



Communities & Localism Select Committee agenda

Date: Tuesday 13 July 2021

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

M Harker OBE (Chairman), S Barrett, P Drayton, M Hussain JP, G Smith, M Stannard, P Bass, R Gaffney, L Smith BEM, J Baum, P Cooper, F Mahon, A Waite, I Hussain and G Hollis

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Chairman's Welcome and Introduction	10:00	
2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman		
3 Apologies for Absence / Changes in Membership		
4 Declarations of Interest		



Communities & Localism Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Communities & Localism Select Committee held on Thursday 18 March 2021 in Virtual Meeting via MS Teams, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.13 pm.

Members present

P Irwin, L Walsh, N Brown, P Cooper, M Harker OBE, T Hunter-Watts, P Kelly, G Peart, B Russel, L Smith BEM, A Waite and J Wassell

Others in attendance

A Hussain and G Williams

From Durham County Council: G Elliot, Cllr R Bell, Cllr B Stephens and Cllr R Yorke

Apologies

E Culverhouse and L Sullivan

Agenda Item

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021 were AGREED as an accurate record.

3 Public Questions

There were two public questions which were both answered by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health.

Cllr Jon Harvey, Buckingham Town Council asked how the Community Boards would be evaluated to which the Cabinet Member explained that the Boards remained in their early stages having formed eight months ago, the same time that the Council's new Localism team started. Regular meetings with Community Board Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Co-ordinators had been held and their feedback acted upon. A more thorough review exercise to gather feedback was now being undertaken to capture what has been done well and what areas could benefit from improvement and towns, parishes and partners would be invited to be involved in this process.

Cllr Mark Cole, Buckingham Town Council queried the voting rights of town and parish councils at Community Board meetings, highlighting the important role towns and parishes plays in devolution and encouraged a greater role to ensure town and parish council's voices were fully heard. The Cabinet Member explained that Community Boards were very different from the former County Council Local Area Forums (LAFs) and the Council was seeking to emulate the models used by Durham and Wiltshire where there was much greater community involvement. The Council had recently drafted a town and parish charter to encourage greater partnership working. The devolution work had not progressed as hoped due to priorities being focused on the Covid response. A team continued to work on devolution and some pilot projects had commenced. The voting arrangements had been agreed by Cabinet, with the board budgets being far greater than LAFs, this decision was made so that the Council took responsibility for ensuring tax payer money was used effectively. Local input remained very important when taking decisions and many Boards hold informal votes to understand how attendees feel about certain decisions. Community Board governance and processes were being reviewed and town and parish council views would be taken account of.

The Chairman thanked Cllrs Cole and Harvey for their questions.

4 Chairman's Update

The Chairman updated that the Inquiry Group's report on the effectiveness of community grants during the Covid-19 pandemic had been presented to Cabinet on 2 March by the Chairman and Cllr P Cooper. The Chairman thanked all Members of the Inquiry Group, the Cabinet Member and all Members who attended an inquiry session or answered the questionnaire. The Chairman also thanked partnership and VCS organisations and officers for their time and help to produce the report.

5 Community Boards: Review of the journey so far

The Chairman introduced a number of guests for this item that were in attendance to provide an update on Community Boards and insight into Durham Council's devolution model. The presentations were as follows:

Cllr G William, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health

The vision for Community Boards was to improve outcomes for residents through ensuring strong connections between Buckinghamshire Council and its communities. There were six themes in the vision:-

- Dedicated local go to: championing the local area and being an ambassador of community needs.
- Collaboration: an 'Everyone is welcome' ethos with a range of people and organisations coming together to understand local need and explore solutions.
- Meetings: five public meetings per year with further work outside meetings.
- Activity: community taking ownership of activities including smaller initiatives as well as deep dives.
- Engagement: community conversations to empower local voices with the Board

being well known in their respective areas.

- Impact: local data and intelligence to demonstrate outcomes for local people and leverage external funding.

