



Communities & Localism Select Committee agenda

Date: Tuesday 22 February 2022

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

M Harker OBE (Chairman), A Waite (Vice-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 and G Hollis

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes		5 - 18
The minutes of the Select Committee held on 26th October 2021 and the informal working group meeting		

held on 16th December 2021 to be confirmed as a correct record.

4 Public Questions

Public questions is an opportunity for people who live, work or study in Buckinghamshire to put a question to a Select Committee.

The Committee will hear from members of the public who have submitted questions in advance relating to items on the agenda. The Cabinet Member, relevant key partners and responsible officers will be invited to respond.

Further information on how to register can be found here:
<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/get-involved-with-council-decisions/select-committees/>

5 Chairman's update

6 Buckinghamshire Culture

10:10

19 - 20

The Committee will receive an update from Buckinghamshire Culture on the development of the Cultural Partnership first conceived in 2019. This will include an overview of the work undertaken in the past three years and a look forward to future opportunities.

Contributors:

Cllr Clive Harris, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure
Julius Weinberg, Co-Chair, Buckinghamshire Culture
Lallie Davis, Director, Buckinghamshire Culture
Ruth Page, Culture and Leisure Services Development Manager

7 Domestic Abuse

11:10

21 - 30

Following the publication of the Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Strategy in December 2021, the Committee will receive an overview of the scale of the issue in Buckinghamshire, gain an understanding of the impact on victims and their families and the actions that are being taken to mitigate this.

Contributors:

Cllr Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities
Claire Hawkes, Service Director, Communities and Strategic Partnerships
Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety

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| 8 | Work Programme
The Committee will discuss the work programme and agree the items for the next meeting. | 11:55 | 31 - 32 |
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Contributors:

All Committee Members

Papers:

Work Programme attached

- | | | |
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| 9 | Date and time of the next meeting
The next meeting will take place on 13 th April 2022 at 10am | 12:05 |
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Agenda Item 3

Buckinghamshire Council

**Communities & Localism Select
Committee**

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER 2021 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.47 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

M Harker OBE (Chairman), A Waite (Vice-Chairman), P Drayton, G Smith, L Smith BEM, J Baum, P Cooper, F Mahon and G Hollis

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Bowles and C Harriss

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Councillors P Bass, I Hussain and M Stannard.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July were agreed as an accurate record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received. The Chairman advised that she had received a number of questions after the public questions deadline had passed which related to community boards, these questions had been given to the relevant Cabinet Member to respond to in due course.

5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman reported that the draft Statement of Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005 was approved to go out to a public consultation exercise by the Licensing Committee at its meeting on 20 October. The Scrutiny Officer would circulate the link to view and respond to the consultation once it was live on the council's website. Members were advised that under the terms of the transitional legislation, Buckinghamshire Council had been given two years to prepare and publish a new single policy under the Gambling Act and align service provision which led to this draft policy being produced for consultation. In producing the work programme it was felt that other items were more beneficial for this committee to look at in detail as this

Act was relatively prescriptive and allowed for limited local influence. Should members have any questions they were encouraged to contact the scrutiny officer who would co-ordinate responses from the licensing team.

The Chairman advised that two public consultation survey links had been circulated to Committee members in recent weeks. These were the 2021 Domestic Abuse Strategy Survey and the Community Safety Survey 2021, these surveys had now closed but it was hoped members had managed to respond.

The Chairman reported that with Community Boards having been highlighted by the Committee as a priority area to include in its work programme, she had attended a number of Community Board meetings since the last meeting of this Committee and planned to attend further meetings with a view to gaining a greater understanding of how the different boards operated across local areas. The Chairman would be meeting with the Cabinet Member for Communities to feed back her views of these meetings to date.

Further, the committee was given an update on the support being given to those arriving from Afghanistan. Buckinghamshire Council had been committed to keeping people safe from vulnerable situations, close partnership working had been taking place to welcome people arriving from Afghanistan who were in urgent need of protection. After months of planning and discussions with the Home Office, matching a family to an accommodation offer, Buckinghamshire was looking forward to welcoming its first family. The family was being helped to integrate into society and build a new life. A further twenty-nine families were expected to arrive within the next few years as part of Buckinghamshire's pledge to take in up to 30 families. The local community was highly praised; landlords across the county had responded to the call for much-needed homes, huge offers of support had come in from communities and considerable amounts of money had been donated to the Afghan Crisis Fund, hosted by Heart of Bucks, which currently stood at £65,000. For people wanting, there were a number of volunteer organisations and groups that the council works with who can be contacted about volunteering, befriending opportunities or donating clothes and toys for the Afghan nationals. The council website holds more information - <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/how-we-are-supporting-the-afghan-crisis/> . For individuals wishing to donate money to the Buckinghamshire Afghan Crisis Fund they can visit this link <https://www.totalgiving.co.uk/appeal/helping-hand>

The Chairman provided an update on work ongoing as part of the Armed Forces Covenant work streams. The Chairman who is also the Chairman the Civilian Military Partnership Board reported that there were four task and finish groups which had been set up and members were encouraged to put people in contact with the groups where relevant. These groups included NEETS and Cadets; Veterans Hubs and Clubs; Events and Commemorations; and Going for Gold, which focused on the Council ambition to achieve gold employer scheme accreditation.

