



Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee Agenda

Date: Thursday 9 November 2023

Time: 10.00 am

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

Membership:

B Chapple OBE (Chairman), R Carington (Vice-Chairman), P Brazier, M Caffrey, M Collins, P Cooper, C Cornell, E Culverhouse, E Gemmell, S Guy, N Naylor, M Rand, D Watson and A Wood

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for Absence		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting		5 - 8

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 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.

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5 Home to School Transport in Buckinghamshire

10:15

9 - 20

The Committee will consider a report updating on home to school transport arrangements and Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs). The report also includes progress on the Client Transport Improvement Programme.

Contributors:

Cllr Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport
Richard Barker, Corporate Director for Communities
Lindsey Vallis, Service Director for Transport Services
Cheryl Platts, Transport Policy & Improvement Manager
Neil Beswick, Head of Client Transport

6 Pollution in Buckinghamshire's Rivers and Chalk Streams: 12-month progress update

11:00

21 - 30

The Select Committee will review the progress of work on implementing the 10 recommendations made in the Pollution in Buckinghamshire's Rivers and Chalk Streams review which was presented to Cabinet on 15 November 2022.

Contributors:

Councillor Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment
Councillor Steven Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport
Councillor Robert Carington, Working Group Chairman
Chris Ward, Senior Scrutiny Officer

7 Work Programme

11:15

31 - 32

The Select Committee will consider the upcoming work

programme.

8 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 1 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: Chris Ward democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
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Agenda Item 3
Buckinghamshire Council
**Transport, Environment &
Climate Change Select Committee**

Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRANSPORT, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.00 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 11.50 AM

MEMBERS PRESENT

B Chapple OBE, R Carington, P Brazier, M Caffrey, M Collins, P Cooper, C Cornell, E Gemmell, S Guy, M Rand, D Watson and A Wood

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

S Broadbent, G Williams, D Barnes, P Martin, C Ward, A Bond, R Dengler and D Sutherland

Agenda Item

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Culverhouse, Naylor and Sullivan. Apologies were also received from Steve Bambrick and Hannah Joyce.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Eight public questions had been received to be considered at the meeting. All the public questions were included in the agenda, however due to time restraints Questions 1-4 were answered at the meeting. Questions 5-8 would be answered in writing following the meeting.

All answers to the public questions would be appended to the minutes.

5 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 5

The Cabinet Member for Transport, Councillor Steven Broadbent, introduced the item by advising that this was an interim report on the emerging Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5) and the approach the Council was taking. The LTP5 was being developed alongside the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan and would need to include specific policies on local transport such

as carbon emissions, road safety, highway maintenance and management, and active travel. LTP5 was also required in order to secure funding from Department for Transport (DfT) towards capital schemes. Further guidance on plan formulation was expected from DfT shortly. A consultation exercise had led to a number of changes to the wording of the objectives; the detail of which was included in the report.

Members considered the report and noted the following in their discussion:

- LTP5 would align with the Council's ambition to be net zero by 2050. Best practice on emission reduction would be sought as part of the Council's work with England's Economic Heartland.
- A key theme of LTP5 would be to offer transport alternatives to cars in order to reduce delays, connect economies and boost businesses and productivity. As part of this, the Council was part of a DfT trial in e-scooter usage which was scheduled to end in May 2024. Use of private e-scooters was illegal on the Council's Highways network so any future plans would be subject to Government legislation. Other work included investment into greenways and cycleways, and also demand response travel which had recently been expanded in High Wycombe to include Flackwell Heath.
- A city-style ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ) would not be suitable in Buckinghamshire.
- The Transport Strategy aimed to improve traffic flow along with funding bids for improvement projects (e.g. linked gyratory traffic lights) however temporary traffic lights from utility works did cause issues on the network. The link road projects around Aylesbury would also reduce through-traffic flow.
- Concerns regarding the impact of development on traffic in Buckinghamshire would be picked up in the emerging Local Plan, as well as at a local level with development planning applications and their associated traffic plans. The Council made funding representations to DfT regarding the growth in the county and the transport infrastructure required to support it.
- The Council had an enhanced partnership with bus operators through its Bus Service Improvement Plan however bus service providers operated privately. Proposed changes to routes would be published in advance by operators and the Council did make representations and suggestions on improving connections but ultimately had no control over business decisions.
- One Member noted that Thames Valley Police had not responded to residents that had reported concerns within the police's responsibility. The Cabinet Member advised that the Council's moving traffic offense powers alleviated some police resource pressure.
- Future consultation would involve engagement with all Community Boards and Members. Work at universities also aimed to increase the diversity in responses as well as improve youth engagement.
- The LTP5 would also link with the Council's emerging Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan which had identified key routes between the county's settlements.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and welcomed a future update on LTP5's development coming to the Committee.

