



Cabinet decision notice

The following decision(s) were taken by Cabinet at its meeting held on **5 March 2024**. Decisions will (unless called-in) become effective at 5pm on 12 March 2024.

Agenda item no. 8

Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029

(a) Decisions

Development of the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy took place in Spring and Summer of 2023. A public and stakeholder consultation on the housing strategy took place between 8 November 2023 and 18 January 2024. This public consultation included an all member briefing and discussion at the 14 December 2023 Growth Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee meeting as well as other targeted engagement.

The responses to the consultation indicated that there is broad agreement of the vision, the three priorities, and the critical success factors. One theme, from the comments to the consultation, raised queries around delivery and action plans. These plans were under development and would align to the final strategy once adopted. Changes to the housing strategy (detailed in Appendix 2 of the report) had been incorporated in the final version for agreement at Cabinet and later at full Council for adoption.

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

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

The three strategic priorities for the housing strategy were:

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

The final housing strategy was scheduled to be presented to Full Council on 17 April 2024 for proposed adoption.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the response to the recent public consultation and recommend the proposed amendments (in Appendix 2) to the draft Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy 2024-2029 to Full Council.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The housing strategy was a major place strategy for Buckinghamshire. It set out the Council's priorities for housing as they related to delivering the Council's statutory duty, increasing the level of affordable housing, and ensuring suitable housing conditions. It was the Council's role as the housing authority to set the strategic direction for Buckinghamshire.

(c) Alternative options considered

Not to produce a Housing Strategy for Buckinghamshire – This was not recommended. The strategy supports the Council's role as setting the strategic direction for housing. The strategy also enabled clarity and coordination between the council and delivery partners.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

Councillor Angela Macpherson declared a personal interest in item 8 (Housing Strategy) as a Board Member of Fairhive Housing Association.

Agenda item no. 9

Buckinghamshire Healthy Ageing Strategy 2023-29

(a) Decisions

In response to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy commitment of 'improving places and helping communities to support healthy ageing' a Healthy Ageing Strategy had been developed. The strategy set out the Council's commitment to become an 'age friendly community' by undertaking improvement actions across the 8 interconnected areas identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) to support older people to live healthy, active and independent lives.

The strategy was supported by a multi-agency Age Friendly Bucks Partnership, chaired by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and a network of partners and residents who oversaw, informed and helped create the strategy and underpinning action plan. It had been informed by resident engagement, and engagement would continue with communities throughout the duration of the strategy.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the contents of the new Buckinghamshire Healthy Ageing Strategy and endorse the actions within it.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The Buckinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 - 2025 committed to "improving places and helping communities to support healthy ageing" – the new Healthy Ageing Strategy would enable the achievement of this commitment.

(c) Alternative options considered

Do nothing. Whilst it was possible to deliver activities without a strategy the risk was these would be small scale and of limited impact. The greater visibility of a strategy was more likely to unlock the benefits of a system-wide approach. Without this approach valuable opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of the growing population of older residents might be missed, and the Council could fail to address the concerns residents have taken time to inform the Council of during engagement exercises. By not having a strategy the commitment within the Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy would not be fully realised.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None

Agenda item no. 10

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Update

(a) Decisions

This report provided an update on a number of matters relating to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), including a national name change to all AONB's, the Chiltern AONB Boundary review, Chiltern Conservation Board's decision regarding its Protected Area Management Plan, an increased duty on Local Authorities in light of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, the government's recommitment to designating a new National Park in the UK and the Chiltern Conservation Boards intention to engage with the Local Authority regarding their next steps and Management Plan review.

RESOLVED that the contents of the update report be noted including comments from Members regarding Chiltern Conservation Boards decision to undertake a 'lighttouch' review of their management plan and delay their full review until early 2025.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The report set out a number of points for information only. The report also sought members views on the Chiltern Conservation Board's intention to delay the full review of their management plan and undertake a light touch review at this time.

