



## Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 11 October 2022 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 1.10 pm.

### Members present

Cllr A Macpherson, G Williams, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, P Strachan and M Winn

### Others in attendance

A Hussain, D King, P Martin, R Stuchbury, D Watson and S Wilson

### Apologies

M Tett, S Bowles and C Harriss

### Agenda Item

#### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors S Bowles (Cabinet Member for Communities) and M Tett (Leader of the Council), and from Sarah Ashmead (Deputy Chief Executive). Councillor A Hussain attended as Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety.

#### 2 Minutes

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.**

#### 3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4 Hot Topics

The following hot topics were raised:

##### **Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment**

The BEIS (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) Sustainable Warmth Competition invited bids from local authorities. Buckinghamshire Council secured just under £5m of capital funding. This would be allocated as follows:

- £3.2 million to support low-income households on the gas grid with energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures such as external wall insulation, underfloor insulation and air source heat pumps
- £1.7 million to support low-income households with energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures such as cavity wall insulation, solar photovoltaics panels and loft insulation

The grants were for households with a gross annual income of less than £30,000 or who were receiving eligible benefits, and properties must have an energy rating of D, E, F or G. The scheme would benefit both homeowners and those who rented privately. The new grant funding would potentially help more than 400 households in the county, and included properties that were 'off grid', currently using an alternative energy supply, such as oil. Applications were open now to eligible households at: [buckinghamshire-applications.co.uk](https://www.buckinghamshire-applications.co.uk)

#### **Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources**

The Chancellor announced a £150 energy rebate for most households in Council Tax bands A to D (occupied properties) and some households in Council Tax bands E to H. This mandatory scheme closed on 30 September 2022 but had now been extended to end of November. Currently 6,000 vouchers had not been claimed.

#### **Cabinet Member for Transport**

The Cabinet Member provided a reminder on demand responsive transport. Buckinghamshire Council and Carousel Buses were launching a new 'demand responsive transport' (DRT) service in and around High Wycombe. The new DRT service came as part of a pilot scheme funded by the Government's Rural Mobility Fund. The new service would run for the next 3 years, with scope to run for longer if the pilot was successful. The High Wycombe DRT pilot was set to launch from 27 September, with an Aylesbury pilot launching later in the autumn. Sitting under Carousel's 'PickMeUp' brand, the Wycombe pilot would serve several communities, including Booker, Daws Hill, Wooburn Green, Wycombe Marsh, Loudwater and Downley. These either had a limited bus service or a route which only served part of the community. Users would be able to book one of the five fully accessible minibuses to collect them either directly from their home, or from one of the 500+ pickup points – also known as 'virtual bus stops' – out and about in the local area. The Cabinet Member would report back on the data collected from the pilot. <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/news/wycombe-residents-will-soon-be-able-to-book-a-bus/>  
<https://www.pickmeupwycombe.co.uk/>

#### **Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services**

The Cabinet Member reported that the results of the 11+ exam would be issued this Friday. A number of parents had not given schools or the Council any contact details for their results to be issued and they were urged to get in touch. Arrangements had been put in place by the customer service centre to receive calls.

**Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety (relating to the Communities portfolio)**

On 21 October 2022 an event was being held at High Wycombe Library to help residents who were finding it difficult to obtain employment. A review of Anti-Social Behaviour would commence on 17 October and Members were welcome to feed back any suggested improvements to services.

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing**

The Cabinet Member had visited the customer service centre and was very complimentary about the service provided. She had particularly listened in to adult social care calls which at times could be very difficult to deal with. The number of calls to the Council was phenomenal.

**5 Question Time**

**Question from Councillor Stuart Wilson to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration**

**Little Marlow Lakes Country Park**

“I understand from the Head of Planning that all Cabinet Members have received my detailed response to the draft report on Little Marlow Lakes Country Park, so I do not need to repeat the many failings and misleading statements of the report now in front of you. It is important that Cabinet Members understand the powers of the Countryside Act 1968 sections 6 and 7, as well as the obligations of Buckinghamshire Council in implementing the full intent of Policy RUR4 of the Wycombe Local Plan and the prior 2002 Supplementary Planning Guidance.

Buckinghamshire Council has a Corporate Plan that, at its very heart, it is to be *Customer-Focused*. The delivery of Little Marlow Lakes Country Park in full as envisaged by the Wycombe Local Plan is not only a planning obligation, but also a moral contract with all residents and our natural environment in the south-west of the county. It provides extensive recreational space to offset housing development in the area and protects this beautiful Green Belt setting between the Thames and AONB land. Natural England said to me in an email, “*We would love to secure the future of Little Marlow as a Country Park*”. Residents and other stakeholders were promised the whole area, not a fraction. This report may present a convenient and lowest cost solution for the Council, but it misses the expectations of our communities by a country mile. It is Council-Focused, not Customer-Focused.

