



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee

### Minutes

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2022 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.04 PM**

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

B Chapple OBE, R Carington, P Brazier, M Caffrey, M Collins, C Cornell, E Culverhouse, S Guy, A Poland-Goodyer, M Rand, L Sullivan, D Watson, W Whyte and S Wilson

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

S Broadbent, J Jordan, R Stuchbury, S Bambrick, R Barker, E Barlow, A Beckett, C Platts, L Vallis, C Ward and R Zierler

#### **Agenda Item**

##### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors E Culverhouse, E Gemmell, D King, G Williams and A Wood. Councillor S Wilson had substituted in for Councillor E Gemmell.

##### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor W Whyte declared a personal interest in Item 6 as the founder of the Bucks EVs Electric Car Club.

##### **3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

##### **4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Four public questions were considered at the meeting as attached to the agenda, and verbal responses were provided by the Cabinet Member for Transport and the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment. The questions and the responses are appended to the minutes.

##### **5 CLIMATE CHANGE & AIR QUALITY STRATEGY: ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Chairman welcomed the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Councillor J Jordan, to the meeting and invited her to present the report to the Committee. The Deputy Cabinet Member outlined the Council's important role in controlling and reducing its emissions, and that all the Cabinet Member portfolios were engaged in this process. The Council also had an

influencing role over its subcontractors and communities.

Compared to the 1990 baseline, the Council had reduced its carbon output by 70% and in 2021/22, the Council was responsible for 6,095 tonnes of greenhouse gas. The Council was on track towards its target of reducing its emissions by 75% by 2030. The Deputy Cabinet Member highlighted a number of Council actions and initiatives and outlined the success of the team in securing £10.3m funding from grant sources to progress initiatives.

The following points were noted during the Select Committee discussion:

- Although the Council was closing in on its 75% reduction in emissions by 2030, the progress on this could vary year to year, for instance by an excessively cold winter. To reach 100% by 2030 would require significant acceleration of expenditure.
- Funding of £7.4m that had been secured was split across three programmes:
  - Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (GHGLAD) 1b – this completed earlier in 2022.
  - GHGLAD 2 – this completed in September 2022. The confirmed number of retrofits was being calculated.
  - Sustainable Warmth – currently active until March 2023.
- As per Government guidance on third parties, Veolia had not been included in the council's carbon emission calculations as they reported their own figures to national Government.
- Grant funding from Defra to create air quality toolkits for Community Boards would assist tackling the issue of engine idling in problematic areas. The toolkits would help by raising awareness of air quality locally and include an air quality sensor to record air pollution levels. Additionally, the service was able to assist with queries on any potential local schemes via [climatechange@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:climatechange@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) to ensure local organisations worked efficiently.
- Consideration would be given on how to maximise Member turnout of future education programmes planned by the service. Members agreed the importance of this and suggestions from the Select Committee included day and evening events as well as the possibility to make the sessions mandatory.
- The council's target and carbon budget were based on a carbon audit baseline that had been carried out during the council's unitary formulation to calculate the legacy councils' emissions. The target and budget needed to balance the need to be timely and deliverable with calculations taking into account assumptions on council buildings, the fleet and the tree planting programme. The Council followed the Government approach of having multi-year carbon budgets to take into account annual fluctuation.
- The Pension Fund Committee was best placed to consider and influence the environmental impact of investment funds.
- The Council engaged with Highways England regarding fund streams available on the strategic road network and both organisations wanted to reach net-zero by 2050. The Council was a consultee on upcoming schemes at Bisham Roundabout and Handy Cross which aimed to improve flow and ease congestion.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Cabinet Member and the officers for the annual report and acknowledged the work that had been carried out under the Strategy.

## **6 ELECTRIC VEHICLE ACTION PLAN**

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor S Broadbent, to the meeting and invited him to introduce the report. Before doing so, the Cabinet Member updated that, subject to contractual confirmation, the Council had received a provisional award in full for

its bid to install 128 charging bays. This would be a significant boost for the county's infrastructure. The Cabinet Member also reiterated that the Council had budgeted £800,000 to top-up Government funding on EV charging where necessary. The council's second bid would be focused on assisting Town and Parish Councils access charging points in publicly accessible car parks or spaces.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that under the new highways procurement, Balfour Beatty Living Places, as Buckinghamshire Highways, would have smaller EVs and EV chargers in depots by the end of the first year. Further opportunities for fleet electrification would be considered in future.

