pockets of development it was harder to persuade the planning authorities to give a S106 contribution. Members heard that the East West Corridor and National Infrastructure Commission were both involved in planning what the County would look like over the next fifty years. The influence would be felt not just in the north of the County and although the Council could not control it, TEE was thinking about how they want to work in the future.

- Members were told that the Council could use its knowledge and skills to influence and that it could be the leading light, proactively shaping and influencing decisions.
- Members were told that the County Council was leading on understanding where the impacts would be felt, with a mapping system being built with associated data sets, and the goal being to make it web-based to allow members of the public to view it. Data would need to be used appropriately and with consent, with the need to manage public expectation about indicative growth and planned growth. The Council would try to secure funding from central government, which would need a clear articulation of the Council's ambitions for growth.
- Members heard that it governance was a complex environment in the UK. Buckinghamshire was the last to create a LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and ideally funding would come direct from the state rather than through another layer of complexity. In some instances there were Combined Authorities resulting in 3 tiers of local government. Two LEPs overlapped in the north of the County; which Mr Gibson felt added complexity. On a larger scale authorities were coming together to try and influence government, for example The England Economic Heartland. The EEH was trying to influence government on the East West rail development through influencing government departments.
- Members heard from the Leader that a single authority would make structures more straightforward and that County, District, Parishes, LEPs have to work together despite their different agendas. In Cambridgeshire which also had a combined authority there was confusion about who was responsible for what.

LEP presentation – Mr Harrington:

Mr Harrington explained that the LEP was trying to create opportunities for Buckinghamshire by working together with commerce and local authorities. Members learned that overlaps did not make sense for businesses, but in this instance these were managed locally by agreeing agendas. Mr Harrington told Members that the LEP attempted to maximise the economy, focussing on strong economies and driving them further, for example scaling up businesses. Members heard about the growth sectors around the creative industries, e.g. Pinewood, and about Bucks Business First which represented 10,000 plus members. Mr Harrington mentioned that the University of Buckingham was looking to double in size in the next ten years and that there would be fallout from the London Plan and the Council needed to be aware of the impact on Buckinghamshire.

Members were told that Mr Harrington had talked to the government about the deficit of strategic infrastructure and that Government was prepared to give money for infrastructure but only in return for development.

Members were told that all the local authority leaders sit on the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP Board along with equal number of business leaders.

The Chairman thanked Mr Harrington for his presentation.

Growth and Strategy Slides – Mr Rippon

Members heard that although Section 106 funding could be secured, the payment was dependent on the developments actually being built, so there was a risk that funding may not be realised within timescales envisaged. Members were told of frustration at the Westcott development with the length of time that it was taking to develop the site although £6m funding secured had leveraged £50m over time.

Members heard that there were vacancies when TEE was formed, but teams were now in place and the accountability lay with Mr Kemp and Mr Gibson.

Members were told that the Local Plans, once in place, would give much greater clarity. Members also were told modelling had been done which suggested where the growth would take place in the future. The service had potential solutions but was constrained by budget.

Mr Rippon assured Members of the close relationship with Mr Harrington and the LEP as a partnership.

Transport Strategy – Mrs Hancox

Members learned that Transport Strategy focussed on what, when and where needed - estimating the amount of traffic that would be generated by a development and where its impact would be felt, before looking at the infrastructure needed as a result of the development. Members were told of a predicted increase in traffic of 25% in the next 20 years.

Members heard work was taking place with the Districts on current versus future needs and that work was progressing on a freight strategy, with over a 1000 responses received to a snap survey.

Mrs Hancox explained that focussing on the future was needed because of the long lead time required for big infrastructure projects, particularly where funding was concerned, and that there was a strong emphasis on the requirement for local plans to be based on evidence.

Head of Highways Development – Ms Chrissy Urry:

Members learned that the Highways Development team undertook a statutory role but was nearly self-funded by charging developers. Ms Urry explained that the team worked with District Councils as a cross-organisation project team.

Ms Urry explained the Council's guidance in relation to parking allocation in developments which was much higher than some of the Districts' standards. As part of the Local plan, Members learned that the Council was pressing for its standard to be adopted. Ms Urry assured Members that parking was dealt with at the planning stage with the safety aspect was taken into account and that District Councils assessed parking on an amenity level.

Members heard how community sums were paid over when roads were adopted and that under the Council's terms, the developers were responsible for

maintenance whilst they own the road. Ms Urry explained that the Council was looking to broaden the charging of all aspects of the new road system and that the Council currently only charged for street lighting and soakaways. Ms Urry explained that the Council would have to ring fence funds in future.

In relation to the 21 day response to planning applications, Members heard that additional resources had been secured for the team and there had been a dramatic improvement in meeting the target. Ms Urry explained that the impact of HS2 and East West rail could result in peaks and troughs and the team may need to draw on consultants occasionally. Members heard that it was not possible to increase the permanent number of staff at present but that the situation was being monitored. Mr Gibson reported that any future requirements would be fed into the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for consideration but that any requirement for more staff would need to be backed by evidence. Ms Urry clarified that peaks would lead to increased charges being received from developers.

Highways – Mr Mark Averill:

Members were given presentation about the day to day running of the roads. Mr Averill clarified a number of points: that HS2 had powers to open roads that will impact residents and that the Council was a street lighting authority not a pathway lighting authority, which was the remit of the Parish Councils.

Members were told that some Parish Councils were unable to take on devolved powers due to a lack of workforce and that when devolving powers, responsibilities needed to be clear so that pathways and street lighting did not fall between the two authorities. Members were told that initial support for Parish Councils was being offered.

