



Communities & Localism Select Committee agenda

Date: Wednesday 5 October 2022

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

M Harker OBE (Chairman), A Waite (Vice-Chairman), A Alam, S Barrett, P Bass, P Cooper, P Drayton, G Hollis, M Hussain JP, M Knight, F Mahon, C Oliver, G Smith, M Stannard and L Smith BEM

Webcasting notice

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the council's website. At the start of the meeting the chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the council's published policy.

Therefore, by entering the meeting room you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should ask the committee clerk, who will advise where to sit.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the monitoring officer at monitoringofficer@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1	Apologies for absence / Changes in membership	
2	Declarations of Interest	
3	Minutes	5 - 10
	The minutes of the meeting held on 13 th July 2022 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 Chairman's update

11 - 14

6 Update on Refugee Resettlement Schemes

10:15

15 - 44

The Committee will receive a report on the current position with the Refugee Resettlement schemes in Buckinghamshire to enable Members to review the support that the Council is offering to guests from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Contributors:

Cllr Arif Hussain, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety

Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities

Matt Everitt, Interim Service Director, Service Improvement

7 Buckinghamshire Libraries - Developing a Vision and a Strategy

11:05

45 - 62

The Committee will receive a report on work currently underway to develop a new vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire Libraries. Members will have an opportunity to feedback on the priorities that have been identified.

Contributors:

Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities

David Jones, Head of Libraries

Laura Davies, Operations Manager

Lyn Mangisi, Support and Development Manager

Katie Dejoux, Culture and Outreach Services Manager

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|----------------|
| 8 | Update on Chilterns Lifestyles Centre
The Committee will receive a report on how the new facilities at the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre in Amersham have been received since the official opening in December 2021.

Contributors:
Richard Barker, Corporate Director, Communities
Sophie Payne, Service Director, Culture, Sport and Leisure
Sue Drummond, Head of Leisure | 11:50 | 63 - 72 |
| 9 | Work Programme
The Committee will discuss and note the Work Programme for future meetings.

Contributors:
All Committee Members | 12:20 | 73 - 74 |
| 10 | Date and time of the next meeting
The next meeting will take place on 22 nd November 2022 at 10am in the Oculus. | | |

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Kelly Sutherland on 01296 383602, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank



Joint Select Committee – Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Select Committee – Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing held on Wednesday 13 July 2022 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.29 pm.

Members present

M Harker OBE (Chairman), D Carroll (Chairman), P Drayton, S Barrett, M Hussain JP, M Knight, F Mahon, C Oliver, M Stannard, L Smith BEM, S James, S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, I Darby, N Marshall, C Poll, D Town, A Waite and S Wilson

Others in attendance

K Sutherland, P Batting, T Fowler, L Michelson, S Payne, M Tett and L Dowson

Agenda Item

1 Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillor Carl Etholen.

Councillor Sarah James was in attendance substituting for Councillor Tom Hunter Watts.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for Communities and Localism Select Committee

The Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee confirmed their appointment of Councillor Ashley Waite as Vice-chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Ashley Waite be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee for the ensuing year.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of the Previous Communities and Localism Select Committee Meetings

The minutes of the Communities & Localism Select Committee meetings held on

26th April 2022 and 18th May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

5 Public Questions

No public questions had been received.

6 Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Martin Tett, Leader of the Council, Philippa Batting, Managing Director for Buckinghamshire Business First, Lucy Dowson, Tourism Development Manager for Visit Buckinghamshire, Bill Morris, Co-Chair for Buckinghamshire Culture, Lisa Michelson, Service Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration, Sophie Payne, Service Director, Culture, Sport & Leisure and Shabnam Ali, Head of Economic Growth, to the meeting.

The following points were highlighted during the presentations:

- Buckinghamshire had a wide variety of attractions for Visitors, placed in an ideal location with 20 million people living 90 minutes from Aylesbury. These included well known Historical and National Trust properties, as well as film and television locations and beautiful natural environments. In 2019, the Visitor Economy in Bucks was worth £900million.
- Covid had affected the Tourism industry heavily, Buckinghamshire Council had been relatively quick to provide support to affected businesses compared to other Local Authorities. The perception of the sector had shifted with the stability of working in the tourism sector along with long working hours now perceived more negatively.
- Staff retention was challenging for those employed in the Visitor Economy. Some village based businesses were closing on alternating days of the week due to shortages in staff. High cost of living in Buckinghamshire was a contributing factor to this.
- The positive impact on the local area was just not just economic. There were large social benefits and increases to quality of life. Cultural programs promoted education and the employment opportunities which allowed a wide range of skills to be developed.
- For the top 10 attractions for the Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire, it was noted that the most popular were National Trust properties (i.e. Cliveden and Waddesdon Manor).
- The visitor economy was more concentrated in the South of the county, with the majority of this in the Beaconsfield Constituency.
- 9% of Bucks workforce was in the Visitor Economy (compared to 10% in England). There was a £1.2 billion contribution to Bucks GVA (Gross Value Added). This accounted for 9.8% of Bucks total GVA (higher compared to surrounding LEP areas. Herts 9.5%; Oxon 9.2%; Berks 7.4%).
- The accommodation supply for the Visitor Economy was focused around the Chiltern Hills for leisure use. For business use, it was concentrated around the Milton Keynes area. The accommodation capacity was split 72% non-serviced and 28% serviced accommodation. Notably 85% of the non-serviced accommodation were AirBnB properties.
- Visit Bucks was the DMO (Destination Management Organisation) for

Buckinghamshire. It supported the promotion of the geography and its key constituents, including accommodation, restaurants, attractions, events, transportation, guided tours and any other retailers catering to travellers.

- The Visitbuckinghamshire.org website received 30,000 visits per month, and had wide reach on Social media. The organisation worked in partnership with over 300 tourism businesses.
- As well as promoting the visitor economy via newsletters to subscribers and weekly themed content on the website, Visit Bucks also attend industry events and encourage businesses to collaborate and develop their offer. They also help businesses to identify possible funding opportunities and support them with grant applications.
- The Council currently provide Visit Bucks with £15k funding per annum which was further topped up by Bucks Business First.
- It was noted that 93% of visits to Buckinghamshire are day visitors so it would be useful to encourage more people to stay, as overnight visitors tended to spend more money locally. It might be useful to promote itineraries whereby visitors could take in several attractions over a weekend or a week, perhaps with different themes.
- Improved transport links could help to boost the visitor economy, as it would help staff and visitors alike to reach attractions. Often it is the last mile or two that proves challenging.
- Visit Buckinghamshire Boost was a programme ran in collaboration with Buckinghamshire Business First and various partner organisations, designed to accelerate tourism, hospitality, and leisure businesses and the wider visitor economy in Buckinghamshire.
- The programme covered various topics with packages aimed at boosting Green Credentials, Accessibility, Digital Skills, Workforce and Growth.
- Buckinghamshire Culture was initially developed from Buckinghamshire County Council and became a separate charity registered October 2021. The organisation aimed to nurture cultural development in Bucks.
- Buckinghamshire lacked a particularly large international tourist attraction that defined it, however it had plenty of medium and small sized attractions. The County's particular strengths were identified as it's Literary Heritage, Sports Heritage, Places of Historical & Cultural Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Cultural & Creative Economy.
- Several events had been held, such as the Summer of Stories, Bucks in 100 Objects, and an Open Weekend (2022 theme was trees and green).

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

- Work had been undertaken to look at work done in surrounding counties to emulate their successful approach to the Visitor Economy.
- Chiltern Hills was considered the strongest brand due to attraction based on an active lifestyle and for family holidays
- More work should be done to establish Buckinghamshire as the home of the Paralympics. However a recent visit from Sophie Morgan, tv presenter, demonstrated that accessibility around Bucks was disappointing for

wheelchair users, so improvements in this area could help to attract more visitors.. Accessibility was not just about catering for people with mobility problems – adjustments for visually or hearing impaired people also needed to be considered.

- A Member felt the National Trust attractions were primarily contributing towards the National Trust. Furthermore, the National Trust properties didn't need further advertisement from Council/DMO resources as they were already a part of the National Trust network.
- An accommodation guide for visitors to Bucks was suggested, as well as leaflets available in Council Offices for visitors to peruse. It was noted that accommodation Guides were in danger of going out of date quickly. Some local towns/villages have produced these in the past. An online version might be easier to keep updated.
- Given the value of tourism to the Buckinghamshire economy, the Chairman questioned whether more investment was available from the Council. The Leader explained there were pressures in the Council budget, as BC was facing increased costs due to the ongoing inflationary challenges. It was suggested leveraging volunteers would help increase utility in the Visitor Economy.
- The development of a Visitor Economy Strategy was strongly encouraged, as recommended in the report. It was felt the Council could offer a comprehensive approach to combine and maximise the resources available across the county. Lisa Michelson, Service Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration would be leading on the development of the Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire.
- Any strategy would need to have a practical Action Plan alongside it, identifying 'quick wins' for the short term and then perhaps 5 year and 10 year goals. It would also be important to have clear performance indicators in the strategy to enable its success to be measured.
- It was also noted that a renewed evidence base for Buckinghamshire's Visitor Economy was needed as the landscape was different post-Covid and this would help to inform the direction for the strategy.
- Leaflets and information should be made available in Council offices to promote attractions across Buckinghamshire. The Leader agreed this would be useful and would look into its implementation. Visitor information was also available to the public from libraries in Buckinghamshire.
- The identity for Buckinghamshire with regards to the visitor economy was difficult to establish. Storytelling was considered due to the rich literary and cultural history.
- Staffing challenges in the hospitality sector were prevalent throughout the country and there was a global shortage. Buckinghamshire faced a shortage exacerbated by a lack of affordable accommodation.
- A Member suggested a 'Bucks Card' that could include entrance to visitor attractions and public transport and maybe discounts at restaurants or other local businesses. This could also be done via an App.
- Several Members expressed their support to establish a business case for increased spending on the visitor economy. This could then be used to justify

a budget increase towards tourism initiatives and the Destination Management organisation.

- 7 Work Programme - Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee**
The Work Programme for 2022-23 was agreed. Members were advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer for the committee with any additional topics they wished to be included in the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing work programme.
- 8 Work Programme - Communities and Localism Select Committee**
The Work Programme for 2022-23 was agreed. Members were advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer for the committee with any additional topics they wished to be included in the Communities and Localism work programme.
- 9 Date of Next Meeting - Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee**
The next meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee would be on 6th October 2022 at 10am.
- 10 Date of Next Meeting - Communities and Localism Select Committee**
The next meeting of the Communities and Localism Select Committee would be on 5th October 2022 at 10am.

This page is intentionally left blank



Agenda Item 5
Councillor Mimi Harker OBE
Councillor David Carroll

Buckinghamshire Council
The Gateway
Gatehouse Road
Aylesbury
HP19 8FF

www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Councillor Martin Tett
Leader
Buckinghamshire Council
The Gateway
Gatehouse Road
Aylesbury HP19 8FF

20 July 2022

Ref: Joint Select Committee - Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing 13th July 2022

Dear Martin,

We would like to begin by thanking you and the other contributors to our Joint Select Committee meeting last week, Philippa Batting, Bucks Business First, Lucy Dowson, Visit Buckinghamshire and Bill Morris, Buckinghamshire Culture and the Council officers, Lisa Michelson and Sophie Payne. It was a very interesting and informative meeting on the Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire and Committee Members were incredibly engaged, with lots of suggestions and questions about how the Council can support the growth of the Visitor Economy going forward.

It was obvious that there has been lots of good work going on across all the partners in Buckinghamshire and the synergies between Buckinghamshire Culture, the Council and the County's Business community are clear to see. It was also interesting to understand the visitor data from 2019 and to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on visitor numbers and behaviour. Members understood that the meeting was about scene setting and early engagement on the proposal to develop a Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

The Joint Select Committee are very supportive of the Council developing a Visitor Economy Strategy with an associated Action Plan, in order to provide strong direction, enhanced co-ordination and renewed vigour to this agenda. It would be helpful to understand the timeline for the development of this strategy and to identify further opportunities for the Select Committees to be involved in scrutinising the details and the delivery of the strategy in the future. Please can you advise us of when it is envisaged that a Visitor Economy Strategy would be agreed?