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

- The Cabinet Member welcomed the suggestion that the team speak with Coldharbour Parish regarding its Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) Project which combined street lighting with on street charging.
- Various Members expressed concerns with the performance of BP Pulse particularly when compared to other providers. The Cabinet Member advised that the contract had been awarded based on a procurement exercise where providers had bid against the council's criteria. The Council had an improved relationship with BP Pulse and its service level agreement covered incident severity and response times which ranged between four hours and seven days. There was an overall agreement that 95% of the network would be working at all times. One Member's comment regarding issues with BP Pulse's Radio Frequency Identify Card (RFID) would be investigated.
- The wireless charging trial had been a Department for Transport (DfT) scheme in conjunction with the Council that had now ceased. The Council was awaiting the data from the Open University which would be available to TECC.
- Pavement channels required numerous considerations which included best practice, legal restrictions, parking and maintenance schedules.
- Plans for EV chargers at the Wycombe office car park would be investigated outside the meeting.

**Action: R. Zierler**

- Members reiterated the importance of ensuring the right charger was in the right place and took dwell time into account. Policy work was underway on parking reviews to consider where improvements were needed to better reflect dwell time and EV chargers. This policy would also consider aspects of enforcement to ensure a turnover of EV users.
- Power grid connections provided by Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) were proving challenging, with one quotation for installation being in excess of £50,000. Consideration of sites took into account potential DNO connection costs.
- The service was investigating contingencies for increased demand which included discussions with England's Economic Heartland.
- Car park viability was based on a threshold capacity of over 40 spaces as EV chargers took up around eight spaces. Beaconsfield featured in a number of potential locations due to the Council having large enough assets in the town and being densely populated. The Cabinet Member encouraged Town and Parish Councils with ownership of car parks to come forward for consideration in ORCS bid, 2 which would enable a greater spread of coverage, and advised that the service could help Town and Parish Councils with their own bids to Government. The Chairman noted that Members should relay this to their respective Community Boards.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and the officer for the update.

## 7 SCHOOL TRANSPORT

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

- School Transport was subject to inflationary pressures from suppliers.
- The service was currently carrying out a three-year service review with re-procurements intended for financial and service efficiency.
- There had been an increase of 700 mainstream pupils and an additional 750 new SEND pupils in September 2022.
- The take-up of Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) had been successful.
- A public consultation was in progress on the Spare Seats scheme which aimed to simplify the charging structure for customers.

The following points were made during the Select Committee discussion:

- The Cabinet Member was aware of recent correspondence regarding concerns of a bus service run by Carousel between The Chalfonts and Amersham and would be answered outside the meeting.
- SEND transport was protected under statutory provision so would continue to be delivered despite demand pressures. The Cabinet Member asked any specific cases of concern be referred to the service.
- Home to school transport and SEND transport were both funded by general council funding. PTBs required a needs assessment and agreement with parents where it was financially sensible and suitable for the child. The council's website contained clear, transparent guidance on PTBs; one example of PTB usage was hiring a child minder to monitor siblings whilst a parent took another child to school. PTB funding was only during term time and could be flexible to include micromobility measures, such as electric bikes or e-scooters, where appropriate.
- One Member commended the improvements in the service and the recent briefing on the spare seat scheme.
- To tackle emissions, the contracts for School Transport required suppliers to upgrade towards cleaner vehicles. The majority of buses needed to be Euro5 by September 2023. All new contracts for smaller vehicles, such as taxis and minibuses, in September 2022 needed to be Euro6. This policy was dovetailed with policies in taxi licensing which had requirements for newer Euro5 and Euro6.
- Further information regarding the benchmark category for a low-income family, the percentage that met this threshold out of the 7,850 pupils and the increase of this percentage would be investigated and provided outside the meeting. The Cabinet Member advised that this was complex and that people could be eligible across different criteria.

