



Communities & Localism Select Committee agenda

Date: Thursday 19 November 2020

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Virtual meeting via MS teams

Membership:

N Brown, P Cooper, E Culverhouse, M Harker OBE, M Hashmi, T Hunter-Watts, P Irwin, P Kelly, G Peart, B Russel, L Smith BEM, L Sullivan, A Waite, L Walsh and J Wassell

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for absence/ change in membership	10:00	
2 Declarations of interest		
3 Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 24 th September 2020 to be confirmed as a correct record.		5 - 16

- 4 Public questions**
No public questions have been submitted for this meeting.
- 5 Chairman's Update**
For the Chairman to update Members on Communities and Localism scrutiny activities since the last meeting.
- 6 Covid Update - Verbal Update from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health**
- 7 Voluntary and Community Strategy update** **10:10** **17 - 28**
The Committee will receive an update on the Voluntary and Community Strategy. The intention is that the Strategy would provide a high-level framework to guide partners across Buckinghamshire in how to work together towards a whole system, place-based approach to working with the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and local communities to address needs.
- Presenters:-**
Gareth Williams – Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health
Mark Ormerod – Director of Leap
Claire Hawkes – Service Director Localities and Strategic Partnerships
- 8 Town and Parish Council Charter** **11:10** **29 - 32**
The Committee will receive an update on the Town and Parish Council Charter. The charter will act as a framework (memorandum of understanding) to support partnership working and inform Buckinghamshire Council's approach to liaison with local councils. It will set out the relationship between the new Buckinghamshire Council and the 169 town and parish councils in Buckinghamshire, including how to harness the opportunities to strengthen partnership working and improve services for residents. It sets out the joint principles and respective roles, responsibilities and expectations, and it will be a live document which will be refreshed regularly in consultation with town and parish councils.
- Presenters:-**
Gareth Williams – Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health
Claire Hawkes – Service Director for Localities and Strategic Partnership

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| 9 | Domestic Violence and Abuse update
The Committee will receive an update of recent and planned activity regarding Domestic Violence and Abuse. This report will help inform the Work Programme of this Select Committee by identifying possible areas of focus for the meeting in March 2021. | 11:55 | 33 - 40 |
| | Presenters:-
Gareth Williams - Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health
Rebecca Carley – Communities Engagement and Safety Manager
Faye Blunstone – Communities Project Manager (Domestic Violence and Abuse) | | |
| 10 | Draft Work Programme and update on Inquiry
The Committee will note the Work Programme. | 12:25 | 41 - 42 |
| 11 | Date of Next Meeting
The date of the next meeting is 21 January 2021 at 10am. | 12:30 | |

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For further information please contact: Clare Gray on 01895 837529, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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Communities & Localism Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Communities & Localism Select Committee held on Thursday 24 September 2020 in Via MS Teams, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.10 pm.

Members present

N Brown, P Cooper, E Culverhouse, M Harker OBE, M Hashmi, P Irwin, G Peart, B Russel, L Smith BEM, L Sullivan, A Waite, L Walsh and J Wassell

Apologies

T Hunter-Watts and P Kelly

Agenda Item

1 Apologies for absence/change in membership

Apologies for absence were given by Mr Tom Hunter-Watts and Paul Kelly.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record with Ms L Smith included as present.

4 Public questions

There were no public questions.

5 Chairman's Update

With regard to issues raised at the last meeting on protected groups the Chairman provided a quick update. Community Boards were working on a Strategy and Communications Plan to ensure that Community Boards and Sub-Groups have a diverse membership and were well represented to ensure that all communities have a voice. Some Community Boards have developed a community cohesion sub group but many of the sub groups impact on all communities including sub groups on covid recovery plans.

During the pandemic a letter was sent to gypsy and traveller communities providing advice on how to contact the local area housing departments if there was a need for anybody self-isolating or if there were any problems with accommodation. The Housing Service would continue to offer Housing support and advice to travellers

who request assistance. A Member commented that it was important to address the negative stereotyping of travellers. She referred to the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer and the need to support their work including the need for Ward Councillors to raise any issues faced by Gypsy and Travellers at their local Community Board.

With regard to diversity training Members were offered the LGA's equality and diversity online training course and additional guidance has been added to the Members area on legislation and useful websites.

Another Member referred to the Equalities and Diversity training offered to Members and emphasised that this should be made mandatory as they were all Community Leaders. She also referred to the BAME Network that had been set up to help Buckinghamshire Council reach communities that never had a voice.

6 Update on the development of the Buckinghamshire Council Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services introduced the report and reported that Buckinghamshire was one of the largest taxi licensing authorities in the Country with 3,500 drivers and 2,500 vehicles. The Council's taxi and private hire licensing policy was an important document that demonstrated the Council's commitment to securing public safety, provided clarity for applicants and licence holders, assisted decision making, facilitated enforcement activities and helped safeguard against legal challenge. The creation of Buckinghamshire Council presented an opportunity to create a new policy that incorporated the new statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards, promoted the highest possible standards to secure public safety, supported the Council's key priorities of protecting the vulnerable and would help improve the environment and promote the local economy.

The Cabinet Member for Regulatory Services reported that a new draft policy document was being prepared, ready for consultation later this year, with a view to adoption next year which would have regard to the Department for Transport Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards which came out in July 2020. The aim of this document was to introduce consistency in the licensing system and reduce the risk of harm posed to children and vulnerable passengers. Councils must have regard to these new standards and it was expected that they would be adopted unless there was a compelling local reason not to.

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee informed Members of the Workshops that had been held to obtain the views of Licensing Committee Members to review, consider and discuss areas of policy harmonisation and the potential implications and impacts of decision making in particular policy areas. He also referred to pre-engagement consultation with external stakeholders which was taking place between 7 – 27th September in the form of an online survey Your Voice Bucks which was available on the Council website and had been publicised to the following stakeholders; public, school transport users and the taxi trade.

Lindsey Vallis, Transition Head of Licensing, Cemeteries and Crematoria informed

Members that the drafting of this policy was a Cabinet Member priority with wider benefits such as protecting the vulnerable, improving the environment and the local economy. Members noted the following points:-

- Each legacy Council had different licensing policies including fee structures, conditions and bye laws which continue to exist for each geographical area until a single policy was agreed. It was really important that decision making was consistent across the Council and that drivers, vehicles and operators were working with the same standards in place. They need to be working under the same fee levels and ensure parity and consistency for both the taxi licensing trade and travelling passengers.
- The work already undertaken had been a collaborative project with experienced licensing officers across the Council and a leading legal expert on licensing. Officers had also worked with other service areas in the Council such as home to school transport (particularly relating to children with special educational needs), safeguarding employment and the climate change team.
- Responses from Your Voice Bucks had been very positive so far with 498 responses, 58% of those were from residents, 35% taxi trade and the survey was being promoted further by the communications team before the deadline.
- The current projected timetable was that Licensing Committee would consider the draft policy on 14 October 2020 and if approved, an eight week public consultation would be carried out. Following consultation the response would be considered by the Licensing Committee and the Cabinet Member in February 2021 before finally being approved by full Council.
- Reference was made to the Department of Transport standards which had been put in place mainly because of historical exploitation cases. In Buckinghamshire the majority of these recommendations had already been adopted by each geographical area such as mandatory safeguarding training for drivers, English language testing and information sharing with the police. However, there are some additional requirements such as 6 monthly DBS checks and subscription of drivers to the DBS updater service, annual DBS checks for vehicle owners, local consultation on the use of CCTV in taxi vehicles to determine whether mandating its use would have a positive or adverse impact on safety.

