



## Communities & Localism Select Committee agenda

Date: Tuesday 26 April 2022

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, 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, M Knight and G Hollis

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
<b>1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership</b>		
<b>2 Declarations of Interest</b>		
<b>3 Minutes</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 22 <sup>nd</sup> February 2022 to be confirmed as a correct record.		<b>5 - 10</b>

#### **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 Community Resilience**

**10:10**

**11 - 24**

The Committee will receive a presentation on the importance of Community Resilience and the work that is undertaken by the Council's Emergency Response team to support this. In addition, members will learn about the recent service review and the successful response to Storm Eunice.

##### **Contributors:**

Vince Grey, Head of Resilience Service

#### **7 Community Board Review Report**

**11:20**

**25 - 38**

The Committee will consider the Community Board Review report ahead of it being presented to Cabinet on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022.

#### **8 Work Programme**

An opportunity for members to propose possible work programme items.

#### **9 Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting is provisionally scheduled to take place on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at 2pm. All Council meeting dates will be confirmed at the Annual General Meeting of Council in May.

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

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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 22 FEBRUARY 2022 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.01 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.37 PM**

### MEMBERS PRESENT

M Harker OBE, A Waite, P Drayton, M Hussain JP, G Smith, M Stannard, L Smith BEM, J Baum, P Cooper and F Mahon

### OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Bowles, C Harriss, C Hawkes, G Springer, Mrs R Page, Ms L Davis, Mr J Weinberg and S Ashmead

### Agenda Item

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP**

Apologies were received from Cllr Paul Bass.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

**3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 October 2021 and the informal meeting held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

**4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received for this meeting

**5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman updated Members on the following:

- The Chairman had visited a number of community boards and had found that they varied in how they operated and a number of different issues had been highlighted to her.
- The Committee also held two deep dive sessions, and two further evidence gathering meetings were planned for March. A list of invitees was being prepared and Members were encouraged to make suggestions as to who should be invited.
- Some Community Boards have presented Proud of Bucks awards. The Chairman had

attended an event in Amersham which had been very well-attended and enjoyed by all.

## **6 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE CULTURE**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Clive Harris, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Julius Weinberg, Co-Chair for Buckinghamshire Culture, Lallie Davis, Director for Buckinghamshire Culture and Ruth Page, Culture and Leisure Services Development Manager, to the meeting.

Julius Weinberg and Lallie Davis provided an overview of the work of Buckinghamshire Culture and the following main points were highlighted:

- Buckinghamshire Culture was created to be a co-ordinating body to support the implementation of the Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy and develop a cultural partnership. In 2018, Discover Bucks Museum, the only national Portfolio Organisation in the county and the Council secured a grant from the Rothschilds Foundation to take this work forward.
- Buckinghamshire Culture formally became an independent charity in November 2021 and Rothschilds have also pledged a further three years of funding.
- Offices are being moved into Buckinghamshire New University, providing access to academics.
- A new Board of Trustees has been established which has some younger people on it.
- Key outcomes for creativity and culture are: Thriving economy and transformed places, equality of access to cultural activity and opportunities, improved health and wellbeing of the population and an energized creative and cultural sector. Buckinghamshire Culture aims to support projects that get organisations together to talk about different topics, fundraising and form new connections. For example, an intergenerational storytelling festival 'Summer of Stories' was held in 2021. Storytelling was specifically chosen rather than a more highbrow literary festival as storytelling was all encompassing as it can include films, books and strong verbal storytelling and folk song culture of some of our diverse ethnic minorities too.
- Further plans for similar projects in 2022 are in place including Bucks Open Weekend 28<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> July, Bucks in 100 Objects and a project to celebrate 10 years since the 2021 Paralympics is also in development
- Partnerships across and beyond the cultural sector have been and are continuing to be built. Networks such as Bucks Cultural Leaders are inspiring people to get involved and lots of groups have approached Lallie Davis for advice on projects, collaboration and fundraising opportunities. A speed dating session had been held in November 2021 to encourage ideas and share best practice and two projects had been awarded seed funding as a result.
- Four action groups to support strategy delivery have been set up: Culture, Health and Wellbeing, Culture, Access and Inclusion, Culture and Placemaking and Storytelling. Buckinghamshire Culture are hoping to work more closely with Community Boards to encourage celebration of 'place'.

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

- Members praised the achievements of Buckinghamshire Culture to date and congratulated them on achieving charitable status. It was noted that the Cultural Leaders Programme was helping to promote their work and they had worked with students at Bucks New University to design their logo and branding.
- Buckinghamshire's cultural landscape is challenging as it is fragmented ranging from lots of artists working on their own in a studio in their shed up to the National Film and TV School in Beaconsfield and Pinewood Studios. People are also very focussed on their

immediate locality.

- Culture and impact on mental health is a key priority. There is an aim to have conversations with health about including cultural activities in social prescribing. In addition, Buckinghamshire Culture would like to work more closely with the education sector – Bucks in 100 objects could be a very educational project.
- A member gave an example of Haddenham Feast, which had brought artists and makers together as a way of helping to support and bind communities. Opportunities to pass skills and stories between generations should be encouraged.
- It was noted that Arts Council funding would be beyond the reach of lots of cultural groups in Buckinghamshire and members were pleased to hear of the role that Buckinghamshire Culture was playing in linking, co-ordinating and enabling individuals and groups to achieve and deliver their best. The Council should support this outreach work and encourage culture as an essential in life, not just a ‘nice to have’.
- Lallie Davis was working with Hearts of Bucks to support groups to access Arts Council ‘Let’s create Jubilee’ funding. She had held a day of virtual surgeries to discuss ideas and talk people through the application process.
- £300,000 of funding had been secured as well as support from the Council and support in kind from Buckinghamshire New University for the next three years, which covers running costs, some projects and staff salaries. We then bid for further grant funding for specific projects. In terms of sustainability in the longer term, the aspiration would be to create a county endowment pot which would be able to leverage significant change.
- In response to a question regarding the additional money invested in culture in the Council’s budget in 2021/22, Ruth Page explained that it had been difficult to spend this funding in the way the Council had wanted. The plan had been to use it for match funding for projects in partnership with Buckinghamshire Culture and other organisations, via the four action groups that had been established. However, it had been hard to launch projects due to a lack of capacity, which reflected the history of underfunding of the cultural sector over many years. Match funding has been put forward for the Paralympics Anniversary celebration and also a programme called Volunteering Futures, which aims to get volunteers from sections of our communities are under-represented.
- The Council has also used some of the funding to support cultural outreach via the library service.
- Buckinghamshire Culture work closely with the Cultural Educational Partnership and youth organisations such as Action for Youth to better engage with young people. There are also plans to develop a shadow youth board, with the Chair then attending the main Buckinghamshire Culture board.
- A member asked about how Buckinghamshire Culture could celebrate Buckinghamshire’s diverse culture and break down barriers. In response, Julius Weinberg explained that culture was not simply art and music, but any activity that people do in their free time are important. It has been more of a challenge to fully encompass diversity during the pandemic, but efforts are being made to engage with representative organisations to support diversity of cultural activity, for example through storytelling and dance.
- It was further noted that Buckinghamshire Culture appreciates the support received from elected members of the council, at events, meetings and through involvement in projects, especially during the pandemic. This communicates the importance of culture to the community.

The Chairman thanked all attendees for their contributions.

## **7 DOMESTIC ABUSE**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities, Claire Hawkes,

Service Director for Communities and Strategic Partnerships and Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety, to the meeting.