6 LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment, Councillor Gareth Williams, introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) would take around 12-18 months to develop and have a formal consultation at the end of the process. The Council had been one of five pilot authorities initially and was one of the named Responsible Authorities in the

country to lead on the LNRS production in the geographic area of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

- Development of the LNRS would be locally led with town and parish councils as well as local environment groups. The intention was to conserve and enhance biodiversity and local habitats.
- The Environment Act required the planning system to have regard for the LNRS as part of an enhanced duty in relation to biodiversity and the Local Planning Authorities were awaiting Government guidance on this.
- Development of the LNRS was at no cost to the Council due to Defra funding.
- Introductory webinars with stakeholders to raise awareness had been met positively and well attended. The Cabinet Member noted the importance of the emerging LNRS with Buckinghamshire residents.

The following points were raised during the Committee's discussion:

- Further guidance from Defra regarding the weighting between the Local Plan and the LNRS was expected soon however LNRSs were designed to be compatible with Local Plans.
- Water supplies to new developments was outside the scope of the LNRS with responsibility lying with water companies and the planning system.
- The LNRS could prioritise the better management of existing woodland. The base line map would show the location of all habitats including woodland. Provision was made in the Environment Act to prevent the deliberate degradation of habitats ahead of the submission of a planning application; Schedule 14 Part 1 is the relevant section in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of a site and sets how it is to be calculated and from what date. The Tree Preservation Order process was separate to the LNRS.
- The Cabinet Member acknowledged that landowners would have an important role in the LNRS and that proactive engagement was planned with existing networks such as the Rural Forum and the National Farmers' Union. Funding streams would be available for opportunities in the LNRS which landowners could decide to pursue, and information on this would be made as accessible as possible.
- The Council was aware of the current biodiversity baseline and would be able to measure netgains over time as part of the Government's audit process. The Council would have to provide evidence of what had been delivered.
- HS2's claim to be biodiversity neutral within 15 years of the project was outside the scope of the LNRS and may be an area for Members to question when HS2 attend in March 2024.
- Funding from Defra for the preparation of the LNRS would mostly be allocated towards officer time so could be closely monitored and managed.
- The Council had a close working relationship with Milton Keynes Council and Bucks Natural Environment Partnership, and a service level agreement had been formalized to outline roles and responsibilities. As part of being the Responsible Authority, Buckinghamshire Council had included mapping information and multiple datasets from Milton Keynes Council.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and commended the work being carried out by the officer team.

7 STREETWORKS AND STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS RAPID REVIEW REPORT

The Chairman of the Review Group, Councillor Bill Chapple OBE, introduced the inquiry report to the Committee. The scoping document for the review had been agreed at March's TECC meeting

and evidence gathering sessions had been held in June and July. This included an in-person meeting with a number of Statutory Undertakers that operate in Buckinghamshire. Members noted the importance of enforcement, recruitment and the lack of deterrent fines offered.

The Chairman thanked members of the group for their work on the review and the Senior Scrutiny Officer for drafting the report and advised that he would be presenting it at October's Cabinet meeting.

8 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the importance of parking enforcement, and that the Council was developing a Parking Strategy. The Cabinet Member for Transport advised that the service reported annually on parking and the parking enforcement vacancy rate had improved.

Consideration would be given to a report related to tree protection and Tree Preservation Orders.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 9 November at 10am.



Report to Transport, Environment and Climate Change Select Committee

Date:	9 November 2023
Title:	Home to School Transport in Buckinghamshire
Cabinet Member(s):	Steven Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport
Contact officer:	Neil Beswick, Head of Client Transport Cheryl Platts, Transport Policy & Improvement Manager
Ward(s) affected:	none specific
Recommendations:	That the TECC Select Committee note the update on home to school transport in Buckinghamshire

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on home to school transport and Personal Transport Budgets. This paper also provides a progress update on the Client Transport Improvement Programme.

2. Home to School Transport Update

Background

- 2.1 Transport Services supports and enables high quality, efficient and safe transport solutions so that children and adults can get to school, work and access public services.
- 2.2 This briefing paper covers the Client Transport Service, within Transport Services, which provides home to school transport for eligible children of statutory school age (5 to 16 years old), pupil referral unit (PRU) transport, and travel assistance for eligible Post-16 (of sixth form age) students and young people with SEND up to the age of 25.

Policy Context

2.3 Home to school transport is a statutory duty placed on local authorities to provide free-of-charge travel arrangements for eligible children of statutory school age (5 to 16 years). The Council's [Home to School Transport Policy](#) describes the policy for home to school travel assistance and the criteria applied to determine eligibility. The key areas of the statutory duty are to:

- Make transport arrangements for all eligible children of statutory school age (5 to 16 years). There are four categories of statutory school age students living in Buckinghamshire and attending their nearest suitable school who are eligible for Council funded travel assistance:
 - children who live beyond the statutory walking distance
 - children from low income families
 - children whose walking route to school is unsafe
 - children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), a disability or a mobility difficulty and who are unable to travel independently from home to school.
- Prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or otherwise that the authority considers necessary to make, to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.
- Encourage, enable and assist the participation of young people with special educational needs and disabilities up to the age of 25 in education and training.

