



Council agenda

Date: Wednesday 17 April 2024

Time: 4.00 pm

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

Membership:

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

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

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



Council minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 4.00 pm and concluding at 7.24 pm.

Members present

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

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors R Bagge, M Baldwin, A Christensen, P Cooper, M Dormer, T Green, P Griffin, S Guy, G Harris, T Hogg, P Irwin, M Knight, J Rush, N Southworth, D Thompson and A Wood. Apologies were also received from Countess Howe, his Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, and from Dame Ann Limb DBE DL, High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire.

1A His Majesty King Charles III and Catherine, Princess of Wales

On behalf of the Council, Councillors, staff and residents of Buckinghamshire, the Chairman extended thoughts and prayers to His Majesty King Charles III and Catherine, Princess of Wales, on a speedy recovery to full health.

1B Right Reverend Dr Alan Wilson Bishop of Buckingham, Jean Teesdale and Jennifer Woolveridge

Tribute was paid to the Right Reverend Dr Alan Wilson Bishop of Buckingham who had passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, and to former Councillors Jean Teesdale and Jennifer Woolveridge who had recently passed away. The Chairman recorded sincere condolences to their families on their sad losses.

Bishop Wilson had served as the Bishop of Buckingham for over 20 years and had spent his entire ordained ministry within the Diocese of Oxford. Prayers had been said at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford on Saturday and across the county on Sunday. Bishop Wilson was an exceptional teacher and preacher and would be deeply missed. The Chairman has sent a handwritten note to Mrs Lucy Wilson on behalf of the Council.

Councillors Lesley Clarke OBE, Julia Wassell and David Carroll paid tribute to Jean Teesdale who had been a Member of Wycombe District Council from 1978 to 1999 and again from 2003 to 2020, serving as Chairman of the Council during 2006-2007. She had also served as a Councillor for Buckinghamshire County Council from 2013 to 2020 representing the Chiltern Villages Electoral Division, and as a Member of Buckinghamshire Council from 2020-2021. Jean had been appointed as an Honorary Alderman of Buckinghamshire Council in July 2021 for her services to Local Government.

During her time at Wycombe DC, Jean represented the West Central (HW) Ward and then the Cressex and Frogmoor Ward during her initial period of service and was also the Town Mayor during 1983 – 84. Jean had been subsequently elected as Ward Member for the Chiltern Rise Ward in 2003. Over the years she had served on many Committees from the Environment Services Committee to the Planning Committee and as Cabinet Member for Planning then Environment for a number of years.

During her time at BCC, some of Jean's appointments had included Chairman of the Development Control Committee, serving on a number of Select Committees and the Bucks & Milton Keynes Fire Authority, and as Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services (2015-2017) and Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities (2018-2019).

Councillors Santokh Chhokar and Isobel Darby paid tribute to Jennifer Woolveridge who had been a Member of South Bucks District Council from 1995 to 2015 representing the Gerrards Cross South Ward. During her time on the Council she had served on the Housing and Health Committee and then Environment and Housing Committees, the Planning Committee from 2002-2015, and was Cabinet Member for Health and Housing from 2005-2015. She had served on the Chiltern and South Bucks Joint Committee from 2012-2015.

She had also been a founder Board Member of the Padstones charity which provides supported accommodation to young people aged 16 to 25 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and was awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in 2019

for services to older people and to the community in South Buckinghamshire.

Members then observed a minute's silence in memory of the Right Reverend Dr Alan Wilson, Jean Teesdale and Jennifer Woolveridge.

2 Minutes

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 6 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillors A Alam, M Angell, M Ayub, A Baughan, A Bond, N Brown, R Carington, D Carroll, L Clarke OBE, E Culverhouse, I Darby, M Fayyaz, P Gomm, C Harriss, G Hollis, A Hussain, I Hussain, Mahboob Hussain OBE, Maz Hussain, A Macpherson, P Martin, R Matthews, M Rand, Sir B Stanier, P Turner and J Ward declared a personal or prejudicial interest relating to Agenda Item number 7 (Changes to Council Tax Discounts and Premiums) and left the Council Chamber whilst this item was discussed and decided.

Councillors A Collingwood and K Wood declared a personal interest (relating to Agenda Item number 7) and remained in the Council Chamber whilst this item was discussed and decided.

4 Chairman's Update

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Mahboob Hussain who had been awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the community in Buckinghamshire in the King's New Year's Honours List.

The Chairman also informed Members that this would be the last Council meeting attended by Nick Graham, the Service Director of Legal and Democratic Services. Nick had joined the Council in 2020 and would soon be leaving the Council to take on a Coroners role in Oxfordshire. On behalf of all Members, the Chairman thanked Nick for all his hard work with the Council and with Members.

Since the last Council meeting, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council had attended a number of events including the Council's Proud of You Awards, where the Council acknowledged the hard work of staff, and Wendy Morgan-Brown had been awarded the Council's Employee of the Year.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman had attended Carol Services, Christmas concerts and the pantomime, and on 10 January 2024 had attended the Guarantor's Christmas lunch for the oldest residents in Wycombe. They had attended the graduation ceremonies last week at the Buckingham New University and attended six citizenship ceremonies in January and February.

On 20 February, the Chairman and Councillor Gomm had attended Clarence House

for the 15th anniversary celebration of the Medical Detection Dogs. They had both met the Queen and talked about the support the Council gave to the charity through the Community Boards and as the Chairman's nominated charity. On behalf of Buckinghamshire Council, the Chairman had expressed best wishes to his Majesty King Charles and learnt that he was making good progress.

Finally, the Chairman mentioned that 24 February would be the second anniversary of the start of the war in Ukraine. Almost a thousand Ukrainian families were living in Buckinghamshire and on behalf of the Council sincere thanks were sent to the 292 sponsors, Community Boards and others who did such a magnificent job in supporting the families.

5 Petitions

There were none.

6 Chief Financial Officer's Statutory Report

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

It was highlighted that the Medium-Term Financial Plan had been subject to frequent and rigorous challenge and review during its development which had started in March 2023 soon after the last budget had been agreed and had included the public meetings of the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry group held in January 2024.

Members were informed that the budget proposals recommended by the Cabinet were robust and sustainable. There were risks associated with the budget proposals that were set out in the budget papers and summarised at paragraph 4.5 of his report to Council. These included but were not limited to demand and complexity in adults and children's social care and client transport, wider inflationary pressures, the delivery of savings, the degree of income expectations in the medium term, and uncertainty around the future of local government funding.

The budget had some contingencies to mitigate these risks, as detailed at Section 5.1 of the MTFP, alongside the development of the budget review of reserved undertaken during the year. The level and usage of reserves was detailed at Appendix A. General Fund Reserves (i.e. unallocated reserves) was currently £42.8m or 7.9% of net operating expenditure, which was above the generally accepted minimum recommended level of 5%.

As such, the Section 151 Officer had concluded that he considered the budget proposals recommended by the Cabinet to be robust and sustainable. The Section 151 Officer also stated that he was aware of a proposed amendment to the budget to allocate an additional £5m to road maintenance. If passed, this would reduce the

level of reserves held but they would still exceed the minimum best practice amount.

Members were informed that information on the additional monies that the Government had allocated for social care was set out in the budget papers. The money had been allocated to social care contingency.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

7 Change to Council Tax Discounts and Premiums

The Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources introduced the report and informed Members that following a review of Council Tax discounts and premiums Council was being recommended to:

- Remove the current discounts for empty properties with effect from 1 April 2025, that would simplify Council tax administration and bring Buckinghamshire Council in line with most neighbouring authorities.
- Amend the 100% premium currently charged on empty homes, so that it applied after one year, rather than two years. This could be done through a power granted by last year's Levelling Up and Regeneration Act and was intended to encourage the bringing of empty properties back into active use as soon as possible.
- Adopt the policy with effect from 1 April 2025, in order to give relevant homeowners a year's notice of the proposed changes.

Members were informed that the circumstances under which empty homes premiums should not be applied was still awaiting the outcome from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities consultation, as detailed at paragraph 3.4 of the Council report.

The Chairman informed Members that an amendment on this item had been received that she intended to deal with next. The amendment was proposed by Councillor S Wilson, seconded by Councillor R Stuchbury. The amendment wording was:

“This Council notes that:

- Buckinghamshire faces considerable pressure on housing in line with the wider national picture. In turn, this puts pressure on Buckinghamshire Council to facilitate the delivery of new housing at all levels of the market, including more affordable housing, as well as providing infrastructure and additional public services. The negative impact of an increase in second home ownership can be measured in terms of the supply of homes available to meet local housing need. Second homes can also result in residents being priced out of the housing market in certain situations. The rationale behind increasing council tax on second homes is to encourage lower levels of second home ownership or to increase contributions for those who continue

- to own second homes to help fund vital local services.
- At the Full Council meeting on the 22 February 2023 the Council made the decision to remove the 10% discount on second homes to help encourage the active occupation of properties as a primary residence in Buckinghamshire. This covered 753 homes at that point resulting in approximately £157k to the Council and £27k to other preceptors. From 1st April 2023 there was no discount available for second homes outside of approved exemptions.
- On 26 October 2023, The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) received Royal Assent and Section 73 of The Act provides councils the discretion to charge additional council tax of up to 100% on all residential dwellings which are occupied periodically, substantially furnished and no one is resident for council tax purposes i.e. second homes.
- Under Section 73(2)(3), any decision to increase the council tax on second homes must be made at least one year prior to the beginning of the financial year from which it relates, hence can only take effect from 1st April 2025 at the earliest. Should Council agree the recommendation, a notice will be published in a local newspaper within 21 days of the decision date.
- Cabinet (February 13th 2024) recommends this Full Council today makes a Change to Council Tax Premiums and Discounts on empty homes to incentivise bringing homes back to the market and enable the Council to reinstate planned cuts previously noted in the initial draft Budget.
- The Council also faces considerable financial pressure over the course of the MTFP requiring it to propose an increase in Council Tax of 4.99% allowed before a referendum is required.
- Some neighbouring councils, such as Wokingham Borough Council, Slough Borough Council and Milton Keynes City Council, are choosing to update their second homes premium in accordance with the discretion provided by the LURA as part of their Budget processes. Others have yet to publish their position.

This Council further notes that:

- Based on information provided by the Finance team (reviewed by the s151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive), there are 718 second homes equating to 852.8 Band D equivalent dwellings that would qualify for a second home premium for council tax.
- Based on a Band D council tax of £1842.03, this would generate incremental gross receipts of approximately £1.571m.
- When adjusted for the Council Tax collection rate of 98.4% proposed in the MTFP, this reduces to £1.546m.
- The s151 Officer has proposed a further prudent discount of 25% to account for a potential reduction in the number of second homes and Government exemptions as yet unspecified. This results in incremental net receipts of approximately **£1.159m from April 1st 2025.**
- The benefit to other preceptors would be approximately £0.2m based on the current 84:16 ratio split.
- The additional receipt could allow the Council to:

- reinstate cuts to planning enforcement in 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 (£300k).
- introduce an additional cycle of weed spraying (£230k).
- reinstate voluntary and community sector funding (£50k).
- partially reinstate Community Board funding (£579k)

This Council agrees to amend the motion as follows:

Recommendations: (page 7)

Recommendations 1-3 unchanged.

Then to insert the words:

(4) Council is asked to APPROVE the introduction of a 100% Council Tax premium on second homes effective from 1st April 2025.”

Councillor Wilson introduced the amendment and explained some of the key points about it including that the Council faced considerable pressure on housing in line with the wider national picture. The amendment was an opportunity to introduce a Council Tax premium that would encourage more housing back into the marketplace. The Council also faced considerable pressure over the course of the MTFP and the amendment would help to generate additional income that could be used to reinstate cuts to services such as planning enforcement, an additional cycle of week spraying, and reinstating volunteer and community sector funding and, partially, Community Board funding.

Following the amendment debate, Councillor Stuchbury, in seconding the amendment supported the points that had previously been raised by Councillor Wilson. A requisite number of Members present then requested that a recorded vote be held.

Following a recorded vote, the motion was declared to be **LOST**. Voting was as follows:

FOR (23): Councillors Bates, Dixon, Drayton, Gemmell, D Hayday, O Hayday, Hunter-Watts, Majid Hussain, N Hussain, James, Kayani, Lambert, Lewin, Morgan, Poland-Goodyer, Shaefer, G Smith, M Smith, Stuchbury, Wadhwa, Wassell, Wheelhouse and Wilson.

AGAINST (71): Councillors Adoh, Ashman, Barnes, Barrett, Baum, Birchley, Blamires, Bowles, Bracken, Brazier, Broadbent, Butcher, Caffrey, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, J Chhokar, S Chhokar, Chilver, Collingwood, Collins, Cornell, Cranmer, Dhillon, Egleton, Etholen, Flys, Gaster, Goss, M Harker OBE, Heap, Jackson, Johncock, Jones, Jordan, Kelly, King, MacBean, I Macpherson, Mahon, Marshall, W Matthews, Mohammed, Mordue, Naylor, Newcombe, Ng, Oliver, Osibogun, Poll, Rana, Rouse, Sandy, L Smith BEM, Stannard, Strachan, Summers, Tett, Thomas, Town, Towns, A Turner, M

Turner, Waite, Wallace, L Walsh, M Walsh, Waters, Watson, Williams, Winn and K Wood.

ABSTENTIONS: There were none.

The original motion was then debated, after which it was –

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the following discretionary Council Tax empty house discounts be removed effective from 1 April 2024:**
 - (i) Empty and unfurnished (100% discount for first month).**
 - (ii) Empty discount for property undergoing major structural repairs (50% discount for up to 12 months)**
- (2) That the Council Tax Discounts, Exemptions and Premiums Policy (Appendix 1), that reflects the removal of discounts at recommendation (1) above, be approved.**
- (3) That a 100% Council Tax premium be introduced from 1 April 2025, on empty homes after they have been empty for 12 months.**

NOTE: Declarations of Interest made by Councillors on this item are recorded at Agenda Item number 3.

8 Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

The Chairman invited Councillor M Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, to introduce the report to Members on the proposed Medium Tern Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28. The following key points were highlighted:

- Councillor Tett thanked all those who had helped shape the budget, this included majority members of the Portfolio Challenge groups, Cabinet and Deputy Members, the cross-party Budget Scrutiny Inquiry Group, the Chief Executive and her Senior Leadership Team as well as the Section 151 Officer and his finance team.
- That there had been considerable risks involved in putting together the budget, which had been impacted by uncertainty, with international turmoil, the ongoing war in Ukraine, recent disruption and strikes, cost of living pressures through the year, political uncertainty with a general election looming, all alongside significant increased demand for Council services. One of the biggest surprises was the rise in the national minimum wage which while very welcomed also added a £3m pressure to the budget. Inflationary pressures would add £36m to the budget over the 3 year MTFP period.
- That a lack of clarity on the Local Government Finance Settlement until a couple of weeks ago had created uncertainty for Council budget setting.
- That the whole local government was under intense pressure, with a number of

Councils really struggling with their finances.

- That the budget building principles had included a return to a 3 year revenue budget, continuing to deliver the Corporate Plan and Manifesto commitments, a 4 year capital budget to provide investment in key schemes and to support local economic recovery and growth, and to open about risk so that it was identified, quantified, where possible mitigated.
- £45m savings had been achieved between 2020 and 2022, with £30.4million savings being delivered in 2023/24. This would mean that £75.4m of savings (17.1% of the 2020/21 net budget had been achieved in the first 4 years of the new unitary Council. Further major new efficiencies, savings and additional income of £95.3m would be generated over the course of the MTFP meaning that by the end of 2026/27, £170.7m in income and savings will have been realised in the first 7 years of the new unitary Council.
- That there were very strong demand pressures within the budget in four key areas: adults and children's social care, temporary accommodation, and Home to School Transport (£97.4m). These problems were common across the local government sector.
- That the MTFP recognised the importance of having corporate contingencies in place to mitigate very high financial risks / uncertainties.
- That key changes since the draft budget included intense lobbying of central Government for additional funding for local government, which had led to an announcement of £600m additional funding for all of local government and a one-off social care grant and funding guarantee of £5m.
- That changes to Council Tax Premiums around empty homes (under the Levelling Up Act) had allowed the following planned savings to be removed from the final budget (reinstate litter collection £200k, reinstate gully cleansing £350k, reinstate weed spraying £230k and reversing plans to close HRCs 1 day per week £300k).
- On how the Council was funded through Council tax, Business Rates, the Adult Social Care precept, plus some grants monies.
- That the level of General Fund Reserves was expected to be 8% of net revenue operating expenditure, equating to £42.8m.
- A high-level breakdown was given of the £600m earmarked for major capital programme expenditure 2024-2028. This included £179.8m for strategic infrastructure, £168.3m for the schools programme, £107.9m for roads, £37.1m for Town Centre regeneration, £34m for HRCs and Waste Vehicles, and £26.1m for housing and homelessness.
- Information on how the capital programme was being funded.
- That the budget included for a basic increase in Council tax of 2.99% for 2023/24 and a 2% increase in the Adult Social Care precept. This would be the equivalent of an increase of £1.69 per week for a Band D property.
- The risks and uncertainties faced in setting the proposed budget.

Councillor Tett commended the budget to Council and moved the recommendations

as per the report. This was seconded by Councillor A Macpherson.

The Chairman informed Members that as the earlier amendment at agenda item number 7, proposed by Councillor Wilson, had been lost that she did not intend to deal with the second amendment he had submitted, so would move straight to the budget amendment that had been received from Councillor Williams and seconded by Councillor Blamires. The amendment wording was:

“This council notes that yet again we have seen a prolonged period on incessant rain throughout the late Autumn and Winter months. This, combined with freezing weather, has resulted in a significant deterioration in the condition of many roads across Buckinghamshire.

This council believes that, from a resident perspective, one of the key measures of success is the condition of our roads. The Budget today already proposes a record level of expenditure upon repair and resurfacing of our roads with the current £100m+ programme now being extended into a further year in order to continue the ‘member led’ rolling maintenance programme. Nevertheless, since this Budget was developed, it has become apparent that further action is again required to address the now evident need.

This council therefore resolves to release £5m from the ‘mitigating future financial risk’ Reserve and add this to the 2024/2025 Revenue for Highways road maintenance. This will amend the Budget proposals as follows:

- **Overall Revenue Budget (p75)**
Replace Transport Portfolio gross budget £86,514,000 and amend to £91,514,000
Replace Corporate items, Revenue Reserves -£2,476,000 and amend to - £7,476,000
- **Undertaken the consequential amendments to the net budget lines, total budget lines and the Transport Portfolio Budget lines (p167).**

Additionally, Council is asked to further approve additional resolutions to those on page 45 of the Council papers; namely that:

- **The Cabinet Member for Transportation should begin immediate planning for the urgent deployment of this funding.”**

Councillor Williams highlighted recent terrible weather, significant rainfall and flooding, and then the freeze thaw had wreaked havoc on local roads. Releasing £5m additional funding for road maintenance, in addition to the £100m 4 year programme, would help the Council to further target maintenance of arterial roads, link roads and key busy roads. It was mentioned that the Council had 29 crews out repairing roads, clearing gullies, fixing potholes via plane and patch, and the additional money would really help to target more roads before Spring and Summer. Feedback from residents was that they were happy with the quality of

road surface repairs being delivered through the new contract.

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Blamires stated that it was entirely right for the Council to use reserves to provide additional funding for road maintenance in response to the recent weather and that over half of residents surveyed during the budget setting process and stated that road maintenance was their second highest funding priority. Following the recent storms there had been a staggering 540 emergence call outs for road maintenance in 3 weeks. Council highway teams were commended for the work that was being done around the clock to fix potholes and make road repairs.

Following debate on the amendment it was put to the meeting and was **CARRIED**.

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

- Councillor Morgan thanked the Section 151 Officer and his finance team for their tireless work in preparing the budget.
- That central government needed to do more to restore local authority funding to sustainable levels, particularly relating to funding for adult and children's social care.
- That she believed the scrutiny process had been limited in scope and time, with insufficient time being allowed for enough questions to fully understand the decisions being made.
- That alternative options for the future use of King George V Council offices in Amersham for social/affordable housing should have been explored rather than selling the offices.
- That an Amersham hub on the ground floor should be created to encompass essential frontline services to the community including the Fire Authority, NHS, Thames Valley Police and the South Central Ambulance Service.
- That more needed to be done in response to the severe housing crisis relating to reducing housing waiting lists and providing more affordable housing through new developments.
- That critical issues such as climate change, ending rough sleeping and homelessness should be the Council's top housing priorities.
- That the Council should give greater consideration to becoming a social housing provider.
- That the Council should be doing more to devolve community centres, sports pitches and green spaces to Town and Parish Councils, to invest in and regenerate town centres, and to establish a High Wycombe Town Council.
- That she was not supportive of the reduction in funding to Community Boards, nor believed that the budget provided a comprehensive solution to address the ongoing financial crisis the Council was facing.
- That there had been a lack of transparency and consultation in the budget process.

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

- Councillor Wilson expressed serious concerns for public services in Buckinghamshire by 2030 and stated that central government needed to do more to restore local authority funding to sustainable levels, including for adult and children's social care.
- That the Council was increasingly outsourcing services to third parties and becoming a commissioning service for private companies and agencies.
- That the MTFP was inadequate because it lacked the vision, ability and resolve to address the expenditure issues in a meaningful and timely way.
- Concerns were expressed about the business rate resets of £8m and the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit of £3m.
- That the initiatives on temporary accommodation in children's homes was welcomed, although more material solutions were required for adult social care, housing and home-school transport.
- That the current registered housing providers were failing the most vulnerable, the Council needed to do more in response to the severe housing crisis.

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

- (i) The ambitious capital programme expenditure 2024-2028 that had been highlighted by the Leader of the Council, and was investing in the priorities of local people.
- (ii) That the Budget Scrutiny Inquiry process had provided plenty of opportunities for all Members of the Inquiry Group to ask additional questions.
- (iii) On whether the Household Support Fund would continue to be funded into the future.
- (iv) Information was provided on the various work and initiatives being undertaken to provide housing, including social / affordable housing for local people.
- (v) That a Town Council for High Wycombe would be more effective if it worked in a non-political way,
- (vi) That £200m in investment had been made into the High Wycombe town centre over the last 20 years, as well as in other major infrastructure projects such as junction 4 of the M40 and the Amersham Lifestyle Centre. All these brand new schemes and the other expenditure detailed in the capital programme 2024-28 highlighted the ambitions of the Council and that it was investing large amounts in the priorities of local people.
- (vii) Concerns were expressed at the amount of money that had to be raised locally by Council through the adult social care precept due to the inability of

central Government to properly fund this sector.

- (viii) That the budget included for major new efficiencies, savings and additional income during the MTFP period, and built on the savings and income generation that had already been achieved during the first 4 years of the new unitary Council.

In seconding the budget proposals, Councillor A Macpherson spoke in support of the strong and prudent budget being proposed, of the additional funding being provided for road maintenance and repairs, and on the Budget Scrutiny process that was described as being rigorous, transparent and thorough. Councillor Tett then responded to provide clarification on some of the concerns and issues that had been raised during the main debate.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their questions and comments and reminded Members that there was a legal requirement for a recorded vote to be taken on the budget. The Chairman also informed Members that she intended to take a recorded vote, en bloc, for all 7 budget recommendations, which were the 6 recommendations in the main agenda plus the additional recommendation resulting from the amendment. The vote was recorded as follows:

FOR (91): Councillors Adoh, Alam, Angell, Ashman, Ayub, Barnes, Barrett, Baum, Birchley, Blamires, Bond, Bowles, Bracken, Brazier, Broadbent, Brown, Butcher, Caffrey, Carington, Carroll, B Chapple OBE, S Chapple, Chaudry, J Chhokar, S Chhokar, Chilver, Collingwood, Collins, Cornell, Cranmer, Culverhouse, Darby, Dhillon, Egleton, Etholen, Flys, Gaster, Gomm, Goss, Harker OBE, C Harriss, Heap, Hollis, A Hussain, Mahboob Hussain OBE, Maz Hussain, Jackson, Jones, Jordan, Kelly, King, MacBean, A Macpherson, I Macpherson, Mahon, Marshall, Martin, R Matthews, W Matthews, Mohammed, Naylor, Newcombe, Ng, Oliver, Osibogun, Poll, S Raja, Rana, Rand, Rouse, Sandy, L Smith BEM, Sir B Stanier, Stannard, Strachan, Summers, Tett, Thomas, Town, Towns, A Turner, M Turner, Waite, Wallace, L Walsh, M Walsh, Ward, Waters, Williams, Winn and K Wood.

AGAINST (26): Councillors Bates, Baughan, Dixon, Drayton, Fayyaz, D Hayday, O Hayday, Hunter-Watts, Majid Hussain, N Hussain, T Hussain, James, Kayani, Khan BEM, Lambert, Lewin, Morgan, Poland-Goodyer, W Raja, Schaefer, G Smith, M Smith, Stuchbury, Wassell, Wheelhouse and Wilson.

ABSTENTIONS (1): Councillor Gemmell.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024/25 to 2026/27 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 be APPROVED.
- (2) That the Council Tax Resolution (Appendix 1) be APPROVED.
- (3) That the Special Expenses budgets, precepts and associated services for Aylesbury Town, High Wycombe Town and West Wycombe Church Yard (Appendices 2 and 3) be APPROVED.

- (4) The Cabinet be delegated authority to make decisions to add up to £100m to the Capital Programme, to be funded by Prudential Borrowing, subject to a robust business case being approved.
- (5) That the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy (Appendix 4) be APPROVED.
- (6) That the Business Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy (Appendix 5) be APPROVED.
- (7) That the Cabinet Member for Transport should begin immediately planning for the urgent deployment of the £5m released from the 'mitigating future financial risk' Reserve that has been added to the 2024/25 Revenue for highways road maintenance.

9 Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27

Councillor Butcher, Deputy Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the Buckinghamshire Council's Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25 to 2026-27. The Local Government Act 2003 ("the Act") and the Regulations made under the Act required the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Act also required the Council to set out a statement of its treasury management strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) (as shown in Appendix 1). This set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy both had to have regard to guidance issued by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and must be agreed annually by Full Council.

Treasury management at the Council was conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. The Council report fulfilled the Council's legal obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to have regard to the CIPFA Code.

The Investment Strategy was considered separately within the Capital and Investment Strategy. The TMSS and AIS formed part of the Council's overall budget setting and financial framework.

The Deputy Cabinet Member mentioned the importance of the strategy to the Council as it set out how the treasury management team was able to invest monies and to maximise income from investments that helped to support the delivery of Council services. The Treasury Management Strategy had already been considered and agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee.

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

RESOLVED –

That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 be approved which includes:

- (1) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement.**
- (2) The Borrowing Strategy as set out in Section 4.**
- (3) The Prudential Indicators (PI) set out in Sections 3, 4 and 5.**
- (4) The Annual Investment Strategy set out in Appendix 1.**
- (5) The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy set out in Appendix 2.**

10 Capital and Investment Strategy

Councillor Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources introduced the draft Capital and Investment Strategy 2024/25, attached as Appendix 1 to the report. It was noted that the Council was required to approve this strategy on an annual basis and that it had been developed in line with the CIPFA and DLUHC guidance.

The Capital and Investment Strategy provided the framework within which to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan objectives through the effective investment of its limited capital resources. As well as the Council's immediate statutory responsibilities, the strategy also reflected the important role that it had to play in the regeneration and growth, affordable housing and climate change agendas, especially in the context of significant housing growth in the area. The latest update to the strategy, Appendix 1, proposed minor amendments to keep it up-to-date and in alignment with the Corporate Plan priorities and these included recent new strategies such as the Regeneration Strategy and Accommodation Strategy, and a revised section on corporate capital development.

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

RESOLVED –

That the Capital and Investment Strategy (Appendix 1) be agreed.

11 Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

In accordance with Section 35 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, the Returning Officer was required to be appointed from among the officers of the Council by the Council. The role of the Returning Officer was one of a personal nature and distinct and separate from their duties as an employee of the council. Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 also set out that a Council should designate an individual to the role of Electoral Registration Officer.

The role of the Returning Officer was to ensure that all elections were administered effectively and conducted in accordance with the law. The role was separate from duties as an employee of the Council, and the Returning Officer was not responsible

to the Council. The role was directly accountable to the courts as an independent statutory office holder. Similarly, the role of Electoral Registration Officer was to ensure the delivery of the electoral registration function, maintaining the electoral register and managing all electoral registration functions.

Part I, Section 3 of the Council's Constitution set out the list of Statutory and Proper Officers for the Council. The Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services was the current Council Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer, however following the resignation of the existing postholder, there was a need to appoint a replacement officer to these roles with effect from 8 March 2024. This was particularly important as the Police and Crime Commissioner elections would be held on 2 May 2024, and the next General Election also had to take place no later than January 2025. The next local council elections would be held on 1 May 2025.

RESOLVED –

That Sarah Ashmead (Deputy Chief Executive) be appointed as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer with effect from 8 March 2024, and the Constitution be updated to reflect the appointment.

12 Report for information - Key Decisions Report

A list of decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the last Full Council meeting on 6 December 2023 were received and noted.

13 Date of Next Meeting

The next full Council meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 4pm.



Report to Full Council

Date:	17 April 2024
Reference number:	N/A
Title:	Corporate Plan Refresh 2024-25
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Martin Tett, Leader
Contact officer:	Rachel Bennett rachel.bennett@buckinghamshire.gov.uk / Natalie Donhou-Morley natalie.donhoumorley@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	1. For Members to adopt the refreshed Corporate Plan.
Reason for recommendation:	To reflect changes in priorities and ensure we are working to an updated plan.

1. Executive summary

1.1 Buckinghamshire Council's Corporate Plan sets out what the Council wants to achieve and how we will do it, addressing the challenges we face, harnessing opportunities as they present themselves and reflect the services that matter most to our residents.

2. Corporate Plan Refresh Overview

2.1 As in previous years, a light-touch review of the Corporate Plan has been undertaken to reflect key developments since the drafting of the current plan, which was adopted by the Council in February 2020, in particular the impact of acute financial inflation and cost of living pressures as well as demand on services.

2.2 The refreshed corporate plan is attached in Appendix 1. The plan also includes an appendix setting out the current Corporate Key Performance Indicators which are used to monitor the council's performance and outcomes in the delivering the priorities outlined in the plan.

2.3 Subject to approval by Council, the updated corporate plan will be published on our website.

2.4 The plan is intended to cover the period until 2025, in accordance with the current Council term.

3. Other options considered

3.1 Do nothing - if the Corporate Plan was not refreshed it may be deemed out of date.

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 Identified priorities have been checked to ensure they are currently funded and included within the MTFP. There are no additional financial implications known at this stage.

5a Director of Legal & Democratic Services comment

4.2 The Director has read and approved the report.

5b Section 151 Officer comment

4.3 The S151 has read and noted the report. Alignment of the Corporate Planning and Medium Term Financial Planning process is fully supported and key to delivery of the stretching savings targets and key demand management measures.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 The Corporate Plan is a council's main strategic business planning document, establishing a golden thread between the Council's priorities, as set out by elected Members, and the activities which will be undertaken to deliver the organisation's agreed outcomes. As a public document, the Corporate Plan also helps communicate to staff, partners and residents, a clear concise narrative of strategic intent.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 The refreshed corporate plan has been shared with select committee chairmen for their feedback prior to it going forward to Full Council for agreement. No feedback or requests for amendments have been received.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 Underpinning the plan are a number of strategies and policies which will be subject to appropriate consultation and engagement with members, partners and our residents. Relevant communications will also be developed to support these as they come forward.

8. Next steps and review

8.1 If refreshed corporate plan is adopted, publication on the council's external website.

9. Background papers

9.1 Current Corporate Plan [Corporate plan | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please contact the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

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Corporate Plan

2020 - 2025

Version refreshed March 2024



Appendix

Introduction

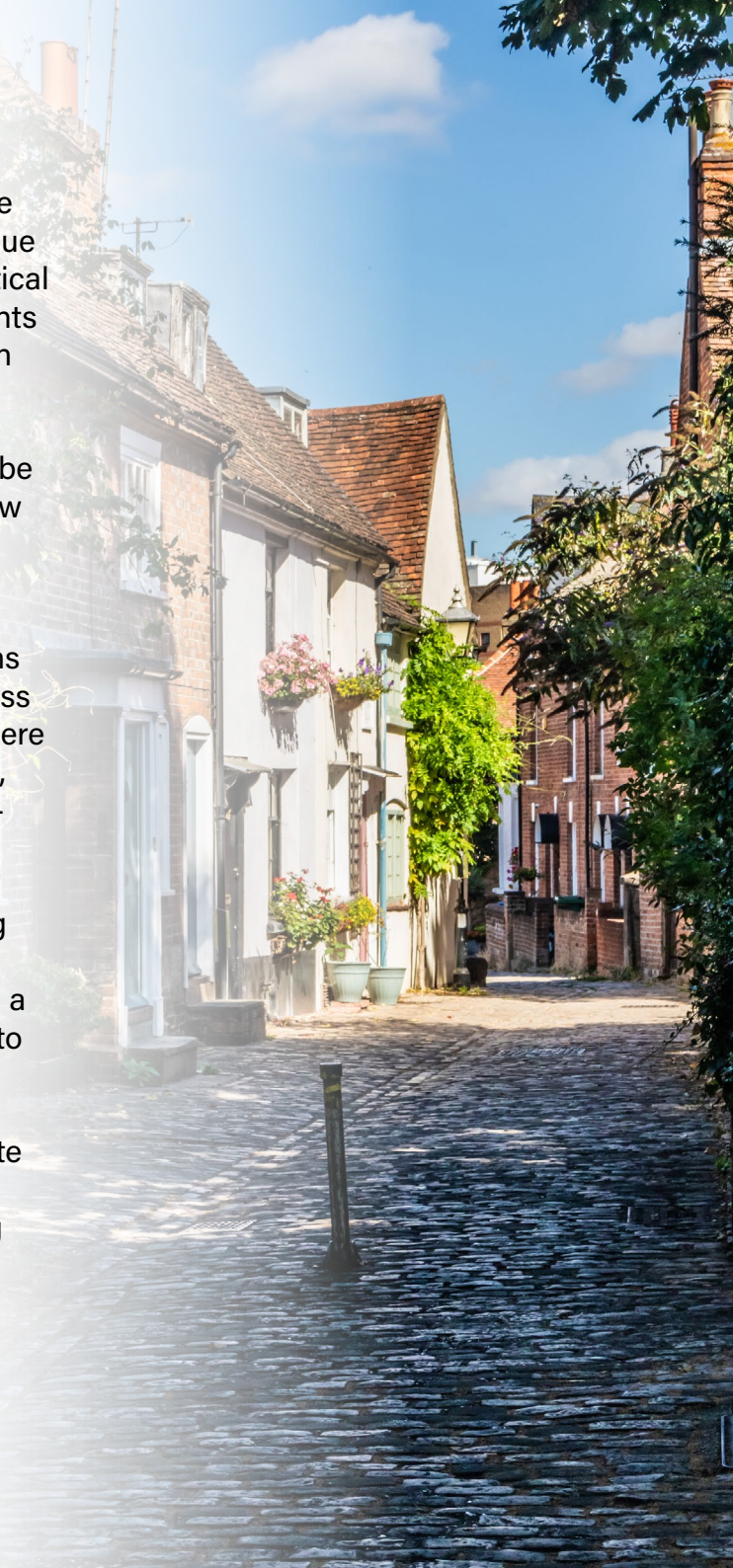
Our Corporate Plan outlines our ambitions and priorities for Buckinghamshire Council. Overall, our aim is to create positive changes for local people, communities, visitors, and businesses. This refresh builds on the original plan from when the Council was formed in April 2020 and reflects the ever-changing world around us. We remain committed to making Buckinghamshire the best place to live, raise a family, work, and do business. We want our county to be a place everyone can be proud of, with excellent services, thriving businesses and outstanding public spaces for everyone. We want our residents, regardless of background, to live healthy, successful lives and age well with independence.

As I am sure you are aware, councils across the country are under acute financial pressure and Buckinghamshire is no different. The cost-of-living pressures and inflation following on from COVID-19 continues to present significant challenges to our residents and council services. This has been further compounded by the ongoing war in Ukraine. Demand for our services continues to rise each year due to factors such as population growth and increased pressure on services such as children's social care, adult social care, home to school transport and temporary accommodation. Our income in certain areas such as parking remains reduced compared to pre-pandemic levels.

However, we are committed to continuing to be a well-run, financially prudent, efficient and value for money council. The escalating costs for critical services that serve our most vulnerable residents have forced us to make difficult decisions when assessing our medium-term financial plans. We are taking steps to reduce our overhead costs and implement a savings programme that will be delivered over the next few years. This will allow us to continue building a strong foundation for Buckinghamshire's long-term future.

Our vision for Buckinghamshire is one that aims to allow all Buckinghamshire residents to access the opportunity to succeed and thrive. One where growth will be carefully planned and managed, so that all residents benefit. This includes well-designed, more affordable homes in thriving communities, providing excellent education opportunities for our young people, developing a skilled workforce with access to great job opportunities in highly productive sectors, and a world-class physical and digital infrastructure to support our businesses to flourish.

We also want to play our part in tackling climate change. Examples of how we plan to do this include planting over 500,000 trees, increasing recycling and improving our environment.



During the challenges of the recent years, we have seen how people from across the county have stepped up to help those in need and look out for their family, friends, and neighbours as well as help refugees temporarily settle in the county. The public sector and community services continue to work together to find ways to support those that rely on them, thinking innovatively through the challenges. Some of these new ways of doing things have worked well and have demonstrated how we can make improvements to the way we deliver our services.

