



Council agenda supplement (no.3)

Date: Wednesday 15 September 2021

Time: 4.00 pm

Venue: The Street, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury
HP19 8FF

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Written questions on notice

Full council 15 September 2021

Question from Councillor Robert Carington to Councillor Peter Strachan Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, in relation to HS2 and the environment

Does the Council have a record of the total acreage of woodland currently and predicted to be cut down by HS2 and will the replacement of this lost acreage by use of the HS2 Woodland Creation Grant be included in the Council's overall Large Scale Tree Planting plan for 500,000 trees, or will the replacement of these trees and the planting of 500,000 new trees be treated separately?

Response

It is worth reiterating that Buckinghamshire Council opposed HS2 from the outset on the basis that it will have a significant and lasting negative impact on Buckinghamshire and its special landscaped including its woodlands. We strongly remain of this view noting there will be permanent loss of irreplaceable ancient woodland in Buckinghamshire of which the replacement planting being undertaken by HS2 will never be able to replicate.

HS2 have stated that the scheme will result in no overall net biodiversity loss and indicated that some 650 hectares of new woodland will be planted between London and Birmingham as part of the mitigation plans for the first phase of HS2. HS2 announced in July 2021 that 700,000 trees have been planted of the 7 million planned across the Phase One route.

Buckinghamshire Council's commitment to plant 540,000 trees is entirely separate from the above and is a key action in association with our Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy. The new woodlands to be created primarily on our agricultural estates highlights our own commitment to the natural environment and will be used to provide a number of benefits from increasing biodiversity, mitigating flood risk, access and increasing air quality. However, in addition to these benefits the additional carbon absorbed and stored by these woodlands will be able to offset the authorities remaining greenhouse emissions by 2050. The authority will be seeking to maximise the grant payment available under the new England Woodland Creation Offer that the government has just announced in relation to the woodlands we are planning.

Question from Councillor Robert Carington to Councillor Steven Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport, in relation to road repairs

Do the Council hold statistics on the average amount of time road repairs made by utility companies in Buckinghamshire last in comparison to those made by TFB and what measures do the Council have in place to hold utility companies to account to honour the 2-year reinstatement guarantee as per the Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways (SROH)?

Response

All utility companies are required to reinstate their trenches in accordance with the Specification for the Reinstatement of Openings in Highways which has been written so that if it is followed correctly, the trench should last for the life of the road. Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) do not inspect reinstatements after the 2 or 3 year guarantee period, which depends on the depth of the trench. Once the guarantee period has elapsed any further work then becomes the responsibility of the Highway Authority.

TfB undertake inspections for 10% of all trenches which are coming to the end of their guarantee period. Data from the 1st September 2020 until 31st August 2021 demonstrates that a total of 311 Category C inspections were undertaken by TfB, of which 243 passed and 68 failed the inspection. If a trench fails at any of inspections then a defect is raised against the utility company. Once it has been corrected, the guarantee period starts again.

Questions from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, in relation to waste and recycling

Question 1

Please can you advise me of the waste and recycling costs for each contract held across Buckinghamshire county in 2020, have the costs now changed and what are the costs for 2021? My understanding of waste and recycling costs for Buckinghamshire in 2020: Aylesbury Vale - 7.1 million (including horticultural costs), and the seven county costs were SWC- Servo & Biffa Costs were 12.4 million & SWC Vella & Biffa 21-22 cost 12.1 Million SWC Veolia cost Vella Costs are 11.7Million 22-23.

Response to question 1

This is very challenging to answer as during 2020 the Serco contract was demobilised and ended, this year, in November 2021, the Biffa contract will end. In summary; in 2020 we had Biffa in the former South Bucks area for the whole year. In Chiltern and Wycombe in 2020 we had Serco for most of the year and Veolia for the remainder. There are no waste contracts in the former Aylesbury area.

Again in 2021 the costs will vary – Biffa are about to leave Buckinghamshire and Veolia will take over in the former South Bucks area.

In an attempt to answer the question, I am happy to provide full year costs for a non-specific year (please note the Veolia costs will be a forecast).