2.4 In 2022/23 the Council provided school transport assistance for approximately 7,460 children and young people. This comprised of 7,060 students who were eligible for school transport assistance in line with the Council's [Home to School Transport Policy](#), made up of 5,060 students attending mainstream educational settings and 2,000 students attending special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) educational settings. In addition to eligible students, the Council transported approximately 400 non-eligible "spare seats" (i.e. paid-for school bus transport) students on some of our school buses.

2.5 The service also provides social care transport for about 310 adults with additional needs, and 60 children with SEND who either have social care plans (i.e. respite arrangements) or who are children in care.

2.6 The Council provides various travel arrangements for eligible children, such as bus passes or train tickets for public transport, personal transport budgets (PTBs), Council-arranged school coaches/buses, minibuses and shared or solo taxis.

Passenger assistant support may also be provided following a travel needs assessment by the Client Transport Team.

- 2.7 Decisions on eligibility for Council funded travel assistance are made by officers in the Adults and Health directorate, as well as officers in Children’s Services, who then make a referral to Transport Services. In Children’s Services decisions on eligibility for home to school travel assistance are made by the Integrated SEND (iSEND) team for students with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs), and by the Admissions Team for all other students. Once eligible referrals are received, Transport Services make suitable transport arrangements, manage, and monitor the transport provision through contractual arrangements with external suppliers.

School Transport School Term Start Update

- 2.8 Over the last two to three years there has been a marked improvement in the September school term start arrangements. This is evidenced by:

- **An effective issuing of bus passes.** All school bus passes were issued by the stated deadlines in August 2021, 2022 and 2023. In addition, temporary bus pass booklets were sent to schools to issue to students who have lost their pass for short-term use while their replacement pass is processed.
- **A flat fee approach agreed for Spare Seats charging** from the 2023-24 academic year onwards. The flat fee is clear and easy for parents to understand and has significantly simplified Spare Seats charging administration. Where there were previously 13 different price points, there are now just two rates; one for Buckinghamshire residents and another, higher, rate for non-Buckinghamshire residents:

Buckinghamshire resident rate	Non-Buckinghamshire resident rate
£868	£1,200

- **Roll-out of better, easier ways to pay.** In addition to simplifying Spare Seats charging for 2023-24, the Council simultaneously introduced better, easier ways to pay including reoccurring card payments and payment by telephone.
- **Continued route optimisation working closely with colleagues in our Public Transport team** to utilise the commercial public bus network fully and effectively in Buckinghamshire to transport eligible children wherever possible. This approach supports the sustainability of the commercial network as well as promoting a more environmentally friendly mode of transport for these journeys. For the 2023-24 academic year we continued to work to effectively utilise the commercial public transport network for home to school transport with over 800 eligible students issued with public bus passes for the term start.

- **A reduction in complaints.** When comparing our total number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints from July to September 2021 (29 complaints) vs. July to September 2023 (22 complaints), there has been a 24% reduction.
- **A reduction in customer contact and improved responsiveness.** When comparing our peak customer enquiry period from July to September, there has been a significant reduction in school transport enquiries since 2021, which can be attributed to better communications to parents, including the use of text messaging for reminders/notifications.

Time period	No. of school transport enquiries received	% school transport enquiries responded to within 5 working days
1 July to 30 September 2021	5,091	70%
1 July to 30 September 2022	3,195	79%
1 July to 30 September 2023	3,241	88%

Between July to September 2023 the number of transport enquiries received were broadly comparable with the same period in 2022, however the percentage of school transport enquiries responded to within 5 working days has shown marked improvement.

- **An increase in Personal Transport Budgets.** Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) were introduced in 2021 and give families the freedom and flexibility to make their own transport arrangements. A PTB is a direct payment to a parent/carer which can be used in many ways to make sure that their child gets to school every day in a fit state to learn.

PTBs can be a more cost-effective way for the Council to provide assistance with transport but are only offered in discussion with families and other professionals (as appropriate) where it is considered a PTB will effectively meet the needs of the child or young person. To determine the appropriate personal budget amount the following factors are taken into consideration:

- the special educational needs and disabilities of the student
- the travel distance
- how the student might travel to school
- the time the journey takes
- whether the student can travel alone or if they need to be accompanied
- the age of the student
- whether any specialist equipment might be required

The standard amount that would be offered with a PTB is 45p per mile and includes the cost of two return journeys to and from the student’s educational setting (i.e. all four legs of the journey). Any variation to the standard amount will be considered as part of the student’s travel needs assessment.