What communication has the Council had with all stakeholders, including landowners and prospective developers, as well as all local bodies and representatives regarding the provision of Little Marlow Lakes Country Park in compiling this report; and has the Council completed a thorough investigation of all options with all such stakeholders, or has it rather relied on supposition and assumptions about deliverability and cost without detailed consultation; and how can the opportunity for Little Marlow Lakes Country Park be quickly re-framed in detailed consultation with all such stakeholders following a decision to defer today so that it truly delivers in a customer-centred manner for residents in line with

national and local planning policy, all the powers of the Countryside Act 1968 and the extensive funding already identified?"

### **Response from Councillor Strachan**

"Thank you Councillor Wilson for your question and also for your detailed response to the draft report which is now before Cabinet. I understand you have been sent a copy of the response to your detailed comments and I too will not seek to repeat here what is already contained in that response.

The report before Cabinet sets out a practical solution to a problem which I'm afraid has not previously been addressed. I'm pleased to endorse the approach set out in the report as it ensures that we can move to the next steps to providing a substantial country park in the Little Marlow area, within the means of the Council and whilst also supporting the growth aspirations set out in the adopted Wycombe Local Plan.

The report is also clear that future expansion of that country park onto adjacent land, within the RUR4 allocated area, is not ruled out in the future should the opportunity and means become available.

As set out in the report, to date there has been no formal consultation with adjacent landowners and stakeholders and in part that is the reason why this report is at all necessary, so that the Cabinet can provide a clear direction and in order to confirm the requirement for a business plan for the park. There have however been a number of informal consultations with a variety of stakeholders in the preparation of the report.

Should Cabinet agree to the recommendations contained in the report, the next steps are clearly set out. Most particularly these will be to delegate responsibility to the Directors of Property and Assets and Leisure and Culture in consultation with the relevant cabinet members to prepare a business plan for the park and to report back to Cabinet for a further decision. It will therefore be a matter for those with delegated authority to take the next steps how they arrange that and who they involve although of course I would expect the local members to be kept up to date with progress."

### **Question from Councillor David Watson to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration**

#### **Little Marlow Lakes Country Park**

"To my mind the complexity of this report raises as many questions as it attempts to answer. It includes a range of misleading statements and inaccuracies and some confusing use of terminology, such as the term "designation". That term does not appear in the relevant sections of the 1968 Act. The paper makes it clear that there are a number of potential options for moving forward. The practicalities of those options need further detailed consideration by a suitably constituted Project Board.

A second legal opinion should then be sought to ensure the principal options are compatible with the 1968 Act.

Can the Cabinet therefore please confirm that any further action to formalise the provision of the Country Park, in accordance with the 1968 Act, is delayed until a suitably constituted Project Board has considered in detail a number of the most practical options and reported back to the Cabinet that their practicability has been confirmed by Counsel's opinion as being compatible with the 1968 Act?

It is assumed that the scope and requirements of Local Plan Policy RUR4 will remain extant until such time as they may be changed following a formal Local Plan review process."

### **Response from Councillor Strachan**

"Thank you Councillor Watson for your question.

The matter is, by its nature complicated but the question before Cabinet is essentially a simple one, does Cabinet wish to pursue the making of a Country Park in this location? The fact that the Country Park is allocated in the Wycombe Local Plan is without question. It is also the case however that no further steps to create the park were taken by the predecessor Council and therefore it is right that the Council should now return to the matter and determine the next steps.

It is clear that WDC relied on powers contained in S7(1) of the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 1968 – but those powers were limited by S7(3) below. The WDC resolution was for an area of land that included both Council owned and other land. If this Council cannot implement the decision in its entirety then it needs to be considered afresh.

### **S7 Power to provide country parks.**

1. *Subject to section 6 above, a local authority shall have power, on any site in the countryside appearing to them suitable or adaptable for the purpose set out in section 6(1) above, to provide a country park, that is to say a park or pleasure ground to be used for that purpose.*

### **3. The powers conferred by the foregoing provisions of this section and by the next following section may be exercised by the local authority—**

**a) on land belonging to them, or**

**b) on such terms as may be agreed with the owners and any other persons whose authority is required for the purpose, on other land, and an agreement under paragraph (b) above may provide for the making by the local authority of payments in consideration of the making of the agreement and payments by way of contribution towards expenditure incurred by the persons making the agreement in consequence thereof.**

The Council is in receipt of legal advice that confirms the position and the Council's Director of Legal Services has confirmed he is content that the advice is sound.

Should Cabinet agree to the recommendations contained in the report, the next steps are clearly set out. Most particularly these will be to delegate responsibility to the Directors of Property and Assets and Leisure and Culture in consultation with the relevant cabinet members to prepare a business plan for the park and to report back to Cabinet for a further decision. It will therefore be a matter for those with delegated authority to take the next steps how they arrange that and who they involve although of course I would expect the local members to be kept up to date with progress.

Finally, to be clear, there is nothing within the Cabinet report that alters policy RUR4 of the Wycombe Local Plan. The site is allocated for a Country Park and remains so until such a time as any changes are adopted in a later development plan, which of course could include a Neighbourhood Development Plan."

#### **Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration**

##### **West End Farm, Brackley, Buckingham**

"Further to my written question to the Cabinet meeting on 13 September 2021 can the Cabinet Member please provide an update on this matter? Is the Council or partners any closer to discovering who and how these people came to be buried on the outskirts of the town of Buckingham. I look forward to your verbal and written response on the progress made on this important archaeological site that will enable the facts to be known and the history to be understood."