Serco (Chiltern and Wycombe): £8.3M

Biffa (South Bucks): £2.9M

Veolia (All Southern areas): £11.2M

Question 2

Understanding the differences between the legacy South Bucks District Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council contracts, has Buckinghamshire Council undertaken comparison work between both contracts in relation to in-house and external contracts to judge which delivery model gives best value for money, and if not, will there be any analysis undertaken?

Response to question 2

This will be critical piece of work will be taken in the coming months. We have recently appointed a Waste Strategy Manager who will research and review the best approach for Buckinghamshire Council in terms of Waste Service Delivery.

Question 3

Will Buckinghamshire Council be charging for green waste collection services within the southern historical district areas in the future, and was this service negotiated with the contractor to continue as free of charge as part of the current waste contract in the south of the county? Please can you also advise as to what is the present situation and the future plans in regards to green waste in the northern historical district area that being Aylesbury vale?

Response to question 3

It is not possible to say at this stage if Buckinghamshire will be charging for Garden Waste in all areas of Buckinghamshire.

The Contract was procured on an 'as is' basis at the time of procurement; this was a charged garden waste service in Chiltern and South Bucks, and free Green Waste in Wycombe.

There are no future plans in terms of significant changes to garden waste in the north.

Questions from Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services, in relation to rough sleeper accommodation

My understanding is that under the 'Everybody In' initiative, the government instructed councils to provide accommodation for all rough sleepers in response to the pandemic. Over 300 individuals have been accommodated since the start of the initiative in March 2020. Now that the government has moved away from this initiative, please can the cabinet member provide some information in response to the following questions in relation to rough sleepers and temporary accommodation:

Question 1

Does the council have the resources to provide this much needed accommodation for rough sleepers?

Response to question 1

Over the last 18 months, the Council has successfully bid for funding from the Government NSAP (Next Steps Accommodation Programme) and RSAP (Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme) to secure additional accommodation for rough sleepers. It is anticipated that this will deliver an additional 34 units of supported and move-on accommodation for rough sleepers when all of the schemes involved are completed. This is alongside the accommodation options that were already in place to support rough sleepers, prior to the pandemic. The Council will continue to review supply and accommodation options for rough sleepers to ensure that it can meet these demands.

Question 2

Since the end of the initiative, how many eviction notices for those in temporary accommodation have been served by the council, and how successful have the officers been in mitigating the change of circumstances for vulnerable individuals, including helping them to find suitable accommodation?

Response to question 2

As of Friday 10th September 2020, the Council will have served 44 notices advising clients that their placement is coming to an end. For those clients who have moved on to date, some clients have moved on independently and others have been supported to move into alternative accommodation via a range of routes including private rented housing, social housing, designated move-on accommodation and supported housing with a third party provider. We are not aware that any of the clients who have moved out to date have returned to rough sleeping.

Question 3

As government funding for emergency accommodation placements will no longer be provided, and the costs will have to be met by the council, has this increased the workload of officers, and how have the effects of this manifested within the housing department? Please can you refer to any pressures that have occurred on our staff in managing these situations to the best of their ability.

Response to question 3

The Council's staff have responded to the demands arising from the Government's "Everybody In" policy by securing accommodation for over 300 rough sleepers since the pandemic began and also successfully bidding for funding to secure additional accommodation (see above). At the time of this policy coming to an end, the Council had 69 persons still accommodated and officers have been working with partner agencies to support these clients to move on. This is alongside delivering other day-to-day homelessness and housing duties and also against the backdrop of the new service structure being implemented over the last few months. The work of officers is supplemented by the work of a range of partners and support agencies (some of which are funded by the Council's successful bid to the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative). We continue to monitor the demands on the service and identify and respond to the needs for additional resources as and when required.

Question 4

Now that the 'Everybody In' initiative is coming to a close and the council and partners are working to support clients to move on to other suitable accommodation, what has been the move-on success rate and challenges, and does the council think the new arrangements will work long-term?

Response to question 4

As highlighted in the answer to question 2, only a small number of Notices have expired to date, but we have already seen clients moved on to a range of accommodation options or making their own housing arrangements.