There were 16 Community Boards across the county and each one determined their own priorities and took action accordingly with funds made available for local projects. The Council had allocated a budget of £3.9m across all the Boards and each Board had a dedicated coordinator. A service director would also be aligned to each Board. A review would be carried out during March to identify opportunities to refine the approach to Boards in future.

Claire Hawkes, Service Director, Localities & Strategic Partnerships

The launch of Community Boards had taken place in July 2020 during the pandemic. New staff had been recruited following the transition to unitary which had been difficult due to interviews and inductions being carried out remotely. The team had been proactive in embracing the cultural changes that the Communities Boards introduced and were looking to develop on lessons learnt after the first nine months. There were three localism managers to oversee the team with each having a core area of responsibility. New opportunities had been identified, such as virtual meetings and virtual working groups, which had been embraced and proved popular. One of the benefits of online meetings had been that they were available to watch on demand.

Across the Boards there were a number of common themes being focused on:-

- Environment & climate change
- Young people
- Older people
- Transport
- Covid recovery
- Health and wellbeing
- Infrastructure
- Community resilience

Councillors Arif Hussain (High Wycombe Community Board) and Anne Wight (Wing and Ivinghoe Community Board), Community Board Chairmen

The High Wycombe Community Board had engaged with its community at the start of the pandemic and had been proactive in improving the area. Outside of the meetings, awareness of the Board had been raised and a network had been created between community groups and partners. Examples of this included visits with local businesses to encourage their involvement and seek feedback which had been met positively. The High Wycombe Community Board had worked with Public Health and the Council to address rising Covid-19 cases in the area and had worked with local partners to address BAME vaccine hesitancy.

The Wing & Ivinghoe Community Board's approach was to be flexible, inclusive and non-political. The Board had a steering group, made up of residents, Members and

key players, to discuss ideas. The informal nature of the Board had received positive praise as it was accessible to all audiences. An example of the Board's work included one subgroup investigating potential locations of electric vehicle charging points in the area. A 'Fun, food and fitness fair' was being planned for May 2022 as part of a project aimed at youths and improving health and food education within families.

Amy Jenner (Aylesbury Community Board) and Jack Pearce (Beeches Community Board), Community Board Coordinators

The coordinators worked with the various internal and external partners and stakeholders on the Community Boards. The coordinators also facilitated conversations between organisations and identified opportunities that external partners could become involved with the Boards. As well as organizing the meetings and content, coordinators also assessed and processed funding applications and kept the Board budgets up to date. During the pandemic, the coordinators had worked with VCS organisations and liaised with council officers that were supporting the Covid-19 response such as the Helping Hands programme. The coordinators enjoyed the variety of the role and working within the local Board communities.

Gordon Elliot, Head of Service Partnerships & Community Engagement, Cllr Richard Bell, Cllr Brian Stephens and Cllr Rob Yorke (Durham County Council)

Durham Council had been running Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) for 12 years having been established in 2009. County Durham had 14 AAPs across the area with each differing in geographical size and population. The boundaries had been agreed with the communities at the time of formulation. The AAPs had a high-profile launch in April 2009 with events in each AAP area which were attended by the Council Leader, Chief Executive. The Secretary of State also attended the first launch. At the launch, each AAP picked its own name and local priorities. Each AAP had localised engagement and consultation mechanisms which tackled local issues. The structure of the AAPs and their budget was outlined. Each AAP Board was made up of 7 public representatives, 7 partner agencies and 7 councillors. The councillor membership changed every two years (where an AAP had more than 7 County Councillors) and was non-political, whilst the chairman, which could be a public representative, from a partner agency or a councillor, was revolved annually. AAP Task Groups supported the work of the AAP Board and each AAP had at least 2.5 council officers assigned to support them. Each AAP had the same Council funding with additional top up from partners such as the Lottery, CCG or local trusts.