(c) Alternative options considered

DEFRA set out in a letter in July 2022 that they recognised the current changing context around AONBs and their Management Plans as well as the size and scale of the implications resulting from the reforms coming as a result of the Landscapes Review. DEFRA had therefore decided to allow an option for Management Plans reviews to be delayed by up to 1 year from the initial review date.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None

Agenda item no. 11

Future High Street Fund Scheme

(a) Decisions

This paper sought approval of a new Future High Street 'Retail Repurposing Scheme'. It was being brought forward to ensure the Council maximised the full benefit of the allocated FHS monies. This project would enable a current high street tenant to downsize from their multi-level store in Wycombe town centre, by newly fitting out the ground floor. The Council owned the freehold of the building. The tenant would pay to surrender their long leasehold and would enter into a new occupational lease. This would release the first and part second floors for alternative use. The large floorplates were suited to storage use, with one third of the first floor and half of the part second floor capable of being converted to offices. The proposal was to relocate Buckinghamshire Archives from Aylesbury into part of the first floor and, possibly, the relocation of the Discover Bucks Museum's collections storage from Halton. The potential offices being either for operational use or developed speculatively for letting.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:-

1 agree to implement the High Wycombe Future High Street Fund Retail Repurposing Scheme, as set out in the Confidential Annex, involving entering into a 'surrender & renewal' Agreement with the tenant, subject to proven structural integrity of the building and conditional upon planning consent for the proposed uses/alterations, enabling the downsizing of the tenant into the ground floor, releasing space to be converted to accommodate the relocation of the Buckinghamshire Archives, and potentially, Discover Bucks Museum's collections storage currently located at Halton, and create office space for existing Council services.

2. agree to supplementary budget changes set out in the Confidential Annex of the report, increasing the Capital Budget for the Future High Street Scheme from the current budget of £6m to £11.26m, funded from Future High Street Fund Grant, Council match funding, the Capital Receipt from the Tenant Surrender Premium, and new Capital Receipts.

3. agree to release £8.27m of this amended Capital budget (which excludes the new Capital Receipts), to proceed with the Tenant lease surrender and the creation of the shell unit, to ensure we meet DLUHC's deadlines for spending the grant funding.

4. delegate to the Service Director of Property & Assets and the Service Director of Culture, Sport & Leisure, in agreement with the Leader and their respective Cabinet Members and the Section 151 Officer, authority to conclude detailed terms for the

Agreement with the tenant; to negotiate detailed terms with Discover Bucks Museum linked to their museum storage (if it is agreed that this will be part of the scheme); to appoint a full project planning and design team and solicitors; submit a planning application and enter into appropriate contracts for the proposed conversion works and relocations. This will be up to the value of released budget as set out in the Confidential Annex of the report.

(b) Reasons for decisions

The proposed Retail Repurposing project provided a potential fully capital funded solution to the relocation of the Buckinghamshire Archives, as part of an innovative scheme to regenerate an ageing retail store in High Wycombe. The project would also enable the delivery of the budgeted Estates Strategy Revenue Savings from the New County Offices disposal.

(c) Alternative options considered

For the existing store itself, a 'do nothing' option would involve either leaving the tenant to decide whether to close their store and try to sub-let the ground floor and /or 'mothball' the first and part second floors (i.e., leave them disused). Any sub-letting, if achievable, was likely to be a poor calibre occupier, not enhancing the town centre.

For Buckinghamshire Archives, they could remain at Walton Street until it was divested/redeveloped. This could risk them losing their accreditation, but in the foreseeable future, they would still need to relocate. To acquire land and develop a purpose-built archive store would involve 100% debt funding, the estimated cost of which was set out in the Confidential Annex of the report in comparison to this fully (capital) funded Retail Repurposing opportunity.

For Discover Bucks Museum, their storage could remain at Halton, but this would leave expansion issues unresolved and remove the option to explore potential re-use of the premises as a SEN school.

The proposed first floor (and potential part second floor) office areas have the potential for Council operational use. This was explored in some detail in the Confidential Annex of the report.

(d) Conflicts of interest/ dispensations

None

For further information please contact: Ian Hunt on , email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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