The following points were highlighted:

- The strategy outlined ways to develop and improve the domestic abuse services over the next three years. It is underpinned by a smart action plan setting out the Council's commitments, which have been informed by review of the effectiveness of current practice, the changing national context and qualitative and quantitative data. Funding had been received for a second year and a strong Domestic Abuse Board has been established with partners to oversee the plans. The Domestic Abuse Strategy had received unanimous support from the Cabinet.
- The strategy has four key themes: early intervention and prevention, effective services to meet the needs of victims and their families, tackling perpetrators to reduce re-offending and supporting professionals to make a difference. Services are also provided for male victims, victims from diverse backgrounds and children of victims.
- In Buckinghamshire it is estimated that around 21,000 adults are victims of domestic abuse, which equates to 57 per day. However, the figure is significantly impacted by underreporting of domestic abuse, with only around 4000 cases per year being reported to the Police. This accounts for 15% of recorded crime in Buckinghamshire. In 2021, 71 % of victims were female. 64 % of perpetrators are under 40 years of age and 72 % of perpetrators are male. Between 2011 and 2020, there were 15 domestic homicides in the county. It is estimated that domestic abuse in Buckinghamshire costs around £687 million per year.
- Anyone could be a victim of domestic abuse but there is an increased risk to disabled adults, those with learning difficulties, mental health conditions and unemployed people. Single-parents, minority ethnic groups, LGBT+ people and low-income groups are particularly at risk.
- Victims are impacted by domestic abuse in terms of both physical and mental health. Conditions include chronic pain, memory loss, alcohol or drug abuse and self-harm. There is also an increased risk of homelessness, poverty and impact of unemployment.
- Children are also considerably impacted by domestic abuse. One in five children in the UK witness domestic abuse. 2,400 referrals for social care assessments where domestic abuse was a primary concern were completed in 2020/2021 in Buckinghamshire, which is 23 % of children referred. Long-term consequences for children include mental and physical health conditions as well as risks of becoming perpetrators and other criminal behaviour.
- The Domestic Abuse Board has developed an evidence-led action plan, focusing on needs assessment and communication with victims.
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During discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- Domestic abuse incorporates all forms of abusive and controlling behaviour - mental abuse, stalking and emotional control are included in the action plan.
- The Council aims to tackle the issue of underreporting of domestic abuse by making experts available to victims. Some programmes have been launched in schools to identify the impact on children. A pilot programme had also been put in place for doctors to identify domestic abuse. Family hubs will also be piloted, which will see domestic abuse staff involved in educating people on domestic abuse and improving communications and outreach. The council is also working closely with the police and consulting other authorities to identify best practice.
- Two years funding had been received from Government as a result of the Domestic

Abuse Act. The Council aims to seek further funding if this investment is not continued centrally. The Council would have to consider how the services could continue to be supported as a priority.

- It was noted that it is important to recognise that domestic abuse is a widespread issue and that everyone has a role to communicate that it is socially unacceptable. The council is taking a joint approach with health and education to address domestic abuse. Whilst there is still a lot that needs to be done, the partnership is hoping to support victims and reduce the levels of abuse experienced.
- Two government consultations are currently being held around housing for domestic abuse victims. The council's strategy already requires housing providers to make victims fleeing domestic abuse a priority.
- The issues domestic abuse victims are facing are complex and the council aims to address these on an individual level as much as possible. For example, some work is carried out with children's services to support referrals for children from abusive backgrounds.
- There are procedures in place for domestic abuse victims that approach the council directly, however, each case is considered individually. It is first investigated whether police are aware of the issue. The victim's permission must be obtained to report the abuse, which victims do not always want. However, support to victims is provided regardless of prosecution. There are also a number of charities, such as Women's Aid, which the Council funds to support individuals.
- To support victims of domestic abuse properly, specialist training is required. However, the Council also aims to train staff in frontline services to recognise signs of domestic abuse and signpost victims accordingly. School Safeguarding leads have also had training to help them support children in school.
- A member noted that the 'Ask for Angela' campaign (which encourages people in vulnerable situations to notify staff of bars, clubs etc. to signal their problems) has not been sufficiently promoted. It was advised that promotion of this and similar safety measures was being considered as part of the Council's comms campaign. However, perpetrators becoming aware of the scheme presents a problem.
- The majority of perpetrators were not convicted. A member argued that more focus needs to be put on perpetrator rehabilitation as well as preventing abuse altogether and providing a support network for perpetrators wishing to get help. Currently are not a lot of services like this, but the Council was looking to spend a proportion of funding to evaluate perpetrator programmes. Several issues, such as timing of intervention have to be considered, making it a complex issue.
- The job posts referred to in the presentations would be funded by the Council but based in third party organisations. For example, Women's Aid provide a lot of services, but other organisations are also funded to provide support.
- Anyone needing help and support can find information on the Council's website or call the national domestic abuse helpline - [0808 2000 247](tel:08082000247).

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

## **8 WORK PROGRAMME**

- A member suggested inviting HS2 and East West Rail to future Communities and Localism Select Committee meetings. The Scrutiny Manager advised that HS2 were attending the next meeting of the Transport, Environment and Climate Change (TECC) Select Committee. It was agreed that a future item on the Communities and Localism agenda would be reviewed following that TECC meeting
- The Chairman noted that today's agenda items would both warrant further consideration by the Select Committee in future, so that members could be reassured

that progress was being made. The Chairman advised that members who wish to suggest agenda items are welcome to email herself or Kelly Sutherland.

- An annual report to full Council will be produced from all Select Committees to highlight the work done throughout the year.

## **9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting of the Select Committee would be Wednesday, 13th April 2022 at 10 am.

**ADDENDUM** – Following the meeting, the date of the next Select Committee was changed to Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 10am.