##### **Response from Councillor Strachan**

"This is an update in response to your question regarding the archaeological site at West End Farm, Brackley Road, Buckingham. Since you last raised this issue at Cabinet in September 2021 we have been working hard to get information from the archaeological contractor, Network Archaeology, regarding this site. Three letters have been issued from our Service Director, Steve Bambrick, to the Director of Network Archaeology, with further communication taking place between Network Archaeology and the Council's Archaeology Officers. As a result we do now have a dialogue with them and we have managed to extract some information regarding the work outstanding, the costs involved and the reasons the project has stalled. This is progress compared to 2021, when we were not receiving any responses to our emails or letters.

The current situation is that Network Archaeology has put the West End Farm project on hold until the developer has paid them for the fieldwork undertaken. In May 2022 we were informed that Network Archaeology is in renewed discussions with the developer over the costs owed for fieldwork, and the costs of reporting and archiving. Network Archaeology have provided us with the detailed costs for

assessment, analysis, publication, archiving and deposition, which amount to approximately £78k.

The Council's archaeology team have held discussions with Historic England regarding the possibility of them funding the post-excavation work through a grant, but the responsibility for paying for this work does rest with the developer (Places for People, which owns Brio Homes), with grants only to be used as a last resort.

As things stand, Network Archaeology are continuing their dialogue with Places for People, keeping the Council apprised, with the option of seeking alternative funding as a last resort. We are endeavouring to keep this communication going, to ensure that the findings from this important site do reach publication.

It is disappointing that we have not yet been able to resolve the issues surrounding the post-excavation reporting, but we are doing all we can that is within our control. The archaeology team will update us as soon as they know more."

**6 Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)**

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

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.**

**7 Select Committee Work Programme**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing introduced the Select Committee Work Programme and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what Select Committees would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness asked if he could be included in the item for the Affordable Housing Position Statement.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Select Committee Work Programme be noted.**

**8 Director of Public Health Annual Report 2021-2022: Hearts and Minds**

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing introduced the report. Each year the Director of Public Health produced an annual report on the health of their population. The report focussed on the importance of the prevention of cardiovascular disease for Buckinghamshire's population. It served as a baseline against which progress in improving cardiovascular disease prevention and outcomes for our population could be measured. It highlighted the opportunities

that the Council, the NHS, the voluntary sector and residents had to reduce the risks of cardiovascular diseases in the County by working together on this agenda.

The aim was to support a strategic approach for the Council and partners to address the cardiovascular health and risk factors of our population. The report summarised the many risk factors for cardiovascular disease. The risk factors include behavioural, clinical and environmental risk factors. It provided recommendations on how residents could reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and what partners, including the Council, could do to reduce these risk factors. The environmental risk factors include stress at work, the quality of housing and poor air quality.

Differences in cardiovascular disease between different groups were a significant driver of health inequalities across Buckinghamshire. This made cardiovascular disease a key concern for levelling up health outcomes in Buckinghamshire. The report highlighted a range of programmes in Buckinghamshire designed to address the main behavioural and clinical risk factors for cardiovascular disease. A multi-agency plan to address inequalities in cardiovascular disease across Buckinghamshire was being developed and implemented. It would be overseen by the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Director of Public Health reported that up to 80% of cardiovascular disease can be prevented. Many of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease also cause other disease such as cancer, lung and liver disease so addressing these risk factors will reduce other diseases too. Cardiovascular disease costed the NHS in England £7.4 billion and the wider economy £15.8 billion every year. The COVID pandemic has also had an impact on cardiovascular disease risk by increasing unhealthy behaviours and affecting other cardiovascular disease risk factors.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- A Cabinet Member referenced the work undertaken during Covid in terms of different ethnic groups and the importance of not taking a generic approach to the whole community. The Director of Public Health agreed and highlighted the importance of working with communities and co-designing services to recognise the different health issues in communities. This was undertaken by providing reports for Community Boards and looking at local statistics to understand what the health issues were for each community area. The Director highlighted the work done with communities in High Wycombe where a pilot had been undertaken which involved residents learning to measure their own blood pressure and understanding more about the importance doing so. Work was underway in the local NHS to help GP surgeries in the highest need areas to undertake more preventive work.
- Reference was made to working with particular groups of people e.g. taxi drivers and the Levelling Up Programme. The Director of Public Health reported that key communities and groups would be identified such as taxi drivers to ensure that initiatives were focused on areas of higher need in communities.



- It was agreed that it was important that residents were able to recognise symptoms of serious cardiovascular disease including heart attacks.
- The Director of Public Health reported that the NHS were looking to improve data quality and improve ethnic coding to enable monitoring outcomes by ethnic group.

**RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022 be NOTED.**
- (2) That the recommendations within the Annual Report and the draft Action Plan be ENDORSED.**

**9 Safer Buckinghamshire Board Annual Report 2021/22**

The Safer Buckinghamshire Plan 2020-23 was approved by the Safer Buckinghamshire Board (SBB) in July 2020, with the aim that Buckinghamshire continued to be one of the safest places to grow up, raise a family, live, work and do business. The Plan set out the five priorities explaining how, through working in partnership, it would reduce crime and disorder and protect vulnerable people in Buckinghamshire.