In the long term, the Council will continue to work with partner agencies to support rough sleepers and provide them with the opportunity to move off the street and into accommodation. This includes an initial 14-day period of emergency accommodation while we work with the rough sleepers to address support needs and identify possible housing options. The range of outreach and support services in place via the Council and its partner agencies give a strong chance of a positive outcome for rough sleepers who wish to engage with the services.

Question 5

My understanding is that there is a gap in provision of temporary accommodation in the far North of Buckinghamshire, is there work going on to address this? For example, to include temporary accommodation provision within the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, or the relevant local parish/ town council neighbourhood plans.

Response to question 5

The temporary accommodation options are currently utilised on a county wide basis. We continue to work on identifying options for new provision, although this is dependent on the opportunities (e.g., land and property) and funding.

Question 6

Does the cabinet member support the suggestion to refer rough sleeper accommodation matters in light of the ending of the 'Everybody In' initiative to the chairman of the relevant select committee for consideration on the committee's work programme? Further discussion would enable members to monitor and discuss outcomes/ changes post 'Everybody In'.

Response to question 6

In accordance with our approach to stepping down from the "Everybody In" initiative, we will continue to engage with and support our rough sleepers into longer term, more sustainable forms of accommodation.

Question 7

I understand that the council has submitted further bids for funding of temporary accommodation and that we are awaiting the outcome of those bids. Will the cabinet member inform Buckinghamshire councillors whether the bids have been successful when the information is available?

Response to question 7

Councillors will be updated on the outcomes of any bids as and when they become known to us, subject to the timing of any announcements as may be required under the terms of the relevant grant scheme.

Question 8

How can we ensure that members of the public and of the council are informed of changes in government initiatives on rough sleeper accommodation, funding, and the council's service provision?

Response to question 8

Through our usual briefings and communication channels we will keep members and residents informed regarding any significant changes to legislation or government policy that might significantly affect Buckinghamshire.

Question 9

Where a client fails to engage with the council, and as a result is not granted a short/ one-month extension to find suitable move-on accommodation (as in some cases), how can I be assured that the right assessments and appropriate communications have taken place in advance of this decision? Recognising that some clients may potentially return to rough sleeping once the notice period for their accommodation ends.

Response to question 9

All of the clients receive support and assistance from both the Council and a range of support agencies with the aim of assisting them to move-on in a planned and controlled way to alternative accommodation. All efforts are made to engage with each client and we are as flexible as possible with extending notice periods etc. where there is a clear opportunity to secure a planned move-on. Unfortunately, if a client fails to engage then it is possible that they will have to leave the accommodation without a move-on plan in place. This will always be the last option that is considered. However, it is not possible to simply maintain open ended accommodation if a client is failing to engage.

Question 10

Now that the initiative is drawing to a close, are the numbers of homeless being monitored to ensure the council is aware of any increase in homelessness as we move forward?

Response to question 10

The Council continues to monitor the number of verified rough sleepers across Buckinghamshire and the overall number of persons seeking homelessness assistance from the Council.

Question 11

My understanding is that officers have designed and implemented a 'step down' approach of working with clients and partner agencies to provide move-on support to avert the need for rough sleeping. Would you agree that this is a fair analysis of the situation to manage this sudden change of the loss of covid-19 funding support? Further, will the council monitor and record the step down process for future reference by councillors and officers to learn by successes/ find ways in which improvements could be made?

Response to question 11

The step down arrangements give us the best opportunity to successfully move on the remaining clients who the Council accommodated under the "Everybody In" policy. We will monitor the implementation of these arrangements as they progress and will adapt and amend as required based on our experience.

Questions from Councillor Gurinder Wadhwa to Councillor Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services, in relation to taxi licensing and policy

Question 1

The new taxi and private hire policy has several changes which will disadvantage licensed drivers and have a detrimental effect on the taxi industry across Buckinghamshire.

How many trade responses did the council receive by the two (private hire and Hackney) trade organisations before the formulation of the new policy? What process of scoring or assessment of the returns was made?

Response to question 1

The Council carried out two public consultation exercises to inform the draft of the new Policy. Statutory consultations were also carried out on taxi and private hire licence fees and hackney carriage tariffs.