**Action: L. Vallis / C. Platts**

The Chairman thanked Members for their discussions, and the Cabinet Member and officers for their recent Home to School Transport briefing.

## 8 INQUIRY REPORT: POLLUTION IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S RIVERS AND CHALK STREAMS

The Chairman invited the Chairman of the Inquiry Group, Councillor R Carington, to introduce the report to the Select Committee. In his introduction, the Chairman of the Inquiry Group outlined the inquiry process timeline and the organisations that had been involved. The Chairman thanked the Group Members, officers, the scrutiny officer and external organisations for their input throughout the inquiry. Highlights of the recommendations in the report included the need for further investment by the water companies in Buckinghamshire, what the Council

could do to influence water quality and improvements required by the Environment Agency (EA).

The Chairman invited Councillor R Stuchbury to ask his pre-submitted questions which were as follows:

- i. *Has work begun to expand the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works and do we know its progress? Did the Inquiry hear of this as part of the report?*
- ii. *Will the same efforts that have been applied in the Chess catchment area be applied in the Thames and Great River Ouse areas?*
- iii. *Will the report be highlighted to the Buckinghamshire MPs in light of the legislation passed in Parliament in 2021?*

In response, the Chairman of the Inquiry Group, Councillor R Carington, answered as follows:

- i. The inquiry heard about progress at the Chesham Sewage Treatment Works from Thames Water when they attended a meeting in person as part of the evidence gathering. The site needed to increase its Flow to Full Treatment by March 2025, and Thames Water planned to deliver this scheme in 2023 to benefit the environment and resolve spills into the River Chess. Thames Water advised that the scheme would deliver an increased treatment capacity from 240 litres per second to 353 litres per second.
- ii. The Chess catchment had an active partnership that was selected by Thames Water to be one of three Smarter Water Catchment Programmes in their area. The inquiry group recognised the benefit of this programme and its report recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change lobbied the water companies to invest in other programmes in the county.
- iii. It was intended that the report would be circulated to Buckinghamshire MPs in due course.

Members of the Select Committee considered the report and noted that:

- Engagement from the water companies, Thames Water and Anglian Water, had been positive and it was hoped the relationships could be maintained.
- Disappointment was expressed regarding the EA not attending a meeting either virtually or in person. One Member was encouraged to share his ward experience of a lack of EA engagement with the Leader as part of the linked recommendation in the inquiry report.
- Gully emptying was an important activity that needed to continue.
- It was suggested that the report be shared to the creator of a petition that the Council received that ran between November – December 2021.

**Action: C Ward**

- The report would be presented to Cabinet on Tuesday 15 November.

The Select Committee Chairman thanked his Vice-Chairman for leading on the report and thanked all Members of the Inquiry Group for their work.

## **9 WORK PROGRAMME**

One Member raised that when HS2 attended Select Committee, an undertaking had been given that a Bailey bridge would be used over the A418. It was reported that this was now not being done due to costs and instead traffic lights would be used on the A418 for construction and staff traffic which would impact Aylesbury and Stone and be compounded by closures of the Marsh Lane crossing and Blackthorn Road at the same time. Concern was expressed over upcoming HS2 plans that may deviate from their original plans with the Council.

**10**     **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**  
Thursday 2 February 2023 at 10am.

**Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee – 3 November 2022**

**Agenda Item 4 – Public Questions**

**Question One**

Buckingham Town Council notes that there is no mention of provision of EV charging points for visitors to residential areas. Would it be possible include in the Action Plan the requirement that developers install (commercial) EV charging apparatus in at least two 'visitor' parking spaces on new developments, at the developer's expense (via condition or S106 depending on the size of the development)? All new cars will have to be electric in 7 years, and the Action Plan will be in force for 5 of these. It is unreasonable to expect a resident to pay for the charging of a guest's car or tradesman's vehicle on their domestic connection.

**Answer**

The installation of EV chargepoints in newly-built residential developments are now required as part of new Building Regulations that came into effect in June 2022 – the 'Approved Document S 'Infrastructure for the charging of electric vehicles'. This document is referred to in the Buckinghamshire Electric Vehicle Action Plan. The regulations state that developers must, as a minimum, install chargepoints equal to either the number of parking spaces associated with that building, or the number of dwellings that the car park serves. There are some exceptions to this rule where electrical connection costs per dwelling are high, in which case cable routes from dwellings to the parking space should be provided as an alternative.