The annual report provided an overview of the Partnership and SBB activity and impact during 2021/22. It covered a demanding time for the Partnership, following a review of the SBB processes and Delivery Plans, the introduction of Priority Sponsors, and a restructure within the Council's Community Safety Team.

There has been a general upward trend in reports of serious violence which was believed to be mainly due to increased reporting of sexual offences which had been reflected nationally. There was a drive to record and take positive action around this type of offence and recording standards have changed.

The Street Warden team have dealt with over 1600 incidents, including shoplifting, begging, emergency first aid and supporting vulnerable people within High Wycombe and Aylesbury town centres.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- Cabinet Members welcomed the establishment of a Violence against Women and Girls sub group and multi-agency action plan and also welcomed the work of the street wardens who were particularly helpful when dealing with rough sleepers and street drinkers.
- Concern was raised about online fraud and considerable work was being undertaken by the police and the trading standards team to highlight scams. The Team particularly focussed on protecting older people and installing equipment such as phone blockers.

- The Prevent Team continued to work with Wycombe Youth Action who specialise in working with vulnerable young people, who often fell within the category of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). A question was asked about who could be referred into the service and it was noted that anyone could be referred. This could be done through the community safety helpline and email address. There were specific telephone numbers for different areas such as domestic abuse or modern slavery. Community Boards also undertook work locally on community safety issues and promoting awareness.
- Since April 2021, 26 volunteer mentors have been trained to offer support to young people, as part of the YOS BAME mentoring project. Each incident was recorded and reviewed and support was provided to the mentors. A new IT system had also been installed.
- Funding was provided through the Police and Crime Commissioners budget for three years. Some funding for projects were guaranteed for three years e.g. Youth Offending Service, whereas other projects could be funded for one year. There were other funding streams such as Heart of Bucks and the Rothschild Foundation.

#### **RESOLVED –**

**That the Safer Buckinghamshire Board Annual Report, which provides an update on the activities and outcomes of the Community Safety Partnership in Buckinghamshire during 2021/22, be NOTED.**

#### **10 Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2022-2023**

The Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2022-2023 provided details of progress made against agreed outcomes for Children and Young People. It outlined priorities, alongside potential future challenges for the partnership over the coming year. It also highlighted the partnership arrangements and budget position for the Youth Offending Service Partnership.

The Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2022/2023 was produced in consultation with strategic partners. This was done through a series of focus groups which were held with representatives from the police, probation, magistrates, health, and Buckinghamshire Council services, including Children's Social Care, Education and Community Safety, as well as representatives from voluntary organisations such as Barnardo's and 'SAFE!'. The plan was produced in line with guidance published by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and must be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State.

The Cabinet Member reported that the Council's performance was above average compared to national statistics. The three main aims were to reduce the number of first time entrants, reduce re-offending and reduce the use of custody. Preventative work was key and also a long term aim of the Board. Priorities included continuing to address disproportionality, addressing exploitation of young people and

strengthening an evidence based model of practice.

A Cabinet Member asked what the most important priority was and in response it was noted to address disproportionality, looking at areas of economic deprivation (particularly for care leavers) and working actively with schools on prevention e.g. county lines. In response to another question, the Cabinet Member responded that it was difficult to measure the impact of listening to the voice of the child. The Corporate Director reported that the frequency of engagement with young people was important, not just at formal meetings but also by engaging them in service improvement. Their input should be tracked to an improvement in outcomes. A young person had been invited to the Corporate Parenting Panel. Cabinet Members welcomed the report.

#### **RECOMMENDED–**

**That the Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2022-2023 be adopted following its endorsement at Cabinet.**

#### **11 Little Marlow Lakes Country Park**

Cabinet received a report relating to the land between Globe Park/A404 Marlow and Bourne End, bounded to the south by the River Thames and to the north by the A4155. The area was covered by Green Belt designation, and most of it - including the former Gravel Yard at Spade Oak Lake (and the proposed Marlow Film Studios site at Westhorpe) – was former landfill, or former gravel pits. The area was dominated by Thames Water’s large sewage works (which used the Council’s Muschallick Road, which also served the former Gravel Yard, for frequent HGV access).

The report included proposals to develop a scheme for a Country Park which as a minimum would be a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) compliant facility. The proposals to create a Country Park in the area had been first made in the 1960s and the background to this including previous actions/decisions taken, or not taken, by the former Wycombe District Council was detailed in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.24 of the Cabinet report.

Cabinet took into account the detailed representations which had been submitted by residents, the parish council and local members which were published on 10 October 2022. The Director of Legal and Democratic Services outlined the independent Counsel advice received which confirmed that the essential elements of the Countryside and Right of Way Act 1968 had not been met by the former Council’s earlier decision. During discussion the Deputy Leader asked all Cabinet Members to confirm that they had read the detailed representations that were included with the supplementary agenda papers. All Cabinet Members confirmed that they had done this.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration and Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services clarified some issues on Little Marlow Lakes. A number of

residents believed that this piece of land was already a Country Park but it was not. Minutes from a legacy Wycombe District Council meeting in 2017 resolved that it was the intention of the legacy Council to establish a Country Park and powers were delegated to officers to undertake this process by working with the landowners.

