



Finance & Resources Select Committee agenda

Date: Thursday 14 October 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

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

Membership:

R Bagge (Chairman), K Wood (Vice-Chairman), D Anthony, K Ashman, M Ayub, S Chhokar, T Dixon, T Egleton, D Goss, G Harris, I Macpherson, J Ng, W Raja, M Walsh and S Wilson

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership	14:00	
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021 to be confirmed as a correct record.		5 - 10

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|----------|--|--------------|----------------|
| 4 | Public Questions | | |
| 5 | Chairman's update | | |
| 6 | Customer First | 14:10 | 11 - 28 |
| | The Committee will receive a report on Customer First, the proposed new Customer Experience framework for Buckinghamshire Council. | | |
| | Contributors: | | |
| | John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets | | |
| | Tim Butcher, Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets | | |
| | Sarah Murphy-Brookman, Corporate Director for Resources | | |
| | Lloyd Jeffries, Service Director for Business Operations | | |
| | Papers: | | |
| | Customer First Framework and Customer Service Centre report | | |
| 7 | 6 Month Review of Recommendations from the 2021 Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group | 15:00 | 29 - 46 |
| | The Committee will consider a six month review of the recommendations made by the 2021 Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group. | | |
| | Contributors: | | |
| | Martin Tett, Leader | | |
| | Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance (Section 151 Officer) | | |
| | Paper: | | |
| | Six month update report | | |
| 8 | Work Programme | 15:30 | 47 - 52 |
| | The Committee will discuss the work programme and agree the items for the next meeting. | | |
| | Contributors: | | |
| | All Committee Members | | |
| | Papers: | | |
| | Work Programme attached | | |

9 Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 9 December 2021 at 2 p.m.

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: Leslie Ashton on 01895 837227, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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Agenda Item 3
Buckinghamshire Council
Finance & Resources Select
Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 22 JULY 2021 IN THE OCLUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, HP19 8FF - AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.52 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

R Bagge (Chairman), K Wood (Vice-Chairman), K Ashman, S Chhokar, T Egleton, G Harris, I Macpherson, M Walsh, S Wilson and N Hussain

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

T Butcher, J Chilver and M Tett

Agenda Item

1 CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed all those in attendance and those members of the public watching the webcast. Committee Members were invited to introduce themselves.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman appointed Councillor K Wood as Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Resources Select Committee for the 2021-22 municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor K Wood be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Resources Select Committee for the ensuing year.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies had been received from Councillors M Ayub, D Antony, D Goss, J Ng and W Raja. Councillor N Hussain attended as a substitute for Councillor W Raja.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 March 2021 and 26 May 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

6 PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Martin Tett, Leader of the Council and Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources to the meeting to present their priorities for the year ahead. The presentation slides can be seen attached to the agenda pack.

Councillor M Tett, Leader, provided an oversight of the Council's budget commitments and highlighted his priorities:

- Usually the Council would develop a medium term financial plan over a four year period, however when the Government abandoned its normal comprehensive spending review, a one year revenue budget for 2021-22 had been adopted by the Council. The Council did however have a four year capital programme of £570m in place to give some certainty to longer term projects building assets.
- From the £1.2bn budget last year, there had been a £400,000 underspend which was a significant achievement.
- After Q1 of 2021/22, an overspend of £500,000 had been forecast for this year.
- A £105m overall road programme had been agreed by the Council and a commitment had already been made to spend an additional £4m on drainage (totalling £8m). An additional £400,000 had been included in the budget this year to tackle street cleaning and litter and more investment was made into planning enforcement, as this service was valued by residents.
- Members wanted to support the development of housing that was affordable in Buckinghamshire and the potential to utilise sites in the Council's own estate was being investigated.
- The Council had a statutory duty to continue support for vulnerable children and adults. The pandemic had seen a noticeable increase in demand and complexity on these services, which could lead to budget pressures this year.
- The impact of infrastructure projects, such as HS2 and East-West Rail, would be monitored despite limited funding from the construction organisations. £500,000 had been committed by the Council to help residents engage with these projects.
- £172m had been obtained for Aylesbury from the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- Risks to the outlined priorities included the level of national Government debt, the levelling up agenda, the fair funding review, changes to the adult social precept and the tapering of new homes bonus. These significant unknowns made it challenging for the Council to plan its finances effectively.

In response to members' questions and during the subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

- The Council had already delivered £2.5m two years ago through senior management restructure and a further £13m savings were included in this year's budget. Some of these would be difficult to deliver due to the impact of Covid 19, but savings would be realised over the longer term.
- Service reviews were ongoing as part of the Better Buckinghamshire programme.
- The Council may adopt a policy of agile working whereby homeworking arrangements would depend on the service and job role. This would develop over time.
- £166m had been distributed by the Council to businesses across Buckinghamshire. The Council had shaped its £21m Additional Restrictions Grant to help businesses that had not been eligible for central Government funding (e.g. sole traders). Buckinghamshire Council was ranked second in the country for distributing its grants during the pandemic.

- The Leader worked closely with the Buckinghamshire MPs who lobby regarding funding and also worked with the County Councils Network and the LGA to lobby Government.
- Virtual meetings had been useful during the pandemic and would have a place in future however physical meetings offered improved team building and networking.
- Broadband was viewed as a household essential. The Government planned to spend £5bn on upgrading the country's digital infrastructure through its launch of Project Gigabit. Buckinghamshire Council's recovery bid to Government had asked for £60m which would go towards high capacity connections. The Leader had met with the Digital Minister, Matt Warman, who was interested to discuss pilot schemes for broadband provision in rural areas of Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire had one of the lowest penetrations of high capacity internet connection in England, so progress in this area was crucial but would be dependent on Government funding.
- The Council was working closely with the Department of Work and Pensions to try and match job seekers to roles in a more meaningful way in Buckinghamshire and the Council was supporting apprenticeships to help young people get a start on the career ladder. The Council had some hard to fill posts due to national shortages of planners and qualified social workers and had used agency workers to cover vacancies. Social media campaigns had successfully attracted job applicants, for example, a number of posts in the crematorium team had been filled recently.

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources, highlighted the following priorities over the upcoming year:

- The target was to save £34m in the next four years with £13m of this aimed to be achieved this year.
- The Council was on track to deliver its unitary council business case saving of £18m. The remaining £16m were associated with specific portfolio savings and these would be considered during the budget building process in the Autumn.
- The Better Buckinghamshire programme was set to deliver £1.7m savings this year with a lot originating from the Deputy Chief Executive Directorate.
- Contract and procurement harmonisation aimed to deliver £2.7m savings which was in part due to the increased purchasing power of the unitary authority.
- A single revenues and benefits system, Northgate, would go live in December 2021 and would deliver savings of £700,000 over two years. Additionally, the Wycombe customer service centre would be insourced, creating a saving of over £250,000 this year as well as delivering a consistent and integrated customer experience.
- A single, fully integrated council website was planned as the legacy websites were still linked to the unitary council's front page. Completion of this was aimed for March 2022. The development plan for this project would be available by September this year.
- There would be an Annual Fees and Charges review and a review of existing and proposed property income projections and opportunities was also underway. The targets were on track for this year. The Council also generated approximately £2m per year from offering services to schools in the county.
- Delivery of the Customer First strategy. Part of this included a single telephony system to improve efficiency and the roll out of Council Access Points with one in each Community Board area.
- The Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Tim Butcher, updated the Committee on some improvements made for customers contacting the Council by telephone.

