



## Finance & Resources Select Committee Agenda

Date: Thursday 17 February 2022

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		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes		5 - 10
The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 to be confirmed as a correct record.		

#### **4 Public Questions**

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

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

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<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/get-involved-with-council-decisions/select-committees/>

No questions have been received.

#### **5 Chairman's update**

#### **6 12 Month Update on Budget Scrutiny Recommendations 14:10 11 - 34**

The Committee will consider a 12-month review of recommendations from the 2021 Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group.

##### **Contributors:**

Councillor Martin Tett, Leader  
Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets  
Richard Ambrose, Service Director for Corporate Finance (Section 151 Officer)

##### **Paper:**

12 month update report

#### **7 Work Programme 14:55 35 - 36**

The Committee will discuss the work programme and agree the items for the next meeting.

##### **Contributors:**

All Committee Members

##### **Paper:**

Work Programme attached

#### **8 Overall Property Strategy 15:00 37 - 50**

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.

**Contributors:**

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance,  
Resources, Property and Assets

John Reed, Service Director for Property and Assets

Lloyd Jeffries, Service Director for Business Operations

**Papers:**

Overall Property Strategy Presentation

Confidential appendices

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

The next meeting will take place on 7 April 2022.

**10 Exclusion of the Public**

To resolve that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that discussion will involve 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 that holds that information).*

**11 Overall Property Strategy**

**51 - 86**

To consider the confidential appendices.

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: Chris Ward on 01296 585807, email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto: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 9 DECEMBER 2021 IN THE PARALYMPIC ROOM, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.13 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

R Bagge (Chairman), D Anthony, K Ashman, S Chhokar, T Dixon, D Goss, G Harris, I Macpherson, J Ng and S Wilson

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

T Butcher and J Chilver

#### **Agenda Item**

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

Apologies were received from Councillors T Egleton, K Wood and M Walsh.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

**4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

**5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman provided an update on budget scrutiny activity that had taken place since the last meeting. Two briefing sessions had been held in November relating to the Adult Social Care and Children's and Education areas of the budget respectively, recordings of the sessions had been circulated to committee members. A further private briefing would be held virtually with the section 151 officer on 21 December to give an update on the draft budget position and it was hoped that members could attend. The Section 151 officer would also hold a virtual briefing for Members on 5 January, a week prior to the formal sessions to highlight key areas in the budget and assist members with queries on the supporting paperwork. As a reminder if any members knew that they would be unable to participate in the budget scrutiny inquiry group they were asked to make the Chairman and Scrutiny Officer aware.

## 6 BETTER BUCKINGHAMSHIRE UPDATE

The Committee received a report on the Better Buckinghamshire Programme. Councillor J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets presented the update and summarised the report which was appended to the agenda pack. The Better Buckinghamshire programme was developed to enable the Council to achieve the ambition detailed in the unitary business case, and to realise the benefits from achieving this. The programme included a series of service reviews to modernise and optimise services for the unitary council, driving innovation and improving customer experience.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the following key points:

- The aim of the Better Buckinghamshire Programme was not only to deliver the £18.6m savings as noted in the unitary business case, but to provide more efficient, streamlined services to residents. Whilst the Resources Portfolio led on the delivery of the programme, commitment and engagement from all service areas was vital to ensure that the programme would be successful. Paragraphs 3.2 to 3.4 of the report highlighted the main challenges to date, which included an increased level in demand in some areas such as child protection, homelessness and issues carried forward from legacy authorities.
- The Council had made good progress with service reviews, as detailed in appendix A of the report and they were on track for completion at the end of next year. At present, of the thirty-one reviews, ten had been completed and nineteen were in progress.
- To date, 56 staffing posts had been deleted and a saving of £2.2 million had been achieved. The target saving for this financial year was £2.6 million. These savings were achieved predominantly through staff reductions, contract harmonisation and property rationalisation.
- In terms of governance, the service improvement board continued to meet monthly, this was chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member were regularly updated on progress.