Some of the work of the AAPs was highlighted which in many cases was in addition to the work carried out with AAP project funds. This included a village broadband provision campaign that resulted in BT Open Reach supplying broadband to a rural village at no cost to local residents, the AAP or the Council. Connections within the AAPs raised £300,000 for the creation of a Victoria Cross memorial garden to commemorate Victoria Cross stones awarded within the county. In market towns, AAPs had worked with Highways to mitigate damage caused by HGVs and were involved with a project to expand the A66. It had been felt that local councillors had a level of legitimacy when approaching external organisations as a member of an AAP.

Durham Council commenced an asset transfer programme to local residents in 2011-12. AAPs were involved in this process with over 3,500 people being consulted. The benefit of this transfer had meant that residents managed the local assets and raised funds through their usage. The practice of AAPs had assisted in Durham being awarded the LGC's Council of the Year 2014 and representatives from overseas had visited the Council to learn from their model. The AAP staff had been key during Durham's pandemic response through their connections linking residents with VCS organisations. AAPs would have a role during the Covid recovery programme through their core budget as well as additional programme funds.

Jennifer Cameron, Chief Executive Action4Youth and Vice Chair VCSE Recovery Board

Ms Cameron shared reflections on the engagements the VCS organisations had experienced with the Boards over the past year. It was felt that the VCS needed stronger representation on Boards and the VCS Recovery Board wanted to work closer with the Community Boards to tackle issues arising from the pandemic. One suggested improvement was how organisations that were county-wide could engage with all the Community Boards without having to engage with each individual one. It was also suggested that funding procedures and timelines be standardised so that the VCSE could share best practice guidance to the wider VCS organisations.

During the discussion the following key points were raised by the Committee:-

- Durham had found that there had been benefits with coordinators working within their AAP areas such as in village halls. Work was ongoing to consider working practice post-Covid. In Buckinghamshire, some Parishes and VCS groups had offered coordinators local 'touchdown' space that would be considered once pandemic restrictions eased. The Committee saw merit in coordinators working within their local area.
- One Member commended how the public influenced service delivery through the Durham AAPs.
- The AAPs in Durham were non-political and one Member hoped this would be adopted in the Buckinghamshire Community Boards.
- AAPs had evolved over time to become more influential bodies with some decision making capabilities as the Council and residents became more aware of their potential. A Member hoped that Buckinghamshire's Community Boards could reach this level of influence in future.
- The AAPs changed every year how local residents could become involved and each AAP had its own way to engage depending on what worked locally. Methods included online questionnaires, stands at local shows, social media and local papers/magazines. 'The Durham Ask', the county council's asset transfer programme, was being run online whereby communities and organisations could submit an expression of interest for particular assets.
- Members agreed that the Durham model was commendable and should inform how the Community Boards develop in future.

The Chairman thanked all attendees for their presentations.

6 Inquiry into the effectiveness of community organisation grants during the covid-19 pandemic

The Select Committee noted the inquiry report that had gone to Cabinet and the Cabinet's response to the inquiry's recommendations.

7 Date of the Next Meeting

This was the last meeting before the local elections in May. The Chairman encouraged members to email him suggested items for the future work programme.



Buckinghamshire Council

Communities & Localism Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 MAY 2021 IN MAIN SPORTS HALL, STOKE MANDEVILLE STADIUM, GUTTMANN ROAD, AYLESBURY HP21 9PP.

MEMBERS PRESENT

S Barrett, P Bass, J Baum, P Cooper, P Drayton, R Gaffney, M Harker OBE, G Hollis, I Hussain, M Hussain JP, F Mahon, Z Mohammed, G Smith, L Smith BEM and A Waite

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor M Stannard.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Resolved: that Councillor M Harker OBE be elected Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee for the ensuing year.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The appointment of Vice-Chairman would be made at the next meeting of this committee on 8 July 2021.