Academic Year (AY)	No. of PTBs in place
2021-22 (as at 31 July 2022 i.e. end of the AY)	378
2022-23 (as at 31 July 2023 i.e. end of the AY)	521
2023-24 (as at 11 October 2023 i.e. 5.5 weeks into the AY)	475

For 2023-24 the expectation is that the number of PTBs will follow previous growth trends and increase as the new academic school year progresses.

School Transport: seatbelt buckle guards

- 2.9 Alongside work to support the start of the 2023-24 academic school year, Client Transport have also undertaken significant work to review the use of seatbelt buckle guards on contracted transport. A seatbelt buckle guard is a device that fits on to a seatbelt and prevents the person travelling from being able to unclip the seat belt themselves.
- 2.10 Buckle guards have historically been provided for use on transport for a small number of passengers with SEND where their travel needs assessment identifies that this is required to ensure their safety in the vehicle, and/or the safety of other passengers or the driver of the vehicle, or the safety of other road users during transit.
- 2.11 Regulation 48(4)(d) of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986¹ requires that seatbelt buckles can be readily fastened and unfastened and that they are kept free from obstruction.

¹ [The Road Vehicles \(Construction and Use\) Regulations 1986](#)

- 2.12 In February 2023 the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency issued a public statement that the use of buckle guards would be likely to be considered in breach of the regulations.
- 2.13 In July 2023 the [Good Practice Guide for Local Authorities](#) issued by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) advised that local authorities should not issue any new seatbelt buckle guards. Where buckle guards are already in use, transport providers should find suitable alternatives.
- 2.14 Since February 2023 Client Transport have undertaken a substantial programme of work to identify and eliminate the use of buckle guards on council arranged transport. This has included engaging with transport operators and parents to fully identify use prior to reviewing needs assessments for existing passengers. The Client Transport Compliance Team have also incorporated buckle guard checks into their regular checks of transport at special schools.
- 2.15 Only 20 buckle guards have been found to be in use which equates to 1% of the 2000 SEN students transported by the Council.
- 2.16 Work is underway to update travel assessments for these children and find suitable alternatives so that we can continue to transport them safely.

Increased pressures on home to school transport budgets nationally

- 2.17 Nationally the cost of delivering Council-funded home to school travel has increased significantly in recent years. Key drivers of cost identified nationally, which are in line with the experience in Buckinghamshire, are:
- Market and inflationary pressures increasing the cost of mainstream and SEND home to school transport
 - Increasing numbers of children with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)
 - Increasing complexity of needs
 - Increasing distance travelled due to school occupancy and distribution of specialist provision
- 2.18 As a result of increasing costs nationally, in the first quarter of 2023-24 the County Council's Network (CCN) commissioned research to understand current demands for and expenditure on both SEND and mainstream home to school transport, differentiating between CCN councils and other local authorities. This research has not yet concluded, but their initial research is outlined below.

Local authority spend on home to school transport between 2015-16 and 2021-22

- 2.19 Published data on local authority expenditure shows that in 2021-22 just over £1.5b was spent on home to school transport by local authorities in England. 74% of this (£1.13b) was spent on SEND Transport.
- 2.20 Over the 7 year period, expenditure on mainstream transport has been relatively stable, with a modest growth of 9% nationally over that period.
- 2.21 In contrast, expenditure on SEND Transport has grown very rapidly by 79% over the 7 year period.

CCN member councils spend on home to school transport between 2015-16 and 2021-22

- 2.22 The rural nature of many county areas means that children often travel longer distances to their nearest suitable school.
- 2.23 CCN member councils spent £844m on home to school transport in 2021/22. While CCN member councils account for 41% of the population aged 5 to 25 years, they account for 56% of all school transport expenditure.
- 2.24 The 10% rate of growth in expenditure on mainstream transport over the 7 year period is similar to the 9% growth nationally over that period.
- 2.25 63% of school transport expenditure in CCN member councils was for SEND Transport. Over the 7 year period, at 84% the growth in expenditure in SEND Transport in CCN member councils is more rapid than the national rate of growth (79%).

Growth in SEND Transport demand in Buckinghamshire

- 2.26 Between January 2019 and January 2023, the total number of children and young people (0-25) living in Buckinghamshire with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) has increased from 4,054 in January 2019 to 5,890 in January 2023, an increase of over 45%.
- 2.27 Since the Covid pandemic in 2019-20, there has been a year on year increase in the number of eligible young people with SEND. The Council have also seen an increase in the complexity of needs over that period. The percentage change of young people with SEND eligible and referred for travel assistance year on year and vs. 2018-19 are shown in the following table.