Members heard that HS2 had published its lorry route, subject to the scanner route which would provide an assessment of the current standard of the roads.

Members were told that HS2 was responsible for returning roads at the end of the development to the same standard as they were when scanned. Members were told that lorries would use mostly the classified road network which was in a reasonable standard and that some junctions would be improved prior to development.

Members heard that scanners on the front of waste vehicles were being used and that work may be taking place with in partnership with ACOM.

Environment – David Sutherland:

Mr Sutherland explained that the TEE planning team focussed on new schools, waste development, rights of way, ecology, archaeology, flood alleviation, natural assets, air and water quality and species. Members were told that issues around the growth agenda included a looming water shortage in the area and large green spaces deficiency in Aylesbury Vale, which were key to wellbeing of residents. Mr Sutherland explained that the lack of green space/natural capacity could lead to social issues and that the team was pushing for bio-diversity net gains for new developments. Members were told that ways of connecting Chiltern AONB to

new developments were being sought and that a model for green spaces in Aylesbury Vale was needed. Mr Sutherland confirmed that work would take place with other statutory agencies e.g. Thames Water and with the Chiltern Conservation Board.

In response to questions, Mr Sutherland made the following points:

- The Council was working with the Environment Agency, Chiltern Conservation Board and Thames Water to ensure water quality and chalk streams.
- The state of the environment report could be shared and highlighted problems across the South East, not just Buckinghamshire. The challenge of preserving the landscape is recognised as a threat.
- The Natural Environment Partnership is an influencing body, but moving into the management of green areas would be outside its current remit.

It was noted that the conservation board working with residents to get agreement about what could be achieved.

Strategic Planning: Mrs Rachael Wileman

Mrs Wileman explained that the emerging Minerals and Waste Plan would review the core strategy that was adopted in 2012 and that the Council would need to manage HGV traffic around extraction. Members were told that waste management was focussed on the north of the county with more recycling and energy production and that there were countywide planning pressures on land use. In relation to working with the Districts on their Local Plans, the Committee was told that a working group had been created with the Districts to coordinate work. Mrs Wileman explained about planning for national infrastructure projects including a Western Rail link to Heathrow, new station at Langley and impact of expansion at Heathrow. The team ensured that the growth agenda was shared with key stakeholders, particularly as there were opportunities around waste for job growth and investment. Members heard about the need to manage landfill sites at the end of their life to become an asset and that the Strategic Infrastructure Plan was going to be considered by Cabinet on 24 July.

In response to questions from Members, Mrs Wileman made the following points:

- That close work was taking place with Public Health to ensure accessibility for all, and a recent meeting had been held with Districts and the CCGsto discuss how the growth agenda would impact GP services within the Aylesbury area.
- Members were told that other BUs and Districts were included in the Strategic Infrastructure Plan, looking at future physical infrastructure, social infrastructure and community infrastructure to ensure a more integrated approach.
- In relation to embedding the Plan in Business Unit Plans, Members told that when the Plan had been formulated, it would prompt discussions in BUs and provide the common framework for those conversations.

Waste Disposal – Ms Gurbaksh Badhan

Ms Badhan explained that there was complex legislation for waste disposal and that to manage future growth a new data system was being developed to provide an evidence base. Members heard that the service was looking at what service model changes were needed for future growth and that although planning was currently taking place for additional houses, there was also a need to plan for the volume of waste increasing for existing households, as this was linked to economic growth.

Members were told that a prevention campaign was planned for the summer to prevent waste. In relation to a question about timing of the campaign during the summer, Members heard that the behaviour change conversation would increase in September. Members were told that nationally England was behind in Waste Management and that more funding was needed to improve this.

Ms Badhan confirmed that the issue of food waste in relation to recycling was a key target for the communication plan.

Energy – Mrs Rachael Toresen-Owuor

Mrs Toresen-Owuor reported that Buckinghamshire had three main suppliers of energy as the County was on the edge of each of their areas and that this was a similar situation for water providers. Members heard that the growth agenda provided an opportunity to do things a different way, for example installation of district heating and local energy centres. Mrs Toresen-Owuor explained that the Council was looking into battery storage and potential savings from the One Public Estate.

Communities and the impact on the Growth Agenda on their services – Mr David Jones

Mr Jones explained that the increase in population would result in increased demand on services and in relation to opportunities:

- Registrars services: could have additional opportunities with regard to pricing and income
- Coroners Service: already has significant budget pressures and a shortage of pathologists nationally and complexity of investigations meant that more costs were incurred.
- Big opportunity but also a challenge is to ensure large developments of houses become communities, with the opportunity to create a culture where communities are encouraged.
- Community Safety and Trading Standards would see an increase in demand.
- Library Services would see an increase in demand and the Library Service has diversified into well-being.

In relation to the digital agenda, Members were told that the Council was well linked with partnerships and offered free lessons on IT for people, with the Contact Centre signposting people to Age Concern or to the Council's libraries for help and access to IT for those who need it. Mr Jones explained that these

services were advertised in Libraries and with the groups that took place in Libraries, together with some local campaigns involving leaflet distribution.

Mr Jones confirmed that Mr Paul Hodson attended the Corporate Working Group on Growth from Communities and found it a very worthwhile group. In future, Members were told, the Communities service would need to consider how best to influence the growth agenda and the Corporate Working Group, and recognised the need to be more involved in the future.

The Chairman thanked Members and the staff present for their attention and the presentations.