



Council agenda

Date: Wednesday 26 April 2023

Time: 4.00 pm

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

Membership:

D Dhillon (Chairman), P Birchley (Vice-Chairman), S Adoh, A Alam, M Angell, D Anthony, K Ashman, M Ayub, R Bagge, M Baldwin, D Barnes, S Barrett, P Bass, K Bates, A Baughan, J Baum, D Blamires, A Bond, M Bracken, S Broadbent, N Brown, S Bowles, P Brazier, T Broom, T Butcher, M Caffrey, R Carington, D Carroll, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, S Chhokar, J Chilver, A Christensen, L Clarke OBE, A Collingwood, M Collins, P Cooper, C Cornell, A Cranmer, E Culverhouse, I Darby, T Dixon, M Dormer, P Drayton, T Egleton, C Etholen, P Fealey, M Flys, R Gaffney, M Fayyaz, R Gaster, E Gemmell, P Gomm, D Goss, T Green, P Griffin, S Guy, G Hall, G Harris, M Harker OBE, C Harriss, D Hayday, O Hayday, C Heap, T Hogg, G Hollis, T Hunter-Watts, A Hussain, I Hussain, M Hussain JP, M Hussain, M Hussain, N Hussain, T Hussain, P Irwin, Cllr C Jackson, S James, D Johncock, C Jones, J Jordan, S Kayani, P Kelly, R Khan BEM, D King, M Knight, S Lambert, S Lewin, J MacBean, Cllr A Macpherson, I Macpherson, F Mahon, N Marshall, P Martin, R Matthews, Dr W Matthews, Z Mohammed, H Mordue, S Morgan, N Naylor, J Ng, R Newcombe, C Oliver, A Osibogun, A Poland-Goodyer, C Poll, S Raja, W Raja, N Rana, M Rand, S Rouse, J Rush, G Sandy, G Smith, L Smith BEM, M Smith, N Southworth, B Stanier Bt, M Stannard, P Strachan, R Stuchbury, L Sullivan, D Summers, M Tett, N Thomas, D Thompson, D Town, J Towns, A Turner, M Turner, P Turner, G Wadhwa, A Waite, H Wallace, L Walsh, M Walsh, J Ward, J Wassell, J Waters, D Watson, A Wheelhouse, W Whyte, G Williams, S Wilson, M Winn, A Wood and K Wood

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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: Ian Hunt - democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk



Council minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 22 February 2023 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 4.00 pm and concluding at 7.42 pm.

Members present

D Dhillon, P Birchley, S Adoh, A Alam, D Anthony, K Ashman, M Ayub, R Bagge, D Barnes, S Barrett, A Baughan, D Blamires, A Bond, M Bracken, S Broadbent, N Brown, S Bowles, P Brazier, T Broom, T Butcher, M Caffrey, R Carington, D Carroll, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, S Chhokar, J Chilver, P Cooper, C Cornell, A Cranmer, E Culverhouse, I Darby, T Dixon, P Drayton, T Egleton, C Etholen, P Fealey, M Flys, R Gaffney, R Gaster, E Gemmell, P Gomm, D Goss, T Green, S Guy, G Hall, G Harris, M Harker OBE, C Harriss, D Hayday, O Hayday, C Heap, T Hogg, G Hollis, T Hunter-Watts, A Hussain, I Hussain, M Hussain JP, M Hussain, N Hussain, T Hussain, Cllr C Jackson, D Johncock, J Jordan, S Kayani, R Khan BEM, D King, M Knight, S Lambert, S Lewin, Cllr A Macpherson, I Macpherson, F Mahon, N Marshall, P Martin, R Matthews, Dr W Matthews, Z Mohammed, H Mordue, S Morgan, N Naylor, J Ng, R Newcombe, C Oliver, A Osibogun, A Poland-Goodyer, C Poll, S Raja, W Raja, N Rana, M Rand, S Rouse, J Rush, G Sandy, L Smith BEM, M Smith, B Stanier Bt, P Strachan, R Stuchbury, L Sullivan, M Tett, N Thomas, D Thompson, D Town, J Towns, A Turner, M Turner, P Turner, A Waite, H Wallace, L Walsh, M Walsh, J Wassell, J Waters, D Watson, A Wheelhouse, W Whyte, G Williams, S Wilson, M Winn and A Wood

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors M Angell, M Baldwin, P Bass, K Bates, J Baum, A Christensen, L Clarke OBE, A Collingwood, M Dormer, M Fayyaz, P Griffin, P Irwin, S James, C Jones, P Kelly, J MacBean, G Smith, M Stannard, D Summers, G Wadhwa, J Ward and K Wood. Apologies were also received from Lady Howe, Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Ms Debbie Brock, High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, and from Nick Graham.

1A Dr John Warder MBE and Mrs Gillian Miscampbell OBE DL

Tributes were paid to Dr John Warder MBE, a past Leader and Chairman of Chiltern District Council, and to Mrs Gillian Miscampbell OBE DL, a past Buckinghamshire County Council Chairman and Honorary Alderman of the County Council and then the Buckinghamshire Council. The Chairman recorded sincere condolences to both families on their sad losses.

Dr Warder was a Member of Chiltern District Council from 1991 to 2015 representing the Central Ward. Some of his appointments during 24 years on the Council included Cabinet Member for Environmental Services Management 2000-2007(a portfolio which included licensing & regulation, homelessness, and Personnel (2004-2007); Leader of Chiltern District Council 2007-2010; Chairman of Chiltern District Council 2011-13 (2 years); and work on other Committees including Standards, Boundaries & Electoral Arrangements, Constitution Review, and Personnel.

Mrs Miscampbell was a Member of the Buckinghamshire County Council from 1977 to 1993 representing the Waddesdon Electoral Ward. Some of her appointments during 16 years included serving as Chairman of the County Council from 1989 to 1993. In 1982 she was awarded an OBE for Public and Political Services and in 1993 was appointed Deputy Lieutenant for the county of Buckinghamshire. She was appointed in 2010 as an Honorary Alderman by the County Council.

Members then observed a minute's silence in the memory of Dr John Warder MBE and Mrs Gillian Miscampbell OBE DL.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillors M Ayub, A Bond, R Carington, E Culverhouse, P Gomm, A Hussain, C Jackson, D King, R Matthews, S Raja, S Wilson and A Wood declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda item number 10 (Council Tax changes to the second home discount) and left the Council Chamber whilst this matter was discussed and decided.

4 Chairman's Update

The Chairman informed Members that this would be the last Council meeting attended by Gill Quinton, the Corporate Director for Adults and Health.

Gill had joined the County Council in 2005 and would soon be leaving the Council after 18 years working for the County Council and the Buckinghamshire Council. On behalf of all Members, the Chairman thanked Gill for all her hard work with the Council. The Chairman invited Cllr A Macpherson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adults and Health, who similarly thanked Gill for all her support, assistance, and hard work over a number of years, most recently since the formation of the new Council and work associated with the Council's response to the Covid pandemic.

On behalf of all Members and the staff of the Council, the Chairman extended thoughts and prayers to everyone impacted by the recent earthquakes in Turkey and

Syria, including Buckinghamshire residents who had family and friends in those countries. The Chairman also extended thoughts and prayers to Ukraine and the Ukrainian people as the first anniversary approached of the conflict and invasion of that country.

Since the last Council meeting, events the Chairman had attended had included the 'Knife Angel' opening and closing ceremonies in Milton Keynes; Chairman's presentation to John Campbell OBE on his 90th birthday; Carol Services for the Aylesbury Town Mayor, BMKFA and Chesham Town; Proud of Bucks 2022 Staff Awards; National Paralympic Heritage Trust tree planting event; the Aladdin pantomime gala night; switching on the Christmas lights at Marlow Park; judging the Council's Christmas jumper competition; RAF Halton graduation ceremony; Chinese New Year celebration event, Honorary Alderman afternoon tea and garden party draw; and 2 citizenship ceremonies. The Chairman thanked everyone who had attended a charity event at Pinewood studios on 30 January and the showing of the movie 'Grease' that had raised over £3,400 for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Members were reminded that a Civic Service was being held on Sunday 12 March 2023 at All Saints Church, High Wycombe.

The Vice Chairman of the Council also detailed events she had attended since the last Council meeting which included the 600th anniversary event for the Royal Latin School, the Chairman's charity event at Pinewood studios, the Mayor of Wycombe's Civic Service, the memorial service for Mrs Gillian Miscampbell OBE DL, and a number of citizenship ceremonies.

5 Petitions

There were none.

6 Chief Financial Officer's Statutory Report

The Chairman welcomed Mr D Skinner, the Council's Section 151 Officer to the meeting. Mr Skinner presented his report and highlighted that he was statutorily required to report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations of the budget and on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The Council was required to have due regard to the report when making decisions on the budget.

It was highlighted that the Medium Term Financial Plan had been subject to frequent and rigorous challenge and review during its development, including the public meetings of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry group held in January 2023. Members were informed that the budget proposals recommended by the Cabinet were robust and sustainable.

There were risks associated with the budget proposals and these were set out in the budget papers and at paragraph 4.5 of his report. These included inflation and national economic conditions, central Government funding, complexity and demand in social care and client transport, increased demand for temporary accommodation,

and the sustainability of providers within the Social Care market and Care Reforms. The budget did however contain contingencies that were detailed in Appendix 1 to the budget papers.

Alongside the development of the budget proposals, there had been consideration of the level of reserves held by the council and the likely balances going forward. A ratio of 5% of net revenue expenditure was the generally accepted minimum prudent level of General Fund reserves. The forecast Council's General Fund reserves of £47.8m were 9.5% of net operating expenditure at the end of 2023/24. As such, the Section 151 Officer had concluded that he considered the budget proposals recommended by the Cabinet to be robust and sustainable.

The Section 151 Officer also stated that he was aware of a proposed amendment to the budget to allocate an additional £5m to road maintenance. If passed, this would still leave the Council's General Fund reserves at £42.8m or 8.5% of net operating expenditure at the end of 2023/24 and would still be deemed to be adequate. The level of reserves held would still exceed the minimum best practice amount of 5% and exceed the reserves held by similar sized unitary authorities, in both percentage terms and absolute value.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

7 Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24 and Capital Programme

The Chairman invited Councillor M Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, to introduce the report to Members on the proposed 2023/24 revenue budget and capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council. It was noted that the Council Tax Resolution (Appendix 4) was found in the supplementary agenda pack. The following key points were highlighted:

- Councillor Tett thanked all those who had helped shape the budget, this included majority members of the Portfolio Challenge groups, Cabinet Members, the cross-party Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group, the Chief Executive and her Senior Leadership Team as well as the Section 151 Officer.
- That a lack of continuity in central Government in the last year (3 Prime Ministers, 4 Chancellors and 4 Secretaries of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) had created uncertainty for Council budget setting.
- That the Council had focussed on delivering 'front line' services, alongside the ongoing improvement journey, despite the many challenges faced in the past year.
- That external influences such as the war in Ukraine and significant increases in inflation and fuel prices had a major impact during the last year on the Council's finances, as well as imposing cost of living pressures on a significant number of residents.
- That the Helping Hands service had taken near 14,000 calls this year. Working

with the voluntary sector the Helping Hands programme had provided critical help to those in need, with a crisis fund with the Heart of Bucks having raised over £180K to date.

- That while there would be continued pressures from the war in Ukraine and economic uncertainty, there was a prospect of some economic and social recovery during 2023 although it was still unclear what the new 'normal' would be. However, the Buckinghamshire Council would be there to support that recovery for all.
- That while the Council had set a Revenue Budget for 3 years last February, the continuing financial uncertainty meant that the Budget this year was now a one-year Revenue plan.
- That the Council was impacted by the current Government's strategy of moving funds away from the South East as part of the Levelling Up programme.
- That, as set out last year, Reserves would be used this year to help balance the budget.
- That the Council was in a better financial position than many other Councils, some of whom were on the edge of bankruptcy through heavy expenditure, lost income, deferred savings, lack of financial control or poor governance.
- On the budget building principles – one-year revenue budget, 4-year capital budget to provide investment in key schemes and to support local economic recovery and growth, whilst also identifying and mitigating risk and always remembering that this was taxpayers' money.
- On the Revenue Budget principles and the Council's Core Spending Power.
- On the revenue budget trends for individual portfolios, which highlighted the main growth areas / expenditure for Health and Wellbeing, Education and Children's Services, and for Transportation. The budgets for Accessible Housing and Resources and Homelessness and Regulatory Services were also increasing as a result of pressures in housing supply and the rising need to support temporary accommodation requirements. While the Climate Change and Environment portfolio was showing a fall in expenditure, this position actually reflected additional income from the sale of electricity from the Energy from Waste plant.
- On how the Council was funded through Council tax, Business Rates, the Adult Social Care precept, plus some grants monies.

Partway through the budget introduction the Leader was unwell and left the meeting. Following a short break, the meeting resumed and Councillor G Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change, completed introducing the report to Members on the proposed 2023/24 budget and capital programme for Buckinghamshire Council. The following key points were highlighted:

- That it was planned to use £1.36m to balance the budget, as agreed in last year's budget.
- That, as mentioned by the Council's Section 151 Officer, the level of General Fund Reserves was expected to be 9.5% of net revenue expenditure.
- A high-level breakdown was given of the £500m earmarked for major capital

programme expenditure 2023-2027. This included £106m for roads, £91m for Strategic Infrastructure, £33.7m for Town Centre regeneration, £20m for Housing and homelessness, £8.6m for pavements and £8m for drainage.

- Information on how the capital programme was being funded.
- That the budget included for a basic increase in Council tax of 2.99% for 2023/24 and a 2% increase in the Adult Social Care precept. This would be the equivalent of an increase of £1.61 per week for a Band D property.
- The risks and uncertainties faced in setting the proposed budget.

Councillor Williams commended the budget to Council and moved the recommendations as per the report. This was seconded by Councillor A Macpherson.

The Chairman informed Members that an amendment on the budget had been received that he intended to deal with next. The amendment was proposed by Councillor G Williams, seconded by Councillor S Broadbent. The amendment wording was:

“This council notes that the prolonged period on incessant rain, combined with the extended freezing weather, has resulted in a significant deterioration in the condition of roads across the country, including within Buckinghamshire. The Budget already proposes a record level of expenditure upon repair and resurfacing of our roads with the current £100m+ four-year programme now being extended into a 5th year with over £5m of additional expenditure to continue the member led rolling maintenance programme. Nevertheless, since this Budget was proposed, it has become apparent that further action is required to address the immediate need.

This council therefore resolves to amend the Budget proposals as follows:

- **Amend Appendix 2 (Buckinghamshire Council Capital Programme) Transport Expenditure 2023/24 by leaving out ‘£47,430’ and replacing it with ‘£52,430’. Also, insert an additional line “Funding from General Fund Balance “£5,000” in column 2023/24.** This will amend the Budget by releasing £5m from General Fund Reserves and adding this to the 2023/24 Revenue for Highways road maintenance.

As a consequence, Council is asked to further approve additional resolutions to those on page 27 of the Council papers, namely that:

- **The Cabinet Member for Transportation should begin immediately planning for the urgent deployment of this funding.**
- **The Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Transport stating the need to increase capital funding for roads given the recent weather impacts.”**

Councillor Williams highlighted that the severe weather experienced over the winter had damaged many local roads. It was proposed on adding in £5m from reserves for additional highways road maintenance in 2023/24, which would be a 20% in-year increase to £30m. This would still leave the General Fund Reserves in a good position at 8.5% of net revenue expenditure.

During debate of the amendment, Members commented that they were in favour of the additional expenditure on roads maintenance although they would like to see a clear plan on how the additional monies would be spent. It was also mentioned:

- that the amendment had been raised very recently which had meant that there hadn't been an opportunity to scrutinise the issue.
- that a strategic plan for fixing roads might avoid the annual pressures experienced every winter to fix potholes.

In seconding the amendment, the Cabinet Member for Transport highlighted the record investment in the current MTFP on roads and provided statistics on the large increase in the number of road repairs/maintenance and additional road gritting required in January 2023 when compared to January 2022. The Cabinet Member stated that he would ensure that the additional road maintenance work was incorporated into the new highways contract arrangements, and through the supply chain when it is the right time to do road repairs in April.

The amendment was then put to the meeting and was CARRIED.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rules, the Chairman then invited Councillor Morgan, as Deputy Leader of the Alliance Group (main opposition group), and in the absence of the Group Leader of the Alliance Group, to comment on the budget proposals. The following main points were noted:

- that the budget savings in Appendix 3 added up to £9.675m and not £10.1m, as stated, which included a missing £13K savings in climate change.
- That the savings could be split into 3 categories – efficiency savings (£7.985m), better Buckinghamshire Programme (£1.26m) and contract savings (£520K). It was stated that efficiency savings were a smoke screen to cut staff and Departments and to outsource services to help balance the budget.
- That the £580K reduction in costs for grass cutting and weed spraying would require Town and Parish Councils to provide these services, that in turn would see local precepts increased.
- The £160k efficiency savings in SEND transport provision were questioned, including the reduced demand for SEND transport (£100k) and reduction in Personal Transport budgets (£210k)
- That the Equalities Impact Assessment should have included more information on possible positive and negative impacts rather than stating that the details of the impact of changes would not be known until the projects were delivered.
- That while there were plans to devolve 3 services to the Aylesbury Town Council, the Council needed to go further and, where possible, look to devolve services to other Town and Parish Councils.
- That more should be done to maintain sports pitches and their associated facilities such as changing rooms.
- That her Group could not support further cuts in the funding to Community Boards, including to Aylesbury and High Wycombe.
- That it was regrettable that the Aylesbury eastern link road would not be built

until 2025/26.

- That as well as additional expenditure on road maintenance, the Council should also be investing more to maintain footways and pathways.
- That there were concerns that some of the £41m in unspent Section 106 funding and £172m in HIF funding would not be spent in time and could be at risk of being paid back to developers or the Government.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Morgan for her comments and invited Councillor Wilson to speak on behalf of the IMPACT Alliance grouping. The following main points were noted:

- Councillor Wilson thanked the Officers and the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry for their hard work on the budget and on budget scrutiny.
- That the Council needed to develop a Strategy to look at long term solutions to systemic issues such as children's and adult services, address the dearth of key workers and social housing accommodation, and deliver the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy. This could be done by having a long-term revenue strategy linked to the Capital and Investment Strategy.
- That important issues the Council also needed to look at included affordable housing, temporary accommodation, and the aging population, managing surplus assets and the repurposing of assets to generate income.
- That the budget was lacking details on how £15.5m in contingencies were being planned for and allocated against risks.
- That there were concerns that the budget was highly dependent on income from the Energy from Waste plant (net of energy producer levy), and of the financial resilience of education and children's services.
- That savings were mostly made up of cuts.

At the conclusion, the Chairman thanked Councillor Wilson for his comments. The Chairman then opened up debate on the budget and invited questions and comments from Members, who highlighted the following:

- (i) Looking at access arrangements and parking for the planned woods in Wing.
- (ii) Concerns that the £10.1m savings were actually cuts in core funding that would increase the risks in delivering services in areas including adults' services and for education and children's services.
- (iii) Concerns on the further cuts in the funding to Community Boards.
- (iv) That it would be important for the Council to deliver Opportunity Bucks and to reduce entrenched systemic inequalities.
- (v) That the Council should be doing more to devolve services to Town/Parish Councils and to not cut grant to third sector partners.
- (vi) That the Client Services transport budget had been increased from £33m to £38m as a part of the budget proposals. It was highlighted that some of the efficiency savings identified area were related to schemes that boosting the independence of children moving into adulthood and was not moving money out of budgets.
- (vii) Concerns that attainment gaps in Bucks were some of the biggest in the country.
- (viii) Concerns for High Wycombe relating to CIL and Community Board funding

and to the level of temporary accommodation.

- (ix) That the Council's Helping Hands initiative continued to help local people with heating and household bills, buying or accessing food, and with benefits, debt, and money advice.
- (x) That it had been particularly difficult to put together a budget this year in the face of the continued pressures from the war in Ukraine, economic uncertainty, and significant increases that inflation and fuel prices had on the Council's finances.
- (xi) The Cabinet Member for Communities stated that the Council remained fully committed to devolving assets identified in the first tranche of projects. He also stated that Community Boards had funded 841 projects, invested £5.6m in local projects and total spending with contributory funding was approximately £9m.

In seconding the budget proposals, Councillor A Macpherson spoke in support of the budget proposals, which she stated sought to protect the most vulnerable in society. Councillor Williams then responded to provide clarification on some of the concerns and issues that had been raised during the main debate. This included that Appendices 1 and 3 did add up in terms of savings as Appendix 1 included some multi-year items, that 450 personal transport budgets had been agreed to date, that Section 106 monies were closely monitored and had never been returned to developers (although £23m of it had yet to be allocated), that there was a Corporate Risk Register and Directorate Risk Registers that were regularly scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee, that the EfW income was supported by a significant contingency reserve, agreed that it was important to deliver Opportunity Bucks, and mentioned about town centre regeneration in High Wycombe.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their questions and comments and reminded members that there was a legal requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on the budget. The Chairman also informed Members that he intended to take a recorded vote, en bloc, for all 7 budget recommendations, which were the 5 recommendations in the main agenda plus the additional 2 recommendations resulting from the amendment.

