



Cabinet Member report – Leader

Cllr Martin Tett

Role during COVID-19

Since the last update, I've continued working closely with Cabinet colleagues and our Chief Executive, such as at meetings of the Members Recovery Board, focussing on how we respond to the ongoing COVID crisis as well as ensuring that we maintain a strong local economy and protect jobs. There's no doubt that COVID-19 is still very much the dominant issue facing our residents and businesses. The COVID statistics have increased significantly in Buckinghamshire since the last meeting of Council and I have kept members regularly updated via email and weekly Video Meetings attended by senior officers and our Director of Public Health.

As part of our Stay Safe Protect Bucks campaign, we continue to communicate with residents to ensure that everyone is kept up to date with the situation in the county. This approach helps to enable people to take appropriate measures to protect themselves and those within their communities.

In Buckinghamshire we value the health and wellbeing of all our residents; however, we have also focused on the particular needs and vulnerabilities of our BAME communities. We have used the cross-Party expertise of our members from those communities to help develop the messages and refine the delivery of COVID communications that are most appropriate for their protection.

Proud of Bucks

Via the Proud of Bucks campaign launched earlier this year, we have heard incredible stories of people helping each other and their communities through the crisis. Members wanted to thank those individuals, groups, community groups and businesses through the Proud of Bucks Awards. We have had a fantastic response with over 450 nominations, by the time nominations closed at the end of September. I'm looking forward to announcing the winners via a virtual ceremony in November.

Ongoing liaison with MPs and the NHS

Weekly briefings are continuing to be held with the five Bucks MPs and the NHS on issues affecting our residents and businesses. They have helped to enhance the close alignment and understanding between MPs, the NHS and the council. Through regular meetings with Bucks Business First, the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Voluntary and Community sector we have continued to review the health of the Bucks economy and progress the Buckinghamshire Recovery Strategy.

Devolution proposition for Buckinghamshire

Partners have been developing a devolution proposition to submit to Government, which builds on the unique strengths, partnerships and opportunities within our area. This proposition will enable Buckinghamshire and the Government to ensure that an already productive place quickly recovers, further increases GVA in the context of a continuing and post COVID19 environment, and contributes to Treasury in order to enable Government to redirect resource to other parts of the UK economy. It is anticipated that the final devolution proposition will be submitted by the Buckinghamshire Growth Board in November.

Buckinghamshire Growth Board

The latest meeting of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board took place on 14 September, which focussed on agreeing the Devolution Proposition and a Buckinghamshire submission for the Comprehensive Spending Review. These proposals seek to underpin a dialogue between Buckinghamshire and Government. The Board also discussed the recent developments regarding future engagement with the Oxford to Cambridge ARC and confirmed Buckinghamshire's withdrawal.

Bucks Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) Board

The BLEP Board took place on 18 September of which, three substantial items were discussed. These included the Economic Recovery Plan for Buckinghamshire of which, members were given the opportunity to provide additional comments. The Board members were then asked to consider the framework for the Devolution Proposition and to endorse the submission of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board for the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Lastly, the Board was asked to note the Executive Report, which included an update on the Local Growth Fund Transport Projects and a response to the England's Economic Heartland Transport Strategy Consultation.

Bucks Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

Officers anticipate that all pre-contract conditions will soon be satisfied, and the Council will be able to enter in to contract with Homes England for £172.3m this October. I have worked with officers to propose the governance arrangements for the programme to ensure appropriate Member oversight. The first drawdown of Aylesbury Garden Town HIF funding is expected this financial year.

England Economic Heartland

England's Economic Heartland launched its draft Transport Strategy on 14 July, which sets out how the transport system will support sustainable economic growth while reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The consultation closes on 6 October and the strategy is due to be published at the turn of the year.

Earlier in September, as chairman of EEH, I had a productive meeting with transport minister, Baroness Vere, where we discussed the region's investment priorities. EEH's work to identify the Investment Pipeline provides us with evidence to press the case for investment in strategic transport infrastructure ahead of the Spending Review later this year. The Leaders Meeting has discussed the submission of an investment prospectus to Government, outlining infrastructure priorities in the Heartland. Baroness Vere spoke at EEH's virtual annual conference on 15 September, where she praised the draft Transport Strategy for being 'bold, ambitious and innovative'. Other speakers included Buckingham MP, Greg Smith, and representatives from Westcott Venture Park and Transport for Bucks.