School year	Total no. of eligible young people with SEND ² (including PTBs)	% change in total number of eligible young people with SEND from previous year	% change in total number of eligible young people with SEND since 2018-19
2018-19	2,306	-	-
2019-20 ³	2,106	-9%	-9%
2020-21	2,296	9%	-0.4%
2021-22	2,541	11%	10%
2022-23	2,713	7%	18%

Buckinghamshire Home to School Transport budget position

2.28 The total approved budget for Home to School Transport in 2023/24 is £28.1m. Last financial year the outturn was a net expenditure of £26.3m⁴ which was £3.0m higher cost than budgeted. In 2022/23 the outturn net expenditure was:

- Mainstream (primary and secondary transport) at £7.5m
- Pupil Referral Unit Transport at £1.0m
- Pre-16 SEND Transport at £14.4m
- Post-16 SEND Transport at £2.5m
- Post-19 SEND Transport at £0.9m

2.29 The Client Transport service are working closely with Finance colleagues through the annual medium-term financial planning process (MTFP) to forecast future growth the Council is likely to experience in the area of home to school transport and mitigations available to reduce the impact of this growth on budgets, as far as possible, over the next 3 years. This includes a high level of scrutiny and management of the budget position month on month, and check and challenge on end of year and growth forecasts.

2.30 The Service also actively seeks to control costs in the context of a demand-led statutory service that is experiencing considerable growth year on year. The Client Transport Improvement Programme has played, and continues to play, a key role in developing and overseeing improvement activities to drive efficiencies in process and manage the demand into the Service as efficiently as possible. In the last 2 to 3 years this work has included large scale retendering of contracts, vehicle optimisation, remodelling routes, introducing PTBs and introducing a parental

² This includes students with EHCPs who attend mainstream schools

³ Decrease is attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic

⁴ A £0.1m grant was received in relation to transport for Ukrainian guest children

contribution to the cost of Post-16 SEND council arranged transport, as well as through school bus ticket sales under the Council's Spare Seats Scheme.

3. The Client Transport Improvement Programme

3.1 Since February 2020 Client Transport has been on an improvement journey, which is tracked and managed through a Client Transport Improvement Programme. The programme had three phases: stabilisation, transition, and transformation.



3.2 The programme is overseen by the Service Director for Transport Services with a board membership which includes the Corporate Director for Communities, the Cabinet Member for Transport, senior officers from across the Council and wider Board Members including [Families and Carers Together in Buckinghamshire](#) (FACT Bucks). The objectives of the programme are:

- To improve the customer experience.
- To ensure that the service has effective budgetary control.
- To ensure that the service operating model is sustainable, effective and efficient with robust contract management.
- To reduce demand and need for Council arranged transport through providing alternative transport solutions.

3.3 The key achievements of the Client Transport Improvement Programme to date include:

- **Procurement rigour.** Transport retendering completed between January 2021 and May 2022. A total of 1,300 contracts were retendered covering all school, college, pupil referral unit (PRU) and adult social care transport.
- **Increase in the number of school bus routes run commercially.** In 2021 and 2022 the service successfully encouraged the set-up of 18 new commercial school bus routes through remodelling of the Council's school bus provision. This enabled the Council to focus on providing transport for eligible children while parents /carers can quickly and easily buy their child's ticket directly from the commercial operator.

- **Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) introduced** in 2021. As at 11 October 2023, 475 PTBs were already in place for the 2023-24 academic year.
- **Shared visibility of the single client record.** Client Transport went live with Capita ONE's transport module in February 2022. This is the same administration system used by Children's Services to manage education records.
- **Streamlining of Spare Seats fee structure and processes** which resulted in the introduction of a flat fee approach to Spare Seats charging from 2023-24 academic year. Better, easier ways to pay online and via the telephone using the Council's Pay360 platform were also introduced reducing administration activity required.

Key Current Projects

- 3.4 The Client Transport Improvement Programme has a number of current projects underway which will be key to effectively managing the growth the Service is experiencing and forecasting. These include:
- 3.5 **School Transport policy review.** On 29 June 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) published revised [Home to School Travel guidance for children of statutory school age](#) (5-16 years) and advised that the guidance comes into force with immediate effect. DfE have advised that local authorities should have regard to the revised guidance when they next review their home to school travel policies. As a result, the Council's next school transport policy consultation will take place in between December 2023 and January 2024.
- 3.6 **SEND Transport eligibility assessment review.** A detailed review has been undertaken to assess the current operating model for eligibility decision-making and identify options for improvement. As a result, a small, dedicated team have been recruited within iSEND to carry out the transport eligibility function with clear accountability for robust decision-making in accordance with the Council's school transport policies, and acting as a first point of contact for parents/carers.
- 3.7 **Streamlining Transport Operator processes** through collaboration and joint working with the Taxi Licencing team in the areas of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, Client Transport Operator ID badge processes and training for transport crews with the aim of reducing duplication whilst maintaining our robust approach in this area.
- 3.8 **Review of our long-term procurement strategy.** Setting up a new Dynamic Purchasing System to deliver a long-term tendering strategy, which will include new contractual terms and conditions to stimulate increased market competition.