The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (94): Councillors Adoh, Alam, Anthony, Ashman, Ayub, Bagge, Barnes, Barrett, Birchley, Blamires, Bond, Bowles, Bracken, Brazier, Broadbent, Broom, Brown, Butcher, Caffrey, Carington, Carroll, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, Chaudry, Chhokar, Chilver, Cornell, Cranmer, Culverhouse, Darby, Dhillon, Drayton, Egleton, Etholen, Flys, Gaffney, Gaster, Gemmell, Gomm, Goss, Green, Hall, Harker OBE, G Harris, C Harriss, Heap, Hollis, A Hussain, Mahboob Hussain JP, Jackson, Jordan, King, A Macpherson, I Macpherson, Marshall, Martin, R Matthews, W Matthews, Mohammed, Mordue, Naylor, Newcombe, Ng, Oliver, Osibogun, Poll, S K Raja, Rana, Rand, Rouse, Rush, Sandy, L Smith BEM, Sir B Stanier, Strachan, Sullivan, Thomas, Thompson, Town, Towns, A Turner, M Turner, P Turner, Waite, Wallace, L Walsh, M Walsh, Waters, Wheelhouse, Whyte, Williams, Wilson, Winn and A Wood.

AGAINST (14): Councillors Cooper, Dixon, Hunter-Watts, N Hussain, T Hussain, Khan BEM, Knight, Lambert, Lewin, Morgan, Poland-Goodyer, W Raja, M Smith and Wassell.

ABSTENTIONS (10): Councillors Baughan, Guy, D Hayday, O Hayday, I Hussain, Majid Hussain, Johncock, Kayani, Stuchbury and Watson

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (Appendices 1-3), as amended earlier, be APPROVED.
- (2) That the Council Tax Resolution (Appendix 4) be APPROVED.
- (3) That the 'Special Expenses' budgets, precepts and associated services for Aylesbury Town, High Wycombe Town and West Wycombe Church Yard (Appendices 5 & 6) be APPROVED.
- (4) That Cabinet be delegated authority to make decisions to add up to £100m to the capital programme, to be funded by Prudential Borrowing, subject to a robust business case being APPROVED.
- (5) That the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy (Appendix 7) be APPROVED.
- (6) That the Cabinet Member for Transport should begin planning immediately for the urgent deployment of the additional 2023/24 Revenue for Highways road maintenance.
- (7) That the Leader of the Council would write to the Secretary of State for Transport stating the need to increase capital funding for roads given the recent weather impacts.

8 Council Tax Support Fund

Councillor Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources introduced the report and explained that Central Government had provided funds to the Council under S31 of the Local Government Act 2003 with the proviso that all monies were paid strictly in accordance with S13a (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and in line with guidance issued on 23 December 2022.

The fund, named by Central Government as the 'Council Tax Support Fund' was designed to meet the immediate needs of all taxpayers who were currently claiming Council Tax Reduction (CTR). The mandatory element was to award all recipients of Council Tax Reduction (both working age and pension age) with a further reduction in their annual council tax bill of up to £25. This reduction would apply to all Council Tax Reduction recipients who had an outstanding liability for the 2023-24 financial year.

Buckinghamshire proposed after applying the mandatory reduction in liability above, that the Council would continue to make similar discretionary payments to all applicants who became eligible for Council Tax Reduction for the first time after 1

April 2023. The report proposed an additional policy framework that set out the Council's approach to the award of the mandatory and discretionary elements of the Council Tax Support Fund from 1 April 2023, that was a new policy in addition to the existing Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy.

It was proposed by Councillor Chilver, seconded by Councillor Butcher, and

RESOLVED –

That the discretionary Council Tax Support Fund policy for Buckinghamshire local Council tax support claimants be ADOPTED, as detailed in Appendix A to the Council report.

9 Care Leaver Council Tax Disregard

Councillor Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources introduced the report on a Discretionary Council Tax (CT) Discount scheme for Buckinghamshire Council Care Leavers, which would work alongside the Local Offer to support young care leavers in taking on the responsibility of having their own property and being able to support themselves financially.

One of the key points of the Local Offer was for Buckinghamshire Council to meet the obligation of paying Council Tax for the Care Leaver up until the age of 21 where they continued to interact with the Leaving Care team. This included paying any council tax due, after any discounts or benefit have been applied. Under Council Tax legislation the Council could set local discounts that applied to certain properties and/or certain groups of people.

Currently, care leavers were required to pay their CT bill and then forward it to the Leaving Care team, with Children's Services then claiming the discount on behalf of care leavers. It was proposed that it would be more efficient to apply the discount directly to the council tax account. By applying the CT discount upfront it would simplify and streamline the process and reduce administrative work and expenditure.

Several Members spoke and were fully supportive of the proposed new arrangement. It was also mentioned that the new process would also bring Buckinghamshire in line with many other local authorities.

It was proposed by Councillor Chilver, seconded by Councillor Butcher, and

RESOLVED –

That the Discretionary Council Tax Discount Scheme for Buckinghamshire Council Care Leavers be ADOPTED, as detailed in Appendix A to the Council report.

10 Council Tax changes to the Second Home discount

Councillor Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, introduced a report which proposed the removal of the 10% discount for second homes in Buckinghamshire with effect from 1 April 2023. This would encourage taxpayers to use premises as their main residence or allow others to use the premises as a main residence and raise additional council tax revenue.

There were currently 753 homes in Buckinghamshire receiving a 10% discount for a second home. It was estimated that the removal of the 10% discount on second homes would bring a benefit to the Council of approximately £157k p.a. and £37k p.a. to other preceptors.

Several Members spoke and were fully supportive of removing the second home discount.

It was proposed by Councillor Chilver, seconded by Councillor Butcher, and

RESOLVED –

That the 10% Council Tax discount on second homes be removed with effect from 1 April 2023.

Please note: Councillors M Ayub, A Bond, R Carington, E Culverhouse, P Gomm, A Hussain, C Jackson, D King, R Matthews, S Raja, S Wilson, and A Wood declared a prejudicial interest in this agenda item and left the Council Chamber whilst this matter was discussed and decided.

11 Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

Councillor Butcher, Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced Buckinghamshire Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2023-24, that was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that it was a requirement for each local authority to approve a Treasury Management Strategy by 1 April each year. This strategy had been developed in line with the CIPFA code of practice.

The Council continued to pursue a strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, to reduce risk and keep external financing costs low. The Council would continue the strategy of internal borrowing while it made sense to do so. In the current economic climate, it was considered appropriate to maintain a degree of liquidity to cover cash flow needs but the Council would also consider investing for periods of up to 12 months with high credit rated financial institutions, whilst investment rates remain

elevated. The Council was considering opportunities for investments with longer exposure, but also ensuring that there was sufficient liquidity to meeting any short-term significant costs that may arise.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee had made clear at its November 2022 meeting that further rate increases were in the pipeline and markets expect Bank Rate to peak at 4.5%-4.75%. As such, investing in 2023/24 was likely to be conducted, first, in a rising interest rate environment, but then potentially in a falling interest rate environment at the end of the financial year. This would depend on how quickly inflation fell back and on levels of economic growth.

The Council's main objective when borrowing money was to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The continuation of the Council's strategy of using surplus cash instead of external borrowing, keeping external financing costs low. The Council was actively reviewing opportunities for rescheduling long term debt.

The only proposed change to the 2023/24 TMSS compared to the 2022/23 TMSS was to amend the section for investments with other local authorities so that the investment could only be placed with the prior approval of the Council Leader, the Chief Executive and the Service Director of Finance (Section 151 officer) or deputies in the case of leave. Furthermore, if a local authority that the Council had invested in subsequently issued a section 114 or is given a capitalisation directive, or any other untoward financial event experienced by an authority who the Council held an investment in would be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee at the earliest opportunity. Members were informed that Slough and Thurrock Councils had fully repaid on time the loans made to them.

Several Members commented on the tightening of rules for lending to other local authorities. It was explained that a local authority had never defaulted on repaying a loan to another local authority although it was prudent and reputationally unsound not to lend to any authority that was experiencing financial difficulties. It was further explained that the low interest rates experienced for the last decade had meant that the best returns on investments had often been through lending to other local authorities. However, markets had changed radically now that interest rates had been rising. It was always incumbent on the Council to seek to maximise the interest received on monies when the Council had surplus funds whilst at the same time not putting those monies at risk which was why the Council had a Treasury Management Strategy.

It was moved by Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor Newcombe, and

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 be APPROVED.**
- (2) That the operational boundary for external borrowing, the authorised limit for external borrowing, the maturity structure of borrowing and the upper limit for principal sums invested for longer than 365 days, and the liability benchmark be APPROVED.**

12 Capital and Investment Strategy

Councillor Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources introduced the draft Capital and Investment Strategy 2023/24, attached as Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that the Council was required to approve this strategy on an annual basis and that it had been developed in line with the CIPFA and MHCLG guidance.

The Capital and Investment Strategy provided the framework within which to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan objectives through the effective investment of its limited capital resources. As well as the Council's immediate statutory responsibilities, the strategy also reflected the important role that it had to play in the regeneration and growth, affordable housing and climate change agendas, especially in the context of a post-Covid recovery and the significant housing growth in the area.

The Cabinet Member explained that not all capital proposals could be funded this year however the Council would conduct a full review of future capital funding and of capital receipts as a part of next year's budget process. Section 7 of the Strategy outlined the key risks and Section 8 outlined the governance and processes around capital proposals and budgeting decisions. It was also mentioned that a capital governance review would be undertaken later in the year to ensure that these systems and processes remained fit for purpose. The Strategy as submitted to Council had been approved by the Corporate Capital Board and by Cabinet.

Members asked a number of questions on the strategy and were informed:

- That the Cabinet Member agreed with a Member about the need to consider more capital investment projects, subject to robust business cases, that could potentially offset revenue pressures. This had also been raised by the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry and Cabinet had responded that this was already the approach taken by the Council.
- On the measure the Council was taking in the south of the Council area relating to temporary housing which included Bridge Court and retaining Saunderton Lodge. The Council was always actively on the lookout for additional properties that could be used for temporary and emergency accommodation, and to house refugees.
- That the Council had never had to return Section 106 funding or CIL contributions to parties/developers. The Council was in active discussions with Homes England about HIF Funding, with there being no indication that any of

this funding would be at risk.

- That the Council was continuing to develop the strategy for social and affordable housing.
- That the Council's policy for many years had been to not sell any of the agricultural estate but to maximise income from it. That position remained unchanged.

It was proposed by Councillor Chilver, seconded by Councillor Butcher, and

RESOLVED –

That the Capital and Investment Strategy attached at Appendix 1 be APPROVED.

13 Committee Proportionality

The Chairman stated that a report on Committee Proportionality was included at agenda item number 13.

Members were informed by the Monitoring Officer that Group Leaders had been consulted and had agreed on the allocation of seats on Council Committee to political groups, as detailed at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED –

That the allocation of seats on Council Committees to political groups as detailed at Appendix 1 be APPROVED.

14 Report for information - Key Decisions Report

A list of decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the last Full Council meeting on 30 November 2022 were received and noted.

15 Date of Next Meeting

The next full Council meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 26 April 2023 at 4pm.

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Report to Council

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date: | 26 April 2023 |
| Title: | Buckinghamshire Electoral Review |
| Relevant councillor(s): | All |
| Author and/or contact officer: | Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic. Contact officer Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer. |
| Ward(s) affected: | All |

Recommendation:

- (1) to adopt the recommendation of the Standards & General Purposes Committee that the proposals set out by the Local Government Boundary Commission in their further consultation (and summarised at paragraph 2.3 and in Annex 1) be accepted;
- (2) to ask the Service Director Legal and Democratic Services to submit this response to the Commission on behalf of the Council.

Reason for decision:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has issued a further consultation on four proposed wards in the south-east of the county. The Standards & General Purposes Committee is tasked by Council to make recommendations to it on potential responses to electoral review consultations. This report summarises the Committee's recommendation in response to the proposed wards of Chalfont St Peter, Farnhams & Stoke Poges, Gerrards Cross & Denham and Iver.

1. Background:

1.1 It was expected that, on 28 February, the Local Government Boundary Commission would publish its final proposals for the pattern of wards for Buckinghamshire Council. Instead, the Commission launched a limited further consultation on revised proposals for four wards in the south-east of the county. These amendments were made by the Commission in response to a significant number of objections to their previous proposals in this area. The Commission believes the revisions achieve the best balance of their criteria: community identity, acceptable electoral variance, effective local

government and their wish to minimise the number of parishes which would be split across Buckinghamshire wards. The Commission's report can be found on their [website here](#) with an [illustrative map](#).

1.2 The Commission has not indicated what position it has taken on the remainder of the county. Instead, it now intends to publish the final recommendations on all wards on 30 May. The consultation officially ended on 11 April but the Commission has given this authority an extension to 26 April to enable Council to consider the matter, in the meantime noting the recommendation of this Committee.

1.3 As in previous stages, the Committee received recommendations from the cross-party Electoral Review Working Group formed under the Committee. Drop-in sessions for ward members were arranged with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Working Group. The Working Group recommended acceptance of the Commission's proposals. On 13 April, the Committee agreed likewise and this is the recommendation now before Council.

2. The Commission's proposals

2.1 The Commission's report notes: "it has received sufficient evidence relating to the rest of Buckinghamshire to finalise its recommendations, so this [new] consultation is focused...only" on the four south-east wards.

2.2 In response to feedback, the Commission is proposing to change each of the four proposed wards: Chalfont St Peter, Farnhams & Stoke Poges, Gerrards Cross & Denham and Iver. As the revised proposals were new, the Commission felt obliged to consult on them.

2.3 Annex 1 summarises the key changes envisaged by the Commission. In short, these are:

- A. To reverse the proposed extension of Chalfont St Peter southwards into Gerrards Cross Parish: based on "strong community-based evidence"
- B. Consequently, to reduce the number of Chalfont St Peter councillors by one: to achieve acceptable electoral variance for that ward (10%)
- C. To restore New Denham from Iver to Gerrards Cross & Denham: based on feedback that there were no "strong community or geographic links" between New Denham and Iver Parish. (The revision now aligns with this Council's original submission)
- D. To place Hedgerley and Fulmer within Farnhams & Stoke Poges: restoring Denham wholly to Gerrards Cross & Denham would result in that ward being out of variance; however, placing Fulmer & Hedgerley within the Farnhams & Stoke Poges Ward would achieve balance for both wards but would do so by expanding the latter from two members to three.

- E. To pluralise ‘Farnham’ to demonstrate that both Farnham Royal and Farnham Common are included in the name “Farnhams & Stoke Poges”.

2.4 This results in one fewer councillor overall, 97 instead of the previously proposed 98. The Commission had indicated, throughout the review, that the “98” number may marginally increase or decrease depending on the final balance of criteria for each ward.

2.5 The representation and variance would therefore be:

| Ward | Electorate | Variance | Councillors |
|-------------------------|------------|----------|-------------|
| Chalfont St Peter | 10069 | 10% | 2 |
| Farnhams & Stoke Poges | 11990 | -12.51% | 3 |
| Gerrards Cross & Denham | 14304 | 4% | 3 |
| Iver | 9308 | 2% | 2 |

2.6 It is notable, from A-E above, that the revised proposals are interlocked, with a decision for one ward having some impact on another. This demonstrates the consideration at the heart of an electoral review: achieving a balance of the relevant criteria for each ward and for its neighbours.

2.7 The Commission considers their revisions achieve a working balance of the criteria: only one ward would exceed the variance, others coming well within it or at the acceptable limit of it; only one parish (Chalfont St Peter) would cross a Buckinghamshire Ward boundary; and each reflects an acceptable balance of community identity.

3. The Committee’s recommendation

3.1 The Committee met on 13 April to agree a recommendation to Council.

3.2 The Committee noted the interlocking nature of the proposals for each ward. It noted that the local ward members for three of the four proposed wards were largely supportive of the changes.

3.3 The Committee noted that process of balancing the criteria necessarily involved a compromise between them. It concluded that the Commission’s proposals presented the most workable balance of the criteria, having regard to the constraints of geography and the interlocking implications for each ward.

3.4 The Group recommends the adoption of the Commission’s revised proposals.

4. Next steps

4.1 The Commission’s revised timetable is:

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Final report Publication of the Commission’s recommendations | May 2023 |
| Order laid in Parliament This makes the recommendations law | To be confirmed |
| Effective date The new arrangements apply to elections after this date | May 2025 |

5. Legal and financial implications

5.1 This report does not contain any financial implications. The Council is participating in a consultation on the future electoral boundaries of the Council. There is no cost in responding to the consultation and any outcome will not be effected until the election of 2025.

5.2 The Council is a statutory consultee to the electoral review.

6. Corporate implications

6.1 The outcome of the electoral review will shape the nature of the Council’s elected member representation from the May 2025 elections and as such will have significant corporate implications at that time. For now, there are no current corporate implications.

**Buckinghamshire Electoral Review - Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC)
Further Consultation (south-east of county)**

Summary of Proposals

| Proposed Ward | Rationale | No. of councillors + variance |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Chalfont St Peter | <p>LGBC has accepted objections to incorporating part of Gerrards Cross parish into a three-member CSP ward, recognised that this had excluded an “integral part of GX community”.</p> <p>Proposing to use Austenwood Common and Kingsway as boundary between Chalfont St Peter and Gerrards Cross; by doing so, “many GX community facilities” would be restored to Gerrards Cross, reflecting community identity. Doing so makes a three-member Chalfont St Peter unviable in variance terms. So now proposing to reduce Chalfont St Peter to two members.</p> | 2 members, 10% variance |
| Farnhams & Stoke Poges | <p>LGBC received support for their previous two-member proposal. However, accommodating Hedgerley and Fulmer (from Gerrards Cross & Denham) now requires a three-member arrangement to achieve good variance. While this still creates an excess variance (-12%), it represents the “best balance” of criteria.</p> <p>LGBC noted comments that Fulmer may not have strong links with the Farnhams. However, LGBC say that the links are “by no means weak”. The proposal also avoids dividing Fulmer between wards.</p> <p>LGBC “consider it a necessity to ward Fulmer [with Farnhams etc.] to achieve even a reasonable level of electoral equality for wards across the</p> | 3 members, -12% variance |

| Proposed Ward | Rationale | No. of councillors + variance |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | <p>south-east of Buckinghamshire”.</p> <p>LGBC are “pluralising” the name Farnhams to reflect the distinct identities of Farnham Royal and Farnham Common.</p> | |
| Gerrards Cross & Denham | <p>Commission remains of the view that linking Gerrards Cross and Denham gives electors here a vote of broadly equal weight with other communities in Buckinghamshire. Accepted that New Denham had no community links with Iver and should remain in Gerrards Cross & Denham.</p> <p>Restoring New Denham to Gerrards Cross & Denham would create an excess variance. So Hedgerley and Fulmer parishes would now be excluded (and placed within Farnhams & Stoke Poges).</p> | 3 members, 4% variance |
| Iver | <p>Removing New Denham from the previously proposed Iver Ward, would lead to under-representation in three-member ward.</p> <p>Achieving an acceptable variance for Iver involves reverting to Buckinghamshire Council’s original proposal for a two-member Iver Ward i.e. following the Iver parish boundary and so coterminous with it.</p> | 2 members, 2% variance |



Report to Council

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date: | 26 April 2023 |
| Title: | Select Committee Annual Report 2022/23 |
| Relevant councillor(s): | All |
| Author and/or contact officer: | Councillors Ralph Bagge, David Carroll, Bill Chapple OBE, Mimi Harker OBE, Jane MacBean and Julie Ward Contact Officer – Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager |
| Ward(s) affected: | All |
| Recommendations: | For Members to note the Annual Report of the Select Committees 2022/23 |

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The role of the scrutiny function is to provide an independent cross-party challenge to decision-makers for public accountability and to improve outcomes for Buckinghamshire’s residents.
- 1.2 Each year the Chairmen of the Select Committees produce an annual report reflecting the work and outcomes achieved by their Committee over the past year.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 A number of key pieces of work and achievements have been made across all 6 Select Committees and the annual report focusses on these.
- 2.2 The 2022/23 Annual report is attached at Appendix 1.

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Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23



Foreword

As Chairmen of the Select Committees, we are delighted to present our Annual Report for 2022/23. We would like to pay tribute to all Buckinghamshire Council officers and staff working within our partner organisations for their continued dedication and hard work over the past year.

Our Select Committees are cross-party and non-political with the overall aim to improve services and outcomes for residents by holding decision-makers to account. This report summarises the main issues which have been reviewed and challenged throughout the year and highlights some of the key achievements. We have completed a number of in-depth pieces of work – a Review of Recruitment and Retention of Children’s Social Workers, a Rapid Review of Pollution in Buckinghamshire’s Rivers and Chalk Streams and an Inquiry into the Development of Primary Care Networks, with the latter’s recommendations being considered by both Cabinet and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Scrutiny of the council’s budget took place across three full days in January and resulted in 9 recommendations being made to Cabinet before the final budget was agreed. There are also several ongoing reviews which will be reported to Cabinet later in the year including Dementia Services Pathways and Pathways for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

We would like to thank all Councillors who have participated in scrutiny over the year, Cabinet for their continued support of scrutiny and all officers, co-opted Members, partners and members of the public who have contributed their time and expertise to our meetings and in-depth reviews.



Cllr Julie Ward,
Chairman, Children’s & Education
Select Committee



Cllr Mimi Harker OBE,
Chairman, Communities &
Localism Select Committee



Cllr Ralph Bagge,
Chairman, Finance &
Resources Select
Committee



Cllr David Carroll, Chairman,
Growth, Infrastructure & Housing
Select Committee



Cllr Jane MacBean, Chairman,
Health & Adult Social Care Select
Committee



Cllr Bill Chapple OBE,
Chairman, Transport,
Environment &
Climate Change Select
Committee

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is an important part of local democracy and provides the legal power for Councillors to look into issues of concern for residents, holding decision-makers to account for the decisions they are making. Scrutiny also acts as a check and balance to the executive or the Council’s Cabinet, which takes the majority of key decisions on behalf of the Council.

