



Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire

Business Case
September 2016

Buckinghamshire
Council

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Executive Summary

Buckinghamshire is an attractive county. It is a successful place to do business, contributing £14.8bn in Gross Valued Added (GVA) to UK economy and ranking 3rd in terms of GVA productivity.

The county enjoys low unemployment, higher-than-average household incomes and good health outcomes, yet we also have a number of challenges. This paper sets out why there is a compelling case for change.

Change is essential for future growth in Buckinghamshire

The profile of Buckinghamshire is set to change significantly over the next twenty years. Emerging local plans identify a need for 50,000 new homes by 2033. Buckinghamshire is becoming even more multi-cultural and diverse. The population over the age of 65 is increasing, as are levels of disability, leading to significant pressures on services.

Past success is no longer a guarantee of continued prosperity. The need for change has become all the more apparent in recent years, a period that has seen rapid changes in attitudes and expectations amongst residents and businesses alike, together with rapid increases in demand. Future public services need to be fit to meet these challenges.

Services provided by the public sector are increasingly unaffordable, particularly in the context of fiscal constraint. By the end of 2016/17, the county council will have delivered £145m savings since April 2010. Collectively, the county and district councils have to deliver further savings in excess of £30m by 2020. Traditional approaches are not sustainable.

The role of the public sector is being transformed, driven by a growing demand for a new form of civic leadership that works with communities to realise a shared vision for their future, whilst being a powerful advocate in partnership and sub-regional arrangements. Residents want better quality services that are easier to access, and they want a real say in services and decisions that affect them. Ambitious town and parish councils want greater responsibility for assets and services so that they can tailor these to community needs. We want to play our part in relieving the acute pressure in the housing market alongside providing sustainable infrastructure for our communities.

The resources and energy tied up in coordinating five individual councils in a relatively small county not only frustrates the effective use of public resources but also prevents the agile leadership that is critical to meet the mid 21st century challenges of shaping sustainable communities, delivering new homes and jobs, devolving power to communities, promoting economic prosperity and ensuring the health and wellbeing of residents.



Now is the time for change

The current configuration of local government within Buckinghamshire is no longer fit for purpose. Furthermore, it is not affordable. Reform will take time but, if implemented now, is achievable within existing resources and manageable without jeopardising the performance of front line services. Any delay brings further risks to the sustainability of essential services and the successful delivery of growth across the county, whilst the capacity to manage a recovery strategy will diminish.

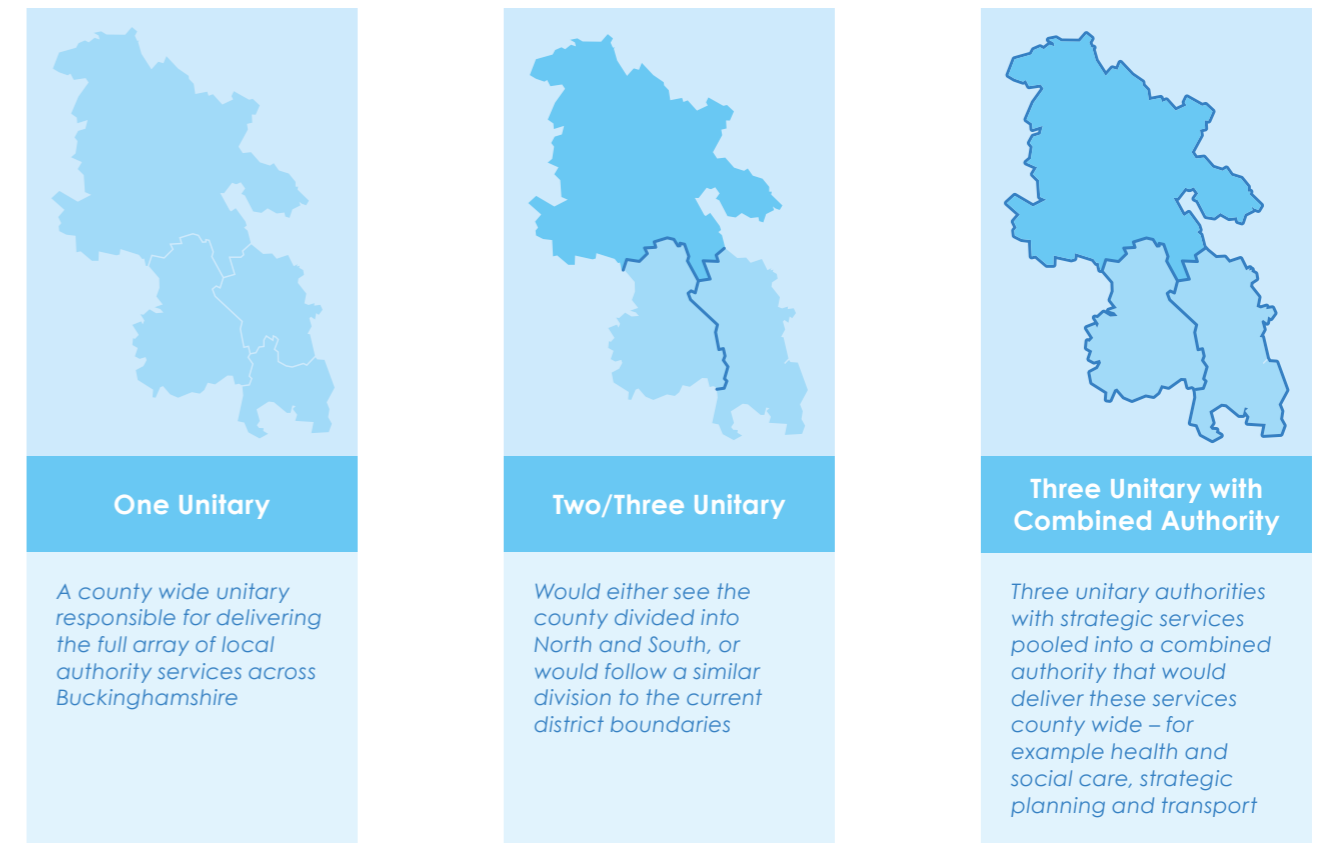
“No change” is the highest risk strategy.

The options

Unitary government offers significant benefits for residents, communities and businesses in Buckinghamshire. Other Local Authorities who have made this transition have identified a variety of opportunities, including cost savings, service improvements and growth.

Three options have been considered for the future configuration of local government in

Buckinghamshire based on the economic geography of the areas that make up Buckinghamshire, travel to work patterns, the urban and rural nature of the county, and population size. A detailed appraisal of these options has been undertaken and externally validated by Grant Thornton. The options considered are as follows:



The financial assessment

Option	Reasons	Rank
Option 1 - One Unitary Authority	Net 5 year revenue savings of £45.4m (£18.2m annual) - 4.7% *	1
Option 2a - Two Unitary Authorities	Net 5 year revenue savings of £17.3m (£10.3m annual) - 2.7% *	2
Option 3 - Three Unitary Authorities + Combined Authority	Net 5 year revenue savings of £11.1m (£5.4m annual) - 1.4% *	3
Option 2b - Three Unitary Authorities	Net 5 year revenue savings of £5.6m (£5.5m annual) - 1.4% *	4

* of estimated net budget requirement

The non-financial assessment

The options have also been evaluated against a set of non-financial criteria, based on discussions with senior civil servants at the Department for Communities and Local Government, together with similar studies that have been undertaken elsewhere within the country. In summary:

- **Option One:** A single county-wide unitary model would achieve the highest annual revenue savings for investment in local priorities, whilst offering clear accountability, simplified arrangements for partners, and a strategic focus to maximise opportunities for communities and businesses. The challenge would be to develop a model that balances strategic coordination with local need;
- **Option Two:** A multiple unitary model offers clear accountability, together with a focus on the distinctive characteristics and challenges in different parts of the county and delivery of modest savings. However, the multiple unitary options would increase complexity for local partners and present risks in terms of the disaggregation of critical child and adult safeguarding services. This option would not provide the scale and capacity to offer significant efficiencies or longer term sustainability;
- **Option Three:** A 'Combined Authority' option offers a potential model for balancing the benefits of multiple unitaries with county-wide scale for strategic services such as social care and strategic planning. However, this model offers the lowest level of savings and risks recreating the issues of a two tier system, with reduced local accountability. A major challenge would be designing the governance arrangements to allow quick and effective decisions and balance potentially conflicting interests to mutual benefit. The 'Combined Authority' model is untested in the context of replacing a two-tier system.

The non-financial appraisal is summarised in the matrix below.

Option	Service Performance	Democratic Leadership & Accountability	Local Engagement & Decision Making	Sustainability				Average sustainability score	Total score	Non-Financial Rank
				Economic Growth	Skills & Capacity	Engagement of supply chain (business and supply chain)	Coterminosity with partners (partnership working)			
Option One: Single Unitary	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1.25	6.25	1
Option Two: Multiple Unitary	3	3	1	3	3	2	3	2.75	9.75	3
Option Three: Combined Authority Option	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1.75	7.75	2

1 - high scoring, 2 - medium scoring, 3 - low scoring

The conclusion

The options appraisal has identified that a single county-wide unitary model offers the greatest likelihood of meeting the needs of Buckinghamshire in the future. Key benefits highlighted in the options appraisal were:

- **a single point** of accountability and responsibility for the quality of all local authority services within the area, supported by a single executive function
- **enhancement** of existing county-wide social care and safeguarding services through closer connection with related services such as housing, leisure and benefits
- **simplified** arrangements from the perspectives of the public, partners and businesses
- **protection** of a robust platform for further health and social care integration
- **opportunities** to improve the conditions for economic growth by bringing together related services such as spatial planning, housing, transport and infrastructure
- **ability** to maximise the investment over the longer term in preventative services

The key challenge identified with this option would be to provide confidence to residents that a large single unitary council would be able to respond to distinctive local needs, respect local identity and put decision-making in the hands of local communities.

Blueprint for a new county-wide single unitary council for Buckinghamshire

Our proposition is to abolish the county council and the four district councils and establish a brand new, county-wide single unitary council at the forefront of modern local government, committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all local residents, designed to engage effectively with each of the multiple communities county-wide, and to develop

a prosperous and sustainable future for Buckinghamshire.

This section sets out a blueprint for what a new council could look like. This is for illustrative purposes; ultimately it will be for a brand new council to design its own vision, priorities and operating model.

A new vision

Our vision for the future of Buckinghamshire is to provide a new form of civic leadership fit for purpose in 2020 and beyond, one that gives local people a stronger say in the choices that affect them and enables each local community – from Buckingham to Burnham – to realise its own shared vision for the future.

Our proposal is for a brand new form of local government which builds upon the strong track record of the four district councils and the county council, whilst seizing the opportunity to design and establish new structures that ensure interests are represented at the right level, so that decisions can be taken to deliver the best outcomes.

Our vision is to redefine the role of the public sector from one of control and top down dialogue to one of enabling and facilitating initiative, innovation and ambition, whilst at the same time strengthening the safety net for the most vulnerable and removing the gaps that people can slip through.

To date it has not been possible to achieve a consensus between the county council and the district councils on the preferred end state of any reorganisation. Our proposition has been developed to reflect what we have heard from residents, businesses, parish and town councils and other key stakeholders.

Our ambition for a new county-wide single unitary council for Buckinghamshire:

- **Single voice** – speaking up on behalf of residents, businesses and partners
- **More local** – delivering an innovative locality based structure built on the ambition of our town and parish councils who are leading the way both locally and nationally, local area planning committees, and new, legally constituted Community Boards with decision making powers
- **Better quality** – improving the quality, cohesiveness and accessibility of services, with local delivery enabled by a network of multi-agency Community Hubs
- **More efficient** – moving £18m of council tax payers money each year away from management overheads and investing it in priority, front line services

Single Voice

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire, aligned with key partnership structures already in place such as the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group Federation, would have the strategic accountability to deliver a place shaping agenda, seizing the opportunities of growth as the catalyst for change.

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire, with a single strategic voice, would be able to be a powerful advocate for ensuring that the opportunities and needs of Buckinghamshire shape the emerging sub-national agenda and the commitment (through the National Infrastructure Commission) to address barriers to growth. It would be able to build upon the initiative that has created England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance – an emerging Sub-National Transport Board – using the ability of its civic leaders to develop momentum and deliver a change agenda. It would have the professional skills required to deliver an ambition for Buckinghamshire in a way that has not previously been possible.

More Local

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would have the confidence to enable greater empowerment at a local level. Through the implementation of new, stronger and well-resourced local area structures, transparency and accountability of decision making could be strengthened and the delivery of things that matter most to residents could be managed wherever possible at the local level. Key features could include:



a new devolution **offer to town and parish councils**, with flexible opportunities and support to enable them to take on responsibility for services and assets currently run by county and district councils and to deliver these far more locally – with packages tailored according to local ambition and priorities;

5

local area planning committees, which ensure that decisions on planning issues continue to be taken at a local level;

19

new local 'Community Boards', which give local councillors the authority and the resources to take local decisions on the issues that affect local people.

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be better for businesses, working in partnership to set the long-term direction and create the conditions that allows businesses to thrive, with a focus on investing in skills, transport infrastructure, encouraging business growth and playing to the strengths of the county's economy, particularly those sectors that will shape the lives of our residents in the future.

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be able to maintain the excellent quality of education across Buckinghamshire, sustain the momentum in transforming health and social care, and improving children's services, and lead whole system integration to meet the growing demands of a changing population.

By reducing from 236 two tier Councillors to 98 single tier Councillors, a new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire could deliver clearer local accountability, with a saving of £1.2m.

Better Quality

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would clarify accountability and enable customer needs to be managed simply and holistically, taking a customer focused approach to supporting need at every stage of life to improve outcomes for all.

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be able to deliver a **single point of contact and a single website** for residents, businesses and town and parish councils. The county council currently receives 680 telephone calls per month from residents trying to access district council services, with an annual cost of £34k. A single telephone number,

with clear links to town and parish councils, would put an end to this frustration for residents.

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be able to use its resources to develop a network of **multi-agency community hubs**, enabling residents to access services from a place local to them.

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be able to eliminate duplication and deliver faster, leaner decision-making, ensuring that Buckinghamshire remains a place in which entrepreneurs want to create the future.

More Efficient

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire provides the greatest potential to cut bureaucracy and release efficiency savings for investment in local priorities, whilst ensuring at the same time that the safeguards valued by local communities are maintained.

A new county-wide unitary council would be able to deliver **£18.2m ongoing annual net revenue savings**. One off transition costs of £16.2m would be affordable within existing resources and repayable within three years. Council Tax equalisation is achievable within five years, and would cost £2.2m in year one. A return on investment of **£45m (282% over the 5 year period) in net revenue savings would be achievable over the first five years of the new council**.

Together, the five councils hold up to **£1bn** in assets. A recent property review highlighted the potential for net capital receipts of up to £48m by rationalising the county council's assets alone. This could be significantly enhanced by looking at the

opportunities across the wider public estate.

A new county-wide unitary council would be able to ensure that the total reserves currently held by the five councils (**£285m as at 1 April 2016**) are effectively deployed to manage risks and invested in delivering the priorities of our residents, communities and businesses.

Council tax can be equalized at the lowest level in the first five years of a unitary, meaning council tax payers in Chiltern, South Bucks and Aylesbury Vale districts would have their bills reduced to the level paid in Wycombe district.

A single unitary council would not only be able to maximise the resources available to local government but would release efficiencies across county-wide partners, including housing associations and local charities, who allocate considerable resource in navigating their way through the different operating models of five councils.

Transition to Transformation

A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be built on the strong track record of the legacy councils, which collectively have the delivery credentials to underpin this vision, together with recent relevant experience of local government reform in areas such as Wiltshire, Durham and Shropshire.

The transition plan illustrates that a new county-wide unitary council could be in place by 1 April 2019. The establishment of a new council would be phase one of a journey, not the end in itself. It would provide a building block for a future which will be connected to growth in the

region and in the UK as a whole, and offer the potential for developing a devolution deal with government in the future.

The implementation of a major change project inevitably comes with transitional costs as well as potential short term risks to service continuity. The costs will be significantly outweighed by the long term gain to local residents and businesses. Risks can be systematically mitigated, as demonstrated by evidence of successful change already managed by the councils in Buckinghamshire, and from the experience of other new county-wide unitary authorities.

Public sector reform is essential for the future of Buckinghamshire and now is the time for change

What will a new county-wide single unitary council mean?

For residents

- Less confusion about who does what
- Simple access to all services - one phone number, one website, local community hubs
- Consistent quality of service throughout Buckinghamshire
- Joined up, integrated services tailored to local needs
- Resources targeted at individuals/communities in need to maximise life chances
- Services for all residents, and particularly the most vulnerable, protected and enhanced during a period of change
- Less taxpayers money spent on management overheads and more on front line services
- More influence at local level to tackle community issues and shape local services
- Stronger, clearer local leadership through single tier elected councillors
- Strong voice for Buckinghamshire at a national level

For businesses

- Collaboration at a strategic level on issues such as use of Business Rates
- Single interface with local government for the Local Enterprise Partnership/business community
- Single account for businesses in accessing council services such as planning, licensing, trading standards
- Streamlined inspection regime with speedy decision making and reduced red tape

- A council using its resources and buying power to add value for business growth
- A single Buckinghamshire wide tourism offer
- Opportunity to discount business rates in certain parts of the county through enterprise zones to stimulate growth and start-ups

For parish and town councils

- Opportunities for more devolved accountability, resources and choice
- Local decision making on services, assets and choices specific to a locality
- Support with capacity, expertise, infrastructure and technology
- Single contact point for accessing support and advice from the unitary council
- Single consultation on all unitary council decisions that impact on the locality through Community Boards
- An end to the tensions between two-tier councils

For the voluntary and community sector

- Easier to do business - one council to work with in partnership
- Streamlined opportunities for accessing capacity building support
- Streamlined decision making on local funding through the new Community Boards
- Stronger engagement at a strategic level through a new Cabinet/Voluntary and Community Sector Forum and at a local level through participation in the new Community Boards

For elected members

- Influence over the full range of local government responsibilities in their local area
- The resources and decision making authority to quickly resolve issues
- Investment in training, development and support
- Stronger, clearer strategic leadership through one Executive
- Opportunities to represent Buckinghamshire in regional and national partnerships

For council employees

- One vision and one set of values
- Improved opportunities for career progression and opportunities for specialist work
- Larger teams, with increased capacity and resilience against absence
- Greater opportunities to resolve issues for customers first time
- The data and information needed to work effectively

For partners

- Less complex partnership working landscape, with aligned boundaries
- Single local government authority to talk to
- Efficiencies through collaboration at scale on a Buckinghamshire platform
- Consistent set of messages from local government in Buckinghamshire about priorities
- Single voice to represent Buckinghamshire's interests at national and regional levels

For central government

- Single council to talk to on public policy issues – including devolution, business rates, housing growth
- Sustainable local government model that minimises reliance on central government funding whilst ensuring ongoing investment in essential front line services
- Value for money service delivery and efficient use of public sector resources and estate.



A

Part A

The Need for Change

Buckingham Public Services Landscape

Local government

The county of Buckinghamshire has been an administrative unit for over 125 years. The current distribution of responsibilities between the county and district councils dates back to the 1974 reorganisation of Local Government, although there have been some changes in responsibilities since then (such as the move of Public Health responsibilities to the county council from the NHS in April 2013). Local Government comprises:

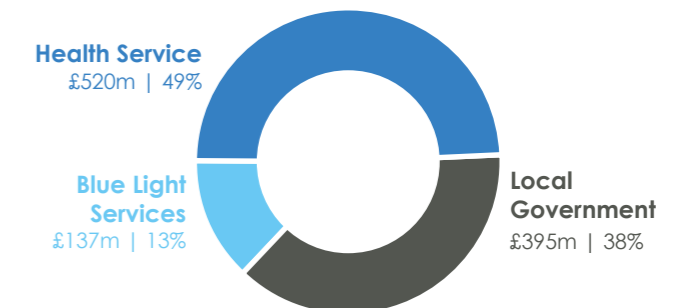
Buckinghamshire County Council	49	elected county councillors
Aylesbury Vale District Council Chiltern District Council South Bucks District Council Wycombe District Council	187	elected district councillors

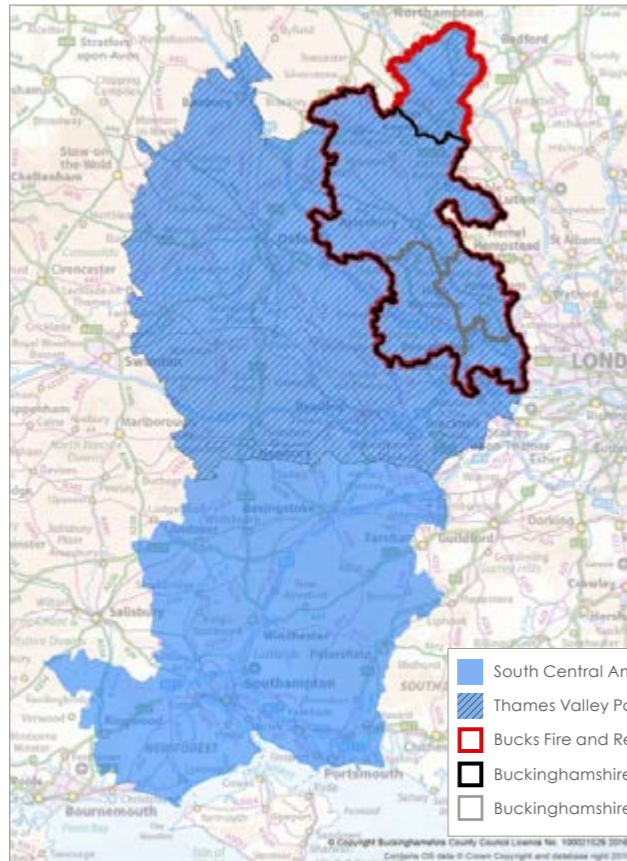
168 parish and town Councils cover all areas of Buckinghamshire, with the exception of the unparished area of High Wycombe.

The county, district and town/parish councils have a combined net budget of £394.5m of which £331.7m is spent by the county council and £50.4m by the four district councils. Together, the parish and town precepts raised £12.4m in 2016/17. Buckinghamshire currently generates £162m in business rates, £50m of which is retained by the county and district councils.

Across the county and district councils, 21% of councillors are accountable for 86% of the local government resources.

Local Public Sector Spend (net budget requirement 2016/17)





Blue light services

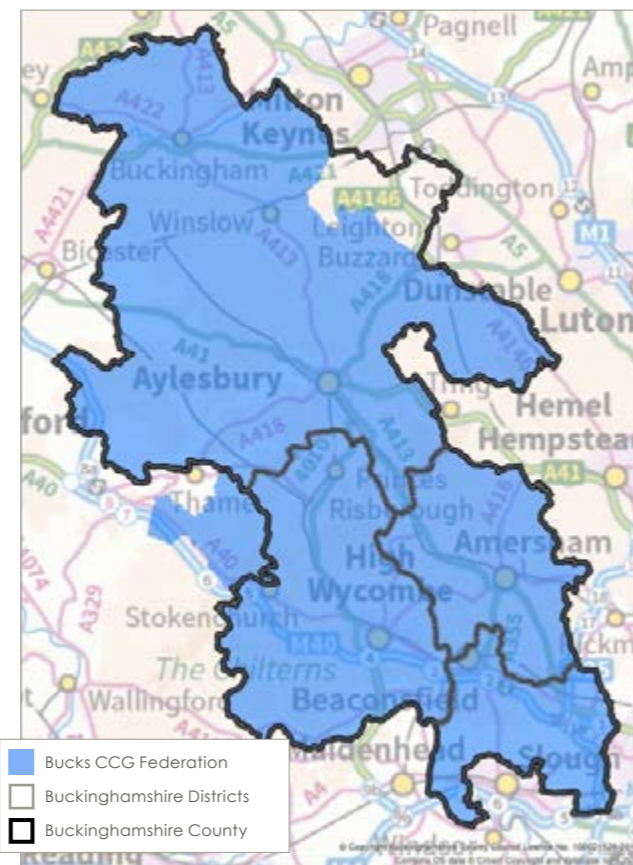
Buckinghamshire is served by:

- **Thames Valley Police constabulary** (Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes Berkshire and Oxfordshire)
- **Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service**
- **South Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust** (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire)

Health Services

Health services are provided by

- **Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Federation** – Aylesbury Vale & Chiltern CCGs have recently decided to create a federated 'one team' approach in order to improve patient care and save money by avoiding duplication and improving efficiency.
- **Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust**
- **Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust** (Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire)
- **Health Watch Bucks** is the independent champion for residents working to shape and improve health and social care services across the county.



"Our strong relationships with our communities, member practices and partner organisations have enabled us to work as an integrated health and social care system in order to improve health and wellbeing across our population. We will continue to build on this and ensure that as far as possible our work and services become even more aligned across Buckinghamshire"

Aylesbury Vale CCG Annual Report 2015

Skills

As a result of the recent Thames Valley Area Review, Amersham and Wycombe FE College and Aylesbury FE College have agreed to combine to create a single FE College on Buckinghamshire geography. This will provide the strategic capacity to work with partners in tackling the skills shortages in Buckinghamshire, linked to the unfolding growth agenda.

Buckinghamshire Advantage is a limited company which acts as the operational arm of BTVLEP on the delivery of its capital schemes, ensuring local growth funds are invested to maximum effect. It also promotes and delivers capital projects helping Buckinghamshire's economy develop sustainably.

Business & Economic Development Infrastructure

Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) is a business-led 'partnership of equals' between local government and the private sector, focused on building the conditions for sustainable economic growth in the county, including through securing Local Growth Funds and engaging with government on strategic infrastructure requirements. The county and district councils all occupy seats on the BTVLEP Board.

Voluntary & community sector infrastructure

Community Impact Bucks (CIB) is the umbrella organisation providing support services to over 900 local charities and voluntary and community groups across Buckinghamshire. CIB is also the nationally accredited Volunteer Centre for Buckinghamshire. CIB receives financial support from both county and district councils.