6 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY BOARDS

The Committee received an update on Community Board activity from Cllr S Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities and then heard from Emily Davis, Programme Director at Action4Youth who presented information on projects for young people which had received funding from Community Boards.

Slides supporting Cllr Bowles update were included in the agenda pack. The following points were highlighted:

- Efforts had been made to increase the awareness of Community Boards, and further work was ongoing to engage residents more with their local board and increase public attendance at meetings. The first Community Board newsletter had been issued; the Cabinet Member had held individual meetings with Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to hear about board activities and challenges; and briefing sessions had been held internally with directorate management teams to promote the work and offerings of the boards. A marketing budget had been established for centralised branding and marketing to ensure boards presented professionally and consistently with grab kits now available for Community Board Co-ordinators to use and take with them to events. To increase awareness, Co-ordinators had been holding engagement events including attending fayres and a number of local events as well as meeting with delivery partners such as Leap, Buckinghamshire Business First, local schools and community groups.
- The second round of board meetings for this year was underway and feedback to date had been encouraging with good progress reported. There were active action groups for each board.
- Work was also underway with the Community Resilience team to understand how boards could support local communities and councils during a major incident. An emergency planning exercise had recently been held and local communities were encouraged to take up resilience plans, with the boards helping to apply for emergency funding for items such as sandbags.
- The funding panel was now established, closely monitoring budget usage and met fortnightly. The spend and project breakdown for each Board was kept under review. With the funding process having opened in July 2021, £1.15m worth of projects had been passed to the boards and £590k of contributory funding had been secured. Projects funded and projects being progressed could be viewed on pages 15-16 of the reports pack.
- Priorities for the next three months would continue to focus on ensuring projects were prepared and submitted in a timely manner with a focus on environment and economic recovery projects. A menu of initiatives was underway to share with the boards detailing potential projects and delivery partners.
- The Proud of Bucks awards would include categories for Community Boards, and each board would decide how to deliver these awards with the suggestion of a physical event which could also aid with increasing board awareness.
- There was also a focus on looking at how engaging with young residents could be improved to establish their needs.

During the presentation from Ms Davis, Action4Youth the following points were highlighted (presentations slides are appended to these minutes):

- A brief background and summary of the work undertaken by Action4Youth was provided to the committee. Action 4 Youth had received Community Board funding for two projects, these were The Junction in High Wycombe, and a Youth mentoring project across Aylesbury Vale. Details of each project can be seen in the appended presentation slides.
- The Junction received £40k funding from the High Wycombe Community Board to support core running costs for the next three years. It served as a multi service drop in centre offering a range of planned sessions and activities seven days a week catering for young people aged 12-18, and provided specialist support to those who were vulnerable. The Junction was located in the High Wycombe library, which was chosen for its town

centre location which already attracted young people and was accessible by public transport. Sessions were based around health and wellbeing, crisis support/counselling and the general youth space.

- Timetable sessions had included boxing and dance and a weekly mental wellbeing counsellor was available for one to one support. There was also a female only evening to support harder to reach groups getting involved in activities.
- The centre had three core staff members and had various partners coming in to collaborate and support young people. It had also been positive to see pupils from different schools and backgrounds mixing.
- The youth mentoring project had been awarded £41,947 from across six community boards in the Aylesbury Vale area. A similar project which had been successful in the Wycombe area was coming to the end of its three year funding it received from the legacy district council.
- This was a 1:1 mentoring project for young people aged 11-17 who experienced low self-esteem, confidence issues, anxiety, low level mental ill health and challenging behaviour. Interactions were face to face weekly for between ten and twelve weeks' dependant on individual needs. Action4Youth would work with its already established network to receive referrals from schools, council, social care, youth groups and direct from parent/guardians.
- The boards who had funded the project had initially identified young people in their priorities and had secondary schools located in or very near the area covered by the Community Board. It was identified that matching the approximate number of young people in each area to the number of referrals may present a challenge when ensuring Community Board money is spent in the right local area, and flexibility would be required in instances where a young person attended school in one area but lived in another.
- There had been significant interest in the full time mentor role and an excellent field of candidates were due to be interviewed shortly. The aim was to get the project running as soon as possible, with January 2022 being the latest start date.

Following the presentations, questions and comments were raised by the Committee. These included:

- A member asked whether there were plans for The Junction to support young people transitioning in to employment by offering CV writing sessions as well as other practical support. Members were advised that an employability programme was planned for the future when the centre had been established. The Junction was also involved with the Government Kick Start programme and would be taking on four junior youth workers who would have been on universal credit for a period of time.
- In relation to access to funding, this was said to be an ongoing process. In addition to Community Board funding, funding was secured through other sources including donations and the National Lottery. The target was for a minimum of three years running costs to be covered at any time.
- The Committee questioned outreach work and were advised that staff visited a number of schools and community groups and also worked around the town centre to make young people aware of the facilities and services on offer. There was a target to increase outreach work to keep attendance growing. In relation to distance, it was said that outreach targeted any young people who were in reasonable distance to the town centre library location which is located by the bus station. A long term ambition was to have local hubs. Further it was said that if Action4Youth were approached by a Parish Council who had an available venue and funding for establishment costs, advice could be given to run that facility. There was a yearly membership fee from Action4Youth, however this would cover DBS checks, introductions to youth work, support with getting a management committee up and running and access to subsidised training.

