

Report to Cabinet

Is the County Council ready for growth?

A 2017 Report by the Select Committees:

Children's Social Care & Learning (CSC&L)
Finance, Performance & Resources (FPR)
Health & Adult Social Care (HASC) and
Transport, Economy & Communities (TEC)



Contents

Slides	Topic
3	Introduction – National Context
4-5	Introduction – Local Context
6-8	Table of recommendations
9-10	Methodology
11-13	Strategies and Plans <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key findings• Recommendations
14-16	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key findings• Recommendations

Slides	Topic
17-18	Data and Modelling <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key findings• Recommendations
19-22	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key findings• Recommendations
23-27	Other observations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• FPR• CSC&L• HASC• TEC
28-30	• Appendices
31	• Next steps



Introduction – The National Context

The Government agenda is about housing and economic growth and is moving fast. This agenda includes:

National Infrastructure Commission Interim Report

- Developing an integrated strategic plan for infrastructure, housing and jobs.

The Housing White paper

- Suggests even more need for housing than currently forecast.
- Allows New Town Development Corporations.

District Councils producing Local Plans

National Infrastructure Projects Impacting Bucks

- HS2
- East West Rail & Crossrail
- Heathrow Expansion including Western Rail Access
- M4 Smart Motorway
- Oxford/Cambridge Expressway



Introduction – The Local Context

Leader of
the
Council

“Bucks is an economically strong county, we are active promoters of development”

Executive
Director

“We need the right development, in the right places at the right time”

- The District Councils’ Local Plans, including those of neighbouring authorities, are driving housing growth.
 - 45,500 (June 2017) new homes planned for Bucks between 2013-2033/36.
- Plans will also identify land for commercial and employment use to secure increased economic growth.
- However, the County Council is responsible for some infrastructure so needs to work closely with Districts to influence plans (e.g. Aylesbury Garden Town).



Introduction – The Local Context

- Cabinet has agreed Phase 1 of the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan (BSIP) with Phase 2 going for agreement in the Autumn.
- Population projection data* between 2015-2033 for Bucks shows:
 - a 44% increase in people aged 60+;
 - a 140% increase in people aged 90+ (6,800 people);
 - fewer 20 - 35 year olds and
 - 13% more young people aged 8 -18

**Office for National Statistics (ONS)*



Table of recommendations

Recommendations	
1	That Business Units' Commercial Plans for 2018-2022 and other key plans & strategies reflect how services are planning for the impact of future housing and population growth and show links to the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan.
2	<p>That the Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan becomes one of the Council's key strategies for responding to growth and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Makes explicit the links between housing and population growth and potential changes to demand for Council services• Is embedded across all Business Units• Demonstrates that all Business Units have been involved in its development.



Table of recommendations

Recommendations

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| 3 | <p>That the current governance arrangements around the growth agenda are strengthened to ensure a strategic view and maximise the Council's influence around housing development by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agreeing formal Terms of Reference for the Corporate Working Group.• Ensuring permanent membership of the Group from key service areas in each Business Unit.• Making sure membership roles are clearly articulated.• Agreeing and documenting a formal reporting mechanism on outcomes from the meetings to Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet.• Ensuring all Cabinet Members have the same level of knowledge around planned growth and can help drive planning in Business Units.• Annual report to Council on growth and progress made on action plans. |
| 4 | <p>That the Council develops a single repository for relevant growth data and analysis to enable sharing of data between Business Units.</p> |



Table of recommendations

Recommendations	
5	The Bucks Strategic Infrastructure Plan should be promoted as a key strand of the Council's prospectus for growth to Government to demonstrate the Council's ambition and lever additional funding.
6	That the Council develops a longer term Capital and investment programme to enable a more robust strategic approach to addressing the impacts of the growth agenda.
7	That clawback mechanisms should always be used to review new developments as they progress and that, where these have increased in value, the Council should re-assess developer contributions.



Methodology

Scoping

- Each Select Committee Chairman contributed to the scoping document agreed at the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee meeting in April 2017.
- The Inquiry was set-up to investigate whether the County Council is ready for growth. As an initial scrutiny Inquiry for the new administration, it was agreed not to review the plans of partners or other external organisations but to focus on the County Council's services, reviewing preparations at a strategic level.
- A copy of the scoping document can be found in Appendix 1.