During discussion the following responses were given to Member questions:-

- A Member asked if they could be assured that the changes were in line with Council policy and in line with taxi and private hire service legislation 2014 and government statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards published in July 2020. In addition, whether the family information service had been involved in assuring that the special education needs interest have been considered in line with the changes in March 2019 with regard to safety of young children and in addition the Children's Social Care and Learning Select Committee report recommendations to the Cabinet on 11 January 2016 on preventing child sexual exploitation. The Transition Head of Licensing

reported that they had been working very closely with the Council's Client Transport Team and with the Safeguarding Employment Team and they would be giving a presentation to the two Safeguarding Boards in the next few weeks.

- A Member emphasised that the policy would be part of a wider transport service as currently there were no cycle ways in place and the bus service needed to be supplemented by other forms of transport such as taxis. The Cabinet Member reported that aside from public safety the other main aim of this policy was the maintenance and development of a professional and respected hackney carriage and private hire trade and to enable access to a local efficient and effective transport service and support tourists and the local environment. The Member suggested that the final policy should look like a transport document. The Transition Head of Licensing commented that this document would be used daily by officers and the taxi trade as it set out the standards, the requirements for entrants into the taxi trade, vehicle requirements and their maintenance. She referred to the survey which asked a question about the location of taxi ranks and whether they were in the right place for the public and how they work in town centres and villages. They would like to gauge opinion from the public and the trade whether there were enough and in the right place and feed that back to town centre colleagues in order to look at this as a whole policy rather than just licensing. In addition officers had been liaising with climate change colleagues and had asked questions as part of the pre-engagement work around whether to incentivise the use of electric and hybrid vehicles and move towards a more environmentally friendly form of transport for the future.
- A Member referred to issues with unregistered and cross border taxis and it emphasised that it was important to be connected to other authorities. He also referred to the idea of a taxi bus which would cut the cost to individuals also making it affordable to groups. The Chairman referred to community transport. Another Member suggested contacting Community Impact Bucks who had undertaken a project in this area and had some good examples of providing community transport which was being led by residents and supported by partners. With regard to the taxi bus this would be outside the remit of the draft licensing policy but was an interesting idea which should be shared with colleagues dealing with community transport. Currently with Covid-19 regulations there was a limit on the number of passengers (6) in a taxi.
- The Transition Head of Licensing referred to cross border work and commented that a single policy for Buckinghamshire would put the Council in a much better position to work with neighbouring authorities. There were examples of local area enforcement protocols in place already e.g. Aylesbury Vale has a protocol with Milton Keynes Council which enabled them to stop and address any issues on vehicles which were licensed in Aylesbury Vale if they were seen operating in their area. The Deregulation Act opened up the market for taxis and it was entirely legal for them to operate outside their local authority area therefore it was an ongoing challenge to ensure appropriate mechanisms were in place to undertake enforcement in other

areas and having a single policy would enable officers to build on that framework with other protocols e.g. Slough.

- With regard to safeguarding, a Member asked that any data kept on vulnerable adults and children would be subject to GDPR and that any data sharing by taxi companies would result in loss of licence. The Transition Head of Licensing reported that their service does not hold any information on vulnerable adults or children and if they were working with the Client Transport Team, this Team would manage that information about their service users with the Licensing Team supporting them on licensing objectives. The only time they may hold information was a result of a direct complaint or intelligence from the police and they would act within the GDPR and have privacy notices in place which clarified where data was shared and for what purpose. Where there was potential criminal activity there was a requirement to share information with partners e.g. police. As part of putting the new policy in place GDPR and privacy statements would be reviewed to ensure that there was a single approach going forward. In terms of taxi companies managing the data that they hold the Licensing Team Leader reported that operators must comply with ICO requirements including GDPR. In terms of losing licenses each case had to be considered on its own merits. A Member asked whether operators had unique information on vulnerable children and adults and the Licensing Team Leader confirmed that operators do have access to a large amount of sensitive information so it was vital that this information was kept secure.
- A question was asked on whether advertising on vehicles would be consistent across Buckinghamshire and was there any restriction on taxi vehicles parking in residential areas. The Licensing Team Leader reported that the parking issue was controversial and they received a number of complaints about operators sometimes not parking in a considerate way. The issue was that if they were legally parked and the operator lived in that road they should be treated as any other resident. There were conditions for operators to not cause a nuisance in the way they operate their vehicles and if there were a cluster of vehicles parked inconsiderately they would raise this with the drivers and the operator. In terms of advertising, taxi and private hire vehicles should be clearly identified so that the public know they are getting into a licensed vehicle. It was felt that other forms of commercial advertising were not appropriate other than advertising their own company. A Member commented that it would be helpful to allow some modest advertising which could also help with public service announcements. If agreed, the draft policy would have an 8-week consultation and if there were strong views about advertising this would be taken into account in the final policy.
- A Member asked about the legacy policies of the former District Councils and whether they differed a lot and in drafting the new policy whether the 'best bits' had been used from each policy or whether officers were starting from scratch having regard to the new DfT standards. In addition, whether the new policy would have budget implications and whether the licensing fees would cover any extra costs. The Cabinet Member responded by saying that

the previous policies had differed quite significantly which was quite a challenge but best practice had been taken out of each policy. In terms of the budget the DfT standards had imposed additional responsibilities but new digital systems were being considered to minimise that cost impact.

- A Member referred to taxi companies being used for illegal activities such as delivering drugs and child trafficking. The taxi company would be asked to pick up young people who would then deliver the drugs and money. The protocol was that if the taxi driver was aware of this to continue the journey but report it to the police afterwards who would have information on the addresses. If all taxi drivers did report this criminal activity, it could help close this down. He hoped that the new draft policy would encourage drivers to report. The Transition Head of Licensing reported on the mandatory training given to drivers which included County Lines and ensuring that drivers worked with the Team to protect vulnerable children and adults. The Team also work very closely with the police and if they receive any intelligence this would be actively followed up and where required robust action would be taken against any drivers or operators involved if there was fault on their side. If a member of the public complained then the Team would work with the police to take enforcement action, when required. The Principal Licensing Officer also reported that drivers could report directly to the police and the safeguarding team rather than go through the operator and were given information cards with contact details.
- With regard to CCTV the standards advocate local consultation to determine whether CCTV would have a net positive or adverse impact on safety which could protect both the driver and the passenger. In Buckinghamshire CCTV was not currently mandated but some of the trade had been contacting the Licensing Team for some time to put CCTV in their taxis as a deterrent to the high risk activities they undertake, particularly late at night and the Team had ensured that ICO guidance was given. It was also beneficial to the Team in terms of enforcement where complaints had been received. There was a cost associated with this at £400 per vehicle.
- A question was asked about how the driver was protected, particularly if they had unknowingly been involved in a criminal activity which they then reported. The Licensing Team Leader reported that they have a duty of care to protect any information that was reported to them and when the police carry out any investigations they have to bear this in mind to protect the driver and were used to protecting sensitive information. Information would never be supplied on a complainant's details, unless required for investigation by the police.
- Reference was made to the company 'Uber' and whether they were currently operating in Buckinghamshire. The Transition Head of Licensing reported that Uber were required to operate under the same standards so they would need to have an operator base in the area which took the bookings. Uber had been licensed in the Aylesbury and Wycombe area, however both those licenses had lapsed. Many taxi operators however were using similar technology so residents can book a taxi online via an app.

The Cabinet Member and officers were thanked for attending the Committee and for providing an excellent update on their work.

7 Safer Buckinghamshire Plan

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Health introduced the report and stated that the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan was a rolling three-year plan which had been developed by the Safer Buckinghamshire Board; Buckinghamshire Council, Thames Valley Police, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service, Clinical Commissioning Group, National Probation Service, Thames Valley Community Rehabilitation Company and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A public community safety survey was conducted in early 2020 with 2,379 respondents (including 76 councillors), the results of which were used to shape the Plan's five key priorities which have been agreed as follows:-

- Helping communities to become more resilient
- Protecting vulnerable adults and children
- Addressing the impact of drugs, alcohol and poor mental health
- Tackling domestic violence and abuse
- Dealing with offending.