Heart of Bucks is the Community Foundation for Buckinghamshire which promotes charitable giving and provides project funding for local charities and not-for-profit organisations.

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is a business-led business focused organisation which exists to support businesses in the County to reach their full growth potential. It provides an information and support hub for new, established and growing businesses across Buckinghamshire. There are 32,050 businesses in Buckinghamshire and currently almost 9,000 are Buckinghamshire Business First members. 62% of the county's private sector workforce is employed within those member companies. 50% of the BTVLEP Board are BBF directors and BBF is recognised by Government as the BTVLEP Growth Hub.

The Clare Foundation supports voluntary sector organisations in becoming more efficient and effective through programmes, mentoring, shared best practice and networking forums

Local councils infrastructure

Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils (MKBALC) is the membership organisation representing the needs of parish and town councils across the historic county.

Strategic Partnership Working

The key public service providers in the county all operate across a Buckinghamshire geography and strong strategic partnership arrangements are firmly embedded on a Buckinghamshire platform.

Health and Wellbeing Board

The Health & Wellbeing Board and the Buckinghamshire Healthy Leaders Group already provide a forum for progressing the joint commissioning of services between local government and the NHS. The Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP) footprint includes Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Councils. There is a strong relationship between the Health and Wellbeing Board and the independent Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Boards for Children and Adults. The Boards also include representatives from both county and district councils.

Children's Improvement Board

The Buckinghamshire Children's Improvement Board was established in response to the 'inadequate' OFSTED rating received by the county council and the Safeguarding Board in 2014. The multi-agency Board has overseen a focused improvement journey, achieving significant

improvements to services for children and their families, including a stronger partnership approach. It will be important to ensure that the improvement momentum is sustained and that partners continue to work effectively together with the shared ambition of keeping children and young people in Buckinghamshire safe, healthy and happy.

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The Buckinghamshire Safer and Stronger Communities Board operates as a county-wide crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP). The district councils also operate district based CDRPs.

Natural Environment Partnership

The Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership brings together partners to work together in driving positive change for the natural environment. The Partnership includes representatives from both county and district councils.

England's Economic Strategic Alliance

England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance is a partnership of nine Local Transport Authorities and four Local Enterprise Partnerships, working together with the shared aim of addressing identified barriers to economic activity and raising productivity to match, and where possible exceed, that of our global competitors. The Alliance represents a population of 3.35 million, with an economy valued at £92.5bn.

Buckinghamshire County Council has taken a leading role in the development of the Alliance. The Leader of the county council currently chairs the Joint Leaders Board, and the county council also hosts the officer support.

The initial focus for the Alliance has been the development of an overarching transport



strategy. The partners have established a Strategic Transport Forum and are currently working on a proposal for a statutory sub-national transport body which could see the devolution of responsibility for national and regional transport infrastructure and for bus and public transport, together with the funding to support local bus services and highways improvements previously undertaken by the Highways Agency. The Alliance also has an ambition to tackle priorities such as digital infrastructure, energy networks, waste and water. In time, this Alliance may provide the partnership working to underpin a potential Combined Authority and devolution deal.

The Case for Public Service Reform

A Changing County

Buckinghamshire is an attractive and relatively affluent county. It is a successful place to do business, contributing £14.8bn in GVA to UK economy and ranking third in terms of GVA productivity. The county enjoys low unemployment, higher-than-average household incomes and good health outcomes, yet we also have a number of challenges.

The profile of Buckinghamshire is set to change significantly over the next twenty years. By 2033, there could be an additional 60,000 plus residents, plus a further 50,000 houses if the emerging local plans are approved. The lower and mid-range socio economic groups are increasing, whilst the higher socio-economic groups are decreasing. The population over the age of 65 is increasing, as are levels of disability. Buckinghamshire is becoming even more multi-cultural and diverse.

Past success is no longer a guarantee of continued prosperity. The need for change has become all the more apparent in recent years, a period that has seen rapid changes in

attitudes and expectations amongst residents and businesses alike, together with rapid increases in demand.

Set against this backdrop the role of strong and effective strategic leadership is critical if we are to seize the opportunities of growth and balance these with the need to protect and enhance the quality of what makes Buckinghamshire the special place it is. It is vital that the model of local government is able to transform to provide this leadership for the future.

Sustainable Services

Changes in public expectation and demand are increasingly placing pressures on our public services that make them unaffordable in the medium to long term. Research conducted by Ipsos Mori identifies that, whilst residents may not fully appreciate the extent of the challenges, they accept that there is simply not enough money to go around and the need to do things differently. Fiscal constraint is impacting not just on local government but also on other critical public services providers, such as health services, as well as the voluntary and community sector, placing pressure on the system as a whole.

All councils in Buckinghamshire have worked hard to drive efficiencies in back office services, innovations in delivery and income generation opportunities in order to relieve the burden on both national and local taxation.

However, it is increasingly apparent that this strategy will just not be sufficient to deliver sustainable public services for the future. By the end of this current financial year, the county council will have delivered annual savings totalling £145m since April 2010. The county and district councils are already facing further savings in excess of £30m over the three years from 1st April 2017.

Bringing together the two tier system provides significant opportunities to streamline functions and design services to meet future, rather than historical, needs. Experience in those counties that have established unitary authorities provides clear evidence that savings will be significant, and greater than originally forecast. Two years after the creation of Wiltshire Council, Cllr Ricky Rogers, Leader of the Labour Opposition Group which had opposed the creation of the unitary council said "the projection that merging the former Wiltshire councils would produce considerable savings has happened, cushioning the blow of government funding cuts".

Customer Expectations

The two tier system has long been seen as overly complex and ineffective at managing end to end customer demand. Repeatedly we hear that no one would design such a system today – for example, where county council public health responsibilities for addressing such long term issues as obesity and healthy lifestyle choices are split from the district council decision makers who determine priorities for leisure and housing.

Residents continue to be confused about the respective roles of different councils and the reason for the split of responsibilities. 78% of people believe that the county council is responsible for rubbish collection and 64% think that they are also responsible for sports and leisure, when both of these functions are the responsibility of the district councils (Buckinghamshire County Council Reputation Tracker April 2013). The county council receives an average of 680 calls per month for district related services, at a cost of £34k pa, creating a dis-jointed and confusing customer journey.

As the pace of technological change continues, so the need for reform in public service delivery becomes all the more pressing.

78% | people believe that the County Council is responsible for rubbish collection

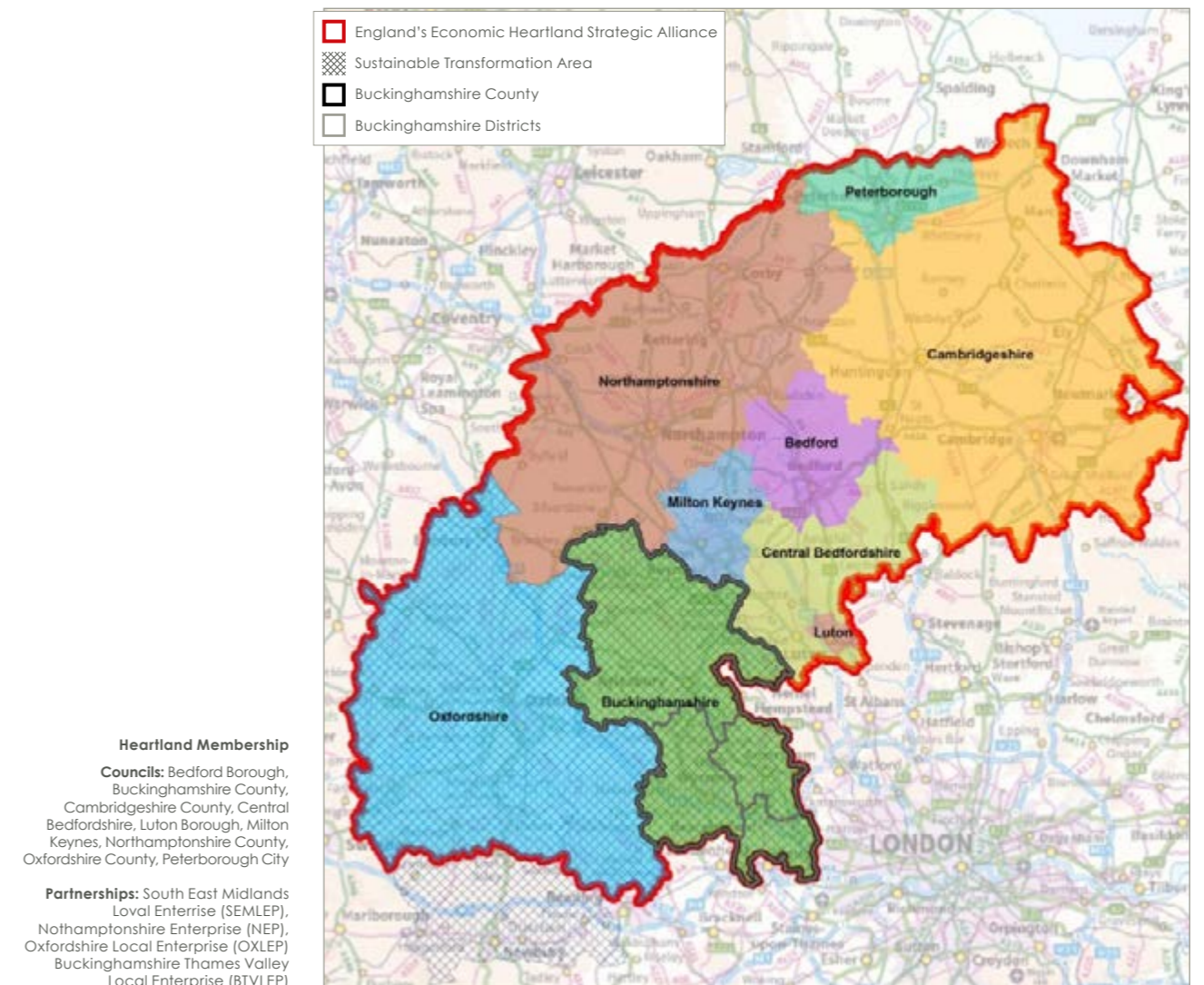
64% | think that they are also responsible for Sports and Leisure

The number of council managers has reduced significantly over the past five years, but those who remain have to spend time trying to broker agreements across separate policy frameworks and independent decision making bodies, to try and manage the risk that vulnerable people could fall through the gaps in services. For example, many of Buckinghamshire's adult social care clients receive one or more benefits administered by the district councils yet they have to provide information to both county and district councils and this data is not used proactively to promote their independence and reduce the need for intensive social care services.

Public Service Landscape

Across public services, the meaning of what is strategic and what is local is rapidly being redefined. Representing the interests of Buckinghamshire residents increasingly means being a powerful advocate in a complex network of partnership and integration arrangements on a bigger geography – from the Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP) footprint for health and social care to England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance. There are also growing opportunities for scaling up public services across traditional boundaries to drive efficiencies and service improvements.

At a more local level, the increasing shift towards community empowerment has led to a move by the county council to devolve services to communities, and in particular to town and parish councils, putting local services in the hands of local people. 86 of the 168 town and parish councils in Buckinghamshire have taken on county council services through devolved arrangements. Roles and responsibilities in the current 'three tier' system are called further into question by the changing landscape of national devolution



which places Buckinghamshire in the context of a larger regional geography. For example, the Government has recently tasked the National Infrastructure Commission with reviewing the governance needed to enable integrated planning and infrastructure decision making across the wider Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford region. England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance, the partnership of nine Local Transport Authorities and four Local Enterprise Partnerships, will be key to giving Buckinghamshire a strong voice in future governance arrangements.

Bringing together the two tier system provides the opportunity for better strategic decision making on issues such as strategic planning, housing, transport and closer integration of health and social care, together with better local decision making reflecting different local priorities.

Consensus

Everyone is in agreement that a change is needed. The debate now is about designing the right model for future public services in Buckinghamshire.

In May 2016, Buckinghamshire County Council took the decision to carry out a review into the options for modernising local government and invited interested parties to collaborate in this process. We have greatly appreciated the very positive response from a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders, and their willingness to engage with us in this debate, sharing their views, experiences and aspirations for Buckinghamshire.

Local employers have a genuine concern over the sustainability of the current system as evidenced by the fact that Buckinghamshire Business First, on behalf of the business community, independently crowd-funded and commissioned a report into the financial case for reorganisation in September 2014.

The Buckinghamshire and Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership is clear that reform is necessary, particularly given recent government policy. The current governance arrangements fail to drive the unified team approach needed to drive economic and housing performance. The business community are keen to work with the public sector to reach the best future outcome.

The current arrangements make no sense from a resident perspective. This quote is drawn from the discussions with local residents, presented in the research report provided by Ipsos Mori (Local Government Reorganisation in Buckinghamshire, September 2016)

"Our local authorities need to look to rationalise their organisations and make the best use of taxpayers' money for the benefit of businesses and residents alike"

Guy Lachlan Buckinghamshire Business Group

"I think we all agree that a unitary authority makes sense. I'd like to keep the local parish and town councils. They'd have to have a real say, not like now, but have a real say in what happens in their communities."

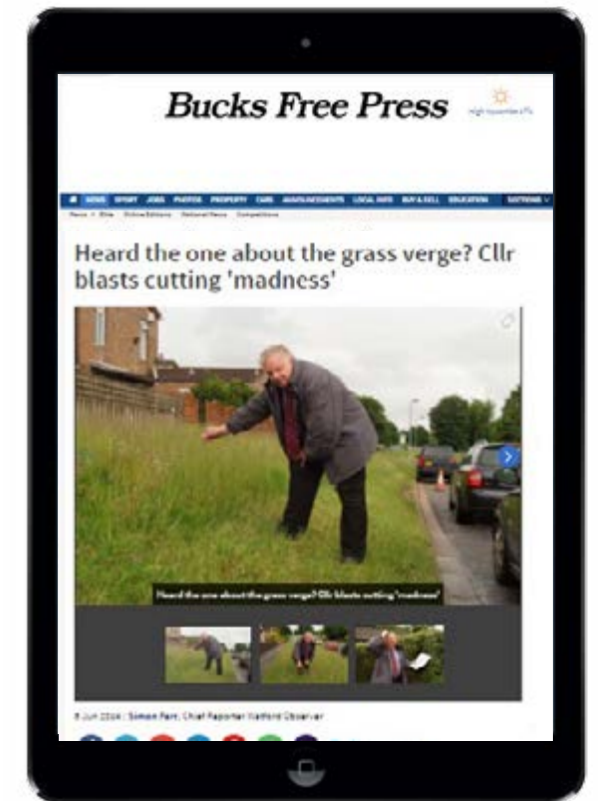
Female resident Buckingham

One parish councillor's comment on the online survey conducted across parish and town councils summed up many of the responses:

"I do not see that much works well within the 3 tier government system. It is antiquated and needs changing. Local residents are usually very vague about which group handles which responsibility and thus have to chase around each one to find out."

Parish Councillor

Whilst the four district councils declined the county council's invitation to collaborate on the development of this business case, they have acknowledged the need for a debate on the future delivery of public services in Buckinghamshire. In September 2016, the leaders of the four district councils announced that they had commissioned Deloitte to undertake a separate review into the future of local government in the county.



A Buckinghamshire verge cut by the contractors of three different authorities was described as 'complete madness' by a local councillor.

Now is the Time for Change

The current structure is not fit for purpose for current challenges, nor is it sustainable in terms of managing the future needs of residents or businesses. In Buckinghamshire, the opportunity is not just to release resources to cushion the reduction in funding, but also to lever positive growth for the future.

Now is the time for change.



Buckinghamshire's Future Needs from the Public Sector

Buckinghamshire is an attractive county with rich heritage and landscape. Over a quarter of the county is included within the Chiltern area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a further third covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt. The county enjoys good transport links, particularly to London. Buckinghamshire has a long heritage as an entrepreneurial county. It plays an important role in the overall economy of the UK, ranking 3rd among England's 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships in terms of GVA productivity.

Many parts of Buckinghamshire are relatively affluent with low unemployment, higher-than-average household incomes and good health outcomes. The workforce is highly skilled and levels of educational attainment are generally high. There is a strong sense of community spirit - with many residents actively participating in community life and engaging with local issues. There is also a strong sense of pride in the local area, although there are different challenges faced by rural and urban communities. A detailed profile of Buckinghamshire is at Appendix 1.

The profile of Buckinghamshire is set to change significantly over the next twenty years which brings significant challenges and opportunities for the local public sector.

A Changing County

Buckinghamshire has a population of 528,000 residents, made up of approximately 212,000 households.

ONS projections show expected population growth of 66,000 people between now and 2031. However this projection does not take into account recently emerging local plans which suggest that approximately 50,000 new homes will be built over the next 15-20 years. Early estimates suggest that the total population increase could be up to 120,000 people over this period.

The lower and mid-range socio economic groups are increasing, whilst the higher socio-economic groups are decreasing. We experience a net loss of young educated adults, but net gains of families with children and mid-life adults. The population over the age of 65 is increasing, as are levels of disability.



66k | expected population growth between now and 2031

50k | new homes will be built over the next 15-20 years

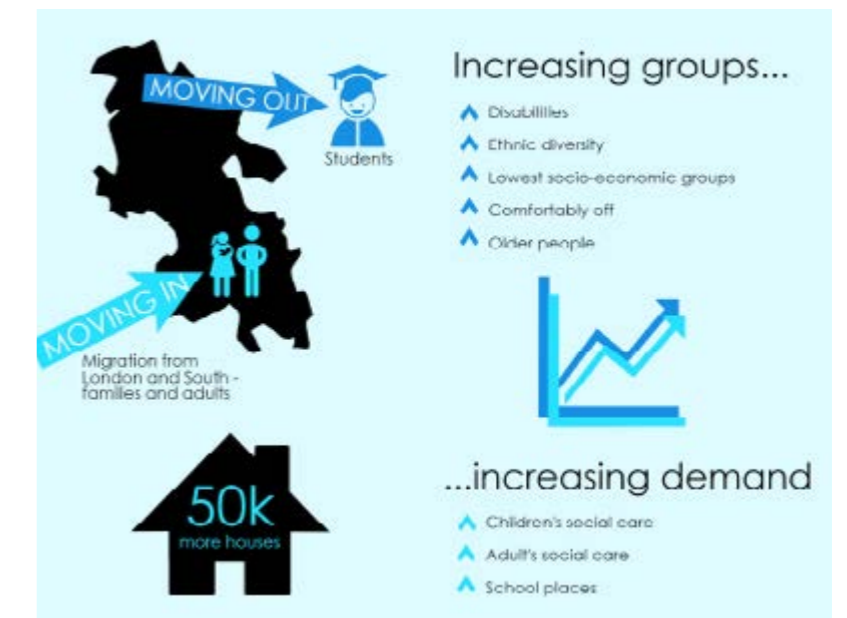
In 2016 the 65+ age group in Buckinghamshire accounted for 18% of the population – by 2031 we expect this to have increased to 23%. This accounts for 62% of total population growth over this period. By far the biggest increase will be observed in our 'oldest old' – the 80+ age group. The gap between disability-free and total life expectancy is increasing. The average total life expectancy for a man in Buckinghamshire is 81.4, with the average disability-free life expectancy for a man being 68.6 – meaning 12.8 years of limited life; a woman in Buckinghamshire can expect 16.7 years of limited life.

Buckinghamshire is becoming even more multi-cultural and diverse. By 2031, 20% of the population will be from black and minority ethnic groups, with some areas such as High Wycombe and Aylesbury, having significantly higher BME populations than others.

These changes, along with shifting behaviours are resulting in increasing demand for some services – including children's and adults' social care, supported transport, school places, specialised and supported housing, and health services.

A new model of public services will need to engage effectively with diverse local communities to respond to their differing needs and help them to shape the future of their surroundings. Innovative new models of delivery will be needed to meet the growing

A different Buckinghamshire



demands on services within reducing financial resources and to encourage and support communities to do more for themselves.

Resident Priorities

Road maintenance is consistently identified by residents as the public service most in need of improvement, followed by maintenance of pavements and bus services. There are 3,199km of highways across Buckinghamshire, 44% of which are classified. Current estimates indicate that an investment of £108m over a four year period would be required in order to bring the classified roads up to a reasonable standard and then maintain them in that condition. A further £28.3m would be required to fully restore the 2,461km of footpaths. A new model of public services must listen and respond to resident's priorities and deliver improvements to key services such as roads and pavements.

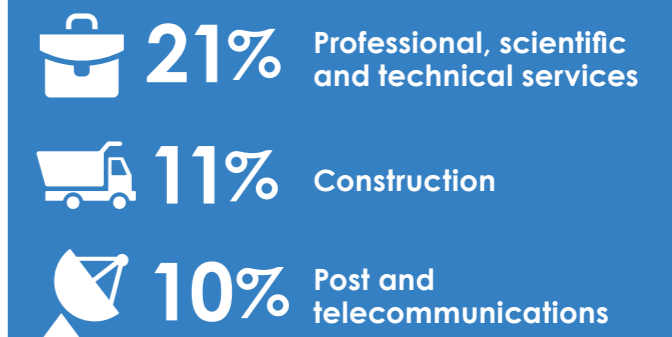
Economic Growth

Buckinghamshire is widely recognised as the 'Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain', with more new businesses starting up and succeeding than anywhere else in the UK. Buckinghamshire is a small firm economy with the highest proportion of firms employing fewer than five people, at 75.8% of all firms. The most prominent local business sector is professional, scientific and technical services (21% of local businesses),

followed by construction (11%), then post and telecommunications (10%).

40% of our small firms (with less than 5 employees) are located in rural parts of Buckinghamshire – and these businesses experience more barriers to growth than many, including a lack of affordable housing; poor business infrastructure; a shortage of key services; a more restrictive labour market (characterised by a lower skilled, ageing workforce); a shortage of business networks; planning constraints; and a lack of access to business support and suitable finance.

Prominent local business sectors



The Buckinghamshire LEP evidence base identifies a number of challenges including a lack of high-growth business start-ups, lack of early-stage business accommodation, and weak specialist business networks. The impact of Brexit on inward investment and business start-ups is yet to become clear, but seizing the opportunities and minimizing any transitional risks will clearly be a priority going forward.

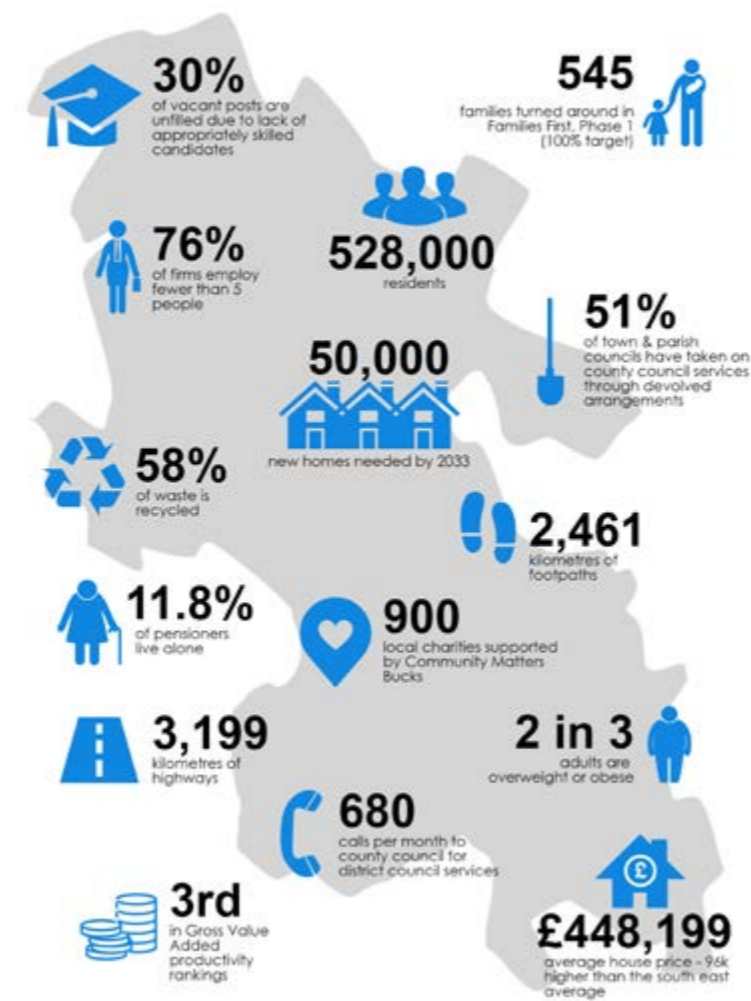
The National Infrastructure Commission has been tasked with bringing forward proposals and options for the long-term infrastructure priorities to unlock growth, jobs and housing within the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford corridor over the next 30 years. The remit for this work includes a review of the governance needed to enable integrated planning and infrastructure decision making across the wider area in a timely manner.

The councils themselves are on a journey to becoming much more commercial, and developing their own business activities such as ValeCommerce, a company established by Aylesbury Vale District Council, and Buckinghamshire County Council's commercial investment property portfolio, both designed to create income streams for the respective councils. As well as generating income, such initiatives help instill a better understanding of business disciplines within the council, which helps council staff better understand the challenges faced by business

Business growth will be critical to the future success of the county. We have listened to business, and they have told us clearly what they need from their council. A new model of public services must make Buckinghamshire a better place for business to succeed – including building alliances to invest in

infrastructure such as broadband, road and rail, business accommodation, and skills. Joined up decision making and accountability is needed for those issues that are fundamental to promoting economic growth – strategic planning, employment sites, housing, transport and infrastructure - to provide a whole place approach. A unified 'Team Bucks' approach – working across the BTVLEP, Bucks Business First, Skills Hub and Bucks Advantage supported by the Business Community and the public sector – is critical to deliver economic and housing outputs for Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire in numbers



Skills

Buckinghamshire faces both skill shortages and skill gaps. We experience a substantial daily loss of skilled people who commute to higher paid jobs in London – around 37% more people commute out of Buckinghamshire as commute in – meaning that local businesses struggle to secure the skills that they need. A further challenge is the 'brain drain' of educated young adults leaving the area – Buckinghamshire has a comparatively small proportion of people aged 24-30.

