



Cabinet agenda

Date: Tuesday 1 March 2022

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

M Tett (Leader), A Macpherson (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing), G Williams (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration), S Bowles (Cabinet Member for Communities), S Broadbent (Cabinet Member for Transport), J Chilver (Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets), A Cranmer (Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services), C Harriss (Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure), N Naylor (Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services) and P Strachan (Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment)

Webcasting notice

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the council's website. At the start of the meeting the chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the council's published policy.

Therefore by entering the meeting room, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should ask the committee clerk, who will advise where to sit.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the monitoring officer at monitoringofficer@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Agenda Item

Page No

1 Apologies

| | | |
|-----------|---|------------------|
| 2 | Minutes To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2022 | 5 - 24 |
| 3 | Declarations of interest | |
| 4 | Hot Topics | |
| 5 | Question Time | |
| 6 | Forward Plan (28 Day Notice) | 25 - 48 |
| 7 | Select Committee Work Programme For Cabinet to note the Select Committee Work Programme. | 49 - 54 |
| 8 | Member engagement in planning - Select Committee report | 55 - 70 |
| 9 | Corporate Plan Refresh 2022 | 71 - 94 |
| 10 | Ofsted Inspection Outcome | 95 - 116 |
| 11 | Affordable Housing Position Statement - Outcomes from the Task and Finish Group | 117 - 146 |
| 12 | Consilio Property Ltd Business Plan 2021-23 | 147 - 152 |
| 13 | Exclusion of the public (if required) To resolve that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act. Paragraph 3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) | |
| 14 | Confidential appendix - Affordable Housing Position Statement | 153 - 154 |
| 15 | Confidential appendix - Consilio Property Ltd Business Plan | 155 - 176 |
| 16 | Confidential minutes | 177 - 178 |
| 17 | Date of next meeting 29 March 2022 at 10am | |

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.

For further information please contact: Craig Saunders -
democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk on 01296 585043, email
democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 15 February 2022 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.05 pm.

Members present

M Tett, A Macpherson, G Williams, S Bowles, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss, N Naylor and P Strachan

Others in attendance

K Bates, P Martin, R Stuchbury, S Wilson and M Winn

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Ralph Bagge regarding the budget scrutiny item as Chairman of Finance and Resources Select Committee.

2 Minutes RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January, 2022, be approved as a correct record.

3 Declarations of interest

John Chilver and Nick Naylor declared a personal interest as Members of the London Housing Consortium (item 12).

4 Hot Topics

The following hot topics were discussed:

Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

The Cabinet Member thanked officers and partners, particularly the NHS for the reopening of Olympic Lodge, Stoke Mandeville which was a step down facility to relieve the pressure on hospitals; this was a 22 bed facility and currently 16 people were using the facility. The facility was up and running within 19 days which was a tremendous effort.

Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Property and Assets

The Cabinet Member reported that there had been a delay in rolling out the County wide IT network due to the worldwide shortage of microchips but having worked closely with BT and Open Reach the necessary microchips had been secured so this programme could be rolled in July which would also include the NHS.

Cabinet Member for Communities

The Cabinet Member reported that funds from the Household Support Grant had been allocated to help provide support for families who were eligible for free school meals during half term. Parents and carers would receive a £30 digital food voucher through their school which they could use at any leading supermarkets.

In reference to the Proud of Bucks awards they had received nearly 500 nominations with 43 winners and 48 highly commended and all but one Community Board would announce their winners next month. Amersham Community Board had already done theirs with a celebration event on 12 February which had been well attended. Residents had been very complimentary about the role Community Boards were playing as a key part of the localism agenda.

Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

The Cabinet Member reported on the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services which was held in December 2021 and the judgement made rating the service as 'Requires improvement to be good'. This was good news as the last two Ofsted inspections had judged the Council as inadequate. The Cabinet Member reported that the service was constantly improving and a report would be submitted to the 1 March Cabinet meeting providing more detail. The Leader congratulated all staff, the Cabinet Member and recent and previous Corporate Directors for the improvements in the service.

5 Question Time

Question from Councillor Stuart Wilson to Councillor Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport

"Excessive Traffic Congestion, Delays and Carbon Emissions for Residents and Businesses: An Overhaul Required for the Buckinghamshire Permit Scheme

In line with the Buckinghamshire Permit Scheme (BuPS) Objective to manage and maintain the local highway network "to maximise the safe and efficient use of road space and provide reliable journey times" and with Paragraph 1.8.2 Improving Performance, what efforts are being made on non-emergency works to **put residents and local businesses first** by:

- Enhancing coordination and cooperation.
- Encourage partnership and collaborative working between all stakeholder groups.
- Provide more timely information including members of the public.
- Improve timing and duration of activities, particularly the busiest streets.
- Promote dialogue on how activities will be carried out.
- Enhance programming of activities and better forward planning by all promoters

and, in line with Paragraph 18.4, which provides for an evaluation of the Permit Scheme following the first, second, and third anniversaries of its inception and every third year thereafter, will the Cabinet Member for Transport commit to a **thorough overhaul of the BuPS to put the interests of residents, local business and the environment first** rather than the current sole focus of Key Performance Indicators on parity for the activity promoters?”

RESPONSE from Councillor Broadbent

“In response to the various elements of the question, please see the following:

Background

Buckinghamshire County Council went live with a Permit scheme on its strategic roads in November 2013. This proved effective in improving the management and coordination of streetworks on those roads. Subsequently, in April 2020, to widen its ability to manage such works, a new, extended scheme, covering all roads was introduced.

Enhancing coordination and cooperation.

Utility companies and others working on the highway have statutory rights and obligations to do so.

National and local targets for housing and development mean there is a much greater need for further infrastructure to provide more housing, schools and commercial areas. Alongside this, there has been a huge increase in telecommunication works to install the superfast broadband network. All of this, together with utility replacement programmes for ageing infrastructure, such as gas and water mains, has led to a massive increase in the number of permits to work that we issue. This was 20000 permits in 2018/19 and is now already over 63000 in the current financial year. Superimposed on this work, are emergency works which we have no control over, and this can sometimes occur close to other works taking place, leading to disruption and congestion that is difficult to manage. In such case, we will always try to ask works promoters to pause and remove traffic management, but this is not always practical depending on the progress of their work. So far this financial year (2021/22) we have issued 1756 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN'S) to Utilities for their breaches of legislation along with 124 occasions of overruns. Furthermore, we have issued a total of 1547 refusals, duration challenges modification requests and revoked Permits to Utility Companies Instructing them to do things on the Network differently. We have also issued 2511 defects against their poor quality of workmanship on the Network which instructs them to carry out the works again in accordance with legislation.

Every Permit to work is coordinated by a team of Permit Coordinators. This team has recently been increased by four to accommodate the increase in Permit numbers over the past two years. We are currently recruiting for these posts.

Encourage partnership and collaborative working between all stakeholder groups

We always encourage collaborative working with works promoters, but we have no

powers to force them to do so. Very often, such coordination is impractical, given competing needs for space within the highway and working practices. For example, works combining water and electricity are usually not possible, neither are electricity and gas. Broadband and telecoms companies are also very reluctant to collaborate as they are all in competition with each other.

Provide more timely information including members of the public

All works that happen on the Network are visible on one.network. Residents and stakeholders can set up alerts so that they are notified of any works on the Network in their area or on routes they use. This is a live system and it also displays congestion levels, and contact details for each item of work. For High Impact works, Advance Warning Signs will be put out advising road users. These can be in the form of Electronic Boards, or VMS as well as traditional A boards. We also encourage letter drops and the use of Social Media to engage with residents and road users. For our own planned works, we will issue notices to residents and send out a weekly Roadworks press release to the media and stakeholders. In addition, we also use social-media channels to alert the public to disruptive works wherever possible.

Improve timing and duration of activities, particularly the busiest streets

We currently attach conditions to Permits which restrict when works can take place and to carry out manual control of temporary traffic lights during peak times. We will encourage working at nights when not in residential areas, though this is dependent on the works and traffic management being able to be taken down during the day. Our Streetworks Technicians have the authority to impose financial penalties to any works promoter in breach of their permit conditions.

Promote dialogue on how activities will be carried out

Utilities have a legal, statutory right to maintain and install their apparatus in the Highway. Where larger works take place site meetings are arranged with them to discuss works and timings, including consideration of working longer hours and in school holidays.

We also regularly challenge works promoters on the appropriate use of traffic management, to try and ensure the least disruptive method is used where appropriate, whether that be using lights instead of a road closure, or working entirely within the verge instead of lights. Ultimately though, the type of traffic management used is a decision for the works promoter based on their own risk assessments, which need to take into account safety of both their workforce and the travelling public.

- Enhance programming of activities and better forward planning by all promoters and, in line with Paragraph 18.4, which provides for an evaluation of the Permit Scheme following the first, second, and third anniversaries of its inception and every third year thereafter, will the Cabinet Member for Transport commit to a thorough overhaul of the BuPS to put the interests of residents, local business and the environment first rather than the current sole focus of Key Performance Indicators on parity for the activity promoters

For larger works, we always encourage works promoters to hold information meetings with local Councillors and stakeholders to explain why the works are taking place and what they will entail. Our street works team will have planning meetings with the works promoters to discuss the potential impact of the works on businesses, residents and the local environment, using their experience and local knowledge.

Overhaul of the Permit Scheme

Our permit scheme is reviewed in line with the DfT requirements to ensure we are compliant with the latest legislation and that we are carrying out our enforcement duties correctly. The first review report for the first year of the current Permit scheme is due in the next few weeks and will be available on the Buckinghamshire Council website.

Alongside the Buckinghamshire Permit scheme we have to work to five other pieces of legislation relating to Streetworks which sets out the powers we have over works promoters, balancing this with their statutory right to work on the Highway.

The performance indicators referred to are specified by the DfT to measure parity of our own works with utility companies to ensure we are treating them fairly. These are not optional. We do, however, have a range of other management and performance indicators to track our own performance in carrying out our Network Management Duty, as well as a system of fines and improvement notices for poor performance by the utility companies. These include the number of works where coordination of different promoters has been achieved, the number of inspections carried out to review safety and congestion during works and the quality of reinstatements at various periods after the work is complete.”

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services

“Social Housing Provision

At the Council meeting on 9 December 2020, a Notice of Motion was considered on ‘Buckinghamshire Council becoming a Social Housing Provider’. It was resolved to call on Cabinet to instruct Officers to commission a report detailing both current and future possible affordable housing delivery models, including local authority owned social housing, which would maximise the provision of the best range of good quality affordable housing appropriate to the needs of residents.

In light of the fact that the Council will be setting a budget next week and that it should reflect previous commitments and agreements, could the Cabinet Member please update me on the progress that has been made with this important issue?”

RESPONSE from Councillor Naylor

“The Housing Service is working with other teams in the authority to prepare an

overarching Housing Strategy in 2022/23.

This overarching strategy will sit above the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which is currently in draft form and being considered by Cabinet, before a public consultation commences. The overarching Housing Strategy will cover targets for the provision of affordable, key worker, socially rented and specialist housing, amongst other issues.

An interim 'position statement' on affordable housing will be reported to Cabinet in March 2022. This position statement has been developed following work done by a member led Task and Finish Group, chaired by myself.

A review of possible schemes for development on Council owned land is also being worked on, currently. This review will highlight the various options that will be open to members when giving consideration to the use of Council owned land.

Uncommitted capital funding of £4.0m is available to support the delivery of affordable housing projects once they are agreed.

I am working with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Planning and Regeneration, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, and Cabinet as a whole, to move this important issue forward."

Question from Councillor Karen Bates to Councillor Martin Tett, Leader of the Council and Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

"Greatmoor Energy from Waste Facility

Buckinghamshire Council has a 30 year contract with FCC for the management of residual waste at the Greatmoor Waste Incinerator near Buckingham. This contract was drawn up between BCC and FCC in 2013.

Yet in 2021 there was a dispute resulting in a High Court case. Buckinghamshire Council won on all counts except one. However, this one dispute resulted in Buckinghamshire Council being ordered to pay FCC £504 000 which including interest came to £812 000.

It is good that there is now legal clarification on all aspects of the income share element but please could Members be informed of

- the full cost including legal fees to BC and residents
- how this will be accounted for in the current financial year, the Budget and the MTFP
- whether this has contributed to the forced cuts elsewhere, such as Community Board funding."

RESPONSE from Councillor Strachan

As noted the Council won all counts with the exception of one issue following the dispute with the current contractor for the Energy for Waste facility. Following this ruling the Council has engaged the contractor to review the detailed financial assumptions in order to determine the payments owed to the Council. These are complex contractual and financial issues and the parties are not yet in a position to agree the payments but it is anticipated that this will result in a net financial payment to the Council which will include the payment made by the Council to the Contractor in respect of the one claim which the court found in the contractor's favour.

The payment made by the Council to the Contractor was made in this financial year (21/22), in accordance with the instruction from the Court and was budgeted from a dedicated financial reserve for the waste service which ensured there was no wider impact on the Council's General Fund. This also ensures that there is no impact on the Council's revenue budget or the future Medium Term Financial plan.

Given that the overall position is anticipated to result in a net income to the Council, this situation has not resulted in any determinantal impact on the Council's revenue position and has certainly not contributed to the need for any reduction in financial expenditure elsewhere for any other Council services.

6 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)

The Leader introduced the Forward Plan and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what Cabinet would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED –

That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

7 Select Committee Work Programme

RESOLVED –

That the Select Committee Work Programme be noted.

8 Budget Scrutiny 2022 report

Councillor R Bagge, Chairman of the Finance and Resources Select Committee (Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group) was unable to attend the meeting. The Leader referred to the recommendations following the intensive budget scrutiny process that had taken place over 3 days in January 2022. The Inquiry had scrutinised the Draft Revenue Budget 2022/23 to 2025/26 and Capital Programme 2022-2026 which had been approved by Cabinet on 6 January 2022.

The Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group had met in public and questioned each Portfolio Holder on their revenue budget and capital programme proposals with a view to making recommendations to Cabinet for consideration prior to submitting the final budget to Full Council for approval on 23 February 2022. The public had been able

to submit questions via email or social media channels.

The Inquiry Group had recognised the hard work of members and officers in preparing a balanced budget in light of a number of ongoing uncertainties. Members were aware that issues outside of the Council's control could change key assumptions significantly, particularly if inflation was higher than 5%, Government funding changes, White Papers came forward significantly changing policy, Covid restrictions were re-introduced at any point, or further lockdowns were enforced. However, having recognised this, the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group acknowledged that the Council must move forward with the 'new normal as business as usual'.

The Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group recommendations had been developed from studying the proposed budget and capital programme, and through questioning of each Portfolio Holder. The report also made a number of observations. The Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group's key findings and recommendations were set out in Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.

The Leader and relevant Cabinet Members summarised their responses to the recommendations. The full detailed responses are available to view on the Council website.

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=337&MId=16785&Ver=4>

1. The **Corporate Plan** was currently under review, and the intention was to take a refresh of the Plan to Council later this Spring.
2. A list of **strategies** were in development and would be shared with Members on a regular basis. This would include key milestones, although recognising these were subject to change. All strategies would also be included on the Forward Plan which set out the anticipated timing for decision making.
3. Beyond the Better Buckinghamshire Programme all services should be reviewed and challenged - Cabinet Members would consider the potential of outsourcing on a case by case basis where this could deliver better value and improved customer service, but this was not necessarily always the most appropriate means to secure best value for the Council. The Leader referred to the Council's waste collection in the North of the County and reported that this was in-house and a very successful service.
4. Greater visibility to Corporate Contingencies - these would be presented to Cabinet in February to ensure visibility. Furthermore, in 2022/23 quarterly budget monitoring reports to Cabinet would include the status of the contingencies, including details of any that have been released to Portfolio areas.
5. Running the Social Worker Academy with a smaller cohort - the ASYE Academy would expand to a cohort of 60 in the financial year 2022/23. The size of the Academy in future years would be determined by need, recruitment strategy and budget priorities. The Cabinet Member reported that the Council still had to employ some agency staff so increasing the intakes to three per year would be extremely helpful including having a retention measure at month 24 after leaving the academy. The Leader

reported the other Service area that might want to look at this recommendation was the Planning Department.

6. The Council's property rationalisation strategy should have a clear vision of future ways of working and be delivered at a greater pace - The Cabinet fully supported the ambition to downsize the Council's estate in order to deliver efficiency savings as early as possible. There were a number of complexities to manage with this, including the uncertainties about future working patterns and space requirements arising from the pandemic, as well as the interdependencies with town centre redevelopment plans. That said, considerable work had already taken place to establish how the revenue saving of £2.4m from accommodation might be achieved in the medium term financial plan period, with the full saving due to be achieved by 2026. The Council has had significant success in letting out surplus operational buildings over the past 18 months and reference was made to the letting out of offices at Amersham to the NHS.
7. Additional funding should be set aside for the development of the Local Plan as £750k p.a. over the next three years was likely to be inadequate, particularly in light of possible changes arising when the Planning White Paper was taken forward – Cabinet were confident that the current budget for preparing the Buckinghamshire Local Plan was adequate to make good progress. However, this would be kept under review, so that the Council could respond to any changes as a result of the Planning White Paper.
8. Cabinet should agree a clear strategy which included a delivery target for affordable homes - The Housing Service was working with other teams in the authority to prepare an Overarching Housing Strategy in 2022/23. This overarching strategy would sit above the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which was currently in draft form and being consulted on. The Overarching Housing Strategy would cover the Council's ambition for the provision of affordable, key worker, socially rented and specialist housing, amongst other issues. The Cabinet Member reported that there was a shortage of land in Buckinghamshire, which was also expensive so it was important to identify any opportunities in the Councils' estate and to convert properties to residential use. They were also working closely with Children's Services with care leavers so they could bid on properties.
9. Cabinet should consider increasing the levels of investment for rights of way repairs to recognise the increased usage and their importance, particularly to rural and semi-rural communities - The revenue and capital budgets that have been proposed were consistent with previous years' allocations with the significant exception that, for 2022/23 the capital budget had been increased by £442k to fund the replacement of Berryhill footbridge and the Denham Bridleway bridge. This extra funding, and these works, enable the Council to fulfil their statutory duty to keep the Rights of Way (RoW) network open.
10. That the Cabinet Member for Transport develop a strategy in 2022 for the £800k (£200k p.a.) investment into EV charging points to assess the current and future need, the number and type of charging points that could be obtained within the budget allocated, the potential income streams and to

ensure there was a consistent approach to deliver these in the most cost effective way - The Transport Strategy team have been undertaking research into the most effective way to support the exponential increase in electric vehicles in Buckinghamshire, focusing on the provision of electric vehicle charging points now and in the future. A draft EV Study and Action Plan have been developed. The Action Plan had gone out to all members for their comments, with a supporting presentation, using the platform YourVoice. A finalised draft would be brought back to Cabinet later in 2022. Suppliers would be able to put forward match funding.

11. That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change should work with officers to develop an offer to improve education for members and residents on climate change and to provide incentives to promote individual action- A package of climate change support for Members would be developed with input from the Member Development Working Group to ensure its suitability. A long term communications campaign had been launched (the Bucks Climate Challenge) and further content to educate and inform residents on how to reduce their impacts on the climate was being drafted. This campaign would also inform residents of the work the Council had undertaken to address climate change.
12. A review of legacy Council special expenses should be undertaken in the coming financial year. Whilst this might be complicated due to varying arrangements with town and parish councils and recognising one of the special expenses was in an unparished area whilst the other was not, the Committee believed that the term 'special expenses' should only be used in the budget to denote a one-off financial commitment - A review of special expenses arrangements in Aylesbury and High Wycombe would be undertaken in 2022/23.

Cabinet thanked Budget Scrutiny Members and the Officer for the work undertaken in putting forward their recommendations.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group, as well as the supporting Officers, be thanked for their work and subsequent recommendations.**
- (2) That Cabinet's responses to the Budget Scrutiny report 2022 and recommendations, as detailed at the meeting, be noted.**

9 Medium Term Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2024/25 and Capital Programme

Cabinet received a report on the 3-year revenue budget for 2022/23 to 2024/25 and 4-year capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council covering the period to 2025/26. These proposals were based on the latest known funding position, service budget pressures and the key financial risks facing the Council both now and in the future. They also took account of the findings from the recent budget scrutiny inquiry.

The Council Tax Resolution report would be presented as a separate report as part

of the budget to Council in February and would contain the final information from the other precepting authorities leading to the total Council Tax for the area, which Full Council would be required to approve.

The report included Special Expenses that were particular costs specific to an area not covered by a local town or parish council (e.g. recreational grounds, allotments, community centres markets etc.) There were three special expense areas within the overall Council area; High Wycombe Town Committee, West Wycombe Church Yard and Aylesbury Town. The proposed budgets and precepts were presented in Appendix 5.

Although the current Government's Spending Review covered a 3-year period, the Local Government Settlement announcements were only from 2022/23. This reflected the significant changes that were planned to Local Government funding from 2023/24. These changes would not impact the quantum of funding available to Local Government, but rather the mechanism (the Fair Funding Review) and policy objectives (Levelling Up) to be funded through the previously announced funding envelope.

Whilst recognising the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on Local Authorities the provisional settlement did not include any specific funding for the ongoing impacts of the pandemic. Given the current Government approach of one-off interventions when circumstances required national policy intervention it was likely that if impacts increased in future years then specific one-off funding would be announced alongside any response measures.

The Leader made the following points in presenting the budget:-

- The Council had been working to provide services whilst dealing with the pandemic for the past two years and this had produced a significant impact on the Council's income e.g. car parking (£1.2 million a month pre-pandemic), leisure centres, commercial and rental investments. It was uncertain whether these levels of income which helped support frontline services, would ever return to historical levels.
- Uncertainty around Government funding which was only for one year although the Council had undertaken a three-year budgeting process for the revenue budget in line with the timeframes of the government's Spending Review announced in October 2021. Reference was made to the Levelling up agenda where priority had been given to the Midlands and the North of England and the Fair Funding Review currently being undertaken.
- Significant upturn in demand for Council Services, particularly increases in social care costs following Covid, significant additional referrals for children and also adults, with increasingly complex cases. Protecting the vulnerable remained a key priority for the Council.
- There was a weakened provider market for those who provided domiciliary services or care homes for short or long term care. This market had been destabilised with the impact of Covid. There was a demand for higher care fees

from providers, some of whom may be economically fragile which would again impact on the Council to ensure that the vulnerable were looked after.