A pre-engagement survey was undertaken between the 7th and 27th September 2020. Information on the survey was provided to key stakeholders, including users of taxis and the taxi licensing trade, via email and SMS, social media and member and residents newsletters. A total of 583 responses were received with 58% of responses received from residents and 36% of responses from the licensed trade, providing a good range of responses across the key stakeholder groups. The results of the pre-engagement survey including a copy of the consultation responses was presented to Licensing Committee at the meeting of the 14th October 2020 and is available on the website within the report packs for this meeting. The findings of the survey aided the draft of the new policy.

A further public consultation on the draft policy was undertaken between 10th November 2020 and 4th January 2021. Information on the survey was provided to key stakeholders, including the taxi trade, via email, SMS, social media and councillor newsletters. A total of 636 responses were received with 23% of responses received from residents and 70% of responses from the licensed taxi trade (hackney and private hire drivers, operators and taxi trade organisations). The results of the consultation, including a copy of the consultation responses was presented to Licensing Committee at the meeting of the 3rd February 2021. Responses received directly to the Service outside of the online survey were also collated and included within the reports.

Results from the survey were collated and analysed by the Council's Business Intelligence Team who provided detailed reports to the Licensing Service. Information within these reports was used to inform the draft policy approach and referenced throughout the Licensing Committee papers. The consultation reports and analysis are attached as appendices to the Licensing Committee reports for those that would like to refer to them.

Question 2

Why were qualifications equivalent to the Pearson Versant test, such as GCSE English, ESOL etc. not deemed acceptable for the English Language requirement?

Response to question 2

In July 2020, the government introduced new statutory standards for taxi and private hire drivers which aim to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. Councils have a legal duty to have regard to these standards and it is expected that they are adopted unless there is compelling local reason not to. These standards include a requirement that all existing and new licensed drivers must pass an English language test. The possession of proficient English language skills by drivers has been identified as a key factor in addressing safeguarding concerns.

The standards state the following with respect to language proficiency:

“A lack of language proficiency could impact on a driver’s ability to understand written documents, such as policies and guidance, relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults and applying this to identify and act on signs of exploitation. Oral proficiency will be of relevance in the identification of potential exploitation through communicating with passengers and their interaction with others.”

The Licensing Committee considered a report on English language testing at their meeting on the 30th June 2021 and this is available on the Council’s website in the Committee report pack. Within the report, exemptions and acceptable equivalent level qualifications to the Versant English language test were clearly set out and include:

- a Versant English language test pass from the previous Aylesbury Vale area of Buckinghamshire Council
- UK GCSE/O level (or equivalent) certificate, grades A* to G.
- UK AS-Level/A level certificate
- UK BA Hons, BSc Hons degree or higher i.e. master's, PhD
- UK HNC/HND qualification
- ESOL, SELT and IELTS qualification showing English language skills equivalent to level B1 (CEFR) or higher.
- UK NVQ/BTEC/City & Guilds qualification, along with confirmation from the awarding body that the qualification provided is equivalent to GCSE or above (for example, a Blue Badge Guide qualification)

The Licensing Service will also consider other qualifications e.g., overseas qualifications (taught in English) on a case by case basis as required. Information on equivalent level qualifications is available for the public on the Council’s website at

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/taxis-and-private-hire/taxi-licence-applications/english-language-skills-assessment-for-taxi-drivers/>

Question 3

What evidence was used to decide the new entry barrier only licensing vehicles under five years old for ten years under the new policy? On what evidence/ basis was the previous safety policy of two MOTs a year scrapped for older cars?

Response to question 3

The four historical legacy area policies had differing vehicle age limit and testing requirements. In three of the legacy areas a maximum 10-year age limit for private hire vehicles was already in place. An entry level age limit for vehicles of 5 years was in place in the Wycombe area and of a limit of 7 years was in place in both the Chiltern and South Bucks areas. In some legacy areas vehicles were tested more frequently as they aged, and in others they were not.

Consultation feedback and supporting information on vehicle age was provided to the Licensing Committee at the meeting of the 3rd February 2021 who considered this when recommending the Policy for approval by the Council. This information can be found in the Licensing Committee reports on the website and is summarised below.