30% of vacant posts across public and private sectors are unfilled due to a lack of appropriately skilled applicants (compared to national average of 23%), and employers have particular shortages in the technician, higher level, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) skills required for local 'plan for growth' sectors (including engineering, digital/ IT, life sciences and medical technology, high performance technologies, creative industries, construction, and built environment). A critical issue for the future will be ensuring the availability of an appropriately skilled workforce, which keeps pace with the unfolding growth agenda in Buckinghamshire.

A new model of public services must work closely with the LEP. The new Buckinghamshire FE college and schools to respond to a significant gap in skills for local employers and play its part in ensuring that young people develop the skills that business need.



Housing

Average rents and house prices in Buckinghamshire are higher than national and regional averages. The average price of a house in Buckinghamshire is £448,199 – compared to £352,120 across the South East. The affordability ratio in Buckinghamshire (average house price to average earnings) is 13:1, considerable higher than the England average (8:1).

The demand for social housing significantly exceeds availability and although homeless acceptances in Buckinghamshire (1.75 per 1000 households) are lower than the national average (2.5 per 1000 households), there are increasing pressures on homelessness services – over the last three years homeless acceptances in Buckinghamshire have increased at almost three times the rate of those in England as a whole. Given the disproportionate growth in the population of elderly residents over the next twenty years, there is also an increasing need for additional 'extra care' accommodation which is not currently being met by the housing market, with a shortfall of some 6700 places predicted by 2035.

Finding solutions to affordable housing will be critical to tackling the skills shortages, as well as the shortage of key workers in public services such as social work and education. A step change in housing supply will require a step change in the local planning and development management process.

A new model of public services must get more of the right sort of houses built, lining up housing and planning strategies to make sure housing is provided to meet the needs of specific groups, including for social housing, for service users with support needs and solutions for older people, and to maximise use of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy funding.





Environment

Buckinghamshire's beautiful natural and historic environment is valued by residents, businesses and visitors alike. A period of unprecedented growth will inevitably place pressure on the local environment, and the benefits it provides. It is essential that growth is managed sensitively and intelligently, providing much needed infrastructure, homes and jobs whilst still protecting and enhancing our natural and historic environment and the positive benefits it brings to the wellbeing of our communities.

A new model of public services must encourage sustainable growth to protect the environmental and historic assets of the county, and mitigate the impact of development, including through rural design, sustainable transport options, green infrastructure, energy, water and flood management. Challenges will include developing the county's resilience to environmental change, including extreme weather and flooding, and maximising the use of greenspaces and countryside to promote health and wellbeing. Continuing to drive the programme to mitigate the impact of High Speed 2 will be a top priority.



Children and Young People

Resilient and successful children and families lead to resilient and successful communities which in turn drive county-wide social and economic growth and prosperity. The education system in Buckinghamshire is highly regarded and children generally enjoy good standards of health and wellbeing. There are however variations in educational and health outcomes across different groups of young people. Demand for services for children with special educational needs and disabilities and for children in need is increasing faster than population growth and is expected to increase still further as a result of housing growth.

Following an 'inadequate' OFSTED rating for children's safeguarding services in 2014, the multi-agency Children's Improvement Board has overseen a focused improvement journey, resulting in improvements to services for children and their families. Strong partnership working is now in place across public, private and voluntary sectors around a shared ambition to make Buckinghamshire a great place for all children and young people to live, be safe, to learn and achieve successful and fulfilled lives.

A new model of public services must continue to put children and young people at the heart of what everything it does. In the context of a changing education landscape, this will include building on existing good relationships with all education providers to champion educational excellence and aspiration for all children and young people, together with ensuring that sufficient investment is leveraged to build new schools, including through S106 contributions. A key priority will be to build upon the strong foundation of partnership working to lead whole systems approaches that sustain the improvement momentum, invest in resilient families and protect children and young people from harm.



Health and Wellbeing

Buckinghamshire is generally affluent and this is reflected in health outcomes that are better than the national average. However, there are still concerning levels of unhealthy lifestyles which are driving an increase in long term conditions. For example, 2 in 3 adults are overweight or obese. The prevalence of long term conditions, many of which are preventable, are expected to increase over the next five years, with the greatest increase expected in diabetes and cancer.

There are significant health inequalities in Buckinghamshire, with the most disadvantaged 20% of people experiencing poorer health outcomes, including infant mortality, premature mortality, hospital admission for a range of conditions (including coronary heart disease, circulatory disease, heart failure, stroke and diabetes).

Significant progress is being made towards integration of services between the county council and the Health Trusts on a Buckinghamshire platform. In 2014, approximately £104.3m of services commissioned by the county council and the CCGs were reviewed and a funding gap of £11.9m was forecast by 2018/19. The Integrated Care Commissioning Strategy defines a partnership between health and social care that will address the funding gap and provide person centred care to support people to live independently for longer, through the development of joint plans and pooling of budgets e.g. Better Care Fund (BCF). Work with partners to integrate prevention into care pathways and front-line activity is already a key priority, with initiatives such as Prevention Matters and Making Every Contact Count training programme becoming an important enabler.

A new model of public services must ensure that growing communities are designed in a way that will improve health outcomes. This will include mobilising all those services which impact upon the wider determinants of health to maximise the collective impact, including public health, leisure and environment provision. A key

priority will be to lead an ambitious and innovative programme of whole system integration of outcomes across services for vulnerable adults and children to invest in prevention and early intervention and reduce long term demand.

Best Practice Case Study – My Care Record

Through effective partnership working between health and social care services, My Care Record has launched in Buckinghamshire - an electronic view of a client's GP record that can be accessed locally.

My Care Record allows medical and social care professionals to access up-to-date GP records so they can make the right choices about the care and medical attention needed. The information in My Care Record will save time and could also be life-saving in some circumstances. Before My Care Record, people would have to wait for information to be sent from GPs during surgery hours, which could cause delay in providing treatment, care or medication.

Sharing this crucial information will help health and social care staff to work more closely together, creating a much smoother experience for people who need both health and social care services.





Community Safety

After a number of years of decreasing crime levels, crime increased by 12% across the county between 2014/15 and 2015/16, reflecting a wider trend across the Thames Valley. The hidden nature of some emerging areas of crime such as modern slavery, exploitation of vulnerable individuals and groups, and cyber (internet) crime means that the understanding of who is at risk is becoming more complex.

A new model of public services must work with partners at both strategic and local levels to tackle community safety priorities, including domestic violence, safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism and radicalisation and combatting child sexual exploitation.

Options Appraisal

Introduction

A strategic options appraisal for future models of unitary local government within Buckinghamshire has been undertaken. The report (published separately) was developed by the county council and validated by an independent third party. It provides an estimate of financial costs and savings and considers the non-financial benefits and limitations of each option. This section includes a summary of the findings.

Types of Reorganisation

Unitary Authorities

A Unitary Local Authority has responsibility for all council services delivered within a defined geographical area. The financial and non-financial benefits of the unitary model of local government are well established, and recent years have seen a number of areas transition from two-tier structures to various forms of unitary local government.

The last new unitary authorities were created in 2009:

- Bedfordshire County Council was abolished and two new unitary authorities were created
- Cheshire County was replaced by two new unitary authorities (East Cheshire and West Cheshire)
- Five other counties (Northumberland, Shropshire, Wiltshire, Cornwall and Durham) were replaced by single unitary authorities covering the previous county council areas

Further unitary moves were halted by the coalition government when it was formed in 2010, but have recently been reinvigorated by the Cities and Devolution Act 2016. Public debates about unitary structures of local government are currently taking place in many two tier areas across England.

Combined Authorities

Combined authorities are a relatively new form of local government structure, introduced by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and strengthened by the Cities and Devolution Act. To date there have been seven Combined Authorities formed in England.

Combined authorities are created voluntarily and allow a group of authorities to take decisions on strategic issues they feel are better considered collectively. One of the key drivers for combined authorities is to collaborate across larger geographies to deliver services at greater scale.

Existing combined authorities are primarily focused on economic growth, transport and regeneration – although changes to legislation in the Cities and Devolution Act 2016 enabled them to perform any statutory function of the member local authorities. Combined authorities, as in Manchester, are generally built on a history of strong collaboration at a strategic level, which must be considered as part of a reorganisation in Buckinghamshire. It is important to note that there are currently no examples of combined authorities delivering social care and people related services successfully.

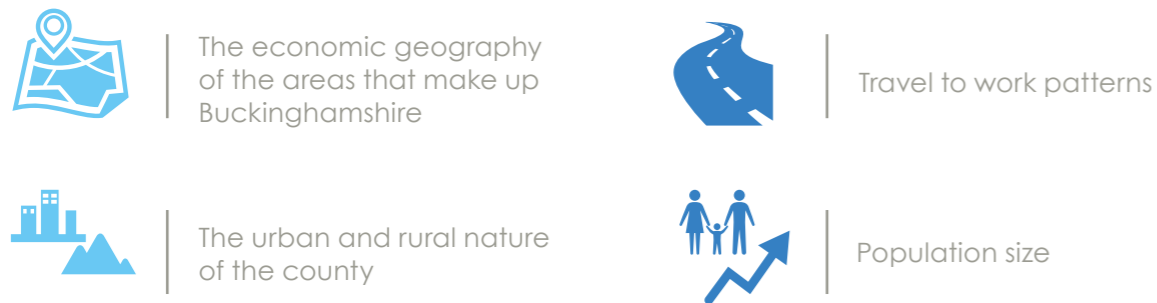
In January 2015 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee commissioned an investigation entitled 'Devolution: the next five years and beyond' which focused in particular on whether the Manchester model of devolution is suitable for other areas. The report suggested caution regarding the applicability of the Manchester model to other

areas, given that it could “not be easily lifted and dropped on to other city regions, where the physical and economic geography may differ” and that the Government could not “simply roll out the same model everywhere”.

It is important to recognise that all existing combined authorities have been implemented to aggregate and coordinate functions across metropolitan unitary authorities, rather than to manage the disaggregation of services from a predecessor county council.

Options Under Assessment

The options selected for consideration are based on:



The options under consideration are as follows:

<p>One Unitary</p>	<p>Two/Three Unitary</p>	<p>Three Unitary with Combined Authority</p>
<p>A county wide unitary responsible for delivering the full array of local authority services across Buckinghamshire</p>	<p>Would either see the county divided into North and South, or would follow a similar division to the current district boundaries</p>	<p>Three unitary authorities with strategic services pooled into a combined authority that would deliver these services county wide – for example health and social care, strategic planning and transport</p>

For the purposes of this evaluation, the creation of either two or three new unitary authorities without a combined authority is being considered as a single option (option 2), as the non-financial implications are broadly similar in both cases. Our financial analysis differentiates between the likely costs and savings available under the variants of this option.

Option three describes the creation of three new unitary authorities and a Combined Authority. For the purposes of this analysis we have assumed that the combined authority would take responsibility for delivery of social care and safeguarding services, including

public health, as well as strategic planning and transport. These services have been selected over other choices due to the geography of Buckinghamshire and a clear separation of services and responsibilities based on current skills and expertise.

Key Findings

Population Size

Throughout this year, guidance has been supplied by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to individual authorities that the optimum population size for reorganisation is in the range of 300,000 and 700,000 people and that “although this ‘range was not absolute, Ministers would ‘ask searching questions’ of proposals outside of this band’.” The table below sets out the population sizes by geography in Buckinghamshire, the options and whether they broadly align with recommended criteria.

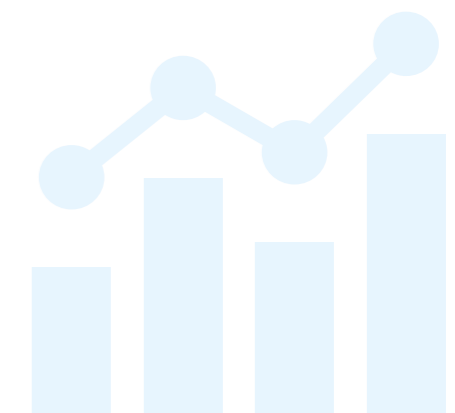
Option	Boundary	Population 2015	Population 2031	Within recommended limits?
1	County-wide Buckinghamshire Unitary	528,300	594,925	Yes
2.1	North Bucks unitary	188,700	222,888	No
	South Bucks unitary	339,600	372,03	Yes
2.2	North Bucks unitary	188,700	222,888	No
	Wycombe unitary	176,000	192,388	No
	Chiltern & South Bucks unitary	163,600	179,649	No

*Table shows population figures from 2015 ONS Mid Year Population Estimate

Financial Analysis

The financial analysis has considered the likely costs, savings, financial standing and risk which are estimated to arise under each of the three options and have been scored on the basis of:

- **Return on Investment:** based on the cost of transition, potential to generate savings and the pay-back period;
- **Financial standing:** based on risk, ongoing value for money (VFM) and financial sustainability for each option



¹ M. Smulian, 'DCLG to Unitary Bidders: Aim for Minimum Population of 300,000', Local Government Chronicle (16 March 2016).

The table below ranks the options from 1–3, with 1 representing the highest level of savings and 3 being the lowest:

Options	Score	Reasons
Option 1: Single Unitary Authority	1	<p>Greatest level of annual revenue savings (£18.2m) for a similar total investment cost. Return on investment (ROI) is estimated at around 99% (of initial costs) with an estimated overall £45.4m net saving (equivalent to ROI of 282%) over the five year period that is significantly higher than for the other options. Pay-back is estimated at 2.2 years following go-live.</p> <p>The level of savings potential would help to contribute significantly to the financial health and stability of the local government structure in the county. The scale of (net) savings that is estimated would be significantly larger than the current funding gap in 2019-20, although achievable towards the end of period.</p>
Option 2.1: Two Unitary Authorities	2	<p>2nd highest level of annual revenue savings (£10.3m) for an investment of £16.1m; with ROI of 54% and a net saving of £17.3m over the five year period. However savings and the impact of council tax harmonisation are not expected to accrue evenly. As a result return on investment and pay-back is expected to be quicker in a North Unitary than in the South. In addition the level of savings within the five year period is not significant in the context of existing funding pressures within the local government structure.</p>
Option 2.2: Three Unitary Authorities	3	<p>This option scores the lowest with savings of £5.5m (from an investment £15.5m) resulting in 33% ROI. Pay-back for the smallest Unitary is anticipated to exceed the five year period with an overall net saving of £5.6m over the five year period across all three unitaries. This would not be sufficient to contribute significantly towards the existing funding pressures within the current structures. In addition risks around financial resilience are estimated to be greater including, for example the ability to manage high risk Social Care budgets.</p>
Option 3: Three Unitary Authorities + Combined Authority	4	<p>Although the lowest level of savings (£5.4m) for reasonable high investment cost £10.9m, the model suggests that a combined authority offers a higher potential return on investment (46%) and net cumulative savings of £11.1m than in the Three Unitary option. However as above, the level of savings is not significant in the current financial climate and pay-back for the smallest Unitary is anticipated to exceed the five year period. The Combined Authority would have a more significant budget in relation to the management of high risk services such as Social Care; however this would be subject to agreement between the contributing authorities. Excluding the Combined Authority elements of their budgets, the model suggests that the size of the Unitary Authorities would be significantly smaller than any existing comparable Unitary.</p>

In conclusion, option one presents the greatest potential level of ongoing savings. These savings are a conservative estimate of what could be achievable through the consolidation of existing organisations. Once all services are brought together there will be additional savings opportunities that can be gained from economies of scale, adoption of best and optimum practices in service delivery, innovation and transformational investment.

A single unitary authority would also be able to take a strategic approach to service delivery and investment across the whole of Buckinghamshire and in doing so, be better placed to manage any financial risks, as well as take full advantage of financial opportunities that may arise.

Options two and three would offer less scope for consolidation and lower economies of scale. Cost and savings are anticipated to accrue differently across the unitary councils within these models with a stronger case being apparent for a North Unitary than for the comparable South or South East /South West

options. Under a three unitary model (both with and without the Combined Authority) it is estimated that the South East Unitary would not be able to achieve payback of transition costs and council tax harmonisation within the five year period.

The demand-led services of Adult and Children's Social Care represent by far the greatest service risk amongst any of the services currently undertaken by the districts and the county council. Disaggregation of these services would represent a significant financial risk. Under option three the ability of a combined authority to mitigate this potential risk is untested; furthermore the limited level of organisational consolidation within this option limits the level of savings potentially available.

The modelling suggests that only the Single Unitary option would provide sufficiently significant net savings over the five year period to contribute to the significant financial risks within the current financial climate within local government.

Non- Financial Analysis

For our non-financial analysis, we have considered a wide range of criteria based on the evidential requirements of the Department for Communities and Local Government, and sought to learn from similar studies that have been undertaken elsewhere within the country. The table below sets out the relative rankings that our appraisal has determined for these criteria, from 1–3 (1 being the highest). The sustainability section represents one rank overall and all criteria have been equally weighted:

Option	Service Performance	Democratic Leadership & Accountability	Local Engagement & Decision Making	Sustainability				Average sustainability score	Total score	Non-Financial Rank
				Economic Growth	Skills & Capacity	Engagement of supply chain (business and supply chain)	Coterminosity with partners (partnership working)			
Option One: Single Unitary	● 1	● 1	● 3	● 1	● 1	● 2	● 1	1.25	6.25	● 1
Option Two: Multiple Unitary	● 3	● 3	● 1	● 3	● 3	● 2	● 3	2.75	9.75	● 3
Option Three: Combined Authority Option	● 2	● 2	● 2	● 2	● 2	● 1	● 2	1.75	7.75	● 2

1 - high scoring, 2 - medium scoring, 3 - low scoring

On the balance of available evidence, our finding is that option one offers the greatest likelihood of better meeting the needs of Buckinghamshire in the future. A single unitary authority for Buckinghamshire would provide a single point of accountability and responsibility for the quality of all local authority services within the area, supported by a single executive function. This would greatly simplify arrangements from the perspectives of the public, partners and business, enabling quicker decisions taken with full democratic accountability and scrutiny.

A single unitary would also improve the conditions for economic growth by bringing together related services such as spatial planning, housing, transport and infrastructure and allowing strategic decisions over the widest possible scale, working to a single plan. Sharing the same boundaries with partners would minimise the complexity of public sector working compared with the other options.

This model would offer an enhancement of existing county-wide social care and safeguarding services through closer connection with related services such as housing, leisure and benefits and a greater ability to match resources with need than would be achievable under the other options. It also provides the most robust platform for further health and social care integration.

The greater financial scale of a single unitary would also maximise the ability of the organisation to invest over the longer term in preventative services.

The key challenge with this option would be to provide confidence to residents that a large single unitary council would be able to respond to distinctive local needs, respect local identity and put decision-making in the hands of local communities.

Option Three was the second-highest ranking. A combined authority would offer the potential for effective joint decision-making on a county-wide basis by multiple new unitary authorities and could also allow some services, such as social care, to continue to be provided across Buckinghamshire without being disaggregated. However, the success of a combined authority would turn on its ability to make decisions quickly and effectively and to balance potentially conflicting interests to mutual

benefit. The constitution and governance arrangements of a combined authority would be critical in order to achieve this. These issues would be particularly testing if, as proposed, the combined authority was required to make decisions on resource allocation for social care services as it is likely that the patterns of need and funding would not be equal across member authorities. At this point there are no precedents for a combined authority achieving this effectively; the model is untested.

Finally, there would be important considerations around the democratic accountability of decisions taken by a combined authority, especially if it is decided that a directly-elected mayor is not an appropriate option for Buckinghamshire.

Option two was consistently the lowest-ranked option. The main disadvantage of this option is the significant risk, complexity and cost likely to be associated with the disaggregation of social care and safeguarding services. It is well documented that existing smaller unitary authorities can struggle to bear the financial burden of these services especially when met with spikes in demand for high-cost placements.

A key further drawback is the likely weakness in joint decision-making and leadership in the absence of a formal vehicle for achieving this. Inevitably, decisions on issues affecting all new unitary authorities would continue to be required, especially relating to the economy, infrastructure and transport. Without a well-governed combined authority, multiple unitary authorities in Buckinghamshire could struggle to avoid deadlock on big decisions that involved competing interests and might not be able to move at a pace expected by regional and national partners and stakeholders.

Conclusion

The preferred option reached by this appraisal is for a new single unitary authority for Buckinghamshire which delivers the greatest possible level of financial savings, reduces complexity and provides a single point of accountability to the public and partners. The one unitary model allows the new authority to be an active participant in wider public service reform within and beyond the county and provides the opportunity to design and implement at scale a comprehensive offer to communities and local councils.

It is important to note that all unitary options under consideration would entail the dissolution of all existing councils, and the creation of new unitary authorities for which fresh electoral arrangements would be required. No existing organisation can therefore determine what new organisations could or should do. A new unitary authority or authorities, once established, would own and determine their own priorities.

Buckinghamshire's future includes significant population growth and a change in its demographics; whilst maximising the benefits this offers, the local economy must continue to thrive and prosper through a period of uncertainty and opportunity, contributing to a positive and sustainable environment. Public service reform must be developed in a way which supports local needs in the wider national context, and at a time of exciting new possibilities through technology.

Taking into consideration the financial and non-financial benefits, challenges and mitigating actions for each model, the finding of this options appraisal is that a new unitary council for Buckinghamshire offers the best solution to current and future challenges.

Buckinghamshire now has a choice.



B

Part B

Blueprint for a New Council

Blueprint for a new council

Our proposition is to abolish the county council and the four district councils and establish a brand new, county-wide single unitary council at the forefront of modern local government, committed to improving

the quality of life and wellbeing for all local residents, designed to engage effectively with each of the multiple communities county-wide and to develop a prosperous and sustainable future for Buckinghamshire.

A New Vision

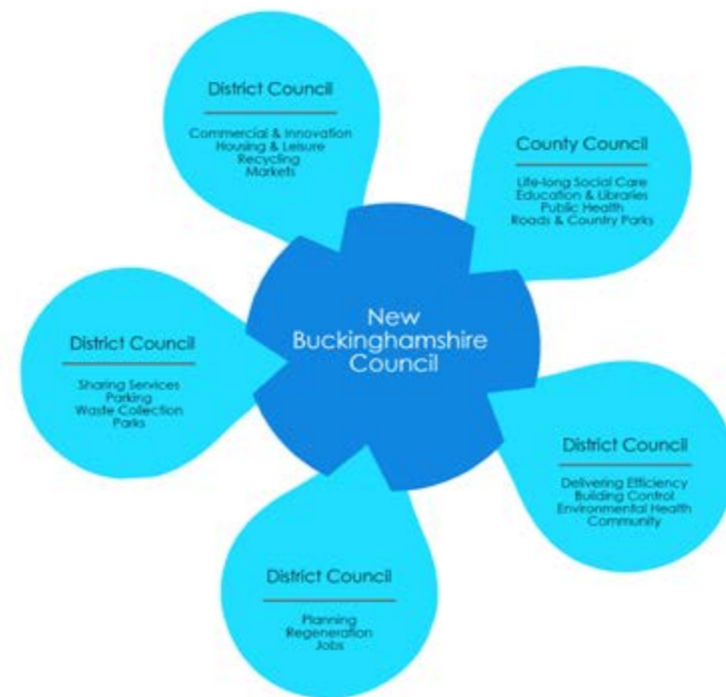
Our vision for the future of Buckinghamshire is to provide a new form of civic leadership fit for purpose in 2020 and beyond, one that gives local people a stronger say in the choices that affect them and enables each local community – from Buckingham to Burnham – to realise its own shared vision for the future.

Our vision is to redefine the role of the public sector from one of control and top down dialogue to one of enabling and facilitating initiative, innovation and ambition, whilst at the same time strengthening the safety net for the most vulnerable and removing the gaps that people can slip through.

Our proposal is for a brand new form of local government which builds upon the strong track record of the four district councils and the county council, whilst seizing the opportunity to design and establish new structures that ensure interests are represented at the right level, so that decisions can be taken to deliver the best outcomes.

The rest of this document sets out what we see as an exciting vision for the aims and ambitions of a new council. However this is for illustrative purposes; it would be a brand new council, with newly elected members, and it would be for that council to decide its own vision, priorities and operating model.

A brand new council - built on best practice from existing five councils



Ambition for Buckinghamshire

A new, county-wide single unitary council will be able to leverage its scale, resources and leadership capacity to use the substantial growth agenda as the catalyst for positive change. Working collaboratively with public, private and voluntary sector, these opportunities could include:

Buckinghamshire is a place where residents are generally positive about the local area. Most residents agree their area is one where people from different backgrounds get on well together (79%) and that people treat one another with respect and consideration (69%). The ambition could be to maintain that sense of harmonious communities in the context of major growth.

Place Shaping

A new, county-wide single unitary council could use its strategic leadership to engage all stakeholders in defining a long term, strategic vision for the future shape of Buckinghamshire and achieve a truly integrated and co-ordinated programme of investment in infrastructure, skills, services and environment to create the conditions for people to flourish and achieve; designing communities reflect the wider determinants of health and promote wellbeing for all.

Harmonious Communities

Drawing on the skills and experiences of the legacy councils – for example through the Chesham project – a new, county-wide single unitary council could promote a new definition of social inclusion within a rural county facing significant demographic changes.

Children at the Heart of Buckinghamshire

Partners in Buckinghamshire have a shared ambition to keep children and young people in Buckinghamshire safe, healthy and happy to that they fulfil their potential. A new, county-wide single unitary council could provide the strategic leadership to ensure that the interests of children and young people are at the forefront of all of our minds in the way that we plan for the future. This could include running a "Future Bucks" Children's Conversation to involve children and young people, and their advocates, in the conversation about planning for the future, and the roll out of a Child Friendly community scheme, building on the [Leeds model](#). All Members of the new council could receive a comprehensive induction programme to enable them to act as Champions of Children.