We remain focused on the importance of a local approach and will continue to engage with our communities, offering opportunities for our residents, business, and partners to influence innovative approaches to their local places and services. There is no better example of this than our Opportunity Bucks initiative where we are targeting resources to ensure residents can access what they need to succeed.

[Buckinghamshire's Strategic Vision for 2050](#) will help us deliver a lot of these ambitions to benefit Buckinghamshire's residents and the local economy.

The refreshed Corporate Plan provides the building blocks to our success and sets out the Council's strategic priorities and how we can achieve these. It will be used to inform cabinet portfolio priorities, service, and team planning – setting out the challenges and vital opportunities we will focus on to support the county to build resilience and continue to grow.

A number of strategies and policies underpin this plan including details about how we evaluate our success and how we use benchmarking information to ensure we measure success and best practice. Buckinghamshire will continue to face challenges in the next few years, but we also have unique and exciting opportunities to improve our services and accelerate the county's success and prosperity, including through devolution from central government. We recognise that our staff are our greatest asset, and it is important that we acknowledge their ongoing hard work, dedication, and resilience during times of unprecedented demand.

By seizing opportunities available to us now and working on our ongoing commitments, such as our objective to achieve net carbon zero for Buckinghamshire by 2050, we can avoid over burdening future generations and ensure that current residents benefit from positive changes in the years to come.



Martin Tett
Leader



Rachael Shimmin
Chief Executive

Buckinghamshire in numbers

In 2024



553,300

population (as of mid-year 2021)



£453,000

average house price (March 2023)



£1,400 pcm

average rent for a three-bed property
(April 2022 - March 2023)



171

parish and town councils



32%

of the county is designated green belt
(England average 12.5%)



£18.485 billion

size of Buckinghamshire economy national output
(ONS 2023)



236

schools, including pupil referral units and local authority maintained nurseries



£38,600

median average annual gross pay in 2022
(full time workers)



2,100 miles

of carriageway were maintained



On the horizon...



564,300

population in 2030
(Source: ONS projections)



There are currently 304 state pension age residents per 1,000 working age residents, by 2040 this will rise to 371 state pension age residents per 1,000 working age residents

In the next decade (2023-2033):



44.3%

increase in 85+ year olds



20.8%

increase in 65+ year olds



0.3%

increase in adults (18-64)*



5.1%

decrease in children (0-17)*

** Construction of new dwellings in the county could lead to population changes/ increases beyond those currently predicted by the ONS.*

Moving forward together: valuing partnerships

Achieving the best outcomes for our communities requires joined-up thinking. Most of our public sector partners work across the same geography and serve the same population. Working collaboratively with partners to make the most of collective resources, skills, ideas, and talents will be critical to achieve our key priorities.

Buckinghamshire Council continues to build relationships at a regional, national, and international level, championing the county's voice and representing our residents, businesses and partners on a big stage. We will work creatively and collaboratively to strengthen the local economy, support businesses, and attract investment and funding into the county.

We are committed to partnership working, focusing on shared priorities, and encouraging collaboration, sharing intelligence, and driving change and tackling key issues in a more coordinated way.



Buckinghamshire Place-Based Growth Board

The Buckinghamshire Growth Board ensures all partners are aligned to a shared place-based vision and provides the broadest platform from which to address our growth and cohesion priorities. It is the overarching partnership board providing a single forum that works across the public and private sector in Buckinghamshire to meet the need for joined up thinking on the economy and growth. It approves the overall vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire to ensure ambitions are agreed, work is undertaken to realise them, and that future economic growth and development aligns with local priorities.

Following the successful integration of the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership into the Council in early 2024, we will continue to work with partners from the health sector, Buckinghamshire New University and business

representatives, all of whom have a shared ambition and work programme, to deliver innovative, sustainable, and appropriate growth at pace.

The Growth Board oversees the work of four sub-boards: the Enterprise and Investment Board, the Skills Strategy Board, the Regeneration Board and the Opportunity Bucks Board. Members of the Board ensure that our strategies and plans are aligned to support the growth ambitions of the county with a single narrative.

We want Buckinghamshire to remain a forward thinking and dynamic economy without sacrificing the assets which already make it a great place to live. This new model of governance also aligns Buckinghamshire to the path of national government policy. The model aims to further strengthen the work currently undertaken by partners including supporting and developing our key sectors, providing a strong and independent business voice, taking forward skills delivery and combining this with a wider focus on health and equality, education, place and regeneration.

We will work with our partners to:

- Invest in our places
- Mobilise our high-tech sector assets
- Create an accelerated skills delivery system
- Enhance physical and digital connectivity
- Deliver public service efficiency improvements, including a first-class integrated health and social care campus
- Increase our overall contribution to HM Treasury



Buckinghamshire Business First

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is the principal organisation delivering business support activity across Buckinghamshire and, as such, represents the voice of businesses of various size and type. BBF also continues to run both the Growth Hub and Skills Hub and is represented on the Buckinghamshire Growth Board.

Integrated Care System

Integrated Care Systems bring together the expertise of key health and care professionals to plan and deliver joined up services within Buckinghamshire to look after people's physical, social, and mental health needs as well as tackling health inequalities. By working in partnership across the Integrated Care System, including with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Integrated Care Partnership (with the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing as vice chair), the Buckinghamshire GP Provider Alliance, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS

Trust, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, FedBucks, Medicas, and South-Central Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, we will achieve our vision of everyone living happier and healthier lives for longer.

Town and parish councils, and local MPs

There are 171 town councils, parish councils and parish meetings in Buckinghamshire, collectively known as local councils. There are currently five MPs for the area. We work closely with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) who are an independent member organisation, providing support to these councils on procedures and statutory regulations. Buckinghamshire Council has adopted the 'Town and Parish Council Charter' which articulates our commitment to working effectively and collaboratively with town and parish councils and outlines some key areas

to help strengthen our relationships. As part of our commitment to the Town and Parish Charter we conducted a Town and Parish Survey in 2023 to help us understand what is working well and what is not. We have also established a Town and Parish Focus Group, whose role is to constructively discuss key issues and emerging themes concerning town and parish councils and provide a local forum to discuss and support approaches on key pieces of work.

Opportunity Bucks

Opportunity Bucks is a programme to improve outcomes for residents who are experiencing significant hardship, a local initiative, in line with the Government's national levelling up agenda. We want to ensure that all residents in the county have the opportunity to succeed, that nobody gets left behind and we reduce inequality within our communities – we recognise that this is not where we are today and that things will get worse if we don't act.

The programme is focused on 10 wards throughout Buckinghamshire, where residents are facing most challenges (these areas have been defined based on data including high unemployment and educational attainment, higher crime and worst health outcomes). We are working with councillors, partners and residents in these areas to identify challenges and deliver initiatives that will break the cycle of disadvantage, improve health outcomes and grow our economy.

Asylum, migration and resettlement

Buckinghamshire continues to welcome a number of individuals and families from both Afghanistan and Ukraine; many of whom were at very genuine risk to their lives fleeing violence and war.

Buckinghamshire is also seeing an increase in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children who are referred to us via the government mandated National Transfer Scheme.

Working with partners, residents and with valuable support from local community groups we continue to ensure these individuals and families are supported to resettle and integrated into Buckinghamshire life, ensuring they are supported to access education, health services and employment.

Voluntary and community sector

Buckinghamshire has an active not for profit sector with invaluable insight into the needs of our communities. The VCSE sector is vital in delivering key services, building relationships, and strengthening social connections. As we deliver our 'Opportunity Bucks' programme, the sector will continue to support our communities. Despite facing cost-of-living pressures, the sector has been an asset in providing support and advice to residents, asylum seekers, and refugees.

We continue to work with our partners in the voluntary and community sector to help them provide much-needed services, build resilience, and use voluntary capacity effectively and safely.

Buckinghamshire Cultural Partnership

The Buckinghamshire Cultural Partnership brings together senior leaders from key cultural organisations, Buckinghamshire Council and higher education organisations. It plays a strategic leadership and development role, positioning culture at the heart of strategic agendas throughout the county.



Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is a pledge to show our support to those who serve, or have served, in the armed forces, as well as their families. It recognises the sacrifices they have made and ensures they are treated fairly.

There are more than 3,300 serving personnel and over 15,000 ex-service people living in Buckinghamshire. Together with their families, they make up a significant proportion of the local population. We are committed to ensuring that the Armed Forces community does not face disadvantage in the provision of services compared to other residents. As an employer, we recognise the range of unique skills and experiences that reservists and veterans can bring to our organisation and are proud to have been recognised with a Gold Award from the MOD's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

Buckinghamshire Swan Envoy Scheme

The Buckinghamshire Swan Envoy Scheme brings together leaders and champions from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, charity sectors, media and business industries who are keen to help inspire Buckinghamshire's communities and businesses to succeed and for younger generations to realise their potential.

Our Swan Envoys care passionately about the future success of Buckinghamshire as a place and support us to promote the county to local, regional, national and international audiences as a great place to live, visit, do business and nurture talent. Some of the ways our Swan Envoys make a difference include offering philanthropic support as a speaker or lending their skills and experience to motivate

others, supporting events and helping to raise awareness of initiatives and campaigns that provide support to residents and communities.

Since the launch of the Scheme, our Swan Envoys have helped highlight the importance of NHS Health Checks, supported the launch of our Opportunity Bucks programme - Succeeding for All initiative, celebrated community heroes who have made a positive impact in their areas, helped recognise excellence in Buckinghamshire's schools and lent their support to various campaigns.

We plan to review and expand the scheme in 2024 and welcome more Envoys who share our vision and values for Buckinghamshire.

Schools, colleges, universities and lifelong learning

The Buckinghamshire Skills Hub promotes and optimises links between the business community and education/training providers to enable young people and adults to develop the skills and qualifications they need to progress in the workplace, at whatever stage of their career they are in. Skills development is central to creating the conditions for sustained innovation, excellence, and growth for our Buckinghamshire businesses, particularly in priority sectors as described in our [Local Industrial Strategy](#).

Police, fire and rescue

The Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel examine and review how the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) carries out their responsibilities of ensuring that Thames Valley Police runs effectively. The panel also supports the PCC in their work and provides reports and recommendations on the Police and Crime Plan, Annual Report and some proposals made by the PCC.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority is a publicly accountable body managing Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service on behalf of the communities it serves. The Authority meets four times a year to discuss budgets, financial arrangements, insurance, and financial plans, and to make recommendations to the Fire Authority for decision. A new Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive Officer was appointed in November 2023. The Council have committed to working closely with her as the Fire and Rescue Service progresses delivery on their improvement plan.

Housing providers

There are approximately 70 Registered Providers with a total combined housing stock of over 29,500 properties across Buckinghamshire. This includes four main registered providers (Paradigm, L&Q, Fairhive and Red Kite) who took on the local housing stock across Buckinghamshire, which was previously owned by the former District Councils. The Council works closely with

Registered Providers on developing new-build affordable housing, either in partnership with private developers or by developing their own sites. These providers allocate social housing tenancies in accordance with the Council's Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme (advertising available tenancies on a central website). The Council will also work with Registered Providers to address and respond to any issues that arise within their social housing stock (e.g. poor housing conditions).



Natural Environment Partnership

The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (the 'NEP') brings together organisations from the private, health, education, conservation and public sectors to drive positive change in the local natural environment. The NEP works collaboratively to contribute to environmental strategy and objectives for the area and brings together its partners to align delivery of conservation interventions to help achieve collective goals. The NEP also works to ensure the environment is appropriately accounted for in local decision-making, such as planning, and to embed natural environment priorities and considerations in growth, economic and health strategies.

Our key priorities - a summary

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

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Our key priorities are:

- Increasing prosperity
- Strengthening our communities
- Improving our environment
- Protecting the vulnerable

Our key priorities are for our residents, employees, businesses, service users and councillors. Great customer service is integral to each of the priorities.





Strengthening our communities

Life expectancy in Buckinghamshire

 **81.5**
years  **85.1**
years

(one of the highest in South East England)

People in Buckinghamshire live longer and healthier lives than the national average



Only **57.6%** of **children and young people** meeting recommended levels of physical activity

Life expectancy gap

 **5.8**
years  **6.1**
years

life expectancy gap between most and least deprived residents



27,000 residents hold a Blue Badge, enabling the County to be more accessible for all of our residents

Strengthening our communities

Buckinghamshire is a healthy and inclusive place to live, work and visit, but we have several challenges. These include building more affordable homes now and for future generations, providing extra help and support for an increasingly older population and improving the health of people who live in the more deprived areas of Buckinghamshire. We also face the challenge of supporting our communities and residents to recover safely from the coronavirus pandemic.



We want:

- Our residents to live independent, fulfilling lives, within strong, healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities
- To support existing business communities, especially our small to medium enterprises (SMEs), to grow and flourish
- To improve health and wellbeing, with a particular focus on reducing any gap in health outcomes
- To work more with town and parish councils, giving them the responsibility for services and assets where it makes sense to do so, and helping communities to help themselves
- To improve educational outcomes for our children and young people, particularly focusing on those most vulnerable

Working with partners, we will:

- Continue to develop our Leisure Strategy and seek to invest in our facilities where appropriate
- Develop and deliver our strategy for Buckinghamshire Libraries to continue providing high-quality services which contribute to key local and national priorities
- Tackle health inequalities, including the longer term impact of Covid-19, through cultural, leisure and learning opportunities, by developing clear plans to reduce health inequalities
- Encourage localism through our Community Boards, the devolution programme and working with local councils and voluntary community groups

- Ensure we are keeping our residents regularly informed
- Provide the affordable homes our growing communities need
- Continue our commitment to equality and inclusion, through engagement with ethnic minority communities, including regular engagement with faith leaders and partnership events, celebrating the diversity within our communities
- Maintain our commitment to the armed forces community by upholding the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, recognising Buckinghamshire's proud and historic military links
- Strengthen and ensure there is a more consistent approach across the partnership that supports the early identification of and response to emerging problems that children, young people and their families face
- Make every effort to find suitable placements for looked after children locally so they can remain within their own community and maintain their existing relationships and connections
- Enable and promote physical and mental health and healthier lifestyles, wellbeing and quality of life for people in Buckinghamshire including through our new Be Healthy Bucks service which supports people to make healthy changes like stopping smoking, or losing weight and reducing their alcohol consumption, Better Points initiative which rewards people getting active, and through our Healthy Libraries programme which supports people's mental and physical health through activities in their local library



Protecting the vulnerable

509

children were looked after as at 31 March 2023 (500 as at 31 March 2022)



550

children had a Child Protection Plan on 31 March 2023 (752 as at 31 March 2022)



59.6 crimes

per **1,000** people for the period April 2021 – March 2022

(72.4 per 1,000 for Thames Valley)

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89%



of adult social care clients were satisfied with the care and support they received - only 6% were unsatisfied

79% of people using Adult Social Care services saying that they had either adequate or as much social contact as they would like (2022/2023)



313 children are in foster care (March 2023)

4,975

homelessness approaches in 2022/23



Budget for adult social care has increased by

58.6%

since 2015



38,825

people contacted the council for adult social care (2023) – an increase of 2626 (7.25%) on the previous year

5,074

residents were receiving long-term adult social care commissioned by the council on 31 March 2023 - an increase of 264 (5%) since March 2022

Protecting the vulnerable

While most people in Buckinghamshire live independent and healthy lives, some need extra support and protection. We know that the number of children and adults who need this extra help is increasing. There are also rising numbers of people with mental health difficulties, special educational needs, disabilities, and complex needs.

We want to give everyone the best chances in life, so that – together with their families and carers - they are resilient and can identify their own solutions. We will continue to work with our partners, social care providers and communities to innovate and improve our offer of support to vulnerable residents, including helping people recover from illness sooner and achieve their maximum potential, and reducing social isolation and loneliness. In addition, we will be strengthening our recruitment campaign and support offer for foster carers which will enable more of our most vulnerable children to live in a safe, loving, and nurturing home when they cannot live with their birth families.

Our goal is to reduce inequalities and give everyone the support and skills they need to live independent, happy, and fulfilling lives.



We want:

- Children, adults, and families to feel safe and supported to live independent lives
- Our older, disabled, and vulnerable people to receive the right support, at the right time
- A strong housing offer that provides affordable, accessible, sustainable and suitable choices at all life stages

Working with partners, we will:

- Develop and deliver our offer of support for residents who need it most. This includes help with food, energy and essential household costs; support to stay warm; and coordination of community-based initiatives through our Helping Hand service
- Work with the police, PCC and partners to help prevent crime, reduce the fear of crime and understand the issues around women's safety and fear of violence and adopting a zero-tolerance approach to domestic abuse
- Provide care for all those who are unable to help themselves, working with the NHS to give residents the choice and support to stay in their own home where this is the best option
- Make sure children and adults, particularly those that are vulnerable, are healthy, safe and protected from harm and continue to improve the services we provide, including delivering the Buckinghamshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy: Happier, Healthier Lives strategy
- Work with residents, partners and stakeholders to virtually eliminate rough sleeping, and reduce homelessness, addressing the root causes of both
- Work in partnership with the NHS and voluntary groups to reduce problems such as misuse of drugs and alcohol, aligning services with the NHS where this makes sense
- Work with our partners across the Integrated Care System with a key focus on reducing avoidable admissions to hospital; and improving the hospital discharge experience for residents
- Encourage children in school to adopt healthy lifestyles and encourage them to exercise more, eat a healthy diet and spend more time with their friends and less on the internet
- Work with schools to encourage more cycling and walking to schools through the implementation of school travel plans and through working with the community to put in place measures to support children to travel to school safely and sustainably
- Develop and deliver robust licensing policies for taxi and private hire, alcohol and entertainment and gambling licensing that actively protect and promote public safety and protect children and the vulnerable from harm
- Provide a strategic and coordinated approach to community resilience activity that supports individuals, businesses, community networks and voluntary organisations to behave in a resilient way and act to support other members of the public including developing a resilience toolkit online and providing advice, support and training to community networks and volunteers in emergency management
- Ensure a more consistent approach across the partnership that supports the early identification of, and response to emerging problems that children, young people and their families face
- Increase the number of in-house foster carers by defining a new improved offer to improve recruitment and retention

- Deliver our children's services transformation programme which will redesign our services around the needs and strengths of children and families, ensuring that children receive a consistent, purposeful and child centred approach wherever they are on their journey of need from early help through to being in care
- Reduce the demand and costs of statutory interventions and promote the wellbeing and resilience of children and families in Buckinghamshire
- Be part of the Delivering Better Value in SEND programme through which 55 local areas are being supported to identify the highest impact changes that can be made to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and to optimise the use of resource
- Continue to work on the development of a suite of Edge of Care services for children and young people in order to prevent the need for them to enter care in the first place or to rapidly return them to their families if they do enter
- Increase the number of care leavers with their own tenancies which will reduce our reliance on more costly semi-independent placements





Improving our environment



46.83%
of waste is recycled
or reused

Aim to facilitate the delivery of

1,000 

public electric charging bays
across the county by 2027 as
part of our Electric Vehicle
Action Plan



73%

reduction in
Buckinghamshire Council's
CO2 emissions since 1990.
We are comfortably within
our carbon budgets

Around



2,100 miles

of publicly maintained carriageway
in Buckinghamshire



1.2 million

country park visitors in 2023/24



2,146 miles

of public Rights of Way



In partnership with operators, we have
used grant funding to support the
recovery of bus passenger numbers to

85 - 90%

of pre-Covid levels

Improving our environment

Buckinghamshire is a beautiful county, and our stunning natural and historic landscape is valued by all. Over a quarter of our county is within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and approximately a third is covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Protection of the county's beautiful countryside, including areas of outstanding natural beauty and green belt will be achieved through the 'Brown before Green' principle. We know we must deliver more homes and associated infrastructure for our growing population. By managing growth sensibly and responsibly; including identifying appropriate surplus public sector property and actively developing this for market and affordable housing, we can protect and enhance our natural environment and the benefits it brings. Aylesbury Garden Town is an exciting example: putting green spaces and natural environments at the heart of future development.



We want:

- To address climate change, improve our environment and create economic opportunities for clean growth
- To reduce our county's environmental impact by promoting sustainability, reducing waste and increasing recycling and reuse
- To improve air quality and people's health, by reducing emissions and encouraging green transport options

Working with partners, we will:

- Take action to reduce our carbon emissions including planting over 543,000 trees, including the completion of a new woodland close to Wing which will contain 132,000 trees and progression of a range of smaller sites under our contractor planting model
- Facilitate the increased use of electric vehicles (including within our own fleet) and support the delivery of 1000 electric charging points across the county as part of our Electric Vehicle Action Plan
- Continue to engage with operators to deliver outcomes consistent with our Bus Service Improvement Plan through our Bus Enhanced Partnership to develop and deliver initiatives aimed at increasing bus patronage and network viability and make best use of grant funding and existing budgets
- Promote the benefits and improve the attractiveness of walking, cycling and wheeling as a realistic alternative for short local trips through the development of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Buckinghamshire, continuing to deliver high quality active travel infrastructure, and encouraging and supporting schools with School Travel Plans

- Increase recycling and energy recovery rates and continue to deliver campaigns including the LitterLotto local project aimed at increasing recycling quality and a food recycling campaign
- Enhance and protect our green spaces and high-quality environment, through a zero-tolerance policy towards fly-tipping and litter, a no-nonsense approach to planning enforcement, and taking action on flood prevention
- Encourage 'green growth' by promoting well-designed homes and higher, more energy efficient standards for all new developments
- Continue to seek to mitigate the impact of HS2 and East West Rail on Buckinghamshire's residents, businesses and special environment by minimising the final landscape and visual impact of the projects and also supporting our communities with finding resolutions to their construction related issues
- Progress our ambition to be net carbon zero by 2050 (and potentially earlier) by delivering the key actions set out in our Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy

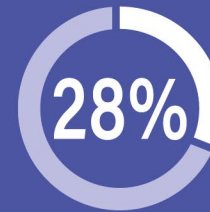


Increasing prosperity



47.8%

of residents aged 16-64 are educated to NVQ4+ (equivalent to Higher Education Certificate/BTEC)



of vacant jobs not filled due to lack of skills (25% national average)



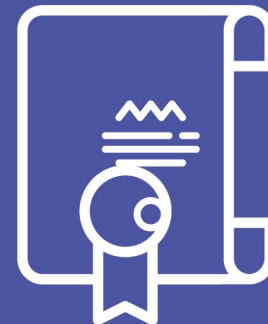
value of exports in 2021 - £4.032 billion of services and £2.821 billion in goods (ONS 2023)

★ **90.6%** ★

of pupils attend good or outstanding schools in Buckinghamshire (compared to the South East 90.5% and England 88.3%)



81.5% of residents in employment (employment rate aged 16-64) compared to the South East average of 78.1% (APS, Jan 2022-Dec 2022)



4.8%

of those aged 16-64 have no qualifications compared to the South East average of 5.0% (APS, Jan 2021-Dec 2021)

Increasing prosperity

Buckinghamshire is a prosperous county and a successful place to do business, contributing £18.485 billion to the UK economy in 2021 (GDP in current prices).

The county has low unemployment, higher than average household incomes, and boasts world leading sectors. From Pinewood Studios in the south to Silverstone in the north, Buckinghamshire is a great success story. We are also well placed to take advantage of emerging opportunities because of our proximity to London and Heathrow, and our location in the middle of a leading economic area with global strengths in science, technology and high-value manufacturing.

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted this and the national trend shows that high levels of productivity and growth are beginning to slow, and levels of unemployment are rising. Our high streets have been severely affected and are still facing challenges, including the change in retail habits with increased online demand and falling footfall in town centres. Action is needed now to ensure our economy remains fit for the future.

The Council continues to invest heavily in our highway network and the ongoing programme of local schemes and strategic road repairs/improvements. Inclement weather has this year further exacerbated where road surfaces are already damaged, and especially through extensive use by HGVs, such as we are seeing in many parts of Buckinghamshire, most notably associated with construction works for HS2 and East West Rail.



We want:

- To encourage sustainable economic growth, working with our partners to maximise opportunities and boost productivity
- To continue to attract high quality jobs and investment in skills, innovation, and connectivity, keeping Buckinghamshire one of the best places to do business
- Growth to benefit both new and existing communities, preserving the character of our environment while delivering everything we need to prosper

Working with partners, we will:

- Provide a clear and consistent vision for Buckinghamshire through longer term strategic planning and a new Buckinghamshire Local Plan and Local Transport Plan
- Continue our commitment to working proactively and in partnership to deliver regeneration plans for Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Chesham and other town centres
- Optimise capital and revenue opportunities in our property estate to support the economy and other council services
- Enable residents to be successful in their chosen career by encouraging skills development providing inclusive opportunities for levelling up and lifelong learning
- Support the business community, especially SMEs, to grow and flourish including through promotion of high streets and Enterprise Zones

- Deliver at least £105m investment in Buckinghamshire's roads and pavements; including gully emptying and investing £2m in our drainage programme in 23/24 and in alignment with the rigorous, data driven approach set out in our highways asset management policy
- Continue to seek mitigations from the impact of HS2 and East West Rail on Buckinghamshire's residents, businesses by securing the necessary road repairs and reinstatements
- Continue to deliver the infrastructure that Buckinghamshire needs where possible ahead of planned growth, including improving connectivity, and strategic Transport links, increasing sustainability, attracting investment in the economic prosperity of the county and tackling congestion
- Promote Buckinghamshire, its locations and reputation as a film friendly county and maximise the economic and social benefits of location filming in Buckinghamshire

Our people

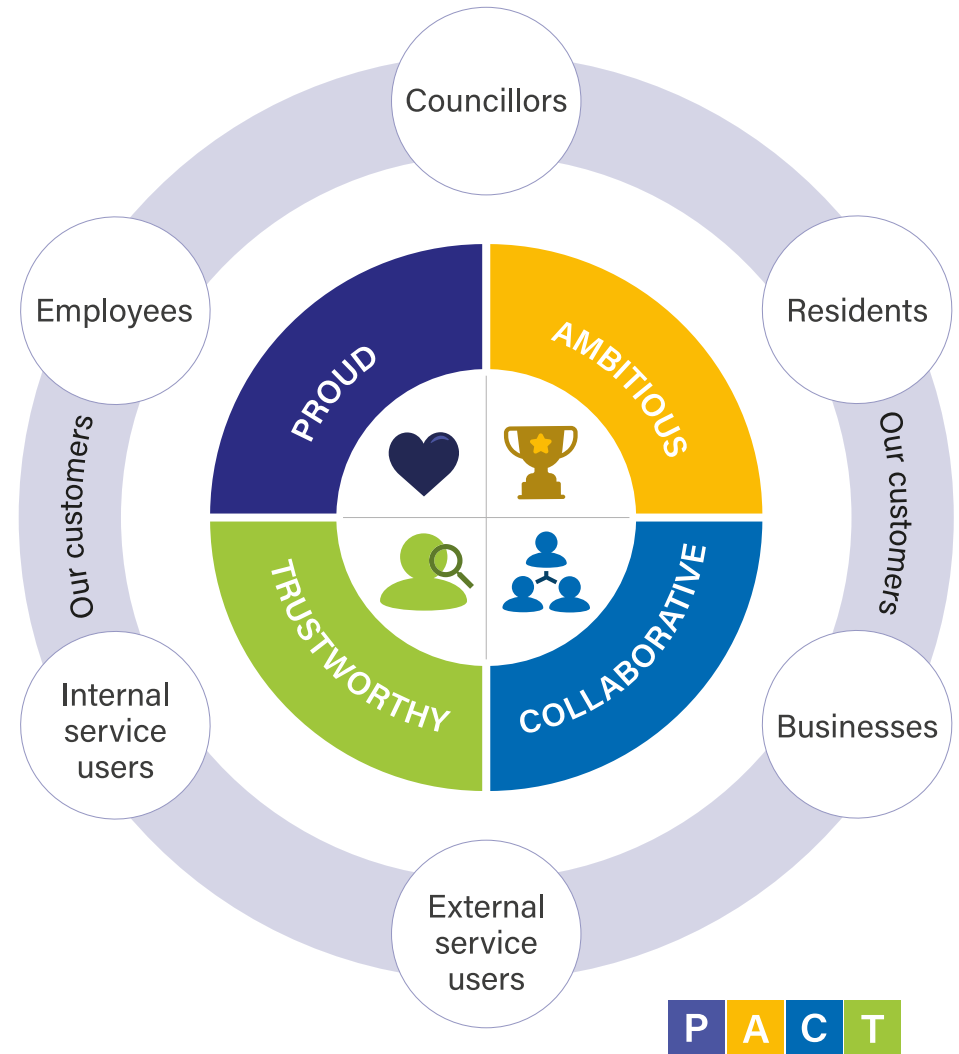
Everything we want to achieve for Buckinghamshire depends on having the right people in place and aligning our workforce changes with our overall approach to delivery of services. We have insourced the delivery of our key services and these changes have increased our headcount. However, we must also balance our budgets and as such have implemented vacancy control measures to ensure that before any post is filled that we challenge ourselves as to whether the work can be stopped or delivered in a different way.

To deliver the breadth of Council's services we must attract, retain and develop talented and motivated staff. By making the most of people's skills and experience, we can take full advantage of the opportunities created by the council. Everyone needs to be performing at their best to take the organisation on the the next stage of its journey.

To support this, Buckinghamshire Council works to a set of values which are: Proud, Ambitious, Collaborative, Trustworthy (PACT). These values underpin how we work and show our commitment – our PACT – to do our very best for our residents, service users and businesses. They are there to put customers at the heart of everything we do.

Similarly, we will work with our partners and external organisations to ensure that our values are upheld when they deliver services on our behalf.

We are a significant employer within Buckinghamshire and we want to provide opportunities for residents who might find it harder to gain employment. We have recently launched an employment scheme that offers supported roles within the Council, aimed at breaking down the barriers that prevent people from working. We are also working with local employers to expand this scheme into their businesses.



The financial challenge

The medium-term outlook for Buckinghamshire Council finances remains extremely challenging. Our 2024-25 to 2026-27 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan delivers a three-year balanced budget and demonstrates the financial sustainability of the Council at a time when a number of other local authorities are facing significant financial stress.

We will ensure that Buckinghamshire Council remains financially sound, efficient, and responsive to change. We will maintain robust financial planning, scrutinise budgets closely and be prudent in managing risks. We have already achieved significant savings over the last three years and will strive to achieve more but like all local authorities, we face challenging financial circumstances as more people turn to the Council for support, whilst the resources available to help them have not increased to match the demand.

We must be realistic and focus on greater efficiency and value for money and have developed an ambitious programme of savings planned for the forthcoming year.

Despite the financial challenges, we remain committed to investing in our communities and sustaining the vital services on which our most vulnerable residents rely. We will manage our assets to create long term benefits and additional income, reducing our dependency on the taxpayer and protecting front line services.

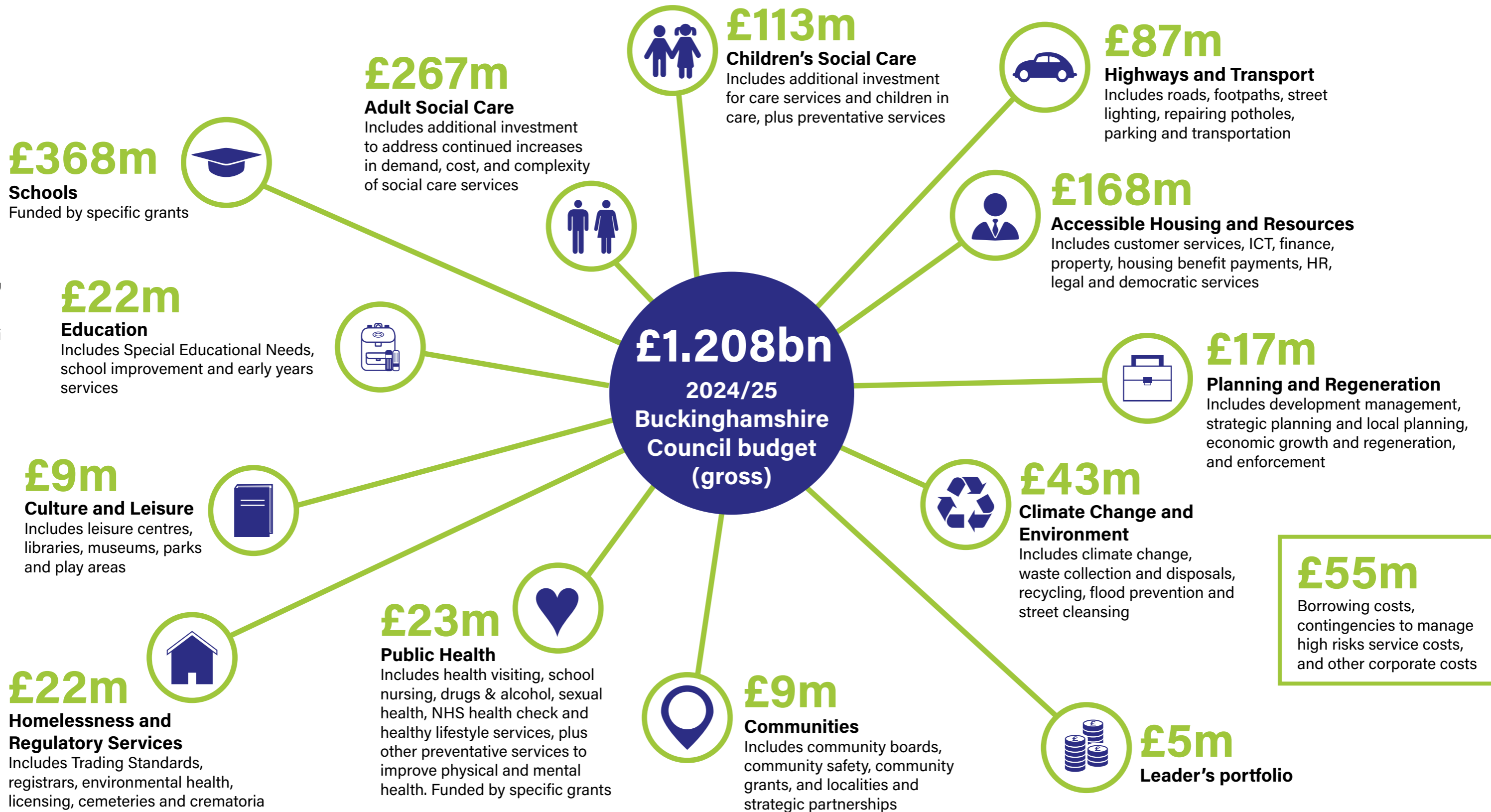


How we will spend the 2024/25 budget

£666.3m spending on providing or improving buildings, roads and other infrastructure (capital budget)

£371m for planning and regeneration
 £179.7m for education and children's services
 £152.9m for transport
 £179.8m for strategic transport and infrastructure
 £8.5m for culture and leisure

£26m for accessible housing and resources
 £28.3m for homelessness and regulatory services
 £48.7m for climate change and environment
 £4.3m for corporate
 £0.9m for communities



Your council, your way

Residents are at the very heart of what we do. There are lots of different ways for people to get involved, shaping the Council's knowledge, plans and policies and keeping up to date on news and views.

Councillors and committees

Being democratically accountable and having good governance is essential to any council. Buckinghamshire Council achieves this through rigorous scrutiny of its processes and decisions through a number of Committees, including its extensive Select Committee work.

In May 2023, the Boundary Commission for England concluded the Buckinghamshire Electoral Review and published its final recommendations. These were that with effect from May 2025 (the next Local Council Elections), the number of Councillors on Buckinghamshire Council will be 97 (50 fewer than currently). There will be 49 wards as currently, but these will be represented by a variable number of councillors rather than the current uniform three members per ward. There will be ten three-councillor wards, 28 two-councillor wards, and eleven single-councillor wards. A review of the existing Committee structure for the Council will be undertaken ahead of implementing these changes in May 2025.

Our website helps you find your local councillor and see which meetings are coming up and decisions that are being taken. To make sure the council is open and transparent, agendas and minutes of meetings are available online, with many meetings being webcast and in public.

Getting involved:

Community Boards

There are currently 16 Community Boards across the county that focus on bringing change and improvement to their local communities. They bring together councillors and local communities to engage with each other to decide how to help solve local issues, take local decisions, and influence local service design and delivery. This year will see a review of the boundaries of the 16 Boards to take account of the reduction in Members from May 2025; the review is likely to see a reduction in the number of Boards from the same date.

Neighbourhood plans

We continue to provide guidance to town and parish councils to support them to develop and deliver Neighbourhood Plans and produce regular local planning updates for local councils.

Our five local Planning Committees and Strategic Sites Committees continue to meet regularly.

Inform, consult, and involve

We believe engagement should be meaningful, timely, inclusive, and direct. We want local people to help shape any proposals that affect the services they use or the areas where they live and work. We want to hear the voices of those most affected. It is important to us that local people - including the young, community groups, businesses, partners, and staff - are involved, working together on developing and testing solutions and services. We are constantly looking to develop and improve on this.

Customer focused

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do, and we work hard to deliver excellent services to our residents. We understand the need to adapt to the changing digital landscape and ensure that our services are easy-to-access, efficient, and responsive to the needs of our customers. We offer multiple channels of communication, whether it be online, via telephone, or through in-person interactions at our Council Access Points.

We are enhancing our website content to make it more accessible and informative, with a focus on high demand services, such as Waste, Planning, School Admissions and Home to School Transport. We have also improved the way our customers can contact the Council online, ensuring that enquiries reach the right teams without delay.

