Delivering the new
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

Report For:	**BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SHADOW EXECUTIVE**
Meeting Date:	**22 October 2019**

Title of Report:	**New brand identity for Buckinghamshire Council**
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Cllr Martin Tett
Responsible Officer and Relevant Members:	Emma Denley, Head of Communications, BCC Cllr Angela Macpherson & Cllr Warren Whyte (Leads for the member working group)
Officer Contact:	Emma Denley 01296 382864 edenley@buckscc.gov.uk
Recommendation:	**To approve the proposed logo as the new brand identity for Buckinghamshire Council.**
Corporate Implications:	There are a number of council assets or items that legally require branding or require the council's name to be displayed from 1 April 2020. This list of assets will be brought to the Shadow Executive in a rebranding strategy in October 2019 together with the breakdown of costs for the re-branding work. A budget has already been allocated for the rebranding activity. The development of the new brand has been fully resourced in-house using three designers already employed by the County and District Councils. All consultation and engagement activities were also undertaken by council officers with a total spend of approx. £1k on providing expenses payments to residents attending a branding focus group session. This was given in the form of vouchers.
Options:	Numerous brand identity options have been provided, discussed, refined and reduced over the past two months with the member working group. This resulted in a final set of three concepts being shown to groups of residents, employees and members.
Reason:	The recommended logo design delivers on the agreed design brief for the new brand identity for Buckinghamshire Council and meets accessibility criteria. A set of three final design concepts were taken through a consultation process with residents, employees and members. The recommended logo was the most popular design overall.
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Detailed analysis of focus group results

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to seek agreement on the new brand identity for Buckinghamshire Council. This includes approval of the logo, the associated colour palette and the font to be used on the new council's assets. Examples of the application of the brand (a letterhead, a vehicle and a social media post) are included in the report.

A separate report known as the new branding strategy will be completed at the end of October 2019 which will identify items and assets that will be recommended for rebranding in readiness for or from 1 April 2020. The report will include a comprehensive list of assets that require rebranding by law and will identify the costs for implementation of the new branding.

2. Executive Summary

This report recommends a logo, or a brand identity, for the new Buckinghamshire Council. The logo will be a key element of the branding for the new council and has been developed by in-house graphic designers with input from the member working group. The new branding will play an important role in visibly marking a new start for local government in Buckinghamshire.

The recommended logo has been selected through testing with Buckinghamshire residents, members and employees. The new brand identity together with full branding guidelines will be available at the end of the year.

3. Background

In July 2019, the Shadow Executive approved the design brief - a document that was created to ensure that officers and members involved in the branding project understood the reason for branding the new organisation, the intended audience and the expected project outcomes. It was also agreed that the design work would be developed over the summer with guidance and support from the member working group comprised of members from each of the existing councils and led by Councillor Angela Macpherson (AVDC) and Councillor Warren Whyte (BCC).

The term 'brand' represents and articulates an organisation's purpose, proposition, positioning, and personality. The brand includes the organisational vision, values, behaviours, strategic goals and tone of voice.

A 'brand identity' is the visible elements of a brand, such as colour, design and logo that identify and distinguish the organisation in residents' or stakeholders' minds. The brand identity can be applied to printed materials, letterheads, websites, software applications, vehicles, signage on building, staff identity badges etc.

This report provides the recommended new brand identity.

It is not a legislative requirement for local authorities to use a logo/brand in addition to their name. It is however, standard practice and it is accepted that Buckinghamshire Council's brand will be ready for use on 1 April 2020.

A corporate brand identity plays an important role in the way the Council will present itself to internal and external stakeholders. It is recommended that all services delivered by Buckinghamshire Council be clearly and consistently branded with the new brand identity. This will help increase residents' awareness of the full range of services provided by their council. The brand identity comprises four functions:

a. Provides visibility and recognition ensuring residents know that the new authority exists, what services are available, how to access services and where to go for information.
b. Contributes to the image of the Council and therefore its reputation.
c. Enables a relationship between external stakeholders and the Council to be easily identified.
d. Allows employees to identify with the organisation and to the specific areas they work within.

Please note that this report does not cover the branding used for civic purposes. A decision about the use of a Buckinghamshire coat of arms will be made by the new Council once elected and will be worked on as part of the Legal and Governance workstream.

4. Summary of principles that have been applied to the branding project

A set of criteria was developed and followed in order to create this brand identity. The criteria were set out in full in the design brief agreed in July.

In summary, other principles are:

- The new brand has been developed by internal designers already employed by the existing councils. These officers will also support the implementation of the new brand.

- A single brand has been produced that will be used across **all** services that make up Buckinghamshire Council. This will include a logo, a colour palette and a font that will be applied to all items requiring the identity. Services will not have their own logos or identities.

- The new brand identity will be accessible and will work for all audiences including those with visual impairments.

- The new brand identity is flexible and works in a range of sizes and formats including digital.

- The new brand will be as unique as possible and not similar to the logo of any other council or commercial organisation nor is it similar to any of the council's historic branding.

5. Development of the new brand identity

Initial design concepts were drafted taking inspiration from around Buckinghamshire and from conducting research on other local authorities, including other unitary councils. This research, together with the approved design brief enabled the member working group to agree on the direction the concepts should take.