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

- Members were keen to understand what work had been undertaken on property rationalisation which would also be discussed under agenda item 7. Due to the pandemic, staff working patterns had been impacted and there needed to be an evidence based approach to ensure adequate office accommodation remained in a hybrid model of working. It was noted that it would take time to build an evidence base, and eighteen months of covid restrictions had impacted this data collection. Early assessments indicated that approximately 100,000 square foot of office space would be required, with savings and income opportunities possible through letting spaces out and capital receipts of potential disposals. The full Work Smart strategy had yet to be implemented for a long enough period of time to gather enough data for thorough analysis. However, some buildings had already been successfully let, including office space at Easton Street office space, High Wycombe which provided a revenue stream to the Council.
- A member requested that where percentages and numbers were used within reports, could both percentages and actual numbers be consistently used to ensure data clarity and assist understanding. A member added that a visual progress meter would also be beneficial to understand the stage the Council was at with the Better Buckinghamshire programme.
- Members discussed the savings that had been delivered to date as noted on table 6.3 of the report. Not all savings would be realised until each of the service reviews had been

completed. Some external factors such as the length of property lease contracts impacted the timeframe of savings being made.

- A member requested a progress update on devolving services to Town and Parish Councils as noted in the report. Members were advised that the Communities Portfolio was responsible for this process, however it was noted that this was an important part of the unitary business programme. Town and Parish Councils had been invited to submit a list of assets and services for this opportunity, some of which were selected for a pilot phase. A number of assets across all community board areas were in the process of being reviewed as part of the devolution programme. A decision on the devolution of one of the community centres in High Wycombe had recently been made by the Cabinet Member for Communities.
- A member asked whether there were opportunities to reduce the transformation budget which was £17 million, of which £6.5 million had been committed. It was reported that external resources had been used in the early stages of the programme, however as the programme developed these specialist skills were transferred to the internal team which removed reliance on external resources. These external resources were now just providing technical expertise to support reviews. As reviews had progressed, it was continually assessed how projects could be delivered more efficiently. Members were assured that opportunities for reducing the cost of the programmes were monitored through the governance model, with business cases being submitted to the service improvement board for any costs required. Many of these had been rejected where feasibility and returns were not adequate. The Committee was assured that the transition budget was only used as necessary.
- The Committee requested that in future reports, more granular data be provided on the programme that underpins assurances made and evidences the working governance model.

## **7 WORK SMART PROGRAMME**

The Committee received a report on the Work Smart Programme which was the programme created to focus on the design of a future working model which met the needs of the Council going forward, as well as reducing costs in line with the unitary business case.

Councillor J Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets presented the update, highlighting the following key points:

- Very recent Government guidance had requested that, once again, staff work from home where possible, which would pause the Work Smart return to the office for the time being.
- The benefits of hybrid working were highlighted, including less commuting, a better work-life balance, fewer working days lost to illness and decreased costs in printing and travelling. By spending two days in an office environment, collaboration between teams could be maintained.
- Since 22 November, the hybrid model of staff spending two days a week in the office had been in operation. Staff had been categorised under four categories of worker type, with the majority, 57 % identified as 'any-desk' workers – those who will work remotely for 3 days per week and were not fixed to a particular location.
- The importance of engagement for new starters and entry-level workers was emphasised. Face-to-face contact and extra support had been implemented for this group of staff as noted in the report.
- Feedback from the early stages of implementation of the programme, including from new starters who had been employed through the Government Kickstart initiative had been positive. It was hoped that through offering flexible working arrangements this

would also ensure the Council was seen as a top employer and attractive option to potential employees.

- Hybrid working offered opportunities for potential property rationalisation through significant downsizing.