We are planning to introduce a booking tool for appointments with professional officers for more complex service requests. We want those who need professional guidance or who are in vulnerable situations to be able to speak to the right person and get the assistance they need.

To support our customer focus, we have a Customer Experience Framework which we call 'Customer First.' This framework is based on three promises that we make to our customers about the experience they should expect:

1. Easy: We make it easy for you to get in touch with us and get what you need
2. Helpful: We aim to get things right first time and provide helpful solutions
3. Fair and honest: We are clear about what we can and can't offer, and the reasons why

As part of this framework, we regularly review our own services to assess how well we are delivering on our Customer First vision and ethos, and where we can make further improvements to enhance the customer experience.

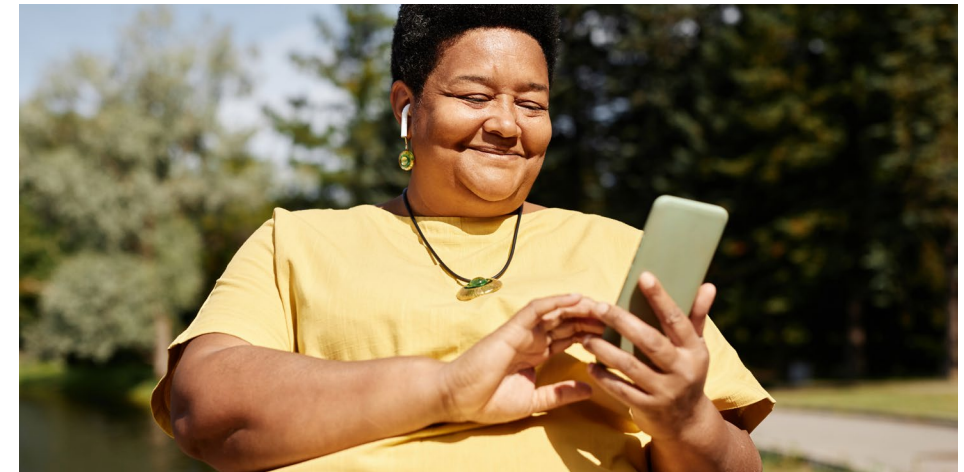
How to contact us:

- You can find most information about our services on our website
- Follow us on social media: @BucksCouncil
- Join our customer partnership panel and help us shape our services
- If you can't contact us online, call us on 0300 131 6000
- If you can't hear or speak on the phone we provide a text relay service: 18001 01296 395000

Our equalities commitment

Buckinghamshire Council is committed to equality of opportunity, fostering good relations, and eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

We recognise, respect, and celebrate the fact that our staff and the people we serve are diverse, whether this is our age, disability, ethnicity, family setting, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or belief. We will work with our partners to promote equality, celebrate diversity, improve social inclusion and mobility, and ensure fairness for everyone.



How to contact us

- Most information about our services can be found on this [website](#)
- To contact us about this plan, use our [online contact form](#)
- Follow us on social media: @BucksCouncil

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Appendix 1

Key Performance Indicators by Corporate Plan Priorities

We will use the following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor performance against our four Corporate Plan Priorities





Increasing prosperity

- £ value of unsecured debt > 90 days (excluding Business Rate, Housing Benefit and Council Tax, and not secured against a property or asset) across the Council.
- Gross income from property.
- Gross yield from investment portfolio.
- Number of businesses registered as primary authorities - provision of advice to large businesses (maintain and increase).
- Number of homes built against housing requirements.
- Number of new business registrations (rank against other Local Enterprise Partnerships).
- Number of valid planning appeals received.
- Overall revenue (forecast) variance (%) across the council.
- Percentage of building control applications checked within 21 days.
- Percentage of business rates collected.
- Percentage of completion of Highways Capital Schemes against agreed programme.
- Percentage of council tax collected.
- Percentage of empty properties across the Council Estate.
- Percentage of Highway Searches responded to within three days.
- Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days across the council.
- Percentage of major planning approvals determined in 13 weeks, or with agreed extension of time.
- Percentage of minor planning approvals determined in eight weeks, or with agreed extension of time.
- Percentage of other applications determined in eight weeks, or with agreed extension of time.
- Percentage of total capital spend across Buckinghamshire Council (forecast) compared to Budget (performance measure).
- Percentage unemployed in Buckinghamshire compared to the percentage unemployed nationally.
- Strategic Infrastructure projects: % profiled spend achieved.
- Town centre footfall.
- Town centre occupancy rate (%).
- Percentage of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability Notices issued within 12 weeks of planning permission being granted.
- Number of uncommitted s106 contributions that must be used within two years.



Strengthening our communities

- Amount of contributory funding secured for every £1 of council funds invested in a Community Board project.
- Average number of days to issue taxi vehicle licence and plate from valid application received.
- Engagement with Archives through social media and in-person visits.
- Hours contributed by Archive volunteers.
- Number of community engagement (resilience planning) activities.
- Number of downloads (e-audiobooks, e-magazines and e-news).
- Number of library information enquiries (signposting and referrals).
- Number of passengers travelling on subsidised bus services.
- Number of unrated premises which are awaiting an inspection and are trading.
- Number of visitors to Country Parks.
- Number of visitors to leisure centres and pools.
- Number of visits to main cultural venues.
- Voluntary staff turnover percentage (rolling 12-month period).
- Webchat service customer satisfaction.



Protecting the vulnerable

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- Average time for processing housing benefit change claims (days).
- Average time for processing new housing benefit claims (days).
- Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Annual Reviews – Percentage of children and young people with an EHCP who have had an annual review within the last 12 months.
- Percentage of pupils attending schools rated good and outstanding by Ofsted.
- Percentage of those who have set a quit smoking date who have successfully quit at four weeks.
- Financial impact on residents as a result of scams intervention (direct and future savings).
- Homelessness cases closed because homelessness has been prevented.
- Household Support Fund (Helping Hand): percentage of profiled spend achieved.
- Number of applicants with/expecting children who have been in non-self-contained B&B accommodation for longer than six weeks.
- Number of older people (aged 65+) admitted permanently to residential or nursing care.
- Number of younger people (aged 18-64) admitted permanently to residential or nursing care.
- On exit from/planned closure of IDVA support, percentage of victims/survivors who say that they have had at least two positive outcomes.
- Percentage of births that receive a face-to-face New Birth Visit within 14 days by a health visitor in the quarter.
- Percentage of children in need seen within four weeks.
- Percentage of children looked after visited within timescales.
- Percentage of children subject to a Child Protection Plan seen within four weeks.
- Percentage of children with Initial Child Protection Conferences completed within 15 working days of the strategy discussion.
- Percentage of children's social care assessments completed in 45 working days.
- Percentage of eligible clients who are provided with transport within agreed timeframe.
- Percentage of initial Family Support Plans completed within 31 working days.
- Percentage of new Education, Health and Care plans issued within 20 weeks (excluding exceptions).
- Percentage of re-referrals within 12 months.



Protecting the vulnerable

- Percentage of safeguarding enquiries where personal outcomes were fully or partially achieved.
- Percentage of service users due an annual review that receive their review.
- Percentage of successful alcohol treatment completions of those in treatment.
- Percentage of successful drug treatment completions of those in treatment.
- Percentage of young people whose Adult Social Care assessment was completed before they turned 18.
- Total homelessness approaches into service.
- Percentage of younger adults (aged 18-64) with a learning disability living in their own home or with friends/family.
- Percentage of 19-21-year-olds who have left care that are in education, employment or training.
- Percentage of eligible two-year-olds registered to receive funded early education entitlements.
- Number of carer assessments.
- Percentage of people that live independently after receiving re-ablement services.
- Percentage of service users with needs related to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) seen or assessed within two working days of first contacting the service.



Improving our environment

- Annual greenhouse gas emissions: tonnes.
- Average daily cycling count per active cycle counter per day.
- Missed bin collections.
- Number of fly-tipping clearances where an action has been taken.
- Number of trees planted.
- Number of publicly accessible electric-vehicle charging units in Buckinghamshire.
- Percentage of gullies cleaned against the cyclical gully programme.
- Percentage of waste collected for recycling, reuse, composting or anaerobic digestion from household sources.
- Residual household waste per household (kg).
- Percentage of Planning Enforcement Notice Appeals upheld.
- Highways Safety Inspections completed in line with the required programme.
- HS2 highways approvals: percentage responded within time limit.
- HS2 planning approvals: percentage responded to within time limit.
- NHT Public Satisfaction on the condition of road surfaces (HMBI 01).
- NHT Public Satisfaction with their local rights of way network (KBI 15).
- Percentage of Category 1 and 2H defects repaired in two and five working days respectively.
- Percentage of strategic carriageway network in fair/good and very good condition.
- Country and Town Park satisfaction ratings (Google).
- Number of visitors to Country Parks.
- Percentage of reported rights of way issues dealt with in target time.
- Percentage streetlights in light.

Value for money

- Average call wait time.
- Call customer satisfaction.
- Council Access Point Plus customer satisfaction.
- IT Service desk first time fix percentage (internal).
- Number of sickness absence days per FTE annually (rolling 12-month period) (internal).
- Percentage of customers rating the registration service as good or excellent. Percentage of invalid Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) (on and off street).
- Percentage of phone calls answered in the Customer Service Centres.
- Percentage of phone calls in Customer Service Centres resolved at first call (FCR).
- Percentage of staff who feel happy, valued and motivated at work.
- Website Accessibility (%) of Buckinghamshire Council website.

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Report to Council

Date:	17 April 2024
Reference number:	Not applicable
Title:	Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Mark Winn, Cabinet Member for Homelessness and Regulatory Services
Contact officer:	Lisa Michelson – Service Director
Ward(s) affected:	None specific
Recommendations:	It is recommended that Council note the responses to the consultation exercises and approves the adoption of the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029.
Reason for decision:	The housing strategy is a major place strategy for Buckinghamshire. It sets out the council's priorities for housing as they relate to delivering the council's statutory duties, increasing the level of affordable housing, and ensuring suitable housing conditions. It is the council's role as the housing authority to set the strategic direction for Buckinghamshire.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Development of the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy began in took place in Spring and Summer of 2023. A public and stakeholder consultation on the housing strategy was conducted between 8 November 2023 and 18 January 2024. Consultation exercises also included two all member briefings which took place on 6 November 2023 and discussions at the 14 December 2023 Growth Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee meeting. The Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy has also been presented to Buckinghamshire's Growth Board.

- 1.2 The responses to the consultation exercises have indicated that there is broad agreement of the vision, the three priorities, and the critical success factors.
- 1.3 Changes to the housing strategy arising from the consultation exercises (detailed in Appendix 2) have been incorporated in the final version which is Appendix 5 to this report.

2. The Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029

- 2.1 The Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy has been devised for the five-year period 2024 to 2029. The vision for the housing strategy is:

A strong housing offer that provides affordable, accessible, sustainable and suitable choices are all life stages.

- 2.2 The three strategic priorities for the housing strategy are:

- Priority One - Understanding the housing needs of our diverse population.
- Priority Two - Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need.
- Priority Three - New Homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate.

- 2.3 The Critical Success Factors for each of the priorities are:

- i) Understanding the housing needs of our diverse population – we will:

- Understand the housing issues and needs.
- Enable the fair, consistent and allocation of tenancies for affordable housing via Bucks Home Choice Register.
- Adopt an effective and proactive approach to address Temporary Accommodation (TA) and homelessness increases in number of placements and costs.
- Identify, specify, and deliver housing options for groups with particular needs.

- ii) Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need – we will:

- Ensure that Registered Providers are actively maintaining and improving the quality of their homes.
- Ensure that the Private Rented Sector maintains and improves the quality of rental properties.
- Work to ensure that best use is made of existing social housing.
- Improve the accessibility of new and existing homes.

- iii) New Homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate – we will:

- Support and enable Registered Providers to deliver new affordable homes, including for those with special needs.
- Explore the use of local authority assets and resources for the purposes of delivering additional new housing.
Ensure that residential development (including affordable housing) is considered in regeneration strategies, and in brownfield and redevelopment proposals for mixed use developments where appropriate.

2.4 A public and stakeholder consultation on the housing strategy took place between 8 November 2023 and 18 January 2024. The consultation was carried out via [YourVoiceBucks](#) and through the housing strategy consultation.

2.5 Responses to the public consultation consisted of the following:

- 161 respondents, of whom 135 were individuals and 26 were responding on behalf of an organisation,
- 69% of respondents were aged 55 or over, while less than 9% were aged 35 or under,
- 73% of the respondents were owner-occupiers, with the majority being members of households who own their homes outright. 6% rented privately and 4% rented from a social landlord,
- 40% of individual respondents were retired and 46% work either full-time or part-time,
- Most individual respondents were White British (although this question had a poor response rate, with a quarter choosing not to answer),
- The number of respondents was too low to enable a breakdown of views by any demographic or geographic categories.

2.6 There was a high rate of approval for the three priorities in the housing strategy.

2.7 In reviewing the responses, a number of themes emerged:

- i) There is a need to prioritise affordable housing delivery in Buckinghamshire. How can more affordable homes be achieved?
- ii) Alongside new house building there is a need to ensure other priority infrastructure is developed such as transport, schools, health services and roads,
- iii) For Priority 3, *New homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate*, there were a number of comments raising climate change issues associated with construction and population growth.

- iv) There are concerns about the need to protect green space from residential development,
- v) The emphasis on the quality of new homes with regard to construction standards, design, and energy efficiency is important.
- vi) The strategy needs to be clear about housing for priority vulnerable groups such as older people and care leavers etc.

2.8 In addition, there were three notable suggestions for policy change in the strategy, which were raised in the consultation:

- i) *A specific Buckinghamshire affordable housing definition should be devised.*

Our response: This was considered but is not recommended.

The National Planning Policy Framework definition of Affordable Housing is a nationally accepted and recognised definition produced by the Government. To adopt a Buckinghamshire specific one would leave Buckinghamshire Council vulnerable to legal challenge. Developers and other parties may use a local definition as a means to brand certain housing delivery models as 'affordable' which do not meet the local needs in Buckinghamshire.

- ii) *Buckinghamshire Council should create its own housing development company to develop affordable housing in Buckinghamshire.*

Our response: The creation of a new housing development company would represent a reversal of legacy decision-making that stretches back many years and would require a substantial level of capital investment and associated risk. To understand this option, legal advice has been commissioned and will be available in the Spring 2024. A review of this advice and further discussion of this option will take place at this time. In the meanwhile, the strategy does not preclude the council pursuing the option of creating its own housing development company if that was a decision taken at some point in the future.

- iii) *The target for delivery of 500 new affordable homes per year is not ambitious enough.*

Our response: The housing market in Buckinghamshire is challenging, and delivery of affordable housing is difficult given financial constraints and other new requirements for quality of new housing build. The council works with Registered Providers and other developers to push affordable housing delivery volumes as high as possible. While a target of 500 new affordable homes per year is not sufficient to meet all the expected affordable housing needs in Buckinghamshire, this target has been reviewed through engagement with Registered Providers in the county and is assessed as

achievable. However, the target will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated if appropriate.

3. Other options considered

3.1 **Not to produce a Housing Strategy for Buckinghamshire** – This is not recommended. The strategy supports the council’s role as setting the strategic direction for housing. The strategy also enables clarity and coordination between the council and delivery partners.

4. Legal and financial implications

4.1 Although there is no legal obligation upon local authorities to produce a housing strategy, it is relevant to the following legislation:

- Housing Act 1996 – legal obligations for the allocation of social housing and assisting households who are potentially or have become homeless.
- Homelessness Act 2002 – a legal obligation to produce a Homelessness and Rough Sleeping review and strategy.
- Housing Act 2004 – improvement of private sector housing conditions.
- Localism Act 2011 – a legal obligation to produce a Tenancy Strategy.
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 – a legal obligation upon local authorities to prevent or relief homelessness.

4.2 Many of the actions within the Housing Strategy will be delivered within the council’s existing MTFP budgets for Housing. These are:

Expenditure Budgets £k	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Revenue Budget	11,244	10,357	10,357	
Capital Programme Budget	10,824	5,596	5,596	4,066

4.3 The exceptions to this are where affordable housing is delivered by Developers (through s.106 planning requirements) and where Registered Providers are leading on the delivery of affordable housing using their own funding sources.

4.4 A full list of actions with their funding sources is included in Appendix 3.

4a Director of Legal & Democratic Services Comment

The Director has read and noted the report.

4b Section 151 Officer Comment

The Housing Strategy will be delivered within existing MTFP budgets, through the Planning regime, and through partnership working with Registered Providers.

5. Corporate implications

- iv) Property – The housing strategy includes broad content and recommended actions relating the potential use of council-owned property and assets to support the delivery of affordable housing. Any decisions on assets are not included in the strategy and would be subject to business case development and other governance.
- v) Human Resources – The housing strategy is a strategic document for use with stakeholders and partners, any involvement on this strategy for officers/teams are part of normal business as usual.
- vi) Climate change –The housing strategy sets out priorities for good quality and energy efficient new homes and improving conditions of existing housing stock. The strategy also sets out council expectations which will influence new house building requirements in the local plan and other key council strategies such as the Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021.
- vii) Sustainability – The housing strategy sets out priorities for good quality and energy efficient new homes and improving conditions of existing housing stock. The strategy also sets out council expectations which will influence new house building requirements in the local plan and other key council strategies such as the Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021.
- viii) Equality – An Equality Assessment has been produced.
- ix) Data – The housing strategy utilises publicly available data.
- x) Value for money – Individual projects, resulting from the strategy, will be considered for ‘value for money’ on a case by case basis e.g. through the development of a business case.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 Two All-Member briefings took place on Monday 6 November 2023 and were well-attended by local members. The Housing Strategy was considered at the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee on the 14th of December 2023. Written feedback has been provided to all questions which were posed at these meetings.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 The draft Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029 has been drawn up from engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and partners. Initially a series of workshops were held in the Autumn of 2022 to explore the priorities and the actions which should be included. This report contains details of the additional consultation exercises which have taken place between 8 November 2023 and 18 January 2024.
- 7.2 In addition, a wide range of sources have been used to provide information on housing need and condition in Buckinghamshire, including the Census 2021, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) data, Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, and Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) information on earnings.

8. Background papers

- 8.1 Appendix One: Information on the internal teams and external partner organisations who were consulted and the methods by which they were consulted.
- 8.2 Appendix Two: Buckinghamshire Council Housing Strategy Actions 2024-2029 – cost implications
- 8.3 Appendix Three: Analysis of the Consultation results
- 8.4 Appendix Four: The Updated Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029, reflecting the findings of the consultation exercises.

9. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 9.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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Appendix One: Information on the internal teams and external partner organisations who were consulted and the methods by which they were consulted.

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Communication method
Councillors	All-Member Briefing 6 November 2023
Special Needs Accommodation Group	Presentation at meeting, 6 November 2023
Housing JSNA Working Group	Presentation at meeting, 28 November 2023
Regeneration	Email
Environmental Health	Email
Adult Care Services	Email
Children's Services	Email
Public Health	Email
Planning Policy	Email
Community Safety Team	Email
Anti-Social Behaviour Team	Email

External Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Communication method
Growth Board	Email consultation as part of the stakeholder consultation exercise. A report was presented to Growth Board at its meeting in March 2024.
Health and Wellbeing Board	The Housing Strategy was presented as part of an item on updates from the Specialist Accommodation Group.
Members of Housing Development Forum	Email
Members of Housing Management Forum	Email
Parish Councils	Email/Corporate update
Town Councils	Email/ Corporate update

Community Boards	Email/Corporate update
Temporary Housing provision for Winter Warmth	Email
Connections Support	Email
Aylesbury Homeless Action Group	Email
Wycombe Homeless Connection	Email
Wycombe Rent Deposit Scheme	Email
Oasis	Email
Supported Housing YMCA.	Email
Health Watch Bucks	Email
Community Impact Bucks	Email
Opportunity Bucks	Email

Appendix Two: Buckinghamshire Council Housing Strategy Actions 2024-2029 – cost implications

Please note: Buckinghamshire Council may contribute Section 106 commuted sums as capital contributions to affordable housing projects. However, the amount available in this budget is continuously monitored and there will be no overspend. Under the new Affordable Housing Enabling Framework, capital contributions to affordable housing projects will be allocated through an Affordable Housing Investment Group consisting of a senior officer within the council and two councillors. The funding will be available to registered providers only. Funding will be allocated to a registered provider only if a project meets a prescribed set of eligibility criteria. No additional funding will be available to supplement the original sum which was agreed.

Actions for Priority one – Responding to the needs of our Diverse Population

Action	Cost Implications
We are managing the social housing allocations process through Bucks Home Choice.	Costs are met through existing budgets.
We are providing a homelessness and housing advice service under Part VII of the Housing Act.	Costs are met through existing budgets
We are providing temporary accommodation to homeless households.	Costs are met through existing budgets. A plan to increase the amount of lower cost high quality temporary accommodation is in place. Registered housing providers may contribute resources to provide temporary accommodation.
We are producing an updated Allocations Policy for Buckinghamshire. This will ensure robust processes are in place for delivery of the Bucks Home Choice scheme and allocations process, including clear workflows and regular monitoring and cross checking of applications to ensure consistency of approach and fairness.	Costs are met through existing budgets.
We are meeting with Registered Providers on a regular basis and as part of the Buckinghamshire Housing Management Forum.	Costs are met through existing budgets.
We are working with Registered Partners and private developers to deliver suitable adapted/adaptable dwellings through planning obligations and other opportunities	Costs are met through existing budgets.
We will produce a new Tenancy Strategy including guidelines for registered providers on Affordable Rent levels.	This will be delivered through by the Housing Strategy and Development Team. The Tenancy Strategy is a statement of partnership working with

<u>Action</u>	<u>Cost Implications</u>
	registered providers and will not incur any additional costs for the local authority.
We will develop a Supported Housing Strategy which will include prospective housing delivery for older persons, persons with physical disabilities, and other types of supported housing.	Costs are met through existing budgets.
We will achieve the targets for developing affordable housing options as set out in the <i>Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022</i> .	The capital costs of developing new affordable housing options will be assessed and agreed through developed business cases on a case by case basis. The funding for projects is most likely to be met through developer contributions, Affordable Housing Grant from the government, and registered provider resources (including rental income, reserves and borrowing). The local authority may decide to contribute resources from held Section 106 commuted sum planning contributions in some case.
We will work with Registered Providers and other housing developers to understand the role played by sheltered housing and other accommodation for older people in the area and whether some housing schemes should be remodelled to better meet current needs. Consider innovative new options for specialist housing (for example: extra-care villages with a dementia inclusive design).	The capital costs of developing new affordable housing options will be assessed and agreed through developed business cases on a case by case basis. The funding for projects is most likely to be met through developer contributions, Affordable Housing Grant from the government, and registered provider resources (including rental income, reserves and borrowing). The local authority may decide to contribute resources from held Section 106 commuted sum planning contributions in some case.
With our partners, we will produce a housing options guide for younger people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); ensure appropriate advice and signposting is available to make good choices	The cost of this project will be met through existing staffing budgets and any corporate funds for the production of new corporate publications.
We will explore ways of increasing the number of one bed properties available in the private and social rented sectors which would be suitable for young people, including care leavers under the agreed Pathways Protocol.	Costs are met through existing budgets. Work associated with the development of the Local Plan will have an important impact in achieving this.

Actions for Priority two – Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Cost Implications</u>
We are supporting the Buckinghamshire Council Energy Doctor scheme (funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund).	Costs are met through existing budgets
We are supporting sustainable warmth upgrade grant programmes, such as. Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2), Solar Together, which are being carried out by Buckinghamshire Council.	Costs are met through existing external funding.
Through our work with houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), we are delivering increased levels of safe and secure accommodation for single people	Costs are met through existing budgets.
The Buckinghamshire Disabilities Facilities Grants and Housing Improvement and Adaptations Policy is being updated to ensure that it continues to achieve the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and promote the physical and mental health of residents. • Prevent accidents. • Enable residents to live safely at home, as independently as possible, for longer. • Reduce hospital admissions and enable speedy discharge from hospital. • Make best use of adapted and adaptable accommodation. 	Costs are met through existing budgets and existing external DFG funding (including in Capital Programme).
We will work with Registered Providers and other care/support agencies to agree best ways to tackle under-occupation, including incentives where appropriate in order to generate more turnover in family-sized accommodation	Costs will be met by existing budgets.

Actions for Priority three – New Homes: affordable, accessible, and appropriate.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Cost Implications</u>
We are working with Registered Providers to facilitate delivery of new schemes, helping to identify sites and secure funding as appropriate.	The capital costs of developing new affordable housing options will assets and agreed through developed business cases on a case by case

<u>Action</u>	<u>Cost Implications</u>
	basis. The funding for projects is most likely to be met through developer contributions, Affordable Housing Grant from the government, and registered provider resources (including rental income, reserves and borrowing). The local authority may decide to contribute resources from held Section 106 commuted sum planning contributions in some case. These are budgeted for in the Capital Programme, currently unreleased pending Cabinet approval.
We are supporting Registered Providers with funding for garage-site developments.	The capital costs of developing new affordable housing options will assets and agreed through developed business cases on a case by case basis. The funding for projects is most likely to be met through developer contributions, Affordable Housing Grant from the government, and registered provider resources (including rental income, reserves and borrowing). The local authority may decide to contribute resources from held Section 106 commuted sum planning contributions in some case. These are budgeted for in the Capital Programme, currently unreleased pending Cabinet approval.
We are ensuring that housing (including affordable housing) is included in regeneration plans by the Council and partners	Costs of met through existing budgets. Government Affordable Housing Grant can now be used as funding for regeneration schemes.
We will work proactively to ensure that the planning process accelerates delivery of affordable housing applications in acceptable locations	Costs will be met through existing budgets.
We will explore opportunities for 'build to rent' schemes, including the use of institutional investment.	Costs will met through existing budgets.
We will explore opportunities for the Council to deliver more housing utilising its land, property and financial assets, including any potential role for Consilio, the council's property company. (Consilio was set up by South Bucks Council in 2017 as a wholly owned local authority trading company to allow the council to facilitate income generation. It has now transferred to Buckinghamshire Council. It owns a limited number of property assets).	Direct delivery of affordable housing by Buckinghamshire Council is an option which is currently being explored. A comprehensive assessment of the financial implications of this option is being made.
We will identify three council-owned sites to bring forward for new development and complete these developments by 2027. Three new developments completed and let by December 2027	The Property Services Team will oversee the disposal of council-owned sites to achieve best value. The capital receipts from these schemes are included in the MTFP (capital programme funding), and the target makes allowance for the sites being disposed of for affordable housing. The cost of developing these schemes for the market will be offset against the capital receipt.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Cost Implications</u>
We will agree priorities for capital funding (including commuted sums) and implement a list of priorities for section 106 monies to be developed	A new Affordable Housing Enabling Framework is under development and will set out the priorities for capital funding and the process by which registered providers might apply for this funding.

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Housing Strategy Consultation Analysis

First look at results, analysis ongoing

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Prepared by Sue Hinks, Analyst,
Business Intelligence and Community Support

26th January 2024



Appendix 3

Housing Strategy Consultation Analysis

Introduction

- This will be Buckinghamshire's first countywide Housing Strategy and it shows what Buckinghamshire Council will do to ensure everyone has a suitable, secure and affordable place to live.

The Buckinghamshire draft Housing Strategy sets out

- the housing challenges and opportunities in Buckinghamshire
- our approach to tackling housing needs
- how we will work together with all the partners involved in delivering housing in Buckinghamshire

The strategy includes three equally important draft priorities:

- responding to the needs of our diverse population
- better homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need
- new homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate

Each priority includes:

- what we will do to achieve it
- the challenges Buckinghamshire faces
- actions we are doing now
- proposed actions for up to 2029

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- The Housing Strategy consultation was open between 8th November 2023 and 18th January 2024, seeking views from residents and stakeholders across Buckinghamshire. The original closing date was planned for 15th December 2023, but was extended in the interests of increasing the number of responses.
- There were **161** responses to the consultation, **135** responses were from individuals expressing their own views, **26** were responses expressing the views of an organisation.
- The following slides summarise the results from the main questions around the priorities and actions, together with a summary of the respondent demographics. Analysis will continue over the next two weeks, specifically looking at the free text comments.
- Although extending the closing date increased the number of respondents, unfortunately the number of respondents is still too low to enable the breakdown of views by any demographic or geographical categories.

Housing Strategy Consultation Summary

Response summary

Priority 1: Responding to the needs of our diverse population



73% agree with this priority



47% think these are the right actions to achieve this priority

Priority 2: Better homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need



79% agree with this priority



55% think these are the right actions to achieve this priority

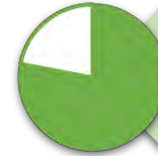
Priority 3: New homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate



66% agree with this priority



48% think these are the right actions to achieve this priority



78% of respondents said the Housing Strategy was 'easy' or 'somewhat easy' to read

Each priority has a free text field where respondents are able to explain the reason for their answers.

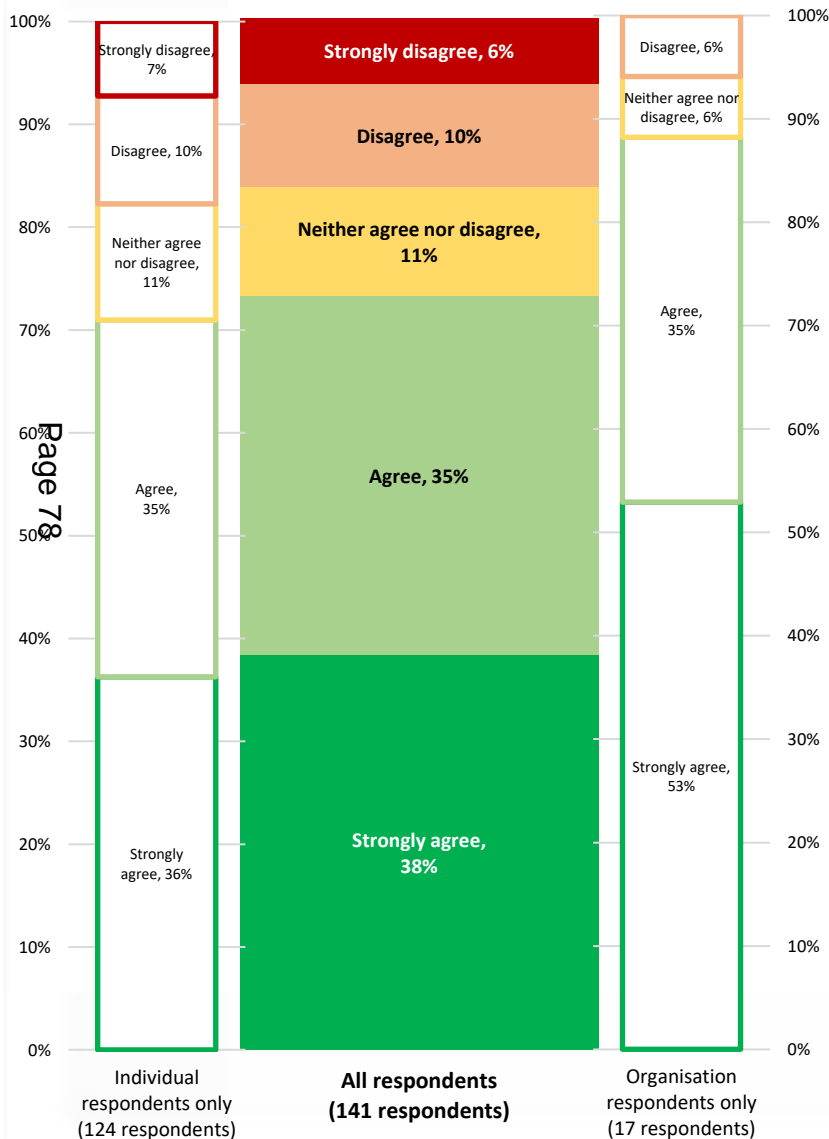
145 respondents made additional comments. There are 458 individual free text comments relating to the priorities and actions and 44 comments relating to the ease of understanding.

These are currently being reviewed and will be summarized in the final analysis.

Priority 1: Responding to the needs of our diverse population

Do you agree or disagree that 'responding to the needs of our diverse population' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029?

(141 respondents / 88% response rate)



73% of all respondents agree with the priority 'responding to the needs of our diverse population' (103 respondents)

88% of respondents representing an organisation agree with this priority (15 respondents)

Do you think these are the right actions to achieve this priority?

(142 respondents / 88% response rate)

47% of respondents think these are the right actions to achieve the priority (67/142)

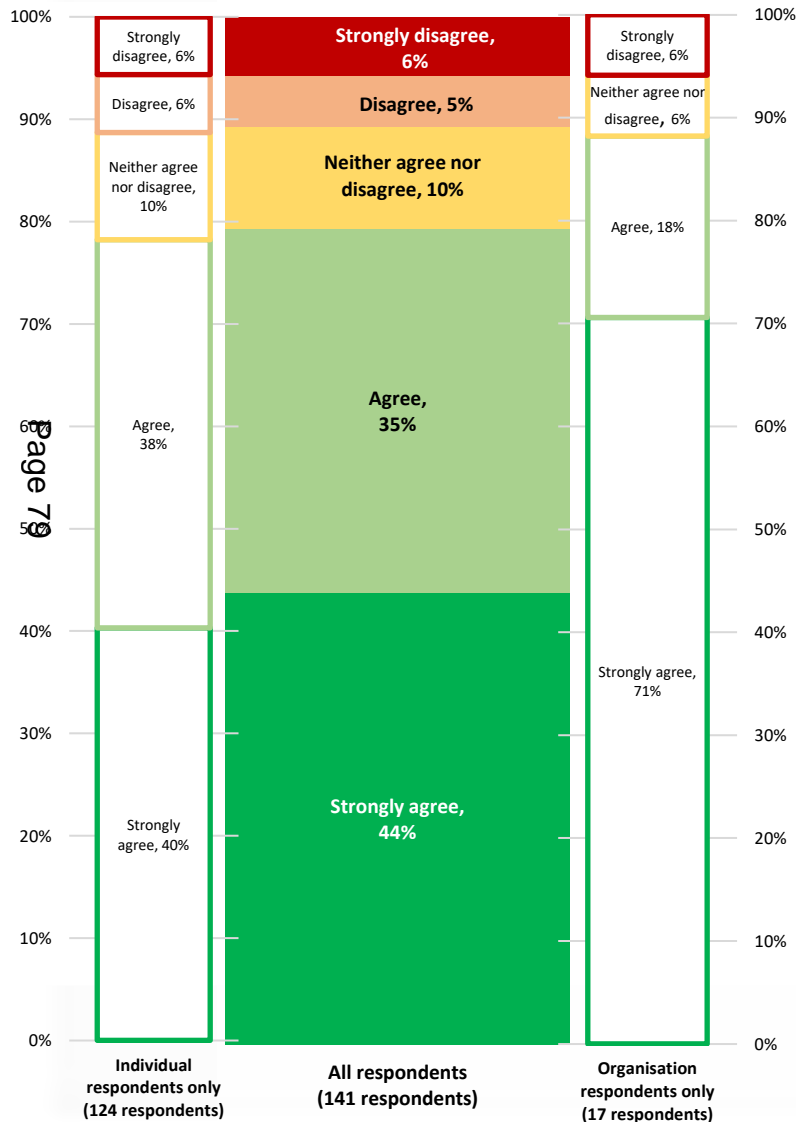
44% of individual respondents (55/125 responses)

71% of respondents on behalf of organisations (12/17 responses)

Priority 2: Better homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need

Do you agree or disagree that 'better homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029?

(141 responses / 88% response rate)



79% of all respondents agree with the priority 'responding to the needs of our diverse population' (112 respondents)

88% of respondents representing an organisation agree with this priority (15 respondents)

Do you think these are the right actions to achieve this priority?

(140 respondents / 87% response rate)

55% of respondents think these are the right actions to achieve the priority (77/140)

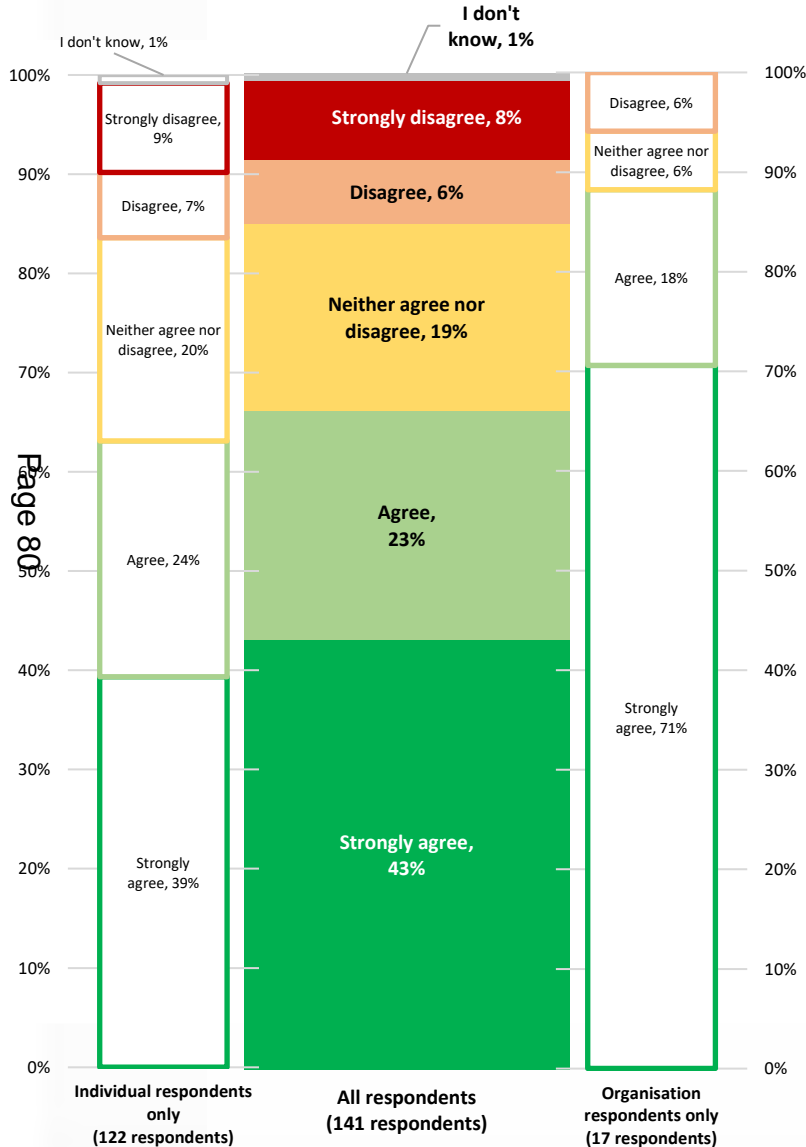
54% of individual respondents (67/123 responses)

59% of respondents on behalf of organisations (10/17 responses)

Priority 3: New homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate

Do you agree or disagree that 'New homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate' should be a priority for the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029?

(139 respondents / 86% response rate)



66% of all respondents agree with the priority 'responding to the needs of our diverse population' (92 respondents)

88% of respondents representing an organisation agree with this priority (15 respondents)

Do you think these are the right actions to achieve this priority?
(137 respondents / 85% response rate)

48% of respondents think these are the right actions to achieve the priority (66/137)

46% of individual respondents (55/120 responses)

65% of respondents on behalf of organisations (11/17 responses)

Housing Strategy Consultation Summary

Respondent demographic summary

Respondents to the Housing Strategy consultation are predominantly of white ethnicity from older age groups. The majority are home-owners with a high proportion of retired people; the most common household type is couples living together. Geographically, there is representation (in small numbers) from all community boards, but the distribution is not proportionate to the population of the county. There are not enough responses to use any of these categories to understand the views of different groups.



69% of respondents aged 55 years and over
Less than **9%** of respondents are under 35 years



White ethnic groups are over-represented.
Asian and black ethnic groups are under-represented in the respondent group

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73% of respondents are home-owners
6% rent privately, **4%** rent from a housing association



21% of respondents have a long-term health condition; **13%** have a disability; **5%** have an impairment.
77% have no disability



69% of respondents live with their partner; **20%** of those also have children or parents living with them.
17% live alone.



40% of respondents are retired.
46% work either full or part time



Respondents are unevenly distributed, geographically.
For example:
High Wycombe is under-represented, Amersham over-represented

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HOUSING STRATEGY 2024 - 2029



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1. Background for the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy

2. The County of Buckinghamshire

3. Council Policy Context

4. Buckinghamshire Council's Housing Offer

5. The Housing Strategy Priorities

6. Delivery

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Appendix Two: Affordable Housing Types, Funding Mechanisms and Delivery

Appendix Three: Glossary

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FOREWORD



Having a home that is safe and secure has major benefits for quality of life. It brings positive outcomes in terms of public health and economic prosperity, and it strengthens our communities. It fits with the corporate objective of Buckinghamshire Council to ensure that the county is the best place to live.

To ensure we fulfil that commitment, we must address the challenges that we face in Buckinghamshire which are highlighted in this strategy, including key issues such as an ageing population and a housing market in which increasing numbers of residents struggle to find an affordable home. To bring about change we need to develop our understanding of the issues our residents face and how we respond to them.

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Therefore, as our population continues to grow, we need a strong housing strategy which identifies not just the issues but solutions and opportunities. We need to face our emerging challenges, so the council and all partners need to take a proactive approach in stimulating the right kind of investment in housing solutions, to create good quality homes and to enhance the vital role housing plays in place shaping.

The Housing Strategy sets out clear priorities for Buckinghamshire which are to enable a strong housing offer that provides affordable, accessible, sustainable, and suitable choices at all life stages. We must work collaboratively and flexibly to adapt to new opportunities and challenges.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in the preparation and consultation for this strategy. All the views of our residents and key partners have proved invaluable. This strategy sets out a framework for the issues we need to tackle and how we aim to do so, and how by taking a partnership approach we can make a real difference to lives in Buckinghamshire.

Mark Winn

Cabinet Member for Homelessness and Regulatory Services



Kite Meadows, Buckinghamshire

OUR VISION IS:

A strong housing offer that provides affordable, accessible, sustainable and suitable choices for all life stages.

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Images on front cover:

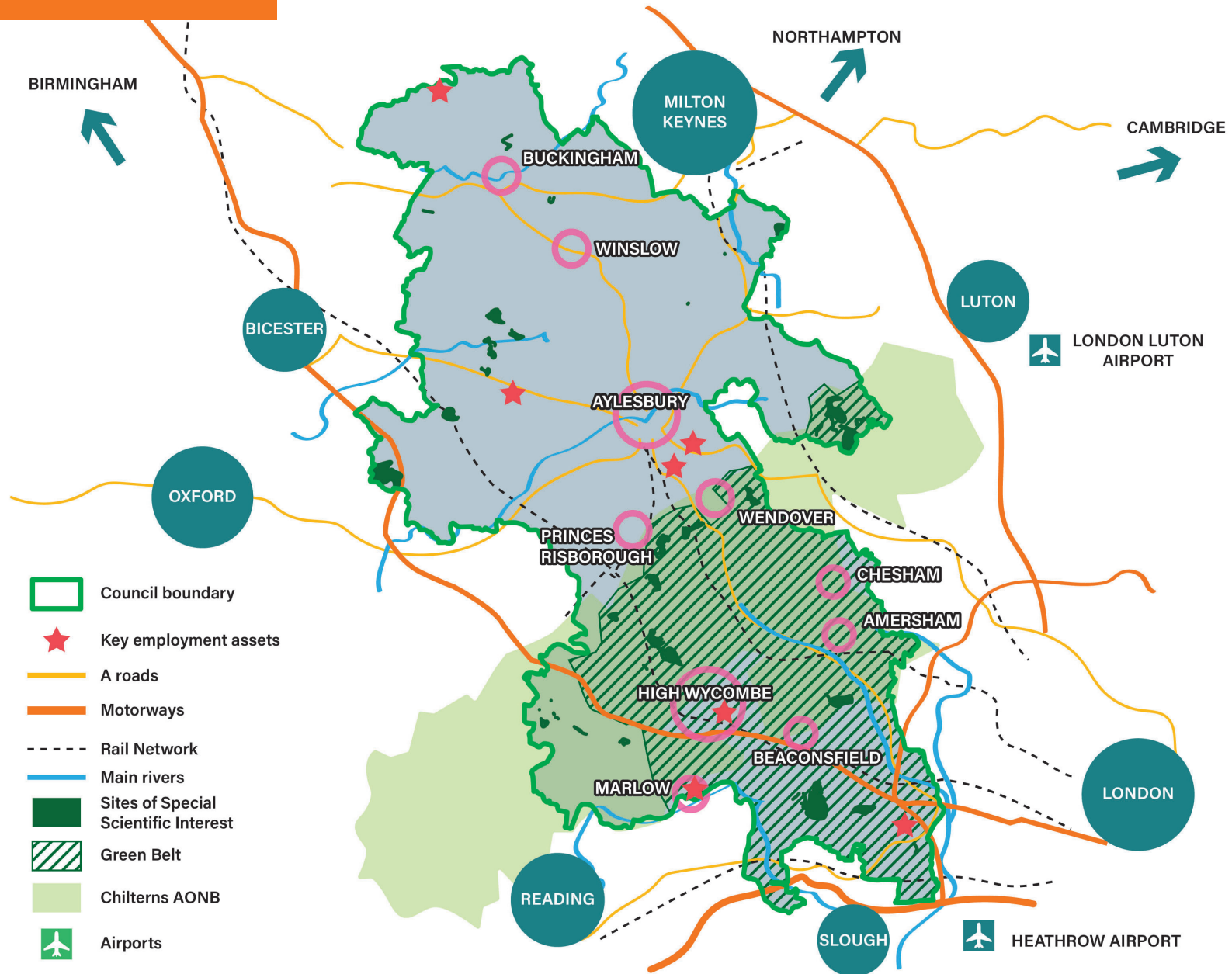
Top right - Queensmead Road, High Wycombe

Bottom right - Aerial view of Aylesbury



Aerial view of High Wycombe

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE



THIS IS THE FIRST COUNTYWIDE HOUSING STRATEGY FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

The strategy has been developed with the input and support of a wide range of partners and will be delivered through continuing partnership working.

Buckinghamshire Council has clear corporate priorities: to strengthen our communities, protect the vulnerable, improve the environment, and increase prosperity. Housing is vital to delivering these. A secure and affordable place to live provides a foundation for our ability to take part in society – to work, to learn, to be healthy and to develop a sense of community. The strategy sets out how all the partners involved in delivering housing in Buckinghamshire will work together to ensure that the housing offer delivers the housing our residents need.

This Housing Strategy is a vital step to delivering those commitments. It sets out in one place the housing challenges and opportunities and how we are all responding to these.

The Housing Strategy has been developed through the following:

- a) Building on the work to produce the Buckinghamshire Affordable Housing Position Statement which was adopted in May 2022.
- b) Consultation with stakeholder organisations including representatives of statutory organisations and voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire.
- c) Key Housing data:
 - i) An overview of Buckinghamshire, including the results of the Census 2021 and the indices of multiple deprivation 2019.
 - ii) Housing demand, including homeless statistics, housing register and allocations data, and research into housing needs among special needs groups in Buckinghamshire.
 - iii) Housing conditions, including information from Registered Providers on stock condition and government data on Energy Performance Certificates and fuel poverty.
 - iv) Housing affordability, including earnings data and house price/rental data.
- d) Public and stakeholder consultation.



I. BACKGROUND FOR THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY

- 1.1. Producing a comprehensive strategy with our partners provides the opportunity to set out our approach to tackling housing needs and to continue to build on Buckinghamshire's reputation as a great place to live and work. The delivery of a housing strategy will improve quality of life, help more people benefit from the opportunities our county has to offer, and contribute towards the achievement of Buckinghamshire Council's corporate objectives.
- 1.2. Buckinghamshire Council has a statutory duty (required by law) to provide certain services: these include managing a housing register, assisting households under homelessness legislation, providing an adaptations service for disabled persons, and compiling data on affordable housing need and supply. The council also undertakes a supporting and enabling role: this includes supporting our Registered Provider partners to develop new affordable homes and to improve their existing homes.
- 1.3. Buckinghamshire Council is not a Registered Provider and does not own or directly manage affordable housing stock. All four of the legacy district councils transferred their housing stock to Registered Providers between 1988 and 2011. Therefore, Buckinghamshire Council plays a role in enabling new affordable housing development and ensuring that Registered Providers and private landlords provide affordable and well maintained housing stock.
- 1.4. The role of the housing strategy is to:
 - I) Ensure a co-ordinated approach for the council and key partners to the housing offer in Buckinghamshire.
 - II) Provide a framework for identifying and agreeing key priorities across the council and partners in order to facilitate delivery and/or allocation of resources.
 - III) Promote the role of housing in delivering wider priorities and objectives including improved health and wellbeing, tackling homelessness, and supporting sustainable economic growth.
 - IV) Ensure that Buckinghamshire Council meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation.



1.5. Our Partners and Stakeholders

Organisation:

Tenants' and Residents' associations,
Community Boards, other organisations

Registered Providers who own and/or manage
affordable housing in Buckinghamshire.

Statutory organisations monitor Buckinghamshire
Council's performance in facilitating the delivery of
affordable housing and housing-related services.

Voluntary organisations:
Citizens Advice Bucks, Helping Hands, Bucks
Mind, Crisis, Aylesbury Homeless Action Group,
Wycombe Homeless Connection, Connections
Support.

Role:

- The organisations who represent the residents of Buckinghamshire and provide comments and feedback on proposals.

- Registered Providers develop the supply of new affordable housing in Buckinghamshire. They are also members of the Buckinghamshire Housing Development Board and the Buckinghamshire Housing Management Forum.

- To monitor Buckinghamshire's performance in facilitating the delivery of affordable housing and housing-related support services.

- The organisations who work in partnership with the housing teams to support the delivery of specialist services for households with particular needs.

2. THE COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

2.1. Buckinghamshire is a richly diverse, enterprising, and attractive county located in the heart of a growing and innovative region. Boundaries stretch from Greater London in the south to the East Midlands in the north, from Oxfordshire in the west across to Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire in the east. With a population of over half a million people, the county is one of the traditional Home Counties, bringing with it great connections into central London and ready access to international gateways at Heathrow and London Luton Airports. From quintessential rural villages and a backdrop of beautiful countryside to urban based living in our network of diverse towns, Buckinghamshire is a sought-after location.

2.2. Buckinghamshire is a beautiful place to live and work, famous for its natural environment and its quality of life. As a place to raise a family, we benefit from top-performing schools, family friendly communities, and a variety of accessible cultural attractions on our doorstep. Residents of Buckinghamshire enjoy active healthy lifestyles with health and wellbeing better than the English average.

2.3. We are a thriving county, but like many other places within the UK, this creates challenges for people looking for housing. Buckinghamshire has house prices and rents which are higher than the English average. In March 2023, the average house price in the market overall was £420,500 and the average cost of a home within the cheapest 25 per cent of the housing market was £320,000. The average income for an individual in the county is £37,300.

2.4. 50 per cent of Buckinghamshire is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Special Area of Conservation or Green Belt. In all these areas, housing development is restricted.

2.5. Parts of our county are fast-changing demographically, economically and environmentally. It is important that new homes are provided in well-connected sustainable locations. We must ensure that our future housing need is met through

a greater proportion of accessible, adaptable, low-carbon and digitally enabled homes, including a range of tenures, in the right locations. This will be set out in the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire.

- 2.6. The Census 2021 has shown the following population and economic trends in the county over the 2011 to 2021 period:
- The population of Buckinghamshire grew from 505,283 in 2011 to 553,078 in 2021, a 10% increase.
 - The number of households in Buckinghamshire grew from 200,727 in 2011 to 220,329 in 2021, a 10% increase.
 - The number of homes in Buckinghamshire grew from 208,334 in 2011 to 226,612 (including empty homes) in 2021, a 9% increase.
 - The number of residents aged 50 and over has increased from 36% of the population in 2011 to 39% of the population in 2021.
 - The most frequent types of household in Buckinghamshire are a single household headed by a couple who have dependent children at 20%, a household consisting of a single person aged under 66 at 14%, and a household consisting of a single person aged 66 and over at 12%.
 - Managers, directors, senior officials and those in professional occupations made up 41% of the economically active population in 2021, an increase from 35% in 2011. However, 25% of the economically active population were employed in the lower paid sectors of care, leisure, sales and customer services, machine operatives and unskilled occupations.

The population of Buckinghamshire has become substantially more ethnically diverse between 2011 and 2021 with the percentage of 'white British' decreasing from 81.1% to 72.0% over that time period.

The following statistics show how Buckinghamshire compares with the national picture:

Number of residents	Census 2011 - number and %	Census 2021 - number and %	% increase or decrease
England	53,012,456	56,490,045	+6.6%
Buckinghamshire	505,283	553,081	+9.5%

Number of households	Census 2011 - number and %	Census 2021 - number	% increase or decrease
England	22,063,368	23,436,086	+6.2%
Buckinghamshire	200,327	220,727	+10.2%

Number of persons aged 65+	Census 2011 - number and %	Census 2021 - number	% increase or decrease
England	8,660,529 16.3%	10,401,303 18.4%	+20.1%
Buckinghamshire	84,151 16.6%	103,713 18.7%	+23.2%

The population of Buckinghamshire, in terms of both people and households, grew faster between 2011 and 2021 than in England as a whole. The growth in the number of persons aged 65 and over is particularly significant.

3. COUNCIL POLICY CONTEXT

This Housing Strategy will complement our corporate direction.

[Buckinghamshire Corporate Plan 2020-2025](#) – sets out the following priorities:

- Increasing prosperity
- Strengthening communities
- Improving the environment
- Protecting the vulnerable

The Housing Strategy can contribute to the achievement of all four priorities within the Buckinghamshire Council Corporate Plan 2020-2025.

[The Buckinghamshire Local Plan](#) – The Housing Strategy clarifies the housing priorities which will shape proposals in the Local Plan.

[Buckinghamshire's Economy: Succeeding as a place, succeeding as a county](#) - Buckinghamshire has a strong £14.6bn economy with the 11th highest GDP per head in the country. There are 34,400 businesses and 281,000 jobs. The county's economy is supported by four key sectors which are Space, Creative and Digital, High Performance Tech, and MedTech.



[Buckinghamshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025](#) contains the following priority which is relevant to the Housing Strategy:

- Improving places and helping communities to support healthy ageing.

The Housing Strategy will include a range of actions to improve health and wellbeing, including accommodation options for older people, improving the conditions, accessibility and energy efficiency of homes, and planning supported homes for people with particular needs. This is also informed by the work through the Learning Improvement Network and the market analysis regarding housing needs in the county (November 2022).

[Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework](#) – A key priority of Buckinghamshire Council is the regeneration of the town centres of Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham.

[Opportunity Bucks](#) – Under the Buckinghamshire Levelling Up Framework, 'Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All' seeks to address disparities between Buckinghamshire communities. It provides a framework for bringing together parties to tackle local priorities which will make a difference for local residents. Two relevant priorities within the programme are:

- Standard of living
- Health and wellbeing

The programme focuses upon six wards in High Wycombe, three wards in Aylesbury and one ward in Chesham.

[Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021 -](#) aims to reduce carbon emissions in activities across the county.

Priority 2 within the Housing Strategy focuses on Better Homes and includes actions to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes in Buckinghamshire and promote high sustainability in new build homes.

[Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2025](#) – priorities within this strategy are:

- i) To provide advice, information, and support.
- ii) To identify those at risk of homelessness.
- iii) To support households to find alternative accommodation.
- iv) To prevent anyone from sleeping rough.
- v) To maximise the supply of affordable rented homes.

[Buckinghamshire First Homes Interim Position Statement](#) – First Homes is a government scheme, introduced in 2021, to assist first-time buyers and key workers onto the property ladder. The First Homes Interim Position Statement sets out Buckinghamshire Council's policy on the development of this type of affordable housing which consists of a home priced at a percentage discount from market level.

[Buckinghamshire Council Housing Allocations Policy](#) - The Buckinghamshire Council Allocations Policy sets out the priority criteria for applicants applying for affordable housing.

[Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy](#) – outlines what Buckinghamshire Council expects from Registered Providers in terms of the delivery of affordable housing, tenancies, rents and allocations.

4. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE'S HOUSING OFFER

Buckinghamshire Council is responsible for delivering a wide range of housing services:

Housing Strategy and Development

- Meeting the obligations of Buckinghamshire Council under homelessness legislation.
- Enabling an increase in the supply of affordable housing so it meets the needs of residents.
- Developing partnerships with developers, Registered Providers, statutory organisations and voluntary organisations.
- Working in partnership with Planning Policy to support the development of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.

Achievements 2022-2023

- **303** affordable homes for rent completed.
- **196** affordable homes for low-cost home ownership completed.
- **499** total number of affordable homes completed.

Homelessness and Housing Advice

- Meeting the obligations of Buckinghamshire Council under the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018, processing applications for assistance under this legislation.
- Commissioning temporary accommodation for homeless households.
- Assisting households in accessing and maintaining accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Providing an outreach service for Rough Sleepers.
- Working with partners to support persons with mental health issues or who suffer from drug and alcohol abuse.
- Providing a service for clients with complex needs in partnership with Social Care, Adult Care and Children's Services.

Achievements 2022-2023

- **1,386** cases of homelessness prevented.
- **873** cases of homelessness relieved.
- **380** homes in the Buckinghamshire private rented sector scheme.
- **37** households assisted into the private rented sector.

Housing Options

- Meeting the obligations of Buckinghamshire Council under the Housing Act 1996 to operate a social housing allocations policy.
- Administering Bucks Home Choice (Buckinghamshire Council's choice-based lettings system).
- Working in partnership with the Registered Providers of social housing in Buckinghamshire to re-house households via the Bucks Home Choice scheme.

Achievements 2022-2023

- **1,541** affordable homes for rent allocated.
- **38** care leavers assisted.

Housing Standards

- Delivering home adaptations for qualifying people with physical and sensory issues funded through the £4 million Disabled Facilities Grant budget.
- Administering loans for home improvement and energy efficiency grants.

Achievements 2022-2023

- **232** Disabled Facilities Grants completed.
- **£128,000** advanced in Flexible Home Improvement Loan payments.
- **27** 'Better Housing, Better Health' grants for heating and insulation improvements for residents with health conditions which make them vulnerable to the cold completed.

In addition, the Environmental Health teams at the Council monitor conditions in both the social and the private housing sector.

5. THE HOUSING STRATEGY PRIORITIES

PRIORITY ONE

Responding to the needs of our diverse population

PRIORITY TWO

Better homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need

PRIORITY THREE

New homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate



Longwick, Buckinghamshire

PRIORITY ONE:

Responding to the needs of our diverse population

Buckinghamshire Council will:

Understand and respond to the housing issues and needs.

Enable the fair, consistent, and effective allocation of tenancies for affordable housing via the Bucks Home Choice Register.

Adopting an effective and proactive approach to improving the quality and reducing the cost of the use of Temporary Accommodation (TA).

Identify, specify, and deliver housing options for groups with particular needs.

Critical Success Factors:

- Housing Strategy Adoption.
- Local Housing Needs Assessment for the Local Plan (Expected 2024).
- Deliver a new Allocations Policy.
- Deliver a new Tenancy Strategy.
- Achieve a 100% compliance with our nomination rights with Registered Providers.
- Ensure applications are processed within three months from submission.
- On average, placements in 'Nightly Paid' accommodation are kept to a set maximum level.
- Maximise temporary accommodation placements which are available longer-term and at lower cost.
- Ensure effective 'Move on' options are in place to reduce Temporary Accommodation placement durations.
- Options development for specialised housing solutions for care leavers, key workers, persons leaving the Armed Forces, older people, persons with a physical and/or learning disability or mental health needs.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

- The proportion of people living in Buckinghamshire who are aged 65 or over increased as a percentage of the population from 16.6% in 2011 to 18.7% in 2021 – this is in the context of the overall increase in population. The overall number of persons aged 65 and over rose from 84,151 in 2011 to 103,713 in 2021, a 23.2% increase. The proportion of people aged 50 – 65 also increased during the same period.
- The number of older people living in Buckinghamshire is expected to increase in line with averages for England as a whole: a 23% increase in those aged 65+ and a 42% increase in those aged 85+. This means there will be an increase in demand for housing suitable for older people, many of which will not require specialist schemes but may need homes suitable for those with reduced mobility.
- According to the Census 2021, a significant change from 2011 to 2021 is the increased number of those who are retired in Buckinghamshire – the figure almost doubled, with the percentage increasing from 13.3% to 21.6%. There was a corresponding drop in the number of people who were in employment.
- Census information shows the growth of the number of older people in Buckinghamshire. This is likely to correspond with an increase in demand for Disabled Facilities Grants to improve the accessibility of accommodation and enable households to remain in their existing accommodation for longer. An increase in demand has also been noted for adapted accommodation among households containing children with disabilities.
- Research has shown that there is a continuing high need for appropriate homes for people with mental health needs, people with learning disabilities and/or autism, and people with physical disabilities. This will likely correspond with an increase in demand for supported housing, independent living, and extra care facilities.



- There are also other groups with a particular housing need including key workers such as in emergency services and health, those leaving the Armed Forces, and adults with special educational needs.
- In line with national trends, the number of households requiring temporary accommodation has significantly increased since April 2022.
- There has been an increase in refugee and asylum seeker households with a housing need in Buckinghamshire since April 2022. By early 2023 the numbers who were resident in the county were as follows: 1,607 Ukrainian guests (763 households), 56 Afghan relocated citizens (15 households), 73 unaccompanied asylum seekers aged under 18, and a total of 188 asylum seekers.

The Council already has a strategy in place for preventing homelessness and rough sleeping which was adopted in March 2022 (as stated under section 3). This incorporates a detailed action plan on preventing and tackling homelessness that is currently being delivered covering groups such as rough sleepers, domestic abuse survivors, ex-offenders and persons leaving hospital. Therefore, this Action Plan below does not incorporate specific measures on preventing and tackling homelessness. For further information on these measures please refer to the [Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2025](#).



Sidney Close, Buckinghamshire

OUR ACTION

- We are managing the social housing allocations process through Bucks Home Choice.
- We are providing a homelessness and housing advice service under Part VII of the Housing Act.
- We are providing temporary accommodation to homeless households.
- We are producing an updated Allocations Policy for Buckinghamshire. This will ensure robust processes are in place for the delivery of the Bucks Home Choice scheme, including clear workflows and regular monitoring and cross checking of applications to ensure consistency of approach and fairness.
- We are meeting with Registered Providers on a regular basis through the Buckinghamshire Housing Development Board and the Buckinghamshire Housing Management Forum.
- We are working with Registered Partners and private developers to deliver suitable adapted/adaptable dwellings through planning obligations and other opportunities.
- We will produce a new Tenancy Strategy including guidelines for Registered Providers on Affordable Rent levels.
- We will consider innovative new options for specialist housing (for example, extra-care villages with a dementia inclusive design).
- We will work with Registered Providers and other housing developers to understand the role played by sheltered housing and other accommodation for older people in the area, and decide whether some housing schemes should be remodelled to better meet current needs. We will consider innovative new options for specialist housing (for example, extra-care villages with a dementia inclusive design).
- With our partners, we will provide a housing options guide for people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This will ensure that appropriate advice and signposting is available to make good choices.
- We will explore ways of increasing the number of one bed properties available in the private and social rented sectors which would be suitable for young people, including care leavers under the agreed Pathways Protocol.

PRIORITY TWO: Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need

Buckinghamshire Council will:

Ensure that private rented homes are improved and maintained to a high standard.

Ensure that the Private Rented Sector maintains and improves the quality of rental properties.

Work to ensure that best use is made of existing housing.

Work to ensure that best use is made of existing housing, including empty homes.

Critical Success Factors:

- All Registered Providers have current asset management strategies and investment plans.
- All Registered Providers have a net zero carbon road map in place.
- Enforcement and subsequent remediation of housing condition issues as they emerge, in line with the Council's Enforcement Policy.
- Effective enforcement of conditions in houses in multiple occupation (HMO) through intelligence-led enforcement with housing partners.
- Under-occupation strategy for social housing developed.
- Effective Allocations Policy and Tenancy Strategy.
- Disabled Facilities Grants Programme Delivery Deliver accessible and adaptable new housing through planning decisions.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

- From 2035, all homes in the Social Rented Sector must meet a specified level of energy efficiency (Energy Performance Certificate Level C). Social landlords in Buckinghamshire are undertaking energy efficiency programmes to achieve this.
- From 2025, compliance with the Future Homes Standard will become mandatory. New homes built from 2025 will produce 75-80 per cent fewer carbon emissions than homes built under 2012 regulations.
- From November 2022, providers of affordable housing are required to provide detailed information on their methods for identifying properties affected by damp and mould, and their strategies for responding to customer complaints for remedying cases of damp and mould.
- Energy prices have increased significantly. The energy price cap (the maximum that an average consumer should have to pay) more than doubled between October 2021 and October 2022.
- Increases in materials and labour costs correspond to increases in costs for the refurbishment of existing stock and new construction.
- The Renters Reform Bill includes the abolition of no fault evictions. Introduced to Parliament in May 2023, it includes new enforcement duties for local authorities.
- The plans to introduce a new Decent Homes Standard are progressing. When introduced, this standard has the potential to have significant financial implications for all landlords.
- Permitted Development Rights are residential conversions (e.g. from office or retail to residential) which can lead to poor quality housing. Examples of this: poor location, lack of amenities, poor standard of conversion, low level of noise insulation.



Building energy efficient homes

OUR ACTION

- We are supporting the Buckinghamshire Council Energy Doctor scheme (funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund).
- We are supporting sustainable warmth upgrade grant programmes, such as the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) and Solar Together, which are which are being carried out by Buckinghamshire Council.
- Through our work with houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), we are delivering increased levels of safe and secure accommodation for single people.
- The Buckinghamshire Disabled Facilities Grants and Housing Improvement and Adaptations Policy is being updated to ensure that it continues to achieve the following:
 - Improve and promote the physical and mental health of residents.
 - Prevent accidents.
 - Enable residents to live safely at home, as independently as possible, for longer.
 - Reduce hospital admissions and enable speedy discharge from hospital.
 - Make best use of adapted and adaptable accommodation.
- We will work with Registered Providers and other care/support agencies to agree best ways to tackle under-occupation, including incentives where appropriate in order to generate more turnover in family-sized accommodation.



High Wycombe

PRIORITY THREE: New Homes: affordable, accessible and appropriate

Buckinghamshire Council will:

Support and enable Registered Providers in delivering new affordable homes, including for those with special needs.

Explore the use of local authority assets and resources for the purposes of delivering additional new housing.

Ensure that affordable housing is considered in regeneration strategies, brownfield and redevelopment proposals for mixed use developments where appropriate.

Critical Success Factors:

- Delivery of Affordable Housing (current target of 500 new affordable homes per year, to be reviewed as appropriate).
- Achieve site targets for Affordable Housing in negotiations with developers in line with council policies and the Local Plan.
- Supporting site identification and funding options/opportunities (for example grants and Section 106 monies) in line with council policies.
- New Temporary Accommodation development.
- Using Section 106 monies to support the development of Affordable Housing.
- Incorporating Council held assets in redevelopment proposals (Target 500 by 2028).
- Consider different delivery vehicles (e.g., Joint Ventures or other collaborative models).
- Local Plan and site policies for residential development that prioritise Section 106 affordable housing requirements and the use of brownfield sites before any development on greenfield sites.
- Working with Homes England including pursuing funding opportunities as they become available.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

- House prices and market rents present affordability challenges to households. House prices and rents are relatively lower in the two major towns of Aylesbury and High Wycombe (see Appendix One – Buckinghamshire Housing Context).
- The demand for affordable homes of various types outpaces the annual delivery of new homes and re-lets, in some recent years by a factor of 3:1.
- Increasing cost of living pressures and lack of local affordable housing options correspond with an increased number of adult children living with parents for longer.
- Private landlords are under new pressures with increasing interest rates and legislation changes, such as the forthcoming Renters Reform Act.
- The new Local Plan will set out the number, size, tenure type and location of new homes in the area, a proportion of which will be affordable. The plan will reflect the level of need across the county, and the allocation of sites will be based on an assessment of sites suitable for housing use. The Local Plan will also identify the need for accessible housing under Part M of the building regulations. This action plan therefore focuses on activity which can be delivered ahead of the implementation of the Local Plan, and on activity which will build on the Local Plan once it has been agreed.



Queensmead Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

OUR ACTION

- We are working with Registered Providers to facilitate the delivery of new schemes, helping to identify sites and secure funding as appropriate.
- We are supporting Registered Providers with funding for garage-site developments.
- We are ensuring that housing (including affordable housing) is included in regeneration plans by the Council and partners.
- We will work proactively to ensure that the planning process accelerates delivery of affordable housing applications in acceptable locations.
- We will explore opportunities for 'build to rent' schemes, including the use of institutional investment.
- We will explore opportunities for the council to deliver more housing using its land, property and financial assets.
- We will identify three Council-owned sites to bring forward for new development and complete these developments by 2027.
- We will agree priorities for capital funding (including commuted sums) for affordable housing, and implement a list of priorities for the use of council contributions.



6. DELIVERY

This Housing Strategy, while delivered locally, relies on close partnership working with central government departments and other agencies such as Homes England. Alongside the actions taken forward in Buckinghamshire, we will also be in dialogue on a number of key issues including:

Planning

- A more workable national planning system in which a well co-ordinated Local Plan can operate.
- The potential for a new Infrastructure Levy to deliver affordable housing development.

Regeneration

- Acknowledgement of regeneration schemes with Buckinghamshire's Registered Providers (Homes England announced that the Affordable Homes Programme for 2021-2026 could contribute to the funding of regeneration schemes).

Sustainability

- Funding for affordable housing stock in Buckinghamshire through further rounds of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.
- Further legislation on the design and sustainability standards of new housing of all tenures.

Overall Funding

- Funding for affordable housing through the Homes England Affordable Homes Programme from 2026.
- Resources to assist with the implementation of new legislation, including the Renters Reform Bill and the Supported Housing Strategy.

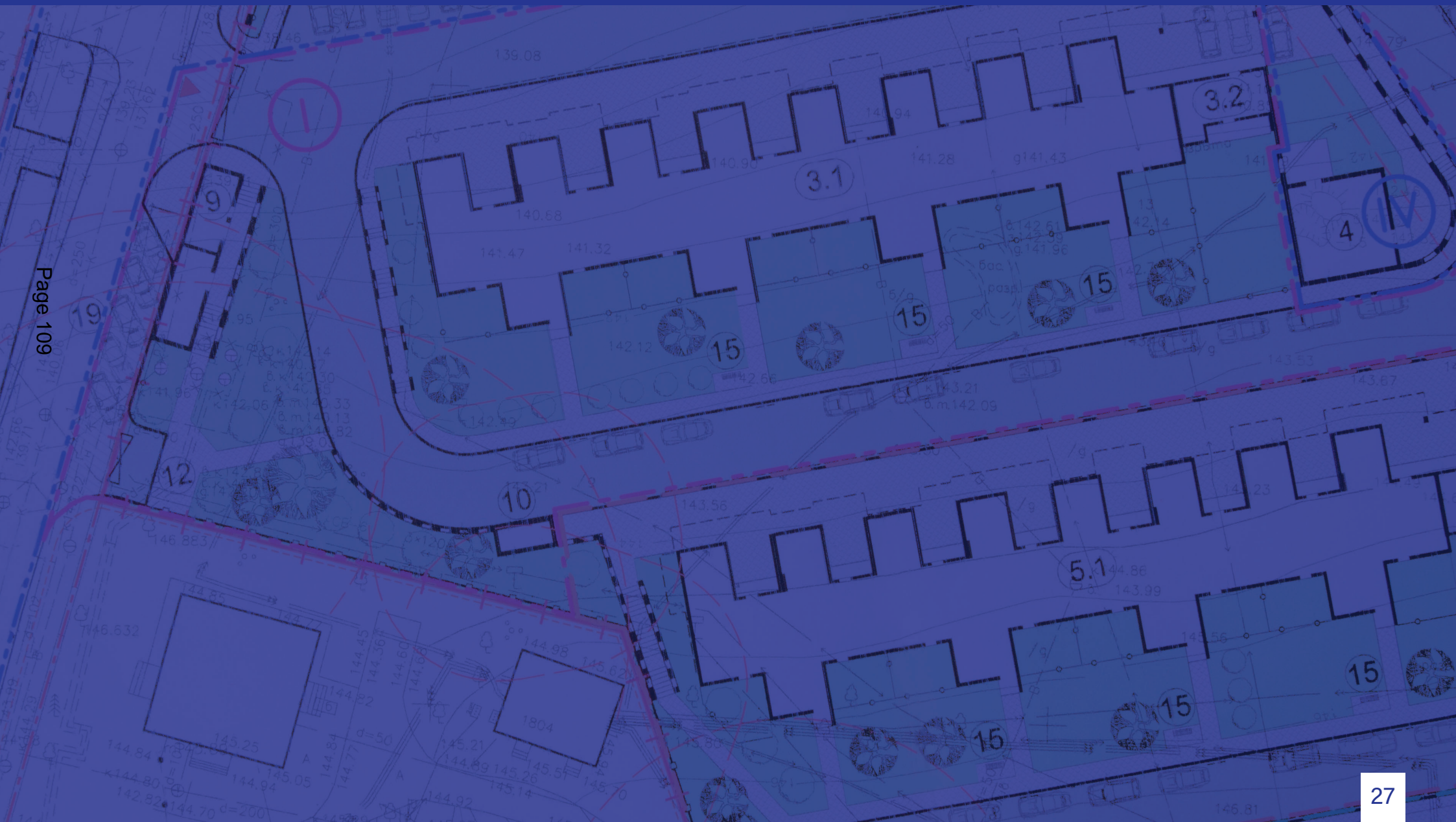
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This strategy will be reviewed annually.

Financial implications

Some of the actions will have financial implications for Buckinghamshire Council. The costs of each project will be considered individually within the context of the financial year in which they are introduced.

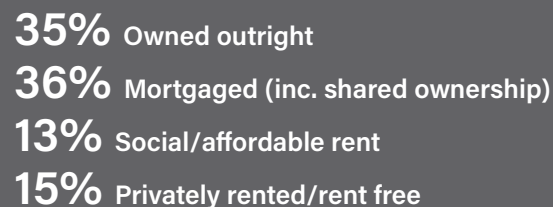
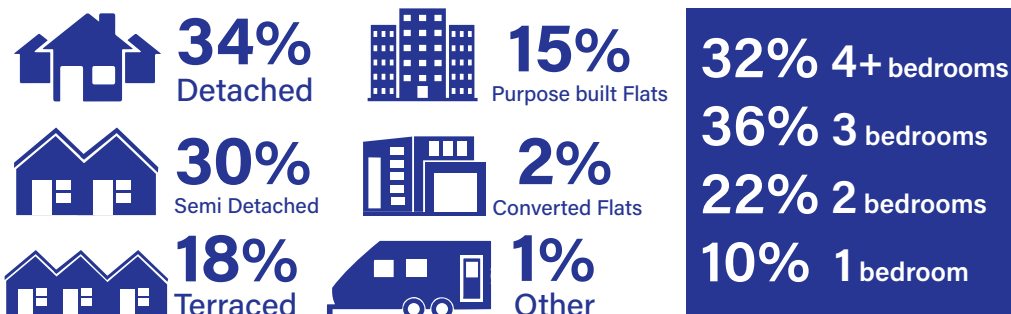
APPENDICES



Appendix One - Buckinghamshire Housing Context

Dwelling stock

220,328 Occupied Homes in 2021



October 2023 **5,686** homes in Buckinghamshire were classified as empty - of which 2,036 were long term empty (unoccupied for six months or more)

Housing Supply - Market housing

Buckinghamshire has consistently high house prices and private rents, making the open market largely unaffordable to households in receipt of average incomes, even for homes priced in the at the lowest quarter of the market (lowest quartile).

Median and Lower Quartile house prices for year ending March 2023:

Dwelling type	Median price	Lower Quartile price
All	£420,500	£330,000
Detached	£745,000	£572,500
Semi-detached	£425,000	£379,748
Terraced	£345,000	£307,000
Flat/Maisonette	£230,000	£193,000

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

The following table shows that average lower quartile house prices in Buckinghamshire in March 2023 are considerably higher for both the England and the South East average:

Dwelling type	Buckinghamshire	South East region	England
All	£330,000	£280,000	£190,000
Detached	£572,500	£480,000	£325,000
Semi-detached	£379,748	£340,000	£195,000
Terraced	£307,000	£275,000	£155,000
Flat/Maisonette	£193,000	£171,000	£148,000

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Average monthly private rents in Buckinghamshire October 2022 to September 2023:

Dwelling type	Lower Quartile	Median average	Upper Quartile
Studio	£675	£725	£750
1 bedroom	£804	£895	£975
2 bedroom	£995	£1,150	£1,300
3 bedroom	£1,300	£1,500	£1,750
4+ bedroom	£1,700	£2,100	£2,750

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

The following table shows the variation of average monthly rent levels in locations across the county in March 2023:

Dwelling type	Aylesbury	High Wycombe	Amersham	Chesham
1 bedroom	£895	£1,000	£1,250	£950
2 bedroom	£1,200	£1,380	£1,465	£1,300
3 bedroom	£1,475	£1,450	£2,000	£1,500
4 bedroom	£1,850	£1,900	£2,425	£2,500

Source: Home.co.uk

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is the maximum amount of housing-related benefit which can be claimed by tenants renting from a private landlord. LHA rates were frozen in April 2020 but were raised again in April 2024. As private rents have risen, the shortfall between private rents and LHA levels has widened. In December 2023 the government announced that the maximum levels of LHA would be raised from April 2024. No further information has been released on the new maximum levels.

The two biggest Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA) in Buckinghamshire are Aylesbury Vale BRMA and Chilterns BRMA. The following two tables shows the monthly shortfalls between LHA rates as of February 2024 and average private rents between October 2022 and September 2023:

Aylesbury Vale BRMA (*private rents are usually lower than the county average in this BRMA*)

Size of home	Average monthly rent	Maximum monthly mount of which can be claimed	Monthly Shortfall (market rent minus Local Housing Allowance)
1 bedroom	£895	£673	£222
2 bedroom	£1,150	£798	£352
3 bedroom	£1,500	£1,047	£453
4+ bedroom	£2,100	£1,396	£704

Chilterns BRMA (*private rents are usually higher than the county average in this BRMA*)

Size of home	Average monthly rent	Maximum monthly mount of which can be claimed	Monthly Shortfall (market rent minus Local Housing Allowance)
1 bedroom	£885	£748	£147
2 bedroom	£1,150	£972	£178
3 bedroom	£1,500	£1,247	£253
4+ bedroom	£2,100	£1,646	£454

The following tables show how households on average (50th percentile) and below average (30th percentile) incomes in Buckinghamshire would experience difficulty in affording privately rented homes at both average and lower quartile rents.

Average rent levels October 2022 to September 2023:

Property size	Average monthly rent	Total annual cost	Annual cost as a % of 50th percentile annual income of £38,220	Annual cost as a % of 30th percentile annual income of £32,500
Studio	£725	£8,700	22.8%	26.8%
1 bedroom	£895	£10,740	28.1%	33.0%
2 bedroom	£1,150	£13,800	36.1%	42.5%
3 bedroom	£1,500	£18,000	47.1%	55.4%
4 bedroom	£2,100	£25,200	65.9%	66%

Source of Income Data: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data for Buckinghamshire April 2023.

Lower Quartile rent levels October 2022 to September 2023:

Property size	Average monthly rent	Total annual cost	Annual cost as a % of 50th percentile annual income of £38,220	Annual cost as a % of 30th percentile annual income of £32,500
Studio	£675	£8,100	21.2%	24.9%
1 bedroom	£804	£9,648	25.2%	29.7%
2 bedroom	£995	£11,940	31.2%	37.0%
3 bedroom	£1,300	£15,600	40.8%	48.0%
4 bedroom	£1,700	£20,400	53.4%	62.8%

Source of Income Data: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) data for Buckinghamshire April 2023.

What percentage of income should be spent on housing costs?

Most affordability calculations work on the basis of a maximum percentage of income which can be spent on housing costs. Using 30% of income (net of tax and National Insurance) is a fairly standard approach and reflects national guidance on affordability assessments in Strategic Housing Market Assessments. Many housing need assessments use 33%. CORE figures show that new social housing tenants paying affordable rents will be spending closer to 40% of their income on their housing cost – and national estimates show that many of those living in the Private Rented Sector are spending more than 50% of their income on housing. It is, therefore, not straightforward to decide the most appropriate percentage to use when assessing affordability.

The core calculations above have been done using 30% and 40% of income; it could be argued that spending 30% of income on housing costs is 'comfortably affordable' while 40% is affordable 'at a stretch.'

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Conclusions:

- Households with average incomes are likely to have difficulty accessing outright ownership in the market due to affordability issues. Low-cost home ownership products, including shared ownership, play a role in supporting homebuyers.
- Most households in receipt of housing benefit face difficulty in being able to afford to rent a home in the private rented sector because of the shortfalls between the full amount of Local Housing Allowance which can be claimed and the market rents. This applies to households living in all districts of Buckinghamshire. Even households who are working full-time experience difficulty in being able to afford privately rented accommodation if their annual incomes were at or below the Buckinghamshire average.

Housing Supply - Affordable Housing

The following new affordable homes were developed in Buckinghamshire between April 2016 and March 2023. This table distinguishes between Social Rent, which is usually between 50%-60% of Market Rent, and Affordable Rent which can be set up to 80% of Market Rent. The extra rental income generated by Affordable Rent is used by registered providers to develop more affordable homes.

Year	Total affordable homes for rent completed	Affordable Rent	Social Rent
2022-2023	303	264 87.1%	39 12.9%
2021-2022	619	568 91.8%	51 8.2%
2020-2021	341	325 95.3%	16 4.7%
2019-2020	422	388 91.9%	34 8.1%
2018-2019	389	375 96.4%	14 3.6%
2017-2018	333	294 88.3%	39 11.7%
2016-2017	271	251 92.6%	20 7.4%

Source: DLUHC Live Tables on Affordable Housing Supply.

(The variation in annual figures is due to a number of factors including the timing of the completion of developments, the availability of Affordable Housing Grant, variations in the costs of building materials and labour which can affect development timetables).

The total number of lettings of affordable homes (both new build and existing) in Buckinghamshire between April 2016 and March 2023.

Year	Number
April 2022 to March 2023	1,508
April 2021 to March 2022	2,457
April 2020 to March 2021	1,389
April 2019 to March 2020	1,962
April 2018 to March 2019	2,062
April 2017 to March 2018	2,060
April 2016 to March 2017	1,920

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 The total number of homes for low cost home ownership developed in Buckinghamshire between April 2016 and March 2023 was as follows:

	Low Cost Home Ownership
2022-2023	196
2021-2022	161
2020-2021	175
2019-2020	166
2018-2019	238
2017-2018	102
2016-2017	91

Housing Demand - Affordable Housing

Applicants on the housing register, Bucks Home Choice, between 31 March 2017 and 31 March 2023:

Year	1 bedroom required	2 bedroom required	3 bedroom required	3< bedroom required	Bedroom need unspecified	Total
31 March 2023	3,438	1,180	1,007	179	0	5,804
31 March 2022	3,911	1,352	1,164	212	0	6,639
31 March 2021	3,673	1,267	1,052	187	0	6,179
31 March 2020*	2,608	692	770	111	76	4,257
31 March 2019	3,557	876	841	136	14	5,424
31 March 2018	3,439	1,308	925	134	0	5,806
31 March 2017	3,512	1,459	833	170	0	5,974

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* A decrease in numbers because of a reorganisation of the housing register.

Number of households for whom homelessness was **prevented**
(under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 Prevention Duty)

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	% increase or decrease
England	119,890	133,450	140,790	+17.4%
Buckinghamshire	1,042	1,105	1,649	+58.2%

Source: DLUHC Statutory Homelessness in England by financial year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Number of households for whom homelessness was **relieved**
(under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2018 Relief Duty)

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	% increase or decrease
England	150,670	144,670	140,790	-6.5%
Buckinghamshire	732	640	762	+4.1%

Source: DLUHC Statutory Homelessness in England by financial year 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

Buckinghamshire has seen an increase in the number of cases of homelessness which have been prevented, which is less than the national (England only) trend. However, it has seen a decrease in the number of homeless cases which have been relieved which is substantially more than the national (England only) trend.

The reasons for households becoming homeless between 2020 and 2023 were as follows.

Households whose homelessness was prevented – reasons for homelessness

Reason for homelessness	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
End of privately rented tenancy	195	18.7%	412	37.3%	599	376.3%
Asked to leave by family or friends	225	21.6%	234	21.2%	416	25.2%
Other reason	350	33.6%	165	14.9%	172	10.4%
End of Social Rented Tenancy	66	6.3%	62	5.6%	146	8.9%
Non-violent relationship breakdown	90	8.6%	95	8.6%	103	6.2%
Domestic Abuse	64	6.1%	85	7.7%	101	6.1%
Evicted from Supported Housing	8	0.8%	20	1.8%	46	2.8%
Other violence or harassment	21	2.0%	20	1.8%	33	2.0%
Left an institution including hospital, Armed Forces, local authority care	23	2.2%	12	1.1%	33	2.0%
Total	1,042		1,105		1,649	

Households whose homelessness was relieved – reasons for homelessness

Reason for homelessness	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
End of privately rented tenancy	43	5.9%	64	10.0%	197	25.9%
Asked to leave by family or friends	205	21.6%	182	28.4%	103	13.5%
Other reason	226	30.9%	89	13.9%	83	10.9%
End of Social Rented Tenancy	7	1.0%	8	1.3%	21	2.8%
Non-violent relationship breakdown	60	8.2%	67	10.5%	75	9.8%
Domestic Abuse	104	14.2%	133	20.8%	167	21.9%
Evicted from Supported Housing	26	3.6%	30	4.7%	25	3.3%
Other violence or harassment	20	2.7%	33	5.2%	32	4.2%
Left an institution including hospital, Armed Forces, local authority care	41	5.6%	34	5.3%	59	7.7%
Total	732		640		762	

Further details of the measures undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council to prevent and relieve homelessness are included in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy.

Appendix Two - Affordable Housing Types, Funding Mechanisms and Delivery

1. Definition of Affordable Housing

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's economic, environmental and social planning policies for England. The policies set out in the Framework apply to the preparation of local plans and the decisions on planning applications.

The definition of Affordable Housing, as set out by the government in the NPPF, consists of the following:

Definition of Affordable Housing - Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

(a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions:

(a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a Registered Provider; and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision.

(b) Starter homes: is as specified in sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used. **The Starter Home Scheme has now been replaced by the First Homes Scheme.**

(c) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

(d) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision or refunded to government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

2. What are Registered Providers and Housing Associations?

Housing Associations are not for profit organisations providing affordable housing and which are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. In addition to Housing Associations, there are also Private Registered Providers which are for profit organisations. Local Authorities are sometimes Registered Providers (RP) who hold their own housing stock.

Buckinghamshire Council does not hold housing stock and therefore is not currently registered as a Registered Provider with the Regulator for Social Housing.

The Registered Providers who currently have affordable housing development programmes in Buckinghamshire are: BPHA, Bromford, Fairhive, Hightown, Housing Solutions, Metropolitan Thames Valley, Paradigm, Peabody/Catalyst, Red Kite, Sage, L&Q, and Thrive. In addition, Sovereign will be developing a former council-owned site outside High Wycombe.

The RPs with the biggest development programmes in Buckinghamshire at present are Fairhive, Hightown, Paradigm, Peabody/Catalyst and Red Kite.

All RPs can develop anywhere they wish in the county with some clustering in the north of the county and others in the south. At present is as follows:

- **Both North and South** – Fairhive, Hightown, Paradigm, and Peabody/Catalyst
- **North only** – Bromford, Housing Solutions, Metropolitan Thames Valley, Sage, and Thrive
- **South only** – Red Kite.

3. Types of affordable housing products

3.1. Affordable housing for rent

Affordable Rent housing – ‘Affordable rent’ was introduced by government as a tenure in 2011. For these properties, the Registered Provider may set a rent which can be up to a maximum of 80% of the market rent in the locality. The Regulator of Social Housing has a rent standard to which all ‘affordable rents’ must conform. Affordable Rents are higher than Social Rents and therefore provide a source of funding for new affordable housing development and an increased rental stream against which the RP can borrow.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 264 new homes for Affordable Rent were constructed in Buckinghamshire.

Social Rent housing – ‘Social rent’ properties have rents set in accordance with a formula prescribed by central government which, for Buckinghamshire are typically 50%-60% of the local market rents (although social rent is not directly linked to market rents). The formula will result in rents that will vary property-to-property as the individual property’s rent is calculated according to the market value of the property, the size of the property and the local income levels in the area

in which the property is located. Social Rents are also covered by the Rent Standard in the same way as Affordable Rents.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 39 new homes for Social Rent were constructed in Buckinghamshire.

3.2. Low-cost home ownership

This is an umbrella term covering a range of schemes that help buyers to purchase a home for less than the market value. The low-cost home ownership products which are most relevant to Buckinghamshire are:

Shared Ownership – A purchase by a household where part of the equity in the property is purchased and the remainder is rented. Rent is determined by calculating a percentage on the unsold equity. Some shared ownership of properties is limited to 80% of the equity, for example in rural areas. Shared Ownership tends to work well in areas of high housing costs, where it reduces deposit requirements and enables households to ‘step’ into the market in stages.

Households typically:

- Buy a share between 10% and 75% of the home’s full market value.
- Pay rent to the landlord for the share they do not own.
- Usually pay monthly ground rent and service charges, for example towards the maintenance of communal areas.
- Benefit in any increase in values for the property for the owned portion.
- Have options to increase their percentage of equity if desired (staircasing).

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 196 new homes for shared ownership were constructed in Buckinghamshire.

First Homes – A specific kind of discounted market sale housing introduced by the government in 2020. The government stated that First Homes meet the definition of affordable housing for planning purposes and must comprise a minimum of 25 per cent of the affordable housing within the development. A First Homes Interim Position Statement has been drawn up for Buckinghamshire.

A First Home must be:

- Sold at a discount of no less than 30% of market value and no more than 50%, with the actual percentage determined by the local authority.
- Have their initial sale price capped at no more than a government-set maximum. The current cap is £250,000.
- Remain a First Home in perpetuity, with subsequent sales subject to the initial percentage discount.
- Sold only to first time buyers.

No First Homes have yet been developed in Buckinghamshire as of July 2023.

4. Affordable Housing Funding Mechanisms

4.1. Planning-led affordable housing development – Section 106 agreements

Planning obligations under Section 106 (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, commonly known as Section 106 agreements, are a mechanism which enables on site affordable housing to be delivered or a financial contribution towards affordable housing to be collected.

Local Plans set out target percentages of affordable housing sought from qualifying development. Local Plan policies also set guidelines for affordable housing tenure mix and size.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 403 new affordable homes were constructed through the S106 agreements in Buckinghamshire.

4.2. The Affordable Homes Programme

Homes England is an executive non-departmental public body. It is sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and provides funds for new affordable housing and aims to accelerate housing delivery.

The Affordable Homes Programme (AHP) is administered by Homes England (outside of Greater London). The current Affordable Homes Programme operates 2021 to 2026.

Buckinghamshire Council works closely with Homes England to monitor the progress and impacts of affordable housing delivery in Buckinghamshire. The council will submit information to support any bids for funding from the AHP for schemes developed by Registered Providers in Buckinghamshire.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 90 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire were funded through the Affordable Homes Programme, of which 46 were homes for Affordable or Social Rent and 44 were homes for Shared Ownership.

4.3. Use of Council resources

Local authorities can contribute to affordable housing development by providing funds and/or land and assets to Registered Providers including:

- Capital Funding, including use of commuted sums (S106 contributions).
- Transferring council-owned land at low or nil cost to a registered provider for affordable housing development.

Between April 2022 and March 2023, a total of 6 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire were funded through Buckinghamshire Council contributions. These were the last completions of a garage site development programme by Paradigm Housing which began in 2019 and has produced 25 affordable homes. Buckinghamshire Council has contributed capital funding to this development.

4.4. Summary of Affordable Housing Development by product and funding mechanism, April 2022 to March 2023

Affordable Housing Product	Funded by Planning-led development	Funded by the Affordable Homes Programme	Funded by Council contributions	Total
Affordable Rent	235	23	6	264
Social Rent	16	23	0	6
Low-cost home ownership	152	44	0	6
Total	403	90	6	499

4.5. Help to Buy

The government 'Help to Buy' Equity Loan Scheme ended in March 2023 after ten years. This was a scheme subsidised by the government to assist households in accessing the open market; it was not part of any affordable development programme. The total number of homes sold in Buckinghamshire under 'Help to Buy' between April 2013 and March 2023 was 5,039 homes.

Appendix Three - Glossary

Accessible and Adaptable Housing – Construction or modification of housing to enable independent living for persons with disabilities.

Affordable Housing - Social rent, affordable rent and intermediate housing (e.g. shared ownership; below market rent) provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Defined in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Affordable Rent housing – Defined in Appendix 2 in section 3.1.

Build to Rent – Build to Rent refers to purpose-built housing designed and built for market rent rather than sale by property developers. Schemes usually offer longer tenancy agreements and are often professionally managed by the owner or operator. Build to Rent developments are marketed as an attractive option for investors seeking long-term returns.

Decent Homes Standard – First introduced in 2000, the Standard was based on social rented homes being warm and weatherproof with reasonably modern facilities. The Standard is currently (2023) under review with proposals that it be extended to the private rented sector.

Disabled Facilities Grant - Council managed grant programme to help towards the cost of adapting homes for people with disabilities.

Discounted Market Sale – A form of low-cost home ownership that helps people purchase a property below open market value.

Empty Home – A property that is empty for 6 months or more. A long-term empty property is one that is empty for 2 years or more.

Energy Performance Certificate – A property rating for energy efficiency. Ratings range from A (most efficient) to G (least efficient) and are valid for 10 years.

Extra Care Housing – Purpose-built or adapted properties with corresponding additional care provision. Residents are able to live independently with 24-hour access to support services and staff. There are often extensive communal areas, such as space to socialise or a wellbeing centre.

First Homes – Defined in Appendix 2 in section 3.2.

Future Homes Standard – New legislation governing building regulations including energy efficiency measures. New build homes will have to meet this standard from 2025.

Homes England – An executive non-departmental public body. It is sponsored by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and provides funds for new affordable housing and aims to accelerate housing delivery.

House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) – Properties let to three or more tenants who form two or more households with shared facilities (e.g., kitchen). Larger houses in multiple occupation, those occupied by five or more people in two or more households who share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom, must be licensed by the local council.

Housing Associations – Defined in Appendix 2 in section 2.

Local Housing Allowance – Local Housing Allowance is used to calculate the maximum amount people renting from a private landlord can claim in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. This maximum allowance is based on where they live, the number of bedrooms they need and the rent they pay.

Low-cost home ownership – Umbrella term covering a range of schemes that help buyers to purchase a new home for less than the market value.

National Planning Policy Framework – Sets out Government’s economic, environmental and social planning policies for England.

National Planning Policy Guidance – Provides planning practice guidance within the Framework and how planning policies are expected to be applied.

Registered Provider – Defined in Appendix 2 in section 2.

Regulator of Social Housing – The Government’s regulator of the standards applying to affordable housing management and maintenance.

Section 106 agreement – Defined in Appendix 2 in section 4.1.

Shared Ownership – Defined in Appendix 2 in section 3.2.

Social Rent housing – Defined in Appendix 2 section 3.1.

Tenancy Strategy – The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy to guide Registered Providers in allocating their properties.

Under-occupation – A household living in a home with bedrooms surplus to their requirements.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) was introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination in the workplace, in the provision of services and in wider society.

The duty requires all public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people

Public bodies demonstrate this due regard in different ways, including producing robust equality impact assessments when considering changes to policies and services.

An EqIA enables us to check the potential impacts on residents and employees of our policies, services and projects. It's an opportunity to challenge how we currently do things.

Carrying out an EqIA should not create extra work; it should be part of your normal service planning process. Most of the information required should already be available to you through other work already undertaken e.g. service user monitoring, analysis of complaints and national research.

The purpose of an EqIA is to *take account* of equality as plans develop, to promote and assist the consideration of equalities issues arising in plans and proposals and to ensure that where possible adverse or disproportionate impacts are minimised and positive impacts are maximised. As such where possible an EqIA should be started at the outset of a project/proposal and continually be developed and reviewed until a final proposal is adopted. An EqIA should be used to ensure decision makers have all the information they need regarding potential impacts to ensure they have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty when making judgements.

Carrying out EqIAs should be an integral part of policy or service development/change and larger projects may need more than one EqIA if different areas are impacted by the change.

Any project that requires consultation will automatically require an EqIA.

All approved and signed EqIAs are recorded in a central register. Please email your completed draft EqIA to equalities@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. Previous EqIAs can be made available for information upon request. For any questions or if you require support in completing your EqIA please contact Maria Damigos and Natalie Donhou Morley directly.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Part A (Initial assessment) - Section 1 - Background

Proposal/Brief Title: Buckinghamshire Council Housing Strategy 2023-2028

OneDrive link to report/policy: [Buckinghamshire Council Housing Strategy 2024-2029](#)

Related policies:

- Buckinghamshire Corporate Plan 2020-2025
- The forthcoming Buckinghamshire Local Plan
- Buckinghamshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025
- Opportunity Bucks
- Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021
- Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2022-2025
- Buckinghamshire First Homes Interim Position Statement
- Buckinghamshire Council Housing Allocations Policy
- Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy.

Date: 6 July 2023

Type of strategy, policy, project or service: A new Buckinghamshire-wide strategy

Please tick one of the following:

- Existing
- New or proposed
- Changing, update or revision
- Other (please explain)

This assessment was created by:

Name: [Helen George](#)

Job Title: [Housing Strategy Officer](#)

Email address: helen.george@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Briefly describe the aims and objectives of the proposal below:

The aims of the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029 are:

- i) [maximise its opportunities and resources to meet housing needs and aspirations, involving the use of council resources and partnership opportunities.](#)



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- ii) ensure a co-ordinated approach to housing activity in Buckinghamshire, linking a suite of policies and strategies to deliver the council's ambitions
- iii) promote the role of housing in delivering corporate priorities and wider objectives including health and wellbeing and sustainable economic growth.
- iv) ensure that Buckinghamshire Council meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and meets a diverse range of housing needs.

What outcomes do we want to achieve?

Priority one – a Home for Everyone: meeting the needs of our diverse population

Buckinghamshire Council will:

- Work with its partners to provide housing options for households with particular needs, including young people, persons leaving the Armed Forces, older people, people with physical disabilities, people with learning disabilities and/or autism, people with mental health issues, people with special educational needs, and key workers.
- Improve the accessibility of new and existing homes.
- Continue to monitor housing needs throughout Buckinghamshire, and produce response to meet housing needs.

Priority two – Better Homes: good quality, sustainable and matched to need

Buckinghamshire Council will:

- Continue to work to ensure a high quality, well-managed accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Work to ensure that best use is made of existing housing include empty homes and under-occupied homes.
- Work with registered providers and other partners to improve the sustainability and energy efficiency of homes in Buckinghamshire.

Priority three – New Homes: affordable, accessible, and appropriate

Buckinghamshire Council will:

- Assist registered providers in delivering new affordable homes, helping to identify sites, and securing funding.
- Maximise the use of local authority assets, including land, property and financial assets, to contribute to the delivery of affordable housing, and assist registered provider partners in maximising their assets to deliver more affordable homes.
- Ensure that the delivery of affordable housing is a major part of all regeneration schemes in Buckinghamshire.

Does this proposal plan to withdraw a service, activity or presence? Yes/**No**



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Please explain your answer:

This strategy does not plan to withdraw a service, activity or presence.

Does this proposal plan to reduce a service, activity or presence? Yes/**No**

Please explain your answer:

This strategy does not plan to reduce a service, activity or presence.

Does this proposal plan to introduce, review or change a policy, strategy or procedure?
Yes/No

Please explain your answer:

The housing strategy is a new Buckinghamshire-wide strategy.

Does this proposal affect service users and/or customers, or the wider community? **Yes/No**

Please explain your answer:

Yes, the Housing Strategy is intended to have a positive impact for service users and customers.

Does this proposal affect employees? **Yes/No**

Please explain your answer:

The Housing Strategy contains proposals for devising housing options for Key Workers. Buckinghamshire Council has devised a definition of Key Workers in the county which includes occupations in which employees of the council are employed. The Housing Strategy should provide new affordable accommodation options for employees of Buckinghamshire Council. The definition of Key Workers in Buckinghamshire is as follows:

1. Clinical staff employed by the NHS to include ambulance drivers, paramedics, healthcare workers;
2. Persons providing care services (including those working in care homes);
3. Police officers, community support officers, and frontline police staff;
4. Uniformed staff in the Fire & Rescue Service;
5. Prison officers, and frontline prison staff;
6. Probation officers;
7. Public sector employed teachers, social workers, planning and building control officers, environmental health officers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and educational psychologists;
8. Or such other critical workers that the council acting reasonably shall approve.

Will employees require training to deliver this proposal? Yes/**No**

Please explain your answer:

No, employees will not require training to deliver this proposal.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Has any engagement /consultation been carried out, or is planned in the future?

Yes/No

Please explain your answer:

Consultation with stakeholder organisations. Workshops took place throughout Autumn 2022 on key housing issues which need to be addressed in Buckinghamshire. Consultees included representatives of statutory organisations, voluntary organisations in Buckinghamshire.

Public and stakeholder consultation to be carried out summer 2023.

Section 2 - Impacts

Please highlight potential impacts (including unintended impacts or consequences) for each protected characteristic*/equality groups below. Where there are negative or positive impacts please give more details of the impact. Where the impacts are unclear please explain why.

Age*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
X			

Details:

The Housing Strategy will contain the following actions related to older people:

- To achieve the targets for developing affordable housing options as set out in the Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022.
- Work with registered provider partners to understand role played by sheltered housing in the area and whether some should be remodelled to better meet current needs.

The Housing Strategy will contain the following actions related to younger people:

- Explore ways of increasing the number of one bed properties available in the private and social rented sectors
- Co-produce a housing options guide for younger people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); ensure appropriate advice and sign-posting is available to make good choices.

Disability*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
X			

Details:

The Housing Strategy will contain the following actions related to physical disability:

- Achieve the targets for developing affordable housing options as set out in the Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- Carry out a monitoring and evaluation exercise to ensure the adaptations process is efficient and effective, including work delivered through Disabled Facilities Grant

The Housing Strategy will contain actions related to mental health:

- To achieve the targets for developing affordable housing options as set out in the *Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022*.

The Housing Strategy will contain actions related to learning disabilities/autism:

- To achieve the targets for developing affordable housing options as set out in the *Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022*.

Pregnancy & maternity*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
		X	

Details: - The Housing Strategy aims to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes in Buckinghamshire. A disproportionately high number of households with children headed by a lone parent approach Buckinghamshire Council for assistance under homelessness legislation.

Race & Ethnicity*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
		X	

Details: The Housing Strategy will contain actions related to Race and Ethnicity:

- Buckinghamshire has become substantially more ethnically diverse between 2011 and 2021. A research exercise will be carried out to assess whether this change generates any particular housing needs.

Marriage & Civil Partnership*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
			X

Details: No particular impacts related to Marriage and Civil Partnership have been identified in the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2023-2028.

Religion & Belief*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
			X

Details: No particular impacts related to Religion and Belief have been identified in the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Sex*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
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Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

X

Details: The Housing Strategy aims to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes in Buckinghamshire.

- A disproportionately high number households with children headed by a lone parent approach Buckinghamshire Council for assistance under homelessness legislation. Lone parents are mostly female.
- A disproportionately high number of single males require assistance with finding suitable and affordable homes.

Sexual Orientation*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
			X

Details: No particular impacts related to Sexual Orientation have been identified in the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Gender Reassignment*

Positive	Negative	Unclear	None
			X

Details: No particular impacts related to Gender Reassignment have been identified in the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Do you anticipate any impacts on military families/veterans in relation to the Armed Forces Act 2021 requirements on local authorities to have due regard to the Armed forces Covenant? Yes

Please explain your answer: The Housing Strategy aims to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes in Buckinghamshire. This will include homes for low cost home ownership. Under government guidelines, military families and veterans must be given priority for low cost home ownership homes.

Are there any other additional groups/impacts that the EqIA should evaluate in relation to the proposal? Yes

Details: The Housing Strategy includes actions to improve the housing options for older people and people with a range of disabilities. It also includes an action to improve housing options for key workers. These could have an indirect beneficial impact upon Carers.

The Housing Strategy contains also actions which aim to improve the supply of affordable housing throughout the county e.g. targeted use of council resources to improve supply which may have a positive impact on those facing rural isolation.

The Housing Strategy aims to increase the availability of good quality affordable homes in Buckinghamshire. The provision of more affordable homes, especially those at the lower Social Rent levels, will benefit households in receipt of lower incomes. The provision of



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

more homes for special needs groups is intended to benefit those who experience social deprivation.

Section 3 – Is a full assessment required?

If you have answered yes to any of the initial assessment questions in section 1 of this EqIA, or have indicated a negative or unclear impact in section 2, it is likely you will need to complete part B of the EqIA form. Should you need guidance as to whether a full EqIA is needed at this time please contact Maria Damigos or Natalie Donhou Morley before continuing.

Following completion of part A, is part B completion required?

X Yes

- No
- Not required at this time

Explain your answer:

This is major strategy for Buckinghamshire Council so it requires completion of part B.

Have you completed an DPIA for this project/change? Yes/No

(As you are completing an EqIA, you may also require a DPIA - for more information please contact dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

This strategy does not involve any use of personal information.

Part B (Full assessment) - Section 5 – Further information

Will there be an impact on any other functions, services or policies? If so, please provide more detail:

Yes. The Housing Strategy relates to all of the following corporate policies, strategies and position statements:

- Buckinghamshire Corporate Plan 2020-2025
- The forthcoming Buckinghamshire Local Plan
- Buckinghamshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2025
- Opportunity Bucks
- Buckinghamshire Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021
- Buckinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Review and Strategy 2022-2025
- Buckinghamshire First Homes Interim Position Statement
- Buckinghamshire Council Housing Allocations Policy
- Buckinghamshire Tenancy Strategy.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Are there any potential barriers to implementing changes to your service/strategy/policy/ project?

The strategy will be implemented by an action plan which will be updated on an annual basis. The methods for overcoming barriers to implementing individual actions will be included in the action plans, and if needed, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for individual actions.

Section 6 – Information gathering – what do you need to know about your customers and making a judgement about potential impacts on them?

What data do you already have about your service users, or the people your policy or strategy will have an impact on, that is broken down by protected characteristics* and equality groups (non-statutory)?

Once all available data has been gathered, it will be examined to check whether there is evidence of any of the following among the projects in the action plan:

- lower take up/participation rates by disadvantaged groups generally;
- lower take up/participation by certain groups,
- eligibility criteria which disadvantages certain groups,
- access to services being reduced or denied to people,
- people facing increased difficulty as a result of a policy/practice,
- a policy/practice resulting in reduced benefits for equality groups.

The information sources which will be used for each Protected Characteristic Group are:

Age*: Census 2021, information on housing schemes for older people in Buckinghamshire, Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022.

Disability*: Census 2021, Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care Accommodation Market Analysis November 2022.

Pregnancy and maternity*: Buckinghamshire Council records of applications for assistance under homelessness legislation.

Race*: Census 2021.

Marriage & Civil Partnership*: Census 2021

Religion or belief*: Census 2021

Sex*: Buckinghamshire Council records of applications for assistance under homelessness legislation, Census 2021, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

Sexual orientation*: Not applicable

Gender re-assignment*: Not applicable

Gender identity: Not applicable



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Carers: *Further research needs to be carried out into sources of information on housing need among key workers.*

Rural isolation: Census 2021, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Census 2021, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

Single parent families: Census 2021, Buckinghamshire Council records of applications for assistance under homelessness legislation.

Poverty (social & economic deprivation): Census 2021, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019.

Military families / veterans: Census 2021, Buckinghamshire Council Housing Register.

Do you need any further information broken down by protected characteristic or equality group to inform this EqIA?

Yes

No

If yes, list here to help you gather data for the action plan in Section 11

Section 7 – Negative effects, impacts or consequences

Is there any potential for or actual direct or indirect discrimination or a disproportionate effect on a protected group or equality group?

Guidance note: Direct discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic, such as sex or race or an equalities group, such as being a carer. For example, someone is not offered a promotion because they're a woman and the job goes to a less qualified man. Indirect discrimination can happen when there are rules or arrangements that apply to a group of employees or job applicants, but in practice are less fair to a certain protected characteristic.

Yes

No

Not sure at this time

What are the potential negative effects, impacts or consequences and how have, or may, they arise:

Guidance note (delete after completion)

Please state what the potential negative impact (s) are – Section 8 allows you to set out any minimising/mitigating actions.

State what the negative impact(s) are for each group, identified in Section 2. In addition, you should also consider and state potential risks associated with your proposal.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Section 8 – Proposals to remove or minimise negative effects, impacts or consequences

How is it proposed to mitigate or minimise the negative effects, impacts or consequences identified in Section 7?

Guidance Note (delete after completion)

No negative impacts are anticipated.

Section 9 - Other factors to take into consideration:

Guidance note (delete after completion)

This should include balancing or other factors for decision makers to take into consideration such as positive impacts (financial or otherwise), costs and resources

Section 10 - Conclusion:

This policy is overarching and is based on improving housing options for those groups identified as being of most need of housing.

Delivery of related documents such as the Housing Strategy Action Plan and Housing allocations policy will be instrumental in ensuring that impacts continue to be monitored

Public consultation will be delivered, with questions to consider equality/agreement with the policy aims and objectives, and data collection will be completed to ensure that a broad spectrum of residents have had an opportunity to engage.

Section 11 - Action Planning

Guidance note (delete after completion)

Where the policy or practice would result in unavoidable or potentially unlawful impacts changes should clearly be made where possible and specific actions should be identified and noted in the action plan. The objectives of the policy or practice should be re-examined to find out if there is an alternative way of meeting the desired objectives without the adverse impact, and potentially creating a positive one.

Where impacts are unavoidable the objective of completing the EqIA and the action plan is to demonstrate that impacts have been considered as part of the decision making process to ensure compliance with the PSED. An example to show how this works - where a council decides to close a care home, if they do so without considering the equalities implications (via an EqIA or otherwise) the decision is extremely likely to be quashed by the Courts on a challenge, as per previous case law. This would happen even if it is almost certain that examination of the equalities implications will have little or no impact on the final decision (e.g. due to a lack of resources to pay for the care home) - because the PSED was not part of the decision making process.



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

A properly completed EqIA should be a full and complete record to show that all equalities implications and the PSED were appropriately considered by the decision maker.

If the adverse impact is potentially unlawful and alternatives cannot be found, the policy or practice may need to be completely redesigned.

Actions to be taken to address negative effects, impacts or consequences and maximise positive impacts	Potential Outcomes	Lead	Timescales
Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for projects within the action plan			

Section 12 - Monitoring Arrangements

What are the plans to monitor the actual and/or final impact? (The EqIA will help anticipate likely effect but final impact may only be known after implementation)

The Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029 and its associated action plans will be monitored and revised on an annual basis.

What are the proposals for reviewing and reporting actual impact

Governance of the strategy will be delegated by Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet.

Section 13 - Part A and B Sign off – (If Part B has not been completed please complete Section 4)

Officer completing Part A and B assessment: [Helen George](#)

Date: [18 May 2023](#), updated [6 July 2023](#)

Equality advice sought from: [Natalie Donhou Morley & Maria Damigos](#) Date: [05/07/2023](#)

Service Director sign off: [Lisa Michelson](#) Date: [6 July 2023](#)

CMT sign off (if deemed necessary by Service Director) sign off: (Please insert name) Date: (Please insert Date)

Next review date: [To be confirmed](#)



Report to Council

Date:	17 April 2024
Title:	Select Committee Annual Report 2023 to 2024
Relevant councillor(s):	All
Author and/or contact officer:	Councillors Ralph Bagge, Steve Bowles, David Carroll, Bill Chapple OBE, Jane MacBean, Julie Ward
Contact Officer:	Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager
Ward(s) affected:	All wards
Recommendations:	For Members to note the Annual Report of the Select Committees 2023 to 2024

1. Executive summary

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

2. Content of report

- 2.1 A number of key pieces of work and achievements have been made across all 6 Select Committees and the annual report focusses on these.
- 2.2 The 2023 to 2024 Annual Scrutiny Report is attached at Appendix 1.

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Annual Scrutiny Report 2023-24



Foreword

As Chairmen of the Select Committees, we are delighted to present our Annual Report for 2023/24. We would like to thank all Buckinghamshire Council officers and staff working within our partner organisations for their continued dedication and hard work over the past year.

Our Select Committees are cross-party and non-political with the overall aim to improve services and outcomes for residents by holding decision-makers to account. This report summarises the main issues which have been reviewed and challenged throughout the year and highlights some of the key achievements. We have completed a number of in-depth pieces of work – a Review of Pathways for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and two Rapid Reviews into Streetworks and Statutory Undertakers and The Dementia Journey, which looked at services to support people with dementia and their carers, with recommendations being considered by both Cabinet and the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Scrutiny of the council's budget took place as usual in January and resulted in 5 recommendations being made to Cabinet before the final budget was agreed. This year we have also undertaken a Joint Review into Planning for Future Primary Healthcare in Buckinghamshire, which was undertaken by members of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing and Health & Adult Social Care Select Committees. This will be presented to Cabinet in April.

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



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



Cllr Steve Bowles,
Chairman, Communities &
Localism Select Committee



Cllr Ralph Bagge,
Chairman, Finance &
Resources Select
Committee



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



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



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

What is Scrutiny?

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

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

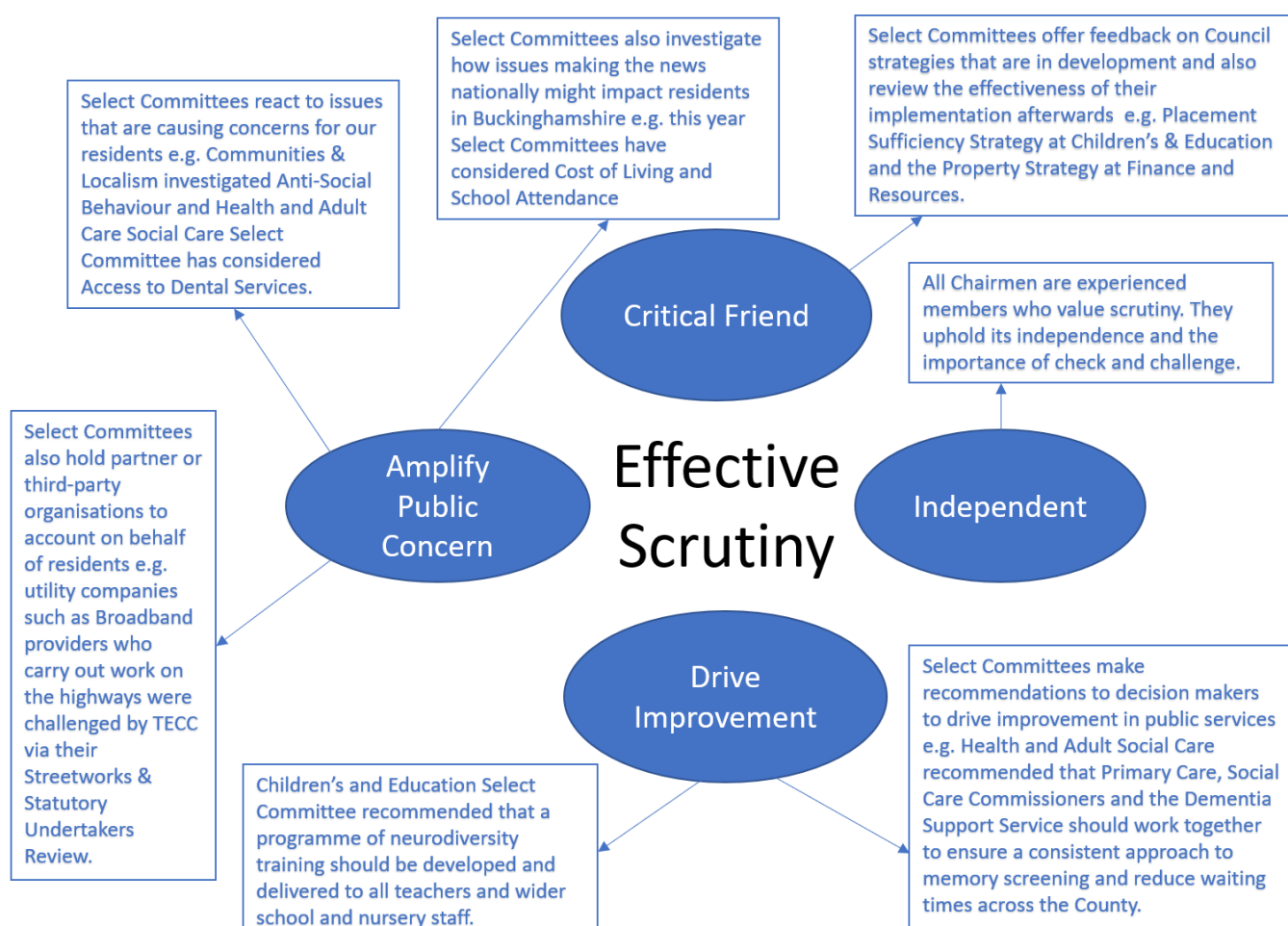
There are also specific powers for scrutiny to hold the NHS to account within health scrutiny.

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

What do we need for Effective Scrutiny?

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

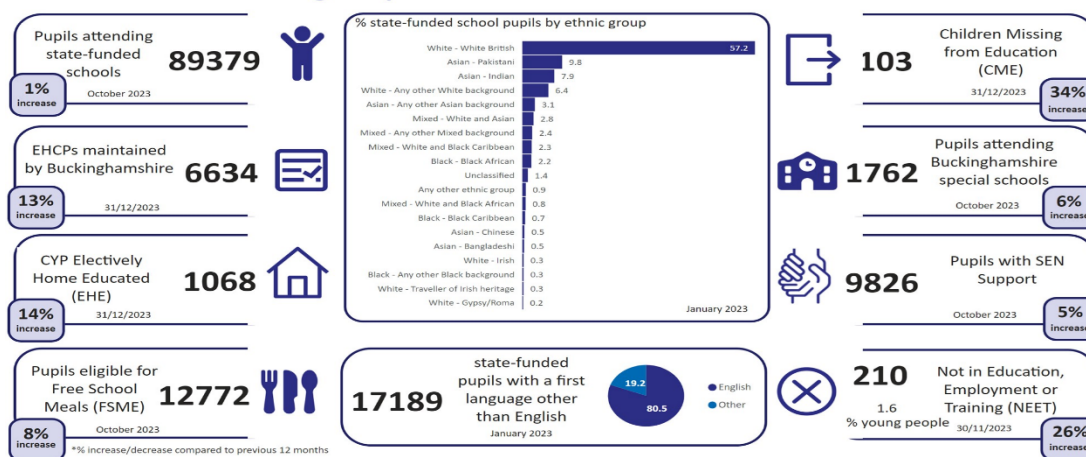
- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services



Children's & Education Select Committee

The Children's and Education Select Committee has an important role to play in scrutinizing social care and education provision for both young adults and children in Buckinghamshire. Many children who come into the council's care or who receive other support services have increasingly complex needs and it is vital that the council can respond with appropriate services in a timely way. Children's social care was greatly impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic and the significant increase in demand on services both in numbers and complexity has continued since then. These demands have created service pressures this year due in part to the increasing child population and the increases in the cost of living.

Our Children and Young People



Transformation Programme

This year the service launched its comprehensive transformation programme for service change which will be implemented to ensure that children and young people are at the centre of decision-making at every stage of service delivery.

The transformation process aims to rebalance the skills and knowledge of the workforce equitably to ensure children and young people receive the right support from appropriately located and qualified practitioners that meet their needs.

Over time the transformation process will create a locality-based model leading to the creation of a whole-system approach with multi-agency professionals who understand the localised needs and pressures within their communities and effectively influence how the resources are used to positively impact outcomes for children and families in a joined-up way.

In addition to the transformation programme, this year the Select Committee has continued to monitor and review the work underway on several important topics, including work on SEND.

Topics the committee has focussed on:

- Children's Services six monthly update
- Annual Report of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board
- SEND Improvement Programme follow up
- Education Standards Report 2023
- Youth Offending Service Update following an inspection
- Placement Strategy

Pathways for Children With SEND

A Select Committee review group investigated the pathways to finding information for children and young people with SEND when first trying to access services and support. This involved a) assessing views from different sources with regards to the availability and accessibility of information required by parents to gain support from services for their children and b) gaining understanding on information for services, specifically relating to getting help before a diagnosis for autism or ADHD and accessing support for anxiety and depression.

In September 2023 the Select Committee review group took their final report to Cabinet recommending various service improvements including revisions to the website “The Local Offer” and development of both a neurodiversity resource pack and a county wide communications plan for SEND. The report was very well-received and the recommendations made by the review group have now been incorporated into the wider SEND Improvement Programme.

New school Attendance Duties

The government guidance “Working Together to Improve School Attendance” published in May 2022 and applied from September 2022 gave details of the importance of high levels of school attendance, and the expectations now placed on both schools and local authorities to address the issue of low attendance. Research has shown that levels of attendance impact on levels of attainment at key stages 2 and 4 with the highest achievement levels found in the highest attendance groups. Dame Rachel De Souza, Children’s Commissioner for England has called for urgent action to address absenteeism.

In line with this, the committee received a report In March detailing the new duties required for schools and local authorities to monitor and provide information to central government on school non-attendance figures.

The Select Committee agreed to commission a review group to investigate the impact of school non-attendance in Buckinghamshire and what measures can be taken to improve this across all our schools. The evidence gathering phase commenced in March and the review group will develop a report detailing their key findings and recommendations to be presented to Cabinet in the summer.



Communities & Localism Select Committee

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

Issues the committee has focussed on

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

- Country Parks
- VCS Grant Overview
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- CCTV Strategy
- Opportunity Bucks Update
- Cost of Living
- Devolution

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FOR ALL**

Healthy Libraries

The Select Committee received a detailed and interesting presentation from Libraries and Public Health on the Healthy Libraries initiative that had been piloted in 7 libraries across Buckinghamshire.

This was a great example of joint working between the Council's teams and also wider partners such as Buckinghamshire Mind, Wycombe Wanderers, Alzheimer's Society and The Reading Agency and Members learned that 64 events had been held to raise awareness of different health issues including menopause workshops, baby sleep advice sessions and dementia action week talks. In addition, NHS Health Checks were offered in the libraries and blood pressure monitors were available to use in the libraries and to be taken out on loan.

Before the meeting Members were able to view touch sensitive projector mats and an example of a 'cosy corner' which have been set up in libraries to provide a friendly and welcoming space for people living with dementia and their carers.



Community Board Review – 12 month update

Members received a final update on the implementation of the recommendations that had been put forward to Cabinet in the Community Board review report in May 2022.

The Select Committee was very pleased to hear that following the appointment of a new Highways contractor in April 2023, a new six step process has been introduced to identify local traffic schemes that would be deliverable and affordable for Community Boards.

This was an area that had caused a lot of frustration for Community Boards in the past. A robust system of evaluating Community Board projects had also been introduced.

Members were also encouraged by the news that a Communications Strategy introduced in January 2023 alongside social media training for all Community Board Managers had already led to an increase in social media followers. Members also acknowledged that face to face events had been well-attended and appreciated by local people.



Community Boards are due to be reviewed again this year, in light of the electoral boundary changes which will come in at the May 2025 Buckinghamshire Council elections. The Select Committee welcomed the Cabinet Members' continued commitment to Community Boards as the local face of the Council and will be keen to discuss the outcomes of the review.

Digital Exclusion Review

By 'digital exclusion' we're referring to situations in which people are at a material disadvantage through some lack of access to digital technologies, whether that's down to a lack of motivation, awareness of the benefits, skills, trust or confidence, an inability to afford devices or services, or the quality of the available connectivity.

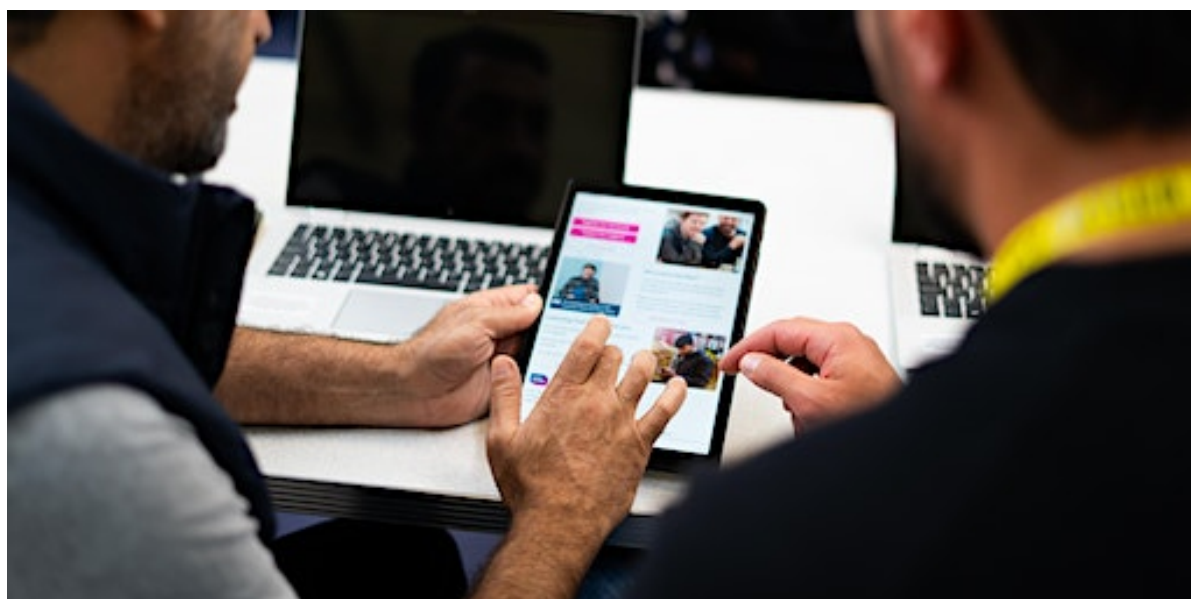
From the LGA report 'The role of Councils in tackling Digital Exclusion', Jan 2023

The Select Committee agreed to undertake a review into Digital Exclusion in Buckinghamshire with a view to understanding the barriers that some people experience in trying to get online and to investigate how the Council and other partners can support people in this area. The review group, led by Cllr Ashley Waite, has carried out a number of evidence gathering sessions and have spoken to officers from across the Council and also to Community Groups to explore three key themes:

- ACCESS – quality of digital infrastructure available
- ABILITY – digital skills and confidence/motivation
- AFFORDABILITY – impact of device or data poverty

As part of the review, Councillors have also visited some Adult Learning classes and a Digital Drop-in Café which is hosted by Buckinghamshire Libraries but staffed by NHS partners.

During the final stage of the evidence gathering, the review group will speak to other local authorities about the initiatives that have been effective in supporting digital inclusion in their areas, in order to gain insight into valuable best practice ideas. Once this has been completed, a report with recommendations will be developed and presented to Cabinet later this year.




Finance & Resources Select Committee

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

Key areas of work during 2023/24

- Quarterly Budget Monitoring
- Estates Programme
- External Property Companies
- Customer First – the customer experience framework for the Council
- Agency Spend
- Absence in the Workplace and Absence Management
- Energy from Waste Income
- IT One Programme
- Treasury Management Investments

 **Buckinghamshire Council**
@BucksCouncil

? Don't miss out on the chance to have your questions answered in our budget scrutiny meetings! ✉ Email them to budget.scrutiny@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Find and watch the meetings at: orlo.uk/jE26L

#BucksBudget



Budget Scrutiny Inquiry

This year’s Inquiry was undertaken in January and is a major focus of the Select Committee’s annual Work Programme. Meetings were held on 8th, 9th and 11th January 2024 and the Leader of the Council, each Cabinet Member, Corporate Directors and senior finance staff were questioned on their draft budget proposals. This year the Inquiry Group was presented with the task of challenging a budget that had little room for manoeuvre due to increased service demands, and complexities. Questions from the public were received via email and put to the Cabinet Members.

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

The Inquiry report contained **5 recommendations** of which 3 were agreed and 1 agreed in part. The recommendations included:

- Proactive intervention in the Home to School Transport market through capital investment.
- Reports to future F&R Select Committee meetings regarding:
 - Home to School Transport costs and modelling
 - The Dedicated Schools Grant deficit

“I would like to thank the cross-party Budget Scrutiny Committee who not only scrutinized the budget but put forward many proposals and recommendations on how the budget could be improved.”

*Cllr Martin Tett (Full Council on 21 February 2024)
Leader of Buckinghamshire Council*

It has been nearly four years since the formation of Buckinghamshire Council in which the Cabinet has had to set a number of challenging budgets due to factors such as the pandemic, high inflation and global conflict. National Government uncertainty is also starting to feature in the budget. The Inquiry Group recognise how difficult a task it has been to put a balanced budget together and believe in the value that Budget Scrutiny week offers to residents and backbench Members.

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

Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

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

Key Areas of Work during 2023/24

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

- Buckinghamshire Local Plan
- Visitor Economy
- Planning Performance
- Regeneration Framework & Strategies
- Community Infrastructure Levy & Section 106
- Housing Standards – Damp & Mould
- National Planning Policy Framework Changes



The Legacy of 'Everyone in' and Homelessness in Buckinghamshire

The Select Committee decided to look into the success of 'Everyone In' and what lessons could be learnt from it. A cross-party review group examined the work that went into making 'Everyone In' a success in Buckinghamshire and also the issues that have arisen more recently as the country has returned to 'business as usual' after the Covid-19 pandemic. Evidence gathering sessions were held in Autumn 2023, with the last one concluding in December. Council officers, partners and charities were invited to give evidence to enable members to gain valuable insight into the support that is available for homeless people.

The review group spoke to the Council teams, as well as partners including Thames Valley Police, Aylesbury Homeless Action Group and Connection Support. A report on the review groups findings and their recommendations will be presented to Cabinet shortly.

Joint Review into Planning for Primary Healthcare

In a joint review with the Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee, the Select Committee has investigated how the Council's Planning staff work collaboratively with Health partners in order to deliver additional capacity in existing surgeries or new surgery buildings, often via Section 106 or CIL funding associated with new housing developments.

Over two days of evidence gathering, members gained valuable insight into the complexities of NHS funding for estates and a clear disconnect between the Council's Local Plan cycles and the ICB's forward planning. With limited resources an issue for both the Council and the ICB, there are no simple answers but a report with the review groups key findings and recommendations to both the Council and the ICB will be considered at Cabinet in April.



Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee

The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee holds health and social care decision-makers to account and acts as a critical friend to the health and social care sector. Part of the Select Committee's work is around challenging proposals for health and social care service change to ensure the best possible outcomes for Buckinghamshire residents. This has continued to be an incredibly challenging year for the council's adult social care services and health partners with increased demand for services and budgetary pressures. The Committee comprises 15 councillors and a representative from Healthwatch Bucks, who sits on the committee as a non-voting Member.

“The Buckinghamshire GP Provider Alliance (GPPA) values the vital role played by the Buckinghamshire Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee (HASC) in holding health partners accountable and improving services for our community. We have appreciated the opportunity to contribute to important pieces of work including the ‘Development of Primary Care Networks Inquiry’ and the ‘Planning for Future Primary Healthcare in Buckinghamshire Rapid Review’. We value the constructive relationship between HASC and the GPPA, recognising the importance of scrutiny in driving positive change and the shared commitment of both bodies to enhancing services and advocating for the needs of our residents.”

Dr George Gavriel, Director, Bucks GP Provider Alliance

Key issues looked at during 2023-24

The Committee has reviewed and challenged key areas including:

- Health and Social Care Winter Plan – representatives from across the health and social care system attended a meeting in October to present the plan and focus on areas of improvement for this year
- Performance of the South Central Ambulance Service following the latest CQC inspection
- Improvement plans for Hospital Discharge and Intermediate Care, including the introduction of Care Hubs
- Director of Public Health's annual report which focussed on mental health
- Adult Social Care Transformation Plans
- Maternity Services
- Dentistry services across Buckinghamshire
- Six month monitoring of the recommendations from the Dementia Review report
- Twelve month monitoring of the recommendations from the Primary Care Network Development Inquiry report

Key achievements in 2023-24

Joint Review into Future Planning for Primary Care Healthcare

In July, the Committee agreed to undertake a joint review with the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee. Two days of evidence gathering took place in September and October and a report was produced which made 12 recommendations, aimed at the Council and the Integrated Care Board.

The report highlighted the significant challenges faced by health partners in planning for future provision, including short planning cycles, regular changes in NHS services and structures, lack of funding for GP estates and a complex property valuation mechanism. The report will be discussed at Cabinet in April.

“Primary Care in Buckinghamshire is one of the most important pathways for our residents when accessing services to help them remain healthy, happy and prosperous. With significant housing growth expected within Buckinghamshire over the coming years, there is a real need to have a robust delivery plan for primary care estates which aligns with the predicted housing growth to ensure the population’s health needs are met.”

Cllr Isobel Darby and Cllr Chris Poll, Joint Chairmen of the Review Group

Rapid Review into Dementia Services Pathways

In February 2023, the Committee agreed to undertake a rapid review into dementia services and the pathways for those living with dementia and the support available for carers. The Review Group held 3 full days of evidence gathering in March to hear from key stakeholders and the report was presented to Cabinet and health partners in July.



“We support the NHS, in recognising dementia as a key priority in its Long-Term Plan and hope the findings and recommendations in this report will help to raise awareness of dementia and lead to an integrated health and social care dementia support service to meet the individual needs of all those living with dementia and their carers on their dementia journey.”

Cllr Carol Heap, Review Chairman

The evidence shows that Buckinghamshire is currently under-funded in its dementia support service and there is significant unmet need across the existing dementia pathways which needs to be addressed. There needs to be a renewed focus on raising awareness of dementia, reducing the stigma, increasing diagnosis rates in care homes and the community, as well as providing an integrated dementia support service.

The report highlights the importance of partnership working to support the person with dementia, their families and carers within local communities. There are many examples of outstanding services in Buckinghamshire but we need to do more, particularly in supporting the voluntary sector to deliver the necessary support services within local communities.

The report put forward 18 recommendations which were grouped together under the NHS England Dementia Well Pathway which has been adopted by Buckinghamshire – Preventing, Diagnosing, Supporting, Living and Dying Well. The recommendations were aimed at the council, health partners, voluntary and community groups.



Development of Primary Care Networks Inquiry

During 2022, the Committee held an inquiry into the development of Primary Care Networks (PCNs) in Buckinghamshire. A small group of Members held evidence gathering sessions with key stakeholders between January and June. The report was agreed by Committee Members and then presented to Cabinet and the Integrated Care Board in November.



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

The 6 month and 12 month recommendation monitoring has been to the Committee with a further presentation of the PCN Annual Report at the April Committee meeting, detailing specific evidence of improvements in developing PCNs in Buckinghamshire.

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust's Annual Quality Account

In May, a working group of HASC Members prepared a statement for inclusion in the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust's annual quality account.

Whilst the HASC statement acknowledged the key achievements and highlights for the Hospital Trust, it also focussed on areas of concern and areas of improvement, including falls, Emergency Department waiting times and pressures on Hospital Discharge as well as ongoing concerns around pressures ulcers.

Below is a link to Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust's Quality Account 2022-23.

[Quality-Account-2022-23.pdf \(buckshealthcare.nhs.uk\)](#)



Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) Primary Care Strategy

The BOB ICB prepared a draft primary care strategy which was part of a public engagement exercise to gain feedback on the key priorities outlined in the strategy. HASC Select Committee Members reviewed the draft strategy and a response was submitted by the Chairman, on behalf of the HASC, to the ICB at the end of February.

Members welcome the primary care strategy but remain concerned about the ambitions detailed in the strategy. The challenges in bringing together health and social care partners on this transformation journey are significant and the risks in being unable to deliver the priorities are a key concern for Members.

Official opening of the Waddesdon Wing, Stoke Mandeville Hospital

A small group of Committee Members visited the new Waddesdon Wing at Stoke Mandeville Hospital which had been built to provide a new Children's department and a new Maternity and Gynaecology department. The Children's department provides inpatient services for children as well as outpatient appointments and day surgery. Members were shown around by a consultant paediatrician, who explained that clinicians, working with the architects, had been greatly involved with the design of the facilities, and the whole team were delighted with the outcome.



There was a special area dedicated to the needs of children with mental health issues.

The Committee also had a tour of the new Maternity and Gynaecology department, where staff had also been involved in the design. Both the Maternity facilities and the Children's department were very impressive. Staff and patients were very appreciative of the new building and facilities and spoke highly of the associated benefits for patients.

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

Buckinghamshire is part of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (BOB ICS). Representatives from the 5 local authorities within the ICS footprint have set-up a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) to review and challenge the strategies and projects being delivered by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) - a statutory NHS body to manage the finances and delivery of health services across the ICS.



The JHOSC has held two formal Committee meetings during this council year – June and January. In the June meeting, Members reviewed the Integrated Care Strategy, the 5 year forward plan and the ICB's engagement strategy. At its January meeting, Members heard from the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the BOB ICB, discussed the draft primary care strategy, received a presentation from the 5 Healthwatch's on how they are working across the ICS and an update on the ICB's communications and engagement strategy.

Following the Committee meeting, Members of the JHOSC submitted a formal response to the ICB's draft primary care strategy. A small group of JHOSC Members set-up a working group to review the ICB's Digital and Data strategy and prepared a response for ICB colleagues to consider as part of the strategy's implementation plan.



Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (BLMK JHOSC)

Buckinghamshire Council has a seat on the BLMK JHOSC, a joint health scrutiny committee to challenge the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System. The first formal Committee meeting took place in November and Members reviewed the ICB's 5 year forward plan at this meeting.

Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee


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


Topics considered this year

- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy: Annual Review
- Tree Planting Programme
- Local Transport Plan 5
- School Transport
- New Highways Model
- East West Rail
- HS2 Ltd
- School and SEND Transport
- Active Travel and Buckinghamshire Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan
- Inquiry recommendation updates regarding water pollution in rivers and chalk streams.

Achievements

- Frequent engagement by members of the public with questions on agenda items.
- Held HS2 Ltd to account in March 2024 regarding latest works and concerns on the Highways, lorry movements, EWR interface and collaborative working, tree planting and maintenance, water resource and flood risk. Members took the opportunity to robustly question HS2 representatives. The Chairman will be sending a follow up letter to HS2 Ltd with a request for further information.
- East West Rail were questioned in February 2024 when they attended Select Committee to discuss work in Buckinghamshire. Members took the opportunity to question issues such as road repairs, biodiversity net gain and proposed plans for diesel rolling stock. The Chairman followed up with a letter to the Cabinet Member for Transport regarding the Aylesbury Spur.



Climate Resilience  EWR Alliance

- 8 Compensatory Flood Storage Areas created (CFSA)
- Climate change allowances of 40% for rainfall increase and 65-70% for river flow increase on 1:100 year event
- All railway drainage has been renewed throughout the route and is sized to maintain existing outfall rates.
- Electrical equipment located outside flood zones and specified to operate at higher temperatures

Drainage Attenuation

CFSA

Renewed Drainage

Extract from EWR presentation in February 2024

Streetworks and Statutory Undertakers in Buckinghamshire

The Select Committee had concerns that the amount of streetworks had been increasing in Buckinghamshire and this was negatively impacting residents travelling on or living alongside the Highways network. With this in mind, the overarching aim of the rapid review was to understand the extent of the current situation in Buckinghamshire and explore possibilities for improvement. In October 2023, the Chairman, Councillor Bill Chapple OBE, presented the inquiry group report to Cabinet.

The report made 10 recommendations, 9 agreed and 1 agreed in-part, across four key themes:

- Streetworks Team
- Statutory Undertakers
- Communication
- Lobbying

An important part of the evidence-gathering process was an in-person meeting with representatives from different statutory undertakers across a range of industries that operate across Buckinghamshire's Highways network. Questioning was robust and the companies were held to account whilst maintaining a constructive tone.



Looking Ahead: Flooding

The TECC Select Committee intends to commence a working group on the topic of flooding in Summer 2024.



Example of overland flow from fields:

Thornborough Section 19 Flood Investigation Final Technical Report - July 2022

Promoting Scrutiny

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

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

Public Engagement

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

Get informed

Watch a webcast

The Select Committees are webcast and can be watched live or up to six months after the meeting on the Council's website. Between 15 June 2023 and 29 February 2024, the Select Committees have had a total of 3157 webcast views (including Budget Scrutiny Inquiry meetings). This is an increase from a total of 2717 in the previous Council year. In addition, the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (BOB JHOSC) has had a total of 176 views across the two meetings that have been held to date.

Get involved

Contribute to an inquiry

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

Ask a public question

Public questions are an opportunity for the public to ask questions on agenda items that have an impact on their local community or the county as a whole. Between 15 June 2023 and 29 February 2024, 22 public questions have been asked at Select Committees and we would encourage anyone who has an interest in items on the agenda to submit a question. For more information, visit the [Council's website](#).



Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

Strategic Finance

Budget Scrutiny took place in January with a number of question and answer sessions held on the overall budget proposals and financial strategy. The budget for 2024/25 was approved by Full Council on 21 February.

Whilst still in very uncertain times the assumptions used in setting the budget remain valid but as contained within the papers considered by Council in February there are still significant risks and uncertainties in the short and medium term. The new financial year starts with the Council having a balanced medium term financial plan for the next three years.

The final outturn position for 2023/24 is still being finalised and will be considered by Cabinet in due course, however despite significant challenges and pressures from rising demand and inflation the prudent budget setting and strong financial management of this Council means that we are not facing unsustainable overspends.

South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR)

Following a Cabinet funding decision on 25th March, we have taken another step forward in the construction of the South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR), with this key infrastructure project due to open to traffic in 2026.

SEALR will see the construction of 1.1 miles of dual carriageway including three new roundabout junctions. It is an essential part of the Orbital Link Road which, when completed, will provide a route around Aylesbury, easing congestion through the town centre. The new link road will join the A413 Wendover Road with the Stoke Mandeville Relief Road, which is being constructed by HS2 Ltd.

We are coordinating the SEALR scheme with the project being delivered in phases. Construction works on Wendover Road and Lower Road have already started to deliver two new roundabouts. Work is continuing to link Lower Road with the new Stoke Mandeville Relief Road and the future South West Aylesbury Link Road.

Later in the year, work is planned to start to connect Wendover Road and Lower Road, which will include the construction of a new bridge over the Aylesbury – Marylebone railway line.

South West Link Road

We continue to work with HS2, Network Rail, developers and landowners in South West Aylesbury to ensure that the complex infrastructure required in the area is able to support the needs of existing and future residents.

Eastern Link Road

After a decision at Cabinet in January, the Woodlands and Eastern Link Road project is progressing to market this Spring and officers will report back in due course.

Aylesbury electricity Grid Reinforcement

The Aylesbury Grid Reinforcement HIF project has been restructured due to legislative change, with UK Power Networks now securing land and planning to undertake critical works later in the year to secure the increased electricity capacity needed for the growth of Aylesbury.

Buckinghamshire Devolution Agreement

As part of the Chancellor's Spring Budget, Buckinghamshire has been offered a Devolution Framework Agreement. The main benefits of this to us will be the opportunity from 2026 to take control over the Adult Education Budget. This will give us local freedom to direct provision to support our local needs as identified in the Opportunity Bucks programme.

Negotiations will continue with government over the coming months, and I expect to bring details of the proposed secondary legislation to secure devolution for Buckinghamshire later in the year.

Buckinghamshire Place-Based Growth Board

The Growth Board met in February and March to preside over the integration of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) into the Council and set up of the new Enterprise and Investment Fund. The Board is also taking an oversight of the Enterprise Zone programme for Buckinghamshire, income from which is being ringfenced into the new Economic Development Investment Fund. The Board is developing the priorities and criteria for this funding. Additionally, the Board is overseeing the new funding agreement between the council and Buckinghamshire Business First for the provision of business support and Skills Hub functions.

Buckinghamshire LEP

The LEP met for the last time on 29 February when the Transfer Agreement of the LEP's assets to the Council was agreed. The contribution that the LEP has made to the economic growth agenda in the county is appreciated as well as the commitment of its staff and private sector Board members over the years. My particular thanks go to Andrew Smith who has chaired the LEP since 2015 and been a great champion for Buckinghamshire and who will continue to sit on the Growth Board as my Vice

Chair. Economic growth in Buckinghamshire now looks forward to a new phase as part of the Council and under the strategic direction of the new Enterprise and Investment Board.

Buckinghamshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The UKSPF programme enters its final year of delivery in 2024-2025, with a number of new initiatives scheduled to launch particularly around the people and skills theme. For more information, please visit: [About the UK Shared Prosperity Fund \(UKSPF\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Bucks Rural Business Grants

The Bucks Rural Business Grant fund focuses on small-scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. Its primary objectives are to create jobs, support business growth, and drive economic prosperity within Buckinghamshire.

The Bucks Rural Business Grants programme opened for applications on a rolling basis in June 2023 and has so far supported 10 rural projects to secure new equipment or upgrade premises. Funding has been used for a range of projects including providing new equipment ranging from fermentation tanks and canning lines to dog laser therapy as well as facilities to support tourism businesses.

Eligible businesses can apply for grants ranging from £2,500 to £300,000, with a requirement to match-fund a portion of the grant amount. Projects must be completed and funding claimed by 31 March 2025. For further information, please visit: [About the Bucks Rural Business Grant \(BRBG\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

England's Economic Heartland

England's Economic Heartland (EEH) is currently producing a series of 'investment brochures' which will be used to advocate for priority transport schemes in the region. This includes improvements to connectivity in Aylesbury, including the ring roads, and the East West Rail link to Milton Keynes; and improvements to the A404/M40. The brochures, which build upon EEH's body of evidence alongside new economic analysis, are due to go before EEH's Board in May. The Board will also consider EEH's next two connectivity studies, which focus on north-south movements between Northampton and southern Buckinghamshire and east-west movements between Buckinghamshire and east Hertfordshire.

A major work stream is also progressing on improving bus journeys and patronage in the region – this includes support for local authorities on refreshing their bus service improvement plans. With around a year to go until East West Rail opens between Oxford and Milton Keynes (including a station at Winslow), the most recent meetings of EEH and the East West Main Line Partnership (chaired by Cllr Steven Broadbent) have been given briefings on the East West Railway Company's emerging 'door-to-door strategy'. Both boards were clear that the next phase of work should be developed as a collaboration with local authorities, who must receive the appropriate funding to ensure the strategy's ambitions can be delivered.

Buckinghamshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2024-29

The Skills Strategy Board, reporting to the Place-Based Growth Board, brings together key partnerships and intelligence to progress the county's approach to increasing productivity through skills and employment interventions. The Skills Strategy Board has developed a Buckinghamshire-wide Skills and Employment Strategy 2024-29, to focus efforts and design the approach to increasing productivity through skills and employment interventions. The vision for the Strategy is:

Buckinghamshire: A place with a future-focused, agile and dynamic employment and skills system that assures the needs of employers, individuals and communities are met in order to contribute to the growth and productivity of the local economy.

The Strategy was formally adopted in January 2024 and was launched at Buckinghamshire College Group on the 12 January 2024, alongside the launch of the wave 4 Skills Bootcamps.

Homes for Ukraine

With the second anniversary of the conflict in Ukraine, our commitment to supporting Ukrainians living in Buckinghamshire remains consistent. We have used the Local Authority Housing funding from Government to recently purchase a block of flats in Chesham for nine Ukrainian families. The families moved into these flats in February, having previously been in temporary accommodation or about to be made homeless.

These properties will remain the property of Buckinghamshire Council and when no longer needed for Ukrainians will be available for us to use as needed.

Afghan Resettlement

On Friday 8 March, our Chairman, Councillor Birchley and the Lord Lieutenant, The Countess Howe, celebrated the conclusion of creative art workshops for several female Afghan refugees who have settled in Buckinghamshire, with the launch of an exhibition of their incredible work at Discover Bucks Museum. The workshops enabled these refugees to connect with each other, share their experiences, and support them to learn English, whilst also producing artwork reflecting their personal experiences.

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

SESL wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport setting out the need for greater investment in the roads network and highway maintenance. SESL also wrote to the MP Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Chancellor regarding the state of strategic authority finance.

Leaders, chief executives, and colleagues met the new Minister of Local Government, to discuss priorities and challenges for strategic authorities. That meeting was followed up by a further meeting of SESL and the Minister.

Leaders, chief executives and colleagues explored the use of artificial intelligence in preventative services and more widely across council functions.

House of Lords Public Services Select Committee

As Chair of the Local Government Association's People and Places Board, I gave evidence to the [House of Lords Public Services Committee](#) on Wednesday 7 February on the topic of the transition from education to employment for young disabled people, alongside officers from Essex County Council and Bristol City Council.



Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

Libraries



The libraries have been involved in several cultural and creative projects, including Rekindle, a three-year project funded by the Arts Council England, which aims to bring culturally relevant and creatively vibrant activities to libraries. A recent highlight of the project included 'The Head Gardener', a show about gardening and mental health, which toured nine libraries in February and March with performances which focused on plant species and garden design, as well as singing a few songs. 95% of attendees rated the quality of the show as high or very high.

The Healthy Libraries programme is working with Public Health to update the Reading Well for dementia collection and to provide dementia information points and resources in partnership with the Alzheimer Society Local Service.

The Prison Library Programme is expanding, with a successful Arts Council England bid to deliver a Writers-in-Residency Programme at HMP Grendon, that started in March.

Culture

Buckinghamshire Archives has begun delivery of a project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund which aims to research and share the stories of LGBTQ+ people and communities in the county during the Victorian era. The project will recruit and train over 20 volunteers, who to date have been researching archival sources and oral histories, and have uncovered some fascinating and hidden

stories, such as the trial of Oscar Wilde's lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, in Aylesbury, and the life of Annie Kenney, a suffragette and lesbian activist, in Lacey Green. The project has also been engaging with LGBTQ+ organisations, schools and heritage partners, and will produce a website, a podcast, an exhibition and a toolkit for teachers.

The Culture Development Team are supporting projects in Opportunity Bucks ward areas to enhance the quality of the public realm, and a schools programme linked to the upcoming Paralympic Games. WhizzFizz, the county's flagship cultural festival, is co-producing events with 35 community groups across Buckinghamshire for later this year.

Half-term activities at Discover Bucks Museum and Wycombe Museum included 80s inspired craft activities, Woollywonka's crochet workshops and felting fun. Wycombe Swan's Spring Youth Project performed Les Misérables on 17 and 18 February to a sold-out audience.



Wool experimentation, half-term activity at Wycombe Museum



Wycombe Swan, Spring Youth Project

Easter holiday events included an Easter Egg Hunt and craft activities at Wycombe Museum and Family Activity Days at Discover Bucks Museum. Wycombe Museum also hosted sessions for home educators, toddler forest school workshops and a family fun civil war reenactment day. Waterside Theatre held 'sold out' Make-Up Masterclass and drawing and painting workshops in the Norman Bragg studio.

Discover Buckinghamshire Museum is currently hosting 'Fractured Land', an exhibition featuring artworks inspired by Buckinghamshire landscapes in the museum collection.

Over the last weekend of July, [Open Weekend](#) will take place. It involves arts, heritage, sports and environmental organisations working together to share and celebrate creativity and culture in Buckinghamshire. The event is coordinated by Buckinghamshire Culture, delivered by venues and organisations across the county and is supported with investment from the Rothschild Foundation and Buckinghamshire Council. Last year, over 16,000 people visited new places and took part in free or low-cost arts activities as part of this annual weekend celebration in Buckinghamshire. This is an opportunity for people of all ages to try something new and experience the amazing variety of culture, arts, heritage and beautiful green spaces available year-round across the county.

Buckinghamshire Film Office

Despite the US strikes having a major impact on the film industry in the UK, Buckinghamshire Film Office worked with 90 productions in 2023/24 - from feature films to student productions - and handled more than 200 enquiries (an increase on the previous year). Income from filming for FY2023/24 reached £798k across Country Parks, Property, Highways, Parking and Film Office. The Film Office is experiencing a significant increase in enquiries and is aware of several productions planning to shoot in Buckinghamshire over the summer; we are therefore hopeful that we will see continued growth in 2024/25.

In February, the Film Officer attended the North West Chilterns Community Board's Business Networking event to promote opportunities from filming and the Film Office to local businesses. The session highlighted the benefits of promoting their venues through the [locations database](#), as well as the wider economic benefits to the area of production spend.

Parks and Green Spaces

I was delighted to officially open our new Changing Places Toilet at Black Park Country Park on 11 March alongside Beverley Dawkins OBE, who has been working to improve disabled people's lives for many years. This fully accessible facility for visitors with complex needs features a height-adjustable changing bench, a hoist system, a large waste bin and more space than a standard accessible toilet; and was installed with the support of funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Our new Changing Places Toilet is now included on the national register compiled by Muscular Dystrophy UK; we hope it will enable many more visitors to enjoy the benefits of our park.



The Lake Erosion Project at Black Park is progressing well with initial tree works completed; the area will be fenced off ready for works to commence later in the year. The project is required as the northern bank of Black Park lake has been eroded by natural wave action. This has been significantly accelerated by the impact of visitor and dog activity on the unprotected banks of the lake. Trees and particularly tree roots, which have previously supported the bank structure, are now failing and leaving the banks at risk of further erosion. This area is currently devoid of vegetation due to compaction and visitor pressures and has little biodiversity value, so part of the project will be to deliver additional planting to improve the habitat value of this area of the lake.

The upgraded play area in Vale Park in Aylesbury was officially opened in March, with a new multi-play unit, a basket swing, a seesaw, a roundabout and a climbing net, as well as new surfacing and fencing. The recently completed Bridge Street Skatepark in Buckingham has received great feedback from local residents. The new concrete skatepark has been designed to accommodate all abilities, is significantly larger than the facility it replaced and comes with a variety of new ramps and rails,

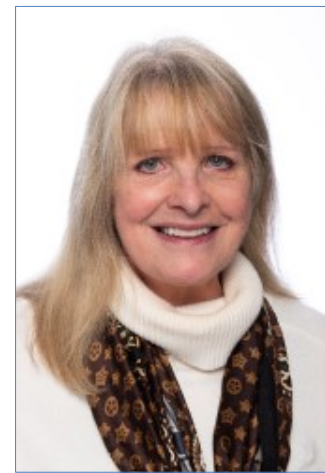
lighting and CCTV. A £280k project to replace the 'Ropes on the Rye' play area in High Wycombe has also recently been completed, providing an exciting range of new equipment including a bespoke 'Tree Castle' multi-play unit, a mini space net, a track ride tower, a giant spinning disc, a 'cocowave' swing and an outdoor calisthenics fitness unit. Many of the new items have been crafted from recycled materials and incorporate features to improve access for all ages and abilities.

Leisure

The Council has been successful in bidding for a grant of £398k from the Government's Sport England Swimming Pool Fund for capital works to improve energy efficiency and reduce running costs at Aqua Vale Swimming & Fitness Centre in Aylesbury and the Swan Pool & Leisure Centre in Buckingham.

We have been working with our leisure partners on a comprehensive mobilisation programme for the new leisure contract which started from 1 April covering Aqua Vale Swimming & Fitness Centre in Aylesbury, Swan Pool & Leisure Centre in Buckingham, Little Marlow Athletics Track, The Beacon Leisure Centre in Beaconsfield and Evreham Sports Centre in Iver. This has included staff briefings, building inspections, equipment orders and ongoing customer communications to ensure a positive handover. As part of the new contract there will be investment of £500k across Aqua Vale Swimming & Fitness Centre and Swan Pool & Leisure Centre, with a full gym refit and all new equipment going into the sites during the first two weeks of April.

The service also supported a successful Opportunity Bucks pilot of swimming lesson sessions for children at Aqua Vale Swimming & Fitness Centre over February half-term.



Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

Managing winter pressures

Since establishing the Transfer of Care Hub (ToCH) in October 2023, which has improved the hospital discharge process, over 1,150 people have been supported to leave hospital safely. The majority of these discharges have gone via the HomeFirst and HIT (Home Independence Team) pathways. The HIT pathway focuses on providing rehabilitation at home, while the HomeFirst pathway provides care for a longer period to support people with their recovery and regain their independence at home.

Referrals with highly complex needs which require additional time, go to social work to ensure that they have the right resources to leave hospital safely. Examples of this are cases where safeguarding involvement has been identified or there is a need for long term care.

The team has steadily managed the pressures throughout the winter period. Through the Health and Wellbeing Board, a partner survey was conducted as part of the system winter evaluation, and positive feedback was received. The results of a survey showed that 75% of service users and their carers thought that this winter pressures were better managed than last year. We will continue to review the feedback received and learn from it to ensure we are as prepared as possible for next winter.

I would like to thank all staff for their continued effort and dedication, particularly over the winter period, to manage the increasing pressures and continue to provide the best outcomes for our residents.

Adult Social Care – increasing demand

Demand continues to rise in adult social care, with 9,876 contacts received between December 2023 and February 2024 compared to 9,021 contacts between December 2022 and February 2023.

Of the contacts received between December 2023 and February 2024, 6,168 contacts related to care needs, with 3,262 new referrals and 2,906 contacts relating to an existing case. 592 safeguarding contacts have been progressed to a concern, which is where a social worker decides what action to take for the individual, and 555 Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLs) assessments were requested. 1,532 contacts were provided with information and advice and 356 contacts signposted to other agencies.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance of Adult Social Care

Following the publication of the [CQC local authority assurance framework](#), the Council continues its preparation for a future assessment visit. Between April and October 2023, the framework was tested with 5 local authorities and in November 2023 the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care formally approved the framework.

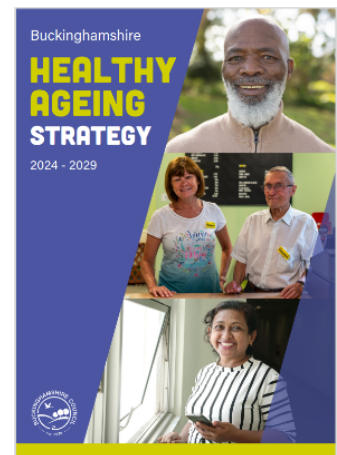


Although CQC will be inspecting all local authorities over a two year period, the programme of assessment for Buckinghamshire Council has not yet been assessed. However, we continue to focus on ensuring the Council is well prepared for the visit. This includes learning from others, including the Local Government Association and the five pilot authorities and developing our own self-assessment.

Healthy Ageing Strategy

On the 5 March 2024, Cabinet approved the first [Healthy Ageing Strategy](#), which sets out the ambition for Buckinghamshire to be more age friendly, supporting older people to live healthy, active and independent lives. The strategy sets out the commitment to become an 'age friendly community' by undertaking improvement actions across the 8 areas identified by the World Health Organization (WHO), which are:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transport
- Housing
- Participation in society
- Volunteering and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support for health and wellbeing
- Respect and social inclusion



This is a countywide strategy and in the first year, the focus will be on two priorities:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Social isolation and loneliness

To deliver the strategy the Age Friendly Bucks Partnership, which I chair, has been set up with partners including the NHS and voluntary sector organisations. The partnership is now focused on delivering the action plan to make Buckinghamshire more age friendly. This includes the recently launched Healthy Ageing Fund which assists voluntary and community organisations to support new or expanding projects that improve social connectedness for older adults.

Public Health Campaigns

'Show Your Heart Some Love'

For International Women's Day (8 March 2024) Public Health launched their new campaign for women – 'Show Your Heart Some Love'.

Coronary heart disease kills twice as many women as breast cancer in the UK, and research shows that women are less likely to seek medical help when they are experiencing what could be symptoms of a heart attack. Simple lifestyle changes can massively lower the risk of heart disease, and knowing the symptoms of a heart attack and when to seek medical advice makes all the difference, as early intervention limits the damage done to the heart.

With busy lives and endless responsibilities, women can sometimes put themselves last, but our campaign aims to encourage women to prioritise heart health, ensure they know what to look out for, and feel empowered to seek medical help.

I encourage you to support this campaign by sharing the campaign page [Show your heart some love | Buckinghamshire Council](#) with your networks, and most importantly by encouraging the women in your life to get their blood pressure checked. This can be done at the free health kiosks at Aylesbury Library, High Wycombe Library, Burnham Library and Health on the High Street, Friars Square Aylesbury.



Healthy Start Scheme

The NHS Healthy Start scheme is a food assistance programme for low-income families providing financial support to families and pregnant women to buy fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk and infant formula. We estimated that over 1,000 Buckinghamshire families are missing out on financial support. To address this, a social marketing campaign is being developed for eligible families and local retailers consisting of promotional materials, a toolkit for partners and local comms campaign led by public health. The aim is to increase uptake of the scheme locally by increasing awareness and knowledge of the scheme. So far, over 45 partners and organisations, and 92 retailers have been engaged and are supporting the promotion of the scheme.



Social Work and Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship Degrees

Delivered alongside Bucks New University, the apprenticeship programmes include social work, and a new BSc (Hons) in Occupational Therapy (OT), which is launching in September 2024. This is great news for Buckinghamshire and the Council who can take advantage of localised training and potential staff to join teams. We aim to enrol around 4 employees onto the social work apprenticeship in 2024.

Both apprenticeship degrees are 3 years in duration. Most social work degree learners are existing staff who have been working as social work assistants. On qualifying, the successful candidates move to a qualified role and go on to complete their assessed supported year of employment (ASYE). After completing this 12-month internal programme, the member of staff is a fully qualified social worker.



Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

Buckinghamshire Highways Update

The Highways contract for Buckinghamshire is one year old! The first year of the new arrangements have seen a completely new delivery model implemented, with far greater control of direction and works ordering by the Client team, alongside Alliance delivery partners Balfour Beatty Living Places, AtkinsRéalis and specialist framework contractors.

Looking back, the start of the new contract coincided with one of the most damaging winters for road surfaces we have ever seen and followed recently by one of the most relentlessly wet and stormy winters on record – all bringing extensive challenges for the service. By the end of the year, our crews had fixed over 30,000 potholes, delivered a £42 million capital programme, and for the third year running, attended and cleansed almost every one of our 85,000 gullies. Our emergency crews dealt with a staggering 3,300 call-outs, responding 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Looking forward, 2024/25 promises another bumper year for delivery with plans in place to deliver both the capital programme and the additional £5M council funding for road repairs, as well as a DfT funded extra £1.6M. We will also maintain our highway drainage assets ahead of next winter and ensure our streetlighting stock remains in light whilst completing the LED replacement programme.

We will be working with our Alliance partners to trial new, innovative processes, materials and plants where they may offer the best value for money to Buckinghamshire residents, as well as tackling key issues such as reducing our carbon impact and adding social value to local communities.



HS2 Road Safety Fund - Puffin Crossing at Westbury

In February, children from Beachborough School, Westbury celebrated the official opening of a new Puffin Crossing in their village which will make crossing the busy A422 much safer. The works were carried out by Buckinghamshire Highways and the cost of £223,000 was met by the HS2 Road Safety Fund which was established in recognition of the impact HS2 construction is having on communities in Buckinghamshire and to leave a legacy of safer roads.

Parking Strategy

In February, a new Parking Strategy was approved by Cabinet which sets out how the service will develop in coming years. Embracing technology and innovation, the strategy has been informed by a previous review of current parking arrangements and addresses inconsistencies across the county identifying where changes are needed in order to provide a better service for residents and visitors to the county.

Key aims within the strategy include:

- A commitment to maintaining the upkeep of quality parking provision across the county
- Working to ensure the council's parking operations are fully self-funded
- Intelligent use of parking enforcement to ensure effective enforcement
- A gradual transition to online/digital payments for all parking, reflecting trends in payment preferences which have accelerated in recent years, whilst maintaining cash payments for as long as economically possible in existing locations
- Ensuring residents and customers are kept fully informed of changes

The council is signing up to the National Parking Platform (NPP), a Department for Transport pilot scheme which aims to provide greater flexibility in paying for parking while providing value for money. The scheme will be piloted in council car parks in Wycombe and allows customers to choose from which supplier they will purchase their parking time.

Public Footpath affected by HS2 sinkhole reopened

A well-used public footpath at Great Missenden has been reopened following its two-month closure as a result of the HS2 related sinkhole which appeared last November. Following the Council's swift intervention and pressure on HS2, the hole was repaired, and the route reopened for the public to safely use.

Berry Hill Footbridge – Taplow – across the Jubilee River

The work to replace the mid-section of Berry Hill Footbridge in Taplow is progressing. The Environment Agency has agreed the work programme for installation of the new structure anticipated to commence in May. It is expected that the new section will be floated down the river on pontoons and lifted hydraulically into place.

Rights of Way Capital projects update

Recent capital works have been completed on the Rights of Way network. Surface works have been completed on public bridleways #51 in Denham and #14 in Beachampton. The public footpath #14 in Stewkley has had clearance and surface drainage work completed whilst a replacement bridge has been installed at public footpath #1 in Hedsor.

School Transport Update

Following National Secondary School Offer Day on 1 March and National Primary School Offer Day on 16 April, teams in Children's Services are busy assessing [school transport eligibility](#) for new pupils. Pupils who are eligible for Council-funded school transport assistance will be referred to the Client Transport Team over the coming months. The team work over the summer making suitable arrangements ahead of the start of the new school year in September. More information on school transport is available online [here](#).

Demand Responsive Transport Update – Aylesbury Launch

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is a flexible type of bus service that allows users to book their journeys on demand as they require it, between any two points within the operational area. This is instead of a traditionally routed and scheduled bus service but provided at fares that are in line with them. Buckinghamshire Council were successful in submitting a bid to the Department for Transport Rural Mobility Fund (RMF) in 2020. This provides part-funding for two DRT pilot schemes which will operate for 3 years in High Wycombe and in Aylesbury. The High Wycombe scheme, known as "[Pick Me Up](#)", launched in September 2022.

The Council has recently awarded a contract to [We Move](#), for the Aylesbury scheme. The new Aylesbury DRT service is planned to start in late spring 2024 and will benefit residents in villages around Aylesbury, including Aston Clinton, Weston Turville, Stoke Mandeville, Weedon, Hartwell and Bishopstone, by providing a convenient and affordable travel option to supplement existing public transport services. Further information about the Aylesbury scheme will be publicised in the coming weeks as the new contract is mobilised.

Concessionary Fares - Early travel scheme extension



We have agreed a further extension until 31 March 2025 for our early travel offer. Holders of the [Buckinghamshire Older Person](#) and [Disabled Bus Passes](#) will be able to travel before 9am (Monday to Friday) for a reduced single fare of £1 on all journeys starting in Buckinghamshire. Holders of a pass for a visual impairment can continue to travel free of charge at any time.

Modeshift Stars National Award

Modeshift STARS is the Centre of Excellence for the delivery of Effective Travel Plans and the scheme recognises schools that have shown excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable and active travel. Congratulations to Thorpe House School in Gerrards Cross who were successful in winning the STARS Regional Secondary School of the Year 2023/24 – Southeast at the regional awards and represented Buckinghamshire at the national awards. This marks another

regional award for a Buckinghamshire secondary school following Amersham School's success last year.

High Wycombe Transport Strategy & LCWIP

Following public consultation, the Council has now approved and adopted its Transport Strategy and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for High Wycombe. The Transport Strategy envisions that by 2050, High Wycombe will be among the best connected and most innovative towns in the Thames Valley. The LCWIP outlines in more detail, the opportunities for a future walking, cycling and wheeling network and a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for High Wycombe. Delivery of these priorities is subject to further development work and external funding.

Further information is available on the Buckinghamshire Council website: [Council approves new Transport Strategy for High Wycombe | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Active Travel Funding for Buckingham Railway Walk



Following a successful application, Buckinghamshire Council has been awarded £1.42m through Active Travel England's Active Travel Fund (ATF). In Buckinghamshire, this funding will facilitate the delivery of a new route along a disused railway line corridor, the 'Railway Walk', in Buckingham. The funding will enable the existing path to be upgraded to a Greenway style route between the A421 and Tingewick Road, enhancing accessibility for residents to local schools, facilities and existing and proposed active travel routes.

The Railway Walk scheme is identified as part of the town's active travel network proposed in the [Buckingham Transport Strategy](#) and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. The scheme will be developed in conjunction with local stakeholders. Once complete, the Railway Walk will also form part of the Council's [Buckinghamshire Greenway](#) vision for a continuous north-south active travel route across Buckinghamshire.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding secured

The Council have successfully secured a further £1.9m of Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) capital funding (provided by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles) to install hundreds of new public charge points across Buckinghamshire. This funding will be focused in areas where there are large numbers of properties with no access to driveways or off-road car parking, delivering primarily on-street charging solutions and enabling more people to switch from petrol- or diesel vehicles to EVs. This project will help towards meeting the target of 1,000 publicly-accessible charge points by the end of 2027, as set out in our EV Action Plan available online [here](#).

Wendover Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Trial – in-pavement cable channels



Part of the Wendover electric vehicle (EV) charging trial, the Council has recently installed in-pavement cable channels outside eligible households through the use of LEVI funds. These cable channels enable homeowners who do not have access to a driveway to connect safely from their charge point to their EV parked on the road outside their house. The scheme may also help to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality in Wendover by encouraging the uptake of EVs. The trial commenced in February 2024 and will be reviewed throughout the next two years.



Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Arif Hussain

Cost of Living

We have continued to develop and deliver a range of initiatives this year, utilising the Household Support Fund, to support residents regarding cost of living pressures; delivered through our Helping Hand service providing support to residents who need it most.

This year we have issued over 88,500 digital food vouchers to eligible families ensuring that they have access to food during the school holidays.

Funding has been provided to support over 90 Voluntary and Community Sector initiatives and schemes for residents across Buckinghamshire to ensure that residents can access support locally to themselves.

We welcome confirmation from Government that we will receive further funding via the Household Support Fund between April and September 24, and are developing plans to ensure this fund is used effectively during this period.

VCSE (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise) Sector



Congratulations to Community Impact Bucks who recently celebrated the placement of its 2000th volunteer in the county since the Volunteer Matching Service was set up in 2020. This valuable service makes it easy to find volunteering opportunities and currently has over 800 volunteer vacancies across the county.

There are a variety of different ways to volunteer. You can get involved with this year's Big Help Out taking place on the 7th to 9th June where you can pledge to lend a hand within your local community. More details can be found on their website [The Big Help Out | Home](#)

We will also be celebrating the 40th Year of Volunteers Week in early June (3rd to 9th June), where we will recognise and thank volunteers who do such a fantastic job supporting local organisations, schools and sports clubs to name a few.

The VCSE Resilience Fund is drawing to a close with funding totalling circa £222,000 being given to local organisations to support them with cost-of-living increases. I will bring you more on this in my next report. Huge thanks to the Mulberry Trust, Rothschild Foundation and Heart of Bucks who have supported this fund.

Community Boards

The engagement work for the Community Boards Boundary Review has continued, with several Members having requested a one to one meeting with me. In addition to this, feedback was also received from other Members via email. Further engagement has also taken place with the community board team, our town and parish councils and other key partners.

Proposals are now being drawn up on options for the future which will be considered by Cabinet in due course. These new arrangements will be effective after the elections in May 2025.



The Community Board Annual Report for 2023/24 is on the agenda for this Council meeting and provides a really positive overview of the work of the Boards over the last 12 months and of the outcomes delivered locally. There has been a real drive to increase the engagement and partnership working which has seen some very good projects come to fruition with local partners.

Social media and Board promotion has been a priority for this year, the Boards have generated an additional 2000 followers and nearly all physical projects will have plaques or other branding showing they are funded or supported by their Community Board.



I have continued to meet with various residents' groups, organisation and Chairmen to discuss a variety of subjects and to continue to familiarise myself with what is happening across the County.

I would urge you to get involved with your local Community Boards as our priorities are being set for the coming financial year. One notable example of how by working together we can make a difference is a project completed by High Wycombe Community Board. Through collaboration with the Department for Health and Social Care, South Central Ambulance Service, the Chair of Hazlemere Fete, Buckinghamshire Councillors, public health, community groups, and residents, 14 public access defibrillators have been procured and installed around High Wycombe.

The aim of the initiative is to enhance community safety and emergency response capabilities by strategically placing defibrillators in community locations with the highest footfall. By leveraging partnerships and community involvement, the project will ensure widespread accessibility to life-saving equipment in community venues and faith settings. Overall, the project exemplifies the power of collective action in safeguarding public health and well-being and will benefit the local community.

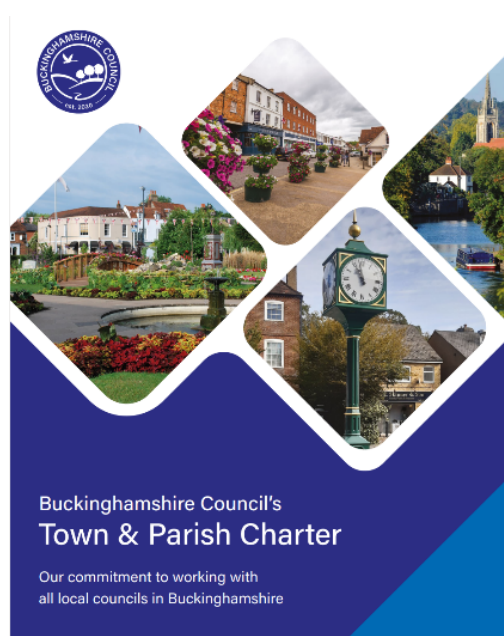
Devolution

Following the introduction of our new devolution policy, two projects have been completed since December. Prestwood Recreation Ground completed in January and three Community Centres, and an associated piece of land should be transferred to Aylesbury Town Council shortly.

One project remains in progress, and we will consider what project to bring forward next.

Town & Parish Councils

Feedback from the Town and Parish Survey in 2023 highlighted that more engagement with Town and Parish Councils was needed. In response to this I have established the Town & Parish Focus Group, working with a cohort of representative local councils to understand current issues affecting them. Our last meeting was on the 9th April, with feedback being shared at the wider Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) on the 24th April 2024.



A refreshed Town & Parish Action plan was shared with the Focus Group, picking up actions from the town and parish survey, and outstanding actions from the previous Charter Action Plan. The action plan will continue to be reviewed and updated by the Focus Group.

I attended the Town and Parish Clerks Forum in Aylesbury, which was well supported and informative. I look forward to the next forums on the 22nd and 23rd April. The format of the meeting has recently been reviewed and a new actions log has been created which is shared with all Town and Parish Clerks. Where possible we will endeavour to respond to and resolve all queries within 2 weeks. More complex cases may take a little longer, but our aim is to maintain an honest and open dialogue.

The next Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) meeting will take place at the end of April so I will be able to report back on this in my next update. This meeting is led by BMKALC for town and parish councils so would encourage your local councils to attend.

Community Safety

The Community Safety Team will be commencing a county wide consultation on all the existing Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs). These are;

- Aylesbury Vale Public Parks
- Aylesbury Vale Town Centre
- Buckingham Town Centre
- Chiltern, Alcohol Restrictions
- Chiltern, Car Parks
- High Wycombe, Desborough Rd
- High Wycombe, Town Centre
- High Wycombe West End Rd
- South Bucks, Dorney Lake
- Winslow and Steeple Claydon

Full details of all active PSPO's can be found on the Council's website on this link- [Public space protection orders and how they help your community | Buckinghamshire Council](#).

This review will be looking at which orders need to be continued and those which need to have new prohibitions added.

The review is being undertaken due to a number of the existing orders across the county having inconsistent prohibitions and some areas having a change in local needs and crime and community safety concerns.

Therefore, this will be assessed and if necessary new prohibitions will be introduced to meet the changing needs of our communities and the challenges they face. All ward members and town and parish councils affected will be notified when the consultations begin and will have the opportunity to make their views known.

Resilience Service

In my last update I spoke about Storm Ciaran and the work the Resilience Service carried out to support response activity. Unfortunately, since that update, we have had Storm Henk which was a much more severe and disruptive storm. Along with other council services the Resilience Service supported a number of Town and Parish councils through warning and informing them on expected flooding. This included those along the river Ouse catchment area and along the Thames in Marlow and Bourne End.

There was significant partnership work undertaken and the Resilience Service represented the council at both Tactical and Strategic Coordination Group meetings that were held several times a day over a weeklong period. This process was supported by our own internal emergency response mechanisms being put into place.

Planning is currently taking place to deliver Exercise Yorktown on the 23 April. Yorktown will be testing the council response to a scenario that will entail emergency response procedures being set up and testing our capacity to set up, manage and close down a rest centre. The Resilience Service are taking this event out into the community as it will be staged at the community hall in Wingrave.

Since my last update Business Continuity Management (BCM) has moved back into the Resilience Service. In January they launched a new BCM strategy and structure on behalf of the council with the goal being that every Service in the council will have a working BCM product hosted on the same internal platform with an analytical tool built into the system. Service areas are currently completing the new templates designed to support the process and from the beginning of April this should be fully embedded.

Cyber remains a constant threat across the UK and the Resilience Service are working with council colleagues to ensure that we have robust structures in place to manage and respond to any threat. Whilst still in the early stages of planning, the Resilience Service will be running a weeklong BCM exercise that will incorporate an element of cyber resilience.



Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Mark Winn

Vapes

Following a government announcement, we are expecting legislation shortly that will ban the sale of disposable vapes and put further restrictions on where other vapes are displayed in shops and the packaging of those vapes. In the meantime, there are two strands of enforcement being undertaken by the Trading Standards team with the support of Public Health – underage test purchases of vapes to identify and deal with shops selling vapes to under 18's and removing illegal vapes from sale. We continue to find numerous examples of child appealing vapes on sale, so we are keen to see the legislation change which is likely to make this illegal.



Vapes seized in January 2024



Examples of child appealing vapes

Multi-agency work

In December, the licensing service introduced new monthly liaison meetings involving the service areas and local partner agencies involved in the various licensing regimes. The meetings have provided an opportunity to exchange information, co-ordinate activities, plan joint operations, and share ideas, knowledge and experience.

Multi-agency visits took place on 6th December involving Licensing, Trading Standards and Thames Valley Police working in 3 teams across the county area. 19 shops and 2 pubs were visited. 8 warnings were issued for various licence contraventions and a seizure of illicit tobacco and vapes was made from 1 premises. 3 referrals were made to Bucks Fire & Rescue Service in relation to concerns about safe means of escape.

£155,000 compensation returned to a Buckinghamshire consumer

A victim of home improvement fraud investigated by Trading Standards (TS) has received £155,000 compensation from the perpetrator. An expert surveyor employed by TS found that works to her house were unnecessary and of such a poor standard they would have to be done again. The trader was prosecuted by TS and pleaded guilty to offences under the Fraud Act. In May 2023 he received a 30-month prison sentence. Further details can be found [here](#).

Environmental Health updates

We have continued to experience high demand in the winter period concerning poor housing conditions including issues related to damp and mould in homes. We have worked with professional partners (i.e. NHS, social care, citizens advice) to ensure that they can make direct referrals for assistance in Opportunity Bucks wards on behalf of their clients. We have also been working in partnership with the hospital discharge teams to enable clients' home conditions to be improved, enabling speedier discharge home to a suitable environment with the target of reducing future hospital readmission rates. The proactive targeting of unlicensed HMOs (houses in multiple occupation) has led to a number of enforcement cases, which in some cases have involved the service of Civil Penalties as an alternative to prosecution.

We provide expert advice on environmental noise, air quality and land quality and are currently working on the expansion of London Luton Airport development consent order (DCO). Work also continues on the HS2 project in relation to construction noise and the operational noise consenting process. The Noise App is now available to all residents to enable them to report noise nuisance to the Council using their mobile phone. More information can be found [here](#).

Officers have carried out a project on gas safety in catering establishments. Issues found included ignition switches not working, fail safe devices tampered with or too dirty to work, poor ventilation and a lack of maintenance and certification. Enforcement action was taken to rectify the problems and in total 21 appliances were made safe.

Environmental Health - Strategic Environmental Protection

The Strategic Environmental Protection team are currently reviewing and consolidating the existing legacy area Air Quality Action Plans with a view to creating a revised plan for Buckinghamshire. This will require DEFRA assessment, followed by stakeholder consultation and then formal adoption in line with Local Air Quality Management Policy Guidance. It is also intended that any potential revocations of existing Air Quality Management Areas as suggested by DEFRA are also considered as part of this forthcoming consultation.

Scrap Metal Policy

The Leader agreed the adoption of the first Scrap Metal Licensing Policy for Buckinghamshire Council which took effect from 1st April 2024. The policy sets out the Council's approach to licensing fixed sites and mobile collectors of scrap metal. Through the policy mandatory DBS checks will help safeguard the public and licensed collectors will be more easily identified via the display of window cards.

Street trading policy

On 27th February 2024 the Licensing Committee agreed the content of a new draft street trading consent policy for public consultation. The draft policy proposes the introduction of a single consent area across Buckinghamshire and contains measures to help promote healthy lifestyle choices and environmentally friendly activities. Elected members, town and parish councils and all relevant stakeholders are encouraged to complete the online survey at [Your Voice Bucks](#) between 11 March and 21st April 2024.

Taxi and Private Hire Licensing

In November 2023, the Department for Transport published new "Taxi and private hire vehicle licensing best practice guidance" for licensing authorities in England. The guidance covers vehicle design, age limits, livery, emission levels, testing arrangements, inclusive transport planning for disabled passengers and staff training. The Service is reviewing the current [policy](#) in light of the new guidance and holding workshops with stakeholders. A public consultation on proposed policy changes will follow.

Unauthorised Encampments

The Autumn and winter months have been quiet as expected for the time of year with only one further report of an encampment since the last update, making it fourteen for the fiscal year. This has been the quietest year for unauthorised encampments since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, it remains to be seen if this is a shift in Gypsy/Traveller behaviours or an anomaly.

We will continue to work collaboratively with partner agencies, and assess the welfare needs of Travelling groups in Buckinghamshire, which gives us the opportunity to decide upon the most appropriate enforcement action. We aim to keep any disruption on local authority land to a minimum whilst balancing the human rights of those who choose a nomadic lifestyle; however, we will take robust enforcement action on those who flaunt the law.

Being seasonal, most unauthorised encampments begin in the springtime when the weather begins to improve, so we are likely to see an upturn in numbers around March 2024. Some of our neighbouring counties such as Oxfordshire have also had low numbers of encampment's compared to their usual figures whereas Milton Keynes continues to experience high levels.

Crematoria & Cemeteries

After a lot of hard work, the Crematoria service is very pleased to be able to showcase its newly launched website. This new website houses both of our crematoria pages with customers able to easily manoeuvre between the two creating an all-over better customer experience.

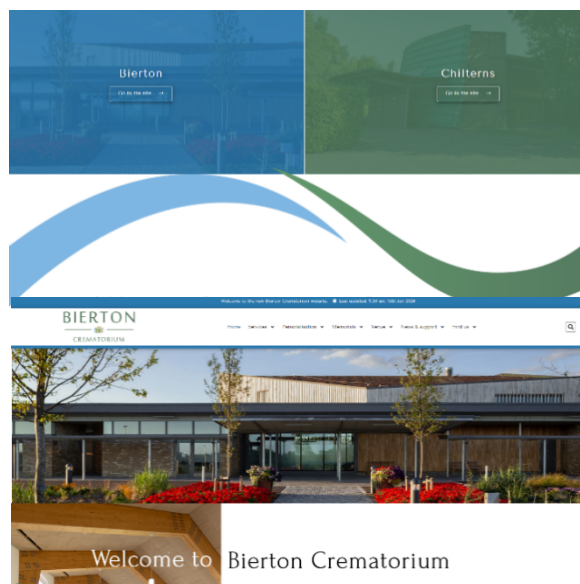
A project two years in the making, working collaboratively with the Corporate Web Design Team, the focus was put into improving the look, feel & accessibility of the webpages with a goal to remove excessive costs and create a more sustainable website. This was achieved by combining the two legacy websites into one and designing the new site with the potential to subsequently add our cemeteries and the ambition to expand our services.

Our sleek new 'one stop shop' has the customer experience at the forefront with new attention around bereavement, education, and support as well as a community focus on events and local charities.

A tremendous amount of effort has gone into ensuring that this design is practical, accessible and user friendly with a new mobile format creating an inviting, and easy to navigate webpage and working closely with the web team to ensure the language used supported our drive for inclusivity.

Newly added pages support a variety of work still going on in the background as we continue to strive for new and innovative products and services. We continue to develop the customer experience and although this is by no means our final product, we are very proud to now be able to demonstrate the fantastic upgrade of our new platform and the hard work that gone into its development.

Since it was opened in July 2022 approximately 140 burials have taken place within Penn Road Cemetery with a significant number of these taking place within the Muslim Section of the cemetery. The graves within this section are carefully aligned ensuring that they are orientated to meet the needs of the Muslim faith.



Concrete burial chambers were the preferred option for burial, within the Muslim Community, at High Wycombe Cemetery and this preference was approved for Penn Road Cemetery following a consultation prior to its opening. Installation of the chambers facilitates a same day burial service, Monday to Saturday, as required by the community.

The Cemeteries Team have recently successfully completed a procurement exercise for a second instalment of chambers, and this has expanded the Muslim Section by a further 99 concrete chamber lined graves to meet future need. The burial chambers are installed underground and the programme of work, that took over three weeks to complete, involved the removal of 50 loads of soil using Tipper Load trucks carrying up to 20 tonne each with 10 tonne of soil left on site for future use. Working collaboratively with the supplier on site the team were able to continue to provide burials within the cemetery throughout this period with no disruption to those attending services.

Homelessness Prevention

The number of households approaching the Council for assistance with their housing between December and January decreased by 126, this reduction was expected due to Christmas period. The top three reasons for requesting homelessness advice and assistance continue to be landlord serving a notice, clients at risk of domestic abuse and relationship breakdowns. Our Rough Sleeper figures across Bucks were 15 in December and just 9 in January. We have placed three long term High Wycombe rough sleepers into off the street accommodation in January and they are still in accommodation and doing well. One rough sleeper who had not spoken to any services for the last four years is now in temporary accommodation and has started to engage with the services thanks to joint working with colleagues in the MEAM team.

Temporary Accommodation

Work continues in the team to reduce the spend on Temporary Accommodation and in particular more expensive nightly paid accommodation. As at the beginning of March, there were 393 households in Temporary Accommodation, of which 184 were in nightly paid. This is a reduction compared to the 246 households in nightly paid at the end of March 2023. The team have also worked hard to reduce the overall nightly cost.

The team continue to work with providers to review voids in Temporary Accommodation. All of the workshops with the substantive Temporary Accommodation providers have now been concluded and we are drafting a Memorandum of Understanding, which will standardise and improve Temporary Accommodation void turnaround times. The metrics around this will be monitored to ensure improved performance. In addition, we are looking at how the Council's own substantive stock can improve its voids performance and the cost thereof.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Between October 2023 and the end of February 2024, 89 adaptations to homes were completed. This is an increase from the previous quarter. Alongside this, the team have been working hard to reduce the backlog of applications in the service and have reduced the average waiting time from 7-8 months at the beginning of the year to 3 months.

Bucks Home Choice

As at the end of February 2024, there were 6224 live applications on the housing register, which is an increase of 183 compared to September 2023. Between October and February, the Council let 455 social housing properties through Bucks Home Choice. This is an increase on the 266 lets completed between July and September 2023.

Registration Service

The service is now planning for the busy Spring and Summer seasons with the increase in ceremonies from Easter time. We are training our new staff from last May to conduct at ceremonies so that we have capacity to cover the summer months. The office at Buckingham Library opened in November and has appointments for one day a week. This has proved to be very popular and most appointments are taken up each week. We had a very successful Winter Promotion offer for getting married during the winter months and booked in an extra 89 ceremonies due to this marketing. We now plan to market our summer availability in a similar way. Bookings for ceremonies for 2023/24 stand at 1723, with the total for 2022/23 being 1851. The year 2024-2025 bookings currently stand at 1070, an increase of 340 bookings since the last report.

Coroner's Service

The service continues to be extremely busy investigating unnatural deaths in the county. The service now has a Court Officer who attends inquests which alleviate some of the workload of the Coroner's Officers and we have also recruited an extra Officer to help with the caseloads as staff had double of what the Chief Coroner recommended. With the Medical Examiner system being implemented shortly, this has been a welcomed addition to the team and has eased the pressured placed on the Coroner's Officers as a whole.

Work continues on the Portal which will allow Police and medical practitioners to report unnatural deaths to the Coroner much quicker and add directly onto the reporting system. This will have a positive impact on the workload of the Coroner's Officers who would usually upload these referrals manually.



Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Peter Strachan

Regeneration

I am delighted that since the Cabinet adopted the 'Regenerating Bucks', a regeneration framework, we now have three regeneration programmes in place for our key towns of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham. We are working in partnership with other key stakeholders in each of these towns to keep our focus on delivery and to really start to see our strategies come to life.

These strategies are key in progressing forward regeneration opportunities within our towns. We are also looking at other projects and sites that can be delivered in the short term whilst some of the larger sites are considered for regeneration.

In High Wycombe a number of key projects are being progressed including:

- White Hart Street Public Realm Enhancement – after the initial phase 1 of outline design and engagement with key stakeholders on the ambitions for this scheme, phase 2 has now commenced for the detailed design and implementation timetable, in partnership with Highways colleagues. It is anticipated that we can share designs with the public for views later in November/December and commence works early 2024.
- Eastern Quarter – an exciting and ambitious project has commenced that will set out our ambitions for this key major site to ensure delivery of much needed regeneration, housing, leisure and employment. Additionally, this project will identify opportunities to enhance the heritage and existing built environment whilst creating new and sustainable cycle and pedestrian spaces and improvements to our green spaces and public realm.

We are also taking forward the ambitions of the Aylesbury Regeneration Strategy which Cabinet agreed last year through the proposed improvement works to Market Square, Cambridge Street and Kingsbury (traffic regulation orders).

- **Traffic regulation Orders** - The council installed temporary traffic regulation orders in the town centre including Cambridge Street as a covid recovery measure which has proved popular including a petition to make the orders permanent. A formal consultation process took place in February to respond to this. Consultation responses are being analysed and proposals will be taken forward for a Leaders Key Decision. It is anticipated that permanent orders will be implemented from June 2024.
- **Cambridge Street** - Public realm improvements for Cambridge Street have been developed between the Harrow pub and No.22. This scheme will build on the benefits of the street

closure and create an attractive environment in this section of the street which is home to a number of independent businesses. Cambridge Street businesses will be engaged in the details as the scheme progress through the detailed design stage.

- **Market Square Improvement Works** - Improvements are also planned in the Market Square to enliven this space. Further details of this work are being finalised and will be subject to a Leader Decision for delivery in coming months.

Planning Enforcement

The planning enforcement service continues to take a focused and efficient approach to resolving breaches of planning control, either by amicable negotiation, or by using the full spectrum of enforcement powers.

In real terms, this means the team served a total of 86 planning enforcement notices in 2023, along with 45 other formal actions being taken. Of course, this formal action, in turn results in a continued increase in enforcement notice appeals lodged to the Planning Inspectorate with the team having seen the number of new enforcement notice appeals this year almost double to 62.

The team were also successful in seeking 6 Injunctions at the High Court and prosecuting 3 offenders. It is very encouraging to see law courts backing up our approach and the decisions taken by the team.

Whilst formal action clearly plays an important part of the role of the Council, these formal actions and appeals need to be managed alongside the day-to-day investigations. 2023 saw 1569 investigations being opened, which is an increase of 32% over the previous year, but as well as managing an increase in the number of cases and appeals, the team also managed to close 2418 investigations, which is an increase of 30% on last year's figures.

Alongside the appeals, which currently stand at 79 in hand, and the increased new investigations, the team have been working to clear the backlog of cases inherited from the legacy authorities, and COVID. This focused working has seen the cases in hand reduce from near 1500 last year to now under 1000, which is a much more productive and manageable caseload for officers.

Our continued solution focused approach from the team ensures that harmful breaches of planning control are regularly remedied. Of particular note is a case where the team secured demolition of a large extension that had been erected to the side of a dwelling, and clad with white PVC, in the open countryside. The team have also secured compliance with 4 enforcement notices on various sites across Buckinghamshire in relation to unauthorised use for vehicle storage and airport parking, 3 of sites were in the Green Belt. These examples demonstrate that we seek to continually uphold the planning system and follow through our formal actions until the breach is fully resolved. Formal action is really just the start of the process.

Our high performing team continues to push the Council’s no-nonsense approach to planning enforcement matters, ensuring a firm and fair line is taken against breaches of planning control, taking action where it is proportionate and appropriate to do so, to ensure Buckinghamshire is protected from harmful development.

Planning Policy

I am pleased to report that Cabinet agreed to adopt the Shenley Park Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) at its meeting on 13 February 2024. This means that it will be used to guide the development of a new community on the site comprising at least 1,150 homes, a primary school, new walking and cycling routes, and a local shopping centre.

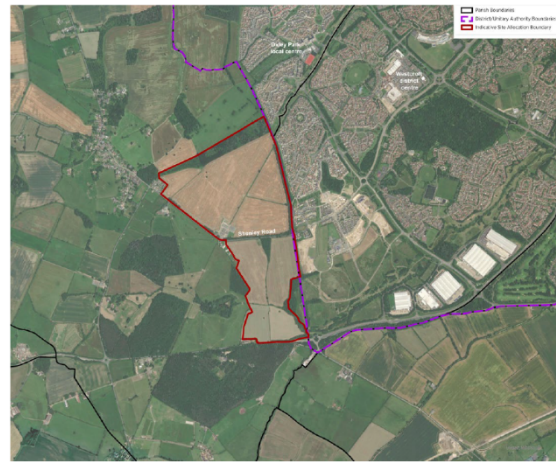


Figure 2: Shenley Park Site boundary overlaid on aerial plan of site and surroundings

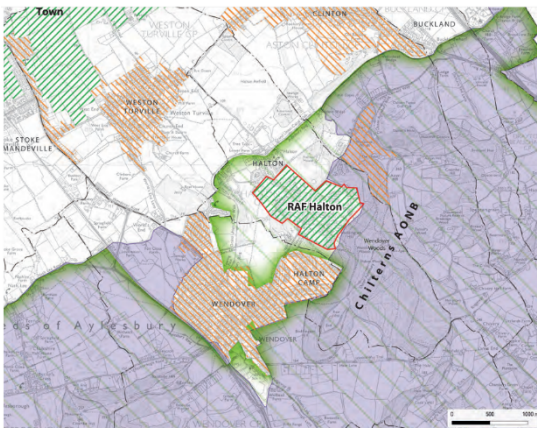


Fig. 1: Location and wider context of the RAF Halton strategic allocation

We commenced the public consultation on the draft SPD for the remaining Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan site allocation at RAF Halton on 22 January. This closed on 4 March. The consultation attracted approximately 220 comments via the Planning Policy online consultation portal and 110 individual responses. The Planning Policy team is now considering these representations and what revisions to the SPD should be made in response. The aim is for Cabinet to be asked to agree the adoption of the final version of the document later this year.

Development Management

Planning applications (major, minor and other) are being determined above the KPI targets set for speed of decision.

Table - Quarterly performance 2023-2024 in respect of determination of planning applications

Category	Q3 (22/23)	Q4 (22/23)	Q1 (23/24)	Q2 (23/24)	Q3 (23/24)
Majors (target = 80%)	80%	93%	88%	95%	97%
Minors (target = 75%)	90%	83%	86%	86%	87%
Others (target = 80%)	90%	93%	93%	94%	94%

Despite carrying vacancies and significantly reducing reliance on external consultants, since the start of 2024, KPI’s have been exceeded over the last 12 months.

Table – Planning applications received and determined

Year	Total applications received	Total applications determined	Total appeals received
2021/22	7177	6717	
2022/23	6472	5815	283 (2023)
2023/24 (Q1-3)	4126. (End of Year forecast=@5501)	4105. (End of Year forecast = @5473)	29 (2024 so far)

Total number of undetermined cases = 3068 (*Feb 2024)

The number of new planning and related applications registered has reduced, albeit the overall number of applications determined remains consistent resulting in a slight reduction on the overall number of cases in hand.

Nationally, Buckinghamshire Council is the second largest in terms of numbers of applications received. In respect of appeals, Buckinghamshire had the highest number of appeal decisions nationally (186) and second highest number of appeals dismissed (112).

Luton Airport DCO – Examination closed

The Examination into the DCO opened in July 2023 and closed on 10th February 2024. A team of Planning Officers and Specialist Environmental Officers from BC provided both written and verbal evidence for this stage in respect of impacts relating to climate change, highways and transport, noise, air quality, the economy and employment and landscape/visual.

The Planning Inspectorate (as the Examining Authority) is now in the process of making its recommendation and will do so by 10 May 2024 to the Secretary of State for Transport. The Minister, on behalf of the Government, will then make a decision on the DCO by the late summer of this year. The recommendation and decision will be published in due course on the Planning Inspectorate's website in respect of the DCO.



Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

Joint Targeted Area Inspection

Between 22 and 26 January 2024, Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) conducted a joint targeted area inspection (JTAI) of Buckinghamshire. This inspection looked at the multi-agency identification of risk and need across the local partnership, primarily around the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). A summary of areas of strength and what needs to improve is below:

Strengths

- The effectiveness and quality of support offered by CAMHS.
- The support given to children by their schools and the mental health triage car when struggling with their emotional and mental health.
- The improved timeliness of referrals from Thames Valley Police, including the measures taken to reduce a significant backlog.
- The combined efforts of social care and maternity/midwifery services to ensure that unborn and newly born babies are safeguarded.
- The positive impact of the family support service and those working in partnership with early help practitioners.
- The positive impact of a joined-up approach to children at risk of exploitation and those being exploited.

What needs to improve?

- The consolidation of performance information and data to fully understand the most pressing issues for families.
- The effectiveness of sub-groups of the safeguarding partnership.
- Multi-agency training informed by a full strategic need analysis.
- The involvement of schools and colleges in formulating the partnership’s strategic direction.
- The timeliness and consistency in quality of social work assessments.
- The quality, consistency and timeliness of information-sharing between the partner agencies involved in safeguarding children.

We are pleased with many of the findings of this report which notes that there are many examples of the partners working effectively together to support children, and that children's mental and emotional health are supported well. It was pleasing to see the inspectors recognise the very strong partnerships that are in place and that the services know themselves well, which is critical in ensuring that referrals are responded to quickly and are well managed.

The report does identify areas of improvement and we know there is still progress to be made, particularly around how all partner agencies share critical information in a timely manner.

Protecting and supporting children is the utmost priority of all the agencies involved in this work and we thank the inspectors for their overview of our services. We will be responding with an action plan within the requested timeframe.

Launch of the Skills Bootcamps

The Skills & Employment Strategy was formally adopted in January 2024 and was launched at Buckinghamshire College Group on 12 January 2024, alongside the launch of the innovative pilot of wave 4 Skills Bootcamps which are delivered in partnership with Buckinghamshire College Group.



***Image:** At the launch event (from left to right): **Joseph Baum**, Deputy Cabinet Member for Education & Skills at Buckinghamshire Council; **Jenny Craig**, Principal and Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire College Group; **Nick Braisby**, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of Buckinghamshire New University; **Martin Tett**, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council; **The Countess Howe**, His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire; **Rob Butler**, MP for Aylesbury.*

Starting in January 2024, these Bootcamps offered Buckinghamshire residents and employees the opportunity to learn new skills in brickwork or property maintenance to enter the construction sector. Skills Bootcamps are free, practical, and engaging short courses designed to equip adults with the knowledge and skills needed by employers across Buckinghamshire. At the end of the bootcamp, the individual learner has a 'job outcome' – such as an interview for a live vacancy within the relevant sector, a move into self-employment, or proof from their employer that the skills learned on the bootcamp are being used in their existing role.

Buckinghamshire Council has secured a further £3.2million of funding for Bootcamps from the Department of Education as part of the Government's Levelling-Up agenda and Lifetime Skills Guarantee. This funding will provide further Bootcamps beginning later this year in engineering, construction, creative (film, TV and gaming), digital, agriculture and leadership and management.

Skills Bootcamps are being funded through the Government's Levelling Up and Department for Education's Lifetime Skills Guarantee. For further information, please visit: [Enrol in a Skills Bootcamp | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Pupils step from the classroom into the conference room at Model United Nations event

More than 100 pupils from secondary schools around Buckinghamshire swapped their regular classrooms for the conference room and the world of international relations on 1 March 2024, as they took part in a Model United Nations event hosted by Buckinghamshire Council.

The event took place at The Gateway offices in Aylesbury, with pupils from Year 9 taking on the task of representing 32 different countries, coming together to discuss the topic of Food Poverty and Sustainability in the day-long activity. The conference mirrored the structure of a United Nations debate, encompassing all the formal processes, professionalism and language typically associated with such discussions, giving the pupils first-hand experience of what a real-life debate would look like.

The event, now in its 13th year, is organised by Buckinghamshire Council in partnership with schools across the county, but the origins of Model United Nations go back to the United States in the 1930s. Its aim is to engage students in current world affairs and develop communication, negotiation and debating skills. It helps students develop skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection as well as deepening their understanding of identity, diversity, equality and community. The event is designed to simulate the format of real-world international forums.

As part of the build up to the day, pupils taking on the roles of country delegates prepared their position stance to present at the conference. Others attending took on the role of media correspondents. At the end of the day awards were presented to the pupils who excelled in a range of skills including public speaking, diplomacy, delivery and media skills.

It is always a delight to see the students truly immerse themselves in the experience. It was a very intellectually stimulating and engaging event for everyone involved. It may seem like a world away from a normal school day but the skills these young people have learned by taking part in this event are invaluable and will be useful for the future in a variety of ways.

Young people speak up at the Bucks Youth Summit

On 11 March 2024 young people from across the county came together to discuss the biggest issues and areas of interest for young people in Buckinghamshire today.

Nearly 200 young people from secondary schools and youth groups in the county attended the event at the Waterside Theatre. The Summit was hosted by young people in the Youth Voice Executive Committee as part of Buckinghamshire Council's Youth Voice Bucks programme. Throughout the day, discussions and conversations were held on topics covering mental health, LGBTQ+/Pride, vaping, politics, sexual health, relations with the police, matters relating to special educational needs and the cost of living crisis.



It is the second time the event has taken place with feedback on last year's event used to plan this year's summit. The aim is to bring young people together to share views on the biggest issues affecting and of interest to them.

In addition to listening and taking part in the discussions, the young people attending were given a ballot paper to cast votes on their priorities. Votes were counted at the end of the day and the results will be used to feed into documents including the CYP (Children & Young People) Partnership Plan and the Buckinghamshire Youth Offer.

Dozens of young people acted in facilitation and behind-the-scenes roles including as election staff to run the ballot, journalists, activity facilitators and front of house roles.

The summit was a hugely successful event, thanks in no small part to the efforts and engagement of the young people who were involved. From getting stuck into back-office tasks to immersing themselves in the discussions and conversations, it was wonderful to see so many young people taking part.

The Youth Voice Bucks website (www.youthvoicebucks.co.uk), will continue to be updated with information and progress about the event and its outputs.

Virtual School – Attachment and Trauma Award Programme

Following an increase in recognition of childhood trauma, notably since the Covid 19 pandemic, trauma informed practice is becoming more widespread within schools and our Virtual School has developed the ‘Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware Awards’ (TIA) programme.

Designed as an award system, the Virtual School’s programme allows schools to embark on a progressive journey that provides opportunities to gain recognition for their commitment to whole school ‘Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware’ practice. The Virtual School have been delivering this award programme for approximately 20 months. Eight schools have so far achieved the bronze level award as part of the first cohort (4 primary and 4 secondary). They will progress to the Silver and continue to develop their knowledge and understanding. Cohort 2 (12 schools) commenced the awards in January 2024.

Trauma informed practice aims to educate the workforce, in this instance using a whole school approach for staff to develop knowledge and understanding of ACEs trauma and attachment theory in order to (a) develop practice that uses a positive and restorative approach (b) develops resilience and (c) practice that avoids re-traumatisation.

Following this pilot programme our Virtual School aims to expand the programme to encourage all schools within the county to become ‘Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware’. This is part of a local authority wide strategy to equip schools to promote practice that supports vulnerable children (including those known to social care) to attend and engage in education. Mitigating the barriers to good educational outcomes for this cohort is a national priority as demonstrated by the government’s commitment to the extended duty to all Virtual Schools ([Children’s social care: virtual school head role extension - GOV.UK](#)). Trauma Informed and Attachment Aware approaches can have a profoundly positive impact on children who have had or are experiencing ‘Adverse Childhood Experiences’ (ACEs) enabling them to be more interested and engaged in their learning.



Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment

Councillor Thomas Broom

Fly-Tipping Enforcement

On 18 December 2023, Buckinghamshire Council adopted raised charges for fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for offences of fly-tipping and of failure by householders in their 'duty of care' responsibility for how they dispose of that waste. These new charges were adopted at the maximum rate allowed by Government of £1,000 for a fly-tipping offence and £600 for a failure in duty of care by a householder (where the failure precedes the waste being fly-tipped).

The first £1,000 fly-tip fixed penalty was issued in January 2024 (and was paid in full) for an offence which took place on 20 December (2 days after the new rate was approved).

Future fixed penalties will be issued at this maximum rate as an expression of the Council's determination to demonstrate and support its 'Zero Tolerance' policy against fly-tipping.

North Waste Collection and Street Scene Services

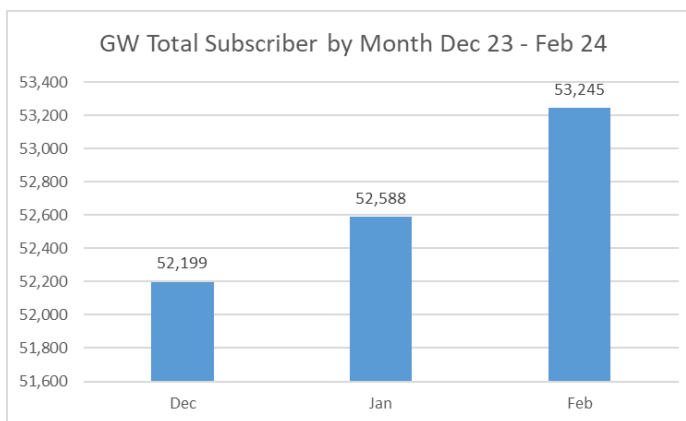
It may feel some time ago, but the total amount of dry mixed recycling collected over the festive season rose by near 26% compared to standard recycling week. It is expected that the recent Easter break will have seen an increase in paper and card, and the annual peak increase in garden waste is expected in the coming months. Over 25,000 residents have successfully subscribed to the garden waste service following a change which now allows residents to have a rolling 12-month subscription rather than a calendar year from the date they sign up.

Across street cleansing and grounds maintenance, March saw litter picks across high-speed roads following verge cutting and now the weather has changed the yearly grass cutting regime has commenced.

South Waste Collection and Street Scene

Contract performance continues to improve. The ongoing improvements in performance and the KPI target of 0.20% has been achieved consistently during 2023/24 following close monitoring and management of the contract.

Garden waste subscriptions are starting to increase as we move into spring, and we have now reached over 53,000 garden waste subscribers. We have over 3,400 properties who also have a second subscription.



During January to March many litter picks on high-speed roads were completed, namely the Marlow By-pass in February and the A413.

The number of abandoned vehicles reported through Fix My Street continue to be high. However, a very small percentage of the vehicles reported are deemed abandoned after checks are made.

Waste Prevention

Repair Cafe
/rɪˈpeɪ/ /ˈkafɪ/ noun

1. Community led event which helps people repair their broken items. Aiming to reduce waste & give items a new life.
2. A friendly place, often with tea, coffee and cake.

The Waste Prevention team have had some recent successes focusing on reuse and repair across the County.

The team support Repair Cafes in Buckinghamshire with regular promotions, training, equipment, and advice. The council's Waste Prevention fund recently helped with the setup of the Buckingham Repair Café, the latest addition to the now 13 regular Repair Cafes across the County. Repair Cafes are run by volunteers and help residents fix items that they bring along. It saves items from the bin, saves money buying new items and teaches basic skills, as well as lots of hot drinks and cakes.

Re-using items is also a key focus and across February the team promoted the reuse revolution highlighting the thousands of tonnes of waste that is avoided each year by reusing whether at recycling centres, charity shops or online via Freecycle. All ten household recycling centres accept items for reuse, which are then sold by South Bucks Hospice at their reuse shops at Aston Clinton & High Wycombe recycling centres.

The more items we can repair or reuse, the more money individuals and the council can save, not to mention the massive positive environmental impact too.



Changes to DIY waste disposal at Household Recycling Centres



Important changes came into effect on 31 December 2023 at all ten household recycling centres in Buckinghamshire. The changes, introduced after a change in the law by central government allowed residents to dispose of small amounts of DIY waste for free. To facilitate the change in law and still maintain a credible deterrent to trade abuse at recycling centres a new DIY e-permit was introduced.

We are starting to notice the effect the new policy is having on the recycling centre service. Residents have disposed of small amounts of DIY for free over 3,000 times.

Satisfaction with the e-permit process has remained high, despite many residents using it for the first time, with 85% happy, or very happy. As expected though, we are noticing an increase in DIY type materials, wood, rubble etc. coming to the recycling centres, which is an increased cost to the council.

3,000+
DIY permits used



We are maintaining our proactive communications to ensure as many residents know about the change and have an e-permit ready if needed before they arrive on site. It's especially important as we enter the busy Spring period for the recycling centres when they open 9am-6pm between April-September.

We will continue to monitor the effects of the changes and return to Cabinet in June to review the implementation and submit recommended changes if required.

Member training on flooding

Training for members on roles and responsibilities for flooding and how Buckinghamshire Council responds to a flood event is being organised by the Resilience Service, Strategic Flood Team and Buckinghamshire Highways during Spring 2024 and members are encouraged to attend to familiarise themselves with who does what, where to find information and how we can be prepared in the event of flooding. In the meantime the Flood pages on Bucks website will be useful [Flooding and flood risk management | Buckinghamshire Council](#).

Climate Change

We're making huge progress against our ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Our corporate emissions have reduced by 73.4% against our 1990 baseline (so we're on track to achieving our target of a 75% reduction by 2030) and emissions area-wide are also decreasing - in 2021 they were 7.73% lower than 2019. Information about the activities that have helped contribute to these achievements is available in the **Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy Progress Report [2022-2023](#)**.

Tree Planting

112,660 trees have been planted on council land, with a further 23,000 expected to be planted at Wing Wood by the end of March '24. Significant community-based projects have been completed, including the establishment of 5 new Miyawaki forests – which are reported to grow ten times faster than traditionally planted woodland.



Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources

Councillor John Chilver

Resources Update

Microsoft Co-Pilot

In November 2023 we launched our Microsoft Co-Pilot AI programme. The council was invited to participate in Microsoft's Early Adopters Programme for CoPilot, their AI tool. The programme gave us CoPilot access for 300 users for 1 year with dedicated support from Microsoft, these licenses have been deployed across the council to understand how it can help us improve our services.

We understand that AI is a complex field, and we need to partner with experts in this area. That is why we are working with Microsoft, who are at the forefront in AI solutions and already a major IT partner for the council. Their technical expertise and tools such as Bing Chat (which we already have access to) will add value to our deep knowledge of public services, enabling a more effective and innovative approach to AI implementation.

In November, Council staff attended a Copilot Art of the Possible session hosted by Microsoft. The session showed the features of Copilot, and then two council staff members presented their use cases. Staff came away very excited about the potential of AI and were enthusiastic to get involved.

We are proactively engaging with other local councils, exchanging experiences, insights, and best practices. This collaboration allows us to learn from each other's achievements and difficulties, not only improving our own AI strategy but also mitigating risks.

Creative Concept Recruitment Campaign

Buckinghamshire Council faces the challenge of recruiting and retaining talent for hard-to-fill roles such as Educational Psychologists and Lawyers. To address this, the council designed and implemented two creative concept recruitment campaigns in-house, using social media, video content, interviews, and events to showcase the employer brand and values, and the benefits and opportunities of working for the council.

The campaigns were successful in attracting and engaging potential candidates, reaching a wide audience, and filling the roles. The campaigns also demonstrated the potential for local authorities to run cost-effective and innovative recruitment campaigns in-house, without relying on external agencies. The campaigns received positive feedback from the hiring managers and the current employees and contributed to the council's objective of making a positive impact on the residents, businesses, and communities of Buckinghamshire.

According to the data collected by the council, the campaigns achieved the following results:

- The Educational Psychologists campaign reached over 74,000 news feeds on social media and resulted in over 3,900 clicks to the advert link. In total, 57 applications were received, 9 of which were through the social media advert. All 5 roles have been filled.
- The Lawyers campaign resulted in 86 applications with appointments to posts on-going.

These campaigns have been so successful that we have been shortlisted for the PPMA award for Best Creative Concept Recruitment Campaign.

Customer Relationship Management

The Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme is migrating interactive web forms and processes from legacy platforms to a new single CRM platform, provided by Abavus. The Waste and Recycling teams, in both the North and South, now use Abavus for resident interactions. The Southern team no longer uses the GOSS Interactive platform, and the Northern team has begun winding down the use of Salesforce. Fix My Street interactions are now integrated into Abavus, providing more information to customer services and the waste team, as well as improving communications with customers.

In the first month from February 2024 launch, 2,048 service requests for Waste were processed through the platform, with 98.5% completed within a 10-working day service level agreement. Similarly, 1,649 Fix My Street requests were received, with 99.4% actioned within a 10-working day service level agreement. The new integration has resulted in close to a 100% increase in customer responses from the Waste and Recycling teams.

Excluding garden waste sign-ups, the average number of calls for waste and street cleansing has dropped by 12.5% since launch, compared to the preceding 2 months. This showcases the improvements to web-content, webforms, and back-office processes. The next steps for the CRM programme include the launch of integrating forms for missed bins and bulky waste collection by May 2024.

Property & Assets Update

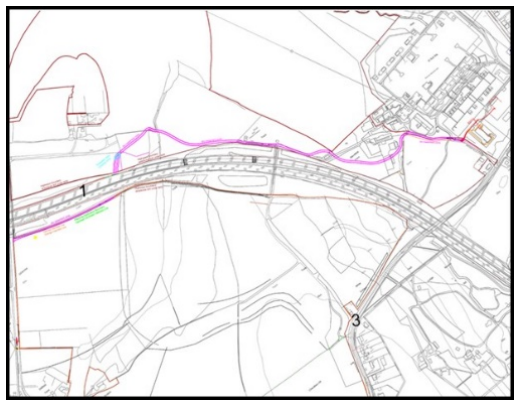
Investment and Development

Property & Assets have made significant progress on the Council's Operational Estate Strategy. The Estate Strategy was formed in January 2023, and during the year closed and let the Wycombe Old Library and also took the decision to close our offices at King George V House in Amersham. These will contribute positively to the savings targets identified by the Council. A further paper has also been approved by the Council's Cabinet in relation to our offices at Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe. More positive news was achieved when the Secretary of State confirmed the Certificate of Immunity from Listing for the New Council Offices in Aylesbury. This will enable us to consider our future opportunities for the site moving forward in the broadest sense.

The Property Team are also focussing on our disposals programme which seeks to realise capital receipts to support our wider capital programme. We have made good progress and Cabinet recently agreed a further sale of a long leasehold interest in the Site at Wycombe Air Park to the leaseholder. This will generate a capital receipt which is budgeted for in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and support the development and delivery of the site in accordance with the Wycombe Local Plan.

Mansfield Farm, Iver

Yondr, a data centre developer and operating company required a high voltage connection between their emerging data centre in Slough, and an existing substation in Iver via a cabling route that crosses Council owned land. The easement permitting this work negotiated by Property and Assets provides a substantial capital receipt to the Council with minimal outlay, and all Council costs covered. As part of the agreed settlement there will also be improvements made to the Bridle path as highlighted on the plans. Once installed the surface land will be re-instated and continue with its present use.



Asset Management

As we enter 2024, the Asset Management Team continues to focus upon delivery of Medium-Term Financial Plan priorities in property and other critical targets in terms of occupational and investment related requirements, including safety, and the environment.

We continue to focus on providing a supporting environment for our tenants but with a commercial focus, across our commercial portfolio of offices, industrial retail, and agricultural estates. Significant changes in the investment market are a continuing focus.

Construction Update

The East West Rail Winslow Station car park work commenced on site in November 2023. Piling is now completed, and integrity tested Drainage 60% complete. Completion of construction currently planned for September 2024.

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Notices of Motion

Date: 17 April 2024

Notice of Motion – Council’s Taxi Licensing Policy / White Ribbon recognition

Proposer: Councillor Robin Stuchbury

Seconder: Councillor Andrea Baughan

1. This Council notes that:

- (a) Buckinghamshire Council is a local authority which recognises White Ribbon. This status shows our commitment to the White Ribbon campaign to protect and support women and girls from abusive and violent behaviour by men and boys. In gaining this accreditation we, the Council, sought to spread the support to all departments and sections of our Council and beyond, into our community.
- (b) Buckinghamshire council currently licenses approximately 3,300 drivers to provide Private Hire and Hackney Carriage services.
- (c) Buckinghamshire Council operates a proactive stance regarding compliance and safety auditing. While some drivers licensed by other Councils do operate within Buckinghamshire Council’s area, BC officers are only able to take enforcement action if authorised by the corresponding council to do so. MOUs are in place with two of the 12 neighbouring authorities allowing BC Officers to carry out vehicle compliance checks in their areas.
- (d) At present all Buckinghamshire Council drivers are fit and proper persons, (meeting the required local standards as set out within our policy) and undertake safeguarding training to ensure they have a better understanding of the abuse suffered by children and vulnerable adults prior to obtaining their licence. Whilst remaining within the statutory licensing procedures, at present this training which includes undertaking CSE safeguarding and disability awareness training every 3 years together with recognising the signs of abuse and how to report concerns, it does not fully address the issues raised by White Ribbon.
- (e) Nationally, there are a high proportion of complaints from women in regards to inappropriate behaviour or language by drivers towards female passengers.
- (f) Other councils such as Newcastle and Wrexham are already promoting White Ribbon to taxi operators, door security, bar staff and other licenced facilities.

2. This Council therefore resolves to:

- (i) Ensure that all new applicants and taxi license holders understand that verbal, physical and emotional abuse is not tolerated.
- (ii) Encourage all those experiencing abuse to report this to-the Police.
- (iii) Ask Officers to make appropriate arrangements (in consultation with relevant portfolio holder and committee chair) to revise the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy to include education about domestic abuse into existing safeguarding and equality training for drivers, and maintain a register of those who complete the training.
- (iv) Invite all those licenced by Buckinghamshire Council to become White Ribbon ambassadors and display the White Ribbon, and
- (v) encourage Operators to promote White Ribbon with their drivers, regardless of the origin of their licence.



Leader Decisions Taken

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

12 Feb 2024

FR01.24 - Property Acquisition - Plot 1A, Gateway, Aylesbury

The Leader AGREED:

Pursuant to the July 2023 report to Cabinet

To acquire reduced demise ("Plot 1A") compared to original site demise ("Plot 1") identified in the July 2023 Cabinet paper on the revised terms set out in the Confidential Annex.

Plot 1A excludes the hatched area of Plot 1 as the buyer of the Lloyds building (Plot 2) now requires this additional land to be included as part of its acquisition. Plot 1A also includes an additional small parcel of land to the north of Plot 1 close to the main vehicular access point. The adjustment from the original Cabinet approved land acquisition results in the loss of 21 car parking spaces. Land now being acquired excluding the access road is circa 1.07 acres providing 156 additional usable car parking spaces.

Extent of Plot 1A is shown in Site Plans contained in Appendix 1.

To authorise the Service Director for Property and Assets in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources and the S.151 Officer to conclude negotiations, complete due diligence, arrange finance and exchange/complete on the transaction as set out in this paper and the Confidential Annex.

To authorise removal of the 3 charges against the title of The Gateway Car Park the Council has in respect of the security loans given to Aylesbury Vale Estates.

There are 3 loan agreements between Buckinghamshire Council (previously legacy Aylesbury Vale District Council) and Aylesbury Vale Estates LLP. This has resulted in the Property being subject to 3 charges. These charges need to be released for the Council to purchase the Property.

There are three charges and restrictions on the First Title in favour of Buckinghamshire Council in respect of three loan agreements made between (1) Aylesbury Vale District Council and (2) Aylesbury Vale Estates LLP known as:

- (a) Security Agreement dated 12 October 2009.
- (b) Security Agreement Short-Term Debt Loan Notes dated 12 October 2009; and
- (c) Supplemental Security Agreement dated 31 August 2012.

These debts have been secured as fixed and floating charges against Aylesbury Vale Estate LLP on Companies House and against the First Title of the Property.

The Seller has confirmed these 3 charges are to be removed from the First Title on completion of the sale. The Council needs to authorise removal of these 3 charges before completion of the sale.

This decision is being taken under the 'special urgency' provisions of the constitution due to the timescales involved for exchange and completion.

19 Feb 2024

FR02.24 - Capital Gateway – Green Ridge Primary Academy Expansion

The Leader:

APPROVED the release of £5,094,385 from the Primary Places funding block within the Capital Programme to fund the one form entry expansion of Green Ridge Primary Academy

This decision is being taken under the 'special urgency' provisions of the constitution in order to achieve a September 2024 completion/opening for the Schools of the additional classrooms; and, to thereby save costs of temporary classrooms. The timelines to achieve this require the Council to enter into contract with the main contractor (Morgan Sindall) by 20 February 2024

20 Feb 2024

L02.24 - Rural England Prosperity Fund Procurement Updates

The Leader:

AGREED the amendment to procurement thresholds for businesses applying for a UK Shared Prosperity Fund or a Rural Business grant to align both programmes to Council thresholds.

28 Feb 2024

HR02.24 - Supported Living Services Commissioning

The Leader AGREED:

- 1. To commission new Accommodation-Based Homelessness Support Service contracts.**
- 2. To decommission the Community Homelessness Support Service contract. This will enable the available funding to be directed into the accommodation-based services to create sustainable contract values.**
- 3. To delegate the decision to award contracts to the Corporate Director and/or Service Director for Planning, Growth & Sustainability in line with the approved scheme of delegation**

5 Mar 2024

EC01.24 - Determined Admission Arrangements 2025

The Leader AGREED the determined admission arrangements for admission in September 2024.

These arrangements shall include:

- 1. The coordinated scheme for primary and secondary admissions in Buckinghamshire, for admission from September 2025, as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 2. The 2025 determined admission rules for community and voluntary-controlled primary schools as set out in Appendix 2. This includes the admission rules for schools, nursery classes and nursery schools and the Published Admission Number and catchment area for each school.**
- 3. The 2025 determined admission rules for community and voluntary-controlled secondary schools as set out in Appendix 3. This includes the proposed Admission Number and catchment area for each school and sixth form admission arrangements.**
- 4. The proposed relevant area for school admission arrangements from September 2026, as set out in Appendix 4.**

21 Mar 2024

PR01.24 - Improvement works Market Square, Cambridge Street, Kingsbury Aylesbury

The Leader AGREED:

To approve the release of £590,000 for Aylesbury Regeneration Improvement Works to Market Square, Kingsbury (TRO) and Cambridge Street, to come from the remaining Capital Budget of £5.1m;

To delegate authority to the Service Director for EG&R to commission the works via the Highways framework contract.

For further information please contact Ian Hunt on 01494 421208