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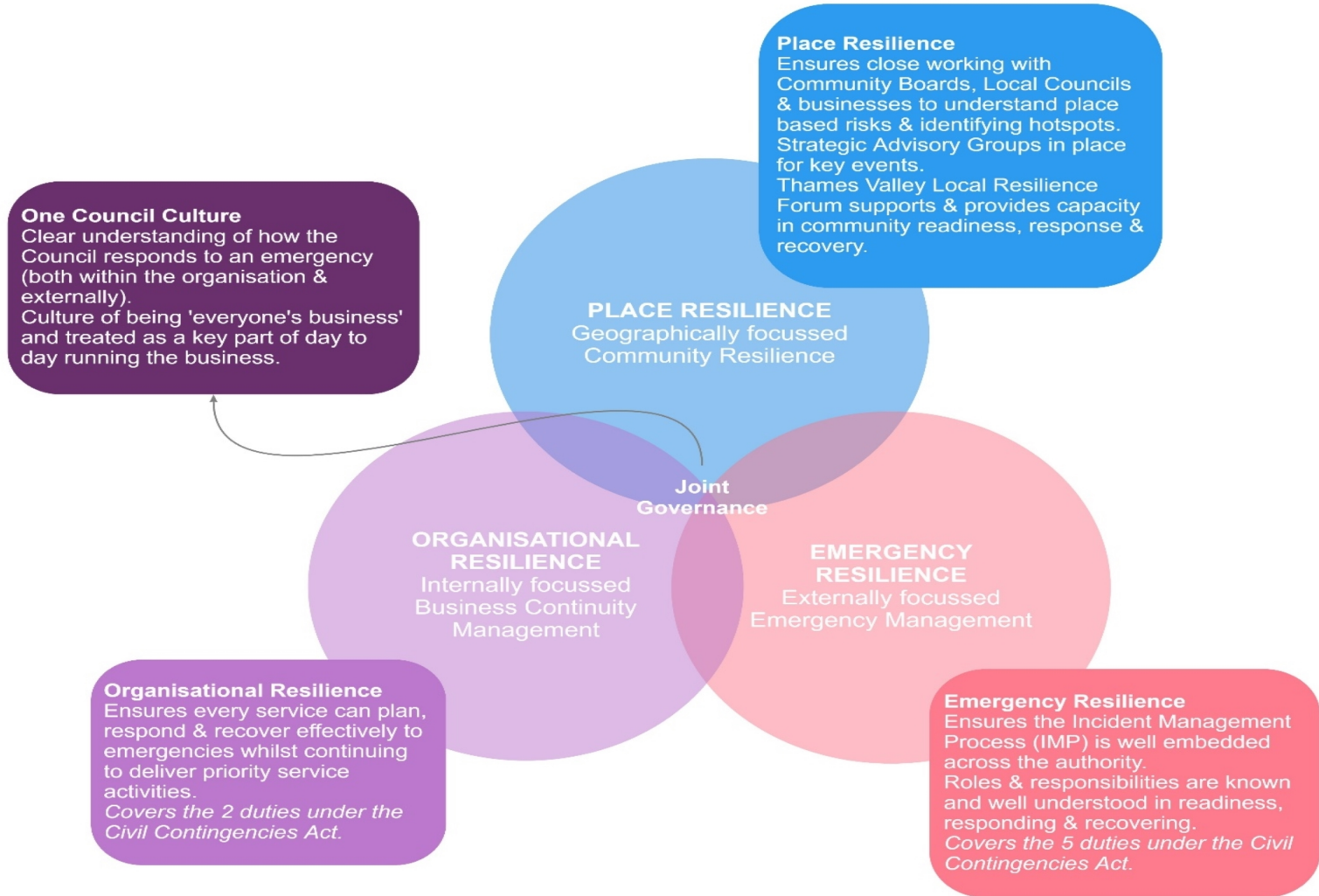
# Council's Resilience Framework and Community Resilience