In response to members' questions the following points were noted:

- The acquisition of Friars Square cost £12m and was supported by professional advice from two independent surveyors. Due diligence had been carried out regarding surveys of the asset and the robustness of tenancies. The acquisition was not primarily motivated by a desire to generate income but would assist the Council in the regeneration of Aylesbury town centre as part of the Aylesbury Garden Town programme.
- Six of the seven customer KPIs were being achieved. Customer call waiting time was just outside the benchmark target, due to average waiting times being around three minutes. It was hoped the new telephone system would help with reducing the wait time.
- The new council website aimed to inherit the best parts from each legacy website – Members were concerned that the search function did not work well currently. Members were welcome to take part in regular show and tell sessions on the website to keep updated on the programme. Members agreed this piece of work should be a priority.
- Member input for the Customer First programme would be sought by the Deputy Cabinet Member in a Task & Finish Group in August.
- Carrying out zero-based budgeting on the council's £1.2bn would be a significant task and require substantial resource. Richard Ambrose, S151 Officer, would update the committee at the next meeting around the approach that would be followed to build the budget for the coming year, when he reported back on progress of the Budget Scrutiny recommendations from February 2021.
- The impact of the pandemic on office working space and home working would be measured in an integrated study which would feed into the work space strategy. This would take some time to complete. Some sites in Wycombe, Amersham and Aylesbury had already been partially rented out to generate income.

The Chairman thanked the Leader, Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for attending the meeting.

7 BUDGET PERFORMANCE MONITORING Q1

Councillor John Chilver, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources presented the Q1 Budget Monitoring Report which had been presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 20 July. Councillor J Chilver summarised the report which reflected the business as usual and Covid pressures faced during that period.

After allowing for £4.9m of mitigations laid out in the report, the forecast was a £0.5m overspend. This was made up of £1.4m adverse variance on Covid related spend and £0.9m favourable variation on business as usual. By portfolios, the largest overspends were on Culture & Leisure and Transport. The Capital Forecast report showed £3m slippage, which was 1.6% of the total capital budget, with main areas of slippage being flood defence schemes and work on Marlow Bridge.

The following key points were raised by the Select Committee members during discussion:

- One Member was concerned that slippage on ICT projects would impact service delivery and the Customer First programme.
- There was a £2m corporate contingency built into the budget, which Scrutiny had previously recommended, that had the potential to offset increased demand in Children's Services due to Covid. This would become clearer in the Autumn.
- The Council had not lost any food and beverage tenancies during the pandemic. It was

hoped that these sectors would recover following the removal of restrictions.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and the officers for their contributions.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee was invited to put forward suggestions for the 2021/22 work programme. The Committee was advised that suggestions made would be developed in to a work programme in consultation with the Chairman and Cabinet Members. The work programme would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting for agreement.

Suggestions made by the Committee included:

- Future updates on the customer service and customer first projects as well as IT infrastructure behind these projects.
- Better Buckinghamshire programme.
- The amalgamation of contracts and procurements.
- Property strategy and its link with the home working policy.
 - Two Members added that working from home had added environmental benefits which would assist in the council's climate change targets.
- The council's overall strategy on home working.
- The council's external property management companies.
- The administrative efficiencies of Community Boards.
- Considering the effective use of Council Access Points on a 'cost per transaction' basis.
- Re-consider key planning assumptions and base data, such as demographics, that informs policies such as the Local Plan and those linked with adult social care.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be on Thursday 14 October 2021 at 2pm. The Chairman also advised that the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry was scheduled to take place from 10 – 14 January 2022.

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Report to Finance & Resources Select Committee

Date:	14 October 2021
Title:	Customer First framework and Customer Service Centre performance
Relevant councillor(s):	Cllr John Chilver and Cllr Tim Butcher
Author and/or contact officer:	Sarah Murphy-Brookman
Ward(s) affected:	None specific

Recommendations:

To note: the proposed Customer First Vision and Promises and Behaviours as a whole Council approach to the delivery of our corporate plan and Customer Experience ambition.

To note: the current Customer Service Centre Performance, the operating context that impacts current performance levels and the improvements in hand.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 At present the Council takes a service-based approach to customer service and the customer experience.
- 1.2 The Customer Service Centre (CSC) is our Council front door for our customers - residents, businesses, service users and Members. The service brings together the legacy council teams and over the past year it has been central to supporting our Covid response.
- 1.3 Promoting a positive customer experience is a high priority for Members and the Unitary Council provides an opportunity to develop and deliver a consistent whole Council 'Customer First' approach. **Part 1 of the report** sets out the proposed **Customer First framework** which seeks to raise standards, improve the customer experience, and ensure consistency.
- 1.4 **Part 2 of this report** sets out the **current CSC performance**, the challenges and the improvement activities that are in hand. Recognising that Customer is a key

Member priority the Better Buckinghamshire CSC service review has been accelerated to bring legacy teams and the CSC technology together as quickly as possible

- 1.5 Although the Finance and Resources Portfolio is the lead for Customer this is a cross Council issue and therefore requires engagement from all Services and Portfolios.

2. Content of report

Part 1 - Customer First

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan sets out a commitment for the Council to be Customer Focused. To achieve this we have developed a vision for a 'Customer First' culture that is prioritised through the entire organisation and which every employee values, owns and exemplifies.

- 2.2 Within this Customer First framework we have set out the great customer experience that any customer of the Council should receive.

- 2.3 We have set out three promises to our customers about the sort of experience they should expect:

'Easy for you to get in touch with us, easy to get what you need

Helpful and that we aim to get things right first time

Fair & Honest in our approach so that we're clear about what we can and can't offer, and the reasons why'

- 2.4 Within this Customer First framework we have described the behaviours that we expect from our staff and what we expect from our customers.
- 2.5 We have identified four themes which underpin our Customer First framework and which guide all our Customer First improvement work: Policy, Process, People and Performance.
- 2.6 And we have set out the practical actions that we are going to take to make 'Customer First' real and to ensure we make meaningful improvements.
- 2.7 Customer First is designed to align with the Better Buckinghamshire Programme which has Customer Focused as one of its Design Principles. This means that every

Service Review is tested against the Customer Focused design principle to ensure that Customer is built into Services.

Customer First - Vision, Promises and Behaviours (Appendix 1):

- 2.8 Our proposed Customer First Vision and Promises set out clearly what any customer of Buckinghamshire Council can expect from us. It is written in a style that is intended to be accessible and easily understood and that tells our staff and customers what the customer experience should 'look and feel' like.
- 2.9 Supporting this we have described the behaviours that we expect from our staff and those we request of our customers.
- 2.10 Once agreed we will publish this on our website.
- 2.11 To support this we will roll out a comprehensive training programme that has three levels of training:

<p>Level 1 – Universal customer first training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all staff / new starters • To cover customer handling skills and customer basics – replying promptly; using holding replies; language and tone • Delivered internally using eLearning live and recorded webinars from Customer Experience Team
<p>Level 2 – Customer Service front line staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For staff delivering front-line services to customers as a key part of their roles e.g. Customer Service Desk, CSC, Waste Services, Environmental Health, IT/HR Service Desk • More in-depth knowledge and understanding • Training may be delivered internally within service area and or with support of an external provider
<p>Level 3 – Advanced customer service advisors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This training is aimed at staff delivering complex or difficult messages to demanding customers. • Training to include being empathetic but also confident/ positive and clear in our messages so that customers understand our decisions and why • To support these staff it is proposed to also train a number of staff as Customer Care Coaches and Mediators. <p>Customer Care Coaches and Mediators will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coach and give feedback to colleagues ○ Act as a customer advocate

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Train internal exemplars to provide internal mediation to help conflict resolution ○ Challenge existing behaviours and processes to ensure a positive customer experience ○ Support internal mediation with external mediation support where necessary
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Customer First - Action Plan

2.12 To deliver ‘Customer First’ we have developed an Action Plan built around four Customer First themes:

- **Policy – a framework for Customer First**
- **Process – our approach to the way we provide services to our customers**
- **People – what we expect from our staff as customer exemplars**
- **Performance – how we will measure our progress**