- 3.9 **Exploring the potential for cross-border transport collaboration** by joint working with neighbouring local authorities on home to school transport options.
- 3.10 **Reflecting on the outcomes of early projects.** The Client Transport Improvement Programme will also be revisiting some of its early projects to check their continued relevance. This will include a software GAP analysis to understand whether there are further opportunities to better utilise technology to drive efficiency within the Service.

4. Legal and financial implications

Legal implications

- 4.1 Section 508B and section 509AA of the Education Act 1996 set out duties on the Council to arrange travel or other arrangements as it deems necessary for pupils of compulsory school and of sixth form age (Post-16) to enable them to attend educational establishments. For compulsory school age eligible pupils, the arrangements must be free of charge, whereas for Post-16 students the arrangements can include financial assistance.
- 4.2 In addition to the statutory duties under the Education Act 1996, there are a number of overarching duties that are relevant to the Council's [Home to School Transport Policy](#) and our [Post-16 Transport Policy Statement](#). These include duties under:
- The Education and Skills Act 2008 to encourage, enable and assist participation of young people with SEND up to the age of 25.
 - The Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to the local offer

Financial implications

- 4.3 The Buckinghamshire budget position is outlined in sections 2.28 to 2.30. Current year overspend at Q2 is £1.4m adverse variance due to contractual pressures with potential risk of £2.45m linked mainly to demand growth. MTFP proposals are underway to determine the level of growth required in future MTFP cycles.
- 4.4 Owing to the statutory requirements to provide home to school transport the Council is legally obliged to ensure provision. This national cost pressure is particularly acute for rural county authorities as set out in sections 2.22 to 2.25. Nevertheless, all options to control costs whilst meeting statutory requirements are being pursued.

5. Corporate implications

5.1 The provision of home to school transport assistance to eligible young people is a statutory duty, which links to our corporate priorities in the following ways:

- Strengthening our communities – the provision of transport enables children and adults across the county to access vital services.
- Supporting the vulnerable – transport assistance is put in place to help eligible students with SEND to get to school.

6. Next steps and review

6.1 The key next steps for the Client Transport Improvement programme are:

- School Transport Policy consultation to reflect requirements of the revised DfE guidance between December 2023 and January 2024.
- Embedding new SEND transport eligibility and assessment processes.
- Streamlining Transport Operator processes through collaboration and joint working with the Taxi Licencing team in the areas of DBS checks, Buckinghamshire Council Transport Operator ID badge processes and transport crew training.
- Setting up a new Dynamic Purchasing System to deliver a long term tendering strategy, which will include new contractual terms and conditions to stimulate increased market competition.
- Exploring the potential for cross border transport provision by joint working with neighbouring local authorities, including those who run their own in-house fleet.



Pollution in Buckinghamshire’s Rivers and Chalk Streams Rapid Review – Recommendations from the TECC Select Committee Review Group

Chairman – Cllr Robert Carington

Response from Cabinet

Recommendation	Cabinet’s Response – Y/N & comments	Six Month Update	Twelve Month Update	Lead Member/Officer & Timelines
<p>1. The Cabinet Member for Transport should investigate the use of new and practical gully technology with the intention of reducing harmful chemicals from the highways entering the watercourse.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>We will continue to look at innovative and practical ways when updating and maintaining our gully systems, working with our current and future Highways Maintenance Contractors, to reduce the extent and impact of highways related pollutants entering water course.</p>	<p>New Term Maintenance Contract now in place alongside our new Term Consultancy Contract and this new technology will be considered as part of the emerging innovation workstream.</p>	<p>Future capital drainage schemes will have pollution capture included in the scope. Current maintenance approach is to ensure silt levels are monitored and kept at the optimum level for capturing pollutants, with arisings disposed of appropriately.</p>	<p>Steve Broadbent</p> <p>Kevin Goad Dave Roberts Alan Rouse</p>

