



Communities & Localism Select Committee Agenda

Date: Wednesday 22 November 2023

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

S Bowles (Chairman), A Waite (Vice-Chairman), A Alam, S Barrett, J Chhokar, P Drayton, G Hollis, M Hussain JP, M Knight, F Mahon, C Oliver, N Rana, G Smith, M Stannard and L Smith BEM

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1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes		5 - 10
The minutes of the meeting held on 4 th October 2023 to		

be confirmed as a correct record.

4 Public Questions

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

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

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

5 Opportunity Bucks Update

10:10

11 - 28

The Committee will receive an update on Opportunity Bucks – the Council’s local ‘levelling up’ initiative which is supporting residents in ten specific wards in Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe.

Contributors:

Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities
Cllr Angela Macpherson, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
Matt Everitt, Service Director, Business Intelligence and Community Support

6 Devolution Update

11:15

29 - 44

The Committee will receive an update on the Council’s approach to devolution of services and assets.

Contributors:

Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities
Roger Goodes, Service Director, Partnerships, Policy and Communications

7 Work Programme

12:00

45 - 46

The Committee will discuss the work programme and note the items for the next meeting.

Contributors:

All Committee Members

8 Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 28th February 2024 at 10am.

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

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

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Agenda Item 3
Buckinghamshire Council
Communities & Localism Select
Committee

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.03 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.42 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT

S Barrett, P Drayton, G Hollis, C Oliver, N Rana, G Smith, L Smith BEM and J Chhokar

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

R Stuchbury, K Sutherland, A Hussain, W Morgan-Brown and G Springer

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bowles, Knight, Mahon, Stannard and Waite.

A temporary Chairman was elected for the meeting – Cllrs Catherine Oliver and Greg Smith were both proposed and seconded and following a vote, Cllr Oliver took the chair.

The Chairman welcomed two new members to the Committee, Cllr Nabeela Rana and Cllr Jaspal Chhokar.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

5 COMMUNITY BOARD REVIEW - 12 MONTH UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities and Wendy Morgan-Brown, Head of Partnerships and Communities to the meeting. The Cabinet Member reminded the Select Committee that its report to Cabinet in May 2022 included 11 recommendations and following an update on progress presented to Committee in February, this was the final update on the implementation of those recommendations. Alongside the

Select Committee report there had also been proposals from a Cabinet Member Task and Finish Group and the internal service review which had contributed to some significant changes in how Community Boards operated.

The Cabinet Member highlighted three recommendations in particular – Recommendation 5 was for a proactive communications strategy for Community Boards. A strategy had been agreed by January 2023 and since then all Community Board Managers had received social media training to enable them to promote the activity of their Board and all Community Boards have seen an increase in followers as a result.

Recommendation 7 was related to Highways schemes and considering an alternative mechanism for their delivery. Following the introduction of a new highways contractor in April 2023, a new six step process had been established to help to identify realistically deliverable schemes and a highways handbook had been created to provide cost information for the most commonly requested solutions. A review of schemes that had been submitted but not begun had been undertaken and now approved schemes were moving forward for delivery by March 2024.

Recommendation 10 was to establish a mechanism to evaluate projects which had received Community Board funding. A new evaluation form was now in place, which enabled reflection on whether the aims of a project had been delivered effectively. 60 evaluation forms have been distributed to date, with 8 already completed and Community Board Managers would be following up on each of the projects and reporting back to the Cabinet Member and Community Board Chairmen every quarter. The evaluations would also be used to inform the annual Community Board report to Council.

The Cabinet Member also reported that a further review of the Community Boards would shortly be undertaken in light of the electoral boundary changes which would come into effect in 2025.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for providing this overview and invited Members' questions. In response to questions and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

- The Highways Handbook included suggested solutions for local road safety issues.
- A Member congratulated the team on increased levels of community engagement. He gave an example of a recent Community Board meeting which was very well-attended by residents who were supportive of 20mph speed limits but the Chairman was reluctant to discuss the pros and cons of the issue and kept repeating the Council's policy on 20mph limits – was this an example of proper engagement? In response, the Cabinet Member explained that the Community Boards were there to engage with local people but also had to support the priorities and policies of the Council and sometimes there were limits to what could be delivered.
- There was concern around the cost of highways schemes that could be a drain on Community Board resources. 51 schemes were reported to be progressing and officers were confident that they would all be funded. A Member expressed the view that highways schemes still caused frustration for Community Boards and it could be beneficial to deal with them separately.
- A Member asked a question regarding how the benefits of Community Boards were being analysed centrally. For example, were all geographical areas or different demographic groups within an individual Community Board receiving a fair share of funding. Wendy Morgan-Brown commented that each Community Board should be working to deliver the priorities that had been agreed locally. Community Board

Managers had access to public health data and community safety data which could also be used to inform their priorities. Whilst accepting this point, the Member suggested that it was important for this to be monitored to ensure that priorities addressed the locally identified needs and were delivered effectively.

- The Cabinet Member was asked about his vision for the Community Boards, as there was concern that the review considering the impact of electoral boundary changes could see some Community Boards being amalgamated and further funding reductions. In response, Cllr Hussain explained that he was a strong advocate for the Community Boards as the local face of Buckinghamshire Council and wanted them to continue for the longer term. He also praised the Communities team for all their hard work in supporting the Community Boards.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Wendy Morgan-Brown for attending the meeting and asked that the Select Committee be kept up to date on the outcome of the Community Board review.

6 CCTV - UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF A CCTV STRATEGY

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Arif Hussin, Cabinet Member for Communities and Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety to the meeting.

Cllr Hussain gave a brief overview, making the following points:

- Buckinghamshire Council had inherited several different CCTV systems from the five former councils which covered public spaces and council buildings.
- Some of these systems were 10-15 years old and would need to be replaced
- A draft had been developed for the CCTV Strategy 2023 to 2028 to cover the whole county.

Gideon Springer gave a presentation detailing the strategy with the following key points:

- Buckinghamshire Council was committed to helping the police prevent and detect crime and disorder and give residents a greater feeling of safety.
- There had been a wide consultation on the aims and principles for the strategy, with the key aims being increasing the safety of the public, prevention of anti-social behaviour and prevention of violence against women and girls.
- The majority of CCTV in public spaces was controlled by local authorities and had led to a 13% reduction in crime.
- A CCTV Advisory Group would be established to monitor all CCTV development work and performance. This will include Members, the police and other stakeholders including the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership Board.
- There were 222 cameras in public spaces and car parks in Buckinghamshire.
- There were fixed and temporary CCTV cameras which could help with traffic management. Cameras were most effective when placed in town centres.
- From 1st October 2023 a single control room would be established at High Wycombe.
- Provision of CCTV was not a statutory duty for the Council. A to £3-3.5 million pound investment was proposed for CCTV over the next three to four years, with the funding focussed on key towns, such as Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham.
- The Council was compliant with the Surveillance Commissioner's code of practice.
- The success of the CCTV system would be measured by a number of means, including the audit of incident logs, the number of arrests made and the use of data images to investigate and prosecute perpetrators.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hussain and Gideon Springer for providing this overview and invited Members' questions. In response to questions and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

In response to a Member's question about a map showing areas covered by CCTV, Gideon Springer explained that a map exists in the control room. Members would be invited to visit the control room on a given date

Action: Gideon Springer

- In response to a point made by a Member on the definition of high harm crimes, Gideon Springer agreed that this was a political term but noted that Members would be included in the CCTV oversight group. He also noted that the council would retain control of the CCTV cameras but allow the police to have access.
- A Member suggested that the use of emojis and facial images could be useful in alerting the public to the presence of CCTV and Gideon Springer advised that the effectiveness of different styles of signs was being considered.
- A Member commented that £3.5 million was a lot of money and raised concerns from the local community that CCTV is often welcomed by the police as it reduces the need for visible police presence. Gideon Springer agreed that £3.5 million was a large sum but said that from his 30-year experience as a police officer, he knew that many prosecutions and convictions would not happen without CCTV evidence. He also noted that CCTV was a significant tool in town centres and surveys showed that CCTV can help women to feel safer and it can deter potential criminals.
- Gideon Springer confirmed that the committee would be updated on progress. A Member expressed a particular wish for progress to be reported as CCTV provision is a non-statutory service.
- A Member asked if the current location of CCTV cameras would be reviewed as some cameras have obstacles such as trees in the way. Gideon Springer replied that an oversight group would review the location of all CCTV cameras. The group would also consider the location of mobile cameras and check all existing cameras were working. Mobile cameras have been very effective against fly tipping when used in a targeted way. However, there is a finite budget for cameras and he hoped that other agencies might help to fund them. It was also important that the siting of new cameras should be lawful and necessary. The right of residents to privacy must also be taken into account.
- It was noted that existing cameras were mainly in the three main towns, although some town and parish councils also had some cameras which were monitored in the control room. They would need to upgrade their equipment and make a contribution to monitoring costs in future. Any new town or parish councils that might want to invest in CCTV could discuss their plans with Buckinghamshire Council to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hussain and Gideon Springer for this update on CCTV and noted that the Select Committee would receive progress reports in future.

7 SERIOUS VIOLENCE STRATEGY

Cllr Hussain gave a brief introduction, explaining that local authorities now had a duty to develop a Serious Violence Strategy. The strategy would cover the period 2023 to 2026.

Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety made the following points:

- The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 created a duty for local authorities and other specified bodies to create a Serious Violence Strategy.
- Buckinghamshire Council formed a group to develop the strategy. This was chaired by

- the Head of Children's Services as serious violent crime often involved young people.
- In consultation with key groups including Community Safety, Children's Service and the Youth Offending Service, five priority areas were identified:
 1. Raising awareness of serious violence
 2. Supporting early intervention for vulnerable young people at the highest risk of involvement with serious violence
 3. Creating awareness of serious violence amongst the Safer Bucks Board
 4. Supporting offenders released from custody who are most at risk of re-offending
 5. Proactive responses where serious violence takes place using a People Groups Places approach
 - The strategy was in the late stage of development and would go forward to Cabinet for sign off in December 2023 and then shared with the Home Office in January 2024. Partners were working on an Action Plan that would sit beneath the strategy.

The Chairman thanked Gideon Springer for providing this overview and invited Members' questions. In response to questions and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

- Cllr Robin Stuchbury attended the meeting and asked the following question - Your report states that there has been a 43% increase in reported rapes and a 36% increase in reported sexual assaults, with 2783 offences, including domestic abuse reported between 2018 and 2023. In 2016, the Children's Select Committee of Buckinghamshire County Council, of which I was a member, undertook a review on Child Sexual Exploitation and one of the strong recommendations from that report was improved information sharing between agencies such as the Council, Police, Health and Education. As a result the MASH was set up to offer a multi-agency response to include specialist CSE social workers. The specific numbers of sexual offences against young people is not stated. Please can you provide specific figures on these types of offences and provide assurance that the issue of child sexual exploitation has been carefully considered as part of this new strategy, as it is important that our most vulnerable young people are protected.
- Cllr Hussain thanked Cllr Stuchbury for his question and reported that 1568 young people had been the victims of sexual assault over the five year period. The strategy had been put together in consultation with Children's Services, Youth Offending, Probation, Police and Health partners and had children at the heart of it. Four of the five principles were focussed on children and young people as they could be victims and perpetrators. Child sexual exploitation was part of this, as young people who perpetrate serious violence were often being exploited.
- A Member asked to what extent the increase in crime rates in Bucks was due to online sexual offences. He also queried how the strategy would tackle with the fact that victims and perpetrators of serious violent crime were predominantly men. Gideon Springer explained that online crime does not always meet the definition of serious violent crime. Online crime was a significant problem. Community safety teams go into schools to educate students on how to stay safe online, online grooming and radicalisation.
- The Serious Violence Strategy focussed on the fact that young men are the main victims and perpetrators of serious violence whilst acknowledging that young women were increasingly involved. There was a culture of carrying knives amongst some young people across the country. It was important to educate all young people about knife crime and the police and partners were piloting the use of tools to identify young people who might be vulnerable to getting drawn into violence.
- A Member commented that young men were being targeted by distorted views of

masculinity. Gideon Springer reassured Members that schools had developed anti-misogyny tools and would continue to use them. It was also noted that young men need positive male role models and youth mentoring could be useful, but resourcing this was a challenge as the Serious Violence Strategy didn't attract any additional funding.

- In response to a Member's question about the suicide epidemic amongst young men, Gideon Springer stated that this is not part of the Serious Violence Strategy but is being dealt with by other efforts.
- A Member asked about the robustness and timeliness of data on serious violence and it was reported that community safety were informed of all serious violence incidents immediately and also used anecdotal insight from youth workers and other partners to inform their action plan.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hussain and Gideon Springer for attending the meeting and providing this useful update on the Serious Violence Strategy.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Manager reported on the progress of the Digital Exclusion review group. An initial scene setting meeting had been held with Council officers in Customer and Digital and Members would be meeting with Adult Learning shortly. It was hoped that the review group would also visit Adult Learning Centres to speak to some learners directly about their experience.

9 DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

22nd November 2023 at 10.00am



Report to Communities and Localism Select Committee

Date:	22/11/2023
Title:	Opportunity Bucks – progress update
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Angela Macpherson, Cllr Arif Hussain
Contact officer:	Matt Everitt – Service Director, Business Intelligence and Community Support
Ward(s) affected:	10 wards with people experiencing the most hardship, across Aylesbury, Chesham and Wycombe
Recommendations:	To note the progress of the Opportunity Bucks programme

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Opportunity Bucks is our local partnership approach to levelling up, working in partnership across the county to improve outcomes for people across the county who are experiencing the most hardship.
- 1.2 Outcomes for people across the county are, on average, good. Income is above the national average, educational attainment is high, and the proportion of people claiming out of work benefits is low.
- 1.3 However the county averages mask the challenges that some people, in some specific parts of the county are facing. We have identified 10 ward areas where outcomes are substantially worse for residents, with more people in these wards claiming benefits, having worse health outcomes, experiencing higher crime and having limited opportunities.
- 1.4 Our aim, through the Opportunity Bucks programme, is to ensure that everyone in the county has the opportunity to succeed, that we grow together as a place and

that nobody is left behind.

- 1.5 The programme officially launched on 7th December 2022, and this report provides an update on progress made since the launch.

2. Our Ambition for Buckinghamshire

- 2.1 Buckinghamshire is an affluent county overall, with good outcomes for residents. We have high skills levels, with nearly half of residents having a degree or equivalent qualification or higher. Earnings are high with median resident wages around 12% higher than nationally. Around 2.8% of the working age population in Buckinghamshire are claiming unemployment benefits, compared with 4% nationally. Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the England average. In 2023, 91% of pupils attended a school rated good or outstanding. Attainment levels for secondary school pupils are above both statistical neighbour and national average.
- 2.2 However, the figures reported at a county level do not reflect the variation within specific parts of the county. Some ward areas within Buckinghamshire have longstanding challenges and a relatively high number of residents in these areas are experiencing significant hardships.
- 2.3 Through extensive data analysis across a range of indicators linked to deprivation and inequality, we identified 10 ward areas where outcomes were lowest for Buckinghamshire residents. This analysis included datasets on unemployment, low-income households, food and fuel poverty, educational attainment, recorded crimes, emergency health admissions, life expectancy and more.
- 2.4 This analysis enabled us to build a comprehensive understanding of where the most challenges are in the county and to ensure that the focus of the programme is into the areas that need it the most. For example, through this analysis we established that the proportion of people claiming unemployment benefits in parts of Wycombe and Aylesbury is substantially higher than it is in Leicester and Durham, which are not areas typically comparable to Buckinghamshire overall. In these same areas recorded crime is relatively high, emergency admissions are high, life expectancy is low and educational attainment is lower than for the rest of the county.

- 2.4.1 The 10 ward areas identified are listed below. A map of these areas is included in Appendix A:

Aylesbury: Aylesbury North; Aylesbury North West; Aylesbury South West

Chesham: Chesham ward

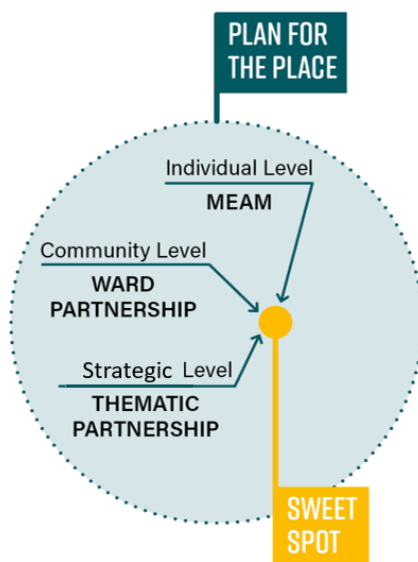
Wycombe: Abbey; Booker, Cressex and Castlefield; Ryemead and Micklefield; Terriers and Amersham Hill; Totteridge and Bowerdean; West Wycombe

- 2.5 The ambition of the Opportunity Bucks programme is to ensure that all residents in the county have the opportunity to succeed. We want to ensure that nobody gets left behind and to reduce the inequality that currently exists within some of the communities in Buckinghamshire.
- 2.6 We recognise that this is not where we are today and that things will get worse if we don't take action, as the issues faced within these communities have developed over a long period of time. Our aim, through the Opportunity Bucks programme is to break the cycle of disadvantage that exists in these communities, improve health outcomes for residents and grow our economy. Residents in these communities tend to have higher usage of services and through tackling the issues these residents face we expect to reduce this usage and deliver longer term cost avoidance.
- 2.7 The framework we have established within the Opportunity Bucks programme has established a shared vision of what Levelling Up is in Buckinghamshire, and will enable us to achieve these aims, specifically through the development and delivery of new and innovative approaches aligned to the particular needs in these communities.
- 2.8 The Government's approach to Levelling Up nationally is focused on improving public services, boosting productivity, living standards, and restoring a sense of community and pride in place, with focus on areas that are lagging behind. The approach we are taking in Buckinghamshire is broadly aligned with this national approach, with a specific focus on the parts of the county where outcomes are worst for residents.
- 2.9 We recognise that this is not a quick fix, and it will take a long time and continued commitment from the Council and partners to address the generational issues that have built up over many years. Through the programme we are aiming to address both the current issues, for example supporting adults to develop necessary skills and attain employment; as well as setting future generations on a path to succeed, for example through raising aspirations and broadening opportunities through schools.
- 2.10 Partnership working is key to making an impact in these communities, and we have established a strong multi-agency commitment to delivering this programme and improving outcomes for residents. This partnership includes statutory partners, the Voluntary and Community Sector, local stakeholders, community groups and resident associations.
- 2.11 The Opportunity Bucks programme officially launched on 7th December 2022, with a launch event held at Adams Park in the Booker, Cressex and Castlefield ward, which is one of the areas experiencing the worse outcomes. This session brought Councillors, partners and colleagues together to clarify the aim of the programme, share learning from other areas, showcase best practice already happening across Buckinghamshire and to discuss priorities for the programme to focus on.

3. Structure of the programme

- 3.1 The Opportunity Bucks programme is being delivered in partnership with statutory partners, the Voluntary and Community Sector and local organisations.
- 3.2 To achieve the aims of the programme, we have established three levels of delivery: Strategic, Community and Individual, detailed in Figure 1:
- 3.3 At a Strategic level we have established Thematic Partnerships, across the following five themes which have been identified as the key challenges impacting on the ward areas:
 - 3.3.1 Education and Youth Engagement - recognising that education is fundamental to improving life chances for children and young people and ensuring there is access to these and a good level of aspiration in young people.
 - 3.3.2 Jobs, Careers and Skills – aiming to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be in paid employment that pays enough money to support a decent quality of life.
 - 3.3.3 Quality of Public Realm – to ensure residents have access to decent quality public realm areas, so recreational spaces are clean and tidy, and people are encouraged to use them to promote positive health & wellbeing.
 - 3.3.4 Standard of Living - recognising that everyone should have the fundamentals of a decent, warm home and good quality food; minimising the impact of poor quality housing, reducing fuel poverty and improving food access.
 - 3.3.5 Health and Wellbeing – health outcomes are worse for people who are living in the 10 target wards and we’re focusing on these areas to improve health outcomes.

Figure 1: Structure of the Opportunity Bucks Programme



- 3.4 At a Community level we have established Ward Partnerships covering all of the 10 wards identified, to enable a hyper-local focus on key issues and challenges that residents are facing in these areas.
- 3.4.1 Ward Partnerships are led by local members for the ward areas, who engage regularly with the Community Opportunities, Engagement and Development team to identify challenges and opportunities; with input and engagement from local community groups, Voluntary and Community sector organisations, resident associations and other appropriate stakeholders for each area. These operate on a smaller geography to community boards, covering only one ward each, and updates on priorities, progress and challenges are reported back into the Community Board Chairmen and Vice Chairmen. Engagement between local members and the Opportunity Bucks programme
- 3.4.2 Through these partnerships, we are able to understand what really are the key things that we need to address or improve in each of the local areas, and ensure local communities are engaged and involved in discussions about how we can do this effectively. The Community Opportunities, Engagement and Development team support the Ward Partnerships and ensure that any learning, best practice and opportunities for joint working between partnerships are identified.
- 3.5 At an Individual level we have established Buckinghamshire's Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) team, to enable our approach of targeting support to people in the county who are the most in need.
- 3.5.1 The MEAM network is a national coalition of charities that specialise in working with people who are experiencing multiple disadvantage. The network consists of over 40 other areas, who share expertise and best practice, coordinated through a centralised MEAM partnership team.
- 3.5.2 Our application to join the network was successful and we have now established our team and a Strategic Steering Group, chaired by the Corporate Director from Adults and Health, and with membership including Thames Valley Police, Red Kite Housing, the NHS and the MEAM Partnership Delivery Manager.
- 3.5.3 The team are working with people who are experiencing multiple disadvantage and experiencing poor outcomes, with a goal to improve outcomes for these people, connect them with relevant services and feed learning back into the system of services to address any systemic barriers that may exist.
- 3.6 The work of the Opportunity Bucks programme is overseen by a Programme Board, on which there is broad representation from statutory partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The programme board meets on a 6 weekly basis, and reports into the Placed Based Growth Board. The list of partners who attend the

programme board is detailed in Appendix B

- 3.7 The Business Intelligence team supports the programme through the development of data profiles, including Ward Profiles for each of the 10 wards, and through the development of key performance indicators and reporting that will enable us to evidence the impact of this work. Indicators and baselines have been established for the programme overall, and for the 5 themes and initiatives, which are reported to each programme board. We recognise that metrics evidencing the longer-term impact of the programme will take some time to change, for example life expectancy, however by capturing and reporting metrics at programme, theme and initiative level we can evidence the activity taking place and link this through to the impact it has within the target areas.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 4.1 We recognise the importance of evidencing the impact of this targeted activity, and have developed a performance dashboard through which we monitor key indicators at a programme, theme and initiative level. This enables us to track the delivery of specific initiatives as well as the impact of these for residents in the target ward areas.
- 4.2 The key performance indicators established for the programme enable us to evidence the volume of activity that is taking place, as well as ensuring we can evidence the impact on resident outcomes that this activity has. There is linkage through initiative, theme and programme level indicators to ensure that we can identify not only the amount of work that is taking place, but also that the effect of this is for residents to be better off as a result.
- 4.3 Key performance indicators are held in a Power BI dashboard enabling oversight of latest outturns, trends and direction of travel across each theme and the programme as a whole. Performance is reported monthly.

5. Progress to date

- 5.1 The programme is still at an early stage, and much of the focus to date has been on embedding the structure and governance required, along with identifying priorities to be delivered through the programme which will improve outcomes for people in the target ward areas.
- 5.2 The Council has committed to providing funding for the programme, at £1.5m per year over 3 years of the programme. To date, £672,340 of the year 1 funding has been allocated to support and enable initiatives including Community Days of Action, Community Clean Ups, the Chesham Jobs and Apprenticeship fair and resourcing to deliver the programme including the Making Every Adult Matter Team.

- 5.3 We've engaged extensively with partners and across Council services to raise the profile of the programme, including through the Voluntary and Community Sector Partnership Board. This engagement has focused on clarifying the aims of the programme and identifying opportunities to work together or to target existing initiatives into these areas.
- 5.4 The ethos of the Opportunity Bucks programme, and focus on the 10 ward areas, is now well established across partner services in Buckinghamshire, which has enabled the targeting of interventions into the target wards including the promotion of volunteering opportunities that will impact in these areas through Community Impact Bucks, the development of targeted food provision and cookery courses from a range of voluntary and community sector providers, targeted promotion and design of Multiply initiatives to improve adult numeracy and the delivery of the Bucks Skills Show in Aylesbury in March. Further detail of specific initiatives delivered are provided in subsequent sections of this report.
- 5.5 We have also established mechanisms to develop a better understanding of the challenges in these areas, through deep dives on specific topics and through tours of the ward areas.
- 5.6 A rolling programme of deep dives has been established to investigate key topics in detail. These deep dives aim to:
- 5.6.1 Explore local and national context, including relevant policies and frameworks
 - 5.6.2 Establish the current state of play in the target wards within Buckinghamshire
 - 5.6.3 Review existing data and KPI's, trend analysis and impact analysis of previous changes
 - 5.6.4 Identify areas of strength
 - 5.6.5 Identify any challenges or areas for improvement
- 5.7 To date, deep dives have focused on education performance, identifying specific challenges and best practice in schools within the target areas, pupil characteristics, performance and opportunities for improvement; on youth engagement and participation, identifying the broad range of initiatives in place for young people, best practice and any gaps that need to be addressed; and on the quality of housing in the target wards, evaluating the physical structure, setting and external factors that impact on this and how this varies across each area. Specific actions resultant from the findings from these deep dives are underway to drive improvement.

6. Strategic Initiatives

- 6.1 Opportunity Bucks aims to deliver long-term change for residents in the target areas

who are experiencing the most hardship. Through the initiatives that we are delivering, we are aiming to build sustainable improvement that can create a legacy for the future and mitigate the challenges in these areas.

- 6.2 The Council has established a programme of work to implement traffic calming measures in Castlefield, in recognition of the road safety improvements required in this area. This is an area of significant investment from the Council, which is being delivered through the Opportunity Bucks programme, to make improvements for residents living in this part of the county.
 - 6.2.1 This programme of work will deliver a comprehensive scheme of improvements to address the road safety issues around the Castlefield estate area, informed by a road safety audit in the specific areas identified at Rutland Avenue, Middleway, Spearing Road, Cross Road and Whitelands Road. Consultation events with the local community took place in September. Feedback was positive and is being used to inform the proposed approach, with activity on-site expected to commence in early 2023/24.
- 6.3 Through our partnership within Opportunity Bucks, we have established a policy change with Buckinghamshire's main Registered Social Landlords to improve living conditions and reduce financial challenges for residents. This change will enable incoming tenants, to social rented properties, to purchase carpets for a nominal fee, whereas the previous policy was to remove carpets when tenants changed over. This change will improve the living standard of tenants in these properties and reduce expenditure on carpets and energy costs.
- 6.4 We've established the Horizons scheme, which is Buckinghamshire Council's programme to help individuals overcome multiple barriers to employment with a focus on individuals who are resident in the Opportunity Bucks wards. This programme will provide job matching support and ongoing development and career progression advice to support employees and managers to establish sustainable employment and mitigate any challenges. Additional work, in partnership with Adviza and the Oasis Partnership, is underway to support people who are economically inactive into work through the Building Futures programme.
- 6.5 We recognise that to successfully deliver the programme we will need to make best use of the collective resource we have across our partnership, and to identify additional funding and resources that can support us to deliver this. To date we have also been able to secure and target additional resource to support the aims of the Opportunity Bucks programme including:
 - 6.5.1 Use of the £2.1m Multiply funding made available from Government alongside the Shared Prosperity fund, to enable adults to improve numeracy skills, is being targeted specifically into Opportunity Bucks target wards.
 - 6.5.2 £2.2m of Health Inequalities Funding to target provision to improve health outcomes for residents in the target wards including through community outreach services, and targeted accelerated smoking cessation initiatives.

- 6.5.3 £160k from the Bucks Capacity Fund awarded to a partnership of Connection Support, Age UK Bucks, Carers Bucks, Citizens Advice Bucks, Community Impact Bucks and Youth Concern as 'Charities Together - tackling Financial Insecurity in Bucks' which will focus on providing practical support for residents experiencing poverty in three towns where inequality is prevalent, aligned to Opportunity Bucks.
- 6.5.4 Ongoing support and consultancy from the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) network, which we have joined and have established a MEAM team in Buckinghamshire. The support includes advice around best practice and guidance when working with people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

7. Local Initiatives

- 7.1 Ward Partnerships have been established in each of the 10 target wards involving Ward Councillors, local stakeholders, resident associations, community organisations, partners and Council officers to identify key challenges and priorities within each of the ward areas.
- 7.2 The Ward Partnerships have also enabled us to raise awareness in these communities of the Opportunity Bucks programme and the aims we are seeking to achieve. In addition, we have engaged with community groups and residents through existing networks and via additional targeted engagement activities in each of the areas, including face to face discussions and via an online survey, to further capture the opinions of residents on the priorities where they live. The feedback captured has been fed into the relevant Ward Partnership to inform the local action plans.
- 7.3 A rolling programme of ward visits has also been developed to include all target wards, with sessions to date taking place in parts of Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham. These ward visits bring together Councillors, Council officers and partners to visit the target areas, see some of the challenges, issues and strengths of these areas first hand, and to engage with local partners and community organisations. Information gathered through these events has been used to inform the programme's priorities at a local and programme-wide level.
- 7.4 Further information on initiatives delivered in each local area are detailed below.

8. Initiatives within Chesham

Chesham

OPPORTUNITY | SUCCEEDING
BUCKS | FOR ALL

Established a Greggs Breakfast Club at the Ivingswood Academy, enabling approximately **50 children to have breakfast** before school each day

Door-knocking of **750 properties in 12 streets** to attempt to identify unlicensed HMOs

Delivered **food support schemes and cookery workshops** with partners to help **upskill vulnerable residents and students on how to cook healthy meals on a budget/using foodbank items**

Delivered numerous **targeted community engagement activities to identify challenges and priorities**

Targeted intensive employment support for economically inactive people via the **Building Futures initiative**

12 cookery course sessions with the Oasis Partnership delivered, to teach people how to cook **nutritious meals using foodbank items**

Visits from the **'Multiply Bus'** to promote opportunities for adults to **improve their confidence with numbers** and sign up to courses

8.1 To date within Chesham we have:

- 8.1.1 Established a Greggs Breakfast Club at the Ivingswood Academy, enabling approximately 50 children to have breakfast before school each day.
- 8.1.2 Delivered the Jobs and Apprenticeships fair at the Elgiva, which was attended by more than 400 residents and 25 exhibitors promoting their jobs and apprenticeships opportunities.
- 8.1.3 Established a cookery course with the Oasis Partnership to teach people how to cook nutritious meals using foodbank items (12 sessions delivered to date in Chesham, more planned during the next 2 months).
- 8.1.4 Delivered an Adult Literacy pop-up event in Chesham library in July to promote literacy courses, identify challenges and sign residents up to courses available including a programme of literacy courses provided during the summer.
- 8.1.5 Targeted the Multiply bus within the Chesham area to promote opportunities for residents to sign up to courses and delivered courses at Chesham Adult Learning Centre to individuals who had signed-up.
- 8.1.6 Targeted the Building Futures initiative – intensive employment support for economically inactive people – within the Chesham area.

- 8.1.7 Conducted a targeted door-knock of properties in 12 streets to attempt to identify unlicensed HMO's – 750 properties covered in 12 streets, which identified issues to resolve.
- 8.1.8 Delivered numerous targeted community engagement activities to identify challenges and priorities within the Chesham ward, including at the Community Board engagement event in April, the Hats Off Festival in July and the Chesham regional partners forum in July. Also attended specific groups including the Hope Church pop-up café, Mama Bee and the Family Hub Community Network meeting for Chesham.

8.2 Activities in Chesham that are on the horizon include:

- 8.2.1 Developing initiatives based on local priorities and feedback following the Ward Partnership workshop delivered on 5th October, chaired by Cllr Gareth Williams.
- 8.2.2 Targeting of the Home Upgrade Grant phase 2 to improve energy efficiency of eligible properties in Chesham will commence in November.
- 8.2.3 We will designate a new smoke free park/playground in Chesham following commencement of the new school term.
- 8.2.4 The community Day of Action for Chesham is scheduled for 13th December.
- 8.2.5 The Council's Waste team are liaising with Paradigm Housing regarding hot spot areas as most of these are within Paradigm's area of responsibility.

9 Initiatives within Aylesbury

Aylesbury

OPPORTUNITY BUCKS | SUCCEEDING FOR ALL

 <p>Community 'Days of Action' offering communities engagement, support and advice in multiple areas</p> <p>50+ visits to properties for fire safety checks</p>  <p>23 blood pressure checks taken</p>	 <p>Providing support to local groups and organisations to enable communities to access free non-perishable food or to provide emergency food to those at risk of homelessness</p>	 <p>Financial support and advice via debt surgeries, engagement activities and attendance by Helping Hand at the Cost of Living event held at Aylesbury DWP office</p>	 <p>Targeted community clean ups</p>
 <p>Resident support and tuition for literacy, maths and / or digital support at Adult Learning Centres and libraries throughout the summer</p>	 <p>Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups (ASBAG) to cover town centre areas have commenced</p>	 <p>Delivered food support schemes and cookery workshops with partners to help upskill vulnerable residents and students on how to cook healthy meals on a budget / using foodbank items</p>	 <p>Visits from the 'Multiply Bus' to promote opportunities for adults to improve their confidence with numbers and sign up to courses</p>

9.1 To date within Aylesbury we have:

- 9.1.1 Delivered Community 'Day of Action' held in Aylesbury North, Aylesbury North West and Aylesbury South West to offer engagement, support and advice for the public and community in multiple areas, including Energy Doctor - energy efficiency advice and promotion, ASB, Public Health advice and Housing advice. 50 + visits to properties were arranged for fire safety checks and 23 blood pressure checks taken.
- 9.1.2 Carried out a targeted clean up in Aylesbury North on 29th August. Operational teams (grounds maintenance and cleansing) cleared a long meterage of public footpath adjacent to Walton Street.
- 9.1.3 Delivered Debt surgeries and engagement activities (DWP offices, VCS events, libraries etc) and the Helping Hand team attended a recent Cost of Living event held at Aylesbury DWP office.
- 9.1.4 Delivered a cookery workshop at Aylesbury Library was held which aimed to teach residents how to cook healthy budget meals.
- 9.1.5 Targeted the Multiply bus within the Aylesbury area to promote opportunities for residents to sign up to courses.
- 9.1.6 Supported the Care Leaver Hub on the 1st Tuesday of each month and establishing a food pantry enabling care leavers to access free non-perishable food.
- 9.1.7 Provided funding to Aylesbury Homeless Action Group to stock their food cupboard to provide emergency food to those at risk of homelessness.
- 9.1.8 Delivered Adult Literacy pop-up events in Aylesbury in June and July to promote literacy courses, identify challenges and sign residents up to courses available including a programme of literacy courses provided during the summer.
- 9.1.9 Developed a summer school programme for residents in Adult Learning Centres held throughout July and August to book or drop into to access support and tuition for literacy, maths literacy and/ or digital support.
- 9.1.10 Commenced the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups (ASBAG) to cover town centre areas in Aylesbury. Feedback from the meeting coordinators indicates that they have been positively received by partner agencies and town centre issues are being discussed and actioned.

9.2 Activities in Aylesbury that are on the horizon include:

- 9.2.1 'Aylesbury Northwest' - meeting with Fairhive to plan a joint initiative to tackle fly tipping in Brenda's Way, Aylesbury, including preventative measures such as improved lighting and fly tipping signage.
- 9.2.2 Working with the new Health on the High Street Hub to develop a community fridge to reduce food waste and support residents in need of fresh food support.
- 9.2.3 Developing provision with the Caribbean Lunch Club in Aylesbury to provide meals to people in need, including families during school holiday periods.
- 9.2.4 Targeting areas for Home Upgrades Grant Aylesbury North, North-West and South-West (estimated target month Dec '23).
- 9.2.5 Working with 2 Opportunity Bucks Primary Care Networks (Aylesbury Central and Dashwood in Wycombe) to target smokers who are inpatients and on patient on surgical waiting lists will be targeted to support them to stop smoking, manage their long-term conditions and be healthy for surgery. Staff recruitment is in process through Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust.
- 9.2.6 The Thomas Hickman School will run a 'design a sign' competition for smoke-free parks and playgrounds in the autumn term and the signage will be used at Vale park (Aylesbury North), Yellowstone Park (Aylesbury North West), Riverside Walk (Aylesbury North West) and Meadowcroft Park (Aylesbury North West).
- 9.2.7 The peer support in schools programme is an additional offer for schools and 5 schools in Opportunity Bucks wards have been recruited for 2023/24. These are: Highworth Combined (Terriers /Amersham Hill), Haydon Abbey (Aylesbury North West), Oak Green School (Aylesbury South West), Wycombe C of E (Abbey) and Wycombe High School (Abbey).

10 Initiatives within Wycombe

High Wycombe

OPPORTUNITY | SUCCEEDING
BUCKS | FOR ALL

Community 'Days of Action'
offering communities **engagement, support and advice** in multiple areas

Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups (ASBAG)
to cover town centre areas have commenced

Plans in place to **improve public spaces** in High Wycombe

Resident support and **tuition for literacy, maths and / or digital support** at Adult Learning Centres and libraries throughout the summer

Delivered **food support schemes and cookery workshops** with partners to help **upskill vulnerable residents and students on how to cook healthy meals on a budget/using foodbank items**

Formal consultations and engagement to **address road safety issues** around the Castlefield Estate

3 Play Street events established

Installed signage for **smoke free parks and playgrounds**

Visits from the **'Multiply Bus'** to promote opportunities for adults to **improve their confidence with numbers** and sign up to courses

10.1 To date within Wycombe we have:

- 10.1.1 Delivered Community Action Days in Totteridge and Bowerdean and in Ryemead and Micklefield, with attendance from key partners including Bucks Fire and Rescue, Thames Valley Police, Red Kite Housing, One Can Trust and Buckinghamshire College Group. Clearance of litter and bulky items throughout wards as well as operational team support with mechanical sweeping and clearance teams.
- 10.1.2 Developed an action plan for Landales Road to improve cleansing and environment. This includes duty of care checks for commercial waste, increased litter picking activities by cleansing team, maintenance of adjacent car park and weed removal and letters to all domestic properties concerning bins, abandoned vehicles and other waste/cleansing matters.
- 10.1.3 Commenced Anti-Social Behaviour Action Groups (ASBAG) to cover town centre areas in High Wycombe. Feedback from the meeting coordinators indicates that they have been positively received by partner agencies and town centre issues are being discussed and actioned.
- 10.1.4 Worked with Buckinghamshire New University to develop a scheme for financially vulnerable students to upskill re healthy cooking on a budget.

Including a proposal for a monthly free recipe bag and online cookery session to produce meals under £3. BNU are capturing data to understand where the residents are accessing this support are residing – launched September 2023.

- 10.1.5 Delivered targeted food support schemes including the One Can Trust Food Bank Supper Club (4-week programme) held at The Avenue Church (Cressex and Castlefield Ward) and Hills Café (Ryemead and Micklefield ward). This enables families to learn how to cook a three-course meal from scratch whilst on a budget.
 - 10.1.6 Delivered a cookery course at Micklefield Library – residents were upskilled on how to cook healthy meals whilst on a budget.
 - 10.1.7 Conducted engagement to progress phase 1 works to address the identified road safety issues in and around the Castlefield Estate in High Wycombe and the formal consultation has now launched.
 - 10.1.8 Made progress with the public realm improvement plans in High Wycombe (White Hart Street) and a separate programme of works to address some of the public realm maintenance issues in the town centre.
 - 10.1.9 Delivered Adult Literacy pop-up events in Wycombe in July to promote literacy courses, identify challenges and sign residents up to courses available including a programme of literacy courses provided during the summer throughout Wycombe market, libraries and the Eden Centre.
 - 10.1.10 Established three play street events (July, August and September) held at Ryemead and Micklefield ward with further events planned.
 - 10.1.11 Installed signage for smoke free parks and playgrounds at the Desborough Recreational Ground. A public-facing launch with the High Wycombe Community Board is being developed. The same signage will be installed at additional parks.
- 10.2 Activities in Wycombe that are on the horizon include:
- 10.2.1 Establishing a dedicated family worker to work with three primary schools in the Cressex cluster, providing more intensive support and intervention.
 - 10.2.2 Additional Community Action Days covering all target wards in Wycombe.
 - 10.2.3 Utilisation of the Home Upgrades Grant phase 2 will be targeting Totteridge and Bowerdean and Booker, Cressex and Castlefield wards (estimated target month Nov '23)
 - 10.2.4 Working with 2 Opportunity Bucks Primary Care Networks (Aylesbury Central and Dashwood in Wycombe) to target smokers who are inpatients and on patient on surgical waiting lists will be targeted to support them to stop smoking, manage

their long-term conditions and be healthy for surgery. Staff recruitment is in process through Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust.

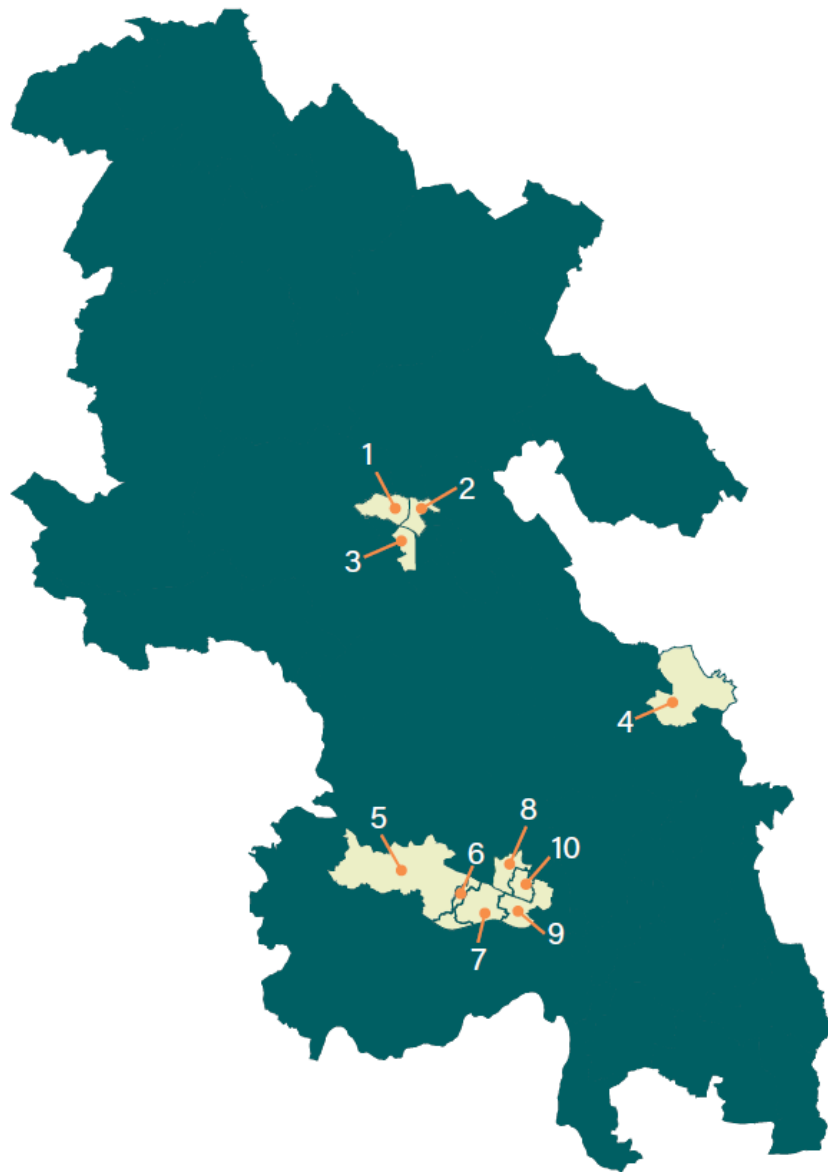
10.2.5 The peer support in schools programme is an additional offer for schools and 5 schools in Opportunity Bucks wards have been recruited for 2023/24. These are: Highworth Combined (Terriers /Amersham Hill), Haydon Abbey (Aylesbury North West), Oak Green School (Aylesbury South West), Wycombe C of E (Abbey) and Wycombe High School (Abbey).

11. Summary & Next Steps

- 11.1 To date the focus has been on establishing robust governance for the programme, raising the profile of the programme and it's aims, and identifying priorities that will improve the lives of our residents.
- 11.2 This has taken time to set up, and it is important that the approach to this engagement and identification of priorities was allowed sufficient time to ensure that colleagues, partners and local communities are brought on the journey and share the ambition and goals of the programme. This engagement will help to clear a path for the ongoing delivery of the programme.
- 11.3 The primary focus going forwards is on delivery. Ensuring that the new initiatives identified at a theme and ward level are delivered as planned, with measurable benefits; and ensuring that the MEAM team continue to progress work with residents in the target wards who are experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- 11.4 The progress of the programme will continue to be reported through the Opportunity Bucks Programme Board and to the Place Based Growth Board.

Appendices

Appendix A – Target Wards



Ward areas

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Aylesbury North West | 6. Booker, Cressex and Castlefield |
| 2. Aylesbury North | 7. Abbey |
| 3. Aylesbury South West | 8. Terriers and Amersham Hill |
| 4. Chesham | 9. Ryemead and Micklefield |
| 5. West Wycombe | 10. Totteridge and Bowerdean |

Appendix B – Opportunity Bucks Programme Board Membership

- Buckinghamshire Council
- Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership
- Action4Youth
- Buckinghamshire College Group
- Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Buckinghamshire Business First
- Red Kite Community Housing
- Buckinghamshire New University
- Thames Valley Police
- Department for Levelling Up Housing & Communities
- Buckinghamshire NHS Healthcare Trust
- Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board



Report to Communities & Localism Select Committee

Date:	22 November 2023
Reference number:	N / A
Title:	Devolution Update
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities
Contact officer:	Tim Weetman
Ward(s) affected:	All
Reason for report:	For members to receive an update on the Council's devolution programme.

1. Background

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council has a strong commitment to localism as demonstrated through the investment in community boards and the development of the town and parish charter. Devolution is not new in Buckinghamshire and there are many examples from legacy councils where our services are devolved to town and parish councils, particularly in relation to grass-cutting, green spaces, highways services and youth centres.
- 1.2 A commitment to the devolution of assets featured within the unitary business case, and during the establishment of the new authority, town and parish councils were asked to submit expressions of interest for devolution proposals.
- 1.3 Following receipt of several expressions of interest, activity began to progress with five pilot projects: Prestwood Rec; Aylesbury Christmas Lights; Green Street Community Centre; Denham Scout Hut and Aylesbury Town Annual Remembrance Sunday Service.
- 1.4 This was all under the guidance of a Member Devolution Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities. Members subsequently agreed to an additional

project to consider three community centres within Aylesbury where funding was raised through special expenses.

1.5 A summary of the progress to date on these projects is below:

- ***Prestwood Recreation Ground – completed (September 2023)***

The ground has been devolved on a long lease of 25 years.

- ***Aylesbury Christmas Lights – completed (July 2022)***

The lights have been devolved for a period of 3 years.

- ***Green Street Community Centre – negotiations ongoing.***

A decision was taken to lease the site to the Karima Foundation in October 2021. Negotiations about the lease are moving forward and the target date for handover is 31 March 2024.

- ***Aylesbury Community Centres (Special Expenses) – negotiations ongoing.***

This would see the transfer of Quarrendon & Meadowcroft Community Centre, Haydon Hill Community Centre, and Aylesbury Multicultural Community Centre for a 25 year period. Bowlers Field (next to Quarrendon & Meadowcroft Community) is also being included on a 2 year period. The Council's proposals and Head of Terms are being considered by Aylesbury Town Council and briefings for local Members are being arranged. If proposals are acceptable for both parties, it is anticipated that the centres will be devolved from 1st April 2024.

- ***Denham Scout Hut – project pending.***

Whilst discussions were taking place with the Parish Council, a fire at the scout hut destroyed the building in March 2022. The Parish Council are currently exploring opportunities for securing external funding to build a new community facility on the site.

- ***Aylesbury Town Annual Remembrance Sunday Service – closed.***

The Devolution Board concluded that the event should continue to be delivered by the Council given its status as the county event.

2. Lessons from the Pilot Programme

2.1 Whilst our experience in devolving services has been relatively straightforward, the devolution of assets – be they land or buildings – is considerably complex and time consuming. Significant input is required from both the property team and the legal team in investigating issues and protecting the interests of the council during the development and negotiation of leases. The input required to progress devolution projects needs to be managed alongside business-as-usual activity, and because of this complexity, progress has generally been much slower than anticipated.

2.2 The financial situation of the Council has also changed as well as new requirements being placed on us such as the Ukrainian refugee programme. As a result, we need to look carefully at all our assets and whether we may need these in the future either to repurpose their use or to generate additional funding.

3. Next steps and future approach

3.1 Given the situation described above, Cabinet approved changes to the Council's approach to devolution when they met on 11th October 2023 and agreed some changes to make it clearer about the process.

3.2 The changes include:

- An initial viability assessment to be completed upon receiving an expression of interest overseen by the Members Devolution Board with appropriate Cabinet Portfolio holders informally consulted, so any requests which are unlikely to proceed are declined at the earliest possible opportunity.
- A stronger focus on those devolution opportunities that offer the most benefit to the Council.
- Applicants will be advised of the proposed Head of Terms as soon as possible to inform the required business case.
- Car parks which generate income, hold an operational benefit or retain a commercial interest will not be considered.
- There will be no negotiation over freehold of assets, although in exceptional circumstances the transfer of freehold could be considered and would be subject to approval by Cabinet.

3.3 Given the impacts on workloads and the time taken to complete projects it was also decided that no further devolution projects would be added to the programme until the current live projects are concluded. Once these are concluded, the programme will proceed with no more than two devolution cases open at any one time.

3.4 The Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy has been updated to reflect the changes and is available on the website. A link to the policy is at the end of this report.

4. Legal and financial implications

Financial implications

4.1 Due diligence is carried out around all proposed transfers to ensure that the financial implications are clearly understood before any decisions are made and that any eventual transfers this will not result in a net cost to the council or the loss of an income generating asset.

- 4.2 There are currently no devolution assumptions built into the MFTP with respect to the devolution projects currently in progress.

Legal Implications

- 4.3 The legal implications of each devolution pilot project are considered as part of the decision-making process. Legal consideration is built into the process for considering requests as per the Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 Devolution of assets involves the transfer of Council property, land or other assets to Parish or Town Councils or community organisations. The Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy sets out that longer-term leases will be granted – usually over 25 years.
- 5.2 There are no HR, climate change, sustainability, equality implications or value for money considerations arising from this report.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 All members were advised ahead of the Cabinet meeting of the proposed changes. There is no requirement however to undertake any individual consultation as the changes are to the policy and process and will only affect future projects.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Town and Parish Councils were advised of the changes to the policy on 18 October 2023. The council website has been updated with the revised policy.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 Further communication will take place with local Members and appropriate local organisations as appropriate as new projects come forward.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 Current service devolution and asset transfer policy:

[Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy | Buckinghamshire Council](#)



Service Devolution & Asset Transfer Policy



October 2023

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3	Types of transfer arrangement	4
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Annex B	Assets out of scope	11
Annex C	Assessment criteria	12

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council recognises the benefits of devolving services and assets to local communities.
- 1.2 We will consider devolving appropriate community assets and services where there is an additional benefit to local communities.
- 1.3 This policy document will be reviewed annually.

2. Scope of this Policy

- 2.1 The scope of this policy document applies to all types of devolution transfer by Buckinghamshire Council – both the devolution of the responsibility for running services and community asset transfer.
- 2.2 Service devolution involves the transfer of the responsibility for running a service from Buckinghamshire Council to another local body.
- 2.3 Community asset transfer involves the transfer of ownership of land, buildings, or other assets from a statutory body to a community organisation in order to achieve a greater public benefit.
- 2.4 The application of this policy may be triggered by either external requests from local organisations and/or triggered by Buckinghamshire Council through an identification by a service area that an asset is declared 'surplus to requirements'.

3. Types of Transfer Arrangement

- 3.1 The transfer of the responsibility for running a service and/or an asset will broadly be managed through different approaches as set out below. A devolution board will determine the most appropriate arrangement on a case- by-case basis considering any associated legislative frameworks relating to procurement, asset disposal or subsidy control. The different types of arrangement are broadly:
- Service Level Agreement - Where a service is devolved, Buckinghamshire Council may set out a service level agreement on the quality standards and activity expected in return for a devolved budget.
 - Freehold Transfer - This is where an asset is permanently transferred to a local organisation subject to any conditions attached.
 - Long Term Lease - 25 years or more in relation to a building.
 - Short Term Lease or other management arrangement - A lease less than 25 years or a license to occupy or other tenancy agreement.
- 3.2 There is a policy presumption that where an asset is to be transferred this will be offered on the basis of a long-term lease, rather than freehold or short-term lease arrangements. This is to provide opportunities for the applicant to consider investment in the asset and/or other funding opportunities whilst ensuring that the asset continues to be used for public benefit.
- 3.3 Short term lease arrangements may be considered under pilot arrangements; however, it is recognised that they may hinder the applicant in planning and investing in a community service without long term certainty.
- 3.4 Freehold transfers will only be considered where exceptional circumstances exist and where there is a clear benefit of this approach to Buckinghamshire Council and the local community. The final decision on a transfer of freehold will be made by the Council's Cabinet.

4. Eligibility and Assessment Criteria

4.1 The following eligibility criteria would apply:

Criteria	Description
a)	This Service Devolution and Asset Transfer Policy is open to: Parish or town councils Unincorporated charitable organisations Companies limited by guarantee with charitable status Community Interest Companies, limited by guarantee Community Benefit Industrial & Provident Society with an asset lock Community Interest Company, limited by shares
b)	Organisations must: Be legal entities Be non-profit making Have community and/or social objectives; and/or Be located within the boundaries of Buckinghamshire Council area or can demonstrate that they provide services within the area to residents.
c)	All community assets must remain open to the wider public. This does not disqualify special interest proposals or groups. However, evidence must be provided of how the asset will be used in an inclusive way.
d)	Applicants must provide full contact details for the organisation, including someone with the relevant decision-making authority.
e)	Applicants must provide supporting evidence where required and complete all sections of required forms.

4.2 Buckinghamshire Council will not consider expressions of interest from organisations which are political or with political affiliations; organisations engaged in supporting candidates for political office; individuals or businesses who intend primarily to run the service or use the asset for commercial gain.

4.3 In addition to the eligibility criteria set out above, the assessment of requests will consider a range of other criteria, including but not limited to:

- Community benefit
- Local control
- Sustainability
- Governance of legal structure
- Financial standing
- Maintenance
- Commitment

- 4.4 The Devolution Board will determine appropriate criteria for each project on a case-by-case basis. Further details on the assessment criteria are set out in Annex C.

5. Principles

- 5.1 Buckinghamshire Council is committed to applying the following principles in how it considers devolution requests:
- Being transparent in the process for devolution, including timelines and decision-making, with as much information published online as possible.
 - Providing timely information to local organisations to make an initial view on whether they are interested in discussing devolution arrangements.
 - Assessing devolution requests fairly through the application of this policy.
 - Transferring the budget for running a service when Buckinghamshire Council is requiring ongoing specific quality/activity standards to be met. Where no specific service standards are expected by Buckinghamshire Council it is anticipated that following a transfer of the service/asset that the future costs would be covered by the organisation taking on the service/asset.
 - Provide a named contact and respond in a timely manner to all devolution enquiries.

6. The Devolution Transfer Process

Decision-making

- 6.1 Following consideration of devolution requests, and negotiations, a decision by Buckinghamshire Council and the respective applicant organisation is needed on the sign-off of individual devolution transfers. All such decisions will be taken in accordance with this policy and Buckinghamshire Council's Constitution. Key decisions on significant devolution transfers will be taken by Cabinet and/or Leader decision, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet members. Non-key decisions will be taken by the relevant officers in accordance with the scheme of delegation.
- 6.2 An advisory Devolution Board will consider all devolution requests and oversee the devolution programme. This will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Communities and comprise the Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Safety; the Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources; the Cabinet Member for Transport; the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure and senior officers from within the council from Policy and Improvement, Property & Assets, Legal, Finance and the incumbent service in respect of service devolution.
- 6.3 The Board will make recommendations to the relevant decision-maker (officer/member) on the detail of transfer agreement terms and sign-off.
- 6.4 The Council may need to balance the competing interests of community groups and an assessment will need to be made as to the option that will deliver most sustainable benefit to the local community. Where possible, potential beneficiaries can be brought together in a partnership, where this can result in greater benefit to residents.

Pre-Application Stage

- 6.5 Buckinghamshire Council can provide support to town and parish councils to enable them to consider submitting expressions of interest. This can include:
- Online guidance and information including template expressions of interest form and business plan.
 - Provision of information on the specification of services to help inform the development of proposals.
 - A named contact to support organisations to submit expressions of interest, support business plan development and to keep the applicant updated at all stages of the transfer process.

Stage 1: Expressions of Interest Submission

- 6.6 Buckinghamshire Council will then:
- Check that the applicant meets the eligibility criteria to be considered, and notify the applicant accordingly.
 - Notify the relevant local member(s) and seek their views.
 - For service devolution, information will be provided to the applicant in regard to service specifications and costs (where possible an estimate of disaggregated costs).

For community assets, the following information will be provided to the applicant:

- Existing costs for maintenance of the asset.
- Condition survey report providing an overview of the property's condition.
- If the applicant wishes to then proceed with the transfer request, in light of this information, the expression of interest will be considered by the Devolution Board.

The Devolution Board will determine if the application passes the stage 1 assessment and next steps which are:

- Business plan required before decision.
- Business plan not required and decision can be agreed (either as an offer decision or Cabinet Member if a key decision).
- Application rejected.
- Proposed Heads of Terms will be assessed and agreed by the Devolution Board, and provided to the applicant to inform any business case.

Stage 2: Business Plan Stage

- 6.7 A business plan will be required where an asset or service request is of value greater than £100,000 and/or for all key decisions.
- 6.8 The Council recognises that completing a business plan will take the applicant time and effort and will only ask organisations that meet all the eligibility criteria.
- 6.9 Where it is agreed to carry out a pilot of a wide-spread devolution of assets and services to a town or parish council, a single business case will be required. This document would be co-developed in partnership.
- 6.10 All business plans will be considered by the Devolution Board prior to a recommendation to the decision-maker (normally the Cabinet Member).
- 6.11 If a business plan is required it is anticipated that supporting evidence will also be requested on the following areas:
- Health & safety arrangements in place
 - Safeguarding arrangements
 - Staffing and/or contractual arrangements
 - Insurance
 - Operational procedures
 - Governance
 - Financial standing
 - Property management and maintenance
 - Proposed improvements and / or investment in the asset
- 6.12 The Council will consult local member(s) and Community Boards prior to a decision on transfers that require a business plan.

Stage 3: Negotiation and Transfer

6.13 The decision on the sign-off of all transfers will be made in accordance with decision-making rules as set out in Buckinghamshire Council's constitution.

Appeals

6.14 Applications that go forward for a decision will be made publicly available and objections / representations can be submitted. Cabinet / the Leader is able to put those objections back to the Devolution Board for further consideration as appropriate.

6.15 Any other matters will be managed in line with the Council's complaints procedure.

Annex A: Devolution Process Flowchart

Devolution & Asset Transfer Policy

If the request is in relation to service devolution, information will be provided to the applicant in regard to service specifications and costs (where possible an estimate of disaggregated costs).

If the request is in relation to community assets identified as priority in phase 1 of the devolution programme, the following information will be provided to the applicant:

- Estimated costs for maintenance of the asset.
- Estimated market value of the asset (if any).
- Condition survey report.

If the applicant wishes to then proceed with the transfer request, in light of this information, then the expression of interest will be considered by the Devolution Board.

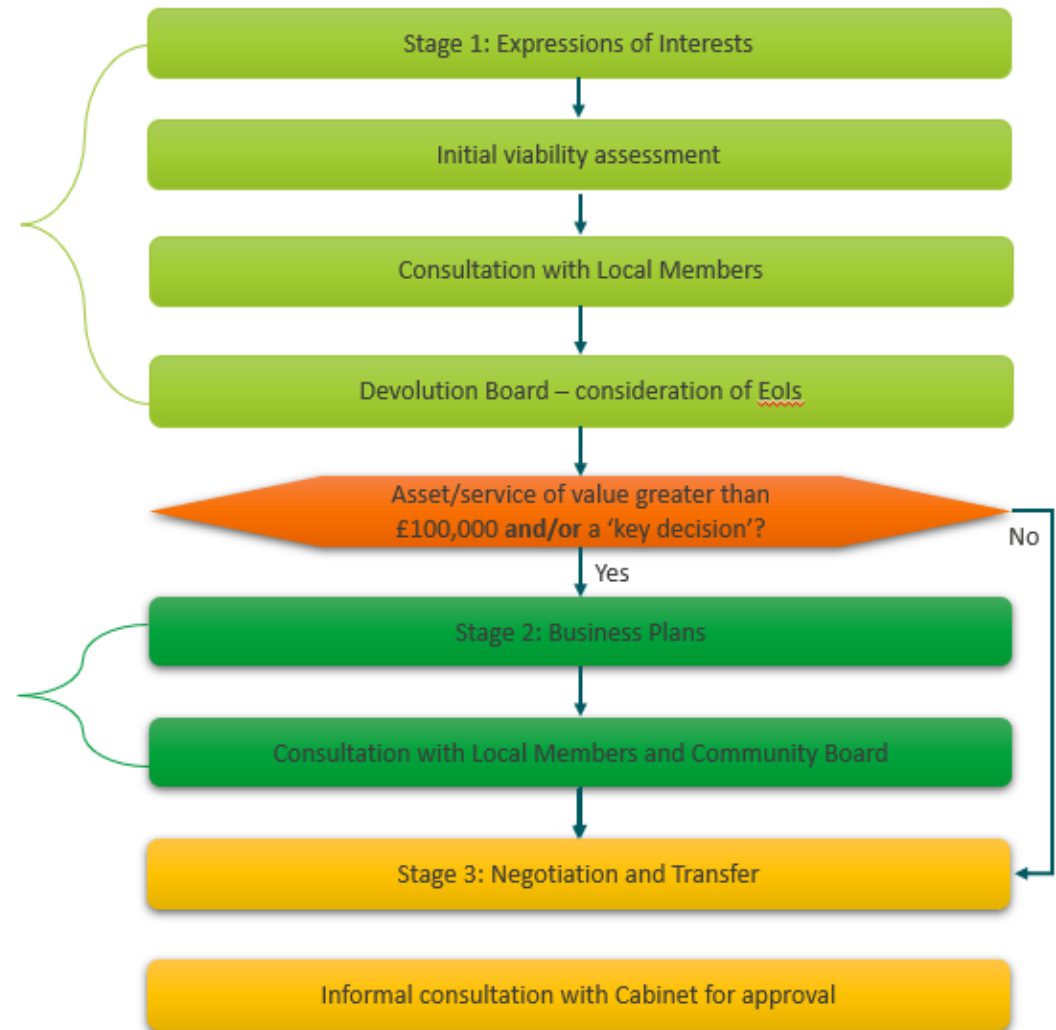
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A business plan will not be required to be submitted where a standard package is offered by Buckinghamshire Council.

If a business plan is required it is anticipated that supporting evidence will also be requested on the following areas:

- Health & safety arrangements in place
- Safeguarding arrangements
- Staffing and/or contractual arrangements
- Insurance
- Operational procedures
- Governance

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL



Annex B: Assets out of scope

In Buckinghamshire Council's devolution programme some types of assets are considered out of scope of this policy. This means that Buckinghamshire Council will not consider such requests under this policy.

Some types of assets are best managed strategically and thereby wish to be retained by Buckinghamshire Council, just as others are better managed locally.

The following asset areas are out of scope:

- Assets held for investment purposes: both assets that generate a net income for Buckinghamshire Council and those held for future capital, revenue regeneration or corporate realisations.
- Vacant land or buildings that may generate a capital receipt, regeneration, revenue aspirations, or corporate aspirations.
- Land held for future development or with underlying development potential (both short and long term), as it would not be financially prudent to devolve land and be required to repurchase it in the future.
- Car parks owned and/or run by Buckinghamshire Council where they generate income, hold an operational benefit or retain a commercial interest.
- Leisure centres owned and/or run by Buckinghamshire Council.
- Buildings used solely as delivery sites for Buckinghamshire Council services.
- Potential buildings which may be considered as Community Access Points/Hubs in later years, to ensure maximum potential for building redevelopment/investment.

Annex C: Assessment Criteria

All applicants will be required to complete an Expression of Interest. A Business Plan will also be required at stage 2 in relation to transfer requests over the value of £100,000 for services/assets and in relation to all transfers which require a key decision.

Template forms will be published online as part of a devolution support toolkit. These template forms will include sections to complete in relation to the criteria areas, with an expectation that more detailed information would be provided where a business plan is required.

Assessment Criteria Area	EOI Evidence	Business Plan Evidence
a) Community benefit	Statement of intended community benefit	Strong track record of delivery of community benefit. Evidence of community impact and resident consultation on proposal.
b) Local control	Meet organisational eligibility criteria.	Evidence that residents will be able to have a say in future decisions on the asset / services.
c) Sustainability	Ability to manage service/property.	Clear long term plan for ensuring viability. A risk assessment and how these risks will be mitigated.
d) Governance & legal structure	Meet eligibility criteria.	Settled legal entity with proven ability to manage change.
e) Financial standing	Established record of financial probity.	Established record of financial probity with evidence of long term planning.
f) Maintenance	Ability to manage service/property.	Proven record of managing maintenance issues.
g) Commitment	Willingness to participate in evaluation.	Willingness to participate in evaluation and share learning.

Communities and Localism Select Committee (Chairman: Cllr Steve Bowles, Scrutiny officer: Kelly Sutherland)

Date	Topic	Description and Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
28 February 2024	Country Parks	An overview of the Country Parks and their work programme.	Sophie Payne	Cllr Clive Harriss, Sophie Payne, Andrew Fowler
	Leisure Strategy	The Committee will consider the key elements of the proposed Leisure Strategy ahead of it being presented to Cabinet for agreement.	Sophie Payne	Cllr Clive Harriss, Sophie Payne Sue Drummond
	Cost of Living	An opportunity for members to hear from Council officers and partners on the support that has been available to Buckinghamshire residents to assist them during the cost of living crisis.	Matt Everitt	Cllr Arif Hussain, Matt Everitt
10 April 2024	Town and Parish Charter	The Committee will receive an annual update on work that has been ongoing in support of the Town and Parish Charter.	Simon Garwood	Cllr Arif Hussain, Roger Goodes, Simon Garwood
	Asylum and Migration Strategy	The Committee will receive an update on the implementation of the Council's Asylum and Migration Strategy.	Matt Everitt	Cllr Arif Hussain, Matt Everitt

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