Vince Grey

Agenda Item 6

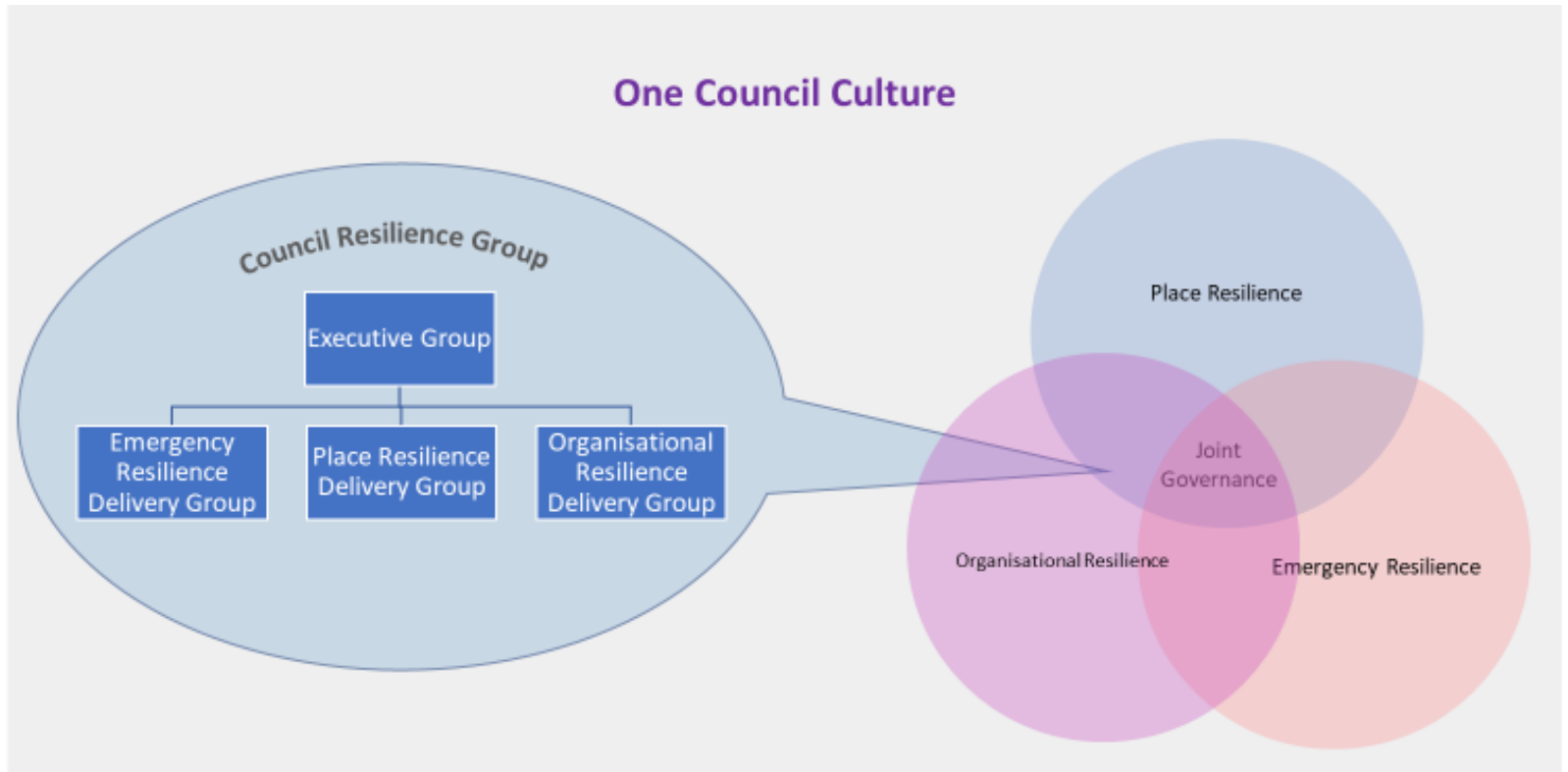


# Council Resilience Framework

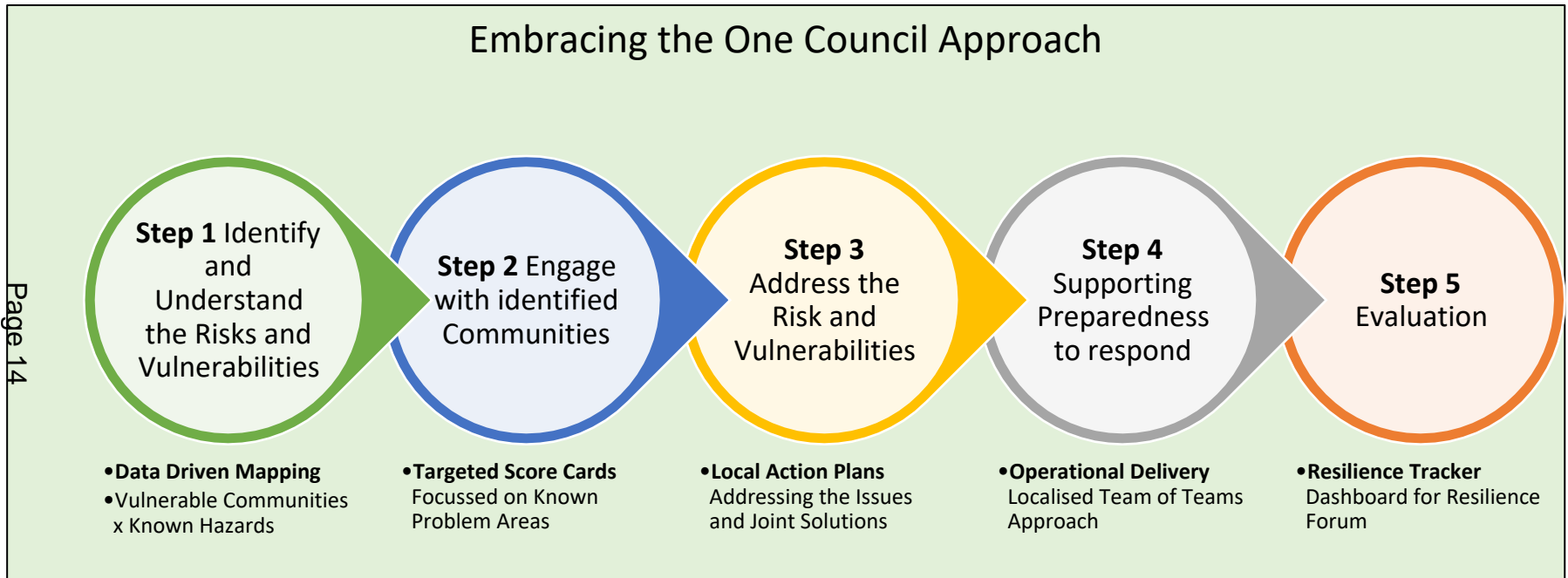




# Governance



# Resilience Delivery Model



# National Resilience Strategy 2022

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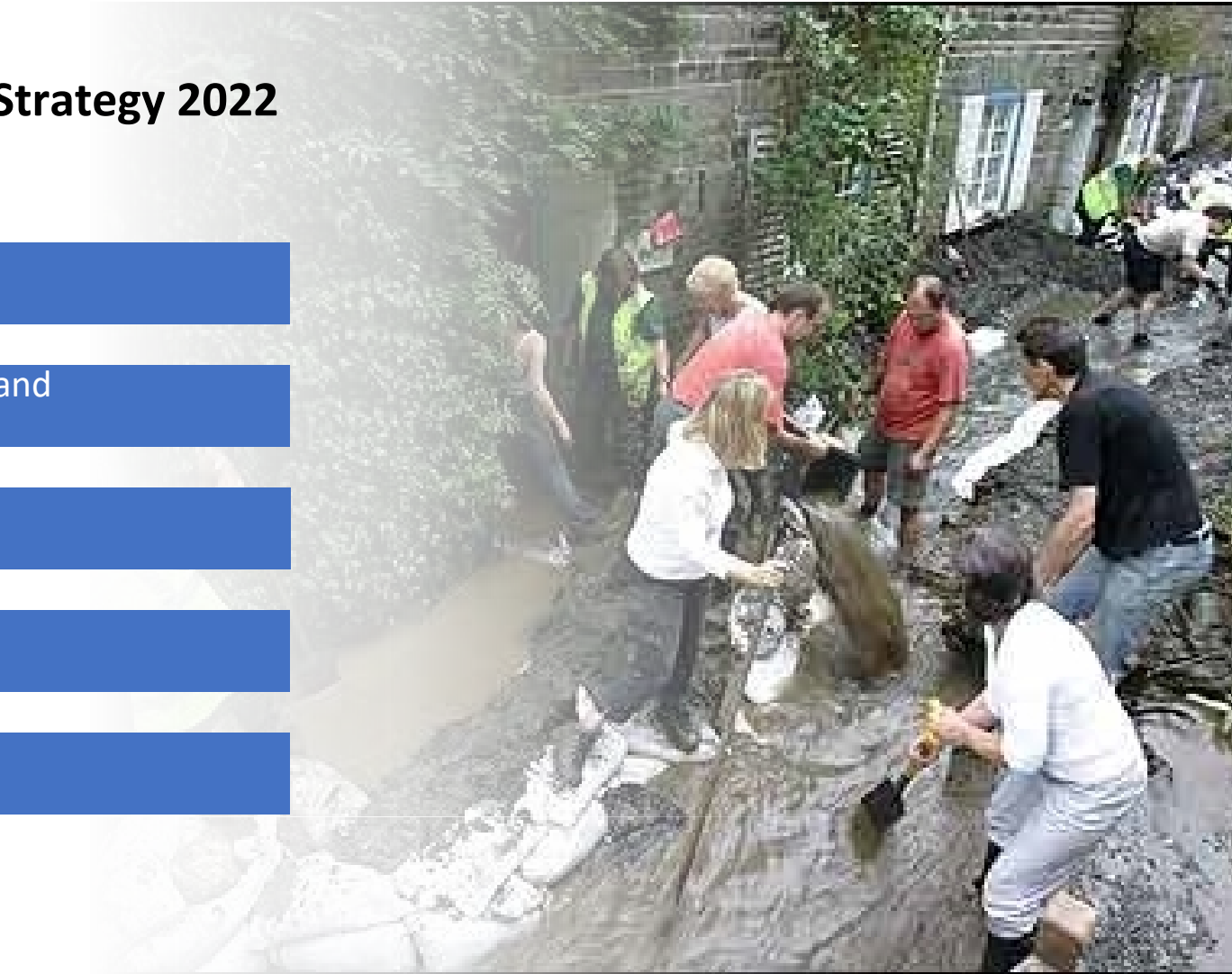
Risk and Resilience

Responsibilities and  
Accountability

Partnerships

Community

Investment





## What is Community Resilience?

Community Resilience is all about working with civil society to create social value and achieve a more resilient UK.

To support community resilience responders partner with the public by sharing knowledge, enabling independent and collective action, and utilising public knowledge and capabilities.



## Aim of Community Resilience

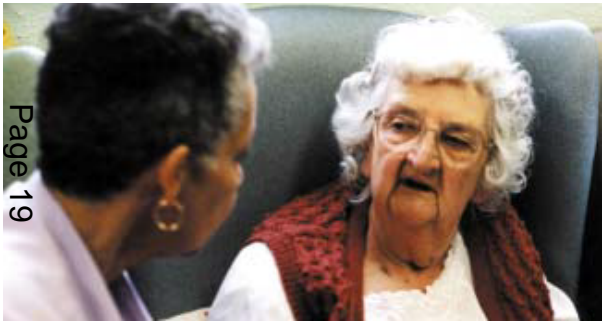
1. Individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations are empowered to prepare, respond and recover from emergencies and disasters.
2. Emergency responders & government understand, enable and integrate the voluntary capabilities of the public into emergency planning, response and recovery activity.





## Community Resilience is not...

- Replacing the emergency services/local authority response;
- Parish and town councils acting alone to respond to emergencies;
- Setting up resources without making other agencies aware;
- Putting yourself or others at any risk.



What the Community can provide...

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# Benefits of Community Resilience (1)

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- Greater capacity, motivation and confidence to take positive collective action to prepare, respond and recover from emergencies.
- Quicker and more efficient response and recovery.
- Reduced exposure to social, financial and health impacts from emergencies.
- Stronger relationships with government and responders resulting in mutual trust and influence.
- Stronger sense of community, with greater inclusivity and cohesion





# Benefits of Community Resilience (2)

Government and emergency responders benefit from:

- Improved understanding of communities, their needs and capacities.
- Quicker and more efficient response and recovery.
- Reduced demand on services to meet social, financial and health impacts from emergencies.
- The ability to prioritise resources to those in greatest need.
- Stronger relationships with communities resulting in mutual trust and influence.
- Better partnering and co-ordination with the full spectrum of volunteers for example from spontaneous volunteers to town and Parish council members.