- There were various contingencies and reserves to mitigate all the impacts and risks outlined above.
- The business environment was uncertain and with the funding from business rates the Council were aware of the pressures of the local economy due to the levels of inflation, shortages of staff, uncertainty around the retail industry and the move to online shopping.
- The Government had now commented that the Country needed to live with Covid and that future variants could be possibly more mild but more virulent and transmissible. The Council needed to be cautious about returning to normal when there was uncertainty about future variants.
- Whilst it was important to provide Home to School Transport, particularly for children with Special Educational Needs, it was a substantial cost to the Council and this needed to be kept under review.
- The Council also recognised the pressure on resident's finances with rising petrol and energy prices, cost of living increases with supermarkets and the need to provide value for money for residents.
- The Council would focus on protecting the vulnerable and residents' priorities such as roads and pavements with a £100 million budget over 4 years to improve this network. There was concern that the Government could significantly reduce funding on roads however, the Council was committed to maintaining this level of spending on the road and pavement network. There was also a focus on clearing drain and gullies in the County and an additional £400,000 to clear litter, particularly focusing on the County's major A roads to take place imminently.
- Additional funding had been found to support the warden scheme in High Wycombe to help support community safety.
- The budget had been funded through efficiencies/additional income (£43.7 million) and reluctantly an increase in Council Tax. This had fallen into two parts; the increase for general services as inflation was running at 5% which required an increase in Council tax of 1.99%. Secondly the increase in social care, where the Government was looking to increase National Insurance contributions by 1.25% but in the first three years of this the money would go mainly to the National Health Service to cope with the backlog particularly during Covid (currently £6 million likely to rise to £9 million). Therefore, the Government were expecting the Council to raise an extra precept for social care. This equated to a further 2% so 3.99% in total for the Council, alongside precepts from parishes, the police and fire authorities.
- There was a capital programme of £524 million over 4 years to provide some certainty for projects and to provide infrastructure such as link roads around Aylesbury, infrastructure around Princes Risborough and High Wycombe. The Council continued to lobby the Government to increase funding for road repairs.

During discussion the following points were made:

- A Cabinet Member reported that this was a carefully crafted and prioritised budget prepared in difficult financial times for resident's needs. These were difficult post covid recovery times and many Councils in similar areas had not managed to present a balanced budget. Some other Councils were in debt but this Council continued to be cautious.
- The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing referred to the Adult Social Care budget of £164 million and the importance of levying the 2% increase in Council tax; there was huge uncertainty for adults and children with an increasing elderly population and people with complex needs which impacted on the cost of nursing care. The provider market was not stable currently which was a national issue. Contingencies were required to deal with any unexpected crisis in this area which included the impact of the Government's White Paper Putting People at the Heart of Care and enabling self funders to access council rates of care of which there were over 60% in Buckinghamshire. The potential equalisation of the care market was a big financial risk for Councils. Other areas within the portfolio included adults with learning disabilities of which there were higher than average numbers in Buckinghamshire and people with physical disabilities.
- The Finance and Resources portfolio was committed to delivering an £11million net budget reduction over the next three years which was 20% of their budget. There were challenging targets in income streams and delivering efficiencies in back office services. Income generation would be through the Council's land and property assets and savings through staffing efficiencies, contract harmonisation such as the IT network contract and also the plans for property rationalisation and the downsizing of office space. Reference was made to using general fund reserves (of which the Council had £47 million) to cover a deficit in the second year of £1.4 million. In terms of the capital budget the Cabinet Member welcomed the new Household Waste Recycling Centre in Buckingham as it had been recognised existing facilities were inadequate.
- In terms of transport, a Cabinet Member particularly made reference to funding into Active Travel Schemes over the 4 year period which cost £4.6 million eg Emerald Way connecting to Haydon Hill cycle path, the Green Wheels in Motion COP event to provide a Green Way throughout the County. It was important to also allocate funding to mitigate the impact of HS2 and East/West Rail. The Council was being cautious currently about parking income. The Home to School Transport Team had made £3 million efficiencies through their re-procurement but the Council still had to fulfil their statutory duties.
- The Cabinet Member for Communities reported that they were looking for efficiency savings through undertaking a voluntary grants review through a commissioning approach and reducing the funding to Community Board which should help them to focus funding on projects that added value to the community and produced outcomes. A Task and Finish Group had been set up to reset and streamline the process. The Service were looking at devolving special expenses in Aylesbury by devolving the Community Centres and playing fields. In High Wycombe similar facilities were run by

the Town Committee.

- The Schools budget was large but most of the funding came from DSG (£532 million). The spend for the 100,000 children in Buckinghamshire was £4,265 per child for primary schools and £5,525 per pupil for secondary schools.

The Finance Team were congratulated on their work on the balanced prudent budget.

RESOLVED –

That Council be recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (Appendices 1-3).**
- (2) Approve the ‘Special Expenses’ budgets, precepts and associated services for Aylesbury Town, High Wycombe Town and West Wycombe Church Yard (Appendices 5 & 6).**
- (3) Support the proposal to delegate to Cabinet decisions to add up to £100m to the Capital Programme, to be funded by Prudential Borrowing, subject to a robust business case being approved.**
- (4) Approve the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy (Appendix 7).**
- (5) Delegate authority to the Leader, in consultation with the s.151 Officer, to make any technical changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme as required from legislation concerning the £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme, together with any changes required to implement any new discretionary schemes linked to the discretionary funding allocated.**
- (6) Approve the Schedule of Fees & Charges as set out in Appendix 8.**
- (7) Note that a supplementary report, the formal Council Tax Resolution, will accompany the final budget to full Council.**

10 Capital and Investment Strategy

Cabinet considered a report on the Capital and Investment Strategy that full Council was required to approve on an annual basis. The draft Capital and Investment Strategy (Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report) provided the framework within which the Council would deliver its Corporate Plan objectives through the effective investment of its limited capital resources. As well as the Council’s immediate statutory responsibilities, the strategy also played an important in regeneration and growth, affordable housing and climate change agendas, especially in the context of a post-Covid recovery and the significant housing growth in the area.

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets highlighted the main changes from last year’s Strategy:-

- Section 2.4 provided an update on the impact of Covid and the post Covid landscape.
- Section 1.7 referenced the new CIPFA Code for capital finance including the tightening of criteria for Public Works Loans in that they could no longer be used for property investments solely for income yield.

- Section 2.2 referred to the Housing Infrastructure Fund income for the Aylesbury Garden Town/ Princes Risborough expansion and Abbey Barn Lane Projects which were now reflected in the Capital Programme.
- Section 2.3 showed the creation of an earmarked reserve for a new ERP system which was the Council's main Finance and HR system with the flexibility for it to be used for capital or revenue.
- There was an update on governance arrangements for capital spend and the Appendix set out the various Boards responsible for capital decisions which fed into the overarching corporate Capital Investment Board who recommended capital allocations and monitored progress in capital project delivery.
- The updated Strategy reflected the Council's priorities and processes.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Capital and Investment Strategy (Appendix 1) be agreed.**
- (2) That Council be recommended to APPROVE the Capital and Investment Strategy.**

11 Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy

The Transitional Arrangements No.2 Regulations 2008 required a new Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy in place by 1 April 2022. Following delays arising from the pandemic and service restructure, work had now been undertaken to develop a new draft strategy for consideration and adoption. To ensure that the Council could adopt its new Homelessness Strategy within a reasonable timeframe, Cabinet was asked to consider and comment on the draft strategy ahead of a public consultation process, with a view to the final version of the Strategy being submitted to full Council for consideration and adoption on 27 April 2022. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had been updated and notified of the timetable for adopting the Strategy by the end of April 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services reported that this Strategy would replace the existing legacy Councils Strategies. A series of stakeholder events had been held during November and December. Due to the tight timescales it had not been possible to go through a full public consultation before Cabinet but this was being undertaken alongside Cabinet. The Strategy would be reviewed annually to ensure that it was fit for purpose. It was currently a high level plan which would need to be formulated into a costed action plan. There were some existing capital budgets committed which were earmarked for delivery for the affordable housing and homelessness strategies. There was no growth for additional funding set aside but there was flexibility in the Annual Homelessness Grant of £1.4 million and a further opportunity to bid for the Rough Sleepers Grant. The Service Director for Housing and Regulatory Services reported that the proposed Strategy gave seven key challenges which had led to five priorities for the Council and the Service and under those priorities there were 43 proposed actions which support the service delivery.

Cabinet sought additional information on the Strategy and during the discussion the following points were noted:-

- This was an important piece of work and tribute was paid to the work of moving people into alternative accommodation during the pandemic. The Strategy emphasised the need to work across all portfolios e.g. teenagers who were presenting as homeless which had been raised in the recent Ofsted report, the links to Safeguarding Boards and Community Safety Panel and domestic abuse strategy. The Cabinet Member reassured Members that the service area worked very closely with other portfolio areas and becoming a unitary council had meant even closer liaison.
- Reference was made to the hidden homeless where people were staying temporarily with friends and families or people being evicted by private providers.
- There were 300 people housed during the covid period which was an immense task. Buckinghamshire had been rough sleeping free. It was confirmed that the Voluntary and Community Sector, other partners such as Housing Associations and the Covid Recovery Board had been consulted in putting together the Strategy. The Cabinet Member congratulated officers for their work on the Strategy. The Deputy Cabinet Member referred to the work during the pandemic; pre pandemic there were 34 rough sleepers and there were now 7 rough sleepers and 4 of those had been offered accommodation. There had been 200 rough sleepers during the pandemic. With reference to the VCS there was the Outreach Programme where they go out to speak to the homeless and help deal with their issues to refer them to Oasis (Addiction Service) or Probation, where people have been released from prison with no accommodation. There was some homeless accommodation coming on line for 34 people which included Hightown Housing and Wycombe had 11 units coming on board and the Council were working with the YMCA. The key factor was to address the issues that had caused homelessness in the first place e.g. employment agencies that help people who had left prison find work.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the draft Buckinghamshire Council Homelessness Strategy be noted.**
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Leader of the Council to make any final amendments to the draft Strategy (following feedback from Members and the completion of the public consultation exercise), and to agree the final version of the Strategy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services.**
- (3) That the final version of the Homelessness Strategy, as agreed by the Leader of the Council, be submitted to full Council for consideration and adoption.**

12 Withdrawal from the London Housing Consortium Joint Committee

The Council had been a Constituent Authority of the London Housing Consortium

(LHC) since May 2006 and had nominated Elected Members to serve on the LHC Joint Committee. The rationale for joining the LHC Joint Committee had been to work collaboratively with other London Councils to improve the procurement of housing and construction products and services. The London Housing Consortium had been set up for that purpose in 1966.

The Council no longer relied on LHC for procurement solutions, preferring instead to use a mixture of its own procurement capability, main contractor services, alternative procurement consortia and sometimes including LHC. LHC surpluses were now shared widely across the country resulting in a reduced annual return for the Council. As a Constituent Member of LHC the council received an annual community benefit fund from LHC surpluses (conditional on attendances by Elected Members at LHC meetings) of £10,000. It was envisaged that in a new LHC corporate entity such funds would continue to be available for former LHC Constituent Authorities.

Much had changed in the operations of the LHC in recent years and Members of the LHC Joint Committee recognised that the dynamic nature of LHC as a commercial enterprise was at odds with the democratic and regulatory processes that were required by local authorities. It was felt that LHC would benefit from having more autonomy around its governance and organisational design, Job design and reward, Future provision of pension and financial modelling and risk management.

Consequently, the members of the LHC Joint Committee had asked for a review of LHC governance arrangements which concluded that the LHC Joint Committee be disbanded, and a new corporate entity established by LHC. If the current lead authority, LB Hillingdon, withdrew from the Joint Committee and two or more Constituent Authorities wished the Joint Committee to continue, then one of them would have to act as lead authority. The requirements for the lead authority were set out in the LHC Constitution.

The governance review leading to the proposal to withdraw from the LHC Joint Committee had identified new governance arrangements that were more appropriate to the current and future operations of LHC. In establishing a new corporate entity LHC would be seeking participation from client organisations and other interested parties from across Great Britain, from local authorities, housing associations and other relevant sectors. The design of the new LHC corporate entity would look to continue to offer grant funding to those Authorities continuing to participate in LHC and would encourage current Constituent Authorities to consider participation in the new corporate entity.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That Buckinghamshire Council withdraws as one of the ten Constituent Authorities of the LHC Joint Committee, as well as from the LHC Joint Committee, resulting in its potential disbandment in December 2022 at the earliest, thereby foregoing the £10,000 p.a. income from the LHC Joint**

Committee.

- (2) That Buckinghamshire Council would consider at a future meeting, the options for continued participation in the new LHC corporate entity when it is known in March 2022.**

13 Future High Streets

In June 2021, the Council had received from MHCLG the first tranche of Wycombe's Future High Streets grant ('FHS'). This had been reported to Cabinet in July 2021, and progress had been made on part of the approved 3-year FHS development programme (two vacant shop acquisitions had been acquired and were undergoing re-purposing). It had not been possible to secure another targeted Year 1 project, although this might emerge again as a project in 2022/23.

Meanwhile, it was proposed that an alternative project be substituted (subject to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities approval), to achieve Year 1 spend profile and thereby secure Year 2 grant. The proposed substitute project comprised the Council co-investing (alongside Eden's owners the long leasehold owners of the centre, the freeholders being the Council), in the proposed re-purposing of Eden's 13,000sm (140,000sqft) House of Fraser building to further economic activity and vitality in the town centre, as well as bringing forward much needed housing and associated benefits with re purposing underutilised space in the town centre.

House of Fraser occupied the building on a temporary short-term arrangement and there was no certainty that they would remain as tenant. Eden were in on-going discussions with them but regarded it as prudent to look at alternative options.

The disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor would facilitate the redevelopment of Chiltern Shopping Centre for predominantly residential development, that would increase economic activity in the town centre and reduce pressures on housing need elsewhere. Work was ongoing with the other tenants and operators that might be affected by the proposed redevelopment of the Chiltern Centre. The terms of the proposed Eden co-investment, along with the terms of the proposed disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor to Dandara, which formed part of their redevelopment proposals, were set out in detail in the Confidential Appendix.

The proposed investment and disposal would have a twofold regeneration benefit to the Council and the town centre. The redevelopment would also generate a capital receipt (from the disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor) and CIL/Section 106 monies for the Council. Cabinet asked the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets to look at the potential for reinvesting some of these monies in the regeneration of Frogmoor.

The Leader referred to the area of Frogmoor which had some historic buildings and the need to protect and help revitalise the area and to leverage any opportunities as part of this project.

RESOLVED –

That the Director of Property and Assets, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, and the Section 151 Officer, be authorised to:

- (1) Agree Heads of Terms, authorise and undertake necessary due diligence, agree contracts and exchange and complete contracts for the investment of Wycombe’s Future High Street monies into the Eden Centre for the reasons set out in the public report and confidential appendix.**
- (2) Agree the Heads of Terms, agree contracts, exchange, and complete the disposal of 6-8 Frogmoor, High Wycombe, for the reasons set out in the public report and confidential appendix.**

14 Exclusion of the public (if required)

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Item 15 – Future High Streets (Paragraph 3)

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). The confidential appendices provide financial information about contracts for the provision of services.

15 Confidential appendices to Future High Streets

The confidential appendix was discussed in exempt session.

16 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED –

That the confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2022 be approved as a correct record.

17 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 1 March 2022 at 10.00am

This page is intentionally left blank



Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet/Leader forward plan

The local authorities (executive arrangements) (meetings and access to information) (England) regulations 2012

This is a notice of an intention to make a key decision on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council (regulation 9) and an intention to meet in private to consider those items marked as 'private reports' (regulation 5).

A further notice (the 'agenda') will be published no less than five working days before the date of the decision meeting and will be available via the Buckinghamshire Council website ([Cabinet agendas](#) / [Leader decisions](#)).

All reports will be open unless specified otherwise.

