



Cabinet decision notice

The following decision(s) were taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on **21 March 2023**. Decisions will (unless called-in) become effective at 5pm on 28 March 2023.

Agenda item no. 8

A Vision and Strategy for Buckinghamshire Libraries

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report on a new vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire libraries. Libraries had transformed over recent years to offer a range of services and activities that promote wellbeing, inclusion, and community cohesion.

The vision was for a service that provided welcoming and safe spaces for everyone to access reading, culture and the information and services they need to learn, discover, imagine, and thrive. The priorities for Buckinghamshire Libraries were:

- Encouraging Culture, Reading and Learning.
- Building Stronger Communities.
- Enabling Access, Information, and Inclusion.
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing.

The guiding principles for delivery were building partnerships; developing libraries as hubs; engaging and empowering staff and volunteers; and constant service improvement.

An extensive engagement exercise had been undertaken to inform the priorities and gauge the level of support for the proposed approach. This had demonstrated that 90% of respondents agreed with the vision, with approval ranging from 84% to 92% for the four priorities. Work had taken place to develop short to medium term objectives to deliver the new vision and priorities, along with the associated measures of success.

The service would now engage with staff, volunteers, and partners to develop a detailed action plan to deliver a modern, relevant, and sustainable library service for Buckinghamshire. The action plan would be reviewed annually with particular attention given to ensuring alignment with the *Opportunity Bucks - Succeeding for All* programme including future discussion with ward partnerships.

RESOLVED –

That the Buckinghamshire Libraries Strategy be APPROVED, as set out in the report and



appendix.

(b) Reasons for decisions

Adoption of this new strategy - developed through a comprehensive process of research and engagement - will ensure a clear focus for Buckinghamshire Libraries, aligned to local communities' needs and the delivery of wider priorities.

(c) Alternative options considered

The alternative is to not produce a strategy. This option has been discounted, as we need to ensure clear direction for service planning and to align with key Buckinghamshire priorities to maximise the impact of library services.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 9

Food and Health and Safety Service Plan and policies

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received the Food and Health and Safety Service Business Plan that detailed how the food and health and safety enforcement services were to be delivered within Buckinghamshire Council for the period 2022/24. The Service Plan was divided into the issues covered by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Framework Agreement and the key priorities identified by the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Strategy Document. The Service Plan and Enforcement Policies were appended to the agenda.

Since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) had set out a timetable (Recovery Roadmap) to bring local authorities back on track with their inspection programmes following a cessation of the inspection programme during the pandemic. The Council had been able to achieve the current milestones in inspecting our category A, B and non-compliant C and D businesses and was able to get a rolling start on the inspection of the compliant Cs as well as triage 927 new businesses. However, the Service had experienced a continual increase in the number of new food business registrations which, together with other work, meant that the final milestone of all compliant C businesses inspected by the end of March 2023 might not be achieved. The FSA had identified this as an area of concern for the authority. This would continue to be the team's focus for 2022/24.

Whilst an annual plan was expected by the FSA, on this occasion due to the above issues the first plan for Buckinghamshire Council covered a period of two years. At this point last year the Council had still been under restrictive arrangements and the focus had been heavily aimed towards the regulatory response to Covid-19. In addition to the FSA

Recovery Plan, as part of an ongoing programme of service transformation, improved and more efficient and effective ways of working and delivering the service were being explored. These would include the inspection processes, schemes of delegation and procedures for the assessment of officer competency and authorisation, streamlining the export health certificate process and the harmonisation of sampling equipment and calibration of thermometers.

The Service actively participates in the Primary Authority Partnership scheme, with seven established partnerships and two new partnerships formed in 2022. The primary authority acted as a point of contact and advice for food businesses that had a number of outlets nationally and local authorities who inspected them. This was a paid for service. There had also been a noticeable decline in hygiene standards which had resulted in an increase in enforcement action and revisits. There had also been an increase in requests for FHRS re-inspections as businesses moved to a more online presence.

The Health and Safety Executive had set out a 10-year strategic plan 'Protecting People and Places' which set out its key objectives and national priorities. In 2022/24 the Council would identify projects aimed to raise health and safety awareness and improve standards in a particular sector or topic. It was likely that these would focus on workplace transport in warehouses and distribution centres following a number of reported accidents this year and gas safety in catering establishments.

In 2021, the Environmental Health Service took on the responsibility for the issue of the General Safety Certificate for the Designated Sports Ground at Wycombe Wanderers Football Club. In addition, the team had also taken on the administration of the registration for skin piercing establishments and operators and as part of this, would look to harmonise the registration process and fees from legacy areas and adopt a single set of byelaws covering safe and hygienic arrangements for skin piercing.

Both policies reflected the principles set out in the Regulators' Code issued by the Office of Product Safety and Standards. The key principles were to support growth, engage with businesses, have a transparent and risk-based approach to activities, share information between regulators and provide clear information and advice to businesses. The Regulators' Code applied to local authority regulatory services such as: environmental health, licensing, housing standards, planning enforcement, building control and revenues and benefits. A corporate enforcement policy had been developed and the policies have been drafted in accordance with this overarching policy.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the joint Food and Health and Safety Service Business Plan (at Appendix 1) be APPROVED.**
- (2) That the Food Policy (at Appendix 2) and the Health and Safety Enforcement Policy (at Appendix 3) be APPROVED.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

The Food Standards Agency’s (FSA) Code of Practice and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) required local authorities to produce and publish an annual service plan that demonstrated how the authority would work to deliver its food safety and health and safety service. The Office for Product Safety and Standards also required local authorities to produce and publish their enforcement policies and to ensure that they complied with The Regulators’ Code.

