



# Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee agenda

Date: Thursday 1 October 2020

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: MS Teams

## Membership:

Z Ahmed, D Barnes, D Carroll (Chairman), S Chapple, M Knight, D Knights, N Marshall, L Monger, G Moore, R Newcombe, C Poll, R Raja, B Roberts, C Rouse and M Winn (Vice-Chairman)

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<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>1 Apologies for absence</b>	<b>10am</b>	
<b>2 Declarations of interest</b>		
<b>3 Minutes</b>		<b>5 - 16</b>

To agree the minutes of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee meeting 25 June 2020 as correct record.

**4 Covid-19 and local economic recovery 10.05am Document to follow**

To receive a joint presentation on local economic recovery from Philippa Batting, Managing Director at Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) and Ian Barham, Partnership Manager at the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

To receive an update from cabinet members on Covid-19 and local economic recovery in Buckinghamshire.

Contributors:

Philippa Batting, Managing Director, BBF

Ian Barham, Partnership Manager, Bucks LEP

Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council

Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Town Centre Regeneration

Ian Thompson, Corporate Director Planning, Growth and Sustainability

**5 Housing allocations 11.05am 17 - 26**

To receive a presentation on affordable housing from Julie Porter, Executive Director of Development at Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (VAHT).

To receive an update from the cabinet member on housing allocations in Buckinghamshire.

Contributors:

Julie Porter, Executive Director of Development (VAHT)

Isobel Darby, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Nigel Dicker, Service Director Housing and Regulatory Services

**6 Work programme 12.05pm 27 - 30**

To consider the draft work programme for 2020 – 2021.

**7 Date of next meeting**

Thursday 26 November 2020.

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For further information please contact: Charlie Griffin on 01494 732011, email [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).

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## Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee held on Thursday 25 June 2020 [virtually via MS Teams](#), commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.44 pm.

### Members present

Z Ahmed, D Barnes, D Carroll, S Chapple, D Knights, N Marshall, L Monger, R Newcombe, C Poll, R Raja, B Roberts, C Rouse and M Winn.

### Agenda Item

#### **1 Election of chairman**

It was proposed by Brian Roberts that David Carroll be elected chairman of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee for the ensuing year. This proposal was seconded by Mark Winn and in the absence of any other nominations was agreed by committee.

#### **Resolved:**

**That David Carroll be elected as chairman of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee for the ensuing year.**

#### **2 Appointment of vice-chairman**

David Carroll proposed that Mark Winn be appointed as vice-chairman; Brian Roberts seconded the proposal.

#### **Resolved:**

**that Mark Winn be appointed as chairman of the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee for the ensuing year.**

#### **3 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Graham Moore.

#### **4 Declarations of interest**

None.

#### **5 Covid-19 update**

The committee received a covid-19 update in connection with the council's planning, growth and sustainability and adult social care services.

Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, Martin Tett, gave an update on the council's response to covid-19, which included the following key points:

- Covid-19 was declared a major incident in Buckinghamshire on the 19 March, and a national lockdown began on the 23 March, just 7 days before the new Buckinghamshire Council was due to be established.
- The senior management structure for the new council was in place, and enabled the council to mobilise quickly in response to the pandemic.
- A crisis response team was established and managed the council's response through a cell structure, working closely with partners including the NHS and Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
- Staff were repurposed into roles to support residents and particularly the most vulnerable also known as 'shielded'.
- It was noted that as lockdown measures were beginning to ease, the council was moving into the recovery phase of the response.
- Thanks were expressed to members and officers for their continued hard work during the pandemic.

The following key points were raised by committee members:

- In response to a question as to the decision to declare a major incident in Buckinghamshire prior to national lockdown, it was noted that this decision was assessed against the situation at the time. Further, it was known that a national lockdown would take place imminently but the exact timing of this was yet to be decided by central government.
- It was noted that individuals in the shielded group were identified by the NHS. The council worked closely with the NHS to provide support for the shielded group.
- In response to a question as to whether the council was prepared in the event of a second wave of infections, it was noted that the council would take advice from central government. It was unknown how potential future lockdowns would work, but it was understood that localised lockdowns may

be likely.

- Members were informed that the council's unitary status had been beneficial in terms of receiving government funding to respond to the crisis.
- Advice on how to mitigate the impact of covid-19 on vulnerable people was being continually released by central government.
- Concern was raised as to whether Buckinghamshire unemployment levels could get back to pre-lockdown unemployment levels.