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|----------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Cabinet 1 March 2022 | | | | |
| Affordable Housing Position Statement To consider the interim position statement on affordable housing prepared by a member led task and finish group. | | Councillor Nick Naylor Nigel Dicker | Part exempt <i>(para 3)</i> | 7/12/21 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|----------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Consilio Business Plan Update on Consilio, an external property company. To receive an update on performance of the Council owned external property company and future plans. | | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 7/12/21 |
| Corporate Plan Refresh 2022 The current Corporate Plan has been in place since April 2020 initially to cover a 3-year period (2020-2023). A light-touch review of the Corporate Plan has been undertaken to reflect key events and changes in priorities since the drafting of the plan in 2019/20. | | Councillor Martin Tett Roger Goodes | | 31/1/22 |
| Member engagement in planning - scrutiny review Select Committee review | | Councillor David Carroll Kelly Sutherland | | 31/1/22 |
| Ofsted Inspection Outcome Outcome of Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services | | Councillor Anita Cranmer Richard Nash | | 17/1/22 |
| Cabinet 29 March 2022 | | | | |
| Aligning Charges for Garden Waste Collections To review and harmonise garden waste charging across the county | | Councillor Peter Strachan Martin Dickman | | 31/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|----------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Buckinghamshire Council Companies Governance Authorisation to form a Cabinet Sub-Committee to act as Shareholder / Member representative to ensure proper Governance for companies owned or part owned by Buckinghamshire Council.</p> | | <p>Councillor John Chilver John Reed</p> | | 7/12/21 |
| <p>Buckinghamshire Littering Enforcement Policy To agree the draft Littering Enforcement Policy for Buckinghamshire Council.</p> | | <p>Councillor Peter Strachan Martin Dickman</p> | | 15/2/22 |
| <p>Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision to 2050 The Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision has been produced by Buckinghamshire Growth Board member. The Growth Board has approved the Vision and it is now seeking partnership organisation endorsement. The Strategic Vision can help to achieve a truly integrated and co-ordinated programme of investment in infrastructure, skills, services, and the environment and assist in creating the conditions for people to flourish and achieve their potential. This sits alongside helping to facilitate Buckinghamshire's communities to reflect the wider determinants of health and promote wellbeing for all.</p> | | <p>Councillor Martin Tett Lisa Michelson</p> | | 15/2/22 |
| <p>Moving Traffic Offences To seek approval to proceed with an application to Dft for powers to enforce moving traffic offences.</p> | | <p>Councillor Steve Broadbent Rob Smith</p> | | 17/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Q3 Budget Monitoring Report 2021-22 Quarterly report | | Councillor John Chilver Richard Ambrose | | 12/11/21 |
| Q3 Performance Report 2021-22 Quarterly report | | Councillor John Chilver Matthew Everitt | | 12/11/21 |
| Woodlands potential acquisition strategy Exploring options for bringing forward the woodlands development. | Aston Clinton & Bierton | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 17/1/22 |
| Wycombe Air Park (Aerodrome) Commercial transaction with leaseholder. | Marlow | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 6/1/22 |
| Cabinet 12 April 2022 | | | | |
| Aylesbury Garden Town HIF Annual Report The £170m contract for the housing infrastructure fund in Aylesbury was signed in November 2020. This is the first annual update requested by Cabinet. | | Councillor Martin Tett Robin Smith | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 12/11/21 |
| OCO budget release and future management arrangements To release capital already set aside to complete the project. | Aylesbury South East | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 17/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Cabinet 10 May 2022 | | | | |
| Biodiversity Net Gain The report provides an overview of the new requirement to provide biodiversity net gain as part of the planning system, introduces the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document for adoption, and sets out a proposal for Buckinghamshire Council to run a Biodiversity Net Gain scheme. | | Councillor Peter Strachan Simon Meecham, Edward Barlow | | 15/2/22 |
| Winslow Regeneration Business Case The plans and proposals for the development of the Winslow centre site. | Winslow | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 17/1/22 |
| Woodlands strategy for negotiated acquisition Recommendations to Cabinet regarding the freehold interest in the Woodlands development site. | Aston Clinton & Bierton | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 17/1/22 |
| February 2022 Leader Decisions | | | | |
| A355 Amersham Road – Proposed 50mph Speed Limit Proposal to lower speed limit from junction with Tower Road to Beaconsfield | Beaconsfield; Chalfont St Giles | Councillor Steve Broadbent Bestman Agu | | 17/1/22 |
| A41 PPTC Bus Lane Relocation Statutory Consultation Bus Lane relocation on the A41 Bicester Road as part of the A41 PPTC scheme. | Aylesbury North West; Stone & Waddesdon | Councillor Steve Broadbent Vanessa Silva | | 14/5/21 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>A413 Amersham Road Gap Closure Closure of central reserve gap on the A413 Amersham Road, Gerrards Cross.</p> | Chalfont St Peter; Gerrards Cross | Councillor Steve Broadbent Bestman Agu | | 17/1/22 |
| <p>Active Travel Statutory Consultations Marlow and Southcourt Decision report on the Statutory Consultations held regarding Active Travel proposals in Trinity Road, Marlow and Southcourt, Aylesbury. Proposals include a restriction of motor vehicles (in both areas), the implementation of a mandatory cycle lane and a shared use lane (in Southcourt, Aylesbury).</p> <p>These proposals hope to create a quieter area for everyone, encouraging cycling and walking whilst still maintaining vehicular access for local residents and businesses.</p> | Aylesbury South West; Marlow | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ricky Collymore | | 23/12/21 |
| <p>Assets of Community Value Policy To agree the Assets of Community Value Policy</p> | | Councillor Steve Bowles Katie McDonald | | 30/7/21 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Aylesbury Garden Town Framework and Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document – Draft for Consultation The Aylesbury Garden Town Framework and Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document is a requirement of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan to support the delivery of the Aylesbury Garden Town. The Supplementary Planning Document sets out the strategic infrastructure delivery schedules for the physical, green and social infrastructure required for the Garden Town. It also outlines the funding and delivery programme.</p> | Aylesbury East; Aylesbury North; Aylesbury North West; Aylesbury South East; Aylesbury South West; Aylesbury West | Councillor Gareth Williams Simon Meecham | | 25/11/21 |
| <p>Aylesbury Vale Area Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document - For Consultation Decision to approve the Draft SPD and for it to go to a public consultation for Six Weeks</p> | | Councillor Gareth Williams David Broadley | | 7/12/21 |
| <p>Buckinghamshire Council Coat of Arms Design and registration of a new coat of arms for Buckinghamshire Council</p> | | Councillor Martin Tett Roger Goodes | | 20/7/21 |
| <p>Budget Adjustments to the Approved Capital Programme To approve changes to the Approved Capital Programme</p> | | Councillor John Chilver Sue Palmer | | 14/9/20 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Business Case for the recommissioning of The Vines (respite service for Children and Young People) To agree the Business Case for the recommissioning of The Vines - a six bedded unit providing residential short breaks to disabled young people aged 11 – 19 years old with behaviours that challenge which is due for renewal on 1st April 2022. This is for a 2 year contract with one year extension.</p> | | Councillor Anita Cranmer Tracey Ironmonger | Part exempt (para 3) | 18/8/21 |
| <p>Choice and Charging Policies Adult Social Care policies</p> | | Councillor Angela Macpherson Tracey Ironmonger | | 17/9/20 |
| <p>D-AGT1 Aylesbury Garden Town - South Aylesbury - Supplementary Planning Document D-AGT1 South Aylesbury is an adopted mixed use allocation in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. The Local Plan requires a site-specific Supplementary Plan Document for this allocation; in the form of masterplan to set out clear and detailed advice for place-making. This key decision is to seek the Leaders approval to consult the public on the draft masterplan.</p> | Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville | Councillor Gareth Williams Simon Meecham | | 1/11/21 |
| <p>Devolution Pilot 2 To agree the devolution pilot scheme</p> | | Councillor Steve Bowles Claire Hawkes | | 8/10/21 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Disabled Parking Bays in Residential Areas (from November 2021 consultation) Disabled parking bays placed near residential properties to assist residents with blue badges and physical mobility issues.</p> | Aylesbury North; Aylesbury North West; Booker, Cressex & Castlefield; Chalfont St Peter; Chesham; Chess Valley; Great Brickhill; Iver; Ivinghoe; Little Chalfont & Amersham Common; Marlow; Penn Wood & Old Amersham; Stoke Poges & Wexham; West Wycombe | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ian Thomas | | 6/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Extension of the e-scooter trials until November 2022 The Department for Transport have agreed that the end date for current e-scooter trials can be extended further until November 2022. This paper requests agreement to extend the end date for the e-scooter trials in Buckinghamshire taking place in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough until November 2022 and the confirmation of a traffic order to allow it to continue until the trial is finished.</p> | Abbey; Aston Clinton & Bierton; Aylesbury East; Aylesbury North; Aylesbury North West; Aylesbury South East; Aylesbury South West; Aylesbury West; Booker, Cressex & Castlefield; Downley; Hazlemere; Ryemead & Micklefield; Stone & Waddesdon; Terriers & Amersham Hill; The Risboroughs; Totteridge & Bowerdean; Tylers Green & Loudwater; West Wycombe; Wing | Councillor Steve Broadbent Richard Lumley | | 23/12/21 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Gerrards Cross Waiting Restrictions Report to be written with recommendations upon the conclusion of a statutory consultation on waiting restrictions proposed in Gerrards Cross.</p> | Gerrards Cross | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ricky Collymore | | 12/7/21 |
| <p>Hatters Lane Signalised Pedestrian Crossing New signalised crossing outside Highcrest Academy on Hatters Lane, High Wycombe</p> | Totteridge & Bowerdean | Councillor Steve Broadbent Bestman Agu | | 17/1/22 |
| <p>Highway Safety Inspection Policy Update to the existing Highway Safety Inspection Policy</p> | | Councillor Steve Broadbent Keith Carpenter | | 30/6/21 |
| <p>Highways Development Management commuted sums Highways Development Management last updated our commuted sums in 2006, this is a proposal to update these not only in line with inflation but to use a slightly different format.</p> | | Councillor Steve Broadbent Lee Steadman | | 15/10/20 |
| <p>High Wycombe Junction Protection Restrictions Report on a Statutory Consultation proposing waiting restrictions in the High Wycombe area. A recommendation will be made in the report after taking the responses received into account</p> | Abbey; Booker, Cressex & Castlefield | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ricky Collymore | | 26/8/21 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|----------------|
| <p>High Wycombe Transport Strategy and High Wycombe Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Consultation Request for agreement to conduct public consultation on the draft High Wycombe Transport Strategy and High Wycombe Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) once engagement has been undertaken with local members.</p> | <p>Abbey; Booker, Cressex & Castlefield; Chiltern Villages; Downley; Hazlemere; Penn Wood & Old Amersham; Ridgeway East; Ridgeway West; Ryemead & Micklefield; Terriers & Amersham Hill; The Wooburns, Bourne End & Hedsor; Totteridge & Bowerdean; Tylers Green & Loudwater; West Wycombe</p> | <p>Councillor Steve Broadbent Suzanne Winkels</p> | | <p>14/5/21</p> |
| <p>Household Waste Collection Policy Document South Bucks Area To make minor changes to waste collection policies in the south of Buckinghamshire to harmonise the service delivered.</p> | | <p>Councillor Peter Strachan Martin Dickman</p> | | <p>20/7/21</p> |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|----------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Land off Amersham Road Development Brief - Consultation Consultation on the draft development brief for the allocated housing site identified as HW8, Land off Amersham Road, in the adopted Wycombe District Local Plan</p> | Hazlemere | Councillor Gareth Williams Chris Schmidt-Reid | | 1/10/21 |
| <p>Network Hierarchy Review Our Network Hierarchy drives our maintenance operations. It is important that the hierarchy reflects the needs, priorities and actual use of the network and that this is kept up to date. This review will update the hierarchy and suggest amendments to reflect changes to the use of the network since it was adopted and last updated.</p> | | Councillor Steve Broadbent Keith Carpenter | | 25/11/21 |
| <p>Oxford Street, High Wycombe Surrender and disposal.</p> | Abbey | Councillor John Chilver John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 17/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| <p>Places of Natural Beauty Parking (from November 2021 consultation) Parking restrictions around areas of natural beauty</p> | <p>Aston Clinton & Bierton; Chiltern Villages; Denham; Farnham Common & Burnham Beeches; Great Brickhill; Iver; Ivinghoe; Ridgeway East; Stoke Poges & Wexham; Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville</p> | <p>Councillor Steve Broadbent Ian Thomas</p> | | <p>6/1/22</p> |
| <p>Registration Service fees 2023-2025 Ceremony fees payable ceremonies booked in the financial year 2023/25</p> | | <p>Councillor Nick Naylor Wendy Morgan-Brown</p> | | <p>31/1/22</p> |
| <p>Station Road, Quainton - Proposed Traffic Calming Build Out Barwood Homes propose to fully fund and construct a Traffic Calming Build Out on Station Road, Quainton. This is to facilitate the widening of the existing footway to 1.5m beside No.17 Station Road. Works would be carried out via a Section 278 Legal Agreement.</p> | <p>Great Brickhill</p> | <p>Councillor Steve Broadbent Darryl Bonsor</p> | | <p>22/10/21</p> |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|----------------|--|--|-----------------|
| <p>Support to the Provider Market To seek approval for support to ensure the care market continues to be able to respond to the needs of Buckinghamshire residents.</p> | | <p>Councillor Angela Macpherson Tracey Ironmonger</p> | <p>Part exempt <i>(para 3)</i></p> | <p>6/4/21</p> |
| <p>The Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2022-2027 The Buckinghamshire SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) recommends that the local authority adopts the Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education for all Buckinghamshire maintained schools, including Voluntary Controlled schools, for 2022-2027.</p> | | <p>Councillor Anita Cranmer Simon James</p> | | <p>31/1/22</p> |
| <p>Town & Parish Charter To agree the Town and Parish Charter</p> | | <p>Councillor Steve Bowles Kate Walker</p> | | <p>15/10/20</p> |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>TRO Project Phase 2 Scheme (from November 2021 consultation) Various sites across the county where the Traffic Regulation Order needs to be amended to match the on-street restriction.</p> | Abbey; Amersham & Chesham Bois; Aston Clinton & Bierton; Aylesbury North; Beaconsfield; Buckingham East; Chalfont St Peter; Cliveden; Denham; Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow & Marlow South East; Gerrards Cross; Great Missenden; Iver; Terriers & Amersham Hill; The Risboroughs; Tylers Green & Loudwater; Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ian Thomas | | 17/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Various schemes relating to planning conditions (from November 2021 consultation) Parking, waiting, moving and speed restrictions across various locations</p> | Abbey; Aston Clinton & Bierton; Aylesbury East; Aylesbury South East; Buckingham East; Buckingham West; Chiltern Ridges; Downley; Grendon Underwood; Iver; Ryemead & Micklefield; Stone & Waddesdon; Tylers Green & Loudwater; Wendover, Halton & Stoke Mandeville | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ian Thomas | | 6/1/22 |
| March 2022 Leader Decisions | | | | |
| <p>2023/24 Admission Arrangements Agreed admission arrangements for voluntary controlled and community schools, County scheme and Relevant area for 2024 following public consultation</p> | | Councillor Anita Cranmer Debbie Munday | | 31/1/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|---|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Buckinghamshire Council Housing Allocations Scheme Formal adoption of the Bucks Home Choice Scheme as the Buckinghamshire Council Housing Allocations Scheme</p> | | Councillor Nick Naylor Michael Veryard | | 15/2/22 |
| <p>Bus Service Enhanced Partnership To set up an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators in accordance with Department of Transport guidance.</p> | | Councillor Steve Broadbent Sara Turnbull | | 23/12/21 |
| <p>Cemetery Rules & Regulations – Penn Road Cemetery, Hazlemere and High Wycombe Cemetery The Council is required to agree rules and regulations for the operation of Penn Road Cemetery prior to opening (currently scheduled for 4th April 2022), minor amendments are also required to the current rules and regulations in place for the operation of High Wycombe Cemetery. Proposed rules and regulations will be reviewed by High Wycombe Town Committee at their meeting of the 8th March and feedback incorporated ahead of this enabling decision.</p> | Abbey; Booker, Cressex & Castlefield; Downley; Hazlemere; Ryemead & Micklefield; Terriers & Amersham Hill; Totteridge & Bowerdean; Tylers Green & Loudwater; West Wycombe | Councillor Nick Naylor Lindsey Vallis | | 15/2/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Dadford Road, Dadford - Proposed Round Top Speed Hump Following informal discussions held with Dadford Parish Council, nearby residents and the local Councillor for the area, MEPC propose to install a round top speed ramp at the Northern end of the village to compliment the S278 traffic calming measures already installed on this section of road. These works will be fully funded by the developer at no cost to the Council.</p> | Buckingham East | Councillor Steve Broadbent Christine Urry | | 17/1/22 |
| <p>Emerald Way Improvements Scheme Upgrading Emerald Way cycle route along Rabans Lane, through Fairford Leys and into the Town Centre</p> | Aylesbury North West; Aylesbury West | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ian McGowan | | 31/1/22 |
| <p>Land at Ashwells Decision on Preferred Purchaser for land at Ashwells, Tylers Green, following open marketing for sale by Carter Jonas, as agents for the Council, using Homes England's DPP3 developer panel process</p> | Tylers Green & Loudwater | Councillor John Chilver Charles Brocklehurst, John Reed | Part exempt (<i>para 3</i>) | 11/2/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|--|-----------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| <p>Post 16 Transport Policy Statement 2022-23 The Council has a statutory duty to prepare and publish an annual Post-16 Transport Policy Statement (the Statement). This Statement specifies the arrangements for transport that the Council considers it necessary to make in order to facilitate the attendance of sixth form students receiving education or training.</p> <p>This Leader (Cabinet Member) decision will consider the outcome of the statutory consultation and will agree the Statement for 2022-23.</p> | | Councillor Steve Broadbent Sara Turnbull | Part exempt <i>(para 3)</i> | 23/12/21 |
| <p>Procurement of Gas and Electricity Supply Contract Procurement of new energy utilities supply contract</p> | | Councillor Peter Strachan Mark Doyle | Part exempt <i>(para 3)</i> | 15/2/22 |
| <p>Tingewick Road Area of Buckingham Proposed reduction in the speed limit for Tingewick Road Area of Buckingham</p> | Buckingham West | Councillor Steve Broadbent Ian Thomas | | 15/2/22 |

| Item and description | Wards affected | Councillor(s) / contact officer | Private report? (relevant para) | Date notified |
|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---------------|
| April 2022 Leader Decisions | | | | |
| Sexual and Reproductive Health Services To agree the business case for the recommissioning of the sexual health service. This service provides a range of information, guidance and services with respect to sexual and reproductive health services, genito-urinary medicine and contraception services. | | Councillor Angela Macpherson Teresa Martin, Adam Johnson | | 17/1/22 |
| June 2022 Leader Decisions | | | | |
| Interim Tree Risk Management Strategy Approval of an interim tree risk management strategy with respect to trees that Buckinghamshire Council manages | | Councillor Peter Strachan David Sutherland | | 5/10/20 |
| July 2022 Leader Decisions | | | | |
| Aston Clinton - Traffic Calming Vertical traffic calming and speed limit reduction | Aston Clinton & Bierton | Councillor Steve Broadbent Daniel Pearson | | 19/3/20 |

Individual Leader decisions (in consultation with the Cabinet Member) are not discussed at meetings – a report is presented to the Cabinet Member and the Leader will decide whether to sign the decision.

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this forward plan, please get in touch with the contact officer. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team in good time ahead of the decision deadline date. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. You can view decisions to be made and decisions taken on the council's website.

The council's definition of a 'key decision' can be seen in part 1 of the council's [constitution](#).

Each item considered will have a report; appendices will be included (as appropriate). Regulation 9(1g) allows that other documents relevant to the item may be submitted to the decision maker. Subject to prohibition or restriction on their disclosure, this information will be published on the website usually five working days before the date of the meeting. Paper copies may be requested using the contact details below.

*The public can be excluded for an item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt (private) information as defined in part I of schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972. The relevant paragraph numbers and descriptions are as follows:

Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual

Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Paragraph 4 - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority

Paragraph 5 - Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings

Paragraph 6 - Information which reveals that the authority proposes:

(a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or

(b) to make an order or direction under any enactment

Paragraph 7 - Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

Part II of schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that information falling into paragraphs 1 - 7 above is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. Nothing in the regulations authorises or requires a local authority to disclose to the public or make available for public inspection any document or part of a document if, in the opinion of the proper officer, that document or part of a document contains or may contain confidential information. Should you wish to make any representations in relation to any of the items being considered in private, you can do so – in writing – using the contact details below.

Democratic services, Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF 01296 382343
democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Select Committee Work Programmes 2021/22

Children's and Education Select Committee (Chairman: Patricia Birchley, Scrutiny officer: Katie Dover)

| Date | Topic | Description & Purpose | Lead Officer | Contributors |
|---------------|--------------------------|--|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| 10 March 2022 | OFSTED inspection update | Review the outcomes of the Ofsted report following the Ofsted inspection during November 2021. | Richard Nash | Anita Cranmer, Richard Nash |

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

| Date | Topic | Description and Purpose | Lead Officer | Contributors |
|---------------|-----------------------|--|----------------|----------------------------------|
| 13 April 2022 | 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 |

Finance and Resources Select Committee (Chairman: Ralph Bagge, Scrutiny officer: Chris Ward)

| Date | Topic | Description & Purpose | Lead Officer | Contributors |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 7 April 2022 | Update on external property companies | To receive an update on performance of the Council owned external property companies and future plans (may require confidential session). | John Reed | John Chilver, Ian Thompson, John Reed |
| | Budget Performance Monitoring Q3 | To review the quarter 3 budget monitoring report. | Richard Ambrose | John Chilver, Richard Ambrose |

Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee (Chairman: David Carroll, Scrutiny officer: Kelly Sutherland)

| Date | Topic | Description & Purpose | Lead Officer | Contributors |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|--|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 7 April 2022 | Buckinghamshire Local Plan – Update | For members to assess progress made to date on the Local Plan. | Steve Bambrick | Gareth Williams, Steve B |
| | Skills discussion | To assess the development of the strategic partnership on skills with DWP. | Lisa Michelson | Martin Tett, Lisa |

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee (Chairman: Jane MacBean, Scrutiny officer: Liz Wheaton)

| Date | Topic | Description & Purpose | Lead Presenters | Contributors |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 24th March 2022 | Support for Carers | The HASC undertook a one-day inquiry into support for carers in October 2018. A previous Committee reviewed the progress in implementing the recommendations after 9 months so this item is an opportunity to revisit this report and review the current situation. | Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing | Gill Quinton, Corporate Director Commissioning Managers (ASC) – Lead officers for the inquiry |
| | South Central Ambulance Service | For Committee Members to hear from representatives from South Central Ambulance Service, particularly in light of the pandemic and Winter pressures. | Mark Begley, Head of Operations | |

Transport, Environment and Climate Change Select Committee (Chairman: Bill Chapple, Scrutiny officer: Chris Ward)

| Date | Topic | Description & Purpose | Lead Officer | Contributors |
|---------------|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|
| 10 March 2022 | HS2 Update | Update from HS2 and Bucks Council officers. | Dr Laura Leech | CM Steven Broadbent DCM Peter Martin |
| | Sustainable Transport | To provide information on schemes to improve the road network and encourage sustainable travel in Buckinghamshire e.g. electric vehicles, active travel options and area transport strategies. | Joan Hancox / Rob Smith | CM Steven Broadbent |
| | Climate Change Strategy Update | To receive an update on the Climate Change Strategy. | Ed Barlow David Sutherland | CM Peter Strachan |



Report to Cabinet

Date: 1st March 2022

Title: **Member Engagement in Planning - Select Committee Report**

Relevant councillor(s) Councillor Chris Poll, Chairman of the review group

Author and/or contact officer: Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager
Kelly.sutherland@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: *Not ward specific*

Recommendations:

Recommendations made by the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee to Cabinet are that:

- 1) A Member Planning Handbook should be produced to provide members with practical information that will assist them in dealing with local planning casework.
- 2) All members should be able to access and receive training on how to use a GIS map to enable them to look up planning application details and other useful information such as flood plains, conservation areas etc to help them respond to planning queries from residents.
- 3) A short guidance note should be provided for officers and members explaining the benefits of working in partnership, to enable public participation in planning and promote a wider understanding of the process. This should set out reasonable expectations in terms of how queries will be managed, including timescales.
- 4) A series of 'informal' Meet the Planners events should be held to enable members and officers to meet and chat in a relaxed atmosphere, to help to cultivate trust and collaboration.
- 5) Political Awareness training should be offered to planning staff to support them in working effectively with Members. This could be facilitated by the Democratic Services team, who would work with the Head of Planning and Development to agree content and delivery timescales.

6) There should be a review of the new Member Surgeries in June 2022 to consider the level of participation and feedback from both members and officers regarding their effectiveness.

Reason for decision: For Cabinet to consider the recommendations of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee agreed to set up a rapid review into Member Engagement in Planning at its meeting on 14th October 2021. The Chairman asked Cllr Chris Poll if he would chair the review group and four other councillors volunteered to participate.
- 1.2 During November and December 2021, the review group collected evidence through meetings and by conducting a survey of elected members and planning staff. The review group then met in January to discuss and agree its key findings and recommendations which are presented in the report found at Appendix 1.

2. Other options considered

- 2.1 Appendix 1 provides further context to the Select Committee's recommendations. Cabinet is asked to consider these recommendations and provide a response.

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 These will be considered as part of the Cabinet's response.

4. Corporate implications

- 5.1 These will be considered as part of the Cabinet's response.

5. Consultation with local Councillors & Community Boards

- 5.1 The report and recommendations were produced by a cross-party review group of Members from the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee.
- 5.2 Part of the evidence gathering phase of the review included an online survey which was emailed to all 147 members of the Council. 59 responses were received which is a 40% response rate.

6. Next steps and review

- 6.1 As noted above, Cabinet will provide a response to the Select Committee recommendations at its meeting on 1st March 2022. The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee will then receive an update after 6 months and 12 months to monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

7. Background papers

- 7.1 Minutes of the meeting of Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee 14th October 2022
<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g16799/Printed%20minutes%2014th-Oct-2021%2010.00%20Growth%20Infrastructure%20Housing%20Select%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

This page is intentionally left blank



Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee – Member Engagement in Planning Rapid Review

Contents

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Introduction | Error! Bookmark not defined. |
| Aim of the Inquiry..... | 4 |
| Context | 5 |
| Key Findings and Recommendations | 6 |
| Appendix - Rapid Review Scope..... | 8 |

Introduction

I am Chris Poll, Buckinghamshire Councillor for Ivinghoe and Vice-Chairman of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee. In October 2021, the Select Committee invited me to lead a rapid review group to investigate Member Engagement in Planning and I was joined in this by four other colleagues, Cllrs Andrea Baughan, Michael Bracken, Peter Brazier and Nic Brown. Whilst this review is very internally focussed, looking primarily at the working relationships and practices between planning officers and elected members, I very much hope that by promoting a culture of collaboration and trust between officer and members within the Council, our residents and other partners, such as town and parish councils, will also feel the benefit of the recommendations we are making.

I would like to extend my thanks to my colleagues on the review group, the planning staff who we spoke to and all members and officers who completed our online survey, as well as to the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Gareth Williams for his contribution. I would also like to thank Stephen Reed, Development Manager at Durham County Council, for taking the time to speak to members and giving us some insight into how the planning process works in another large unitary authority.

Cllr Chris Poll, February 2022



Chris Poll
Ivinghoe



Andrea Baughan
Ryemead &
Micklefield



Michael Bracken
Gerrards Cross



Peter Brazier
Ivinghoe



Nic Brown
Bernwood

Aim of the Inquiry

As part of a service improvement programme, the Planning and Environment service had identified a need to ensure that members are well-supported to deal with enquiries from residents in connection with planning matters. For members who sit on one of the 5 Area Planning Committees (APCs) or on the Strategic Sites Committee (SSC), statutory training must be undertaken before the committees can make any decisions. In addition, Induction training was also provided for all members following the May 2021 elections, to raise their awareness of planning issues.

Buckinghamshire Council has 147 elected members and the Planning service are dealing with circa 13,000 planning applications and 1,650 enforcement enquiries per annum. This generates a significant amount of queries/liaison between planning officers and members, therefore it is important that member engagement is meaningful and can resolve issues at an early stage. With this in mind, the Planning and Environment service were keen to work with the members of the rapid review group to identify what changes could be made that might improve engagement between members and planning officers.

Methodology

In order to gather evidence, the review group held a number of meetings and conducted an online survey of both planning staff and elected members.

4th November 2021 – Initial meeting with Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, Head of Planning and Development and other senior planning staff

17th-26th November 2021 – Online survey of elected members and planning staff.

59/147 Members responded which is 40% response rate. There were 89 responses from planning staff. Anonymised comments from the surveys feature in blue text in this report to illustrate certain points.

21st December 2021 – MS Teams meeting with Stephen Reed, Planning Development Manager, Durham County Council

21st January 2022 - Review Group meeting to consider evidence and findings



Context

Buckinghamshire Council launched in April 2020, a new Unitary Council replacing five legacy councils and one of the key priorities was to create one effective Planning service. This was always going to be a complicated task – whilst the National Planning Policy Framework applies across the country, Local Planning Policy varies across each of the former legacy Council areas, working practices and customs were significantly different and a number of different planning software systems were being used. In addition, legacy teams were not fully staffed, which meant that the new authority inherited a backlog of planning applications waiting to be determined.