Reference was made to the following piece of legislation :-

**S7 Power to provide country parks.**

1. *Subject to section 6 above, a local authority shall have power, on any site in the countryside appearing to them suitable or adaptable for the purpose set out in section 6(1) above, to provide a country park, that is to say a park or pleasure ground to be used for that purpose.*

**3. The powers conferred by the foregoing provisions of this section and by the next following section may be exercised by the local authority—**

**a) on land belonging to them, or**

**b) on such terms as may be agreed with the owners and any other persons whose authority is required for the purpose, on other land, and an agreement under paragraph (b) above may provide for the making by the local authority of payments in consideration of the making of the agreement and payments by way of contribution towards expenditure incurred by the persons making the agreement in consequence thereof.**

The Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services reported that as the legacy Council had not agreed anything with the landowners, the Country Park had therefore not been established and residents could not rely on the Countryside Act 1968 and the fact that an allocation had been made in the Wycombe Local Plan. The Council would focus on the part of the land that was owned by the Council and then develop a business plan and operating model for the Country Park which ensured the facility was delivered as a cost neutral enterprise. The business plan would be brought back to Cabinet for approval.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- A number of the concerns raised by residents related to the proposal for the development of a film studio and whether this recommendation would give a 'green light' for future development. The Cabinet Member responded that the planning protection remained the same as it had previously in that it was treated as green belt land and he clarified that there was no enhancement of protection with the previous legacy Council resolution. The Service Director for Planning and Environment confirmed that the new and old recommendation would not alter the allocation of the site in the Local Plan and that any application would continue to be considered as normal like any other green belt land.
- Reference was made to the recreational area and that a suitable restoration plan would be agreed in consultation with Natural England for the Spade Oak Lake Site which would be SANG compliant (suitable alternative natural

greenspace). There would be no impact on Burnham Beeches.

- Much of the land that the Council owned in this area, namely the former Gravel Yard at Spade Oak Lake, was the subject of a restoration planning condition to return the site to a nature reserve. This condition was currently in breach and needed to be complied with by the end of the year (December 2022).
- In terms of developing a business case previous Council Country Parks had been successful at income generation and consideration would need to be given to using funding to support a good business case. However, until negotiations had been carried out with landowners it would be difficult to estimate the cost of any future proposals particularly with the need to be cost neutral. A further report would be submitted to Cabinet.
- The report showed a positive way forward in moving forward in a two step approach first looking at Council owned land and then dealing with other land ownership which would be more complex. Proposals to create a Country Park were first made in the 1960's and the Council were taking measures to progress the proposal.
- Local Members would be kept informed of progress.

**RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the lack of formal designation for Little Marlow Lakes Country Park be NOTED.**
- (2) That the Service Director of Culture, Sport and Leisure be authorised, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Accessible Housing and Resources, and Culture and Leisure, to develop a scheme and pursue formal designation of land within the Council's ownership as a Country Park which as a minimum would be a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) compliant facility.**
- (3) That it be agreed not to pursue formal designation to regularise the status of the whole area allocated in the Wycombe Local Plan (RUR4) as a Country Park as part of the initial phase of delivery but instead to retain a commitment to the wider Country Park as and when circumstances and resources permit.**
- (4) That the Service Directors of Property and Assets, and Culture, Sport and Leisure, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Accessible Housing and Resources, and Culture and Leisure, be delegated authority to agree a suitable business plan and operating model for the Country Park which ensures the facility is delivered as a cost neutral enterprise. The business plan to be brought back to Cabinet for approval.**
- (5) That the Service Directors of Property and Assets, and Planning and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, be delegated authority to negotiate and agree a suitable restoration plan in consultation with Natural England for the Spade Oak Lake site which would be SANG compliant.**
- (6) That the planning and enforcement strategy that may be required in order to protect the Local Planning Authority position and to facilitate**

an amended restoration plan at Spade Oak Lake be NOTED.

- (7) That the Service Director of Property and Assets in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources and the S151 Officer be delegated authority to negotiate and agree funding for the Country Park from S106 monies as set out in the Cabinet report.
- (8) That the Service Director of Property and Assets, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, be delegated authority to enter into negotiations with the Thameside Preservation Trust on terms that would see the Country Park proposed in the Cabinet report to include both pieces of land set out in the Appendix.

## **12 E-scooter trial extension (until May 2024)**

Cabinet received a report which sought approval for Buckinghamshire Council to extend the current e-scooter rental trial schemes in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough. This would extend the trial period from November 2022 to May 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Transport reported that the continuation of the e-scooter trials would support the Council's ambitions to be a 'living lab' for innovation. The scheme would also support the Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy by promoting sustainable low-carbon transport alternatives for shorter trips. The e-scooter trial was managed at zero cost to the Council as they were run as a private business by an operator.