Warren Whyte, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment, informed the committee that the impact of covid-19 on planning income was less than expected. Thanks were expressed to members of the planning team that undertook additional responsibilities to support work on the covid-19 response.

Steve Bowles, Portfolio Holder for Town Centre Regeneration, provided an update on the impact of covid-19 on Buckinghamshire's high streets and town centres. It was noted that officers worked closely with high streets and town centres to provide support during this period, including providing guidance and signage for safe reopening. Thanks were expressed to the officer team that had enabled the successful reopening of high streets and town centres.

The following key points were noted in response to questions from members:

- The plans to regenerate High Wycombe town centre were progressing and would continue to do so in consultation with local members.
- It was hoped that lessons learnt and best practice from successful local schemes established during lockdown would be taken forward.
- The Portfolio Holder will work closely with the relevant community boards in any regeneration plans.

Isobel Darby, Portfolio Holder for housing and homelessness gave an update on the work of the housing cell during covid-19 which focussed on rough sleeping, domestic violence, and the travelling community. Members were advised that the council had successfully housed rough sleepers during lockdown. It was noted that, as people were less likely to be evicted during the crisis due to government changes to regulations, fewer people were presenting themselves as homeless to the council.

Throughout consideration of the item, members of the committee and portfolio holders paid tribute to staff for their work in the community and in response to the pandemic. Staff were commended for the way they adapted during the crisis in light of becoming a unitary council on 1 April where separate teams quickly came together as one, many working remotely.

## 6 Cabinet member priorities for 2020 - 21

The committee received a report detailing the cabinet member priorities for 2020-21. The following key points were highlighted:

- The importance of the council maximising benefits of the Oxford - Cambridge arc by driving economic green growth and generating high skilled jobs for local people.
- The council had been successful in a housing infrastructure fund (HIF) bid for local infrastructure in Buckinghamshire, predominantly predicated for the Aylesbury area (the garden town), as well as a host of other projects.
- The transformation programme for an exemplary planning service is scheduled to commence this summer.
- A new enforcement strategy for Buckinghamshire Council was approved by cabinet at their meeting 16 June 2020.
- The council had high aspirations of environmental standards in planning.
- It was noted that a backlog of determining planning applications had been significantly reduced between January and May 2020.
- The council had a statutory duty to adopt a new local plan for Buckinghamshire for 2025.
- New call in procedures adopted by Buckinghamshire Council were a cause for concern for some parishes within the Aylesbury area. It was explained that the constitutional change empowered local Buckinghamshire Council members and provided consistency in procedure across all former district areas. Local members and parishes received notification of the change in the parish liaison newsletter, and a copy of the guidance sent to parishes is appended to these minutes.
- Members were informed that planning training for town and parish councils had been delayed due to covid-19, but it was expected that these training sessions would be rescheduled to a safe and appropriate time in the near future.
- Approximately 80 rough sleepers were being housed at present. The housing team in liaison with central government were drafting an exit strategy for rough sleepers.
- There were a number of options for the council to consider to support homeless prevention work, including repurposing buildings for residential use.

- The importance of affordable housing and key worker housing provision.
- The importance of reframing strong positive relationships with registered providers and partners, and working closely with these partners and other council services to achieve a housing service that works for Buckinghamshire residents.

*Note 1: Councillors C Rouse, D Knights and N Marshall left the meeting at 11.56am, 12.30pm and 12.36pm respectively.*

## **7 Work programme discussion**

It was requested that housing be added as an item on the work programme, and that the following strands be considered:

- Affordable housing
- Housing providers and Buckinghamshire Council as a housing provider in its own right/ a delivery arm
- Equal opportunities in housing allocations
- Repurposing of office accommodation to residential housing

The Chairman asked that members submit any further items for the work programme via email.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

1 October 2020.

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# **Parish and Town Council's involvement in Planning Applications**

Author: Planning, Growth & Sustainability

Date: 20/05/2020

## **Introduction**

This guidance note tries to answer some of the questions the parish and town councils may have about the scheme of delegation relating to planning applications in your area and how you can get involved.

The Council notifies you of planning applications received in your area, and you can make representations raising whatever matters you feel are important. These are very important in highlighting issues, particularly local issues that you have knowledge of, called material planning considerations, which need to be taken into account when applications are decided.

There will be separate advice on our web site giving guidance on what matters can be taken into account and what are not material planning considerations when we are determining an application.