During discussion, the following questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- The Chairman welcomed the Work Smart initiative and praised its efficiency in terms of flexibility for staff and potential for reduction in office space.
- A member was interested in the rationale behind working remotely for three days rather than two. Cllr Chilver and the Corporate Director for Resources explained that an examination of staff calendars displayed that for 'Any Desk' workers that there was a mix of collaborative meetings, 1-1s but also 'quiet work'. On average the collaborative working and 1-1s were assessed to be about 2 days a week, with the rest being quiet work. In many cases, staff members reported that they benefit from having a quiet space at home for focused work. The two days in the office was then focussed collaborative meetings, training sessions and one to one meetings with line managers. It was also highlighted that the two office days would be the minimum, with staff being able to visit the office more frequently if they wished.
- Members were concerned about the negative mental health implications of being at home more frequently. The Corporate Director for Resources advised that mental health implications were different for different people. Some members of staff had expressed anxiety about returning to work, including clinically extremely vulnerable staff. Those staff members had been assured that the office environment would be made as safe as possible, with additional measures in place such as spacing between desks. It was also noted that people who wished to come into the office more frequently for mental health or other reasons could do so and this had been communicated to staff. Members were advised that the Work Smart initiative allowed for greater flexibility at work. The Council had also seen in the first lockdown a significant reduction in sickness due largely to decreased social mixing, this reduction in sickness in turn meant that there was greater productivity. There was also the benefit of colleagues still being able to work remotely when suffering from the lesser illnesses, such as colds, whereas in the past these colleagues may have had to take a day's sickness absence.
- A member highlighted the importance of face-to-face contact for new starters and colleagues in entry-level positions and the committee was assured that this group of staff had continued to receive proper induction and support was in place. The Committee was advised that new strategies had been developed over time to adapt to different ways of working. Induction tools had been produced for online use and the 'Being a Buckinghamshire Manager' programme had been rolled out to managers to support them with the training of new members of staff.
- A member asked how the Council ensured that customer demands were going to be met in the future through Work Smart. It was pointed out that customer service centre and all customer contact channels remained open throughout the pandemic. It was noted that in order to remain competitive in the employment market, flexibility and homeworking was in demand, and was now expected from a large number of applicants.
- Several members queried the discrepancy between the office space available and the utilised space eighteen months into the Council's formation. It was asserted that due to the pandemic, exceptional ways of working had been adopted and therefore, not enough data had been acquired to give an entirely clear picture as to what office space the Council needed to retain. Additional evidence would need to be collected once the Work Smart programme was re-introduced to understand the Council's operational footprint in more detail. Some surplus office space in High Wycombe, Amersham, Aylesbury, and



Denham was already being let out to generate additional revenue. It was also noted that less office space had been available for us in light of the pandemic and requirements to practice social distancing. Furthermore, the office space was not only used for staff working at their desks, and consideration had to be given for other spaces such as meeting space. Members expressed that they would like to see a more detailed plan produced on this topic.

- A member queried how much space of the former New County Offices (Walton Street Offices) was presently occupied by staff. Cllr Chilver advised that most of the floors would be occupied once the Work Smart programme was in full force.
- A member was interested in whether there had been an increase in staff moving from part-time to full-time roles in light of more flexible working being introduced. The Corporate Director for Resources advised she would examine the data and feed back to members, although believed this pattern was not evident.
- A question was raised in respect of the ways Work Smart had been implemented and monitored among teams. It was explained that each manager discussed the days their team members would come into the offices with them directly. This was also subject to desk availability. Teams had been encouraged to spread their office presence across the week, both to use meeting rooms and desk space efficiently but also to collaborate with different teams/team members across the services. All staff were supported in this process both by their line managers and corporately.

## **8 BUDGET PERFORMANCE MONITORING Q2**

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets presented the Q2 Budget Monitoring Report which had been presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 9 November. Councillor J Chilver summarised the report which reflected the business as usual and Covid pressures faced during that period. An appendix provided further detail for each Portfolio and information about performance relating to overdue debts and late payments of commercial debt.