It was the Buckinghamshire countryside and beautiful landscapes that provided the most compelling inspiration. Over a quarter of the county is included within the Chilterns area of Outstanding Beauty and a further third covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Both traditional and modern logos from other authorities were reviewed. The county's rich history was researched, in particular the **swan emblem**.

The link with the swan dates back to the Anglo-Saxon times when Buckinghamshire was known for breeding swans for the king (at that time the bird was considered a delicious meal). Its earliest known use was by a 12th century Sheriff of Buckingham on a badge and then came to the Mandeville family through marriage and inheritance. The last male Mandeville died in 1227 when the swan badge passed to the de Bohun family who made good use of it.

Today the swan, typically with the background colours of black and red, can be seen across the County and is used by many organisations including the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service, the Bucks County Show, the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire and scouting and guiding clubs.

Other authorities make use of an animal that has been linked with their counties for generations. This includes Leicestershire with a fox, Hertfordshire with the stag and Warwickshire with a bear.

As the initial design concepts were discussed, refined and reduced to the final set of three, it became clear that a swan would feature in the final identity.

It was also important that the new identity fitted with the emerging personality of the new Buckinghamshire Council. Through the work of establishing the vision and values of the new council, the designers and the member working group were able to draw inspiration from this. The new brand identity needed to reflect innovation, openness, integrity, ambition and trust.

6. Process undertaken to recommend this brand identity

Step One The design brief was agreed and the team of three designers presented an initial set of nine design concepts to the member working group on 30 July 2019. Each concept explored different design approaches, ranging from contemporary shapes to more traditional logos.

Step Two Following review and discussion, three concept ideas were taken forward and developed with consideration of colour and how it was going to be applied to assets. A further nine concepts based on these three ideas were presented to the member working group on 28 August 2019.

Step Three A final set of three concepts were agreed and refined to take forward for feedback via focus groups held with residents of Buckinghamshire, employees from all 5 existing councils and County and District Councillors (as agreed in the design brief report). Focus groups were held in the first two weeks of September where participants were asked to choose the logo they thought was best suited to the new council. Employees were also asked to 'vote' in flash polls at roadshow events.

Step Four The feedback from the focus groups resulted in the final concept being recommended to the Shadow Executive and further refinement work to the logo, colour palette and fonts being undertaken in line with the comments received.

Step Five Undertaking of accessibility testing of the final logo.

7. Brand identity recommendation – the Buckinghamshire Council logo

The logo that is being recommended for Buckinghamshire Council is known as 'Spectacular Landscapes'.

This logo represents Buckinghamshire's spectacular landscapes with our rolling hills, rivers, ancient woodlands and, as a nod to the history, a swan in flight.

The 'stamp' concept is enclosed by an outline which forms the shape of the river and the hills. The text circles the logo for practicality as the word Buckinghamshire is long (15 letters). The text 'est. 2020' will be included on items like letterheads as it explains neatly that a new council has been introduced for those residents or stakeholders that are unaware of the change. It is recommended that this is a short term solution and the words 'est. 2020' would be used for the first few years only. The 'est. 2020' would not be included on long term assets such as signage.

Full colour logo

The logo versions shown below include the main logo inverted for use on assets such as uniforms and the landscape option that will be needed for the website. The small versions will be required for social media platforms and smaller items such as business cards.

The monochrome versions will be used when it is not practical to print in colour and will be used on uniform where embroidery is used for example.

Inverted

Greyscale

Landscape

Smaller scale

8. The supporting colour palette – Spectacular Landscapes

The logo itself is a single colour and therefore the use of the secondary colour palette will be important to provide interest and will play a part in affirming the council's new brand identity with its residents and employees.

The extended colour palette will enable the development of promotional materials still in keeping with the colours found in the Buckinghamshire landscape. The inspiration for the colour palette is shown in the Buckinghamshire photos shown below.

Primary colours - for the logo and as background colours for text

| Deep River | Charcoal | White |

Secondary colours - for branding elements only

| Beech Leaf | Ancient Woodland | Grand Union | Aylesbury Duck |

Extended colour palette

Land - fields, trees and bluebells
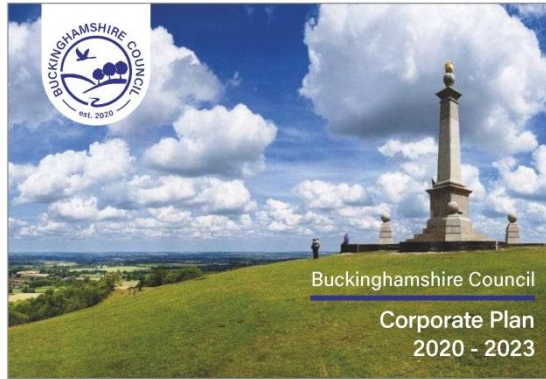
Sky - sunny days and sunsets

Rivers - birds found in rivers

Examples of the Spectacular Landscapes brand identity are shown below on an identity card, lanyard, Tweet, letterhead, strategy document and on the Gateway building in Aylesbury. These are initial artist impressions only and the communications team will work with relevant services and workstreams to ensure the application of the new brand identity is appropriate and meets specific requirements.