At the end of March 2020, all Council staff had been asked to work from home where possible as the country went into lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic. This meant that planning staff who were going through a staffing restructure following unitarisation now had to work remotely and it was impossible to physically meet up with colleagues. Some senior planning managers were also redeployed to deal with the Council's Covid 19 response at this time. During the pandemic, there was a significant increase in the number of planning applications submitted, both nationally and locally – as people were unable to travel and many people were working from home, their attention turned to making changes and improvements to their home.

In 2021 planning application submissions rose in every English region; February 2021 saw a 25% increase across the country compared to the previous year. In March 2021 Buckinghamshire had the biggest spike in applications since 2017. This was followed by a prolonged period of demand, thankfully dropping away towards the latter part of the year. The Development Management team responded by increasing rates of determination. The number of applications being determined was around 28% higher when comparing April-June 2020 with the same period in 2021. Since August 2021 the planning service has sustained this effort and is determining more applications than received.

In May 2021, local elections which had been postponed in 2020 were held and Buckinghamshire Council's first intake of 147 councillors, including 55 brand new councillors were welcomed. All members appointed to one of the five Area Planning Committees (North, Central, East, South and West) or the Strategic Sites Committee, which considers applications for larger developments, received training to enable them to make informed decisions. In addition, planning training for all members was also available. These training sessions were well-attended and delivered virtually via MS Teams.

Due to the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions, by Autumn 2021 when this review began, it is fair to say that very few elected members had physically met with planning officers and even contact over the telephone had been limited due to the high caseloads that planning staff had been faced with. Some members were frustrated that they could not get updates on resident's planning applications in a timely manner and officers were perhaps more reticent in picking up the phone to discuss a case with a member, who they had never met or spoken to previously and because they knew that they may also be delivering 'bad news'. On the other hand, some members who felt acutely aware of the pressures that planning staff were under, were reluctant to disturb them and relied heavily on email communication when perhaps a short phone call could have resolved a number of queries in a short space of time.

In summary, in the first two years of Buckinghamshire Council, the Planning service has found itself in a 'perfect storm' of staff shortages, an existing backlog of planning applications (and enforcement issues), introduction of new management and team structures and a significant increase in demand during the Covid 19 pandemic. These difficulties were then compounded by the challenges of remote working without access to one consistent planning software system and a lack of 'tried and tested' methods of liaising with a large elected member body of 147 councillors, working in 3 member wards.

Key Findings & Recommendations

After carefully considering the evidence we collected through interviews, alongside the survey responses from both members and planning staff, the review group wish to report the following observations and key findings:

- Members of the review group and also those members surveyed had found staff in the planning teams to be very professional and helpful, although it was noted that it had sometimes been more difficult to contact them during the lockdown period and some queries had required a degree of chasing. It was understood that members of the public sometimes felt that they were being ‘fobbed off’ when their planning application remained undetermined and members wanted to ensure that they were working together with planning staff to help the process run as smoothly as possible.
- Members could be important advocates for the planning team out in the community as well as being useful sources of very local information.
- It was noted that the backlog of work combined with the significant increase in planning applications during the lockdown period had led to high workloads and pressure for staff and increased emails and phone calls from members also added to that. It was therefore important that members should be encouraged to ‘self-serve’ where possible – if they could access information for themselves and felt confident in dealing with basic planning queries from their residents, then this could help to relieve pressure on staff.
- With this in mind, the review group propose that a Member Planning Handbook should be produced to provide members with practical information that will assist them in dealing with local planning casework. This should be online, but in a format that would allow elements of it to be printed off if members wish to do so. It should focus very much on practical advice to support members in dealing with local planning casework, for example, a clear explanation of how a member of the public can get involved in the planning process and how they should go about it, lists of useful contacts and what specialist teams need to be involved when and an Acronym Busting guide. Planning staff will probably have a very good idea of frequently asked questions which could help to inform the content of a handbook and members of the review group would be willing to work with officers to refine it further.

Recommendation 1 - A Member Planning Handbook should be produced to provide members with practical information that will assist them in dealing with local planning casework.

- Following on from this recommendation and the idea of members being able to ‘self-serve’ the review group discussed the benefits of being able to access a GIS map which contains a lot of information pertinent to planning discussions such as flood plains and conservation areas, as well as historical planning application data. An example can be seen at this link - <https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/quick-map-search>.
- It was noted that access to GIS had been available to members at some of the legacy councils but not all of them and members were uncertain as to the current availability. The review group believe this would be a useful tool for members, alongside the Member Planning Handbook.

“I have just learned about the GIS map and its many layers. Access to this could save everyone a lot of time and repeat questions”

Recommendation 2 - All members should be able to access and receive training on how to use a GIS map to enable them to look up planning application details and other useful information such as flood plains, conservation areas etc to help them respond to planning queries from residents.

- The Cabinet Member was keen to emphasise that part of the planning service improvement plan was looking at quick wins to help staff to assess applications more quickly, which was key to addressing the backlog. Householder templates had been simplified and a risk-based approach was being encouraged to streamline the process. In addition, a checklist for agents was being introduced to enable their applications to be reviewed more efficiently.
- It was hoped that slight changes to working practices would help to boost morale of staff, as well as making the service more responsive to customers. It was also clear that a culture of collaboration between members and officers was key. We heard from Stephen Reed, Development Manager at Durham, that it was important that members and planning staff work together and this approach had been encouraged at Durham from the very beginning of their unitary journey. It had been essential in delivering the Council's ambitious regeneration plans and the planning staff worked hard to build relationships with members through regular training sessions and dealing with members' queries in a timely manner. It was noted that Durham had been fortunate to have a fully staffed team from the outset.
- From the survey results and discussions with senior planning staff, it was also clear that whilst remote working had some advantages, it had led to a disconnect between colleagues and between members and planning officers. As the planning service was trying to establish itself in a new configuration, as well as recruiting a number of new staff when the pandemic hit, it was obviously quite challenging for everyone to adapt. However, as already mentioned, the number of planning applications processed between April and June 2021 was 28% higher than in the corresponding months of 2020 which is all credit to the hard work of staff and the revised working practices that were introduced.
- We heard of some incidences where members had been rude to junior members of staff and some survey responses indicated that there had been occasions where members had not treated officers as equals. This could knock the confidence of more inexperienced staff and led to senior managers wanting to protect their team members. The review group were clear that this behaviour was unacceptable and that all staff should be treated with courtesy and respect. All officers should be able to interact with members, as restricting this to the realm of senior managers would only make the situation more difficult in the long term.
- The review group would like to make a number of recommendations (3-5) to promote a more collaborative approach between members and officers, as follows:

Recommendation 3 - A short guidance note should be provided for officers and members explaining the benefits of working in partnership, to enable public participation in planning and promote a wider understanding of the process. This should set out reasonable expectations in terms of how queries will be managed, including timescales.

- In connection with recommendation 3 above, whilst the review group acknowledge that the Planning Protocol referred to in the Council's constitution does cover expected behaviours between officers and members and advice around planning decision making, it was felt that a brief, more informal guidance note might be useful in helping to set expectations for members and officers.

Recommendation 4 - A series of 'informal' Meet the Planners events should be held to enable members and officers to meet and chat in a relaxed atmosphere, to help to cultivate trust and collaboration.

- Whilst recommendation 4 could appear to be a relatively trivial suggestion, it was noted from survey responses that some staff had not had a single interaction with an elected member since 2020 and some members were finding it difficult to know who to go to when they had a planning query.
- With 147 members and over 200 staff working in planning, this will not be a situation that can be remedied overnight, but when people are able to put a face to a name and remember meeting someone, then it is much easier to pick up the phone and have a useful discussion. Some members of the review

group described meeting a new senior planner as a 'breath of fresh air', as after a short face to face meeting they had been able to answer a number of planning queries and reassure the members that they wanted to assist them in dealing with concerns raised by their parish council and residents.

"Since vesting day (and lockdown) I've had little interaction with members, and most of my teams have had no engagement at all. It is very difficult for members to trust us to do our jobs and deliver their agendas if they've not met us (and vice-versa) This needs to change."

Recommendation 5 - Political Awareness training should be offered to planning staff to support them in working effectively with Members. This could be facilitated by the Democratic Services team, who would work with the Head of Planning and Development to agree content and delivery timescales.

- As noted above, the review group were concerned to see evidence of a disconnect between members and officers following the service restructure and the remote working that had been necessary during the pandemic. In addition, it was acknowledged that a negative experience with a member might lead to officers being reticent to proactively communicate with members going forward.
- We heard from the Cabinet Member that he wanted to encourage officers to pick up the phone for a discussion rather than relying on sending lengthy technical emails, which might lead to more questions than answers. We also noted that Stephen Reed, Development Manager in Durham reported that building strong working relationships with members was a key skill for anyone wanting to build a long career in planning.
- With this in mind, the review group believe it would be helpful to offer some political awareness training to staff, particularly relatively new planning officers who may not have had a lot of experience in working in local government before. This could be facilitated by our in-house Democratic Services team who have delivered training on working with members for officers across the Council in the past.

"I haven't really ever had any interaction with the members. There seems to be little scope for interaction unless you are a manager or above."

- During our review, the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration advised the review group that he was hoping to introduce a new system of Member Planning Surgeries from January 2022. These would be pre-bookable slots for members to meet with a planning officer, either in person (Covid 19 permitting) or via MS Teams. Members would be able to outline what they wished to discuss e.g. progress of specific planning applications or enforcement issues to ensure that the correct member of staff could attend and would have time to collate relevant information.
- These surgeries have now gone live, with members being able to book a 20-minute slot and agendas and action notes are circulated by a Planning Member Liaison Officer.
- As part of our online surveys, we asked both members and officers for their thoughts on the suggestion of Member Planning Surgeries. 80% of members were either positive or very positive about the proposal, with many holding up the Local Area Technician Surgeries as an example of how this could work well. Officers were more neutral in their response to the proposal, with some questioning whether it would add to an already heavy workload.
- Whilst members welcome the introduction of this new initiative, they would not want the Member Planning Surgeries to limit day to day interaction between members and officers around a quick planning query. A short chat on the phone is a simple way to save a lot of time and ease concerns.
- The review group would like to revisit how the new Member Planning Surgeries are working once they have had sufficient time to become established. It seems sensible to review progress after 6 months. This would then allow for any proposed changes to be considered over the Summer and be in place for September 2022.

Recommendation 6 - There should be a review of the new Member Surgeries in June 2022 to consider the level of participation and feedback from both members and officers regarding their effectiveness.

APPENDIX

Rapid Review Scope

| | |
|--|---|
| Title | Member Engagement in Planning |
| Signed-off by | Cllr David Carroll, Chairman, Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee |
| Author | Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager |
| Date | 14 th October 2021 |
| Rapid Review Group Membership | Cllrs Chris Poll, Andrea Baughan, Michael Bracken, Peter Brazier, Nic Brown |
| Scrutiny Team Resource | Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager will manage this rapid review. |
| Lead Cabinet Member | Cllr Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration |
| Lead Service Officer | Christine Urry, Head of Planning and Development |
| What is the problem that is trying to be solved? | <p>As part of a service improvement programme, the Planning and Environment service has identified a need to ensure that members are well-supported to deal with enquiries from residents in connection with planning matters. For members who sit on one of the 5 Area Planning Committees (APCs) or on the Strategic Sites Committee (SSC), statutory training must be undertaken before the committees can make any decisions. Induction training is also provided for all members to raise their awareness of planning.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council has 147 elected members and the Planning service are dealing with circa 13,000 planning applications and 1,650 enforcement enquiries per annum. This generates a significant amount of queries/liaison between planning officers and members, therefore it is important that member engagement is meaningful and can resolve issues at an early stage.</p> |
| What might the Rapid Review achieve? | <p>Key lines of enquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key concerns of members and officers in the service (an open & frank exchange of views and ideas) • Define what ‘member engagement’ means? • Identify what is already offered by the service and assess its effectiveness– what works? What could work better? • Speak to other comparable local authorities to gain insight into their approach and identify best practice ideas that BC might wish to consider adopting. (via MS Teams) <p>By investigating the above, outcomes will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased trust between members and officers • Members will feel more confident to engage in planning queries with residents and to advocate for the planning service • Reduction in number of emails to the Cabinet Member and specific complaints about a lack of communication <p>This is an ideal opportunity for Select Committee members to influence the evolving culture and work practices of the Planning and Environment service.</p> |
| Is the issue of significance to Buckinghamshire as a whole and is the topic within the remit of the Select Committee? | Yes |

| | |
|---|--|
| What work is underway already on this issue? | This project was identified by the Planning Improvement Board and it has been suggested that the Select Committee investigates as this will enable the voice of members to be amplified and recommendations to be made to Cabinet. |
| Are there any key changes that might impact on this issue? | Buckinghamshire Local Plan Planning White Paper Both of the above are in early stages and therefore unlikely to impact on this rapid review. |
| What are the key timing considerations? | This will be a focussed rapid review to enable the Planning and Environment service to respond to any recommendations for improvement as soon as possible. Post-election and post-service redesign presents an ideal opportunity to propose new ideas to continue to improve/refine the service. |
| Who are the key stakeholders & decision-makers? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Members • Planning & Environment Officers • CM for Planning & Regeneration • Service Director – Planning & Environment • Head of Planning and Development |
| What is out of scope? | Liaison with Parish and Town Councils |
| What media/communications support do you want? | |

Evidence-gathering Methodology

| |
|---|
| What types of methods of evidence-gathering will you use? |
| <p>List them here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desktop research • Meetings • Discussions with other local authorities • Possible member survey/call for evidence |
| How will you involve service-users and the public? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main focus of the rapid review is internal communications and engagement between elected members and planning officers. |

Outline Project Plan

| Stage | Key Activity | Dates |
|--------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Scoping | Inquiry Scope Agreed by Select Committee | 14 th October |
| Evidence-gathering | Evidence-gathering phase – anticipate 3-4 meetings | November/December |
| Reporting | Final Inquiry Group report with recommendations completed (signed-off by SC Chairman) | |
| | Report published for Select Committee | |
| | Select Committee agrees report to go forward to decision-makers | |
| | Cabinet/Partner considers recommendations | |

Definition of a Rapid Review

A Rapid Review is a focussed investigation with fairly narrow parameters, that can be conducted in a relatively short time scale. For example, you may hold three or four meetings as a review group – one to establish and understand what the key issues are, one or two to gather evidence from service users or other authorities to gain insight into best practice and a final meeting to discuss what members have heard and identify any useful recommendations. A rapid review format will be useful when considering less complex issues and may be helpful in delivering ‘quick wins’ for the Council’s service users and residents.

This page is intentionally left blank



Report to Cabinet

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Date: | 01 March 2022 |
| Title: | Corporate Plan Refresh 2022 |
| Relevant councillor(s): | Martin Tett- Leader |
| Author and/or contact officer: | Gail Hudson |
| Ward(s) affected: | None specific |
| Recommendations: | <p>To agree the refreshed Corporate Plan for submission to Council.</p> <p>To delegate to the Leader responsibility for making any further amends to the draft in the light of feedback from Select Committee Chairmen, prior to submission to council</p> |
| Reason for decision: | To ensure an updated version of the Corporate Plan is approved for publication. |

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council's Corporate Plan sets out what the Council wants to achieve and how we will do it, addressing the challenges we face and harnessing opportunities as they present themselves.
- 1.2 A light-touch review of the Corporate Plan has been undertaken to reflect key developments since the drafting of the plan in 2019/20, in particular the impact of the pandemic.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 The current plan was approved in February 2020.
- 2.2 A light-touch review of the Corporate Plan has been undertaken to reflect key events and changes in priorities since the drafting of the plan in 2019/20.

- 2.3 The revised plan reflects the impact of the pandemic on the Council's priorities, together with other key developments such as new national legislation.
- 2.4 A draft of the refreshed corporate plan is attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the refreshed corporate plan 2020-25 progresses for approval to full Council.
- 2.6 Following approval, the refreshed corporate plan would be published on our website.
- 2.7 The plan is intended to cover the period until 2025, in accordance with the current Council term, and will continue to be subject to an annual refresh.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Do nothing - if the corporate plan was not refreshed it may be deemed out of date.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Identified priorities have been checked to ensure they are currently funded and included within the MTFP. There are no additional financial implications known at this stage.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan is a council's main strategic business planning document, establishing a golden thread between the Council's priorities, as set out by elected Members, and the activities which will be undertaken to deliver the organisation's agreed outcomes. As a public document, the Corporate Plan also helps communicate to staff, partners and residents, a clear concise narrative of strategic intent.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 It is proposed the refreshed corporate plan will be shared with scrutiny committee chairs to seek their feedback on the draft before it is presented to Full Council.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Not applicable at this stage.
- 7.2 Relevant communications will be taken forward as the strategies outlined within the plan are developed and implemented. Each of these will be subject to the appropriate consultation and engagement.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 It is proposed that the revised plan is presented to Council on 27 April 2022.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 Current Corporate Plan <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/corporate-plans-and-priorities/corporate-plan/>

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please contact the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone on 01296 382343 or email gail.hudson@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

Page 75

Corporate Plan 2020 - 2025

Version refreshed February 2022



Appendix

Introduction

Our corporate plan outlines our ambitions and priorities for Buckinghamshire Council, a brand-new organisation bringing together the best of the previous five councils to create positive changes for local people, communities, visitors, and businesses.

Our original plan was developed over many months in consultation with the public, our partners and our staff and was published in April 2020.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic will leave a social and economic legacy long after it has ended and as such, we have reviewed the plan to reflect key events and changes in priorities since the plan was drafted in 2019/20.

Our vision for Buckinghamshire has not changed and remains one where growth will be carefully planned and managed, so that all our residents benefit. This includes well-designed, more affordable homes in thriving communities; providing excellent education opportunities for our young people, developing a skilled workforce with access to great job opportunities in highly productive sectors; and a world-class physical and digital infrastructure to support our businesses to flourish.

We also want to play our part in tackling climate change by planting over 500,000 trees, increasing recycling and improving our environment.

We are committed to making Buckinghamshire the best place to live, raise a family, work, and do business. We want our county to be a place everyone can be proud of, with excellent services, thriving businesses and outstanding public spaces for everyone. We want our residents, regardless of background, to have access to great opportunities, living healthy, successful lives and ageing well with independence. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we live, work and think and we will have to make difficult decisions in the short-term to balance our budget to ensure that we continue to protect and support people who are vulnerable and in need. While we do this, we will continue to lay the foundations for what is best for Buckinghamshire in the longer-term.

We will need to continue to adapt to achieve this, building on some of the positive changes we have already made as well as increasing resilience, agility and the skills required to be able to manage ongoing challenges. We remain focused on the importance of a local approach and will continue to engage with local communities and offering opportunities for our residents, business, and partners to influence new approaches to their local places and services.



Buckinghamshire's Strategic Vision for 2050 will help us deliver a lot of these ambitions and delivering on this will not only benefit the residents of Buckinghamshire but also the economy.

This refreshed plan provides the building blocks to our success and sets out the Council's strategic priorities and how we can achieve these. It will be used to inform cabinet portfolio priorities, service, and team planning – setting out the challenges and vital opportunities we will focus on to support the county to recover, build resilience and reset. Supporting this plan will be a number of strategies and policies which will detail how we will deliver our ambitions and priorities.

Demand for our services rises each year due to changes in our population, but new pressures from the pandemic have added to this. We are down on income compared to pre-pandemic levels with reduced levels of income from council tax, business rates and parking charges for example. However, income is slowly recovering.

During this challenging time, we have also seen great strengths and opportunities for the future. All over the county, people have stepped up to help those in need and look out for their family, friends, and neighbours. The public sector and community services have worked more closely together than ever before to find ways to continue supporting those that rely on them, thinking innovatively through the challenges. Some of the new

ways of doing things have proven to work well and have demonstrated how we can make improvements to the way we deliver our services. Our staff are our greatest asset, and it is important that we acknowledge and thank them for their ongoing hard work, dedication, and resilience.

The next few years will undoubtedly be a challenging time for Buckinghamshire, but there are also exciting and unique opportunities available to us to improve the services we provide and accelerate the county's success and prosperity in the future, such as devolution from central government. We must continue to attract investment into the county and seek to maintain valued universal services that make a big difference to quality of life for our residents. By seizing opportunities available to us now and working on our ongoing commitments, such as our objective to achieve net carbon zero for Buckinghamshire by 2050, we can avoid over burdening future generations that make Buckinghamshire their home and ensuring that current residents benefit from positive changes in the years to come.



Martin Tett
Leader



Rachael Shimmin
Chief Executive



Buckinghamshire in numbers

In 2021



551,000

population in January 2022



£413,924

average house price
(December 2021)



£1,310pcm

average rent for a two-bed property
(January 2022)

Page 78



171

parish and town councils



31%

of the county is designated green belt
(England average 12.5%)



£18.4 billion

size of Buckinghamshire economy national
output (Buckinghamshire LEP 2019)



One third

of working residents travels outside of the
county for work



236 schools



On the horizon...



564,319

population in 2030



450

state pension age citizens per
1,000 working age citizens by
2040 (from 320 per 1,000 in 2020)

In the next decade (2022-2032):



19%

increase in 65+ year olds



38.4%

increase in 85+ year olds



4.3%

decrease in children

Moving forward together: valuing partnerships

Achieving the best outcomes for our communities requires joined-up thinking. Working collaboratively with partners to make the most of collective resources, skills, ideas, and talents will be critical to achieve the key priorities which we set out later in this plan.

Most of our public sector partners work across the same geography and serve the same population. This provides great opportunities to join up and improve services.

Buckinghamshire Council will also be a leader in developing relationships at a regional, national, and international level. Championing the county's voice on a big stage, we will work creatively to develop the local economy, support businesses, and bring in investment and funding.

We are committed to partnership working, focusing on shared priorities, and encouraging collaboration, sharing intelligence, and driving change and tackling key issues in a more co-ordinated way.

Buckinghamshire Growth Board

The Buckinghamshire Growth Board is an established board which has been engaging with key partners for over a year, developing the Strategic Vision and producing the Recovery & Growth Proposal. Partners include the Local Enterprise Partnership, NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, and other local public sector partners, all of whom have a shared ambition and work programme to deliver innovative, sustainable, and appropriate growth at pace.