At the end of the Q2, an overall nil variance was forecast for the revenue budget 2021-22 after allowing for £4.8m of corporate mitigations. This was a favourable movement of £0.5m since Q1.

The nil variance comprised:

£4.9m adverse variance on Portfolio Covid related spend (£6.7m adverse August).

£0.1m favourable variation on Portfolio BAU (£0.9m adverse August).

£2.8m favourable variation on Corporate Contingencies (£4.0m August).

£0.9m favourable variation relating to Covid Sales Fees and Charges compensation scheme.

£1.1m favourable variation on Corporate Budgets, principally capital financing costs.

Figure 1 (Cabinet report) detailed high level information for each Portfolio.

The total Portfolio net revenue forecast variance was £4.8m adverse (1.1% of the total Portfolio budget). Significant risks to the Revenue forecasts had been identified, a proportion of which were likely to materialise. These and any new pressures could potentially be covered by a number of contingencies that were not yet fully committed and could be used, if required. Appendix 1 provided further detail on the revenue forecast outturn by Portfolio.

Figure 2 showed performance, by Portfolio and against savings targets, for the £13.2m of savings that had been incorporated into the 2021-22 revenue budgets.

Figure 3 provided information on the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF), funding

provided to local authorities to help reduce the spread of coronavirus and support local public health. Buckinghamshire was expected to benefit from £15.9m of funding spread over three financial years. The approved spend was for £6.125m in each of 2020-21 and 2021-22.

### **Capital Budget Outturn**

Capital slippage had increased between Q1 and Q2 from 1.6% (£3.0m) to 7.9% (£14.8m). Whilst this was currently below the corporate target of 10% there was an expectation that slippage may increase further in future months because there were reduced opportunities to catch up on delays as the year progressed. Details were provided of a number of specific circumstances that had impact on the progress of capital projects. Further details for each portfolio were found in Appendix 1.

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

- A member noted that a breakdown of the impact of COVID-19 on the revenue budget for areas such as transport would be helpful in determining budgets for next year. It was advised that COVID-19 assumptions had been forecast when setting the budget for 2021/2022, particularly around income loss in parking, rental and leisure. Members were advised that many of the reduced income variances were related to pandemic implications, but that some of this had been claimed back from the government's Sales, Fees and Charges income protection scheme for the first quarter of the year. There were Client Transport pressures (particularly transport for SEND children) with additional costs relating to both demand and complexity. This was being assessed as part of the budget build process for next year, with analysis on whether certain pressures would be one off or on-going. This Committee would, through its budget scrutiny inquiry in January, test assumptions made in the draft budget.
- A Member also commented that some savings noted in the report would be repeatable such as some of those noted within climate change; however, decisions would need to be made on underspends in other areas such as Communities. The papers for the draft budget would be published prior to Christmas for Cabinet to consider at its meeting on 6 January, before being reviewed by the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group.

### **9 BUDGET SCRUTINY INQUIRY GROUP SCOPING PAPER**

The Committee received a scoping paper and noted the proposed approach to the budget scrutiny inquiry taking place in January 2022.

### **10 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an up to date version of the work programme to cover the remainder of this municipal year. Members were advised that items had been scheduled for the most appropriate meetings where member input would be most valuable. The Committee was advised that there were no items provisionally scheduled for the April meeting as yet, and there was agreement that the budget scrutiny sessions in January may highlight areas that should be looked at in April.

### **Resolved:**

That the work programme be noted.

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

Thursday 17 February 2022 at 2 p.m.

