



Finance & Resources Select Committee Agenda

Date: Thursday 22 September 2022

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, HP19 8FF

Membership:

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

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes		5 - 12
The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July to be confirmed as a correct record.		

4 Public Questions

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

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

Further information on how to register can be found here: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/get-involved-with-council-decisions/select-committees/>

5 Six Month Budget Scrutiny Update

14:15

13 - 30

The Committee will consider a six-month review of the recommendations made by the 2022 Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group.

Contributors:

Councillor Martin Tett, Leader

David Skinner, Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Papers:

Six Month Budget Scrutiny Update

6 Employee Experience and Workforce Ambition

14:45

31 - 80

The Committee will consider a report updating on the deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan which supports employee experience and workforce ambition.

Contributors:

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing & Resources

Councillor Tim Butcher, Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources

Sarah Murphy-Brookman, Corporate Director for Resources

Sarah Keyes, Service Director for HR & OD

Papers:

Buckinghamshire Council Employee Experience and Workforce Ambition report

Buckinghamshire Council People Plan appendix

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|----------|---|--------------|------------------|
| 7 | Council Tax and Business Rates
The Committee will consider a briefing report on the revenues and benefits collection and arrears performance. The report also updates on the project to implement a single revenue and benefits system for the Council.

Contributors:
Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing & Resources
David Skinner, Service Director for Finance (Section 151 Officer)
Clive Jones, Head of Revenue & Benefits

Papers:
Revenues and Benefits report | 15:30 | 81 - 104 |
| 8 | Work Programme
The Committee will consider the upcoming work programme.

Contributors:
All Committee Members

Papers:
Work Programme attached | 16:00 | 105 - 106 |
| 9 | Date and time of the next meeting
The next meeting will take place on 1 December at 2pm. | | |

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For further information please contact: Chris Ward on 01296 585807, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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Agenda Item 3
Buckinghamshire Council
Finance & Resources Select
Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 28 JULY 2022 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 2.00 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 4.04 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

R Bagge, D Anthony, M Ayub, D Barnes, M Bracken, S Chhokar, T Dixon, D Goss, G Harris, I Macpherson, R Newcombe, M Walsh, S Wilson and K Wood

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

J Chilver, M Everitt, N Graham, S Murphy-Brookman, M Preston, M Strevens and C Ward

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies were received from Councillor M Tett. Councillors Barnes, Bracken and Newcombe were appointed as new Committee Members, replacing Councillors Ashman, Egleton and Ng.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman confirmed the appointment of Councillor D Goss as Vice-Chairman of the Finance and Resources Select Committee for the ensuing year.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 7 April 2022 and 18 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

6 LESSONS LEARNT FROM OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources, and the officers to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The report was a six-month update on lessons learnt from other local authorities. The last report had been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 25 January 2022.
- Over the past two years, several declarations of insolvency and public interest and best value reports had been issued to a number of authorities. Buckinghamshire Council had taken the approach of reviewing recommendations from these reports and assess best practice to avoid similar issues. Two external reports covering finance and governance in relation to Slough Borough Council and an independent governance report in relation to Northumberland County Council had also been considered.
- The Select Committee report examined recommendations made in these reports and related them to Buckinghamshire Council. It further provided an update on the consolidated action plan which identified areas for improvement. Buckinghamshire Council did not experience any significant issues in these areas but reports on other authorities' issues were constantly being monitored to identify best practice to improve financial processes and governance arrangements.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- A Member noted that a peer review had been undertaken for Slough Borough Council and asked whether such a process could also be considered for Buckinghamshire Council, for example by the Local Government Association (LGA). Members were advised that the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had examined the financial systems and processes as part of Buckinghamshire Council's service review and shared recommendations with the Council which had been considered.
- A Member raised concerns about the transparency of the Buckinghamshire Shareholder Committee Meetings. Whilst the Member understood why a large portion of these meetings were confidential, they maintained that public records of the work undertaken by the committee were necessary to ensure effective public scrutiny. The Cabinet Member explained that this new committee had been set up following a recommendation of a recent report on local authority governance with respect to control of subsidiary companies. Previously, such reports had gone to the Cabinet with an open discussion being held prior to entering a confidential session. This open discussion would continue in future Cabinet Meetings. However, the purpose of the Shareholder Committee was for a subcommittee of the Cabinet to focus on governance procedures and to ensure there was no conflict of interest between Members and subsidiary companies. As the Committee also reviewed whether the companies were fit for purpose or required governance changes and discussed confidential property and financial matters, confidential sessions would be necessary. Additionally, statutory provisions were in place to ensure that commercially sensitive information remained confidential. For future Shareholder meetings, consideration would be given on extracting information from confidential reports, such as business plans, so that part of the discussion could be held in the public domain.
- Although there were some significant differences between Buckinghamshire Council and Slough Borough Council, valuable lessons could still be learnt, for example in terms of developing a local code for corporate governance and developing the Shareholder Committee. One of the key challenges faced by Slough Borough Council had been the large investment into property of around £800m. This contrasted with Buckinghamshire Council's commercial investments, totalling around £200m. Buckinghamshire Council also had a strong property team with diverse knowledge of different properties and tenants, as well as professional property management advisors. Another significant

difference was the transformation programme which presented a challenge to Slough Borough Council. Buckinghamshire Council's 'Better Buckinghamshire' service review was on track to deliver annual savings of £20m.

- Slough Borough Council's reliance on agency staff presented an issue and this was highlighted in Buckinghamshire Council's budget. It was suggested that this should be monitored more closely, and potentially added to the KPIs. The Cabinet Member explained that a certain amount of agency staff was necessary to meet demands, for example in the customer service centre or for specialist projects. However, the number of agency staff was under regular review, particularly in the long-term, and expenses were also monitored. Long-term agency staff were encouraged to convert to become permanent employees. Slough Borough Council's concerns related to agency staff in more senior positions, whereas the number of senior positions filled by agency staff at Buckinghamshire Council was very low. Buckinghamshire Council aimed to create opportunities for upskilling and promotions within the existing workforce. In general, Buckinghamshire Councils' use of agency staff was well-balanced between flexibility and resilience and remained reasonably consistent over time. Although there was no dedicated budget for agency staff, the corporate management team reviewed the number of agency staff on a monthly basis to monitor costs, develop exit plans where necessary and retain visibility of available funds.
- It was suggested that the report would benefit with the inclusion of a timeframe for the development of the local code for corporate government and officers agreed that more detail about anticipated deadlines should be provided. The local code operated on a similar timeframe as the annual governance statement, which was expected to reach the Audit and Governance Committee in September, with completion estimated by mid-October.
- The Cabinet Member assured the Committee that procurement was covered by a strong team, and a contract and supply management group met regularly with representatives from all service areas to monitor contracts. Issues could be raised with the Audit and Governance Committee, especially for contract waivers and breaches.
- When asked about a timeframe and progress on the harmonisation programmes, the Cabinet Member advised that these were part of both the 'Better Buckinghamshire' review and the ongoing transformation programme. Currently, there were a number of legacy systems which were being harmonised into a single system. One of the biggest systems to be harmonised was the revenue and benefits system, which was expected to be completed by the end of the year. Different systems had different timeframes and satisfactory progress was being made across systems selected for consolidation.
- The five legacy authorities had different practices around Section 106 funding, but the consolidation of systems would allow the Council to better monitor these funds. More detailed information around the recovery of Section 106 funds could be provided to the Committee in future. It was expected that a consolidated system to monitor Section 106 funding would be in place by the end of the year.
- A Member requested an update on the progress of raising the profile on corporate governance issues which had aimed for completion in March 2022. The Committee was advised that profile-raising was an ongoing process, thus providing a timeline for completion was difficult. The completed work included mandatory staff training on data protection and governance issues.
- Improving recovery rates and managing outstanding debts was an ongoing process, and more definitive timeframes might be able to be established in future.
- KPIs were identified and developed collaboratively across the Council, with input from Cabinet Members, senior managers, and the business intelligence team. In addition to the Corporate Performance Report, the Council also had performance frameworks within each area to cover KPIs on an operational level in more detail.

- It was noted that the Audit and Governance Committee also examined and monitored governance issues faced by other local authorities.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

7 BUDGET MONITORING OUTTURN 2021-22

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, Councillor J Chilver, to introduce the report. In the Cabinet Member's presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The report set out the final financial outturn position for the financial year 2021-2022. It showed a more favourable position compared to the forecast position in the previous quarter on revenue overall. There was a £2.2m favourable variance, which was up from the £0.9 million forecast in quarter three. £7.7m of unrequired contingencies were built into the original budget due to the uncertainties and risks, particularly linked to COVID. It had been recommended that both these variances and the unused contingencies (total of £9.9m) be transferred to a specific reserve. This was to mitigate the growing financial risks in the current year and beyond linked to increased inflationary pressures, global turbulence, local government finance reform, and the new adult social care reforms. This affected both the Council's direct costs and the costs of providers.
- Construction inflation at 20% was particularly impacting on the Council's future capital programme table.
- Main overspends were seen in the education and children's services, transport, and health and wellbeing portfolios. The climate change and environment portfolio had seen an underspend, mainly delivered by increased revenue from the energy from waste plant.
- There was forecast net slippage of £18.7m, which was an improvement on the quarter three position of £22.5m. This represented 9.5% of the overall capital budget, which is within the council's target of 10%. The slippage is mainly a result of COVID implications, including the availability of building materials and components. It had been recommended that slippage is carried into future years on already improved capital schemes.
- Work had been undertaken to ensure the capital program was as realistic as possible. However, current inflationary pressures meant that a review needed to be undertaken. A task and finish group had been set up to review the capital budget to identify potential savings.
- The Council achieved £12.8m of savings, which was below the target of £13.2m. Overall debt levels had been reduced over recent months. Unsecured debt over 90 days was at £8.5m, decreased from £10m in quarter three. Debt recovery had been affected by COVID, with suspensions of court activity. However, a recent focus on outstanding debt had significantly helped the overall position.
- The overall performance for the last quarter on prompt payments to suppliers was 95%.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- Comparing the council's 10% slippage target to other local authorities was difficult due to some authorities adjusting their budget throughout the year. However, in comparison to published results from other authorities, Buckinghamshire Council's slippage levels were good.
- Prompt payment to suppliers was measured against two targets. For local, smaller, and medium-sized enterprises, the target timeframe for payment was 10 days. The general terms for payment were 30 days. As these timeframes were measured from the date on

the invoice, delays in payment could occur as a result of processing time to reach the Council, for example over weekends. The performance of 95% was satisfactory, and comparable to other authorities.

- A Member asked whether the Committee could be provided with a breakdown of savings from quarter four detailing recurring and one-off savings. The Cabinet Member advised that identifying ongoing savings from the previous year was part of the budget-setting process. As the budget was based on the forecast for quarter four, savings that were known at the time were marked as such. Ongoing savings identified throughout the year would be fed into future budgets.
- A Member noted that a significant amount of money from the energy from waste plant was allocated to a reserve pot. The Cabinet Member explained that these funds were established to mitigate against future risks on this income (for instance the plant closing for maintenance). The Cabinet Member added that consideration to the allocation of these funds would be discussed in next year's budget proposal.
- A Member asked if the next budget should include funds to help residents during the energy crisis. The Cabinet Member explained that the budget for the current year had been agreed and that scenario planning was done to account for factors such as inflation, resulting in a £10m special and £50m general reserve to mitigate the impact.
- The Cabinet Member agreed that the quality of reporting needed some improvements. It was suggested that a summary line for expenditure and income be added across the energy and climate change portfolio to increase understanding for expenditure more broadly.
- Concern was raised about the impact of inflation in construction costs and its impact on major projects. The Cabinet Member was aware of budgetary pressures on projects and advised that they were examined regularly on a case-by-case basis considering the latest forecast and developing action plans. Additionally, a task and finish group to review the capital programme had also been set up.
- The task and finish group would also be considering the uncommitted £3.3m of slippage on Section 106 funded projects for affordable housing. The Cabinet Member explained that this was legacy funding and highlighted the Council's commitment to delivering the affordable housing programme with some projects already in the pipeline.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

8 Q4 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021-22

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, Councillor J Chilver, to introduce the report. In the Cabinet Member's presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The report detailed the quarter four performance outturns and commentary for the Council's Key Performance Indicators. Trend data showing performance along with national and regional benchmarking in information was provided where possible.
- There were 115 indicators in the report. Most of them represented the year-end outturn, though some data was provided in arrears. A small number of indicators were updated annually. Improvement actions were listed against each indicator if applicable.
- The report showed that 71% of indicators were green and 22% are red. This reflected a good performance across a number of key areas. The proportion of green indicators had increased compared to the previous quarter, which was 69%. However, red indicators had also increased from 18% in quarter three.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- A Member noted that there was no historical data provided for the climate change and environment KPI. This information had not been available at the time of publishing the quarter four reports and data would be published as an agreed indicator in future.
- Comparison was drawn between the council's budgeted 9 days staff sickness compared to the ONS average data of 4.6 days for 2021. The Cabinet Member explained that sickness levels were higher during Covid but had returned to pre-Covid levels. In the 2021 calendar year, the average sickness levels were at 8.42 days, which was comparable with other local authorities. There was a discrepancy between public and private sector sickness levels, the latter of which was generally lower. Local authorities were multi-purpose businesses, with some jobs requiring mental health considerations (e.g. anxiety and depression in social care). As lockdown has ended and officers returned to the office, there had also been more staff members sick with colds. The Committee was assured that interventions were being put in place, for example physiotherapy at council depots, to mitigate muscular/skeletal sickness absences. It was also found that return-to-work conversations had been important to make staff feel understood and valued when returning to the workplace after sickness. Managers were also attending workshops on effective return-to-work discussions for both long- and short-term sickness. The lower levels of sickness absence in the private sector could be explained by employees going to work despite being sick as a result of not receiving sick pay.
- A Member noted that the average number of abandoned phone calls in the call centre in the last quarter had exceeded the 10% target (at 11.3%). The Cabinet Member advised that there had been an increase in customer contact after the Council followed up on unpaid Council Tax, as well as the new Revenue & Benefits system being implemented. These had resulted in the higher number of abandoned calls in Q4. The ability for customers to request call-backs from the team and advising customers of their position in the queue had also been helpful. The Cabinet Member noted that the customer service centre was advised to advertise alternative contact methods, such as web chat or council access points, to make it easier to contact the Council. The Committee heard that first call resolution (number of calls resolved straight away) was very high around 70%. The customer first board had been set up to investigate issues such as call-backs and examined how services could be improved to provide the best and most easily accessible experience for residents. The board also put several training opportunities in place to ensure effective customer service. The amount of abandoned calls would be checked and circulated to the Committee.

ACTION: S. Murphy-Brookman

- The Cabinet Member felt that offering flexible home working was essential to recruitment and retention and remaining a competitive employer. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) was committed to monitoring staff turnover levels and comparing them both regionally and nationally to other authorities and the private sector, and a set of workforce performance indicators was used to examine areas of concern. It was noted that the turnover target for the coming year should be a range rather than a number and this would be adjusted for 2022/23.
- During the recruitment process, a key question from applicants was regularly about the approach to flexible working. Increasing the number of days that people are required to visit the office would make it more difficult to recruit. An analysis had also been done on neighbouring authorities, which showed that other organisations took a much more flexible approach of not mandating office attendance where roles can be carried out from home. The Cabinet Member noted that sickness absence as a result of mental health difficulties had decreased since flexible working had been introduced.
- A Member suggested that the financial consequences of the increased appeals for

planning applications and enforcement should be considered within the budget, and how the Council can best support planners challenged by residents. The Cabinet Member advised that a robust local plan was the best way to mitigate these issues and noted that fewer speculative applications had been received in light of the local plan. The suggestion should be raised with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement.

- The payment rates had been impacted by the suspension of chasing debts and would likely be impacted going forward due to the cost of living crisis. The percentage of customers paying by direct debit ranged between 76% and 84% in the legacy areas which was high in comparison to other authorities. The team was committed to encouraging payments via direct debit.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

9 Q1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022-23

The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, Councillor J Chilver, to introduce the report. In the Cabinet Member's presentation, the following points were highlighted:

- The report included data from April to June and included a forecast adverse variance of £3.8m (1% of portfolio budgets). This was made up of a £10.4m adverse variance on portfolio spend offset by £6.6 million of corporate mitigations. The largest adverse variances included Health and Wellbeing, Education and Children's Services and Accessible Housing and Resources, which was largely attributable to energy costs, inflation, and variance in transport costs for school transport. This was offset by a favourable variance of £1.1m in the Climate Change Portfolio, due to the sale of electricity; and £6.6m favourable variants in corporate costs due to the forecast release of specific contingency budgets. These had been set aside to mitigate risks. Portfolio holders continued to look for further mitigations to bring forecast spend in line with the approved budget.
- The current level of inflation was having a significant effect on capital budgets. A member-led Task & Finish Group was reviewing the Capital Programme.
- £19.2m of savings were incorporated in the current year's budget, of which £19m was forecast to be delivered. The overall debt levels had continued to see a downward trend, currently at £8.7m over 0 days. In terms of payment, the target of 95% within 30 days has been achieved (98% in April and 96% in May).

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- It was suggested that early warning indicators for Children's Services could be monitored more closely. The Cabinet Member explained that the service's pressures were a result of staffing and placements costs, increased volume and complexity of cases and inflation. The Council was attempting to mitigate these issues through forward planning, for example by attempting to reduce agency costs through offering more placements and affordable accommodation.
- The Cabinet Member advised that funding for the Homes for Ukraine scheme had been ringfenced and would be reported through the Communities portfolio. The funds were received in arrears from central Government and it would be important to examine options for accommodation after the end of the six-month programme; this was on the council's risk register. Members were encouraged to write to the relevant Cabinet Member if they sought additional information.
- Whilst a Member acknowledged the prudence of last year's budget, it was suggested that consideration be given to whether any funds could be deployed to assist residents with

the cost of living crisis.

10 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-2023

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, Councillor J Chilver, introduced the report. The report detailed the 116 Key Performance Indicators agreed for the current financial year. These would be updated annually and linked to the priorities in the corporate plan.

The following points were noted during the Committee's discussion:

- The Cabinet Member agreed that a KPI for spending money may be ineffective and would consider how this could be amended.
- A Member felt that whilst interventions for smoking and drug use were important to examine, KPIs relating to public health should be expanded to include obesity and diabetes. The Cabinet Member agreed and would refer the feedback to the Director of Public Health.
- The Council engaged in different KPI benchmarking exercises with different comparative groups depending on the indicators and areas being investigated. The Council used information from the nearest neighbours to both set targets and monitor performance, as well as to better understand the needs of the population.
- The Cabinet Member agreed with the suggestions that a KPI be introduced to indicate how the 'homes built against housing requirements' target (PRE 010) would relate to other planning matters and also that the five-year housing supply, which had been agreed by the legacy district councils, be allocated based on these legacy areas rather than all of Buckinghamshire.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report.