During the meeting, you emphasised that the Council's budget is under pressure and Members recognise this. However, if a robust business case, supported by credible evidence, demonstrates that a modest increase in investment would lead to a significant upturn in visitor numbers and their associated spending locally, then Members feel that this would merit serious consideration during the Medium Term Financial Planning process.

Best wishes

Councillor Mimi Harker OBE
Chairman
Communities & Localism

Councillor David Carroll
Chairman
Growth, Infrastructure & Housing



Leader of the Council

Martin Tett
 Buckinghamshire Council
 The Gateway
 Gatehouse Road
 Aylesbury
 HP19 8FF

martin.tett@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
 01296 382302
www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Cllr Mimi Harker OBE
 Chairman
 Communities and Localism

Cllr David Carroll
 Chairman
 Growth, Infrastructure and Housing

22 September 2022

Dear Mimi and David

Joint Select Committee - Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing 13 July 2022

Thank you very much for the supportive letter of 20 July regarding the Select Committee discussion on the Visitor Economy and I am really sorry for the delay in this response. I would agree that it was a very engaging conversation, and it was great to hear the thoughts of the Committees as well as our key partners from Buckinghamshire Business First, Visit Buckinghamshire and Buckinghamshire Culture on how we can all consider the best way to take things forward.

It was clear from discussion that there is real support and enthusiasm to develop a Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan that can identify key opportunities as well as how each Visitor Economy partner can help to deliver it. As reported to the Committee, the Council will take this forward in the coming months in conjunction with all the key partners for this sector; having an up-to-date strategy will support the better co-ordination of activities in promoting Buckinghamshire's tourism and place promotional activities.

Lisa Michelson and her team in Economic Growth and Regeneration will commence this work on the Visitor Economy Strategy immediately and she is already in the process of identifying experts in this sector who can support this work. We expect that a draft strategy will be completed by the end of this year with discussions at Cabinet and with key partners happening in the new year.

Having an evidence-based strategy will be key to understanding the likely benefits/impact that new initiatives and interventions could bring and will support discussions on potential financial decisions. As we talked about in the Committee, we will have significant pressures on Council funding so will need a robust rationale to increase spending in this area. The clarity that comes

from a new strategy can also identify new ways we can maximise impacts from our existing resources and bring in external funding where needed.

Thanks again for the Committees' consideration of this important issue and I look forward to updating you in due course regarding the next steps of the strategy and consultation process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Tett". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Martin Tett
Leader
Buckinghamshire Council



Refugee resettlement update

Communities & Localism Select Committee

5 October 2022



Introduction by Cllr Arif Hussain

Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities

- Over the last two years, Buckinghamshire has welcomed individuals and families from both Afghanistan and Ukraine; many of whom are at very genuine risk to their lives fleeing violence and war
- Whilst the resettlement schemes being provided by Buckinghamshire Council to Afghans and Ukrainians are very different, they share the same ethos – wrap around practical support and care
- Buckinghamshire is also accommodating arrivals who are in the process of seeking Asylum – this includes Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)
- This presentation is to provide an update on what we have done so far and what our future plans are for refugees wanting to resettle in Buckinghamshire

Refugee Resettlement in Numbers

Asylum Seekers

- Current population in Buckinghamshire: 91 (June 2022)
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC): 50 (September 2022)
- Home Office set Target: 431 (by December 2023)

Page 17

Afghan Resettlement

- Current population in Buckinghamshire: 52 people, across 12 families
- Target: 30 families over the cycle of the resettlement scheme

Ukraine Resettlement

- Current population in Buckinghamshire: 1,217
- Target: no target. 551 Ukrainian citizens matched to Buckinghamshire sponsors but not yet arrived

Financials

The financial support via Central Government Grants are based on formulas driven by the take up of each scheme.

Below is a snapshot on the current status for each Grant.

Grant	Rate if applicable	Income to date £000's		Spend/ commitments to date £000's	
Homes for Ukraine Visa Scheme	£10,500 per beneficiary for 12mths from arrival date	8,788		7,994	
Afghan Resettlement	12 families to date 3 year tariff funding	496		43	
Asylum Dispersal	£3,500 per dispersal bed occupied to 31-03-2023	n/a		n/a	
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)	£143 per day for young people aged under 18 years	<18yrs	454	<18yrs	659
	£270 per wk for young people 18 years and over	>18yrs	158	>18yrs	330

Page 18

Homes for Ukraine Visa Scheme

- Income received as at Qtr1, noting funding covers 12mths and will therefore span Financial year 2022-23 and Financial Year 2023-24.
- Costs cover £200 welcome payment, SLO staffing, housing check staffing, children's holiday scheme, employment support, voluntary sector infrastructure, accommodation costs

Asylum Dispersal : information is as per informal consultation

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children : Income and expenditure to date 2022-23 financial year (claims are in arrears)



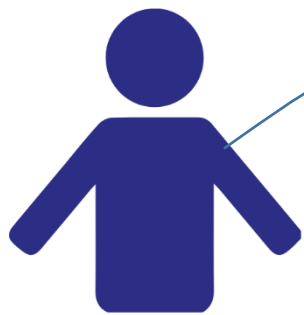
Ukraine



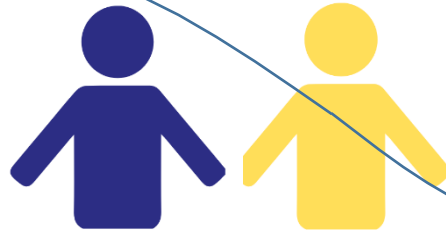
Ukraine

- There are two schemes: Family Visa Scheme and The Homes for Ukraine scheme
- The family scheme is a private arrangement with a three-year visa to join family members in the UK (we are not provided with any data about this scheme)
- Homes for Ukraine scheme - this is the national sponsor scheme where the Council has responsibility for administering funding and support
- Over 1,200 Ukrainian beneficiaries have arrived in Buckinghamshire, with 500+ more matched with Buckinghamshire sponsors but not yet arrived

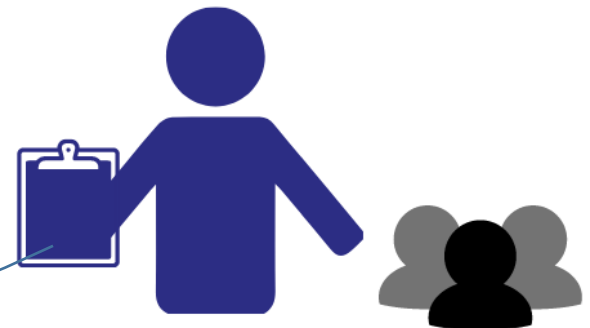
Page 20



Public 'sign up' to host an individual or family for minimum six months



Guests and hosts are matched (but not by the council)



The council provides coordinated support including education, housing checks and safeguarding



Operating model

- Formed a Local Strategic Partnership Board with sub groups to be in the best position to co-ordinate a strong response with partners to whatever scenario presents
 - Community Impact Bucks funded to support with community capacity and volunteer interpreters, workshops offering pre arrival advice
 - Support from BBF to guests looking for employment / setting up own businesses
- Programme team comprises of Head of Service, 12 Area Leads covering Community Board Areas and rematching, four refugee support officers including one of our Ukrainian guests, project and programme support officers.
- 150 Sponsor Liaison Officers - council staff, NHS and Fire service volunteers
- Services with additional responsibilities: Environmental Health, Housing, Safeguarding teams including DBS, School Admissions and Transport, Finance, Corporate Business Support

Page 21



Sponsors
people offering a place
in their house



Guests
Ukrainians arriving –
sometimes called
beneficiaries



Sponsor Liaison Officers
Staff volunteers helping in
addition to their role

Being a Sponsor Liaison Officer

“

Being a Sponsor Liaison Officer is the **best thing I've ever done**, it's not just rewarding but **an honour**. In many cases, you are the representation of our area, our council and our country and at one of the most momentous periods in their life. Sponsors, guests and liaisons will **share these experiences forever** ”



Ryan, Chesham and Villages

Page 22

“

Welcoming guests to Buckinghamshire and providing them and their sponsors with practical support and advice **has been an honour**. The Ukrainians I have met have been so happy and grateful to be here, I can't imagine being so brave and positive in their situation. **I am glad I have the opportunity to do something small to help them.** ”



Connie, Winslow and Villages - Wing and Ivinghoe

Homes for Ukraine scheme support

- Home Visit, DBS, safeguarding and welfare checks, School admissions support – including transport
- £350 monthly thank you payment to sponsor and £200 cash on arrival for guests
- Each sponsor assigned a Liaison Officer who provide benefits and employment signposting
- Partnered with Heart of Bucks to ensure crisis fund available
- Additional support packages some of which have been administered through community boards
- Adult Learning English Language courses available at 11 venues and new online offer
- Libraries, leisure centres, activities during the summer holidays (HAF)
- Hosting employment/jobs fairs for Ukrainian guests
- Support from business including toy vouchers from The Entertainer

Communication

- Welcome pack for sponsors and translated version for guests
- Our webpages are being kept up to date [A Helping Hand for Ukraine | Buckinghamshire Council](#)
- Dedicated mailbox to understand emerging picture and ensure oversight of programme ukrainesupport@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
- Buckinghamshire online directory is regularly updated to help identify what community support is available
- Sponsor and guest newsletter's circulated including housing options
- Attendance and presentations at community group sessions, Community Board meetings, Parish Clerk meetings

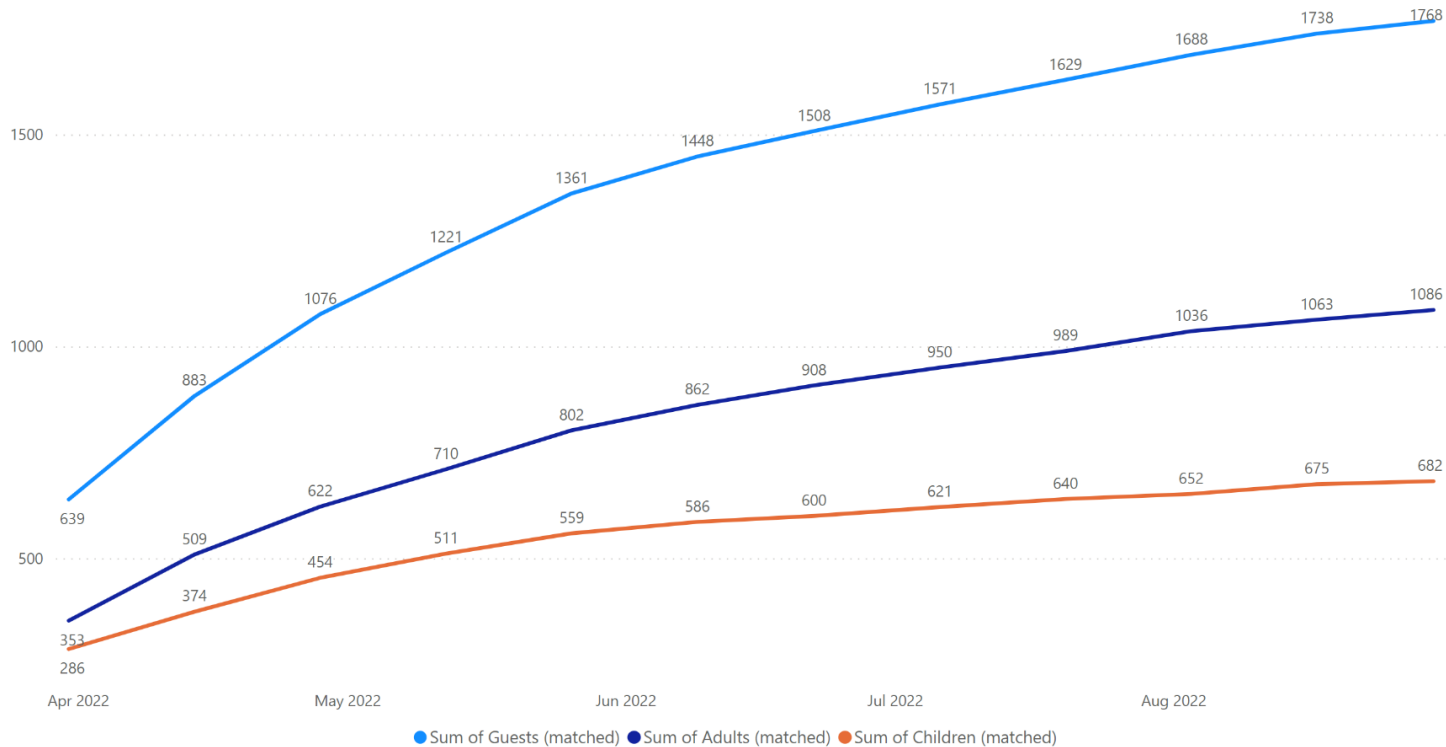


Current situation

- Scheme launched end of March, first guests arrived in April
- Significant activity and design of local programme within two weeks
- High volume of sponsors in Bucks, particularly in the South of the county
- Required housing checks, DBS checks and safeguarding checks for Children's and Adults. High volume and started with a backlog requiring emergency response
- Developed good practice models based on fostering standards with safeguarding paramount
- Volume of initial applications for checks slowed down but guest arrivals increased resulting in pressure points in different services
- Inevitably there have been some relationship breakdowns which need to be managed
- The majority of sponsors only signed up for the minimum 6 months support yet guests have right to remain for 3 years