- It was confirmed that both Wycombe Youth Action and Aylesbury Youth Action were members of Action4Youth and had access to training and DBS checks with both working on the NCS programme as charity partners. Action4Youth had asked youth groups about their interest in running projects at The Junction and groups had been invited to give proposals of programmes.
- A member noted that Community Board funding had been granted to Action4Youth and that the Council had also provided funding to Aylesbury Youth Action and queried if the figure was known that was being provided to youth groups in Buckinghamshire. The Cabinet Member advised that he would obtain this information and feed it back.
- In terms of attracting staff and holding on to quality youth workers, members were advised that at the current time recruitment was not an issue and a number of sessional staff were still available for the centre to use.

Recommendation

With the intention to get more young people involved with Community Boards, the Committee recommended that Action4Youth could facilitate discussion of potential Community Board schemes and topics with a view to obtain and understand the views of young people. This could then be fed back to Community Board Co-ordinators and taken in to consideration when progressing projects and allocating funding.

7 LEISURE FACILITIES STRATEGY

The Committee received an update on the current leisure provision in Buckinghamshire and the emerging Leisure Facilities Strategy. The Committee also heard about work and plans to increase involvement in leisure from groups who historically had low involvement. The Committee had the opportunity to hear from Cllr C Harriss, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Richard Barker, Corporate Director for Communities, Sue Drummond, Head of Leisure and Mark Ormerod, Director, Leap. Presentation slides were appended to the agenda pack

During the presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- Prior to introducing the leisure facilities update, the Cabinet Member reported that the swimming pool at Chalfont Leisure Centre was again open for use, a film office was being explored as Buckinghamshire was regularly being used for film and television, the Rye Boathouse was open and six parks had been awarded the Green Flag award. The opening of the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre had been slightly delayed due to supply of handrail which would be a health and safety risk, however there remained excitement around the centres opening in the near future and it was noted that despite covid restrictions throughout construction, work had progressed on the centre as planned.
- Key principles had been set to progress the overall leisure strategy and consideration given to where investment was best placed to encourage participation from those groups less likely to take part in leisure activities. It was emphasised that the strategy not only focused on indoor facilities but would also cover the important areas of playing pitches and open space strategies.
- In addition to the Council leisure provision, Buckinghamshire saw strong leisure provision in the private, voluntary, education and MOD sectors.
- Leap continued to make efforts to bring external funding in to the county, with a focus on investing in supporting behavioural change among residents, where a systemic approach was required, particularly for those groups that found it most difficult to be active. It was noted that whilst the charts on page 24 of the report pack showed Buckinghamshire compared well nationally, these were not significantly large percentage differentials. Since agenda publication further figures had been made available and within the last 12 months there had been a 2.7% increase in adult activity in the county

- and a 2.4% decrease in inactive people.
- With such a significant number of residents shielding, when people had started to engage in activities again there had been a spike in incidents such as falls where core stability had decreased and this had resulted in injuries such as wrist and hip fractures.
 - It had been found that the pandemic had a profound on young people with 16% fewer children reporting having taken part in sport than in the previous year, although girls had fared slightly better than boys who had usually been involved in more traditional team sport games.
 - Approximately 400 organisations were involved in helping to deliver activity programmes in Buckinghamshire to support the four broad principles on page 27 of the report pack. The Council and Leap worked with mental health charities, housing organisations, Age UK and a broad range of partners. There were 119 satellite clubs across the county offering the best chances for young people to get involved with sport and there was a drive with DfE funding to open up more school facilities after school to young people and communities.
 - Leisure centre usage was at around 70% of pre-covid levels which was significantly better than forecast and resulted in a smaller financial loss to the Council than had been planned for over the first five months of this financial year. There had been a high demand for swimming, and the covid related restriction to book a swimming lane had been really popular and given users confidence when using facilities. Swimming lessons were also seeing high demand.
 - Buckinghamshire had seen significant investment in centres at Chalfont and Chesham with facilities having been improved at Risborough Springs and Court Garden as well. The new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre would also be opening in the coming weeks. As part of this strategy the leisure facilities at Aqua Vale, and the Buckingham Swan would be assessed to see what improvements may be required and expansions required to meet the growing housing population in the north of the county.
 - The wider benefits of physical activity were highlighted with improved jobs and volunteering, fewer GP visits, improved educational attainment, prevention of ill health and improved mental wellbeing all being linked to being physically active.
 - In terms of indoor facilities, there was a higher concentration of facilities in the south of the county and it was explained that Sport England set principles on recommended journey times for residents which show 90% of people should be within reasonable distance of a facility, although this may be a school facility, or a facility in a neighbouring authority.
 - It was noted that should appropriate outdoor provision be in place for playing pitches this could create more indoor space for activities so the strategy would look further in to solutions such as this. Work was also ongoing to look at potentially maximising public access to facilities at school sites outside of school areas as there were a number of education providers with the capacity to offer more in this area, although there was often local resident opposition to nearby schools being used in the evenings for leisure activities.
 - Through discussions with national sport governing bodies there were sports looking to expand such as gymnastics and netball and Buckinghamshire as a place could be repurposed to support this expansion.