## Budget Scrutiny 2021 – Recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group – 12-month update

Chairman – Cllr Ralph Bagge

### Response from Cabinet – Cllr Martin Tett, Leader

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	12 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>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</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>The draft revenue budget is for 3-years to match the length of the Spending Review announced at the end of October 2021. The paperwork for the latest budget scrutiny meetings was hopefully at an appropriate level in terms of the format and the level of detail.</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)</p>

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<p>b) A four-year revenue budget be prepared to enable an assessment of the Council's financial sustainability</p> <p>c) Budget Scrutiny members should receive more detailed information in good time and should be involved earlier in the</p>	<p>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 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.</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>		
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<p>budgeting process, attached to portfolio budget review groups</p>	<p>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	12 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
d) There should be consistency in presentation from all directorates using the same presentation template.	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.				
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	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.	The final budget proposals to be amended to include a £3m general contingency related to covid-19/economic uncertainties – February 2021	Complete.	Complete.	Martin Tett, Leader/ Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)

be significantly reduced into the 2021/22 financial year.	<p>The final budget proposals now include a contingency in relation to local taxation receipts (council tax and business rates) of £2m.</p> <p>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 £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>				
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	<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</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</p>	<p>A 10 year view of the capital programme has started to be developed as part of the 2022/23 to 2025/26 Capital Programme and significant progress has been made in particular in identifying estimated school place requirements and the ongoing costs of existing programme provisions. However it hasn't been possible to give a comprehensive 10</p>	<p>John Chilver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Resources, Property &amp; Assets /Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)</p>

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)

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 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

balanced Capital Programme from the capital resources available to the Council.

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

year picture as there are still some key strategies and plans that need to be agreed by the Council, such as the Housing Strategy, Leisure Strategy and a refresh of regeneration strategies. These will then lead to the development of action plans that can be reflected in the 10 year strategy. We will continue to work on the 10 year plan during 2022/23 as part of the 2023/24 – 2026/27 Capital Programme development.



	<p>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.</p>				
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	12 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<div data-bbox="47 738 85 858" data-label="Page-Header">Page 18</div>	<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 &amp; Investment Strategy objectives.</p>				

4. An increased contingency be considered for Children's services,	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	See Rec 2 above	Complete.	Complete.	Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Children's Services/ Richard Nash
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	12 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
where there has been a history of overspends in recent years.	placements. This is in addition to the contingency of £2.5m for placement cost already included within the proposed budget.				Corporate Director, Children's Services
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). Page 20	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	The local plan reserve to be reviewed in the context of further work on the development of the plan - January 2022	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.	The delays in the Planning White Paper mean that we have not progressed the Local Plan as much as we would have liked, however, based on the work we have done this year we remain confident that the £3m overall budget remains sufficient. Should the Planning White Paper require any additional work – which in turn may require additional budget – will need to be addressed in a future MTFP. It remains a risk on our risk register, that we keep under regular review.	Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Planning & Regeneration/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth & Sustainability

	basis of this work in the next 12 months.				
<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</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>The KPIs for enforcement have been reviewed and are now reported monthly to the Planning Improvement Board, as well as quarterly to Cabinet.</p>	<p>Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Planning &amp; Regeneration / Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth &amp; Sustainability</p>

	substantial increase in the number of formal actions that the Council has taken to resolve them.				
<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>Following consultation, the final Climate Change Strategy was approved by Cabinet and published in October 2021. It is published here:</p> <p><a href="https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33624/Report%20for%20Climate%20Change%20and%20Air%20Quality%20Strategy.pdf">https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s33624/Report%20for%20Climate%20Change%20and%20Air%20Quality%20Strategy.pdf</a></p> <p>The delivery of the Strategy will be scrutinised regularly by the Transport, Environment and Climate Change Select Committee.</p>	<p>Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Climate Change &amp; Environment/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning, Growth &amp; Sustainability</p>

Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	12 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>results of the Council's Carbon Audit), and the County generally by 2050.</p> <p>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</p>				

	reducing our carbine emissions				
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 recommendation 4).	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.	n/a	Complete. The new Cabinet has a Portfolio Holder leading on Climate Change & Environment.	Complete.	Martin Tett, Leader/ Richard Ambrose, Service Director (Corporate Finance)