Much of the content of this note was intended to be covered in workshops prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore has not been possible. There will however be further training for parish councils offered in due course.

## **What Can a Parish and Town Council Comment On?**

This will vary according to the different type of application.

You don't have to comment on every application. Where you do comment you should try to focus on the issues you feel are important (focus on material planning considerations) and explain why.

You don't need to quote specific policies, just explain why you think it's acceptable or unacceptable and provide any evidence you have to support your view.

## **How Do I Comment on Planning Applications?**

If you feel it appropriate to comment on a specific application, you should do so using the Public Access section of the relevant part of the website (or Consultee Access where available).

This ensures that your comments are automatically and immediately published on the website.

## How are planning applications determined?

The power to determine “Planning Applications” rests with either a Committee (one of the Area Planning Committees, or the Strategic Sites Committee), or more usually is delegated to Senior Planning Officers.

In accordance with national best practice over 96% of applications are usually determined under delegated authority. This allows our Planning Committees to focus their resources more effectively on cases of local or strategic significance which would benefit from scrutiny.

Details of the committee structure and the committee process can be found on our web site. <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

## What applications can be considered by committee?

The new scheme of delegated powers are different to those operated in the previous legacy authorities until 31 March 2020 and therefore may be unfamiliar in some cases.

The Buckinghamshire Council’s Constitution (the rule book) sets out the scheme of delegation which gives powers to officers to determine planning applications and which applications are to be referred to committee, known as exceptions.

The relevant Planning Committees can determine an application for full, outline or reserved matters in the following circumstances:

- a) **Member call in:** This allows a Buckinghamshire Council member to request scrutiny (call-in) of any “outline”, “full” or “reserved matters” planning application.

In such cases the Service Director for Planning & Environment would consider these requests, in consultation with the appropriate Planning Committee Chairman, and on the basis of the material planning considerations put forward they would decide whether the application would benefit from Planning Committee scrutiny.

- b) **Certain specified applications:** where these are applications submitted by the

- Buckinghamshire Council,
- a councillor,
- a Chief Officer,
- a Corporate Director,
- a Service Director, or,
- a planning officer.

Other types of applications, consents, and notifications are not the subject of these exceptions and can proceed to be determined under delegated powers.

The full constitution can be viewed on the council's web site setting out the full details of the scheme of delegation. <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/council-and-democracy/our-constitution/>

## **How does this apply to parish and town council comments submitted before 1 April 2020?**

The previous triggers for applications to be reported to committee do not apply as the previous Councils and their scheme of delegations no longer exist. This means that in areas where the parish council comments may have meant there was an automatic referral for consideration at a committee, this no longer applies.

This includes in the Aylesbury Vale Area where the parish/ town council had made comments which were contrary to the officer recommendation and had ticked the box to say they wish to speak at committee.

Details on how the parish and town council can now ask for these to be considered by committee are set out below.

## **How can the parish council ask for an application to be considered by committee?**

If you feel that the issues raised are of such local or strategic significance which would benefit from scrutiny, you can contact your local councillor and ask them to consider calling in the application to committee. The member call in arrangements and procedure are set out above.

Where an application is reported to committee there will be an opportunity for the parish or town council to speak at the committee.

## **What is regarded as a full, outline or reserved matters application?**

This includes anything which is submitted under the relevant applications seeking full planning permission, outline planning permission or a reserved matters approval. This also includes variation or removal of a condition on an existing planning permission under S73 of the Planning Act. It also does not include any applications that fall outside this bracket which we can refer to as

- Related Matters and
- Follow On Decisions

as set out below:

**Related matters:**

There are many types of planning decisions in addition to actual planning applications, notifications and consents which are defined above we are calling these Related Matters and they include, but are not limited to:

- Permitted Development,
- Prior Approvals,
- Advertisement Consent,
- Tree Preservation Orders,
- High Hedges
- Listed Building Consent.