(c) Alternative options considered

As the food service plan and enforcement policies were requirements of central government, there were no other options available to their publication.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

Agenda item no. 10

Q3 Budget Monitoring Report 2022-23

(a) Decisions

Cabinet received a report which set out the Revenue and Capital outturn position for Buckinghamshire Council for the financial year 2022/23 as at Quarter 3. The Council was continuing to experience significant financial pressures due to the current economic situation and the high levels of inflation. Although the rate of inflation had reduced recently and was forecast to reduce further by the end of the 2023 calendar year, the Council’s budgets were continuing to experience ongoing pressures from inflation and energy prices, and also particularly in Adults and Children’s social care due to increased demand and complexity of demand. In addition, in Children’s Services the market had become sub-optimal with a lack of suitable placements driving up unit costs.

The Revenue outturn position as of Quarter 3 was a forecast balanced position, which was an improvement from the adverse variance of £1.8m reported at Quarter 2. Appendix 1 provided detailed information for each Portfolio and relating to the forecast revenue budget outturn and information about performance relating to overdue debts and late payments of commercial debt.

The Revenue outturn position as of Quarter 3 was a balanced position, which was an improvement from the adverse variance of £1.8m reported at Quarter 2. The key areas of movement in the forecast variance from the Quarter 2 position were detailed at paragraph 1.8 of the Cabinet report, and related to:

Forecast variance Quarter 2	£1.8m adverse
Health & Wellbeing – reduction of £2.1m in the adverse pressure to £2.7m (£4.8m last quarter). Although there have been increased	(£2.1m)

demand pressures, corporate contingency budget of £3.3m has been released to mitigate pressures and additional government funding of £1m has been received from the Hospital Discharge fund.	
Education and Children's Services – reduction of £2.8m in the adverse variance from £9.5m to £6.7m. This reflects revised staffing forecasts and maximisation of grant funding to reduce pressures.	(£2.8m)
Homelessness & Regulatory Services – an increase of £3.1m from an adverse variance of £0.8m to £3.9m due to a significant increase in demand for Temporary Accommodation, particularly nightly accommodation. Temporary Accommodation has now been escalated to a Key Financial Risk. Although the budget for 2023/24 has been increased to meet additional demand, work is progressing apace to develop a more sustainable solution.	£3.1m
Transport – increase of £1.4m in the adverse variance related to Home to School Transport from £2m to £3.4m due to inflationary pressures on contractors.	£1.4m
Accessible Housing and Resources – improved position in Property and Assets due to revised forecasts for rental income.	(£0.7m)
Other – minor movements in Culture & Leisure, Planning and Regeneration and Leader.	(£0.3m)
Corporate and Funding – although the overall movement is an improvement of £0.4m, within this there are some significant movements in forecast due to £3.3m of contingency released into Health & Wellbeing budgets, a further £2.4m of contingencies forecast to be released to offset pressures, £0.7m of additional interest income due to increases in interest rates, and £0.5m surplus of income relating to the reversal of the 1.25% increase in National Insurance effective from November.	(£0.4m)
Forecast variance Quarter 3	£0.0m

Paragraph 1.9 of the Cabinet report detailed information within the overall position of the adverse variances on Portfolio spend of £14.3m (£15.7m forecast at Quarter 2) that was offset by £14.3m of corporate mitigations (£13.9m forecast at Quarter 2). £19.2m of savings had also been incorporated into the approved 2022-23 Revenue budgets. Overall, there was a shortfall of £0.6m against this target, attributable to delays in the Revenues and Benefits system implementation in the Accessible Housing and Resources portfolio, and £407k overspend in the placements budget. Additionally, the £250k Agency Staff saving had not been achieved. Trading with schools was forecast to increase by £43k more than the target.

The Cabinet report also detailed information on external funding where the Council had been successful in obtaining additional funding during the financial year from external grant funding.

At Q3, the overall forecast capital outturn was £30.7m (21.0%) less than the capital cash limit for the year. The position as reported was subject to approval of a number of in-year

changes to the approved capital programme. These had been through the appropriate internal governance boards and were pending a further Cabinet Decision. This was also an increase in net slippage of £17.7m compared with the Q2 position. Further details of the delivery of the capital programme for each portfolio were in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the current forecast outturn for the financial year 2022/23, and the associated risks and opportunities, be NOTED.**
- (2) That a drawdown from the Mitigating Future Financial Risks Reserves to fund a further contribution of £150k to the Staff Hardship Fund be APPROVED, as agreed by the Senior Appointments and Pay Committee (SAPC) on 1 February 2023.**

(b) Reasons for decisions

To understand the financial position of the Council in respect of 2022-23 Budgets.

(c) Alternative options considered

None arising directly from this report.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None.

For further information please contact: Ian Hunt - democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk on , email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

You can view upcoming decisions to be made and all decisions taken on the Council's website [here](#).