<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The final budget proposals to be amended to include an additional £800k contingency related to property rental income February 2021</p>	<p>Complete. The future MTFP will consider assumptions around property rental income.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>John Chilver, Cabinet Member, Finance, Resources, Property &amp; Assets, /Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth &amp; Sustainability</p>
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	12 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
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.	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,	Examples of Community Board activity in relation to Broadband to be shared across all Boards – March 2021	<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>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>Our Strategy on Broadband coverage has broadened out and moved on since the 6 month update on Community Board input, with the launch of Project Gigabit, delivered in partnership with BDUK, and which includes a Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme targeted at rural businesses and residents.</p> <p>For more information, see the recent updates to the Council website on broadband:</p> <p><a href="#">Broadband in Buckinghamshire   Buckinghamshire Council (buckscc.gov.uk)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Broadband voucher schemes   Buckinghamshire Council (buckscc.gov.uk)</a></p>	Martin Tett, Leader/ Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth & Sustainability

<p>Page 27</p>	<p>this fund will provide the budget to help towards delivering against this recommendation.</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>17 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</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</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>Complete.</p>	<p>Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport/ Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities</p>

residents.	<p>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 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	12 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</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>The 6 month update still applies, and similar theme was discussed at Budget Scrutiny in Jan 2022. The Affordable Housing Position Statement is due for Cabinet discussion in Spring 2022 &amp; Housing Strategy due for delivery and publication in Early Summer 2022. Pilot projects to deliver key worker and social affordable housing continue to be developed for delivery, in parallel with the strategy formation.</p>	<p>John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property &amp; Assets/ Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing &amp; Homelessness &amp; Regulatory Services/ Ian Thomson, Corporate Director, Planning Growth &amp; Sustainability</p>

	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.				
Page 30 15. 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	Alternative options for developing Key Worker housing will be reviewed and business cases developed over the next year (see response to Recommendation 12 above)	As per Rec 12 above	As per Rec 12 above	As per Rec 12 above.	John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property & Assets/Nick Naylor, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Services Ian Thompson, Corporate Director, Planning

last year).					Growth & Sustainability
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Recommendation	Cabinet Response	Cabinet Agreed Actions/Timelines	6 Month Update	12 Month Update	Lead Cabinet Member/Officer
<p>14. 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 £745k 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>Complete.</p>	<p>Martin Tett, Leader/ Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive</p>



15. Cultural Strategy	<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>	Complete.	Complete.	<p>Clive Harriss, Cabinet Member for Culture &amp; Leisure/ Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities</p>
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**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 ( <b>may require confidential session</b> ).	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

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# Finance and Resources Select Committee

## *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 uses.*

*Author John Reed – Director of Property and Assets  
Cabinet Member for Resources and Property and Assets*

# Key note to Finance and Resources Select Committee

- The Strategic Asset Management Plan will be refreshed by the end of Q2 2022 and an Agricultural Estate Management Plan will be promoted over the same time period.

# Outline Summary of the Property Estate

The Councils property portfolio comprises;

- Operational (offices, depots)
- Community (schools, leisure centres, community centres, theatres, car parks, green spaces, parks)
- Highways
- Agricultural Estate – Farms and land
- Investment portfolio and development opportunities
- Regeneration opportunities
- Property Companies – Consilio, Aylesbury Vale Estates, BA.

# Context

- The entire estate is valued at £1.978b
- The Companies have assets under management of over £70m
- The Estate has over 1700 Properties.
- We have over significant number of land holdings the majority of which are highways.
- The property team number around 120 staff comprising;
  - a. Strategic Asset Management
  - b. Development and Investment
  - c. Property Services and hard facilities management
  - d. Soft facilities management
  - e. Health and safety
  - f. Transformation and regeneration
  - g. Construction.
- The annual revenue budget is in the order of £41m. Property directly manage a significant number of construction projects as set out in this report.



# Overall Property Strategy

The overall property strategy is set out in the **Strategic Asset Management Plan**, and is an amalgam of various strategies, policies and plans. The 2019 update is published on the Council's web site but is really a live document and due for a refresh and update in 2022 along with the preparation of an Agricultural Estate Management Plan. The current Strategic Asset Management Plan is attached at Appendix A.