11 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were encouraged to suggest items for consideration in 2022/23's work programme and could email these to the Chairman and the scrutiny officer.

12 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Thursday 22 September 2022 at 2pm.



Report to Finance & Resource Select Committee

Date:	22 nd September 2022
Reference number:	
Title:	Six Month Budget Scrutiny Update
Cabinet Member(s):	Martin Tett, Leader Portfolio
Contact officer:	David Skinner
Ward(s) affected:	None specific
Recommendations:	The Committee is asked note and comment on the contents of the report

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 In January 2022 the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group produced a report containing fifteen recommendations. This report details the six-month update to each of the recommendations, together with the timetable for actions to be completed.

2. Content of the report

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

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Set out in the responses above.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 Not applicable.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 Not applicable.

8. Next steps and review

9. Background papers

9.1 Not applicable.

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 Not applicable.

Appendix 1

Budget Scrutiny 2022 – Recommendations from the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group

Chairman – Cllr Ralph Bagge

Response from Cabinet – Cllr Martin Tett, Leader

Recommendation	Cabinet's Response – Y/N & comments	Six Month Update	Lead Member/Officer & Timelines
Page 15 1. The Corporate Plan be reviewed prior to the end of this financial year. The Corporate Plan is vital in providing the vision that drives the strategies, programme, and budget.	Yes. The Corporate Plan is currently under review, and the intention is to take a refresh of the Plan to Council later this Spring.	Complete – the refreshed Corporate Plan was approved by Council at its meeting on 27 April 2022.	Martin Tett Rachael Shimmin
2. A timetable of key strategies which are in development across the Council, with target dates for key milestones, should be shared with all members on a quarterly basis. This would provide renewed focus on delivery of strategies and enable members to identify opportunities for consultation or pre-decision scrutiny by the relevant select committee and local members where appropriate.	Yes. A list of strategies in development will be shared with Members on a quarterly basis. This will include key milestones, although recognising these are subject to change. All strategies will also be included on the Forward Plan which sets out the anticipated timing for decision making. Individual Cabinet Members have a clear focus on the development and delivery of strategies for their respective portfolios and are responsible for ensuring	A paper on the harmonisation of strategies, policies and charges was published ahead of, and reviewed at, the Cabinet meeting on 7 June 2022. This included a list of 70 strategies and policies the council is planning to harmonise or update by April 2023. A corporate policy register is being developed which will create a single	Martin Tett Sarah Ashmead

<p>3. Beyond the Better Buckinghamshire Programme, all services should constantly be reviewed and challenged for demonstration of best value. Members note that service areas such as Policy and Communications have had the capacity to cope with exceptional demand throughout the past two years due to COVID whereas other service areas have tended to hire interim staff to cope with times of higher demand. Members welcome an ongoing assessment of how each service is delivering value and question whether this level of budget would be necessary as the Council returns to a 'business as usual' footing. Publishing headcounts to understand staffing levels across all areas would support this assessment. A further review should be considered post-unitary and COVID to consider further reductions and potential outsourcing of non-core activities to save costs.</p>	<p>In part.</p> <p>Cabinet Members will consider the potential of outsourcing where this could deliver better value and improved customer service, but this is not necessarily the most appropriate means to secure best value for the Council and it needs to be considered on a case by case basis.</p> <p>The Better Buckinghamshire Programme is the Council's framework for reviewing and improving service delivery to ensure that we operate in an efficient way as possible within our resource constraints to deliver services to the public, meet the needs of the organisation and deliver on member priorities within a finite cash envelope. The methodology includes a rigorous review of staffing structures, digital processes</p>	<p>central database to hold information on each of the Council key policies, including dates of review. It is expected this will be in place by Autumn 2022. Once established, this will provide a mechanism to share details more easily and regularly / quarterly on the suite of Council policies and the upcoming review schedule.</p> <p>We have continued to review Council services to identify improvements and efficiencies, as well as rationalising structures and processes, in line with the Better Buckinghamshire programme. This programme is delivering our ambition to transform Council services, improve customer experience and release savings.</p> <p>At the commencement of the Better Buckinghamshire programme, we scheduled a timetable of reviews for Council services. Currently, we have completed reviews for 15 service areas, and have reviews in progress for a further 17 service areas. Savings for the programme are on track to</p>	<p>Martin Tett Sarah Ashmead</p>
	<p>appropriate consultation arrangements, including with local members. The regular dialogue between the Cabinet Member and relevant Select Committee Chairman will ensure that, where appropriate, the draft strategy is shared with the Select Committee for comment prior to sign off. The Select Committee will play an important role in reviewing the impact of the Council's strategies in the medium/longer term.</p>		

and delivery models, alongside a comparison against external benchmarks.

Given our finite resources and demand pressures we also need to progress our improvement and change work alongside business as usual. This has to take account of being able to flex to respond to any new government initiatives including but not limited to COVID. Our existing prioritisation reflects the detailed work needed post unitarization as well as improvement and change work in Children's and Adults services. Once the first cycle of Better Buckinghamshire Reviews has been completed, we will develop plans for the ongoing review of all service areas to ensure a continual focus on efficiency. Alongside the Better Buckinghamshire service improvement programme there are also a number of smaller improvement projects appropriately managed within services.

Headcount information is regularly published as part of the Cabinet's performance dashboard. However, headcount does not in itself enable us to assess value for money. A number of posts are externally funded, a number of services are insourced or outsourced, and a number of vacant posts covered by agency staff. Given the size and complexity of the organisation, headcount is dynamic and needs to flex based on individual service issues. For example, in the context of COVID, none of our services were able to respond to the exceptional

achieve £20.1m by the end of 2025/26.

All of the completed reviews have resulted in improved operating models, rationalised structures and better resilience. Continuous improvement plans are in place for all service areas where reviews are completed, to ensure that there is a continued focus on improvement.

In addition to the service reviews, we are delivering a large volume of improvement projects and transformational activity across the Council, including the Adult Social Care transformation programme, the Planning Improvement Board and Work Smart. We are also considering the next phase of the Better Buckinghamshire programme and identifying further service reviews that may be required.

Information regarding Headcount continues to be published quarterly.

	<p>staffing demand arising alongside delivering business as usual activity. Across the Council, service areas including Policy and Communications, managed the exceptional workloads through a combination of bringing in additional temporary staff, funded through COVID grant funding, and putting on hold core activities.</p> <p>Oversight of improvement activity is a key activity for the CMT and reviewed regularly by Cabinet Members. Cabinet Members are also responsible for regular challenge of all services in order to ensure efficiency and this includes identifying opportunities to reconsider delivery models where appropriate.</p>		
<p>Page 18</p> <p>Greater visibility should be given to contingencies contained within the budget, as well as any in-year release of contingencies so that residents can see and understand how decisions are reached and what pressures there are on the budget. Consideration should be given to including an additional appendix in the final budget paperwork to be approved by Cabinet. Graphical representation grouping portfolio areas would be helpful for Members and residents.</p>	<p>Yes. Corporate Contingencies will be presented to Cabinet in February to ensure visibility. Furthermore, in 2022/23 quarterly budget monitoring reports to Cabinet will include the status of the contingencies, including details of any that have been released to Portfolio areas.</p>	<p>Complete.</p>	<p>Martin Tett Richard Ambrose</p>
<p>5. Consideration be given to running the Social Worker Academy with a smaller cohort on an ongoing basis to mitigate issues of recruitment shortages and a</p>	<p>Yes. The ASYE Academy will expand to a cohort of 60 in the financial year 2022/23. The size of the Academy in</p>	<p>The ASYE Academy is on track to have three cohorts of 20 ASYE social</p>	<p>Anita Cramer John Chilver</p>



<p>reliance on high cost agency staff. Metrics should be developed to measure the success of the delivery of the programme and Cabinet should explore whether this is a model that can be replicated in other hard to recruit areas such as planning.</p>	<p>future years will be determined by need, recruitment strategy and budget priorities.</p> <p>The model will be actively considered in other directorates where recruitment challenges exist. The metrics to measure success will include; the proportion of successful candidates who join the staffing establishment and retention rate at month 24 after leaving the Academy.</p>	<p>workers in the 12 months from 1 April 2022.</p> <p>The Corporate Director for Children’s Services chairs a ‘Talent Academy’ focus group to progress recruitment and retention initiatives across the Council. This group is run with colleagues from HR with representatives from across the Council.</p>	<p>Richard Nash Sarah Murphy-Brookman</p>
<p>6. The Council’s property rationalisation strategy should have a clear vision of future ways of working and be delivered at a greater pace, with regular updates provided to Finance and Resources Select Committee. Acknowledging that an Estates Strategy is under development, the Council can shape its own future with new ways of working and targeting an earlier date for downsizing of the council estate will bring greater efficiency savings. Should the Council return to pre-pandemic work patterns there would still be excess office space, therefore decisions to dispose or repurpose some assets should be made within the coming financial year.</p>	<p>Yes. The Cabinet fully supports the ambition to downsize the Council’s estate in order to deliver efficiency savings as early as possible. There are a number of complexities to manage with this, including the uncertainties about future working patterns and space requirements arising from the pandemic, as well as the interdependencies with our town centre redevelopment plans. That said, considerable work has already taken place to establish how the revenue saving of £2.4m from accommodation might be achieved in the medium term financial plan period, with the full saving due to be achieved by 2026 (in line with the lease end at Capswood). There is a targeted and realistic delivery programme in place to support this, assuming that a further variant of covid does not materially affect the programme.</p>	<p>Work continues on the Estates Strategy and Cabinet Members have been briefed on the emerging strategy.</p> <p>A Member working group has been established to discuss the issue and the first meeting has been held. The second meeting is programmed before August. The aim of the working group is to have a finalised Estates Strategy for the Autumn.</p> <p>The current mandated two day a week in the office has resulted in a solid set of data on building usage over the last 6 months, supported by</p>	<p>John Chilver Ian Thompson</p>



The Estates Strategy, and accompanying rationalisation plan, is being developed for Cabinet consideration in July 2022. A number of steps are being taken to inform the development of this strategy over the next six months. In terms of the requirement for office space, a pilot is due to take place from March 2022 to assess the potential of moving to a desk to staff ratio of 1:4 and a ratio of 1 person to 100 sq. ft. It would not have been possible to commence this at an earlier date because staff have not been in the office sufficiently to be able to undertake a pilot study that would realise tangible results. In advance of the pilots, we are due to commence the implementation of a new desk and meeting room booking system by the end of February. In tandem with this work, preliminary master planning of the Amersham and Wycombe offices is being undertaken to give an indication of what is possible on the Council owned sites, if we are to reduce the operational footprint. The planned result of these steps will be a roll out estates strategy for the organisation, meeting the requirements of the medium term financial plan, regeneration considerations and opportunities in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Amersham together with operational need.

The Council has had significant success in letting out surplus operational buildings over the past 18 months. We have recently had letting success of surplus space at 66 High Street Aylesbury (now fully let, 30,000 sq. ft) and Easton Street (fully let to Oxfordshire Mental Health

both Service Now and independent verification surveys. This piece of work has been very important as it explains how in a complex recruitment, retention and operational landscape in a post covid world how the Council offices are actually being used.

The information collected demonstrates that the Offices continue to operate at considerably less than full, and that there are opportunities to reduce.

Work continues along the following themes:

- Head office in Aylesbury with options being discussed by Members regarding space needed.
- The closure and potential lease surrender at Capswood. The Lease ends in 2026. In the interim the Council has had some success in letting the Offices.

	<p>Trust, 30,000 sq. ft). The Council also sublets space at Wycombe offices and has recently achieved a new letting of 10,000 sq. ft of accommodation, bringing the total space let at Wycombe to about 25% of the office space. Additionally the Council lets surplus space at Amersham and a small amount of space at New Council Offices to the CCG. We continue to actively market and seek occupational tenants for vacant space within the Councils portfolio and are pleased to note that, excluding those in an approved capital or regeneration scheme, just 0.33% of the properties across the Council's estate have been vacant for more than 2 years which is an improving position. The only large operational vacancy we have is at Capswood. We are actively seeking to identify a solution that will reduce our costs linked to this asset and will report to Cabinet as things progress.</p> <p>Regular updates on the development and delivery of the Estates Strategy will be provided to the Finance and Resources Select Committee.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions about the space needed at Amersham, Wycombe. • Potential closure of floors and possibly buildings. <p>Preliminary conversations have started with a final strategy to be outlined after the summer.</p>	
<p>7. Additional funding should be set aside for the development of the Local Plan as £750k p.a. over the next three years is likely to be inadequate, particularly in light of possible changes arising when the Planning White Paper is taken forward.</p>	<p>No. We are confident that the current budget for preparing the Buckinghamshire Local Plan is adequate to make good progress. We will, however, keep it under review, so we can respond to any changes as a result of the Planning White Paper.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Peter Strachan Ian Thompson</p>
<p>8. Cabinet should agree a clear strategy which includes a delivery target for</p>	<p>Yes. The Housing Service is working with other teams in the authority to prepare an Overarching Housing</p>	<p>Property continue to work on two sites, being the first tranche Horns</p>	<p>Mark Winn</p>

affordable homes. This strategy and target number should be produced in 2022/23 and cover a greater scope for targeted housing for Key Workers, Social Rent and Supported Living and demonstrate the Council's desire to move at pace in this area. The Cabinet Members for planning and regeneration, finance, resources, property and assets and housing, homelessness and regulatory should work together to deliver these affordable homes in the most cost-effective way for residents (similar to last year's recommendation 12).

Strategy in 2022/23. This overarching strategy will sit above the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which is currently in draft form and being consulted on. The Overarching Housing Strategy will cover targets for the provision of affordable, key worker, socially rented and specialist housing, amongst other issues.

An interim 'position statement' on affordable housing will be reported to Cabinet in March 2022. This position statement has been developed following work done by a member led Task and Finish Group, chaired by myself. A review of possible schemes for development on Council owned land is also being worked on, currently. This review will highlight the various options that will be open to members when giving consideration to the use of Council owned land.

I am working with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Planning and Regeneration, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources, Property and Assets, and Cabinet as a whole, to move this important issue forward.

Lane, Wycombe and Bucks Sports and Social Club, Aylesbury both opportunities are being actively promoted for an affordable housing contribution and work is being undertaken to see if that can be extended beyond the normal Planning requirement.

The Affordable Housing Position statement was presented to Cabinet in May 2022 and was approved.

Progress has been made in respect of two key sites where affordable housing may be delivered, and Cabinet has approved a request by officers to apply for outline planning permission for Stoke Mandeville. Work is now underway on developing a proposal for the Horns Lane development site in High Wycombe.

Following a Cabinet restructure, responsibility for council delivery of Accessible Housing now sits with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Resources & Property.

Ian Thompson

<p>9. Cabinet should consider increasing the levels of investment for rights of way repairs to recognise the increased usage and their importance, particularly to rural and semi-rural communities.</p>	<p>No. The revenue and capital budgets that have been proposed are consistent with previous years' allocations with the significant exception that, for 2022/23 the capital budget has been increased by £442k to fund the replacement of Berryhill footbridge and the Denham Bridleway bridge. This extra funding, and these works, enable us to fulfil our statutory duty to keep the Rights of Way (RoW) network open.</p> <p>The baseline level of expenditure is considered to be sufficient to maintain the RoW network and any increase would have to be funded from other services, so a balanced view has been taken. The RoW network will continue to be regularly inspected and if particular work is required, further allocations will be considered.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Steve Broadbent Richard Barker</p>
<p>10. That the Cabinet Member for Transport develop a strategy in 2022 for the £800k (£200k p.a.) investment into EV charging points to assess the current and future need, the number and type of charging points that could be obtained within the budget allocated, the potential income streams and to ensure there is a consistent approach to deliver these in the most cost effective way.</p>	<p>Yes. The Transport Strategy team have been undertaking research into the most effective way to support the exponential increase in electric vehicles in Buckinghamshire, focusing on the provision of electric vehicle charging points now and in the future. This work has involved several stakeholder workshops to identify the most appropriate solutions for each type of end user. The study element is drawing near to its conclusion and a draft EV Study and Action Plan have been developed. The Action Plan is being sent out to all members for their comments in the next week, with a supporting presentation, using the platform YourVoice.</p>	<p>The Council adopted its Electric Vehicle Action Plan (EVAP) in June 2022. This committed us to deliver 1000 publicly available charging spaces by 2027, with an initial doubling of charging spaces by the end of March 2024. This equates to 175 additional EV charging spaces.</p> <p>We have procured a delivery partner to support the delivery of chargepoints within Council owned</p>	<p>Steve Broadbent Ian Thompson</p>

We hope to bring a finalised draft to Informal Cabinet in April 2022.

The draft Action Plan recommends 14 key actions to be delivered over the next 10 years, with short- and medium-term priorities outlined. It is expected that the £200k per year investment will be utilised to deliver these outcomes over the next four years. The number and type of charging points will vary according to the geography, population density, power distribution available and the constraints of the car park. To this end the draft Action Plan also includes an assessment of the suitability of Buckinghamshire Council owned car parks for the installation of faster chargers. In addition, the Transport Strategy team are working with Community Board Coordinators and Parish Councils to support parishes to identify and install further charge points. Each location must be assessed for physical feasibility of installation (whether there is adequate space, street furniture in the way etc) and to identify power supply costs with the Distribution Network Operator (DNOs), which are often significant and limiting. Slow chargers may provide a viable option where there is inadequate power supply.

We want our approach to be cost effective and consistent which is why we have undertaken a thorough study of the options available to us. To ensure value for money, smooth delivery, ongoing maintenance and a

public car parks and are submitting an initial bid (Phase 1) to the On Street Residential Charging (ORCS) fund in early August, which will fund 136 new EV charging bays. This is due to be followed by a second bid (Phase 2) to the same fund to cover new chargepoints in town and parish council car parks. We are working with the Community Boards to identify receptive locations.

In addition to this we have also submitted a bid for £3m to the new Government Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund. The aim of this is progress innovative solutions to charging electric vehicles in residential areas where there is limited off street parking. This is a core priority in the EVAP. We will find out if we are successful in being awarded this funding in August 2022.