Although scrutiny cannot make decisions, it makes recommendations for improvement to decision-makers, which can be Cabinet, but also there are often recommendations for other partner organisations.

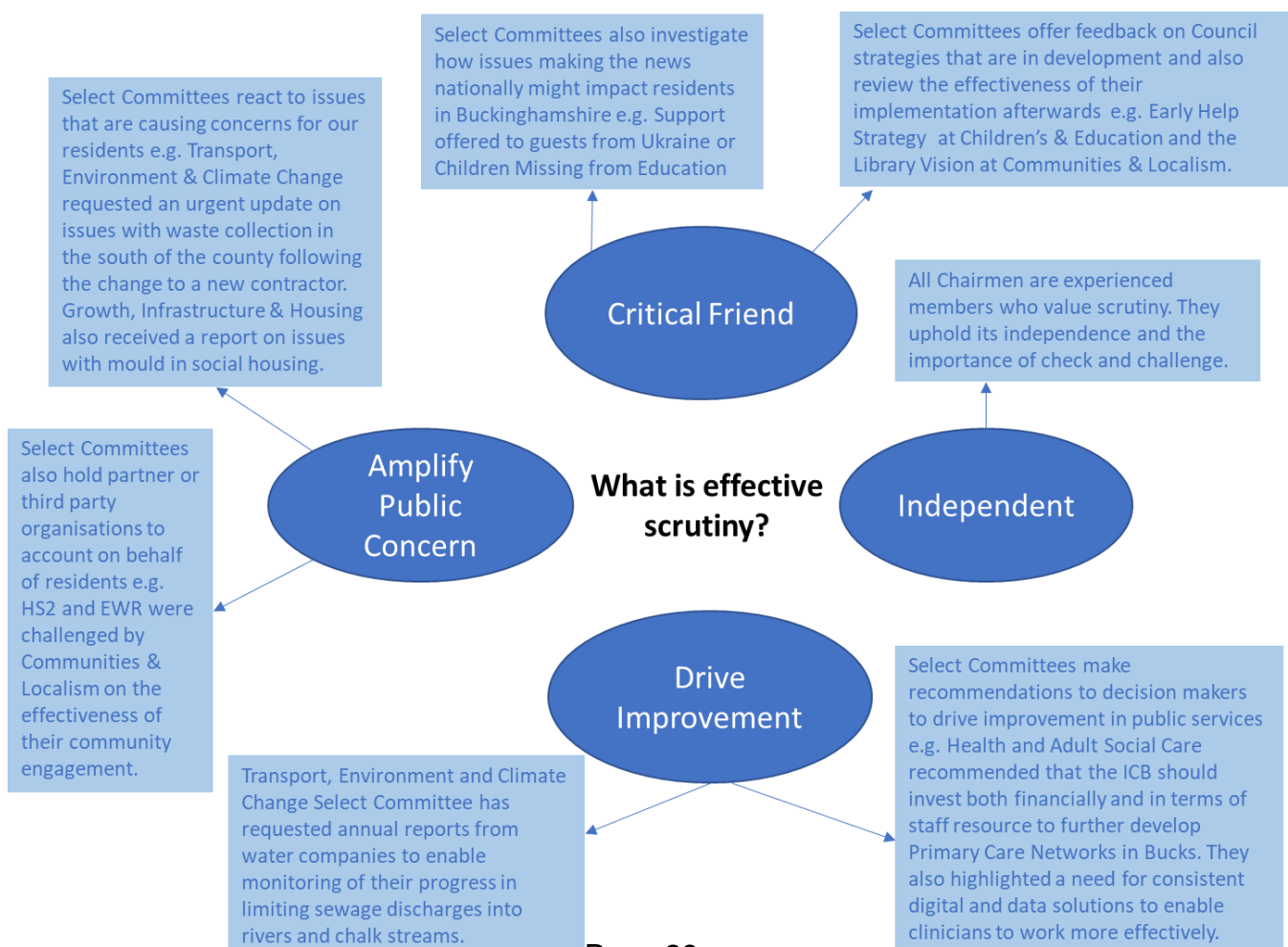
There are also specific powers for scrutiny to hold the NHS to account within health scrutiny.

Scrutiny at Buckinghamshire Council is carried out by six Select Committees. Each Select Committee has a different remit and each examines local services across the public sector. The Committees are made up of elected Councillors who are not part of the Council’s Cabinet, together with some co-opted representatives from relevant local organisations.

What do we need for Effective Scrutiny?

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) have identified four factors that will contribute to effective scrutiny in local government. They are:

- Provide constructive ‘critical friend’ challenge
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services



Children’s & Education Select Committee

The Children’s and Education Select Committee has an important role to play in scrutinising social care and education provision for both young adults and children in Buckinghamshire. Many children who come into the council’s care or who receive other support services have increasingly complex needs and it is vital that the council can respond with appropriate services in a timely way.

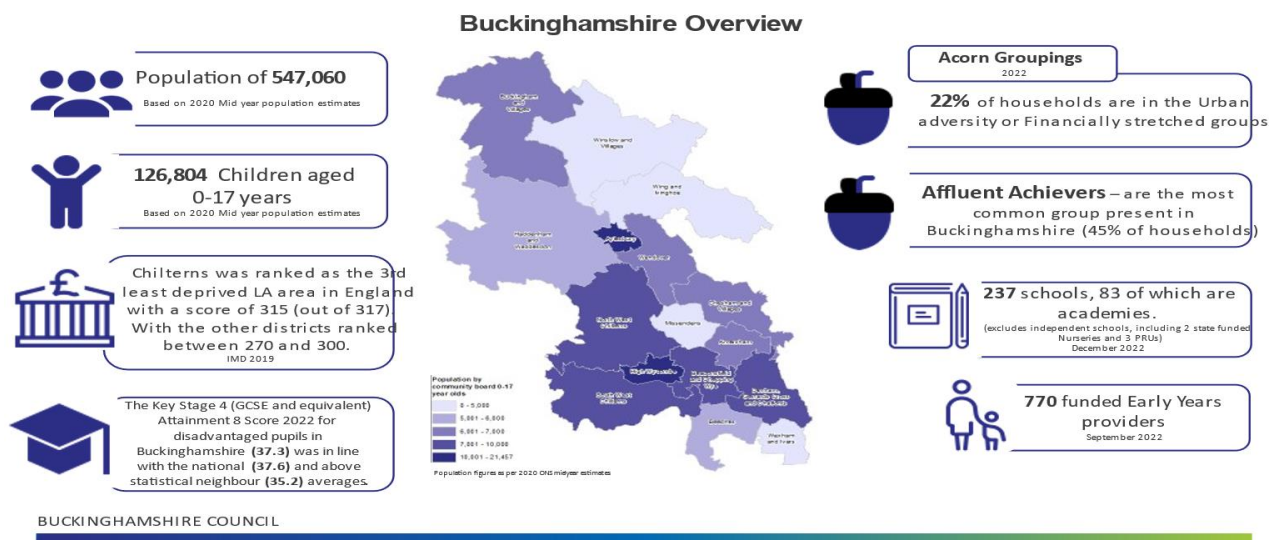
Children’s social care was greatly impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic as there was a significant increase in demand on services both in numbers and complexity. These demands will continue to rise with the increasing child population and the increases in the cost of living.

Further to the Ofsted inspection of the service in December 2021 and the SEND service inspection in March 2022, the service has continued to focus on its improvement pathways and on improving outcomes for children and young people. The Select Committee has continued to monitor and review the work underway on several important topics.

Topics the committee has focussed on

In the past year the Committee has considered a variety of key topics including the following:

- Feedback from the February- March 2022 SEND Inspection
- Early Help Strategy and Impact of the Family Support Service
- Participation Strategy for Young People 2022-2025
- Children Missing Education
- Children’s Services Update March to September 2022
- Annual Report of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Board



Local Area SEND Inspection Outcome

A joint Care Quality Commission and Ofsted inspection of the local area SEND provision took place between 28th February and 11th March 2022 involving staff, service users and parents. Partners from the Buckinghamshire NHS Trust, Oxford Health NHS Trust and NHS Berkshire West CCG as well as Children’s Social Care Directors, attended the committee to answer questions on the inspection outcomes.

The Select Committee heard that the inspection found a number of strengths across the local area, despite the ongoing Covid-19 challenges. It also recognised the considerable activity that is happening as part of the SEND improvement programme and confirmed that the local area’s self-

evaluation accurately reflects the current position. That said, inspectors also identified 3 area of significant weakness:

- i. The lack of a cohesive area strategy to identify and meet the needs of those children and young people requiring speech and language, communication and occupational therapy;
- ii. Waiting times for assessments on the autism and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder diagnosis pathways and the system-owned plans in place to address this;
- iii. Waiting times to see a community paediatrician.

As a result of the inspection findings, the local area was required to submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to address the significant areas of weakness. Both the council and healthcare service continue to focus their efforts on improving the areas of significant weakness identified, while continuing with the broader improvement journey to ensure that the support children with SEND receive in Buckinghamshire is of high quality and effective.



Pathways into SEND Services

In light of the SEND inspection outcome, the Select Committee decided to set up a Review Group of five Councillors led by Councillor Diana Blamires, to look at the pathways to services for children and young people with SEND. This group has been meeting on a weekly basis since December. Members have spoken to a variety of professionals including school staff and those who have already accessed the services and those who wish to, across three different scenarios as follows:

1. Getting help before a diagnosis of Autism
2. Getting help before a diagnosis of ADHD
3. Getting help with anxiety and depression



The evidence gathering phase has now been completed and the Review Group are developing a report detailing their key findings and recommendations, which will then be presented to Cabinet in the Summer.

Communities & Localism Select Committee

The Communities and Localism Select Committee holds decision makers to account for improving outcomes and services for Buckinghamshire. This Select Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the Communities and Culture and Leisure portfolios and the Regulatory aspects of the Homelessness and Regulatory portfolio, which makes for wide-ranging and varied agendas.

Issues the committee has focussed on

In the past year the Committee has considered and provided feedback on a number of significant issues including the following:

- Library Strategy
- Support to guests from Ukraine and Afghanistan
- Violence against Women and Girls
- Buckinghamshire Film Office
- Safer Bucks Strategy
- Town and Parish Charter



In July 2022, a joint meeting was held with members of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee to consider the approach of the Council and other partners in promoting Buckinghamshire as an attractive visitor destination. This was an interesting and productive meeting and members are looking forward to reviewing the Visitor Economy Strategy once it is developed.

Community Board Review

Last year the Select Committee undertook a review into Community Boards. The Chairman presented the report detailing our key findings and 11 recommendations to Cabinet in May 2022, which was very well-received.



In February 2023 members received an update on the implementation of those recommendations – it is clear that the grant application process has been improved and face to face promotional events that were held during last year were very well-received by local residents. Community Boards are still evolving and there are plans for a further review this year, so members will continue to retain oversight of how the 16 Community Boards progress.

East West Rail & HS2 – Community Engagement

In January, the Select Committee held a high-profile meeting which was attended by representatives from East West Rail and HS2 to discuss the effectiveness of their community engagement activities in Buckinghamshire. Members were able to put questions directly to East West Rail and HS2 and we also heard questions from Greg Smith MP and several Town and Parish Councils who have been significantly impacted by the construction of these major infrastructure projects.

The Select Committee was very keen to hold East West Rail and HS2 to account and the meeting was very constructive. Members were also informed about valuable social legacy projects that have been funded along the HS2 route.

HS2 Community & Business Funds

A total of £40 million is available for community and business groups along the Phase One route to improve their local area or support their local economy

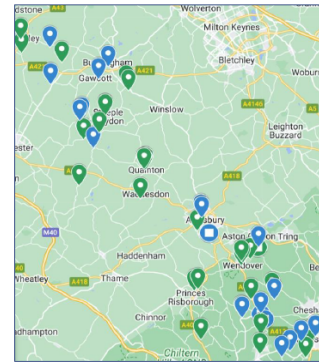
+£3.6m

£3,620,000 has been awarded in Buckinghamshire from HS2's Community & Environment Fund (CEF) and Business & Local Economy Fund (BLEF)

64

64 local projects in Buckinghamshire have received funding since 2017

Recent awards include Chalfont St Giles Village Pond, South Bucks Radio, Penn Street Cricket Club and Little Chalfont Charitable Trust



CEF & BLEF Project Map

The Chairman wrote to both project executives following the meeting to sum up the key points from the Select Committee and to encourage improvements in communications with both Buckinghamshire Council and our residents.



Looking Forward

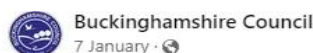
The Select Committee is currently preparing to undertake another in-depth review and members are hoping to investigate Digital Exclusion. The Scrutiny Manager is undertaking desktop research with a view to developing a scoping document for the Select Committee to consider and discuss shortly. It is important that there is an agreed scope before an in-depth review begins to ensure that there is a clear focus which is shared by everyone contributing to the work.

Finance & Resources Select Committee

This Committee considers the Council's overall financial strategy, as well as the Resources portfolio which includes property and assets, the Better Buckinghamshire programme and customer services. The work programme is often driven by the findings of the annual Budget Scrutiny process.

Key areas of work during 2022/23

- Customer First – the customer experience framework for the Council
- Work Smart Programme
- Estates Strategy
- Council Tax & Business Rates
- Better Buckinghamshire Programme
- Overall Property Strategy
- Employee Experience, Health, Wellbeing & Absence Management
- Treasury Management Investments



Buckinghamshire Council

7 January · 🌐

? 📧 Have you got any questions about budget allocation for communities, transport or housing? Send them in to budget.scrutiny@buckinghamshire.gov.uk by 9am on Monday 9 January to be discussed at the budget scrutiny meeting!

See meeting details at:

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings...>

#BucksBudget



Budget Scrutiny Inquiry

This year's Inquiry was undertaken in January and is a major focus of the Select Committee's annual Work Programme. Meetings were held on 9th, 10th and 12th January 2023 and the Leader of the Council, each Cabinet Member, Corporate Directors and Finance Directors were questioned on their draft budget proposals. This year the Inquiry Group was presented with the task of challenging a budget that had little room for manoeuvre due to increased demands and service costs. Questions from the public were received via email and put to the Cabinet Members.

Following the Inquiry, the Committee met to discuss, consider, and develop their key findings and recommendations.

The Inquiry report contained **9 recommendations** of which 5 were agreed and 4 agreed in part. The recommendations included:

- Showing a pipeline of viable capital schemes which show the Council's ambition beyond those in the Capital Programme.
- Capital spend to alleviate revenue pressures where possible.
- Re-examining Community Board delivery.
- Appropriate budgets for CCTV provision and the emerging Visitor Economy Strategy.

"I always feel that the budget we discuss today is far better for the cross-party scrutiny that takes place. We are often listed by the LGA as an absolute exemplar in the way in which scrutiny of budgets should take place."

Cllr Martin Tett (Full Council on 23 February 2022)
Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

This has been another extraordinary year which has been challenging for all of us in Local Government and the Inquiry Group recognise how difficult a task it has been to put a budget together in the context of increasing inflationary pressures and global conflict. We appreciate the efforts of Cabinet and officers at a time when there are uncertainties around post-pandemic economic recovery, future Government funding and significant increases in service demand, cost and complexity.

Cllr Ralph Bagge (Forward in Scrutiny Inquiry Report)
Chairman of the Finances & Resources Select Committee

Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee scrutinises a number of portfolios that have a crucial role in 'place shaping' for Buckinghamshire now and in the future, namely Planning and Regeneration, Homelessness and Regulatory Services, Accessible Housing and the Leaders' portfolio, which has responsibility for economic development and national infrastructure projects.

Key Areas of Work during 2022/23

The Select Committee has considered the following important topics during the past 12 months:

- Visitor Economy (Jointly with the Communities & Localism Select Committee)
- National Model Design Code Pilot
- Buckinghamshire Local Plan
- Planning Enforcement
- Affordable Housing
- Aylesbury Garden Town
- Housing Standards – Damp & Mould
- Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Model



The Legacy of 'Everyone in' and homelessness in Buckinghamshire

In March 2023, the Select Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Legacy of 'Everyone in' and homelessness in Buckinghamshire. 'Everyone In' was an initiative launched by Government at the start of the pandemic in 2020 to house all rough sleepers in temporary accommodation. This was achieved via extensive central government funding and cooperation with local authorities. Since then, rough sleeping has begun to increase and some anti-social behaviour has been observed.

The Select Committee decided to look into the success of 'Everyone In' and what lessons could be learnt from it. A cross-party review group will examine the work that went into making 'Everyone In' a success in Buckinghamshire and also the issues that have arisen more recently as the country has returned to 'business as usual'. Evidence gathering sessions will begin during April & May 2023. Council officers, partners and charities will be invited to give evidence to enable members to gain valuable insight into the support that is available for homeless people.

Call-in Requests considered by the Select Committee

Call-in is an important mechanism in the Council's constitution which allows backbench councillors to challenge Cabinet decisions if there is evidence that the decision-making process has not been properly followed. Two decisions subject to call-in requests were considered by the GIH Select Committee as follows:

- 5th July 2022, the Select Committee considered the call-in of the decision on Proposed residential development at the site of the former Buckinghamshire County Council Sports and Social Club land taken at Cabinet on 7th June 2022. The Select Committee upheld the Call-in request and recommended that the decision be referred back to Cabinet for further consideration in light of the pre-planning consultation report.
- 15th December 2022, the Select Committee considered the Call-in of the decision on Little Marlow Lakes Country Park taken at Cabinet on 11th October 2022. The Select Committee rejected the Call-in request and took no further action.

Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee

The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee holds health and social care decision-makers to account and acts as a critical friend to the health and social care sector. Part of the Select Committee's work is around challenging proposals for health and social care service change to ensure the best possible outcomes for Buckinghamshire residents. This has continued to be an incredibly challenging year for the council's adult social care services and health partners.

The Committee comprises 15 councillors and a representative from Healthwatch Bucks, who sits on the committee as a non-voting Member.

Key issues looked at during 2022-23

The Committee has reviewed and challenged key areas including:

- Mental Health Services provided by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust;
- Health and Social Care Winter Plan – representatives from across the health and social care system attended a meeting in September to present the plan and have been invited back to the May meeting to provide Members with an opportunity to evaluate the plan;
- Performance of the South Central Ambulance Service following the latest CQC inspection;
- Health & Care Integration plan, including the development of a new Hospital Discharge model;
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust's community hubs project in Thame and Marlow;
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust's Clinical strategy and Estates strategy;
- Director of Public Health's annual report which focussed on preventing cardiovascular disease;
- Adult Social Care Workforce;
- Maternity Services;
- Six month monitoring of the recommendations from the Primary Care Network Inquiry report.

Key achievements

Development of Primary Care Networks Inquiry

The Committee held an inquiry into the development of Primary Care Networks (PCNs) in Buckinghamshire. A small group of Members held evidence gathering sessions with key stakeholders between January and June.

The aim of the inquiry was to identify areas to help PCNs in their development and to bring together the collective challenges and barriers facing the PCNs and to highlight the role of the Patient Participation Groups. Seventeen recommendations were made and centred around the following key areas: governance and oversight, PCN development, PPGs, partnership working, digital, data and information sharing and communications. The report was agreed by Committee Members and then presented to Cabinet and the Integrated Care Board in November.



“Buckinghamshire GP Leadership Group and Buckinghamshire PCN Clinical Directors endorse those recommendations made to BOB ICB within the Development of Primary Care Networks Inquiry. The Inquiry also provided additional evidence of the need for centrally funded Network Managers and flexibility around additional roles recruitment which supported our lobbying of NHS England to prioritise these changes within the national PCN contract.”

Dr George Gavriel, Chair of Buckinghamshire GP Leadership Group and Dr Stephen Burr, PCN representative to the GP Leadership Group

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust’s Annual Quality Account

In June, a working group of HASC Members prepared a statement for inclusion in the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust’s annual quality account. Whilst the HASC statement acknowledged the key achievements and highlights for the Hospital Trust, it also focussed on areas of concern and areas of improvement, including increasing the target of personalised care plans for all end of life patients, concerns over the readmission rates for 0-15 year olds and ongoing concerns around pressures ulcers.

Below is a link to Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust’s Quality Account 2021-22.

<https://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Quality-account-2021-2022.pdf>



Rapid Review into Dementia Services Pathways

At its February meeting, the Committee agreed to undertake a rapid review into dementia services and the pathways for those living with dementia and the support available for carers. The Review Group held 3 full days of evidence gathering in March to hear from key stakeholders and the report is currently being drafted and will be presented to Cabinet and health partners in due course.

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

Buckinghamshire is part of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS). Representatives from the 5 local authorities within the ICS footprint held their first formal Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Meeting in January. Cllr Jane MacBean has been elected as Chairman of the Joint Committee for the ensuing 24 months.

The JHOSC prepared a formal response to the draft Integrated Care Partnership’s strategic priorities, as part of the ICB’s engagement process. Below is an extract from the JHOSC’s response.



“A key objective should be the delivery of a robust digital and data solution across the footprint to improve the patient experience and quality of all services. The development of a workforce strategy also needs to gather pace, with defined timeframes for delivery to help meet the challenges across BOB, including innovative recruitment and retention solutions, identification of training gaps and shared ideas for staff wellbeing. These two priorities need to be accelerated as they underpin the successful delivery of the other 18 areas.”

The JHOSC will continue to scrutinise the ICB and ICP strategies over the coming months.

Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

The Select Committee has a wide remit covering transport, environment and climate change topics. Some of these issues cut across a variety of council portfolios but the Select Committees can undertake joint pieces of work to ensure that the Council takes a co-ordinated approach. Climate change and environmental concerns are high on the agenda for residents and the Select Committee regularly features questions from members of the public.