The current strategies which are informing the work Property is delivering are:



# Overall Property Strategy – Key Objectives

The current key objectives for the Property Strategy are to:

- Support the Councils corporate Plan objectives and the medium term financial planning of the organisation;
- Support the provision of housing including market, key worker and affordable;
- Support the Councils wider carbon agenda including tree planting on the agricultural estate, building energy saving, solar car ports and electrification of fleets;
- Reduce operational footprint of the corporate estate where it is expedient to do so develop, dispose or create additional income, with associated reductions in the carbon footprint; and
- Role out the wider corporate landlord across the Unitary estate.

# How the Property Strategy and objectives are currently being delivered...

- Managing the development and disposals programme (See confidential appendix 2) to fund the Council's wider capital programme whilst delivering Regeneration & Housing objectives too.
- Managing major construction projects for services across the council, including:
  - Schools construction
  - Chiltern Lifestyle Centre
  - Amersham multi storey car park
  - Brunel Shed
- Generating Revenue income to meet the Councils medium term financial plan through deals and developments. (See confidential appendix 4).
- Providing the analysis, financial modelling and decision-making on the future office space for the Unitary Council to ensure it meets future requirements and delivers best value.

# How the Property Strategy and objectives are currently being delivered...

- Providing technical property advice and project management on the **Regeneration proposals** and projects across the County, particularly Aylesbury, Wycombe, Amersham, Chesham, Buckingham and Winslow.
- Providing technical property expertise on **Highways projects** – Princes Risborough expansion, Abbey Barn North and Aylesbury HIF-related schemes.
- Supporting tenants with rent arrears due to COVID
- **Tenancy management** of our extensive portfolio, including managing rental income and leases.
- Providing technical advice and expertise for **Community Asset Transfer** devolution proposals.
- Supporting the Council's regeneration ambitions with tactical asset **acquisitions**, recently in Wycombe and Aylesbury.

# How the Property Strategy and objectives are currently being delivered...

- Ensuring our extensive portfolio of council properties are **properly maintained** and safe to occupy and support the Council in being a great place to work, particularly that they are **COVID worksafe**.
- Provide **shareholder oversight** to the Council's Property Companies: BA, Aylesbury Vale Estates and Consilio.
- Continue to work collaboratively with strategic stakeholders and the **One Public Estate** on a series of cross-cutting public sector property projects.
- Delivery of the **Future High Street** grant programme, which is achieving tangible success in re purposing and re letting vacant high street units in High Wycombe.
- Use our knowledge and industry contacts to continually horizon scan for new revenue, disposal and investment opportunities which will contribute towards our revenue and capital targets as well as our housing and regeneration ambitions.



# Council Access Points

January 2022

Lloyd Jeffries – Service Director Business Operations



# Overview

17 Council Access Points (CAPs) were established for the launch of the single unitary council in April 2020.

They are spread across the entire county in selected Council offices, libraries, community libraries and Parish Council buildings.

The council main offices, based in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Amersham have all become “CAP+ (plus)” centres, offering extra services from Monday to Friday for residents who have more complex enquiries. These offices have dedicated face-to-face customer service advisors to support with more complex enquiries, including housing, council tax and benefits queries.

The CAPs in Libraries offer a more limited service for general council services and self-service options.



# Private rooms and bookings

- Most CAPs have private rooms, including in Libraries.
- Some Library CAPs have rooms they are able to rent out however due to the pandemic have had very little interest in room bookings.
- CAP+ sites have private rooms and booths however we do not monitor the usage of the rooms. In Aylesbury the private rooms are mostly used by the Housing and Homelessness service.



## Next steps

- The Council prepared a Strategic Asset Management Plan, a refreshed version is programmed for Q2 2022.
- Prepare a Agricultural Estate Management Plan for Q2 2022.

# Questions

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