Aims

Single Voice – strong, visible and accountable strategic leadership, speaking up with a single voice for Buckinghamshire on behalf of residents, business and partners

More Local – local communities empowered to shape their own future, with improved involvement of local people in the choices that affect them

Better Quality – services that are simple to access, efficiently delivered, and meet the needs of residents, communities and businesses, with faster, leaner decision making

More Efficient – significant cost savings delivered and invested in priority outcomes, adding value for both Council and Business Rate Tax payers; appropriate commercial activities developed to reduce the need for grant and taxpayer funding

Best Practice Case Study – Regeneration

Wycombe District Council has a strong track record in planning and delivering regeneration schemes for the district. The current Town Centre Masterplan project is designed to improve access for individuals with mobility impairments, as well as strengthening the role of the town centre as a focus for employment, shopping and leisure activities. Through the regeneration of the town, changes to the road network will be made to make the area more "pedestrian-friendly", including changing the traffic flow around the town centre and improving the streets and pedestrian spaces in the town centre.



Economic Prosperity

Working in partnership with the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, a new, county-wide single unitary council could use its resources and its scale as leverage for economic prosperity – for example:

- Delivering on infrastructure provision for communities and businesses
- Intervening in the market so that developments achieve community outcomes
- Developing Buckinghamshire as a centre of expertise in Assistive Technology
- Developing a brand new technical pathway into employment, in alliance with schools, local employers and universities, including a rapid expansion of local apprenticeship provision
- Maximising the value of open data to drive growth in the digital economy
- Public sector investments that complement that of the private sector and are delivered in a timely and cost effective manner

Best Practice Case Study – Aylesbury Woodlands Development

Situated next to Arla Dairy factory, Woodlands is a 220 acre site which has been granted Enterprise Zone status by the Government.

Buckinghamshire Advantage, the infrastructure delivery arm of Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership, is promoting the mixed use development which will provide, housing, commercial premises and extensive community, social and transport infrastructure.

The scheme provides a model for the way in which public services can be proactive in stimulating balanced sustainable development to promote employment growth, respond to local housing pressures and deliver community infrastructure.



Governance and Local Democracy

Local members will provide a pivotal link between a new, county-wide single unitary council and the residents and businesses of Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire Council would need to support councillors to ensure that they have the capacity and capability to carry out an expanded community leadership role. Local Members will:

- work together on Community Boards to listen to local residents and businesses, influence the decisions of Buckinghamshire Council so that they respond to the needs and ambitions of local communities, and carry out scrutiny of local public service delivery

- work together with their empowered local town and parish councils to integrate locally delivered services with those delivered by Buckinghamshire Council and other public organisations
- play a formal role with all other Buckinghamshire Council Members in approving the budget and other strategic policies, as well as debating the big issues affecting Buckinghamshire
- carry out formal duties linked to the other core business of the new Buckinghamshire Council which could include:-
 - Cabinet: A Cabinet of 10 members is envisaged for the first term of the new council. This is larger than would be required for 'steady state' but would provide the capacity required for the successful implementation of a major change programme. The new council could consider reducing this number in its second term
 - Scrutinising the work of the executive and partners at a strategic level - a single unitary council would enable more robust scrutiny on behalf of local residents rather than the current artificial constraints of looking at council services of 5 separate bodies in isolation. Scrutiny would be carried out at two levels - strategically and locally – by non-executive councillors on a cross-party basis. Locally scrutiny would take place through the proposed Community Boards which will be explored in more depth in the following section
 - Statutory decision making committees, such as Strategic Planning Committee, Licencing, Rights of Way etc.
- play a civil, community and ambassadorial role for Buckinghamshire, including representing Buckinghamshire Council on partnerships

Further details of council structures and the roles of local members are included at Appendix 3.

Supporting Local Members

A new, county-wide single unitary council could support all councillors to fulfil their roles effectively through providing high quality training and development, policy and administrative support:

- A dedicated single team offering a 'one stop shop' for Local Members, including local support for case work and Community Boards
- Member training & development (building on the existing Charter Mark status achieved by Buckinghamshire County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council)
- Digital & ICT support to enable Members to work remotely and communicate with their electorate utilising technology
- Dedicated policy support for the council's statutory scrutiny function

To make it as easy as possible for those with full-time day-time commitments to serve as an elected councillor, a new Buckinghamshire Council could hold all full council and committee meetings in evenings.

Electoral Wards

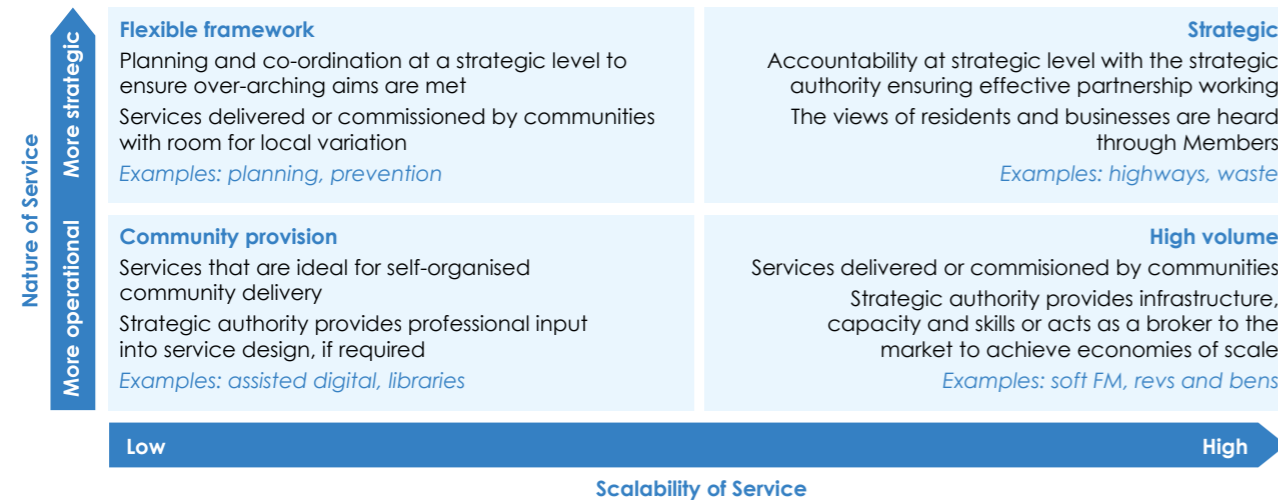
In order to effect a smooth and speedy transition from county and district Member representation, it is proposed that a new Buckinghamshire Council would have 98 councillors. This is higher than the range of 65 - 80 elected members recommended in the Buckinghamshire Business First /EY report, which was based on a review of average councillor per elector rates across unitary authorities. However, it would provide a straight forward approach in terms of a boundary review, and would also ensure sufficient capacity to lead the council during a period of transformation.

Implementation of this proposal would involve a Boundary Commission Review, with each of the 49 existing county council divisions broadly divided into two in order to create 98 single member wards. This is based on the approach taken with the creation of the new Wiltshire Council. It would represent a reduction of some 138 councilors across Buckinghamshire, and a saving of £1.2m compared with the current county and district councils. In the longer term, a more significant boundary review may be appropriate in order to reflect the changing nature of communities during a period of significant growth.

Operating Model

The creation of a new, county-wide single unitary council would provide a unique opportunity to introduce a modern business model, at the heart of a broader integrated system of public service delivery in Buckinghamshire. This would replace the management arrangements of the five existing councils, overcoming silos and promoting collaboration and integration.

Striking the right balance between joined up, strategic planning for the county, empowered communities, saving public money and offering choice will be vital. This balance could be achieved considering the **strategic or operational nature of services** alongside their **potential for economies of scale** (see model).



The role of a new Buckinghamshire Council would be to commission, co-ordinate, support and enable, as well as some direct delivery of services. Strategic commissioning would be underpinned by evidence of what works and an understanding of the priorities in each community, informed by active engagement. The authority could deliver and commission some services, particularly where there is a statutory responsibility. However, the new model would make it easier for many services to be designed and delivered at local level by more empowered town and parish councils.

A diverse range of service delivery models could be used, according to the needs of different services:

- Town/Parish Councils
- Direct delivery by the new Buckinghamshire Council - where services are strategic in nature or achieve best value for money through economies of scale
- With partners – through integration, pooled budgets, joint delivery vehicles
- Shared with other similar councils – through individual partnerships as well as regional alliances

- Creation of new trusts, social enterprises or joint ventures
- Contracting with voluntary and private sector providers
- Personal budgets

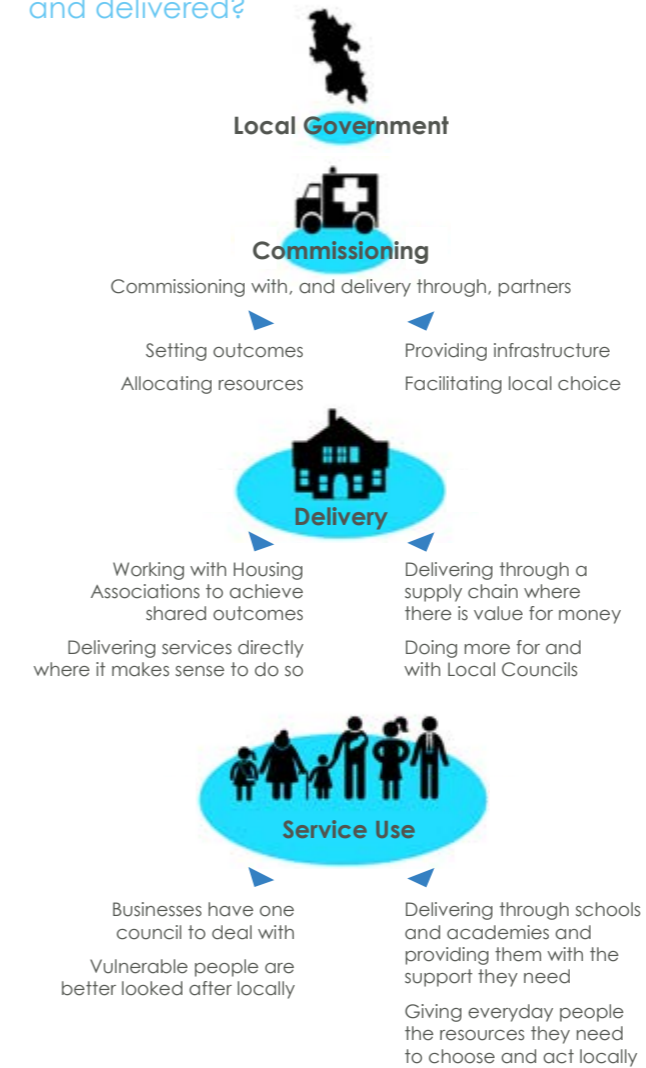
An immediate challenge for a new organisation would be to establish an agreed framework for the values and behaviours which it wishes to establish, in order to promote collaboration, innovation and accountability. Cultural values could for example include:

- Caring
- Trusting
- Working together
- Valuing diversity

Key operational traits of a new organisation might include:

- **Digital by design** – co-designing processes and services with customers to ensure that they meet needs and deploying new technologies where relevant

How might services be commissioned and delivered?



- **Entrepreneurial and prepared to take a risk** – with a strong external focus to seize opportunities for innovation and commercialisation
- **Strong financial planning** – to keep track of more diverse and complex funding
- **Devolving local decision making to lowest possible level** – enabling and supporting town and parish councils to choose and act locally
- **Pragmatic Commissioning** – with a strong commissioning and contract management framework to manage external provision and robust performance management for internally provided services
- **Strong and flexible infrastructure** – that facilitates partnership working and provides the resources for partners to work with the unitary council and with others, e.g. technology infrastructure that keeps data secure but allows it to be shared across many partners.

Best Practice Case Study – Excellence in Cross Regional Commissioning

Buckinghamshire County Council has played a leading role in building a commissioning consortium across six authorities to provide therapeutic residential care and education for 11-to 18-year-olds with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. The project resulted in a seven-year contract between residential child care provider Keys Group and the six authorities – Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Bracknell Forest, Reading and Milton Keynes – and has already delivered savings as well as improved outcomes for the young people through specialist provision which allows them to stay near to home. The consortium has been widely recognised as best practice, including by Sir Martin Narey in his *independent report on Children's Residential Care for the Secretary of State for Education (June 2016)*

The six authorities are now in discussion with neighbouring authorities over a commissioning strategy for the next ten years. This case study illustrates a model for the future development of commissioning complex specialist services, together with a strong track record in partnership working with neighbouring authorities, which Buckinghamshire Council will be able to build upon in exploring opportunities for scaling up services in the future.



Commercial Model

A commercial outlook will be important for a new council, and it would be able to draw on considerable expertise from its constituent councils. The benefits of a commercial outlook are:

- the identification and exploitation of opportunities which can reduce the need for taxpayer or grant money
- a cultural shift that embraces balanced risk-taking within appropriate governance mechanisms
- a stronger empathy with the realities of life for businesses, and therefore a better understanding of how to help local businesses succeed.

Service delivery solutions could be considered on a case by case basis, taking account of:

- Value for money
- Impact on the market
- Quality
- Benefits to residents
- Statutory requirements

The table below illustrates a way of categorising commercial opportunities and offers some examples which Buckinghamshire Council could choose to build upon.

Activity Type	Considerations	Illustration
Taking existing service capabilities and finding new customers for them	The services need to have demonstrable competitive advantage in order to win business, and the council must be able to invest in marketing and continuing product improvement.	Taking excellent corporate or other services and selling them, or developing joint activities, with other councils – for example Buckinghamshire County Council's model of delivering HR and Organisational Development services to the London Borough of Harrow
Developing new capabilities for existing customers	The council needs the skills to identify and develop new product opportunities and must be willing to invest in this.	For example AVDC recently launched two new brands for its trading company: <i>LimeCart</i> , which provides garden services to residents, and <i>IncGen</i> , which provides services to business customers such as office space and a virtual reception service
Enhancing return from existing products for existing customers	Where councils have monopoly positions e.g. in fees and charges, there are regulatory limits to how much profit can be made. However, fees and charges can be used to drive beneficial behaviours.	Premium car parking charges in the most popular car parks to fund subsidised or free parking in high streets where parking charges impact badly on local business profits.
Maximising the return on assets	Councils may need to access specialist capabilities either through recruitment or external support	For example, Wycombe District Council's Handy Cross Hub redevelopment scheme which has led to new jobs as well as investment in new state of the art leisure facilities

Functional Model

It is envisaged that a new Buckinghamshire Council could be developed around five building blocks of services. In the longer term, a unitary council could potentially operate with four departments but it is envisaged that a new Buckinghamshire Council would wish to have additional capacity at the outset, particularly in the context of the transformation programme. The financial analysis has been carried out on this basis.

A new, county-wide single unitary council would deliver greater resilience to services, both through its own resources and through strong relationships with partners, thereby ensuring greater sustainability in public sector services for the future.

Organisational Resilience

Across the five councils there is a significant level of duplication in role and responsibility at a senior and executive level. In addition, the councils all struggle to recruit key staff to undertake critical roles within crucial services such as planning and social care. A new,

county-wide single unitary council would be in a position to select the very best staff from across all five councils and beyond. The new council's members and executive would be able to build a new organisation which is fit for the 21st century and develop a customer and business focused culture that supports innovation across the county.

Redesigning the functions of five separate councils into a new fit-for-purpose structure would deliver not only savings but also the opportunity to design in resilience and strategic capacity to manage the service expectations of Buckinghamshire. The scale of a new, county-wide single unitary council would enable it to adopt approaches that have been proven within the current councils in the county and beyond. This would include the creation of specialist technical teams and the opportunity to professionalise support functions. These approaches would not only provide better services, but also create new career pathways to attract and retain key talent, something that has not previously been the case.



Aim 1: Single Voice

This blueprint is not just about a new modern system of local government but of broader public service reform within Buckinghamshire, enabled and facilitated by a new Buckinghamshire Council, designed to meet the challenges and opportunities of 2020 and beyond.

Strategic leadership for Buckinghamshire is about strong and stable governance, the strategic capacity to understand and tackle complex problems, and the powers, local discretion and willingness to take bold and farsighted decisions on behalf of residents, communities and businesses of Buckinghamshire.

Benefits of a Single Strategic Voice for Buckinghamshire

This section highlights some of the opportunities that a new single county-wide unitary council would bring for Buckinghamshire:

- A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire, with a single strategic voice, would be able to be a powerful advocate for ensuring the opportunities and needs of Buckinghamshire shape the emerging sub-national agenda and the commitment (through the National Infrastructure Commission) to address barriers to growth. It would be able to build upon the initiative that has created England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance – an emerging Sub-national Transport Board – using the ability of its civic leaders to develop momentum and deliver a change agenda. It would have the professional skills required to deliver an ambition for Buckinghamshire in a way that has not previously been possible.
- A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would provide the scale and governance arrangements fit for a future which will be connected to growth in the region and the UK as a whole, with the potential for developing a devolution deal with government in the future. It would be able to gain economies of scale and integrate services across a larger geography where that makes sense
- A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire, aligned with key partnership structures already in place such as the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Federation, would have the strategic accountability to deliver a place shaping agenda, seizing the opportunities of growth as the catalyst for change.
- A single executive could provide the agile leadership to make faster strategic decisions. Stronger representation by fewer, more empowered councillors would provide clearer accountability over decision-making to residents and businesses. The council would provide robust assurance and regulation of the use of public funding and assets held on behalf of Buckinghamshire, and effective scrutiny of services delivered on behalf of the council and other public service providers.
- A new county-wide unitary council would be in a position to provide a single vision for Buckinghamshire, supported by investment plans for transport infrastructure, regeneration and housing delivery, skills and jobs.
- A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be better for businesses, working in partnership to set the long-term direction and create the conditions that allows businesses to thrive, with a focus on investing in skills, transport infrastructure, encouraging business growth and playing to the strengths of the county's economy, particularly those sectors that will shape the lives of our residents in the future.
- A new county-wide unitary council for Buckinghamshire would be able to maintain the excellent quality of education across Buckinghamshire, sustain the momentum in transforming health and social care, and improving children's services, and lead whole system integration to meet the growing demands of a changing population.

Strategic Partnership Working

Strong collaboration across public, private and voluntary sectors – at both strategic and local levels – will continue to be essential for meeting the future needs of Buckinghamshire.

A new, county-wide single unitary council would be able to use its democratic mandate to work with the public, private and voluntary sectors in Buckinghamshire at a strategic level, in shaping the future for the county, and at a local level in delivering improved and, where appropriate, integrated local services.

The key public service providers in the county all operate across a Buckinghamshire geography and strong strategic partnership arrangements are firmly embedded on a Buckinghamshire platform. A new Buckinghamshire Council would play a key role in these arrangements, providing a coherent, single voice for local government services.

The development of a new county-wide unitary council would provide an opportunity to review the way in which key stakeholder groups are able to engage with and influence local government. Consideration could be given to establishing forums for key groups

such as the businesses and voluntary sector organisations to encourage regular liaison with executive members of the new council at a county-wide level. There would also be opportunities to rationalise partnerships – for example, replacing two tiers of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships with a single partnership – as well as to reduce the duplication arising from separate county and district representation that currently exists. At a local level, partners would be critical to realising the ambition for Community Hubs and Community Boards set out in this business case and these models would be developed as a joint endeavour.

A new, county-wide single unitary council would be able to build on successes to date to work with local public sector partners in order to combine relevant back office services and create even greater efficiencies, in order to alleviate some of the financial pressures being experienced by other public service providers. For example, Buckinghamshire County Council now provides the communication and engagement function for the Buckinghamshire CCG Federation.

The Role Of A New County-wide Single Unitary Council

The role of a new county-wide unitary council would be to:

- Listen to the people and businesses of Buckinghamshire and set a clear vision
- Use its evidence, data and information sources to develop key strategic plans
- Make sure resources are lined up together to deliver the vision and policies
- Forge alliances locally, regionally and nationally to coordinate strategy, investment and delivery of services in a way that delivers better outcomes for Buckinghamshire
- Be visibly accountable for all decisions of the council and be open to independent and rigorous public challenge and scrutiny, both strategically and locally
- Establish county-wide policy and service standards and devolve/share decision making with local communities
- Act on behalf of the local community in holding all public service providers to account
- Maximise opportunities for devolution and investment from Central Government that will give greater local control and influence to achieve the best for Buckinghamshire

Aim 2: More Local Voice

Strong mechanisms for listening to local communities and responding to the differences in need across the county geography would be critical for the success of a new, county-wide single unitary council. Residents want to know

that a new council will give them a real say about services and act on their concerns, and deliver greater transparency and accountability.

The development of a brand new county-wide unitary council provides an exciting opportunity to design a new localism model which builds on the experience of the five councils to date but goes much further in responding to the appetite amongst county and district councillors, town and parish councils and residents for a real say on local issues.

It is proposed that a new Buckinghamshire Council would deliver these ambitions through the following approach:

- **A new devolution offer to Parish/Town Councils** – offering flexible opportunities to enable them to run services and assets currently run by the county and district councils where it is cost effective to do so, with packages tailored to local ambition and priorities
- **Five Local Area Planning Committees** – ensuring that local councillors take decisions on local planning issues
- **Nineteen new local 'Community Boards'** – giving local councillors the authority and resources to take local decisions, enabling local people to hold a new Buckinghamshire Council to account and ensure that its services reflect local differences

Each of these three key elements are critical to successfully delivering a localism approach. Each has a different role to play. Taken together, these three elements will offer far greater opportunities for local service delivery and local accountability than those currently offered by the county council and district councils under the two tier system.



Best Practice Case Study – Local Area Forum

In 2008, Buckinghamshire County Council introduced 19 local area forums (LAFs) as a place for County, District and Parish Councillors, together with local representatives from key public sector organisations to come together to discuss and take action on local issues. The County Council allocates a budget to each LAF which is available to fund projects that tackle local priorities.

These have ranged between parking projects, match funded by town and parish councils, mobile speed awareness devices, intergenerational youth volunteering schemes, community cafes, and supporting youth enterprises. Some LAFs have held participatory budgeting schemes over recent years, each scheme engaging up to 3000 residents in voting on local projects.

Community Boards would provide the mechanism by which a new Buckinghamshire Council would listen to the views of local people on those services that remain the council's responsibility. They would not deliver local services themselves but could encourage **town and parish councils** and community organisations to take on responsibility for running services and assets, and facilitate agreements. Planning decisions need to be taken by a formal committee in accordance with the law, comprising of the elected councillors for Buckinghamshire Council. **Area Planning Committees** would therefore enable local councillors to take planning decisions.

The table illustrates the key differences between the current 'local area forum' arrangements and the locality arrangements underpinning a single unitary model.

Feature	Current	Future	
	Local Area Forums	Community Boards	Town/Parish Councils
Delegated Decision-making powers on behalf of Unitary Council	✗	✓	✗
Devolved council budget for local projects	✓ Informal arrangement	✓ Formal accountability	✗
Delivery of local services	✗	✗	✓
Scrutiny of local service delivery	✗	✓	✗
Consultee on all significant council service changes impacting on area	✗ Sometimes	✓ Always	✗
Statutory consultee on planning	✗	✗	✓
Raise taxation to invest in local issues	✗	✗	✓
Dedicated Officer Support	✗	✓	n/a

Parish & Town Council Devolution Offer

Parish and town councils have a critical role to play in supporting local communities to thrive and these will be key partners to a new Buckinghamshire Council on all aspects of its work, particularly in working together on Community Boards to tackle and solve local problems.

It is envisaged that a new Buckinghamshire Council would develop a new devolution offer for individual town and parish councils. This agreement would offer both choice and resources.

The success of this model will depend on communities taking on the role they want in the services that matter to them, not being given accountabilities they don't want and assets they don't need. This will require a confident Strategic Authority that is as comfortable delegating decision making and resources as it is accountability.

Benefits will include:

For Communities

- Improved quality of service: parish and town councils take pride in delivering services locally and will likely 'go the extra mile' to deliver a high quality of service
- A more responsive agile service: parish and town councils are able to respond quickly to need for changes in service delivery
- Opportunities to generate local employment
- Greater local choice and decision making – for example whether to prioritise grass cutting in the centre of a village over the edges, or by raising precept locally to add value to services

For Parish and Town Councils

- Enhanced role and ability to respond to local issues
- Greater control over local service delivery if they wish
- The opportunity to take ownership for the local environment

- More substantial roles to attract candidates to join Town & Parish council

For Buckinghamshire Council

- Ability to secure the economies of scale from large contracts on universal service delivery models, balanced with a localised approach which is flexible to meet different needs of communities

Best Practice Case Study – Town and Parish Council Devolution

To date, 86 of the 168 town and parish councils in Buckinghamshire have taken on services from Buckinghamshire County Council through devolved arrangements. Many now have an appetite to build on this with even further devolution.



In 2013, the Stewkley Enterprise Agency was set up as a not-for-profit social enterprise, which enabled the parish council to provide both local employment and an enhanced quality of service for the villages. The social enterprise now provides services such as grass cutting, minor hedge cutting, weed spraying and road sign cleaning for Stewkley together with six other parish councils. A similar agreement has been made with Amersham Town Council, which carries out grass cutting, vegetation clearance, tree maintenance and graffiti removal services on behalf of five parish councils.

The Devolution Offer

Best Practice Case Study – Town and Parish Council Devolution

Stone with Bishopstone and Hartwell Parish Council is an example of a parish council taking on service devolution without clustering. The 2016 annual report of the Parish Council noted:

“Overall, the Parish Council are very happy that the decision was taken to undertake the devolved services without clustering. Positive feedback from residents has meant that we have been able to provide a far better service and a much improved environment. We had inherited a rather neglected area of general maintenance work and our residents have praised the significant improvements. The Parish Council are confident that the decision to raise the precept to cover the additional funding of £5,000 (£4.50 approx. per household) was the correct way to proceed in order to achieve the improved environment and better standard of work.”