Since supporting the recovery and growth proposal in November 2020, Buckinghamshire Council, through the Buckinghamshire Growth Board, have been progressing discussions with central government to develop partnerships and secure investment and devolution opportunities.

Whilst there is no current precedent, the proposals aim to build upon the ambitions outlined in the Recovery and Growth proposal and provide Buckinghamshire with the tools to locally drive economic recovery and growth, which in turn will drive national growth. The proposal includes the supply of affordable and appropriately designed new housing, and the delivery of necessary supporting infrastructure such as digital communications, energy,

roads, schools and hospital beds. We want Buckinghamshire to remain a forward thinking and dynamic economy without sacrificing the assets which already make it a great place to live.

Following the transition to a unitary authority, we have the advantage of strong local alignment and the most coterminous county structure in England as all our key partner organisations share our county geography. Utilising our economic assets and governance strengths with a combination of direct project investment, broader investment funds, and specific freedoms and flexibilities that would enable us to deliver services more efficiently and effectively. We will work with our partners to:

- Increase our overall contribution to HM Treasury.
- Invest in our places.
- Mobilise our high-tech sector assets.
- Create an accelerated skills delivery system.
- Enhance physical and digital connectivity.
- Deliver public service efficiency improvements, including a first-class integrated health and social care campus.

Local Enterprise Partnership and businesses

Our business community includes major international companies and large numbers of small and medium enterprises. By working closely with partners, including Buckinghamshire Business First and Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and through the Buckinghamshire Business Group, we support new businesses to grow and existing businesses to thrive - creating more local jobs and wider economic benefits to our communities.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership is a business-led 'partnership of equals' between local government and the private sector, building the conditions for sustainable economic growth in Buckinghamshire.

Integrated Care Partnership and health partners

This brings together the expertise of health and care professionals to look after people's physical, social, and mental health needs. By working closely with partners across the Integrated Care Partnership, including Buckinghamshire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, FedBucks, Medicas, and South-Central

Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, we will achieve our vision of everyone living happier and healthier lives.



Town and parish councils, and local MPs

There are 171 town councils, parish councils and parish meetings in Buckinghamshire, collectively known as local councils. There are 5 MPs for the area. The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) is an independent member organisation which provides support to these councils on procedures and statutory regulations. Local councils can take on the management of services through devolution agreements with the council, allowing them to set their own priorities according to local needs.

Voluntary and community sector

Buckinghamshire has a vibrant not for profit sector with invaluable insight into the needs of our communities. The sector is at the heart of the community, delivering key services with experience in building relationships and social connections. They are vital in strengthening and supporting our communities. Volunteers are a huge asset, and we must ensure that voluntary capacity is used effectively and safely.



Buckinghamshire Cultural Partnership

Buckinghamshire Cultural Partnership brings together senior leaders from key cultural organisations, Buckinghamshire Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership, and higher

education organisations. It plays a strategic leadership and development role for culture, positioning culture at the heart of strategic agendas throughout the county.

Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge to show our support to those who serve, or have served, in the armed forces, as well as their families. It recognises the sacrifice they have made and ensures they are treated fairly.

We are committed to ensuring that the Armed Forces community does not face disadvantage in the provision of services compared to other residents. As an employer, we recognise the range of unique skills and experiences that reservists and veterans can bring to our organisation.

Schools, colleges, universities and lifelong learning

The Buckinghamshire Skills Hub promotes and optimises links between the business community and education/training providers to enable young people and adults to develop the skills and qualifications they need to progress in the workplace, at whatever stage of their career they are in. Skills development is central to creating the conditions for sustained

innovation, excellence, and growth for our Buckinghamshire businesses, particularly in priority sectors as described in our [Local Industrial Strategy](#).



Credit: Buckinghamshire College Group

Police, fire and rescue

The Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel examine and review how the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) carries out their responsibilities of ensuring that Thames Valley Police runs effectively. The panel also supports the PCC in their work and provides reports and recommendations on the Police and Crime Plan, Annual Report and some proposals made by the PCC.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority is a publicly accountable body managing Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue

Service on behalf of the communities it serves. The Authority meets four times a year to discuss budgets, financial arrangements, insurance and financial plans, and to make recommendations to the Fire Authority for decision.

Housing providers

There are four main registered providers which were formed to take on the local housing stock across Buckinghamshire. The council works closely with them on developing new-build affordable housing, either in partnership with private developers or by developing their own sites. These providers allocate social housing tenancies in accordance with the Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme, advertising available tenancies on a central website.

Natural Environment Partnership

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership includes individuals, businesses, and organisations with an interest in driving positive change in the local natural environment. They work alongside the Local Enterprise Partnership, LEAP and Health and Wellbeing Board to embed natural environment in growth, economic and health strategies, and develop interventions and programmes for delivery.

Our key priorities - a summary

We want to make Buckinghamshire the best place to live, raise a family, work and do business.

Our key priorities are:

- Increasing prosperity.
- Strengthening our communities.
- Improving our environment.
- Protecting the vulnerable.

Our key priorities are for our residents, employees, businesses, service users and councillors. Customer focus is integral to each of the priorities.





Strengthening our communities

Life expectancy in Buckinghamshire



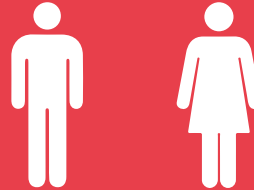
(one of the highest in South East England)



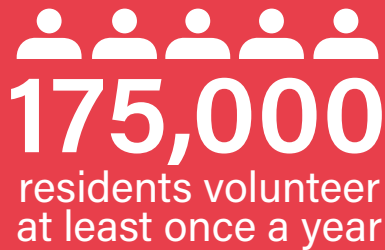
Children and young people meeting recommended levels of physical activity

Life expectancy gap

6.5 year | 6.4 year



life expectancy gap between most and least deprived



> 63% of adults are obese or overweight

Strengthening our communities

People in Buckinghamshire are living longer and healthier, with health outcomes better than the national average. We have strong communities and a thriving, dedicated not for profit sector

Buckinghamshire is a healthy and inclusive place to live, work and visit, but we have a number of challenges. These include building more affordable homes now and for future generations, providing extra help and support for an increasingly older population and improving the health of people who live in the more deprived areas of Buckinghamshire. We also face the challenge of supporting our communities and residents to recover safely from the coronavirus pandemic.



We want:

- Our residents to live independent, fulfilling lives, within strong, healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities.
- To support existing business communities, especially our small to medium enterprises (SMEs), to grow and flourish.
- To improve health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on reducing any gap in health outcomes.
- To work more with town and parish councils, giving them the responsibility for services and assets where it makes sense to do so, and helping communities to help themselves.
- To facilitate a 'catch up programme' for our young people, from the lost educational achievement which occurred during the coronavirus pandemic, particularly focusing on those most disadvantaged.

Working with partners, we will:

- Enable and promote healthier lifestyles, wellbeing and quality of life for people in Buckinghamshire.
- Review our Leisure Strategy and seek to invest in our facilities where appropriate.
- Tackle health inequalities, including the impact of Covid-19, through cultural, leisure and learning opportunities, by developing clear plans to reduce health inequalities.
- Encourage localism through our Community Boards, the devolution programme and working with local councils and voluntary community groups.
- Ensure we are keeping our residents regularly informed.
- Provide the affordable homes our growing communities need, including key workers.
- Continue our commitment to equality and inclusion, through engagement with ethnic minority communities including regular engagement with faith leaders and partnership events, celebrating the diversity within our communities.
- Maintain commitment to the armed forces and armed forces covenant and recognising Buckinghamshire's proud and historic links to the armed forces.



Protecting the vulnerable



518 children with a Child Protection Plan on 31 March 2021 (446 as at 31 March 2015)



26 children were adopted (2020/21)

1,918

applications for homelessness assistance (2020/21)

33% of care users do not have as much social contact as they would like (2020/21)



58/1,000 crimes people (67 per 1,000 for Thames Valley)

68% were satisfied with the care and support they received - only 3% were unsatisfied (64% England average)

With 67% of people using Adult Social Care services say that they had either adequate or as much social contact as they would like (2020/21)



Budget for adult social care has increased by **23.2%** since 2015



357 children in foster care (March 2021)

Protecting the vulnerable

While most people in Buckinghamshire live independent and healthy lives, some need extra support and protection. We know that the number of children and adults who need this extra help is increasing and the impending social care reforms, set out in the 'People at the Heart of Care' White Paper will have significant impacts for us as an authority. There are also rising numbers of people with mental health difficulties, special educational needs, disabilities, and complex needs.

We want to give everyone the best chances in life, so that – together with their families and carers - they are resilient and can identify their own solutions. We will continue to work with our partners and communities to innovate and improve our offer, helping people recover from illness sooner, promoting fostering, reducing social isolation and loneliness, and supporting our most vulnerable residents.

Our goal is to reduce inequalities and give everyone the support and skills they need to live independent, happy, and fulfilling lives.



We want:

- Children, adults, and families to feel safe and supported to live independent lives.
- Our older, disabled, and vulnerable people to receive the right support, at the right time.

Working with partners, we will:

- Develop Helping Hand programme to tackle food and financial insecurity in local communities, administering government winter grants to vulnerable residents.
- Work with the police, PCC and partners to help prevent crime, reduce the fear of crime and understand the issues around 'female insecurity' and adopting a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse.
- Provide care for all those who are unable to help themselves, working with the NHS to give residents the choice and support to stay in their own home should they wish to.
- Make sure children and adults, particularly those that are vulnerable, are healthy, safe and protected from harm and continue to improve the services we provide, including delivering the Happier, Healthier Lives strategy.
- Work with residents, partners and stakeholders to virtually eliminate rough sleeping, and reduce homelessness, addressing the root causes of both.
- Work in partnership with the NHS and voluntary groups to reduce problems such as drug abuse, alcoholism, and unhealthy lifestyles. Aligning services with the NHS where this benefits residents.
- Work with our partners to understand and prepare implementation of the Government's new social care reforms and the Health and Care Act, which sets out the Integrated Care System to ensure it best suits the needs of our residents.



Improving our environment



1,990 miles

of publicly maintained carriageway



3.35 billion

vehicle miles travelled (2020)



34%

reduction in Buckinghamshire's CO2 emissions (from 2005 to 2019)



1.3 million

country park visitors (projected) in 2021/22



51.2%

of waste is recycled (2020/21)



2,130 miles

of public Rights of Way



Bus passenger numbers have returned to



67.5%

of pre-Covid levels

Improving our environment

Buckinghamshire is a beautiful county, and our stunning natural and historic landscape is valued by all. Over a quarter of our county is within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a further third is covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Protection of our AONBs and Green Belt will be achieved through the 'Brown before Green' principle for future developments. We know we must deliver more homes and associated infrastructure for our growing population. By managing growth sensibly and responsibly (including identifying appropriate surplus public sector property and actively developing this for market, affordable housing and key worker housing), we can protect and enhance our natural environment and the benefits it brings. Aylesbury Garden Town is an exciting example: putting green spaces and natural environments at the heart of future development



We want:

- To address climate change, improve our environment and create economic opportunities for clean growth.
- To reduce our county's environmental impact by promoting sustainability and reducing waste.
- To improve air quality and people's health, by reducing emissions and encouraging green transport options.

Working with partners, we will:

- Take action to reduce our carbon emissions including planting over 500,000 trees, including 240 trees planted by schools and care homes for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and creation of new woodland.
- Facilitate the increased use of electric vehicles (including within our own fleet) and aim to double the number of electric charging points across the county. Encourage recovery and use of the public bus network.
- Increase recycling and energy recovery rates and continue to deliver recycling initiatives, including regular Love Food, Hate Waste campaigns through the year.
- Enhance and protect our green spaces and high-quality environment, through a zero-tolerance policy towards fly-tipping and litter, a no-nonsense approach to planning enforcement, and taking action on flood prevention.
- Encourage 'green growth' by promoting well-designed homes and introducing higher, more energy efficient standards for all new developments.
- Continue to manage and mitigate the impact of national infrastructure schemes such as HS2 and East West Rail, on Buckinghamshire's residents, businesses and special environment.
- Progress our ambition to be net carbon zero by 2050 (and potentially earlier) by delivering the key actions set out in our Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy.

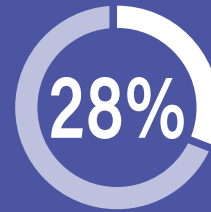


Increasing prosperity



45%

of residents educated to degree level or above



of vacant jobs not filled due to lack of skills (25% national average)



88.8%

of pupils attend good or outstanding schools



Value of exports from Buckinghamshire



77.5%

of residents in employment (South East average 78.3%)



5.4%

aged 16 or over have no qualifications (South East average 4.9%)

Increasing prosperity

Buckinghamshire is a prosperous county and a successful place to do business, contributing £18 billion to the UK economy and ranked as the fourth most productive area in England.

The county has low unemployment, higher than average household incomes, and boasts world leading sectors. From Pinewood Studios in the south to Silverstone in the north, Buckinghamshire is a great success story. We are also well placed to take advantage of emerging opportunities because of our proximity to London and Heathrow, and our location in the middle of a leading economic area with global strengths in science, technology and high-value manufacturing.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted this and the national trend shows that high levels of productivity and growth are beginning to slow, and levels of unemployment are rising. Our High Streets have been badly affected and are still facing challenges, including the change in retail habits with increased online demand and falling footfall in Town Centres. Action is needed now to ensure our economy remains fit for the future.



We want:

- To encourage sustainable economic growth, working with our partners to maximise opportunities and boost productivity.
- To continue to attract high quality jobs and investment in skills, innovation, and connectivity, keeping Buckinghamshire one of the best places to do business.
- Growth to benefit both new and existing communities, preserving the character of our environment while delivering everything we need to prosper.

Working with partners, we will:

- Provide a clear and consistent vision for Buckinghamshire through longer term strategic planning and a new Buckinghamshire Local Plan.
- Continue our commitment to working proactively and in partnership to produce and deliver regeneration plans for Aylesbury, High Wycombe and other town centres.
- Maximise capital and revenue opportunities in our property estate to support the provision of affordable key worker housing, to support the economy and other council services.
- Enable residents to be successful in their chosen career by encouraging skills development and lifelong learning.
- Support the business community, especially SMEs, to grow and flourish including through promotion of high streets and Enterprise Zones.
- Deliver at least £100m investment in Buckinghamshire's roads and pavements; including gully emptying and investing £2.7m in our drainage programme in 22/23.
- Continue to deliver the infrastructure that Buckinghamshire needs ahead of planned growth, including improving connectivity, increasing sustainability and tackling congestion.

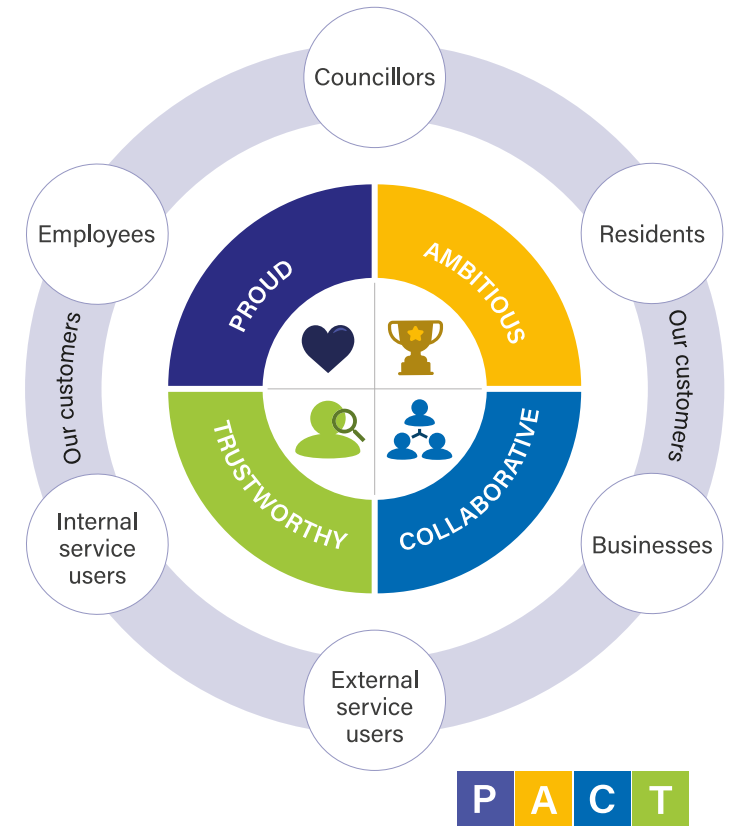
Our people

Everything we want to achieve for Buckinghamshire depends on having the right people in place. We need to retain, recruit, and develop talented and committed staff to provide the best services for our residents and businesses. To support this, Buckinghamshire Council has developed a set of values in consultation with our staff.

Our values are: Proud, Ambitious, Collaborative, Trustworthy (PACT). These values underpin how we work and show our commitment – our PACT – to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses. They are at the heart of everything we do.

Similarly, where services are provided through partners or external organisations, we will work with them to make sure these values are carried through in delivering services on our behalf.

We are already transforming our services and will continue to do so through our Better Buckinghamshire Programme, not only making savings but redesigning services and service delivery to suit our residents' needs. It is our people who deliver these services, and our improvements are focused on making the most of people's skills and experience, so we can take full advantage of the opportunities created by the new council. Everyone needs to be performing at their best to take the organisation on the next stage of its journey.



The financial challenge

We will ensure that Buckinghamshire Council is financially fit, efficient, and responsive to change. We will maintain robust financial planning, scrutinise budgets closely and be prudent in managing risks. As a new unitary authority, we have already achieved significant savings and will strive to achieve more.

Like all local authorities, we face challenging financial circumstances. There are more people turning to the council for support, but the resources available to help them have not increased to match the demand. We have to be realistic and focus on greater efficiency and value for money.

However, we are still ambitious to keep investing in our communities, sustaining the vital services on which our most vulnerable residents rely. We will manage our assets to create long term benefits and additional income, reducing our dependency on the taxpayer and protecting front line services.

£1.278bn

2022/23
Buckinghamshire
Council budget (gross)

£524m

2022/23 to 2025/26 - spending on providing or improving buildings, roads and other infrastructure (capital budget)
£38.5m for economic growth and regeneration
£136.4m for schools and school improvement projects
£117.9m for strategic highways and maintenance
£129.4m for strategic transport and infrastructure
£24.8m for waste
£21.8m for housing and homelessness



£561m

Schools
Funded by specific grants.



£217m

Adult Social Care
Includes additional investment to address continued increases in demand, cost, and complexity of social care services.



£78m

Children's Social Care
Includes additional investment for care services and children in care, plus preventative services.



£71m

Highways and transport
Includes roads, footpaths, street lighting, repairing potholes, parking and transportation.

£169m

Finance, resources, property and assets
Includes customer services, ICT, finance, property, housing benefit, HR, legal.



£19m

Planning, regeneration and economic growth
Includes development management, strategic planning and local planning, economic growth and regeneration, and enforcement.



£21m

Education
Includes Special Educational Needs, school improvement and early years services.



£11m

Culture and leisure
Includes leisure centres, libraries, museums, parks and play areas.



£22m

Public Health
Giving residents tools and information to lead healthier lives. Funded by specific grants.



£10m

Communities, localities and strategic partnerships
Includes community boards, community safety, community grants and localities and strategic partnerships.



£38m

Climate change and environment
Includes waste collection and disposals, recycling, flood prevention and street clearing.



£44m

Borrowing costs, contingencies to manage high risks service costs, and other corporate costs.



£16m

Housing, homelessness and regulatory services
includes Trading Standards, Registrars and Environmental Health.



Your council, your way

Residents are at the very heart of what we do. There are lots of different ways for people to get involved, shaping the council's knowledge, plans and policies and keeping up to date on news and views.

Getting involved: community boards

Community boards enable a focus on local solutions. There are 16 boards across the county. They bring together councillors and local communities to help solve local issues, take local decisions, and influence local service design and delivery.

Neighbourhood plans

We continue to work with town and parish councils to develop and deliver Neighbourhood Plans and produce regular local planning updates for local councils.

Our five local Planning Committees continue to meet regularly.

Inform, consult, and involve

We believe engagement should be meaningful, timely, inclusive, and direct. We want local people to help shape any proposals that affect the services they use or the areas where they live and work. We want to hear the voices of those most affected. It is important to us that

local people - including the young, community groups, businesses, partners, and staff - are involved, working together on developing and testing solutions and services.

Councillors and committees

Being democratically accountable and having good governance is essential to any council.

Our website helps you find your local councillor and see which meetings are coming up and decisions that are being taken. To make sure the council is open and transparent, agendas and minutes of meetings are available online, with many meetings being filmed or in public.

Customer focused

We must have a strong customer focus with services that are easy for everyone to access and we continue to improve our user experience with a commitment to return calls, keep customers updated on progress and to escalate queries when needed. We are improving our website content to improve accessibility and availability of information in high traffic areas, such as Planning, School Admissions and Home to School Transport. We are also developing our Digital Strategy focussing on improving resident's interaction with council through digital channels.



We want our residents to have a choice of how they engage with the council, including in places local to them. We know that some people would like to 'self-serve' online, but others will still value talking to us face to face. To support this, we have developed a Customer Experience Framework which we call 'Customer First.'

Key to Customer First are our three promises to our customers about the experience they should expect:

1. Easy for you to get in touch with us, easy to get what you need.
2. Helpful and that we aim to get things right first time.
3. Fair and honest in our approach so that we're clear about what we can and can't offer, and the reasons why.

Supporting this we have described the behaviours that we expect from our staff and those we request of our customers. To track the Customer Experience that residents, services users and businesses receive we will publish performance metrics to show how we are doing.

We are also developing our Digital Strategy focusing on improving residents' interaction with the council through digital channels.

Our equalities commitment

Buckinghamshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity, fostering good relations, and eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

We recognise, respect, and celebrate the fact that our staff and the people we serve are all from different backgrounds, whether this is our age, disability, race, family setting, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or belief. We will work with our partners to promote equality, celebrate diversity, improve social inclusion and mobility, and ensure fairness for everyone.

How to contact us

- Most information about our services can be found on this [website](#).
- However, you can also [contact us](#) directly.
- Follow us on social media: [@BucksCouncil](#)





Report to Cabinet

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Date: | Tuesday 1 March 2022 |
| Title: | Ofsted Inspection Outcome |
| Relevant councillor(s): | Cllr Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member Children's Services & Education |
| Author and/or contact officer: | Richard Nash, Corporate Director Children's Services |
| Ward(s) affected: | All wards |
| Recommendations: | For Cabinet to note the positive outcome of the Ofsted reinspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. |
| Reason for decision: | For information only |

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Children's Services in Buckinghamshire was judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in August 2014 and November 2017.
- 1.2 Following the November 2017 'Inadequate' judgement, Ofsted recently conducted their reinspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. As part of the inspection, inspectors evaluated:
 - overall effectiveness of the service
 - the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection
 - the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
 - the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families
- 1.3 This inspection found that Buckinghamshire was no longer 'Inadequate', and the overall judgement of Children's Services was 'requires improvement to be good'. The report was published on Friday 11 February 2022 and can be accessed [here](#).