HS2

In September the Chief Executive, Nick Naylor and I met with HS2 Ltd at a senior level. We emphasised our continued opposition to the project alongside our on-going frustration at lack of information and engagement with local communities and parishes. HS2 Ltd said that they would work with Members and officers to co-design an engagement programme soon.

East West Rail

It has recently come to our attention that delivery of the proposed Aylesbury spur of the EWR Western section may not be going ahead as planned. I have written to the Secretary of State at DfT vehemently opposing any cancellation of this section of the EWR route, stating that the need for improved transport connections to Aylesbury is vital as it is one of the key areas of growth for the UK.

South East Aylesbury Link Road

Statutory processes of compulsory Purchase Orders/Side Road Orders and a Section 19 certificate have been progressed to help the project to acquire the land needed, to ensure all statutory processes are in place and to provide a replacement area of public open space.

Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

On 1st October I attended the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee. Discussions were focused on COVID-19 and local economic recovery, where we examined the impact the pandemic is having on Bucks, what countermeasures are being taken and their levels of success; housing allocations: where we discussed how to create a new scheme to allocate social housing fairly and efficiently to those who need it, and drafting the work programme for 2020 – 2021.

LGA's People and Places Board

I attended a meeting on 15 September, which included discussions on: the Board's work programme for 2020/21; rural digital connectivity; an update on devolution; national planning reforms; home to school transport and an update on the economic impact of COVID-19 what is needed for a jobs and skills recovery.

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

I chaired two SESL meetings in September. In the first, Leaders discussed the Government's proposals for: changes to the planning system, including a new national method for calculating housing allocations; and, changing the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. SESL is preparing a response to the consultation on changes to the planning system and seeking a meeting with the Minister for Immigration. The second meeting discussed NHS Test and Trace with the Contact Tracing Lead. The Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce also led discussion on the most effective ways for strategic authorities to support local businesses in rebuilding and trading in the evolving environment.

Strategic Finance

The financial implications (additional costs and lost income) of COVID-19 in the current financial year continue to be forecast based on potential scenarios and considering funding so far allocated by central government (including the recently announced income protection scheme). As this is likely to lead to a funding shortfall, strategies to mitigate this are being developed. We are also reviewing the modelling work on the future year impacts as we start the Medium-Term Financial Planning (MTFP) process. The uncertainty around government support is proving to be very difficult, but the strategy is to try to avoid any further service cuts beyond those already agreed as part of the current MTFP.



Cabinet Member report – Adult Social Care

Cllr Angela Macpherson

Winter Preparedness

Winter produces challenges for the health and social care system and this year those pressures may be increased by the additional impact of Covid-19. Adult social care has been planning to prepare for winter and to support our clients and providers over this period. We are also working in partnership with the NHS. This year winter planning is focussed around 6 areas. These are:

- Supporting the NHS by enabling people to stay in their own homes over winter and ensuring people with social care needs can be discharged quickly from hospital
- Working with social care providers to help them stay resilient and maintain their services over the winter period
- Supporting our most vulnerable residents, particularly in the event of a second wave of Covid-19 and the need to for these residents to self-isolate
- Supporting Carers
- Promoting the uptake of flu vaccination and this includes within our own staff and encouraging staff in social care providers
- Working with our Communications Team to provide the public with information on staying well during winter and appropriate routes to access support.

The winter plan also includes actions to enhance support to social care providers in the event of further Covid-19 peaks.

Care Homes

Our Integrated Commissioning Service continues leading on the support for care settings instigated during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. A dedicated team provides a single point of contact for providers with questions and support needs, and ensures that up to date information is easily available through the Council website and email updates.

The team worked in partnership with the NHS to develop an enhanced support offer for care homes. This outlined support available in relation to infection control, human resources, equipment and technology, communication, and mental health and wellbeing.