The Cabinet Member reported that the work for the new Plan was undertaken before the covid-19 pandemic therefore they would be close monitoring of the Plan to understand the impact of covid-19 and steps would be taken to reduce its impact on crime and the causes of crime. The Safer Buckinghamshire Board would review the implementation plan and impact at its regular meetings. The main impacts of covid-19 have been increases in anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, radicalisation and speeding. Burglary had decreased. The Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner had devolved a considerable budget of £440,000 which helped support some of the projects sitting under the agreed priorities along with Council and partnership funding.

The Communities Engagement and Safety Manager reported that detailed Delivery Plans sat under the Strategic Plan and she co-chaired with Thames Valley Police the Safer Buckinghamshire Co-ordinating Group, the operational arm of the Board which reviewed the detailed delivery on a regular basis. The Safer Buckinghamshire Board maintained oversight of the work and provided a check on performance on a quarterly basis. They were developing a dashboard which would provide some contextual information so Members could see the trends in Buckinghamshire and also specific measures which relate directly to the priorities.

In terms of next steps officers were developing Community Safety Profiles for Community Boards as many Boards had Community Safety Sub Groups and this information would provide an evidence base and highlight more pervasive issues which Boards may be concerned about. There was also a legislative requirement for an annual community safety Strategic Assessment to identify emerging trends and issues; and public engagement. This was completed at the end of last year and formed the basis of the new Safer Buckinghamshire Plan. This work would be

continued this year and the Board would like more detailed work carried out on:-

- Mental health – developing greater insight into its links with being a victim/offender; and risk management
- Those with housing need – more likely to be victims
- Victim suspect duality; and repeat victimisation

The Communities Engagement and Safety Manager reported that the next public community safety survey would be undertaken in January 2021 and they would be linking in with Community Boards to access local information.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- A Member commented that in his local area they had an excellent community centre called the Hive in Arnison Avenue, High Wycombe but unfortunately there had been some anti-social behaviour including a stabbing. They had applied for a fence to be put up near the car park to prevent this. He also referred to the shopping parade nearby where the shopkeepers were also concerned about anti-social behaviour and had asked about installing CCTV to act as a deterrent. The Cabinet Member referred to areas that had been targeted for anti-social behaviour with great success and suggested that he follow this up outside the meeting with the Community Safety Team. He particularly referred to anti-social behaviour at Dorney Lake which had required a multi-agency response and also Hervines Park, Amersham. Some of these incidents were a result of lockdown and young people letting off steam where as others were persistent offenders. It was important to involve Community Safety Teams so they could identify whether criminal activity was taking place or whether it required street wardens.
- A Member asked for further information on the work of Community Boards; some of them had set up Community Safety Sub Groups but not all and it was important to get a consistent approach across Buckinghamshire. She had also attended a Community Forum meeting where it had been discussed that there was a mismatch between the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan priorities and resident priorities and also how they fitted into the Structure. The Cabinet Member reported that they were working with the police, Community Boards and Forums to get a system in place. He particularly referred to the Chiltern Community Forum which was seen as a good model by the police and helped provide accountability for neighbourhood policing and interaction with communities. The Council main interaction would be through Community Boards which included devolved funding and it made practical sense to have the public facing survey and response aligned with Community Boards areas which was made easier where the Local Police Area reflects these boundaries. He further commented that Chiltern and South Bucks had seven Community Boards and whilst he would not want to reduce any public engagement it would help to have a single set of priorities for that area which were agreed by the Board Chairmen and Thames Valley Police. He would like to use a similar model to that of Chiltern and South Bucks for

Aylesbury and Wycombe and the LPA Commanders so that these bodies could provide an input on the focus for neighbourhood policing. There would still be a focus on resident concerns regarding issues that had arisen as a result of covid-19 such as anti-social behaviour and speeding.

- A Member had several questions which she put to the meeting:-
 - She referred to the Community Forum meeting as well, particularly in relation to concerns raised by the Asian community who were being targeted because of perceived wealth.
 - She expressed concern about vulnerable children and adults being exploited and how they were being helped to prevent further exploitation and in addition to that how many children were missing in Buckinghamshire. She commented that this linked in with the importance of statutory training on diversity and equality.
 - She also referred to domestic abuse where it was not reported because it was seen as normal behaviour in some communities; she was working with some of these communities so would be happy to talk to Members and officers regarding this area.
 - Raising awareness of hate crime so that this did not just relate to BAME communities but other areas such as mental health etc.
 - Educating people on the effects of drug and alcohol on their families, which had become even more relevant during the covid-19 pandemic.
 - Working with offenders and how organisations would work with them to stop them reoffending e.g. education programme.

A written response would be provided.

- A Member referred to Community Boards and the police working together to agree community safety priorities and commented that in her area there were two Neighbourhood Action Groups and two different policing teams. She also mentioned that it would be difficult for the police to attend various meetings with their limited resources. The Cabinet Member referred to the earlier comment that he was hoping that there would be a single set of priorities, he referred to the survey that would be undertaken and that each Board which have an idea of local priorities. The police did not have the resource to deal with seven different sets of local neighbourhood policing priorities. Regular meetings would be set up with the Chief Constable, LPA Commanders and the Community Board Chairman which was seen as the most effective use of police resources rather than attending individual community board meetings.
- A Member commented that the police had aligned their LPA area to match the boundary of their Community Board and enable proactive collaboration. He then referred to his role as a Community First Responder for South Central Ambulance Service where he had to deal with a number of people who had drug and alcohol problems who had collapsed or been injured through fights who went through a revolving circle of abuse. He asked how this could be picked up through prevention work as once the person had been to hospital they were discharged without any further action. The

Cabinet Member reported that he had regular meetings with the Chairman of Hospital Trusts where they had discussions about not dealing with patients/ residents in silo's where responsibility was discharged without any further action. It was important to take a multi-agency approach to this issue and put the patient first and to signpost residents to appropriate services following any incidents e.g. there were social workers in hospitals who were looking at older people who had suffered a fall and may need some support at home. However, he would check whether the SCAS were invited to these regular meetings with partners to ensure that there weren't any gaps in providing a co-ordinated approach to services.

- A Member referred to anti-social behaviour in town centres and referred to an example in Wycombe where young men were becoming a nuisance during the day time. He also referred to young people begging who he was aware were not homeless and could often make £500 per week to support a drug habit. He commented that the police because of limited resource would use their resources more at the weekend or at night. However, three street wardens were appointed who patrolled the streets in the day time which had an extremely positive effect. The beggars were referred to One Recovery Bucks where appropriate. He commended the use of street wardens to improve the ambience of town centres. The Cabinet Member referred to the recruitment of street wardens and said they had worked well and could also help signpost residents to appropriate services. He also referred to expanding the role of traffic wardens to help provide support for community safety. Community Board profiles and their allocated funding could be used to target resources.

The Cabinet Member and officers were thanked for attending the Committee and for providing an excellent update on their work.

8 Draft Inquiry Scoping paper

At the last meeting Members agreed that they would like to have an Inquiry Group on the effectiveness of community grants during the covid-19 pandemic. A draft scoping paper was attached to the agenda for comment. The Inquiry Group should have cross party representation from 6-8 Members with two days of evidence gathering. The aim was to examine that resources were being used effectively and efficiently providing value for money for all residents through good partnership working, that there were no gaps or duplicate services and that benefits were provided which may have a long term impact on communities. Members who had volunteered were Paul Irwin, Graham Peart, Mimi Harker, Ashley Waite and Peter Cooper.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- A Member asked if the scope could include Community Impact Bucks and other organisations that have provided funding.
- It would be helpful if all Members send in an email on their experiences during the covid-19 pandemic and interaction with community groups.