Methodology

Evidence Gathering

- Evidence gathering included:
 - an introductory presentation and discussion on growth at the Member scrutiny induction session held on 23rd May 2017.
 - a document review
 - each Select Committee holding a themed evidence gathering meeting during July where the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members and Senior Officers from the Business Units provided information.
- The findings and recommendations in this report are a culmination across all the Select Committees and the final report will be presented to Cabinet.
- Links to the minutes and webcasts of evidence gathering meetings are given in Appendix 1.



Key Findings – Strategies and Plans

- The Committees acknowledge that there is uncertainty around growth and its implications for the Council, for example:
 - Local Plans have not yet been agreed
 - Housing White Paper was introduced during their development
 - impact of Brexit, and
 - changes to central government funding.
- The Committees asked about the Council’s key plans and heard that whilst all Business Units are aware of the expected housing and population growth, they are at different stages in their engagement and planning for managing the issue.
- The Committees felt that the impact of growth on demand for services is starting to be understood, for example through the Transport, Economy, Environment (TEE) Commercial and Business Unit Plans but that in other Business Units some plans are quite general in scope and specifics still need to be developed.
- In some high level plans there is no or only limited acknowledgment of the forecast housing and population growth. Some recent strategies, such as the Looked After Children Strategy, do not mention the issue.
- Although the Committees welcome where services have aspirations to address the implications of growth, Members felt that work now needed to take place across the Council to formalise and embed growth planning.



Key Findings – Strategies and Plans

- The Select Committees welcome the agreement by Cabinet of the high level Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan (BSIP) in starting to give a strategic focus to planning for the impacts of housing and population growth.
- The Committees identified some examples of good joint working, e.g. the One Public Estate work, but recognised the potential for more joint working between Business Units. For example:
 - the TEC Select Committee heard about opportunities for the Council, particularly through Community Services, to be proactive in helping to create resilient and well integrated, cohesive communities as new housing developments are built;
 - The CSCL and HASC Select Committees were told that services would like to be able to better influence the types of housing and green infrastructure included in new developments, to design out potential issues at an early stage, for example around mobility issues for an ageing population, and maximise funding from developer contributions – (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy).



Recommendations – Strategies and Plans

Recommendation 1

That Business Units' Commercial Plans for 2018-2022 and other key plans and strategies reflect how services are planning for the impact of future housing and population growth and show links to the Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan.

Recommendation 2

That the Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan becomes one of the Council's key strategies for responding to growth and:

- Makes explicit the links between housing and population growth and potential changes to demand for Council services**
- Is embedded across all Business Units**
- Demonstrates that all Business Units have been involved in its development.**



Key Findings – Governance (1)

- The Committees asked about the current governance arrangements around growth and found this consists of:
 - The Corporate Growth Working Group - an Officer group reporting into the Corporate Management Team (Chief Executive and Executive Directors), and
 - The Growth Board – comprising the Leader and Cabinet Members for Transportation, Resources and Planning and Environment, as well as the Executive Director and Head of Growth & Strategy and Highways
 - Both forums are supported by the Head of Strategic Planning & Infrastructure
- As the growth agenda is gaining pace, and given the implications for all Council services, Committee Members felt there was now an opportunity for knowledge around the growth agenda to be shared more widely by Growth Board members
- The Committees found that not all key service areas sent a representative to the Corporate Growth Working Group, for example from Children’s Social Care. Members felt that this limits both the ability of the Group to establish a full picture of the impact of growth across the Council, and the potential for Business Units to understand the impact of growth on their services and influence the overall strategy of the Council.



Key Findings – Governance (2)

- The TEC Select Committee was told that there are no formal terms of reference for the Corporate Growth Working Group and Members feel that formalising the remit of the Committee and its membership would help improve co-ordination of the Council's response to the growth agenda.
- The FPR Committee learned that the Council has a legal duty to collaborate in the development of the Local Plans. Members believe strong internal governance would promote and enhance collaborative working with all District Councils and ensure that all Business Units have influence.
- By strengthening internal governance, the Committees believe there is an opportunity to improve the response to Local Plans by including the needs of all services.