The e-scooter trial was facilitated by the Department for Transport and the Council was therefore required to inform Department for Transport of its decision by 31 October 2022.

There had been over 191,000 rides in Buckinghamshire since the trials began in 2020. In contrast, there had been only four reported health and safety incidents across the Buckinghamshire schemes, equating to 0.002% of all rides. However, it was acknowledged that a handful of these incidents had received media attention, which had resulted in mixed opinions on the safety of e-scooters.

The extension of the trial would enable the Department for Transport to gather additional usage data post-COVID, which would provide a better understanding of 'normal' use patterns. The extension would also allow the Department for Transport time to finalise legislation making all e-scooters road-legal, whether privately owned or part of a hire scheme.

Subject to agreement to extend the e-scooter trial, the Council would continue using Zipp Mobility as its preferred operator for e-scooters. The Council continued to have a good relationship with this supplier, and they had proven fundamental to the success of the trial schemes so far. This scheme was zero cost to the Council financially. Due to the overall value of this concession contract, the intention was to

use a waiver to extend the contract which was already in place with Zipp to May 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Transport referred to the concerns regarding collisions. Out of 3656 collisions in the Thames Valley police region in 2021 (which covers other local authority areas and e-scooter rental schemes), there were only 28 collisions involving e-scooters, representing less than 1% of all collisions in the Thames Valley region. This also represented only 2% of all collisions involving e-scooters reported nationally.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- Reference was made to procurement. Members noted that if the Council were to go out to procurement now rather than continue with Zipp it would mean a large break in service for at least 3 – 6 months whilst the Council sought to find another provider. There would also be a loss of local employment and potential costs associated with reviewing and replacing all the bays. Cabinet Members welcomed the fact that there would be a continuity of provision which would not impact employment.
- A Cabinet Member referred to the Aylesbury statistics and that 29% of journeys had replaced motor vehicle transport. He asked for clarification on what constituted misuse and whether they could be used on the pavement. In response the Cabinet Member reported that in all three areas a number of car journeys had been replaced which reduced congestion and emissions. Some residents had adopted the e-scooter as a form of transport. Of those comments received the majority were reporting issues with pavement riding and other misuse of the scooters which were passed onto Zipp to take appropriate action. E-scooters could be used on a shared pathway.
- Only Zipp Mobility e-scooters were legal in Buckinghamshire. Privately owned e-scooters could only be used on private land, with the permission of the landowner.
- A Cabinet Member reported that it would be good to encourage helmet wearing when using e-scooters. Current guidance were that helmets were encouraged but not a legal requirement. This was under review. If Buckinghamshire said that helmets should be mandatory this could impact on usage. However to incentivise use of helmets, Zipp offer a £5 credit to anyone who wears a helmet whilst riding.
- E-scooter use should be encouraged with larger employers. This obviously related to the zone areas which should be matched to places of work. The numbers of scooters, potential routes and parking locations were agreed with stakeholders and the operator at the outset. These were reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure issues such as safety concerns could be resolved quickly and to meet new demand where required. E-scooters were also promoted through Community Boards.

## **RESOLVED –**

**That it be AGREED to extend the end date for the e-scooter trials taking place in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough until May 2024, as part of the national trial.**

### **13 Cost of Living Support for Buckinghamshire Residents**

The Council recognised the growing pressures being faced by residents linked to the increases in the cost of living. The Cabinet report summarised the wide range of support that had been developed this year, together with new initiatives which had been put in place in anticipation of growing hardship over the forthcoming winter.

Confirmation had been received of the third tranche of Household Support Fund allocation for the period from 1st October 2022 – 31st March 2023. This had been built on the funding the Council had received from Government since 2020, initially through the Winter Grant and Local Support Grant, and subsequently through the Household Support Fund.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment presented the report. The Cabinet Member reported that for the period 1st April to 30th September 2022, Buckinghamshire was awarded £2.4m of funding from the Household Support Fund to provide support for residents in need of help with food, fuel and other essential household costs. The Cabinet report summarised how the previous funding allocation was used, and set out a proposed use of the additional fund between now and the end of March that would ensure this would be targeted to residents in need of support and in line with the Government guidance.

The Cabinet Member reported that in partnership with the Heart of Bucks, the Council have established a Crisis Fund to raise money to help Buckinghamshire families in need. Residents have been invited to donate what they can into this fund so the money can be best channelled to get support to the people in communities who need it most. The Crisis Fund had already raised more than £80,000 in donations, which would be used to support local people who were in the most need with energy, food and other essential costs. The Council was also developing Welcoming Spaces (safe and inclusive spaces such as libraries, free of charge, to stay warm and enjoy a little company) and a Warm Box offer, to provide further practical support to residents during the winter months. Further information about Warm Boxes would be available on the website.

The Service Director Service Improvement reported that in line with previous allocations of the Household Support fund, the new fund was intended to provide support to vulnerable households in most need of support to help with significantly rising living costs. Whilst the general purpose of the fund was the same as that provided previously, there were changes to the criteria which offered more flexibility in how the fund was used locally.