In January 2021, Officers carried out a vehicle age policy benchmarking exercise of 45 other local licensing authorities in England. Of these authorities 40 (89%) had licensing policies in place that set vehicle age limits. Of these policies 19 were more restrictive in terms of age limits than the new licensed vehicle age limit for Buckinghamshire placing Buckinghamshire at the mid-point by comparison. Where age limit policies are in place, the majority (21) have set a lower vehicle age limit of maximum 5 years at first licence as is set for the Buckinghamshire Council area, which likely reflects a link to the Euro 6 emissions standard vehicle manufacture date. 8 of the authorities had set a lower vehicle age limit of a maximum of 3 or 4 years at first licence (more restrictive than Buckinghamshire). Officers also carried out an analysis of MOT test results from the Council's approved testing centre at Pembroke Road which provided clear evidence of declining pass rates as vehicles age. Vehicles that were less than 5 years old had a pass rate in excess of 75% whereas vehicles more than 6 years old had a pass rate of 50% or less. The results (accepting limitations of duration and scale) support the correlation between the age of the vehicle and roadworthiness.

Department for Transport (DfT) guidance also suggests that Licensing Authorities may wish to consider how far the vehicle licensing policy can and should support local environmental policies. The Council may also decide to set vehicle emissions standards by promoting cleaner fuels. A review carried out by the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection in 2005 found that taxis were more likely than other vehicles to fail emissions tests. A review of MOT test information obtained for licensed vehicles tested at the Pembroke Road testing centre supports this. MOT test failures by category were analysed and the site failure rate average was then compared to the national failure rate average. The results show that the site failure rate average for licensed vehicles tested during this

period was 17% as a result of 'noise, emissions and leaks' in comparison with the national failure rate average of 11%.

During the consultation process, we asked how important it was that taxi vehicles were safe and roadworthy and 90% of people told us that this was extremely important. Many also said that vehicle interiors should be clean, tidy and presentable and exteriors should be in a good condition. There was a clear view that the overall safety, condition and standard of licensed vehicles should be high. Vehicles deteriorate due to a combination of age and use and are constantly being improved by manufacturers. Newer vehicles are safer, less environmentally damaging and less likely to break down. A younger fleet should improve the overall standard of vehicles available for customers as well as reducing the level of enforcement activity and testing required. This also limits costs associated with these activities for the trade.

The new Policy incentivises the use of low emission vehicles by enabling these to be licensed up to 15 years of age.

Question 4

Why does the council policy on tinted windows directly contravene the DVLA regulations on tinted windows? Why wasn't an exemption made for vehicles with manufacturer-fitted windows; or a grant fund set up to help licensed drivers to adapt their vehicles to the council's requirement?

Response to question 4

Taxi fees are required by law to be cost neutral and taxi licensing should not be subsidised by the taxpayer. Historically, licensed vehicles across the legacy areas all had a tinted windows policy which prevented vehicles with low levels of light transmission from being licensed. This requirement has now been harmonised across the legacy areas in the new Policy which results in change for some.

The new policy states that,

"in the interests of public safety, tinted windows are not permitted on licensed vehicles unless a minimum of 75% light is transmitted through the front windscreen and 70% light is transmitted through any front passenger windows. All other glass on the vehicle must transmit a minimum of 60% light (with the exception of rear quarter lights). Approved executive vehicles are exempted from this requirement."

I can confirm that the tint requirements for the windscreen and front windows reflect legal requirements under the vehicle construction and use regulations. Whilst the requirements for vehicle light transmission levels in the rear of licensed vehicles are not in accordance with the regulations, the Council is able to set a level within licensed vehicles to protect public safety in its role as licensing authority and has actively chosen to do so.

The regulation of window tint is considered to be a key general public safety issue and it is very important that enforcement officers and others have a clear view into the rear of licensed vehicles to protect passenger safety e.g., unaccompanied children who may be

travelling to school. This is also the view of the Thames Valley Police Road Safety Officer. In our recent surveys, we asked people how important they felt it was that you should be able to see into a licensed vehicle and 63% told us this was important to them.