The 'Tab' will be used as a holding device for the logo to give documents, in particular letterheads (as seen below), a modern official feel. The tab can also be used to add colour to a document and be used to differentiate sections in a report.

9. The Buckinghamshire Council fonts

When developing the new brand identity, a number of fonts were looked at. Serif fonts (where a small line or stroke is regularly attached to the end of a larger line in a letter) felt too reflective of the past and not accessible so were not considered.

The sans serif fonts '**Acumin**' and '**Calibri**' were both chosen for the clean modern lines and legibility across a range of sizes. It is anticipated that Calibri will be adopted by the council as the default font across all Microsoft software.

Primary font
Adobe creative cloud fonts

Headings - Acumin Semibold

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ?!'£&%*();:@<>/+="

Subheadings - Acumin Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ?!'£&%*();:@<>/+="

Body copy - Acumin Light

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ?!'£&%*();:@<>/+="

Secondary font
Microsoft compatible fonts, only used where primary font is unavailable

Headings and subheadings - Calibri Bold

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ?!'£&%*();:@<>/+="

Body copy - Calibri Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ 0123456789
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz ?!'£&%*();:@<>/+="

10. Financial Implications

The development of the new brand has been fully resourced in-house using three designers already employed by the County and District Councils. All consultation and engagement activities were also undertaken by council officers with a total spend of approx. £1k on providing expenses payments to residents attending a branding focus group session. This was given in the form of vouchers.

A budget of £755k has been agreed for the implementation of the new brand identity. Details of how this budget will be allocated will be detailed in a separate strategy at the end of October 2019.

11. Legal Implications

It is not a legislative requirement for local authorities to use a logo/brand in addition to their name. It is, however, standard practice and it is accepted that Buckinghamshire Council's brand will be ready for use on 1 April 2020.

There are a number of council assets that legally require branding, or require the council's name to be displayed from 1 April 2020. This list of assets will be bought to the Shadow Executive in the new branding strategy together with the breakdown of costs and timescales for the re-branding work.

There is also the option for trademarking the logo in order to protect against third party imitation within the UK. This process would take between nine and twelve months to complete, if agreed to proceed and the standard fee is £170. There would also be an ongoing annual cost of employing an agency to monitor/protect the trademark.

A large number of authorities choose to register their logo as a trade mark (a sign or symbol used to distinguish products and services from those of other traders). The benefit of registration is the ability to prevent others from using the logo without permission. Although an unregistered trade mark is capable of protection, infringement is often more difficult to prove. In order to be registerable a trade mark must be:

- Capable of being represented graphically
- distinctive
- capable of distinguishing goods or services; and
- not excluded by statute

If the authority decides that the branding should be registered, clearance searches will need to be undertaken to ensure it does not infringe any third party rights

12. Dependencies

All of the unitary workstreams have one or more dependencies on the completion and agreement of this new brand identity. There are some areas, such as parking services, where the authority name and identity is required by law in order to enforce parking charges from 1 April 2020. In some instances the new logo will need to be supplied as early as October 2019 due to the timescales involved, for example the production of Council Tax bills for residents for 2020/21.

13. Consultation

A programme of consultation has taken place with Buckinghamshire residents and elected members and employees of all existing councils. The groups were diverse, and included young people (a group of Year 5 pupils and a group of looked after children), lifelong residents of Buckinghamshire, those new to the county, and employees

Focus groups	No. of participants
5 evening resident sessions	46
2 sessions with Councillors	20
5 employee sessions	48
2 sessions with young people	28
Employee roadshows (flash polls)	223
TOTAL	**365**

from a broad spectrum including senior management, employee and union representatives, depot staff, and new recruits. Residents were recruited for the focus groups via an advertising campaign across the county with the best response from adverts placed on social media channels.

Feedback from these people was collected via 14 formal branding focus groups (lasting on average 40 minutes) where participants were asked to comment on the **three final branding concepts**. They were asked to comment on whether the concepts reminded them of any other products or organisations, what they thought about the colour, the font, the imagery and then an overall 'vote' about which was preferred for the new council. The materials provided included iterations of the logo design to show it in use on a bin lorry, letterheads, and on social media, as well as versions in landscape and black and white.

Feedback was also received via three employee roadshow events where attendees were asked to vote for their preferred concept. No specific discussion took place about the concepts; it was simply a flash poll. Therefore, the results from the roadshows should be viewed somewhat separately to those from the focus groups.

The detailed analysis of the focus group events can be found in Appendix 1.