Topics considered this year

- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy: Annual Review
- Tree Planting and Tree Protection
- Performance of waste collection in the south and overall waste options appraisal
- School Transport
- New Highways Model
- East West Rail
- HS2 Ltd
- Electric Vehicle Action Plan
- Air Quality Monitoring in Buckinghamshire

Achievements

- Frequent engagement by members of the public with questions on agenda items.
- Questioned representatives from Veolia in order to scrutinise performance of the waste contract in southern Buckinghamshire.
- Held HS2 Ltd to account in March 2023 regarding latest works and concerns on the Highways, lorry movements, EWR interface and collaborative working, tree planting and maintenance, water resource and flood risk. The Environment Agency also attended the meeting to discuss HS2 and flood risk. Members took the opportunity to robustly question HS2 representatives and requested further information outside the meeting. The Chairman also wrote a follow up letter to HS2 Ltd as well as a letter to the Cabinet Member ahead of his Parliamentary roundtable discussion with Ministers.
- East West Rail were questioned in February 2023 when they attended the Select Committee to discuss their work in Buckinghamshire. Members took the opportunity to question issues such as road repairs and biodiversity and the Chairman followed up with a letter.
- Concluded an inquiry into pollution in Buckinghamshire's rivers and chalk streams.

Traffic Management & HS2 2023



- Road closures and traffic lights required to complete final works, utilities, demobilisations, reinstatements & road repairs.
- Q1 Works (blue) fully planned. Aim to work through the detail of future (grey) road closures by quarter with BC in early 2023.
- Road Closures unless stated

Extract from EWR presentation in February 2023



Promoting Scrutiny

The Select Committees are supported by a dedicated Scrutiny Team. The team work closely with their Chairmen, Business Managers and Service Directors in each of the Council's directorates to identify priority areas of work to be scrutinised by the Select Committees and to promote the benefits of engaging with Scrutiny. The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee also works closely with health partners to ensure key pieces of work are identified and included in the work programme.

The team continue to raise awareness of scrutiny across the Council and with partner agencies and look to provide a voice for Buckinghamshire residents.

Public Engagement

The Council welcomes the public's involvement in scrutiny because public services are provided to help improve local lives. There are a number of ways in which anyone who lives, works or studies in Buckinghamshire can get involved in the work of scrutiny at the Council.

Get informed

Watch a webcast

The Select Committees are webcast and can be watched live or up to six months after the meeting on the Council's website. Between 22 June 2022 and 16 February 2023, the Select Committees have had a total of 2717 webcast views (including Budget Scrutiny Inquiry meetings).

Get involved

Contribute to an inquiry

Scrutiny work is improved by the involvement of local people. To have your say on any current scrutiny inquiry, please email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Ask a public question

Public questions are an opportunity for the public to ask questions on agenda items that have an impact on their local community or the county as a whole. Between 22 June 2022 and 16 February 2023, 30 public questions have been asked at Select Committees and we would encourage anyone who has an interest in items on the agenda to submit a question. For more information, visit the Council's website: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/council-and-democracy



Cabinet Member report – Leader
Councillor Martin Tett



Strategic Finance

Budget Scrutiny took place in January with a number of question-and-answer sessions held on the overall budget proposals and financial strategy. The budget for 2023/24 was approved by Full Council on the 22 February.

Whilst still in very uncertain times the assumptions used to set the budget remain valid and so the new financial year starts with the Council on a firm footing in terms of delivering the Council's priorities within approved budgets. The final outturn position for 2022/23 is still being finalised but there is confidence that the Council will come in on budget which is a major achievement in these particularly difficult times.

The year ahead remains financially challenging with the forward Capital programme under significant pressure.

Road Repairs

I am very pleased that the council agreed to my motion to release an additional £5m from General Fund Reserves to help repair our roads after the damage done by the appalling cold and rain this winter. Since then, we have also received an extra £2.3m from the Government. I have lobbied the Secretary of State for Transport that this will not be sufficient given the scale of the task and that its allocation does not take into account the intensity of usage of Buckinghamshire's roads.

Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Board

In January, Cabinet agreed a proposal to initiate a new 'Place Based Growth Board' as a consolidation of the existing Growth Board and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board. This new Place Based Growth Board launches this spring and includes newly created 'sub-boards' which focus on Regeneration and Skills. The existing Opportunity Bucks Board will also be aligned as a sub-board of the new Place Based Growth Board. The decision to integrate the Growth and LEP Boards aligns with the recent Government announcements proposing the winding down of LEPs nationally by next year.

The most recent meeting of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board meeting took place in February and a further workshop took place on the 16 March to discuss the focus and priorities of the new Place-Based Growth Board.

Also discussed at the meeting was an update on the progress of the Multiply project, Buckinghamshire's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) projects and future allocation process, and the Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.

The Board also received an update on the Levelling Up Fund round two bidding outcomes. Buckinghamshire was not successful in receiving funding for any of the five bids that were submitted although feedback has been received from DLUHC and proposals are being considered on how to approach round three. The announcement in the spring budget was that round three would be open later in 2023 but we continue to see Levelling Up related funding being targeted at areas categorized as priority 1 (Bucks is in the lowest priority category 3).

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

I attended the LEP Board meeting on 27 January 2023 where a number of agenda items were discussed. Information was shared around the so called 'Oxford-Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership'.

To date, I have still not received any approach regarding involvement with this project. Government will not enforce Buckinghamshire being a part of this new partnership and not being a member will not preclude bidding for funding available.

The Board noted contents of the Chairman's report including the LEP delivery plan, capital investment programme, budget, Growth Hub, updates on the Enterprise Zones and updates from the Skills Advisory Panel.

The Board also agreed unanimously, in principle, and subject to satisfactory governance and evaluation and monitoring frameworks being in place, to move towards the new Buckinghamshire Place-Based Growth Model.

Devolution and County Deal

The new Place-Based Growth Board will continue previous discussions on a Buckinghamshire County deal proposal that we aim to share with Government. We are reviewing our Recovery and Growth deal proposition to ensure that our County Deal proposals complement and can help deliver on the Government's Levelling Up White Paper framework for devolution. We are still seeking an enhanced level 2 deal to reflect our strong local partnership and desire for greater local devolution. This type of deal would give us the greatest level of freedoms and flexibilities although the indications from government are that only deals which include the establishment of a directly elected Mayor/Leader will be supported.

Support to Buckinghamshire Businesses and Aylesbury Enterprise Zone Update

Review and monitoring of our Enterprise Zones remains imperative to supporting businesses in Buckinghamshire. The Enterprise Zone Memorandum of Understanding between the LEP and Buckinghamshire Council remains in place to support the continued growth of the BEZ sites, facilitating investment, growth, and skills development. Efforts for 2023-24 are to accelerate pipeline development opportunities through planning to construction stages or risk losing valuable retained rates as we moved through year eight into nine. This includes a clear focus on Westcott and Woodlands, where future opportunities lie. This may also mean there is a need to invest directly in floorspace delivery as well as to support infrastructure development of business needs.

Bosch

I was pleased to be asked to address the main Board of Bosch as a keynote speaker on the 125th Anniversary of their establishment. They remain a key local business and a strong force for green energy Research and Development.

Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee met on 16 February with the agenda focusing on housing standards, an update on key planning, transport and regeneration strategies alignment and an update on planning enforcement. The housing standards report followed the tragic death of 2-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale. Government wrote to all local authorities directing them to provide information concerning matters pertaining to damp and mould in rented housing accommodation. We have undertaken an array of activities to ensure we have reviewed our own processes and enforcement arrangements. The team also prepared and subsequently sent a response to the Government outlining what we currently have in place, along with relevant data.

The key planning, transport and regeneration strategies alignment update sets out the three-way relationship between the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, Local Transport Plan 5, and the Regeneration ambitions for Buckinghamshire and how they are being synergized and aligned.

The planning enforcement report had been prepared to provide an overview of the planning compliance and enforcement service.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)



Over the past year, we have encountered significant cost pressures on our construction activities, and the Aylesbury and Princes Risborough HIF projects are no different. In response to this, officers, Members and local MPs have been working with England's Economic Heartland, central government and developers to secure sufficient funding to enable the progress of critical infrastructure. Current projects captured in those discussions include South East Aylesbury Link Road, Eastern Link Road, Woodlands development site, Aylesbury Electricity Grid, and the Princes

Risborough Southern Road Link.

South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) Update

There remains significant financial pressure on the project due to increasing costs as a result of inflation as well as other factors. The Secretaries of State confirmed the CPO/SRO/open space orders on 31 March 2022. All licence agreements have been put in place to enable vegetation clearance work as well as archaeology work to facilitate the UKPN diversion and other works. We also took possession of a number of parcels of land under the CPO powers at the end of July last year.

In December 2022, it was agreed at Cabinet that decisions on the progress of the project in 2023 would be delegated. Decisions on the delivery of the roundabouts and the project are expected to be taken in the coming months.



Significant work continues with regard to the ongoing archaeological dig and the Thames Water diversion work at the Wendover Road end of the project. The work to put the overhead power cables underground is fully complete and this will allow the new public open space to be opened. Further vegetation work has recently been undertaken under the watchful eye of trained ecologists to ensure that all rules have been followed.

Thames Water Diversion Works

Discussions continue with HS2 regarding the bridge assurance and use of materials for the embankment. Phase 2 planning application was submitted on 18 October 2022 and is expected to go to committee soon.



Archaeological excavations Lower Road, Stoke Mandeville Roundabout
(Between Wendover Road & Lower Road)

Opportunity Bucks

Opportunity Bucks, our local approach to levelling up, officially launched on 7 December with an event at Adams Park in High Wycombe. This is our flagship programme, working with partners and local communities to improve outcomes for people who are experiencing the most hardship across the county.

We have established partnerships with local Councillors, Community Board Chairmen, local organisations and community representatives to identify priorities in 10 priority wards and are now progressing initiatives to improve things in these areas. Recent successes include the targeting of the Multiply (Adult Numeracy) courses into the 10 wards which were promoted through a mobile unit that toured these areas, and the delivery of the Bucks Skills Show in Aylesbury to raise aspirations amongst young people.

Homes for Ukraine

We have recently passed the one-year mark of Ukrainians arriving in Buckinghamshire and we continue to support over 1500 Ukrainians who are settling in Buckinghamshire and making it their home.

Since the last update we have introduced top up payments for sponsors who continue to provide accommodation for Ukrainian guests and are supporting Ukrainian guests into private rental accommodation where possible. We are also utilising the Local Authority Housing Fund which was announced by the Government in December to source some more properties for Ukrainian guests in Buckinghamshire, which we will be able to use to alleviate wider housing pressures in the longer term.

To date, we have made over 100 rematches, and we are continually working to expand our pool of rematch sponsors. We have recently delivered a series of roadshows within our libraries talking to residents about opportunities for sponsorships.

We are continuing to support Ukrainian guests into employment. We currently have a skills survey open to Ukrainian guests to understand the roles that the guests had before they arrived in the UK, are assisting with the translation of qualifications and will be working with businesses to support the guests into sectors relevant to their qualifications.

Cost of Living Pressures

We have continued to develop and deliver a range of initiatives this year to support residents and staff in response to these cost-of-living pressures and have committed to ensuring the continuation of our Helping Hand service to provide support to residents who need it most. We have been allocated a further £4.8 million from the Household Support Fund.

Key initiatives have included a comprehensive package of support for staff, the relaunch of the Food Champions network, the launch of Welcoming Spaces for residents to access and the distribution of 'warm boxes' to residents in most need.

Nominations

We celebrated our third anniversary as a single unitary authority for Buckinghamshire on 1 April.

Paul Rowsell CBE Head of Governance Reform and Democracy Unit Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities visited the council in March for a really positive meeting where we were able to reflect on our successes and points of learning after the first three years as a new unitary council.

At this time, I am delighted to share that despite our young age, we have been shortlisted for the LGC Council of the Year award 2023. The winner will be announced in June and will be chosen on the basis of the delivery of strong outcomes, the quality of the council's community leadership, and the evidence that the council is doing the best for its area, all in response to the specific challenge the council has faced in all areas of its work. In addition, we have also been shortlisted for a number of other awards in the LGC, MJ and national awards.

England's Economic Heartland

EEH's next tranche of connectivity studies, which identify potential transport interventions along a number of strategic corridors, have commenced. These cover the geographies 'Thames Valley-Buckinghamshire-Milton Keynes-Northampton' and 'Southern East West movements' (central and southern Buckinghamshire across to Hertfordshire's border with Essex). A call for evidence, inviting interested parties to submit their views on connectivity in these two corridors, will launch in May. EEH officers are meeting with cabinet members from the relevant local authorities and Buckinghamshire Council officers are closely engaged with the studies through the project steering group. A study on the Oxford-Milton Keynes corridor has already been completed and is available on the EEH website.

[Oxford-Milton Keynes connectivity study.pdf \(eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/Oxford-Milton_Keynes_connectivity_study.pdf)

EEH continues to press the case for investment in the region, particularly focusing on securing funding for major roads, including the Aylesbury link roads, while it is also working with the East West Main Line Partnership and Buckinghamshire Council on pressing the case for the East West Rail link to Aylesbury. The opening of the line from Oxford to Milton Keynes, via Winslow, remains on schedule for late 2024/ early 2025. An announcement is expected in May which will set the preferred route for East West Rail from Milton Keynes to Cambridge.

In March, EEH published the most in-depth guidance yet on how to develop business cases for mobility hubs (which are accessible spaces where public, shared and active travel modes are co-located). The guidance focuses particularly on more rural areas and will support local authorities in the region – and potentially across the country – as they plan visible, safe, and accessible co-located spaces. [England's Economic Heartland providing leadership on mobility hubs - England's Economic Heartland \(englandseconomicheartland.com\)](https://englandseconomicheartland.com)

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

Leaders wrote to the new Secretaries of State for Health and Social Care, setting out concerns and ideas regarding adult social care and the Government's proposals to reform charging and costs, seeking a delay to the changes.

Leaders wrote to the new Prime Minister, setting out ideas on the challenges of inflation and the rising cost of living, concerns about social care, and ideas for levelling up. The ideas about levelling up and devolution were also presented in letters to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Minister for Levelling Up.

We also wrote to the Minister for Immigration regarding families from Ukraine and other countries, asylum seekers, the role of strategic authorities and pressures on services.

In November, Leaders held a meeting focused on budget setting and the outlook for strategic authorities in the wider South East.

In December's conference, Leaders met the Local Government Minister to discuss local government finance, priorities and challenges. We also met senior civil servants to discuss the long-term reform of adults' social care, and the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services to discuss the pressures and challenges on children's service ahead of the anticipated plans for reforms.



Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services
Councillor Anita Cranmer

Youth Voice Bucks

On Thursday 23 February 2023, the first ever Bucks Youth Summit took place at the Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury. The event was planned and hosted by the young people in our county-wide Youth Forum, Youth Voice. The event invited students from schools across the county to share their voice on the biggest issues and areas of interest for young people in Buckinghamshire today. The event also acted as the launch of the Youth Participation Strategy for young people.



142 students from 16 schools attended and spoke about a number of key themes that matter to them, ranging from mental health, a youth-led conversation on sexual violence and access for young people in rural communities

The event was youth-led, exciting, lively, and empowering for the young people that took part, and the feedback has been incredible. The outputs of each conversation are being collated by facilitators and workstreams are launching to ensure action is taken in response to the young people’s feedback. These workstreams will be monitored by the Youth



Voice forum and young attendees will be kept updated on progress via email and the YouthVoiceBucks website. Due to the event’s huge success, Youth Voice Bucks and the Youth Voice forum plan to make this an annual event! The next Youth Summit will take place on Wednesday 28 February 2024, again at The Waterside Theatre. For more information about the Youth Voice Bucks programme, please explore www.YouthVoiceBucks.co.uk and/or contact youthvoicebucks@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Local Area SEND Co-production Event

Colleagues across our local area partner organisations, schools and parent/carer representatives all came together at an event held on Tuesday 7 March 2023 to talk about co-production. Co-production is about developing equal working partnerships between children and young people who use services, their families, carers and professionals.

The aim of the event was for colleagues to find out more about the benefits of co-production, what is currently happening in Buckinghamshire and how we can all play our part in championing co-production in SEND services. During the day, the Buckinghamshire SEND Co-production Charter was launched. The Charter is the agreed shared principles and way of working for co-production in SEND services across the Buckinghamshire local area. We also launched the Buckinghamshire Co-production Promise, a way for people to sign-up to support the Buckinghamshire Co-production Charter.



The event was very well attended with almost 100 colleagues coming together to hear guest speakers share examples and case studies of co-production they have worked on with children and young people with SEND and their families. Attendees also took part in a group workshop activity, the outputs of which will feed into the ongoing SEND improvement work programme. Feedback from attendees about the event was extremely positive.

Alongside the event, resources are being developed to help co-production embed across the local area; including a co-production toolkit, aimed at anyone working with children and young people with SEND and/or their families. The toolkit will give a practical understanding of what co-production is, how effective it can be and how to do it well. We plan to continue the co-production conversation during National Co-production Week in July 2023 and on an ongoing basis. Find out more at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coproduction.

Buckinghamshire pupils swap the school classroom for the international conference room

On Friday 3 March 2023, nearly 100 pupils from eight different secondary schools across Buckinghamshire, swapped their classrooms for the conference room as they took part in a live action role-play event modelled on the global United Nations Conference. The Buckinghamshire Model United Nations (Bucks MUN) Conference took place at the Council Chamber in High Wycombe. A total of 93 students took part, representing 27 different countries and five international media organisations.



The theme of this year's event was Freedom of Movement. The students were asked to discuss and consider a range of topics linked to the movement of people around the world. From refugees fleeing civil war

or natural disasters, to those proactively seeking to move to another country to pursue a better life, there are millions of people moving around the globe for a variety of reasons. The students taking part in the event were prompted to consider the impacts and implications of this movement in a humanitarian, political and economic capacity, both for the individuals and the countries involved.

The Bucks MUN event, now in its 12th year, is organised by Buckinghamshire Council in partnership with schools across the county, but the origins of MUN go back to the United States in the 1930s. Its aim is to engage students in current world affairs and develop communication, negotiation and debating skills. It helps students develop skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection as well as deepening their understanding of identity, diversity, equality and community. The event is designed to simulate the format of real-world international forums.

At the end of the day awards were presented to the pupils who excelled in a range of skills including public speaking, diplomacy, delivery and media skills. Some of these pupils could well be the negotiators, diplomats and policy makers of tomorrow and all our school children of today will have a future part to play in the continued protection of our planet and its people. The small lessons and insights they have learned as part of this event will help them in whatever job they pursue.

Placements for Looked After Children



As you will all be aware, when a child comes into care, the council becomes their Corporate Parent. As Corporate Parents it is our collective responsibility to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, cannot safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. The local authority has the legal responsibility for

placing looked after children in either foster placements or children's homes. Buckinghamshire, like all local authorities, utilises a mixture of internal placements, those run by the Council, and external placements run by private organisations. Currently, the service has 18 residential beds available across our four children's homes, this includes four beds within our newly established parent and baby unit, Sunflower House. The quality of provision across our homes is also extremely high with two of them now rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding'. We are delighted that the hard work and determination of our residential teams has been recognised by Ofsted. Our children receive the highest level of care and are all fully engaged with their education and an array of activities. Our home managers work tirelessly to achieve the best outcomes for the children in their care and receiving our two outstanding judgements recognises this.

Children's Services Transformation

There is corporate and political recognition that we must work differently in order to realise our shared ambition to deliver good quality services to children. The service has refined, throughout its improvement journey, a comprehensive self-assessment from which a whole system Children's Services Transformation Programme has been developed. The Transformation Programme aims to:

- Enhance the effectiveness of support provided by improving collaboration through better sharing of information and increased system-wide multi-disciplinary ways of working.

- Target need variation through locality specific services and development of responsive, community-based interventions.
- Ensure children and families are supported at the earliest possible stage through effective partnership interventions that improve outcomes without the need for escalation to more intrusive statutory support.
- Rebalance from a model of process and performance to enhance availability of system-wide support that can reduce avoidable demand by focusing on the most prevalent presenting needs.
- Develop a sustainable approach to placement sufficiency in response to unprecedented challenges arising from changes within the external placements market.
- Develop a highly skilled, permanent Children's Services workforce where the workforce feels valued and supported and are encouraged to develop their skills and capabilities in order to secure good quality outcomes for children and young people.

The proposed changes to the way in which the Service operates are in line with national policy direction and are based on ensuring that children receive a consistent, purposeful and child centred approach wherever they are on their journey of need from early help through to being in care. A Children's Transformation Board has been set up to maintain oversight of the delivery of the programme and will provide direction, challenge and rigour whilst ensuring partner involvement in the programme's delivery. It will provide essential governance and assurance to the transformation workstreams, supporting Children's Services' vision and commitment to delivering good services to children.



Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

Developing a new vision and strategy for our libraries

Buckinghamshire Libraries have evolved in recent years and while traditional book borrowing remains at their core, these cherished places are developing as hubs for the local community. Libraries host various classes, events and workshops; have provided Welcoming Spaces (warm and friendly places) this winter; provide free digital access for residents; and many also now operate as Council Access Points.

After a wide consultation with residents, staff, volunteers, councillors, and partners, we have developed a new vision and strategy for our libraries, with a clear set of priorities to ensure we continue meeting the evolving needs of our communities and maximise libraries' contribution to key agendas across Buckinghamshire; this was approved by Cabinet on 21 March. The strategy sets out how we will work in partnership to:

- encourage reading and learning, and grow the libraries' cultural offer
- build stronger communities
- promote health and well-being through the Healthy Libraries programme and
- enable access, information and inclusion.