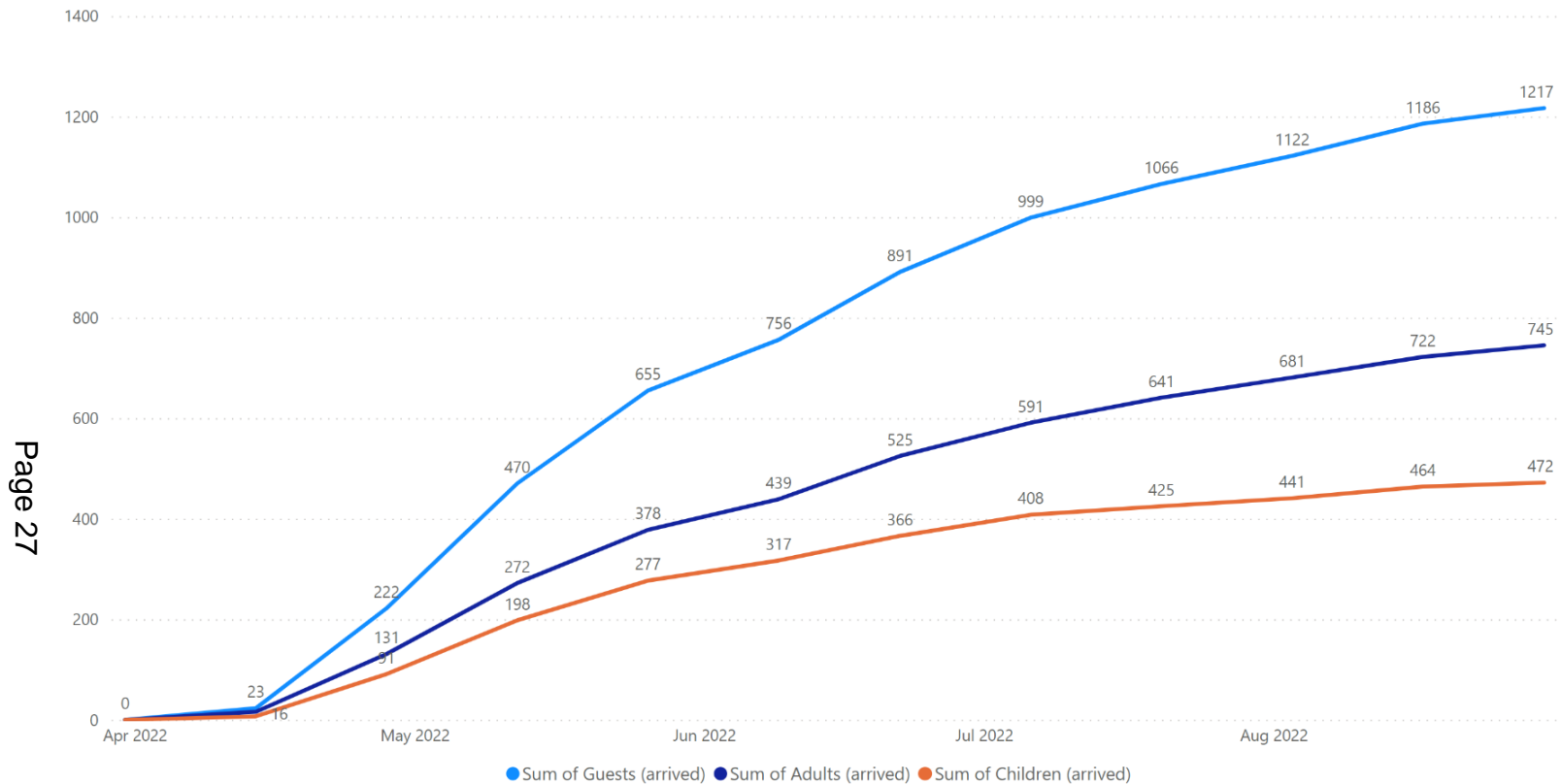
Metrics – guests matched

Page 26



- Guests matched have continued to rise steadily following the initial high numbers in April and May, which highlights the need for ongoing resources to be assigned
- 682 children need school places, early education or post 16 support
- 61% of the matched guests are adults but we know there are a large number of family members left behind. It is important to remember these will be vulnerable and been through significant trauma

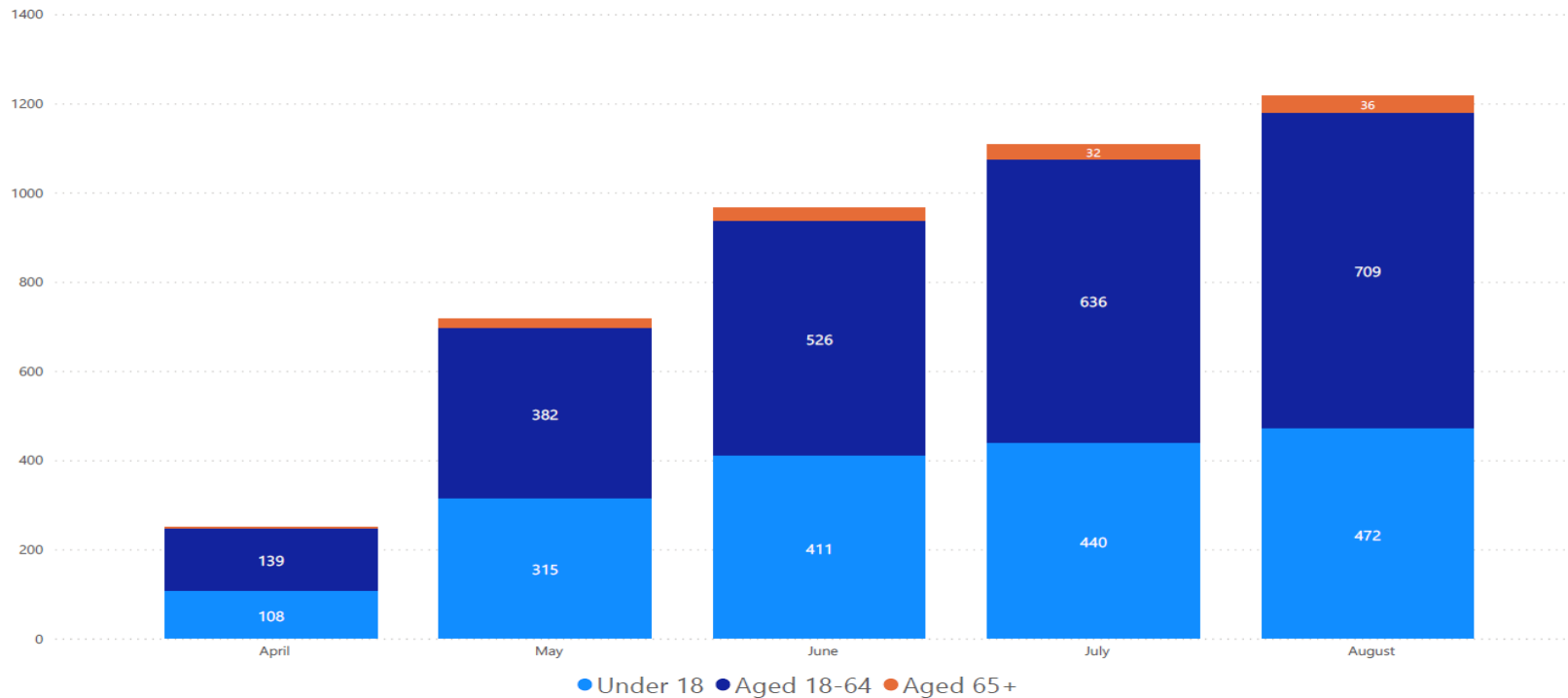
Metrics – guests arrived



- Arrived guests have been steadily increasing. This is expected to level off in the coming months with the Council's emphasis shifting to deal with the need of rematches, as the end of the original 6 month sponsor agreement approaches

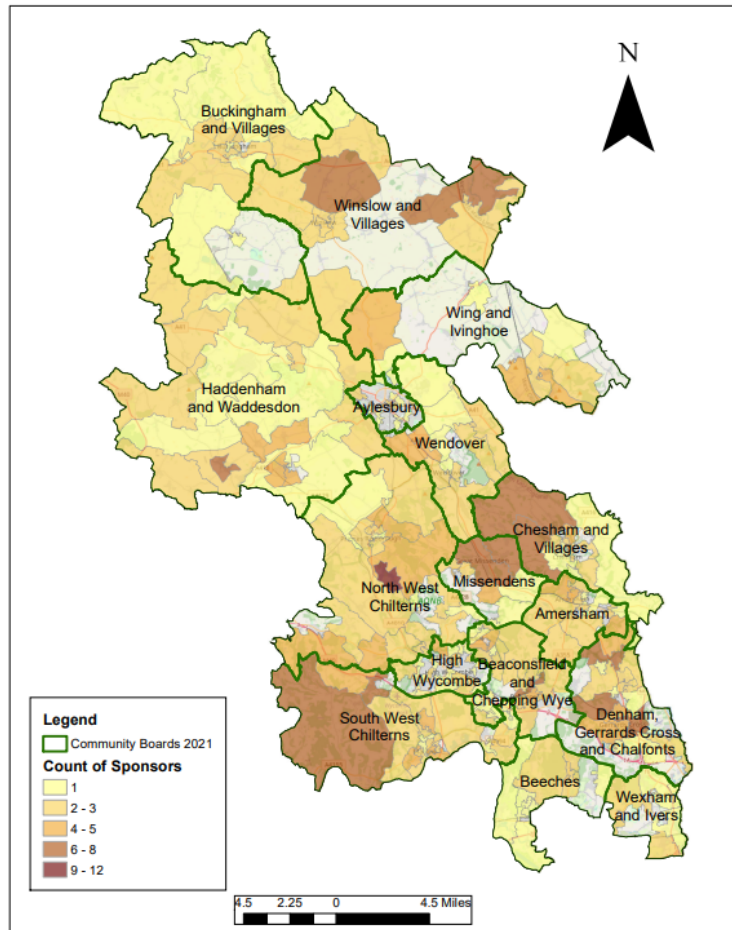
Metrics – beneficiaries arrived by age

Page 28



- Beneficiaries in all age groups continue to rise steadily
- Arrival numbers have slowed in all age ranges however the 18-64 age group is increasing fastest with an 11% increase in August compared to July. This appears to be as a result of more working age males travelling to the UK
- Although 65+ lower than anticipated important to be mindful of adult social care needs

Metrics – sponsor location



- There are a few areas across Buckinghamshire where we are seeing a high number of sponsors in one area
- This is predominately down to proactive community groups who worked to identify sponsors in their areas and have provided support
- The high proportion of sponsors in the South of the county is putting pressure on public services e.g. school places, school transport and doctors/dentist
- We have had local intel that the matching websites were encouraging Ukrainians not to match into rural areas due to transport difficulties. This explains the gaps in some of the areas



Local rematching

- Where hosts or guests want to end their agreement early rematching is available
- Rematched sponsors undergo the same checks as initial sponsors and a bank of available sponsors is being created
- There are instances where emergency rematching needs to take place due to a breakdown in the relationship between the guest and the sponsor
- The initial ask on sponsors was for a six month period. After six months, guests have the option of moving into private rental or social housing, both of which are expensive/in short supply in Buckinghamshire, therefore rematching may be their only option to remain the area they have settled in – with children in school and location of jobs
- We know that rematching will increase as we near the end of the initial six months