The power supply for Buckinghamshire is fed from 3 District Power Networks and our expansion of public chargepoints has been repeatedly hampered by the

	<p>high-quality customer experience when using public chargers, we will procure a delivery partner and be guided by their experience. This will include installing publicly available points at low or zero cost to the Council and/or identification of future revenue sharing possibilities. We have good relationships with the UKs leading suppliers and expect to procure a delivery partner for on-street installations later in 2022. In addition to this, charge point operators and businesses are investing in the network at key destinations and service stations. We intend to only be a funder of last resort, so that key locations are covered and our funding only utilised where it would be difficult to deliver a charge point commercially.</p>	<p>prohibitive costs of power connections to the charging sites. The focus for the £200k p.a. fund is to unlock those priority sites that have higher power connection costs, so that they can come forward. £58k of this year's allocation will be used to support the Phase 1 ORCS funded locations. The remaining £140k has yet to be allocated but will likely be used to support difficult locations in ORCS Phase 2, as well as chargepoints in Council facilities such as our leisure centres, for which there is currently no funding support from Government.</p>	
<p>1. That the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change should work with officers to develop an offer to improve education for members and residents on climate change and to provide incentives to promote individual action. Other Members should be involved in this piece of work, the TECC Select Committee and/or the Member Development Working Group.</p>	<p>Yes. A package of climate change support for Members will be developed with input from the Member Development Working Group to ensure its suitability. A long term communications campaign has been launched (the Bucks Climate Challenge) and further content to educate and inform residents on how to reduce their impacts on the climate is being drafted which we will seek TECC Select Committee feedback on. This campaign will also inform residents of the work the Council undertakes to address climate change. We have committed in the Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy to provide annual updates on progress against actions as well as emissions reductions, the first due in October 2022 (1 year after adoption).</p>	<p>Communications and awareness raising activity to date has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication of Bucks' Climate Challenge webpages and an update to the Council Energy and Climate Change webpages - Ongoing social media advertising for the Bucks Climate Challenge campaign encouraging environmentally friendly behaviour. - 2 internal Member awareness raising sessions 	<p>Gareth Williams Ian Thompson</p>

- Climate Change Literacy Training (delivered by APSE) for 10 officers and 5 elected Members
- Promotion of the Cycle to Work Scheme and accessing electric vehicles via the Tuskar car benefit scheme for Council staff in two internal staff emails
- Bucks Climate Challenge artwork affixed to 10 refuse collection vehicles (summer '22)
- Defra '21/'22 Air Quality Grant to the Council press release resulted in coverage by Bucks Free Press and Energy Live News
- Letters sent to 151k addresses regarding the Buckinghamshire Solar Together (N.B. solar PV, EV chargepoint, and battery storage group purchasing opportunity) (additional promotion via a press release, an internal email to staff, and on the Low Carbon Workspaces website)
- Letters sent to 3,314 homes regarding the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Deliver Scheme Phase 2 opportunity



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Buckinghamshire Council becomes the first local authority to promote the AWorld app – which encourages environmentally sustainable behaviour. - Encouragement of Earth Day ‘waste less and save more’, Clean Air Day emission reduction, National Walking month transition to active travel modes, AWorld app download and usage activities in press releases and staff internal emails. 	
<p>12. A review of legacy Council special expenses should be undertaken in the coming financial year. Whilst this might be complicated due to varying arrangements with town and parish councils and recognising one of the special expenses is in an unparished area whilst the other is not, the Committee believe that the term ‘special expenses’ should only be used in the budget to denote a one-off financial commitment. This would not necessarily impact on current governance arrangements; however an assessment is required of the need for these and to ensure there is consistency in terms of how services are funded in other areas of the</p>	<p>Yes. A review of special expenses arrangements in Aylesbury and High Wycombe will be undertaken in 2022/23.</p>	<p>Work to review special expense arrangements has commenced as planned.</p> <p>We have convened a Member Task and Finish group to oversee Phase 1 of this this work, which is focused on Aylesbury, and we are exploring options to devolve six community centres and their associated green spaces.</p> <p>Subsequent phases to this programme of work will broaden the</p>	<p>Martin Tett Sarah Ashmead</p>



County (e.g. community centres / open spaces).

scope across other parts of the county.



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Report to Finance & Resources Select Committee

Date: 22 September 2022

Title: **Buckinghamshire Council (BC) Employee Experience and Workforce Ambition**

Relevant councillor(s): Cllr John Chilver and Cllr Tim Butcher

Author and /or contact officer: Sarah Murphy Brookman

Ward(s) affected: **None specific**

Recommendations:

To note: achievements against the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan deliverables for our first two years as a unitary organisation, put in place to meet our early workforce ambition and to support the employee experience for our new council

To note: the further deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan to meet our workforce ambition for 2023-2025 and further support our employee experience

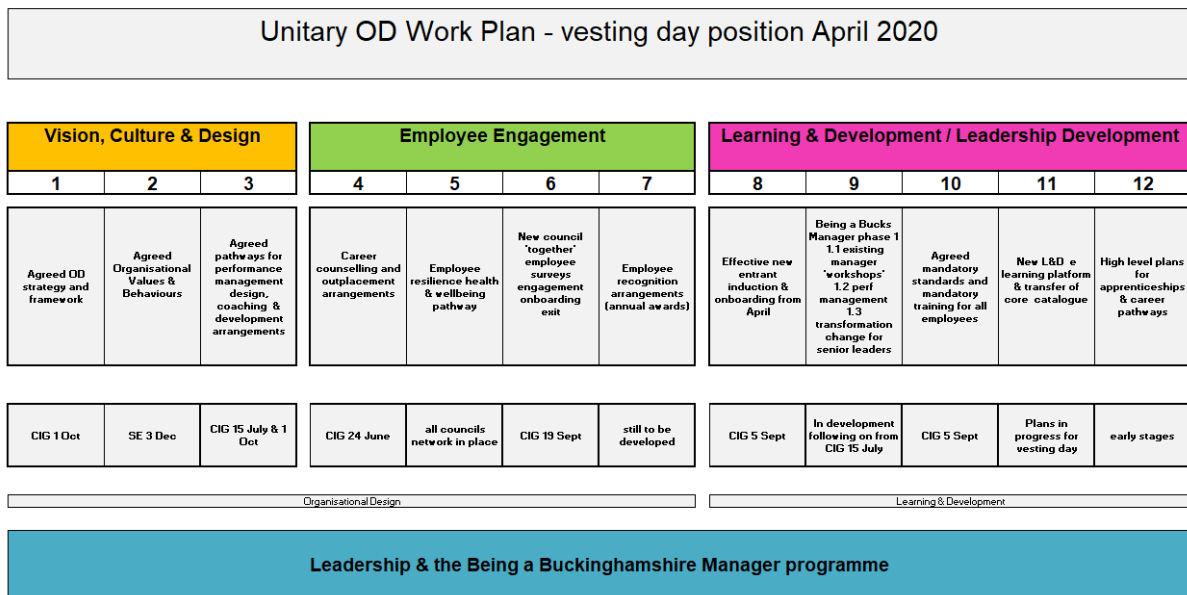
1 Executive summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan, in place to support our employee experience and meet our workforce ambition. It provides an update on the work we have done in the last two years and covers the further plans we have in place for the next 3-5 years as part of our continuous improvement.

2. Part one - Introduction

2.1 **An overview of our Employee Experience & Workforce Ambition – as set out in our People Plan**

2.2 Employee experience and employee sentiment have been central to our thinking for Buckinghamshire Council. Through a unitary organisational development (OD) workstream we had clear deliverables for vesting day with a dedicated focus on employee engagement – see middle section of diagram below (a larger scale diagram can be found at appendix 1).



2.3 A strategic **People Plan** has been in place since 2020 setting out our initial five year workforce ambition for the new organisation. The OD workstream is built into this.


2.4 There are five themes in our People Plan with Employee Engagement at the centre (see diagram next page). The other themes also relate to engagement and together they build a comprehensive foundation for our people offer (for more detail on these themes and the plan see appendix 5 as an attachment)



2.5 The deliverables in our plan have recently been reviewed, updated, and signed off by CMT with a shift in focus from the 2020-2022 deliverables, which are on track, and towards our 2023-2025 deliverables. See highlights on next page and appendix 5 for full details.

Key deliverables for the first 2 years 2020-2022

Embedding our new organisation, service improvement, reset and recovery



1. Improve our Customer experience with an effective customer friendly digital platform, expert consultancy and HR leadership
2. Develop our HR operating model and service offer to deliver services in line with organisational priority, capacity and budget including fulfilling our legal and statutory and contractual obligations
3. Roll out and embed our leadership development programme to create the culture we want for our new council
4. Have policies, toolkits and processes in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices
5. Provide professional support to our corporate service review and Work Smart change programmes
6. Improve our workforce metrics and analytics to help better drive and understand employee health and wellbeing, performance, resourcing, skills and succession planning and help improve organisational performance
7. Address our recruitment and retention challenges with an internal and external focus on developing pipelines for current and future skills requirements – including a focus on entry level pathways for young people
8. Raise employee performance through – coaching for performance, setting direction and personal development
9. Communicate with our internal and prospective future workforce, using effective tools for our different workstyles, showing an understanding of their needs and concerns with particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing

Key deliverables for years 3-5 (2023-2025)

Towards meeting our place based vision and Council of the year



1. An innovative and clear employee experience including career pathways and development opportunities for people of all ages and at all stages in their career; fair and transparent reward and recognition; authentic engagement, empowerment and wellbeing
2. Developing leaders and managers who are exemplars, who coach and support colleagues as part of our resourcing and retention strategy and with an emphasis on equality diversity, inclusion
3. Employees who act as ambassadors for our council, role modelling our values and promoting our employer brand
4. Embedding our worksmart culture and new ways of working
5. Convergence onto one set of BC terms and conditions
6. Meeting pay and reward challenges in a high inflation environment
7. Building workforce resilience, to respond to fluctuating demand and future challenges through a flexible, peripatetic workforce
8. Facilitating major change programmes such as ASC reforms and Service Improvement
9. Improving our information platform, processes and HR systems to enhance our customers experience.
10. Employer of choice/Council of the year

2.6 Our **People Plan** has KPIs to measure how well we're meeting employees' expectations. The following indicators are of particular interest:

- Recruitment and attraction
- Retention and turnover
- Health and attendance

- Levels of engagement in our employee survey

2.7 The table below shows the relevant KPIs relating to employee experience based on June 2022 or closest available data.

People Plan – Key Measures of Performance 1 April -30 June 2022				
People Plan Pillars	Performance Measure	Target	Q1	Commentary including external benchmarking comparators
Resourcing a skilled and flexible workforce	Voluntary turnover	12-16%	15.1%	Retention strategies planned and in place to help to mitigate turnover levels – People Plan 2020-2025 applies
	Mandatory training completion	90%	87.4%	May 22 data – very close to overall target. There will always be a margin nor non completion – long term absence, maternity leave etc
	Time to hire (vacancy approval to offer)	90 days	43 days	This figure is consistent through the year. Resourcing is working hard to keep this figure as low as possible in a tough recruitment marketplace.
	Turnover in first year of service	<2 %	4.2%	This is rising and needs to be watched (up from 3.6% last quarter) – engagement strategies and focus on growth and development opportunities apply
Engaging and motivating our people	Together Survey engagement index	70%	72%	May 22 data. We have an ambitious KPI and we perform well above the external benchmark for other private and public sector companies which is 65%
	Joiners positively engaged at 3 months' service	85%	75%	Relatively small sample sizes so % rates fluctuate (40 responders in last Q)
	Leavers who would recommend us as an employer	80%	77%	Relatively small sample sizes so % rates fluctuate (44 responders in last Q)
Inspirational leadership	Together Survey response rate	60%	53%	Based on May 22 data - up from 48% in last survey Nov 2021.
	Together Survey - positive relationship with line manager	85%	87%	Based on May 22 data – and consistent with November 21 External benchmark for other private and public sector companies is 79%
	C4P reviews complete for mid/end year deadline	90%	91%	Based on end of April deadline - full compliance was achieved for pay review purposes in July
Change management and HR consultancy	Together Survey change management index	65%	60%	Based on May 22 data - up from 57% last in the last survey. Management comms and training has been put in place and a new Change Management Charter has been developed External benchmark for other private and public sector companies is 64%
	Average sickness levels	9 days per FTE	9.7 days	Covid related absence has increased rates and is our highest reason for absence. Workshops to support performance and a new absence management training course is in place

2.8 Our People Plan is innovative and ambitious in our approach and includes piloting new projects and developing new processes. Examples of this include our 'try before you apply' and 'meet the expert' approaches to supporting recruitment activity, our work with the DWP on Kickstart as a route to supporting inclusion and helping young people into work, and the launch of our new 'my e-pay' app to provide an accessible overview of pay at any time over the year.

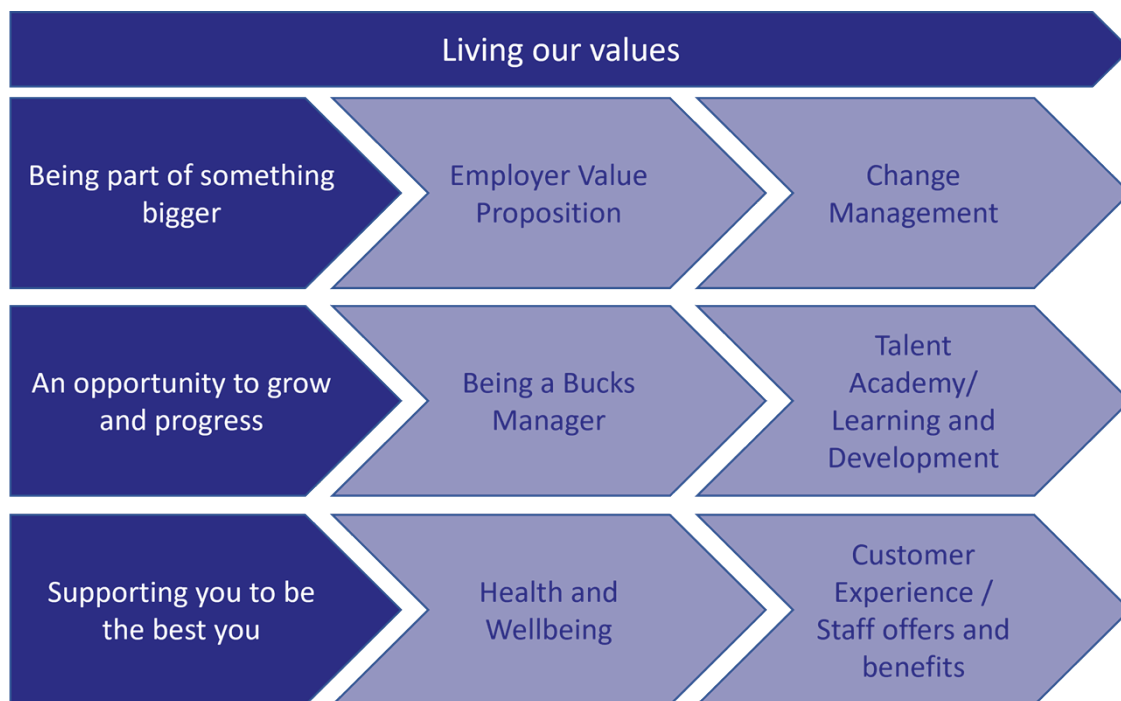
2.9 This report will focus on the employee engagement deliverables in our People Plan and provide an update on the work that has taken place in the last two years. It will also refer to the plans we have in place for the next 3-5 years as part of our continuous improvement.

2.10 **Part two - Progress on our Employee Experience and Workforce Ambition**

2.11 Our employer brand is an important statement that sets out what is distinctive about us as an employer and reflects the employment experience colleagues receive when working for Buckinghamshire Council – helping to appeal to those people who will thrive and perform best in our culture. Our employer brand is aligned to our organisational values, and in practice means:

- **Meaningful work**
- **A positive induction and onboarding experience**
- **Inspirational leadership and management**
- **Opportunities for personal development and growth**
- **Support in place for health and wellbeing, and work life balance**
- **Feeling valued and with opportunity for recognition and reward**

2.12 To embed this vision and ensure the employee experience meets the expectations of our staff, we have devised a communication approach for our internal audience, bring this employer brand and vision to life as part of everything we do. The approach for the next twelve months is represented in the diagram on the next page, focusing on the key deliverables and initiatives imperative to the staff experience.



These themes will structure our update in the following sections of the report

2.13 **Using our employer brand to support attraction and retention**

2.14 To enhance attraction and retention, we have researched what our unique employer appeal is, through analysing joiner and leaver surveys and interviewing hundreds of colleagues who have taken part in campaigns for our careers-focused social media accounts ([Instagram](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#)).

93% of new joiners say they are proud to work for the organisation and 91% would recommend Buckinghamshire Council as a place to work.

2.15 The top four attraction factors are:

- the nature of work
- opportunities for learning and development
- work life balance and flexible working
- its local to where I live

2.16 Out of our voluntary leavers, limited career progression has been the top reason for leaving followed by wellbeing and personal growth as the most common reasons driving resignations. However, two-thirds of leavers would work for Buckinghamshire Council again and 7 out of 10 would recommend the organisation as a good place to work. Explored later in this report is how the People Plan is addressing these top turnover factors.

- 2.17 From this research, we have distilled four key messages that are the essence of why people choose to join and stay and are motivated to do their best during their careers at Buckinghamshire Council.
- 2.18 These headline messages from our new employer brand and will be complemented by employee stories and professional photography to share with both external candidates and our internal workforce to highlight why Buckinghamshire Council is a great place to work.
- 2.19 People join us for career development. And we are building on our learning and development offer to ensure it's inclusive to all and that we're supporting younger people into entry roles and developing them to grow into our in-demand professions. We are known to be an employer with strong values and a supportive place to work that has good employee benefits, a growing set of staff networks, and an emphasis on wellbeing and equality and diversity. Flexible working hugely appeals to our workforce who value having a good work-life balance, and hybrid working has proved both effective and popular with staff.
- 2.20 The four key messages are set out below with more detail on these in appendix 2 (please note this work is still in final development so the images/words inserted are illustrative at this time).