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Portfolio Priorities

Localities and Strategic Partnerships
Communities & Localism Select Committee
July 2021



Overview

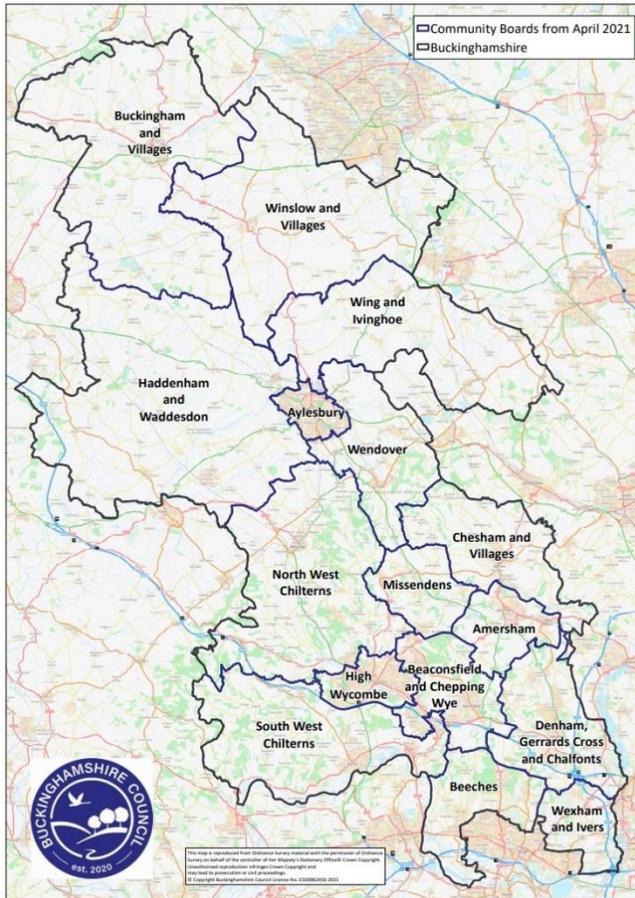
The Localities and Strategic Partnership service is diverse and fast paced. It is closely connected to every councillor and every service area within the Council.

We are ambitious about what can be achieved through exceptional, innovative engagement and collaboration. Teams proactively problem-solve, deliver on projects and drive change. Building on strong connections between Buckinghamshire Council, its partners and our communities to work with others in creative ways to make Buckinghamshire a prosperous, safe and healthy place to live, work and grow.

My Priorities are to:

1. Develop the Localism model, at its heart of which is 16 Community Boards that connect the council to partners and its communities to provide tailored local support and solutions to issues.
2. Deliver at pace the local Devolution programme.
3. Work with the Police & Crime Commissioner to help prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime. Support tackling offences like speeding, illegal parking and rural crime.
4. Work with local community groups, voluntary groups and town & parish councils to support local communities and build effective relationships.
5. Collaboratively deliver a community 'helping hand' offer for vulnerable residents.

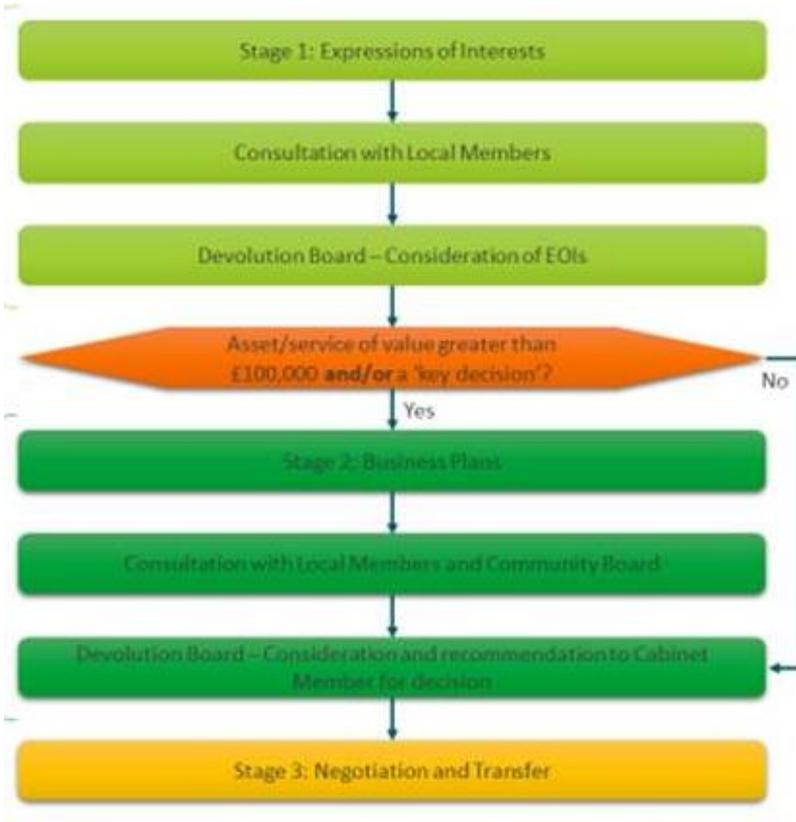
1. Develop the Localism Model at its heart of which is 16 Community Boards that connect the council to partners and its communities to provide tailored local support and solutions to issues.