Early Years Communication Week

From 27 February to 3 March, Buckinghamshire Libraries worked in partnership with Early Years to host various events to promote the value of 'Engage with Chat, Explore with Play, Encourage to Read' for young children and babies. This included bestselling and multi award-winning children's author Karl Newson reading his fabulous and very funny 'I Really, Really Need a Wee!' at a special online event. Over the week, the libraries also held 53 Bounce and Rhyme and Storytime sessions, with 584 attendees.

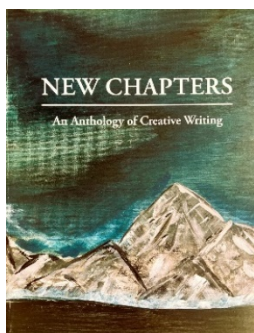
Healthy Libraries

The service has been working with Public Health to develop and pilot an overarching health and wellbeing framework for libraries, delivering a co-ordinated programme of activities based on the needs of local communities. The programme aims to encompass and enhance the range of information, support and community activity available in local libraries to improve healthy lifestyles, connectedness and wellbeing, focusing on the themes of the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Start Well, Live Well, Age Well. The initial pilot involves seven libraries across the county.



As part of the pilot, Buckingham Library and the Alzheimer Society Local Service in Buckinghamshire produced a new set of resources that are available to support people living with dementia and their families and carers. The new resources include an information stand and reminiscence materials that contain various games, activities and books. The Dementia Friendly Community Support initiative was launched at Buckingham Library in March.

New Chapters



Delivered by The National Literacy Trust, the New Chapters project aims to support and inspire people in prisons, young offender institutions (YOIs) and other secure settings through the power of creative writing. The project ran in a number of settings in Buckinghamshire including HMP Aylesbury, Oakhill STC, HMP Grendon and HMP Springhill. Creative writing workshops were led by authors with lived experience relatable to the participants; the National Literacy Trust also collated an anthology of participants' work which was showcased across the prison estate and at Buckinghamshire libraries, community festivals and beyond.

Online room booking

Buckinghamshire Libraries have launched a new online room booking and payments system, giving customers increased access to and visibility of our facilities. The system is available 24/7 for customers to book rooms in 11 libraries, using a real-time availability calendar. It has also streamlined processes for staff and provides robust reporting, enabling us to continuously improve our services by reviewing trends and proactively reacting to customer behaviours. To view the new system visit [Find a library | Buckinghamshire Council](#), select a library and click on book a room.

Culture

Buckinghamshire Archives has recently made a number of improvements in response to customer feedback, including rearranging its public access space, increasing opening times, and reintroduction of on-the-day production of original documents.

Buckinghamshire Culture, the county's independent cultural partnership, ran its first ever conference, '*Cultural Capital*', at Missenden Abbey on 23 March. Booked to capacity, the event included keynote speakers Jenny Sealey OBE and Mark Damazer CBE.

The '*Together We Build*' project celebrating 10 years since London 2012 and Buckinghamshire's Paralympic Legacy, concluded with a celebration event at the Elgiva Theatre in Chesham on 18 March. The event was attended by all the project partners, including Buckinghamshire Archives, and many participants.

The Discover Bucks Museum's exhibition '*Your Amazing Brain*' ran until mid-April and proved popular with visitors. There was an excellent and varied programme of events running alongside the exhibition, including a lecture series, brain-themed craft days and optical illusion-based events.

Plans are well underway for WhizzFizzFest, the Council's annual family-friendly arts festival. This year we are working with partners around the county to bring creative activity to three fantastic events:

- **Sunday 2 July** – WhizzFizzFest @ Aylesbury on Sea with Aylesbury Town Council
- **Saturday 8 July** – WhizzFizzFest @ Desborough Carnival with High Wycombe BIDCo
- **Saturday 15 July** – WhizzFizzFest @ Hats Off Chesham with Chesham Connect

The festival programme will also feature a family-friendly show which will visit libraries and a children's author event at Discover Bucks Museum. Keep an eye on our [What's On](#) page for further information as details are announced.



Country Parks, Parks and Play Areas

Parks (country parks and urban parks) customer satisfaction levels (excellent or very good) remain stable at an excellent 91.9% using Google and Trip Advisor reviews with 11,385 reviews completed.

Play area replacement projects in parks across the county are ongoing. Higginson Park in Marlow completed a consultation exercise with the local community to inform the design brief for the replacement play area in the park; one of the key features of the new design is that the plastics used in the products come from recovered and recycled ocean plastics. We hope the works to install the new play area will be completed before the start of the summer holidays. A similar consultation exercise is underway for the replacement of the popular Ropes on the Rye play area in High Wycombe. Works on the Bridge Street skate park in Buckingham are also due to start in the near future and as soon as dates are confirmed by the contractor communications will be sent out to the community and other key stakeholders.

The new country park near Stoke Poges has been progressing at pace, with the site now being shaped into the undulating form of the landscape design. Soil importations will continue for a while longer as materials are delivered to construct the final visitor facilities, alongside transforming the former clubhouse into a new café with associated facilities. A soft opening of the site is anticipated for late 2023, with formal opening next year after the site has settled and as plants begin to grow.

The Litter Bugs trail at Black Park Country Park was shortlisted as a finalist for the 2023 Keep Britain Tidy Network Awards (Community Engagement category), receiving the runner-up award. This free trail of giant bugs made from litter was back in the park from mid-March to mid-April, in conjunction with the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean 2023 campaign. A giant woodlouse made from helium balloons can be seen in this picture.



Leisure Centres

Our leisure centres have continued to see strong visitor numbers during the final quarter of the year, with visits expected to exceed 3.5m during 2022/23, including over 1.5m visits to the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre. Investment in other new facilities such as the soft play at Chesham Leisure Centre is encouraging and supporting new groups to enjoy this venue, including a new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) session on Saturday mornings, enabling families to use the soft play and sensory space in a relaxed noise-free environment with no music or bright lights. Work will also begin shortly on the athletics track at Little Marlow, with track repairs and field event equipment.



Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

Buckinghamshire Highways – New Service Model

The new arrangements for the Council's 'Buckinghamshire Highways' service commenced on 1st April 2023. The previous 'Transport for Buckinghamshire' contract ceased with Ringway Jacobs and contracts with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP), as the new term maintenance contractor, and Atkins, as the new term consultant, are now operational. Both providers are working in close partnership with the Council's client team and will be known collectively as Buckinghamshire Highways. They will be supported by a number of contractors for certain activities and specialisms which have been appointed via framework agreements. The key objectives are to improve service delivery, customer engagement and satisfaction, be able to better demonstrate value for money and maximise innovation and opportunities. There is an information page for Members to refer to and social media accounts for the public -@Bucks_Highways on Twitter and BucksHighways on Facebook.



**Buckinghamshire
Highways**

Highway defects

The teams have been working tirelessly, including weekend work, to respond to the surge in reports. The very cold weather that started in December continued into January/February. This combined with very wet conditions, led to unprecedented levels of defects reported with over 4,000 reports (predominantly potholes) in January alone reported through Fix My Street, the most effective way to report issues on the highway. Over 3,500 were made safe within five days and any outstanding or requiring permanent repairs are added to forthcoming programmes. Additional resources have been brought in to help address the number of defects received and this has already shown good progress. The confirmation of additional council funding of £5m and central government funding of £2.3m specifically to tackle the effects of the harsh winter is adding to the record capital funding of £105m over four years being made available to tackle our roads. A programme of additional schemes to tackle the effects of this harsh winter on our network are being planned and programmed to be delivered when we have drier and warmer weather. This will include plane and patch schemes, specialist surfacing, traditional surfacing and use of the innovative 'pothole pro' machine.

Gully Cleansing



This year, our highways gullies crews faced many challenges, including extremely cold weather and vehicles parked over 4,214 gullies which prevented cleaning them first time. Gully machines cannot operate in sub-zero temperatures and efforts to suspend parking and advise motorists were also hampered by the need to frequently change the programme due to the weather. The team involved were also flexibly deployed to help tackle the significant number of potholes we saw in January. Despite these setbacks, a huge effort has been put in from all involved in the programme, especially the crews out on the network carrying out the work.

Investigative and reactive works plus revisits to gullies that were not able to be cleaned first time have continued too. The crews have cleaned 330 manholes, 336 catchpits and 155 soakaways. Additionally, 2396 channels/pipes have been cleared with 33,015m of channels / drainage pipes inspected. As a result of the enhanced programme, we have seen a 16% reduction in average silt levels this year compared to last year and those gullies yet to be cleansed by the end of March will be first on the rolling programme this year.

Completed Capital Maintenance Programme for 2022/23

We completed our Capital Maintenance Programme for 2022/23 which addressed some of the significant schemes that require substantial repair. This year we completed 151 sites including Network Safety Schemes, plane and patch schemes and failed road sites.



Quinton Path Reopening

Following pressure on HS2 by our Strategic Access Officers, their contractor EKFB has reopened part of Bridleway QUA/28/1 earlier than planned, this brings back a long network of walks for residents on the west side of Quinton village that would otherwise have remained closed until March 2025. The link forms a triangle between Towns End Farm, Railway Cottage and Shipton Lee.

A41 PPTC



All construction works for the A41 priority public transport corridor project were completed at the end of March, alongside work to fine-tune the signal timings of the junction and help it adapt to traffic flows and patterns so the junction runs as efficiently as possible. The new technology (Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)) that have been installed will work in conjunction with the highway changes along the A41 to reduce congestion, reduce journey times, improve journey time reliability, and improve bus service information.

The Ridgeway at 50

Popularly known as 'Britain's oldest road', The Ridgeway still follows the same route over the high ground used since prehistoric times by travellers, herdsman and soldiers. Today it is popular with walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders and people using mobility scooters.

Buckinghamshire Council is a member of the Ridgeway Partnership, which oversees the management and promotion of this national trail between Overton Hill near Avebury to Ivinghoe Beacon. Celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the opening ceremony on Coombe Hill, Wendover, will take place in September this year and residents are invited to take part. The [Ridgeway Top 50 launch](#)

[video](#) starts a year-long treasure hunt revealing things about The Ridgeway National Trail as one way of celebrating.

Anti-social behaviour in car parks

An Injunction Order was granted at High Wycombe County Court on 7th March 2023 to address persons sleeping in Easton Street and the Swan multi-storey car parks, along with the Town Hall arches and QVR. Street Wardens work with the Homeless team to find accommodation and signpost all those that are open to receiving support and we work with our security provider to increase the level of patrols, support cleaning regimes and help reduce the safety risks.

Additionally, we are trialling anti-graffiti paint at a car park in High Wycombe and security shutters have been fitted to Easton Street car park. From 17 April 2023 the car park will be closed overnight. The timings are Sunday to Thursday closed 11pm to 6am, Friday/Saturday closed 12 Midnight to 6am. The Swan multi-storey car park will remain open with extra security measures.

Wycombe Barrier Car Parks (Easton Street/Swan/Handy Cross)

Barriers and equipment were removed in March this year from the Handy Cross Park and Ride car park, Swan and Easton Street and new contactless card payment machines installed. The alternative payment method is via RingGo, this provides more flexibility for customers to pay for parking.

School Transport Contract Compliance

The Client Transport team provide transport assistance to children and young people who are [eligible for free school transport](#). They play a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of clients that travel on home to school and social care transport.



In 2022, the Client Transport Compliance Team carried out:

- Over 1,100 spot checks and visited 176 schools and other establishments.
- 735 Buckinghamshire Council ID badge applications for drivers and passenger assistants working on Council-commissioned contracts.
- 46 wheelchair training courses and 68 safeguarding and induction training courses resulting in:
 - 412 drivers and passenger assistants completing Safeguarding and Induction Training
 - 218 drivers and passenger assistants wheelchair trained

Public Bus Services

The Government announced that the £2 bus fare cap for is to be extended until the end of June 2023 and operators have been invited to continue to take part in the scheme.

The Public Transport team has worked with local commercial bus operators to bring forward two new support schemes for passengers which will continue after the fare cap scheme ends.

This Spring, Arriva and Carousel Buses are introducing subscription-based ticketing for High Wycombe [Smart Zone](#). This will give users a 9% discount over the course of a year when compared to the cost of 13, four-week tickets, which are currently the cheapest Smart Zone tickets.

From 1st April to the 31st August, all bus operators in Buckinghamshire will offer pre- 09:00 use of the Concessionary Fares (Older and Disabled Persons) bus pass. This means it will cost £1 to use the pass before 09:00 on weekdays instead of paying the full single fare. Bus use with a concessionary pass remains free between 09:00 and 24:00 on weekdays and all day at weekends.

Local Transport Plan 5

The Council will be undertaking public consultation on the Vision and Objectives for both our forthcoming Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LP4B) and Local Transport Plan (LTP5). This will be the first LTP created for Buckinghamshire Council, superseding the Buckinghamshire County Council LTP4, published in 2016.

The two consultations will take place on [Your Voice Bucks](#), starting in April 2023 and remaining open for six weeks. Once this is complete, we will review feedback from the consultation survey and incorporate this into the development of the main LTP5 documents, to be developed later this year. We are aiming to carry out a further public consultation on the draft LTP5 in Winter 2023. Dates for this are yet to be confirmed.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Update

The Council has commenced installation of 128 new electric vehicle (EV) charging bays in 16 Buckinghamshire Council-managed car parks. These are funded by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) through their On-Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme (ORCS). Installation is progressing speedily and expected to complete by May 2023.

We have recently received £142k funding from OZEV's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. £70k of this is to support a trial of on-street EV infrastructure in Wendover. This will include new on-street lamppost or bollard-mounted chargepoints and/or in-pavement cable channels; allowing households without a driveway to run charging cables safely underneath the pavement.

Active Travel Funding

In the first nationwide assessment of local transport authorities' capabilities to deliver active travel led by Active Travel England, the Council was rated as a Level 2, defined as 'strong local leadership, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging network with a few elements already in place'.

The Council has since been awarded £397k through the Active Travel Capability and Ambition Fund. The Council will be using this funding to plan future active travel networks, carry out feasibility work for future routes, promote and monitor new routes and provide resources to schools to encourage children and young people to walk, cycle and scoot to and from school.

The Council also submitted a bid through Active Travel Fund 4 to seek funding to develop and deliver new active travel infrastructure. The Council's bid focused on routes in Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Buckingham and Iver, aligned with the Fund objectives and our existing/emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (or equivalent local network plans). The designs of the funded routes will be developed further in consultation with local members, stakeholders and communities, with delivery planned for 2024/25.

Platinum Way



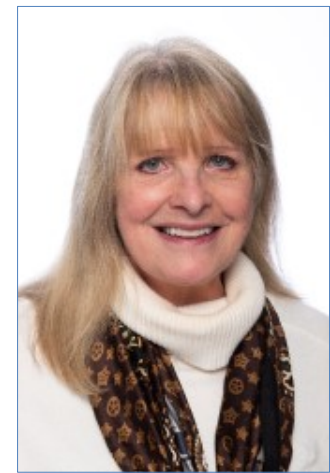
The 3rd and final phase in the upgrade to the Platinum Way cycleway was completed in March with the construction of three parallel (Tiger) crossings. The scheme funded by the Department for Transport (£1.398m) will also help to increase active travel. The new crossings are part of a programme of improvements to the route from Aylesbury town centre to Fairford Leys, Haydon Hill and beyond and joining on to the very popular Waddesdon Greenway. The project benefitted from community groups getting involved to plant trees, hedges

and wildflowers helping create important habitat for local wildlife and a more attractive route for walkers and cyclists.



HS2 and EWR

The Council continues to challenge ongoing construction work on HS2 and East West Rail to hold both companies and their contractors to account across a wide range of issues against the impacts on our environment, residents, communities and businesses. We continue to challenge on proposed designs including overbridges across the county and wider impact on the landscapes. We also continue to press for further recompense from HS2 Ltd to adequately fix the damage they are causing and we have secured a programme of permanent repairs to [12 roads in 12 months](#) from EWR to reinstate roads as a result of their construction activities.



Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Angela Macpherson

Market Sustainability Plan

In October 2022 the Adult Social Care Reforms, originally due to be implemented from October 2023, were delayed for two years. Despite the delay, local authorities were required to complete two actions - to publish summarised outcomes of our Fair Cost of Care exercises and publish (and submit to Department of Health and Social Care) a Market Sustainability Plan (MSP) by the end of March.

The Buckinghamshire Fair Cost of Care information and Market Sustainability Plan can be read [here](#) and paper copies can be requested from businessstrategyadults@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

CQC Short assurance of Seeleys Breaks Centre

Buckinghamshire Council runs the Seeleys House Short Breaks Centre in Beaconsfield – Seeleys provides respite care for people with learning and/or physical disabilities to provide their carers with a valuable break. I am delighted to report that following inspection in January 2023, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) awarded a rating of “good”.



The service received a consistent ‘Good’ rating across all criteria, including safety, effectiveness and leadership. This marks a significant improvement for Seeleys House, which previously received a rating of ‘Requires Improvement’ in 2019. The full CQC report has been published and is available to read on the CQC website.

The report highlights the appropriate, professional interaction between staff and residents, with residents observed to be smiling, laughing and relaxed in the home.

Relatives of residents described the staff as:

- "Excellent."
- "Professional and friendly."
- "Approachable, caring, efficient, interested in who they are looking after."

Community Cafes

February 2023 was the 1st year anniversary of the social care community café service, which has gone from strength to strength. The community cafes offer an alternative way for people to receive adult social care support and guidance, providing a face-to-face service in community locations. The cafés are now also supported by Occupational Therapy, the Council’s Helping Hands service and Voluntary Sector partners such as One Recovery Bucks, Women’s Aid and Connections Support.

Three community cafés are held each week, operating from Aylesbury, Chesham, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, High Wycombe, and Burnham. 1,114 people have used the service in the 12

months up to February 2023 - an average of 86 people per week. An online booking system is also being developed so that people can book straight into a café. Feedback from residents using the café service has been really good - but it's hard to track the impact of the cafes, beyond immediate feedback, as the service is usually advice and guidance, and we will be exploring how to evaluate the longer-term impact of the service.

Co-production

During the last six months we have been developing a co-production approach to support and embed a way of working that ensures that people who draw on social care are central in how our services are designed and delivered. I have been championing this as it is an important part of our Better Lives Strategy which includes a commitment to “co-produce and design services with people receiving support from Adult Social Care”.

As part of developing this approach, local people were asked, what is important to them when we work together and what values should underpin our approach. Following this series of events and conversations, we are creating a resource to guide people who work in social care and those who draw on social care to work together and co-produce how services are provided. This guide will soon be available on-line; and will also be available for other council services to use.

Co-production is not completely new – and there are excellent examples of co-production across my portfolio – but this new approach will support co-production being systematically embedded and will be continuously reviewed to ensure that it reflects learning and best practice.

CQC Assurance

The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of how councils are discharging their adult social care duties as defined by the Care Act. Councils were last subject to CQC assurance of adult social care in 2010. Buckinghamshire County Council was inspected in 2008 with an outcome of “good”.

The CQC started this new assurance regime in April, starting with some national desktop benchmarking of councils and a number of pilot assessments to help establish a baseline; and then will commence assurance of all councils responsible for adult social care over the following two years. A clear focus in the assessment will be the experience of people using our social care services and for this reason, CQC will be keen to hear the views of service users, residents and partners. At this stage, we do not know when Buckinghamshire is likely to be inspected.

Hewitt Review

The Hewitt Review has looked at integrated care systems and how they can be improved to benefit population health; and Buckinghamshire Council responded to the call for evidence in January. The [Hewitt Review published its findings](#) on 4th April.

I am really pleased that the review recommends a clear focus on prevention, that health and social care have parity in the remit of ICSs and the importance of a focus on children and young people and children's social care – all of which reflect points that we made in our submission. The government will make its response later this year but, in the meantime, I will be promoting these recommendations in my role within the BOB ICS.

The BOB Integrated Care Partnership – of which I am vice-chair – agreed its [strategy](#) on 24th March following extensive public consultation in December and January; and I am very pleased that it closely aligns with the priorities of the Buckinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

DHSC Webinar on Managing Quality in Commissioned Social Care Services

The Integrated Commissioning Service was recently invited to present a best practice webinar on behalf of the Social Care Institute of Excellence and the Department of Health and Social Care. Over the last two years, the Integrated Commissioning Service has been developing a more consistent and

robust approach to the quality oversight of commissioned care and support providers for adults. For example, when monitoring concerns with a provider, the service will take into account a much wider range of information than is typically undertaken. This has been formalised in a Quality Monitoring Framework which has been welcomed by both the CQC and providers. The SCIE webinar can be viewed online at: [Webinar: Provider Quality Oversight – practice sharing \(scie.org.uk\)](https://www.scie.org.uk/webinars/provider-quality-oversight-practice-sharing)

The approaches developed within Integrated Commissioning have received external praise, including from the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University, who are using some of the work as best practice examples in their training for local authorities.

Healthy Lifestyle Service



Buckinghamshire Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have recently recommissioned the Healthy Lifestyle Services in Buckinghamshire. The Be Healthy Bucks service will include stop smoking, adult and child weight management, outreach NHS Health Checks and enhanced alcohol brief intervention. In addition, it will have a Single Point of Access for these services and signposting to other healthy lifestyle services – residents can self-refer digitally or by phone where they will speak with a Health and Wellbeing Coach in the first instance.

There will be three community engagement and partnership workers who will be place-based directly in the key target communities and will be able to work with people face-to-face and sign them up there and then to services.