1. Part of something bigger



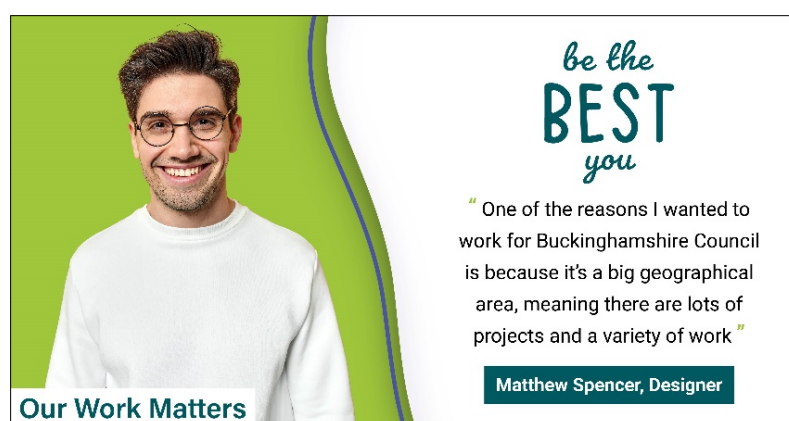
2. Do big things



3. Our work matters



4. Be the best you



2.21 **Onboarding and Induction**

2.22 An effective induction reassures new starters that they have made the right career choice by matching the expectations set during the recruitment journey, and enables them to get up to speed faster, feel happier and more motivated, and stay longer.

2.23 **Corporate Induction**

2.24 A new corporate face to face induction was launched earlier this year to help new joiners settle in and learn about the organisation. We know that new starters benefit from meeting colleagues in person, so the induction package provides online resources for people before they start but also, importantly, an opportunity to meet face-to-face.

2.25 This package includes

2.26 **New Joiner Guide** - new starters receive a link to this guide before they join, and again on their first day. The guide covers a range of essential joining information as well as important need and nice-to-knows. It is available to hold onto and for easy reference to help answer questions and orientate. Please click on the link (left) to see this guide. An extract is provided as an illustration on the next page.

2.

Your induction overview

At Buckinghamshire Council, your induction is made up of five main parts:



Corporate induction elearning



'Welcome to Buckinghamshire Council' session (in person)



Your team and directorate induction



Your role-specific training



Ongoing onboarding

Here's what to expect during your six-month probationary period:

MONTH 1

Welcome and first steps



MONTH 4 & 5

Ongoing induction



MONTH 2

Settling in



MONTH 6

Final probationary meeting



MONTH 3

Probationary period half-way point



MONTH 7 & BEYOND

Your development beyond after your probation



- 2.27 [In-person Corporate Induction Session](#) - all new joiners are invited to attend a face to face Corporate Induction Session delivered by a Service Director or member of CMT. These sessions take place every month and we encourage all new starters to attend the next available session. 88 people have attended the first two sessions.
- 2.28 [Tips for managers and a new checklist](#) - updated guidance and a new checklist are available from the How We Recruit People page on The Source, making sure you cover all bases when inducting a new team member.
- 2.29 [Introduction to Being a Buckinghamshire Manager](#) - new joiners who are managers, as well as internal movers into management roles, are invited to attend a face to face introductory session led by CMT that introduces manager standards and expectations including all the manager essentials. These sessions will run every three months, or more often if necessary.
- 2.30 **Local induction**
- 2.31 To complement the corporate induction, directorates have also developed their own local face to face or on-line induction programmes to help familiarise new joiners with contextual information more specific to them. Communities and PGS have a directorate induction which is run face to face every quarter. Adults & Health have an induction programme for all new starters which usually takes place via Teams every month. DCE, Resources and Children's Services are launching their directorate inductions in the autumn.

- 2.32 **Opportunities to support people starting work for the first time**
- 2.33 We are aware that the pandemic and shift to hybrid working has presented challenges for people new to the workplace to make connections and socialise. We have used the Kickstart programme to pilot some new approaches for bringing young people together across services.
- 2.34 For young people who have never worked in an office environment before and may be unfamiliar with programmes used and office etiquette, we developed workshops homing in on these skills, offering hints and tips and sharing advice for best-practice. Throughout the year, we also worked with external training providers including Bucks Adult Learning, to provide face-to-face training sessions focussing on working styles and employability skills. These sessions helped new employees to understand the best ways to collaborate with their teams, create successful professional development plans and much more.
- 2.35 To help kickstart participants saying they didn't feel connected to the other employees in other directorates, we ran a networking session. Rachel Shimmin delivered a virtual welcome speech, followed up with talks from Service Directors, ice-breaker activities, and a presentation on how to create other networking opportunities whilst on placement.
- 2.36 Based on the success of this event, we ran another for a wider group of young people including our apprentices and graduate trainees, this time delivering more career and personal development focused content and invited other employees from within the council to talk about their own career journey's and things they had learnt along the way. The response to this was so positive that its format has already been used for an event in Children's services, and we hope to repeat it on a larger scale, open to an even wider range of Early Careers employees as part of our emerging work to support internal career progression.
- 2.37 **Early Careers Network** - Our National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) trainees have done their own thinking into what would make a good onboarding experience and they have initiated a project to establish a new Early Careers Network. This will be a support system for anyone early on in their career to tap into and will meet regularly to share ideas and introduce new members. As well as regular virtual meetings, the network will also encourage face-to-face networking activity and act as a forum for entry level staff to create connections across the Council. This project will be led by the graduates and HR&OD initially, with the plan to eventually elect new chairs on an annual basis as individuals move on from their programmes, hopefully into further permanent roles at the Council.

2.38 Other opportunities to support collaboration

- 2.39 Our staff survey has told us that although 77% of staff feel connected and in touch with their team, and 80% of staff find it easy to collaborate effectively with colleagues regardless of workstyle, not all employees find it easy to make connections across the council to get things done (only 56% agreed in the May 22 survey).



- 2.40 The Council's communications programme to support 'The Year of Collaboration' was endorsed as our 'theme of the year' from September 21 – September 22, in recognition of the feedback in the Together Survey around how easy it is to collaborate with colleagues. The year-long programme has presented opportunities for people of all workstyles, to collaborate and meet (virtually and face to face) on topics of interest. The programme has included the launch of our successful ongoing Tea Break Talk series where internal experts knowledge share on a diverse range of topics, including mental health, our Covid response and even an online guided workout led by our Physical Health Network. The programme has also supported our staff networks to grow and develop with the formation of the new Mental Health and Physical Health networks (see more in health and wellbeing section). In addition, 'Collaboration Coffee Morning' Packs for teams to download have been provided, and the programme is rounding off this September with a 'Summer Social', giving teams the opportunity to have a longer lunch break to come together, and 'SLT on the Road' which will see directors visiting satellite and non-office based teams around the county, outside their own directorate, to help form new connections.



2.41 **Buckinghamshire Managers and Inspirational Leadership**

2.42 An impressive 87% of staff from our May survey state they have a positive working relationship with their manager and 78% say their manager regularly reviews their personal development and performance goals. Reassuringly, these high measures have been constant on our surveys, over time.

2.43 However only 58% of staff feel there is a clear sense of direction and although questions relating to managing change have gone up in May, they are still showing that staff want more opportunity to discuss changes affecting them and to feel that they will be listened to if they voice concerns about how things are done.

2.44 As part of our unitary planning, we designed resources to support managers and help them to know what is expected of them. These resources include:

- Our PACT Values and LEADER Framework behaviours to support the leadership culture
- A Leadership Charter to provide a clear understanding of the role of senior leaders in the organisation and the importance of role modelling and supporting personal development and growth
- A Managers Essential Handbook to define expectation of all managers at all levels in the organisation – the mandatory expectations, minimum requirements and 'need-to-knows'.
- Our Coaching for Performance arrangements - to set clear personal objectives aligned to our service plans and organisational goals; supported by a regular one to one conversation and coaching for development
- A wide range of management development resources, available at any time, though our Learning Hub including bookable workshops and webinars, recorded webinars; eLearning Mindtools and Skills Boosters videos.
- The roll out of a series of specific Management Skills Workshops that will be run face to face or on-line, covering a range of different management needs from

introduction to management for new managers through to managing hybrid teams, managing health and attendance, discipline and conduct etc

- Managers' Brief – delivered as an all manager communication for cascade, every two weeks
- Manager's Live – a live event hosted on teams every 8 weeks by the corporate management team providing managers with timely details and materials to brief their own staff easily, quickly and consistently.
- Senior Manager's Forum provides a quarterly face to face opportunity to bring all service directors and heads of service managers together and discuss key topics and is led by CMT.

2.45 Managing Change

2.46 Following staff feedback on managing change, there has been consultation with employee reps and trade unions about how we can make further improvements. As a result, a Change Management Charter has been co-designed. The [Change Management Charter](#) outlines what staff can expect when they go through change at work. A [supplementary range of tools and support](#) is available and will be promoted to colleagues going through change programmes, including new training for managers.

2.47 An overview of management courses run and being planned between 2021-2023

Course Name	FY 2021/22		FY 2022/23 to date		Total to date	Future courses planned to 31/3/23
	Courses	Attendees	Courses	Attendees		
Being a Buckinghamshire Manager	11	321	9	273	594	2
Building a Positive Culture	-	-	-	-	-	3
Conflict Resolution	-	-	-	-	-	3
Developing your Coaching Skills	5	60	-	-	60	2
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	4	64	2	17	81	2
Getting Performance back on Track	-	-	1	11	11	2
Highly Effective Manager	7	94	1	14	108	3
Managing Change for Managers	-	-	-	-	-	3
Managing Change Returning to the Workplace	-	21	1		21	-
Managing Discipline and Grievance	-	-	-	-	-	3
Managing Hybrid Teams	-	-	1	16	16	3
Managing Sickness Absence	-	-	1	12	12	2

Mental Health Awareness for Managers	-	-	-	-	-	3
Occupational Health for Managers	3	30	-	-	30	-
Supportive Conversations	1	19	-	16	35	3
Wellness Action Plans for Managers	9	96		-	96	-
Total	40	676	16	388	1064	30

2.48 Further management Training - case studies and highlights are provided at appendix 3.

2.49 **Personal Development and Opportunities for Growth**

2.50 Perceptions about limited career progression and opportunities for personal growth have been given as two of the most common reasons driving resignations. In addition, our Together Survey data shows that although staff feel motivated to do their best for BC (77% agree), only 63% feel they have opportunities to grow and develop their skills and only 56% feel they have a fair opportunity to grow and develop. These are areas we are focussing on as part of our Talent Academies and Career Development Pathways.

2.51 Opportunities for growth and development are integral to the employer branding work and these are as important to message to internal staff as to prospective candidates. New internal communications strategies are focusing on promoting and signposting career and personal development opportunities, starting with our mid-year performance review messages in September when all staff will be expected to have a personal development conversation leading to a personal development plan.

2.52 A new steering group has been set up to review internal talent and career development pathways especially in relation areas of skills shortage. The emphasis on skills shortages is not just about attracting new talent, but also, just as importantly on **retaining, and growing our own workforce** though succession planning, career development and talent management – see diagram appendix 4a.

2.53 Not all staff want a career that involves progression and upward movement, and our message is also about supporting employees with personal development opportunity in their existing role and according to their own personal motivations.

2.54 ‘Talent Academies’ already in place as career pipelines and pathways include

- Social Worker Academy Programmes in Children’s and Adult Social Care
- Arrangements for Planners and Building Services
- Legal Trainees
- Apprenticeships

- Traineeships – including Social Care Cadets and Supported internships
 - National Graduate Development Programme
 - Customer Services
 - Kickstart
- 2.55 Case Studies to show how we are developing talent pipelines and growing our own workforce are provided at appendix 4b.
- 2.56 **Support for Health and Wellbeing**
- 2.57 The latest staff survey in May 2022 showed that Wellbeing and Resilience is our most positive area with 75% of respondents agreeing that they feel supported, 3% ahead of the external benchmark. Almost 9 in 10 respondents said they have a positive working relationship with their manager, and 84% feel trusted and enabled to get on their job. However, underneath this, only 64% felt the pressures of their role are manageable and only 63% felt Buckinghamshire Council cares about employee wellbeing.
- 2.58 There is continued focus on mental health including upskilling managers; campaign work to destigmatise talking about mental health and the launch of a new Wellbeing app for staff (from our EAP provider).
- 2.59 More preventative approaches are being taken where there is high sickness absence including support to improve musculoskeletal health, such as funded physio for teams at Pembroke Road, and training for Adult Social Care managers.
- 2.60 Of current concern is the potential impact that rising inflation and cost of living pressures may have on our staff and their families. The Council carried out a recent financial staff survey in which 61% of respondents said that they were quite or very anxious about money, with 36% saying they were concerned about paying for household bills.
- 2.61 A Financial Hardship Task and Finish Group has been in operation since March 2022, monitoring the national economic climate and responding to the need for additional support and advice for colleagues. Working in partnership with HR and Communications colleagues, they have been cascading information on available financial support sign-posting support, including the Helping Hands Scheme, keeping the conversation going through promotion across corporate channels, as well as checking in with staff through a dedicated financial support staff survey. A financial support toolkit has been produced and this is regularly updated based on the evolving financial climate, responding to emerging issues and concerns [financial support and information](#)

2.62 Our Health and Wellbeing Framework sets out our key themes:

Resources and policies - A comprehensive and up-to-date pool of resources and supportive HR policies and processes

Mental health - Improve and raise awareness of mental health support for all employees

Active & Healthy Lifestyles - Promote and provide opportunities for colleagues to lead active and healthy lifestyles

Role of managers - Encourage and develop managers to take a proactive approach to their own and their team's health and wellbeing

2.63 Our framework is supported by a 12-month action plan that includes:

- Utilise data and workforce information to diversify, tailor and develop health and wellbeing interventions
- Introduce feedback loop for colleagues who access PAM services
- Sign the Champion the Change Employer Pledge
- Continue the mental health conversation, utilising partner networks and the network members
- Provide support for managers on managing attendance and their role in supporting the wellbeing of their teams as part of existing Buckinghamshire Manager Training plans
- Support the Physical and Mental Health staff networks to grow, be effective and deliver great awareness campaigns

2.64 **Reward, Recognition Terms and Conditions**

2.65 Despite employees feeling very positive about Buckinghamshire Council (75% from the May 2022 Together Survey are happy working for Buckinghamshire Council; and 93% of the new joiners in the last 12 months say they are proud to work for the organisation and 91% would recommend BC as a place to work); staff do not report feeling as highly valued for the work they do (only 65% feel valued for the work they do from our Together Survey compared to the external benchmark of 56%).

2.66 **Feeling valued**

2.67 Our Proud of You Staff awards is an annual celebration event that recognises outstanding contributions from colleagues over the preceding year. [Watch the highlights reel](#) from the 2021 event (delayed to March 2022 due to Covid-19). [Find out more](#) about the categories and last year's winner. The next awards event is being hosted at the Oculus on Monday 5 December.

2.68 In addition to annual awards, day to day recognition and appreciation of colleagues is vitally important; and our Buckinghamshire Manager values, and Leader framework set out to role model and bring this to life as part of our workplace

culture. Our coaching for performance appraisal process aims to bring colleagues together with their manager 'little and often' on a face to face basis as well as on-line and to provide regular feedback and opportunity to give praise and encouragement 'in the moment'.

2.69 **Work life balance and flexible working**

2.70 Exit and recruitment data highlights the need to understand the 'whole person' at work and their wider needs and responsibilities. Flexible working arrangements repeatedly stand out as being highly important and can be a significant differentiator in terms of the attraction and retention of talent. The opportunity to look at more flexible working arrangement such as part time roles, or different job rotas, especially in services that have fixed desk or mobile roles would support engagement in these areas and help to offer flexibility across all our workstyles to support attraction and retention.

2.71 Most services can cite examples of staff who are looking for more flexibility than a defined 40/60 split and some candidates have turned down job offers because of this. Examples of these declines include the following:

- *Public Health Principal (Adults & Health) - declined due to having to come into the office 60/40 whereas the candidate was looking to work from home full time*
- *Duty Manager (Culture, Sport & Leisure) - declined due to their current employer being prepared to let them work more flexibly for an improved work life balance than what was currently on offer with the service.*
- *Waste Project Manager (Neighbourhood Services) – declined as the service was not able to offer the flexible working that the candidate was looking for.*
- *Health Care Coordinator (Education) - declined as the candidate did not believe the service were willing to meet their working from home requirements.*
- *Customer Service Advisor (Business Operations) – declined as the candidate did not want to work in the office 2 days in the office.*

2.72 Young people are looking for this type of flexibility as well as older people. Information gathered from face to face exit interviews show that many people have readdressed their work life balance as a result of Covid and no longer wish to spend a significant amount of time commuting to work in roles where they are able to work flexibly. Insight from our graduate programme participants confirms this, and work life balance features as a top reason for leaving in exit surveys.

2.73 Flexible working also is an important component in supporting diversity and in attracting new talent and ties into our employer branding around equality, inclusion and work life balance. A recent recruitment campaign for customer advisers in our customer service contact centre attracted an exceptional number of high quality

candidates in a highly competitive market when we advertised that working could be done fully remotely. Originally advertised as being based in Aylesbury, 53 applications were submitted over 22 days. When the role was re-advertised as a fully remote role, 891 applications were submitted over 3 days.

- 2.74 Working arrangements offered by neighbouring employers is also an important factor, as workers will select employers who offer arrangements that best match their preferences (and external recruitment data suggests that flexible working will over-ride pay in many cases). The diagram below shows current information on arrangements offered by neighbouring local authorities and highlights how much flexible working is changing.

South East Councils Working in office

Council	Hybrid working approach to being in the office <i>Brackets shows days required in the office</i>
Bracknell Forest Council	Work is something you do, not where you go (1 day a week)
Central Bedfordshire Council	Hybrid contracts being offered to those able to work from home (1 day a month)
Essex County Council	Teams will define their hybrid working charters – assuming a balance of remote and office working. The specifics are defined by each team based on their business and customer need.
Hertfordshire County Council	Our new ways of working (WoW) prioritise outcomes over locations. Colleagues are trusted to make the right decisions about how to perform at their best, how to effectively collaborate with others and when to travel and use offices, taking what we've learnt throughout the pandemic and modernising how we work. (Nothing Mandatory)
Kent County Council	All office space around the county has been fully converted to hot-desking spaces with collaboration areas and meeting rooms. Teams no longer have their own spaces. (1 day a month)
Milton Keynes Council	1/3 of staff have become full time homeworkers – assessed/discussed with managers and only agreed in cases where it would work for their role. This is a formal contractual change. Homeworkers are required to work from the office one day a week. Site-based workers can work from home up to two days a week. Some teams have moved from satellite offices into the Civic Centre as a result
Oxfordshire County Council	Office working when required (Nothing Mandatory)
Slough Borough Council	Staff are being encouraged to come into the office at least once a week (Nothing Mandatory)

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

2.75 Pay and reward considering rising inflation

- 2.76 This years' pay award reflected the particularly challenging background the Council faces with different legacy pay schemes and terms and conditions, its response to the pandemic and the current economic climate with public sector pay restraint and rising inflation. Whilst pay is undoubtedly an important element of reward, particularly in the current climate, it needs to be understood in the context of our wider benefits including flexible working arrangements, pensions, holiday, and sick pay; and in the context of the employer brand – how we work the nature of our work and alongside the wider range of health, wellbeing, and financial hardship initiatives and options available to support and advise staff.