- Working together: local voices, local choices, local action
- The boards are a great way of connecting the council to communities and partners
- Bringing the council and community together to improve outcomes for residents and tackle local issues
- Connecting with community groups, partners and residents to understand what matters to them and work together to problem solve.
- Community Boards are open for anyone to take part, they are council committees with a little bit of a difference
- It's activity all year round and action groups help explore local priorities, projects, and creative ways to make local changes
- Boards to proactively support council priorities at a very local level and in a way which is the best fit for that local community.

2. Deliver at pace the local devolution programme

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- Devolution is central to the new Buckinghamshire Council localism agenda
- We are keen to energise devolution programmes, shift power to communities and improving local services by better aligning these with local needs
- The devolution of services and assets to local communities, particularly to town and parish councils, can make a significant contribution in enabling them to be stronger, more resilient and sustainable
- A lot of planning time was lost due to the pandemic
- We have a devolution policy, webpages and have been developing a toolkit
- We have a phased approach to make sure we implement devolution well, learning as we go. We are now focusing on the pilots
- Looking forward to this post progressing our devolution programme at pace

3. Work with the police and the PCC to help prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime. Support tackling offences like speeding, illegal parking and rural crime



- Working together to make Buckinghamshire a safer place
- Ensuring the Council is compliant with crime-related statutory duties and to increase the safety of residents and reduce their fear of crime.
- Deliver services to support the community safety partnership and its work
- Ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties relating to crime reduction, ASB, Prevent, modern slavery and domestic abuse etc.
- Deliver services directly to residents to address ASB and crime hotspots and to prevent and reduce crime and disorder.

4. Work with local community and voluntary groups and town and parish councils to support local communities and build effective relationships.



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VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE SECTOR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2021-2024

Better Together: A partnership approach to improving people's lives in Buckinghamshire



In partnership with the VCSE Recovery Board



All Councils Charter



Working together for the people of Buckinghamshire



A shared commitment between Buckinghamshire Council and the parish and town councils of Buckinghamshire

- There are a number of key partners but two are particularly critical for this portfolio:
Voluntary Sector and Town & Parish Councils
- One of our focus will be on publishing a co-designed Town & Parish Charter
- Support the VCSE Board – excellent examples of collaboration
- Review of Council funding to VCSE completed November 2021

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Cabinet Member Priorities for 2021/22

Culture & Leisure Portfolio
Councillor Clive Harriss



Scope of the Portfolio

Culture

As part of the county's Cultural Partnership ([Buckinghamshire Culture](#)), we support delivery of the Cultural Strategy, maximising investment and harnessing culture to support economic development, new housing and communities, health and wellbeing, education and skills. An example is Open Weekend (22-25 July), a new co-ordinated event which will see over 70 exciting activities and events in town centres and cultural venues across the county.



The Culture, Sport and Leisure service also delivers key events, such as the WhizzFizzFest family arts and literary festival, and manages relationships with the Wycombe Museum and the Discover Bucks Museum (formerly Bucks County Museum), which are operated using trust arrangements, and with our main theatre operators: Ambassador Theatre Group (Waterside Theatre) and HQ Theatres (Wycombe Swan Theatre).