2.13 Key Deliverables within the action Plan include:

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Customer First Vision and Promises to be agreed by our new Cabinet and published on our website • Cabinet and Select Committee reviews the progress of Customer First • We will ensure that our third-party suppliers have a Customer First approach and our procurement and contract management processes will test and enable this • We will have a Customer First Team who will support, monitor, embed and develop our Customer First framework
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will ensure that our Customer Service Centre has access to information and line of service systems so that they can answer queries as far as possible at the first point of contact • We will maximise 24/7 access to services through our digital programme • We will make sure that any customer can speak to us face to face and we will have dedicated sites to do this. • We will provide ‘live updates’ for customers on their transactions with the Council (e.g. planning applications, bus pass applications, queries regarding waste services etc) • We will create resident panels to test our service improvement and service design work

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Better Buckinghamshire Programme tests each Service Design against the 'Customer Focused' design principle.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will include Customer First as part of people processes including, recruitment, induction, performance management. We will create Customer First champions in each Team who will act as the customer advocate and will challenge the way we work to ensure that a positive customer experience remains at the heart of service delivery We will celebrate our Customer First stories to showcase great Customer Service. Our staff awards will include 'Customer Hero' award category We will put mandatory Customer First Training in place that focuses on behaviours and provides our staff with the skills to manage challenging and difficult customer conversations
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each Service will report against a corporate Customer First performance dashboard which include Complaints, Compliments and Customer feedback The CSC Customer performance dashboard will include measures of the customer experience We will survey resident satisfaction with services that the Council provides and we will include this in our corporate performance dashboards We will develop a customer insight dataset from a range of sources – customers; performance data; Community Boards; Resident Panels; satisfaction survey

2.14 We know that the Better Buckinghamshire programme is key to the delivery of our Customer ambition and as each Service progresses through the Better Buckinghamshire service review process the proposed service designs are tested against the Customer Focused Design Principle:

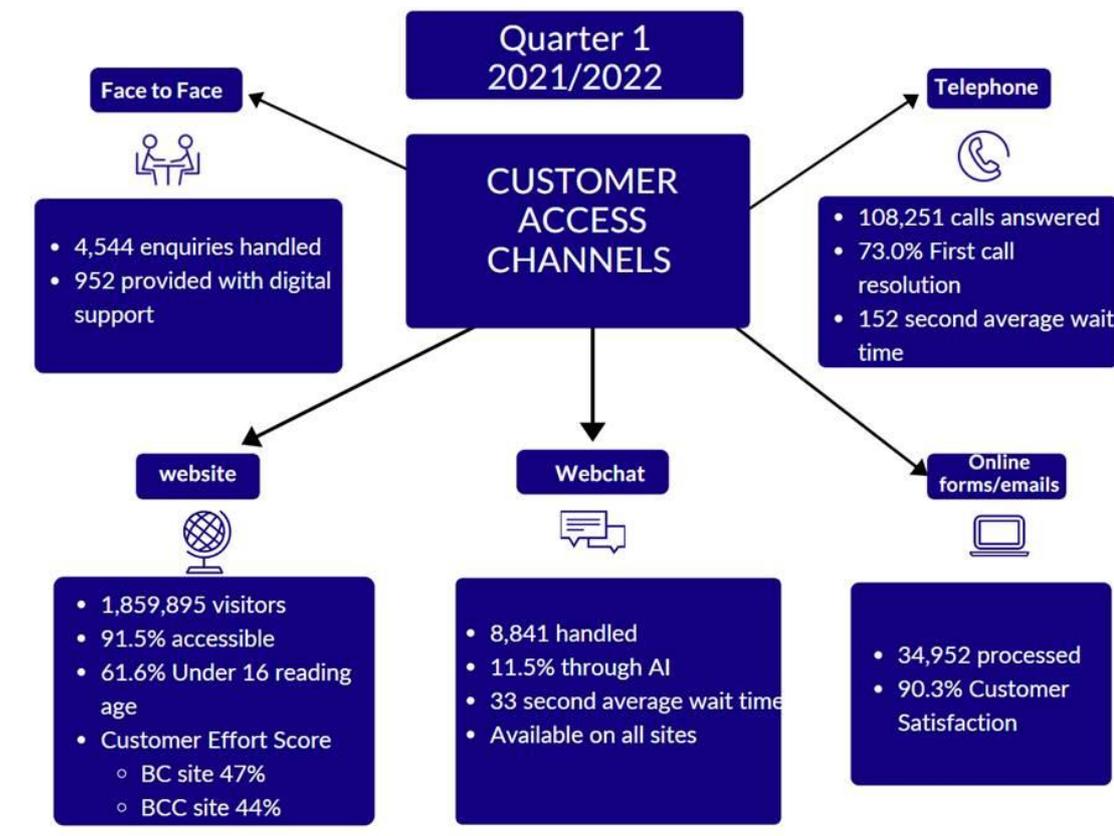
Better Buckinghamshire Design Principle - Customer Focused:

Services and processes will be co-designed with employees, customers, service users and communities around their needs, making the best use of existing and emerging technology as appropriate. We will place our customers at the heart of what we do. We will provide excellent digital channels whilst also ensuring that telephone and face to face access is provided for our most vulnerable residents and those who are digitally excluded.

Part 2 - Customer Service Centre

Introduction

2.15 The Customer Service Centre is the front door for the Council, the consolidated volumes across our access channels for Quarter 1 (2021 / 2022) are set out below.



Footnotes:

Accessibility measures how we make our websites usable by as many people as possible. This covers both people with disabilities, plus accessibility using mobile devices and those with slow network connections.

Average reading age – this is the reading age required to use our website (UK average is 9 years)

Customer Effort Score is a % of visitors who rated a page on the website as useful.

AI – Artificial Intelligence – an example is Amazon’s Alexa

2.16 The operating model of the CSC is to achieve a personalised service which maximises first contact resolution, minimises the referral of calls into service teams and thus helps reduce the overall costs of the Council. This is achieved through a mixture of contact us forms for specific and general enquiries; bespoke digital online forms such as reporting a missed bin; webchats; face to face enquiries at our Council Access Points and telephone calls.

2.17 This personalised service means that telephone calls in particular can take quite a number of minutes to complete but the end result is a better customer experience as customers for the majority of transactions should only need to contact the Council once. This approach seeks to maximise First Call Resolution (FCR).

Customer Performance Data

2.18 The current performance indicators for the six months April – September 2021 are set out below:

Indicator	Target	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
Calls offered	-	41,568	43,089	48,084	42,757	38,098	41,978
Calls answered	-	32,960	36,272	39,013	35,756	32,830	37,887
% calls answered	90%	82.40%	84.20%	81.13%	83.62%	86.17%	90.25%
% calls abandoned after 100 secs	10%	13.50%	9.80%	18.51%	16.18%	12.47%	9.09%
First call resolution	51%	54.20%	70.00%	80.00%	78.00%	74.80%	77.80%
Average call wait time	180 secs	189	304	328	323	313	222
Number of webchats	-	3,385	2,357	3,099	3,358	2,899	2,975
Average chat wait time	100 secs	28	28	27	33	38.5	28
Online forms/email	-	11,161	12,249	11,542	10,632	8,477	7,373
Council Access visits	-	1,110	1,682	1,752	1,818	2,099	2,068

2.19 The May – August 2021 performance has been disappointing - in particular the % of calls answered; calls abandoned and wait times all of which are outside their performance target. First Call Resolution has remained significantly above the target.

2.20 Overall there has been a 10% increase in calls into the CSC over the period April - August 2021 compared with same period last year and a corresponding 6% reduction in calls answered. This increase in demand has been driven by two service areas – Waste and Council Tax. The impact of the Southern Waste HGV driver shortages have given rise to high numbers of calls primarily about missed bins. As an example there were an additional 2,000 calls in June 2021 compared with May 2021 on Southern Waste alone.