2.77 Staff engagement

- 2.78 The delivery of the employee engagement element of the People Plan is supported day-to-day by the Internal Communications Team and the corporate communications delivered to staff. The messaging is weaved through a variety of channels designed to support our diverse workforce and workstyles.
- 2.79 The communication approach embodies a top-down ‘leading by example’ cascade process through a monthly all staff briefing hosted by the Corporate Management Team, a fortnightly Managers’ Brief email cascade and a live briefing session for managers every other month. The approach is centred on two-way communications, encouraging managers to ask questions and put themselves in the best position to be able to support their teams.
- 2.80 Also central to our communications delivery is peer-to-peer recognition and discussion, this is achieved through the monthly Proud of You e-card nominations, where colleagues can express their thanks and recognition to others, the annual Proud of You staff awards, for which colleagues nominate their peers in twelve award categories and our monthly staff blogs, where staff share both their personal and professional experience in the hopes of inspiring others.
- 2.81 Consistency is key, and this is also achieved by the weekly newsletter, delving into elements most relevant to staff and ensuring context is provided – with a name and face behind the messaging. We also welcome the imminent introduction of our new intranet which will explore new means of communicating with our colleagues through personalised and targeted delivery.
- 2.82 Our corporate communications are centred on three key themes, aligning with the People Plan; Health and Wellbeing; Leadership; and our culture. The team continue to respond to emerging issues and trends to focus on what staff need and want to know, and to exemplify our PACT values.
- 2.83 **Conclusion**
- 2.84 Deliverables to support employee engagement against our People Plan for our first two years are largely on track but we recognise there is always more to do. The areas covered in this report reflect the work done to support employee engagement by:
- Developing our new employer brand
 - Improving our induction and onboarding
 - Paying particular attention to supporting and socialising young people new to the workplace
 - Developing metrics to help us measure and understand our People Plan and performance

- Developing our managers to provide coaching and development to help employees perform to their best and support the right culture
- Provide employees with the right health and wellbeing support and ensuring this meets circumstances that matter - whether it's support through the covid pandemic, or to reflect the current cost of living pressures
- Developing career pathways and opportunities for personal growth for internal staff to help grow our own workforce and retain talent
- Delivering a relevant and consistent programme of corporate communications
- Having policies, practices, and arrangements in place to support reward and recognition including flexible working arrangements to suit modern lifestyles and ways of working

2.85 These deliverables are illustrated in our high level workplan for 2020-2022

High level workplan 2020-2022

Embedding our new organisation, service improvement, reset and recovery

Key Deliverables for 2020-2022	Resourcing	Engagement	Leadership	Change management	Service providers improvement	Status after first two years
1. Improve our Customer experience with an effective customer friendly digital platform, expert consultancy and HR leadership				x	x	On track for delivery as part of service review ✓
2. Develop our HR operating model and service offer to deliver services in line with organisational priority, capacity and budget including fulfilling our legal statutory and contractual obligations				x	x	On track for delivery as part of service review ✓
3. Roll out and embed our leadership development programme to create the culture we want for our new council	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
4. Have policies, toolkits and processes in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
5. Provide strategic and professional support to our corporate service review and Work Smart change programmes		x	x	x		Completed as planned for first two years ✓
6. Improve our workforce metrics and analytics to help better drive and understand employee health and wellbeing, performance, resourcing, skills and succession planning and help improve organisational performance		x	x	x	x	Completed as planned for first two years ✓
7. Address our recruitment and retention challenges with an internal and external focus on developing pipelines for current and future skills requirements – including a focus on entry level pathways for young people	x	x			x	On track for delivery as part of new employer brand, talent programme & career pathways ✓
8. Raise employee performance through – coaching for performance, setting direction and personal development		x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
9. Communicate with our internal and prospective future workforce, using effective tools for our different workstyles, showing an understanding of their needs and concerns including a particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓

2.86 There is more to do – particularly around career pathways and growth and development; but having invested in the foundations to underpin our People Plan over the last two years - by putting in place the right frameworks and by developing our leaders and managers to support colleagues and understand their role in employee engagement and retention; we feel confident that the deliverables set out in our 3-5 year in our People Plan will help us meet these new goals and further support continuous improvement for our employee experience and workforce ambition.

High level workplan 2023-2025

Towards meeting our place-based vision and Council of the year

Key Deliverables for 2023-2025	Reporting Status (to commence from Autumn 2022)				
	Resourcing	Engagement	Leadership	Change management	Service Improvement
1. An innovative and clear employee experience including career pathways and development opportunities for people of all ages and at all stages in their career; fair and transparent reward and recognition; authentic engagement, empowerment and wellbeing	x	x	x		
2. Developing leaders and managers who are exemplars, who coach and support colleagues as part of our resourcing and retention strategy and with a particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing	x	x	x	x	
3. Employees who act as ambassadors for our council, role modelling our values and promoting our employer brand	x	x	x		
4. Embedding our worksmart culture and new ways of working	x	x	x	x	
5. Convergence onto one set of BC terms and conditions	x	x	x	x	
6. Meeting pay and reward challenges in a high inflation environment	x	x	x	x	
7. Building workforce resilience, to respond to fluctuating demand and future challenges through a flexible, peripatetic workforce	x	x	x	x	
8. Facilitating major change programmes such as ASC reforms and Service Improvement		x	x	x	x
9. Improving our information platform, processes and HR systems to enhance our customers experience.	x	x	x	x	x
10. Employer of choice/Council of the year	x	x	x	x	x

Associated detailed workplans

Resourcing workplan

OD and HRBP workplan

HR service improvement plan

Policy and Reward workplan

Convergence workplan

Work Smart and Work Styles workplan

HR Customer Experience workplan

EDI action plan

Skills and Workforce Board workplan

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Risks and potential impact of not addressing employee experience will impact on attraction and retention of talent, performance, and productivity.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 Budget for this work is part of existing HR&OD operating costs. There are no other direct legal or financial implications

5. Corporate implications

- a) Property - none
- b) HR - none
- c) Climate change - none
- d) Sustainability - none
- e) Equality – an EQIA was completed as part of unitary planning on this topic
- f) Data – no DPIA required
- g) Value for money – this work will add value by improving employee attraction and retention and reducing turnover costs; also by improving health and wellbeing benefits – impacting on improved productivity/motivation and reduced absence

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Ongoing internal and external communications and employer branding plans are in place to support this work

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 The 3-5 year deliverables in the Buckinghamshire Council People Plan are reviewed quarterly by CMT

9. Background papers

- 9.1 Buckinghamshire Council five year People Plan

Appendices

Appendix 1

Unitary OD Work Plan - vesting day position April 2020

Vision, Culture & Design			Employee Engagement				Learning & Development / Leadership Development				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Agreed OD strategy and framework	Agreed Organisational Values & Behaviours	Agreed pathways for performance management design, coaching & development arrangements	Career counselling and outplacement arrangements	Employee resilience health & wellbeing pathway	New council 'together' employee surveys engagement onboarding exit	Employee recognition arrangements (annual awards)	Effective new entrant induction & onboarding from April	Being a Bucks Manager phase 1 1.1 existing manager 'workshops' 1.2 perf management 1.3 transformation change for senior leaders	Agreed mandatory standards and mandatory training for all employees	New L&D e learning platform & transfer of core catalogue	High level plans for apprenticeships & career pathways
CIG 1 Oct	SE 3 Dec	CIG 15 July & 1 Oct	CIG 24 June	all councils network in place	CIG 19 Sept	still to be developed	CIG 5 Sept	In development following on from CIG 15 July	CIG 5 Sept	Plans in progress for vesting day	early stages
Organisational Design						Learning & Development					

Leadership & the Being a Buckinghamshire Manager programme

Appendix 2

Our Employer Brand

These headline messages from our new employer brand and will be complemented by employee stories and professional photography to share with both external candidates and our internal workforce to highlight why Buckinghamshire Council is a great place to work.

The four key messages are:

Part of something bigger



We're one of the largest unitary councils in the UK, covering the full range of public services to over 550,000 residents. We're also one of the largest local employers, and networked across public, private and the third sector. With scale comes lots of career opportunities.

Do big things



People get opportunity to be part of (directly or indirectly) projects and work that make tangible differences to our local communities. Supporting families struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, settling Ukrainian refugees; meeting carbon-neutral ambitions; helping an

elderly resident stay independent in the home they love... just a few examples of the important work that inspires our brilliant colleagues to get out of the bed in the morning.

Our work matters



People get to contribute to a mission with meaning; we're helping to protect the vulnerable, protect our environment, and help our communities thrive. We appeal to the socially conscious, looking for more than a pay cheque. Many colleagues live locally so as well as having a good work-life balance from having shorter commutes, they live in the communities we serve, seeing the real-world impact of the work the council does.

Be the best you



People join us for career development. And we are building on our learning and development offer to ensure it's inclusive to all and that we're supporting younger people into entry roles and developing them to grow into our in-demand professions. We are known to be an employer with strong values and a supportive place to work that has good employee benefits, a growing set of staff networks, and an emphasis on wellbeing and equality and diversity. Flexible working hugely appeals to our workforce who value having a good work-life balance, and hybrid working has proved both effective and popular with staff.

Management Training - case studies and highlights



Being a Buckinghamshire Manager events

- Delivered directly by CMT between March and June this year
- Over 20 face-to-face workshops and over 600 attendees
- Set expectations for the leadership culture and provide opportunity to network and share best practice
- Hugely positive feedback “Being led by directors is really powerful, and demonstrates CMT’s commitment to investing in leaders, and being clear on the expectations of all managers”
- These are now part of on-going face to face induction for newly recruited or internally promoted managers and will run quarterly and continue to be delivered by CMT or their Service Directors.

New Manager Training - The Highly Effective Manager

- 116 managers have already attended with 42 scheduled to attend later this year
- Aimed at new or aspiring managers or those who have been in a management role for a while but who have had no formal training or who require a refresher.
- Delivered over two days by an external provider with positive feedback
- Course Content
 - How to Excel as A Manager
 - How to Manage Your Time Better
 - How to Manage Performance

- How to Build a High Performing Team
- How to Manage Change
- How to Communicate Better

Managing Diversity and Inclusion

- 73 managers have attended with positive feedback from attendees and staff reps.
- The course explains managers responsibilities under the Equalities Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, raises awareness of the benefits of diversity within the workplace and explores how to promote equality and tackle discrimination.
- Delivered by external provider Equality and Diversity UK – face to face or on-line

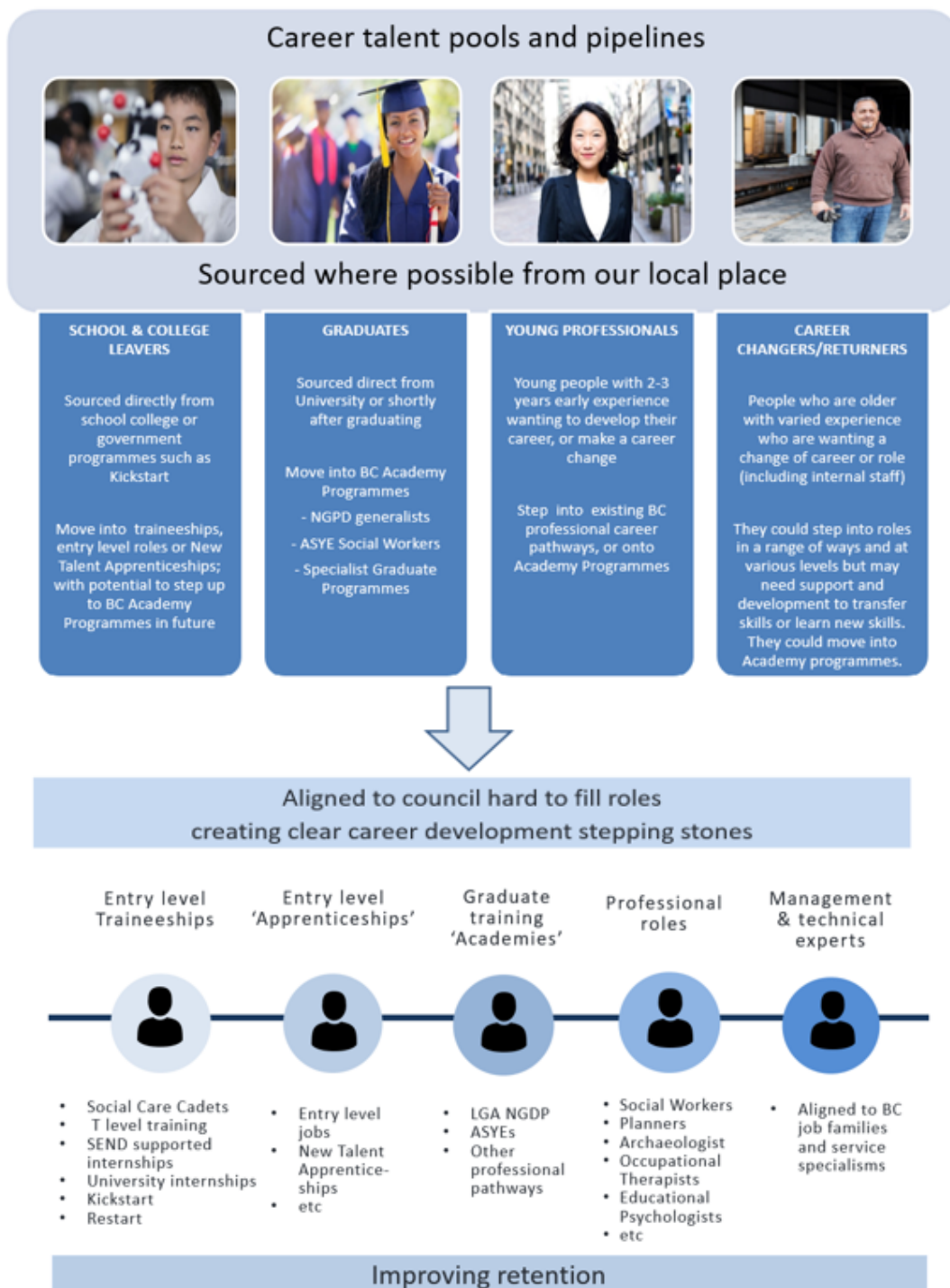
Developing Coaching Skills

- 108 managers have attended
- Helps managers develop coaching techniques to motivate and support their team to develop confidence, improve performance and manage change
- Led by an external provider - delivered face to face or on-line

Further skills workshops in development/at pilot stage

- Workshops to raise skill and confidence in core areas of people management including managing performance, discipline, grievance, and conduct and managing sickness absence. All 10 people who attended the pilot on Managing Sickness Absence training gave an overall assessment of “Excellent”.
- A Managing Hybrid Working pilot as part of the Worksmart programme. These workshops will focus on equipping managers with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to lead hybrid teams effectively.
- Health & Wellbeing Leadership programme delivered by our Employee Assistance Programme Provider in October/November. This consists of 4 modules on Mental Health Awareness; Having Supportive Conversations; Building a Positive Culture and Conflict Resolution
- Plans to introduce “ideas exchange” workshops for informal management networking and collaboration. Managers will have the opportunity to meet and discuss a topic of interest such as health & wellbeing; and with support from a facilitator, explore how this is being applied back in the workplace and share challenges and best practice.

Appendix 4a



Appendix 4 b

Case Studies to show how we are developing talent pipelines and growing our own workforce

Kickstart programme

Following success with the DWP's Kickstart scheme, we are planning to develop our own internal version of the scheme to support new career opportunities for a variety of people (school leavers, more mature career returners or new starters and local people at risk of long term unemployment). Details are currently in design and discussions being held with partner organisations on how we can look at funding options.

Conversion rates from the total of 45 placements we offered on the Government backed DWP programme that we ran between 2021 and 2022 are as follows:

Conversion type/employee status	Number of employees	As a Percentage (%)
Internal conversion (still at BC in Perm, FTC or apprenticeship role)	15 of 37	40%
External conversion (has found a job with another employer or gone into further education)	11 of 37	30%
No conversion – placement ended	11 of 37	30%

Note: we have offered 45 placements in total. 8 individuals are still on placement, and we do not yet know what their employment status will be upon completion, so these have not been included in the above statistics.

The Social Worker Talent Academy model used in both Adult's and Children's Services supports professional practice for social workers in their first year of employment. The 'Academy' status is a hallmark of good practice and helps attract young professional into the workplace with a strong learning and development offer. Once social work students have completed their assisted year, they can move into social worker vacancies and on through the social worker career pathway.

These programmes target graduates who are already studying for a degree in social work. Established relationships with Buckinghamshire New University, University of Bedfordshire and through the local Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy has created a powerful hub to build our profile and help pipeline social worker recruits. Students become

aware of the training offer available from Buckinghamshire Council well ahead of their graduation date helping our recruitment process.

There are several career pathways in **Planning Growth and Sustainability** including dedicated graduate recruitment programmes for five graduates in Planning DM, two graduates in Building Control, two graduates in Strategic Flood Management, three graduates Highways DM and one graduate in Ecology. Three team members in Highways are currently undertaking an MSc in Transport Planning and Management (University of Westminster), with two staff members having already successfully achieved an MSc. Highways DM also has two team members working towards their Transport Planning Apprenticeships and two further team members progressing their Civil Engineering Apprenticeship. In addition, entry level career pathways have been designed (for school or college leaver or career re-starters) to grow and retain talent in Planning Enforcement Environmental Health and Strategic Transport and Infrastructure.

Adults & Health have created an entry level apprenticeship with a planned programme of rotation across 3 different roles, to diversify skills and experiences in different settings help successful retention at the end of the training. They have also taken on Social Care Cadets through the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy as an accredited training programme offering students aged 16-24, one day a week work experience as part of a level 3 Diploma in Health and Social Care. This qualification develops knowledge and skills to support progression into a wide range of job roles in the Health and Social Care sector. Occupational Therapy have taken on their first OT Degree apprentice this year in collaboration with University of Hertfordshire. The OT Team have also linked up with Oxford Brookes University to offer their OT undergraduate students' placements during year 1, 2 and 3 of their degree.

Legal Services have introduced career graded structures to allow progression opportunities for staff as they gain experience, without having to wait for a vacancy to arise. They have also developed several training routes into qualified positions, using the apprenticeship levy where possible. They currently have three staff members training to be chartered legal executives through apprenticeships and one staff member training to be a solicitor through an apprenticeship.