- A comment was made that the Council was commended for the work on this area however as it was a new situation some historical community groups were competing with pop up community groups for resources e.g. food. Established charities should be contacted as part of the review. There should also be a check on how the money was used and its impact.
- Reference was made to those groups who held the funding and how decisions were made on its allocation.

The draft scoping paper was agreed by the Committee.

9 Draft Work programme

The Scrutiny Officer referred to the draft Work Programme which was attached to the agenda. Members noted that the Work Programme was not set in stone and once this had been agreed further changes could be made during the year, particularly as projects got off the ground. A Member asked if the domestic violence item in March 2021 could be referred to as domestic abuse as it covered coercive control and it would be useful to focus on one particular area of domestic abuse. Following the elections next year a more detailed piece of work could be undertaken. A Member suggested whether it would be helpful to have an update on this area at the November meeting and following that Members agreed that contact numbers should be circulated so that they could raise public awareness.

Members agreed the draft Programme.

10 Date of Next Meeting

19 November 2020 at 10am

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Voluntary Sector Strategy

Update at Localism Select Committee

November 2020



Introduction

- Buckinghamshire has a strong and diverse voluntary and community sector (VCS).
- Members have spoken many times about the value and vital role the sector plays. The importance has been highlighted within legacy councils, as a shadow council and as the new unitary Buckinghamshire Council.
- As well as the council, partners across the county have highlighted the importance of the sector and advocating a strong sector and a culture of a mature relationship that is not predicated on funding.
- The VCS deliver key services and build social connections. They are vital in strengthening and supporting the County, in delivering shared priorities, providing valuable insight and offering referral pathways as they sign post, and enable prevention or early intervention.
- No single organisation can solve complex problems by itself, together we are greater than the sum of our parts.
- By harnessing, building on the enthusiasm, relationships and opportunities for collaborative working, we can make the most of our collective skills, knowledge and resources to better understand and respond to the needs of our communities in innovative and creative ways.
- There is a place based ambition of 'no wrong front door' in Bucks.

Covid-19

- The launch of the new Buckinghamshire Council coincided with responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our local response highlighted the strong partner relationships that exist both in the county and nationally.
- We saw how it was possible to swiftly collaborate, adapt services and embrace new ways of working.
- It demonstrated our beliefs around the need to think differently, creatively and be innovative with transformation.
- New and stronger alliances have been formed with a targeted focus on protecting our vulnerable residents and a common goal to work together for Buckinghamshire.
- It is vital that we continue to collaborate effectively at every level to safeguard our communities and improve their health and wellbeing.

• Page 19



Buckinghamshire
Council



NOMINATE NOW!
Nominations close: 27/9/2020



Community Impact Bucks
supporting charities, communities, volunteering



Buckinghamshire Council partnership

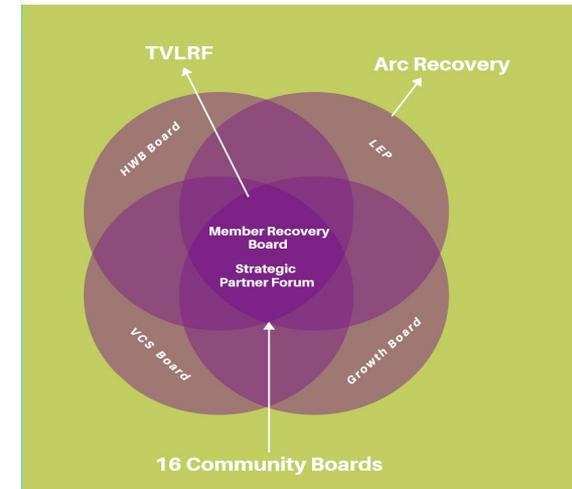
- Covid-19 highlighted impressive partnership collaboration and passion for the sector.
- The new Localities and Strategic Partnerships service has a core part of their service as working in partnership with and championing the voluntary sector.
- We have solid foundations and good collaborative working:
 - VCS strategic group (last 3 years)
 - VCS funding group
 - VCS Recovery Board (*further info on next slide*)
 - Representation at Strategic Partners Board
 - Representation at Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Representation at Children's Partnerships
 - Corporate Plan
 - Co-location, rental subsidy, grants, commissioning
 - Other connections (speaking at each others events, Action4Youth Inspiration programme, sponsorship with awards, support with recruitment and inductions)

Moving forward together - The VCS Recovery Board

- The VCS Recovery Board is one of four thematic partnerships tackling the long term social, economic and environment challenges arising from Covid-19 pandemic in the county.
- It brings together senior officers from key organisations to provide invaluable insight and constructive call to action.
- This group represent distinct aspects of the very diverse sector and help to drive forward thematic discussions, understand the wider VCS landscape with its fragility and risks as well as maximise recovery opportunities.

Page 21

- 4 key roles:
 - Senior representation for strategic and tactical 'call to action' with a solution focused approach.
 - Share insight to consider the impact of Covid on communities and the sector.
 - Enable more joined up thinking for future emergency responses and help drive recovery forward action in a more coordinated manner.
 - Focus on maximising resources including finding opportunities and mobilising volunteers.



Whose involved:

Chair, Mark Ormerod (Leap)
Vice Chair, Jenifer Cameron (Action4Youth)
Martin Gallagher (The Clare Foundation)
Karen Irons (Citizens Advice)
Henry Allmand (Heart of Bucks)
Andrea McCubbin (Bucks Mind)
Ellie Stout (Rothschilds)
Katie Higginson (Community Impact Bucks)
Bernadette Ashcroft (Age UK)
Colin McGregor-Paterson (Oasis Partnership)
James Boultee (Wycombe Homeless)
Graham Peart (One Can Trust)

Plus more on working thematic groups

A 'strategic framework'

- Covid-19 highlighted impressive partnership collaboration.
- Being a new unitary council provides an opportunity to transform and begin an ambitious journey of being 'best in class'.
- There is an intention to develop a VCS strategy to provide a high-level framework to guide how as partners across Buckinghamshire we can work together towards a whole system, place-based approach to working with the Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) and local communities to address needs.
- The framework would be about positive relationships and the importance of innovative solutions.
- It would highlight the council's commitment, passion and belief in the collaboration.
- It becomes a coat hanger document for other council policy, behaviours and commitments.
- It's a statement of the value of a vibrant and thriving voluntary and community sector.
- At its heart, its recognition that VCS is critical in delivering shared objectives and plays vital role in maintaining strong local communities.
- It will help continue exploration on how can we renew relationships to focus on community needs and enable a legacy of community spirit so visible during Covid.

Co-design with the VCS Recovery Board

- Research into other council's approaches showed a huge variety in approach. These documents instantly sets the tone for the vision and relationship.
- Lots of discussions for quite a few months and a partners workshop on 25th August hosted by the Clare Foundation.
- The workshop emphasised a need for a strategic framework that is accessible - too long it risks going into too much detail and detracting from key messages.

Page 23

Be pragmatic and don't make it too complicated. Should be produced fairly quickly and light touch as the focus should continue to be on covid, limited resource, important to codesign.

- Needs to be high level. Much of the detail will come from engagement sessions that will form a codesigned delivery plan.
- Highlight what is out of scope – too wide and it loses its impact. Avoid financials or contracts, not a strategy for the VCS; the sector is an equal and self-determining partner.

Ambitious & accessible
Visual short document
Avoid council jargon
Place based approach
(something stakeholders will relate to and want to be involved with)
Recent case studies of collaboration
A living document
Flexibility to adapt to changing needs
Evolving through review and monitoring

- The workshop identified it would be beneficial to produce over the next few months a high level framework that highlights the importance of collaboration to ensure Buckinghamshire is a great place to live, work and grow up in.
- A document that promotes the principles of working together to ensure there is no wrong front door for people to receive help and support.
- A document that isn't limited to the council showing commitment but instead enables a place based approach with other sectors (health, police, fire, LEP etc) showing commitment to the ambition.
- A document that shows the common purpose, the 'can do' attitude of collaboration and sharing skills, expertise, learning and risks.
- Initial suggestions are 3 ambitious headline themes which would be underpinned by a detailed delivery plan that is also co designed through sector deep dives.