Recommendation – Governance

Recommendation 3

That the current governance arrangements around the growth agenda are strengthened to ensure a strategic view and maximise the Council's influence with District Councils and developers around housing development by:

- **Agreeing formal Terms of Reference for the Corporate Working Group.**
- **Ensuring permanent membership of the Group from key service areas in each Business Unit.**
- **Making sure membership roles are clearly articulated.**
- **Agreeing and documenting a formal reporting mechanism on outcomes from the meetings to Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet.**
- **Ensuring all Cabinet Members have the same level of knowledge around planned growth and can help drive planning in Business Units.**
- **Annual report to Council on growth and progress made on action plans.**

Key Findings – Data and Modelling

- Select Committees are clear that robust baseline data, that is shared effectively across all business units, is vital to inform the Council's planning for Growth.
- The FPR Committee heard that the Corporate Business Intelligence (BI) team has shared modelling data on population and housing growth with Cabinet, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and at Leadership Forum and supported some specific Business Unit projects using growth modelling.
- The Committees learned that some service areas are already using this data e.g. Transport Modelling, Waste Management, School Place Planning and parts of the Change for Children programme.
- However, the Committees found that others still need to do more to include growth data into their planning. For example, Children's Social Care in understanding housing development size and mix and the Communities service in understanding its role in helping shape and engage communities.
- The Committees understand that data modelling and forecasting is happening within Business Units and would like to see a mechanism for sharing this information to reduce duplication and help planning, for example in designing transitions service capacity for an increasing population



Recommendation – Data and Modelling

Recommendation 4

That the Council develops a single repository for relevant growth data and analysis to enable sharing of data between Business Units



Key Findings – Finance (1)

- Members heard that the Council needs to fully understand the implications of the Local Plans on our services as well as the scale of investment needed.
- A concern of residents in relation to growth is often the associated infrastructure, however all Committees heard that there are challenges around having two different organisations being responsible for the separate areas (i.e. District Councils for delivering housing growth and the County Council for meeting the infrastructure requirements).
- The FPR and TEC Committee Members were told that funding of infrastructure is one of the biggest challenges, given the reduction in funding from central government, and that it was therefore vital to ensure continued collaboration between the County and District Councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in order to maximise funding opportunities.
- Given the challenges of funding, the Select Committees recognise that the Council will still need to prioritise investment in infrastructure projects.



Key Findings – Finance (2)

- The TEC Committee heard from the Local Enterprise Partnership that the Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan (BSIP) sets out the Council’s ambitions and will define the infrastructure priorities for investment. The Committee was also told that government Infrastructure funding will be given to “ambitious” councils. Members considered that the BSIP should be used to demonstrate the Council’s ambition to government and as a lever for Infrastructure funding.
- The Committees noted that growth outlined in the Local Plans is long term but that the Council’s current capital programme plans only 4 years ahead. This made it more difficult to plan and accommodate longer term need. The FPR Committee heard that a longer term capital budget would be beneficial in facilitating strategic decision making e.g. planning services for older people or highways infrastructure.



Key Findings – Finance (2)

- Members heard financial contributions negotiated with developers e.g. S106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy needed to be maximised in some Business Units, for example in Children’s Social Care.
- Members heard that some Business Units had more skills in negotiating developer contributions than others and so were keen to see a more joined up approach by sharing skills and collaborating across Business Units, with District Councils and other partners to maximise funding.



Recommendation – Finance

Recommendation 5

The Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan should be promoted as a key strand of the Council's prospectus for growth to Government to demonstrate the Council's ambition and lever additional funding.

Recommendation 6

That the Council develops a longer term Capital and investment programme to enable a more robust strategic approach to addressing the impacts of the growth agenda.

Recommendation 7

That clawback mechanisms should always be used to review new developments as they progress and that, where these have increased in value, the Council should re-assess developer contributions.

Other Observations – FPR

- During evidence gathering Members were pleased to see that Business Units were being encouraged to maximise their income generation opportunities.
- Some Business Units might see their income increase as a direct result of housing growth, whereas others will not. Members believed that a ‘One Council’ approach was needed to achieve a balanced budget, even if this meant that one Business Unit’s income had to be used to support increased demand in another.
- The Committee welcomes the Council’s more innovative approach to income generation e.g. investing in commercial properties to generate revenue; opportunities to play a more proactive role in shaping the housing market by acting as a property developer. Members encourage innovation but cautioned that the risks needed to be fully evaluated and monitored.
- Members recognised the close collaborative working with District Councils, and strong partnerships with neighbouring authorities e.g. via England’s Economic Heartland to influence Infrastructure planning at a regional/sub-national level.
- The Committee was keen to see the Council taking a proactive role in driving and shaping the growth agenda in the best interests of Buckinghamshire and its residents.