Through the planning process we can ensure that developers meet these minimum standards, but there are no legal requirements to provide additional charging bays for visitors and we would not be able to enforce the provision of these. As such, the EV Action Plan cannot be updated to include this requirement. We will however endeavour to discuss opportunities for additional chargepoints for visitors with developers on a case-by-case basis.

In preparation for the increased need for publicly available charging facilities, we have a programme of installation of chargepoints in public car parks near to existing residential areas. For example, we recently installed eight chargepoints (16 parking bays) at two sites in Buckingham: Western Avenue car park, and Cornwalls Meadow car park. The two Buckingham installations were funded by the Government's On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme, which requires sites to be located in residential areas, in areas which lack access to off-street parking (for residents), and to be open to residents 24 hours, 7 days per week. Depending on the size of vehicle, these are therefore also available for use by tradespeople or guests visiting residential areas. We continue to work to secure funding to install new publicly accessible chargepoints in residential areas as these opportunities become available.

**(Questions Two and Three relate to Active Travel and so had one single answer)**

**Question Two**

I welcome the update report and the Council's continued commitment to address climate change. My question relates specifically to the work carried out towards Action 42: "Improve infrastructure for active travel (such as walking and cycling) and electric vehicles". The progress reported is to be welcomed but, as far as active travel is concerned, it is exceptionally modest compared with the ambitions referred to in previous strategies. The Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan, for example, contains the following ambitions:

'In 2033 people choose to walk, cycle, or use public transport for everyday journeys within Aylesbury, because it is easy to navigate and has an integrated and inclusive transport system. Residents benefit from active lifestyles and streets are people-friendly places. By 2050 at least 50% of trips originating in the Garden Town will be made by sustainable modes.

A web of green and blue infrastructure provides the 'garden' in Garden Town. As a result of the Garden Town project, Aylesbury's communities are better connected to the countryside and the Chiltern Hills. The town's waterways have been revealed and naturalised, streets are greener and outdoor spaces are more accessible, biodiverse and active.'

As someone who cycles nearly every day, both within Aylesbury and to nearby destinations such as Wendover and Haddenham, I have to say that, apart from the Haydon Hill extension, there is no evidence that provision for "active travel" is improving. On the contrary, paths are increasingly taken over by vegetation and the surfaces are breaking up, the signage for Aylesbury's Gemstones cycle routes is deteriorating badly, the 20mph scheme in Thame Road, Haddenham – introduced during the short-lived wave of enthusiasm for active travel during the pandemic – has been abandoned, and no progress has been made in creating the Haddenham station to Thame greenway despite years of promises and thousands of pounds wasted on studies by organisations such as Sustrans. Compared to the vast resources poured into projects such as the South-East Aylesbury Link Road, it is clear that active travel remains a very low priority within the Council. What resources does the Council make available to ensuring that "active travel" really does become a strategic priority (in the jargon, bringing about a "step change") and when can a detailed, comprehensive review of all "active travel" requirements, including maintenance, be made available to the Select Committee and to the general public?

**Answer**

Thank you to both Mr Bloxham and Mr Thawley for these questions which allow me to outline the work we are doing to ensure a 'step change' in provision for active travel: walking, cycling and wheeling.

Under Action 42 of the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy, the 2021-22 annual review is included on today's agenda, a range of active travel infrastructure improvements were outlined and these have all now been delivered. These included delivery of the Haydon Hill link in Aylesbury (so that users can walk and cycle from Aylesbury Vale Parkway station into town), as well as route improvements in Wendover and making two of the 'Emergency



Active Travel Fund schemes' referred to in the question, in Southcourt Aylesbury and Marlow, permanent.

This year (2022), the Council has delivered further active travel infrastructure, including the recently opened Berryfields-Buckingham Park Greenway in Aylesbury. We are also currently upgrading the Emerald Way (renamed the Platinum Way in celebration of our late Queen's Jubilee) between Aylesbury town centre and Haydon Hill, which includes improvements to surfacing and signage. The Council is also working with partners to create new and improved routes, for example Sustrans are currently delivering the Misbourne Greenway (Wendover Dean – Great Missenden) which is due to open in 2023.