A menu of assets and services could be provided, enabling each parish and town council to express an interest in individual assets and services. This menu would be supported by a transparent formula for the transfer of resources from a new Buckinghamshire Council to the local councils, a tailored package of capacity building and support and clear county-wide policies and standards.

By including a spectrum of options, flexible to meet the needs and ambitions of different localities, this model may lead to different solutions in different places. This could involve a parish council being commissioned to take on a service provider role on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council, on a case by case basis. At the other end of the spectrum, this could involve statutory based devolution with full legal responsibility for service provision transferred to eligible councils, together with associated resources. It could also involve the full transfer of local assets to the ownership of the local council.

Buckinghamshire Council would have a dialogue with each interested council on the respective business case for a deal. Key considerations could include:

- Evidence of the benefits to the local community
- Cost neutral overall for Buckinghamshire Council
- Enable more local decision making and budget setting

Examples of Services to be Included in the Devolution Offer

Assets which could be transferred to parish and town councils could include:

- Play areas
- Sports grounds
- Local Parks and open spaces
- Public toilets
- Allotments
- Community Centres
- Cemeteries and churchyards

The service devolution menu could include

- Minor road and footpath repairs
- Grasscutting and open space maintenance

- Flytipping
- Street cleaning
- Abandoned vehicles
- Environmental health
- Recycling management
- Home care and meals on wheels
- Health and wellbeing services
- Off street car parks
- Community library premises
- Community transport
- Community safety/ neighbourhood watch
- Footpath lighting

Best Practice Case Study – NALC Buckingham

NALC's new Local Council Award Scheme has been designed to celebrate the successes of the very best local councils, and to provide a framework to support all local councils to improve and develop to meet their full potential. Buckingham Town Council is one of a small number of councils nationally that have achieved the Quality Gold award which recognises those councils that are at the cutting edge of the sector.

Buckinghamshire Council would want to encourage and help resource local councils to use these sorts of tools and frameworks to share best practice, to make use of all the training and funding available, and support each other so that local towns and parish councils reach their full potential.



Capacity Building Offer

This devolution offer could represent an ambitious programme for a local council, or group of local councils. A devolution offer could therefore be accompanied by investment in a capacity building programme tailored to the individual circumstances - including training and development, officer capacity and governance advice. In agreeing a deal, a new Buckinghamshire Council could support parishes by:

- **A single contact point and an online account** for the parish and town council with the unitary council to ensure that tailored support and advice is readily available, according to the circumstances of the individual council
- **Access to back office support services** which would allow local councils to access services such as customer service system, payroll, ICT, HR, legal advice, training and development, drawing on the purchasing power of a new Buckinghamshire Council
- **A project team to agree details of the offers**, set standards, and liaise closely with those parishes and town councils who are interested in taking up the offer
- **A capacity building scheme** for town and parish councils based on the County Council's New Futures programme for voluntary and community sector groups. The Town and Parish Futures scheme could offer business planning advice and specialist support to help councils address identified needs, improve what they already do, or to take on new assets and services
- **Transparency** with parish/town councils in the information on the respective service performance and contracts and budgets, being clear which services will require some specific standards/qualifications (e.g. pot hole filling)
- **Support to town and parish councils to cluster** where there are opportunities for service delivery improvements, whilst respecting the wishes of individual parish/town councils

Parish and town councils would be free to:

- Decide their delivery model (e.g. via contractors, volunteers, employed staff or a mixture of these)
- Decide how to allocate the total overall budget against specific activities
- Use the precept to enhance services if desired (although noting that any devolution of services will provide the resources to provide the minimum service standards specified by Buckinghamshire Council).

It is envisaged that the offer and transfer process would take between 2–3 years (depending on the size and scale of the service/asset).

There are of course a wide range of Town and Parish councils and some will not want to extend their role and responsibilities at this time. Where local councils did not choose to take up the partnership offer, Buckinghamshire Council would retain responsibility for service delivery in the area. Over time, however, it is anticipated that parishes will increasingly cluster together to take advantage of this deal.

Area Planning Committees

The majority of planning application decisions would be made by Area Planning Committees, with members of Buckinghamshire Council from within the area. It is envisaged that five Area Planning Committees would be appropriate.

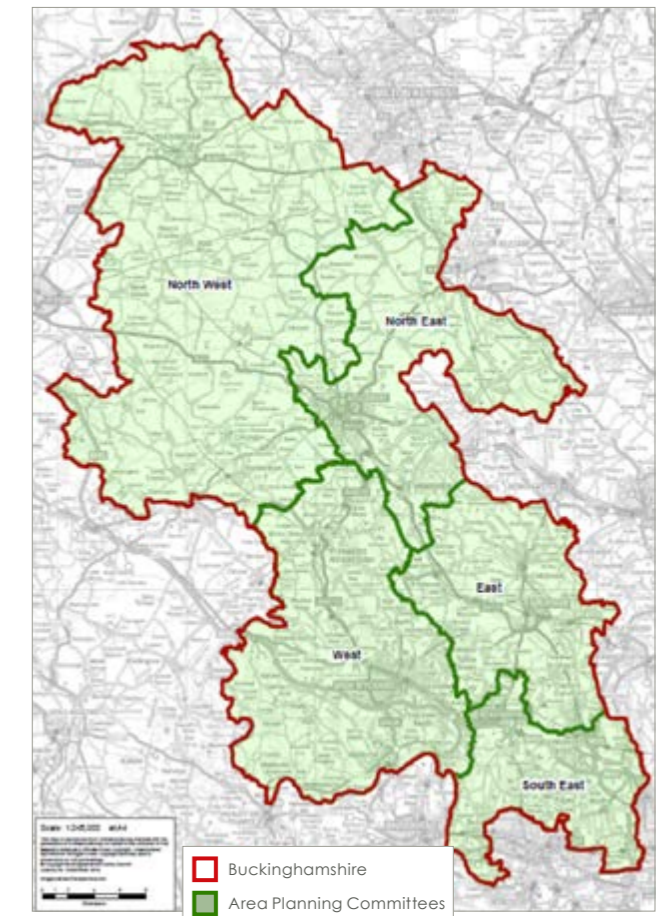
The Area Planning Committees would carry out many of the functions currently carried out by district council planning committees, as well as determining planning decisions which the county council currently takes on issues such as the approval of school building extensions.

The types of issues that the Area Planning Committees would determine include:

- Planning Development Control
- Designation and amendment of conservation areas
- Village Design Statements
- Parish Plans in the planning context
- Registration of town and village greens,
- Powers relating to the protection of important hedgerows
- Powers relating to the preservation of trees
- Powers relating to complaints about high hedges

A limited number of decisions would be reserved to a strategic planning committee. These would be decisions with wider strategic implications or a significant impact beyond a specific local area – such as planning applications for a large-scale major development (defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government as those of 200 houses or more). The thresholds for decision-making on planning would be set out in the council's constitution.

For the purposes of this business case an illustrative map is included below with proposed boundaries for five Area Planning Committees. This has been based on best fit with natural communities and best size for the effective functioning of the committees. The current district council boundaries have been used to ensure continuity with current development committees, although Aylesbury Vale has been divided into two to reflect the differences within the area. These boundaries would be subject to local consultation.



Community Boards

A network of Community Boards could enable local councillors and the community to have a say about issues that affect them and take action to resolve issues.

The Community Boards could be set up as formal committees of a new Buckinghamshire Council so that councillors in that area could take decisions on issues such as the funding for local community groups. The Community Board could be a formal consultee for all major changes of Buckinghamshire Council services in the area so that local people have a stronger voice on service planning.

The role of the Community Board is proposed to build on the experience of the Local Area Forums, which are resourced by the county council and work in partnership with the district councils, but would be different in some key respects (see p49).

The proposed role of the community board would be:

- **To enable local Members and residents to influence Buckinghamshire Council & partner service planning** e.g. budget consultation or Cabinet Member decisions with local impact, such as service change/transport/transfer or disposal of assets
- **To lead and encourage community action** to resolve local issues – road repairs, traffic problems and speeding, litter, facilities for young people, affordable housing, reducing loneliness and social isolation. To help communities to help themselves.
- **To have particular regard to the health, social care needs and well-being of residents in the area** using their local knowledge and networks to both identify local needs/issues as well as solutions; and their influence to help resolve these needs
- **To have an oversight and scrutiny role in relation to local public sector performance and delivery in the area** identifying & communicating any issues to the relevant bodies e.g. Buckinghamshire Council and partners; including oversight of the devolution service offers to parishes/town councils in area
- **To take decisions on delegated Council**

budgets. It is envisaged that £2m could be allocated between the 19 Community Boards, providing enhanced opportunities for participatory budgeting and generating match funding.

- **To provide a local point of access to Members and council services** e.g. by providing regular well publicised formal meetings and forums

To reinforce the role of the Community Board, the communities could provide a building block for use by a new Buckinghamshire Council in its commissioning of services. For example, a local health and wellbeing needs assessment will be carried out for each community area, enabling the Community Board to tailor public health initiatives according to the differing health priorities of each area. A new Buckinghamshire Council could also encourage and support its partners to use the Boards as a mechanism for local consultation and engagement.

Membership and Public Participation

The formal voting membership of the Community Board would be all Members of Buckinghamshire Council in the geographical area covered. Standing invitations would be made to key partners - health, police, the business community, voluntary and community sector and parish/town councils - to attend the meetings. Whilst the voting rights would rest with the unitary councillors it is expected that the Boards would work by consensus wherever possible.

For the Boards to work effectively they would need to facilitate high levels of public participation in their work. Our ambition is that Community Boards would be innovative in finding a wide variety ways of talking to the public about the issues that they care about. This would include reaching out to different types of people as well as within all localities e.g. older people, faith groups, disabled and young people. As an example, Community Boards could encourage youth participation by holding forum events with young people working with existing town and parish youth councils.

Location of Community Boards

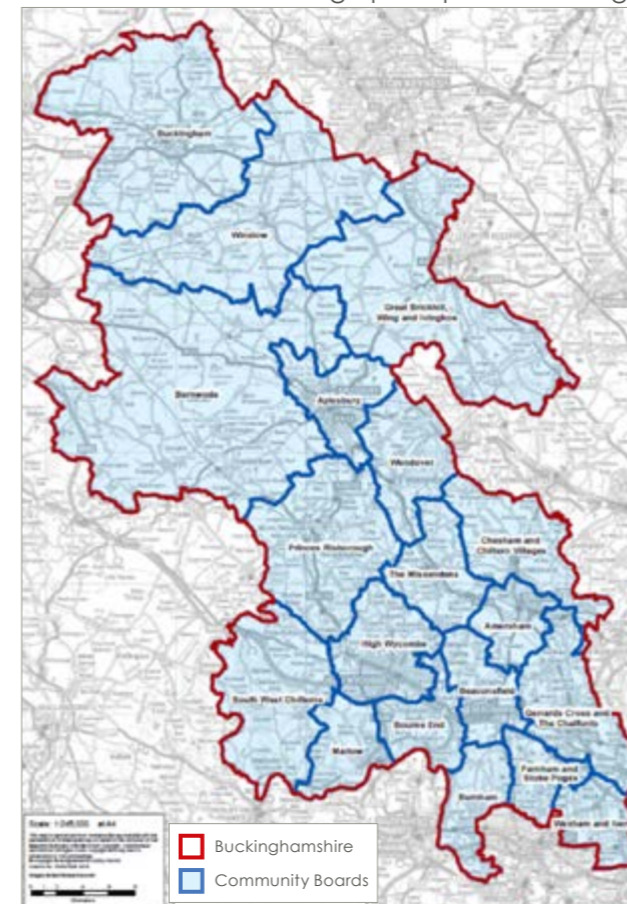
The number of Community Boards, and the geographical boundaries, would need

to be subject to full consultation with local communities and key stakeholders, such as the Buckinghamshire CCG Federation, to ensure that they reflect local identity and are fit for purpose.

To illustrate the concept, a map has been drawn up for the purposes of this business case (as below). This is purely for illustrative purposes and will change through consultation. The key principles underpinning this model are:

- **Best fit with natural communities:** school planning areas have been used as a starting point for developing these proposals as they are designed to reflect the natural flows of children to local primary schools which are often at the heart of local communities
- **Co-terminous with town and parish council boundaries:** so that any town or parish council would only have to work with one Community Board
- **Best size for the effective functioning of the committees:** small enough areas where the public feel a strong connection with, as well as of a sufficient size for partners to engage with.

Ensuring that the Community Boards are coterminous with the unitary electoral wards is desirable but has not been used as a design principle at this stage



Example Agenda for a Community Board

Decision on:

- The allocation of devolved Revenue and Capital Funding
- Disposal of non-strategic assets
- Speeding reviews, dropped kerbs, traffic calming measures
- Oversight of detailed works negotiated through S106

Consultation on:

- Proposals to change hospital services (CCG)
- Priorities for Allocations of Community Infrastructure Levy Funding (CIL)
- Developing a multi-use community hub (partners involved)
- Allocation of new school places

Scrutiny on:

- How agencies are planning to prevent flooding
- Effectiveness of local community transport
- Performance of highways provider on pothole filling

Work planning:

- Setting up a group to plan community workshops for people to have their say on forthcoming changes in children's centres.

as these would be subject to a Boundary Review.

Whilst this model has identified 19 areas, these do not fully reflect the boundaries of the existing 19 local area forums.

Learning from Best Practice

The design work in relation to the role and number of Community Boards is drawn upon best practice elsewhere - in particular successes of Wiltshire Council who set up their equivalent of the proposed Community Boards as a key element of their new unitary council.

In determining the appropriate number of Community Boards practice elsewhere indicated that it was important to have a sufficient number so that local communities could have their say. For example, Wiltshire Council has 18; Durham 14; Shropshire 33 and Cornwall 19.

Aim 3: Better Public Services

At a time of austerity, a new, county-wide single unitary council must achieve significant service improvement opportunities as well as sustainable savings. Our ambition is a high-quality customer experience that recognises and adapts to the changing lives and expectations of residents, working with them to personalise and join up services around their current and future needs.

Residents have told us that a new model of local government must be designed to ensure that the quality of services is retained and enhanced, and that services should be easier to access. (Ipsos Mori research – Appendix 5)

Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils have already demonstrated some of the opportunities through their joint services model. A new Buckinghamshire Council would be able to build on this and exploit further opportunities

for the benefit of all residents and businesses county-wide. Experience from other county-wide unitary reorganisations demonstrates opportunities for service improvement across all areas of the council without incurring additional ongoing costs.

This section highlights some of the opportunities that evolving into a new single unitary council could bring to the following service areas:

- Customer experience
- Health and Care
- Children and young people
- Communities, culture and leisure
- Housing, Transport, Planning, Economy and Environment
- Corporate and support services

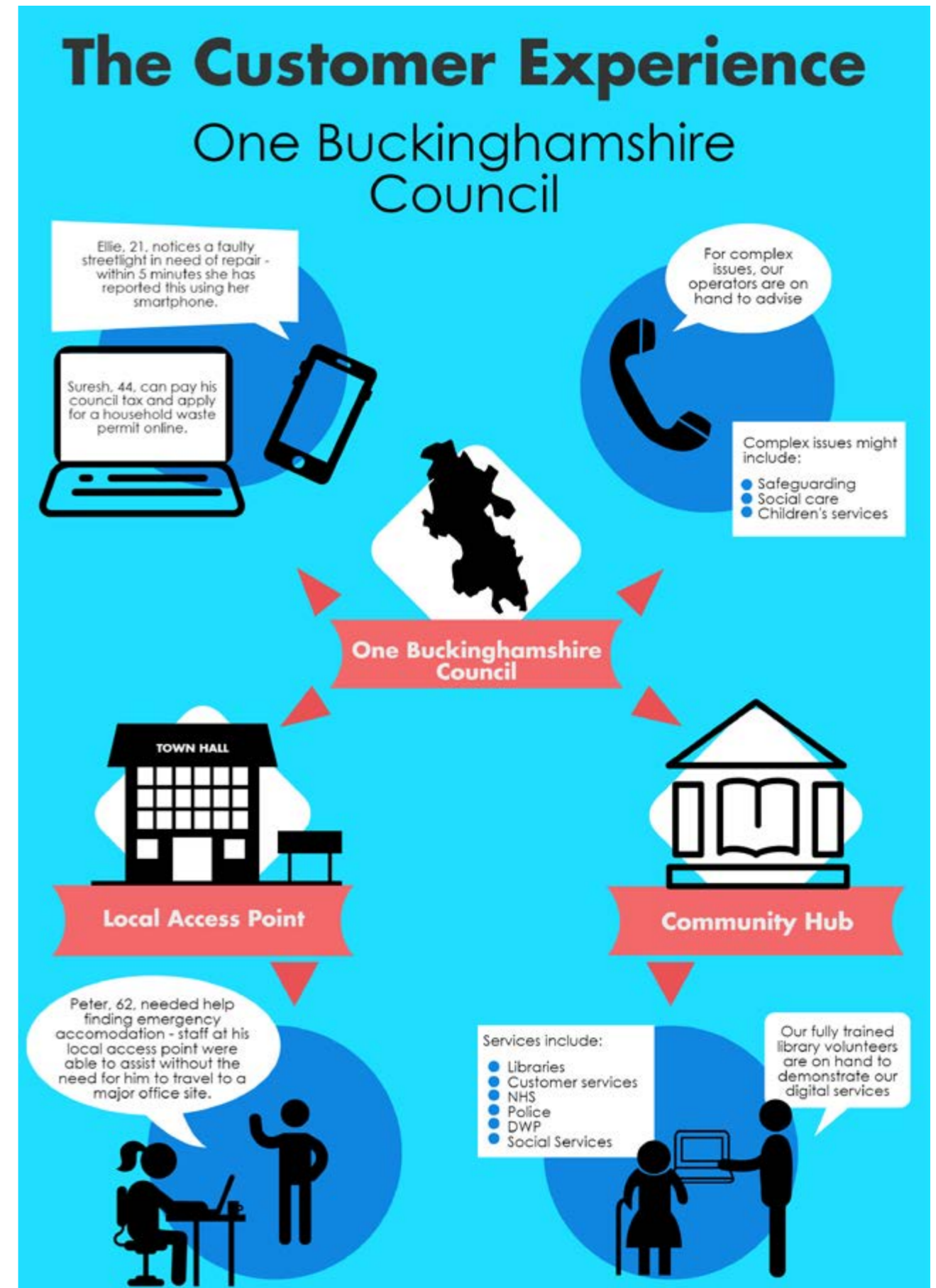
Customer Experience

The changing population profile in Buckinghamshire means changing demands for customer service. Buckinghamshire sees one of the highest usages of online services in the UK with 91.9% of residents having access to the internet. Demand for online services will continue to grow with increasing developments in technology and generational shifts.

The current two tier model is no longer the most effective for delivering public services that meet the needs of our diverse customers. The county council receives between 35-40,000 web-hits annually for district related services and an average of 680 calls per month, at a cost of £34k pa, creating a dis-jointed and confusing customer journey. Residents tell us

that they are 'passed from pillar to post'. Not only does this create a fragmented customer experience, it runs the risk of vulnerable individuals "falling between the cracks" that currently exists between Buckinghamshire's councils. It also has a significant impact on the operating costs of multiple authorities. Services are not joined up for residents and councils do not have reliable data to plan and commission services effectively.

A new, county-wide single unitary council could improve outcomes for residents through the development of a fully integrated customer service approach. This could involve a single point of access for all residents underpinned by one common source of data.



A Single Point of Access

A new Buckinghamshire Council would be able to replace existing multiple websites and customer service with one point of access through a channel of their choice, one website where they can source all relevant information with opportunity to self-serve and track progress if desired.

A Single Secure Customer Account

Residents would be able to securely log in and access their full council service account, with details of all the services that they use and those that may be relevant to them with the ability to track progress of service requests. All their information and personal data would be held in one place within a secure environment, meaning they would only have to provide and verify their personal circumstances once and, with their consent, this would then be used to ensure accurate access to all their entitlements. Within a two-tier system this would be cost prohibitive and, would require agreement from five councils who operate different IT platforms with the inherent data security risk this brings.

Best Practice Case Study – Revenues and Benefits Data

In Wiltshire, data from the benefits and council tax systems were collated to identify any single mothers with three or more children that will be adversely affected by the benefit cap in autumn 2016. This information was shared with the safeguarding team to identify families that may slip further into debt and crisis – thereby enabling targeted preventative services and changing outcomes for residents and improving lives.



A Single Business Account

Businesses would be able to securely log in and manage their day-to-day interactions with the council. The electronic system would provide bespoke information, advice and support based on the specific nature of the business and desired transaction. This would then allow a new Buckinghamshire Council to deploy appropriate professional support in the form of online chat, telephone or face-to-face support and appropriately deploy the wide range of services that may be needed such as planning, environmental health, building control, grants.

A Single Parish And Town Council Account

This would recognise the role of local councils as a major partner in a new modern public service model and provide tailored support and advice according to the circumstances of the individual council.

Predictive Service Delivery

Information collated by the council and its partners could be used to proactively identify patterns of behaviour that can be used to predict a likely service need before it arises. For example, ensuring that a request for an assisted bin collection service due to mobility issues will trigger an assessment of the health and social care needs of the individual to support them in remaining independent for longer. Predictive service delivery will be a critical element of a future operating model for social care.

Local Service Variation

By adopting a single account based approach to access and information collation, a new, county-wide single unitary council would be able to ensure its local area structures have the information they need to support decisions and target spending. This move to an evidence based approach to policy and decision making would enhance local democracy and focus scarce resources where they are needed the most.

Supporting Integration Across Health and Social Care

Research consistently shows individuals most at risk are most likely to have interactions with multiple agencies increasing cost, complexity and risk. The delivery of an account based customer access approach would enable full data integration across the new council and local health providers. Recent statutory changes to the NHS and Social Care mean that Buckinghamshire Council can best exploit data to prevent ill health and promote independence. The single authenticated customer account will be controlled by the customer, allowing them to grant various 'layers' of permitted access to the loved ones and professionals who support them.

Digital Delivery

Through service integration and transformation there is an opportunity to design digital processes to achieve 24/7 access. Rapid increases in technology and the changing expectations of residents provide the opportunity to change the way services are delivered. A new, county-wide single unitary council would be able to design digital services in the way Government Digital Service has delivered at a scale in central government

Digital Inclusion

No individual, group or community can be disadvantaged through a lack of digital access to council services. A new Buckinghamshire Council would design services around the needs of users, providing other access channels to support customer outcomes, including a telephony system for complex queries and support in community hubs.

Community Hubs

There will always be times when residents need to talk to someone face to face, and a new, county-wide single unitary council would need to ensure that this can happen close to home. A network of multi-agency community hubs could enable communities to access services from a place local to them, ensuring vulnerable residents are safeguarded.

By working across organisational silos within a community, partners would be able to reach

Best Practice Case Study – Unlocking Data Potential

There are many examples of joining up data within unitary authorities enabling service improvement and income – from profiling debtors to increase debt recovery, to better evidencing eligibility, to identifying failure demand and profiling those customers to understand their needs better first time around.

Linking household level waste collection data (captured by Districts) with waste treatment data (captured at County level) would create an evidence based strategic response to increasing recycling and reducing waste to landfill. Southampton City Council saved £100k per year on waste disposal through a targeted intelligence-led campaign focused on households where recycling rates were low.



at-risk and vulnerable individuals and connect them to services that enhances customer and community outcomes.

It is envisaged that a community hub could be provided in each of the local community areas (currently proposed as 19 areas) with the service offer tailored to the needs of each area. A new Buckinghamshire Council would need to work closely with public sector providers, including the parish and town councils, to understand local need, identify and provide community hubs that meet this need. Initial discussions with partners indicate support for this model which builds on existing examples of co-location of services and helps release surplus property in the public sector estate.

Best Practice Case Study – Digital Development

Best practice across the authorities is already impressive with increasing effort and success being put towards maximising digital processes and aligning customer expectations.

Aylesbury Vale District Council has with its digital development partner Arcus Global built an online account that customers can access. It includes a range of features such as managing council tax, benefits, bins and discounts at their convenience. It's available 24/7, on any device, with no need for a phone call.

In April 2016 the "My Account" already had 16000 users with an average 100 users signing up every day. The account has won a European IT and Software Excellence Award for the launch and ongoing development of the online account. Arcus and AVDC picked up the award for Customer Experience/Management Solution of the Year. Particular praise was given to how My Account matches user expectations and allows AVDC to monitor usage to continually develop and improve the service.



Best Practice Case Study – Community Hub in Practice



The Families Plus project at Chess Medical Centre, Chesham, is a unique colocation of services built around the needs of Lone Parents dependent on welfare benefits. The project aims to increase the number of socially stable, financially robust households by better assisting specific communities of high need through effective partnership working.

In addition to the existing pharmacy, NHS dentist and 2 GP practices, further services provided by DWP, the NHS, county council social care and voluntary and community sector are now located in the same centre and deliver local services where there is the demand.

This fundamentally changes the delivery method and level of support to Lone Parents in receipt of welfare benefits and their children. This approach aims to move these residents into education, training or employment; improving financial and social outcomes for parent and child.

An excellent colocation of services has been achieved that provides a strong case for developing similar community hub models across the County, as seen with the more recent roll-out to Wycombe.