Other Observations – CSC&L

Through their evidence gathering for the inquiry, the CSC&L Select Committee identified the following issues.

- Due to the complexity of trying to anticipate household compositions, some school place planning modelling data is based on averages. The Committee would like to see data reviewed at regular intervals as data sets become more robust or new actual data becomes available to see whether it is possible to include more actual/real time data.
- School place planning decisions should be linked to and take account of home to school transport policy decisions to enable children to travel less.

Although there are no specific recommendations to be made, the Committee are keen to highlight them so that they may be used to inform potential future Committee work items.



Other Observations - HASC

During the HASC Select Committee evidence gathering meeting there were a few observations which were specific to HASC and could be used to inform the work programme. These are listed below.

- The role of Public Health services across the council – the need to embed the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) across all Business Units.
- Developing and inputting to growth ideas across all the Business – ie. need to be part of discussions around the future of community libraries – affect on social isolation and using libraries to provide health services.
- Income generation – think about this in light of drive to transform and modernise adult social care and to learn from other authorities. Ask the Council's Business Services Plus Commercial team to be part of these discussions to provide ideas for the service.
- Look at what Adult Social Care teams at other authorities are doing to meet increase in demand for services – use this to help shape and inform delivery plans.



Other Observations – TEC (1)

The following observations were raised in the TEC meeting. They do not form recommendations, but may inform future committee item topics.

- Heads of Service clearly have a vision to manage the challenges and exploit opportunities. Where these are not fully acknowledged in current BU plans, we were told they will be, within the updates for 2018. Need to develop the aspirations into delivery plans.
- A key challenge for Buckinghamshire is protecting green spaces and the natural environment e.g. NEP report highlights significant areas of concern for Buckinghamshire, including Aylesbury vale 70% of homes deficient in green space, Need a model for green spaces in Aylesbury vale. There should be a financial value placed on the natural asset in Buckinghamshire.
- Energy and Resources are exploring ways to exploit opportunities to generate income from energy schemes and meet extra demand – members want to explore.



Other Observations – TEC (2)

- The Council's commuted sum policy needs updating (not updated since 2006), in so far as where it is possible to cover the expense of highways maintenance of new infrastructure promoted and implemented by Developers.
- We need to fully understand the impact of national infrastructure projects on Buckinghamshire. E.g. National Infrastructure Commission East West corridor.
- There is a challenge moving forward of HS2 and East West Rail and resourcing these.
- Buckinghamshire has the challenge of productivity below average and its hard to obtain skills needed by business.
- There are opportunities for communities to play a more proactive role in helping inform and shape communities within housing developments and have a public engagement role.



Appendices

1. Scrutiny Inquiry Scoping Document

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s99521/Growth%20Inquiry%20Scope.pdf>

2. FPR – Growth Inquiry Draft Minutes & Evidence Gathering Notes

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/g9494/Printed%20minutes%2004th-Jul-2017%2010.00%20Finance%20Performance%20and%20Resources%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

3. FPR – Webcast of the meeting

https://buckscc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/273916



Appendices

4. TEC – Growth Inquiry Draft Minutes & Evidence Gathering Notes

<http://moderngov/documents/g9493/Public%20minutes%2011th-Jul-2017%2010.00%20Transport%20Environment%20and%20Communities%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=11>

5. TEC – Webcast of the meeting

https://buckscc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/273915

6. CSC&L Growth Inquiry Draft Minutes & Evidence Gathering Notes

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/g9499/Public%20minutes%2018th-Jul-2017%2010.00%20Childrens%20Social%20Care%20and%20Learning%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=11>

7. CSC&L – Webcast of the meeting

https://buckscc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/273914



Appendices

8. HASC – Growth Inquiry Draft Minutes & Evidence Gathering Notes

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/g9297/Printed%20minutes%2025th-Jul-2017%2010.00%20Health%20and%20Adult%20Social%20Care%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

9. HASC – Webcast of the meeting

https://buckscc.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/273910



Next steps

- Progress of accepted recommendations will be monitored by the TEC Select Committee, with invited Select Committee Chairmen, at 6 and 12 months and reported to the other Select Committees.