This graph shows the combined results of all people asked for their view on the preferred logo for the new council.
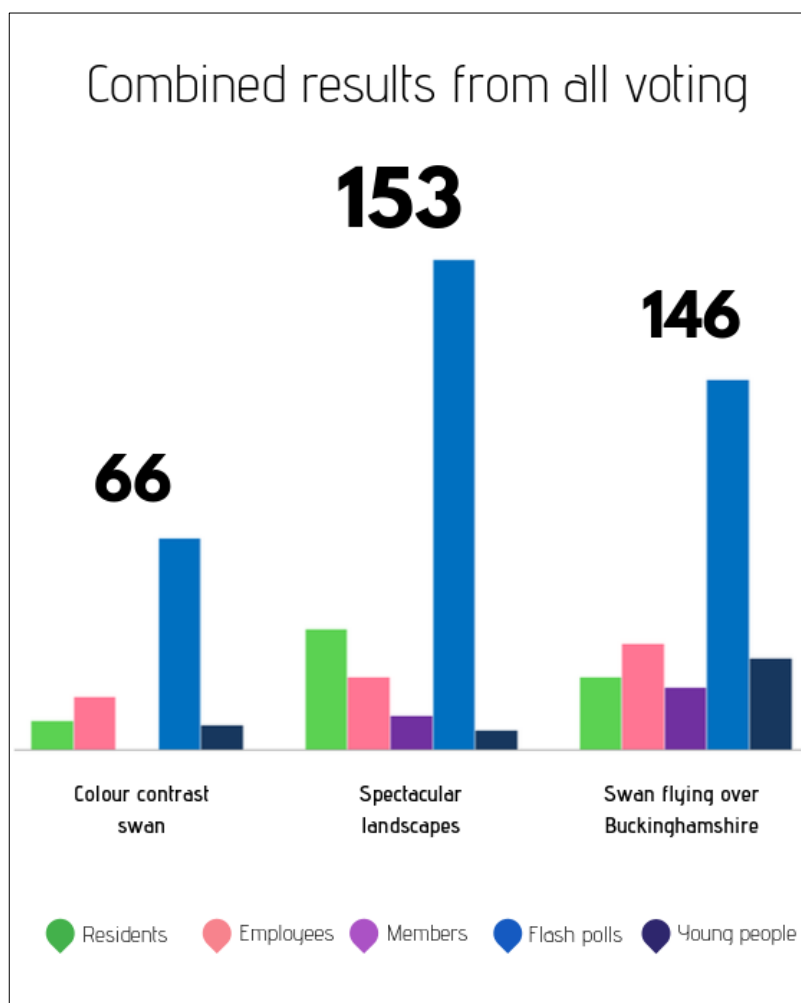
14. Communications Plan

A comprehensive communications plan will be developed to launch Buckinghamshire Council's new brand identity. This will be focussed on the Council's primary service users and key partners. It is likely that the launch will take place in January 2020.

A detailed branding guidelines document will be produced for employees and for our service providers and partners. This document will be promoted along with the new brand identity so that employees are able to make the necessary changes to documentation and other council's assets, themselves, where reasonable.

15. Equalities Implications

Accessibility requirements were a key feature of the design brief. The brand identity has been tested for people with visual impairments and has **passed**.

The logo and colour palette were tested using the Web Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) which sets a single shared standard for web content. This, in particular, looks at appropriate levels of colour contrast with text.

The fonts Acumin and Calibri have been chosen as they are both accessible and widely available. Both of these fonts are 'sans serif' meaning without the decorative line. It is therefore widely accepted that the shape of the letter is plain and easier to read for people with a visual impairment or those who having learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

16. Next steps

- October 2019 – New branding Strategy to be bought to and agreed at Shadow Executive.
- November 2019 – Work carried out on the creation of branding guidelines to enable employees, with support and guidance from the communications team, to apply the new brand identity to assets. Full guidance will be available for use at the end of the year.
- January 2020 (TBC) - Official launch of Buckinghamshire Council with promotion of the new logo etc.

Background Papers	None.

Appendix 1 – Detailed analysis of focus group results

Focus groups were selected as a preferred approach to gathering views on the new brand identity as the group discussion could be steered around the key themes whilst allowing sufficient time for issues and discussion points to explored in more detail. This enabled us to develop an understanding of branding preferences in addition to the rationale underpinning those preferences.

All focus group participants were asked to comment on the same three branding concepts. They were asked to comment on whether the concepts reminded them of any other products or organisations, what they thought about the colour, the font, the imagery and then an overall 'vote' about which was preferred for the new council.

Materials provided at each of the focus groups included iterations of the logo applied to a bin lorry, a letterhead and on a social media post, as well as versions in landscape (as it would be seen on the website) and in monochrome.

Resident focus groups

Focus groups with residents were carried out across Buckinghamshire. This was to ensure that residents across all five existing council areas were able to have their say. In all, **46 residents participated in five sessions**:

- Aylesbury - 29 August: 13 attendees
- Denham - 2 September: 4 attendees
- Amersham - 3 September: 12 attendees
- Buckingham - 3 September: 6 attendees
- Wycombe - 5 September: 10 attendees

And 28 young people were also surveyed in smaller, more informal focus groups:

- Ashmead Combined School – 13 September: 15 Year 5 attendees
- We Do Care Group – 14 September: 13 care leaver attendees

Key themes emerging from resident groups

1. Balancing heritage and the future is important

- Participants questioned whether the swan imagery was relevant to Buckinghamshire in the 21st century.
- There was equal division over whether the 'Est. 2020' is needed; some liked it as it referenced a new start, but others thought it was more appropriate for a shop than a council.
- Calls for modernity, or reference to urban life or progress, were voiced.
- Some references were made to the county flag, and the heraldic imagery of Buckinghamshire, which were generally neutral observations.

2. A grown up font, and sentence case typography were preferred

- Sentence case lettering was widely preferred to all capitals, as it's easier to read.