2.21 In the case of Council Tax during the first wave of Covid we paused all Council Tax debt collection activity and only restarted this in September 2020. This year we have

been actively managing debt collection in line with our normal collection processes. However the backlog in the Court system, plus the restricted number of Court dates has meant that reminder letters and summons must be issued en masse. Although we spread the reminder letters for each Revs and Bens area across the month as far as we can, summons letters in particular need to be issued promptly. With up to a thousand summons letters at a time this inevitably creates significant demand into the CSC and we know that residents will wait in a queue to talk to an Agent about their particular circumstances.

- 2.22 Performance has started to improve from August 2021, with an increased number of calls answered, less abandoned calls and a shorter average waiting time compared to July 2021. In September, performance was within target for both calls answered (90%) and calls abandoned (9%) for the first time since April 2021.
- 2.23 The recent improvement in performance is due mainly to the various improvement actions that are outlined from section 2.26, especially the extension to the use of the Injixo workforce management tool. This tool uses historic call data to better plan agent schedules and ensure that spikes in demand can be managed. From September, the use of the tool was extended to include legacy Wycombe and Aylesbury call handlers.
- 2.24 Going forward the new Revenue and Benefits system will provide a far better Customer Experience as Residents will be able to check on their Council Tax payments far more easily, make changes such as change of address and view account balances and this should reduce the number of calls.
- 2.25 The insource of the Wycombe CSC has also impacted performance data – this is no longer operating as a ‘switchboard’ style CSC which maximised call answering and minimised First Call resolution. Instead the Wycombe team now provides a full CSC service which prioritises first contact resolution of calls.

CSC Improvement Activity

- 2.26 To better manage the rising customer demand received to the CSC, a number of improvement actions have been identified and are in the process of being implemented. These actions recognise that our Customer journeys fall into three ‘phases’ which require different targeted improvement activity.

2.27

Phase		
Customer - CSC	CSC – Line of Business interface	Customer - Line of Business Service
Aim to maximise First call resolution	CSC either sourcing additional information or passing the enquiry through to the Service	Only those enquiries which require specialist skill or knowledge should pass through

2.28 *CSC – Actions*

- Call waiting message including alternative methods to contact us
- Position in queue message
- Promote the single CSC contact number to reduce the use of legacy telephone numbers
- New online planning enquiry form to direct customers to the appropriate web pages – in final test
- New automated forms e.g. assisted waste pickups/ clinical waste that allows residents to select dates. This means that there is no manual intervention required by the line of service team.
- Injixo Workforce management tool used across all CSA staff
- We have implemented the facility for customer feedback/satisfaction on the Buckinghamshire Council web site to capture feedback from customers and we are using this information to take the appropriate action with either the service areas or the web team to improve the online journey with the aim of reducing calls.
- We are focussing on increasing web chats as a channel of choice. Our Advisors can handle up to 3 web chats at a time which makes it a very efficient customer channel.

2.29 *Interface Actions*

- Improving information that the Customer Service Agents can access from Line of Business Service systems to answer enquiries at first point of contact

2.30 *Line of Business Service - Actions*

- CSC representatives attend Service Improvement Boards and Service Task and Finish Groups. As examples tactical improvements for Southern Waste have included:
 - Placing a list of missed roads onto the website each night to inform residents when their bin will be collected
 - The CSC meets formally twice weekly with the Service Waste team to review performance and to identify quick wins or improvements whilst the contract is managed back to its contractual performance levels
- Data provided to Services about customer progress chasing enquiries so that these are prioritised and reduced.
- Provision of CSC stats to help services improve performance and understand where demand failure occurs

Customer Service Centre – Service Review

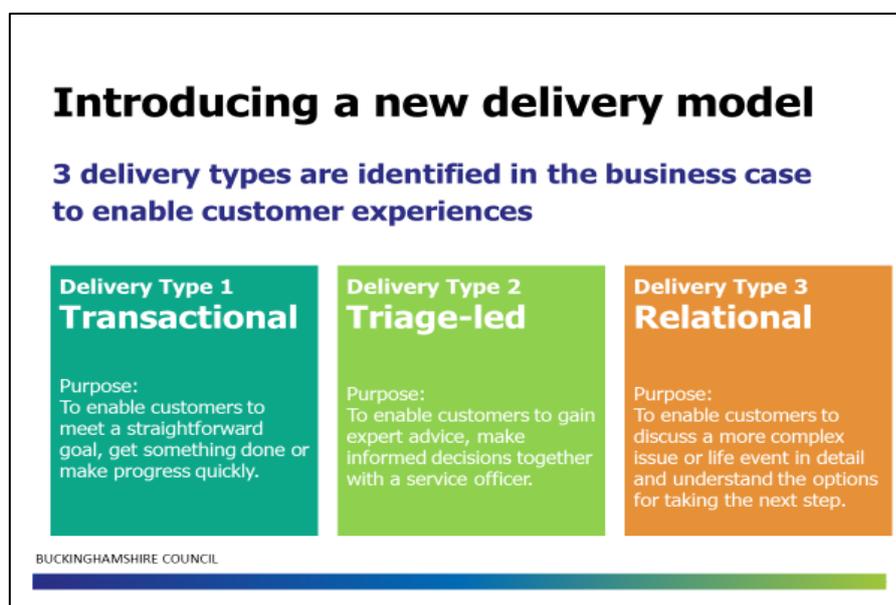
2.31 Recognising the importance of Customers the Customer Service Centre Review has been accelerated and although it is yet to complete the key findings to date are:

- contact centre tools that aren't consistently integrated with business systems, making it difficult for customer service agents (CSAs) to handle customer enquiries at the first point of contact;
- customer access channels that aren't sufficiently integrated, meaning that customers have different experiences when they contact the Council, and that the Council doesn't have a 360-degree view of customers and their experiences across channels and through the end-to-end journey;
- a delivery model that isn't resilient, cost effective nor easily scalable to enable the future customer experience and support the delivery of customer services that truly meet resident needs;
- a suite of performance metrics that, while comprehensive, are not clearly aligned with the CSC's purpose and the outcomes it wants to achieve.
- A current people structure following the 'bolt together' of the five legacy customer contact centres that is not fit for purpose and has different approaches and styles to managing customer services, and lack a clear and consistent vision for the future.

2.32 These findings plus detailed mapping from six of the Council's high demand services has allowed us to describe a new delivery model for the CSC - Table below. This has

been designed around the 3 common customer journeys and customer service needs and are designed to be scalable so that as Services progress through the Better Buckinghamshire programme the appropriate Customer delivery model can be embedded within the relevant Service.

2.33



2.34 The delivery model design recognises that Transactional services e.g. reporting a missed bin, lend themselves to digital self-serve whereas Relational services require a personalised service. However, for all three delivery types a customer can choose to have an assisted service either via telephony or at a Council Access Point.

CSC Staffing

2.35 The CSC has a team of 80 FTE call handlers. However after annual leave, other absences, offline activities and training this equates to 56 FTE who are active each day, of which 42 FTE are on the phones, with 14 FTE supporting other channels including webchats, form processing, emails and Face to Face.

2.36 The CSC is also consolidating its team into a single service and a single Head of Service was appointed in June 2021.

2.37 To manage peaks in workload a number of steps have been put in place including Contact us Forms being responded to out of main call hours; managers and supervisors answering calls and bridging resource provided through assistance from those line of service teams with high call volumes.

- 2.38 This bridging resource model has contributed to the CSC performance improvements and will be deployed as and when service spikes occur or service changes are planned which are expected to generate higher call volumes.