This also includes Permissions in Principle for minor housing-led development

**Follow On Decisions:** Once a decision to approve has been issued there are often consequent matters that need resolution. We are referring to these as Follow On Decisions and they include, but are not limited to Discharges of Conditions, Legal Agreements and Non-material Amendments.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Author</b>
1	13.05.2020	Draft for review	SK
2	20.05.2020	Revisions made to deal with SB comments	SK

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## Report to Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

**Title:** Housing Allocations

**Relevant councillor(s):** Councillor Isobel Darby

**Author and/or contact officer:** Nigel Dicker / Michael Veryard

**Ward(s) affected:** None specific

**Recommendations:** That the contents of the report are noted

Executive summary

- 1.1 Buckinghamshire Council currently operates the Bucks Home Choice scheme for the allocation of social housing tenancies. This is a choice based lettings system whereby applicants on the Housing Register can bid for tenancies that are advertised on a weekly cycle. Social housing tenancies are owned and managed by Registered Providers (aka housing associations) and the Council will nominate tenants to a provider via the Bucks Home Choice process. The Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme sets down who qualifies to register for the scheme and how applicants are assessed and prioritised for re-housing. Work is underway to review this and develop a new Buckinghamshire Council Allocations Scheme for adoption by 31/3/22 at the latest.

Content of report

- 1.2 Buckinghamshire Council has a statutory duty to operate an Allocations Scheme for the allocation of social housing tenancies within its area. This is often referred to as the Housing Waiting List or Housing Register policy and sets down:
  - Who qualifies for a social housing tenancy
  - How they are prioritised for tenancies

- How tenancies are allocated when they become available

The Council's current Allocations Scheme is Bucks Home Choice. This report provides further information on housing allocations in Bucks and associated issues.

- 1.3 **Appendix 1** provides further background information on the Council's statutory duties and how the Bucks Home Choice Scheme operates. As explained in the Appendix, social housing tenancies in Buckinghamshire are owned, managed and let by Registered Providers (RPs who are also known as housing associations). RP landlords are independent bodies who are regulated by the Government's Regulator for Social Housing. The Council does not have any broad regulatory or controlling powers over RPs. The organisations work in partnership through the Council nominating households to vacant RP social housing tenancies (via the Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme) and supporting RPs to deliver new affordable housing properties and other initiatives. RPs currently own, let and manage approximately 30,000 properties across Buckinghamshire.
- 1.4 To provide some context of the supply and demand situation for social housing tenancies in Buckinghamshire, as at 17/9/20 there were 5,827 households registered on the Bucks Home Choice scheme seeking social housing tenancies. During the course of the year 2019/20, 1,766 households were rehoused into social housing tenancies. This indicates that overall demand for social housing tenancies in Buckinghamshire is significantly higher than the supply of accommodation. This will vary across the county based on factors such as location and type of property.
- 1.5 The existing Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme was carried forward from the former District Councils to the new Buckinghamshire Council from vesting day under the Transitional Arrangements Regulations. Therefore, the scheme continues to operate on the same basis as it did prior to vesting day. It incorporates four Housing Registers based on the former District Council administrative areas and still applies district local connection requirements for each of the four Registers. The Regulations require that Buckinghamshire Council must have a new Housing Allocations Scheme in place by 1/4/2022 (two years after vesting day).
- 1.6 Work has now commenced to review the existing Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme and to develop and adopt a new Buckinghamshire Council Allocations Scheme. As it progresses, this work will be being informed by:
  - A review of legal requirements and case law relating to local authority allocation schemes
  - A review of experiences and lessons learnt from operating the current Bucks Home Scheme

- Input from key internal and external stakeholders
- A formal public consultation

1.7 Once the formal public consultation stage has been completed and the response considered, a finalised proposed Allocations Scheme will then be brought forward to the Council for approval. It is anticipated that this will happen in mid-2021 although there may be scope to shorten some parts of the timetable. In particular, it should be noted that the latest version of the Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme was formally adopted on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 after an extensive review of the scheme and a full public consultation on the proposed revisions. It is possible that many of the key legal and consultation issues will already have been captured in this recent policy review.

1.8 Members had previously requested feedback on some specific issues relating to Housing Allocations. These are covered in the following paragraphs:

#### **Equality Opportunities in Housing Allocations**

1.9 Local authority allocation schemes (and the detailed policies and procedures that they contain) must take account of the authority's statutory duties under equalities legislation and should not unlawfully discriminate between applicants. The current Bucks Home Choice policy was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment prior to being adopted and implemented in October 2019 to ensure that the changes made to the allocations policy did not disadvantage particular groups of people. Where any disadvantage is identified then the Council is required to mitigate this impact. Officers are currently reviewing and updating the Equality Impact Assessment following the transition to the unitary authority and a further assessment will be undertaken on the new Buckinghamshire Council Allocations Scheme as it is drafted and brought forward. The former District Council housing services were also subject to regular internal audit to ensure that the correct processes were being followed for administering applications and the Allocations Scheme was being applied and interpreted fairly to all applicants.