During the consultation process, the Council took on board feedback from the licensed trade and made changes to reduce the light transmission rate from the originally proposed 70% to a 60% level to accommodate a wider number of manufacturer specifications. The requirement to replace quarter windows was also removed.

In addition, grandfather rights were extended to existing vehicles so that owners would not need to replace tinted windows on existing licensed vehicles that had been permitted under the varying legacy area policies. An exemption has also been granted for executive vehicles, which are typically higher specification vehicles, used for corporate client type work.

We understand that manufacturers change specifications over time and that higher specification vehicles may be more likely to have tinted windows that do not meet policy requirements. We will continue to work with trade representatives through the new Taxi Working Group to carry out further research and get more feedback from the trade to ensure that we can protect public safety while as far as is reasonable, limiting financial impacts on the trade.

Officers are happy to test any prospective new licensed vehicle prior to application to ensure the vehicle meets the policy tint level requirements before purchase. In addition, officers will continue to consider each vehicle licence application on an individual basis and are mindful of the cost implications to applicants when making decisions. However, it is important that the Council adopts a robust and consistent framework that supports the primary objective of protecting the public.

Question 5

What evidence has been used to supersede the DVLA 12-point licence ban in order to qualify the council-imposed 7-point licence ban for licensed drivers?

Response to question 5

A minor traffic or vehicle related offence is one which does not involve loss of life, driving under the influence of drink or drugs, driving whilst using a mobile phone, and has not resulted in injury to any person or damage to any property (including vehicles). Under the new Policy where an applicant has 7 or more points on their DVLA licence for minor traffic or similar offences, a licence will not be granted until at least 5 years have elapsed since the completion of any sentence imposed.

When drafting the Policy, consideration was given to best practice guidance from the Institute of Licensing (IoL) on determining the suitability of applicants and licensees in the hackney carriage and private hire trades. This provides authoritative guidelines to licensing authorities as to how they should make determinations about the safety and suitability of drivers and operators. The Guidance also aims to deliver consistency across local authorities by providing a degree of national uniformity and consistency, promoting confidence in the licensing regime.

Taxi and private hire drivers are professional occupational drivers. Case law judgements indicate that when considering suitability the 'test' should be whether they are 'safe drivers with good driving records'. In this context the IoL endorsed requirement to have less than 7 DVLA points is not considered unreasonable and should not have a significant impact on the vast majority of the law abiding licensed taxi trade.

It is important that the Council has a robust and consistent Policy framework within which to operate when determining suitability. However, officers will continue to review each case on its individual merits in accordance with best practice.

Question 6

How was the impact on service provision and driver numbers assessed before the one-zone approach and reduction of rank parking space was implemented?

Response to question 6

There has been no reduction of taxi rank parking space associated with the new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy.

The pre-engagement public survey asked responders whether they were users of taxi ranks and where they felt provision was lacking. Responders provided information on where they would like to see additional ranks in the future, including at several train stations within the Council area.

The Licensing Service will be working with the licensed trade and other stakeholders over the coming months to review and consider additional rank provision.

The new policy removes the legacy area hackney carriage and private hire zones enabling hackney carriages and private hire vehicles to operate across the entire Buckinghamshire area.

The DfT Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Licensing Best Practice Guide (March 2010 edition) recommends the abolition of zones and states that the primary reason for this is to benefit the travelling public. The guidance states that zoning tends to diminish the supply of taxis and the scope for customer choice and that the provision of separate zones for customers can be both confusing and frustrating. In addition, the abolition of zones can reduce costs for the local authority, for example through simpler administration and enforcement, as well as promoting fuel efficiency through more occupied taxi journeys (where a fare can be picked up for a return journey).

The rationale for removal of the hackney carriage zones was presented to the Licensing Committee at their meeting of the 3rd February 2021 and is available within the Committee report pack. The key considerations in making this decision have been a desire to ensure that how we operate in the future reflects the key priorities of the new Buckinghamshire Council in terms of protecting the environment and promoting the local economy for businesses and residents. Creating a single zone enables hackney carriages to operate across the Council area and respond flexibly to meet demand. Hackney carriages travelling across the Buckinghamshire Council area are now more able to pick up a fare on a return journey,

limiting the amount of time spent travelling unoccupied and increasing earning potential. A single zone assists the implementation of a single set of standards and tariffs simplifying the system for the taxi users and for the licensed trade.