The new service started on April 1st - the website is [here](#) where people can find out more about it and also self-refer.

Better Points Launches in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Council Public Health team has partnered with Better Points, a behaviour change programme that incentivises and rewards people for making positive changes to their lives.

Users collect points through completing physical activities which earn them vouchers which they can spend on the high street or donate to charity. We have also partnered with leisure centres, Wycombe Wanderers Football Club and Be Healthy Bucks to offer extra points when accessing their sessions or facilities too. Individuals are also rewarded for engaging in wider healthy life initiatives such as stopping smoking and weight management programmes.



This video [Changing behaviour with BetterPoints – YouTube](#) provides a good overview of the programme. The BetterPoints app can be downloaded from the Apple app store and Google Play.

Since 1st January, when BetterPoints Bucks launched, 775 residents have registered with 39% of those coming from within our Opportunity Bucks wards. Current engagement with the app is 53% - this exceeds expectations and experience elsewhere with similar apps.

Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds



Public Health is working with Community Boards and Parish Councils to implement a Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds initiative, aimed at reducing the impact of smoking in the community.

Cold Harbour Parish has installed Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds signage at eleven of the parish's play parks. Steeple Claydon Parish Council has installed Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds signage in the children's corner play area and multi-use games area of Steeple Claydon park. It will be launched locally in April 2023. The signs were created as part of the Stoke Mandeville Combined School, 'Design a Sign' competition for the Eskdale Road Play Park and were used as part of a pre-designed sign package for Steeple Claydon. A 'Design a Sign' competition is currently running for Millbrook Combined School. This will allow the school to create a bespoke sign for Desborough Road Recreational Ground and play park. Signage designed by local children builds further awareness and support from the local community for the Smokefree Parks and Playground initiative. The winning design will be announced on 19 May 2023.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening with the Homeless Community in High Wycombe

The Buckinghamshire Council public health team worked with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), colleagues in the BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB), specialist tuberculosis (TB) services and the local Voluntary and Community Sector to deliver a TB screening event for members of the local homeless community in December.

During the successful event, alongside ad hoc GP consultations delivered by the Priory Surgery, warm clothes, hot drinks and food voucher distribution, the team on site delivered:

- 57 Chest Xray's (active TB screening)
- 33 tests for blood borne viruses
- 11 urine tests for sexually transmitted diseases
- 15 COVID vaccinations and 17 seasonal influenza vaccinations
- Two enrolled to One Recovery Bucks
- Eight identified with various health problems and now under the care of the relevant team

The impact of this event cannot be underestimated as homeless are exceptionally vulnerable to poor health and are very likely to slip through the net of usual health services.

My thanks to Wycombe Homeless Connection, the YMCA, One Recovery Bucks, Terrence Higgins Trust, the TB screening team, the Priory Surgery, Street Wardens and everyone else involved for making the event such a success.

Innovation in Public Health Awards

The UKPHR (UK Public Health Register) Innovation in Public Health Awards, offers an opportunity to celebrate achievements in improving public health and reducing inequalities. Buckinghamshire Public Health were finalists in the following two categories:



- **Translating evidence into practice:** For the 'Behavioural Science Trailblazer' programme, which is adding to the evidence base for the use of behavioural science by Local Authority Public Health teams and has already led to us employing a Behavioural Science Practitioner. The judges complimented us on our exemplary example of translating evidence into practice and how this has led to a major change in the team.
- **Outstanding employer of the year:** For the 'Practitioner Trainee' role we created to provide a career pathway into public health by gaining on the job experience whilst consolidating this with the UKPHR registration. We have also supported several existing staff to undertake UKPHR registration. The team also support the UKPHR scheme by volunteering as mentors, assessors, and verifiers. The judges felt we had an innovative and comprehensive approach, and specifically complimented us on our recruitment and personal development plan process and the success of the Practitioner Trainee role.



Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration
Councillor Peter Strachan

Business Improvement District (BID) Update

The Council remain close delivery partners with the High Wycombe Town Centre BID (HWBIDCo) and the two business park BIDs at Cressex (High Wycombe) and Globe Park (Marlow). Anti-Social Behaviour is a key current focus for HWBIDCo – and recent traffic congestion being the main issue for our businesses on Cressex Business Park. Both matters are being looked at to reach solutions and resolutions for such issues. Cllr Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE has been appointed as the Advisory member on the Cressex Business Park BID Board and the inaugural meeting took place on 31 January 2023. Helen Keats (Smartcomm) and Emma Gray (Mediplus Ltd) both local businesses, accepted continuing as Chair and Vice Chair of the BID board.

Aylesbury Town Centre Update

The Economic Development Team ran a successful Aylesbury Business Forum at Metro Bank in February. Feedback received from attendees is being used to schedule a series of future forums as well as to consider other ways to expand and support the network of key stakeholders in Aylesbury Town Centre. Ongoing engagement with businesses and stakeholder is helping to identify small scale interventions that will help improve the vibrancy of the town, such as refreshing the decals on the Jahoots building on the High Street for example.

Visitor Economy Strategy Update

Workshops, 121 interviews and stakeholder engagement have now been carried out as part of the development of a Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire. This will be used to develop key themes and opportunities for the county and provide a framework for both council and partner delivery. This is an important new strategy for the county as it will help us outline our approach to making Buckinghamshire a destination of choice and supporting its tourism related businesses and activities in generating greater economic vibrancy.

Town Centre Markets

The Council continues to support our town centre markets and traders. The national picture shows that market trader numbers remain lower than pre-COVID levels and this is the case for Bucks' local markets too. The Council is undertaking a piece of work to review the current state of markets and to identify measures that can be taken forward to initiate activities to improve the quality of our markets and increase footfall to them. Markets have an important role in bringing activity and liveliness to our public spaces and also provide opportunities to support the growth of our local business communities. For people wanting to create new businesses, markets can provide that first public trading opportunity to test new products and build an initial customer base. An expansion of the 'On the High Street' pilot in High Wycombe to support start-ups (carried out as part of the 'Welcome Back Fund') is currently being investigated for Aylesbury and Chesham markets. We are

also preparing for a campaign to encourage more market traders to come to Buckinghamshire and this will feed into that national 'Love Your Local Market' campaign in May.

Regeneration

In *Aylesbury*, the garden town's communities programme has supported the renewal of the station platform beds at Aylesbury Railway station. This was a partnership project with Chiltern Railways to improve the arrival experience for residents and visitors to Aylesbury.

The Secret window project is a visual installation under the arches of a grade 2 listed building which has been recently completed. It celebrates Aylesbury's rich music history, the installation will help to improve the environment under the arches and will be revealed to the public shortly.

The Council is currently in discussions with Homes England about the ongoing funding and what implications that has for Buckinghamshire's participation in the national Garden Town Programme. Indications are that the funding we receive locally may decrease substantially or cease altogether as resource is directed to the newly announced Garden Town areas. Clarity on this national programme will inform next year's activities to take the Aylesbury Garden Town masterplan forward.

Within *Chesham M&CO* has recently fallen into administration which has a prominent location on Chesham High Street. The building it occupies is close to the Broadway and has rear parking facing Lowndes Park next to Star Yard car park, locations which feature in the emerging strategy and neighbourhood development order plans for Chesham as having potential to unlock regeneration. Council teams are urgently investigating this potential, including opportunities to lease or purchase the building, costs, and viability, planning and other practical considerations and will move reports through the appropriate boards as soon as is practicable.

There are also a number of small projects in the early stages of development such the redecoration of the alley next to Waitrose which leads to the high street, *in a partnership between the town council, Waitrose and Chesham Museum* and other interventions around air-quality, active movement and wayfinding.

White Hart Street is a public realm enhancement scheme in the heart of *High Wycombe*. The location, between the historic High Street and Eden shopping centre will be transformed into a destination that prioritises pedestrians and encourages dwell time. The new space will be economically, socially and environmentally resilient and fit for purposes for the 21st century. The scheme is now being managed internally, with a delivery consultant to be commissioned in April 2023. Detailed design due to complete in summer 2023 and, following a public consultation, construction delivery is due to begin in the autumn.

Future High Streets Fund activity continues with progress on 16 Church Street, The Guildhall, Little Market House, 22 Queen's Sq. The repurposing of House of Fraser is due to complete in October 2023. The option to purchase has now been signed with the Liberal Club and DLUC has agreed to add 22 Church Street (repurposing a long-term vacant ground floor unit) to the programme.

Local Heritage List

I am pleased to announce that the first phase of sites on the Buckinghamshire Local Heritage List were formally adopted by Cabinet in January 2023. This means that 771 sites across the county have been recognised for their local heritage significance and given a level of protection through the planning process. All owners have been notified in writing. The sites include 546 historic buildings, 77 parks and gardens, 86 archaeological sites and 62 landmarks or pieces of public art.

The Local Heritage List project has been very successful with nearly 3000 sites nominated on the web platform. The team are busy working their way through these, visiting and assessing them, and will bring the second phase of sites forward for adoption in November. We have 211 people signed up and actively using the platform, nominating sites and enhancing our records. Do take a look and see the wide range of sites that are being considered for Local Listing at [Home - Buckinghamshire's Local Heritage List \(local-heritage-list.org.uk\)](https://www.local-heritage-list.org.uk)

Digital Planning

Our planning team is working with the Open Digital Planning team within the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities on a visionary pilot project to co-design the next generation of planning services for local government.

This collaborative work is creating new front end planning software and services which improve the user-experience for residents who are applying for planning permission. Last year we were one of only three local authorities who were first to go live with these new digital services. We introduced two new user services– the first, find out if you need planning permission and the second, apply for a lawful development certificate. The project also introduced a back-office planning system which reduces errors, time and costs for planning officers.

On 15 March 2023 the Open Digital Planning team, which we are part of, won the Digital Change Project of the Year Award at the national Government Project Delivery Awards. These awards celebrate individuals and teams who are delivering complex and ambitious projects right across Government, so it was a real honour to be recognised at national level for the ground breaking collaborative work we are part of.

DLUHC Housing and Planning Minister visits Buckinghamshire Council to see new Digital Planning software in action

Lucy Frazer, former Housing and Planning Minister, visited Buckinghamshire Council on 26 January to learn more about Buckinghamshire’s experience of being part of the Open Digital Planning (ODP) project, demo new user-centred Digital Planning services and hear more about the council’s wider ideas for streamlining the planning system as part of the department’s Digital Planning Programme.

The minister met with a range of representatives from across the council including the leader, Planning and Environment portfolio members and council officers who have been directly involved in the DLUHC funded ODP Project, which brings together pioneering councils who have joined together with digital agencies to co-design, build, test and launch better software used for planning. Together with ODP project partners Lambeth and Southwark Councils, Buckinghamshire was one of the first LPAs to launch new live services in 2022. Two of the ODP products were demonstrated to Minister Frazer during the visit - PlanX and BOPS (formally RIPA and BOPS).

PlanX is a digital platform designed to simplify citizen-facing services, including the “Find Out If You Need Planning Permission” guidance service and “Apply for a Lawful Development Certificate” application service. These two services help residents and professionals to understand which permitted development rights exist on a property, and to submit proposals where planning permission is unlikely to be needed. A Lawful Development Certificate is the proof that a project is lawful for planning purposes, such as works allowed under permitted development.

PlanX allows planners to write planning legislation and policies in a machine-readable way based around simple rules such as whether a proposed extension is above or below a specified height. This simple approach to permitted development rights allows applicants to learn what they can do by answering a series of simple questions written in plain English and supported by visual guides.

Lawful Development Certificate applications received by local councils can then be validated and processed via the Back Office Planning System (BOPS) service. BOPS is primarily a user-centred case-management system for local authorities, allowing planning officers to reach planning decisions quickly, but it also enables direct communications between planning officers and applicants, for example, when amendments to a proposal are needed.

BOPS clearly indicates whether the application meets the criteria set out in the rules-based elements of the system, and points planning officers to the core decision they need to make using their experience and judgement.

Minister Lucy Frazer said:

“It was fantastic to hear about the work going on in Buckinghamshire in the Digital Planning space. We want to ensure the public are better connected to the planning issues and decisions that affect them whilst also supporting councils to develop cutting edge services which will save them time and money. These new digital services will modernise the planning system, speeding up applications and help us to deliver our levelling up mission.”

Development Management Update

The number of new planning and related applications registered as valid remains around 950 a month, which remains the same as our monthly determination rate. This increased in March to 1092 applications determined. Planning applications (major, minor and other) are being determined above the KPI targets set for speed of decision. The number of planning appeals being received from the Planning Inspectorate continues to be very high, with 24 new appeals registered in March, which continues to place a considerable demand on our resources.

I would also like to draw members attention to two applications that have recently been considered by our Strategic Sites Planning Committee:

PL/22/2657/FA - Land South of Pinewood Studios and Alderbourne Farm, Pinewood Road, Iver Heath

Part A - A full application for the change in use of 25.6 ha of land at Alderbourne Farm to a nature reserve. Part B - Outline application - with all matters reserved (except for principal points of access) for land at Alderbourne Farm to comprise backlots and up to 35,000 sq ft (3,252 sqm) of associated film production buildings (workshops) together with access roads and parking; Part C - Outline application for 32.6 ha of land at Pinewood South with all matters reserved (except for three principal points of access) to comprise up to 1,365,000sqft (126,817sqm) of film production buildings (to include sound stages, workshops, offices and ancillary uses), education and business hubs with associated ancillary structures together with backlot, multi storey car parks, accesses and green and blue infrastructure.

22/07549/FUL - Land at South Corner, Wycombe Air Park, Clay Lane, Booker

Creation of new film and TV studios incorporating the retention of 1 x existing sound stage, construction of further new production facilities including 7 x sound stages, 10 x workshops, 4 x production facility buildings, 1 x rehearsal building, ancillary offices, cafe and amenity space, parking, landscaping and new vehicular access off Marlow Road

Such decisions contribute to ensuring the ongoing prosperity of Buckinghamshire as a successful place to do business.

Tree Preservation Order

A Tree Preservation Order was served on HS2 Ltd on Thursday 30 April with respect to an area measuring approximately 800m by 30m at the western edge of Sheepphouse Wood, Calvert Green Parish.

The need to serve the TPO has emerged during pre-application discussion, including the bat mitigation structure that would sit across the railway to the west of Sheepphouse Wood, between Council Officers and the HS2 Ltd contractor, EKFB. In November 2022, it became apparent to Officers that HS2 Ltd intends to undertake work to 'manage' trees adjacent to the route of the railway, but outside the Act Limits (the Limits of Land to Be Acquired or Used – LLAU). HS2 Ltd had received the necessary 'licence' (Assent) from Natural England with respect to work on an SSSI, in September 2022, but there had been no conversation with the Council at that time.

HS2 Ltd and other interested parties have until 27 April to submit comments. After this date, and before 27 September 2023, the Council will review the information received and make a decision whether to confirm the TPO, confirm the TPO with modifications, or not to confirm the TPO. Separately, but related to this process, Officers continue to request full details and have suggested dates for workshops to discuss an appropriate course of action for the management of trees at Sheepphouse Wood.

Enforcement update

Further to my previous reports on planning enforcement matters I am pleased to report that the firm but fair approach to dealing with breaches of planning control continues to run through the heart of the service and is being delivered in a consistent way across the Council area.

I am delighted to report that the statistics for the whole of 2022 have been published on the government website and Buckinghamshire have successfully improved their position up the league table and are now 3rd overall. Buckinghamshire remains the highest planning authority outside London in terms of issuing Planning Enforcement Notices, only beaten by two of London's enforcement big hitters, Brent and Westminster.

In the meantime, whilst these stats show our continued commitment to taking formal action, I also regularly see reports from the team where compliance is being achieved 'on the ground'. The breaches being remedied vary massively from fences and walls to illegal dwellings, caravan sites and changes of use where we use the full spectrum of our enforcement powers. Over the past few months, I have seen compliance being achieved from highly skilled amicable negotiation all the way up to formal actions like high court injunctions and contractors being sent in to undertake works in default. In fact, we have instructed contractors to enter land and take direct action on three sites in the past three months and whilst these actions are often seen as a last resort, the protection of our area remains of paramount importance, and we will use these powers as necessary and appropriate.

In addition, having recently rolled out a programme of pro-actively monitoring conditions on larger development sites the team are finding an increased number of breaches as a result of our onsite presence. Generally, the team see these breaches, such as lack of wheel washing facilities or incorrect contractor parking, being resolved quickly and often before they are even reported. At this stage the project appears to be resulting in breaches of conditions being resolved before they become a local issue and is securing holistic site compliance with conditions.

Our high performing enforcement service and general no-nonsense approach to dealing with breaches of planning control should act as a warning and deterrent that Buckinghamshire is not the

place to come if you intend to breach planning control and that when we seek resolutions, we will use all the tools available to us to ensure it occurs.

Planning Policy Update

As the government continues work on reforming the planning system, our work progressing the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire also continues. In March this year the Council responded to the government's consultation on their proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and we hope that our comments will help the government shape the way the planning system works in the future.

In the meantime, we have been working on the evidence base for the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. The sites submitted during our Calls for Sites (including 2x previous Brownfield Calls and the follow up wider calls for all sites) have now been mapped by the team and published on the Council website. There were over 1000 sites submitted and we have commenced work assessing those sites accordingly.

The Council will be undertaking a public consultation on the Vision and Objectives for both our forthcoming Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LP4B) and Local Transport Plan (LTP5). This will be the first LTP created for Buckinghamshire Council, superseding the Buckinghamshire County Council LTP4, published in 2016. Both consultations will take place together in April 2023, allowing residents to share views on our overarching aims for Buckinghamshire over the coming years, and enabling improved integration between planning and transport services. The two consultations will take place on [Your Voice Bucks](#), starting in April 2023 and remaining open for six weeks.

Our programme of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) also continues to progress with work being furthered on the SPDs associated with strategic site allocations in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan as well as Affordable Housing and Residential Design SPDs.

Planning Resource Planning Awards

Finally, I'm delighted to report that the Planning and Environment service has been shortlisted by Planning Resource under the category of '*Local Planning Authority of the Year*' at this year's Planning Awards. Our submission highlighted the excellent work that the teams across the Planning and Environment service have been doing over the past 12 months, so my congratulations go to teams across Planning and Environment on this notable success.

In addition, Buckinghamshire Council has also been shortlisted in the '*Award for Use of Digital Technology in Planning*' for the Power BI for Planning Teams. This is an excellent shortlisting and reflects the incredible work that the team is doing to bring digital enhancements to the Planning world.

The awards will be presented on 8 June, and we wish those teams the best of luck with the outcome.



Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources
Councillor John Chilver



Customer Partnership Panel

In late 2022, Buckinghamshire Council launched its Customer Partnership Panel which invites our residents to help inform the design of our digital services and communication methods. The panel is open to all residents over 18, providing they reside within our boundaries. Those who have registered their interest will be contacted several times a year to take part in surveys, digital focus groups and occasionally we will also meet with them in person. Panellists will receive regular feedback showing how the results have influenced decisions, with survey results published online.

Through focussed communication via social media, digital screens throughout the council access points, and through printed media the panel has grown from 15 to 100 residents, and we hope to see the panel grow even further throughout 2023. We are particularly keen to see a response from younger residents, and our communications are targeted to encourage this cohort, we are asking all Councillors to help promote the panel especially when they are in forums with those younger residents.

We have already started to use the Panel and the first research campaign concluded in February, where members of the panel were asked to give their insight over why people were telephoning to report a missed bin, rather than use our online forms and processes. The feedback received has facilitated two changes, firstly in order to reduce the number of online steps, we have removed the nudge to create an online account, sending residents directly to the missed bin form and secondly, behavioural prompts have been added, highlighting evidence that reporting online is quicker, more efficient and offers the same level of service. [Here is a link to the survey results](#). Our ambition is to publish one campaign per month.

This engagement with our residents ensures that the access to our services works for everyone and the Customer Partnership Panel is a powerful way of ensuring our focus is on inclusive access and that for our digital tools these are by design, not by default.

Employee Together Survey

The Together Survey is held twice a year to gather employee feedback against five key indices that can be benchmarked against other organisations. Our last survey was held in November 2022 with a council wide response rate of 58%, up from 53% in May. Our KPI target response rate is 60%.

Results for November were very positive with all five indices showing a positive increase on the previous survey.

- **Engagement** 74% up from 72% (external benchmark 65%)
- **Managing Change** 62% up from 60% (external benchmark 64%)

- **Wellbeing and Resilience** 77% up from 75% (external benchmark 72%)
- **Our Council** 77% up from 73% (external benchmark 70%)
- **Diversity and Inclusion** 70% up from 68% (external benchmark 80%)

There was an increase in colleagues feeling that the council cares about employee wellbeing, reflecting all the work to prioritise and promote wellbeing resources, particularly around financial hardship, and the support available for staff.

The free text question in November, reported colleagues' thoughts about opportunities for growth and development. These are being used to help shape our Talent Academy and Career Development thinking – see further details below. The next survey will be held in May 2023.

November 2022 Together Survey Results



Employer Brand and Talent Academy

96% of new joiners responding to our onboarding survey in 2022 said they were proud to work for the council and 93% would recommend the council as a place to work. 78% of leavers over the same period also said they would recommend the council as a place to work. These figures highlight high levels of engagement and a strong employer brand.

During 2022 we further developed this brand based on conversations with colleagues who work for the council. They helped to synthesise the following four top attraction factors that sum up why people join, stay, and are motivated to do their best during their careers at Buckinghamshire Council.

1. The nature of work
2. Opportunities for learning and development
3. Work life balance and flexible working
4. It's local to where I live

We style this as: *'our work matters'* and *'part of something bigger'*.