Following the presentations, questions and comments were raised by the Committee. These included:

- In response to a query on how the older population could be better supported, the Committee was advised that the Council and Leap worked closely with expert clinicians and carers. Through partnership working with the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire,

Berkshire West Integrated Care System, front line clinicians and carers had received training on the benefits of physical activity with around 1400 people having received active medicine training. Leap had been able to fund this training for a number of people. Leap had worked with public health and the Community Boards to issue 10,000 activity packs to the homes of elderly residents promoting staying active and these had been well received. Digital support was also said to be an important factor in the strategy as it was an excellent tool to combat loneliness for older residents. Planning design would also take account of practical issues such as making sure there was adequate toilet access and seating.

- A member raised that new retirement living developments, were often now built to include wellness centres and officers agreed to discuss this provision with the Public Health team to ensure residential offerings were being captured where necessary.
- How the Council worked with developers was discussed. Where Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was in place in the county there was additional flexibility on spend whereas Section 106 contributions were more limited in how they could be used. Additionally, where developments were required to include education settings this fed in to the ambition for long term community access arrangements to be in place with these settings for their leisure facilities.
- The importance of the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan was raised as this would significantly assist in the understanding of population/housing growth, particularly in the north of the county and would be helpful in identifying areas needs for playing pitches and facilities. Members were told that the strategy would closely interlink with the Local Plan and planning policy. The Council assets in the north were of good quality but were worn and did not offer significant capacity for future growth so specific programmes would be explored including working with the Buckingham University to explore opportunities for growth with the Swan Pool.
- The Cabinet Member added that he would like the Council to encourage more personal trainers to become wellness trainers to assist in restoring people's confidence when it came to taking up exercise and this would in turn reduce strain on GPs, an option was link health hubs in to the leisure strategy. There was concern raised that the 6.5 miles radius set by adult social care for a resident to reach a hub would still be a difficult journey for many groups and town and parish council leisure provision would therefore remain important for these groups.
- The importance of getting young people involved in sport at an early age was spoken of, with the financial costs being one of the obstacles for parents. Accessibility of provision was said to be key in the strategy, legacy councils had varying approaches to their fees and charges, however work was ongoing with leisure operators to achieve a level of consistency across the county and meet needs through facility offerings. The Cabinet Member was also progressing a new 'Bucks Card' for residents which should help promote awareness of leisure offerings.
- The Committee recognised work undertaken by legacy councils in producing rolling programmes of investment and regeneration to ensure that facilities remained income generators and suggested these as a model for the Cabinet Member and officers to look at. Further, whilst it appeared in the presentation that the north of the county lacked provision, a member noted that the legacy Council had encouraged parishes to fund their own provision due to it being a large rural area so there were a number of facilities in addition to the council provision outlined on the map.
- The Committee raised concern around the transparency of legacy council use of CIL and section 106 contributions, and the Cabinet Member advised that this issue would be reported to Cabinet to ensure that there was transparency moving forward. The Committee were advised that the Cabinet was working across portfolios and was aware of work ongoing which affected different areas of the Council.

- There was a target to develop offers which promoted a wide breadth of use to meet the needs of different sports and to squeeze the most out of each facility so that they were financially viable. It was noted that Sport England was a statutory consultee on all open space planning applications. The areas identified as higher need would be explored further with an aim to make specific proposals. There had been pressure for football pitches due to a number of successful teams in the Aylesbury area but there was an awareness this needed to be balanced out to encourage involvement across all sports.

Recommendation

The Committee recommended that Leap link in with Community Board Co-ordinators so that Community Boards were made aware of the training available through Leap to individuals in the community so that in instances where a GP recommends exercise to a patient there could be more qualified individuals who could support those starting to exercise.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a draft work programme to cover this municipal year. Members were advised that items had been scheduled for the most appropriate meetings where member input would be most valuable. During discussion the Committee were in agreement that it would like a working group set up to focus on community boards and related issues as soon as practicable so that issues could be looked at during the year, rather than waiting until the end of the council year to hold an inquiry.

The Committee also discussed a desire to bring the devolution item forward on the work programme as it was identified as a priority topic for Town and Parish Councils and residents. Further, members asked for domestic abuse to be given higher priority on the work programme with the Council currently in the process of approving the 2021 domestic abuse strategy. Approaches to these items would be discussed ahead of the next meeting and reported back to members.

Resolved:

That the 2021/22 work programme be noted.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 16 December 2021 at 9.30 a.m.



Buckinghamshire Council

Communities & Localism Select Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE INFORMAL WORKING GROUP MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 16 DECEMBER 2021 VIA MS TEAMS, COMMENCING AT 9.30 A.M. AND CONCLUDING AT 12.10 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

M Harker (Chairman), A Waite (Vice-Chairman), J Baum, P Drayton, M Hussain JP, M Knight, F Mahon, L Smith, M Stannard

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Bowles, A Hussain

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that due to the situation at the time of this meeting and with covid-19 transmission on the increase, the meeting had been changed from a formal public meeting to a working group to allow the meeting to be held virtually. The Chairman reported that there had been a change in membership and Councillor Matt Knight was welcomed to the Committee. Councillor Knight had replaced Councillor Imran Hussain.