1.4 This is, in our view, a very significant achievement particularly given the long history of previously inadequate practice and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on demand for services. We would like to thank and acknowledge the considerable efforts of our staff and the contribution of partners in achieving this inspection outcome.

2. Content of report

2.1 Children's Services in Buckinghamshire was judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in August 2014 and November 2017.

2.2 As this was Buckinghamshire's second inadequate judgement, the Secretary of State appointed John Coughlan CBE, former Chief Executive Hampshire County Council, as Children's Commissioner to undertake a review to determine if the most effective way of securing and sustaining improvement in Buckinghamshire was to remove the control of children's social care from the Council. As part of the review, the Commissioner recommended that the Council should retain control of its Children's Services and that there should be no alternative delivery model in Buckinghamshire; however, some external support should be commissioned. As a result, the Secretary of State appointed Hampshire County Council, as the Council's improvement advisers. The purpose of the improvement partnership with Hampshire is to provide the service with independent advice, support and challenge. An Improvement Board, chaired by John Coughlan was also established and included representatives from the Police, Health and Education. The purpose of the Board was to drive sustainable improvement across Children's Services to address the feedback and areas of concern identified during the November 2017 inspection.

2.3 Between July 2018 and October 2019, Ofsted completed 4 monitoring visits. This is standard practice by Ofsted prior to carrying out a full re-inspection. The report of each monitoring visit has been published and is available via the Ofsted website. All monitoring visits reflected progress and also the general challenge in improving services and also specific challenges around recruitment and retention of social workers.

2.4 The fifth monitoring visit was scheduled for Spring 2020; however, this was postponed due to Covid-19. Once Ofsted commenced inspection activity again, they conducted a Covid Focused Visit in February 2021. Challenges in relation to recruitment and retention were noted again as well as the significant increase in demand as a result of the pandemic.

2.5 Between 29 November and 17 December 2021, Ofsted conducted their reinspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. As part of the inspection, inspectors evaluated:

- the overall effectiveness of the service
- the experiences and progress of children in need of help and protection
- the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers
- the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families.

2.6 During the inspection, inspectors reviewed approximately 400 children's case files and over 350 documents. Inspectors also met with staff, partners, children and young people, care leavers, parents and carers, adopters and foster carers, as well as the Leader, Cabinet Member Children's Services & Education, Chief Executive and Senior Leaders within Children's Services.

2.7 This inspection found that Buckinghamshire was no longer 'Inadequate', and the overall judgement of Children's Services was 'requires improvement to be good'. The key findings as detailed within the inspection report are set out below.

2.8 **Overall Effectiveness: requires improvement to be good.**

- a) No children were identified at immediate, unassessed risk of serious harm and no widespread or serious failures for children were seen across the range of services.
- b) Leaders worked highly effectively to ensure that children were safeguarded during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- c) The scale and speed of improvement work have been impeded by acute and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties of both social workers and frontline managers and the depth and extent of poor social work practice dating back to the last inspection in 2017. These challenging conditions have been compounded by the pandemic, particularly a large and persistent increase in demand for children's services following children's return to school.
- d) Many children, particularly those receiving services from the assessment and help and protection teams, have too many changes of social worker.
- e) Senior managers have established a comprehensive and rigorous set of performance measures, which gives them a sound understanding of the services provided for children. However, this data is not always used to full effect.
- f) The positive impact of quality assurance work has accelerated during the last six months but has been too slow in generating widespread higher standards of practice that improve children's circumstances and experiences.

2.9 **The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: requires improvement to be good**

- a) Children are identified when they are at immediate risk of serious harm and prompt action is taken to protect them. No widespread or serious failures were

identified that left children exposed to serious continuing harm. This is a tangible improvement on the position at the last inspection in 2017. It has been achieved while addressing the considerable additional challenges entailed in safeguarding children during the pandemic.

- b) The work carried out in targeted and universal early help services results in discernible improvements in many children's circumstances. These services prevent many children's difficulties worsening and escalating.
- c) Children referred to the MASH needing urgent safeguarding responses are immediately identified and decisive actions are taken to protect them. Strategy meetings are held quickly, with relevant partner agencies attending or providing information.
- d) Too many children and families are re-referred who are not at significant risk of harm but require skilled help to improve their circumstances.
- e) Some assessments are too superficial. They often list histories of previous referrals and interventions, but do not evaluate these in conjunction with current concerns to provide a coherent picture of children's circumstances over significant periods of time.
- f) A sharp increase in the number of strategy meetings and initial child protection conferences (ICPCs) has led to delayed ICPCs. Inspectors did not find any avoidable harm arising for children because of delays, and most of the children had tight initial safety plans in place.
- g) Children on a plan are seen regularly by their social workers and many receive help that improves their circumstances and helps to keep them safe. However, the quality of direct work with many children often has little purpose. Emerging indications of improving practice were seen with some children on CP plans over the last six months which redressed previously entrenched patterns of drift and delay.
- h) Most child protection advisers (CPAs) regularly seek updates on children's progress, but their scrutiny is not always incisive enough when plans are floundering.
- i) When concerns about children's safety and well-being increase, work in the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline (PLO) is effective.
- j) Decisions to remove children from parental care are careful and in the best long-term interests of the child.
- k) Some children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless are not well supported when they present to children's social care.

- l) The local authority has suitable oversight of most children not currently placed full-time in education.

2.10 The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: requires improvement to be good

- a) Some older children wait too long for permanency arrangements to be confirmed and associated drift is not always effectively challenged. Direct work with children often lacks a clear purpose and is fractured by changes in children's social workers. A small number of care leavers live in unsuitable accommodation.
- b) Some older children wait too long for permanency arrangements to be confirmed and associated drift is not always effectively challenged. Direct work with children often lacks a clear purpose.
- c) Many care leavers valued the support provided to them during the pandemic and most children are living in secure and stable foster families.
- d) Diligent early permanence work is conducted with children who have recently entered care, particularly during care proceedings.
- e) Work with some children living with their parents under a care order requires strengthening. Some children have well-considered assessments and plans; however, for others, weaker planning and drift leads to avoidable delays in discharging their care orders.
- f) Most children in care are settled and feel safe where they live.
- g) Review meetings for children in care take place on time and with the appropriate people.
- h) The regular footprint of the IROs is present on children's files, but formal escalations are not consistently recorded to address drift in care planning.
- i) Care plans are refreshed regularly; however, the effectiveness of some care plans is limited as they contain generic rather than individualised actions.
- j) Children in care have their routine health needs met. Some children receive support with their emotional health and well-being, but others experience considerable delays in waiting for child and adolescent mental health assessments or interventions.
- k) An established Children in Care Council provides opportunities for some children in care and care leavers to have their views heard on the services they receive. Children in care can access the support of advocates if they wish, and a small number do so.
- l) The quality of a small number of foster carer assessments is weak and delays are evident in the completion of some connected person assessments.

- m) Prospective and approved adopters are well supported through regular visits and effective communication.
- n) Care leavers are visited regularly by their PAs and are able to establish trusted relationships that are valued by most young people. Not all care leavers are routinely informed of their rights and entitlements.
- o) The virtual school works collaboratively with the care leavers team to actively promote young people's engagement in education, employment and training (EET).

2.11 The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: requires improvement to be good

- a) Leaders and senior managers have achieved important improvements in practice over the last year for children in most parts of the service following two inadequate inspection judgements in 2014 and 2018.
- b) Several strengthened elements of leadership are in place, but much more needs to be done to ensure that children receive consistently positive standards of social work intervention in all parts of the service.
- c) A knowledgeable and highly committed new senior management team is providing highly focused practice leadership.
- d) Managers at every level have worked tirelessly and collectively to ensure that children are safeguarded in the face of the unique and continuing challenges generated by the pandemic.
- e) Social workers' workloads in the assessment and help and protection teams are relentless and highly demanding. Persistently high workloads and staff turnover continue to impede senior managers' efforts to substantially improve the quality of social work practice.
- f) Senior managers are determined and persistent in their efforts to recruit and retain more social workers.
- g) Improved strategic engagement with partners has secured much greater confidence in the local authority's decision-making and responses concerning work in the front door.
- h) Quality assurance of social work with children is still at an embryonic stage and is not yet a powerful determinant in improving practice standards, although its influence and scale have gained pace and traction over the last six months.
- i) Senior managers are determined and persistent in their efforts to recruit and retain more social workers.

- j) A detailed and accurate performance management system provides managers with frequently updated and rigorous metrics about performance in most parts of the service.
- k) Children's services are at the centre of the recently unitarised council and considerable additional investment has been provided to children's social care services. Regular scrutiny provides the leader of the council and cabinet member for children with an informed understanding and they both have an inquisitive eye.
- l) Most social workers receive regular case and personal supervision and management oversight. Case supervision is predominantly functional rather than reflective and developmental. Heavy workloads in the front door teams leaves limited time to critically reflect on the progress of plans and the influence of direct work on helping children.
- m) Social workers and frontline managers attend a wide range of pertinent training and development opportunities.
- n) Despite the intensive workload demands, most social workers spoken with during the inspection like working in Buckinghamshire and reported that their managers support them and help them prioritise their work.

2.12 **What needs to improve?**

- a) The understanding, and reduction of, a high rate of re-referrals and assessments that result in no services being provided for children and their families.
- b) The consideration and cumulative impact of earlier interventions and family histories in children and family assessments.
- c) The quality of social workers' direct work with children.
- d) The support provided to children aged 16 and 17 years who present as homeless.
- e) The impact of independent reviewing officers (IROs) in decisively escalating children's cases when there is drift and delay in the progress of their care plans.
- f) The quality of case supervision for social workers in order that it promotes consistently effective work with children.
- g) The engagement and participation of children in care in the corporate parenting work of the council.

3. Other options considered

3.1 N/A

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 In light of the positive Ofsted judgement, the Statutory Direction issued to the Council in relation to Children’s Services under Section 487A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 is currently in the process of being revoked by the Secretary of State.
- 4.2 There are no financial implications associated with the outcome of this inspection.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 N/A

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 N/A

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 N/A

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 The service is currently in the process of developing an Improvement Plan in response to the Ofsted recommendations. This plan must be submitted to Ofsted by Wednesday 25 May 2022.
- 8.2 Local authorities judged as ‘requires improvement to be good’ at their most recent inspection will receive standard inspections by Ofsted. The standard inspection will usually take place about 3 years after the previous inspection. In between inspections, the local authority will receive up to 2 focused visits.
- 8.3 An independently chaired Board will continue to meet every two months. The Board will maintain oversight of the progress being made against the Ofsted recommendations and other improvements required across the service. John Coughlan, CBE, will continue to be the Independent Chair.

9. Background papers

[June 2014: Ofsted Inspection Report](#)

[November 2017: Ofsted Inspection Report](#)

[July 2018: Ofsted Monitoring Visit](#)

[December 2018: Ofsted Monitoring Visit](#)

[June 2019: Ofsted Monitoring Visit](#)

[December 2019: Ofsted Monitoring Visit](#)

[February 2021: Ofsted Focused Visit](#)

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone [01296 382343] or email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk]

This page is intentionally left blank

Inspection of Buckinghamshire Council children's services

Inspection dates: 6 December 2021 to 17 December 2021

Lead inspector: Nick Stacey, Her Majesty's Inspector

| Judgement | Grade |
|--|---------------------------------|
| The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families | Requires improvement to be good |
| The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection | Requires improvement to be good |
| The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers | Requires improvement to be good |
| Overall effectiveness | Requires improvement to be good |

Children's services in Buckinghamshire are no longer inadequate, but still require further improvements to be good. No children were identified at immediate, unassessed risk of serious harm and no widespread or serious failures for children were seen across the range of services. Leaders worked highly effectively to ensure that children were safeguarded during the COVID-19 pandemic. The scale and speed of improvement work have been impeded by acute and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties of both social workers and frontline managers and the depth and extent of poor social work practice dating back to the last inspection in 2017. These challenging conditions have been compounded by the pandemic, particularly a large and persistent increase in demand for children's services following children's return to school.

Work with some children, who are the subjects of child in need and child protection plans, reduces risks of further harm and helps parents to better understand and address their children's unmet needs. Many children, particularly those receiving services from the assessment and help and protection teams, have too many changes of social worker. This means that the help they receive is fragmented and episodic rather than carefully planned and underpinned by continuous strong professional relationships. Some children who are in care also commented unfavourably about their frequent change of social workers.

Senior managers have established a comprehensive and rigorous set of performance measures, which gives them a sound understanding of the services provided for children. However, this data is not always used to full effect to provoke enquiries into some significant practice areas that inspectors highlighted, including a persistently high rate of re-referrals and unsuitable accommodation for a small number of care leavers. Regular and forensic levels of scrutiny have promoted improvements in the circumstances and experiences of many children. This approach embraces managers at every level and has enabled leaders and managers to have a more collective, shared culture in understanding and addressing difficulties. The positive impact of quality assurance work has accelerated during the last six months but has been too slow in generating widespread higher standards of practice that improve children's circumstances and experiences.

What needs to improve?

- The understanding, and reduction of, a high rate of re-referrals and assessments that result in no services being provided for children and their families.
- The consideration and cumulative impact of earlier interventions and family histories in children and family assessments.
- The quality of social workers' direct work with children.
- The support provided to children aged 16 and 17 years who present as homeless.
- The impact of independent reviewing officers (IROs) in decisively escalating children's cases when there is drift and delay in the progress of their care plans.
- The quality of case supervision for social workers in order that it promotes consistently effective work with children.
- The engagement and participation of children in care in the corporate parenting work of the council.

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection: requires improvement to be good

1. Children are identified when they are at immediate risk of serious harm and prompt action is taken to protect them. No widespread or serious failures were identified that left children exposed to serious continuing harm. This is a tangible improvement on the position at the last inspection in 2017. It has been achieved while addressing the considerable additional challenges entailed in safeguarding children during the pandemic.
2. The work carried out in targeted and universal early help services results in discernible improvements in many children's circumstances. Several family centres and three 'family centres plus' offer a valuable range of community-based programmes to support parents. These services prevent many children's difficulties worsening and escalating to requiring intervention from children's

social care. Children at risk of harm are promptly identified in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), and thresholds between early help and social care are mostly well understood. There is delay in the targeted early help family support team for a small number of children with more complex needs who require referral for statutory help.

3. Staff in the MASH are proficient and balanced in responding to contacts and referrals and this is also a distinct improvement since the last inspection. Information-gathering between partner agencies in the MASH is fluid and provides a history of earlier involvements and thorough intelligence about presenting concerns. This work informs appropriate and prompt recommendations by social workers for managers, who make well-founded decisions.
4. Children referred to the MASH needing urgent safeguarding responses are immediately identified and decisive actions are taken to protect them. Strategy meetings are held quickly, with relevant partner agencies attending or providing information. Discussions produce rounded evaluations of initial risks. Valuable work led by senior managers has resulted in many partner agencies, particularly schools, having a clearer understanding of thresholds and greater confidence in referring children to the MASH. Most schools spoken to during the inspection reflected positively about their communication with social workers and frontline support staff regarding children in need of help and protection.
5. Too many children and families are re-referred who are not at significant risk of harm but require skilled help to improve their circumstances. A significant number of these children are referred on for social workers to complete assessments which culminate in no further action. Some assessments are too superficial. They often list histories of previous referrals and interventions, but do not evaluate these in conjunction with current concerns to provide a coherent picture of children's circumstances over significant periods of time. These omissions lead to episodic assessments where each new concern is typically conceived of as a distinct event. Evaluative and authoritative pre-birth assessments are completed by experienced senior social workers in a court team. Highly vulnerable newborn babies are protected from future harm, either through care proceedings that are initiated when they are born, or through rigorous child protection plans if it is deemed to be safe enough for their parents and carers to look after them.
6. A sustained rise in referrals has featured a sharp increase in the number of strategy meetings and initial child protection conferences (ICPCs). This surge in volumes led to a high number of delayed ICPCs. This trend has reduced substantially since the summer but remains significantly higher than the rate prior to the onset of the pandemic. Inspectors did not find any avoidable harm arising for children because of delays, and most of the children had tight initial safety plans in place.
7. Children who are the subjects of child in need and child protection (CP) plans are seen regularly by their social workers and many receive help that improves their circumstances and helps to keep them safe. However, the quality of direct

work with many children often has little purpose beyond seeing them and recording observations and conversations. Frequent changes of social workers, and their very demanding workloads, have a detrimental impact on building constructive relationships with children and their families. Emerging indications of improving practice were seen with some children on CP plans over the last six months which redressed previously entrenched patterns of drift and delay. A specialist disabled children team undertakes effective safeguarding work with a small number of children on CP plans.

8. CP plans are thorough and comprehensive, but they often use too much professional language. Some plans could be shortened and simplified to make them more accessible and helpful tools for children, parents and professionals. Most child protection advisers regularly seek updates on children's progress between their scheduled review meetings, but their scrutiny is not always incisive enough when plans are floundering.
9. Child protection core groups and child in need review meetings are convened regularly. These forums helpfully update parents and professionals on key developments and events, but they rarely assess the continuing effectiveness of children's plans in addressing unmet needs and reducing risks to them.
10. When concerns about children's safety and well-being increase, work in the pre-proceedings stage of the Public Law Outline (PLO) is effective. Panels and monitoring systems provide managers with a sound understanding of the progress families make during the process. The PLO phase is not misused as an automatic gateway to subsequent care proceedings, and some families safely exit the PLO due to effective work that improves parenting and reduces risks to children. Some children experience delays because of overdue external assessments. Changes in social workers result in some internal assessments being submitted late.
11. Decisions to remove children from parental care are careful and in the best long-term interests of the child. These critical decisions are accurate and made by managers of appropriate seniority; however, the supporting rationale is not always explicit enough on children's files. The quality of most social work statements for care proceedings is detailed and analytical, providing a sound basis for recommendations for the court. The designated family judge echoed these findings but was also concerned at some delays in care proceedings caused by social workers who suddenly leave.
12. The referral pathway to a specialist missing and exploited hub (MEH) is well understood, and workers know most of the children well. Effective work by the team maps children's connections with risky locations. Active police investigations are instigated concerning local employers when there is evidence about potential child exploitation. A Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) multi-agency forum meets regularly to review the progress of work with children at the greatest risk. Well-targeted disruption activities are initiated, and appropriate actions are pursued when concerns about children escalate. The work of the MEH has been weakened, however, by the temporary

redeployment of some staff into other social work teams due to high demand levels.

13. Management oversight and case supervision with social workers are regularly recorded. Records are functional and task-centred, and social workers are helped to prioritise what work needs to be completed. Records rarely demonstrate inquisitiveness about children's experiences, or any beneficial outcomes of the work being done with them.
14. Some children aged 16 and 17 years old who present as homeless are not well supported when they present to children's social care. A small number were identified by inspectors that should have been promptly offered support as children in care due to their considerable vulnerabilities. The local authority urgently reviewed the circumstances of these children.
15. Allegations about professionals or volunteers who work with children are swiftly and appropriately responded to when they are first received by the local authority designated officer (LADO). Partly due to a large backlog of work, subsequent enquiries are not all closely tracked, and many take too long to complete.
16. Work to support and safeguard a small number of children living in private fostering arrangements earlier this year was not careful enough. These children previously attended local language schools and were unable to return to their home countries due to travel restrictions. No children experienced harm, but basic checks on their carers were not completed.
17. The local authority has suitable oversight of most children not currently placed full-time in education. Children identified as missing education are kept under review until they are back in school or local authority officers are confident that they are safely in the care of another local authority. The number of pupils identified as electively home educated is increasing steadily over time, as has been the case nationally. Officers are alert to the reasons why parents electively home educate their children, and prioritise their contact with, and oversight of, families suitably.

The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers: requires improvement to be good

18. The experiences and progress of some children in care are not strong enough. Some older children wait too long for permanency arrangements to be confirmed and associated drift is not always challenged effectively. Direct work with children often lacks a clear purpose and is fractured by changes in children's social workers. A small number of care leavers live in unsuitable accommodation.
19. Inspectors spoke with several young people who have left care and children in care. Many care leavers valued the support provided to them during the pandemic and most children are living in secure and stable foster families.

Children repeatedly emphasised how their trust in social work support had been undermined by their experience of their social workers frequently changing.

20. Diligent early permanence work is conducted with children who have recently entered care, particularly during care proceedings. Fostering placements are quickly matched and approved. Parallel adoption planning is proactive and demonstrates that adoption is considered for older children and those with special needs. Permanence options are thoroughly considered for some, but not all, children in long-term care. When children have been in long-term care with relatives, proactive discussions encouraging carers to apply for special guardianship orders lack sufficient urgency, resulting in a small number of children remaining in care longer than is necessary.
21. Permanence planning meetings are held regularly, but some records comprise too many descriptive updates. For older children, they do not consistently result in challenging drift in their care plans, and this is further exacerbated by their social workers changing.
22. Work with some children living with their parents under a care order requires strengthening. Some children have well-considered assessments and plans devised before applications to discharge their care orders are made. For others, weaker planning and drift leads to avoidable delays in discharging their care orders. When children return home in an unplanned way, there are some delays in confirming the suitability of these arrangements.
23. Most children in care are settled and feel safe where they live, including a large proportion of children in long-term care who are placed outside Buckinghamshire, and older 16- and 17-year-olds living in semi-independent settings. No children are living in unregistered children's homes.
24. Although most social workers can describe why children are living where they are and explain why it is the right place for them, this is not always well documented. Important documents are not always accessible in children's files. Care experienced adults accessing their records later in life would struggle to understand why critical decisions had been made at specific points in time.
25. Review meetings for children in care take place on time and the appropriate professionals and family members are usually involved. Children's views are presented, either in person or by someone who knows them. The regular footprint of the IROs is present on children's files, but formal escalations are not consistently recorded to address drift in care planning.
26. Care plans are refreshed regularly, and most are informed by updated six-monthly social work assessments. The effectiveness of some care plans is limited as they contain generic rather than individualised actions.
27. Some children told inspectors that they are frustrated at how many social workers they have had to work with and consequently having to tell their stories repeatedly to new workers. Work with some children has been impeded by changes of social worker. Children in care are mostly visited within the timescales stipulated in their plans but conversations about what is happening

to them and what the future holds often lack detail. A specific service completes life-story work with children, rather than their social workers. This arrangement leads to delays in the completion of this important work due to a long waiting list.