Health and Care

Demographic change, increasing demand and reducing budgets are placing adult social care services under significant pressure. The integration of health and social care services has been a major focus for the county council and the Health Trusts, in order to tackle health challenges, support people to live independently for longer and reduce cost pressures. Greater alignment of health and social care services with community services such as housing, recreation and leisure would fundamentally change the way services are designed, commissioned and delivered:

- Public services could be commissioned with family and health outcomes in mind utilising the full range of public and community services available to assist prevention, keeping more adults more independent for longer
- Health outcomes could be supported by a clear vision for leisure, outdoor and recreational spaces and quality housing in the county, with clearer accountabilities for delivering on county-wide strategy such as the Sustainability Transformation Plan
- Single strategic leadership across planning, housing and social care could allow fit-for-

the-future accommodation to be provided that supports the changing needs of an ageing population and young people transitioning to adult services as well as vulnerable care leavers. This would enhance accessibility and the capacity for assistive technology and telecare included by design. Full consideration could be given to the impact of the built and natural environment on the health and wellbeing of local communities and residents

- A single local authority working with a single federated CCG to a shared agenda would simplify partnership working particularly with Health and the County Sports partnership 'LEAP'
- Consolidation of resources across the existing councils, particularly in property assets and ICT, would allow a new Buckinghamshire Council to provide the infrastructure and capacity to communities and local councils to deliver more services at a local level, encouraging community capacity and resilience
- Consolidated revenue collection and benefits functions would deliver consistent performance, aligned with specialist services



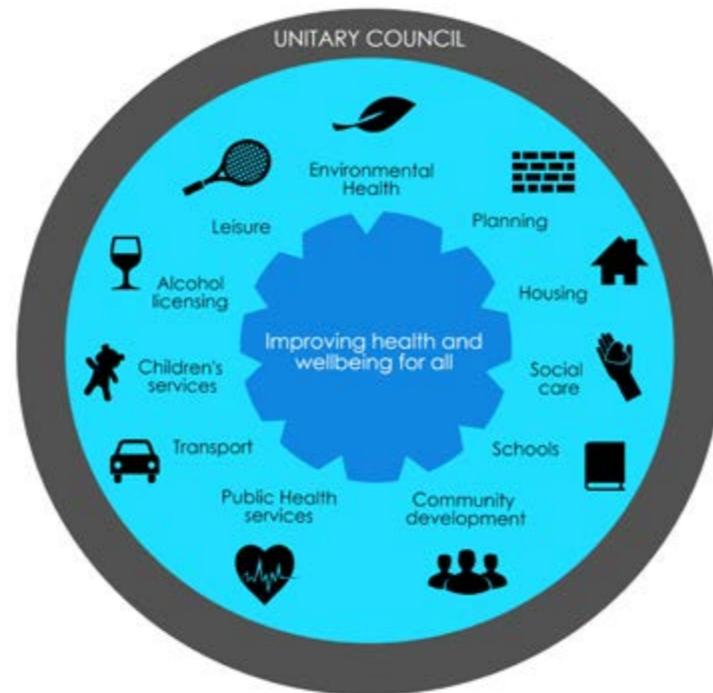
Public Health Outcome

This model illustrates the synergies between county council and district council responsibilities

Source: District Councils' Network 2013

like debt collection and advice, social care financial assessments and income collection.

- Whole system approaches to tackling the wider determinants of health could be developed through the integration of preventive services - for example services currently provided by the county council such as substance misuse services, physical activity programmes and health protection, together with services currently provided by the district council such as alcohol licensing, housing, leisure and environmental health
- More effective and consistent large scale campaigns could be delivered to promote health and wellbeing and encourage healthier lifestyles
- Better insight could be available to support and improve preventative services through trend analysis, creating a single customer record and a basis for designing and delivering services based on individual need and community capacity
- Seamless support could be provided for clients with multiple needs (such as early



intervention, housing, community support), or at times of crisis

- Customer journeys could be improved by joining up assessments, grants, benefits, housing and planning applications, whilst efficiencies could be delivered in commissioning and back office processes.

Children and Young People

Children's Services in Buckinghamshire have been on a significant improvement journey and OFSTED inspectors are starting to recognise progress in key areas. Safeguarding children is a shared responsibility of local government and all its partners. Faced with rising demand and declining budgets, it is critical that partners work together to improve the outcomes for children in need, whilst also promoting resilient families across Buckinghamshire.

The integration of local government services county-wide would provide clear responsibility, greater commissioning power, opportunities to achieve closer working between partners and deliver significant benefits for children and young people:

- Single strategic leadership across all aspects of local government service delivery which impacts on the wellbeing of children and young people. Housing, leisure and play are critically important to improving outcomes for children and young people. Lack of appropriate accommodation is often a significant issue in supporting families and young people to achieve stable lives. A single county-wide unitary council would bring these functions together with statutory responsibilities for the wellbeing of children and young people to deliver stronger organisational links and encourage improved outcomes
- Consistent approach to safeguarding across all local government functions, for example transport, leisure, community safety, by providing common standards, training and communications to all employees and delivery partners
- Consistent model for involving children and young people and encouraging the voice of the child in all appropriate aspects of service delivery
- Simplification of partnerships and elimination of current duplication of meetings both for local government and its partners, including Thames Valley Police and health partners
- Development of 'whole system support' for youth offenders covering housing, financial planning and benefits, education and training designed to reduce reoffending

Best Practice Case Study – Whole System Working

"Families First" is Buckinghamshire's response to the national Troubled Families Agenda, which seeks to "turn around" the lives of families facing multiple problems, including mental health difficulties, domestic violence and debt.

Phase 1 of the programme (2012–2015) successfully "turned around" 545 families (100% of target) and Buckinghamshire was awarded "early starter" status for Phase 2 in recognition of its strong performance and ambition.

Partnership working has been a major factor in the success of Families First. The programme has led to significant changes in how all agencies work together in Buckinghamshire to improve outcomes for children and their families and reduce the burden on the public purse. Rather than employ new teams, the Buckinghamshire delivery model was based on the commitment by all relevant agencies to play their part from the outset, moving outside their traditional remits to provide lead family workers to coordinate all the work with the family. The approach has been underpinned by strong multi agency governance and oversight, coordination of work, shared training, tools and processes.

A new Council and its partners will be able to draw on this whole system approach as a model for working together to transform services to deliver longer-term goals into the future.



Best Practice Case Study – Multi-Agency Groups

Buckinghamshire has invested in the development of MAGs (Multi-Agency Groups) that currently operate at 44 GP practices in the county. The model involves key members of relevant teams coming together to identify and discuss the most vulnerable people on their caseloads that they believe would benefit from a more holistic approach to enable them to maintain their independence.

Since launching in 2013, 2354 patients have been referred and the model continues to be rolled out through strong partnership working, despite the initial funding ceasing.

Each MAG has a core team of health and social care but also benefits from engaging other teams from the county and district councils – including the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub), Trading Standards and Environmental Health.

Benefits from this approach include reduced hospital admissions, a decline in A&E attendances, emergency and elective

inpatient spells with a secondary care cost saving of over £256,003.

Investment in MAGs has resulted in an established best practice model of service delivery and effective partnership working. A new Buckinghamshire Council could build upon this approach through the development of a Community Hub model which co-locates partners in a locality and promotes models of information exchange and joined up service delivery.



- Reduction in the 'touch points' for vulnerable children, young people and families through joined up, consistent services in relation to assessments, grants, benefits, housing and planning applications, particularly for children with disabilities.
- Effective sharing and availability of data across services which could lead to improvements in

early intervention and prevention, for example sharing data about families experiencing difficulties with issues such as housing and debt, delivering coordinated assessments and service responses, increase the speed of verification for school applications, fraud deterrent and detection.

Communities, Culture and Leisure

Improving the cultural offer is vital to building community cohesion, strengthening sense of place and community empowerment. Community, Culture and Leisure services could be more joined up in the county than ever before, with closer alignment both to each other and to the desired outcomes for residents, businesses and communities. Opportunities could include:

- The creation of a coherent culture, leisure and tourism strategy for the county - one that broadens and improves service provision to build community cohesion, strengthens sense of place and builds community empowerment
- Services designed with strategic outcomes in mind, maximising use of assets such as quality housing and leisure facilities to improve health and cultural outcomes, reduce crime, foster more confident and resilient communities and support prevention
- A more strategic approach to delivering the Government's strategy for sport – *A New Strategy for an Active Nation* – promoting health, social and economic outcomes through existing assets, for example country parks and managed green spaces, and working with the County Sports Partnership 'LEAP' to improve active lifestyles and participation in sport
- Coordinated and user-focused service delivery that builds on the Paralympic heritage to establish Buckinghamshire as the most accessible County
- A one stop shop for individuals and businesses to access consumer protection services such as trading standards, environmental health, licencing, building control and private sector housing regulation. A uniform and consistent approach would contribute to improving public reassurance and also enable specialist expertise to be developed to support effective enforcement
- A single county-wide team for emergency planning, resilience and business continuity with better links to the Fire and Rescue Service through one stronger partnership
- A single strategic local authority for Thames Valley Police to liaise with for community safety issues
- A simplified route through which communities and the voluntary and community sector can interact with the local authority, become more self-reliant and bid for contracts where services are being tendered
- Expansion of the range of services delivered through libraries so that libraries continue to develop their important contributions to health and wellbeing, digital inclusion and welfare reform
- The development of a broader but more consistent leisure offer, based on stronger needs assessments. Local residents would have more say in the type of programmes (including outreach) available in their local area and health professionals would be able to refer patients to physical activity programmes that deliver evidence-based interventions.

Housing, Transport, Economy, Planning and Environment

A new, county-wide single unitary council could manage these services in a way that achieves a fundamental shift from disparate processes and disconnected customer journeys to an integrated set of services that support the economic and physical growth strategy for the county, whilst appreciating individual community needs. Some of the most visible benefits for the new authority and for customers would be realised through bringing together this portfolio of services that supports the three pillars of sustainability – economy, society and environment.:

- Joining up strategic and local planning to create a single vision for Buckinghamshire which integrates economic growth and demographic change with the planning, roads, transport, housing, green infrastructure and other services to support it – with improved leverage to enable, influence and benefit investors and developers. A new single county-wide unitary council could make rapid progress in this area
- A single housing and homelessness strategy, building on the collaboration that has already developed across the four district councils, that would address differences across the county and ensure that sufficient housing stock is made available to cater for needs of the most vulnerable, including those facing homelessness and domestic violence or needing supported housing
- Improved strategic relationships with the key housing associations (Paradigm, RedKite Housing Trust and Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust) to secure the development of purpose built accommodation for service users with higher needs which could reduce social care costs, together with the effective delivery of appropriate affordable homes
- Elimination of complex existing arrangements for Section 106 funding and Community Infrastructure Levies, with one organisation negotiating with developers and making use of that funding in a way consistent with a single, strategic vision for Buckinghamshire
- A single strategic approach to the use of publicly owned land and surplus assets
- Integrated planning function with strong and effective links to housing, transport and regeneration services, providing a speedy and effective one stop shop for developers and the community
- A model of 5 area planning committees would ensure local development decisions are taken in in the local area, whilst a strategic planning committee would determine major applications with strategic implications
- A consistent and integrated waste collection and disposal service, creating an end to end waste service with a single, consistent strategy supported by joined up delivery, enhancing performance and customer satisfaction, would be a major benefit from a single unitary council
- Joining up similar services such as winter maintenance and street cleaning services to ensure that they are aligned and not negatively impacting each other
- Consolidation into single teams to drive efficiencies – for example, housing advice and homelessness teams, leisure, green spaces and country parks teams
- Delivery of locally-focused services by town and parish councils, such as local highway maintenance and management, parks, green spaces and town centre management. savings from collective energy purchasing for the local government asset base in Buckinghamshire – estimated cost reductions of around £180,000 per year
- A new single energy contract to achieve a lower unit price. Energy efficiency improvements could be implemented across the local government estate in a cost efficient manner
- A single strategic organisation would be better able to draw in and take advantage of investment and external funding opportunities, resulting in real service delivery improvements

Corporate and Support Services

- Opportunities to eliminate confusion, clarify accountability and improve the journey for customers. For example one central location for planning applications would allow more consistent comments from the public as there is regular confusion over which council completes which service currently
- Customer insight would be significantly improved by a single account for residents which could provide the opportunity to draw together knowledge of vulnerable service users which is currently spread across suppliers, the districts councils, county council, service providers, Bucks Home Choice (the choice based lettings system) etc.

Local Plans

The three local plans will be newly adopted at the launch of a new council and will therefore continue to provide the policy framework for Buckinghamshire for the immediate future (Appendix 4). Once the plans come up for review in 2022/2023, Buckinghamshire Council could consider the benefits of moving towards a single local development and infrastructure plan for Buckinghamshire.

Benefits of a Single Plan

- **Stronger focus** on place shaping, mapping out a vision for what we want our places to be
- **Integrated approach** to growth, linking together the planning and delivery of jobs, housing and infrastructure to build sustainable communities
- Improved integration with sub national policy, with a single voice
- **Single** evidence base and plan making process – both offer efficiency savings
- **Simplified**, streamlined consultation processes, enabling more meaningful consultation which will improve the quality of the policy and control processes
- **Enhanced** spatial planning, with coordination of social, environmental and economic interests for the county as a whole and improved integration with regional level policy
- A **strategic** view of the connectivity across the County between the two urban centres of Aylesbury and High Wycombe

Consolidation of corporate resources and support services would maximise savings for the new authority through economies of scale, process efficiencies and rationalisation of management and systems. Consolidating resources would also allow savings to be made in the back office that in turn protects frontline services. Opportunities could include;

- Reduced expenditure on support services such as ICT, Human Resources, Finance, Legal, Procurement and Property functions estimated at around £7m a year, through a combination of staffing efficiencies and greater purchasing power. Pooling of resources and expertise would reduce dependency on agency staff, high cost interim staff and consultancy expenditure
- Investment in specialisms that no single council can afford alone. This could also lead to centres of expertise that could support frontline services more effectively and also offer opportunities to other local public sector providers - for example building on the model whereby the county council now delivers a communications and engagement function for the Buckinghamshire CCG Federation
- Consistent delivery of low cost, high quality processes, building on best practice processes from the existing councils. This would place the new authority in a strong position to lead in shared services partnerships, such as the county council's shared HR and Organisational Development service with London Borough of Harrow
- A single corporate and support services team which would eliminate competition between the existing councils for traded services, such as payroll and meeting space hire
- A single online portal to access details about the council's formal governance, with a single webcasting provider providing online access to committee meetings
- A more strategic approach to procurement and a single relationship with the market which could deliver significant savings through greater economies of scale. The new authority would have a combined annual third party spend of more than £350m
- More effective customer relationship management through data sharing, with opportunities to identify local demands for service and tailor services appropriately - for example through joining up council tax register with disabled blue badge and concessionary fares data
- Greater clarity to local service users: one place to go, consistent advice, wider combined promotion channels and increased capacity to respond to local requests
- Increased resilience and ability to respond to peaks and troughs in workload to deliver a better service for residents. It would offer improved business continuity and the ability to respond flexibly and responsively to change
- More career opportunities that would make the new authority a larger, more attractive and more dynamic employer, attracting quality candidates in a tough professional services market, eliminating competition for top candidates between the existing councils and providing opportunities for career progression which help retention.



Aim 4: Better Value for Money

The system of local government funding will change over the next 4 years. Arrangements for the retention of business rates are currently under review and are uncertain beyond 2020. New responsibilities will be devolved to local authorities but as yet there is no agreement around what they will be. The relative needs formula is also likely to be reset. The New Homes Bonus system is also under review nationally.

Whilst the impact of some of these changes is not known at this stage, it is probable that the Buckinghamshire authorities will see reductions in both New Homes Bonus and the level of income from business rates. These changes will occur during a period when districts' financial resources are already assumed to decline in the core spending power. Under a single county-wide unitary authority the fall in core spending power would only be approximately 2.0%, which would significantly mitigate the potential risk to frontline services.

A new Buckinghamshire Council would be well placed to manage both known and unknown financial risks:

- Ability to direct resources to areas of highest need
- Funding changes including business rates (e.g. larger employer leaving)
- Volatility in levels of income generation
- Demand pressures on social care budgets
- Pressure on services through housing growth

Financial Model: Overview

LG Futures was commissioned to provide some independent support in producing a financial model for Buckinghamshire Council. The model confirms that a new, county-wide single unitary council would be financially viable, based on current spending and funding patterns. The four-year forecasts indicate that the financial position of a new Buckinghamshire Council would deteriorate between now and 2019-20 as a consequence of the known funding changes for local government. However, the change for a single county-wide unitary council would be less severe than for the district councils under the current arrangements.

Savings

Based on the assumptions made, CIPFA statistics and benchmark comparison with other local authorities, the model estimates that a new Buckinghamshire Council could achieve annual cost savings of £18.2m a year, compared with the current two-tier arrangements.

These savings would primarily be achieved through:

- Operation of existing services within Buckinghamshire at the most efficient level
- Streamlined senior management structure
- Reviewing functions/reducing management overheads
- Changes to democratic structures
- Reductions in corporate overheads

Overall savings are estimated as £18.2m per annum (from year 3 following transition). This equates to a saving of £35.27 per head of population and £84.03 per household.

These savings make very prudent assumptions about the cost savings which could be achieved through streamlining services and functions once they are brought together under a single county-wide unitary council. It is anticipated that they in fact will be significantly higher than those identified above. Moreover, they do not include the wider cost savings to the public purse which unified local government could achieve for key partners.

	Value	Description
Democratic processes	£1,625,000	Reduced number of members, overall committees and support
Senior staffing	£2,990,000	Streamline senior management structure
Back office	£3,975,000	Support Service efficiencies for new council – 10% prudent reduction
Consolidated Systems	£1,700,000	Reduced costs of single system platforms in new Council
Contract Efficiencies	£2,760,000	Larger contracts, efficiencies and economies of scale
Service opportunities	£3,650,000	Consolidating existing services and operating to the most efficient level in Buckinghamshire, including refuse collection and recycling, revenues and benefits and the consolidation of other district services.
Property Rationalisation	£1,500,000	Revenue cost savings from the rationalisation of property holdings across the district and county council estates.
Total	£18,200,000	

Transition Costs

In order to establish a new Buckinghamshire Council and deliver the savings, one-off transitional costs of £16.2m would be incurred. These would cover the costs of the transition programme team, redundancy and/or retirement costs, and interim shadow arrangements. Taking into account the estimated level of savings, it is estimated that these transitional costs could be repaid within a period of three years.

A sensitivity analysis has been carried out on the assumptions around savings and transition costs. This is included in Appendix 2. It confirms that transitional costs do not impact significantly on the financial case and, even under extreme circumstances, payback would still be within five years.

	Value	Description
Transition Programme Team	£1,500,000	Assumes a team of five posts over three years
Recruitment and Interim capacity	£1,500,000	Assumption is that current staffing across the five organisations will be deployed to manage the transition as far as possible
Property	£500,000	Property rationalisation revenue costs
External communications	£500,000	Communications costs, signage and branding
Cultural Change Programme	£500,000	Including change management, skills development, enhanced communication
Corporate Systems Transition	£4,000,000	Transfer to a single ERP System (£1.5m) Consolidation of Revenues and Benefits and Planning Systems (£1.5m) Other Systems Integration Costs (£1m)
Harmonisation of Terms and Conditions	£500,000	Due to small differentials between the national pay and conditions at districts and local pay at the county.
Early Retirement/Redundancy	£4,670,000	Assumes that the proposed cap of £95k on exit packages will come into effect
Closedown Costs	£500,000	Cost of closing down legacy councils
Legal and New Constitution Costs	£500,000	Includes Legal costs, contract novation, development of new constitution
Contingency	£1,500,000	
Total	£16,170,000	

Council Tax Equalisation

Variations in the district council element of council tax are relatively small in Buckinghamshire. The lowest is Wycombe (£131.99 at Band D) and the current cost of equalising council tax bands in all districts, within the existing referendum limits is £2.221m compared to existing council tax assumptions in the first 3 years. These proposals assume that council tax is equalised after the first year.

maximum increase in council tax over the next four years. Whilst a new Buckinghamshire Council may have an ambition to be able to freeze or even lower council tax in the longer term, it would be critical to get the new council onto a sustainable footing before being able to consider this. The financial model therefore assumes an increase of 2% for the social care precept up to 2021 and an increase of 1.99% within the council tax referendum limit in each of the current districts.

The budgets set by the county and the majority of the district councils have assumed the

	Band D as at 1 April 2016 (excluding parishes, police, fire)	Assumed Band D as at 1 April 2018	Lowest Band D at 1 April 2019 (Including Care precept)	Reduction in Band D (from 1 April 2018)	% change in Band D (from 1 April 2018)	Est. Council Tax Base at 1 April 2019	Reduction in district council tax Income (compared to budget for 2019/20)
Aylesbury Vale	£139.06	£144.65	£142.77	-£1.88	-1.3%	7,513	-340,147
Chiltern	£168.77	£175.55	£142.77	-£32.78	-18.7%	44,060	-1,598,340
South Bucks	£148.00	£153.95	£142.77	-£11.18	-7.3%	32,994	-469,382
Wycombe	£131.99	£137.30	£142.77	£5.48	3.99%	68,026	186,793
Total						216,592	-2,221,076

Investment of Savings

Taking into account the savings and the payback period for the transitional costs, a new Buckinghamshire Council would be able to afford investment of £45m (282% over the 5 year period) of cumulative net savings to enhance delivery against residents' priorities over the first 5 years or the investment of annual revenue of £18m after year 3.

Reserves

This table sets out the existing level of general fund reserves held across the county council and district councils plus any balances held in earmarked reserves for Transformation or contingency purposes. For general fund balances, the lowest level is at Chiltern District Council where balances are equivalent to 8.1% of net revenue expenditure. There are some plans to use balances across the district councils to support the budget but these appear to be limited. These are shown as the 'planned increases' line below and reflect the information presented within the 2016/17 Medium Term Financial plans.

Impact on Reserves	Base Year 2016/17 £000	Lead in -Y1 2017/18 £000	Lead in Y0 2018/19 £000	Year 1 2019/20 £000	Year 2 2020/21 £000	Year 3 2021/22 £000	Year 4 2022/23 £000	Year 5 2023/24 £000
Aylesbury Vale	7,299	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chiltern	4,496	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
South Bucks	4,603	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wycombe	10,370	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bucks CC	17,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total General Reserves	17,400	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Planned Increases	456	111	455	-772	0	0	0	0
Net Transition Costs	0	-23,000	-5,350	-6,476	0	0	0	0
Reserve Balance	44,624	42,435	37,540	30,292	30,292	30,292	30,292	30,292
% of NBR	12%	11%	10%	8%	8%	8%	8%	8%

In addition to the general fund reserves, collectively the county council and district councils held over £203m of earmarked reserves as at 1st April 2016. Although some of these will be used in the near future for the purposes for which they are held, in the context of a new unitary council, a new Buckinghamshire Council would want to review the purpose for which these funds are held to meet the priorities of the new council.

The table below shows the impact on the general reserves balance for Buckinghamshire Council, if the reserves were used to meet the net transition cost as presented in the financial model below. A new Buckinghamshire Council could reinstate the reserves to the pre-unitary level by choosing to put less than one year's savings into reserves after 2021. In practice some of this investment could be met from capital reserves and usable capital receipts.

Capital Programme

Over 500 property assets are held across the county and four district councils (excluding schools, agricultural estates and country parks) with a net book value of just under £1bn. Physical space would have an important role to play in realising the benefits of a brand new unitary council. The strategic management of a combined property portfolio would provide enhanced opportunities for:

- transfers to parish and town councils
- development of community hubs and promote co-location and integration of public sector services
- rationalisation and disposals to remove duplication and realise the value for reinvestment
- commercial investments to create revenue streams or enhanced post-development capital receipts
- use of assets to stimulate growth.

The county council recently commissioned Carter Jonas to carry out a property review in order to identify opportunities for delivering both financial benefits and service improvements. The scope included potential

"A Unitary model may generate substantial savings whilst offering an improved service"

Carter Jonas, 2016,

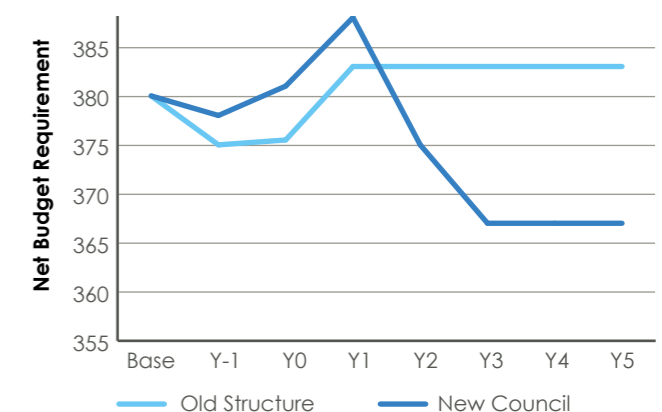
property sharing opportunities with public sector partners, including co-location into multi-agency community hubs. The report identified potential net capital receipts of up to £48m, including co-location of county and district functions. The ability to deliver the top end of this estimate would be enhanced through the establishment of a single unitary council due to the reduced geographical constraints.

No assumptions have been made about additional capital expenditure as a result of the establishment of a new Buckinghamshire Council, beyond the transitional spend on ICT systems. Any change in property requirements would be managed through the existing portfolios or financed in the main through the disposal of existing assets.

Summary of Financial Model

The adjacent financial model shows that a new Buckinghamshire Council would be able to balance its budget, funding the cost of transition from reserves with payback within 2.5 years from set up. Even where all transition costs are funded from reserves, the model indicates that reserve balances overall would not fall below 5% of net budget requirement.

Impact of Proposals on Net Budget Requirement



The table below summarises the impact of the changes described above on the total spend of the existing and then the new authorities. The payback period calculated by this model is 2.2 years from 1 April 2019.