Customer Services and Business Support have 330 colleagues and work with every service within the council. Much work is generic, and colleagues easily become aware of not just their service area but other services. This has resulted in the function developing themselves as a foundation level training ground, acting as a steppingstone for careers throughout Buckinghamshire Council. Individuals are recruited into the team following requests from the services for admin/ Customer Services roles to work within their specific service. There is then a natural progression for these individuals to move directly into future roles in the service or other services. This creates a natural progression route and early career pathway. This model works very well and is something we wish to promote and

maximise through developing colleagues even further at the early stages of their career to ensure we maximise this natural resource pipeline.

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Buckinghamshire Council People Plan 2020-2025

Update September 2022



Introduction

Buckinghamshire Council was established in April 2020 by bringing together our five previous councils in the county.

The Council wants to make Buckinghamshire the best place to live, raise a family, work and do business - and our People Plan is aligned to meet this aim and the key priorities of the Council.

Key priorities

- strengthen our communities
- improve the environment
- protect our vulnerable
- increase prosperity

HR&OD set out a People Plan for the first 5 years with year 1-2 and 3-5 year deliverables. This revision shows what has been completed in the first two years and moves onto the year 3-5 year deliverables with some suggested amends to update the plan and bring it in line with our current position

Our organisational ambition

We have an ambitious programme of transformation and service improvement and we have new approaches to how we work following the covid pandemic. As a result, we are shaping our future work styles and work places on a hybrid model through our Work Smart programme.

We are proud of the work we deliver; and we want to attract and retain the best people, have inspirational managers who set direction, develop and care for the wellbeing of their staff. We want our employees to be motivated and skilled to perform to their best and be able to grow and stay with the organisation as it delivers service improvements to our customers.

We are passionate about Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We want to create a culture based on respect and inclusivity, where our values and behaviours are role modelled throughout the organisation and our leaders manage by example. Achieving the best outcomes for our communities requires collaboration and trust to make the most of our collective resources, skills ideas and talents. It is a challenging but exciting time – with everything to play for.



Our People Plan needs to support our ambition for our new organisation and our changing times. This document sets out our vision and workplan for the next 5 years under five core headings, providing a clear plan for delivery and measuring our effectiveness.

Our organisational goals and values

We want to make Buckinghamshire the best place to live, raise a family, work and do business.

To succeed, our workforce needs to understand and share this ambition and our People Plan must underpin this.



	<p>Proud: We are motivated to make a positive difference for our people and communities and committed to improving and modernising our services to provide the highest standards and the very best outcomes for our residents, businesses and service users - putting the customer at the heart of everything we do.</p>
	<p>Ambitious: We are excited about our new organisation and have confidence in our ability to meet the challenges ahead. We work with energy and pace – looking for continuous improvements in the way we do things. We have an ambition to be the best at what we do and deliver the best outcomes for our service users.</p>
	<p>Collaborate: We work together and across our partner organisations, making connections and understanding the bigger picture so we can find the best solutions for our people and our places. We respect the part everyone plays and work towards inclusivity, supporting and developing our communities and workplace.</p>
	<p>Trustworthy: We take responsibility for our work and are trusted to perform our job to the best of our ability. We do what we say we will do and look for solutions. We are responsive to the needs of our residents, businesses and service users and are focused on high standards of professional practice and service delivery.</p>

HR&OD Statement of Intention

We will partner with the business to:

- recruit and retain and grow our people
- reward and recognise fairly
- effect organisational change and effectively manage change
- engage with and support the wellbeing of our staff and promote diversity and inclusion
- embed the ways of working culture
- sensibly apply best practice and innovation
- deliver a top performing HR function

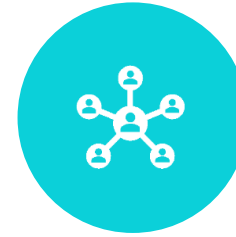
We will do this by:

- Improving, simplifying and streamlining our systems and processes ensuring the customer experience is at the heart of all of these
- getting the basics right and taking ownership of tasks
- responding in a timely, customer service orientated manner
- empowering and training customers and making things easy for this to happen
- building a partnering mindset in our team to deliver our service in a more effective and efficient way

5 themes in our People Plan



**RESOURCING &
RETENTION**



**EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT**



**INSPIRATIONAL
LEADERSHIP &
PERSONAL GROWTH**



**CHANGE
MANAGEMENT AND
HR CONSULTANCY**



HR SERVICE DELIVERY

Resourcing & Retention

Ensuring we have a skilled and resilient workforce supported by personal development and succession plans

- The way we work is changing and we are developing new work styles and hybrid working arrangements to support this. Our employer branding will position us as an employer of choice by promoting our meaningful work, the opportunity to be part of something bigger, to grow and develop and 'be the best you' at Buckinghamshire Council.
- We have attraction and retention strategies based on a range of career pathways and have our own talent academies for training social workers and other professionals. We are also developing pathways for young people and those looking to repurpose their careers - providing them with work experience and training opportunities to develop new skills.
- Our People Plan will ensure we work effectively across our place to help level up job opportunities and develop skills and recruitment pipelines across our locality including our schools, colleges and universities help to train and provide a source of talented people to meet our current and future needs both at entry level and beyond.
- We aim to attract and retain a diverse workforce that reflects our local community by promoting our commitment to be an accessible and inclusive organisation.



RESOURCING



Employee Engagement

Understanding and communicating effectively with our existing and future workforce

- It is important that we listen to, and understand the needs of colleagues and develop strong and inclusive relationships supported by effective internal and external employee communications.
- Evidence shows that people are increasingly attracted to jobs that provide a sense of purpose, flexibility and work-life balance. Employees are attracted to, and will stay working for organisations with great managers who coach, develop and support them and show an understanding of the importance of the whole person including diversity and inclusion, health and wellbeing.
- It is essential that new employees receive an effective induction and onboarding experience and build early social connections with colleagues at work.
- Our WorkSmart programme has shifted thinking about how and where we work, but we still value the importance of social connections for work collaboration, learning and development. So alongside our digital platforms we are developing new ways to keep people connected – creating new workspaces to support meetings and keep people engaged face to face as well as on-line.
- We are committed to having appropriate policy, pay and reward arrangements in place taking account of legislative, best practice and organisational requirements.



ENGAGEMENT



Inspirational Leadership & Personal Growth

An authentic, considerate approach to management that supports employee development

- The role of the manager is central to shaping the culture of our new organisation. Our Being a Buckinghamshire Manager (BABM) programme sets out the expectations we have for all managers and the LEADER framework describes the behaviours we look for – ensuring we have managers who act as great role models.
- Coaching for Performance conversations will provide the opportunity for managers to set direction, coach and develop their staff to reach performance goals and understand their health, and wellbeing needs and future ambitions.
- We want to offer career pathways that provide the opportunity for colleagues to grow and develop in the direction that is right for them and remain with the council in a role they find fulfilling.
- Our culture will also be shaped by our employee values and behaviours and how they go about their work – including showing respect for one another, valuing diversity, collaborating to get things done and sharing a commitment to equality and inclusion.



INSPIRATIONAL
LEADERSHIP

Change Management and HR Consultancy

Partnerships with services to support change and provide professional advice

- Our People Plan must support and enable our internal customers to meet these ambitions through our professional consultancy provision which is commissioned to support major programmes such as Better Buckinghamshire Service Improvement, Work Smart, Convergence, annual pay reviews, academisations, Ofsted and the Adult Social Care Reforms
- Professional HR and OD consultancy and networks will also ensure we are connected to external best practices, research and legislation to ensure we respond well to external circumstances and change.
- Our policies, toolkits and processes are in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices and with particular attention to equality diversity and inclusion



CHANGE MANAGEMENT
AND SERVICE
IMPROVEMENT

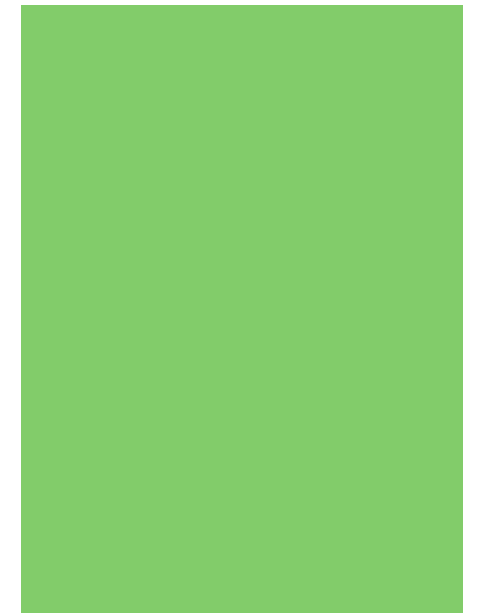
HR service improvement

A customer centric service providing easy, efficient access and a great customer experience

- Our customers (managers and employees – internal and external) must be at the heart of everything we do and we therefore need to ensure that they are able to access the information, systems, processes and advisory services efficiently.
- We will provide accessible and clear information through one central platform which will be linked to the relevant HR Systems, enhancing the customer experience.
- Our processes will be streamlined and our systems intuitive and easy to navigate through, enabling our customers to self-serve.
- Customers will be able to access our specialist advisory services at the right time.
- We are enablers for a wide range of HR services across the employee life cycle - from new recruits through to pensioners and everything in between and will work in partnership with our customers to take responsibility for their people management activities enhancing employee engagement..
- We will develop and deliver high standard services focussed on evidence and insight to meet the needs of our customers.
- We will ensure our HR operating model enhances our service delivery and our customer experiences.



SERVICE ENABLERS



People Plan Pillars	Key Performance Measure	Target
Resourcing and retaining a skilled and flexible workforce	Voluntary turnover	12-16%
	Mandatory training completion	90%
	Time to hire	90 days
	Turnover in first year of service	<2 %
Engaging and motivating our people	Together Survey engagement index	70%
	Joiners positively engaged at 3 months' service (on boarder survey)	85%
	Leavers who would recommend us as an employer	80%
	Our Diversity and Inclusion index from Together Survey	71%
Inspirational leadership and personal growth	Together Survey response rate	60%
	Together Survey - positive relationship with line manager	85%
	Mid/end of year C4P reviews and personal development plans complete on SAP at end Sept and end April	90%
Change management and HR consultancy	Together Survey change management index	65%
	Average sickness levels	9 days per FTE
HR service improvement	Service desk volumes	10,500 per Q
	A new KPI based on what our customers think (this will be developed as part of Service Improvement)	tbc
	Service Now first-time fix rate	50%

Key deliverables for the first 2 years 2020-2022

Embedding our new organisation, service improvement, reset and recovery



1. Improve our Customer experience with an effective customer friendly digital platform, expert consultancy and HR leadership
2. Develop our HR operating model and service offer to deliver services in line with organisational priority, capacity and budget including fulfilling our legal and statutory and contractual obligations
3. Roll out and embed our leadership development programme to create the culture we want for our new council
4. Have policies, toolkits and processes in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices
5. Provide professional support to our corporate service review and Work Smart change programmes
6. Improve our workforce metrics and analytics to help better drive and understand employee health and wellbeing, performance, resourcing, skills and succession planning and help improve organisational performance
7. Address our recruitment and retention challenges with an internal and external focus on developing pipelines for current and future skills requirements – including a focus on entry level pathways for young people
8. Raise employee performance through – coaching for performance, setting direction and personal development
9. Communicate with our internal and prospective future workforce, using effective tools for our different workstyles, showing an understanding of their needs and concerns with particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing

High level workplan 2020-2022

Embedding our new organisation, service improvement, reset and recovery

Key Deliverables for 2020-2022		Resourcing	Engagement	Leadership	Change management	Service Enablers Improvement	Status after first two years	
1.	Improve our Customer experience with an effective customer friendly digital platform, expert consultancy and HR leadership				x	x	On track for delivery as part of service review ✓	
Page No	2.	Develop our HR operating model and service offer to deliver services in line with organisational priority, capacity and budget including fulfilling our legal statutory and contractual obligations			x	x	On track for delivery as part of service review ✓	
	3.	Roll out and embed our leadership development programme to create the culture we want for our new council	x	x	x		Completed as planned for first two years ✓	
	4.	Have policies, toolkits and processes in place to support a skilled, committed, flexible and engaged workforce – building in new work styles and working practices	x	x	x		Completed as planned for first two years ✓	
	5.	Provide strategic and professional support to our corporate service review and Work Smart change programmes		x	x	x	Completed as planned for first two years ✓	
	6.	Improve our workforce metrics and analytics to help better drive and understand employee health and wellbeing, performance, resourcing, skills and succession planning and help improve organisational performance		x	x	x	Completed as planned for first two years ✓	
	7.	Address our recruitment and retention challenges with an internal and external focus on developing pipelines for current and future skills requirements – including a focus on entry level pathways for young people	x	x			x	On track for delivery as part of new employer brand, talent programme & career pathways ✓
	8.	Raise employee performance through – coaching for performance, setting direction and personal development		x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓
	9.	Communicate with our internal and prospective future workforce, using effective tools for our different workstyles, showing an understanding of their needs and concerns including a particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing	x	x	x			Completed as planned for first two years ✓

Key deliverables for years 3-5

Towards meeting our place based vision and Council of the year



1. An innovative and clear employee experience including career pathways and development opportunities for people of all ages and at all stages in their career; fair and transparent reward and recognition; authentic engagement, empowerment and wellbeing
2. Developing leaders and managers who are exemplars, who coach and support colleagues as part of our resourcing and retention strategy and with an emphasis on equality diversity, inclusion
3. Employees who act as ambassadors for our council, role modelling our values and promoting our employer brand
4. Embedding our worksmart culture and new ways of working
5. Convergence onto one set of BC terms and conditions
6. Meeting pay and reward challenges in a high inflation environment
7. Building workforce resilience, to respond to fluctuating demand and future challenges through a flexible, peripatetic workforce
8. Facilitating major change programmes such as ASC reforms and Service Improvement
9. Improving our information platform, processes and HR systems to enhance our customers experience.
10. Employer of choice/Council of the year

High level workplan 2023-2025

Towards meeting our place-based vision and Council of the year

Key Deliverables for 2023-2025

Resourcing

Engagement

Leadership

Change
management

Service Enablers
Improvement

Status
Reporting to start from Autumn 2022

1. An innovative and clear employee experience including career pathways and development opportunities for people of all ages and at all stages in their career; fair and transparent reward and recognition; authentic engagement, empowerment and wellbeing

x

x

x

2. Developing leaders and managers who are exemplars, who coach and support colleagues as part of our resourcing and retention strategy and with a particular emphasis on diversity, equality, inclusivity and wellbeing

x

x

x

x

3. Employees who act as ambassadors for our council, role modelling our values and promoting our employer brand

x

x

x

4. Embedding our worksmart culture and new ways of working

x

x

x

x

5. Convergence onto one set of BC terms and conditions

x

x

x

x

6. Meeting pay and reward challenges in a high inflation environment

x

x

x

x

7. Building workforce resilience, to respond to fluctuating demand and future challenges through a flexible, peripatetic workforce

x

x

x

x

8. Facilitating major change programmes such as ASC reforms and Service Improvement

x

x

x

x

9. Improving our information platform, processes and HR systems to enhance our customers experience.

x

x

x

x

x

10. Employer of choice/Council of the year

x

x

x

x

x

Associated detailed workplans

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Resourcing workplan

OD and HRBP workplan

HR service improvement plan

Policy and Reward workplan

Convergence workplan

Work Smart and Work Styles workplan

HR Customer Experience workplan

EDI action plan

Skills and Workforce Board workplan

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Finance Select Committee

22nd September 2022

Briefing on Revenues & Benefits

John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources

Report for information

Introduction – Revenues and Benefits

Finance Select Committee have asked to receive a briefing on the Revenues and Benefits collection and arrears performance.

This slide deck sets out contextual information about the service and the performance, as well as an update on the major project to implement a single Revenue and Benefits system for the Council.

Contents

Section	Slides
Revenue & Benefits Service Metrics	4
Collection performance	5-13
Single System Major Project Background	14-23

Introduction to Revenues and Benefits Service - Metrics

Revs & Bens Service Metrics

CT c£473m BR £174m	13,597 housing benefit live claimants
230,000 council tax payers	23,500 council tax reduction accounts
14,000 council tax summonses	15,500 business rate payers

Single System Project Metrics

4 sites connecting via 3 different networks	Over 20 million transactions are converted
4 R&B data merges	Over 1.5 million accounts are converted
4 I@W document migrations and merges and a pre go live catch up load	140,000 Benefit claims are converted
17 database instances are required	9,061,592 Documents are being migrated



Council Tax and Business Rate Collection Performance

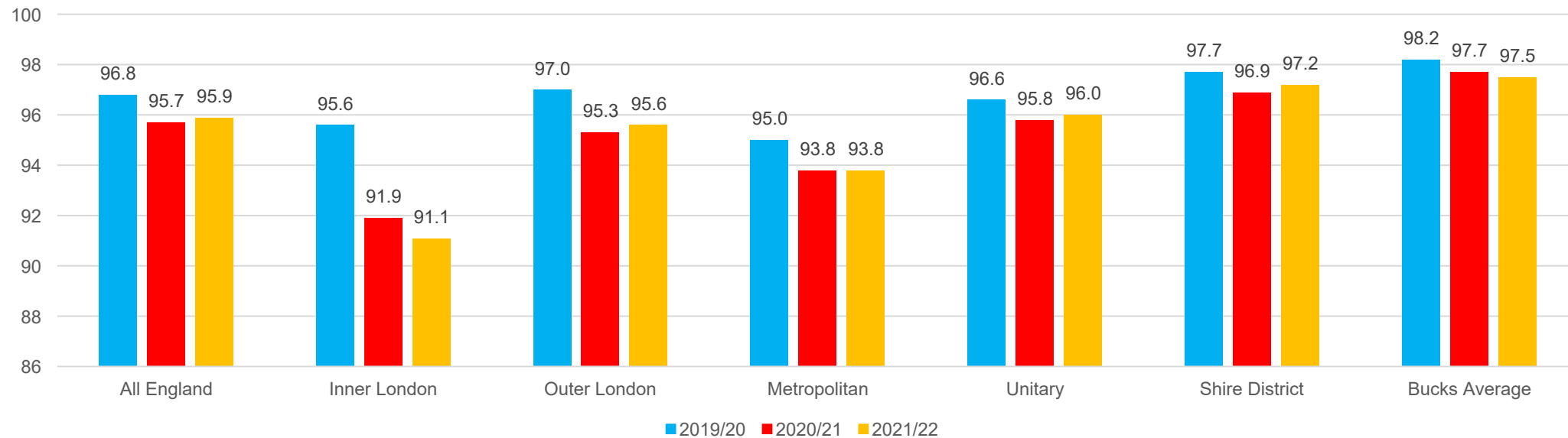


National Council Tax Collection Rates 2019-2022

- Traditionally shire districts have higher collection rates than any other type of authority