Apologies were received from Councillors G Smith, P Bass and G Hollis.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and would be formally agreed at the next committee meeting on 22 February 2022.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received for this meeting.

5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman reported that a public consultation exercise was undertaken on the draft Statement of Licensing Policy under the Gambling Act 2005, this closed on 10 December and it was hoped that interested members were able to respond. The results would be considered by the Licensing Committee in February ahead of the policy going to Full Council for agreement.

Following Community Boards being highlighted as a priority area of work by this committee, a working group had been established to hold some 'deep dive' sessions in to community boards. The first of the deep dive sessions was held on 13 December where members discussed the concept of the boards and what 'good' looked like. The next session would take place on 20 January at 10 a.m. and members were advised that recommendations would be produced on the back of these sessions for the Cabinet Member to consider. To assist with this work, the Chairman advised that she had attended further community board meetings and sub-groups and had met with the Cabinet Member and Service Director to advise of early findings across boards.

The Chairman also reported that the domestic abuse strategy, that the committee recently received a private briefing on was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 7 December. Under the work programme agenda item it was highlighted to members that domestic abuse had been brought forward to the next meeting.

6 COMMUNITY SUPPORT 'HELPING HAND'

The Committee received a presentation from Councillor S Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities and Gill Harding, Head of Community Support. The presentation covered the changing landscape for those residents struggling financially which included the impact of the pandemic on individuals, the planned increase to National Insurance contributions by April 2022 and the energy cap which was expected to rise again in April 2022; the Helping Hand service and the positive impact this had on residents who accessed it; the Household Support fund and how it would be used; partnership working through the Buckinghamshire Financial Insecurity Partnership; and the Council's role in improving food infrastructure in Buckinghamshire.

During the presentation, the following key points were highlighted:

- Councillor Bowles thanked the team for their ongoing work across a number of projects and for having continued to deliver an excellent service to residents under pressured circumstances.
- A collaborative approach across all stakeholders was taken to support residents throughout challenging financial times. Challenges included increasing fuel costs, changes to universal credit, an uptake in residents accessing Healthy Start vouchers and an independent study having found people living in the Wycombe area being some of the most affected by food insecurity in the UK. Data intelligence sharing across services including housing associations, public sector and the business sector was essential to provide help to those in need.
- The team had liaised with the author of the study, which had been undertaken by Sheffield University to gain a better understanding of how to support the residents facing difficulty in the Wycombe area.
- There had been a changing landscape for those who were in need of support driven by increased living costs and consequences of the pandemic. It was highlighted that support was not just available for those in receipt of benefits and help could be provided for those in need over a short term period.
- Food banks experienced increasing demand particularly from residents who had never used the service before. The number of children who received free school meals increased with the highest numbers in Wycombe, Chesham and Aylesbury areas.

- Whilst uptake of the Healthy Start voucher scheme had been seen this was still heavily underutilised and work was ongoing with the Public Health Team to publicise the scheme more widely.
- Residents were able to access support through helping hands the Council's communities team. A signposting leaflet had been produced to improve the visibility of the support on offer and an online directory had been produced. The Buckinghamshire Financial Insecurity Partnership also raised awareness and signposted residents to available support. There had been a back on track event run by Red Kite Housing association which the team had supported to encourage employment opportunities and debt support for residents.
- The Helping Hand service had been built as a brand for residents to reach out to who may otherwise be off put by the stigma of contacting the council for assistance. The service was aimed to help people get back on track and those in need of short term support.
- A range of residents were entitled to access the Household Support Fund, a fund provided by central Government and members were encouraged to share details of this with residents where a need was identified. The fund was flexible and designed to ensure residents had food, warmth and support with household essentials/bills where needed. The Household Support Fund was available to support a range of needs and funding was distributed via third party organisations, including welfare teams, health visitors, adult social care teams, housing services, Heart of Bucks and directly from helping hands.
- The pandemic had a personal economic impact on many residents. The Buckinghamshire Financial Insecurity Partnership had launched its 'Back on Track' scheme to help residents access support to overcome initial financial challenges and find ways to stabilise their finances in the medium and long term. The scheme ensured collaborative working with organisations across the voluntary and community sector to collect data and build a robust sustainable solution. This partnership included Buckinghamshire Council, Citizens Advice, Housing Associations, DWP and other key groups. The data insight collected would feed in to a long term solution for a support model to residents. The 'helping to get you back on track' leaflet and social media campaign had proved successful in raising awareness of support for residents.
- The Buckinghamshire Food Partnership continued to look at addressing the key issue of residents struggling to access food. Financial support had been received from Government but future funding post-April 2022 was not yet known. A food access strategy was being developed with VCS partners to collaboratively agree an approach to addressing food poverty in Bucks. There had been work with Public Health England to roll out sustainable food support programmes encouraging residents to cook home grown food.