2.2 years from 1 April 2019

	Base Year 2016/17 £000	Lead in -Y1 2017/18 £000	Lead in Y0 2018/19 £000	Year 1 2019/20 £000	Year 2 2020/21 £000	Year 3 2021/22 £000	Year 4 2022/23 £000	Year 5 2023/24 £000	Total 2016/24 £000
Old structure									
County	332,070	328,832	329,310	336,722	336,722	336,722	336,722	336,722	2,673,821
Districts	48,196	46,537	46,285	46,585	46,585	46,585	46,585	46,585	373,942
TOTAL under Existing Structure	380,266	375,369	375,595	383,307	383,307	383,307	383,307	383,307	3,047,763
New Structure									
County	332,070	328,832	329,310	0	0	0	0	0	990,212
Districts	48,196	46,537	46,285	0	0	0	0	0	141,018
Transition costs	0	2,300	5,150	7,670	1,000	0	0	0	16,120
CT equalisation	0	0	0	2,221	1,652	1,691	1,730	1,771	9,066
TOTAL under New Structure	380,266	377,669	380,745	388,225	374,927	366,797	366,837	366,877	3,002,343
Difference	0	2,300	5,150	4,918	-8,379	-16,509	-16,470	-16,430	-45,420
Difference made up of									
Transition Costs	0	2,300	5,150	7,670	1,000	0	0	0	16,120
Efficiency Savings	0	0	0	-4,793	-11,032	-18,200	-18,200	-18,200	-70,606
Re-investment	0	0	0	2,221	1,652	1,691	1,730	1,771	9,066
Net of costs and savings	0	2,300	5,150	4,918	-8,379	-16,609	-16,470	-16,430	-45,420

Assumptions

Business rates – for the purpose of this business case no change has been assumed to the relative needs allocation to a unitary authority from the total awarded to upper and lower tier at present.

New Homes Bonus – Although the current 80:20 split may also be reconsidered, for the purpose of this business case it is assumed that there will be no impact on the overall total resource available to a unitary authority.



C

Chapter C Achieving the Change

Managing the Risks of Change and Achieving the Benefits

An effective change management programme would be fundamental to ensuring that a new Buckinghamshire Council is launched successfully and is able to achieve the benefits articulated in this business case. Bringing five separate organisations together would present a significant challenge in terms of developing a brand new organisational culture. We do not underestimate the need to plan and properly resource this programme, and to sustain a focus on this for the first 2-3 years of the life of the new council whilst continuing to deliver good business as usual services.

The five legacy councils have a strong track record in delivering transformational change and possess the skills and experience to lead this change programme, drawing on external capacity as required.

Learning from the experience of other new unitary authorities, the approach to implementation would be characterised by the following principles:

Continuity of service delivery to residents, communities, businesses and service users is the top priority. Members and officers from all five existing authorities must be able to play a full role in the transition to a brand new council

Valuing Employees - key to the success of the new council would be its ability to retain skilled, specialist staff from the five organisations and actively engage them in shaping a new culture for a new organisation

Valuing the legacy of the five councils - the approach to implementation would need to be built on a fundamental respect for the history and legacy of each of the five existing councils

Valuing Partners - a wide range of stakeholders have contributed to the design criteria for a new unitary authority, and must continue to have a voice during the implementation phase.

From Transition to Transformation

The programme is envisaged in three phases over a five year period (assuming 2019 go live):

- **Preparation: DCLG decision – April 2018**
- **Transition: May 2018 – May 2020 – with go live in April 2019**
- **Transformation: May 2020 – May 2022**

From the approval of the Business Case through the first year of the new council, the emphasis would be firmly on service continuity rather

than change. In this period, priority would be given to retaining existing staff, and to the ongoing effective operation of existing systems, processes and contracts, with a strong focus on performance management to ensure that performance of front line services and resident satisfaction remains sound. Whilst there may be some opportunities to integrate services from Vesting Day (or earlier), the realisation of benefits through harmonising teams, systems, policies and contracts, would be phased gradually over time as and when it makes sense. Whilst this defers the benefits until later in the plan period, it would ensure that a new Buckinghamshire Council can lay strong foundations for future success. The financial modelling in the business case reflects this cautious approach to the phasing of service redesign.

Key Milestones

Assuming that a decision is made in January 2017, key milestones are envisaged as follows:

Unitary Transition Milestones	
January 2017	Secretary of State Decision Shadow Implementation Executive & Transition Board established
March 2017	Appointment of Programme Director
May 2017	County Council elections
Summer 2017	Parliamentary Structural Change Order
Summer 2017	Appointment of Chief Executive Transition Reviews commissioned: Property Digital & IT HR Terms and conditions Supply Chain Business Continuity Plans
Summer 2017	Boundary Review Proposals submitted
Autumn 2017	Chief Executive of new Council in post Agree organisational structure
Spring 2018	Boundary Commission Report published Top team of new council appointed
Autumn 2018	Set budget
April 2019	Vesting Day for new Council
May 2019	Elections for new Unitary Council
May 2019	County and District Councils dissolved
May 2019	Integration of services on phased basis Monitoring the delivery of benefits

A detailed programme plan is at Appendix 6.

Governance

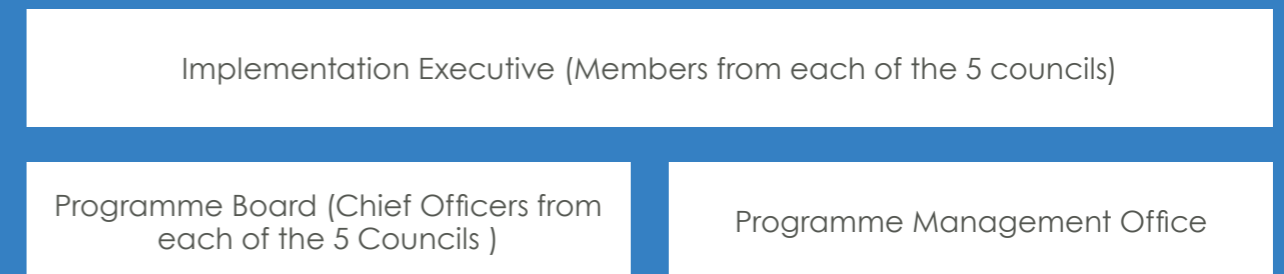
Once the Secretary of State makes a decision, an Implementation Executive and an officer Transition Programme Board would be established to lead the preparations for the new council, prior to Vesting Day. Post Vesting Day, these would be replaced with the Cabinet and Management Team of Buckinghamshire Council.

The Implementation Executive would lead the delivery of the Transition Plan and also oversee

key 'business as usual' milestones for each of the five councils to ensure that any risks to service continuity are mitigated.

Strong collaboration with key stakeholders would be critical throughout the programme, and the detail of these arrangements would be developed with key partners.

Governance Arrangements



Transition Programme Management Office (PMO)

At the outset, a new programme management team would be established in order to manage the substantial transition programme, drawing on the talent across the five organisations blended with external advice and challenge. A Programme Director (external) would be appointed to lead the transition programme, with accountability to the Implementation Executive.

A robust approach to risk management would be taken by the PMO in order to identify specific risks associated with the transition, and to actively manage these.

The Programme Director would report monthly on the delivery of the transition programme to all five councils, through the implementation executive, and also to DCLG.

Transition Programme – Workstrands

The 'Transition Phase' of the Programme would cover the period from laying parliamentary orders through to the end of the first year of the

new council (Summer 2017- April 2020). At this stage, it is envisaged that the Programme would move into a 'Transformation Phase'.

The Transition Programme workstreams could include:

- Governance – including constitution and policy and planning framework
- Democratic Leadership – including planning for the elections, inductions of new councillors, defining the roles of Members, and development of Community Boards
- HR – including staff retention, transfer and appointments
- Systems – including ICT transitions
- Supply chain – novation of contracts
- Financial management – including design of the budget structure
- Culture Change – internal comms & organisational development
- External Communications & Stakeholder engagement

- Customer Experience & Service Delivery
- Property strategy – including due diligence on asset transfer, opportunities for co-location and development of community hubs
- Service Transformation programme – including planning the phasing of service redesign opportunities

Democracy Commission

A “Democracy Commission” could be established to maximise public participation in the design of the new council, including the geography of the local areas and the terms of reference of the community boards and the community hub models.

Building on the [Kirklees model](#), this could be established with an independent chairman, with a remit to gather views and ideas from existing county and district councillors, residents, parish & town councils, businesses and other partners, as well as drawing on best practice elsewhere. It is envisaged that this could start in Summer 2017.

One of the issues raised during the research on the business case is the way in which residents of the unparished area of High Wycombe could potentially benefit from the local devolution offer. This will be an issue for the new Buckinghamshire council to consider, and potentially could be included within the scope of the proposed ‘Democracy Commission’.

Boundary Commission

It is proposed that the Buckinghamshire Council would be established with 98 single member wards, broadly based on dividing the existing county council division boundaries into two. This would involve submitting proposals to the Boundary Commission in summer 2017 to consider. The Boundary Commission anticipate that they would be able to reach a decision on the proposals by January 2018.



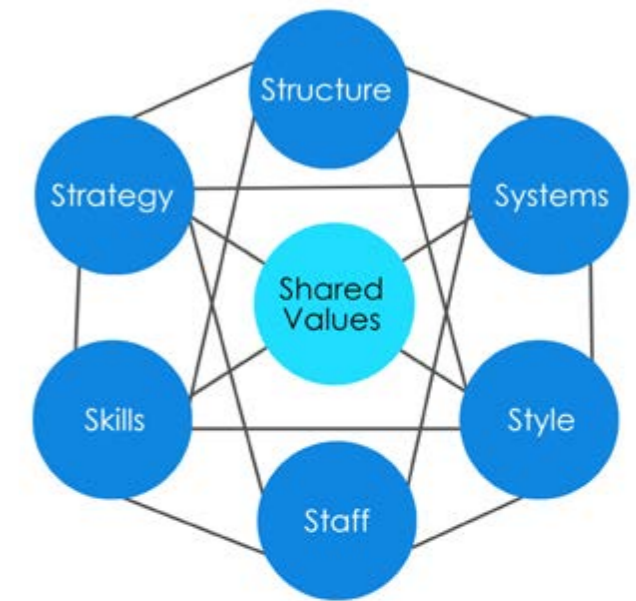
Creating a New Culture

A new, county-wide single unitary council would need visionary leadership, organisational flexibility and people capacity, with the right people working in the right way. To achieve this, it would be critical to invest in the transition of the workforce in a way that wins hearts and minds, builds trust, and develops the new council into a coherent and cohesive organisation, with its own distinct culture.

Underpinning the transition programme would be a major workstrand focused on developing and embedding a new culture for a new Buckinghamshire Council. This could include:

- Vision, values and behaviours
- Organisational development & design
- HR systems and policies
- Skills development
- Working practices
- Performance management
- Pay and reward, relocation and retention
- Assessment and selection
- Employee relations

A key element of this culture could be a business-like and entrepreneurial approach which would be found not only in the council’s own commercial activity but more generally in the attitude towards problem solving, and in an empathy with the needs of businesses in Buckinghamshire



Credit: McKinsey

Appendix 1

Buckinghamshire Profile

Geography

Buckinghamshire is an attractive county with rich heritage and landscape; over a quarter of the county is included within the Chiltern area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a further third covered by the Metropolitan Green

Belt. The county enjoys good transport links, particularly to London. Contrasting with the rural areas in the county, Buckinghamshire has an urban environment found within its key towns such as Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham.

History & Heritage

Buckinghamshire has been a strategic and administrative unit for over 1000 years. Its boundaries were laid down in 914 by King Edward the Elder who developed the new county of Buckinghamshire as a military unit and a judicial and taxation area, administered by a sheriff.

The Local Government Act of 1888 established the new Buckinghamshire County Council, with democratically elected members from both their urban and rural areas. 1894 saw the creation of elected Urban and Rural District Councils, based on the Poor Law Union boundaries, to look after sanitation and local roads and in due course play a major role in building regulation and the construction of council houses. In 1974, these were replaced by 5 larger district councils, with Slough moving out of Buckinghamshire and into Berkshire. In 1997, the new city of Milton Keynes gained unitary status and separated from the rest of Buckinghamshire.



Historic map of Buckinghamshire 1934

Demographic and socio-economic change

Buckinghamshire has a population of 528,000 residents, made up of approximately 212,000 households. The population profile is not static, and important changes are occurring. The gap is widening between the lowest and highest socio-economic groups; both of which are growing. The population over the age of 65 is increasing, as are levels of disability. Buckinghamshire is becoming even more multi-

cultural and diverse. We experience a net loss of young educated adults, but net gains of families with children and mid-life adults. These changes, along with shifting behaviours are resulting in increasing demand for some services – including children's' and adults' social care, supported transport, school places, specialised and supported housing, and health services.

Migration

Migration into Buckinghamshire is a key driver of population change. Migrant characteristics are typically: aged 20-45, families with young children, BME, lower to mid-range socio-economic group, arriving from South Oxfordshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, Milton Keynes, Slough, Hillingdon Ealing, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and India.

Since 2001 the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) population in Buckinghamshire has increased by 6%, and we expect to see a further 6% increase by 2031 (to 20% of the total population). The largest increase will be seen in the Asian/ Asian British group (from 9% to 12% total population). Greater Aylesbury and High Wycombe had the

largest BME populations aged 60-79 in 2011 (766 and 1747 respectively), and this will still be the case in 2031, although they will have seen a 255% and 191% increase respectively (to 2725 and 5088 residents).

Future population change will be informed by future changes in housing supply, which is not currently reflected in the projections discussed above. Based on the emerging Local Plans, the housing supply is expected to increase significantly, potentially by an additional 50,000 houses over the next 15 years. Initial estimates suggest our total population could be 60,000 higher by 2031 than current projections.

Skills, employment and economy

We have a very highly qualified workforce in Buckinghamshire, with high levels of economic activity and low unemployment. 35% of working age people are educated to degree level or above (compared to 30% across the South East), 74% of the population are economically active (compared to 72% across the South East), and only 0.7% of working age population are claiming Jobseekers Allowance (0.9% across the South East).

Job opportunities are good. The latest figures show that there are 2.06 jobseekers for every job vacancy in the County – this compares to 2.47 across the South East, and 3.43 across England as a whole. Average earnings for jobs held by Buckinghamshire residents are £35,579 – significantly higher than the average across the South East (£24,888) and England as a whole (£22,716). And less than 1% of people in Buckinghamshire live in the 20% most deprived areas in the country – compared to 8% across the South East as a whole.

But there are also challenges!

There are two prominent issues around skills – the substantial daily loss of skilled people who commute to higher paid jobs in London, and the 'brain drain' of educated young adults leaving Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire has a comparatively small proportion of people aged 24-30, being in the bottom 25% of all Local Authorities for this measure.

These issues may pose a challenge to the unfolding growth agenda in Buckinghamshire, which will be predicated upon the availability of an appropriately skilled workforce.

Skills shortages are more acute across the Thames Valley than the rest of the country, and within the Thames Valley Buckinghamshire faces the biggest challenge with 30% of vacant posts reported unfilled due to a lack of appropriately skilled applicants (compared to an average of 25%). Skills gaps are also an issue with 6% workforce employees deemed not proficient (compared to an average of 6.25% across the Thames Valley). There is evidence of some mismatch between the supply and demand of skills

in Buckinghamshire, with particular shortages in the technician, higher level, and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) skills required for local 'plan for growth' sectors (including engineering, digital/ IT, life sciences and medical technology, high performance technologies, creative industries, construction, and built environment). Competition from other employers (particularly London-based) is also noted as a driving factor.

A key opportunity for addressing these skills shortages, is to grow our Apprenticeship provision; with only 2% of key stage 5 pupils currently progressing into this type of training. The top five categories in our Apprenticeship profile are Business Management, Hospitality & Catering, Child Development & Welfare, Health and Social Care, and Administration. This demonstrates a comparative lack of provision in some of the more important sectors for the future of Buckinghamshire's economy (the 'plan for growth' sectors mentioned above).

Accessibility

Buckinghamshire is the least self-contained of all the Local Enterprise Partnerships with only 62.3% of working residents employed in the county, and roughly twice as many people commuting out of Buckinghamshire as commuting in. Out-flows are generally to the South, with in-flows generally being from East/ West. There is high car ownership and use in Buckinghamshire, particularly for journeys to work (the majority of people in employment travel less than 40k, and by car), 13% of residents commute (road or rail) to London,

and 1 in 10 work mainly from home. North/ south travel (M40 and M41) is generally thought to be easier than East/ West. East West Rail is a key project expected to improve connectivity across Buckinghamshire with Oxford, Milton Keynes and Bedford (and Cambridge in the future on the 'Knowledge Arc'). It will place many communities on the national transport network and encourage inward investment (a survey of Buckinghamshire businesses in 2013 found that 1 in 5 expected East West Rail to have a positive impact on their business).

Housing Supply

The 'brain drain' and skill shortages issue discussed above are in part tied to the lack of affordable housing (both higher than average rents and house prices) for young professionals. The average price of a house in Buckinghamshire is £448,199 – compared to £352,120 across the South East. The difference is even more stark for detached houses – In Buckinghamshire the average price is £696,477, compared to £533,967 across the South East. Our affordability ratio (average house price to average earnings) is 13:1, considerable higher than the England average (8:1).

Despite the outstanding natural beauty of Buckinghamshire undoubtedly being an important factor in attracting and retaining skilled workers, the resulting constraints on developable land mean that housing growth cannot always match economic growth.

The demand for social housing significantly exceeds availability and although homeless acceptances in Buckinghamshire (1.75 per 1000 households) are lower than the national average (2.5 per 1000 households), there are increasing pressures on homelessness services – over the last three years homeless acceptances in Buckinghamshire have increased at almost three times the rate of those in England as a whole.

Business Profile

Buckinghamshire, from a labour market perspective, is advantageously located, within easy commuting distance from the London, the M4 Corridor, Oxford and Milton Keynes labour markets. Key features for which Buckinghamshire is world famous include Silverstone Race Circuit, Pinewood Film Studios and Stoke Mandeville 'The Birthplace of the Paralympics'.

Buckinghamshire is widely recognised as the Entrepreneurial Heart of Britain, with more new businesses starting up and succeeding than anywhere else in the UK. Buckinghamshire is a small firm economy with the highest proportion of firms employing fewer than five people, at 75.8% of all firms. 40% of our small firms (with less than 5 employees) are located in rural parts of Buckinghamshire – and these businesses experience more barriers to growth than many, including a lack of affordable housing; poor business infrastructure (particularly a lack of suitable premises, slower broadband speeds and weaker training and development provision); a shortage of key services; a more restrictive labour market (characterised by a lower skilled, ageing workforce); a shortage of business networks; planning constraints; and a lack of access to business support and suitable finance.

The most prominent local business sector is 'professional, scientific and technical services' (21% of local businesses), followed by construction (11%), then 'post and telecommunications' (10%). As the construction

sector has often been the first to demonstrate the impacts of a downturn in the economy, this could be an emerging issue for our business community as the impacts of Brexit become clearer over the next 2 years.

Film and TV is also a recognised dimension of Buckinghamshire's business profile - Pinewood Studios is a key hub for creative industries and the UK film and television industry, with around 112 full-time equivalent employees sitting alongside over 175 Pinewood tenant companies employing approximately 750 people. Recent research estimates suggest that Pinewood generates £101m GVA per annum. The National Film and Television School produces a host of award winning students and graduates, and many of the UK's most noted contemporary auteurs as well as commercial filmmakers. The county's strong natural landscape, great houses and National Trust properties have attracted many high profile film-makers in search of locations – from James Bond to Bridget Jones' Diary, and TV series such as the Midsummer Murders.

A survey of local businesses in 2013 found that overall around three quarters of businesses are satisfied with Buckinghamshire as a place to do business, leaving less than one in ten dissatisfied (these figures vary by district; businesses in Wycombe are more likely than average to be satisfied, whilst those in South Bucks are less likely). Advantages of being Buckinghamshire based are reported as:



Next Generation Access (NGA) Superfast Broadband, which will deliver 24 Mbps - due to be completed 2018



Excellent access to national road network – via the M40 & M25



Rail links to London Marylebone Station and access to London Underground network at Amersham Tube Station



major international airports within 1 hour drive, inc. Heathrow & Luton



Less than an hours drive to London and Oxford



Key Stations for East-West Rail (Oxford to Cambridge) to be located within Buckinghamshire. Due for completion 2019

The main challenges to locating in Buckinghamshire were found to be utility and energy prices, transport connectivity (particularly for high-growth businesses), constraints around access to finance, broadband speed, and cost of premises.

The Buckinghamshire LEP evidence base identifies a number of challenges including a lack of high-growth business start-ups, lack of early-stage business accommodation, and weak specialist business networks. The impact of Brexit on inward investment and business start-ups is yet to become clear, but could also be an emerging issue for our local growth agenda.

Environment

A period of unprecedented growth will inevitably place pressure on the Buckinghamshire environment, and the benefits it provides. Whilst overall domestic energy consumption is reducing in line with national trends, residents in Chiltern and South Bucks consume more gas per household than any other District in England. Only 11% of electricity consumed in Buckinghamshire is from renewable sources, significantly below the Government's national target of 30% by 2020. CO2 emissions per capita in Buckinghamshire (6.8t) are also higher than the regional and English average.

Recycling rates in Buckinghamshire (58%) are better than the national average (45%).

However, Buckinghamshire has more municipal waste going to landfill than is the case nationally (currently 42% compared to the national average of 25%). This is set to improve as a result of the recent opening of a new Energy from Waste facility in the north of the County. This facility represents the single biggest investment ever made by the County Council, and stands to save the county's taxpayers £150 million over 30 years through avoiding landfill charges, as well as earning an income from the electricity generated from waste that cannot be recycled. As the county grows, avoiding and reducing waste and improving resource management will continue to be important to achieving a sustainable future.



Buckinghamshire is the 3rd most productive place in England

48%

of residents educated to degree level and above



Some of the best performing schools in the country

6th

highest proportion of employment in the knowledge economy

Health & Wellbeing

Buckinghamshire scores well on the national measures of wellbeing with the highest GDP per capita outside Inner London, one of the highest life expectancies and some of the best educational results in the country. Compared to the national average a higher proportion of Buckinghamshire residents view their health as very good or good, and are less likely to report having a long term limiting illness.

2 in 3

adults are overweight or obese

1 in 7

adults smoke, compared with 1 in 4 adults in manual groups smoke

1 in 5

adults are physically inactive

1 in 5

adults drink harmful levels of alcohol

1 in 3

adults are at risk of developing diabetes

The prevalence of long term conditions, many of which are preventable, are expected to increase over the next five years, with the greatest increase expected in diabetes and cancer. The prevalence of cancer is predicted to increase by 31% from 2.5% to 3.2%, driven by unhealthy lifestyles, early detection and improved survival, while diabetes is predicted to increase by 17% from 5.9% to 6.9% driven by an ageing population and unhealthy lifestyles, particularly overweight and obesity. Although hypertension is expected to increase by 5% due to unhealthy lifestyles and better identification of hypertension. However, better management of hypertension and other causative factors such as diabetes, combined with improved identification means the prevalence of coronary heart disease is likely to remain fairly constant.

Mortality rates in Buckinghamshire are significantly lower than national rates for all deaths, for all circulatory diseases and for all cancers. However, the mortality rate due to hypertensive disease (conditions associated with high blood pressure) in Buckinghamshire is statistically significantly higher than the national rate.

There are also significant health inequalities in Buckinghamshire, with the most disadvantaged 20% of people experiencing poorer health outcomes, including infant mortality, premature mortality, hospital admissions rates for a range of conditions (including coronary heart disease, circulatory disease, heart failure, stroke and diabetes).

Community Safety

After a number of years of decreasing crime levels, crime increased by 12% across the county between 14/15 and 15/16 (reflecting a wider trend across the Thames Valley).

The hidden nature of some emerging areas of crime such as modern slavery, exploitation of vulnerable individuals and groups, and cyber (internet) crime means that the understanding of who is at risk is becoming more complex.

Repeat offending accounts for 67% of all detected crime, and a small proportion of offenders (5%) are responsible for more than 25% of all detected crime. Despite this the Ministry of Justice identifies Buckinghamshire as having the lowest repeat offending rate in the South East. The primary age of offending is between 16 and 26, with the higher rate of offending in this age group being linked to a higher rate of substance misuse.



Appendix 2

Sensitivity Analysis

Council Tax Equalisation

The current model assumes 1.99% council tax equalisation for districts and county councils over the period; plus the 2% Social Care precept for the county and unitary council until 2021. Sensitivity analysis has been performed

of a change in assumption around council tax increases by the lowest precepting authority.

The analysis shows that the impact of changes in council tax increases is not significant in terms of the overall business case.

		Cost of CT equalisation in year 1	Impact on payback	Impact on GF reserve	Impact on GF as % of
		£000	Years	£000	%
Current assumption	1.99%	2,221	2.46	30,292	7.8%
Lowest DC increase by	1.00%	2,544	2.50	29,969	7.7%
Lowest DC increase by	0.00%	2,869	2.54	29,644	7.6%
Lowest DC increase by	-1.00%	3,194	2.59	29,319	7.5%

Savings Assumptions

The current model has a number of assumptions around potential savings. Sensitivity looks at the impact of an overall over-estimation or over-delivery of potential savings:

The analysis shows that savings would need to fall to around 50% of what has been assumed before it would become significant in terms of the overall business case.

		Total savings over 5 year period	Ongoing Annual saving	Net (surplus) / deficit over 5 years	Impact on payback period	Impact on GF reserve	Impact on GF as % of NBR
		£000	£000	£000	Years	£000	%
Current assumption		70,606	18,200	(45,420)	2.24	27,440	7.5%
Reduction of	5%	67,075	17,290	(41,890)	2.31	27,191	7.4%
Reduction of	10%	63,545	16,380	(38,359)	2.38	26,943	7.3%
Reduction of	25%	52,954	13,650	(27,769)	2.67	26,197	7.1%
Reduction of	50%	35,303	9,100	(10,117)	3.62	24,954	6.8%
Increase of	5%	74,136	19,110	(48,950)	2.18	27,689	7.5%
Increase of	10%	77,666	20,020	(52,480)	2.13	27,937	7.6%
Increase of	25%	88,257	22,751	(63,071)	2.00	28,683	7.8%

Cost Assumptions

The model has a number of assumptions around the cost of transition. Sensitivity looks at the impact of an overall under-estimation of potential costs. The model has assumed that the £95k cap on public sector exit packages comes into effect. The impact of this not taking place is also modelled.