1.10 The Bucks Home Choice scheme is delivered via a public website at [www.buckshomechoice.org.uk](http://www.buckshomechoice.org.uk). The site can be accessed in many different languages and has been built to accessibility guidelines so that it is readable for those with sight impairment. The Housing service works very closely with support service providers within Bucks Council and external advocates in multiple agencies to help clients with particular support needs. This includes access to translation services to ensure we can make the necessary adjustments for everyone to access the housing service.

#### **Key Worker Housing**

1.11 The current Bucks Home Choice Allocation Scheme does not give any specific priority to persons in a designated key worker group. Key workers can apply to register with Bucks Home Choice in the same way as any other applicant and will be accepted onto the scheme if they meet the scheme eligibility and qualification criteria. As part of the review of the Allocations Scheme, we will assess whether or not specific provision should be made for designated key workers and, if so, how this should be applied (include consideration of who should be designated as a key worker and how they should be prioritised for a move). In considering this question, we will need to recognise that being registered on Bucks Home Choice scheme can still result in a long wait for a tenancy and will not provide an immediate housing solution for a key worker. As highlighted in paragraph 1.4, the demand for social housing tenancies significantly exceeds availability. Therefore, any extension of the scheme to incorporate and prioritise additional designated applicants (including key workers and other groups) will result in other applicants facing a longer wait to be rehoused. The review of the scheme will take this into consideration along with any other key worker housing initiatives that the Council is bringing forward.

#### **Housing Providers and Affordable Housing**

- 1.12 As stated in paragraph 1.3 and the appendix, currently Registered Providers (RPs) are the providers of social housing tenancies and other affordable housing across Buckinghamshire. In addition to vacancies arising within the existing social housing stock, Bucks Home Choice will also advertise tenancies in new build schemes that are being delivered by these providers. Some of these will be on sites that are being developed in their entirety by the RPs. In other cases, they may be a proportion of affordable homes being delivered under a Section 106 planning agreement as part of a larger private housing scheme (where the RP has an agreement with the landowner/developer to build or take on the affordable properties on the site).
- 1.13 RPs draw funds from a range of sources to fund new development. While Government provides some direct subsidy via the national Affordable Homes Programme, this has reduced over recent years. Consequently, RPs now increasingly rely on private finance to fund new development (e.g. long term loans serviced from rents and other income streams). Most RPs are not-for-profit organisations who have charitable status. However, there has recently been an increase in “for-profit” RPs being established after the Government allowed these providers to register with the Regulator for Social Housing.

#### **Legal and financial implications**

- 1.14 There are no legal or financial implications at this stage. As the review of the Allocations Scheme moves forward, legal and financial implications will be considered at the appropriate time.

## Corporate implications

1.15 This report links to the Corporate Plan priorities for “Strengthening our Communities” and “Protecting the Vulnerable” which relate to providing affordable housing and working to reduce homelessness. At this stage, there are no other specific implications to consider. Equality Impact Assessments and other relevant assessments will be undertaken as the review of the Allocations Scheme progresses.

## Consultation and communication

1.16 No consultation has yet been undertaken in respect of this issue.

## Next steps and review

The review of the current Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme and development of the new Buckinghamshire Council Allocations Scheme will continue.

## Background papers

### Bucks Home Choice Allocation Scheme

This can be accessed on the Bucks Home Choice website at

<https://www.buckshomechoice.org.uk/choice/>

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## **Appendix 1 to Report (Housing Allocations)**

### **Social Housing Allocations - Bucks Home Choice**

This note provides a broad overview of the Bucks Home Choice scheme and the process of allocating social housing in Buckinghamshire.

#### **1. Why do we have an Allocations Scheme?**

1.1 Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 places a statutory duty on all Local Housing Authorities to have an Allocations Scheme for allocating social housing tenancies (traditionally this is sometimes referred to as the Housing Waiting List or Housing Register policy). The Allocations Scheme will set down:

- Who qualifies for a social housing tenancy
- How they are prioritised for tenancies
- How tenancies are allocated when they become available

1.2 The Local Housing Authority has some flexibility in deciding who qualifies for the scheme and how applicants should be prioritised. However, the Housing Act requires that the Allocations Scheme must give reasonable preference for rehousing to certain categories of household including:

- Homeless households
- People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions.
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to disability).
- People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship to themselves or others.