During discussion, questions and comments raised by the Committee included:

- The Committee commended the Communities team and partners for their work and highlighted the importance of working collaboratively to support the different levels of need in the community.
- A member was interested in whether there were plans to extend the 'Helping Hand' scheme beyond March 2022. The Committee was advised that there needed to be evidence of the level of demand for the service, including details on numbers of people who were back in work. This data collection would be supported through collaboration with the DWP and LEP.

- Members expressed concern around potential lack of Government funding moving forward. The Committee was advised that this was a risk, although the Government tended to leave announcements on future funding late, often very close to the end of the existing funding stream. A Member asked whether feedback about the scheme was provided to the Government and was advised that figures on how the funds had been distributed were passed back to the Government.
- Members were keen to know whether there was support available for those self-isolating. It was noted that residents had access to the household support fund, which could be accessed through the 'Helping Hand' scheme. Buckinghamshire Business First supported employment aspects and had launched a grant scheme to assist smaller firms in the rollout of work from home infrastructure to assist in keeping people in employment.
- A question was asked about approaching parish councils with a view to asking those with allotment plots, whether they could give excess food to someone who would value it. The Committee was advised that the team worked closely with public health on a 'grow to give' scheme where communities donated produce grown and further opportunities would be explored.
- It was noted that further work was required to ensure foodbanks connected and communicated to each other to ensure that if one food bank had a surplus, it was passed onto another food bank. The Council was working with food banks to see how it could best support residents, for example by providing vouchers instead of food parcels. Food support groups had been formed in some locations including High Wycombe. The scheme also looked at available pieces of land to grow produce, and also to encourage people to build skills necessary to cook meals with own-grown produce.
- Through working with Community Boards a community fridge infrastructure was being developed for people to access and the team was looking at providing a mapping tool to locate these across the county. The Council had encouraged staff to donate to food banks by providing drop-off locations within Council buildings, however, this had been more difficult due to the pandemic.
- A member asked whether elected members could get access to hard copy leaflets to distribute to residents, especially those who had to cancel their broadband connection due to financial constraints. The Committee was advised that the team would look to make these available to members, and that where possible residents should be discouraged from cancelling broadband due to the important connectivity it provided to them.
- The Chairman was interested in how the Council was supporting refugees from Afghanistan. Currently, there were three families in the Council's care, and the voluntary sector had been particularly proactive in offering support. Funding had been received from Heart of Bucks as well as central government. The Council was reliant on both social and private landlords to provide housing and the aim was to settle families and get working age people in to employment as soon as possible. Discussions with other local authorities were ongoing however families and in particular pregnant women were being supported. Schools were supporting and integrating child refugees who second language was English. The Chairman noted that long-term support would be required to support refugee families.

7 DEVOLUTION

The Committee received a presentation on devolution from Councillor S Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities and Katie McDonald, Head of Localities. The presentation covered the importance of devolution to the Council's localism agenda; the objectives of the programme;

legacy arrangements; the effect of covid on delivery; the devolution process, stages and pilot schemes; and future plans.

During the presentation, the following key points were highlighted:

- Devolution entailed shifting power to communities and helped them get involved in local decision making and intended to deliver local services in line with local needs. The devolution programme aimed to
 - Improve outcomes and service quality for residents through enabling opportunities for services to be more tailored to meet the diverse needs of communities
 - Empower Town and Parish Councils through enabling further opportunities for local prioritisation and choice
 - Enable joint working with local communities to improve local services and facilities through increasing local control over services and assets
- The Council wanted to work with partners to develop the right devolution deals for local areas, enabling creative local solutions based on best practice, and providing technical advice and support.
- Examples were shared of legacy devolution arrangements highlighting what had worked well and what the lessons learnt were in areas such as green spaces, highways, youth centres and community libraries.
- It was important to the whole process that there was a cross-council collaborative approach to devolution. A number of things could be devolved, ranging from assets of community value through to local events.
- A Member Devolution Board was in place to help ensure the programme was driven forward and achieved maximum benefits for local communities and value for money. The Board met monthly and considered all expressions of interest received, reviewed implications and agreed recommendations for transfer and/or development of the business plans. The Board was made up of the Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities, the Cabinet Member for Resources, the Cabinet Member for Transport and two relevant Community Board Chairs for single item agendas to help ensure strong communication links on board area developments. Officers in attendance included the Deputy Chief Executive and Service Directors for Legal, Localities and Strategic Partnerships and Property as well as relevant Heads of Finance.
- There was a strict process in place which started at pre-application stage, where officers provided pre-application advice and assessed viability, through to expression of interest, business case, handover and transfer then aftercare and evaluation. The length of time required on any transfer was highlighted, with a number of checks and balances required along with risk assessments, legal issues, and possible break clauses.
- 14 possible pilots, in which 45 projects were in motion, were identified after parishes were invited to submit expressions of interest. The detail needed for each pilot had meant that these could not progress at a particularly rapid pace. An overview of pilots and areas was given to the Committee and would be circulated after the meeting.
- The team regularly liaised with other local unitary authorities who had successful devolution programmes, this included, Durham, Cornwall and Milton Keynes to ensure delivery in Buckinghamshire was of high quality.
- Highways services were a large part of the devolution programme and their expertise was relied upon for a number of asset transfers.
- Resources within the team had been an issue at times, however the Committee was advised that a specialist officer was now in post and significant progress was being made.