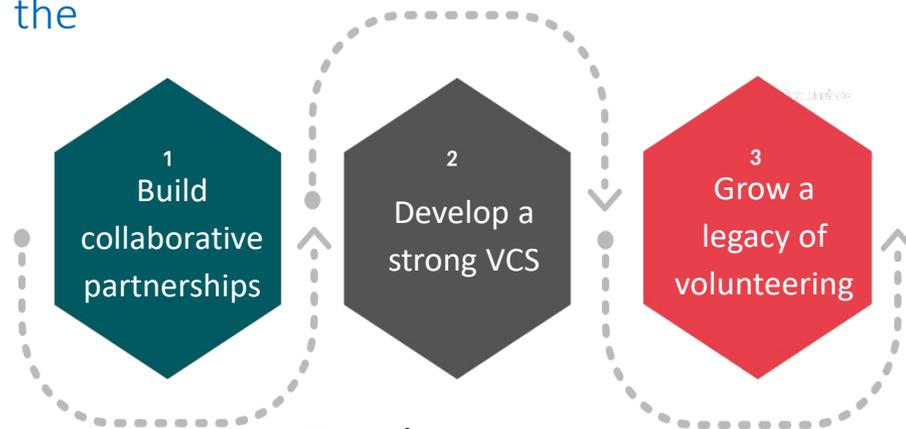
Mark Ormerod @MarkOrmerod1 · 26 Aug

My first proper @Leap_BMK face-to-face meeting in months . . . it was energising! Vital that we carry forward the momentum built through the Voluntary & Community sector during the pandemic. 30 years in the sector and never before has there been so much 'can-do'; let's keep it up



Gareth Williams @GarethWatBucks · 25 Aug

Great workshop with Bucks charities today drafting a new Voluntary and Community strategy for @BucksCouncil. Crucial to start by listening to those on the ground! Thanks to @tcf_uk for hosting. @Leap_BMK @WycombeHomeless @Action4Youth @One_Can_Trust @BucksMind @TheOasisCharity



3 ambitious aims

- The Council naturally has its own channels for monitoring effectiveness – including select committee scrutiny.
- The VCS Recovery Board has suggested that given the current climate, and the need to be responsive, flexible and adapt to changing needs, the delivery / action plan accompanying the high level framework shouldn't be a static document but one that continually evolves with the changing environment .
- The VCS Recovery Board is happy to drive the engagement and development of the delivery plan.
- Next steps are to continue reflections with a view to have a final product ready for formal decision by the end of the year.

Working together example

Community Resilience

A partnership with the Fire and Rescue service, supported by Manchester University, brings an opportunity to reset our approach to community resilience. Working with the new Community Boards, partners and volunteers to understand the changing local risks as well as learning by the amazing community spirit shown during covid. Peoples' needs and vulnerabilities are changing, local capability and services or support can be delivered in different ways including by those working most closely with communities. Community resilience tackles the causes of emergencies, identifies local needs, reduces vulnerabilities, and creates capacity – making Buckinghamshire a safer community-led place to live.

Working together example

Covid-19 Strategic Funding Group

A partnership of funding organisations that supported communities in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. Since March 2020 Heart of Bucks, Buckinghamshire Council, The Clare Foundation, Leap, The Rothschild Foundation and The National Lottery Community Fund came together to ensure over £1.5 million of emergency funds and grants were swiftly distributed to local charities and community groups with a coordinated approach. The group help maximise funding opportunities and also look to help the sector stabilise and recover.

Working together example *Creating a Partnership Capacity Fund*

The 'Buckinghamshire Wellbeing Capacity Fund' is a collaboration of three local charitable foundations (Heart of Bucks, The Rothschild Foundation and The Clare Foundation) to increase capacity in a challenging area during the Covid crisis. This is a unique and innovative way for local funders to come together.

Managed by Heart of Bucks, the fund recognised that collaboration amongst the sector will be critical to long-term community stability, as such it encouraged applications from partnerships of two or more local charities that helped address one or more of the following key areas:

- BAME groups
- 'Green' recovery and environmental sustainability
- Digital inclusion & accessibility
- The LGBTQ+ community
- Young people aged under 25
- Physical activity & health

Four applications, each with at least five different charities involved, were made to the fund. One trustee from each of the funders, plus the Cabinet Member for Communities at Buckinghamshire Council, were invited to form the decision-making panel. The grant of £73k was awarded to the consortium led by The Oasis Partnership. Their project, 'Listen, Learn, Adapt', is intended to work alongside and closely with BAME communities, enabling local non-profit organisations to become more inclusive and diverse and supporting improved community engagement.

Working together example *The Street Association*

The Street Association, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner, is a resident led initiative to encourage strengthened communities and local connections.

Partners include Thames Valley Police, Trading Standards, Housing Associations, Neighbourhood Watch, local groups and residents who contribute ideas and provide local data to inform on issues. Residents identified training needs and a programme was established to upskill residents. Over 450 residents accessed free workshops which covered community safety and health and wellbeing themes including domestic abuse, scams, county lines and modern slavery. This has enabled over 500 referrals to preventative services.

Working together example *Olympic Lodge*

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, The Olympic Lodge and other buildings at the Aylesbury stadium were transformed into a contingency facility to ease pressure on Buckinghamshire hospitals. In just three weeks, the lodge was repurposed as a care and re-ablement centre to look after vulnerable adults during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Up to 240 beds were available and the lodge was set up to be staffed by a team of care workers and volunteers who were able to give round the clock care. The facility is a great example of how all organisations worked together to plan how to organise staff and volunteers, pull together procedures, including health and safety and safeguarding guidance for the site at short notice as well as ensure sufficient equipment and PPE.

Working together example

#ProudofBucks

The critical relationships between Buckinghamshire Council, charities and voluntary groups to beat the coronavirus emergency featured in a Vlog with Leader Martin Tett.

Martin's guests are Katie Higginson (CIB) and Martin Gallagher (TCF) who talk about the vital role of volunteering in supporting people in the community during the Covid-19 effort. The two organisations developed a volunteer matching service works in partnership with the Council.

Katie, CEO of the Community Impact Bucks, spoke about the overwhelming response across the county and, as a result, how the current community need is being met. "There is so much support taking place in our local communities, it's absolutely fantastic," she says. "But looking ahead we anticipate there'll continue to be a huge need for volunteers."

Martin, CEO of the Clare Foundation, talks about how they have been working with charity leaders to help them think ahead, how the foundation has worked collaboratively to meet needs throughout the county and to ensure volunteers have the right skills, tools and guidance. "When you think of all the work by volunteers and the voluntary sector, we couldn't have got to this point in the crisis without them," says Martin.

Katie and Martin also focused on addressing the inequalities for BAME communities with facilitating roundtables.

Working together example

Covid-19 Mental Health

Coronavirus had a severe impact on mental health. The fear of contracting the virus, coupled with separation of families and job insecurities, caused widespread anxiety. A Buckinghamshire partnership of mental health organisations covering all ages formed an alliance to tackle the challenges in a strategic and coordinated approach. The partnership will leave a lasting legacy to work from and to whilst reaping many benefits in the meantime. Together we have mapped national and local online provision for mental health support, shared intelligence and learning, created a new bereavement support task and finish group, shared key themes, found solutions to combat the challenges service users face, introduced a digital inclusion pilot project for older adults, the sharing of funding opportunities and supporting wellbeing in the workplace.