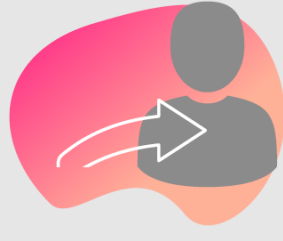


Post sponsorship options



1. Extending with sponsor

The sponsors can receive a 'thank you' payment for up to 12 months, so if the guest and sponsor are happy they can extend



2. Rematching with new sponsor

If a new sponsor can be found, the guest can move into a rematch. The 'thank you' payments can be transferred to the new sponsor



3. Private Renting

Guests can move into private rental, they are able to claim Local Housing Allowance through Universal Credit and the council can support with a deposit guarantee and first month rent upfront



4. Social Housing

Guests can apply to go onto the Housing Register and be assessed for priority need in line with the current policies

Post sponsorship challenges



1. Extending with sponsor

Some sponsors are clear they want to end at six months (either for practical reasons or due to the relationship with the guests)



2. Rematching with new sponsor

There are fewer residents coming forward to be rematches. We have a number of options for single people, but very few for larger family groups who need multiple rooms



3. Private Renting

Private rental accommodation is expensive, scarce and not always in settled location. Guests don't have credit history for checks. Local Housing Allowance may not cover rents



4. Social Housing

There is already a very high demand for social housing, in particular larger properties and in the South where we have a lot of settled guests

Additional Challenges

- Cost of living crisis - some sponsors have indicated £350 monthly payment not enough to cover the cost of hosting families
- Family members joining settled families in Bucks and increasing our numbers
- Sponsor Liaison Officers are finding it difficult to balance the additional work they have taken on alongside their day jobs so are stepping back from the role giving Area Leads a higher case load





Afghan Resettlement Scheme



Afghan resettlement scheme

- The situation in Afghanistan remains extremely concerning
- There are 2 schemes in operation: the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) scheme
- There have been over 21,450 arrivals into the UK from Afghanistan to date, with over 15,000 of occurring during Operation Pitting. Of these over 10,000 currently remain in Bridging Hotels and it estimated that between 500-1000 arrivals are entering the UK every month
- Funding is available to Local Authorities to provide Wrap around support for Afghans who are being resettled within an LA area
- Buckinghamshire Council is currently supporting 12 Afghan families (26 adults, 26 minors and 5 pregnancies) exceeding our target of 10 in the first 12 months. In the longer term we are expecting to accommodate 30 families over the cycle of the resettlement scheme.

ARAP Scheme

- The Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) launched on 1 April 2021 and remains open.
- Offers relocation or other assistance to former Locally Employed Staff (LES) in Afghanistan
- Any former LES can submit an application and are eligible to apply from any country (including Afghanistan) and regardless of their employment status, rank or role, or length of time served.
- There are four categories for assistance, against which all ARAP applications are assessed.

Cohort

Assistance offered

- | | | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| • Category 1 | High risk / imminent threat | Urgent relocation |
| • Category 2 | Eligible for relocation by default | Routine relocation |
| • Category 3 | Not eligible for relocation | Other support offered |
| • Category 4 | Special cases | Case-by-case basis |

ACRS Scheme

- The Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) launched on 6 January 2022.
- Priority cohorts:
 - those who have assisted the UK efforts in Afghanistan and stood up for values such as democracy, women's rights, freedom of speech, and rule of law
 - vulnerable people, including women and girls at risk, and members of minority groups at risk (including ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+)
- The UK will resettle more than 5,000 people in the first year and up to 20,000 over the coming years.
- The ACRS scheme is not application-based. Instead, eligible people will be prioritised and referred for resettlement to the UK through one of 3 referral pathways, pathway 2 and 3 were launched recently

ACRS Scheme

- **Pathway 1** - vulnerable and at-risk individuals who arrived in the UK under the evacuation programme have been the first to be settled under the ACRS. Eligible people who were notified by the UK government that they had been called forward or specifically authorised for evacuation, but were not able to board flights, will also be offered a place under the scheme if they subsequently come to the UK
- **Pathway 2**, - referrals are now being received from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of vulnerable refugees who have fled Afghanistan for resettlement to the UK
- **Pathway 3** - designed to offer a route to resettlement for those at risk who supported the UK and international community effort in Afghanistan, as well as those who are particularly vulnerable, such as women and girls at risk and members of minority groups. In the first year this is for: British Council contractors, GardaWorld contractors and Chevening alumni.

Afghan resettlement support

- Ongoing liaison with Home Office and South East Migration Partnership to match families with suitable accommodation within Buckinghamshire.
- Linking with appropriate services to provide:
 - Healthcare
 - Education
 - English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)
 - Employment support
 - Access to benefits
- Provision of friendly support and practical advice, and develop an integration plan alongside experienced local community members
- Liaison with partners and the voluntary and community sector
- Coordination of local offers of support



Current situation

- 12 settling families (across 13 properties) doing well with successful delivery of integration plans and ongoing support in place
- Really positive feedback regarding the support received from the Afghan resettlement officers
- All Afghan families accessing ESOL lessons (unless experienced Interpreters)
- Community Sponsors and welfare visits plans in place for all families according to level of support requirement.
- Financial support from Heart of Bucks Crisis fund, and further support with supermarket vouchers, food parcels and travel allowances.



Current situation

- All registered with GPs/Midwife – supporting complex health referrals to Hospital. Some under NHS Dental care
- Children of school age or early year (2yrs+) attending setting for education and developing English language skills.
- Family triage information to ensure support is delivered as appropriate.
- 8 further families in the pipeline - potential accommodation options being explored.
- Working with the Ministry of Defence to explore possibility of securing properties in Bucks suited to larger families

Recent policy changes

- Two recent developments in the schemes have been launched:
 1. **Find your own accommodation pathway** – to enable Afghans in Bridging hotels to source their own accommodation. Support within the system to ensure that families are sourcing appropriate accommodation and also to ensure the a receiving Local Authority is able to provide response back on the suggested accommodation. Buckinghamshire is not participating in this scheme due to availability of housing supply and volume of Ukrainian refugees accommodated
 2. **Enhanced Matching Process** - for Afghans in Bridging Hotels –Afghans in Bridging Hotels are now only able to decline 2 suitable accommodation offers. If neither are accepted, they are declared homeless and will be sourced temporary accommodation as per the Homelessness statutory responsibilities of the receiving LA.

Challenges and risks

- Many properties in Buckinghamshire will be unaffordable especially with many Afghan families requiring larger sized accommodation. A potential solution here is the use of MOD accommodation for ARAP families
- Complex language barriers where education system in Afghanistan was poor, especially for females. This is more acute in relation to written English which is essential for employment, especially more skilled employment. Work is in progress with Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) to explore solutions
- There can be a delay for families to receive appropriate benefit support as early as possible. Biometric Residence Permits (BRP), which are required for employment and driving licences can also be delayed

Challenges and risks

- Mental health issues and trauma can impact on the level of support required from the LA team to assist with their resettlement. Trauma-informed approach required to reflect family's experiences of prolonged war.
- Families at risk of exploitation with limited knowledge of their rights in the UK, vulnerability within community
- Cost of living crisis and ongoing support
- High levels of pregnancy rate (of 12 families supported 2 have given birth since arriving to Buckinghamshire and 5 are currently pregnant), resulting in provided accommodation may quickly become unsuitable.
- Further Bridging/Temporary Accommodation will need to be sourced by Govt which could be in Buckinghamshire. The pressure of this and the other schemes such as Ukraine scheme and Asylum Dispersal could see significant pressure developing within Buckinghamshire.



Report to Communities & Localism Select Committee

Date:	5 October 2022
Title:	Buckinghamshire Libraries – Developing a Vision and Strategy
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Clive Harriss
Contact officer:	David Jones, Head of Libraries David.Jones@Buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	The Committee are recommended to note progress in developing a new vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire libraries.
Reason for decision:	For members to be informed and comment on the emerging libraries vision and strategy and further engagement plans.

1. Background

- 1.1 Work has now started on developing a five-year vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire Libraries.
- 1.2 The library service has been transformed in recent years in response to a range of challenges and opportunities and now delivers a broader range of services, including enhanced digital services. Key performance information and statistics for Buckinghamshire Libraries can be found in the attached slide pack.
- 1.3 Increasingly the emphasis for the service has been on promoting health and wellbeing, inclusion, and in enabling access to information and services - particularly for the most vulnerable. Buckinghamshire Libraries have re-modelled buildings and developed partnerships to broaden the offer:
 - Most libraries now operate as Council Access Points (CAPs) and provide local and supported access to information and services.

- Specific projects have taken place to engage residents and partners in developing new services and activities in libraries, to meet the needs of local communities (for example, the Marlow Library refurbishment, and community engagement to deliver new activities in Micklefield).
- The new Amersham library within the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre has demonstrated the benefits of shared premises. Library usage has diversified and significantly increased; this is now the second busiest library in Buckinghamshire behind High Wycombe.
- In High Wycombe, a successful partnership with Action4Youth has been developed to deliver the Junction Youth Club. Open seven days a week, this facility attracts 50 – 100 young people a day and has resulted in the doubling of library usage by young people.
- Buckinghamshire Libraries have responded with speed and flexibility to re-purpose staff, information, and spaces to support residents throughout the pandemic and to welcome Ukrainian refugees. Most recently, libraries are now effectively supporting residents with the cost-of-living crisis, with surgeries promoting financial health and mutual aid and in developing the role of libraries as warm and welcoming spaces.

1.4 There is now an opportunity to build on the successes and lessons learned from the above developments and to create a new vision and strategy that aligns with key national and local agendas and priorities, for example levelling up in Buckinghamshire.

2. Developing a vision and strategy

2.1 Some initial scoping has been undertaken around developing a new vision and strategy, with library staff and volunteers as well as Trustees and volunteers from the Community Libraries engaged in several workshops at the end of last year to discuss and agree a future purpose and vision for Buckinghamshire Libraries. The following definitions were proposed through these groups.

Shared purpose (*‘Why the library service exists’*)

Our purpose is to provide free and accessible resources to connect communities and support learning and wellbeing in an inclusive, safe, trusted, and welcoming environment.

Shared vision (*‘What we are going to aim for’*)

Our vision is for all libraries to be welcoming and safe spaces for everyone in our communities to access services, information, and tools they need to learn, imagine, discover, and thrive.

2.2 Work has also begun to start mapping the high-level strategic context for Buckinghamshire Libraries, with the following plans considered thus far:

- Buckinghamshire Council Corporate Plan
- Community Board Priorities
- Buckinghamshire Cultural Strategy
- Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All - A local response to Levelling Up
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Universal Library Offers (National vision for libraries)

Further engagement will be undertaken with a range of council services and partners to consider wider strategies and work in development.

2.3 As set out above, Buckinghamshire Libraries have been successful in diversifying the service offer and responding to local priorities, but it is in the nature of the services that if we try to be all things to all people, we risk limiting our impact by spreading our resources too thinly. Therefore, clarity around future priorities is critical (and this might require agreement on where the opportunity for libraries to deliver impact is more limited).

2.4 An assessment of the strategic context to date has identified four broad areas, common to all plans, that could be agreed as service priorities for Buckinghamshire Libraries.

Health and Wellbeing

2.5 Buckinghamshire Libraries have made important contributions around key health challenges such as mental health, loneliness and social isolation, obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, and there is scope for the library offer to be developed further. Activities to date include:

- Social activities e.g., knit and natter to bring people together, combat loneliness
- NHS Health Checks, smoking cessation sessions, blood pressure checks in libraries
- Bibliotherapy – ‘reading well’ collections to support mental health
- Health education, campaigns around particular conditions e.g., strokes
- Information on diet and exercise (libraries staff trained to have conversations)
- Proactive services and activities to support people living with dementia, autism

- 2.6 We are working with Public Health on a 'Healthy Libraries' model and a personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) project delivered through our schools library service. We will also look at ways of supporting NHS Health on the High Street initiatives. Libraries can also support the wider prevention agenda and help keep people active and socially engaged; and in our thinking around libraries as hubs, we will align with adult social care and continue to explore opportunities for collaborative working with health partners.