We are heavily reliant upon external funding to deliver both new schemes as well as improve and maintain our existing routes. We are proactive in seeking funding through means such as Government grants (we have secured over £2.3m through the Active Travel Fund) and from development sites through both good design within the site and securing developer contributions for wider local improvements. We also work to secure improvements from major infrastructure projects, such as East West Rail and HS2.

The Council's priorities for new cycling and walking infrastructure are set out in our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) – we have these in place in Aylesbury and Buckingham and are currently consulting on our LCWIP for High Wycombe. The Aylesbury LCWIP includes the flagship Gardenway orbital park/active travel ring around Aylesbury, which underpins the Garden Town ambitions for active travel.

To bring about that step change across the whole county, the Council has just begun work on a Council-wide LCWIP. This will involve considerable work with the 16 Community Boards to identify local priorities, aspirations and 'missing links' and will set out our proposals for the future network of active travel corridors across Buckinghamshire. It will set out infrastructure design guidance and build upon the long held aspiration for a 'Buckinghamshire Greenway', a north-south corridor across our region.

Using funding from government grants specifically for this purpose, we have recently recruited a specialist in travel planning and behaviour change promotion and will now be able to deliver targeted promotional campaigns along our new and improved active travel routes. This will include engaging with local schools, businesses and communities and raising awareness of the benefits to health, pollution and climate change amongst residents and visitors of making the choice to travel actively.

Monitoring the usage of our new and improved infrastructure is extremely important – it helps us make the case for further investment from Government and so secure future funding. We already have a network of approximately 30 cycle counters across Buckinghamshire and we are now installing walking and cycling counters on new routes as standard. We will be publicly reporting on usage using this data via a new KPI under my portfolio.

The Emergency Active Travel Fund scheme in Haddenham was introduced on a temporary, trial basis to encourage more active travel during the pandemic. Following feedback from

local residents and through liaison with the working group, which included Buckinghamshire Council Members and Haddenham Parish Council, the decision was taken to decommission the scheme. It was removed in March 2022. The learnings and data from the scheme have been shared with Haddenham Parish Council to help inform their locally-led Streetscape project.

Buckinghamshire Council continues to work closely with Oxfordshire County Council on the aspiration for an active travel link connecting Haddenham and Thame. Schemes of this nature and scale are complex and can require significant background feasibility work to be undertaken.

I report on progress on active travel matters at Cabinet and Full Council. I can look to bring an item on active travel schemes that are under development as well as an update on our LCWIPs to TECC in 2023.

Please do continue to report maintenance issues on footpaths and cycleways routes via FixMyStreet.

*Other active travel schemes in development:*

<b>Funding source</b>	<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Status</b>
<i>DfT / S106</i>	<i>Waddesdon Greenway Extension to Westcott village and Venture Park</i>	<i>In development/consultation</i>
<i>Internal</i>	<i>Buckinghamshire Greenway (north-south spine)</i>	<i>In development/consultation</i>
<i>Internal</i>	<i>Denham A412 Corridor (linking Denham Green to Maple Cross and Rickmansworth)</i>	<i>In development/consultation</i>
<i>Sustrans</i>	<i>Misbourne Greenway</i>	<i>In delivery</i>
<i>Great Western Railway</i>	<p><i>Bourne End Station improvements</i></p> <p><i>Funding secured from GWR to undertake feasibility work at Bourne End station covering:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Station access improvements;</i></li> <li><i>• Relocation of the bus stop;</i></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Path improvements and new road crossing.</i></b></p>	<i>In development/consultation</i>

### **Question Three**

It is great to see the introduction of new walking and cycling infrastructure around the county as part of your efforts to tackle climate change, but will this be backed up with a well-funded, consistent and high-profile campaign to promote the benefits of active travel, along with monitoring to assess the increase in uptake?

### **Answer**

See answer to Q2.