CSC Technology

- 2.39 *Telephony* – we have now completed consolidation onto a single telephony platform and this enables us to quickly and efficiently transfer resource to call lines where there are increased call volumes. The single telephony platform also offers more resilience and helps stabilise the service by reducing call abandonment and wait times for customers
- 2.40 *Workforce Management* - we have now deployed a single workforce management software – Injixo - across all our staff to give a holistic picture and allow capacity planning for peaks in contact. The software looks at historic 8-week data and produces a forecast for staff breaks, lunches and offline activities based on anticipated volumes. Seasonal peaks are also forecasted against previous yearly trends.
- 2.1 *Performance Data* - As part of the CSC Service Review the teams’ reporting and operational practices are also being harmonised. Currently the teams are on different systems with different performance recording methodologies which does not make the comparison of performance data straightforward.
- 2.2 *Webchat* – We currently have two webchat solutions in place. Work is starting to harmonise webchat providers with an ambition to increase the use of automated responses to common queries
- 2.3 *Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System* - we currently have three Customer Relationship Management solutions in place in our customer services teams. This also impacts the Councils’ direction on Customer Accounts – whether we have a solution where the customer can access all their records with one, single sign on through the same system, or whether they sign into other applications (for example, the library customer account) for more specialist interactions.
- 2.4 Going forward the proposal is to take a Master Data Management (MDM) approach. This is an application that reads data from a variety of sources (back office systems, existing Line of business CRMs and forms) and then presents a complete data picture back to a customer service agent or a customer themselves.

- 2.5 Work is in progress to define a comprehensive set of requirements for both the CSC CRM system and Customer Accounts; plus the interface with Line of Business CRMs all using a Master Data Management approach to make sure we get the right solution that supports our principles for customer services.
- 2.6 *FixMyStreet* – this is a digital access channel provided by a third party – My Society - and the Council Digital team have now recruited a product owner to review and improve all customer message and signposting.

CSC Challenges

- 2.7 *Call volumes* – The number of calls received in the CSC has increase by 10%. We are using our CSC data to work with services so that they understand how we can reduce demand failure.
- 2.8 *Call wait times* – We know that at some points the call wait times have been unacceptably high and the reasons and some of the actions and improvements are set out above. We also have a particular issue with assisted telephone payment process – this is where a customer wishes to pay over the telephone and is transferred to the payment line when the advisor has setup the payment but it then requires our advisor to collect a completion code and so they must stay on the call until the transaction has completed. This does impact upon the call length by approx. 2 mins and increases waiting time where there is an assisted payment. We are working with the supplier to identify a solution to this.
- 2.9 *Access to Line of Service Business Systems.* To maximise First Contact resolution, we need to provide our Agents with access to back office systems.
- 2.10 *Customer correspondence.* Agents do not always have sight of correspondence between the Council and the Customer, GDPR requirements notwithstanding, if Agents had this access this would make the Agent better placed to assist. This will be explored as part of the Master Data Management approach described below.
- 2.11 These challenges emphasise the need for a Council Customer First approach so that every Officer across the entire Council prioritises the Customer Experience.

CSC Improvements

- 2.12 The key to driving a better customer experience is to have business as usual level of contacts so that agents can answer calls within target wait times; to reduce progress

chasing calls by either the CSC being able to answer the enquiry and/or to prioritise the relevant service to address customer contact enquiry resolution.

- 2.13 *CSC performance reporting.* As the CSC consolidates its technology estate this provides the opportunity to report consistent single performance figures. The analysis of the consolidated data means that we are then able to understand for each access channel and service line where we have spikes in contacts and what the underlying reasons are so that we can address failure demand.
- 2.14 *Access Channels and Ease of Use.* We have a customer improvement team who look at opportunities to improve the customer experience across all of our access channels, whether it is wording; signposting or creation of e-forms. We have made the signposting more visible for our alternative access channels whether it is webchat; contact us forms and automated enquiry resolution through AI - which is particularly useful out of hours – as alternative to telephony.
- 2.15 *Task and Finish Methodology.* The CSC has through its experience with Southern Waste team developed a joint methodology of performance dashboards and deep dives to address customer and service performance issues.
- 2.16 Whilst it has been very challenging with regard to Waste this in-depth service engagement model has proved very successful and has been rolled across into Home to School Transport and Adult Social Care. The CSC is also embedded into Service Reviews and Improvement Boards so that the Customer Experience is prioritised.
- 2.17 *Access to Line of Service Systems.* Currently Services through the Better Buckinghamshire programme are consolidating their systems. As an example Revs & Bens are consolidating onto a single system - which will start in December 2021 with full go live in April 2022. In most cases it is not cost efficient to either procure licences or train Agents on these multiple systems. The current approach for high volume enquiries e.g. Southern Waste is to provide a daily ‘scrape’ of data so that Agents have recent information. Going forward the proposal is to take a Master Data Management approach.
- 2.18 *Customer Service Agent Training.* Our Customer Service Centre Agents have shown good skills taking on new additional work, often at short notice, including Local Contact Tracing; Helping Hands; general Covid enquiry line and the vaccination booking line.
- 2.19 We are now rolling out a consistent training plan that will include all Advisors entering data whilst on the phone and all team members having a reduction in average handle time as a target in their C4P to make call taking as efficient as possible. We are also upskilling advisors who historically may only have taken one

call type to be trained across different call types to add better resilience and improve answer rates and wait times.

CSC Improvements Road Map

2.20 Whilst the CSC Better Buckinghamshire review is not yet complete the expected implementation timeline for the CSC recommendations are as follows:

- ***Short term – 2021/22***

- Insource Wycombe Capita CSC – delivered in June 2021
- Interim single telephony solution in place, final telephony contract award and implemented - October 2021.
- Agree Master Data Management and CRM strategy and commence procurement – Autumn 2021
- Webchat consolidation and automation – in progress
- Customer First Framework agreed – September 2021

- ***Medium term – 2022/23***

- Implement MDM and CRM strategy
- Continue to roll out the new customer delivery model
- CSC Continuous Improvement activity

2.21 Taken together the CSC consolidation and Service Review plus the proposed Customer First proposal are key to this whole Council approach.

3. Other options considered

3.1 The alternate option would be to continue with a fragmented approach to Customer however this would neither deliver our commitments with the Corporate Plan nor would it deliver the Customer experience that our Customers should reasonably expect.

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 Budget for the Customer First Team and the customer training has been identified and is fully funded and all costs can be contained within Resources Directorate budget. There are no other direct legal or financial implications.

5. Corporate implications

- Property - none
- HR - none
- Climate change -none
- Sustainability - none
- Equality – no EQIA required
- Data – no DPIA required
- Value for money – this will deliver cost avoidance as customers will be able to do more at the first point of contact and will have a good customer experience and so be less likely to complain

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Background papers

7.1 Corporate Plan [Corporate plan | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

7.2 Current Customer Service Standards [Customer service standards | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

'Customer First' - our vision:

We're here to make people's lives better. That includes delivering the kind of customer service that we'd want for ourselves and our families and friends: **easy, helpful, fair & honest.**

Customer First - our Promises:

Easy- we will:

- Provide a number of ways to get in touch- in person, on the telephone and on line.
- Join things up for you, both inside the council and with our local partners.
- Help you if you need particular assistance- for example because of a disability or health condition.

Helpful- we will:

- Ensure you feel confident that we've listened to you, understood your needs and will take action.
- Aim to get it right for you first time.
- Always look for ways to improve how we do things.
- Seek to deal with things quickly and telling you when there is a delay.

Fair & Honest- we will:

- Set clear expectations about our policies, processes and standards, telling you what we can and can't offer and why.
- Treat you as we would like to be treated.
- Say sorry if we get something wrong and learn from our mistakes.
- Clearly explain our actions to you, so that you understand our decisions.
- Keep your information and data secure, in compliance with GDPR.



'Customer First' Behaviours

We know that behaviours matter and that even when things have gone wrong a great customer experience provides the opportunity to rebuild trust and confidence in the Council. Our customers also have an important role to play so that we can get everything back on track.