<p>2. The Cabinet Member for Transport should consider pollution contribution as a category that impacts the frequency of gully cleaning in the future programme of maintenance.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Maintaining optimum silt levels in gullies and soakaways through a data lead approach to cleansing is important. A certain level of silt helps to filter pollutants, that are then disposed of appropriately in cleansing. Not allowing them to be overly full will automatically reduce the amount of harmful pollutants that would otherwise enter watercourses as a result of overflowing gullies and/or saturated silt levels that no longer act as filters.</p>	<p>The planned gully emptying programme is underway and on target with the aim to ensure all 85,000 of the County's gullies are inspected and maintained appropriately.</p>	<p>Gully cleansing remains on target, with a little over 51,000 cleaned as of 13th October.</p>	<p>Steve Broadbent</p> <p>Kevin Goad Dave Roberts Alan Rouse</p>
<p>3. The Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change and the Cabinet Member for Homelessness & Regulatory Services should liaise to implement an update on the council website to include a page on water quality. This page should contain signposting for residents on who to contact regarding issues such as pollution incidents,</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>We would support this recommendation. This page can be created with input from both the Flood Risk team, Environmental Health team and Highways to signpost to the relevant organisations with responsibilities in this area</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>New web page is live: Link to page</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Gareth Williams / Mark Winn</p> <p>Karen Fisher</p>

<p>spillages on highways and misconnections.</p>	<p>Page likely to be to be owned by Planning & Environment. The situation will be monitored to determine that amount of “enquiry” traffic to Buckinghamshire Council which is generated by having a page for water quality and any increase in staff resources that may be required as a result</p>			
<p>4. The Environment Agency should assign a dedicated, single point of contact that is of suitable seniority that can signpost queries from Local Authorities to the relevant EA Team or contact.</p>	<p>EA In part</p> <p>The Council can continue to use Helen Smith as the Area Environment Manager that covers the Buckinghamshire area. Liz Robinson can also be used as a more local contact that covers pollution incidents and regulates the water companies and other water users (discharge consents and water resources permits) in Buckinghamshire area.</p> <p>Bucks Council</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>EA</p> <p>An overview of the Buckinghamshire area is that we have responded to water quality incidents over the last year including sediment suspension in some tributaries of the Padbury Brook due to cattle poaching and from the building works of the East West Railway and HS2. We responded to a maize effluent incident from a failing slurry tank on the Padbury Brook. Advice</p>	<p>EA</p>

	The Strategic Flood Management Team already have a point of contact within Environment Agency for flooding matters. There also is currently a method of escalating matters to more senior people within the Environment Agency but this is more related to flooding matters. To be included in letter for recommendation 5		and guidance have been provided to all parties and pollution prevention advice given to prevent further pollution incidents.	
5. The Leader writes to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs regarding the council's concern with engagement from the EA on this particular inquiry and other concerns reported to the Council regarding the EA's discharge of its statutory functions and its conduct.	Yes Letter being drafted and will be sent in near future.	Letter was sent by Martin Tett and Peter Strachan to the Secretary of State regarding these concerns. The letter and response are included as appendices.	n/a	Martin Tett / Gareth Williams Steve Bambrick
6. The Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate	Yes	Lobbying being done through relevant groups and Thames Water and Anglian	Continued discussions with Thames Water and	Gareth Williams Karen Fisher

<p>Change to lobby Anglian Water and Thames Water to invest in further catchment programmes in the county that emulate the benefits of the River Chess Smarter Water Catchment programme.</p>	<p>Thames Water have an ambition to roll this project out to other catchment partnerships. This will be dependent upon OFWAT's decision, regarding future funding, following the completion of the Smarter Water Catchment projects. Lobbying should therefore also include OFWAT.</p> <p>Lobbying of Thames Water and Anglian Water can be through existing partnership channels.</p>	<p>Water keen to pursue more opportunities through Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans with more details being worked on.</p>	<p>Anglian Water. Work on Smarter Water Catchments is ongoing. Meeting/River Walk/visit to Chesham sewage works (during Rivers Week in September 2023) arranged with DEFRA Minister and local MPs by Cllr Gareth Williams with Chilterns Conservation Board, Thames Water and Buckinghamshire Council in attendance. Opportunity to raise the good work done by the organisations and the collaboration and need for further collaboration and funding for initiatives similar to Smarter Water Catchments.</p>	
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<p>7. Anglian Water and Thames Water submit annual reports to the TECC Select Committee on the progress towards reducing the amount and duration of storm overflows and discharge events in the county, as well as improving their infrastructure in Buckinghamshire.</p>	<p>Anglian Water Yes</p> <p>Anglian Water is currently increasing understanding of storm overflow operation across the region through the delivery of investigations in our Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP). We recognised the imperative of this work and have accelerated the programme to deliver 100% coverage of storm overflows by December 2023, with 73% already delivered. This has included ecological modelling of storm overflows in targeted river catchments.</p> <p>The storm overflow investigation programme includes approximately ten (10) assets within Buckinghamshire and is helping to inform our storm overflow strategy for 2025-2030 (AMP8) and beyond.</p>	<p>Anglian Water Position remains the same as 6 months ago.</p> <p>Thames Water We will be happy to provide an annual update on an agreed date each year. We have set out our plans for reducing harm to rivers and communities in a document which can be downloaded from our website: https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/about-us/performance/river-health/river-health-report.pdf This includes a commitment to reduce the total annual duration of discharges by 50% by 2030, and within that a commitment to achieve at least 80% in sensitive catchments. This will see us progressing further and faster than the targets set in the Government’s Storm Overflow Reduction Plan.</p>	<p>Anglian Water 12-month update not received.</p> <p>Thames Water 12-month update not received.</p>	<p>Anglian Water Thames Water</p>
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	<p>Our AMP8 target is to understand the ecological impact across all of our 1552 overflows, with 38% of the high-priority overflows achieving 10 or fewer spills per year. We are currently assessing options to achieve this objective through our business planning process and hope to be able to outperform this target through a combination of tradition and nature-based solutions.</p> <p>Thames Water Response was not received.</p>			
<p>8. The Cabinet Member for Environment & Climate Change should engage with the incoming new CEO of the River Thame Catchment Trust and support the Trust's expansion into the Upper Great Ouse catchment area.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Collaboration with River Trusts is essential to the delivery of water quality improvements in Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire Council would be well positioned to engage with the River Thame Conservation Trust to understand and support,</p>	<p>Initial meeting held with officers and the River Thames Conservation Trust and a meeting date has been set up to meet with Deputy Cabinet member.</p> <p>Trust advised that they are no longer looking to expand into the Ouse – a new nascent organisation will cover this area.</p>	<p>Cllr Jilly Jordan, Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change presented at the River Thame Conservation Trust Liaison meeting in late March 2023 to explain Buckinghamshire Council's responsibilities.</p>	<p>Gareth Williams Karen Fisher</p>