When considering the impacts of the decision to remove the hackney carriage zones particular attention was given to the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles for users. The historical legacy area provision of hackney carriage WAVs ranged from 1.2% in South Bucks to 100% in Aylesbury Vale meaning that users in some areas were far less likely to be able to hire a WAV than in other areas, should they need to do so. The removal of the hackney carriage zones enables hackney carriage vehicles to operate across the Buckinghamshire Council area. This open market approach should increase the availability of WAVs, balancing up to some extent the differences in legacy Council area WAV availability for users and maintaining a mixed fleet.

Nationally, DfT statistics show decline in the number of licensed hackney carriage vehicles over time and an increase in private hire vehicles. This is indicative of a changing market which is likely driven by the use of smartphone apps for the private hire trade enabling customers to easily book, track and trace a private hire vehicle rather than utilising the traditional taxi rank option to travel when out and about. Set in this context it is not considered that the removal of the hackney carriage zones in itself will have a detrimental impact on driver numbers, but this will be kept under regular review.

Question from Councillor Adam Poland-Goodyer to Councillor Steven Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport, in relation to cyclists and other vulnerable road users and HS2

What action has Buckinghamshire Council undertaken to date to mitigate the significant risk to cyclists and other vulnerable road users caused by HS2's realignment of the Waddesdon Crossroads on the A41, where the proposed HS2 changes to the road layout exposes cyclists and other vulnerable road users to 60mph + traffic with no safer alternative crossing thereby increasing the safety risk on these roads?

Further, can the Cabinet member advise what powers are at its disposal, to encourage HS2 to design and redesign, where there are road changes and new roads being built and that all forms of transport are planned in with industry-leading, safe sustainable transport options including cycle paths and pedestrian footways?

Response

The A41 to the east of Waddesdon is to be realigned to accommodate HS2 and the existing staggered priority junction on the A41 with Blackgrove Road and Winchenden Hill will be replaced in the new scheme with a roundabout incorporating pedestrian and cycle facilities and which are considered to be much safer.

The precise details are still under discussion prior to a formal application being submitted to Buckinghamshire Council for consideration. A road safety audit of the scheme will form part of the submission.

In the meantime, a temporary speed limit of 40mph has been introduced on this section of the A41 which incorporates the existing junction as well as the temporary accesses to the HS2 compounds at Fleet Marston.

With regard to general design standards, HS2 is expected to follow the recommendations contained in the government's Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 'Cycle Infrastructure Design.' This sets out five core design principles which should be balanced when developing cycle infrastructure. All submissions from HS2 are assessed by the council with particular reference to the safety of all road users and the council has the ability to refuse any application if safety is considered to be compromised.

However, discussions are held with HS2 at the pre application stage when any concerns are raised and generally resolved before formal submission.

Finally, the council has been working with the DfT to incorporate a number of cycling improvements as part of a wider initiative to encourage and promote cycling to create a legacy following the construction of HS2. These improvements are being linked to the council's long term aims to create a safe cycling network.

Question from Councillor Steven Lambert to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, in relation to household recycling centres

What is the current fee structure and what income has the Household Recycling Centres provided to the council since fees were introduced? What is it forecast for the next four years?

Is that income directed to particular support of Council Services?

What capital expense projects are planned and what budget allocation is there for Household Recycling Centres for the next four years?

Response

- The fee structure is published on the [Council's website](#), both on the Waste & Recycling pages and the Council's fee and charges pages. It is also prominently displayed at all household recycling centres. It lists the types of non-household waste that is charged for and prices for each per bag/item. Over 80% of the waste brought to the sites is free to bring and most people who visit the sites pay nothing, as they do not bring chargeable waste.
- The actual income and forecasted income for charges is as follows:
 - 2019/20 - £288,000
 - 2020/21 - £383,000
 - 2021/22 – £450,000 (expected year end outturn)
 - Forecast annual income £450,000 per annum for the next four years.
- The income from the charges is used to offset the cost for the Household Recycling Centre Service.
- The Council's existing capital programme includes a specific budget which is allocated to replace transport fleet, on site vehicles and shredder all at the end of life in the next three years. The agreed capital programme budget for this (HRC) service is £2,746,000 between 21/22- 24/25.