During discussion the following points were made:-

- In response to a question whether residents were reticent about reaching out for help it was noted that a lot of work was being undertaken reaching out to residents e.g. through Community Boards and Council Services such as housing. Assistance was also being provided with helping with school uniform costs. The Council made every contact count.
- In terms of raising funds Heart of Bucks reached out to the business community for support and data was being analyzed to look at the needs of individual communities.
- Our Warm Box offer was still being developed, and other areas who were providing these offered practical items such as blankets, an insulated mug and gloves.
- A query was raised about energy bills being taken out as a direct debit making it more difficult to control their finances. This scheme was administered by Government. The Service Director would look at what help was available for residents in this situation.
- There was a communication plan including reaching out to those most in need such as children who had free school meals, people who used food banks or refugees. Allocating funding would be undertaken in a phased approach e.g. digital food vouchers or providing vouchers for school holidays. Data trends were also analysed on previous requests. Community Boards also provided funding support which supplemented this funding.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) That the range of support provided by the Council for individuals experiencing hardship across the county be NOTED.**
- (2) That the arrangements for deploying the new Household Support Fund allocation for the period from October 2022 to March 2023 be APPROVED.**

#### **14 Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy 2021-22 Progress Report**

The Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy 2021-2022 Progress Report provided an update on the significant progress made against the aims, objectives, and actions set out in the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy within the year following its adoption on 19th October 2021. Details of 51 activities were provided, many of which addressed several actions in the Strategy. These have contributed to greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) decreasing by 10.61% from 2019 to 2020 and nitrogen dioxide concentrations staying within the annual mean value in the last two calendar years in Buckinghamshire; and, the Council's GHG emissions being 70% lower in 2021/2022 compared to its emissions from 1990.

The Council was responsible for 6,095 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions (TCO<sub>2</sub>e) in 2021/2022. The Council had kept comfortably within the Council's carbon budget for 2021/2022 (7,407 TCO<sub>2</sub>e) and were on track to reduce the Council's carbon emissions by at least 75% by 2030. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment referred to some examples such as installing 450 solar panels on the

roof of Chiltern Lifestyle Centre.

The Cabinet Member also reported that there were nine AQMA's and he referenced the 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide threshold and that the Council was under this threshold in all areas with the exception of Wendover Road. The Team were monitoring this area closely. There were a lot of good initiatives such as providing assistance for insulating homes, including 108 battery installations. There had been a lot of collaborative work with partners.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- A Cabinet Member reported that half of the Council's emission rates were generated by buildings and a significant downsizing of the Council estate would play an important part in reducing carbon emissions.
- The target for tree planting was to plant 21,000 trees on Council owned land and procurement work to contract a woodland and maintenance contractor had concluded which would see 28,000 trees planted across two large sites. A tree would be planted for every resident.
- It was important to keep air pollution within prescribed thresholds for any infrastructure projects and according to planning policy. There were opportunities to tighten this policy with the development of the new Local Plan.
- The Stoke Road AQMA was adjacent to the railway sidings and their engines were run 24 hours a day. This would be looked at as this had crept above 40 micrograms and work would be carried out with partners. It would be good to encourage Chiltern Railways to go electric.
- A Cabinet Member emphasized the importance of communicating what work had been carried out by the Council and also work undertaken in individual portfolios who were all playing their part on climate change and air quality. The Council was undertaking a lot of good work to reach targets which had not been reported for example most of the Council buildings had solar panels and the Chiltern Leisure Centre had a water source heat pump which was very efficient. Another target was to install solar panels in Council car parks.
- The Cabinet Member reported that it was important to lead by example and that protecting the environment was a fundamental part of the budget setting process.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the progress made in 2021-2022 against the aims, objectives and actions in the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy be NOTED.**

## **15 Children's Services Update**

The work of Children's Services had always been diverse, demand led and challenging. The impact of Covid-19 had increased levels of demand and need that could not have been predicted. The child population continued to increase as do the levels of poverty being experienced by children and families. Furthermore, the

lasting impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing cost of living pressures had added an additional layer of complexity to the work of Children's Services. The performance information available to the Service demonstrated that the unprecedented surge in demand began at the end of 2020 and had continued through to the present day. There were currently no indicators to suggest a return to pre pandemic demand levels.

Given the complex demand challenges within the system there was a need to address increasing financial pressures and ensure affordability and financial sustainability through delivery of better outcomes that cost less. Whilst there had and continued to be a significant focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, the Service wanted to refresh its evidence base to fully understand the root causes of the current demand coming into the system. This would inform the way in which services were developed and delivered in the future, especially as the Service looked to build stronger relationships with partners. To support the Service with this work, IMPOWER had been commissioned to develop a single programme of change based around a clear profile of demand, with a plan for delivery. The aim of this plan was to help maximise the impact and effectiveness of early intervention and prevention, alongside our intention for more locality-based support.