Working together example

Early prevention

Heart of Bucks are working closely with the CCG and Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust to pilot an innovative way of increasing early prevention of certain types of cancer. The NHS are providing a funding programme, managed by Heart of Bucks, directed towards the non-profit sector in Bucks. The fund helps Not for Profit and community organisations locally, who have excellent local connections to marginalised or disadvantaged communities, and encourage/educate/engage at-risk members of these communities to attend cancer screenings much earlier, as early detection increases the survival rate significantly.

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Report to Select Committee

Date: 19 November

Title: Town and Parish Council Charter Update

Author: Claire Hawkes, Service Director Localities and Strategic Partnerships

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Town and Parish Councils (T&PC's) are the grass roots of local government in Buckinghamshire. The establishment of the new Buckinghamshire Council brings an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between all tiers of local government.

1.2 T&PCs are vital partners for the council. The new Localities and Strategic Partnerships Service will focus on developing strong links and nurturing the relationship to ensure effective partnership and joint working between the two tiers of local government. The service will introduce several new working arrangements to help build collaborative cultures including publishing a Charter which articulates that ambition. It is an important document that helps define the relationship between Buckinghamshire Council and T&PCs.

2.0 Coronavirus

2.1 Although coronavirus meant the charter work needed to be paused, the desire to build good relationships with T&PC's remained. The Localities service were heavily involved in the coronavirus community response, which was naturally the priority between March and September, this involved collaboration and building relationships with local councils:

- Covid area coordinators
- Clerks calls
- Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) liaison
- Town and Parish Council newsletter
- Team Bucks campaigns
- Clerks directory of unitary key contacts
- Starting community board conversations

2.2 At the start of the pandemic, in the absence of community board coordinator posts, staff from across the council were quickly redeployed to be 'covid area coordinators'. These roles were a critical link for members, Town and Parish councillors and clerks as well as community groups. The relationships formed with parishes at these times were incredibly important. The area contact helped trouble shoot and signpost as well as champion those area needs within the council. Towards the end of lockdown and a move more into business as usual it was possible to begin building up elements of the service that were paused. The service recruited to key positions including a senior manager responsible for parish development and Community Board Coordinators all of which will be a critical operational contact for T&PCs. Those recruited who were involved in the pandemic cited how rewarding the area role had been and how important those effective relationships with local councils were. July and August saw intensive induction programmes which included presentations from BMALC and parish clerks on the importance of strengthening the relationship between all tiers of local government.

2.3 The clerk's role is diverse and unusual, it was fundamental to ensure effective communication channels between the clerks and the council during the first lockdown given so many unknowns to quickly share insight, avoid duplication and escalate issues. As well as the area coordinators, the council established several 'clerks calls' dedicated to sharing insight and key messages. The calls were open to any clerks interested with attendance limited to 10 to ensure inclusive two-way conversations. These proved popular with often 3 sessions a fortnight being scheduled with the Deputy Chief Executive or Service Director for Localities. With no agenda it allowed for informal conversations and also gave an opportunity for clerks to support one another. As the pandemic started to ease these moved to fortnightly and then scheduled upon request. We valued T&PC's insight, our learning from this experience is the importance of formal and informal liaison on a regular basis. As a result 10 clerks forums have been scheduled for the year. These will be chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive with service directors in attendance in accordance with agenda topics. The first forums took place in September with agendas formed by listening to clerks and BMKALC suggestions.

2.4 The Localities service had fortnightly meetings with BMKALC ahead of the pandemic, these quickly became weekly with the Service Director and the Cabinet Member. They were helpful check in points in addition to the clerks calls to explore key themes and collaborative cultures. These again were valued meetings to share honest reflections, our learning going forward is these meetings are essential. They have also been scheduled for the whole year; fortnightly with the senior strategic lead for parishes, monthly with the service directors of Localities and Democratic Services and quarterly with the Cabinet Member. The honest and open relationships formed with BMKALC during covid have enabled more codesigned service planning. Dates for the quarterly BMKALC (member) liaison meetings are also secured in the diary for the remained of the year.

2.5 Good communication during the pandemic was paramount. The volume of updates, key messages and showcasing of our local council's work prompted an introduction of a weekly Town and Parish newsletter started on 7 April until 7 May, reducing to fortnightly till the end of August. This was a joint BMKALC and Buckinghamshire Council newsletter to help show that we were active partners.

"It was extremely helpful and very valuable for our community – great job."

"I'll be sad to see this particular newsletter go. It is by far the most informative, concise and best structured of all the Bucks communications and it is not being replaced by anything nearly as good in terms of communication flow. The lack of Covid does not mean that a lack of communication is ok. indeed most of what has been interesting about this newsletter has been non-covid content."

2.6 This newsletter has restarted at the end of October following feedback from town and parish councils. Our learning going forward is the need for a correctly pitched newsletter with content developed alongside BMKALC. We will continue to work with the communications team and do stakeholder analysis to make sure we get the right balance of content and regularity. Having one area coordinator collating the wonderful examples of parish work during Covid helped illustrate what good joint working can achieve and showcase our T&PC's through Proud of Bucks campaign illustrating the team Bucks aspect. These examples will be used in the charter and promotional material.

3.0 Drafting the Charter

3.1 The Charter is still under development given the time lost due to coronavirus, but a lot of preparation work and focus on building collaborative cultures has been done. We have focused on developing those key relationships and many of the operational aspects we expect to see listed in the charter, such as regular liaison arrangements with BMKALC, clerks and communications, are in place.

3.2 A working group of clerks had been established ahead of vesting day, their expertise and shared vision of wanting to develop collaborative cultures and good joint working is helping the charter evolve. There is appetite from local councils to not simply produce a product that sits on the shelf but instead take time to co-design a charter so the dynamic end product adds value. The group has met again since the pandemic started to ease to check on progress and consider how a 'launch' might now work given social distancing measures and a parish conference no longer appropriate. They are currently reviewing a second draft ahead of sharing this wider across all of our town and parish councils.

3.3 The charter will act as a framework (memorandum of understanding) to support partnership working and inform Buckinghamshire Council's approach to liaison with local councils. It will set out the relationship between the new Buckinghamshire Council and the 169 town and parish councils in Buckinghamshire, including how we will harness the

opportunities to strengthen partnership working and improve services for our residents. It sets out the joint principles and respective roles, responsibilities and expectations, and it will be a live document which will be refreshed regularly in consultation with town and parish councils.

3.4 The council and our town and parishes share a common goal to promote the wellbeing of Buckinghamshire, and we serve the same residents. The document will also bring the 'spirit of the partnership' alive, including case studies to help shine a spotlight on town and parish councils and describe the benefits delivered to communities when we work together. The charter will also help promote the unusual role of the clerks and aid understanding of the different tiers, the responsibilities, the differences and connections.

3.5 Having a vibrant document which helps explain what T&PC's do as well as showcase the benefits and commitment of joint working will help mean this document can be used in inductions (both T&PC's and the council). It can also be used as a driver in a 'Think Local' campaign which would support a whole council approach of working closely with community boards and collaborative cultures with parishes. The charter will provide clarity on what we want the relationship to be and help outline the stepping stones in place to help that journey.

3.6 Many of these liaison / relationships aspects we want to see listed in the charter have started to be in place. Contents include:

- A new title and strapline that shows how we are all working together for Buckinghamshire
- A joint welcome from the council and BMKALC
- Introduction statement about the vision and shared commitments
- Examples of working together for Buckinghamshire – brilliant examples from Covid and economic recovery (town centre regeneration)
- Understanding the role of town and parish councils and a mutual respect for each other
- Effective communications and liaison arrangements: BMALC liaison, clerks forums, emergency planning
- Governance, complaints, advice and support
- Think parish campaign

3.7 The Localities and Strategic partnership team will be working on the charter development with the working group over the next few weeks with a final document to be ready by the end of the year.