Buckinghamshire Archives

Buckinghamshire Archives provides a statutory archives service. The 3.5 miles of shelving hold collections of local and international importance, including records related to Stoke Mandeville's role in the development of the Paralympic Games. Staff also support volunteers, run outreach projects, work on digital preservation, conserve collections and undertake digitization.



Scope of the Portfolio



Libraries

Buckinghamshire Council has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. The public library service operates in over 29 locations through a network of 9 County Libraries, 8 Community Supported Libraries and 12 volunteer-led Community Libraries. We also provide online, school, home and prison library services.

The activities of our Libraries teams contribute to a wide range of council priorities, from early years outcomes to supporting people to live independently in their later years. A number of libraries are also Council Access Points, providing residents with local access to council services.

Country Parks, Parks & Play Areas

The service operates four Country Parks (Black Park, Langley Park, Denham and Thorney), which in 2020/21 were visited by a record breaking 1.7 million visitors. Country Parks are self-financing; income generated from car parking and filming activities funds operations and maintenance, plus work to conserve the natural environment for future generations. A new Country Park in Stoke Poges is under development to be opened by summer 2023.

The Culture, Sport and Leisure and Neighbourhood Services teams work together to manage a number of local parks across the county. As well as capital projects to improve parks and play areas, this includes liaising with planning to make sure that alongside housing growth, we create facilities and green spaces that support the future health of our communities.



Scope of the Portfolio

Sport & Leisure

Buckinghamshire Council has 10 main leisure facilities across the county, operated by three leisure operators (Everyone Active, Greenwich Leisure Limited and Places Leisure) under four separate contracts:

1. Aqua Vale Swimming & Fitness Centre – Aylesbury
2. Beacon Sports Centre & Theatre – Beaconsfield
3. Chalfont Leisure Centre – Chalfont St Peter
4. Chesham Leisure Centre – Chesham
5. Chiltern Pools – Amersham
6. Court Garden Leisure Complex – Marlow
7. Evreham Sports Centre – Iver
8. Risborough Springs Swim and Fitness Centre – Princes Risborough
9. Swan Pool & Leisure Centre – Buckingham
10. Wycombe Leisure Centre – High Wycombe



Other facilities include the South Buckinghamshire Golf Course (pictured above) and the Farnham Park Playing Fields, both located in Stoke Poges. The playing fields are an 80 acre site providing grassroots sports facilities for football and rugby, and purpose built baseball/softball fields operated by Baseball Softball UK Limited.

The current capital projects programme includes the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre in Amersham (£36m), due for completion and opening in the Autumn, and works to replace the Chalfont Leisure Centre swimming pool. Recent investment has seen improvements to the Court Garden Leisure Complex, Chesham Leisure Centre and dry-side facilities at the Chalfont Leisure Centre, all well received by our residents and users.

The service also undertakes sports development and outreach to support people to become more physically active, working with a range of partners including Leap, our County Sport & Activity Partnership, which is hosted by the Council.

Some areas of focus:

- Improvements to our parks and play areas
- Capital programme including the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre, developing new visitor facilities for Black Park Country Park and a new Country Park at Stoke Poges
- Promoting healthy lifestyles through partnership activities with Public Health, Leap, Active in the Community and others
- Development of a Leisure Facilities Strategy for Buckinghamshire
- Delivering against the Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy action plan
- Coordinating cultural events such as WhizzFizzFest, Paralympic Heritage Flame Lighting and Buckinghamshire History Festival
- Rolling out new technology in libraries to enable more customers to self-serve
- Investigation of the feasibility and viability of a Bucks Card for residents

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Housing, Homelessness & Regulatory Services

Cllr Nick Naylor



Some areas of focus:

As well as the services mentioned on the following slides, this portfolio includes Housing & Homelessness services. That element of the portfolio is scrutinised by the Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee. Priorities for the portfolio as a whole are as below:

- Identify surplus public sector land and actively develop this for housing that is affordable
- Require new private developments to include affordable housing for local people and key workers
- Maintain virtual elimination of rough sleeping across Buckinghamshire through an integrated public health and wellbeing approach
- Work with private residential residents to address issues such as debt or personal concerns which risk them becoming homeless
- Introduce a new countywide 'Homelessness Action Team' to lead our work
- Development and implementation of key licensing policies

Scope of the Portfolio

Licensing, Cemeteries & Crematoria

Licensing teams ensure that taxi providers, gambling licenses, alcohol and entertainment premises in Buckinghamshire are appropriately licensed. The Licensing team cover scrap metal, taxi licensing, personal licenses, gambling licenses, licensed animal establishments and licensing and entertainment premises.

The new Tax and Private Hire Licensing Policy for Buckinghamshire, having been adopted by Council in February 2021, will be launched in September this year. Work is underway to develop new Licensing and Gambling Act policies for adoption later on this financial year.

There are two Committee's for licensing matters: the Statutory Licensing Committee which considers issues under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005; and the non-statutory Licensing Committee which deals with all other regulatory licensing policy matters such as street trading, fee setting, private hire and hackney carriage licensing.

Crematoria services are provided at both the Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham and the Berton Crematorium, Aylesbury. In addition, the team manage a number of other cemeteries and memorial gardens across Buckinghamshire:

- Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens, Denham
- Parkside Cemetery, Hedgerley
- Holtspur Cemetery, Beaconsfield
- Shepherds Lane Cemetery, Beaconsfield
- High Wycombe Cemetery
- Great Missenden Cemetery



Scope of the Portfolio

Environmental Health

The Environmental Health service works to help ensure that Buckinghamshire is a safe and healthy place to live and work, minimising impacts on the environment & supporting business to ensure compliance with the law. Our vision is to provide a trusted & approachable service for local communities, businesses & visitors, ensuring Bucks is a safe place to work, live & visit. The team monitor food safety (including hygiene ratings), support public health and act against nuisance.

Page 26 Recently, our teams have been critical in providing a flexible response to the pandemic and COVID activities remain a primary focus of the team. From December 2020, new COVID19 'marshals' offered guidance and support to local residents about coronavirus rules and staying safe during the ongoing pandemic. The marshals were brought in to support Environmental Health and Trading Standards Officers who provided more detailed additional help to local businesses. Working in partnership with the Health & Safety Executive, Environmental Health teams undertook spot checks on large supermarkets to ensure compliance.

The team are now responding to a high number of enquiries concerning organised events which were originally planned to be held post 21st June (the earliest date that Step 4 may have been implemented).

The transformation of the Environmental Health service post-unitarisation has commenced. The service is moving away from the model which was delivered by legacy district councils to a single countywide service.

Scope of the Portfolio

Trading Standards

Trading Standards operate jointly between Buckinghamshire and Surrey and tackles unfair trading practices, scams, rogue traders and serious organised crime. The service seeks to maintain a fair-trading environment and provides a level playing field for local businesses while improving health and wellbeing of people and communities. The team work with organisations such as the National Food Crime Unit, Thames Valley Police and Office for Product and Safety Standards. Trading Standards also offer training for individuals and businesses to protect from and prevent scams, alongside a number of other initiatives.

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Registrars & Coroners

Registration services cover births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships. We have Register Offices in Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Amersham and Buckingham. As well as four ceremony rooms within Register Offices, our registration service licenses other venues in Buckinghamshire to hold ceremonies with over 80 venues currently licensed. Having been significantly affected by COVID, the registration service has recovered well and birth and death registrations are now operating as usual.

The service also conducts Citizenship ceremonies – the final step in the process for people who have been successful in gaining British citizenship. Following enablement's put in place by the Home Office, registrars have been running virtual citizenship ceremonies to ensure citizens can receive their citizenship while remaining safe.

The Coroner is based in Beaconsfield Old Town and is appointed by the council but is an independent judicial officer.

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