The analysis shows that the £1.5m contingency assumed within the business case is not quite sufficient to cover a 10% increase in costs.

It would not cover the estimated cost of removing the £95k exit cap (*note this has been estimated at the top-end of potential packages assuming all senior officers are over 55 years and without taking account of potential vacancies).

In terms of the business case overall, however, a 50% increase in costs can be accommodated within general fund reserves without reducing reserves below 5% of net budget requirement.

		Total transition costs £000	Net (Surplus) / deficit over 5 years	Impact on payback period	Impact on GF reserve	Impact on GF as % of NBR
		£000	£000	Years	%	%
Current assumption		16,120	(45,420)	2.24	27,440	7.5%
No £95k exit cap		18,503	(43,037)	2.39	25,057	6.8%
Increase of	5%	16,926	(44,614)	2.29	26,684	7.3%
Increase of	10%	17,732	(43,808)	2.34	25,928	7.1%
Increase of	25%	20,150	(41,390)	2.49	23,660	6.4%
Increase of	50%	24,180	(37,360)	2.73	19,880	5.4%
Reduction of	5%	15,314	(46,226)	2.19	28,196	7.7%
Reduction of	10%	14,508	(47,032)	2.14	28,952	7.9%
Reduction of	25%	12,090	(49,450)	2.00	31,220	8.5%



Appendix 3

New Council Governance Arrangements

New Council Governance Arrangements

The political governance arrangements of a new Buckinghamshire Council could be designed to provide:

- representation of all Buckinghamshire's communities
- transparent and open decision-making
- responsiveness to the needs and ambitions of local communities
- accountability to local residents, communities and businesses
- robust assurance and regulation of the use of public funding and assets held on behalf of Buckinghamshire

- scrutiny of services delivered on behalf of the council and other public service providers
- strong partnership working with the public, private and voluntary sectors in the interests of local people
- civic leadership and pride in Buckinghamshire which respects the values of local communities and the heritage of the county.

Subject to proportionality rules, all councillors would be eligible for appointment to these positions, as well as serving on local Community Boards and external bodies on behalf of the council.

Strengthening Local Democracy – Council decision-making

A new council would need to ensure that there is robust public accountability for decision-making and that decisions are taken locally on issues that only affect one locality. Where decisions impact on more than one area or have a significant impact across Buckinghamshire, these decisions would be taken by the council as a whole through the councils' committees and Cabinet Members.

To ensure robust accountability and a localism approach, a new Buckinghamshire council could take the following measures:

- Ensure that all committee/cabinet/cabinet Member decisions which have a local impact demonstrate how the local councillors and the Community Board have been consulted

- Require public consultation on all major service changes through different ways – online; face-to-face engagement events; Community Board & Forum meeting.
- All planning decisions to ensure local consultation; the Strategic Planning Committee and the Area Planning Committees would ensure that the public and affected parish councils have the opportunity to make representations.
- Hold committee meetings in evenings to ensure that residents who work are able to attend

Council Committees

To fulfil the purpose of Buckinghamshire Council it is proposed that a Leader and Cabinet model be adopted for the new council, with four yearly elections. The other key committees of the council proposed are:

- Strategic Planning Committee
- Area Planning Committees (5)
- Licencing Committee
- Area Licensing Sub-Committees (5)
- Regulatory & Audit Committee
- Senior Awards & Appointments Committee
- Health and Wellbeing Board

- Pensions Fund Committee
- Rights of Way Committee
- Commercial Committee (to oversee the council's commercial activities)
- Community Boards (19)
- Corporate Parenting Panel
- Schools Forum

The exact details of the roles of all committees would be set out in a new council constitution.

In order to make it as easy as possible for those of working age to serve as an elected councillor, all full council and committee meetings could take place in evenings.

Key Councillor Positions

In order to carry out the functions of the new council effectively the following roles would be needed:

- Chairman of the Council- ceremonial head of the council & chairman of full council meetings
- Leader & Portfolio Holders — political portfolios should be designed to deliver the benefits of integrating the former county and district council services to customers.
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chairmen (5) — The remit for scrutiny committees should be structured to reflect the political portfolios and strategic themes of Buckinghamshire Council. The committees will fulfill statutory responsibilities in relation to health, education, community safety.

- Strategic Planning Committee Chairman
- Area Planning Committee Chairmen (5)
- Rights of Way Committee Chairman
- Licencing Committee Chairman
- Regulatory & Audit Committee Chairman
- Pensions Fund Committee Chairman
- Senior Appointments and Standards Committee Chairman
- Community Board Chairmen (19)

Subject to proportionality rules, all councillors would be eligible for appointment to these positions, as well as serving on local Community Boards and external bodies on behalf of the council.

Cabinet

A Cabinet of ten members is envisaged for the first term of the new council. This is larger than would be required for 'steady state' but would provide the additional capacity required for the successful implementation of a major change programme. The new council could consider reducing this number in its second term.

Political portfolios should be designed to provide a focus on the key challenges and opportunities faced by the new council, and to deliver the benefits of integrated services. It will be for the new council to design these portfolios, but they will need to include combinations of the following areas of responsibility:

- Adults Services
- Health
- Housing Services
- Children & Young People's services
- Highways & Transportation

- Economic Development, Skills
- Growth Strategy — Planning, Housing and Transport
- Planning
- Property
- Waste
- Communities & Local Partnerships
- Leisure
- Culture
- Environment & Flooding
- Resources
- Customer Service
- Commercialisation
- Business Transformation

Scrutiny

A new Buckinghamshire Council's scrutiny system would be set up according to the four national overarching principles for good scrutiny:

- Provides critical friend challenge to executive policy and decision makers
- Enables the voice and concerns of the public
- Carried out by independent minded councillors
- Drives improvement

A new, county-wide single unitary council would be able to carry out more robust scrutiny on behalf of local residents of issues rather than the artificial current constraints of looking at council services of five separate bodies in isolation.

Scrutiny could be carried out at two levels - strategically and locally – by non-executive councillors on a cross-party basis. Strategically

the following committees are envisaged:

- Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Committee – This Committee would have a key role in helping to join-up the work of each committee through an oversight role, including scrutinising the council's draft budget, its commercial activities, and considering call-ins.
- Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
- Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee
- Transport, Economy, Environment & Housing Committee
- Communities, Culture & Leisure Scrutiny Committee

Locally scrutiny could take place through the proposed Community Boards.

Civic and Ceremonial Role

The civic and ceremonial heritage of Buckinghamshire dates back to 914 and the offices of the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff have long been valued county-wide. Whilst Milton Keynes is now a separate administrative area, Milton Keynes Council has

continued to support the ceremonial structures of Buckinghamshire. The Clerk to the Lord Lieutenancy has traditionally been hosted by the county council and it is proposed that a new Buckinghamshire Council would provide that office in the future.

Role Profiles

Full details of Member roles for all committee positions will be set out in the council's new constitution. Role profiles are included here for:

- All Councillors
- Council Leader
- Cabinet Members (Executive)
- Scrutiny Members

All Councillors

All councillors will have the following roles to play:

Community Leadership

- Championing their division
- Dealing with casework
- Representing the community within the council and other agencies
- Campaigning on local issues
- Keep in touch with constituents
- Engaging with all groups within their respective electoral area

Decision maker and influencer

- Making well informed decisions at council meetings and other committees
- Working with partners and outside bodies as a representative of the council
- Act as a Corporate Parent for children and young people in the care of the local authority
- Liaising with town and parish councils
- Being an active member of the Community Board, including attending all meetings. This role may involve leading an action group to solve a local issue, leading community meetings with residents and facilitating engagement with the council and partners. The exact responsibilities of the role will be locally determined and agreed by each Community Board.

Leader

Leadership

- Provide an overall cohesive, corporate and strategic leadership and direction for the council
- Lead and chair the Cabinet and ensure its overall effectiveness
- Lead in developing the council's partnerships with other organisations
- Work with portfolio holders to ensure effective delivery of services within their portfolios against the agreed policies of the council, and to ensure the delivery of the Cabinet's responsibilities
- Ensure effective communication and explanation of all Cabinet's decisions and recommendations to council and the public
- Ensure that the Cabinet manages the business of the council within the financial limits set by the council

- Ensure Cabinet members abide by the council's code of conduct

Overall responsibility

- Ensure that cabinet exercises responsibility for the prudent management of the council's budget
- Have overall responsibility for the political management of the authority and the delivery of agreed council priorities, strategies and policies

Working with partners

- Be the main representative of the council, with others as appropriate, in dealing with the community, business, voluntary sector and other local and national organisations
- Ensure effective liaison with other political groups within the council

Cabinet Member (Executive)

The Cabinet is responsible for all local authority functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the council, provided the decisions made are within the council's agreed policy and budget framework.

- Participate effectively as a Cabinet Member taking joint responsibility for all actions and be collectively accountable.
- Build good relationships, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, with appropriate officers and work with them in developing policy
- Ensure that appropriate, viable, commercial opportunities within the portfolio area are identified and nurtured, in liaison with the Cabinet Member with overview responsibility for commercialisation

- To take a proactive approach to the early engagement of overview and scrutiny committees to help in policy development
- Ensure that a balanced approach is taken to risk - seek to ensure that risks are well balanced and are managed rather than always minimised, especially in relation to entrepreneurial activities of the council.
- Give political direction to officers working within the portfolio
- Ensure up to date knowledge of related developments and policies at national, regional and local level
- Enhance the council's reputation through taking the national stage where possible and participating in regional and national networks

- Have an overview of performance management, efficiency and effectiveness of the portfolio
- Represent Cabinet by attending scrutiny committees as requested in connection with any issues associated with the portfolio and consider scrutiny reports as required.
- Make executive decisions within the portfolio
- Act as a strong, competent and persuasive figure to represent the portfolio and a figurehead in meetings with stakeholders
- Be prepared to take part in learning and development opportunities to ensure that the role is undertaken as effectively as possible
- Represent the council as a spokesperson with the Media and feedback to Cabinet any issues of relevance and importance.

Scrutiny Member

The Overview and Scrutiny Select Committees carry out the statutory scrutiny role of the council in holding decision-makers to account (Cabinet and partners) and making recommendations to improve outcomes for residents through undertaking Scrutiny Inquiries.

All councillors on a Select Committee have the following roles:

- Reviewing and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken by the Cabinet. They may also be involved in policy development prior to decisions being taken by the Cabinet. The committees may make reports and recommendations to full Council and Cabinet and any relevant partner in connection with council functions.
- Assist with the development of an effective work programme
- Engage with all stages of the scrutiny process
- Develop a constructive relationship with Cabinet, officers, and partners in relation to the remit of the respective committee to assist the effective improvement process
- Be responsible for the outputs and outcomes of scrutiny, including monitoring the implementation of scrutiny recommendations
- Seek to engage with the public to enable the public voice to be heard of public concern
- Seek to gather, receive and analysis evidence from a wide-range of sources so that the committee can make evidence-based impartial recommendations.
- Analyse information presented to the committee
- Make recommendations based on the committee's deliberations



Appendix 4

Planning Framework

Planning Framework

District councils are responsible for delivering Local Plans which set out the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change, including an annual trajectory of the number of new homes planned in the period. In 2015, the Government announced that councils must create and deliver local plans by 2017 to help reach the

government's ambition of delivering 1 million homes by 2020 – or that Ministers would intervene to ensure that plans are produced for them. The expectation is that plans will be reviewed every five years. The timetable for adoption of local plans in Buckinghamshire is currently as follows:

	Adoption due	Plan period
AVDC	Summer 2017	2013-2033
Wycombe	End 2017	2013-2033
Chiltern & South Bucks	June 2018	2014-2036

It is anticipated that Buckinghamshire Council will, in due course, wish to consider the benefits of moving towards a single local development and infrastructure plan for Buckinghamshire, succeeding the three local plans. A single plan would need to contain sufficient detail to enable decisions at the local level be taken in a way that avoids challenge, with standard advice provided to deal with the detail of individual (smaller scale) planning applications.

The first review of the local plans (2022/2023) could be an appropriate point for the new council to begin those discussions. Until that point, the new council should continue to operate with the current local plans.

It is envisaged that a new council would continue to encourage the development of **Neighbourhood Plans**, in accordance with the local plans. Currently, 29 communities in Buckinghamshire are at various stages of developing neighbourhood plans and three are awaiting designation as a neighbourhood plan area. In addition to this, ten have been approved and adopted, with one further plan being held by a referendum awaiting final decision. These plans, totalling 43 across the county, provide a powerful way of enabling communities to shape a shared vision for their neighbourhood and direct the right types of development for their community, consistent with the strategic needs of the wider area.

Appendix 5

Engagement



The engagement of residents, communities and stakeholder groups has been critical to understanding how best to shape the future of local government in Buckinghamshire. An extensive programme of insight and engagement has therefore been carried out to inform the development of this business case.

Programme of Engagement

Throughout June, July and August 2016, Buckinghamshire County Council, in partnership with Buckinghamshire Business First, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire Association of Local Councils, (MKBALC), Community Impact Bucks and Ipsos MORI held a series of engagement sessions, conducted 1,000 telephone interviews and ran an online survey.

The engagement sessions each followed a similar format, recruited by open invite and posed questions to understand priorities and needs, explore perceptions and represent the voice of different stakeholder group, in town and parish councillors and clerks, service users, businesses, suppliers, and voluntary and community sector organisations. The sessions were facilitated by external organisations, rather than the county council, in order to provide an independent voice:

Audience	Host	Date
Town/Parish Councillors	MKBALC	07/06/16 10/06/16
Town and Parish Clerks	MKBALC	08/06/16 09/06/16
Local Businesses	Buckinghamshire Business First	20/07/16
Voluntary Community Sector	Community Impact Bucks	25/07/16 27/07/16
Residents	Ipsos Mori	02/08/16 04/08/16 09/08/16

The telephone interviews undertaken by MORI, involved a randomized sample of 1,000 Buckinghamshire residents.

Findings

A summary of findings can be found below. A separate report is available with the detailed record of the research.

Sessions identified that participant's prior knowledge of the, so called, 'Unitary debate' was relatively low, but, by the end of each session, participant understanding was recorded to have increased, on average, by 20%.

Knowledge of where responsibilities lie for the delivery of each service provided, across the three tier council structure was varied. Overall, participants assigned 73% of responsibilities correctly. This was made up of 26% correct assignments to town and parishes, 61% to districts and 89% to county. This suggests that there could be better clarity of accountability at all levels.

To understand more about the perceptions held by participants about their identity to Buckinghamshire, as it currently stands, questions were posed around the effect that modernising local government might have on its history, geography and brand. This topic was met with an almost unanimous response from

all stakeholder groups; that Buckinghamshire would remain Buckinghamshire regardless of the future shape that local government takes and that there is little significance placed on or owned towards identity and so little consequence of it changing.

Despite the general acknowledgment of the positive activity carried out by councils for the delivery of public services, there was an agreement that more could be done to improve them. For example, customer experience, efficiency of delivery, collaboration and shared learning between councils, streamlining of decision making and delivering value for money. There was also a strong focus from participants on the importance for the future model of local government to be responsive to local needs and where appropriate, deliver services locally.

The focus of the sessions was to understand participants' design principles for the future shape of local government and so no direct questions were asked about specific solutions. However, it was clear that participants were formulating their own strong views...

"Let's go back to the work that BBF carried out some years ago. The case has in fact become much stronger for a whole of Bucks unitary authority...let's do it!" Local Business

"There are mixed views about the unitary proposal...It is hard to make the archaeological voice heard at district level, it could be harder in a unitary authority. Whilst economies in delivery of civic services are important, this must not be at the expense of functions that play a small but supporting role in the cultural health of the community". Voluntary Community Sector

"Aylesbury workshop participants wanted to come to a collective agreement of their suggested model for streamlining: All Aylesbury VCS participants opted for a single county-wide unitary authority with varying degrees of devolved budgets to a more local level." Community Impact Bucks

Regardless of its shape, the proposal to modernise local government was seen as an opportunity by all. Of course, each model would come with its challenges but it was globally seen as fundamental to ensuring the best for the local community, its economy and the future of local government.

Ipsos Mori Local government re-organisation:
research report for Buckinghamshire County Council - September 2016

Resident Criteria

Retaining the quality of services. According to the survey, in thinking about future service delivery two in five residents stress the importance of 'providing high quality services' (40%) and 'improving the overall quality of service' (37%). In fact, group participants reflected further that potential re-organisation offers an opportunity to not just make savings and improve efficiency, but also improve service quality.

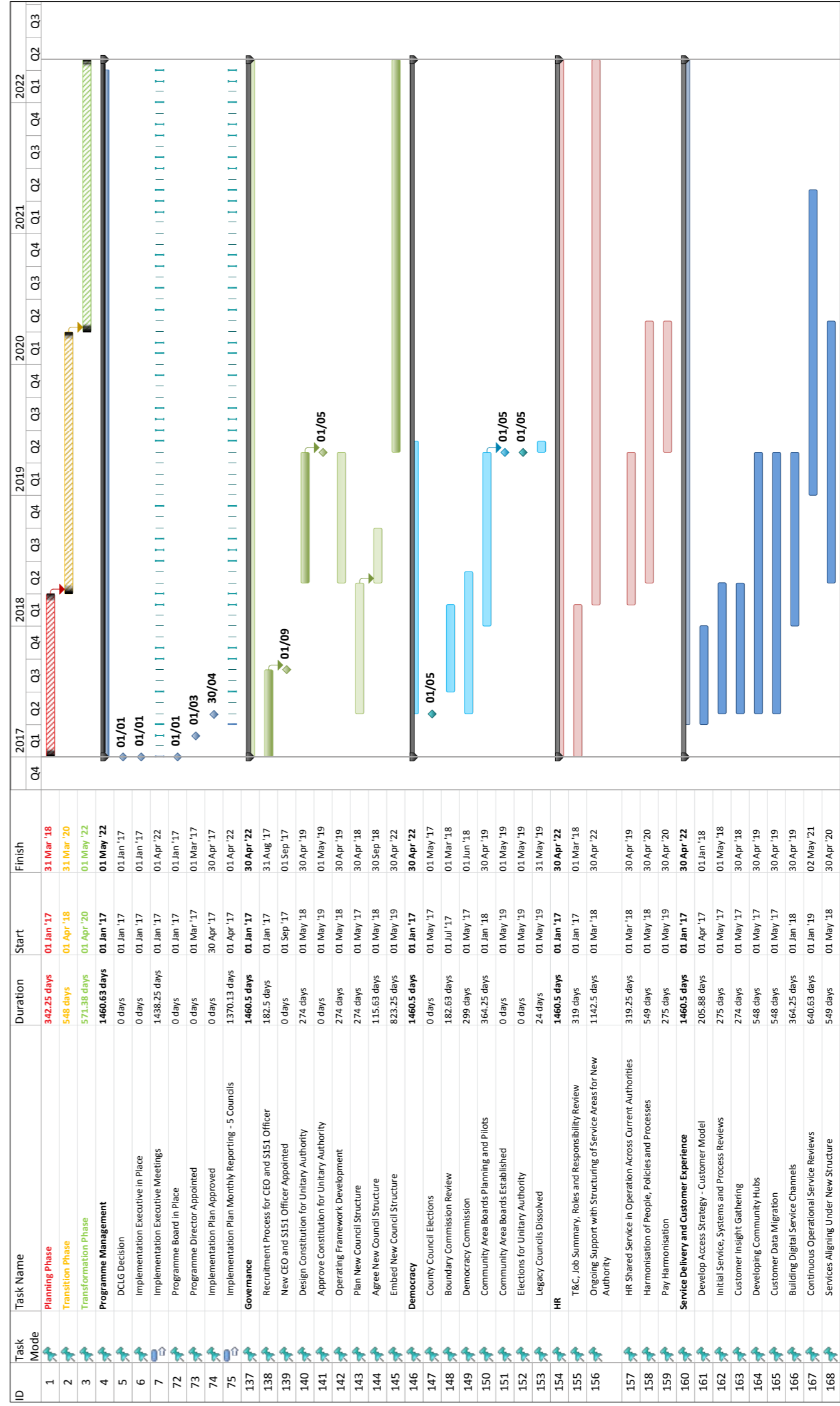
Making sure services are easy to access. The survey demonstrates how similar proportions (44%) also think 'ensuring that public services are easy to use and simple to access' is also key. This links to improving customer service as well as ensuring that any move to unitary status does not compromise residents' ability to be able to physically access services locally in person if they need to; a recurring theme coming out of the groups.

Giving residents a say about services and acting on their concerns. Over two in five residents (44%) to the survey think that 'giving people a say in the decisions that affect local services' is the most important thing for local councils to consider in thinking about a unitary model - the top priority of those asked about. 'Acting on the concern of local residents' was also mentioned by 43% as being important for future service delivery. These issues came through strongly from the group discussions too. Group participants were concerned about the potential risk to local responsiveness and the ability of any new council model to address local need as a result of future re-organisation at a larger-scale.

Ensuring transparency and accountability. Two in five residents (42%) to the survey also felt that 'being accountable to local people' was important. Group participants emphasised that residents should know how money is being spent and how decisions about future services and structures are made (including greater visibility of councillors here).

Appendix 6

Implementation Plan



Project: Unitary Implementation P
Date: 15 Sep '16

Task: [Solid Blue Bar] Project Summary [Dotted Blue Bar] External Tasks [Diamond] External Milestone [Arrow] Inactive Task [White Bar]

Split: [White Bar] Inactive Milestone [Arrow] Manual Summary Rollup [White Bar] Manual Summary [Arrow] Start-only [White Bar] Finish-only [White Bar]

Milestone: [Diamond] Inactive Milestone [Arrow] Manual Task [White Bar] Duration-only [White Bar]

Summary: [White Bar] Inactive Milestone [Arrow] Manual Summary Rollup [White Bar] Manual Summary [Arrow] Start-only [White Bar] Finish-only [White Bar]

Deadline: [Arrow] Progress: [Arrow]

ID	Task Mode	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022						
						Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
169	Task	Services Operating Under Unitary Authority	823.25 days	01 May '19	30 Apr '22												
170	Task	Digital Services for New Unitary Deployed	0 days	01 May '19	01 May '19												
171	Task	New Telephone Number Available to Residents	0 days	01 May '19	01 May '19												
172	Task	Systems	1460.5 days	01 Jan '17	30 Apr '22												
173	Task	System Review	90.38 days	01 Jan '17	30 Apr '17												
174	Task	Data Capturing	116.5 days	01 May '17	30 Sep '17												
175	Task	Data Migration	432.5 days	01 Oct '17	30 Apr '19												
176	Task	System Alignment	432.5 days	01 Oct '17	30 Apr '19												
177	Task	Ongoing Data Maintenance	823.25 days	01 May '19	30 Apr '22												
178	Task	Property	1460.5 days	01 Jan '17	30 Apr '22												
179	Task	Commission Asset Review	296.13 days	01 Apr '17	01 May '18												
180	Task	Implement Short Term Asset Strategy	548 days	01 May '17	30 Apr '19												
181	Task	Implement Long Term Asset Strategy	823.25 days	01 May '19	30 Apr '22												
182	Task	Business and Supply Chain	1460.5 days	01 Jan '17	30 Apr '22												
183	Task	Develop Shared Business and Supply Chain Team	115.38 days	01 Apr '17	01 Sep '17												
184	Task	Due Diligence for Tender Activity and Current Spend	115.38 days	01 Apr '17	01 Sep '17												
185	Task	Opportunity Analysis (Long List) and Implementation Plan	69.25 days	01 Sep '17	01 Dec '17												
186	Task	Re-design Procurement	160.75 days	01 Mar '18	01 Oct '18												
187	Task	Contract Model on Deadline	0 days	30 Apr '19	30 Apr '19												
188	Task	Culture Change, OD and Internal Communications	1460.5 days	01 Jan '17	30 Apr '22												
189	Task	Business Case Approval Announcement	0 days	01 Jan '17	01 Jan '17												
190	Task	Develop Internal Comms Plan	5 days	01 Jan '17	06 Jan '17												
191	Task	Develop and Deliver a Staff Engagement Plan (Employee Reps, Tra	1371.25 days	01 May '17	30 Apr '22												
192	Task	Organisational Design Principles Agreed and Implemented	455.75 days	01 Sep '17	01 May '19												
193	Task	Learning and Development Plan for Future Authority	455.75 days	01 Sep '17	01 May '19												
194	Task	Design and Agree Performance and Reward Frameworks	455.75 days	01 Sep '17	01 May '19												
195	Task	Agreeing New Organisational Values and Behaviours	455.75 days	01 Sep '17	01 May '19												
196	Task	Agreed Approach to Leadership and Management Throughout the	730.75 days	01 Sep '17	01 May '20												
197	Task	External Comms	1187.5 days	01 Jan '17	01 May '21												
198	Task	Business Case Approval Announcement	0 days	01 Jan '17	01 Jan '17												
199	Task	Develop and Deliver External Comms Plan	890.25 days	01 Jan '17	01 Apr '20												
200	Task	Develop Engagement Plan	890.25 days	01 Jan '17	01 Apr '20												
201	Task	Branding	632 days	09 Jan '17	30 Apr '19												
202	Task	Finance	1460.63 days	01 Jan '17	01 May '22												
203	Task	Monitoring Investments and Delivery of Savings	1460.63 days	01 Jan '17	01 May '22												
204	Task	Budget Planning	228.75 days	01 May '18	28 Feb '19												
205	Task	Budget set for New Authority	0 days	01 Mar '19	01 Mar '19												
206	Task	Coding Structuring	252.13 days	01 May '18	31 Mar '19												
207	Task	Statement of Accounts for Old Councils	158.75 days	01 Dec '18	30 Jun '19												

Project: Unitary Implementation p
Date: 15 Sep '16

Task Split Milestone Summary

Manual Summary Rollup Manual Summary Start-only Finish-only

Inactive Milestone Inactive Summary Manual Task Duration-only

Project Summary External Tasks External Milestone Inactive Task

Deadline Progress