Culture and Learning

- 2.7 National research has evidenced that the informal and neutral setting of a library can promote equal access to cultural activity i.e., people who do not usually engage with cultural activities are more likely to do so in an informal library setting. Buckinghamshire Libraries have recently delivered successful poets in residence and touring theatre programmes and the library service is a key partner in the Buckinghamshire Cultural strategy.
- 2.8 Libraries have always had a role in promoting reading and learning and this will remain as a key priority for the service. The library service supports Buckinghamshire schools with project collections and work with early years to get book packs to babies and carers. The service supports hundreds of reading groups, hosts writing groups and library spaces are used for a wide range of learning activities in partnership with organisations such as Adult Learning and University of the Third Age (U3A).
- 2.9 Importantly, libraries also support computer literacy and promote digital inclusion with free classes and gadget days and support skills and employment with interview and CV writing classes.

Stronger Communities

- 2.10 The position of library sites as neutral and safe spaces in the community, means that they are excellent venues for the types of community activity that build cohesion, encourage civic participation, and promote community safety.
- 2.11 Two thirds of our library sites are co-delivered in partnership with volunteers and third sector organisations. Looking ahead, we will build stronger links with community boards and further develop libraries as local hubs at the heart of the community.

Access, Information, and Inclusion

- 2.12 Free access to information is the core function of a library service. In Buckinghamshire we have extended this role by developing libraries as council access points, offering support, and signposting to services across all three channels – face to face, phone, and web. The digital information offer has been expanded and we have an extensive range of books, magazines, and newspapers available online.

- 2.13 Access and inclusion are central to our work to ensure that all residents can access services and we have developed strong partnerships with organisations such as Age Concern, Bucks Vision, RNIB, Dementia Friendly alliance, and Buckinghamshire Disability Service. We are also actively researching language needs in Buckinghamshire and developing cultural programmes to help attract all Buckinghamshire communities into the library.
- 2.14 Libraries have a strong offer to help support the most vulnerable in society. A network of safe and accessible community venues provide access to information and services face to face, by phone and by computer. The flexible spaces, strong partnership arrangements, free access to information and staff aptitudes of care and helpfulness mean that libraries can be deployed at short notice to support council initiatives to help the most vulnerable residents.

Future approaches

- 2.15 The key principles for effective delivery against these priorities will be:

Developing libraries as local hubs

Traditional use of libraries e.g., book borrowing is in decline nationally, and so the future vision and strategy for libraries requires the diversification of the library service offer, to contribute to wider agendas such as wellbeing and inclusion. Sharing premises and/or re-modelling existing library spaces as hubs can reduce premises costs, increase footfall, and ensure future sustainability for the service.

Working in partnership

Buckinghamshire libraries are enabling services, collaborating with a wide range of partners to deliver shared outcomes. The library service has a strong and successful track record of partnership working and partners are positive towards libraries because of the safe and informal community setting, high levels of customer reach and satisfaction, free access to ICT and knowledgeable and helpful staff.

Engaging and empowering staff and volunteers

Our libraries staff and volunteers are the greatest assets of the service. They are motivated, skilled and have strong personal values around caring and support for Buckinghamshire communities. Our strategy will need to consider how best to harness the creative energies of staff and cultivate an empowered and dynamic workforce leading change and improvement at all levels.

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 There are no legal or financial implications at this stage.
- 3.2 However the net revenue budget for the service is £3.7m and existing MTFP savings targets are:

Year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Savings (£000)	180	75	75	330
Incremental Savings (£000)	180	255	330	330

4. Corporate implications

4.1 The development of a vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire Libraries will contribute to a range of key corporate priorities as described in the report and appendix.

5. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

5.1 The development of the vision and strategy is at an early stage and local councillors and community boards will be engaged and consulted as the work progresses.

6. Communication, engagement & further consultation

6.1 This report provides members with early sight of the proposed priorities underpinning the future vision and strategy. The vision and strategy will be informed by customer insight, to be gathered through research and stakeholder engagement:

Partner engagement	<p>Customer First Exploring roles of libraries as CAPs and CAP+ and engaging with technical services around ICT/access</p> <p>Culture and Learning Buckinghamshire Culture, Early Years, Children’s services, Youth Services, Adult Learning</p> <p>Public Health / Adult Social Care/BHT Work with PH already underway to develop a ‘Healthy Library’ model. Opportunities to engage with Adult Social Care, Community Café, and Health on High St projects</p> <p>VCS, Community Boards and Parish and Town Councils Engage with key VCSE partners such as Community Impact Bucks, Leap etc, plus Community Boards</p>	October - January
---------------------------	--	------------------------------

	<p>Inclusion and levelling up</p> <p>Work with organisations such as Bucks Vision, BUDs, RNIB, Dementia Friendly, cultural organisations, Community safety etc. to ensure delivery of inclusive and accessible services. Engagement with services and groups promoting debt advice, helping hands, Heart of Bucks, Financial Insecurity Partnership etc</p>	
<p>Community engagement</p>	<p>Research, surveys and focus groups</p> <p>Base-line data and gap analysis to identify under-represented groups – focus groups to better understand needs of harder to reach groups</p> <p>Survey on access arrangements – satisfaction with existing opening hours</p> <p>Surveying on levels of awareness of service offer to inform future marketing strategy.</p>	<p>October - January</p>
<p>Staff, volunteer, and Community Library engagement</p>	<p>Staff workshops</p> <p>Community Library Forum</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Libraries Conference</p>	<p>September / October</p> <p>September, December</p> <p>February</p> <p>November 2022</p>

7. Next steps

- 7.1 The libraries strategy will be produced using inputs from the above engagement and research; the anticipated governance timeline for the strategy is as follows:

CMT – January 2023

Cabinet – 21st March 2023

This page is intentionally left blank



Buckinghamshire Libraries Developing a new vision and strategy

Report to Communities and Localism Select
Committee, 5 October 2022

Appendix



Our Service

Buckinghamshire Libraries are multi-functional and serve as central hubs offering a wide variety of local activities, services and facilities that support local communities. Our libraries are trusted places which connect people to their communities and council services.

Our people

- 140 staff members
- 600+ volunteers
- 120+ partner organisations



Our Customers

- 191,000+ Customers
- 24% age 15 and under
- 61% aged 16-64
- 15% aged 65 and over



Our sites

- 29 libraries in total
- 10 County libraries
- 9 Community-supported libraries
- 10 self-managed libraries



Physical visits (2021/22)

- 652,334



Services (2021/22)

- E-resource downloads: 670,443
- Council Access Point Enquiries: 15,816
- Loans: 1,050,604
- 271 customers signed up for the home library service



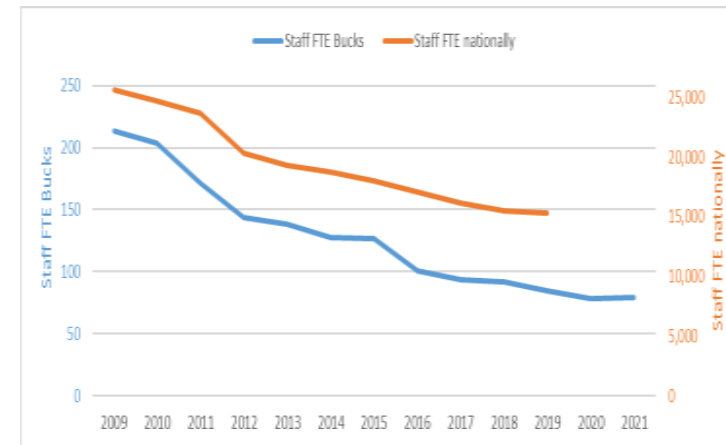
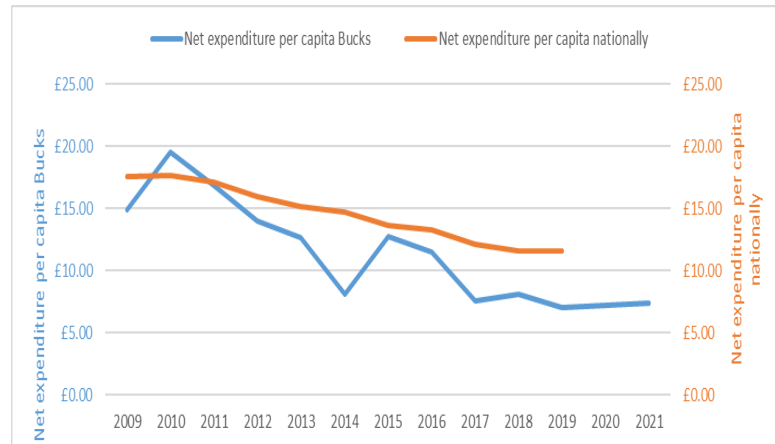
Our Offers

- Free public Wi-Fi
- Public Computers and tablets (1hour free per day)
- Free printing for CVs and job applications
- Low cost printing and scanning
- Access to over 7,000 online resources
- Health and wellbeing activities
- Cultural activities
- Digital inclusion support



Financial context

The library service has been successful in driving efficiencies and reducing costs through introduction of new self-service technologies and enabling of co-production delivery models (Community Libraries along with lean management structures). The net cost of the service has reduced from £5,825m in 2011 to £3,771m in 2021. Buckinghamshire libraries compare well against the national average in terms of cost. In 2019 the net expenditure per capita was £7.04 in Bucks compared to £11.54 nationally and staff in post per 1000 population was 0.14 in Bucks, compared to 0.23 nationally:



Current MTFP

Savings targets are currently in place as part of the Medium Term Finance Plan

YEAR	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Savings (£000)	180	75	75	330

Developing a Shared Vision and Purpose

We asked our staff and volunteers what they liked

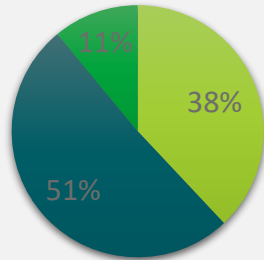
Page 56

Purpose:

A purpose is why the library service exists, it's an unchanged description of the things that you do as a service. It's not deep, but its encompassing.

Options provided:

1. Our purpose is to enable access to inclusive spaces, services, tools, culture and support to promote learning, imagination, fairness and participation.
2. Our purpose is to provide free and accessible resources to connect communities and support learning, culture and wellbeing in an inclusive and welcoming environment
3. Our purpose is to inclusively support, inform and connect our communities to promote learning, imagination, fairness and participation for everyone.



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3

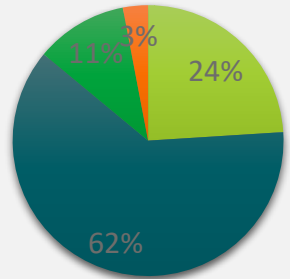


Vision:

A vision is aspirational, and something we are going to aim for. It is somewhere we want to be and provides us with a guiding light when we are delivering a future service and projects into the future.

Options provided:

1. Our vision is to be a trusted guide at the heart of the community, providing free services and resources that meet modern needs and are inclusive of all the communities we serve.
2. Our vision is for all libraries to be welcoming and safe spaces for everyone in our communities to access services, information and tools they need to learn, imagine, discover and thrive.
3. Our vision is to provide welcoming, safe, inclusive and cultural spaces and services that are flexible to meet the needs of our communities and spark imagination.
4. Our vision is to be a trusted guide at the heart of the community and inspire and empower people to live happy and healthy lives.



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4

Aligning to the corporate plan, working as one

We recognise the need to align services across the Council. Libraries will work towards the below corporate aims, actively collaborating to ensure we offer a joined up experience for our residents across our services.

- Provide an informal and accessible 'face' for Buckinghamshire Council and enable access to other information and services
- Support people through all stages of their life
- Connect people to other sources of support and council services which contribute to resident wellbeing
- Inspire interest in culture and enable access to cultural activities
- Support people with developing their digital skills and capabilities
- Meet the diverse needs of our communities
- Connect people to new ideas and experiences
- Provide free, accessible access to information
- Support and inspire learning, including intergenerational learning
- Build a sense of community with libraries at the heart
- Encourage residents to get involved in shaping the service

- Deliver a service that helps the council achieve its net zero carbon emissions target by 2050
- Sustainable ways of working
- Reduce, reuse, recycle where possible
- Promote / raise awareness of green agenda



- Enhance the health and wellbeing of our communities
- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Provide an inclusive and safe space for all to visit
- Support those living with health conditions (e.g. dementia and chronic illness), and those in difficult life situations (e.g. refugees, homeless, lower income families, bereavement)
- Support those that are homebound through the home library service

- Connect people to resources (e.g. courses, grants) that will support career development, jobs, training and business start-ups
- Support children with their development
- Support people who want to learn English and improve their literacy skills
- Provide space and technology for people to conduct work

Identifying Strategic Priorities

We recognise the need to align our services across the Council. Libraries will support a range of council priorities, collaborating widely to offer a joined up experience for our residents.