- Participants were broadly in agreement that the layout of text would read better if 'Buckinghamshire' was top of the circle, 'Council' bottom.
- Group preference for font is the blocky typeface; the rounded one looks too young.
- Some group members suggested lettering in all caps, as well as the two words running together, may not be good for accessibility.

3. Strong colours work best but some concerns raised about use of teal

- The use of teal was questioned by some participants in most groups, though many liked it. The question was raised more than once about the colour's longevity.
- Some concern was voiced about what will print best / most economically, particularly the gradient landscape swirl (Swan flying over Bucks concept).
- Some participants thought that Swan flying over Bucks would be better black or white rather than grey, and the beak on the Colour contrast swan yellow, or orange like a real beak.
- Monochrome is important; detail is lost in designs Spectacular landscapes & Swan flying over Bucks. Comments for Contrast swan; in black it looks very like the current BCC logo.
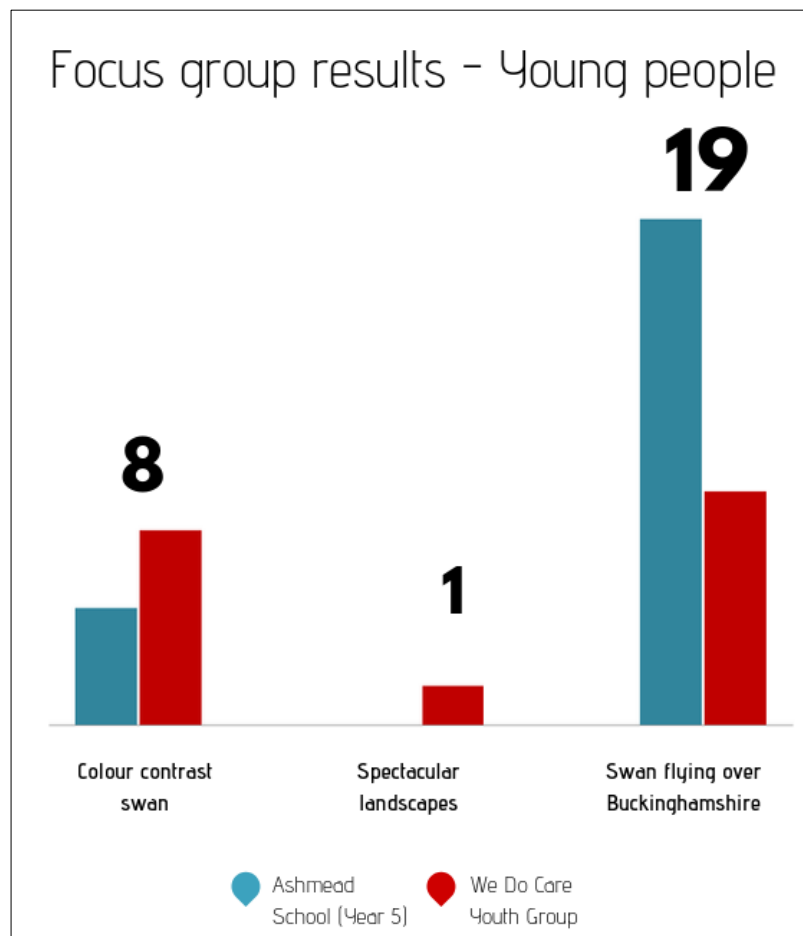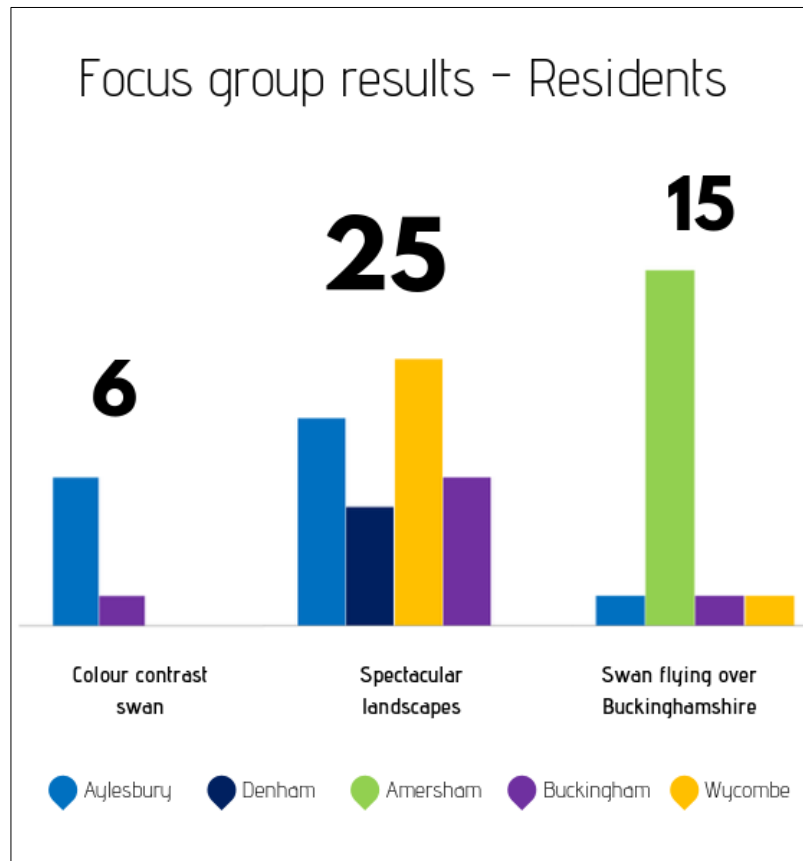- Many people mentioned green would be a better colour than teal.