Our staff will:

- tell you their name and the department they work in, so you know who you're dealing with
- deal with things quickly and tell you when there's a delay
- apologise when we get things wrong
- treat you with respect
- listen to your feedback

We request that our Customers:

- be polite and are prepared to listen
- don't use abusive language or behaviour when dealing with our staff or contractors
- provide accurate and honest information so that we can deal with your request as promptly as possible
- let us know in good time if you need to cancel or rearrange an appointment
- tell us if your circumstances or contact details change
- tell us if you have been having problems so that we can work together to resolve them



Report to Finance & Resources Select Committee

Date:	14 th October 2021
Title:	Six Month Budget Scrutiny Update
Cabinet Member(s):	Martin Tett, Leader Portfolio
Contact officer:	Richard Ambrose
Ward(s) affected:	None specific
Recommendation:	The Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 In January 2021 the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group produced a report containing fifteen recommendations. This report details the six-month update to each of the recommendations, together with the timetable for actions to be completed.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 Attached at appendix 1 is a table which provides updates against each of the recommendations made by the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group in January 2021.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Set out in the responses contained within the table.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Next steps and review

8.1 A further update will be provided to the committee in six months' time.

9. Background papers

9.1 Not applicable.

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 Not applicable.

Response from Cabinet – Cllr Martin Tett, Leader

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>1. In future years:</p> <p>a) A zero-based budget be prepared to help drive out further savings and efficiencies</p> <p>b) A four-year revenue budget be prepared to enable an assessment of the Council’s financial</p>	<p>a) A zero-based budgeting approach is a core element of the Better Buckinghamshire Service Review process, which is helping to deliver the Unitary Transformation savings, and so this approach is already being piloted. At the end of the Better Buckinghamshire programme, an evaluation will be undertaken based on the learning and experience gained. This will also then consider how a ZBB approach can become integrated into the MTFP process (including adults and children’s).</p> <p>b) It is always the Councils intention to set a medium-term budget over a period which is sufficient to evidence financial sustainability, and which support strategic</p>	<p>An evaluation of the ZBB approach and proposals for integration into the MTP process will be produced - July 2021</p> <p>Discussions will take place with the Scrutiny Chairman in to agree the format and detail of paperwork for the budget scrutiny process – July 2021:</p>	<p>A form of ZBB is now included as part of the Better Buckinghamshire Service Review process. This involves a deep dive to ensure that all budgets are robust and properly aligned to service activity and the outcomes desired.</p> <p>The MTFP process has been agreed with Cabinet Members and this will consider a four-year period for revenue budgets.</p> <p>Discussions took place in mid-June with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Select Committee to agree the format and detail required for the next budget scrutiny process.</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)</p>

<p>sustainability</p> <p>c) Budget Scrutiny members should receive more detailed information in good time and should be involved earlier in the budgeting process, attached to portfolio budget review groups</p>	<p>decision-making. This year's one-year revenue budget is a direct response to the uncertainties the Covid-19 pandemic has brought, layered with the uncertainties in local Government funding beyond 2021/22.</p> <p>c) The MTFP Process aims to ensure that a robust budget is set and that it receives proper scrutiny. Early conversations with the Chairman of the scrutiny committee will help ensure that paperwork is provided in the most suitable format and detail</p>			
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>d) There should be consistency in presentation from all directorates using the same presentation template.</p>	<p>d) All directorates provided a slide pack of information for the scrutiny committee in a broadly consistent format. The level of detail included will be discussed with the Chairman of the Committee.</p>			
<p>2. Cabinet Members should revisit their budget assumptions and outcomes for the current year prior to the final budget being presented to Full Council for approval, particularly the assumptions around income for 2021/22 as income streams such as parking, planning and leisure centres are likely to continue to be significantly reduced into the 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p>Page 33</p>	<p>The budget assumptions have been kept under constant review as the impact of the pandemic have become apparent. Following the third lockdown the key assumptions and risks associated with the pandemic have been reviewed again and we have made a number of changes to the final budget proposals in line with the Scrutiny recommendations.</p> <p>The final budget proposals now include a contingency in relation to local taxation receipts (council tax and business rates) of £2m. Furthermore, the general contingency of £1m, included within the draft budget, relating to Covid-19 / economic uncertainties has been increased by a further £2m (to</p>	<p>The final budget proposals to be amended to include a £3m general contingency related to covid-19/economic uncertainties – February 2021</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader/ Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)</p>

	<p>£3m) to reflect the risks linked to the pandemic (including provider support, further losses of income and other additional expenditure such as rising placement costs).</p>			
<p>3. The Capital programme should be divided into those schemes which are fully funded, with deliverable business cases and those that are more aspirational, in order to give members and residents a clearer understanding of the programme. This detail should be included in the final budget (Last year's recommendation 8)</p> <p>Page 34</p>	<p>A review of the existing capital programme, approved by the Shadow Authority in February 2020, was undertaken as part of agreeing the proposed programme. This involved ensuring consistency in approach meaning that the proposed programme does not include aspirational projects as we need to make sure that we have a balanced and affordable programme. The approach that has been taken should help minimise the amount of slippage in the capital programme and funding risk, as schemes have only been included where there is reasonable certainty that there is</p>	<p>A medium/longer term strategic capital programme to be developed as part of the MTFP process for next year – December 2021</p>	<p>A 10-year strategic capital programme will be developed as part of the 2022/23+ MTFP process (December 2021). From this a formal 4-year programme will be agreed by Council in February 2022 that has identified as a fully funded and balanced Capital Programme from the capital resources available to the Council.</p> <p>The strategic 10-year capital programme will demonstrate the longer term ambitions of the Council in order to meet its corporate and statutory objectives, as well as those projects it would like to add to the capital programme, but where</p>	<p>John Chilver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Resources, Property & Assets /Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)</p>

funding available. Therefore, the schemes that have been included are either committed, fully funded (and meet the Council's strategic priorities), provide a net revenue or capital benefit or helps the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities (including health and safety).

The schemes that have been removed from the formal programme are those where the business case is not sufficiently developed and clear but can still be included through use of the £100m prudential borrowing facility providing there is a viable business case. Unfortunately, the inclusion of more aspirational projects that aren't confirmed as being fully funded, would necessarily be to the detriment of other priorities in order to demonstrate a balanced capital programme over the four year period.

additional funding is required to be identified before they are able to be undertaken.

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
	<p>However, we do accept the comments by the Budget Scrutiny Committee that the programme does not perhaps reflect the full scale of the ambition of the Council but feel that approval via the formal capital programme is not the place to achieve this. Instead, we propose to develop a medium to long term strategic capital programme as part of the MTFP process for next year, which will enable the inclusion of the aspirational projects and also reflect a longer time horizon so that a clear line of sight can be given to potential future capital commitments and ensure that these satisfy the Capital & Investment Strategy objectives.</p>			
<p>4. An increased contingency be considered for Children's services,</p>	<p>An increased general contingency is being recommended as part of the final budget proposals (see Recommendation 2 response). This is designed to recognise the increased risks as a result of the third lockdown, including potential increases in costs linked to children's</p>	<p>See Rec 2 above</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children's Services/ Richard Nash</p>

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>where there has been a history of overspends in recent years.</p>	<p>placements. This is in addition to the contingency of £2.5m for placement cost already included within the proposed budget.</p>			<p>Corporate Director, Children's Services</p>
<p>5. Additional funding should be set aside for the Local Plan reserve as £3m over the next three years is likely to be inadequate (last year's recommendation 22).</p>	<p>Work has commenced on the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan. As work continues, we will develop a detailed project plan including estimated costs for supporting evidence and the eventual Examination in Public. Many of the aspects of the new Local Plan are still unknown given the proposed changes to the planning system through the Governments Planning White Paper. There is also no evidence to suggest that the budget set aside is not appropriate. Therefore, we will review the figure in the reserve on the basis of this work in the next 12 months.</p>	<p>The local plan reserve to be reviewed in the context of further work on the development of the plan - January 2022</p>	<p>Work continues on the new Local Plan. The Local Plan reserve will be reviewed in the context of that work. The review remains on target to be concluded in January 2022.</p>	<p>Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth & Sustainability</p>