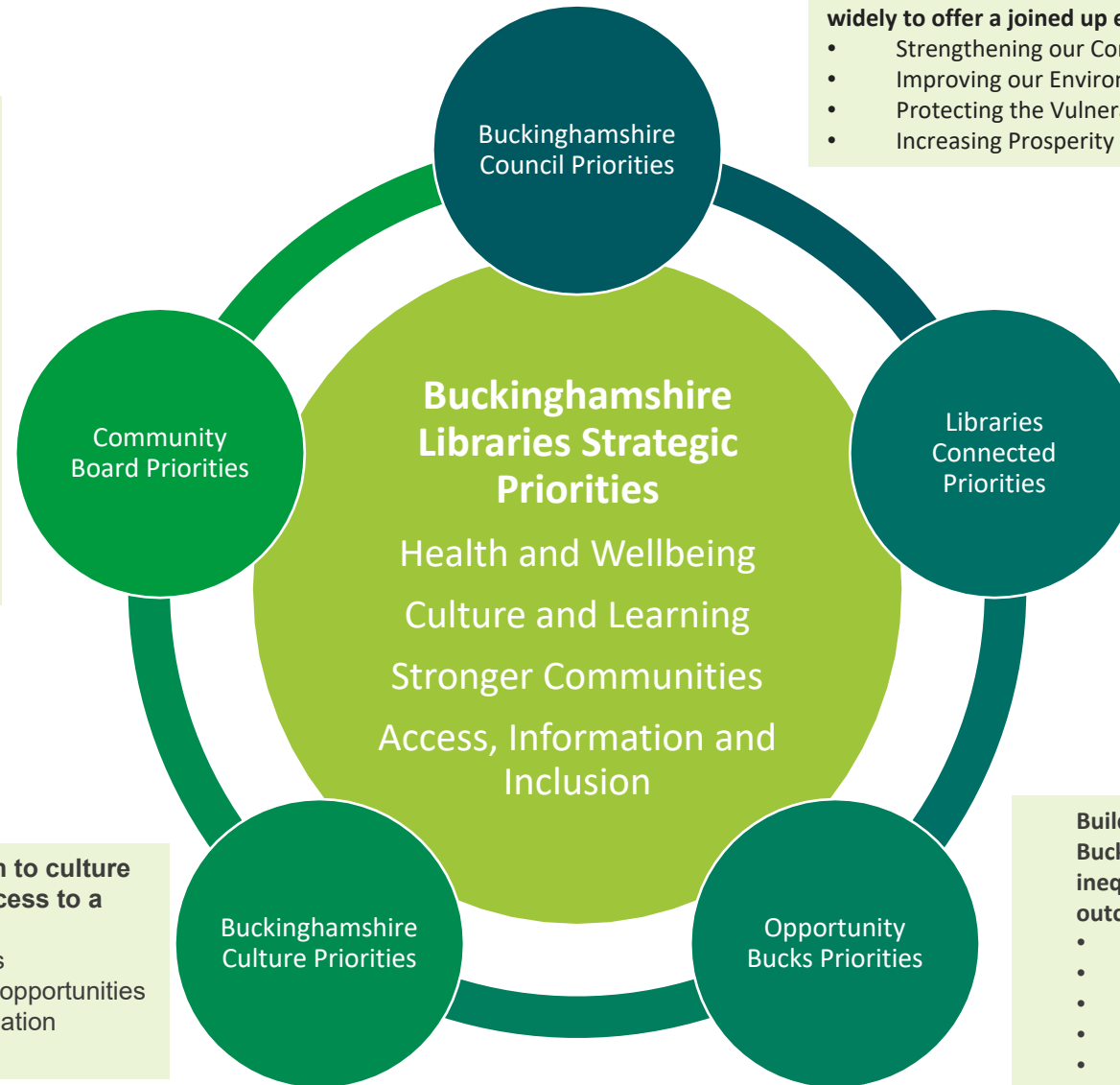
- Strengthening our Communities
- Improving our Environment
- Protecting the Vulnerable
- Increasing Prosperity

National / universal libraries offers which aim to enrich the lives of individuals and communities by improving wellbeing and promoting equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity.

- Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and Creativity
- Information and digital inclusion
- Reading

Building on the 'Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All' framework to reduce inequality within communities, whilst improving outcomes for all residents.

- Education and Skills
- Jobs and Career Opportunities
- Quality of Public Realm
- Standard of Living
- Health and Wellbeing



Buckinghamshire Council Priorities

Libraries Connected Priorities

Opportunity Bucks Priorities

Buckinghamshire Culture Priorities

Community Board Priorities

Buckinghamshire Libraries Strategic Priorities
 Health and Wellbeing
 Culture and Learning
 Stronger Communities
 Access, Information and Inclusion

Community Boards bring the council, groups, organisations and local people together to look at local issues and find ways of improving them together. Libraries will continue to work in partnership with community boards to ensure we listen and respond to local needs.

- Environment and Climate Change
- Covid 19 Economic Recovery and Regeneration
- Health and Wellbeing
- Transport and Travel
- Enhancing The Lives of the Elderly, Vulnerable and Young
- Community Safety
- Road Safety, Highways & Infrastructure
- Community Cohesion

Developing a stronger partnership approach to culture will result in greater impact and open up access to a wider range of funding opportunities.

- A thriving economy and transformed places
- Equality of access to cultural activities and opportunities
- Improved health and wellbeing of the population
- An energised creative and cultural sector

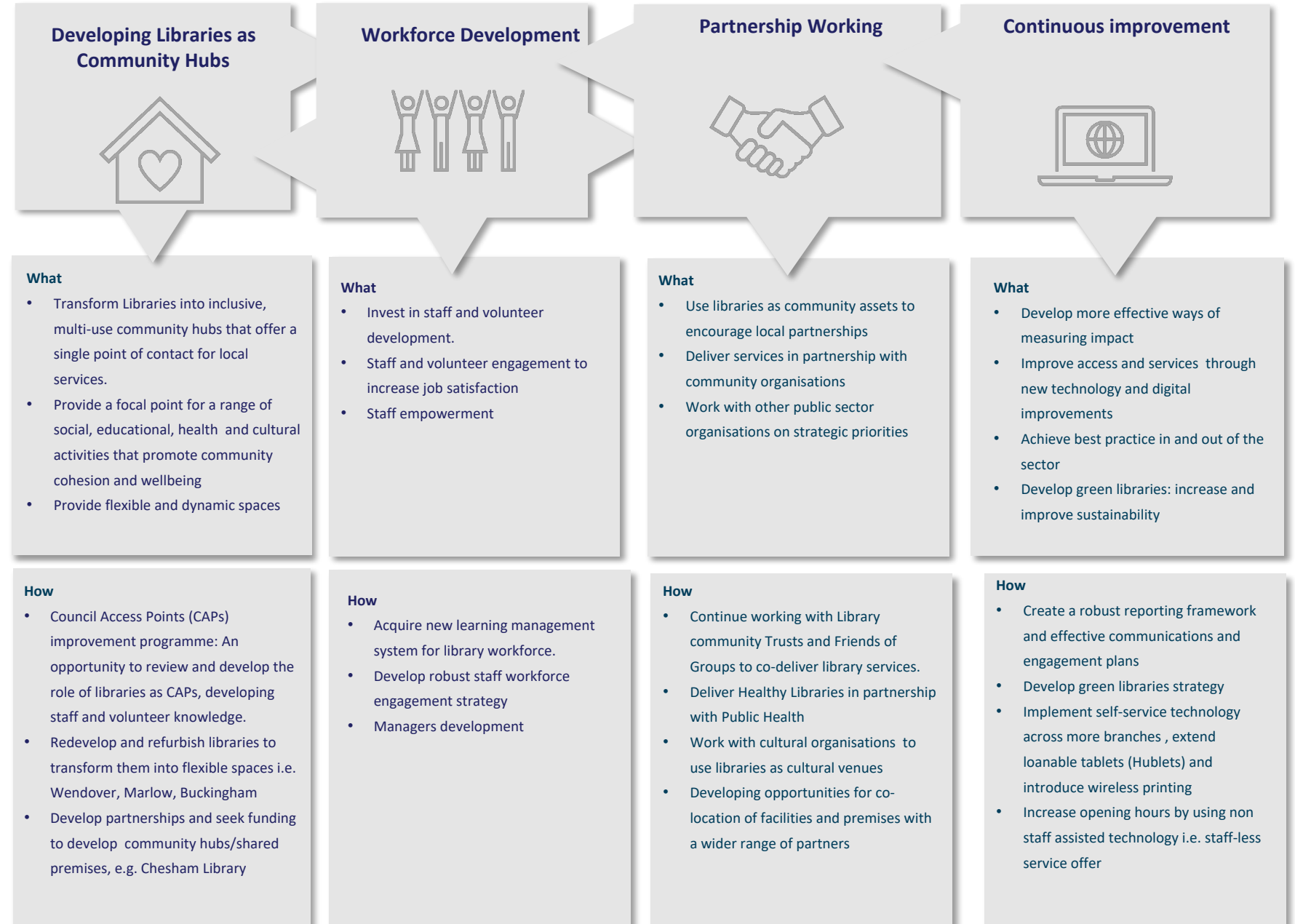
Buckinghamshire Libraries



Our Vision is for all libraries to be welcoming and safe spaces for everyone in our communities to access services, information and tools they need to learn, imagine, discover and thrive.

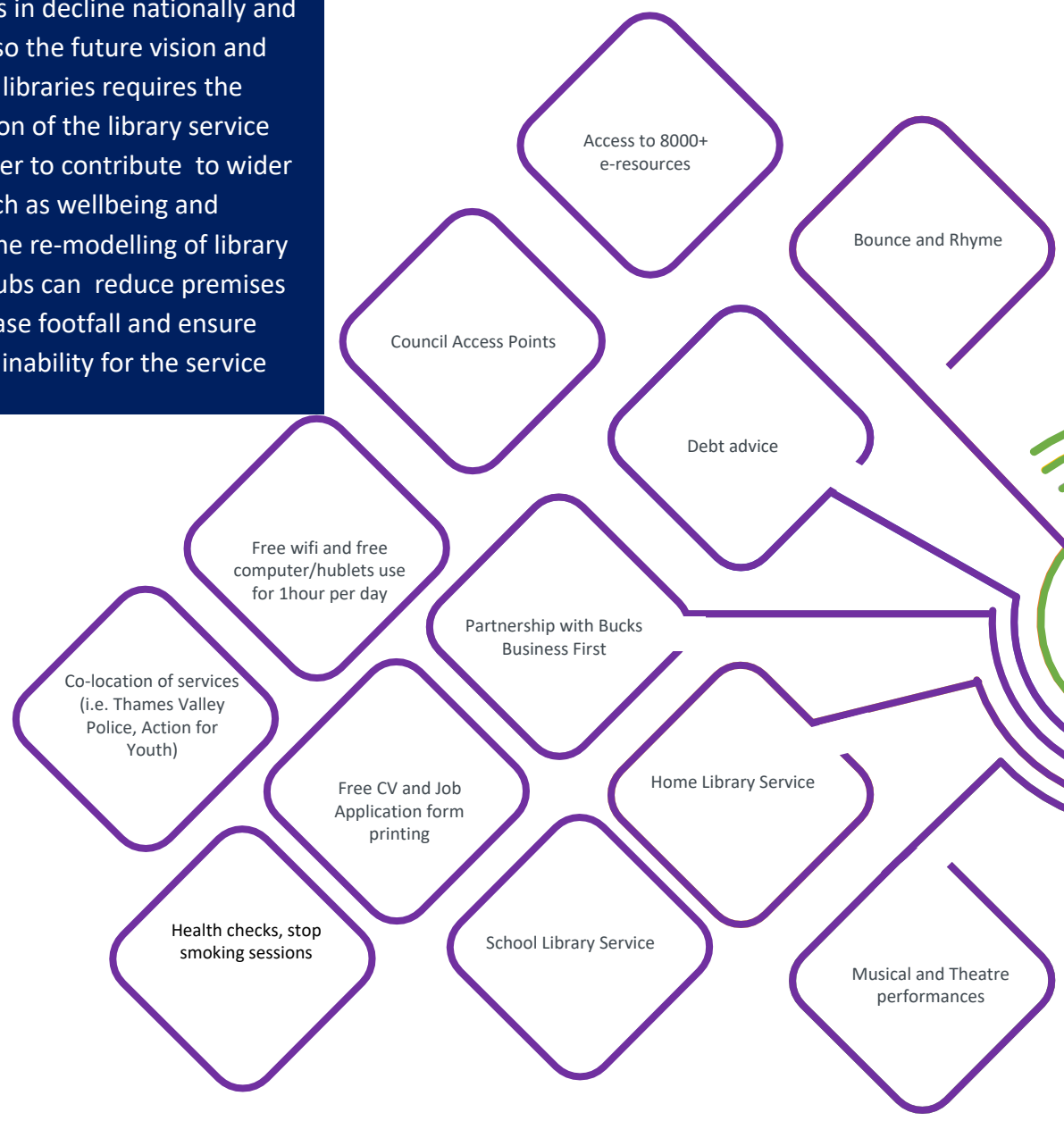
Our Purpose is to provide free and accessible resources to connect communities and support learning, culture and wellbeing in an inclusive and welcoming environment

How will we deliver our Vision?