#### **2. What is the Allocations Scheme in Bucks?**

2.1 Prior to vesting day, the Local Housing Authorities in Buckinghamshire were the four District Councils – AVDC, CDC, SBDC and WDC. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, Buckinghamshire Council became the single Local Housing Authority for the area.

2.2 From 2009 onwards, the District Councils operated a common Allocations Scheme called **Bucks Home Choice**. Under the Bucks Home Choice scheme:

- The District Councils all operated the same policy for determining who qualifies for social housing and how qualifying applicants are then assessed and prioritised.

- Each District Council maintained its own district Housing Register (aka waiting list) within the policy. An applicant needed to have a local connection to the district concerned in order to qualify for that district's waiting list (e.g. only applicants with a local connection to Chiltern district could apply for tenancies in Chiltern etc.). Typically, an applicant must have lived or worked in a district for at least 2 years in order to have a local connection there. The scheme does allow for some exceptions to this.
- The District Councils used a common IT system and database for managing applications and for advertising and allocating tenancies

2.3 In accordance with the Transitional Arrangements Regulations, the existing Bucks Home Choice Allocations Scheme was carried forward to the new Buckinghamshire Council from Vesting Day on 1/4/2020. Currently, the scheme continues to operate on the same basis as previously by incorporating four Housing Registers based on the former District Council administrative areas and still applying district local connection requirements for each of the four Registers. The Transitional Arrangements Regulations require that Buckinghamshire Council must have a new Housing Allocations Scheme in place by 1/4/2022 (two years on from vesting day).

### **3. What social housing tenancies are let via Bucks Home Choice?**

- 3.1 Buckinghamshire Council does not directly own or manage any social housing stock. The former District Councils had all previously undertaken a LSVT (Large Scale Voluntary Transfer) of their housing stock to a housing association. Therefore, none of the District Councils directly own or manage any social housing tenancies.
- 3.2 All of the social housing tenancies which are let via Bucks Home Choice are owned and managed by Registered Providers (often referred to as Housing Associations). Registered Providers are independent bodies who are registered and regulated by Government to provide and manage affordable housing. The social housing tenancies that they let will typically have rents set at 60% to 80% of local market rent levels. Registered Providers own over 30,000 homes across Buckinghamshire.
- 3.3 During 2019/20, a total of 1,766 social housing tenancies were let via Bucks Home Choice across Buckinghamshire.

#### **4. How does Bucks Home Choice Work? – Making an Application**

- 4.1 Applicants to Bucks Home Choice can apply on-line at [www.buckshomechoice.org.uk](http://www.buckshomechoice.org.uk). Any persons who are unable to apply on-line can contact the Council directly for assistance in applying.
- 4.2 Once an application is submitted, the Council's Housing Service undertakes an assessment of the application to determine:
- Does the applicant qualify for the Bucks Home Choice scheme (i.e. Does the applicant meet the local connection criteria and other qualifying requirements for the scheme)?
  - If the applicant does qualify, what level of priority should be awarded to the application?
- 4.3 A qualifying applicant will be placed in one of five Priority Band levels ranging from Band A (the highest) down to Band E. The Bucks Home Choice scheme sets down the categories and household circumstances that fall into each band. The Council will assess the applicant's circumstances against these categories and will place the applicant in the appropriate Band that reflects their level of housing need.
- 4.4 The categories and circumstances covered by the Priority Bands reflect the statutory "reasonable preference" categories summarised in paragraph 1.2 above. They also cover some other scenarios including households who are under-occupying and wish to downsize and care leavers or clients in supported housing scheme where move on protocols are in place.
- 4.5 As at 17/9/20, a total of 5,827 households were registered on the Bucks Home Choice applications and seeking social housing.

#### **5. How does Bucks Home Choice Work? – Allocating Social Housing Tenancies**

- 5.1 Once an applicant has been accepted onto the Bucks Home Choice Scheme and been awarded a Priority Band, then the applicant can start to be considered for a social housing letting. The applicant will be set up with an on-line account on the Bucks Home Choice website.
- 5.2 Bucks Home Choice is a "choice based lettings" scheme. This means that applicants can see what vacancies are available and can choose what properties they wish to bid for. In general, the applicant will only be allowed to bid for tenancies that are located

in the district area where they have a local connection (based on the former District Council administrative areas) but there are some exceptions to this. The advertising and bidding process works as follows:

- 5.2.1. The available social housing tenancies are advertised in a weekly cycle. The advertised tenancies are available for applicants to view from Thursday.
  - 5.2.2 An applicant can view the tenancies and decide if there are any tenancies that she/he would be interested in bidding for. The applicant can make bids via her/his on-line account (although assisted bidding is available for applicants with support needs or difficulties accessing the on-line system).
  - 5.2.3 Bidding on all advertised tenancies closes on the following Monday.
  - 5.2.4 After bidding closes, officers will review the bids and create a shortlist which lists the bids for each vacancy in priority order (e.g. a Priority B applicant will be placed higher on the shortlist than a Priority C applicant)
  - 5.2.5 Once shortlisting is completed, the Council will nominate the highest placed applicants to the Registered Provider for the vacancy concerned.
  - 5.2.6 The Registered Provider will review the shortlist for the vacancy and undertake any further checks that it wishes to before making an offer of the tenancy to an applicant.
- 5.3 There will be some cases where the Council may choose to directly offer a tenancy to a specific applicant (aka a direct let) instead of advertising the tenancy more generally. For example, this may arise if there is an urgent need to move someone or the applicant has specific needs that need to be addressed by a specialist property.



## Report to the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee

**Date:** 1 October 2020

**Title:** Work programme

**Relevant councillor:** Councillor David Carroll

**Author and/or contact officer:** Charlie Griffin

### **Recommendations:**

- **To approve the draft growth, infrastructure and housing select committee work programme 2020 – 2021 at appendix 1.**
- **To note that the chairman, in consultation with the growth, infrastructure and housing select committee, may amend the work programme from time to time to account for any changes in the work and/ or priorities of the council 2020 - 2021.**

### Executive summary

- 1.1 The committee are asked to consider and comment on the draft growth, infrastructure and housing work programme 2020 – 2021 at appendix 1, and subject to amendments the committee may wish to make, to approve the draft work programme for 2020 – 2021.
- 1.2 The committee are also asked to note that the chairman, in consultation with select committee members, may amend the work programme from time to time to account for any changes in the work and/ or priorities of the council 2020- 2021. The work programme will be a standing item on committee meeting agendas to enable regular review.

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Meeting date	Topic	Description and purpose	Contributors	Lead officer	External presentation (Y/N)
01-Oct	Covid-19 and local economic recovery	To receive an update on the local economic recovery process, including: - What support can we offer to local businesses, including how we are working with partners to support economic recovery. - Unemployment levels in Buckinghamshire. - Vibrancy of town centres - Aylesbury Garden Town.	Martin Tett Steve Bowles	Ian Thompson	Y Joint presentation from Philippa Batting Managing Director (BBF) Ian Barham Partnership Manager (LEP)
	Housing allocations	To receive an update on housing allocations in Buckinghamshire, including: - Housing providers and affordable housing (including use of CIL/ s106 monies). - The housing waiting list. - Housing audit and equal opportunities in housing allocations. - Key worker housing provision.	Isobel Darby	Nigel Dicker	Y Julie Porter Executive Director of Development Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (VAHT)
26-Nov	Covid-19 and local economic recovery	To receive an update on the local economic recovery process.	Martin Tett	Ian Thompson	
	Long term strategy for rough sleepers	To receive an update on the long term plan for rough sleepers.	Isobel Darby	Nigel Dicker	
	Local plan for Buckinghamshire	To receive an update on the local plan for Buckinghamshire, including: - An update on the current district local plans. - The proposed timeline and progress for the new local plan for Buckinghamshire.	Warren Whyte	Steve Bambrick	
28-Jan	Covid-19 and local economic recovery	To receive an update on the local economic recovery process, including: - What continuing support can we provide to local businesses.	Martin Tett	Ian Thompson	Tbc
	Opportunities for cyclists and pedestrians	What opportunities are there for cyclists and pedestrians, including: - An update on new/ planned and implemented schemes. - Opportunities in town centres.	Warren Whyte Steve Bowles	Joan Hancox	
25-Mar	Covid-19 and local economic recovery	To receive an update on the local economic recovery process.	Martin Tett	Ian Thompson	
	The local authority planning process and the Local Enforcement Plan	To receive an update on planning and enforcement.	Warren Whyte	Steve Bambrick	
	Temporary accommodation	To receive an update on use of temporary accommodation in Buckinghamshire, including: - Domestic violence and temporary accommodation.	Isobel Darby	Nigel Dicker	

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