<p>6. Key Performance Indicators around planning enforcement should be robust and regularly monitored to ensure that the strongly supported increased investment delivers an improved service and value for money.</p>	<p>During 2020/21 Cabinet has introduced a suite of robust enforcement indicators that are monitored on a quarterly basis. These include measuring number of new enforcement cases logged each quarter; the number of cases closed; the number of enforcement notices issued, and the number of cases closed through amicable negotiation. These indicators have shown a considerable increase in the number of cases being logged since the start of the year but also a very substantial increase in the number of formal actions that the Council has taken to resolve them.</p>	<p>The Cabinet member to continue to keep this under review and introduce new indicators where appropriate - ongoing</p>	<p>Key Performance Indicators around planning enforcement are kept under constant review. The Cabinet will consider the suite of performance indicators at its meeting in July. In addition, the Cabinet member and his deputy regularly monitor a variety of performance indicators through the Planning Improvement Board and other mechanisms to ensure the enforcement service delivers on the priorities and objectives</p>	<p>Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration / Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth & Sustainability</p>
<p>7. The Corporate Plan for Buckinghamshire Council should include a stronger commitment to Climate Change, with the aim of the Council being net Carbon Neutral by 2035 (subject to consideration of the</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan sets out a clear ambition to address climate change. The Council in July agreed a motion on climate change and this motion sets the direction and scope of the Council's ambitions on climate change. Council agreed that the Cabinet should produce proposals to work alongside national Government with the objective to achieve net carbon zero for Buckinghamshire as a whole by 2050. The council should also evaluate reaching 'net zero' for its own</p>	<p>Cabinet to consider the Climate Change Strategy – February 2021</p>	<p>The Climate Change Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet in February 2021. This strategy includes a deliverable commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050. This year, the Council will consult further on the strategy, make any amendments and report the document back to Cabinet for formal adoption.</p>	<p>Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth & Sustainability</p>

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>results of the Council's Carbon Audit), and the County generally by 2050. This commitment should be explicit and transparent and will require strong political leadership to ensure delivery and should focus on carbon reduction rather than buying in savings in order to become carbon neutral (last year's recommendation 2).</p>	<p>emissions no later than 2050 and possibly before this, potentially by 2030, subject to resources.</p> <p>Development of a Climate Change Strategy, to cover how this ambition can be met, is underway and is due to be reported to the February Cabinet meeting. This strategy will play a major part of further reducing carbon on a year by year basis. The focus of the new strategy will certainly be on carbon reduction and we will look to build upon the excellent work of the previous Councils in reducing our carbine emissions</p>			
<p>8. A specific Portfolio and Portfolio Holder should be nominated to be responsible for driving the Climate Change & Carbon Neutral agenda forward across Buckinghamshire Council and to take a leading role in championing this across the County and beyond (last year's</p>	<p>The current Cabinet has a Portfolio Holder leading on the Environment, who is responsible for championing the Council's developing approach to climate change. The organisation of future portfolios will be the responsibility of the new Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, following the elections in May.</p>	n/a	<p>Complete. The new Cabinet has a Portfolio Holder leading on Climate Change & Environment.</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader/ Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)</p>

recommendation 4).				
9. That further contingency funding be allocated to property rental income loss. This is an area where the Council does not receive any Government support and will likely be significantly impacted by the effects of further lockdowns.	The Council continually monitors its rental income and is in direct conversation with its tenants where they are experiencing difficulty. Lockdown 3 and the prolongation of Covid 19 has resulted in a re-evaluation of the potential loss of rental income in financial year 21/22 from £1.2m to £2m. An additional contingency of £800k has been included in the budget proposals for this purpose.	The final budget proposals to be amended to include an additional £800k contingency related to property rental income February 2021	Complete. The future MTFP will consider assumptions around property rental income. The additional budget of £2m is, so far, proving adequate to cover COVID-related losses in the coming year. Further planning and modelling is being done for future years to feed into next year's MTFP.	John Chilver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Resources, Property & Assets, /Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth & Sustainability

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>10. Broadband coverage across Buckinghamshire be reviewed and plans submitted to ensure Buckinghamshire is one of the most connected counties in the country. A number of Community Boards have already set up sub-groups to investigate this and we recommend this be replicated across all Community Boards that cover rural areas. A budget should be set aside to do this.</p>	<p>The Cabinet strongly supports the ambition to ensure that Buckinghamshire is one of the most connected counties. However, the scale of funding required to deliver this ambition is such that it relies on funding from Government. It is not something we can resource from the Council's budget. The Council has recently submitted an ambitious Recovery and Growth proposition to Government. One of our core asks is for a £60m Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund to enable Buckinghamshire to operate as a fully connected rural economy with every premise connected to gigabit capable broadband. If successful, this fund will provide the budget to help towards delivering against this recommendation.</p>	<p>Examples of Community Board activity in relation to Broadband to be shared across all Boards – March 2021</p>	<p>Broadband action groups have been set up in two of our community boards areas; North West Chiltern and South West Chilterns which sees local members, MPs and the Minister for Digital Infrastructure discussing the issues within rural areas in Buckinghamshire and any opportunities for Buckinghamshire to be considered for any pilot schemes.</p> <p>In April 2021, Government announced the next significant national investment in digital infrastructure initiative, Project Gigabit. The previous 'superfast' contract looked to achieve a minimum of 24 Mbit/s whereas gigabit connection speeds are 125 Mbit/s. This new national investment scheme has a target of 85% of premises (nationally) having gigabit connectivity by 2025. Buckinghamshire has been confirmed into the second phase of the programme with procurement processes for a gigabit contract</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth & Sustainability</p>

	<p>We welcome the priority that some of our Community Boards are attaching to this at a local level. It is for each individual Community Board to set its own priorities, however we will share these examples as a model for other Boards to consider.</p>		<p>commencing in spring 2022. An 'Open Market Review' was launched in Buckinghamshire in August 2021 to map the intervention areas for this contract which is expected to be completed in January 2022.</p> <p>Community Boards continue to share good practice across all areas and within the more rural areas a focus on broadband, working towards the Economic Recovery priority set for all community boards.</p>	
<p>14 Cabinet should consider increasing the levels of investment in the capital programme for both footway repairs (as suggested in last year's report Page 48) and drainage issues, as both were highlighted as areas of priority for residents.</p>	<p>Over recent years, footway investment has been at a raised level with £2m committed as part of the budget proposals for 21/22.</p> <p>Additional capital investment in highways drainage assets also forms part of the current proposed budget. However, recent weather events have highlighted problems with the highway drainage systems leading to highway flooding, some damage to properties and disruption to the use of the highway and it is recognised that the</p>	<p>The final budget proposals to be amended to include an additional £2m one off investment in highways drainage - February 2021</p>	<p>Complete. Additional funding secured as part of the final budget for drainage. Future levels of investment for drainage issues will be considered as part of the next MTFP.</p>	<p>Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport/ Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities</p>