Early in the emergency access to PPE was a key issue. We supported care providers to access PPE locally, including through the county-wide emergency distribution centre ahead of the establishment of the national PPE portal. Providers have also been helped to access the national Covid-19 testing programme, and to local testing capacity through local NHS partners.

A range of approaches have been used to ensure providers have the skills and knowledge to respond effectively to Covid-19. This has included infection control training using a national 'train the trainer' model which was delivered to over 130 individuals in care and support settings. Webinars and practice sharing sessions have been provided on a range of Covid-19 related topics including working safely in care homes, dementia, mental health and wellbeing, medicines optimisation and hydration and care home visiting. These have been delivered with partners from across the health and social care system including Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, The Alzheimer's Society, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Buckinghamshire Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

There remains an immediate focus on supporting settings through the second wave of the pandemic and an Outbreak Control Plan for Care Homes has been produced to ensure that there are effective responses to any local outbreaks.

We are now working with partners to consider how the accelerated support that has been put in place through the pandemic can be further developed so that a longer term enhanced health care offer for the care and support sector can be put in place.

The Council understands the challenges which the care sector has faced and would like to thank local providers for their continued efforts to provide safe and quality care through this difficult time.

Day Services Update

Earlier this year, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council shut all of its direct care service provision. People who used those services were supported safely in other ways during this time including on an outreach basis. As the situation eased, the Council phased the reopening of day service and all day centres are now open again providing socially distanced support. The centres have prioritised clients living in family settings and who wish to return to day services. Other clients are being supported with weekly phone calls and, where needed, the team is able to offer expanded hours for those living in supported living environments on a case by case basis.

At the time of writing, Seeleys overnight short breaks service is due to reopen w/c 12th October.

Social Work Update

Recruitment and retention in social work remains challenging, due to national shortages in key workers. It is important that staff and managers are supported to deliver the high standards of social work practice that we expect, and this is the aim of the quality assurance framework for adult social care. A range of best practice mechanisms have been put into place and the service has also had an ongoing programme of both internal and external auditing to provide rigour and assurance on the standards of social work practice and recording.

In addition, this month our first cohort of 11 social work assistants will start their qualification journey through the Adult Social Care apprenticeship programme, part of the Health and Social Care Academy developed in conjunction with Bucks New University.



Cabinet Member report – Resources

Cllr Katrina Wood

The Resources Directorate is working hard to join up the processes and systems of Buckinghamshire Council so that we have a single way of delivering support services as part of our 'Resources – One Team' approach.

New Network design

IT is now working with BT, our new IT Network partner, and our NHS partners to finalise the High Level Technical Design of the council's new IT network. This will replace the four IT networks. The new network will be designed on the principle that any member of staff should be able to connect seamlessly from any device.

Consolidation of Data centres, single telephony and domain environment

As part of ONE IT Programme, IT have started to consolidate the council's current data centres. The two data centres at Amersham have now been combined. In October the Wycombe data centre hosted by Capita will be brought back in-house under management of the council. This work on data centres and the new network design builds a new technical design for the council's Cloud/Data Centre environment. The ONE IT Programme design work has started to move all council users onto a single Telephony platform (MS Team). This will replace all legacy solutions e.g. Skype For Business. Work has also started on moving all the council's IT users into one single environment (Domain). This will ensure all IT users can access all the data and applications they require, with all staff having the same laptop devices and one single build of the laptops.

Fraud risk register

The Business Assurance Team have been developing a single comprehensive fraud risk register for the Council, and this is being used to inform our Counter Fraud plan to ensure that we are focussing the pro-active fraud work on the high-risk areas. This has included managing a number of fraud risks relating to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic such as the payment of Business Rates Relief grants and an increase in phishing emails. A fraud awareness training programme is being developed to roll out across the organisation during Quarter 3, which will include a mix of live on-line sessions and e-learning.

Customer Experience Review Group and Customer Service Centre review

A Customer Experience Review Group has been established to be a 'Customer Advocate' on behalf of our Residents and Service Users. Key customer journeys will be reviewed and where possible improved, with the support of Business Operations, Service Improvement, Customer Improvement and in collaboration with the respective Service Area, to identify an optimum and affordable model of customer experience. The process will seek to drive innovation in customer service design,

harness the opportunities of technology and data, and improve the customer experience. An indicative timetable for these reviews has been developed and will be agreed by the Member group, which I chair.