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# Routes for Engagement





## Steps to developing Community Resilience

1. Identify community networks, characteristics, risks and prioritise support
2. Align responder and community networks' understanding of risk and capabilities
3. Enable resilient behaviours
4. Enable community led social action
5. Partner with voluntary capabilities
6. Review community preparedness and impact of activities



Any  
Questions?





# Communities and Localism Select Committee – Community Boards Rapid Review

## Contents

Introduction .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
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## Introduction

Hello, I am Mimi Harker OBE, Buckinghamshire Councillor for Great Missenden and Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee. In December 2021, the Select Committee decided to undertake a rapid review of Community Boards and after some initial discussions across the wider Select Committee, a smaller group of councillors volunteered to participate in further evidence gathering meetings with a number of stakeholders which took place across two consecutive days in March 2022. I was joined in this endeavour by six colleagues, Cllrs Paul Bass, Peter Cooper, Frank Mahon, Linda Smith, Gregory Smith and Ashley Waite.

I would like to thank my colleagues on the review group for all their hard work, as well as Cllr Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities and Claire Hawkes, Service Director for Localism and Strategic Partnerships and all the staff dedicated to supporting the Community Boards. In addition, I would like to thank the Community Boards who welcomed me to their meetings in Autumn 2021 and all contributors to our meetings in March, when we spoke to Community Board Chairmen and Co-ordinators, Council officers, Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks and Community Groups and Charities who had benefitted from funding from Community Boards. These meetings were incredibly valuable in widening the review group's understanding of the issues faced by different Community Boards, as well as highlighting some of the real successes that the Community Boards have facilitated.

Cllr Mimi Harker OBE, May 2022



Mimi Harker OBE  
Great Missenden



Cllr Paul Bass  
Denham



Cllr Peter Cooper  
Wing



Cllr Frank Mahon  
Grendon Underwood



Cllr Gregory Smith  
Bernwood



Cllr Linda Smith BEM  
Chalfont St Peter



Cllr Ashley Waite, Stone & Waddesdon



## Aim of the Rapid Review

The Communities and Localism Select Committee recognise that the Community Boards play a vital role at the forefront of Buckinghamshire Council's Localism agenda. The Community Boards are the most recognised public interface between the Council, voluntary organisations, Town and Parish Councils and local people.

Buckinghamshire Councillors are all members of Community Boards and as community leaders they regularly interact with other key stakeholders such as Town and Parish Councillors, community groups and residents and had received a lot of varied feedback about the Community Boards.

The Select Committee was therefore very keen to undertake a cross party Rapid Review to gain a better understanding of both the challenges and the successes of the Community Boards during their first two years of operation. In addition, the Rapid Review would identify areas for refocus as the Community Boards emerge from a period of being reactive to the emergency of the Covid-19 pandemic into a time of working more proactively on wider engagement and embedding the Community Boards as a means of inspiring and enriching local communities.

## Methodology

The review group gathered evidence as follows:

October - November 2021 – The Chairman attended a number of Community Board meetings, at their invitation, and had informal discussions with stakeholders after the meeting to understand their experience of the Community Board to date.

Amersham  
Aylesbury  
Wycombe  
Haddenham  
Chiltern Ridges  
Wing & Ivinghoe  
South West Chilterns

December 2021 – Select Committee members discussed experiences with their own Community Boards alongside the feedback the Chairman had gathered at the above Community Board meetings.

January 2022 – Discussion with Cabinet Member and Service Director

14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – Review Group meeting with Stakeholders – Separate sessions with Community Board Chairmen, Co-ordinators and Council Officers.

15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – Review Group meeting with Stakeholders – Separate sessions with Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks and Community Board beneficiaries.

18<sup>th</sup> March 2022 – Review Group meeting to discuss and consider all evidence gathered to date and to identify areas of recommendation



## Context

Buckinghamshire Council launched in April 2020, a new Unitary Council replacing five legacy councils which covered the whole geographical area of Buckinghamshire, excluding Milton Keynes. Whilst the new Unitary Council had been several years in the planning, no one could have predicted that it would launch during a global pandemic which meant that the first elections for the Council had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 lockdown and a large proportion of Council staff had to work from home.

A commitment to establish a network of 16 Community Boards had been an integral part of 'Modernising Local Government in Buckinghamshire', which was the 2016 business case for a Unitary Council. The Community Boards were seen as an important way to ensure that residents, town and parish councils, community groups and other key partners could get involved and influence service delivery of the Unitary Council in their local area. Other large Unitary Councils had used similar mechanisms to enhance community engagement effectively and Councillors and officers from Buckinghamshire who had visited Durham and Wiltshire to see their respective Area Action Partnerships and Area Boards had been impressed with what they had achieved.

Therefore, despite the constraints of Covid-19, the 16 Community Boards were quickly launched and began to hold their first meetings, albeit virtually, in July 2020. The Community Boards played a key role in supporting local community responses to the pandemic and in administering emergency Councillor Covid Support grants, with a streamlined process to enable community groups to access funding quickly. The Community Board Co-ordinator team were immediately heavily involved in supporting grass root community initiatives, but it wasn't the ideal scenario in which to have launched the Community Boards. (The Councillor Covid Support grants were the subject of a Select Committee Inquiry which was presented to Cabinet in March 2021)

In May 2021, the postponed Buckinghamshire Council elections were held. The total number of councillors reduced to 147 and of those 147, 55 brand new councillors were returned. Summer 2021 was then the ideal time to reset the Community Boards, with a view to establishing a bit more of a 'business as usual' footing, but because of the continued Covid-19 restrictions, the year was still very challenging and meetings continued to take place online.

By Autumn 2021, Members felt it would be opportune to review how the Community Boards were operating. It was recognised that each Community Board area was very different and therefore the Boards would all work differently but at the same time it was felt that there should also be some consistency across all 16, particularly in relation to funding processes. As we now approach Spring 2022 and all hope that we are emerging from the worst of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been helpful to reflect on what has been learnt over the first two years of Community Boards and look to make improvements to areas that have caused frustrations, whilst also building on their undoubted successes.

***"It was valuable to hear different views on Community Boards and the Select Committee's questions were very helpful in determining what we should be aiming to achieve in future"***  
***Cllr Howard Mordue, Chairman, Buckingham and Villages Community Board***



**Community  
Boards**



## Summary of Recommendations

The Communities and Localism Select Committee Rapid Review group recommend that:

- 1) A refreshed vision for Community Boards should be agreed and widely promoted to ensure a shared understanding for residents, key partners, elected members and council officers about the role of the Community Boards in enriching local communities.
- 2) The unique skill set required to be an effective Community Board Chairman, as well as the necessary commitment in terms of energy and time, should be given due consideration when appointing Community Board Chairmen.
- 3) Cabinet should ensure that there is sufficient resource and resilience in the Community Board Co-ordinator team due to the pivotal role they play in delivering the Council's localism agenda.
- 4) Community Boards should be allowed full autonomy to identify and agree their own local priorities, in line with Buckinghamshire Council's priorities and to establish relevant sub-groups in order to tackle key issues in their area.
- 5) A proactive communications strategy for Community Boards should be developed as a matter of urgency, to enable a 'step change' in community engagement, the promotion of Community Boards and the positive impacts they have had in their local area.
- 6) There must be greater clarity around the Community Board funding process and improved transparency around decision making. The process should be revised to deliver both the necessary governance and oversight and efficient processing of monies in a realistic and proportionate way.
- 7) Consideration should be given to an alternative mechanism for the delivery of local Highways schemes.
- 8) Community Board Champions should be appointed in each service area of the Council, to demonstrate corporate commitment to the CBs as the local face of the Council and to act as a dedicated contact point for Community Boards Co-ordinators. In addition, guidance should be issued which sets out clear expectations for service officers in supporting Community Boards and manages expectations of the Community Boards, in terms of the resource that might be available, especially in smaller service areas.
- 9) An overarching plan, we suggest a three year road map, for the development of the Community Boards should be drawn up, with clearly defined milestones to enable their progress to be evaluated.
- 10) The success of each Community Board and individual projects that receive funding should be evaluated in a simple and proportionate manner. (This could be as straightforward as each CB reflecting on the priorities they set at the beginning of each year and how well the projects they have supported have delivered on those priorities at year end)
- 11) A mechanism should be established to enable greater sharing of best practice ideas across Community Board areas and to consider opportunities for working in partnership across Community Board boundaries.