	<p>highway drainage assets would benefit from increased investment levels.</p> <p>We have therefore included an additional £2m one off investment to further improve the Council's highways drainage assets as part of the final budget proposals</p>			
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>12. Cabinet should define a delivery target for affordable homes and the Cabinet Members for planning and enforcement, property and assets and housing and homelessness should work together to deliver these affordable homes in the most cost-effective way for residents. This project should be regularly monitored and we recommend that the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee should be engaged in the development of such plans.</p>	<p>Targets for affordable housing delivery are already included in the existing local plans and will feature in the new Local Plan for the County. A delivery programme would flow from this work and will be monitored by all Cabinet members involved in the Planning, Growth and Sustainability portfolio of services. It is also part of our Recovery and Growth Deal to build high-quality, carbon-neutral, digitally enabled, affordable homes for life. These will be adaptable, accessible and suitable for key workers, home working, family living, and healthy, independent living in older years, for instance through a care village model.</p> <p>An evaluation is currently being undertaken of Council owned property assets (excluding the agricultural estate) that might be released for affordable housing, key worker housing and homelessness and papers are being developed for Cabinet to consider including financial appraisals.</p>	<p>PGS Portfolio to report to Cabinet on the release of council owned land for affordable and key worker housing – June 2021</p>	<p>Members have formed a task and finish group around affordable housing delivery. The group will consider a position statement of the Council in relation to affordable housing and will also consider how Council owned sites might be used to support delivery.</p> <p>A list of all potential brownfield sites – suitable for housing developments – has been compiled to feed into Local Plan considerations. We will start to take forward feasibility work on some of these sites in the Autumn and bring this together as part of a wider Housing strategy as part of the development of the Capital Programme.</p>	<p>John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets/ Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Services/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth & Sustainability</p>

<p>13. A Task and Finish Group should be established to review the Council's real estate portfolio with a view to identifying suitable sites/buildings that could be converted to residential dwellings for key workers and the homeless (see recommendation 8 last year).</p>	<p>Alternative options for developing Key Worker housing will be reviewed and business cases developed over the next year (see response to Recommendation 12 above)</p>	<p>As per Rec 12 above</p>	<p>As per Rec 12 above</p>	<p>John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets/Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Services Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth & Sustainability</p>
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>In anticipation of the May 2021 local elections being postponed a contingency provision of £325k should be factored into the budget to cover members' allowances for a six-month period. If it is known by the time of the budget being approved by Full Council that there is a longer postponement period, a provision of £765k should be made to cover a twelve-month period.</p>	<p>A contingency of £326k has been added to the final budget proposals to mitigate the risk of elections being delayed by 6 months.</p>	<p>The final budget proposals to be amended to include a contingency of £326k for election delay - February 2021</p>	<p>The elections were not delayed, so no contingency was required. Complete.</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader/ Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive</p>
<p>15. Cultural Strategy</p>	<p>The Budget Scrutiny Committee advised that, given the delivery of the Cultural Strategy is a Council priority, a specific budget should be considered to drive the strategy forward and promote culture and tourism in Buckinghamshire. Whilst this was not a specific recommendation, the Cabinet noted the suggestion and has included a specific budget of £100k in the final budget proposals for this purpose.</p>	<p>The final budget proposals to be amended to include a budget of £100k to support the Cultural Strategy - February 2021</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>Clive Harriss, Cabinet Member for Culture & Leisure/ Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities</p>



Report to Finance and Resources Select Committee

Date: 14th October 2021

Title: Select Committee Work Programme

Relevant councillor(s): All

Author and/or contact officer: Leslie Ashton, Senior Scrutiny Officer

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Recommendations:

- i. That the Finance and Resources Select Committee agrees the draft work programme for the 2021/2022 municipal year.
- ii. That the Select Committee identifies a subject for a more focussed and in-depth piece of work.

Introduction

- 1.1 Every municipal year, each of Buckinghamshire Council's Select Committees will draft and agree a work programme for the ensuing year. The work programme will detail the subject of reports to be presented at each committee meeting during the year. The work programme will come back to each committee and may be amended or developed during the year.
- 1.2 The work programme may also include suggested topics for in-depth pieces of scrutiny work, which can be undertaken outside of the formal webcast committee meetings.

Options for In-Depth Scrutiny Work

- 1.3 The Select Committee may identify a particular issue which they would like to investigate in more depth than a committee item allows. The Select Committee can commission an in-depth piece of work which will be undertaken by a smaller group of members, supported by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

- 1.4 **Rapid Review** - This is ideal for a focussed review 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.
- 1.5 **In-depth Inquiry** – An in-depth inquiry is more suitable when the topic identified for investigation is more complex or there are a number of different lines of enquiry that the Select Committee wish to consider. An Inquiry group will still consist of a smaller group of members, but a significant number of evidence gathering meetings may be undertaken, perhaps including visits to partner agencies or other local authorities or discussions with subject matter experts, over a longer period of time.
- 1.6 With either of the two approaches outlined above, a scope for the piece of work will be agreed by the Select Committee and members who wish to participate will be drawn from the Select Committee, ensuring cross party representation. As a guideline, a maximum of 6-8 members would be ideal.
- 1.7 The Select Committee Chairman may chair a Rapid Review or an In-depth Inquiry, but they can also choose to appoint another committee member to act as Chairman if they wish.
- 1.8 The outcome of either a Rapid Review or an In-depth Inquiry will be a report, which will outline members’ findings and include recommendations for Cabinet and partner agencies to consider. Once the final report has been agreed at Select Committee it will then be presented at Cabinet and Cabinet will provide a response to the recommendations.
- 1.9 When considering undertaking a Rapid Review or In-depth Inquiry, members are asked to be mindful of the resource implications for both the Scrutiny team and other Council officers who will support these pieces of work. The Select Committee Chairmen meet regularly, which will enable co-ordination of in-depth pieces of work and consideration of timeliness, possible areas of duplication and cross-cutting issues.

Next steps and review

2.0 The work programme will be included on the agenda of each Select Committee meeting and any necessary amendments can be discussed.

Once the Select Committee have identified a topic for a more in-depth piece of work, the most appropriate approach and timing for the work can be discussed and agreed and a scope will be developed by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Background papers:

Finance and Resources Select Committee draft work programme.

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Finance and Resources Select Committee (Chairman: Ralph Bagge)

Date	Topic	Description & Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
14 October 2021	Customer First	'Customer' is a key priority for Members and Customer First is the proposed new Customer Experience framework. Customer First sets out specific behaviours and expectations around customer service which applies to both our employees and customers. The Select Committee will hear about and be able to provide feedback on the work planned.	Sarah Murphy-Brookman, Lloyd Jeffries	John Chilver, Tim Butcher, Sarah Murphy-Brookman, Lloyd Jeffries
	6 month update on budget scrutiny recommendations	To receive an update on the progress of the budget scrutiny recommendations made in January 2021.	Richard Ambrose	Martin Tett, John Chilver, Richard Ambrose
9 December 2021	WorkSmart Strategy	For members to receive an update and provide feedback on the WorkSmart Strategy and delivery plans to include any possible update on future office accommodation.	Sarah Ashmead, Sarah Murphy-Brookman	John Chilver, Sarah Ashmead, Sarah Murphy-Brookman, John Reed
	Better Buckinghamshire	For Members to receive a progress update and overview of the Better Buckinghamshire programme and review savings against targets to date.	Sarah Ashmead	John Chilver, Sarah Ashmead, Roger Goodes
	Budget Performance Monitoring Q2	To review the quarter 2 budget monitoring report.	Richard Ambrose	John Chilver, Richard Ambrose
	Budget Scrutiny Inquiry scoping paper	For members to agree the approach to the budget scrutiny inquiry taking place in January 2022.	Leslie Ashton	Ralph Bagge, Leslie Ashton

10 – 14 January 2022	Budget Scrutiny		All Corporate and Service Directors	Cabinet Members, Deputies, Corporate and Service Directors
17 February 2022	Overall Property Strategy	For members to understand the Council's overall property strategy and to receive an overview of council access points, their customer usage and plans to utilise council property for other purposes.	John Reed	John Chilver, Tim Butcher, Ian Thompson, John Reed
	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
	12 month update on budget scrutiny recommendations	To receive an update on the progress of the budget scrutiny recommendations made in January 2021.	Richard Ambrose	Martin Tett, John Chilver, Richard Ambrose
	Budget Performance Monitoring Q3	To review the quarter 3 budget monitoring report.	Richard Ambrose	John Chilver, Richard Ambrose
7 April 2022	TBC			