From these, we have developed headline messages, complemented by employee stories and professional photography to promote Buckinghamshire Council as a great place to work. This branding is used extensively on our social media accounts:



- [Buckinghamshire Council Careers | Facebook](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council Careers \(@bucks_careers\) / Twitter](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council | LinkedIn](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council Careers | Instagram](#)

An integral part of our brand is our commitment to Learning and Development. We have developed the **Buckinghamshire Talent Academy** to visibly demonstrate this commitment to career progression and personal growth. The Talent Academy sets out our learning and development offer to ensure internal colleagues and potential new joiners can see and understand the wide range of inclusive career opportunities that are available - encouraging everyone, at every stage of their career, to think about how they can learn and develop. The Talent Academy programmes are an integral part of our

Details of the Talent Academy Programmes – who they are aimed at and how they support colleagues

| | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Supporting equality and inclusion for colleagues and our future workforce | Promoting Careers and Attracting Talent | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Branding and Attraction Strategies – including strategies for scarce skills • Work experience and internships to showcase our careers at all levels including career changers and those facing barriers to employment |
| | Entry level and Early Careers Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckinghamshire Horizons programme – opening doors for new and changing careers • Early Careers Networks • Entry level and upskilling apprenticeships • Graduate entry programmes & development |
| | Career Planning & Personal Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Development planning and workshops for all staff • Soft skills and face to face training • Workforce and Succession Planning • Coaching and Mentoring including reverse mentoring |
| | Management Careers & Management Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiring Manager programmes • Buckinghamshire Manager framework and workshops • Leadership Development |
| | Professional Development & Professional Careers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service led professional development programmes and career offers for areas of scarce skills • Specialist apprenticeships |

attraction and retention strategy to help develop our own internal resourcing pipelines to grow our future workforce and focus particularly on our areas of scarce skills and skills shortage.

Property and Assets Update

Construction:

Working collaboratively with other Portfolios including

Education, Culture and Leisure, Planning and Regeneration and Housing and Regulatory Services, we have continued to deliver against our significant and substantial capital programme.

The new Kingsbrook Secondary School achieved Practical Completion in December 2022. The school was delivered through the close collaboration of different partners, including the Council, Barratts, Insignis Trust and Morgan Sindall. The project has now been named as finalists for the Constructing Excellence SECBE Awards having been shortlisted in the award categories for ‘Integration and Collaboration’ and ‘Client of the Year’; the winners are being announced in June 2023. The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Major expansion works at Chiltern Hills Academy achieved Practical Completion in December 2022. The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Major expansion works have achieved practical completion at Holmer Green including the new four court sports hall, new two storey teaching block, various conversions of the existing accommodations including the provision of additional dining area and a new kitchen together with an extension to the sixth form. These are currently being managed through the rectification periods with various sections being completed with final sign off planned for July 2023.

Misbourne School and the new Misbourne Sports Hall project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for July 2023.

Work has progressed on the procurement of three major school projects including the second Primary School at Kingsbrook as well as major expansions of both the Green Ridge Academy at Berryfields and Cottesloe School in Wing. In this period all three projects have been issued for competitive tender via the SCF Construct Framework. The Council aim to be able to make contract awards by the end of April.

The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre Section 2 which included carparking (272 Spaces), new children's play area, a new MUGA and external hard and soft landscaping achieved Practical Completion in December 2022. The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Investment and Development:

Wycombe Film Studio

Planning permission has been granted to Stage 50 to develop the Wycombe Film Studios at land adjacent to the Wycombe Airpark. This comprises of new film and TV studios incorporating the retention of 1 x existing sound stage, construction of further new production facilities including 7 x sound stages, 10 x workshops, 4 x production facility buildings, 1 x rehearsal building, ancillary offices, cafe and amenity space, parking, landscaping and a new vehicular access off Marlow Road. Stage 50 will be developing the site over the few months and have already received interest from a number of production companies to use the site. The use of the site will create new jobs in the area once the site is fully operational.

The Council have agreed a new lease with Stage 50 with an option to buy a long leasehold. This arrangement will regenerate the land, provide additional rental revenue to the Council which will support council services and will also have a positive impact upon the local economy through the knock on benefits of having this employment site in the area.

Horns Lane Land Sale for 100% Affordable Housing Scheme

Following the last update where we reported that the Council owned site located off Horns Lane in High Wycombe was being put on the market, we have now successfully completed the sale to a developer who is working with a national Housing Association and will work to deliver a 50-unit scheme with 100% affordable homes. The capital receipt received was only 6% lower than the full market price which would have delivered only 48% affordable homes. The scheme will be made up of half affordable rented homes and half shared ownership bringing much needed affordable accommodation to the people of Buckinghamshire. The Housing Association have committed to actively engage with the waiting lists of prospective tenants as early as possible, and to support applicants nominated to them focussing on the lower income earning tenants. They will proactively assist residents in work/training/looking to get back into work, thereby indirectly relieving pressures on other public sector services.

Councils Estate Strategy

The Councils operational office estate strategy was approved at Cabinet in January and since then work has begun on the initiative contained in the report. The first milestone of moving out of Wycombe Old Library and into the Councils main Wycombe Offices opposite has been achieved and further the vacated offices have now been let to a commercial occupier producing a revenue saving to the Council and a rental income.



Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles



Helping Hand

All of Buckinghamshire Council's allocation of the third tranche of the Household Support Fund, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, has been utilised to provide essential support to financially vulnerable households. The Helping Hand team have led the coordination of this work, ensuring that the £2.4 million allocation was directed to those most in need between 1 October to 31 March.

The Fund has enabled over 56,200 digital food vouchers, with a combined value of over £1.2 million, to be distributed to eligible pupils during each of the school holidays since 1 October and including the Easter holidays. In addition, it has enabled the Helping Hand team to deliver direct support to residents on more than 8,300 occasions in total, including delivery of over 830 white goods items, 561 other essential household items and financial support for emergency food and fuel on more than 4,400 occasions. Nearly £450,000 was provided to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, including Heart of Bucks, who collectively provide a range of key support services to residents including food parcels, community fridges and crisis grant support.

The Department for Work and Pensions have now confirmed that Buckinghamshire has been allocated a further £4.8 million in the next tranche of the Household Support Fund. We are currently developing a plan for the effective disbursement of these funds to support our financially vulnerable households within the stipulated grant conditions.

Afghan Resettlement

In Buckinghamshire, we have welcomed 15 families to date. We are currently working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Home Office to use 16 MoD properties for a further 15 families (and moving an existing family into one of these homes) to meet our target of welcoming 30 families. The families are all settling well with many, who speak good English, now in employment - ranging from working at the BBC to translation services, mechanics, and retail. All have taken up the opportunity of ESOL lessons with Adult Learning to help progress their spoken and/or written English and are doing well. The children have settled well in their schools and are also doing well.

We have introduced monthly Hub sessions at Buckingham, Aylesbury and Wycombe libraries allowing a range of topics to be discussed including finances and budgeting, mental health and also includes talks from partner organisations like the Police and the Fire Service. As well as being informative, these also aim to support conversational English and are well attended.

Community Boards

This year the Community Boards launched the **Proud of Bucks Awards** in January to recognise and celebrate those who went the extra mile for their community in 2022.

A small team from the Boards and communications designed and delivered the awards which saw some 398 nominations, 46 winners and 48 commended, and one special posthumous award across three categories: **Local Community Champion** (an individual over 21) and **Young Community Champion** (a young person under 21) who have made a clear and positive impact in their local community during 2022, and a **Community Group Contribution** which recognises and celebrates a group in the Community Board area who also has made a clear and positive impact on the community during 2022.



There were some fantastic nominations and the awards recognised people and organisations across Buckinghamshire. With so many exceptional and worthy nominations, judging was a tough job for the Boards. Whilst not everyone can win, it was inspirational to read how many people are going above and beyond to help others, so it is very pleasing to see so many people formally commended.

The awards will be presented from April onwards at engagement events being organised by each Board and celebrated in the community.

The Boards have also been at several key events including the Bucks Youth Summit where they spoke directly with young people to understand the issues they face within their areas and what they would like to see as a priority for the Community Boards. These views are now captured and will provide insight to the Community Boards to investigate further.

An Autism Awareness Day was organised by the Community Boards in partnership with the Longridge Centre. Families and individuals attended over 130 sessions organised at Longridge which encouraged young people to try different skills and activities, but also for everyone to understand and learn more about autism generally.

A health and wellbeing event in Amersham for older people highlighted local community groups, activities and services that can support residents to remain independent at home for longer. Attended by 29 stallholders including Amersham National Trust, Active in the Community, CAB and trading standards, the event also provided a networking opportunity for stallholders to enhance their knowledge of local provision and helped to strengthen signposting pathways.

Other events have included engagement with residents to discuss board priorities for 2023/34, including what these mean to residents and what improvements they would expect to see from them.

VCSE Sector Resilience Fund

On Tuesday 14 March we launched the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Resilience Fund.

The £230,000 fund has been established in partnership with [Heart of Bucks](#) and funded by Buckinghamshire Council, The Mulberry Trust, and [The Rothschild Foundation](#). It is designed to support organisations suffering from increased operating costs, due to cost-of-living pressures, which they have not been able to manage in other ways.

Organisations can apply for grants of up to £10,000 with additional priority given to organisations aiming to reduce inequalities amongst residents living in the most disadvantaged areas of the county.



Armed Forces



On 27 February 2023, we attended the National Transition Event at Silverstone to promote Buckinghamshire Council as an employer to service leavers. The event was attended by over 500 serving personnel, and their families, who will be leaving the armed forces in the near future and are considering their next steps. A wide range of employers from sectors such as motorsport, engineering and construction exhibited at the event, alongside employers from the public sector. Chris Geen, Community Safety Team Leader, was part of the team which attended the event and was able to share his experiences of leaving the armed forces and transitioning into civilian life.

In March, we shared information with over 650 businesses via our Business Improvement Districts regarding the Armed Forces Covenant and the benefits of signing it as an organisation. We produced an e-leaflet in conjunction with a local Reserve unit, advocating the benefits that employing ex-service personnel and serving Reservists can bring to a business, including the wealth of skills and experience that they have. We also highlighted that making goods and services “Forces Friendly” is a great way of growing a customer base as well as giving back to the Armed Forces Community. Any businesses or organisations who would like to find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant or are interested in signing can contact the council at armedforces@buckinghamshire.gov.uk for more information.

Consultation on the restructure of Thames Valley Police

Thames Valley Police are undertaking a review of their force structure which aims to make sure it is structured in the best possible way to meet current and future challenges. Two local policing models are being considered:

- 1) continue with the existing 11 Local Policing Area (LPA) model, with enhancements where possible
- 2) change to a five-area command model. The five areas would be Oxfordshire, Berkshire West, Berkshire East, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Both proposals, will keep the same number of neighbourhood teams and seek to increase the number of officers in visible patrol roles. There will be 80 additional neighbourhood officers across TVP funded by the PCC.

We are drafting a response to the consultation and would encourage local residents to share their views. The consultation ends on 28 April 2023. [Local policing proposals | Thames Valley Police](#)

Community Safety Partnerships and anti-social behaviour powers

On 27 March 2023 the Home Office announced that the phase one national consultation of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Review has now been launched alongside the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan.

The purpose of the consultation is to:

- seek views on the relationship between CSPs and PCCs, with the aim of enhancing the accountability of CSPs
- consider how CSPs and PCCs work together to tackle ASB, with the aim of strengthening this co-operative working

- consider the expansion of ASB powers, and whether amendments are required to ensure they are being used effectively.

The consultation is open to the public until 22 May 2023 and targeted to those with experience working in, or with, Community Safety Partnerships, as well as those with an interest in ASB powers. The Safer Buckinghamshire Board will be responding to the consultation.

Council Resilience Group

Focussing on the continued development of the Council Resilience Framework and Standards Policy, we have held two Executive Council Resilience Group (CRG) meetings in the last six months. The theme has been to focus on a One Council Approach to deliver across both council services and collaboration with local communities. Members have been provided with two training sessions during February and March on Emergency Management and the Council Resilience Framework. Up to 70 Members took part in these sessions and positive feedback was received with regards to the content and support the sessions provided Members.

Winter Readiness and Response Framework

Building on the One Council Approach we have developed a council winter readiness and response framework that has been in place since November and concluded on 31 March. This framework provided an overarching review of the council's winter preparedness utilising 15 front line services including:

- Service areas dealing with vulnerability such as Health, Social Care and Housing.
- Service areas dealing with front line operational activity i.e., Waste Management Buckinghamshire Highways, Country parks.
- Service areas dealing with emergency or risk i.e., Resilience Service, Business Assurance and Community Safety.

These Service Areas also formed a winter cell which met monthly. This approach proved very successful in supporting the council and provided re-assurance across the board. As a result, we will be setting up a Summer Framework utilising the same blueprint as the winter framework, this will run from June till September. As part of the feedback process, we have managed to engage a number of external partners to be part of the Summer Framework.



Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services
Councillor Mark Winn



Gypsy and Traveller Service

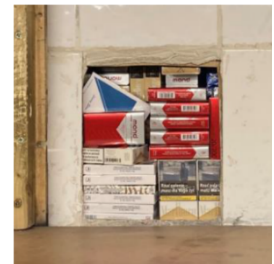
As anticipated, there have been few unauthorised encampments throughout the winter months. A recent incursion saw a large number of French Travellers in February passing through Buckinghamshire. This consisted of twenty-one caravans which were located in the car park of the Holmers Farm Recreation Ground in High Wycombe. Although the group were very pleasant there was a need to expedite the removal process due to the car park being inaccessible for visitors who were due to attend planned sporting events which were scheduled to take place that weekend, for this reason enforcement agents were employed which ensured a timely resolution. The caravans were moved on with no resistance and the site was left clean and tidy.

Following the enactment of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill last summer we expect to get a more realistic idea of unauthorised encampment numbers this year and a better understanding of how and when Thames Valley Police will utilise their new available powers, with this said the primary responsibility for removal of encampments on all land lies with the landowner. The Buckinghamshire approach to dealing with unauthorised encampments is robust but fair, and our management of unauthorised encampments is individually assessed with our response tailored to each group's specific behaviours.

Trading Standards

Following an investigation by Trading Standards, three suspects have been convicted and were sentenced in relation to home improvement fraud; in these cases, vulnerable older residents were conned into believing that they needed expensive work for their homes with threats and other intimidating behaviour used to ensure payment. Following the investigation, the victims have, between them, received nearly £200,000 in compensation for their losses which the company paid prior to its conviction.

February saw the conclusion to an illegal tobacco case reported in the last update to Council. Following the conviction in October of one defendant and the partial conviction of another, February saw the matter concluded with a guilty plea to the final charge for the second defendant. Because of the repeated nature of the offending, the person was awarded a suspended prison sentence which will be activated should he repeat this offending during the next year. The picture below shows where the tobacco was found on one of the occasions with the help of a tobacco detection dog. The Service continues to carry out regular test purchasing to locate sellers of illegal tobacco.



Dangerous Electric Blankets – With the help of a grant from Electrical Safety First, the service recently offered residents free testing of electric blankets. Over 80% of the blankets tested were unsafe and were destroyed. Thanks to a donation from Dreams, all unsafe blankets were replaced free of charge with a new electric blanket. Some blankets were over 30 years old and scorch marks were clearly visible on another that was found to be unsafe.

Unsafe electrical products and energy saving claim lies - We have tested a range of plug-in electrical devices and electric heaters that claimed to reduce energy consumption and save money. All were widely available on online marketplaces, all failed safety tests. Energy saving claims were found to be misleading where all increased, rather than decreased consumption, and many were poorly constructed with access to live parts. Following our intervention, they have now been withdrawn from the market.

Ensuring residents get what they pay for –In recent months over 100 petrol pumps were tested to ensure that consumers are getting the amount of fuel they are paying for. Approximately 5% were giving short measure and were taken out of use until repaired. On average every time a car was filled up £1 extra was charged by those delivering short measure.

Cemeteries and Crematoria Services

At Chilterns Crematorium, refurbishment of the Hampden Chapel has been completed and it was reopened for cremation services on Monday 13 March 2023. There have been a significant number of improvements incorporated into the refurbishment including upholstered pews for customer comfort with removable seating sections to accommodate wheelchair users sitting with their family members, a larger catafalque with a bespoke curtain track, new curtains and voiles and an upgraded lectern with touch screen controls for the media system, curtains and voiles.

An energy efficient climate control system has been installed along with energy saving Halo lighting and a new hearing loop. A glass balustrade has been fitted to the mezzanine floor to make this area more inclusive to mourners who benefit from sitting in a quieter area and to accommodate larger funeral parties. The seating capacity in the chapel has increased from 80 to 100 people. There are still some ongoing works related to the wider improvement project but these are mainly external and include reinstatement of fencing, roof repairs and final installation works to the electric vehicle charging points.



The music and media systems at both Chilterns and Bierton Crematoria have been replaced with the Obitus audio visual and sound system. This is a high quality system that offers a number of benefits to service users including lyrics to popular funeral hymns displayed on the chapel screens and there is the capability to embed visual tributes into webcasts improving the experience for those viewing the service remotely.

Licensing

The Licensing Committee have agreed a new draft Charitable Collections Policy. The Council is responsible for dealing with permit and licence applications for charitable collections which may take place in either public areas or in the form of house to house. There is currently no single policy in force covering the whole Council area for these activities. It is considered necessary and appropriate to have such a policy to ensure there is fairness, consistency and transparency in the Council's approach to dealing with applications. The draft policy will be subject to a six week public consultation, with the results being reported back to Licensing Committee for final consideration and final determination.

The Licensing Service have commenced work on the development of a single Street Trading Policy for Buckinghamshire. The Council is able to determine whether or not it wishes to regulate street trading in publicly accessible areas. Currently street trading is regulated according to policies and procedures adopted by the former legacy District Councils. The development of a new policy is an opportunity to harmonise the Council's approach, review current arrangements and determine to what extent the Council wishes to regulate this activity. The work is likely to attract interest from a wide range of stakeholders including Ward, Town and Parish Councils and those various agencies responsible for planning and managing how the Council's public spaces are used. The work is at an early scoping stage to identify relevant stakeholders who will be invited to share their views through organised engagement sessions, prior to development of a draft policy and full public consultation.

Following a further procurement exercise, an additional garage in the Wycombe area has been added to the existing five garages approved by the Council to conduct tests on taxi and private hire vehicles.

Operation Holly – On 20 and 21 December 2022, Council licensing officers joined officers from TVP Roads Policing team. The officers travelled in a marked police vehicle, supported by an unmarked car on the second day. Officers visited Aylesbury, Wendover, Stoke Mandeville, High Wycombe and Princess Risborough areas. Of the 19 Buckinghamshire Council licensed vehicles stopped at random, five had no issues at all, three were suspended with immediate effect (two with tyre issues and one with a faulty door) and the remainder had minor issues which were dealt with via enforcement notices. Two drivers were not wearing their badges and three were not wearing their seat belts correctly. Immediately following the operation all licensed trade members were contacted and provided with compliance advice. A similar operation is planned soon, and it is expected that a higher level of compliance will be found. These outcomes are comparable to findings in other Council areas when these types of operation are conducted. In a national context, Buckinghamshire Council continues to apply among the highest standards in terms of licensing requirements to ensure the public remain protected.

At the beginning of March, the Licensing Service successfully defended a decision on appeal to the Magistrates Court to revoke the licence of a driver who was witnessed by police officers using a mobile phone while reversing his vehicle into a junction.

Housing

Rough Sleeping: During the course of the winter months, the Council has had to implement the SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) on five separate occasions due to temperatures consistently falling below freezing. On each occasion, the Council worked extensively with partner agencies to make emergency accommodation available for all rough sleepers until temperatures improved.

In February 2023, DLUHC published the results of the annual national rough sleeper count carried out by all local authorities during October/November 2022 and providing a snapshot of rough sleeper numbers on a single evening. The annual snapshot for Buckinghamshire identified 16 verified rough

sleepers. While this is an increase on the previous year's figure, it still remains significantly below the snapshot figures that were being recorded prior to the pandemic. During the 2016-2019 period, Buckinghamshire was recording an average of 37 rough sleepers per year in the annual snapshot. Therefore, the 16 rough sleepers recorded in the 2022 snapshot still represents a 56% reduction against the pre-pandemic figure. As at the end January 2023, 12 verified rough sleepers were recorded across Buckinghamshire. Many of these are clients with challenging and complex needs and the Council and its partner agencies continue to work extensively to try to support these persons.

Temporary Accommodation: At the end of February 2023, the Council had 420 homeless households placed in temporary accommodation (this compares to an average number of 225 pre-pandemic). This continues a month on month trend of increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation and we anticipate that these high levels of demand will continue, due to factors including increased cost of living pressures on households, Ukraine and Afghan refugee approaches, and the limited affordable housing options in Buckinghamshire. We continue to look to make the best use of existing social housing stock to help manage these pressures by increasing our direct lets into social housing for homeless households. We are also actively working to identify and develop new additional temporary housing stock and reduce our reliance on expensive nightly booked accommodation. The new Council-owned temporary accommodation scheme at Bridge Court in Wycombe which is due to open in early May 2023. I would like to thank the staff and our contractors in advance of that for putting together what is a big improvement in the provision of Temporary accommodation in High Wycombe and the surrounding area. It should start to reduce the numbers in expensive B&B style accommodation.



Bridge Court, Desborough Road – Exterior

Bucks Home Choice: There continues to be a very high demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme and we have seen an upturn in applications since Christmas. Overall, at the end of February 2023, we had 5,238 live applications registered on the scheme which is the highest level since the creation of the Buckinghamshire Council in 2020. To date in 2022/23 (April 2022 – February 2023) 1398 new tenancies have been let via Bucks Home Choice.