### **Question Four**

Just this summer, a school in Wendover, which was the subject of a Feasibility Study into decarbonisation and electrification of heat, which was being done in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council, had its gas boilers replaced with gas boilers. How can Councillors and management in the Council help Property and Estates teams to change policy and practice more quickly so that this doesn't happen again as it is in direct contradiction to stated Council policy on climate change?

### **Answer**

Thank you for this question – this is a good example of the complexity and challenges we face in decarbonising not just the Council's buildings, but as a country why this is difficult.

I would like to first clarify that this is not in contradiction with policy – we have not said we will never install a gas boiler again. We have to also remember that we have obligations to schools and keeping their buildings operational is important – so where a heating system is close to failing, we must act to replace this and do so within the fixed budgets we have.

In this specific case, the initial feasibility study was being completed around April /May this year – by this time the original boilers had been experiencing issues for many months and work to procure the replacements well underway. The feasibility study is an initial look at what's possible, not a detailed design or costed model for replacement – so it was simply not practical to delay the replacement of the boilers whilst that work progressed. To do so would risk leaving the school without a working heating system come the winter.

As is implicit in the question, retrofitting a building with low carbon technology is not simple and needs carefully looking at through a study – we do not switch a boiler for a heat pump and hope it works. Technical feasibility work is essential to understand how a low carbon system would work, and what changes to the building would be required. This is not just the heat source, but the pipe work, the controls, the thermal efficiency of the building and, for electric powered heating like a heat pump, the capacity of the incoming electrical connection. If not done carefully, a poorly designed system can lead to the building being underheated as well as costing a lot more to run.

So, whilst it's really good this feasibility study has been undertaken, we were not able to leave the school with its failing system whilst this the feasibility and potential future costing and design work was completed for a currently unfunded replacement proposal.

I would like to highlight though that as part of this recent works, parts of the pipe work also needed replacing and this has been done with a larger diameter pipe as would be required for a typical heat pump heating system. So, this infrastructure has been future proofed so that a low carbon system can be retrofitted in the future.

I'd like to draw attention to work the property and schools' teams have undertaken together on the new Kingsbrook Secondary School which includes many excellent low carbon features:

- The heating and hot water systems are powered by high efficiency air-source heat pumps.
- Over 200 square meters of solar PV has been included, which will generate approx. 28,600 kwh/yr.
- The building carbon emissions rate is 44 % below required Building Regulations levels and achieves Energy Performance Certificate rating of 'A'.
- And the operational energy will be below 60 kwh/sqm/year, this is considerably lower than a typical low energy new school building that would typically be in the region of 80 kwh/sqm/year.
- The design of the building has also reduced embodied carbon emissions by use of timber framed structural insulated panels that are used for all areas of external wall build-up

Reducing our carbon emissions is absolutely something which teams across the Council are active on – however the reality is that we have finite budgets and many other obligations to deliver on. So, we are delighted to support this feasibility study but in this case it was necessary to replace the system in good time and ensure the school can continue operating before the feasibility study or any subsequent design stages could be undertaken or completed.

#### **Additional post-meeting information**

This answer shows that the actions taken in this case are not in contradiction to the actions in the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy or any of our policies and so the question basis that we must change practice to stop this happening again is unfounded. Should the same circumstances arise it would be appropriate for the same course of action to be progressed, as set out, to ensure that the school remains operational, and pupils' education continues. The specific circumstances were explained to ensure Members and residents listening did not misunderstand the circumstances of the case raised in the public question. Through the Kingsbrook Secondary School example, we show that the Property and Schools teams are already taking major steps to address climate change and so we feel policy and practice across these teams is already in a strong position and as more opportunities to improve performance arise they will be taken.

## **Information Circulated After the Meeting**

### **EV Action Plan**

- We currently have no plans to install additional EV chargepoints in the legacy Wycombe Council (Queen Victoria Road) office car park. However, High Wycombe-based Buckinghamshire Council staff are able to park at the nearby Easton Street car park free-of-charge, after registering for a permit, and make use of the BP Pulse chargepoints there. Normal charges for use of the BP Pulse chargepoints still apply.