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Council tax collection rates (%)

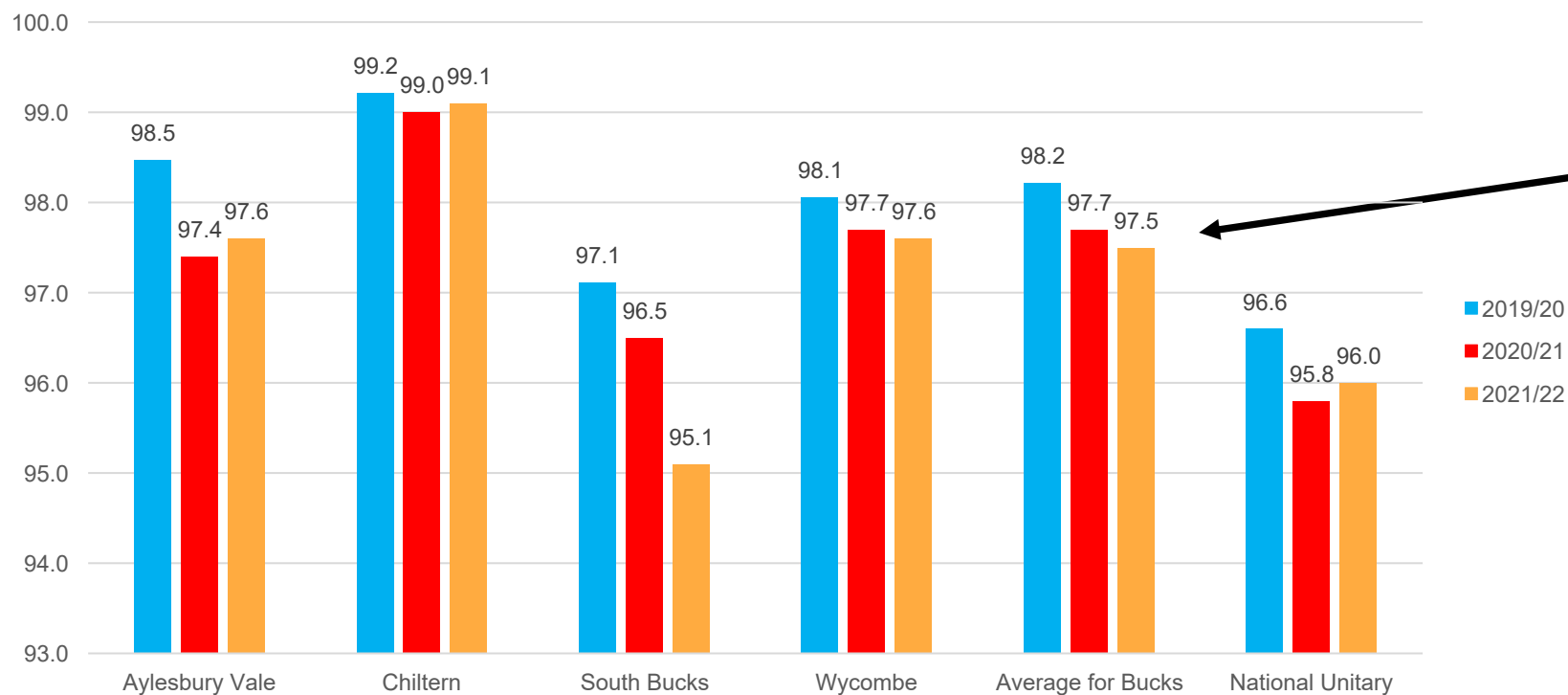


Source: LG Futures Collection rates for Council Tax and NNDR In England 2021 to June 2022

Council Tax Collection Comparison 2019-2022

- Buckinghamshire consistently has performed above the national unitary average
- COVID has reduced collection rates nationally between 1% and 4% since 2020
- Buckinghamshire is also above the national Shire District average
- However, collection rates remain well below the rates in 2019/20 both nationally (0.9%) and in Buckinghamshire (0.7%)

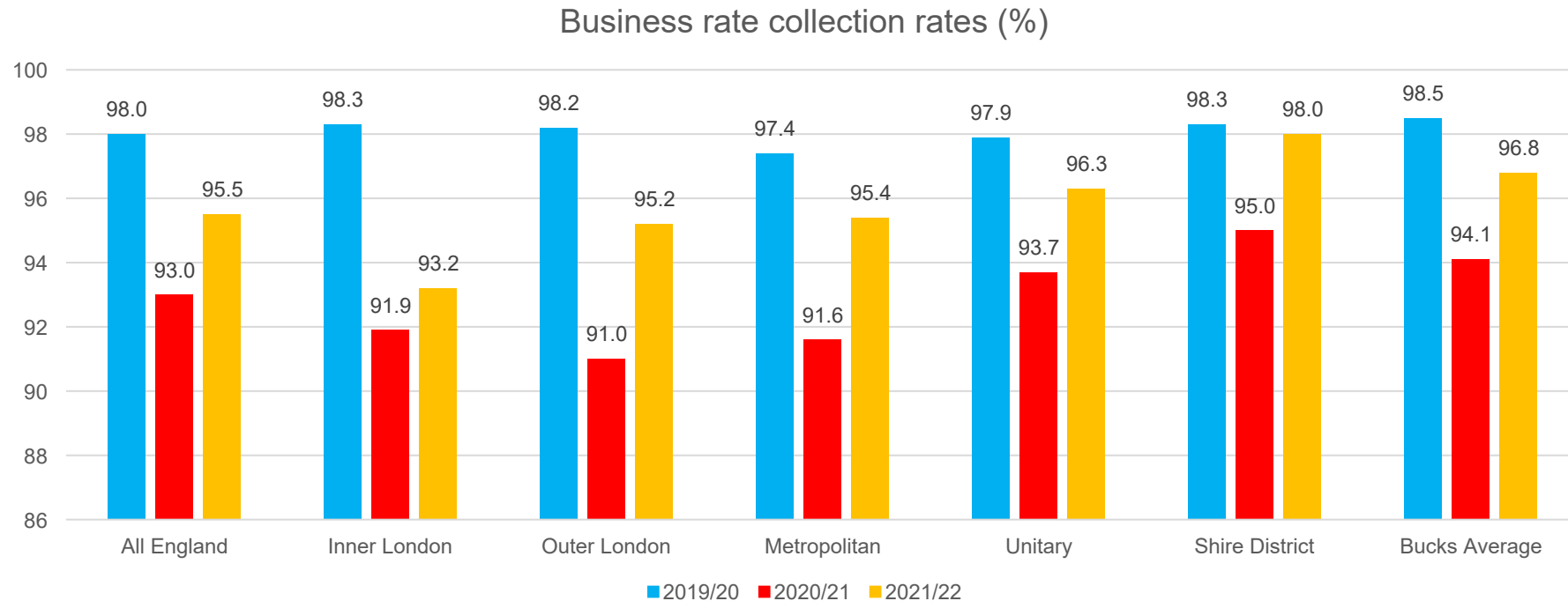
Council Tax % Collected 2019-2022



Shire District in 21/22 nationally was 97.2%

National Business Rates Collection Rates 2019-2022

- Traditionally shire districts have higher collection rates than any other type of authority

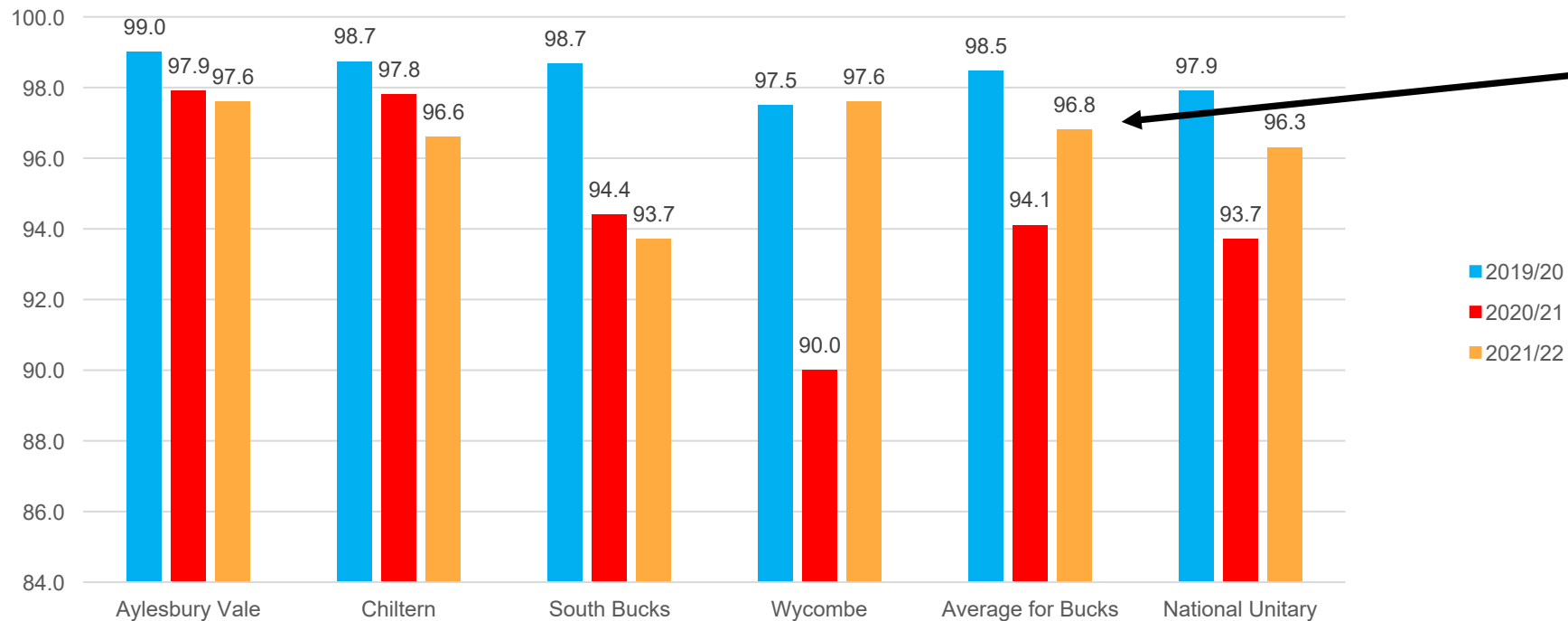


Source: LG Futures Collection rates for Council Tax and NNDR In England 2021 to June 2022

Business Rates Collection Comparison 2019-2022

- Buckinghamshire consistently has performed above the national unitary average
- COVID has reduced collection rates nationally between 1% and 5% since 2020
- Shire Districts appear to have performed slightly better than Buckinghamshire in 2021/22

Business Rates % Collected 2019-2022

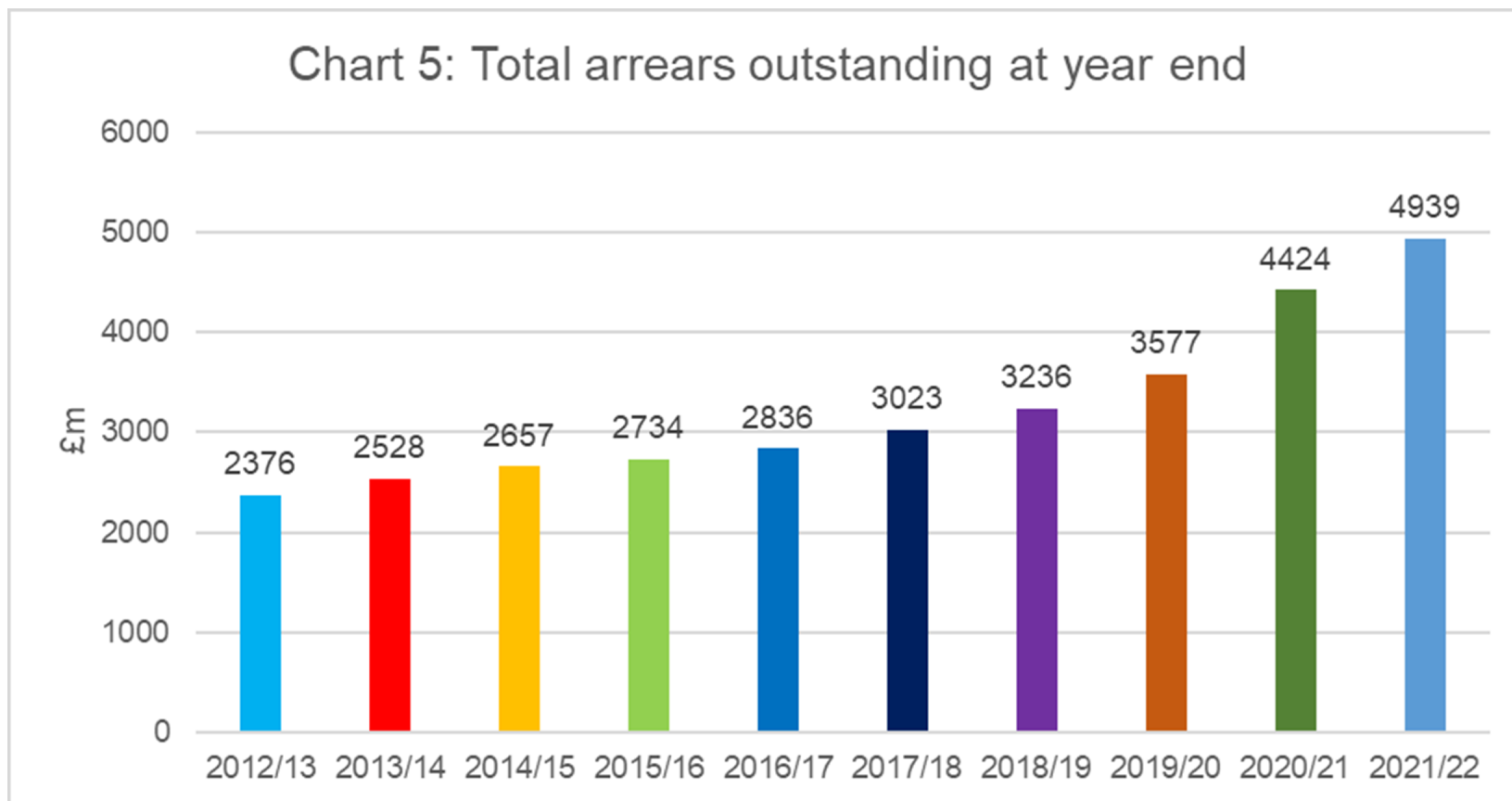


Shire District in 21/22 nationally was 98%

Council Tax Arrears Nationally 2012 - 2022

Chart 5 below shows that the level of outstanding arrears of council tax had already been increasing significantly even before the on-set of the Covid pandemic. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2020 total arrears outstanding had risen by 51% from £2.4bn to £3.6bn compared to an increase of £0.4bn or 19% in the period 2007/8 to 2012/13.

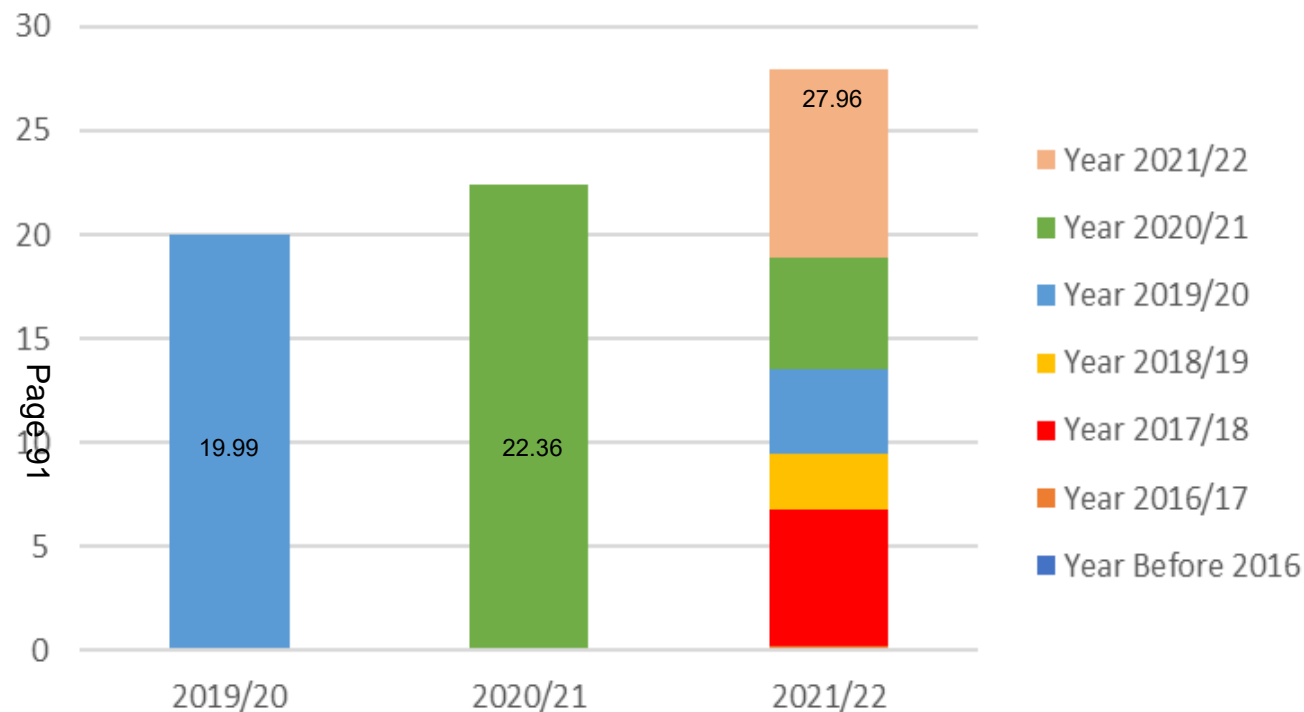
The further increase, since 2019/20, of £1.4bn (38%) in the cumulative level of arrears on council tax means that this figure has increased by £2.6bn since the introduction of council tax support which represents an increase of 108%.



Source: LG Futures Collection rates for Council Tax and NNDR In England 2021 to 2022 June 2022

Buckinghamshire Council Tax Arrears

Total arrears outstanding by year (£m)



The 40% increase in total arrears between 31st March 2020 and 31st March 2022 of £7.97m is broadly in line with the national increase of 38%.

Total arrears includes normal CT arrears and credits, which occurs when a resident overpays or prepays their Council Tax.

This reflects the impact of Covid and the limitations placed on recovery processes, with a restriction on court summonses during the height of the pandemic.