Revenues and Benefits

Revenues and Benefits have gone to the market with a tender for the provision and implementation of one system for the billing and collection of Council Tax and Business Rates and Council Tax Support as well as the payment of Housing Benefit. This will replace the existing four different systems from three providers that are currently being run and supported. The team are currently evaluating the bids received against the agreed criteria to progress a decision required for implementation to be completed by December 2021 in readiness for the 2022/23 annual billing.

Employee recognition scheme

Building on the success of May's Proud of You recognition scheme, we are launching a new recognition scheme for the Council from 1 October to give people an additional way to show their colleagues they are valued. The new scheme encourages colleagues to send eCards to each other to say 'Thank you'; 'Congratulations!'; 'I appreciate your hard work!'; or 'You're living the values'. Leadership teams will choose one or two people, from the list of all the eCard recipients in their directorate each month, to send a personal letter of thanks and provide recognition in local staff communications.

Legal

Following the appointment of the new Service Director in mid-June, Legal Services have embarked on an ambitious service improvement programme and restructure which will bring the location-based teams into a series of specialist teams working collaboratively with the Directorates and seeking to increase external income from work for others (Schools, Fire Service, other Councils). Legal officers have moved quickly to successfully embrace online hearings which has proven challenging, with certain cases still being held in person. Recruitment of suitable staff continues to be a challenge to address increased demand in certain areas of the Council's activity (planning, child protection, special educational needs) which results in the need for increased legal support.

Member Development

Although plans for Member development and induction were interrupted due to the aborted elections in May 2020, Democratic Services have rolled out a series of induction and development activities on important topics. We have also established a Member Development Working Group to take forward the plan for induction training and development of Members when the new Council starts in May 2021 with the aim that we work towards achieving the Councillor Development Charter for later in 2021.



Cabinet Member report – Children’s Services

Cllr Mark Shaw

Continued Response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact upon statutory children’s social care services. Protecting children and improving outcomes for them is predicated upon direct, face to face interactions. It is also based upon co-located teams with visible line management.

During the last 6 months, to reduce the risk of infection and protect the community as well as our staff, visits to children were reduced, other than in extreme circumstances. The service took a number of proactive and robust steps to maximise the collective ability to still keep children safe and protect the most vulnerable including regular communication with children, young people and their families using electronic methods of communication.

During this period the service has maintained grip and control of performance and this is monitored through weekly reporting on the regularity of management oversight and virtual contact at a team level. In addition, a robust quality assurance programme has provided information on the strength of work within the service. These mechanisms ensure that standards are maintained, and that children and young people are protected.

In line with the return of the majority of children and young people into education settings, the service has recently put in place measures to increase the number of physical visits to children, young people and their families in line with statutory requirements. The service will continue to act with care to meet our individual and collective health and safety obligations and this means using continual risk assessments to judge situations and scenarios, continued use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), adherence to government guidance and to act in the best interests of children.

The service will continue to focus on the most vulnerable children, young people and their families during the next few uncertain months. This will be achieved by maintaining the systems and practice already in place and ensuring that our leadership and strategic direction is both flexible and clear.

Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Focused Visits

Following the suspension of routine inspections in March 2020 due to COVID-19, Ofsted has now outlined their interim plans for a phased return to routine inspections. These interim arrangements commenced at the end of September and will run through until December 2020. There is potential to extend this if measures for responding to and recovering from COVID-19 continue into 2021. Focused visits have been identified as an appropriate way to hold local authority Children's Services to account but will not make a graded judgement. These focused visits will evaluate the quality and impact of key decision-making in the following practice areas:

- Help and protection
- Children in care and care leavers
- Impact of leaders

As we are an authority whose monitoring visits started before lockdown, the next visit from Ofsted will likely be one of these focused visits. The outcome of this visit will determine future arrangements which will either be a full re-inspection or a return to routine monitoring visits, depending on where Ofsted deem the local authority is on its improvement journey.