### **School Transport**

#### **1. What is the benchmark definition of a low-income family?**

Home to school travel and transport is set out in national law in accordance with [statutory guidance](#) issued by the Department for Education (DfE). The Council's Home to School Transport Policy sets out how we apply the law in Buckinghamshire.

The DfE statutory guidance states that under "Extended rights eligibility", for children of statutory school age (5 – 16 years) the local authority is required to:

- *"provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals or their parents are in receipt of maximum Working Tax Credit if:*
  - *the nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (for children over the age of 8 and under 11);*
  - *the school is between 2 and 6 miles (if aged 11-16 and there are not three or more suitable nearer schools);*
  - *the school is between 2 and 15 miles and is the nearest school preferred on the grounds of religion or belief (aged 11-16)."*

The Buckinghamshire Council [Home to School Transport Policy at Section 3.5](#) states:

#### ***"Extended rights for pupils from low income families***

*A pupil may be eligible for extended rights under the 'low income' provisions. The Council defines low income families as those where a child receives free school meals because their parents or carers receive at least one of the benefits listed below:*

- *Income Support*
- *Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance*
- *Income-related Employment and Support Allowance*
- *Child Tax Credit – provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190*
- *Universal Credit - with an annual earned income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get)*
- *The guaranteed element of Pension Credit*
- *Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*

*If you are not entitled to free school meals, another benefit that is accepted is entitlement to the maximum level of Working Tax Credits. This means that there is no reduction due to*

*income in the Working Tax Credits elements section of your HM Revenue & Customs award notice for the current tax year and your annual income is no more than £16,190. Where extended rights apply, pupils aged 8 to 10 from low income families who live more than 2 miles (rather than 3) from their nearest suitable school become eligible for funded home to school transport from the Council.*

*Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home will be eligible for Council funded home to school transport even if the school they attend is not their nearest suitable school, providing it is one of the three nearest schools which the pupil is qualified to attend (e.g. a mainstream pupil is not qualified to attend a special school even if it is one of the 3 nearest schools and therefore it would be discounted).*

*Secondary school age pupils from low income families who attend a school between 2 miles and 15 miles away from home will be entitled to Council funded home to school transport if their parents/carers have expressed a wish for them to be educated at that particular school based on the parents/carer's religion or belief and, having regard to that wish, there is no nearer suitable school. This applies to parents/carers with a particular religious or philosophical belief, including those with a lack of religion or lack of belief."*

2. What percentage of the overall number of young people who are eligible for Council-funded transport assistance meet the definition of low income?

School transport eligibility is based on the information provided by families at the time their child’s school application is made. This data does not include information on the family’s financial circumstances; therefore a separate application is required for Council-funded school transport on low income grounds. Supporting evidence is required of being in receipt of the previously named benefits.

A child from a low-income family may also be eligible for Council-funded school transport on the grounds of distance, unsafe walking, and/or their SEND i.e. they are eligible under more than one criterion. If a child is eligible for transport under distance, unsafe walking and/or SEND, then a separate low-income application is not required.

The number of children over the past 3 years who have been eligible for Council-funded school transport on low-income grounds is as follows:

School year	Pupils aged 5 to 16 eligible under low-income criteria	Percentage increase on previous school year	Low-income eligibility as a percentage of the total no. of pupils (5 to 16 years) who are eligible for Council-funded transport
2020 – 2021	79	-	1%
2021 – 2022	82	3.8%	1.1%
2022 – 2023	86	4.9%	1.2%

3. How much of an increase are we seeing in low income and what sort of budgetary pressures are we seeing as a result?

As shown in the table above, there has been a 3.8% increase between 2020-21 and 2021-22, and a 4.9% increase between 2022-23 and 2021-22 in the number of pupils eligible on low-income grounds.

Local authorities receive funding from the Government to spend on home to school travel for children from low-income families, and in Buckinghamshire this funding is held centrally. The allocations for extended rights to free travel and general duty to promote sustainable travel from 2019 to 2023 are available on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)

The allocations for Buckinghamshire were as follows:

Local authority name	2019 to 2020 ER allocations	2020 to 2021 ER allocations	2021 to 2022 ER allocations	2022 to 2023 ER allocations
Buckinghamshire	£196,500	£310,000	£433,300	£559,800

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