28. Professionals in the MEH have a sound knowledge of the more vulnerable children in care. There is effective partnership working and information-sharing through the MACE and consultation with social workers about possible child exploitation. Direct work with children in care has also been adversely affected by the redeployment of some hub workers to support pressured social work teams across the service. Not all children benefit from diligent return home interviews after an episode of going missing, especially if they are living outside Buckinghamshire.
29. School leaders have described the benefits of clear expectations from, and useful communications with, the virtual school in supporting their work with children in care. They value staff expertise and approachability in working together for the benefit of children in care. Personal education plan review discussions illustrate that the virtual school is well informed about children's outcomes, both academically and, in a broader sense, of their wider development.
30. Children in care have their routine health needs met. Some children receive support with their emotional health and well-being, but others experience considerable delays in waiting for child and adolescent mental health assessments or interventions. Following triage, two-year waiting times are not uncommon. Most care leavers are provided with their health histories to ensure that they have an understanding of their childhood health to carry forward into their adult lives.
31. An established Children in Care Council called We Do Care provides opportunities for some children in care and care leavers to have their views heard on the services they receive. Direct engagement by the corporate parenting panel with children in care and care leavers is too limited. No children are represented on the main board. Children in care can access the support of advocates if they wish, and a small number do so.
32. Repeated staffing changes and sickness absence in the fostering service have had an adverse impact on some elements of work. The quality of a small number of foster carer assessments is weak and delays are evident in the completion of some connected person assessments. As a result, some children live for short periods in unlawful family placements. However, foster carers appreciate receiving regular supervision, support and training. More effective methods have been introduced to strengthen the recruitment of foster carers which are showing promising results.
33. An increased number of adopters have been recruited this year. Prospective and approved adopters are well supported through regular visits and effective communication. Responses to adults enquiring about adoption are prompt and

welcoming. Adoption support makes a positive difference to children and their family lives.

34. Not all care leavers are routinely informed of their rights and entitlements. A clear and accessible offer sets out the support and entitlements available to care leavers, but it is not widely understood. Some uncertainty on the part of professionals as to how the local offer should be implemented leads to some inequities for care leavers in the support they receive. The practice of transferring young people to another part of the service when they are 21 to 25 years of age disrupts important relationships with their personal advisers (PAs).
35. Care leavers are visited regularly by their PAs and are able to establish trusted relationships that are valued by most young people. Not all care leavers get the help and support that they need quickly enough, particularly if they live outside Buckinghamshire and have additional needs arising from a disability or poor mental health. Pathway plans are mostly well written and are reviewed on a regular basis.
36. The virtual school works collaboratively with the care leavers team to actively promote young people's engagement in education, employment and training (EET). Consequently, most young people secure EET opportunities and approximately 10% are attending higher education programmes. Care leavers seeking asylum are well cared for and supported into adulthood. They benefit from swift access to services that address their wide spectrum of needs.
37. Care leavers in custody are supported by visits and indirect contact, providing important emotional support for them. Transition planning for young people who are moving to adult services is not fully effective and some young people fall between the gaps of both services.
38. Most care leavers live in a range of suitable accommodation. Specialist services and their PAs help care leavers acquire independent housing and develop the skills they need to live on their own. Tenancy support, council tax relief and a leaving care grant support these early stages in their progression towards independent living. Young people who live in other local authority areas experience more erratic support, which reduces their access to secure housing in locations where they feel they belong. A small number of care leavers identified during the inspection are living in unsuitable accommodation which is not accurately reflected on the child's record.

The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families: requires improvement to be good

39. Leaders and senior managers have achieved important improvements in practice for children in most parts of the service following two inadequate inspection judgements in 2014 and 2017. Several strengthened elements of leadership are in place, but much more needs to be done to ensure that children receive consistently positive standards of social work intervention in all parts of the service. A knowledgeable and highly committed new senior management team is providing highly focused practice leadership.

40. Managers at every level have worked tirelessly and collectively to ensure that children are safeguarded in the face of the unique and continuing challenges generated by the pandemic. These measures have safeguarded the most vulnerable children. Addressing this unprecedented public health emergency has been compounded by acute social worker recruitment and retention challenges, and increased demand to work with children subject to a referral in the 'front door' assessment and help and protection teams.
41. Social workers' workloads in the assessment and help and protection teams are relentless and highly demanding, and, as a result, some seek transfers to other parts of the service. Senior managers continue to work relentlessly to improve the quality of social work practice despite the significant challenges of staff turnover and high workloads.
42. The extent and scale of increasing waves of referrals are regularly reflected in accurate performance information. Many local authorities have experienced similar rises. Although it has reduced in the last few months, too many children are still re-referred to the service following earlier assessment and intervention. Many assessments are completed that lead to no subsequent social care service, consuming considerable amounts of scarce social work time. Senior leaders, including the chair of the improvement board, advised inspectors of the increased complexity and seriousness of many referrals featured in the demand surge. Senior managers did not persuasively explain why more substantive work has not been done to pinpoint any distinguishable local factors underpinning the high re-referral rate and of any specific measures taken to reduce it.
43. Improved strategic engagement with partners has secured much greater confidence in the local authority's decision-making and responses concerning work in the front door. Schools are referring more children when new needs and risks have emerged or intensified during recurrent lockdowns.
44. Senior managers understand the detrimental impact of numerous changes of social workers in undertaking impactful and positive work with children. This is most prevalent in the front door teams, but a quarter of social workers in the child in care team have also left in the past year. Furthermore, many children in care are allocated to social workers in the help and protection teams, where the churn of social workers is greater.
45. Senior managers are determined and persistent in their efforts to recruit and retain more social workers. Specific local factors have further diminished the already very limited number of experienced locum social workers. A planned overseas social worker recruitment programme has just reached fruition. Significant additional investment has been injected to support a cogent plan to expand the numbers of social workers produced by the local authority's academy over the forthcoming two years.
46. Quality assurance of social work with children is still at an embryonic stage and is not yet a powerful determinant in improving practice standards, although its influence and scale have gained pace and traction over the last six months.

Social workers are experiencing recent auditing work as collaborative and professionally enabling.

47. The inclusion and participation of children in helping to shape improved practice and services is underdeveloped, particularly in the corporate parenting board. This is recognised by leaders and work has recently started to strengthen the inclusion of more children in decision-making and governance structures.
48. A detailed and accurate performance management system provides managers with frequently updated and rigorous metrics about performance in most parts of the service. More recently, weekly check and challenge meetings with team managers have been introduced to promote their routine engagement and understanding of performance in their teams. There are some gaps in the intelligence and analysis emerging from this performance data, including an authoritative evaluation for the high rate of re-referrals and the poor timeliness of LADO investigation outcomes. Senior managers and leaders are highly informed about, and seek to be responsive to, demand pressures in front door teams. The impact of measures to substantially reduce workloads to manageable levels is less evident. It is recognised by inspectors that this is not easy and straightforward.
49. Children's services are at the centre of the recently unitarised council and considerable additional investment has been provided to children's social care services. Regular scrutiny provides the leader of the council and cabinet member for children with an informed understanding and they both have an inquisitive eye. The chief executive also has a sound strategic and operational overview, assisted by her attendance at monthly Improvement Board meetings.
50. Most social workers receive regular case and personal supervision and management oversight. This has been particularly important during the extensive period when most have been working from home. Case supervision is predominantly functional rather than reflective and developmental. Heavy workloads in the front door teams leaves limited time to critically reflect on the progress of plans and the influence of direct work on helping children. Many teams have also experienced changes in managers, which has resulted in professional discontinuity in the management support provided to social workers.
51. Social workers and frontline managers attend a wide range of pertinent training and development opportunities, despite their relentless workload pressures. This has continued to promote their professional knowledge and development. Despite the intensive workload demands, most social workers spoken with during the inspection like working in Buckinghamshire and reported that their managers support them and help them prioritise their work.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This report is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022

This page is intentionally left blank



Report to Cabinet

- Date:** 1st March 2022
- Title:** Outcomes from the Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group
- Author:** Nigel Dicker
- Recommendations:** That Cabinet considers the findings of the affordable housing member led task and finish group, including the proposed interim position statement on affordable housing,
- and
- a) Provides any comments and amendments as appropriate;
 - b) Agrees that the affordable housing position statement is adopted with any required amendments and the required activities be taken forward by officers.

Background

- 1.0 An affordable housing member task and finish group was initiated in August 2021. Led by the Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services the group met on a number of occasions to discuss the issues and challenges around the delivery of affordable housing in Buckinghamshire and to develop an affordable housing 'position statement', with the aim of reporting back to the Leader and Cabinet.
- 1.1 The position statement is intended to set out the Council's interim approach and immediate commitment to bringing forward a development on a Council owned site that provides affordable housing, potentially with an element of specialist affordable and key worker housing. The interim approach is intended to cover the period while the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and overarching housing strategies are in development and is expected to provide early tangible progress for the key Council priority of increasing the delivery of affordable housing.

- 1.2 The member led task and finish group (TFG) had the immediate objectives of:
1. Identifying how the Council can help secure more affordable housing delivery, for example by looking at options for making use of county wide property and land assets.
 2. Identifying and following up issues that may require further clarification, for example a corporate 'key worker' definition.
 3. Agreeing a site or scheme(s) to pilot new approaches for delivery of affordable housing of various types.
 4. Applying learning from these schemes to set the framework and methods for getting the best outcomes for future affordable housing schemes.
- 1.3 Some of the longer term objectives of the member led TFG are to provide input into the development of the Council's overarching housing strategy and to identify learning from completed pilot projects to inform future schemes, thereby maximising delivery, and also complementing existing delivery that occurs through the planning process and registered provider partnerships.

Main content of report

- 2.0 The proposed position statement is shown at Appendix 1. The key aspects or immediate commitments are in bullet points a-g., para 2.1 of Appendix 1. The TFG also proposes a two-line statement to describe its basic purpose:
- "to develop proposals on how to best provide affordable housing in Buckinghamshire, and bring forward a site that demonstrates the Council is delivering on its promises".*
- 2.1 Appendix 2 - site costings - outlines the potential impacts of introducing different types of affordable housing on site values at two major development sites and presents possible options for consideration and highlights that there may be a direct impact on the Council's capital programme.
- 2.2 As shown below in points 1-16, the TFG considered a number of aspects and challenges around the delivery of affordable housing in Buckinghamshire, identifying areas of need and prioritising opportunities to house those residents in greatest need. (Types of affordable housing are listed in Appendix 4.)
1. There is more need in the north of the Council's area – how can this be addressed, given that there are underused Council owned sites across the whole of the Council area.
 2. Where there is a business case to do so, we will use Council owned land / buildings where possible, tying into our ambitions to regenerate town centres and using the Council's planning powers and permitted development rights where appropriate, to convert these into affordable housing and discounted rent units.

3. We will develop a definition for key workers, and how we house them sustainably (including what happens when they stop being key workers). This is likely to be a combination of social and affordable housing, discounted rent or in some cases discounted ownership models.
4. We recommend that the planning requirement for affordable housing on new build developments across the Council area is harmonised, reducing the existing requirements ranging from 25% affordable to 40% affordable to a single requirement for Buckinghamshire.
5. We will look for opportunities to use rural exceptions and neighbourhood plans driven by local communities to develop local schemes that keep families connected with their villages, especially in locations where developers would be unlikely to build.
6. We will explore the use of innovative building methods, including modular construction techniques to enable quicker builds and fit-outs where possible, especially on previously undeveloped Council-owned land (and distinct from conversion of former Council buildings).
7. We will include sites for affordable housing in the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan, balancing the need to maintain green belt with the need for more affordable housing units, and using brownfield sites where possible.
8. We will develop an enabling strategy to partner with other organisations (e.g. Homes England), leading with RSL's and private builders, using S106 and grant funding.
9. We will develop and upscale Consilio, a Council owned company, as an active partner that could contribute to bringing forward affordable housing, potentially at lower cost, especially in areas where there is already an active regeneration plan. Consilio will need to be properly resourced to meet this considerable challenge. There will be detailed attention to ensuring sufficient capacity and robust governance processes.
10. We will continue with the process of setting up the governance arrangements required to create a registered provider of social housing (RP) potentially as a subsidiary of Consilio so as to be able to act as a social landlord and let affordable units acquired by or possibly brought forward by Consilio.
11. We will develop a 'principles' document outlining the affordable strategy, and relevant principles to follow, including tenure (number of bedrooms) and types of housing, including adapted housing, bringing clarity to geography, location and utilisation of Council owned sites, working with the 'one estate' work stream.

12. In order to assess potentially foregone capital receipts from using Council properties or land, and so the impacts on the overall capital programme that can be afforded by the Council, we will identify and cost out options (Appendix 2) for at least one Council owned asset in Buckinghamshire on which to deliver additional affordable (potentially of a specialist nature) and key worker housing. We will expedite such a scheme on one of these Council owned sites:
 - Stoke Mandeville Sports and Social Club
 - Horns Lane, High Wycombe
 - Tatling End, Denham
13. We will review and catalogue empty homes in Buckinghamshire and explore the possible use of processes to bring these back into use. We will review the framework of Council Tax charges to incentivise owners to bring these back into use as dwellings.
14. The Council will agree a position statement on the new national 'First Homes' product for first time buyers and ensure that First Homes delivered in new Buckinghamshire housing developments are prioritised for Buckinghamshire residents and key workers. See Appendix 5, First Homes Interim Position Statement.
15. We will adopt language that avoids stigmatising occupants in mixed tenure developments and find better descriptions than "social housing" that minimises stratification.
16. We will carefully examine and summarise the opportunities that are in the pipeline (Appendix 3) making the Council's objectives transparent and developing a narrative that follows and showcases the progress of our activities.

3.0 Next steps and review

- 3.1 If Cabinet agrees to adopt the approach suggested above and the content of the position statement, with or without further amendments, then officers will action as appropriate and in particular, as soon as possible seek to identify a Council owned asset in Buckinghamshire on which to deliver additional affordable (potentially of a specialist nature) and key worker housing.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Affordable Housing Position Statement

Appendix 2 - Site costings (confidential appendix)

Appendix 3 - Affordable housing delivery performance

Appendix 4 - Affordable housing types

Appendix 5 - Draft First Homes Position Statement

Your questions and views (for key decisions)

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone [01296 382343] or email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk]

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1

Buckinghamshire Council Affordable Housing Position Statement**1.0 Current Conditions in Buckinghamshire**

- 1.1 With around 4800 (as of September 2021) households on Bucks Home Choice seeking social housing, yet with only around 1500 lettings made annually, the Council recognises that Buckinghamshire has an acute shortage of housing in terms of socially rented housing, affordable rent and rented key worker accommodation.
- 1.2 This shortage is largely driven by high rents and property values, which put even properties defined as 'affordable' in Government guidance (e.g. rented at up to 80% of market rent or sold as shared ownership or discounted purchase price) out of the reach of many residents.
- 1.3 Symptomatic of this is the fact (column 7, table 1 below) that the proportion of Buckinghamshire residents in work and claiming housing benefit is higher than in the South East and significantly more than in England. This demonstrates that lower income working households often need welfare support to afford to rent in both social housing and private rented sectors in Bucks.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|---------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------------|---|---------------------------|
| | Average (mean) house prices in 19/20 | Mean annual earnings in 19/20 | Ratio house prices/ income 19/20 | Income for 80% mortgage 19/20 | Mean monthly private sector rent 19/20 | Unemployment 2019/20 | Housing Benefit claimants total in employment % | HA affordable homes 18/19 |
| England | £309,678 | £30,248 | 10 | £70,784 | £843 | 3.9% | 17.3% | 2,753,583 |
| South E | £388,040 | £32,162 | 12 | £88,695 | £999 | 3.1% | 19.4% | 392,396 |
| Bucks | £480,356 | £35,526 | 14 | £109,796 | £1,160 | 3% | 23% | 31,394 |

Table 1 - National Housing Federation - Home Truths. The housing crisis in the South East, August 2021

1.4 The challenges faced in the delivery of affordable housing

- 1.5 To effectively tackle the shortage of affordable housing in Buckinghamshire is clearly a significant challenge. High land values and greenbelt planning controls mean there is a shortage of modestly priced sites available for building, making the supply of a good number of truly affordable homes near to employment and amenities difficult.
- 1.6 Housing supply has a major influence on economic development and it impacts upon economic performance - a lack of supply can place an area at competitive disadvantage. Essentially, a good supply of affordable housing is an enabler, bringing access to jobs, education, it underpins economic growth, the ability to recover from the economic effects of the pandemic, and health and wellbeing.

1.7 The 'cost' of affordable housing

1.8 However, it must be recognised that the delivery of affordable housing has to be subsidised in order for the rent level or sale price to be truly affordable to those people who cannot afford renting or buying on the open market. This can be through direct subsidy via financial grants or indirect subsidy whereby a landowner (perhaps the Council) or developer has to accept a lesser capital receipt, or lower income from the scheme.

1.9 The table below shows housing need in the former district areas in Buckinghamshire, in terms of bedrooms for households on Bucks Homes Choice, as of September 2021.

| Bed need | Chiltern Area | Wycombe Area | South Bucks Area | Aylesbury Area | Totals |
|----------|---------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|--------|
| 1 bed | 345 | 736 | 271 | 1614 | 2966 |
| 2 bed | 113 | 238 | 113 | 334 | 798 |
| 3 bed | 161 | 272 | 92 | 349 | 874 |
| 4 bed | 16 | 44 | 14 | 76 | 150 |
| 5 bed | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 11 |
| Totals | 636 | 1293 | 493 | 2377 | 4799 |

2.0 The Council will be reviewing homelessness in its area and producing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and Overarching Housing Strategies in 2022. These will set the scene for the next 5 years, examine the issues in Buckinghamshire and set key priorities for how the Council will work with others to tackle homelessness, rough sleeping and strategic housing challenges in Buckinghamshire. The strategies will identify the need for general, specialist and key worker affordable housing across a range of tenures and set a target for the delivery of 1000 units affordable housing to be delivered by 10 years after commencement.

Our immediate commitment

2.1 The Council is committed to maximising delivery of affordable and key worker housing. Therefore, over the next 12 months;

- a) The Council will work closely with house builders, through planning obligations, to maximise delivery of general needs affordable housing. On average, this system has delivered 643 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire each year. The Local Plans across Buckinghamshire set targets for new developments to deliver affordable housing. These targets range from 25% to 48% (as a proportion of the new dwellings built). Given the high land values in the county and the increasing cost of development it is likely that fully meeting these targets will remain a challenge.

- b) *The Council will work closely with Registered Social Landlords to support them to deliver their development plans and also to work in partnership with the Council to use s106 funds and other enabling grants to make nomination rights for affordable rented accommodation available to those on the Bucks Home Choice system.*
 - c) *The Council will agree a local definition for 'key workers'.*
 - d) *The Council, through its housing company 'Consilio', may engage with private house builders to explore the viability of acquiring homes to accommodate key workers. Provided this is a viable option, the Council will deliver at least one scheme in 2022.*
 - e) *The Council will identify at least one Council owned asset in Buckinghamshire on which to deliver affordable (potentially of a specialist nature) and key worker housing. It will expedite such a scheme on one of these Council owned sites:
 - 1. *Stoke Mandeville Sports and Social Club*
 - 2. *Horns Lane, High Wycombe*
 - 3. *Tatling End, Denham**
 - f) *The Council will agree a position statement on the new national 'First Homes' product for first time buyers and ensure that First Homes delivered in new Buckinghamshire housing developments are prioritised for Buckinghamshire residents and key workers. An interim position statement on First Homes has already been developed.*
 - g) *Empty homes in Buckinghamshire will be reviewed and catalogued and the Council will explore if these can be brought back into use. Council Tax charges for persistently empty homes will be reviewed.*
- 2.2 *Whilst the forthcoming Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and Overarching Housing strategies will emerge in 2022, the approach embodied in this statement will offer an opportunity to deliver tangible benefits in the shorter term whilst not replicating wider general housing market activity. The approaches will also inform strategy and pilot some of the potential future delivery models on Council owned sites i.e. whether the Council is the developer, an RSL, or a combination of the two)*

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 3 - affordable housing delivery performanceTable 1: Affordable homes completed and delivered in Buckinghamshire in **2020/21**

| Model | No. Units |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Social rent | 51 |
| Affordable rent | 325 |
| Intermediate rent | 14 |
| Shared ownership | 157 |
| Other affordable home ownership | 4 |
| Total | 551 |

Table 2: Currently *anticipated* delivery of new affordable s106 housing units in **2021/22**

| Site | Rental Units | Shared Ownership | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| Haddenham Airfield | 24 | 6 | 30 |
| Aylesbury East (Kingsbrook) | 66 | 30 | 96 |
| Tingewick Road, Buckingham | 27 | 0 | 27 |
| Marsworth Road, Pitstone | 16 | 6 | 22 |
| Aston Clinton Road, Weston Turville | 35 | 21 | 56 |
| Abbey Barn South, High Wycombe | 15 | 13 | 28 |
| Berryfields, Aylesbury | 21 | 7 | 28 |
| Haddenham Glebe | 21 | 4 | 25 |
| Winslow Furze Lane | 15 | 12 | 27 |
| Stoke Mandeville - Various | 45 | 19 | 64 |
| Steeple Claydon - Sandholme | 17 | 4 | 21 |
| Cheddington | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| Newton Leys | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Whitchurch | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 317 | 129 | 446 |

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 4 - Affordable Housing Types

1. Social Rented Housing

May be owned by local authorities or registered providers of affordable housing (RPs). Rent is determined through the national rent regime. Social rents are normally low and so generally affordable. Most social tenants will be on a lower wage and so in receipt of housing benefit.

2. Affordable Rented Housing

Affordable rent is defined as a rent of less than 80% of the local market rent.

3. Intermediate tenure types

This includes a range of homes for sale and rent at above social rent, but below market levels. Includes shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), and intermediate rent.

4. Low cost market

Low cost market homes do not meet the National Planning Policy Framework definition of affordable housing and, are not considered as 'affordable housing' for planning purposes.

5. Shared ownership

An occupier will typically buy a share of a new build property from a housing association. The association owns the remaining share and the occupier pays a proportional rent on this share.

6. Key Worker (see para 3.8 Appendix 5 First Homes – Interim Position Statement)

Housing offered at affordable rent to bring a financially accessible option for key workers. Rents may typically be set at 80%, or less than local market rates. A 'key worker' is a public sector employee who provides an essential service. Key workers include those occupations listed below.