During discussion, questions and comments raised by the Committee included:

- The importance of transparency in decision making was highlighted and it was asked how the public could be reassured a robust procedure was being followed. The Committee was advised that a rigorous process was undertaken when assessing expressions of interest including assessing how proposals meet the needs of the local community, ensuring the business plan worked and the overall ethos of the asset was a good fit. It was reiterated the process did not just look at financial benefit but also community benefit. As it was early in the pilot stage, lessons were being learnt as projects were completed.
- Members were advised that the presentation slides from this meeting could be shared with Town and Parish Councils, if any member wished to.
- In relation to how Town and Parish Councils could feed in to the Members' Devolution Board it was explained that they did not have specific representation on the board, however issues could be raised through their relevant Community Board Chair who could take part in decision making on assets within their localities. The Cabinet Member advised he would consider other ways Town and Parish Council input could be captured by the board.
- With Wycombe being unparished a concern was raised that there was not a Town Council to build in to the devolution process, however the High Wycombe Town Committees views were sought on decisions.
- A member queried how Town and Parish Councils would meet maintenance costs should they escalate once an asset had been transferred. It was noted that assets were only passed on in reasonable condition, with any major issues resolved before the asset is devolved. Conditions for maintenance were set out in contracts and members were assured that the Council would not devolve any asset that was in any way defective. Financial planning takes place before the devolution happens to ensure maintenance is secured, and the scoring is based on the community benefit rather than solely on financial resources.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received an up to date version of the work programme to cover the remainder of this municipal year. Members were advised that items had been scheduled for the most appropriate meetings where member input would be most valuable. The Committee was advised that domestic abuse and visitor economy were scheduled for the next meeting and topic suggestions were welcomed for the April meeting. Members suggested that a joint presentation from the devolution team with highway services would be welcome as would details on food security work happening. The Committee were open to food bank representatives attending that session to understand the challenges faced and the current infrastructure around delivering a service to vulnerable residents.

Resolved:

That the work programme be noted.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

22 February 2022 at 10 a.m.

Buckinghamshire Culture Development to Date (2019–2022)

In 2018 Discover Bucks Museum (Bucks' only Arts Council regularly funded National Portfolio Organisation) and Buckinghamshire Council secured a grant from Rothschild Foundation towards implementation of the Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy and development of a cultural partnership. This grant facilitated the emergence of a cultural partnership for Buckinghamshire and delivery of a host of networks, projects and initiatives designed to develop, inspire and connect the Bucks cultural sector. In this period, a member of staff has been recruited, two passionate Co-Chairs have been appointed; an Interim Board set up; charity registration for achieved; and a further 3-years funding secured.

Delivery

A great deal of relationship development, connection and partnership working has taken place since 2019. Several new networks have been developed, creating opportunities for organisations to meet, work together and develop ideas. Despite the impact of Covid-19 on the sector, Buckinghamshire Culture leadership feel a great deal has been achieved over this period, putting in place the foundations for a strong cultural partnership that can develop joint projects and funding applications, develop access and inclusion in creativity and culture across the county and contribute to healthier and happier lives of our residents.

An overview of activity from 2019-2021 is as follows:

- Visible delivery – Summer of Stories, Open Weekend, Bucks Cultural Leaders programme, Creative Arts Training for artists, Thinking Digital, various online sessions with inspirational speakers
- Buckinghamshire Culture development – charity registration, plan for structure/governance, Trustees recruitment beginning, logo/brand development and roll out
- Celebration/promotion of culture – Open Weekend 2021 (now planning for 2022), Storytelling Festival development, Bucks in 100 Objects. Developing project to mark 10 years since the London Paralympics
- Connection – greater connection within and beyond the creative and cultural sector and new projects emerging. Catalysing opportunities/growth through sharing, ideas, inspiration etc.
- Partnerships – strong partnerships developed with major cultural organisations and stakeholders.
- Placemaking – encouraging places and communities to build vibrancy in their locality through considered and relevant arts projects and activities. Working with Community Boards to help shape and develop the local culture offer and encourage participation in schemes such as Open Weekend.
- Fundraising – building relationships with National, regional and local funders, securing additional funds for delivery (c£100k), development of Culture Endowment concept for Buckinghamshire.
- Sector support – advice, meetings, funding surgeries, inspiration and Horizon sessions. Providing strategic insight/overview. Sharing and collaboration to make the most of opportunities. Delivered Bucks Cultural Leaders, Creative Arts Training, Thinking Digital with additional funding.
- Action Groups to develop projects – Culture, Health and Wellbeing / Culture, Access and Inclusion / Culture and Placemaking / Storytelling (meetings began July 21 – put off from April 20)
- Networks – Bucks Cultural Leaders network, artist networking, Learning Managers & broader Buckinghamshire Culture network meeting, talking and connected through Lallie.
- Cultural education – actively supporting development of Bucks Cultural Education Partnership and aim to support Cultural Education Strategy to dovetail Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy
- Health and wellbeing – exploring opportunities for embedding culture into health/social prescribing.
- Advocacy – ongoing active advocacy for culture with wide range of organisations and projects, reaching out to VCSE. Development of evaluation framework for collective evidence/value.