In addition to the local challenges, there were a number of national policy developments planned to be introduced that would impact on the way in which services were delivered to the children and young people of Buckinghamshire. Whilst many of the reforms currently lacked detail, the Council was in support of the Government's proposals. The Service continued on its improvement journey and the number one priority was to strengthen services for children, young people and their families. Whilst there was more to do, the Service was confident in its understanding and knowledge of what needed to be done.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services particularly referred to the Schools White Paper of which the main ambitions were to:-

- i. for 90% of primary school children to achieve the expected standard in Key Stage 2 reading, writing and maths by 2030, and;
- ii. to see the national average GCSE grade in both English language and maths increase from 4.5 in 2019 to 5.0 by 2030.

In addition the Special Education Needs and Disabilities Green Paper which set out proposed reforms for a single, national SEND and alternative provision system that would introduce new standards in the quality of support given to children across education, health and care.

The Cabinet Member also made reference to the Social Work Academy. Between 2019 and June 2022, 42 of the 60 NQSWs that have been through the Academy remain within the service. Given the success and in order to alleviate some of the significant challenge in recruiting high quality social workers, the Academy had

recently been expanded to support a further 60 newly qualified social workers by April 2023.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- A Cabinet Member asked how Ukrainian children were managing in English schools. In response it was noted that there was no comprehensive data on this but all the children had been allocated a school and some funding was being used on providing help with language difficulties. Feedback so far from head teachers were that Ukrainian children were enriching the school experience for all children.
- A Cabinet Member referred to the demand pressures and the table at 3.19 of the report which showed a 52% change in contacts, a 42% change in referrals, a 43% change in initial child protection change. The Cabinet Member reported that it was difficult to deal with increases in demand in the short term in terms of employing additional staff. The demand had increased post pandemic which was a national issue. They were looking at redesigning family support to identify work that could be dealt with by non-qualified professionals. The morale of social workers was good. There were also challenges with recruitment because of the cost of living crisis but they were encouraged with the work of the Social Work Academy.
- It was important to give an early help offer and to escalate help where required. This was referred to in the Start Well, Live Well and Age Well Strategy.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the national and local developments across the Children’s Services Directorate be NOTED.**

## **16 Adult Social Care Update**

Adult social care had been at the frontline of the Covid pandemic response for the past two and a half years. Whilst guidance for businesses and the public had relaxed, adult social care was still responding to significant demand, part of which had built up during the pandemic. In addition, during the past 7 months the Government had published a number of reforms, white papers and legislative changes which required a different response to the delivery of adult social care services. The Cabinet report provided an update on the current position of adult social care services in Buckinghamshire.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing reported that it outlined the Council’s financial pressures which reflected the issues being faced by Children’s Services, increasing complexity of cases, inflation which impacted on providers and contracts and the rise of safeguarding inquiries and referrals. The Council worked in partnership in this area and reference was made to the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board which focused on prevention and the Start Well, Live Well, Age Well Strategy. Another pressure was the Reform agenda coming down from

Government. Reference was made to the White Paper 'People at the heart of care' which set out a ten year ambition to ensure that everyone received the appropriate care they needed when they need it and would involve additional work for the Council. The Health and Care Act 2022 aimed to improve integration between health and social care. With the social care reforms residents would see a welcome cap on care costs which would help residents manage more carefully the total costs they would need to spend on care and provide assistance to self-funders, of which there was a high proportion in Buckinghamshire. The Act set up the Integrated Care System of which a partnership had been set up in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. There are other new pressures such as the Inspection Regime by the Care Quality Commission which would commence in April 2023. Liberty protection safeguards would also be introduced which was part of the Mental Capacity Act protecting people's rights in hospitals and care homes. There were other Acts coming through Parliament such as the Down Syndrome Act and the Mental Health Reforms. Recruitment was also an issue but the service area were actively addressing this with a wide range of initiatives and a Strategic Workforce Plan. There was a robust transformation plan to help with these changes.

During discussion the following points were made:

- There was a statutory duty to provide and in terms of staffing and being able to cover the casework load there was obviously a preference to have staff who were permanent and committed to Buckinghamshire. However agency staff did help support the caseload work. The Leader through the County Council Network lobbied the Government to bring forward a Workforce Plan and to ensure that the unfunded burdens that were emerging through the new policies were adequately funded. All upper tier Councils were facing the same challenges. Unfortunately there were some people who were waiting for care which was a national situation, including hospital delays. This would also impact on the ambulance service and other aspects of health care. Significant work had been undertaken in Buckinghamshire to help people maintain their independence which had been successful in slowing down the rate of which people need care. Residents were encouraged to approach the Council with any issues so that the Council could signpost them to other forms of support.
- A Member referred to innovative solutions and spend to save measures such as building purpose built homes. The Cabinet Member reported that this was at the heart of what the Council needed to do looking at enabling people to stay in their homes for longer without the need to escalate high end service costs. Reference was made to the Better Lives Strategy which focused on this area and early intervention. Housing had a huge part to play and the service area was working on a Housing needs analysis to help supported living and how to use technology to help people stay independent longer.
- Reference was made to the safeguarding campaign which had increased reporting. The Council was working with partners to ensure that the threshold for a referral was understood. If the threshold had been met the Council would respond within 24-48 hours.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the latest developments in relation to adult social care both locally and nationally be NOTED.**

**18 Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022**

**RESOLVED –**

**That the confidential Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.**

**19 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held at 10am on Tuesday 15 November 2022.