Please read on to understand more fully the reasoning and evidence behind the recommendations.

## Key Findings & Recommendations

After carefully considering the evidence we collected across a number of meetings, the review group wish to report on our observations and key findings across a number of important themes, as follows:

### ***A Clear Vision for Community Boards***

- It became clear during our discussions with different stakeholders that Community Boards represent different things to different people and we heard from both Town and Parish Councillors and Council service officers that they were not 100% clear on the role of the Community Boards.
- Cllr Ashley Waite, a member of the review group and also the Chairman of Haddenham and Waddesdon Community Board drew a very effective analogy. He commented that at the beginning 16 Chairmen were given a pot of money and a blank canvas and were told to go away and paint community, which has resulted in 16 very different pictures.
- Whilst it is recognised and accepted that the Community Boards are likely to all be very different due to their geography, demographics and varied local needs, a shared understanding of the role and purpose of the Community Boards is still important. As the Community Boards continue to establish themselves and look to increase public engagement and build improved relationships with key partners, a clear vision of what the Community Boards are about and aspirations for their future growth and development is vital.
- In 2021, when the Community Boards entered their second year the vision and aims were set out as follows:

#### *Our Vision*

- *To proactively support council priorities at a very local level, and in a way which is the best fit for that local community.*
- *To connect the council with community groups, partners and residents to understand what matters to them and work together to problem solve.*

#### *Community Boards aim to:*

- *Represent the voice of local people*
  - *Capture thoughts, ideas and suggestions to address council and local priorities within the community*
  - *Bring together key community partners and residents.*
  - *Identify local needs and work to produce creative solutions*
- Although the review group believe that much of this remains relevant now, they would like to see a more dynamic vision which will appeal to local residents and inspire them to get involved. It should be more ambitious in encouraging 'grass roots' engagement, rather than being focussed on delivering the Council's agenda.
  - The following suggested vision could be a starting point for discussion:

#### *Our Vision*

*Community Boards will be the 'local face' of Buckinghamshire Council and will deliver the council's key priorities in a way that is relevant to each Community Board area.*

*Community Boards will support delivery of the aspirations of Parish and Town councils, their community groups, partners and residents based on the specific local needs of each Community Board area. Their aim will be to work in partnership to identify local needs and deliver imaginative workable solutions to create a new sense of local community.*

- Members are supportive of the vision not explicitly referring to funding, as the underlying purpose of the

Community Boards is more than simply facilitating grants for local projects and there is a sense that some of the networking and community capacity building that Community Boards have done to date has been overshadowed by the funding aspects.

**Recommendation 1 - A refreshed vision for Community Boards should be agreed and widely promoted to ensure a shared understanding for residents, key partners, elected members and council officers about the role of the Community Boards in enriching local communities.**

### ***Leadership***

- Another theme that came through strongly during our discussions with stakeholders was the importance of committed leadership for the Community Boards. The Chairmen we spoke to believed they had a crucial role to play in shaping their Community Board and in driving its success.
- Town and Parish Council representatives also paid tribute to the work of their Chairmen in involving them in discussions and the work of sub-groups. Some Town and Parish Councillors told us that initially they had struggled to feel part of their Community Board but over time they now felt more involved and could see that their views were valued.
- It is important that a Community Board Chairman is proactive and energetic and someone who can inspire the trust and confidence of key partners and local residents. The role of the Chairman is much more than being able to run a meeting efficiently, in accordance with the Council's constitution. They need to be a respected community leader who can bring people together and encourage creative thinking around how to resolve local issues.
- Commitment of time is also a consideration, as a Community Board Chairman will need to be able to devote a lot of time in between Community Board meetings in order to deliver real change in their local area.

**Recommendation 2 – The unique skill set required to be an effective Community Board Chairman, as well as the necessary commitment in terms of energy and time, should be given due consideration when appointing Community Board Chairmen.**

- In addition to the importance of the role of the Chairman, another key player in the success of a Community Board is the Community Board Co-ordinator. Each Community Board has a dedicated Co-ordinator, most of whom work full time. Whilst speaking to stakeholders it was immediately apparent that the Co-ordinators were universally well-respected and there were lots of comments about the sheer volume of work that they have undertaken over the past two years.
- When speaking to Community Board Co-ordinators it was clear that whilst they have worked hard, launching the Community Boards during Covid has been very challenging and a lot of their time – an estimated 80% - had been very focussed on dealing with funding applications, rather than proactive community engagement work.
- We heard from community groups how helpful the Co-ordinators had been in supporting them with preparation of funding applications and in some cases, in proactively connecting them to sources of third-party funding as well.
- It appeared that Town and Parish Councillors saw the Co-ordinator as the 'go to' person for Council related queries and issues and whilst this is testament to the relationship building skills of the co-ordinators, it could also lead to them getting bogged down in dealing with complicated queries.
- In addition, there appeared to be a misconception that the Co-ordinator would be able to 'project manage' different initiatives on behalf of the Community Board. The Co-ordinator is there to support community groups by acting as a link to the Board and facilitating connections between organisations that might have shared goals, but they do not have sufficient resource to proactively manage projects on behalf of the community.
- Where some Co-ordinators had changed due to a member of staff leaving or being redeployed to cover maternity or sick leave, it was clear that stakeholders felt the lack of continuity had undermined the

progress of their Community Board. With a team of 16 Co-ordinators, there will inevitably be changes but the review group can see that consistency of support is important, particularly when the Community Boards are still relatively immature.

**Recommendation 3 - Cabinet should ensure that there is sufficient resource and resilience in the Community Board Co-ordinator team due to the pivotal role they play in delivering the Council's localism agenda.**

- In the first two years of operation, Buckinghamshire Council ringfenced a certain proportion of the Community Board budgets to address particular issues and also proposed that each Community Board should set up three sub-groups on Transport/Highways, Environment and Economic Recovery. The areas were chosen in line with Buckinghamshire Council's corporate priorities but some stakeholders were unhappy that these parameters were set for them by the Council, as not all of them felt relevant to every Community Board.
- If one of the key principles of the Community Boards is that the needs of individual communities should be identified at a very local level, then the Community Board priorities should also be set locally. Much of the feedback received from stakeholders around the setting of priorities and the establishment of sub-groups to address specific issues reflected strong feelings that the Community Boards are best placed to identify these themselves.
- Interestingly some stakeholders felt that the sub-groups were more representative of their local communities than the main Community Board meetings and were often more engaging, so it is important that there is a feeling of ownership with sub-groups, as this is where a lot of work is actually delivered.