The Co-Chairs would like to thank all of our partners and funders for their continued support and contribution towards delivery of the new partnership. We look forward to continuing to work together as the appropriate structures, policies and mechanisms are put in place for Buckinghamshire Culture to function as an independent charity.



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Domestic Violence and Abuse



Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

Context

- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** – The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent on the 29th April 2021; The new duties came into effect on 1st October 2021. The act provides additional resources to tackle this critical issue. With the new duties we are now publishing our intentions to drive forward a three year strategy for victim support and safe accommodation. The Act and the introduction of a Domestic Abuse Commissioner is important to help raise awareness and ensure the advocacy continues.
- We want Buckinghamshire to be a place where as few people as possible are affected by domestic abuse, but those who are can get help to end the abuse and go on to live the lives they want.
- This strategy is about how we want to develop and improve domestic abuse services over the next 3 years. Underpinned by a SMART action plan, this document sets out our commitments which have been informed by a review of the effectiveness of current practice, the changing national context alongside qualitative and quantitative data from a range of contributors
- **Domestic Abuse Board-** Inaugural meeting 28th September 2021

Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Strategy

- DA Strategy - Approved by Full Cabinet on 7th December & published on 9th December



Four key themes

1. Early intervention and Prevention
2. Effective Services that meet the needs of victims and their families
3. Tackling Perpetrators to reduce reoffending
4. Supporting Professionals to make a difference

The size of the problem in Buckinghamshire

- Estimated 21,000 adults per year, or 57 people everyday.
- Significant under-reporting
- 4,000 victims of abuse recorded by police -71% women (20/21)
- 3,212 perpetrators - 72% men (10 months data)
- 15% of all recorded crime in Buckinghamshire.
- 15 domestic homicides 2011 – 2020.
- Using *estimated* numbers of victims in Buckinghamshire, cost of consequences ~ **£687m**.

Who is at risk of domestic abuse?

- Anyone
- Women 2x as likely to experience domestic abuse as men. 91% of domestic violence crimes causing injuries are against women.
- Increased risk in disabled adults , people with a learning disability , women with mental health problems
- unemployed, single parent households, mixed ethnic group, women from lowest household income bracket, LGBT and transgender people.
- Under-reporting by older people and poor ethnic coding.

Perpetrators

- More likely to be male (72% in Buckinghamshire).
- 64% 40 years and under.
- Often a partner or ex-partner.
- Male perpetrators are more likely to seriously injure or kill their victim.
- Men committed 86% of the 357 domestic homicides in England and Wales 2017 – 2019.

Impact

- poor physical & mental health, chronic pain, memory loss, problems with daily activities, the consequences of sexual violence and “self-medicating” with drugs or alcohol.
- 16% of people experiencing domestic abuse consider or attempt suicide and 13% self harm.
- 1 in 5 high risk victims attended A&E with injuries in the year before getting help offering opportunities to detect and prevent further abuse.
- Increase risk of homelessness, poverty and impact on employment. Domestic abuse is 2nd most common reason for losing a home and it is estimated that 1 in 5 homeless women are homeless due to domestic abuse

Impact on children

- estimated 1 in 5 children are exposed to domestic abuse in UK.
- emotional, psychological, social, educational and developmental problems.
- moving home and school to escape a perpetrator
- a danger that children may in some cases begin to see abuse as normal behaviour.
- In 2020/21 in Buckinghamshire there were 2,400 referrals for social care assessment where domestic abuse was the primary concern (23% all children's social care referrals).
- 700 children were given children in need, child protection plans or became looked after. Accounted for half of all children who became looked after that year.
- **Long term consequences** - alcohol misuse, becoming a victim or perpetrator of domestic abuse, anti-social & risk taking behaviour, early pregnancy, homelessness, increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation & criminal behaviour.

Progress so far

- Smart Action Plan has been developed
- The Domestic Abuse team is in discussion with Service Providers to deliver new Domestic Abuse Services as set out in outline spend plan below.
 - Specialist DVA Worker for male victims
 - 2x Specialist DVA advisors in hospitals
 - Specialist DVA worker – diversity and inclusion
 - 2x Multi Agency Hub triage workers
 - Specialist Housing/Resettlement Advisor
 - Fund for ‘no access to refuge’ support
 - Fund for additional therapeutic services
 - Cross agency scenario-based training and Immersive technology support
 - Multi agency case management system
 - Back office infrastructure including project officers
 - Specialist Domestic Abuse Communications Officer
 - *Perpetrator service

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Communities and Localism Select Committee (Chairman: Mimi Harker, Scrutiny officer: Kelly Sutherland)

Date	Topic	Description and Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
13 April 2022	Food Insecurity	To be confirmed		
	Devolution	To be confirmed		
	Visitor Economy (TBC)	To receive an overview of the plans to promote the visitor economy in Buckinghamshire. Member will have the opportunity to discuss and suggest opportunities and how promotion could be more widespread.	Lisa Michelson	Clive Harriss, Lisa Michelson

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