1. Clinical staff employed by the NHS to include ambulance drivers, paramedics, healthcare workers;
2. Providing care services (including those working in care homes);
3. Police officers, community support officers, and frontline police staff;
4. Uniformed staff in the Fire & Rescue Service;
5. Prison officers, and frontline prison staff;
6. Probation officers;
7. Public sector employed teachers, social workers, planning and building control officers, environmental health officers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and educational psychologists;
8. Or such other critical workers that the council acting reasonably shall approve.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 5

First Homes – Interim Position Statement

Last updated: 6 January 2022

Version: 1.4

Online version: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/insert-link-to-policy>



Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Summary | 1 |
| Interim Position in Buckinghamshire | 1 |

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 2. Background | 3 |
| First Homes – the key details. | 3 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| 3. Terms – Local Variations | 5 |
| Discount | 5 |
| Local Connection | 5 |
| Price Cap | 6 |
| Key Worker | 7 |
| Local Evidence | 7 |

| | |
|--|----------|
| 4. Impact on other Affordable Housing Tenures | 8 |
| Local Plan requirements. | 8 |

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| 5. Exception Sites | 11 |
| DLuHC Guidance | 11 |
| Position for Buckinghamshire | 11 |

1. Summary

Interim Position in Buckinghamshire

- 1.1 The proposed interim policy position set out in this report reflects the guidance issued by the MHCLG (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – DLUHC)
- 1.2 In August 2020 Local Authorities were consulted on the government’s proposals to introduce First Homes as part of the affordable housing tenure on all new housing developments.
- 1.3 First Homes are a new Government scheme for affordable home ownership designed to help local first time buyers and key workers onto the property ladder, by offering homes at a discount compared to the market price. This could save each buyer a significant amount of money, making deposits and mortgages more affordable. The discounts will apply to the homes forever, meaning that generations of new buyers and the local community will continue to benefit every time the property is sold.
- 1.4 On 1 April 2021, the Government released its response to the consultation setting out the key details for delivery of First Homes. On 24 May 2021 a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) and changes to the National Planning Practice Guidance were published, setting out further details on the application of First Homes policy and procedures, and confirmed an implementation date of 28 June 2021.
- 1.5 The WMS requires local planning authorities to make clear how existing policies should be interpreted in the light of First Homes requirements using the most appropriate tool available to them. It is on that basis that this report has been prepared, recommending an interim policy framework for negotiating the delivery of First Homes in Buckinghamshire until such time that it can be incorporated into the new Local Plan 4 Buckinghamshire.
- 1.6 The Government have clarified that despite absence of First Homes from the July 2021 National Planning Policy Framework, the Written Ministerial Statement on First Homes does not cease to apply and should be read

alongside the NPPF as a statement of national planning policy. The WMS still represents current national policy on First Homes and exception sites.

1.7 First Homes will be delivered through three routes within the planning system in Buckinghamshire as set out below until a new Local Plan 4 Buckinghamshire is adopted. This reflects the First Homes Transitional Arrangements (Government policy on First Homes at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes#plan--and-decision-making> Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 70-018-20210524) that Local plans and neighbourhood plans submitted for examination before 28 June 2021, or that have reached publication stage by 28 June 2021 and subsequently submitted for examination by 28 December 2021, will not be required to reflect the First Homes policy requirement.

1. In the Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe areas, First Homes are required as these areas have Local Plans adopted before First Homes requirement came into existence. Therefore, First Homes will be secured through the council's consideration of affordable housing on planning applications. The Government rules on discount and local connection criteria will apply until such a time the council has published evidence to set a local discount and connection criteria.
2. In the Aylesbury Vale area – no First Homes are required as the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VALP) was at examination after 28 June 2021 and the area is therefore caught by the transitional arrangements. The associated Affordable Housing SPD will explain the delivery of affordable housing to meet policy H1 in the VALP.
3. Across Buckinghamshire - Neighbourhood plan policies in new or revised neighbourhood plans can have policies and or site proposals for First Homes.

2. Background

First Homes – the key details

2.1 The key requirements of First Homes delivery are: -

- a) At least 25% of affordable homes delivered on each site must be First Homes. Some exemptions apply, including developments that provide solely Build to Rent homes, 100% affordable housing schemes, rural exception sites, developments that provide specialist accommodation for a group with specific needs such as the elderly, and self-build developments.
- b) Purchasers must be first time buyers.
- c) The discount must be at least 30% of open market value. Local authorities can set policies that seek discounts of 40% or 50% if they can evidence the need and viability through the Local Plan process.
- d) The discount and first time buyer eligibility requirement will be held in perpetuity and secured through legal mechanisms, i.e. when any First Homes are sold to subsequent purchasers the same level of discount and first time buyer eligibility criteria will apply.
- e) There will be a price cap for qualifying properties, and the maximum purchase price after the discount will be £250,000.
- f) Local authorities can apply their own local connection criteria and other criteria such as giving priority to keyworkers.
- g) Purchasers are eligible to purchase a First Home if they have household income of less than £80,000 (this is the same as the qualifying criteria for shared ownership housing).
- h) Local connection criteria can only be applied for the first 3 months of marketing, after which a property can be sold to any purchaser from anywhere in England, subject to meeting the criteria around household income, first time buyer eligibility, and with the discount still being held in perpetuity.
- i) A First Home must be a purchaser's only home.
- k) At least 50% of the discounted value of the property must be financed via a mortgage or other similar form of finance.
- l) In the event that a First Home cannot be sold to a qualifying purchaser within 6 months of marketing, the property can be sold as an open market home and the seller pays the council a cash contribution in lieu

of the 30% discount. This requirement will be secured in the Section 106 agreement.

- m) House values should be set by developers obtaining valuations from a registered valuer acting in an independent capacity, and any valuations should be in accordance with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors red-book valuation guidance for new-build homes. When the home is resold in future, the seller should secure a valuation in the same way in accordance with RICS's guidance. Where First Homes do not sell, a local authority may include provisions in a Section 106 agreement which allow a developer or First Home owner to sell a First Home on the open market and remove the title restriction, as long as certain conditions are met.
- n) The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 (as amended) make provisions for charging authorities to give relief or grant exemptions from the levy. These regulations allow developers of First Homes to obtain an exemption from the requirement to pay CIL. There is a CIL in operation in the Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks areas of the county.

3. Terms – Local Variations

3.1 The national terms to be used for the qualifying criteria for what constitutes a First Home and eligibility criteria to apply for a First Home are summarised in section 2. Local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups by preparing a neighbourhood plan can vary these criteria and add additional criteria based on local evidence and these local criteria would be time limited for the first 3 months from the start date of marketing the property. Local plans should set out policies for the level and type of affordable housing including the minimum of 25% of affordable homes being First Homes.

Discount

- 3.2 Local authorities can set a deeper minimum discount at either 40% or 50% and impose lower price caps if they can demonstrate a need for this through evidence. However, the same level of discount must apply each time such houses are sold in perpetuity secured through a planning obligation.
- 3.3 The council is considering the case for local evidence given the proximity of parts of Buckinghamshire to the more expensive London and indeed the south east of England housing market. Neighbourhood planning groups would also need to prepare their own evidence to support neighbourhood plan policies which go beyond the national parameters.

Local Connection

- 3.4 Local authorities will be able to apply additional criteria at a local level such as, setting a lower income cap, prioritising key workers (locally defined) and/or specify a particular local connection requirement based on work or current residency (excepting those with military connections).
- 3.5 If local authorities or neighbourhood planning groups choose to introduce their own eligibility restrictions, these will still be time-limited to the first three months from the start date of marketing of the property. Upon expiry of the three-month period, any homes which have not been sold or reserved will revert to the national standard criteria and these will apply to all future sales of a First Home.

3.6 The council will require First Homes in the Buckinghamshire Council area (that are not already subject to local connection criteria such as through a Neighbourhood Plan) to be prioritised for the first three months of marketing to eligible applicants in the following priority order:

1. Those who have:

lived in the 'area' continuously for at least two years immediately prior to exchange of contracts for the relevant First Home or

been in continuous employment in the 'area' for at least two years immediately prior to exchange of contracts for the relevant First Home and have worked a minimum of 24 hours per week throughout that period

been living outside the 'area' but employed or with a firm job offer within the Buckinghamshire Council area that falls within the definition of 'keyworker'

2. Those who have:

lived in the 'area' continuously for at least one year immediately prior to exchange of contracts for the relevant First Home or

been in continuous employment in the 'area' for at least one year immediately prior to exchange of contracts for the relevant First Home and have worked a minimum of 24 hours per week throughout that period.

Where 'area' is the Local Plan area these applicants shall be prioritised for the first month of marketing before extending priority to people meeting one or more of the above local connection criteria from the wider Buckinghamshire Council area for the remaining two months of marketing.

Price Cap

3.7 The Council can impose a lower price cap than £250,000 if it can demonstrate a need for this through evidence. It may be that there needs to be different price caps reflecting the housing markets in the south nearer to London than the north of the country nearer to the Midlands.

Key Worker

3.8 The council wishes to restrict First Homes with local eligibility restrictions so that First Homes have the best chance to be sold to local people and key workers. The Council prioritises Key workers for the eligibility criteria to apply for a first home with the following definition. Key workers are:

- Clinical staff employed by the NHS to include ambulance drivers, paramedics, healthcare workers
- Providing care services (including those working in care homes)
- Police officers, community support officers, and frontline police staff
- Uniformed staff in the Fire & Rescue Service
- Prison officers, and frontline prison staff
- Probation officers
- Public sector employed teachers, social workers, planning and building control officers, environmental health officers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and educational psychologists
- Or such other critical workers that the council acting reasonably shall approve.

Local Evidence

3.9 The council will consider the case for local evidence for the discount and price cap given the proximity of parts of Buckinghamshire to the more expensive London and indeed the south east of England housing market. This matter will be taken forward in the evidence gathering stage for the Local Plan 4 Buckinghamshire. Neighbourhood planning groups may also prepare their own evidence to support neighbourhood plan policies on First Homes discount and price cap.

4. Impact on other Affordable Housing Tenures

4.1 The requirement is that at least 25% of all affordable homes delivered through planning obligations will be delivered as First Homes, with the balance of the affordable units being delivered as per the relevant former District Council's local plan requirement.

4.2 Where cash contributions for affordable housing are secured instead of on-site units, a minimum of 25% of these contributions should be used to secure First Homes. A local authority should prioritise securing their policy requirements for social rent once they have secured the 25% First Homes requirement. Where specific developments are exempt from delivering affordable home ownership products under paragraph 64 of the NPPF, they shall also be exempt from the requirement to deliver First Homes.

Local Plan requirements

4.3. The following sets out the impacts of the application of First Homes policy on each of the areas that are not exempt.

4.4. Wycombe Local Plan 2019 (Wycombe Local Plan 2019 - weblink <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/Planning-and-building-control/Planning-policy/Wycombe-Development-Plan.aspx>) plan policy DM24, requires a tenure split of 80% affordable rent and 20% intermediate. So a scheme of 100 homes not on a greenfield site or a Class B business use would provide 35 affordable homes. Following implementation of this position statement would produce a tenure mix of: -

- First Homes 8.75 units (25%) – leaving a balance of 26.25 affordable homes comprising:
- Affordable Rented units 21 units (80% of 26.25)
- Intermediate – 5.25 units (20% of 26.25)

4.5. The Chiltern Core Strategy 2011 (Chiltern Core Strategy 2011 - weblink <https://www.chiltern.gov.uk/planning/adoptedcorestrategy>) Policy CS8 requires at

least 40% affordable on a site of more than 15 dwellings and Policy CS10 identifies a tenure split of 70% social rented and 30% shared ownership. So, an example of 30 homes would mean 12 homes are to be affordable and therefore following implementation of this position statement:

- First Homes – 3 units - 25% of 12 leaving 9 affordable homes comprising:
- Affordable Rented units – 6.3 units (70% of 9)
- Intermediate – 2.7 units (30% of 9)

4.6. South Bucks Core Strategy (2011) (weblink -

<https://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/corestrategy>) Core Policy 3 requires at least 40% of five dwellings or above to be affordable with a tenure split of 2/3 social rented and 1/3 intermediate. So for an example a scheme of 20 homes would mean 8 affordable homes and following implementation of this position statement:

- First Homes - 2 units (25%) leaving a balance of 6 affordable homes comprising:
- Affordable Rent – 4 units (2/3 of 6)
- Intermediate - 2 units (1/3 of 6)

4.6 The impact of the application of First Homes would be to reduce the amount of affordable rented and intermediate housing that would be delivered by approximately 25%. The inclusion of First Homes will not only reduce the amount of affordable rented homes being delivered but may also affect the viability of the inclusion of any social rented homes. This is largely because of the requirement for First Homes to be part of the affordable housing mix there will be a reduced number of shared ownership homes which tend to generate the higher level of income to the developer.

4.7 In terms of rounding, where the provision of First Homes results in figures below 0.5 of a unit this should be rounded down but where the figure is 0.5 or above this should be rounded up. The rounding of the remainder of affordable housing secured should be in line with the relevant local plan policy or Supplementary Planning Document in force for that part of Buckinghamshire.

4.8 The size of the units (1 bed/2-bed/3 bed etc.) to be secured and accessibility standards that apply to First Homes are the same standards

as those for housing or affordable housing in the relevant local plan (or made neighbourhood plan) policy in force in Buckinghamshire.

- 4.9 The definition of what is 'affordable housing' is as per each Local Plan in force in the relevant area of Buckinghamshire. Therefore how forms of sheltered housing are addressed and if they are 'affordable housing' will be as set out in each relevant local plan (or made neighbourhood plan).

5. Exception Sites

DLuHC Guidance

5.1 The Government is also seeking to deliver First Homes via an exception sites approach and is introducing a 'First Homes exception sites' policy. First Homes exception sites are acceptable:

- a) on land which is not already allocated for housing,
- b) should comprise 100% First Homes (as set out above), and,
- c) be adjacent to existing settlements, proportionate in size to them

5.2 First Homes exception sites should not compromise the protection given to areas or assets of particular importance identified in the NPPF (National Parks, AONB's or Green Belt), and comply with any local design policies and standards.

5.3 A small proportion of market homes may be allowed on the site at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of First Homes without grant funding. Also, a small proportion of other affordable homes may be allowed on the sites where there is significant identified local need. In designated rural areas, which include Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, rural exception sites will remain as a tool for the delivery of housing. Elsewhere, First Homes exception sites and rural exception sites can both come forward.

Position for Buckinghamshire

5.4 In Buckinghamshire in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Green Belt, rural exception sites will remain as the sole exception site which can come forward. Elsewhere, in the Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks areas, First Homes exception sites and rural exception sites can both come forward.

5.5 The site size threshold for Entry-Level Exception Sites in the NPPF (2021) para 72 where exception sites should not be larger than one hectare in

size or exceed 5% of the size of the existing settlement - see National Planning Policy Framework 2021 para 72 (weblink to this document at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>) has been removed for First Homes Exception Sites. A local authority can determine what it considers to be appropriate as a site size threshold.

5.6 As an Interim Position until the final Local Plan 4 Buckinghamshire is agreed, proposals for First Homes Exception Sites in the Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks areas will be considered on a site-by-site basis taking into consideration the size of the proposed site against the size of the adjacent settlement. Proposals will also need to demonstrate evidence of need in the sites location to justify the size of the development and will need to demonstrate that the development is sustainable in terms of its proximity to local transport networks and amenities.

5.8 To be clear none of the above applies to the Aylesbury Vale area.

6. Monitoring, Management and Enforcement

Section 106 Agreements

- 6.1 The Council, in drafting Section 106 Agreements for planning decisions on First Homes, will take into account the Government's model Section 106 agreement for First Homes published on 23 December 2021
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/first-homes-model-section-106-agreement-for-developer-contributions>
- 6.2 The Council's Section 106 Agreement will set out all the obligations on the applicant for a First Home planning permission and future purchasers of the home (s). These obligations may cover clustering, development construction standards, arrangements for marketing and sale, the use and occupancy of the property including letting or subletting and any mortgagee exclusions.
- 6.3 The Council will monitor the delivery of First Homes in the Buckinghamshire Council area and use where necessary its powers to enforce the obligations and other parts of a planning decision so that the rules of qualification of a First Home and the full terms of the planning permission are being adhered to.

This page is intentionally left blank



Report to Cabinet

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Date: | 1st March 2022 |
| Title: | Consilio Property Ltd Business Plan 2021 - 2023 |
| Cabinet Member(s): | Cllr John Chilver - Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets |
| Contact officer: | John Reed – Director of Property and Assets |
| Ward(s) affected: | None |

There is a confidential part to this report, which is exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Confidential Appendices: -

1. *Consilio Property Ltd Business Plan*
2. *Consilio Finance report Narrative*
3. *Consilio Balance Sheet*
4. *Consilio P&L Year To Date – Nov 2021*

Recommendations:

- **Cabinet recognise that the attached Business plan represents a true and accurate reflection of Consilio Property Ltd past and current position.**
- ***Cabinet recognises that, even with no additional investment, with the current management team and property portfolio, Consilio Property Ltd is expected to continue to generate net returns.***

Reason for decision: Consilio Property Ltd is well structured with both good governance and internal and external professionals in place to support its ongoing management. The appended business plan shows that the Company is making a consistent profit and is ready to expand with future projects

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Consilio Property Limited is a company limited by shares founded in September 2017 by South Bucks District Council.
- 1.2 In April 2020 100% ownership of Consilio transferred from South Bucks District Council to Buckinghamshire Council since when the aims and objectives of Consilio were reviewed and revised to align with its shareholder objectives of enabling the new development of residential property on surplus land on the council's existing estate to:
 - Increase the amount of good quality affordable and key worker housing stock for Buckinghamshire's residents.
 - Increase the supply of private housing to meet the Councils housing needs under the adopted Local Plan.
 - Promote and showcase by delivery Buckinghamshire Councils affordable Housing aspirations.
 - Provide a financial return to the Council for the benefit of its residents, where viability allows.
- 1.3 In helping to increase the County's housing supply, Consilio will have a positive impact on the county's economic development and help influence economic performance.
- 1.4 The company currently holds a portfolio of property assets comprising of two commercial buildings and a development of 34 flats, including 14 of which are allocated to affordable housing.
- 1.5 Future Freehold development proposals are currently under consideration by Consilio as evidenced in the appended Consilio Business Plan.
- 1.6 To be compliant with regulations surrounding the supply and management of Social Housing, Consilio is building the appropriate structure to secure Registered Housing Provider (RP) status as soon as possible.
- 1.7 Funding in the new Consilio landscape will require ongoing discussion and agreement with shareholders. There may additionally be grant funding available from Homes England, especially once RP designation is achieved, that could be secured on a project specific basis to support future residential investments.

- 1.8 In 2021, Consilio Property Ltd appointed a new Directorship team to enhance good governance and transparency and to take the company forward. Consilio's Directors, while not inheriting accountability for antecedent decisions, are tasked with the responsibility of driving forward Consilio's progressive and exciting next phase of its future development.
- 1.9 Consilio Property Ltd is invested in providing good quality, affordable, sustainable housing that residents are proud to call home and endeavours to ensure that all residents are treated with fairness, consideration, and respect. Current schemes under consideration will provide an opportunity for Consilio to demonstrate to the shareholders and the public that good quality, affordable and sustainable development and exemplary property management practises can be and should be delivered
- 1.10 In summary, Consilio Property Ltd is well structured with both good governance and internal and external professionals in place to support ongoing management. With the current property portfolio and opportunities for the future combined with continuing financial support, both in additional funding and in reinvestment within the company, Consilio's future forecast is looking prosperous. Since its inception in 2017, Consilio has worked with changing management and objectives but going forward, is now well placed to deliver the aims and objectives shared with Buckinghamshire Council.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 This document, including Confidential Appendices listed above

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Do Nothing – As the sole Shareholders of Consilio Property Ltd it is in the Council's interest to ensure that the Directors and management team are running the business in a way that is aligned with the Shareholders objectives and to review and respond to the business plan submitted for approval.
- 3.2 Not to agree the attached Business Plan which, depending on the reasons given will require the Business plan to be re-written and be re-submitted which may impact on pending decisions to purchase Council owned sites.
- 3.3 Close the Company and sell assets: Doing this at this stage will result in a negative balance to the Council and impact on the Councils ability to provide social housing and to successfully perform in the private development sector.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Consilio is a private Company limited by shares solely owned by Buckinghamshire Council.

- 4.2 Shareholders Governance is being further enhanced by the formation of a Cabinet Committee to Cabinet to act as Shareholder's representative. A report requesting the formation of this subcommittee will come before Cabinet as a separate paper on the 29th March.
- 4.3 Consilio is funded through Council borrowing and then lending to Consilio at a more commercial rate.
- 4.4 Continued funding will be required as the Company expands and business cases for this will be determined by Cabinet on a case-by-case basis as a bid against the £100m prudential borrowing facility.

5. Corporate implications

- a) Property: Property and Consilio have prospective projects to be progressed concurrently and in partnership. Consilio is an existing entity and Property will be impacted with additional workload if Consilio is disbanded prior to winding up all Company assets.
- b) HR: No implications at this stage but as the company expands Consilio will call on HR's services via a Service Level Agreement.
- c) Sustainability and Climate change: Consilio is committed to good practise in sustainability and climate change.
- d) Data: The Councils ICT and Data Protection team have been consulted in setting up Consilio's electronic filing structure.
- e) Value for money: Consilio has been shown to be a profit-making company and provides the opportunity for the Council to expand affordable housing provision in the county.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 The views of the Cabinet member for resources Finance and Property & Assets have been sought and the report trajectory agreed

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Communication: Regular conversations take place between the Consilio Board Directors and the Director for Property and Assets and more formal communications take place through the sharing of monthly Board meeting minutes and financial reports to both the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets and the Director for Property and Assets. Financial assurance is helped through the inclusion of the Head of Finance for Planning Growth and Sustainability in all Consilio board meetings.

- 7.2 Subject to Cabinet approval a Cabinet Sub Committee will shortly be formed to act as a Shareholder representative to all Council owned Companies including Consilio and it is anticipated that Consilio will provide copies of monthly Board meeting minutes and financial reports to this committee and hold 3 four-monthly shareholder meetings per annum.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 Consilio will move toward assessing and implementing future projects in line with the attached business plan.
- 8.2 Consilio will be reviewed by the Shareholders sub-committee monthly by way of board meeting minutes and three x four-monthly shareholder meetings per annum.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 None

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by **telephone 01296764814** or:

email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank