



Communities & Localism Select Committee Agenda

Date: Wednesday 28 February 2024

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

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

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes		5 - 12
The minutes of the meeting held on 22 nd November 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 Country Parks Overview and Work Programme

10:05

13 - 26

The Committee will receive an overview of the Country Parks operating model and an update on their current work programme.

Contributors:

Cllr Clive Harriss, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure
Sophie Payne, Service Director, Culture, Sport and Leisure
Andrew Fowler, Head of Parks and Green Spaces

6 Cost of Living

11:00

27 - 58

An opportunity for the Select Committee to hear about the support that has been available to Buckinghamshire residents to assist them during the cost of living crisis, from both the Council and our partners.

Contributors:

Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities
Matt Everitt, Service Director, Business Intelligence and Community Support

7 Anti-Social Behaviour

11:45

59 - 76

The Select Committee will receive an update on the work of the Anti-Social Behaviour team, to better understand their role and responsibilities and the impact of their work across Buckinghamshire.

Contributors:

Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities
Gideon Springer, Head of Community Safety
Abdul Rahim, Community Safety Manager (Operational)

- 8 Work Programme 12:30 77 - 78**
The Committee will discuss the work programme and note the items for the next meeting.

Contributors:

All Committee Members

- 9 Date and time of the next meeting 12:40**
The next meeting will take place on 10th April 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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Communities & Localism Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Communities & Localism Select Committee held on Wednesday 22 November 2023 in The Paralympic Room, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.29 am.

Members present

S Bowles, A Waite, S Barrett, J Chhokar, G Hollis, M Hussain JP, M Knight, F Mahon, C Oliver, N Rana, G Smith and L Smith BEM

Others in attendance

K Sutherland, A Hussain, Ms S Moore, M Everitt and R Goodes

Apologies

P Drayton and M Stannard

Agenda Item

- 1 Apologies for absence / Changes in membership**
Apologies were received from Cllrs Penny Drayton and Mike Stannard.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
There were none.
- 3 Minutes**
The minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.
- 4 Public Questions**
There were none.
- 5 Opportunity Bucks Update**
The Chairman welcomed Cllr Arif Hussain, Cabinet Member for Communities and Matthew Everitt, Service Director, Business Intelligence & Community Support to the meeting. Cllr Angela McPherson, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing had also been due to attend and had sent her apologies.

The Cabinet Member gave an overview of the work of Opportunity Bucks, making the following key points:

- Opportunity Bucks had been set up as a flagship programme to improve life chances for those Buckinghamshire residents whose outcomes were considerably worse than the average for the county. Wards had been identified where unemployment and crime were higher, and educational attainment and health outcomes were much lower than the county as a whole. For these wards, the data was similar to less affluent areas of the country, such as Leicester and Durham.
- The overall aim was that everyone in Buckinghamshire should have good education, career progression, a healthy and active lifestyle and a decent and warm home. Improved outcomes were needed for the current and future generations.
- Opportunity Bucks was launched in December 2022 and had been allocated a budget of £1.5 million per annum.
- The key to the success of Opportunity Bucks was partnership working with local groups from the public and charity sectors and local organisations.

A lot of work to date had focussed on establishing the structure and governance of the Opportunity Bucks programme within which there are three levels of delivery to achieve its aims, Strategic, Community and Individual:

1. Thematic partnerships which focused on education and youth engagement, jobs, careers and skills, the quality of the public realm, standard of living and health and wellbeing at a strategic level.
2. Ward partnerships operated at the community level, where local members, officers and stakeholders identified local challenges and interventions to meet local needs.
3. At the Individual level, the MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) team had been established to engage with individuals or families in most need and link them with appropriate help and support.

Some significant achievements of the programme so far were:

- A scheme to introduce traffic calming measures and improvements to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase resident satisfaction in Castlefield.
- An initiative where registered social landlords were encouraged to leave any carpets which were in good condition for the next tenant at a nominal fee, rather than automatically disposing of them.
- An additional £2.1 million had been secured from central government to improve numeracy skills which helped residents, particularly with household budgeting.
- Litter picks, area clean-ups and a community café organised by ward partnerships.

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

- The Cabinet Member emphasised that ward members and local organisations knew their wards well and were trusted by local residents, which was key in identifying targeted interventions that would be effective.
 - A Member asked what was being done to advertise and promote the work of Opportunity Bucks. The Cabinet Member gave details of a recent Community Action Day which had taken place in High Wycombe. The Community Action Day had been promoted using a leaflet drop, social media and via the Community Boards. The day included around 10 contributors including Community Safety and voluntary organisations.
 - Matthew Everitt added that the relevant Community Boards had encouraged participation and engagement across the 10 wards. Local events and community engagement sessions had also helped. A newsletter had gone out to Opportunity Bucks residents in October 2023, with another to follow in December 2023. The Opportunity Bucks programme also had a strong web presence.
 - In response to a Member's question on how the 10 wards were chosen for the programme, Matthew Everitt explained that a large amount of analysis had been carried out using indicators including unemployment, poor health, crime and educational outcomes. Solid evidence had led to the choice of the 10 Opportunity Bucks wards.
 - It was noted that any underspend of the annual £1.5 million allocation would be carried over into the following year.
 - Whilst the programme was planned for three years, the aim was to make changes which would have a lasting positive effect within the 10 Opportunity Bucks wards.
 - A Member noted the emphasis on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) measures and asked about peer support programmes in schools. He also noted that Youth Forums had given a voice to young people in some of the legacy councils before the unitary authority was formed. In response Matthew Everitt stated that there was not a specific Youth Forum within the programme but that representatives from organisations working with young people were represented within the ward partnerships. All of the ward partnerships had been effective at identifying areas of need in their areas, including need relating to youth activities and safe spaces for young people.
 - A Member commended the way that Opportunity Bucks was harnessing partnership working and listening to residents and local members in a pragmatic way and suggested that this was something that all residents should expect from the Council wherever they lived.
 - A Member proposed that the Anti-Social Behaviour team should be invited to a future meeting to talk to the Committee about its wider work in the county. There was general agreement that this would be helpful.
- Action: Scrutiny Manager**
- A Member asked how the success of this project would be measured. The Cabinet Member advised that a dashboard with performance indicators would be updated regularly and any learning would inform future efforts. Matthew Everitt added that assessing the impact of the programme is key and would take place at three levels: Initiative, Theme and Programme, to ensure

activity could be counted as well as outcomes. An example was offered, explaining that metrics reporting the take-up of adult literacy and numeracy courses, would link through to the measurement of the number of unemployment benefit claimants.

- A Member asked if any unexpected issues had arisen during the first year of Opportunity Bucks. Matt Everitt explained that the nature of the problems experienced in some communities was more complex and entrenched than anticipated.
- Again, Members expressed concern about other wards in the county, explaining that the cost of living crisis had led many residents into difficulties. The Cabinet Member explained that for other wards, various sources of help were available including the Helping Hand team. The Cabinet Member also suggested that members should speak to their Community Board Chairmen and Managers to discuss initiatives that could help their local areas.
- The Chairman and a number of members commented that the Helping Hand team had been doing a magnificent job and asked that their thanks should be passed on to the team members. The Cabinet Member expressed his gratitude for this recognition of the team.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and Matthew Everitt for attending the meeting and advised that the Select Committee would be interested to receive further updates on the progress of Opportunity Bucks.

6 Devolution Update

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Communities for staying and welcomed Roger Goodes, Service Director, Policy and Communications to the meeting. The Cabinet Member outlined Buckinghamshire Council's commitment to localism, which included the establishment of the Community Boards and a Town and Parish Charter. Town and Parish Councils and local groups had been invited to submit expressions of interest for devolution of assets or services and the Council had chosen six initial pilot projects, as follows:

1. Prestwood Recreation Ground – This had been completed recently, with a 25-year lease granted.
2. Aylesbury Christmas lights – a 3-year agreement had been put in place in July 2023.
3. Green Street Community Centre – negotiations were ongoing but it was hoped that a handover would be completed by 31st March 2024
4. Aylesbury Community Centres – three centres were planned to be devolved in 2024 and leases were currently with Aylesbury Town Council for consideration and agreement.
5. Denham Scout Hut – unfortunately the Scout Hut had burned down during negotiations and the Parish Council had looked at raising funds for a rebuild.
6. Aylesbury Town Annual Remembrance Sunday Service – this devolution application had been rejected due to the status of the ceremony as a county event.

The Cabinet Member explained that the process of devolution was much more complicated than had been anticipated and required significant legal and property resources, in order to progress the projects. Covid 19 had also contributed to delays.

A revised policy was agreed at Cabinet on 11th October 2023 which aimed to make the devolution process quicker by undertaking an initial viability assessment of applications. In addition, car parks would not be included in the devolution programme and the freehold of an asset would not usually be devolved. Cabinet also agreed that in future, no more than two devolution projects will be worked on at any one time.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for this summary, noting that only two devolution projects had been completed to date and asked him to elaborate on the key challenges. In response to this question and others and during subsequent discussions, the following main points were noted:

- The main delays with the devolution process had been the legal issues involved. Surveys of properties had been required and, in some cases, remedial work was necessary. It was important that the Council and the new asset owner were clear about their respective liabilities. Roger Goodes gave the example of the Green Street Community Centre where Japanese knotweed and an on-site telephone mast had posed difficulties. With regards to the Aylesbury community centres, the Council had consulted with existing users to ensure that they would be able to continue to use them.
- A Member gave an example of a field which Westcott Parish Council had asked to be devolved on several occasions. This was a relatively straightforward devolution request as the field had no utilities etc. but the parish council had not received any feedback. He asked how devolution projects would be chosen in the future if only two were worked on at any one time.
- The Cabinet Member stated that where devolution could be done quickly and easily, these projects could be progressed and he agreed to provide an update on the specific application in Westcott. Roger Goodes stated that there was a waiting list for devolution projects and that new projects would be taken on in early 2024. The Council would look for 'easy wins' - projects that would most benefit the Council and the organisations applying for devolution.

ACTION: Roger Goodes

- A Member asked about the community centres which were to be devolved in Aylesbury, enquiring about what Buckinghamshire Council was spending to get the assets up to the standard where Aylesbury Town Council could take them on. The Cabinet Member replied that this was subject to negotiation.
- A Member pointed out that where requests had been made to devolve play areas to parish councils, it was disappointing that no progress had been made. Local play areas could only be a cost to Buckinghamshire Council and it was disappointing that small projects had not been completed to produce quick wins already. The Cabinet Member agreed that this was a lesson

learned.

- A Member stated that he saw three failings with the devolution process to date - 1) the previous district councils had not been quick to hand assets over, 2) the process had been advertised as quick and simple – this had not been the case and 3) there had been delays in formulating a comprehensive devolution policy.
- He also raised concerns about a lack of communication between Buckinghamshire Council and Denham Parish Council regarding the scout hut. The Cabinet Member agreed to look into this matter and report back.

Action: Cllr Hussain

- A Member noted that it seemed that parish and town councils had tried to take control of assets that were formerly important to them. He felt that the emphasis should be on the needs of the local community. Roger Goodes agreed that any decision on devolution should be right for the council and the local community.
- A Member expressed the view that the council was being too risk-averse where devolution was concerned and that local councils could use their precepts to help fund a local asset if necessary. The Cabinet Member appreciated the Members' frustration and agreed to look at assets which could be devolved quickly.
- A Member pointed out the wording in the report which stated that devolved projects should benefit local communities and the council. She felt that the emphasis should be on community benefit. The Cabinet Member stated that value should be added to both parties.
- Roger Goodes advised the Select Committee that there was one officer leading on devolution projects. However, he explained that a number of officers from different teams, for example Legal Services or Property, were involved in each application. Every application was treated as a project in its own right and would have its own lead officer. For future projects it was agreed that Roger Goodes would ensure that relevant contact details were shared.

Action: Roger Goodes

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Roger Goodes for their contributions to the meeting.

7 Work Programme

The Chairman reminded members that this was an opportunity to raise potential agenda items. Any suggestions could also be emailed to the chairman or the Scrutiny Manager at any time. The suggestion of inviting the Anti-Social Behaviour team to a future meeting had been noted.

The Chairman noted that since the last meeting, the Digital Exclusion Group had made visits to adult learning centres in High Wycombe and Aylesbury. At their next meeting, the group would be hearing about broadband coverage in the county.

8 Date and time of the next meeting

28th February 2024 at 10am.

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Report to Communities & Localism Select Committee

Date:	28 February 2024
Title:	Country Parks Overview and Work Programme
Author:	Andrew Fowler – Head of Parks and Green Spaces
Recommendations:	For information – Members of the committee are invited to NOTE the details of the Country Parks operating model and work programme

1. Background

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council's four Country Parks were established under the 1968 Countryside Act between 1972 and 1990.
- 1.2 The Country Parks operate under a self-financing arrangement, meaning all costs required to manage and improve the sites must be generated from activities within the sites.
- 1.3 This report details the key activities that have been developed and implemented and future plans.

2. The Country Parks operating model

- 2.1 Buckinghamshire Council currently owns and operates four country parks in Wexham and Stoke Poges, the Ivers and Denham: Black Park Country Park (525 acres/213 hectares), Denham Country Park (69 acres/28 hectares), Langley Park Country Park (155 acres/63 hectares) and Thorney Park (52 acres/30 hectares).
- 2.2 Each park has a unique identity drawing on the site's particular attributes: Black Park's size and wilderness atmosphere, the historic landscape of Langley Park, the wetland attributes of Denham Country Park and the unique wildlife attributes (despite its industrial background) of Thorney Park.
- 2.3 There are no statutory responsibilities for the Council to provide Country Parks, however there are legal and operational responsibilities to manage these facilities appropriately. These include (but are not limited to) the Occupiers Liability Act, Health and Safety at Work Act (HASWA), Control of Substances

Hazardous to Health (COSHH), the Reservoirs Act, the Wildlife and Countryside Act, the Badgers Act, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act. Each of these acts, and numerous others, have an impact on how the Country Parks must be managed.

2.4 Prior to the pandemic, visitor numbers across the Country Parks were relatively stable at around 1m visitors per annum, but this rose to 1.76m during 2020/21 when other leisure opportunities were constrained under the Covid restrictions. Visitor numbers have decreased since this peak, but still sit approximately 7% above pre-pandemic levels (as shown in Appendix 1).

2.5 A comprehensive visitor survey, completed in 2017, included an analysis of the customers using the parks at the time including group size, visitor mix by age, employment status, household income and an analysis of visitors' home postcodes. The postcode distribution maps in Appendix 2 show that Black Park has the widest draw, followed by Langley Park and then Denham.

A repeat of the 2017 survey will be completed in 2024 to analyse what impact changes to the sites over the last 7 years may have had on visitor perceptions and catchment areas.

2.6 Customer feedback remains consistently positive and the quarterly analysis of Google reviews shows overwhelmingly positive visitor reviews, with almost 94% positive (4/5 or 5/5) comments. Examples include:

"A place where at times anyone can be truly alone. A huge forest cut off from civilization only a few miles away from West London. Very grateful for this regional park."

"It's a beautiful adventure park, picnic spot, forest just at the edge of Slough and Langley. It has ample paid parking, if you are an adventure enthusiast or nature lover, this place is for you."

2.7 Income generation has always been a feature of the Country Parks operating model, with forestry and filming activities contributing to the core funding from the Council prior to the self-financing arrangements being introduced. Full self-financing was achieved from 2004/05 and since then, the financial position has been both sustained and improved through the successful development of the parks. The income achieved enables further investment into the facilities to deliver conservation activities, to ensure the parks remain attractive and enjoyable places to visit, and to support future income generation.

2.8 To guide the development of the parks, several studies have been commissioned and subsequently approved by Members, to provide a framework for

appropriate commercial developments in the Country Parks. The key features of these documents are summarised in Appendix 3 'Service on a page'.

- 2.9 Any developments/activities in Black Park or Langley Park must consider several covenants and historic Acts of Parliament that were enacted when the land was bought in 1946. The covenants, particularly, specify what these two parks can (and cannot) be used for, meaning that it is highly unlikely that the sites could be used for any other purpose apart from their current uses.
- 2.10 Alongside the commercial focus, the parks retain a strong community focus with high quality facilities and activities which are free of charge, including three quality play areas meeting Local Area Equipped for Play (LEAP) standards, picnic facilities, over 10 miles of surfaced tracks and hundreds of acres of parkland in which visitors can explore and play.
- 2.11 The Country Parks team also provide volunteering activities every week where visitors can engage with practical conservation tasks, as well as an award-winning 'Adopt a Patch' scheme which encourages individuals and families to adopt an area of a park and endeavour to keep it litter free.
- 2.12 The above are among many ways in which the parks contribute to wider Council priorities and agendas, from supporting people's health and wellbeing, to increasing public participation and connecting people to nature.

Current business arrangements and income generation

- 2.13 Since the introduction of the self-financing arrangements and associated commercial focus, the bigger parks have evolved to become visitor attractions as opposed to traditional country parks and they operate in the extremely competitive leisure market.
- 2.14 As an example, in 2008/09 the team secured a deal with Forest Adventure Ltd (trading as Go Ape) for a high ropes course at Black Park Country Park; following the success of the initial course additional features and attractions were introduced including forest segways, mountain bikes, junior tree-top adventure and the nets kingdom, in order to increase and maintain public interest in the parks. The Go Ape activities required the installation of catering and toilet facilities adjacent to these new facilities and these, coupled with a new high-quality caterer and exceptional high standards of management and maintenance, have been the catalyst for the transition from traditional Country Parks to visitor destinations.

Core Income

There are three main sources of income for the Country Parks: car parking, filming and commercial/residential leases. These activities are supported by other equally important but less profitable activities and arrangements, including forestry, events/education, grants and sales.

	Annual Income 2023/24
Car Parking	£776,173
Leases/Licences	£345,559
Filming	£282,760
Other	£93,802
Total	£1,498,294

- 2.15 Car parking charges are levied at the three Country Parks that have visitor facilities (toilets, catering and recreation facilities) and this is consistently the biggest source of income. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that car park pricing is a consideration for visitors, particularly in relation to other similar sites, and therefore it will be important to continue to monitor visitor reactions to any future price increases (although relatively small numbers, parking prices remain the biggest area of complaint in customer satisfaction analysis).
- 2.16 Leases and Licences - There are three main commercial tenants at the Country Parks: Forest Adventure Ltd (Go Ape), San Remo Catering and Groundwork South. There are also eight residential properties linked to staff 'service tenancies' that require staff to live on site for the better performance of their duties.
- 2.17 Filming - The Country Parks have a long history of filming and are reported as being the most filmed outdoor locations in the UK. With an adjoining boundary with Pinewood Studios, Black Park has been associated with location filming since the invention of the earliest mobile cameras in the 1920s. Filming continues to be a critical source of income for the Country Parks, but it can be inconsistent.

Other Income

- 2.18 Commercial forestry and timber sales – As well as being an amenity woodland, Black Park is a commercial forest, hardwoods and softwoods are routinely harvested producing high-quality timber from the site. This is a long-term investment and closely regulated through our woodland management plan which is approved by the Forestry Commission. Within the woodland management plan there are opportunities to remove certain species which

allow the principal crop to develop, this allows for supplementary income to be achieved through sales to the film industry for set dressing.

- 2.19 Grant Applications – historically countryside/parks management has been supported by European Agri/Environment scheme funding. Following Brexit these funding schemes have been gradually wound down while alternative schemes have been developed. The operational spatial/management plans and the woodland management plans mentioned above will be key to any future submissions for grant funding from the Government. The service maintains regular contact with regional advisors from the Forestry Commission and Natural England (NE) to monitor upcoming schemes and the options for applications to be submitted. The team also delivered a £3.1m restoration of the historic Langley Park estate, bringing a landscape reputedly designed by Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown back to its former glory. The 10-year project restored key features of the estate including a collection of Rhododendrons of European significance.
- 2.20 Events and Education - A weekly pre-school ‘Tots in the Wood’ activity takes place at Black Park based around the Forest Schools initiative; this has been active for a number of years, initially through an external supplier and subsequently in house. This has recently been extended to provide sessions for home schooled children and children with special educational needs.
- 2.21 Additional public events, from self-guided trails to traditional guided walks, are delivered throughout the year and try to capture current trends, as well as more traditional events including Halloween trails, dinosaur trails and film walks. All events encourage outdoor exercise, are usually at least 2.5km long, and often have an educational theme linked to the activity e.g. the litter bug trail promoting reuse and recycling.

Financial Management

- 2.22 Since 2005/06 Country Parks have been net contributors to the Council’s General Fund budget which forms part of the Council’s Medium Term Financial Plan. Any funds generated above this annual income target are transferred into allocated reserves or to help offset wider corporate or service financial pressures. Reserves are used to deliver unforeseen/major maintenance projects (e.g. bridge repairs, play area replacements), income generation projects (e.g. new café building, car park extensions) or renewals (e.g. specialist site equipment and machinery).
- 2.23 The allocated reserves mean that the Country Parks can continue to operate sustainably within the commercial leisure market, providing regular improvements and developments at the sites without drawing on the Council’s pressured capital programme. Without the investments, it is unlikely that the

Country Parks would be able to keep pace with developments required to maintain their competitive edge within the leisure market.

3. Future work programme

- 3.1 Black Park Changing Places Toilet – this is a modular toilet and changing facility for adults with severe physical disabilities and is being delivered with core funding from Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This will be the first such unit in Buckinghamshire Council’s parks portfolio.

Funding: DLUHC £40k grant, Development reserve £35k

Target completion date: March 2024
- 3.2 Langley Park spatial plan and management plan – Following the completion of a spatial plan and an operational management plan for Black Park, it has always been the intent to deliver similar plans for all the Country Parks sites. These plans guide the operational management of the sites dividing the sites by landscape characteristics, visitor usage and conservation value. They are ‘live’ documents that can evolve as the environment, the economic climate and customer expectations change. The first draft of these documents for Langley Park was delivered to the team at the end of December and is currently under review.

Funding: Maintenance reserve £34k

Target completion date: March 2024
- 3.3 Forestry/woodland management plans - To facilitate operational management of the commercial woodlands at Black Park, Langley Park and Rowley Woods it is necessary to have a woodland management plan agreed with the Forestry Commission (FC). Despite early engagement with the FC through our consultants, the previous management plans have expired, and the new plans are yet to be approved.

Funding: Maintenance reserve £9k

Target completion date: March 2024
- 3.4 Langley Park Ha-Ha Wall – this historic feature linked to the Capability Brown inspired Langley Park estate was last repaired in 1994 where large sections of the wall were rebuilt is now in need of further work after the collapse of a large oak tree in 2019 and some subsidence of the 1994 repairs.

Funding: Maintenance reserve £20k

Target completion date: September 2024

- 3.5 Black Park Café facility - A new catering outlet with indoor seating, incorporating new toilet facilities, adjacent to Black Park Car Park and the Go Ape facilities at the Country Park. This facility replaces the outdoor kiosk and temporary toilets that have been in-situ since the establishment of a visitor hub centred around the Go Ape facilities. It draws together the key recreational activity hub and the parking facilities which will help to improve visitor attendance during the winter months.

Funding: Development Reserve £1.25m

Target completion date: March 2025

- 3.6 Black Park Lake Erosion mitigation - Black Park Lake is classified a raised reservoir under the 1974 Reservoirs Act, which requires formal annual and 10-year inspections of the earth bank dam. Issues of erosion along both the north and south banks of the lake have been identified and require a programme of remedial works to be completed; this will include the clearance of the degrading mature trees along these banks to facilitate access for the erosion mitigation works. Subject to gaining felling licences and budget constraints, works will commence in autumn 2024.

Funding: Maintenance reserve £145k

Target completion date: phase 1 - March 2025

- 3.7 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Fund (CVAMF) - Following the use of Denham Country Park for HS2 enabling works the Parks have been successful in securing funding from the Colne Valley Addition Mitigation Fund for access and habitat improvements and a further £80k from HS2/National Grid for habitat enhancement focussing on protected species, namely Great Crested Newts and Water Voles. A dedicated project officer has been appointed and works will take place over the next two years.

Funding: CVAMF grant £196k (potentially increasing); National Grid grant £80k

Target completion date: phase 1 March 2025, phase 2 March 2026

- 3.8 New Country Park in Stoke Poges – This project is delivering a new country park following the importation of 80,000m³ of soils and sub-soils to create a new landscape feature based on the footprint of the former South Bucks Golf Academy. The income generated from the soil importation is funding the landscaping and the development of the facilities including parking, toilets, a café, various paths for walking and cycling, play areas and other visitor infrastructure.

- 3.9 Layout and landscaping of the site has been progressing well following the soil importation, and initial planting has been undertaken in some areas of the park

(where it will not be impacted by the other elements of construction). For both environmental and cost-efficiency reasons, it is now proposed to repurpose and extend the existing brick building on site (rather than demolition and construction of a new modular unit); the construction company are confirming planning requirements in order to provide confirmed completion dates.

Funding: soil importation £1.8m

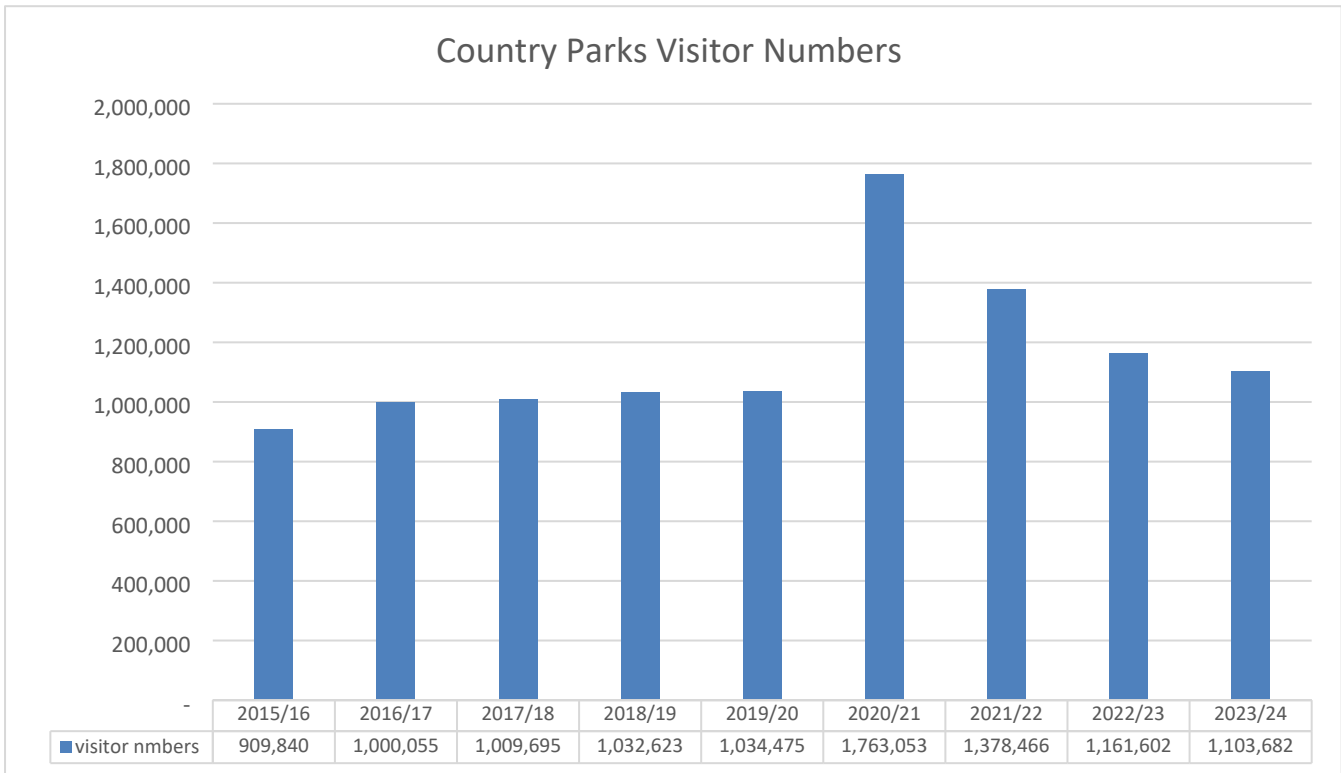
Target completion date: late 2024/25

- 3.10 Little Marlow Lakes – Planning colleagues are continuing to work with Natural England around compliance with Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace requirements, using evidence gathered through visitor surveys undertaken last year; this work is key to inform the development of management and business plans for the site. A report on this will be brought back to Cabinet in due course.

4. Next steps and review

- 4.1 The Country Parks team will continue to deliver high quality operational management and maintenance of our successful Country Parks sites, balancing their benefits for local people, conservation, and income generation.
- 4.2 We will regularly monitor the leisure market to ensure that the parks remain commercially competitive and continue to sustain high levels of customer experience and satisfaction. Where internal or external funds become available, and in line with the Council's financial approvals processes, we will seek to deliver appropriate developments and improvements aligned to the agreed spatial and management plans, to ensure that each of the Country Parks retains its USP.

Appendix 1

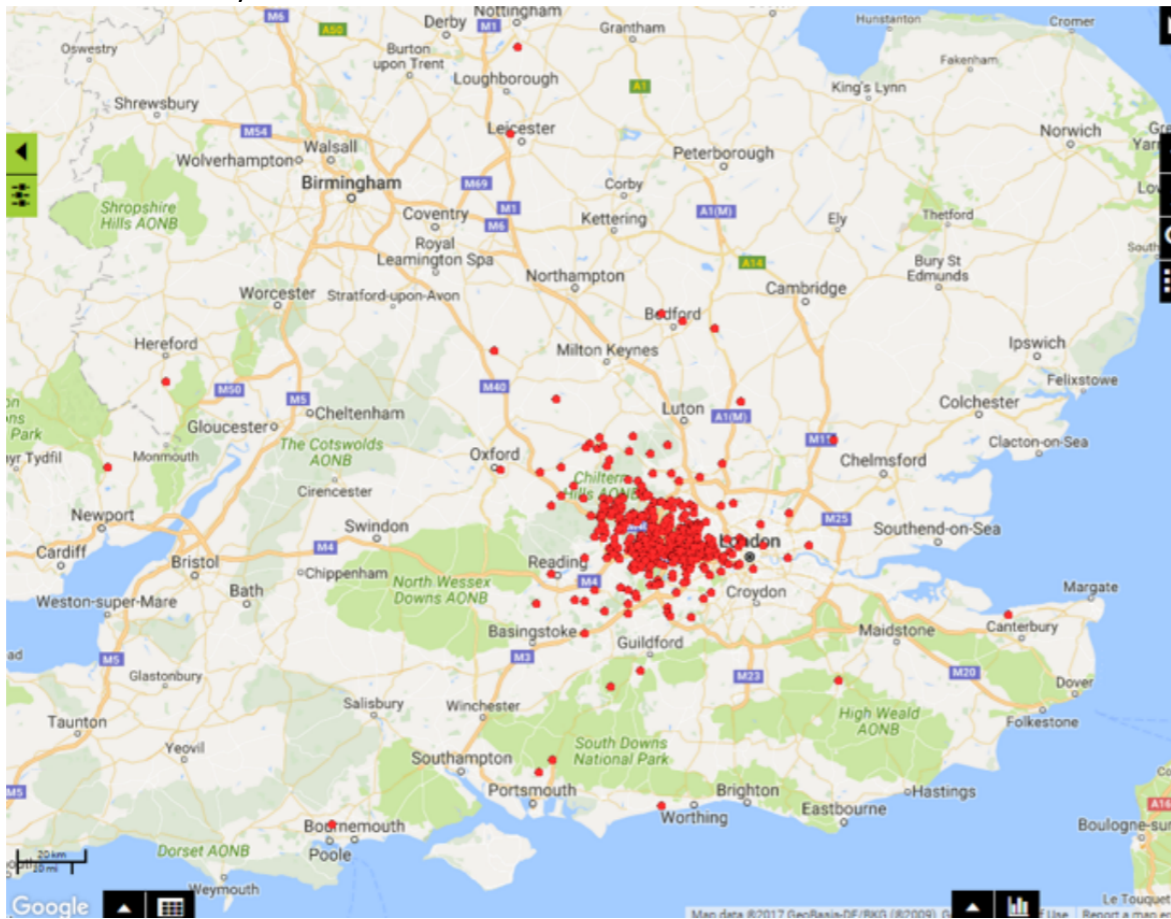


The peak in 2020/21 relates to increases in outdoor recreation caused by lockdown restrictions. New facilities in development such as the café/visitor centre, the Changing Places Toilet, path improvements etc. are designed to support and sustain future visitor numbers.

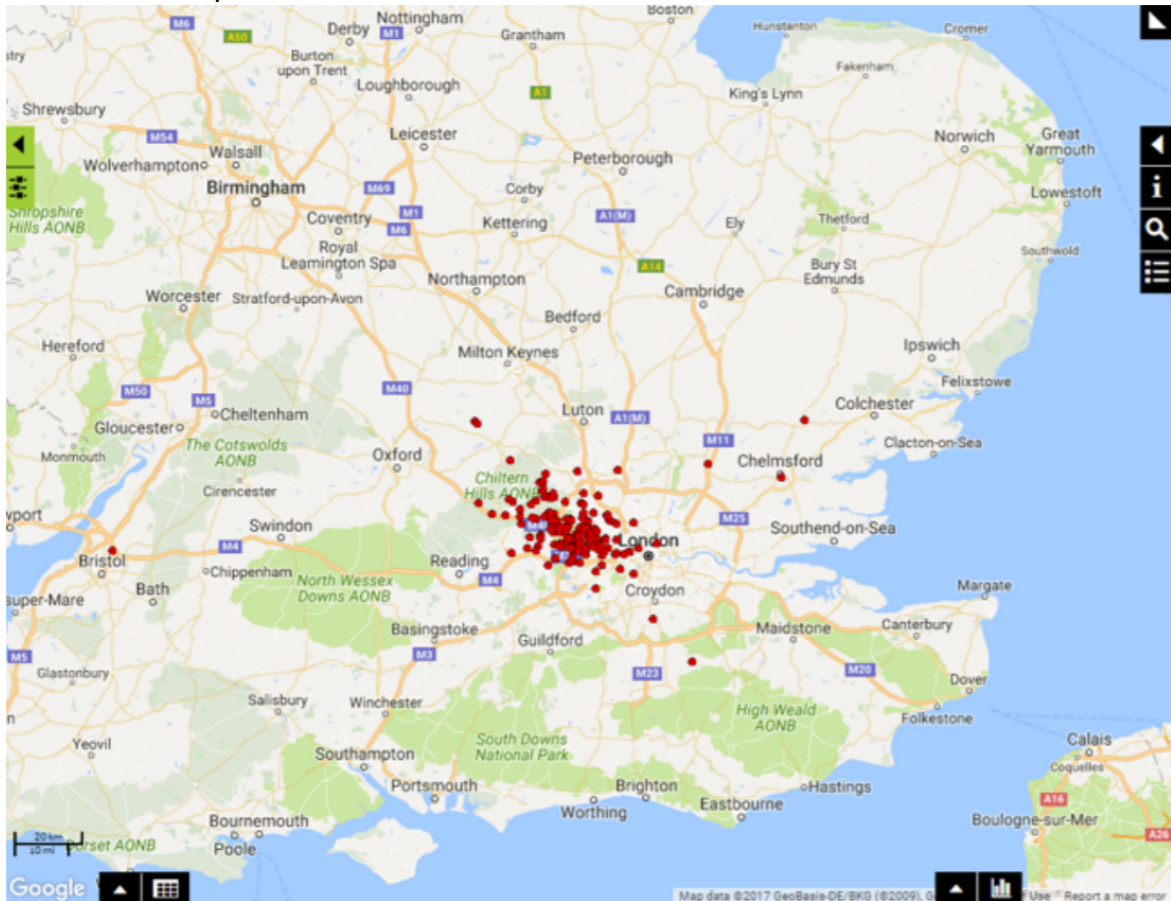
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Appendix 2 - Visitors home postcode distribution

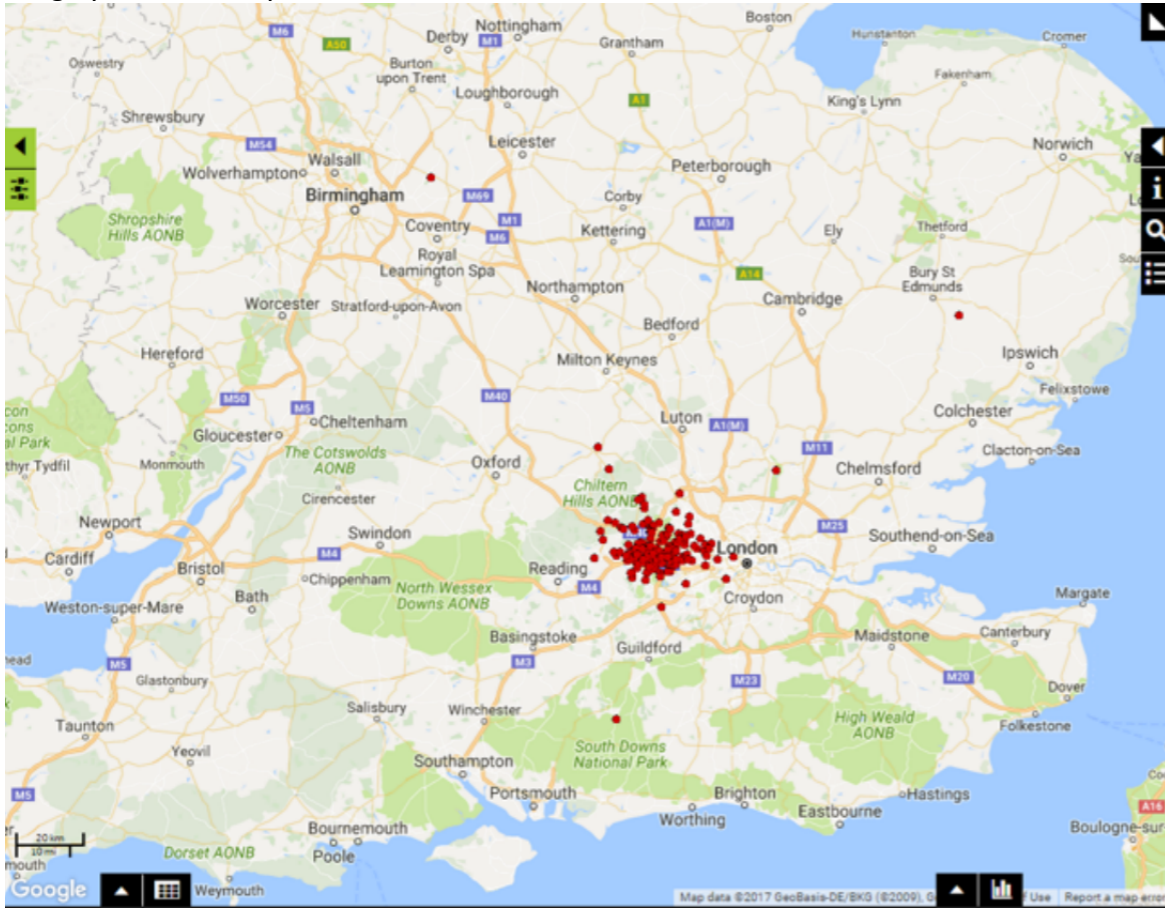
Black Park Country Park



Denham Country Park



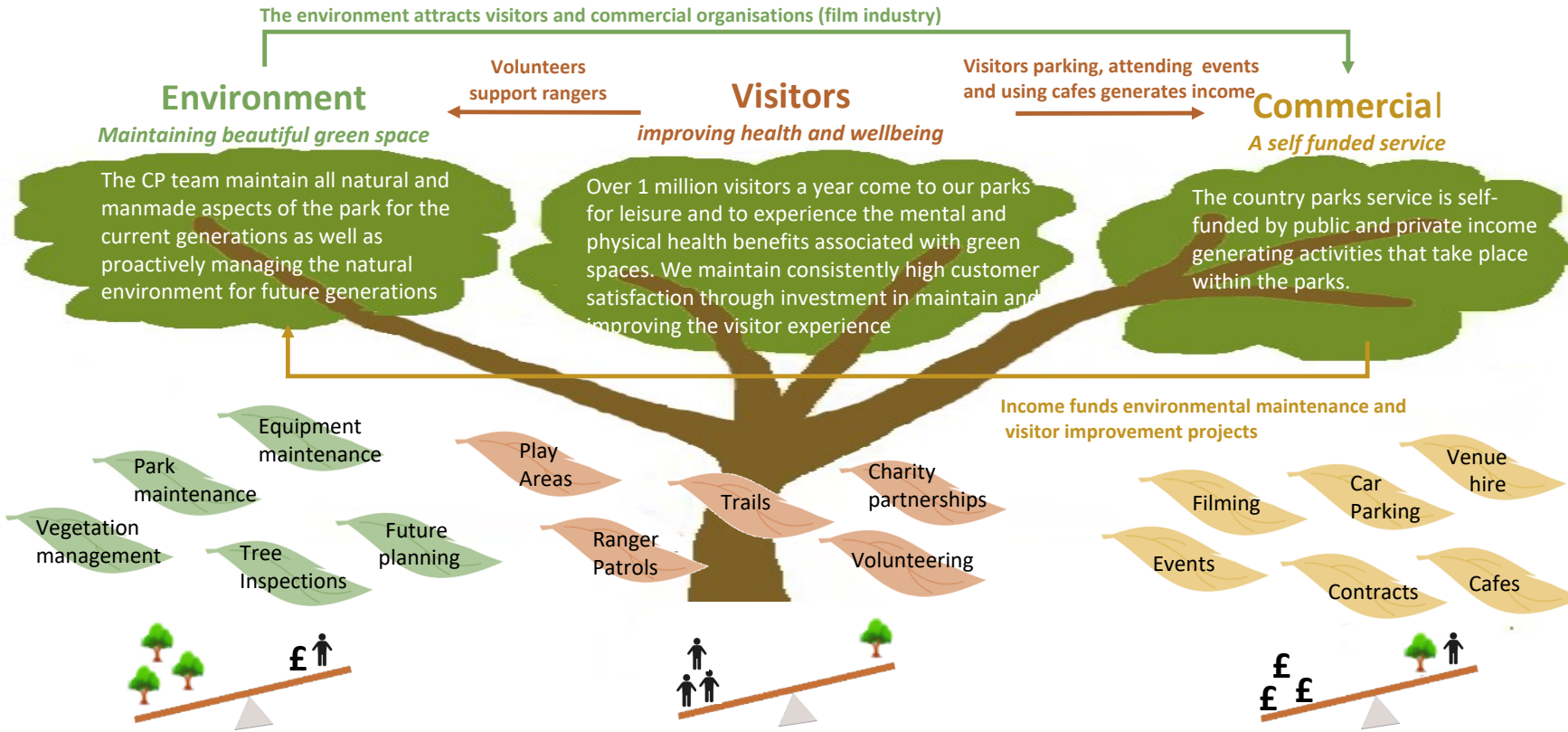
Langley Park Country Park



Appendix 3 – Service on a page

Country Parks

The parks offer areas of **woodland and heathland where natural habitats can flourish** and which the **public can enjoy**. The work of the country park team falls into three interrelated areas which are shown below, along with examples of key activities in each area.



A BALANCING ACT: While each of the three work streams feeds into the others to a greater or lesser extent, there are also tensions between them.

Long term environmental management can negatively impact visitors and income generation in the short term. For example reducing the attractiveness of a location through forest clearance required to replicate natural succession

We want to encourage people to visit our country parks, but we must be mindful of how a large footfall through the parks can damage the natural environment. E.g. through littering and erosion.

Activities that generate income, such as events and filming, can damage the natural environment. For some visitors these activities detract from the natural beauty of the park .

Key Challenges



Climate change: threat to certain tree species and habitat preservation.



Intergenerational tension: need to clear areas today to preserve forest for future generations Short-term vs long-term



HS2: clearing areas of Denham Park as part of the construction.

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Supporting Buckinghamshire residents and staff with the cost of living

February 2024



Background

- The national cost of living pressures are well documented
- Energy costs have increased
- Inflation has increased
- Household income has decreased
- Across the country, people are struggling to heat their homes, buy food, pay bills and manage other essential costs
- We are also seeing this in Buckinghamshire, where local research suggests that demand at Buckinghamshire food banks has increased by 162% from 2019 to 2021



Cost of Living Programme

- As a Council, we recognise the growing pressures being faced by our residents linked to the increases in the cost of living.
- We have seen an increasing level of demand for financial help and wellbeing support from Buckinghamshire residents and have made further provision to support residents who are in need, developed through close partnership working, particularly with the voluntary and community sector.
- Our Cost of Living programme, to coordinate our response to the cost-of-living pressures, started in September 2022.



Programme Objectives

Ensure that residents keep warm, have sufficient food and essentials for themselves and their families by:

- Signposting to support and advice with income, finance and debt problems
- Providing direct support
- Encouraging community and business responses
- Promoting energy efficiency measures

This was the starting point for the cross-council Cost of Living Programme, which grew into nine workstreams: Communications, Helping Hand, Food and Essentials, Fuel and Energy, Warmth, Money and Debt, Community Activity, Public Health and Support for Staff.

1. Communications

Our Communications workstream has underpinned all workstreams, focussing on delivering a wide-reaching promotion campaign covering multiple media as appropriate for each workstream so that residents are aware of the council and partners' initiatives and know how to access cost of living support in the county.



Key activities have included:

- 'Help with the Cost of Living' website section regularly updated with new information
- Joint communications with HAF and Helping Hand to encourage uptake of HAF and redemption of holiday food vouchers
- Launch of Community Food Chain comms
- Christmas Gift of Giving campaign including Food Champions comms
- Printed Residents Support Leaflet distributed through key partners
- Coordinated with partners on activity through Community Action Days in Opportunity Bucks wards



Everyone needs a **helpinghand** from time to time



Is heating your home a struggle?
We might be able to offer you a **helpinghand**



2. Helping Hand - Crisis Support

The Helping Hand team has directed support to those who need it most and informed other workstreams with intelligence about emerging need. The Helping Hand team is available to help individuals or families in need, those on low incomes and those who are experiencing a financial emergency or crisis.



helpinghand

Key activities have included:

- Raising profile of Helping Hand support available, including engaging with key partners to promote support offered by Helping Hand – most recently with Bucks Mind and Wycombe Mind
- Coordinating use of the Household Support Fund £4.8m (from April -March); using this to support over 7,500 residents since April 2023
- Delivery of holiday food vouchers for eligible children in receipt of pupil premium
- Pre-paid Utility cards contract in place – allowing debts for gas/ electric and/or water to be cleared by the resident
- Working closely with the MEAM team to provide additional support to residents who have had the most contact from the Helping Hand team within Opportunity Bucks wards

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

H A F

Winter Holiday Activity Booklet



Visit Buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf to find out more

Funded by
UK Government

Do you know someone
who could benefit from
a free Warm Pack?



Each warm pack contains a fleece blanket, hat, snood, gloves, socks and a reusable canvas bag.



You can collect a warm pack from the library in Amersham, Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Buckingham, Burnham, Chesham, Hazlemere, High Wycombe, Marlow and Princes Risborough.

Please check library opening times on the council website.

Our libraries are also welcoming spaces where residents can keep warm this winter. Find out more at Buckinghamshire.gov.uk/welcoming-spaces

If you or your family is in need or is experiencing a financial emergency or crisis,

contact Helping Hand: Buckinghamshire.gov.uk/helping-hand
01296 531 151 | 0800 999 7677 (out of hours)

Or visit one of our council access points, located in our libraries.

Case Study 1

- Single, 59-year-old male with a disability reducing his ability to work.
- All white goods broken over previous years and no funds to replace them.
- Debts with gas/ electric suppliers.
- Struggling to complete the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) forms to receive additional benefits

Page 35

Outcomes:

- White goods purchased and installed
- Heart of Bucks grant to clear gas and electric arrears
- Referral to Citizens Advice Bucks to support with PIP application and benefit maximisation

I cannot begin to thank you enough for your help with this. The last few years have been absolute hell for me, from a standpoint of health, ability to work, rising food and energy prices and low income. This is a huge weight being lifted from me, giving me breathing space once again

3. Food and Essentials

This workstream was focused on developing support mechanisms for food and essential items, ensuring that people who are vulnerable are well signposted and these are easy for residents to access.





Could you become a
Food Champion?



Key activities have included:

- Food Champions Network expanded to now include Bedgrove, Aylesbury
– currently 47 food champions
- Gift of Giving – Christmas volunteering and donations plus Christmas food champions comms
- Ongoing financial support for food banks, community food schemes such as hot meals, community fridges, hampers, Bucks New University food scheme
- Ongoing signposting and referral to food banks and other meal schemes via the Helping Hand team
- Developing new models for food support with Bucks Food Partnership (BFP), and area-based Food Action Plans under the Opportunity Bucks Programme
- BFP launched their Food Ladder Project with Chesham selected as the pilot area to launch the recommendations from their findings report and we will be supporting this work

4. Fuel and Energy

This workstream aimed to develop new and innovative measures to ensure that we target support to residents struggling with fuel and energy costs who need it the most.



Key activities have included:

- Providing assistance with fuel bills and pre-payment meter cards through Helping Hand where residents have been unable to get help from their energy companies
- Promoting existing energy schemes such as the Sustainable Warmth Fund
- Promoting energy saving measures and link to energy companies via a social media campaign
- Investment in relevant schemes, for example Better Housing Better Health
- Launch of the Energy Doctor scheme to support eligible households with smaller energy efficiency measures such as draft proofing and energy saving lightbulbs
- Letters sent to eligible properties in Buckinghamshire for the energy doctor scheme with 113 households in Opportunity Bucks areas and 171 outside of Opportunity Bucks benefiting from an Energy Doctor visit



5. Warmth

The Warmth workstream is focused on developing and providing practical support to residents, to enable them to keep warm during the cold winter months.



6. Money and Debt

Through our Money and Debt workstream we recognise the financial pressures residents are facing and have sought opportunities to reduce these pressures whilst ensuring residents are linked in to the support available to them.



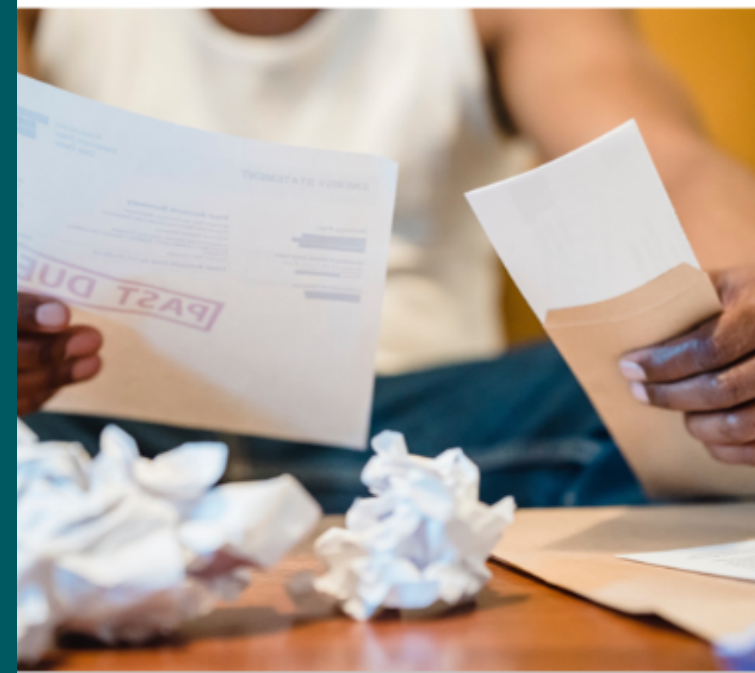
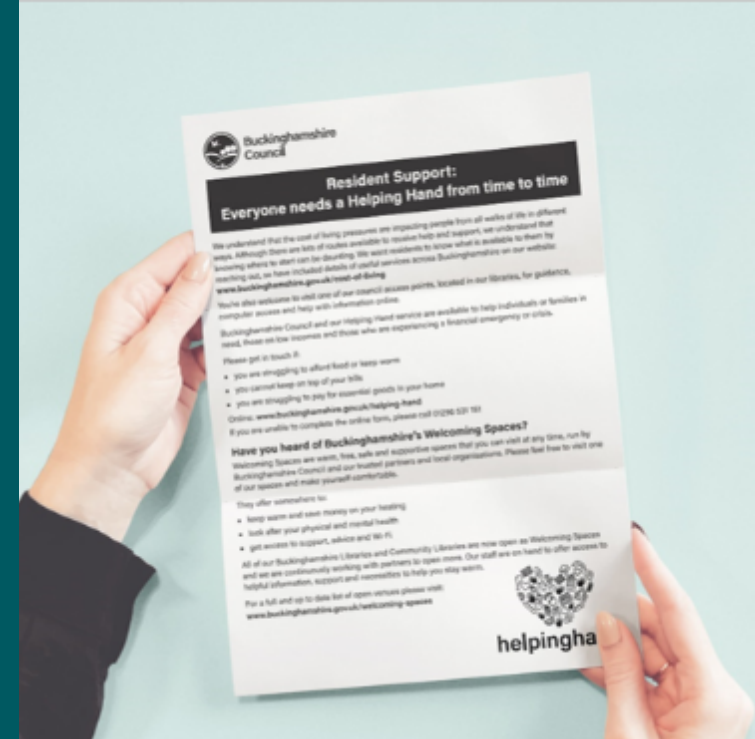
Key activities have included:

- Working with Citizens Advice Bucks (CAB), a 'warm referrals' portal has been launched, allowing the Helping Hand team to provide resident details to CAB and contact made to offer debt support without the need for the resident to call them
- Funding provided through the Household Support Fund to Christians Against Poverty and Citizens Advice Bucks to support with the cost of Debt Relief Orders and applications for bankruptcy – thereby removing the worry for the resident to find this cost at a difficult time

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We have updated council tax reminder and annual bill messages highlighting available support – including a link to Bucks Mind – and utilise the Council Tax Support Fund to assist the most vulnerable

- We are working closely with the Economic Development Team to identify opportunities for future job fairs; ensuring these will be targeted in Opportunity Bucks wards where employment challenges have been identified in the ward action plan. The aim is to ultimately reduce dependency on the Helping Hand team if improved employment opportunities are available



Case Study 2

- Single mum with two children (one with a registered disability)
- Survivor of Economic Abuse during her marriage (all bills were put into her name without her knowing)
- Works full-time
- Struggling emotionally after the divorce and unable to open any debt related letters
- Received a court summons for Council tax

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Outcomes:

- Heart of Bucks grant of £2,000 awarded to clear the Council tax arrears
- Engagement with Women's Aid for counselling and support.

I want to express my gratitude to you and the Helping Hand team for your help with the grant towards my council tax bill. As well as the way I was treated with dignity and compassion when I came to you for help. The help with the bill was a great relief to me

7. Community Activity

Our Community Activity workstream has focused on developing and supporting community-led initiatives, maximising the use of detailed community knowledge to extend support into communities and to residents who need it the most.



Key activities have included:

- Community Boards have supported with:
 - Funding opportunities for cost-of-living related projects
 - Communicating signposting information
 - Investing in more hot meals sessions/supper clubs
 - Continuing to support projects through funding, engagement & partnership working with communities and Helping Hand
- Hot meals community toolkit launched
- Guidance for developing Community Fridges including funding options
- Food waste residents' toolkit
- Sharing signposting information with key partners



Make yourself warm
and comfortable in our
Welcoming Spaces



Waddesdon Hall **Community Fridge**

Everyone welcome, please help yourself

Together we can reduce food waste and offer
a Helping Hand to our local community

Where: Waddesdon Hall

When: Monday and Tuesday | 10am - 12 noon
Thursday and Sunday | 5pm - 7pm

Everybody needs a helpinghand from time to time

DONATIONS WELCOME



Buckinghamshire
Council



WADDESDON HALL
A GREAT VENUE AT THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE



helpinghand

8. Public Health

Our Public Health workstream has helped to provide an evidence base to inform our approach, conducting research to support targeting of interventions.



Key activities have included:

- Input into internal and external cost of living comms content
- Linking in with key public health partners for signposting
- Exploring the potential benefits of conducting a cost-of-living survey to explore behavioural aspects of accessing cost of living support
- Launched the Better Points app

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EARN VOUCHERS FOR HEALTHY ACTIVITIES

3 simple steps!

Download the app today!



1 Download BetterPoints



2 Complete activities (e.g. walking) and collect points



3 Spend vouchers at high streets or charities



9. Support for Staff (Internal)

We recognise that we also need to support our staff during the cost of living pressure. We have developed a comprehensive package of support, including a dedicated internal network, to ensure that we provide support to staff who need it.



Key activities have included:

- Internal comms campaign highlighting support available (including digital, events and print content)
- Staff mileage loan and extension of working hours parking scheme
- Employee hardship fund (ended June 2023)
- CAB Money Matters webinars
- Office pantry and hygiene item scheme
- Flexible working pool
- Extra staff payments in July and January 23
- Staff Financial Wellbeing surveys to inform and target activity
- Nominated for a PPMA award and shortlisted for Best Health and Wellbeing Initiative



10. Funding

The Helping Hand team is largely reliant on funding from the Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund. Just under £4.8 million was allocated to Buckinghamshire Council to spend between April 23 – March 24.



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Household
Support
Fund



How the funding is being spent:

- Direct support from the Helping Hand team – including white goods and beds/ mattresses
- Fuel vouchers to top-up pre-payment meters
- Heart of Bucks – grants of up to £2,000 to clear priority debts including rent arrears, Council tax arrears, gas, water and/or electric bills
- Holiday food vouchers for children eligible for pupil premium, early years' pupil premium or 2-year old funded free education places
- Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Organisations – providing funds for food banks, community fridges, hot meal projects etc
- Targeted Cohorts – including clothing vouchers for care leavers

Government has not announced an extension to the Household Support Fund for 2024-25 so this offer is subject to ongoing review



How we work with our partners:

- Working with Red Kite Housing we asked them to support their tenants by leaving in place good condition carpets when they offer new tenancies. This was introduced in August 2023 and has been positively received. Other Housing Associations are now also offering this to their tenants.
- Fairhive Housing's Welfare Manager set up the weekly Community Hub at the Vineyard, Aylesbury. This is a one-stop shop drop-in for anyone and provides multi-agency support & advice on housing, employment, training and well-being. A representative from the Helping Hand team attends each week.
- Bucks Fire & Rescue Service regularly makes referrals to the Helping Hand team for support for vulnerable residents that they have visited. In addition, they receive referrals from the HH team for support with hoarding.



Helping Hand stats (April –December 23):

- Over 7,500 applications were received during this period
- On average 194 applications were received each week
- 49% of applications received during the year had previously applied within the same year
- Over 400 cookers, 370 fridge freezers and 330 washing machines were delivered and installed
- Over 235 Heart of Bucks grants of up to £2,000 each awarded to clear priority debts (rent/ council tax/ gas/ water/ electric)
- Over 58,000 digital food vouchers distributed to over 14,500 eligible children in receipt of pupil premium or 2-year-old funding during the school holidays
- Over £400,000 spent on VCS organisations including foodbanks, hot meal projects and community fridges



Case Study 3

- Married couple with three young children. Wife works full-time, husband has been made redundant and applying for multiple jobs
- Husband is struggling with his mental health
- Requested support with food

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Outcomes:

- Foodbank referral made
- Supermarket vouchers issued
- Signposted to his GP and Healthy Minds
- Referral made to The Getaway Foundation for a well needed holiday for the family
- Christmas hamper and presents provided

Can I say a massive thank you please. Once again you have gone above and beyond. I had literally just told the girls we couldn't afford a proper Christmas dinner this year and then you called with that news! You will never know how grateful I am and they had such an amazing day! The food, the chocolate, all the toys - I was in literal tears at your generosity.

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Anti Social Behaviour Team

C&L Select Committee Presentation
February 2024



Introduction

- What is ASB?
- Whose responsibility is it to deal with?
- How do we respond to ASB across Buckinghamshire?
- Which Partner agencies do we work with?

What is ASB?

ASB, Crime and Policing Act 2014-

- Section 2 (1) (a) Defines ASB in **public** as conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, **harassment, alarm or distress to any person.**
- Section 2 (1) (b)(C) Defines ASB within a **housing setting** as conduct capable of causing **nuisance or annoyance** to a person in relation to that person's occupation of residential premises, or conduct capable of causing housing-related **nuisance or annoyance** to any person.

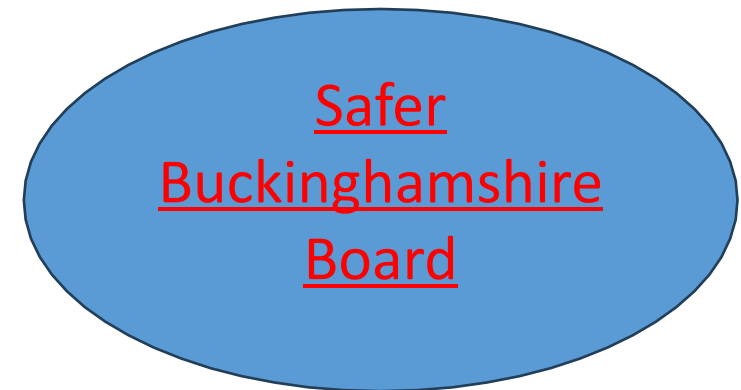
- It can include low level criminal behaviour and non-criminal activities
 - vandalism, graffiti, harassment, noise nuisance, drug use, and rowdy behaviour.
 - Antisocial behaviour can affect individuals, communities, or the environment.



Whose responsibility is it to deal with ASB?

- **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998** places a legal duty on a number of different agencies to do all they reasonably can to prevent, reduce, or stop crime and disorder, including ASB and behaviour which adversely affects environment.

- Policing body (TVP and OPCC)
- Local Authority (in all its functions)
- Fire and Rescue Authority
- Health Authority
- Probation
- And others



ASB Team, roles and responsibilities

Three members of the ASB Team cover the whole of Buckinghamshire;

Stuart McNair – Team leader – South Buckinghamshire area.

Andy Smith- The North of the county.

Garin Christie – Legacy Wycombe area.

Town Centres of Aylesbury and Wycombe

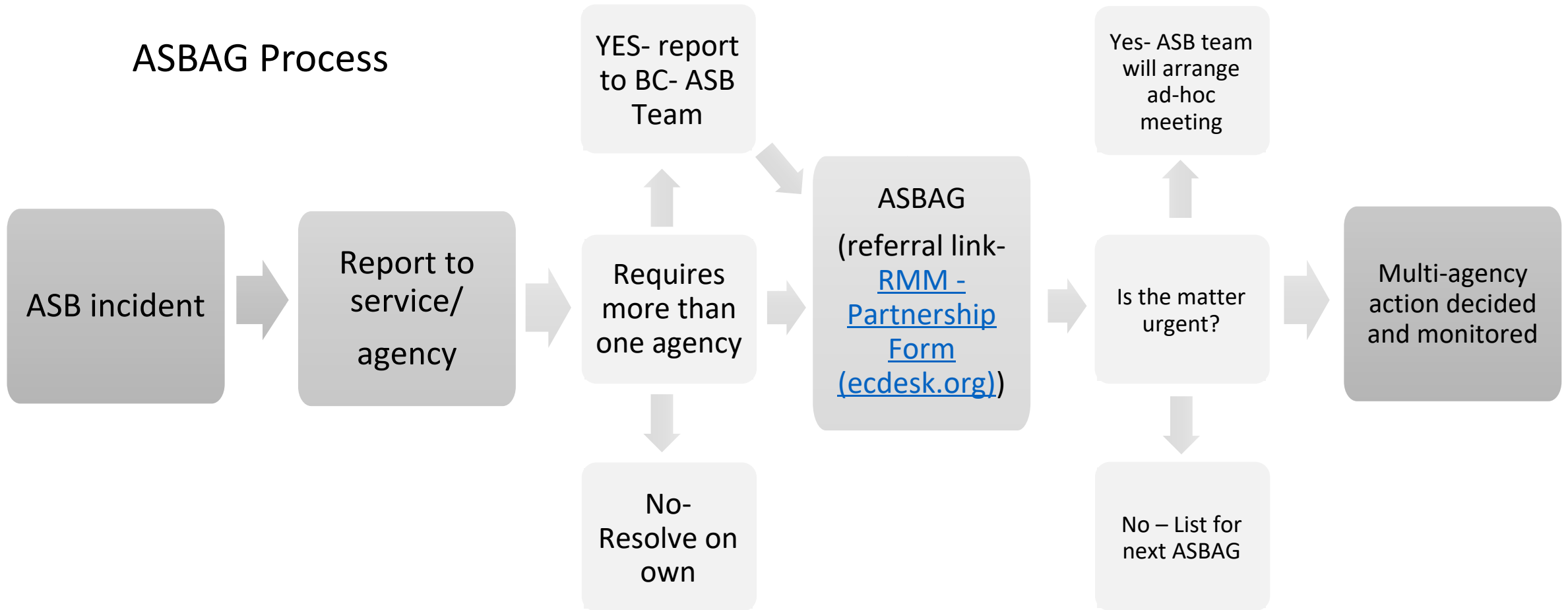
Nick Adkins- Team leader and two street wardens in each town centre.

Partners The ASB team work with

- Police
- Housing providers
- Youth services
- Social services
- Waste services
- Environmental Health
- Trading Standards
- Local Councillors
- Planning
- Mental Health services
- Substance misuse teams
- Homeless teams
- Highways
- Parking services
- Asylum and migration teams
- Community Boards

How do we respond to ASB?

ASBAG Process



ASBAG Process

- Anti-Social Behaviour Action Group.
- Aims
 - Bring key stakeholders together to establish a response to ASB issues in the area and coordinate actions and activities of partner agencies.
 - Discuss Current and New cases
 - Agree actions
 - Monitor / review and update.

Informal or Formal Tools and Powers?

Informal

- Warning Letters
- Trespass Letters
- Mediation-Restorative Justice
- Acceptable Behaviour Contract
- Parental Responsibility Agreement
- Good Neighbour Agreement
- Responsible Retailer Agreement

Formal

- Community Protection Notice
- Criminal Behaviour Order
- Injunction
- Premises Closure
- Tenancy
- PSPO- FPN's

Vulnerable victims

Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment Matrix to be completed in all cases where we have individuals affected by ASB.

- **High-** Case to be treated as urgent with a referral to ASBAG and safeguarding referral to be made if appropriate for the victim.
- **Medium-** Case can be referred for additional support and monitored through ASBAG.
- **Low-** No action required, can be signposted to support groups if necessary and to be managed locally.

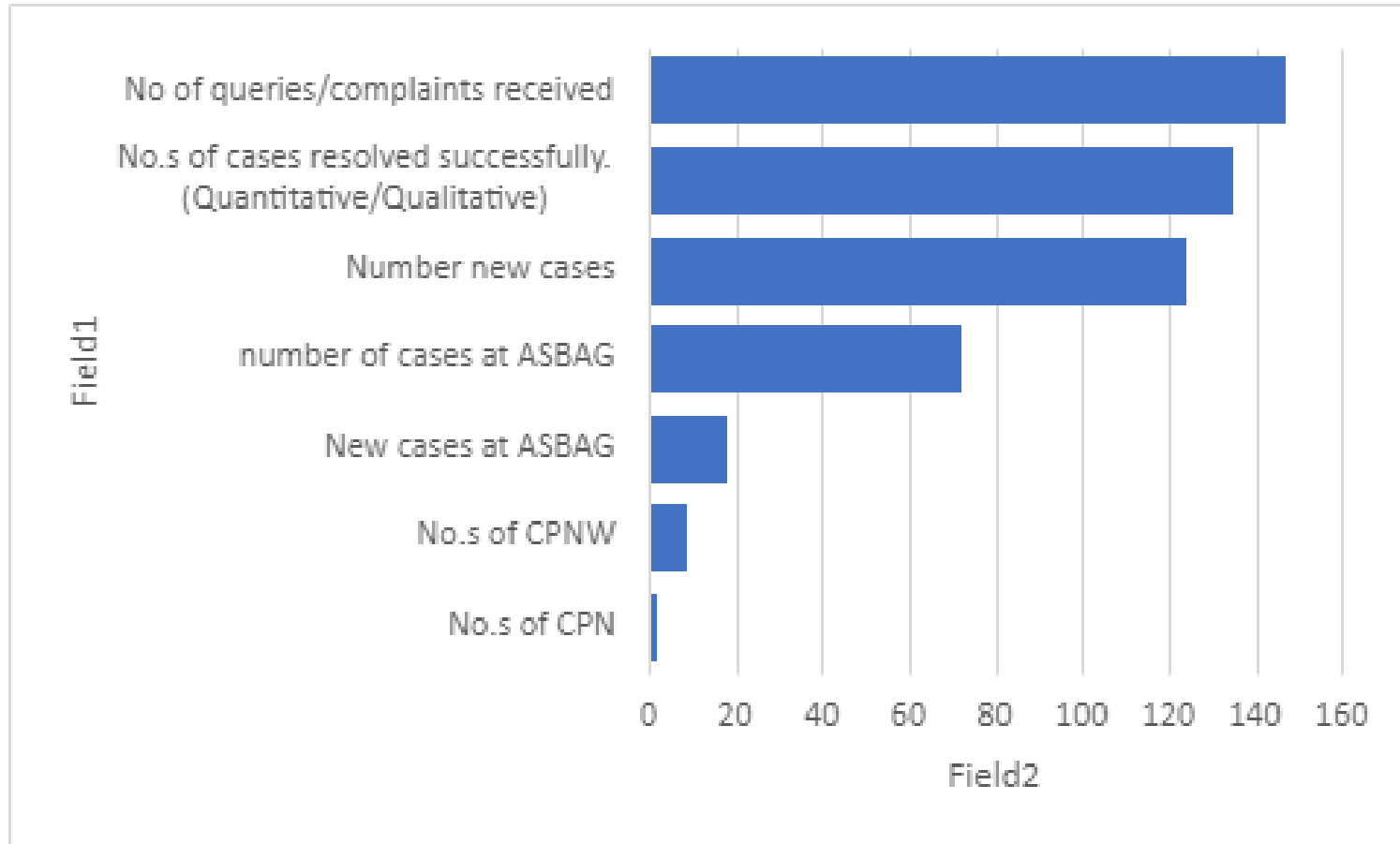
Repeat Victims

The same person suffers from two or more offences or incidents, whether the same or linked in nature within the previous six months. it is not necessary for the incidents to have been previously reported.

ASB Case Review

- Legal Right to have ASB case reviewed
- Commonly known as 'ASB TRIGGER REVIEW'
- Local Threshold has to be met-
 - three or more complaints in a 6 month period, where matters are linked
 - Can be raised by a community or an individual.
- Independent senior level review
- Outcome to identify where things could have been done differently
- How to remedy ?
- Prior to Unitary countywide Buckinghamshire was averaging 7 ASB case reviews a year. This has now reduced to one case per year.

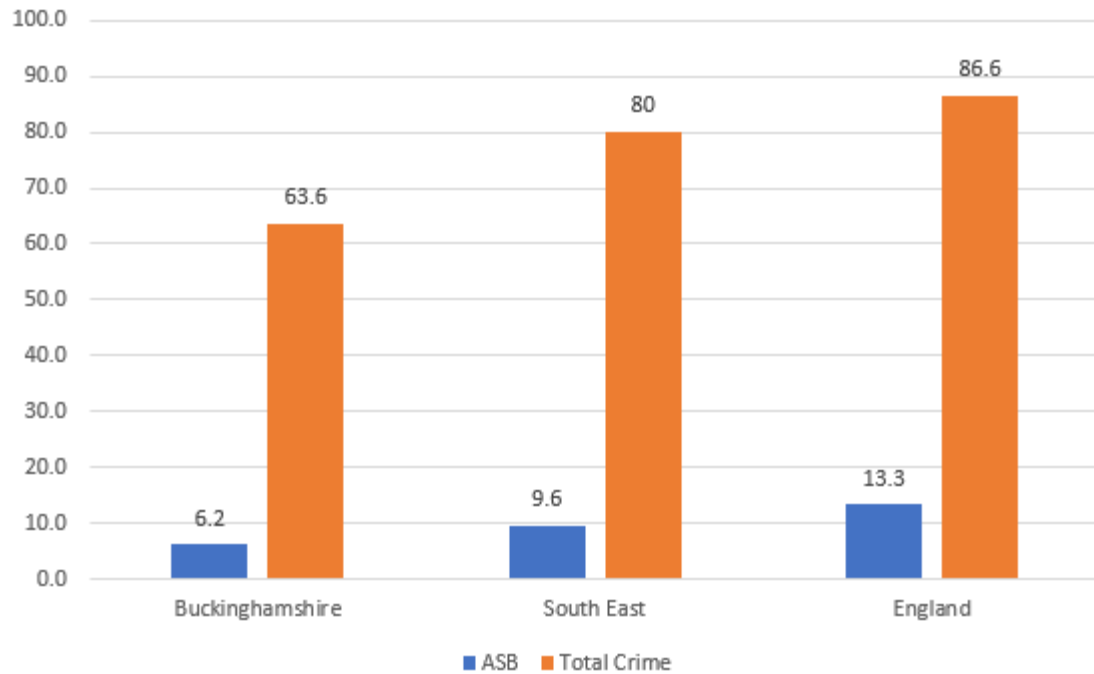
ASB Team Data and performance YTD



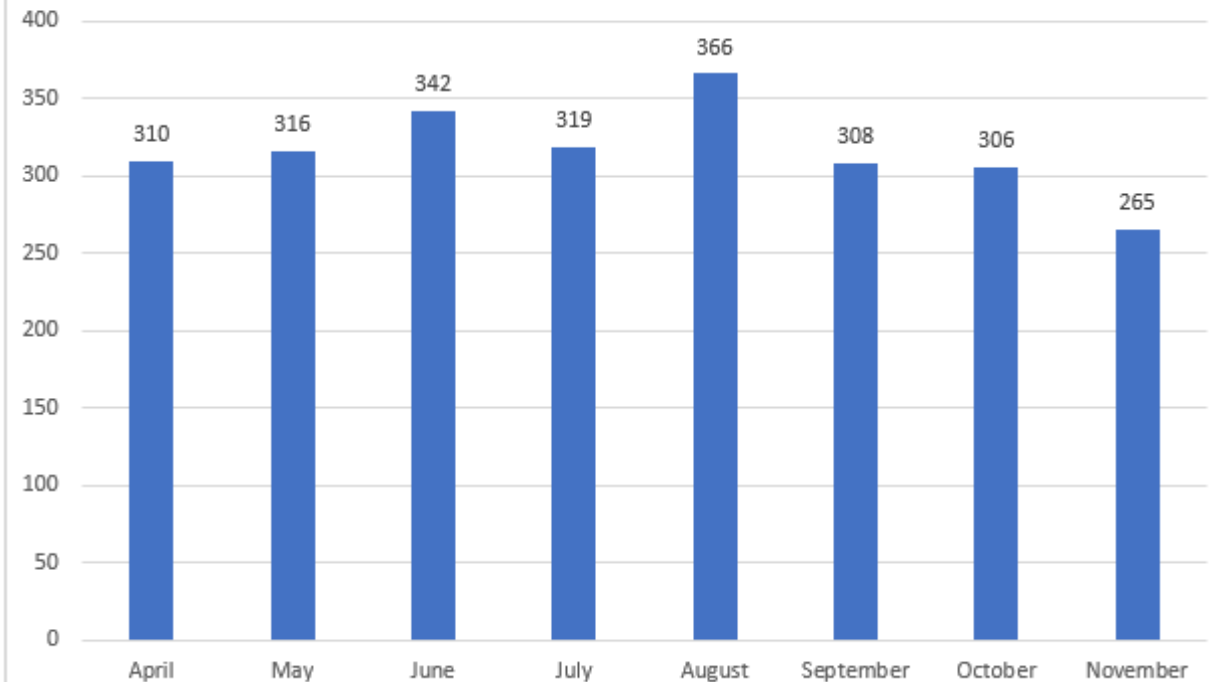
No. of queries/complaints received	147
No.s of cases resolved successfully. (Quantitative/Qualitative)	135
Number new cases	124
number of cases at ASBAG	72
New cases at ASBAG	18
No.s of CPNW	9
No.s of CPN	2

The Regional and National Picture

ASB & Crime (Per 1000 Residents)
September 2022 to August 2023



Reported incidents of ASB (Total Number)
April to November 2023



ASB service in neighbouring areas

Council	Population (x 1000)	ASB officers	ASB reports YTD	YTD Cases
RB Windsor and Maidenhead	160	5	153	10
Bracknell forest	127	1	238	15
Milton Keynes	280	6		108
Oxford	160	17	1858	264
Buckinghamshire	540	3	147	124

Summary

- Responding to and dealing with ASB is a statutory responsibility for the Council, Police, Housing providers and other agencies.
- We have a small team in Buckinghamshire, who carry a case load and coordinate partner agency activity and responses on more complex matters.
- The team work in partnership with many different agencies depending on the circumstances of each individual case.
- Those at greatest risk of harm and who are most vulnerable are given priority.
- If a resident is not satisfied, they can request case review.

- Thank you for listening
- Any Questions?

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

Date	Topic	Description and Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
10 April 2024	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
	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

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