	<p>where appropriate and feasible, their ambitions.</p> <p>The proposed expansion has potential benefit to the northern catchments in Buckinghamshire which currently lack an active rivers trust.</p>		<p>Discussions held with new CEO of River Thames Catchment Trust to discuss ongoing collaboration for Natural Flood Management Projects.</p> <p>Contact made with the newly established Great Ouse Rivers Trust (GORT) and initial chat with officers from Buckinghamshire Council to set up a meeting with members and the trustees of GORT. GORT currently has no funding nor any staff members.</p>	
<p>9. The Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment lobbies further regarding the enactment of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 with further support from the Council if necessary.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>This decision on the enactment currently sits with Defra with a possible announcement this Autumn 2022. Lobbying has already taken place through the consultation process. Any further lobbying should be</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>An announcement was made in January 2023 that Schedule 3 will be enacted with DEFRA working with Lead Local Flood Authorities on further detail and a consultation through the summer. Enactment likely will be in 2024</p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>Gareth Williams / Jilly Jordan</p> <p>Karen Fisher</p>

	<p>directed at both the Minister for Environment and Defra officers.</p> <p>The impact of Schedule 3 on the Council and resource requirements will need careful assessment.</p>			
<p>10.A communications campaign be promoted through existing channels (e.g. newsletters and planning informatives) to encourage residents to ensure that their builders/contractors connect the right drain to the right place on works that are exempt from checks by Building Control.</p>	<p>Partial agreement.</p> <p>The Water Companies and Environment Agency have regular communication out to the public on these and other flooding issues. It would be useful to have forewarning of these communications so that Buckinghamshire can share re-tweet these messages and reinforce the message going out to local residents. Any comms campaign by the Council would duplicate the efforts made by the other agencies identified above and it would not be value for money for Buckinghamshire Council to embark upon a communication campaign.</p>	<p>Publication of messages retweeted and shared by comms team where appropriate</p>	n/a	<p>Gareth Williams / Peter Strachan</p> <p>Steve Bambrick</p>

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Select Committee Work Programmes 2023/24

Transport, Environment and Climate Change Select Committee (Chairman: Bill Chapple OBE, Scrutiny officer: Chris Ward)

Date	Topic	Description & Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
1 February 2024	East West Rail	To receive an update on the project.	Dr Laura Leech Susan Browning	Steve Broadbent Peter Martin EWR Reps
	Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy: Annual Review	The Committee will annually review the strategy following its adoption on 19 October 2021.	Steve Bambrick Darran Eggleton Alexander Beckett David Johnson	Gareth Williams
	Buckinghamshire Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan	The Buckinghamshire LCWIP will identify and develop a strategic network for walking, wheeling and cycling (active travel) between and through settlements across the County. Active Travel will also be featured in the report.	Steve Bambrick Hannah Joyce Jonathan Fuller	Steve Broadbent
	Buckinghamshire Highways Service Transition	To consider a six-month update on the transition of the Highways contract following go-live on 1 April 2023	Richard Barker Kevin Goad	Steve Broadbent
28 March 2024	HS2	To receive an update on the project	Dr Laura Leech	Steve Broadbent Peter Martin HS2 Reps

To be scheduled:

Parking Strategy Update (February 2024)

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