4. Similarities with other brands/logos

- Contrast swan in particular was compared to the current BCC logo several times.
- Other similarities / comparisons with other organisations: Swansea FC, Wimbledon, Swan Vesta matches, wildlife and wetlands charities or rescue organisations (across all 3 concepts).

5. All three concepts call to mind wildlife organisations

- References to wildlife / wetlands / bird rescue organisations were mentioned in every group.
- It was questioned whether it's usual to see flying swans, as they are usually on water.
- Some thought the flying swan looks more like a goose, in particular in relation to the colour.
- Several commented whether it would be better to have a Red Kite than a flying swan.

Overall, while there were strong feelings for and against all the concepts, the preferred option for the residents groups was 'Spectacular Landscapes'. The preference from the young people was for 'Swan flying over Buckinghamshire'.


Focus group results - Residents

25   15   6

| Colour contrast swan | Spectacular landscapes | Swan flying over Buckinghamshire |

Aylesbury   Denham   Amersham   Buckingham   Wycombe

Focus group results - Young people

19   8   1

| Colour contrast swan | Spectacular landscapes | Swan flying over Buckinghamshire |

Ashmead School (Year 5)   We Do Care Youth Group

Member focus groups

Two focus groups were held for members, one in the north and one in the south of the county, on Monday 9 September. In total**, 20 members** attended to discuss the logo concepts.

Key themes from members

- There was discussion over the appropriateness or relevance of the swan, with some feeling it looks back to the old days too much and represents the County Council. Several suggestions to use a red kite instead.
- The colour was discussed, with some comments saying that while they like teal, it may date. Others saw it more as green, and commented it was already in use for three of the five existing councils.
- There was agreement that whatever the logo was it needed to work in black and white, and generally agreed that the spectacular landscapes concept worked best in black and white.
- There were equal voices asking for a logo representing the green landscape of Buckinghamshire, and for regeneration / progress.
- While there were a couple of voices for the 'Est. 2020' (or for displaying it in Roman Numerals) overall it was felt that it would not be relevant within a few years.

Overall the two groups were split with the southern group preferring 'Swan flying over Buckinghamshire' and the north group preferring 'Spectacular landscapes'.
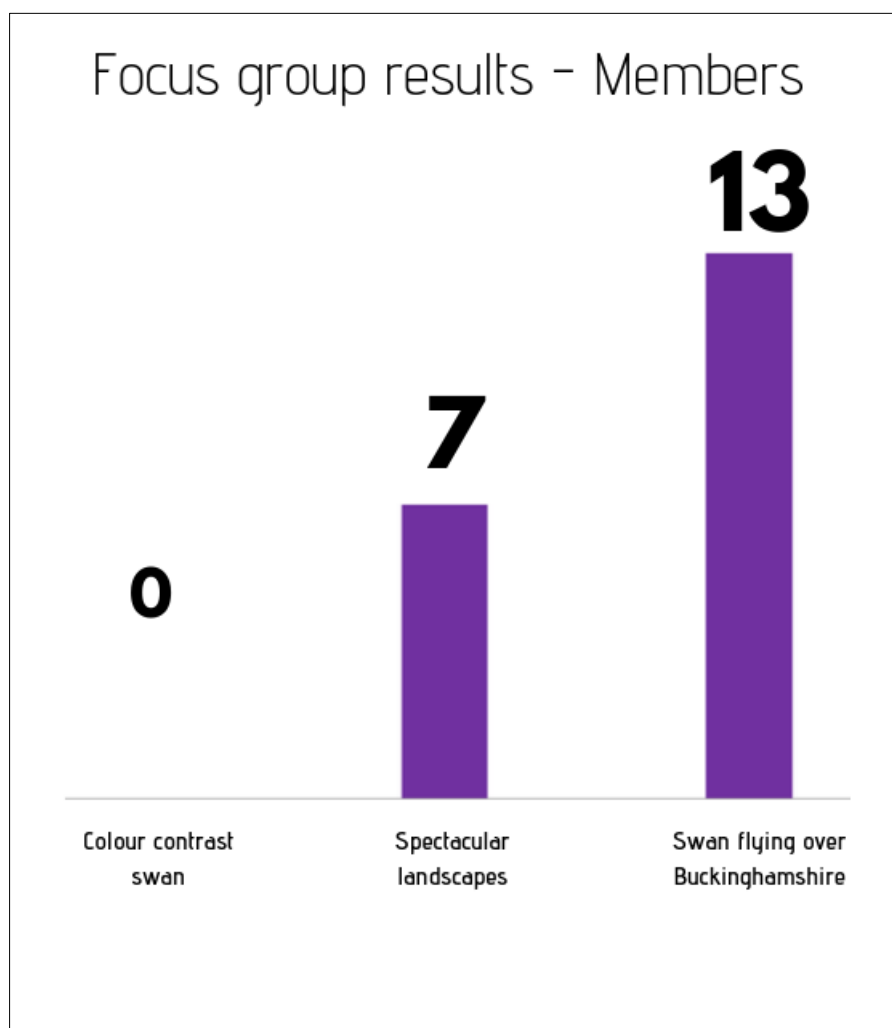
Employee focus groups

Six staff focus groups were carried out across all five existing councils, which were each open to all invitees, regardless of which council they work at. Some invitees were selected due to the fact they work with the branding regularly within their roles. A section of union and employee representatives were invited, together with a random selection of employees to achieve a broad cross section of seniority and length of time at the councils.