**Recommendation 4 - Community Boards should be allowed full autonomy to identify and agree their own local priorities, in line with Buckinghamshire Council's priorities and to establish relevant sub-groups in order to tackle key issues in their area.**

*"We need people to understand that they are the Community Board and we can achieve amazing things if we work together."*

*Elaine Hassall, Community Board Co-ordinator, Haddenham and Waddesdon*

***Importance of Communications and Engagement***

- From the outset, members of the review group shared the view that more could be done to support the Community Boards in terms of proactive communications and other members frequently commented that there was a lack of Community Board branding on projects that had been funded during the past two years.
- Communications was repeatedly raised as a concern with the Chairman during her visits to Community Boards in the Autumn and we heard from other stakeholders who echoed these views during our meetings in March. For example, some representatives from charities commented that they hadn't heard of Community Boards as residents or seen promotional material around their towns and had only become aware of them due to their professional connection and the draw of possible funding opportunities.
- This is perhaps unsurprising as the Community Boards launched during the Covid 19 pandemic and the public and indeed the Council were more focussed on crucial public health messaging. It may also reflect the pressures for the new Unitary Council delivering services in an unprecedented situation, where a lot of staff had to suddenly work remotely.
- The review group is aware of some good supporting comms that were produced including an introductory video for service officers on The Source (Council's internal website) and a Community Board Handbook which was designed for Chairmen/Vice Chairmen and Co-ordinators to use but could have been more widely promoted. This included very useful information and the review group would like to see this refreshed and publicised more widely for use by all Community Board members.



- Social media is another way of promoting Community Boards. We note that some Community Boards have Facebook pages but it is important that they are kept fresh and up to date. A member also commented that an email bulletin developed by Elaine Hassell, Community Board Co-ordinator for Haddenham and Waddeson, had been very informative and well-received.
- Of course, more face to face public engagement is needed and we hope that this will be achieved going forward. This is the best way of reaching local residents who may not have heard about their Community Board. The Chairmen we spoke to were very keen to have Community Board stands at local events/shows. The review group are aware that the Co-ordinator team now have event 'grab bags' and gazebos for this purpose and hope they will identify a programme of events to attend over Spring and Summer 2022 across the County.
- We heard about a community event that had been held recently in Amersham where projects who had received funding from the Community Board and other partners had an opportunity to showcase their work. This had been very well-attended and had a buzzing atmosphere, which can hopefully be replicated in future elsewhere.
- In addition to reaching out to members of the public at events, consideration should also be given to how to make Community Board meetings more inclusive and engaging, in order to encourage more residents to attend and get involved.
- The review group would welcome further engagement with key partners such as Thames Valley Police and the NHS and also voluntary sector organisations at Community Boards. It is noted that in the south of the county the Police have made a commitment for senior officers to attend each Community Board annually and it would be good to see a similar level of commitment elsewhere. It is important that the Council works together with key partners to agree clear expectations and to ensure that engagement can be meaningful for all involved.
- Finally, it is recognised that all Buckinghamshire Councillors have a role to play as advocates for the Community Boards. Training for members around a refreshed vision and other changes that may result from the Select Committee's recommendations would be helpful to ensure a shared understanding and consistent messaging from members.
- The review group acknowledge that as the Community Boards were launched on an emergency footing and have continually evolved over the past two years, there may not have been enough opportunity to reflect and consider how effective communications have been. Now is the ideal time to review what has worked well, what more can be done, especially as there is now more freedom to engage with stakeholders in person and to take on board some of the above suggestions of the review group in developing a proactive communications strategy for the Community Boards.

**Recommendation 5 - A proactive communications strategy for Community Boards should be developed as a matter of urgency, to enable a 'step change' in community engagement, the promotion of Community Boards and the positive impacts they have had in their local area. The Community Board Handbook should be refreshed as part of this and promoted more widely.**

#### ***Clarity regarding the Funding Process***

- The Community Board budgets which enable funding of local projects in support of their priorities are universally welcomed by stakeholders and we heard details of a number of different projects which have supported vulnerable adults, mental health in young people, youth led conservation and recycling and waste reduction. In total, over 350 local projects have been funded over the course of the last two years.
- However, it was noted that there had been some issues with different aspects of the funding application process and there was concern from Community Board Chairmen, Town and Parish Council representatives and other stakeholders that delays and uncertainties related to funding applications could undermine the credibility of the Community Boards.
- The review group appreciate that governance and oversight are necessary when public money is being spent but it is important that the funding process is not so over-engineered that it becomes inefficient. We heard of a number of cases where relatively small sums of money took an unreasonable length of

time to gain approval, with the process described as 'slow and clumsy'. Community Board Co-ordinators also estimated that they were spending 80% of their time on dealing with funding applications, which is not ideal.

- The review group would like to see a more streamlined funding process with a simplified application form. One of the charities we spoke to admitted that their professional fundraisers found the funding application form challenging, as some of the boxes that needed to be completed were very prescriptive.
- In addition, we would like to request more support for very small groups who may have a great idea for a local project but don't have a bank account or are not formally constituted. Several members had examples of local groups who had been put off by the process - the Council should look at creative ways to assist smaller groups.
- It would also be helpful if consideration could be given to how best to administer applications that might cut across Community Board areas. We heard from some community groups that they were unsure if they could submit one funding application form to cover multiple localities and they wouldn't necessarily have the resources to make multiple applications, although we did hear of some projects that had been undertaken by South West Chilterns in partnership with the High Wycombe Community Board.
- Town and Parish Council representatives also requested clear guidance around the requirements for contributory funding. Whilst the reasoning behind contributory funding was accepted there was concern that very small parishes might be disadvantaged in getting local projects off the ground and the review group would like this to be considered and reflected in the guidance.
- The review group heard that different Community Boards handled the decision making around funding applications in different ways, with some approval decisions being taken by funding sub-groups, others at the formal Community Board meetings and sometimes discussions being undertaken via email. Whilst we understand the logic behind the different approaches it is important that members of each Community Board are clear about how and when decisions are taken and there should be a clear line of sight so that everyone is aware of which projects have received funding to increase transparency.
- Consideration should also be given to introducing a scoring matrix to assist members in assessing funding applications consistently.
- The review group also suggests that there could be scope for the Community Boards to each have a 'Small Grants Fund' which may set an upper limit on grants of perhaps £500. The approval process for these smaller sums could be lighter touch to enable rapid delivery of the money, empowering local groups to act quickly and decisively.
- The review group would like all these comments to be taken into account and recommend that the funding process should be revised to improve clarity and transparency around both the funding process and decision making. It was clear from our discussions with stakeholders that improvements to the efficiency of the funding process would improve 'buy-in' to the Community Boards.

**Recommendation 6 - There must be greater clarity around the Community Board funding process and improved transparency around decision making. The process should be revised to deliver both the necessary governance and oversight and efficient processing of monies in a realistic and proportionate way.**

#### ***Alternative mechanism for the delivery of Local Highways Projects***

- Linked to the above general discussions about funding, the review group also sought the views of various stakeholders on the highways spending that falls within the remit of the Community Boards.
- Some Community Board Chairmen felt that discussions about highways schemes could dominate the agenda when they wanted Community Boards to focus more on community issues. It was noted that some issues such as installation of yellow lines could be quite divisive as whilst it helped some residents it simply pushed parking problems along to the next road.
- Community Board Co-ordinators expressed some frustration with the current system as they felt like 'ineffectual middlemen' as they lacked the technical highways knowledge to be able to advise on schemes at an early stage and had to go to and fro between Transport for Bucks and Town or Parish councils, often delivering unwelcome news about what was actually possible or the associated costs.