Grants and Adaptations: The Council continues to operate a significant programme of DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) to support adaptation works. As at the end of February 2023, we had completed 207 DFG schemes to date in 2022/23 with a further 497 DFG requests at pre-approval stage. Increasing building costs still remain a significant pressure on the existing funding caps, particularly for larger extensions and these are being reviewed as part of the overall review of the DFG and Financial Assistance Policy.

Environmental Health

Commercial (Food and Health & Safety): The team continue to make progress towards the Food Standards Agency's recovery roadmap which was put in place during the pandemic. This will end at the end of March and the inspection programme will resume as 'business as usual'. The service continues to see an increase in the number of new businesses registering this year which outpace the number of closures, increasing the overall number of food and beverage and other commercial food establishments. The Food and Health and Safety Service Plan for 2022/24 and the associated Enforcement Policy have been agreed by Cabinet and has now been adopted.

With respect to the adoption of the model byelaws concerning skin piercing activities, the proposed byelaws are currently under consultation. Once this has closed on 17 April 2023, the final step will be confirmation by the Secretary of State for Health and the resulting implementation of these nationally consistent byelaws.

Housing and Domestic: Following the tragic death of a two year old child in Rochdale, the issue of housing standards has had a heightened profile both nationally and for the Council. The service has seen a large increase in requests for service concerning reports of poor housing conditions, many of which relate to damp and mould. In a nine-week period from 7 November 2022, the service saw a 241% increase in cases being reported compared to the same period the previous year. With respect to cases that specifically mentioned damp and mould there was a 488% increase (17 cases compared to 83). The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, wrote to all local authorities at the end of last year to survey data and processes/ procedures on a national basis. This request from Michael Gove and the local situation regarding household mould was discussed at the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee in February 2023 with follow on actions agreed by the service and a further update session to be scheduled in the autumn.

The team continue to inspect homes which have been offered as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and we are approaching 950 properties having had been inspected over the past 12 months.

In March the team successfully prosecuted a landlord who was operating an unlicensed HMO. Initially the landlord tried to deceive officers by claiming it was occupied by a single family, however, further information was identified indicating the property was an HMO. An unannounced inspection was undertaken and confirmed the property's status as an HMO and there were a number of matters identified concerning the lack of appropriate amenities and fire safety measures. The landlord was found guilty and was fined £5000, ordered to pay the Council's costs of £6878.96 and a victim surcharge of £190 totalling £12,068.96. This should be a clear message to landlords that the Council will take formal action when appropriate to do so.

Strategic Environmental Protection: The Council has been successful in obtaining a grant from DEFRA for £120k which will build upon the initiative run by Bucks Business First (BBF) who approach local businesses about travel plans and access to work through sustainable modes. Working with businesses, BBF has created an action plan to reduce the pollutant emissions created by their current operations. This project targets small and medium sized businesses (where it is more likely that larger organisations have travel plans in place). As part of the personal travel planning, we would offer access to online eco-driver training module for car, van and HGV drivers. The Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy was published in October 2021 and this grant embraces the Council's role in influencing businesses and residents to reduce their emissions.

Registration Service

The service implemented its new structure borne from the service review on 1 February 2023.

There were 4531 births from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, only slightly lower than the year before of 4552 births. There were 3778 deaths registered from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 (excluding inquests) which was 544 more than the previous year of 3234 deaths. Ceremonies are getting back up to pre-covid levels with 1750 marriages and 48 civil partnerships completed in 2022/23 against 1768 marriages and 89 civil partnerships in 2021/22. Ceremonies booked in so far for 2023/24 are 1235 which is the usual amount of bookings for this time of year. Many registration office weddings are booked within three to four months of the date of the ceremony. Buckinghamshire has a wide range of venues for couples to choose from and still proves to be a popular county to marry.

Coroner's Service

In collaboration with Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust, we have launched our WPC Portal, which forms part of the coroners' case management system. After presenting to the Medical Examiners Officer, and roll out to the hospital doctors, all deaths that are reported to the coroner are now made via the portal. This benefits the officers, saving time in inputting deaths whilst allowing the Trust to monitor the progress of the case and see the medical cause of death, meaning that weekly returns to the Trust are no longer required. The next steps are to introduce the same system to the community GPs in preparation for the 'go live' date of the National Medical Examiners System, which has been delayed from 1 April 2023.

At the end of February, the annual return to the Ministry of Justice was completed for year ending 2022. This showed that the office had 1353 deaths reported, seeing a year on year increase over the past few years.

- 571 cases had a post mortem examination.
- 234 Inquests were heard of which five Inquests were heard with a jury.
- 11 Treasure Inquests were heard.

On 20 February 2023, the Chief Coroner, HH Judge Thomas Teague KC, visited the Buckinghamshire Coroner's Office. The purpose of the visit was a welfare tour to enquire as to the wellbeing of the officers and to thank the officers for all their hard work, particularly over the COVID period as they remained front line workers. The Chief Coroner also enquired as to the working relationship between the local authority and the coroner, in terms of working conditions, resources, welfare. It was a very successful visit.



Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment
Councillor Gareth Williams

Tree Planting

We have made impressive progress regarding the number of trees planted across Buckinghamshire, this includes 29,200 trees planted on parts of our agricultural estate in Amersham and Widmer End (High Wycombe) (which are part funded by over £215K of grant funding from the Forestry Commission), and 4,000 new trees along the new Platinum Park Way active travel route. Several community based tree planting initiatives have benefitted from the funding secured from our Local Authority Treescapes Fund '22/'23 bid, which has resulted in two tiny forests being established at Princes Risborough School and Bourton Park. Under the partnership agreement we have with them, I'm pleased to confirm that Forestry England will start planting at the Council's 51 hectare site in Wing this month – leading to the creation of a large mixed species 132,000 tree woodland.

Domestic Property Resource Efficiency and Decarbonisation Initiatives

455 solar photovoltaic system installations have been completed under the current Buckinghamshire Solar Together scheme, and we expect that there will be at least another 219 installations in the next couple of months. Our 'Energy Doctor' scheme is up and running and the first visit was made on 5 April. With funding under the Sustainable Warmth scheme the energy performance of 155 domestic premises has been improved following the installation of renewable or energy efficiency measures such as wall insulation.

Fly-Tipping Enforcement

Investigations have recently been targeted more towards repeat fly-tipping offenders and cross-border waste movements preceding fly-tipping. That means fewer but arguably more complex individual cases which have the highest impact by tonnage on the dumping affecting Bucks. Lower level offences are frequently dealt with by the issue of a fixed penalty (at the national maximum level allowed by Government of £400) in accordance with guidelines recommended by our legal department. A recent example of this is a live investigation involving the deposit of 12-20 truckloads of waste in the area of southern Buckinghamshire between the Chalfonts and Fulmer which has even involved the blocking of roads. A suspect was arrested by Thames Valley Police (Rural Crime Task Force) in a joint operation with Buckinghamshire Council officers and BC

investigations are ongoing after the suspect was 'reported for consideration of summonses' by BC officers while he was in TVP custody.

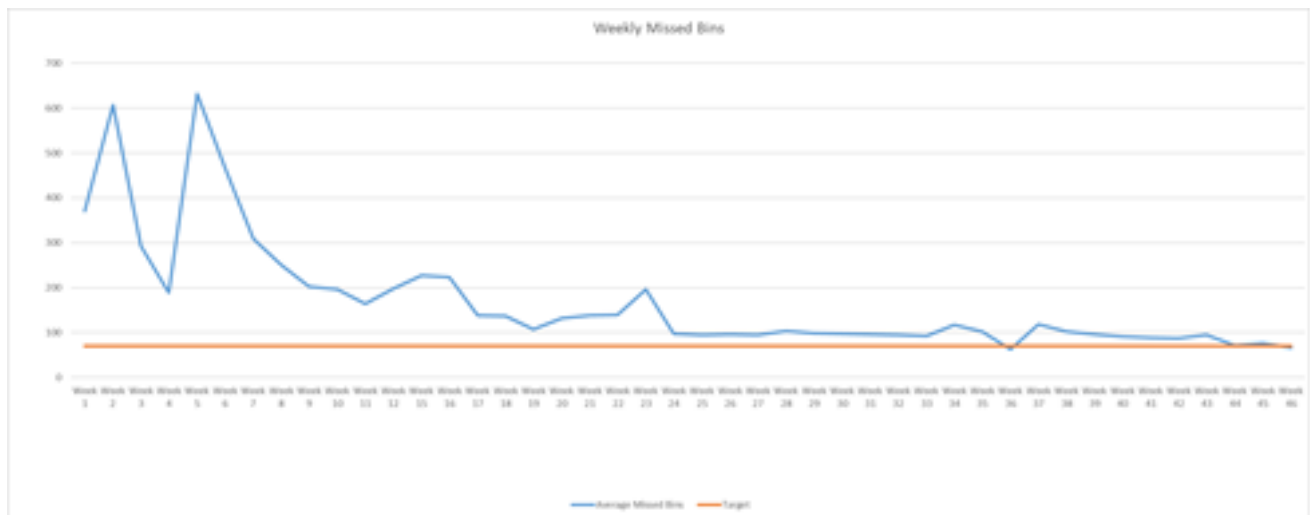
Littering

Work is also being carried out to develop an Enforcement Strategy against littering offences in Bucks and we hope this will lead to a county-wide campaign including enforcement responses. The Council will be asked to consider options once these have been given full consideration by colleagues affected by littering across the local spectrum.

South Waste Collection and Street Scene

We are pleased to say that the weekly missed bins and rounds being completed are now back to pre-reorganisation levels with good week on week improvements, reaching the contractual SLA levels.

The Council will continue to work with Veolia until the required service standards are being consistently achieved. Please see the graph below, which shows missed bins from the reorganisation up to current day:



North Waste Collection and Street Scene

The in-house service in the North delivers waste collection, street cleansing and grounds maintenance functions. The services operate from Pembroke Road depot where recycling collected from the North is tipped, bulked, and transferred for onward processing. The site also houses an in-house vehicle workshop to maintain and repair a fleet of over 60 vehicles as well as being one of the Council's approved taxi MOT stations. Overall, all services operate well with low missed bins and high resident satisfaction.

Over the winter months the team have successfully delivered on a Christmas and New Year operation which involved collecting an additional 30% more waste, whilst Street Scene were vital to gritting operations. The Grounds Maintenance team completed all scheduled winter works which included hedge cutting and shrub bed maintenance and it was also the first year that the garden waste suspension period was aligned between the North and South services as the team continue to harmonise service delivery for residents.

In February, a small percentage of residents' collection day changed to optimise waste collection rounds which had been operating since 2018. The project was a success, with missed bins remaining low and resident complaints equating to zero.

In March the Street Cleansing team will commence the bi-annual litter pick on high-speed roads, whilst the Grounds Maintenance team will be starting their spring services such as grass cutting and sports pitch renovations.

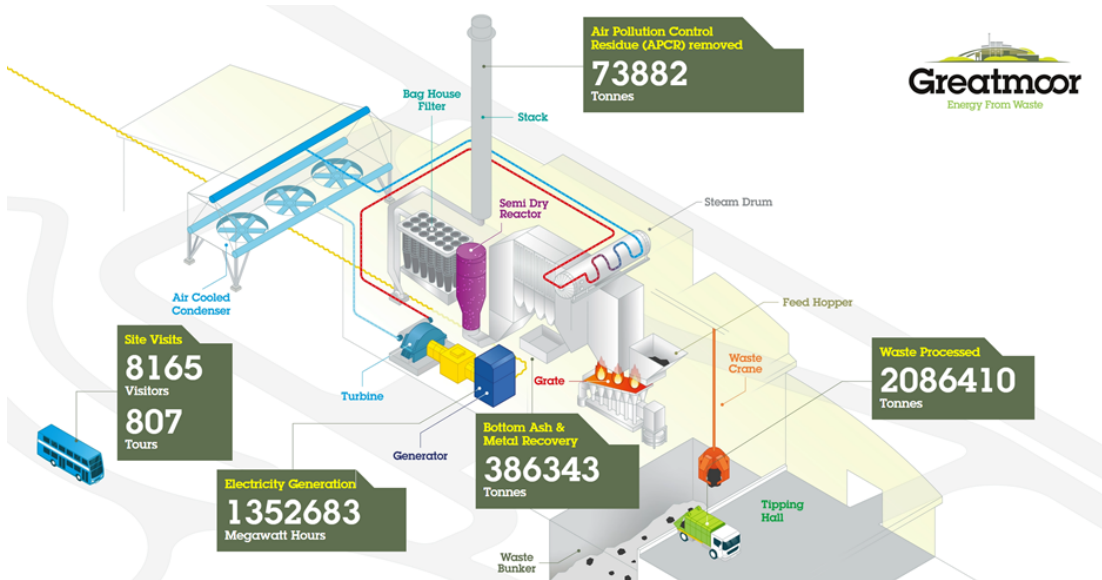
In April the team are expecting the delivery of the 7x 26tonne vehicles awarded to Faun Zoeller, 2x 26tonne narrow access vehicles awarded to Dennis Eagle and an additional award of 2x 12t food waste vehicles awarded to Farid Hillend. The transport team have already started procurement proceedings for 2023/24 with a £2.3m vehicle capital investment, with further procurement aimed at replacing the aging vehicle within the fleet. This is a continuous replacement programme to ensure the fleet and the operation is reliable and efficient.

Energy From Waste (EFW)

The Greatmoor EFW facility continues to operate very successfully, treating all of Buckinghamshire's household residual waste and producing electricity in the process. Now in its seventh year of operation, the facility is an asset the Council is proud to own, having invested nearly £180 million back in 2016 to ensure the Council's waste is managed to the highest regulatory and compliance standards for 30 years. The facility has saved the council some £30 million to date against the costs of the previous disposal route to landfill, and is on track to deliver savings of over £150 million across the 30-year contract.

The EFW facility has a dedicated visitor centre which has now welcomed in excess of 8,000 people to take in a tour and see in detail all the key parts, as highlighted in Figure 1 below. The tours are a great opportunity to understand how the whole process of treating residual waste works, covering areas like how emissions are controlled to meet Environment Agency standards. More information on all of this, including how to book a tour can be found on the dedicated EFW website www.greatmoor.co.uk.

Figure 1: Overview of the Greatmoor EFW facility



Project Groundwater

Year 2 of 6 of Project Groundwater is complete. The project to date has delivered new improved modelling and mapping techniques for groundwater flood risk, completed a community survey, launched its website and social media channels, fully scoped research into natural flood management, property flood resilience and flood warning. Year 3 will focus on working with the 9 pilot communities to develop a new flood warning service, portal and also investigate the repurposing of military drones for water table measurement.

Smarter Water Catchments – River Chess Catchment

The Chess Smarter Water Catchment has produced a ‘State of the Chess’ report and highlights issues with poor water quality, water usage pressures, declining wildlife and invasive species. The project is aiming to address these problems through partnership with a range of local organisations including Buckinghamshire Council. We are leading on the urban water quality theme and have produced a technical options report which identifies several possible mitigation methods using sustainable drainage systems. The next year of the project will focus in on the best options that will look to improve the water quality of the Chess by reducing the impact of run off from roads, farmland and urban areas.

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Leader Decisions Taken

Information on decisions taken by the Leader since the last full Council agenda. For an up-to-date list of decisions taken and forthcoming decisions, please refer to the Council's website – <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/>

15 Feb 2023

CO01.23 - Public Spaces Protection Order extensions

The Leader AGREED:

To extend the following Public Spaces Protection Orders for three years, until 2026:

- Dorney Lake
- Desborough Road High Wycombe
- High Wycombe Town Centre
- Chiltern Designated Car Parks

15 Feb 2023

FR03.23 - New Council Offices (NCO) - Application for Certificate of Immunity from Listing

The Leader AGREED:

That the Director of Property and Assets in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources is authorised to make an application for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing for the reasons set out in this report for the building known as the New Council Offices (NCO) in Aylesbury.

24 Feb 2023

EC01.23 - Determined Admission Arrangements 2024

The Leader AGREED:

The determined admission arrangements for admission in September 2024.

These arrangements include:

1. The coordinated scheme for primary and secondary admissions in Buckinghamshire, for admission from September 2024, as set out in Appendix 1.
2. The 2024 determined admission rules for community and voluntary-controlled primary schools as set out in Appendix 2. This includes the admission rules for schools, nursery classes and nursery schools and the Published Admission Number and catchment area for each school.
3. The 2024 determined admission rules for community and voluntary-controlled secondary schools as set out in Appendix 3. This includes the proposed Admission Number and catchment area for each school and sixth form admission arrangements.
4. The proposed relevant area for school admission arrangements from September 2025, as set out in Appendix 4.

28 Feb 2023

HW02.23 - Domiciliary Care Procurement Vehicle

The Leader:

- **APPROVED** the decision to go out to tender for the Home Care Dynamic Purchasing Vehicle (DPV) on a 3 + 2 + 1 year contract.
- **AGREED** to delegate the decision to award contracts to successful providers to the appropriate authorised officers in accordance with the financial scheme of delegation, on the initial and any subsequent evaluations of bids for the DPV.
- **AGREED** to delegate the decision to invite new providers to bid and bring additional capacity onto the DPV, at appropriate points throughout the lifetime of the contract, to lead officers within the Integrated Commissioning team.

3 Mar 2023

HW03.23 - Annual Fee Uplift for Adult Social Care Providers 2023/24

The Leader APPROVED the recommended approach to the Adult Social Care provider fee uplift for 2023/24:

- **A 7% uplift across all providers except for home care**
- **An offer equivalent to 7% for home care. This is split between a 5% uplift for all commissioned home care providers and an additional uplift for providers being paid at the bottom of the market**
- **Further price revisions for home care linked to the Council's planned tender during 2023**
- **Contractually required uplifts where these apply**

6 Mar 2023

CO02.23 - Voluntary and Community Sector Resilience Fund

The Leader AGREED:

- To utilise £100,000 funding within the Buckinghamshire Lottery Community Fund on a one-off basis to create a Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Resilience Fund.
- To progress discussions and negotiations with an external partner to operate the fund on our behalf and to co-design the application and assessment process with them.
- To delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, to take any further decisions as necessary to establish the Fund.

8 Mar 2023

CO03.23 - Assets of Community Value

The Leader **AGREED** the changes to the procedure for managing Buckinghamshire Council's Assets of Community Value and Community Right to Bid Process.

9 Mar 2023

TR06.23 - Calvert Parking Restrictions

The Leader:

- 1) **CONSIDERED** the feedback received at the Statutory Consultation.
- 2) **APPROVED** the making of the Traffic Regulation Order as set out in this report, for the installation of no waiting at any time restrictions and two bus stop clearways (24/7) on Brackley Lane, Calvert (as showed in appendix C).
- 3) **AGREED** that responders to the Statutory Consultation be informed of the decision as well as implement the traffic regulation order and related works.

10 Mar 2023

CE01.23 - Award of Consultancy Services via ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation) Framework Lot 2d General Finance

The Leader **AGREED** to award the General Finance Consultancy Service contract via the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework, Lot 2d. The initial contract is for

a 3-year period with the option to extend for a further 1 year, subject to satisfactory performance.

10 Mar 2023

CE02.23 - Award of Consultancy Services via ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation) Framework Lot 8b Environmental and Sustainability

The Leader **AGREED** to award the General Engineering Consultancy Service contract via the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework, Lot 8b. The initial contract is for a 3-year period with the option to extend for a further 1 year, subject to satisfactory performance.

10 Mar 2023

CE03.23 - Award of Consultancy Services via ESPO (Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation) Framework Lot 8h Waste and Recycling

The Leader **AGREED** to award the General Technical Consultancy Service contract via the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) Framework, Lot 8h. The initial contract is for a 3-year period with the option to extend for a further 1 year, subject to satisfactory performance.

16 Mar 2023

TR07.23 - Stablebridge Road, Aston Clinton - 30mph Speed Limit T.R.O

The Leader **APPROVED**:

- a) The making and introduction of the Traffic Regulation Order as advertised, comprising of a speed limit reduction to 30mph on a section of Stablebridge Road, Aston Clinton.
- b) That respondents to the consultation are informed of the decision.

31 Mar 2023

TR08.23 - Hicks Farm Rise, High Wycombe - Proposed Traffic Calming

The Leader:

- a) **CONSIDERED** the objection and feedback received at Statutory Consultation.
- b) **APPROVED** the implementation of the proposed traffic calming measures as set out in this report
- c) **AGREED** that responders to the Statutory Consultation be informed of the decision

31 Mar 2023

TR09.23 - Stoke Poges Parking Scheme

The Leader AGREED:

- a) **That the Traffic Regulation Order be made as advertised at Statutory Consultation but with the following amendments:**
- **The double yellow lines proposed in Broom Hill and Sefton Paddock are scaled back so that they extend 10 metres from the junction with Hollybush Hill**
 - **The double yellow lines proposed on Hollybush Hill are scaled back so that they extend 10 metres either side of the junction with Sefton Paddock and Broom Hill only (proposals opposite Sefton Paddock and Broom Hill removed)**
- b) **That responders to the Statutory Consultation be informed of the decision.**

4 Apr 2023

TR10.23 - Haddenham Parking Restrictions

The Leader:

- a) **CONSIDERED the feedback received at Statutory Consultation**
- b) **APPROVED the making of the Traffic Regulation Order as set out in this report, for the installation of no waiting at any time restrictions on Tibbs Road Haddenham.**
- c) **AGREED that respondees to the Statutory Consultation be informed of the decision as well as implementation of the traffic regulation order and related works.**

For further information please contact Ian Hunt on 01494 421208

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