Question from Councillor Steven Lambert to Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets, in relation to prudential borrowing

What Public Works Loans does the council hold, what are they for, what was the original borrowing figure, its interest rate and maturity rates for each?

How many Lender option borrower options (LOBOs) does the council hold what was the original borrowing figure, its interest rate and maturity rates for each?

Response

Set out below is the schedule of Buckinghamshire Council's external borrowing, which is an amalgamation of the borrowing that was undertaken by the legacy Buckinghamshire Councils. It is difficult to say in any detail what the loans are specifically for as they go as far back as 24 years ago and would reflect the borrowing requirements of the council's capital investment programmes. The Council's current policy is that external borrowing will only be considered when there is a financially viable business case that at least covers the cost of borrowing, for example the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre. The Council will not necessarily undertake external borrowing immediately if there are sufficient cash balances available, especially given the low returns that are available for invested cash, with borrowing deferred until the Council's cashflow requires it. No new external borrowing has been taken out by Buckinghamshire Council since its creation on 1st April 2020.

Buckinghamshire Council Borrowing as at 31st August 2021

PWLB Loans

Start Date	Maturity Date	Loan Type	Original Loan Amount	Original Term	Interest Rate	Principal o/s 31 Aug 2021
24 Jun 97	15 Jul 22	Maturity	10,000,000	25 yrs	7.125%	10,000,000
08 Oct 13	08 Oct 28	Maturity	5,000,000	15 yrs	3.970%	5,000,000
06 Dec 18	06 Dec 28	Maturity	10,000,000	10 yrs	2.100%	10,000,000
31 Jan 19	31 Jan 29	Maturity	5,478,000	10 yrs	2.090%	5,478,000
03 Sep 19	03 Sep 29	Maturity	19,400,000	10 yrs	1.220%	19,400,000
20 Mar 18	20 Mar 33	Annuity	20,000,000	15 yrs	2.120%	16,489,478
12 Apr 18	12 Apr 38	Equal Instalments of Principal	18,000,000	20 yrs	2.290%	15,300,000
06 Dec 18	06 Dec 38	Equal Instalments of Principal	10,000,000	20 yrs	2.120%	8,750,000
14 Mar 19	14 Mar 39	Equal Instalments of Principal	10,000,000	20 yrs	2.050%	9,000,000
30 Oct 17	30 Oct 42	Equal Instalments of Principal	25,100,000	25 yrs	2.470%	21,586,000
29 May 19	29 May 44	Equal Instalments of Principal	10,000,000	25Yrs	1.980%	9,200,000
20 Nov 18	20 Nov 46	Annuity	46,000,000	28 yrs	2.560%	43,091,846
02 Nov 18	02 Nov 48	Annuity	30,000,000	30 yrs	2.560%	28,279,621
07 May 14	07 May 50	Annuity	13,500,000	36 yrs	4.170%	12,177,162
23 Jan 06	15 Nov 55	Maturity	10,000,000	49 yrs	3.700%	10,000,000
25 Jul 17	25 Jul 57	Annuity	10,800,000	40 yrs	2.700%	10,164,160
24 Jul 08	31 Mar 58	Maturity	20,000,000	50 yrs	4.580%	20,000,000
12 Apr 18	12 Apr 68	Maturity	30,000,000	50 yrs	2.370%	30,000,000

LOBO Loans

Start Date	Maturity Date	Loan Type	Original Loan Amount	Original Term	Interest Rate	Principal o/s 31 Aug 2021
28 Jul 08	28 Jul 78	Maturity	15,000,000	70 yrs	3.985%	15,000,000
28 Jul 08	28 Jul 78	Maturity	15,000,000	70 yrs	4.095%	15,000,000
Total BC Loans			<u>333,278,000</u>			<u>313,916,267</u>