REPORT TO COMMUNITIES & LOCALISM SELECT COMMITTEE

Title: Domestic Violence & Abuse Update

Date: 19th November 2020

Author: Faye Blunstone

Purpose of the report

1. This report provides the Select Committee with a brief update of recent and planned activity regarding Domestic Violence and Abuse; and proposes some recommendations.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is recommended to:
 - note and comment on this update
 - consider the proposals for focus on by the Select Committee

Safer Buckinghamshire Plan - DVA strategic priority and delivery plan

3. The [Safer Buckinghamshire Plan](#) for 2020 – 2023 has 5 priorities, one of which is **Tackling domestic violence and abuse**. This DVA priority has a detailed delivery plan based upon the following key actions:
 - adopt an approach focussed on early intervention and prevention - implementing more evidence based best practice interventions for identifying at risk individuals and respond more effectively by intervening early to reduce harm and avert homelessness
 - engage with Early Help services to ensure appropriate early help is delivered to address adverse childhood experiences
 - seek more effective and accessible perpetrator services to change behaviours
 - better align specialist DVA services with mainstream services, reviewing procedures and protocols that link all relevant agencies to provide an improved, more holistic service
 - work to better understand the barriers and increase access to DVA service use for male victims, victims with physical and learning/sensory disabilities and people with poor mental health and improve services accordingly
 - work with the new Council's Housing Service to embed a victim-centred response to DVA, including reviewing the allocations policy to ensure DVA cases receive appropriate support

- work with Housing Associations to intervene early and avert homelessness; and develop accommodation options for victims unable to access shelters
- when commissioning DVA services anew from 2021 onwards:
 - seek opportunities to incorporate or provide separately support services for ‘hidden’ victims, for example older people, males, travellers, LGBT, people without recourse to public funds, services for BAMER in other languages, particularly information and possibly counselling.
 - to strengthen, formalise and connect the support received from mental health services and substance misuse services.
- seek alternative secure funding for the IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) service (an essential component of the commissioned DVA service) to remove dependency on short term funding
- implement a multi-agency partnership training programme to support all professionals in responding to victims, perpetrators and others affected e.g. children.
- produce public information which makes it clear what DVA is, how to spot the signs of it and how to respond to it as a victim, witness, or a concerned person
- work with the new Community Boards and community organisations, extend our DVA Champions scheme to raise awareness and encourage more consistent understanding of the issues and changes in legislation across our communities
- implement Domestic Homicide Review learning events to share lessons learned from both local and national recommendations

DVA demand in Buckinghamshire

4. The Buckinghamshire Public Health service has estimated the prevalence of DVA in Buckinghamshire amongst adults¹ – see table below:

Buckinghamshire	Age 16 - 59	Age 60 - 74
Total number of people in each age group	298,867	81,735
Prevalence of any DVA (partner or family non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking)	6.1%	2.4%
Estimate number of people with experience of DV in Bucks by age group	18,231	1,962
Total number of people with experience of DVA in Bucks (men and women aged 16-74)	20,193	

5. DVA crimes:
- The number of DVA related crimes recorded by the Police at the end of Q2 (Sept 2020) is 12% higher than the same time last year. In Chiltern & South Bucks LPA², it is 16% higher. Levels have been consistently higher every month in 2020/21 until September where numbers have fallen. However, this is very recent data, and DVA Flagged crimes are

¹ Based upon the Crime Survey for England & Wales, ONS 2018

² LPA = Local Police Area

regularly reviewed so there may be some adjustment to September numbers. This rise is attributed to a number of factors – changes in recording practice, increased awareness leading to increased reporting and a likely trend following lockdown.

- In 2019/20, 75% of DVA related crime was categorised as 'violence against the person', at the end of Q2, this proportion had increased to 79%. The increase in *violent crimes* was primarily accounted for by an increase in *violence without Injury*.

6. Commissioned services:

- Calls to Women’s Aid are 11% lower than the same time last year, however, that drop was almost wholly accounted for by Q1 (lockdown) and Q2 has returned to 2019/20 levels.
- Referrals to Women’s Aid refuges have increased this quarter but are still less than half the number as this time last year. Both refuges are now open and accepting new families having been closed during lockdown. Covid 14-day isolation requirements mean only one family can be admitted at a time. However, twice the number of victims as in 2019/20 are receiving IDVA³ support.
- Call levels have continued to increase since May 2020, despite a slight drop in call levels during August. This continues to exceed pre-lockdown levels and, except for July, is higher than the same period in 2019. The *number of pieces of short-term work* are also consistently higher than for the same period in 2019.

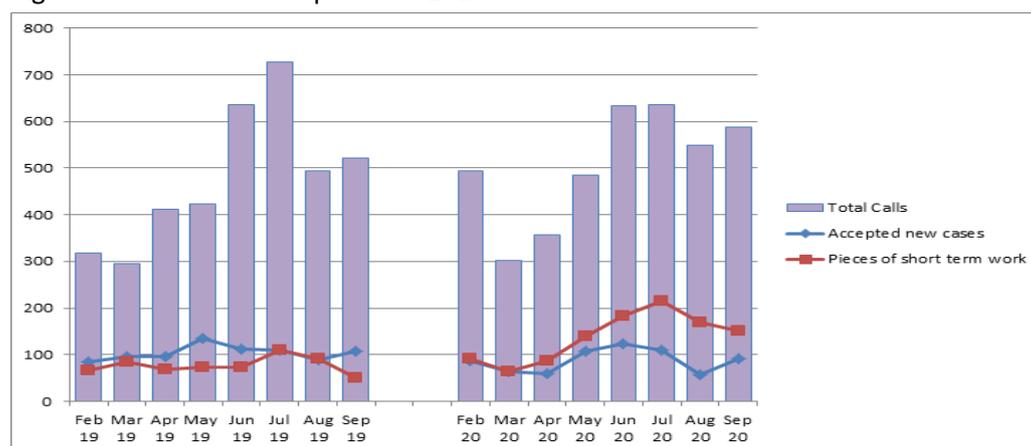


Chart- showing the profile of calls, accepted new cases and pieces of short-term work completed by Aylesbury and Wycombe Women’s Aid compared to the same time last year.

7. Although lockdown has lifted, we are continuing to monitor DVA demand in light of victims now taking the opportunity to leave or seek help which they may not have felt ready to do during the lockdown period. To manage demand, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Community Safety Fund was allocated to our local Women’s Aid services to increase outreach capacity.

Domestic Abuse Bill

8. Having been delayed by last December’s election, the Domestic Abuse Bill is making its way through parliament and is awaiting a date for the second reading in the House of Lords. It is anticipated that the Bill will be enacted by April 2021.

³ IDVA = Independent Domestic Violence Advocate

9. The Bill includes a wider range of provisions, the majority of which relate to policing and the criminal justice system. Other provisions relate to strengthening housing support for victims. Specifically, for local authorities, there is a new Duty relating to support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation, to establish a Domestic Abuse Board and undertake a Needs Assessment relating to safe accommodation and support for DVA victims. A summary of the key provisions of the Bill can be found [here](#).
10. The one local authority requirement that will need to be in place by April 1st is the Domestic Abuse Board, or to have arrangements to discharge the function through other governance arrangements. Buckinghamshire plans to have the Board operating in shadow form before April 1st.
11. Subject to the Spending Review, there will be *new burden* funding for local authorities.

Integrated DVA Services

12. The Council commissions a range of support services for victims, principally through one main contract. This contract was due to end in 2021 but due to delays caused by lockdown has been extended. Re-commissioning is underway with the newly commissioned service commencing in March 2022.
13. The new service will need to accommodate the requirements flowing from the DVA Bill in addition to the locally determined service requirements.

Wycombe Women's Aid Impact Report 2019/20

14. Wycombe Women's Aid has published its Impact Report for 2019/20. In total WWA supported 887 women, 137 children and 61 young people. There were 3,015 helpline calls and 2,526 face to face support sessions. 29% of women were seeking support around historic DVA and 71% were seeking support around current DVA. 7 years was the average length of abuse experienced by service users. 78% of families who left refuge moved onto safer accommodation.
 - Support at court was provided 13 times
 - 11 convictions obtained
 - 18 injunctions obtained
 - 6 improvements to security
15. The Aylesbury Women's Aid Impact Report will be published in November.