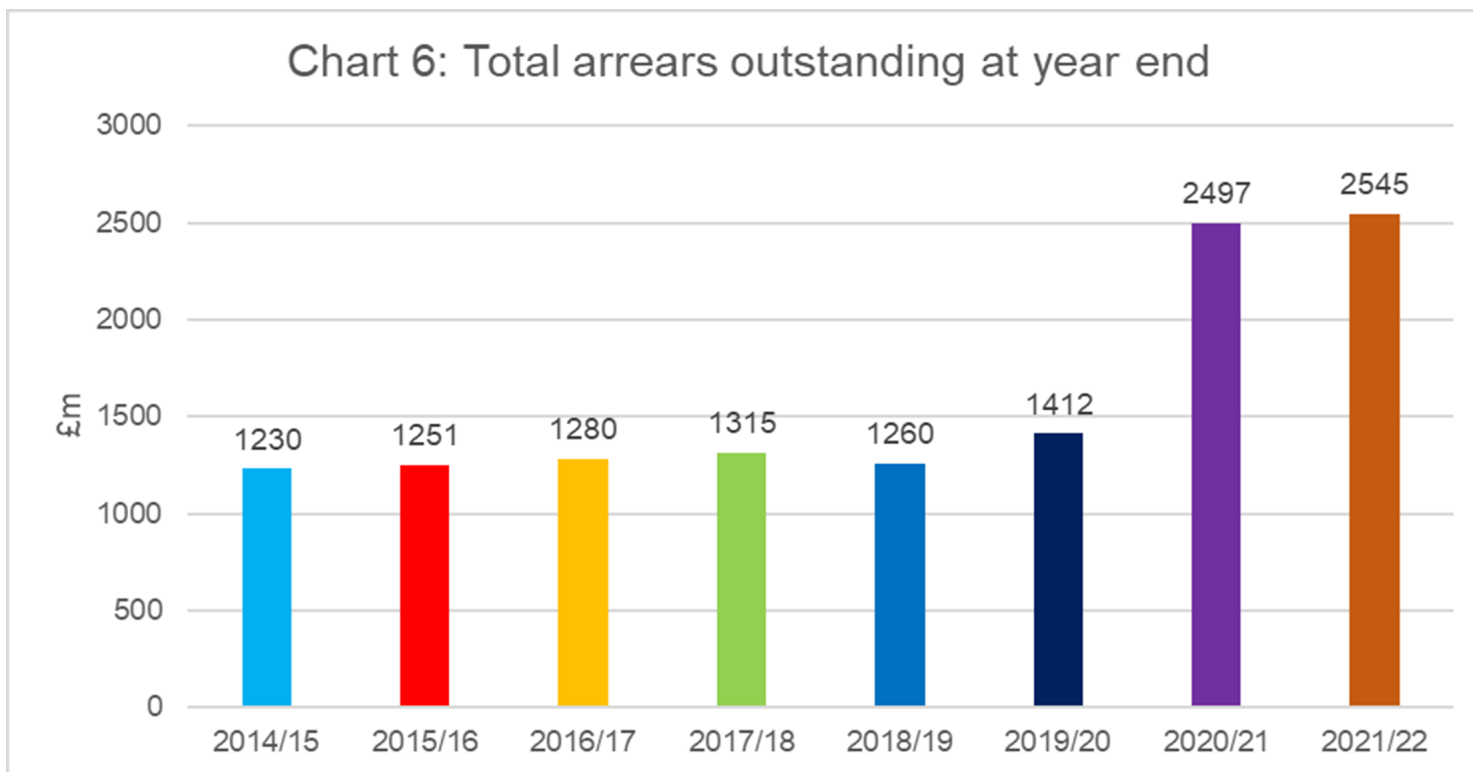
Arrears as a % of that collect over last three years is 2.2%

As part of the restructuring there is a single Council Tax Recovery Team who are focussed on recovering outstanding Council Tax. There are an increasing number of cases going to court, with summonsed debt being more likely to be recovered. Despite the system downtime, there are court dates already set for the end of November. There will be a continued review of all Council Tax arrears and a concerted focus on recovery during the 2022/23 financial year.

Business Rate Arrears Nationally 2014 - 2022

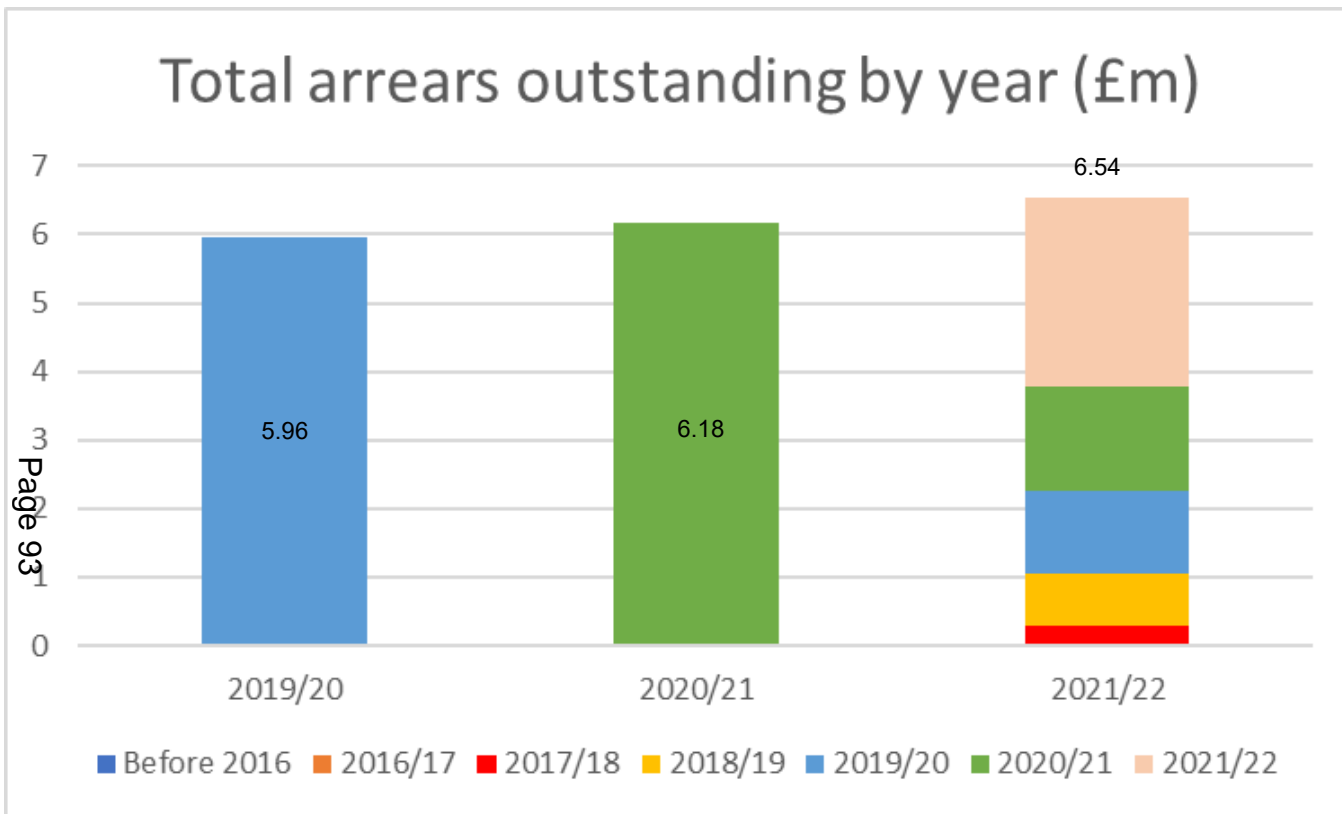
Chart 6 below shows the increase in total arrears outstanding at year end. The chart shows that although there had been some variability in the total level of arrears outstanding in earlier years, in particular in 2019/20, the impact of Covid-19 had been to increase the total levels by £1.1bn in 2020/21. This has been followed in 2021/22 by a further increase of £48m.

This has taken total levels of arrears outstanding from £1.4bn to £2.5bn, an increase of 80%. It remains to be seen how much of this will be collectable in future years.



Source: LG Futures Collection rates for Council Tax and NNDR In England 2021 to 2022 June 2022

Buckinghamshire Business Rate Arrears



The 10% increase in total Business Rate arrears between 31st March 2020 and 31st March 2022 of £580k is well below the national increase of 80%.

Total arrears includes standard Business Rates arrears and credits, which reflects rebates that are due to businesses. Excluding credits, Business Rates arrears have actually reduced by £1m (-32%).

Arrears as a % of that collect over last three years is less than 2%

As part of the restructuring there is a single Business Rates Team who are focussed on maximising collection and recovering outstanding business rates. With the pandemic over and the additional grant workload reducing the team will be focussing on ensuring arrears continue to reduce in the next year.



Single System Major Project



Single System Major Project background (slide 1 of 3)

The project to consolidate four legacy Revenues and Benefits systems down to one system began in February 2021. The legacy systems are Capita Academy (South Bucks), Civica (Chiltern), Northgate (Aylesbury and Wycombe). The chosen target system is provided by NEC Software Solutions (NEC previously known as Northgate).

The objectives of the project are:

- Build a Cloud environment, setup and configure the NEC Revenues and Benefits system and Information@Work document management software and applications platform.
- Data conversion, migration and merger of the existing Revenues and Benefits data and documents to the NEC Revenues and Benefits system and I@W cloud solutions.
- Implementation of a Customer Access Solution.

Single System Major Project background (slide 2 of 3)

The project is being delivered in two distinct phases.

- Phase 1 included the conversion and merger of data for the Aylesbury and Wycombe Northgate Systems and was delivered in December 21. This also included the implementation of the Customer Access Solution (Aylesbury & Wycombe), a cloud environment and an updated document management system. Phase 1 required five weeks of systems downtime and the clearing of the consequent backlog of work.
- Phase 2 will be the migration and merger of the Chiltern and South Bucks data into the new system. This will involve 11 weeks of system downtime with the system going live to the public on 27 October. Resources have been arranged to then address the consequent backlog of work and a recovery plan is in place across Revenues and Benefits and the Customer Service Centre.

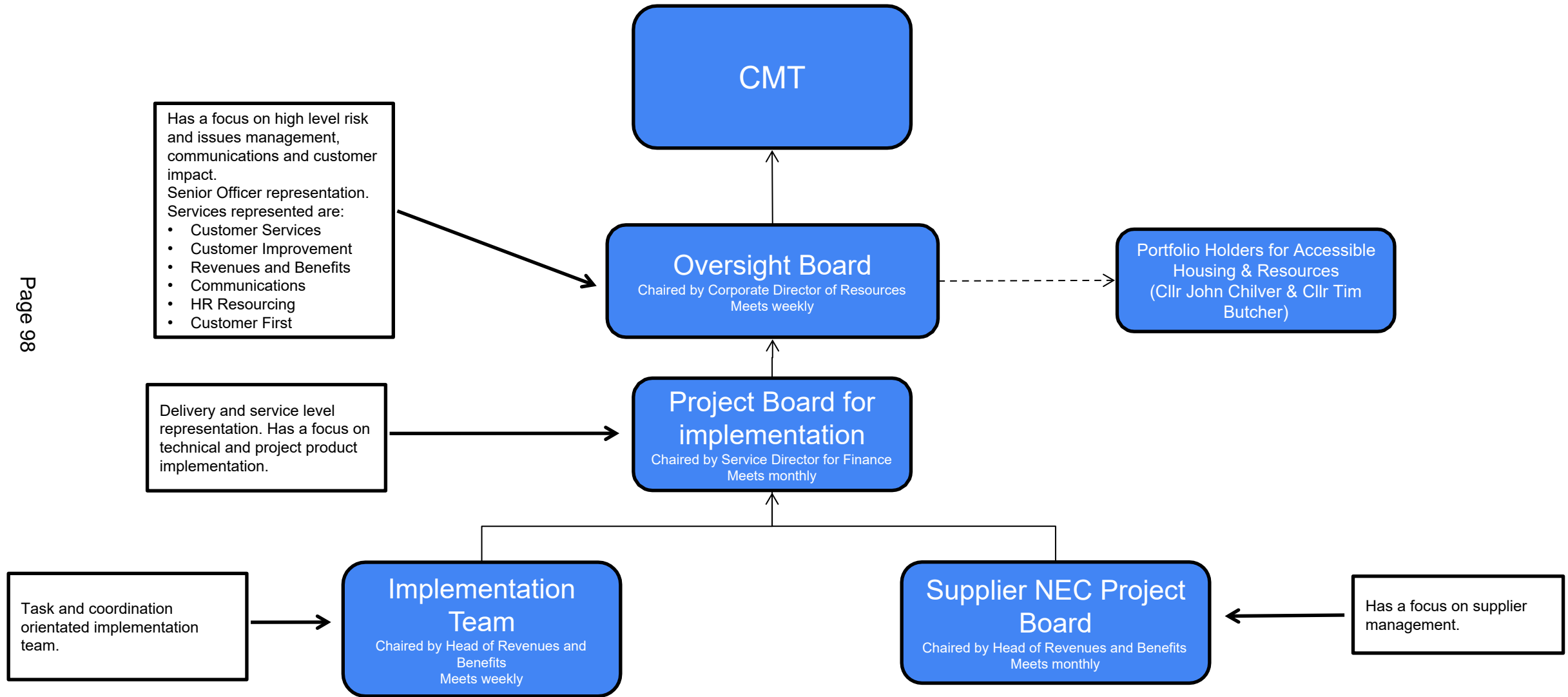
Single System Major Project background (slide 3 of 3)

The benefits of consolidating to a single system will enable Revenues and Benefits officers to be trained and work on the same system improving the flexible deployment of our staff. Together with the planned restructuring as part of the Finance Service Review, this will enhance the team working as a single Revenues and Benefits team with consistent policies and procedures. The new system will also improve the automation of tasks, and residents and businesses will be able to do more for themselves.

The detailed plan for this project, including the recovery plan, has been scrutinised in detail by the Risk Management Group on 28 July and there were no significant concerns raised about the plan or resources identified for the project.

Chiltern and South Bucks area members were briefed on 1st and 2nd August and Aylesbury and Wycombe area members are due to be briefed on 12th September.

Single System Project Governance



Phase 2 single system implementation timeline

Timing	Activity
15/8	Chiltern & South Bucks System Closedown
18/8 – 1/9	Convert & load data (C&SB) - 2 systems
2/9-15/9	Reconcile & Data cleanse
16/9 – 21/9	Chiltern & South Bucks Load payment details into NEC
22/9	Aylesbury & Wycombe System Closedown
26/9 - 27/9	Merge Chiltern & South Bucks into live
28/9 – 4/10	Reconcile South Bucks
30/9 – 6/10	Reconcile Chiltern
7/10	System is live to staff for testing of basic functionality
10/10 - 19/10	Run stored payments
07/10 - 26/10	Urgent post live cleansing
27/10	Public Go-Live
01/11	Phase 2a of service review staff structure in place

66-66a
System Closedown Period 11 weeks

Phase 2 single system - recovery timeline

Timing	Activity
07/10 – 27/10	Revenues & Benefits staff cleanse converted data
01/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 Agency in Revs & Bens clearing backlog• 21 staff in Customer Service answering calls and this increases to 30 in March 23 ready for annual billing
03/11	Service User Number change on direct debits
30/11	Council tax and business rates recovery recommences
31/01	Chiltern direct debit customers informed of payment change
01/02	9 more staff available in Customer Service
16/03	Council Tax Annual Billing notices start to hit door mats

Communications – key messages

What is happening and when:

- We are moving from four old legacy revs & bens systems to a single system for the whole of Buckinghamshire. We are taking this opportunity to upgrade the offer
- To achieve this we need to switch off the system for a few weeks
- This will have an impact on some customers

What we need you to do:

- Be aware that the system will be down; customer correspondence at this time will be logged and action taken after the launch on 27 October
- We still need you to tell us about any changes in your circumstances
- In genuine emergencies we will work with the customer direct

Why we are doing it:

- It will provide a better and consistent service to council tax payers, benefits recipients and business rates payers
- A self-service option will enable customers to access their accounts quickly to find information or make updates
- This will free up staff to better support customers where needed
- A single system means costs will be reduced

Key message for Residents

1. The **majority of residents will be unaffected** by this closedown period – council tax direct debit and standing order collections, housing benefit payments and all online payment systems **will continue as normal**.
2. If **you need our help or assistance**, we are here to help and you can contact us: online as normal : www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk telephone : 0300 1316000
3. If you are **suffering hardship** during the closedown, emergency payments will be available. Full details will be available on the housing benefit web pages. All requests will be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

Contact Us

Residents can use our Revs and Bens on line forms, call on 0300 131 6000 or for genuine hardship they can email:
emergencypayments@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Members will have a VIP in box to contact the service for resident enquiries

RevandBensMemberenquiries@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

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Finance and Resources Select Committee (Chairman: Ralph Bagge, Scrutiny officer: Chris Ward)

Date	Topic	Description & Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
1 December 2022	Budget Performance Monitoring Q2	To review the Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring Report	David Skinner	John Chilver
	Q2 Performance Report 2022-23	To review the Quarter 2 Performance Report	Matthew Everitt Holly Pedrick	John Chilver
	Commercial Investments and Loans	To consider a report on the council's commercial investments and loans	David Skinner Mark Preston	John Chilver
	Customer First	To receive an update on the programme	Sarah Murphy-Brookman	John Chilver Tim Butcher
	Work Smart Programme	To receive an update on the programme	Sarah Murphy-Brookman John Reed	John Chilver
	External Property Companies	To consider a six-month update report.	John Reed	John Chilver
	Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group Scoping Paper	The Committee will discuss the budget scrutiny inquiry group proposals.	Chris Ward	Ralph Bagge Martin Tett
9 – 13 January 2023	Budget Scrutiny		All Corporate and Service Directors	Cabinet Members, Deputies, Corporate and Service Directors
23 February 2023	Budget Inquiry 2022 Recommendations: 12-month review	To receive an update on the process of the budget scrutiny recommendations made in January 2022	David Skinner	Martin Tett
	Budget Performance Monitoring Q3	To review the Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring Report	David Skinner	John Chilver
	Q3 Performance Report 2022-23	To review the Quarter 3 Performance Report	Matthew Everitt Holly Pedrick	John Chilver
6 April 2023	External Property Companies	Report on the performance and business plans of the Council's companies: AVE, Consilio, London Road Management Company, and Buckinghamshire Advantage	John Reed	John Chilver

	External Company Governance Annual Update	To receive a report following one year of the new governance arrangements with the external property companies	John Reed	John Chilver
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