Opening of new Area Office - Wycombe Old Library

Our new area office at the Wycombe Old Library officially opened on Monday 14 September 2020. After a long project, delayed by contractual issues and of course Covid-19, staff have finally moved out of Easton Street offices and into the new office.

A modern and functional office space has been installed while retaining many of the beautiful original features of the building such as the entrance lobby, winding staircase, and skylights on the first floor. As well as the main desk spaces, the building has a dedicated Child Protection Conferencing suite.

The full address of the office is Children's Services, Buckinghamshire Council, Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe, HP11 1BG.

Firstly, thank you to all those involved in making this happen. The workforce are delighted with the new space and whilst there is still some organisational work to be done to settle in, the building is designed to better support our staff.

South East Sector Led Improvement Programme

Buckinghamshire is part of the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme (SESLIP), which is a membership group of all single/upper-tier local authorities in the South East, it aims to:

- Improve outcomes for children and young people across the South East.
- Establish a culture of honest and constructive dialogue and challenge within and between authorities.
- Demonstrate the capacity and capability of the sector to achieve a coherent and consistent self-improving system.

Recently, I attended the Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members Briefing where this year's improvement plan was launched. This plan focuses on how local authorities can support each other to improve across the region. The service and I welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with authorities across the South East on to improve outcomes for the families we serve in Buckinghamshire.





Cabinet Member report – Communities & Public Health

Cllr Gareth Williams

Community Boards

The Community Boards are still at the start of their journey with first official meetings being held during September, where each Board set their priorities for the coming year. Common themes were Covid recovery, environment, transport, infrastructure, health and wellbeing, young people and community safety. The chairmen are enthusiastic about the boards and vision of creating vibrant, inclusive and creative community-led partnerships that actively improve the lives of people in Buckinghamshire. Banners, posters, animation, webpages and social media pages will promote the message with partners and residents. As Community Boards are new, we are listening to feedback from members, partners and residents to best shape how they work. All Community Board meetings are recorded and available to view.

Coronavirus Community Response

As part of the continued Covid response, the Support Hub team is working closely with local members and partners on support plans. This includes facilitating a forum at the beginning of October for all food banks across Buckinghamshire. This will provide opportunity to share best practice, learning points and issues so that we are well prepared for any future local or national lockdowns and ensure there is good coverage and signposting throughout Buckinghamshire. The team will be working with other local community groups to understand the food provision that could be redeployed, the response capacity and build a picture of all the emergency food solutions available in Buckinghamshire.

Covid will create pressure on incomes as redundancies, reductions in hours and unemployment become more widespread. Whilst Treasury schemes support incomes in the short term, there is uncertainty for many beyond this. Changes in circumstances can lead to problem debt and a change in income is likely to affect significant numbers of Buckinghamshire residents during 2020 and 2021. Without money and debt advice for residents the impacts will be far reaching and long-lasting, affecting many council services such as housing and homelessness, revenues and benefits and adult social care, as well as partners in the health sector. To address this, we are working with partners to develop proposals for a new Financial Insecurity Partnership and an expansion in debt advice provision across Buckinghamshire.

The Strategic Funding Group is a partnership of funding organisations in Buckinghamshire which has been distributing emergency funding since March 2020. The funding has supported communities, ensuring that local funding sources for the voluntary and community sector are maximised and used effectively. To date, approximately £1.5m has been distributed in small grants (under £10k) and The National Lottery Community Fund has also provided grants of between £10k and £100k to the local area. Hundreds of small grants have supported a range of local initiatives, including food banks, support for the elderly and isolated, mental health care and support for victims of domestic violence. This collaborative approach has enabled us to understand and monitor the funding

landscape (nationally and within Buckinghamshire), identify need and ensure collaboration on longer term recovery.

Addressing inequalities for BAME communities In Covid-19

We have established a Buckinghamshire-wide group to address the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities working with our partners in the Integrated Care Partnership. This group, chaired by our Public Health team, is developing an action plan for Buckinghamshire and will oversee its implementation.