In all, **51 staff had their say**:

- BCC session - 2 September: 12 attendees
- CSBDC session - 6 September: 13 attendees
- WDC session - 9 September: 7 attendees
- AVDC session - 11 September: 12 attendees
- BCC session - 13 September 6 attendees

Key themes from staff

1. **Opinion was firmly divided over the appropriateness of using the swan**
   - There was some very strong feeling, particularly with Colour contrast swan concept, that by continuing the use of the swan we are looking to the past, and 'rebranding Buckinghamshire County Council'.
   - Many felt the Swan flying over Bucks concepts resembled geese rather than swans, and questioned whether flying swans is a common occurrence.

2. **Colour was viewed from a functional, rather than aesthetic, viewpoint**
   - Teal (on concepts Colour Contrast and Spectacular landscapes) was popular with lots of people, but it was suggested the colour is currently on trend and may date quickly, not looking fresh in coming years.
   - Everyone was agreed that whatever design was chosen it needed to look as good in black and white as in colour. Swan flying over Bucks went down in favour due to its silhouette not being clear, whereas Spectacular landscapes shone as the better monotone choice.

3. **The typography needs tweaking**
   - Rounded lettering of 'Buckinghamshire Council' was considered hard to read and possibly old fashioned.
   - There was a preference for sentence case text over all caps.
   - It was asked if Buckinghamshire be at the top and council bottom (of the roundel) to split them out and make it easier to read.

4. **Ultimately, 'Est. 2020' is possibly not a lasting message**
   - Many thought the 'Est. 2020' was a good thing to show the new start, but agreed it would only be relevant for a few years.
   - Others thought it was not appropriate for a council at all, and more like something seen on a shop, or pub.

- It was also suggested that some residents may be unnerved by too much of a reference to a brand new council, as it could inadvertently give the idea that some services may change immediately, or there may be a lapse – for example – in support (such as housing benefit etc.).

Overall the 'Swan flying over Bucks' was the preferred concept, but was the 'marmite choice' with some strongly negative comments alongside the more positive ones.
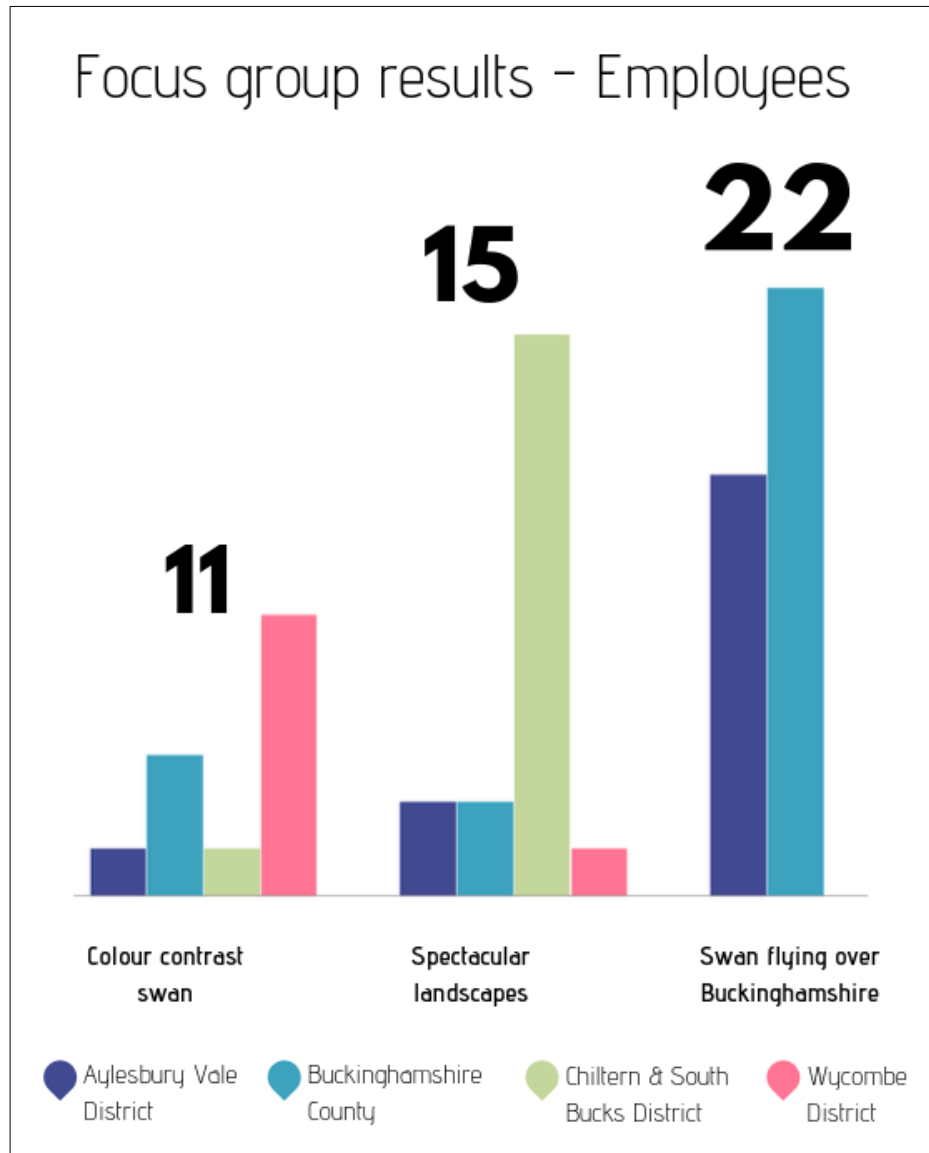
Employee roadshow flash polls