- Town and Parish representatives recognised that the Community Board Co-ordinators lacked the highways expertise and expressed frustration at the costs associated with highways projects and the length of time they took to be delivered. Many also questioned whether the Community Boards were the right forum for delivering local highways projects.
- The Community Board Co-ordinators reported that they had good working relationships with colleagues in Transport for Bucks who always provided the necessary information, but there were often timing issues because they were under resourced and the Community Boards had generated considerable additional workload. In addition, it was noted that often a costly highways scheme that would only benefit a small group of residents will come forward for consideration at the Community Board only to be inevitably rejected.
- We also spoke to Rosie Tunnard, Highways Community Liaison Manager who explained that Highways wanted to be more focussed in their work with Community Boards going forward. She commented that it was challenging to support 16 Community Boards but several changes that would be coming in following the appointment of a new Highways contractor in April 2023, should help.
- With all this feedback in mind, the review group suggest that this aspect of the Community Board's remit should be revisited. It might be that Community Boards could have a reduced scope, perhaps considering very small-scale projects such as drop kerbs, vehicle activated speeding signs and line painting and the rest of the local highways budget could be administered via a different route.
- As a new Highways contractor will be taking over in April 2023 it would seem an opportune time to explore different options for the delivery of local highways schemes.

**Recommendation 7 - Consideration should be given to an alternative mechanism for the delivery of local Highways schemes.**

***Service Area Champions***

- As part of our evidence gathering, we spoke to some Council Service Officers about their experiences to date in working with the Community Boards. This might have been in connection with attendance at Community Board meetings to deliver presentations linked to their service area or work undertaken in support of specific Community Board funded projects. In addition, some officers had been asked to comment on funding applications which were relevant to their service.
- It was clear from our discussions that service officers were not totally clear about how they should be interacting with Community Boards and what the expectations were. We spoke to very small services who really wanted to engage but due to limited resources this had been quite ad hoc so far, whilst other services had tried to take a more strategic approach but still felt unsure of what was expected and acknowledged that it was challenging to balance Community Board engagement alongside their 'business as usual' activities.
- Community Board Co-ordinators also confirmed that services had responded to requests from Community Boards in varied ways and it was acknowledged that it would be helpful for Co-ordinators to have stronger service links, for example, to know in advance about different service campaigns which could then be promoted at Community Board meetings.
- The review group is aware that each Community Board has a Service Director linked to it, but this will not represent every service area of the Council. Therefore, we recommend that Community Board Champions are appointed in each service area to act as a dedicated contact point for Community Board Co-ordinators. In addition, guidance should be issued to help the Community Board Champions fulfil this role.
- It is important that the whole Council understands the importance of the Community Boards and can work to support the Community Board Co-ordinators in delivering the Council's Localism agenda. In addition, consideration must be given to the resources that are available to ensure that the expectations of Community Boards can be realistically managed.



**Recommendation 8 - Community Board Champions should be appointed in each service area of the Council, to demonstrate corporate commitment to the CBs as the local face of the Council and to act as a dedicated contact point for Community Boards Co-ordinators. In addition, guidance should be issued which sets out clear expectations for service officers in supporting Community Boards and manages expectations of the Community Boards, in terms of the resource that might be available, especially in smaller service areas.**

***Evaluating Success – What does ‘good’ look like?***

- Another strong theme which emerged during the course of our review related to evaluating success. It was recognised that the Community Boards had launched very quickly in difficult circumstances – a brand new service with staff in brand new roles in a brand new Council during the unprecedented situation of a global pandemic. Staff admitted that they had reacted to the emergency situation and systems and processes had been stood up very quickly, which would inevitably lead to issues that then had to be ironed out.
- The review group hope that this review of the Community Boards alongside the internal service review means that now is an appropriate time to refocus on what the Council’s ambitions are for Community Boards, what the Council wants them to achieve in the short and medium term and how they might need to evolve in order to deliver that goal. The learning that has been gained from the past two years will obviously inform this, but we should also look to best practice ideas from elsewhere and revisit our original aspirations.
- A three-year road map for the development of the Community Boards should be drawn up, with clear goals and key milestones to measure their success. It was interesting to observe how Community Boards successes have been ‘measured’ informally to date – some stakeholders held up examples of good community engagement, others cited individual projects that had been funded and others the fact that their Community Board had spent 100% of its budget within the year.

**Recommendation 9 - An overarching plan, we suggest a three year ‘road map’, for the development of the Community Boards should be drawn up, with clearly defined milestones to enable their progress to be evaluated.**

- Alongside this overarching ‘road map’, there needs to be more focus on the success of each individual Community Board and evaluation of the projects that receive funding from them. There is a sense that so much energy has been invested in processing and approval of funding applications to date, that there has not been much scope for routinely following up with beneficiaries in a reliable way. Community Board Chairmen, Co-ordinators and other stakeholders all highlighted this, yet it was agreed that Community Board members would definitely like to hear about the projects that had been supported.
- As we have already mentioned, the promotion of these successful projects will also help to create a brand for the Community Boards, increase engagement and provide further momentum to continue to drive them forward.
- We heard about Local Action Plans from the Service Director for Localism and Strategic Partnerships, which are a mechanism for Community Boards to forward plan and proactively manage the delivery of their agreed priorities over the year. They weren’t mentioned during our discussions with other stakeholders, but the Local Actions Plans could be a vital link between individual Community Boards and the ‘road map’, if they are developed and owned by the Community Boards and not simply used as an oversight/management tool for the Community Board Co-ordinators.
- The review group suggest that whilst evaluation of each Board and individual projects is important it should also be simple and proportionate. Community Boards should be involved in identifying ‘What does Good look like’ for their Board.

**Recommendation 10 - The success of each Community Board and individual projects that receive funding should be evaluated in a simple and proportionate manner. (This could be as straightforward as each CB**

**reflecting on the priorities they set at the beginning of each year and how well the projects they have supported have delivered on those priorities at year end)**

- Across our two days of gathering evidence from different groups of stakeholders, many people commented that it had been interesting to hear about how other Community Boards worked and to share ideas. This seems to the review group to be an opportunity for a quick and easy win and we suggest that a mechanism should be established to enable and encourage greater sharing of best practice ideas across Community Board areas.
- Members are aware that the Community Board Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen have regular meetings and a standing item to share ideas or to ask advice from each other could be valuable. We heard from a number of Community Boards who were keen to engage with young people in their area for example and Aylesbury Community Board had designed a survey in partnership with Aylesbury Youth Action and the Buckinghamshire UTC. This could be useful insight to share with others.
- Likewise, the Community Board Co-ordinators have regular meetings where they could also discuss and share best practice.
- It would also be useful for considering opportunities for cross-boundary working. We heard that in some areas certain communities felt more of an affinity with their neighbouring Community Board and there were also initiatives that whilst based in one Community Board, served residents in other areas. There may also be projects where economies of scale could be achieved by delivering across Community Board areas.

**Recommendation 11 - A mechanism should be established to enable greater sharing of best practice ideas across Community Board areas and to consider opportunities for working in partnership across Community Board boundaries.**



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|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 1.  | Buckingham and Villages              |
| 2.  | Winslow and Villages                 |
| 3.  | Haddenham and Waddesdon              |
| 4.  | Wing and Ivinghoe                    |
| 5.  | Aylesbury                            |
| 6.  | Wendover                             |
| 7.  | North West Chilterns                 |
| 8.  | Chesham and Villages                 |
| 9.  | Missendens                           |
| 10. | Amersham                             |
| 11. | High Wycombe                         |
| 12. | South West Chilterns                 |
| 13. | Beaconsfield and Chepping Wye        |
| 14. | Denham, Gerrards Cross and Chalfonts |
| 15. | Beeches                              |
| 16. | Wexham and The Ivers                 |