Traditional use of libraries e.g., book borrowing is in decline nationally and locally and so the future vision and strategy for libraries requires the diversification of the library service offer in order to contribute to wider agendas such as wellbeing and inclusion. The re-modelling of library spaces as hubs can reduce premises costs, increase footfall and ensure future sustainability for the service

Some of our current offers



Some identified opportunities



Buckinghamshire Libraries: Suggested Strategic Priorities



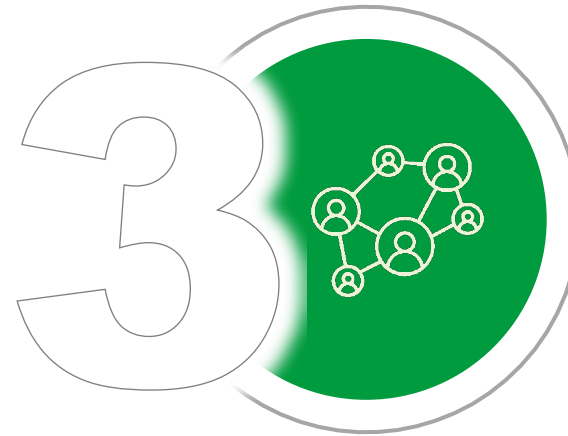
Health and Wellbeing

Buckinghamshire Libraries will support place-based strategies including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, focusing in areas such as early years outcomes, mental health, social isolation, obesity, diabetes, cardio-vascular illness and ageing well. We will do this through local and national partnerships working with Public Health, Children's Services, Adult Social Care, social prescribers, GPs, schools and social activity groups to ensure we meet the needs of our local communities.



Culture and Learning

Buckinghamshire Libraries are inclusive cultural venues that host activities offering diverse cultural experiences, encouraging individuals to explore, create and learn. We will continue developing partnership work with the arts and culture sector providing diverse and inclusive resources (i.e. books, e-resources, history and heritage materials, playbooks, reminiscence collections), and cultural activities (i.e. book talks, reading groups, bounce and rhyme, plays, musical performances). To encourage learning through reading at all ages we will increase reading groups and continue supporting reading campaigns such as the Summer Reading Challenge and Read Well.



Stronger Communities

Buckinghamshire Libraries are neutral, safe, welcoming spaces in the community, making them excellent venues for local activities which build community cohesion and resilience. Two thirds of our libraries are already delivered in partnership with volunteers and third sector organisations. We will position libraries as local community hubs, and build stronger links with and through local community boards.



Access, Information and Inclusion

Buckinghamshire Libraries are committed to enabling digital inclusion and access to information through our library resources, Council Access Points and technology. We will develop a stronger and more robust offer with a focus on providing support to the most vulnerable residents in Buckinghamshire and marginalised groups (elderly, refugees, young parents etc), plus specific activities in line with emerging priorities, for example to help people experiencing financial insecurity.

Possible areas of discussion for the Communities and Localism Select Committee

How well do the proposed purpose and vision statements describe a library service for the 21st century?

Are the four proposed service priorities the most relevant areas for library service focus in Buckinghamshire?

Are there additional ideas and suggestion for stakeholder engagement to help shape the vision and strategy?



Report to Communities & Localism Select Committee

Date:	5 October 2022
Title:	Chilterns Lifestyle Centre – Update on the First Six Months
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Clive Harriss
Contact officer:	Sue Drummond, Head of Leisure Sue.Drummond@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Recommendations:	The Committee are recommended to note the content of this report.

1. Background

- 1.1 The completion and opening of the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre in December 2021 marked a major milestone in the redevelopment of the former Chiltern Pools site in Amersham. Since then, the old leisure centre and nursery/community centre buildings have been demolished, and construction of the Lifestyle Centre's new car park is well underway. The first area of the car park, including access to blue badge parking, is now open; the remaining works, including the remainder of the car park and the new children's playground, are due for completion by the end of 2022.
- 1.2 Over the coming months, there will also be some ongoing work required from the construction company (BAM) to address snagging and defect issues across the site and rectify any operational issues that impact on the site functioning fully as required.
- 1.3 The focus of this report is to update the Committee with information on the interest and use by the public across the whole offer at the Lifestyle Centre, which includes the leisure facilities operated by Everyone Active, Amersham Library, Amersham Community Centre and the Lindfield Pre-School Nursery.

2. Chilterns Lifestyle Centre – Leisure

- 2.1 The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre opened to the public on 6 December and proved to be immensely popular and incredibly well used from the outset. There were 10,000 visits in the first week of opening alone, with 37,000 attendances and 200 new members during December. It is perhaps worth noting that at this point in December and through January/February 2022 we saw the widespread impact of the Omicron variant of Covid-19; this saw some continuing caution from the public, and affected staffing levels across the site with a knock-on effect on the centre's activity programme, compounded by a very difficult period in the recruitment market. Despite these challenges, January 2022 (always a positive month for people thinking about a more active healthy start to the New Year) saw 72,000 attendances and 887 new members joining the centre.
- 2.2 The Everyone Active team focused on filling vacancies using the normal methods as well as going beyond what would have previously been required to fill roles, such as 'refer a friend' initiatives and salary reviews; they also introduced a regular pattern of overnight deep cleaning taking place by specialist companies, to support the daily programme of cleaning by the onsite team.
- 2.3 The Council has in place a strong and positive partnership with Everyone Active and we have continued to work closely with the team as the focus has shifted to developing and driving forward the programmes of use for the new facilities. The Everyone Active team have also fully engaged with our county's Active Partnership, Leap, for example to ensure the Live Well Stay Well rehabilitation and wellness sessions are an important part of the centre's offer going forward. The centre has also appointed a Sports Activities and Community Development Manager, whose outreach role is focused on building links within local communities to engage residents in activity that will improve their health and wellbeing.
- 2.4 In terms of performance monitoring, the categories within the original contract documentation included customer perspective, internal business process, continuous improvement and financial position. All of these were originally framed pre-Covid and therefore the areas around continuous improvement and financial position have required some recalibration to become meaningful. We have retained an open book model of financial monitoring as we make a graduated return to management fee income being received by the Council from this contract from 2022/23 onwards. This position is reflected in the current MTFP. The strong early performance by the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre, particularly in health and fitness memberships and swim programmes, is contributing positively to the overall performance of the contract (which also includes Chesham and Chalfont leisure centres).

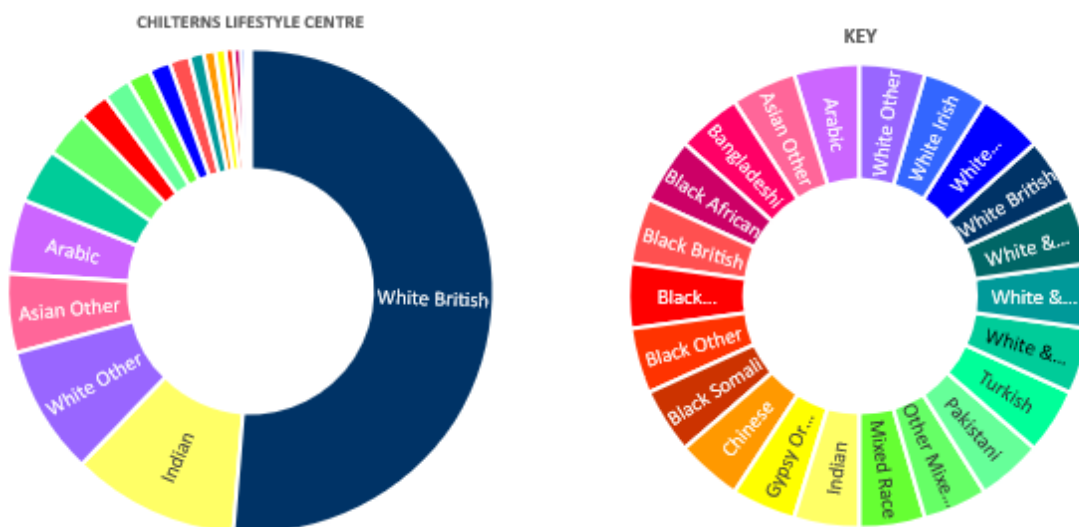
2.5 Headline Impacts

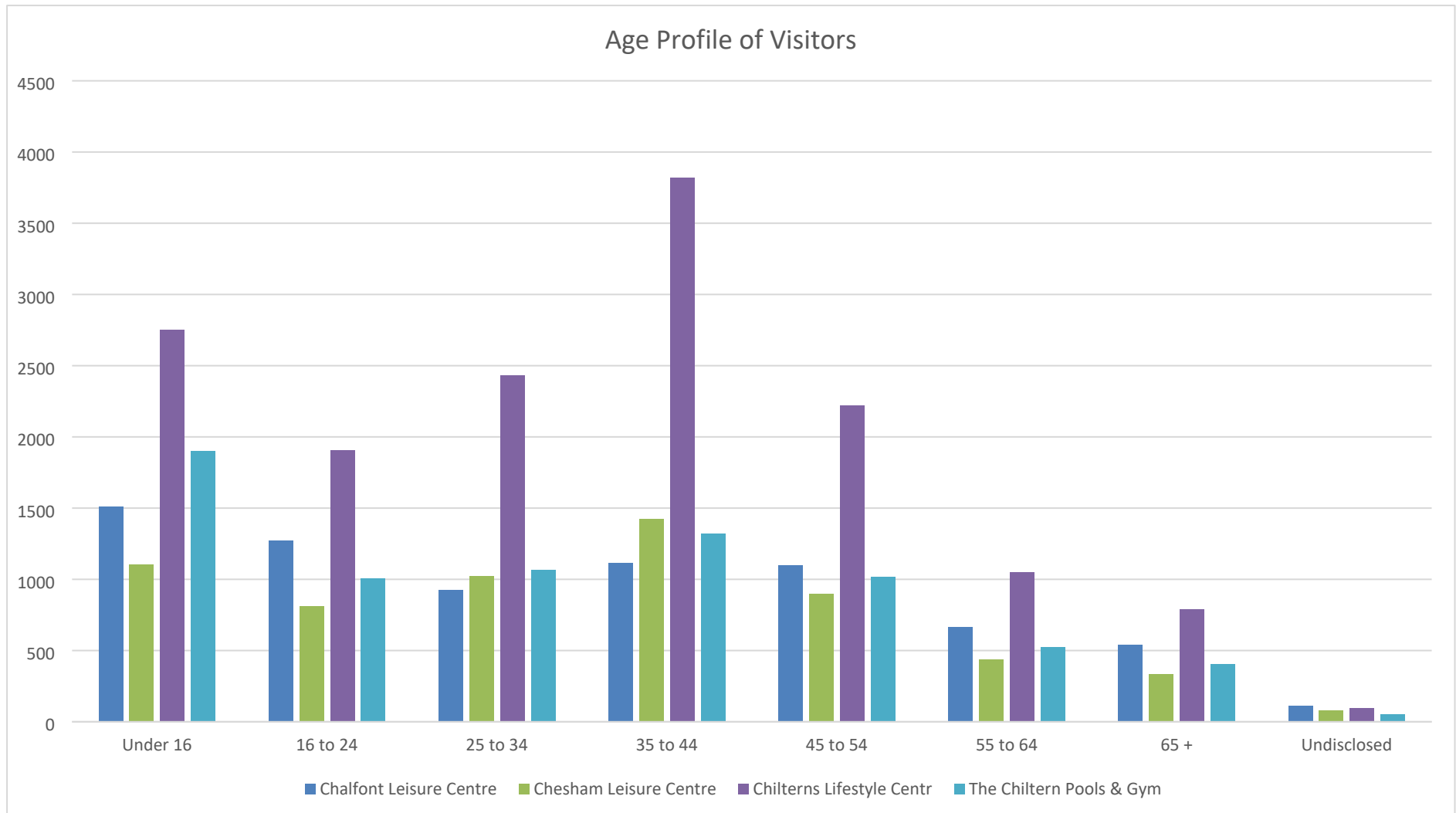
Highlighted below is key data around attendance and engagement in the centre over its first six months.