The three concepts were also taken to three of the employee roadshow events hosted by Chief Executive of the council, Rachael Shimmin, where employees were asked to vote on their preferred design. This included one event at Aylesbury Waste Depot.

No discussion took place over the designs and the votes are considered a quick snapshot of people's thoughts on the day; some participants at staff focus groups mentioned they had also been to roadshows and cast their votes for different concepts when they had time to digest the designs and how they would be used. Therefore, the results from the roadshows should be viewed somewhat separately to the in-depth focus group session results as different methodologies were used.

Overall the 'Spectacular landscapes' was the preferred concept from this quick snapshot of employee views.
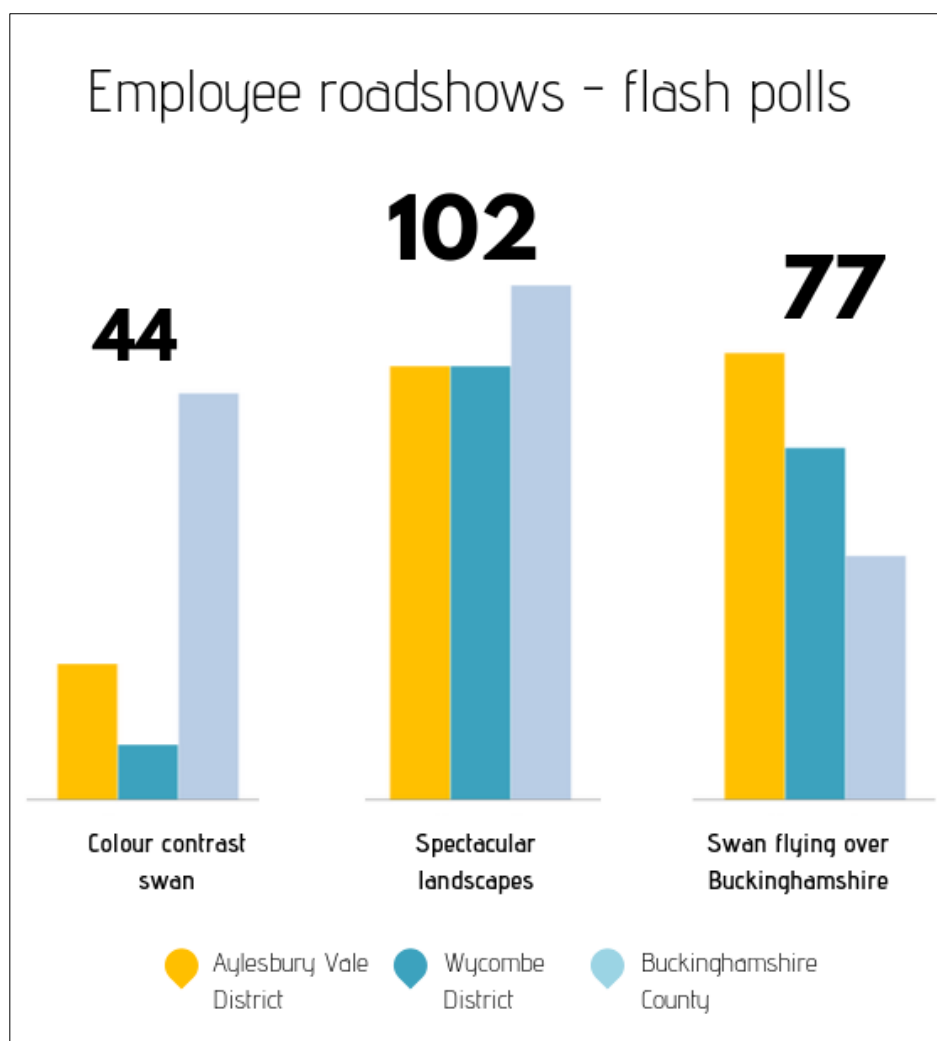
Overall results

The graphs below show the results from all of the focus groups (i.e. without the flash polls) and the combined results from all voting.

Overall results put 'Spectacular landscapes' as most popular with 153 votes, 'Swan flying over Buckinghamshire' second most popular with 146 votes and 'Colour contrast swan' least preferred with 66 votes.