Perpetrator interventions

16. Effective intervention with perpetrators is one of the most challenging areas of DVA service provision whilst being an area where there is generally universal support to seek behaviour change in perpetrators.

17. One key action in the Safer Buckinghamshire DVA delivery plan is to seek more accessible and effective perpetrator interventions to change behaviours; and explore early intervention and prevention to prevent someone becoming a DVA perpetrator.
18. In Buckinghamshire, the only perpetrator programme was commissioned by the Police & Crime Commissioner and delivered by the Community Rehabilitation Company. A recent evaluation commissioned by the PCC concluded that, although the programme was well delivered, it was no more effective in achieving a positive outcome than short term measures such as writing a letter to the perpetrator. For this reason, the PCC has suspended the service whilst exploring more effective options.
19. Elsewhere in the Thames Valley, there are some small perpetrator programmes commissioned directly by local authorities.

“Intersectionality” (understanding of DVA by different social and gender characteristics)

20. **Learning disability:** Earlier this year, the charity Talkback was commissioned by the Council to deliver some local and national research to establish the nature and scale of DVA issues in Buckinghamshire relating to learning disability and/or autism, both as victims and perpetrators. TalkBack has completed this work and made some recommendations which are being reviewed and taken forward by a Task & Finish Group.
21. **Male victims of DVA:** According to the national data, in the year ending March 2018, roughly one 1/3 of people reporting DVA (National Crime Survey) were men. However, most DVA victim services are exclusively for women. This autumn, we are reviewing the support provided for male victims in Buckinghamshire. The review will investigate research carried out by key organisations such as Mankind’s ‘Oak Book’ directory of services for male victims and also seeks to consult male victims.
22. **Colour and ethnicity:** A recent report into DVA and BAME communities in the Thames Valley⁴ identified a number of barriers which would apply to DVA victims in Buckinghamshire such as the prevalence of honour and shame culture creating significant consequences for disclosing DVA, coercive control, language barriers and cultural misunderstandings by service providers.
23. **Older people:** One area to explore further in the next 12 months is DVA and older people.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

24. A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a statutory multi-agency review that takes place following the death of an individual aged sixteen or over, which has, or appears to have resulted from violence, abuse or neglect; and been inflicted by a person to whom they were

⁴ The Thames Valley BAMER Project - supported by the nine Local Authorities in Thames Valley and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The project, which concluded in March 2020, set out to identify the barriers experienced by women from ethnic minority communities who are subjected to abuse or violence when needing to access support, and to identify lessons for improving service responses

related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship or a member of the same household as themselves.

25. 14 DHRs have been conducted in Buckinghamshire since their introduction in 2011. The DHRs concerned the deaths of 5 male and 9 women victims. The deaths included 4 suicides (3 women and 1 man).
26. One of the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan actions is to hold regular DHR learning events. The 1st learning event is on 9th December, focusing on "*Suicide and Domestic Abuse*". The 100 virtual tickets – targeted at people who usually sit on Buckinghamshire DHRs - have sold out. Preparations for the next learning event which will be "*DHRs and intersectionality*" on 23rd June 2021 is already in motion. Contributions are planned from the LGBT community, BAME and the traveller community.

Safe Accommodation Project

27. The advert for a Women's Aid Complex Needs Floating Support worker has gone out and interviews are planned for the 19th October. The £70K funding was successfully bid from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government Safe Accommodation Fund. The successful candidate will provide wrap around support for those with complex needs for the first 6 weeks up until placement in temporary accommodation and potentially for a few weeks thereafter if the individual is almost settled. The project, supported by the Council's Housing Service, will also explore move-on accommodation for victims alongside housing providers.

White Ribbon 2020

28. A communications strategy has been produced around White Ribbon Day 2020. White Ribbon Day is our opportunity to bring people together – in person or online - to raise awareness and commit to prevent men's violence against women. However, we recognise that DVA does not discriminate and anyone can be a victim no matter of no matter of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age or financial background. Our campaign will include all potential victims and raise awareness of the support on offer.
29. We are committing to a whole week of promotion for this campaign w/c 23rd November 2020. Each day will focus on different types of victim (females, males, BME, those with a disability and LGBT+) to tailor our messages and be more specific about the types of support on offer locally. There are scheduled radio adverts going out the week before, during and week after the campaign to reach those who will be inevitably isolating in their homes from Covid19.
30. We are also taking the opportunity to focus on the theme of coercive control emerging (nationally and locally) in DHRs and will be promoting the indicators of coercive control in our public and professional campaigns.

Buckinghamshire DVA Champion's Network

31. Research tells us that victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) can go to as many as 5 different agencies before they find appropriate help, advice and support. By having Domestic

Abuse Champions with increased awareness of the problems and of local services, the aim is to dramatically reduce this number and ensure early intervention.

32. Buckinghamshire has a network of 460 DVA champions. These are trained individuals from a wide range of internal council departments and external organisations. It is free to join the network and enjoy all of its benefits.
33. Champions are able to advise their clients, colleagues, family and friends and signpost them to local domestic abuse resources and support services.
34. The Champions are supported by quarterly network meetings. The July meeting focussed on male victims of DVA and the September meeting was on disability and DVA. At the next network meeting in December, the speaker will be the Director at the Centre for Women's Justice who has acted in many high-profile cases on behalf of women appealing murder convictions for killing abusive partners, most recently the well documented Sally Challen case.
35. Champion's also have access to a Champion's database with external champions within the Thames Valley and those further afield for example Havering and Torbay. This offers the opportunity to not "reinvent the wheel" and exchange ideas, advice and best practice.
36. As mentioned earlier, a bite-sized training module is being developed for people who are keen to be DVA Champions but are not able to complete the full 2-day training programme e.g. teachers, councillors, community board members. There's been some delay in designing this training module due to Covid, but it should be finalised by the end of the year.

Select Committee work programme and DVA

37. The Select Committee plans to focus on DVA at its meeting in March 2021.
 - We would recommend a focus on perpetrator interventions, reviewing what has worked well elsewhere in the country and how local provision can be improved.
 - An alternative focus could be on the work of the IDVAs and how the function is deployed within Buckinghamshire.
38. Consideration of the implementation of the Domestic Abuse Bill provisions and their impact would be useful some 18 months or so after the Bill has become law in April 2021.

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Date	Topic	Description and Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
24 September 2020	Taxi Licensing policies	To receive an update on the draft taxi licensing policy which is being sent out for consultation	Lindsey Vallis	Caroline Stevens, Simon Gallagher
	Safer Buckinghamshire Plan	To receive an update on the Safer Buckinghamshire Plan	Rebecca Carley	
	Inquiry Scoping paper	Draft for discussion	Clare Gray	
19 November 2020	Voluntary and Community Strategy	To receive an update on the development of the Voluntary and Community Strategy	Claire Hawkes	
	Domestic Abuse Update	To receive an update	Rebecca Carley/Faye Blunstone	
	Town and Parish Charter	To receive an update on the Town and Parish Charter	Claire Hawkes	
21 January 2021	Social isolation	Update on the pilots being conducted by the Health and Wellbeing Board on social isolation https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?CommitteeId=589&MeetingId=7470&DF=05%2f12%2f2019&Ver=2	Katie Macdonald	Agenda Item 10
	Prevention	To look at how the Cabinet Member priority on prevention is being delivered	Claire Hawkes	
	Grants Review	To receive an update on future proposals for allocating grant funding	Claire Hawkes	
18 March 2021	Domestic Violence	Domestic Violence and Abuse – themed item	Rebecca Carley	

Inquiry Group – Verbal Update

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