- **Number of total members (old and new)**
1,391 to 3,809 fitness members, 913 to 1,454 swim learners.
- **Number of new members joined since opening**
3,230 fitness sales.
- **Number of customers/visitors through the door since opening**
559,510 (including June)
- **Heatmap showing where visitors are coming from** - the catchment area shows that the site is a destination facility.



- The chart below shows the ethnicity of the customers that have used the facilities:





The graph above shows the age profile of the people that have attended across the three sites within the contract (Chiltern Pools has been included to further illustrate the positive impact of the Lifestyle Centre); all these users have been captured using membership cards and booking systems.

- **Most popular activities/areas of the leisure centre**

Soft play has been a huge hit (we've been shortlisted for a 'Soft Play of the Year' award) as well as fitness growth.

- **Successful new events that have taken place**

Amersham Swim Club were able to host their first 'Open Meet' on 26/27 March due to the quality of the new facilities; positive feedback was received from clubs across the region.

- **New groups/clubs that have started using the facilities**

Raans Gymnastics (four days a week), Genesis Martial Arts (weekly) and a new dance school.

- **Benefits to the local community**

Created the equivalent of 28 new full-time jobs. There is a wide demographic mix that visit the facility. Attendance is four times greater than the old Chiltern Pools site (excluding stakeholders) and is growing.

- **Focus for the next six months?**

Continue to develop the group exercise programme, including use of the terrace for bootcamp classes. Launch of a pool inflatable. Community programmes such as Chair Based Exercise, Walking Netball/Football, Pickleball, and accommodating and supporting Headway in introducing activities for those with brain injuries. Launch of climbing membership.

New Initiatives

2.6 Everyone Active launched a new membership in May to support Ukrainian Refugees within our local communities; 41 have registered at the centre. The free memberships are for a 12-month period and allow access to the following:

- 0-10 years – swimming pool, soft play.
- 11-15 years – junior gym, swimming pool.
- 16 years and over – gym, swimming pool and group exercise classes.

2.7 Support with free membership to those with Parkinson's and their carers – 40 registered at the centre.

2.8 Everyone Active also recently launched a complimentary membership scheme for cared for children/care-experienced young people.

2.9 Now in its sixth year, Everyone Active's Sporting Champions scheme will provide more than 1,000 up and coming athletes in the UK with free access to its 200+ leisure facilities across the country. Talented athletes in Buckinghamshire have been

given the opportunity to gain much-needed support as part of a sports talent development programme, including:

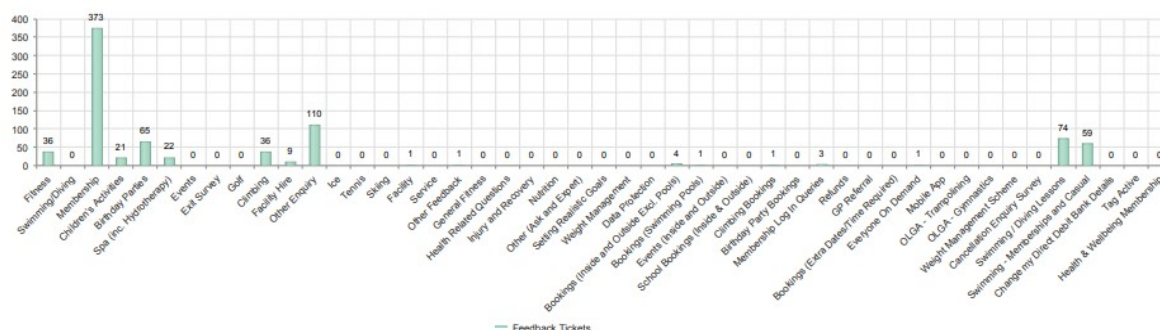
Athlete	Discipline	Home Site
Ava Gifford-Moore	Golf	Chalfont Leisure Centre
Daniella Hoyland	Swimming	
Olivia Lee	Golf	
Eleanor Martin	Lacrosse and Netball	
Max McGarvie	Running – Middle Distance	
Luke McGarvie	Swimming and Hockey	
Nicola Conner	Triathlon, Running	Chilterns Lifestyle Centre
George Bancroft	Athletics Long Jump/400M	Chesham Leisure Centre
Lucy Newman	Alpine Ski Racing	
Sam Trigg-Petrovic	Athletics	

Alongside free access to Everyone Active’s centres, Sporting Champions will also get the chance to receive valuable mentoring and guidance from some of the UK’s most influential sports stars.

Site Challenges and Customer Comments

2.10 Significant effort and work continues to go into maintaining standards on the site; customer comments directly to Everyone Active are logged and tracked. We have seen a drop in negative comments about cleaning between April and May when additional deep cleans began. The volume of comments up to the end of May was as follows:

Category



Most concerns are raised with the team on site and resolved quickly, but some do come directly through to the Council or relevant Councillors. Most often these have been in relation to disabled parking, changes to the timetable/programme and cleaning. In the first six months, we have dealt with fewer than 25 follow-up complaints.

3. Amersham Library – The New Library Experience

- 3.1 One simple but powerful design choice has had a really big impact for the library team. The new library has a sliding transparent front wall which opens onto a thoroughfare – the Street – which is regularly busy with local people. This means people who may never have visited the old library can now see clearly inside to a space that looks friendly and inviting. It is now a space that people feel comfortable in, feel it's easy to walk into casually, and is helped by being surrounded by other services that they may already use.
- 3.2 Many people feel libraries are not meant for them. Some may be hesitant to enter if they feel like they don't understand the rules; others may have a sense that it is a 'members only' space where they wouldn't be welcome. By dispelling any sense of mystery or exclusivity, the team and the actual space have managed to get rid of a huge barrier to entry. People now come and use the library who would never have considered joining otherwise. This is the biggest asset of our new library and it is reflected daily in the conversations with people while registering as new members.
- 3.3 Combined with the ready passing footfall, this has led to a massive increase in usage of our library in stark contrast to the national backdrop of reduced activity following the pandemic.
- 3.4 The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre is a really positive environment for the staff to work in and the library team are enjoying having the other partners on site which is giving some really interesting opportunities for collaboration. The shared facility model, which is working so well here, is one that should be pursued again wherever the opportunity arises.

Changing Demographics

- 3.5 Staff at the library all agree that they now seem to be serving a far younger audience than ever before, with an 18% increase in membership of children. We have also seen a significant increase in usage from teenagers and young adults, with a 16% increase in membership from this age group. Whereas it was previously very difficult to get these groups into the library at all, the team saw their study facilities at maximum capacity all day every day throughout the exam period, with queues in the morning and students waiting on café tables outside to grab spots as soon as they became available. Book collections aimed at young people, such as graphic novels and teen fiction, see more use than ever before. The strong view of the library team is that being situated next to the gym and leisure facilities has given an unprecedented level of exposure to this audience.

Library Statistics

3.6 As a comparison period, December 2018 to July 2019 is used as the most recent equivalent period pre-pandemic. Comparisons with 2020-21 would yield an even starker contrast due to reduced activity through the pandemic.

- **New borrowers registered** (i.e. people joining for first time)

1,438 (vs 451 new borrowers from same period 2018-19 – an increase of 219%).

The number of users being re-registered also increased in this period by 92%, demonstrating that existing borrowers were returning to the library, including those who had not used the service for a significant amount of time.

- **Visitors since opening**

59,742 (vs 41,504 in same period 2018-19 – an increase of 44%).

This is now the **second busiest** library in Buckinghamshire; up from **fifth busiest** library in 2018-19.

- **Percentage of stock on loan June 2022**

43.02% (26.33% in June 2018)

A more focused selection of higher-quality stock, attractively presented, means each bit of shelf space sees much greater use.

Customer Feedback and Quotes

"We never used the old library & now use it every week after swimming lessons because it's so convenient 😊."

"Lovely space, the library should be a pleasure to visit now."

"I absolutely love the cubby holes with the flashy lights. They are so cosy!"

"I love everything. So much to love. It's amazing."

"Wonderful setup & helpful staff. We are delighted!!!"

"There is really good change in display, collection & presentation of books on shelves since last month. Really good job done. Makes you want to read more types of books. Thanks for the library team's efforts."

4. Lindfield Pre-School Nursery

4.1 Lindfield Nursery operates from its new bespoke designed space on the first floor; it is a thriving vibrant space that the children and staff clearly love being in. Having their own dedicated areas enables children's work to remain out on view, creative material to be easily accessible and for staff to be able to focus on working with each

child, rather than having to spend time each day setting up and clearing everything away as they had to do previously.

- 4.2 Each session is full (a capacity use level was set at 50 as part of the planning conditions) and they have a waiting list as parents value the quality of the whole offer that can now be provided.
- 4.3 The Nursery Team have built a good relationship with the leisure centre and library teams and continue to work closely with us.

5. Amersham Community Centre

- 5.1 Amersham Community Association have made a relatively smooth transition to their new home in the Lifestyle Centre. They have seen a number of their groups return but still have some with a more cautious membership who have been meeting by Zoom, and are planning to come back into the programme from September 2022. The opening of the first phase of the car park providing closer access to the centre will also help with this.
- 5.2 The Community Association's range of local groups brings a wider demographic of people into the site, including those who otherwise may not have visited. Regular groups include Age Concern lunch club, Gardening Association, Photographic Society, short-mat bowls, U3A, Bridge Club, Tai-Chi as well as local drama groups, functions and parties – although the latter have so far been slower to return. The Association anticipate levels of attendance this year 2022/23 of 39,400; previously (pre-Covid) levels had been at around 54,600.
- 5.3 This is being seen now as a positive move for the Association, albeit that it may take a little longer to fully realise the potential that the new site and facility can offer.

6. Next steps and review

- 6.1 The focus for the coming months is to ensure the site can operate to its full expected design potential, with a comprehensive programme of activities that continues to expand to reach and encourage residents to be active for the first time. Alongside this, close monitoring of the impact of rising energy costs remains key for both the Council and Everyone Active, to manage and reduce consumption and mitigate costs as much as practically possible.

This page is intentionally left blank

Communities and Localism Select Committee (Chairman: Mimi Harker, Scrutiny officer: Kelly Sutherland)

Date	Topic	Description and Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
22 November 2022	HS2 (TBC)	A discussion with HS2 focussing on their engagement with communities impacted by construction and the opportunities available through their community investment funding.	Laura Leech	Steve Bowles Peter Martin
	Devolution (TBC)	The Select Committee will receive an update on devolution of services and assets and assess how effectively the Council has delivered devolution at pace.	Matt Everitt?	Steve Bowles
	Community Board Review – 6-month progress report	The Select Committee will review the progress of work on implementation of recommendations made in the Community Board review report which was presented to Cabinet on 10 th May 2022.	Roger Goodes/ Wendy Morgan-Brown	Steve Bowles
8 th February 2023	Violence against Women and Girls	The Select Committee will review how the Council and Partner organisations are working together to prevent violence against women and girls.	Gideon Springer	Zahir M for Public Health
	Film Office	Members will learn about the work of the newly established Buckinghamshire Film Office.	Ruth Bryant	Clive Harriss, Sophie P, Ruth Bryant
19 April 2023	Community Resilience Update (TBC)	Members will receive an update from the Resilience Service on their work with town and parish councils to strengthen community resilience.	Vince Grey	Steve Bowles, Vince Grey, Lloyd Jeffries
	Town and Parish Charter	Members will receive an update on the implementation of the Town and Parish Charter Action Plan.	Simon Garwood	Steve Bowles, Roger Goodes, Simon Garwood

This page is intentionally left blank