We are also working with our BAME communities to ensure that we work together to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection and outbreaks. For example, our Public Health and Community Engagement teams are engaging in direct conversations with faith and community leaders from key organisations and groups, initially focusing on the Wycombe, Aylesbury, Chesham and Wexham and Ivers areas. The Community Engagement team is supporting the development of a community-led BAME network, facilitating connections to council services and officers where required. A Public Health presentation given at an early meeting shared what is known so far about Covid-19 and BAME communities and how to reduce the risk. We will be developing new ways of engaging with our communities, including an Assets-Based Community Development project and developing community health connectors within BAME communities. We are supporting the development of communications materials to all groups, including BAME communities, to ensure that they are targeted appropriately and reflect local infection rates and public health science.

Happier, Healthier Lives, the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Ahead of publication in early 2021, the Health and Wellbeing Board is refreshing its Health and Wellbeing Strategy, 'Happier, Healthier Lives'. The strategy will run through to 2023 and the Board is proposing a new life-course approach in the refresh. By taking this approach, partners will be better able to identify where actions can be taken to make the biggest impact on people's health and wellbeing as they go through life. There will also be a continued focus on health inequalities, mental health and increasing community engagement. The views of residents and other interested parties were invited through a consultation earlier in the autumn and the Board will agree the Strategy at its meeting in December.

Town and Parish Charter

The Town and Parish Charter, which will act as a framework (memorandum of understanding) to support partnership working with local councils, is still under development, given the time lost due to coronavirus. In spite of this, a lot of preparation and focus on building collaborative cultures has been done. Key relationships and many of the operational aspects we expect to see listed in the Charter, such as regular liaison arrangements with Bucks & MK Association of Local Councils (BMKALC), clerks and communications, are in place. The document will bring the 'spirit of the partnership' alive, including case studies to highlight the role of Town and Parish Councils and the benefits delivered to communities when we work together. It will also help promote the unusual role of the clerks and aid understanding of the different tiers, the responsibilities and connections. A final document will be ready by the end of October.

Voluntary Sector Engagement

Throughout the Covid pandemic we have built and continue to build strong working relationships with our voluntary and community sector. On 25 August we held a partners workshop which was very well received, with one partner afterwards tweeting '30 years in the sector and never before has there been so much 'can do''. We will continue to work with our partners to make best use of our collective resources to deliver positive outcomes for our residents, partners and businesses.

Libraries

Work on the transformation of Marlow library is progressing well and the library will be formally re-launched on Saturday 21st November. The new look library will feature an innovative art installation and Marlow residents have been asked to share stories that are important to them to help inform the project. 'The River of Us' will be a suspended installation that creates a river of stories flowing through the library - drawing on the identity of Marlow as a river town

The use of online resources has increased significantly throughout 2020. The rate of increase has slowed since libraries re-opened in July, but performance continues to exceed the same period last year.

| Jan - Sep eLibrary 2019-2020 comparison* | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Year | eBooks | eAudio | eMagazines |
| 2019 Jan - Sep total: | 60810 | 26304 | 29836 |
| 2020 Jan - Sep total: | 103555 | 43177 | 39025 |
| % increase: | 70.29% | 64.15% | 30.80% |
| *September currently estimate | | | |

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sept | Total | % |
|---------------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| ebooks | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 6870 | 6517 | 8019 | 12584 | 15353 | 14843 | 14746 | 13341 | 11282 | 103555 | 70.29 |
| 2019 | 6431 | 6246 | 6750 | 6917 | 6725 | 6588 | 6722 | 7703 | 6728 | 60810 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| eaudio | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 3578 | 3600 | 4234 | 5131 | 5624 | 5251 | 5460 | 5301 | 4998 | 43177 | 64.15 |
| 2019 | 2522 | 2638 | 2960 | 2844 | 2836 | 2834 | 3214 | 3336 | 3120 | 26304 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |
| emag | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 3335 | 3470 | 4102 | 5187 | 5204 | 4491 | 4573 | 4518 | 4145 | 39024.5 | 30.8 |
| 2019 | 3373 | 3224 | 3482 | 3304 | 3387 | 3151 | 3078 | 3441 | 3396 | 29836 | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | |

Buckinghamshire libraries were re-opened to the public on a phased basis from 6 July. All 29 libraries are now open, and we are working to increase opening hours whilst remaining mindful of the need to prioritise the safety of customers, volunteers and staff.

All library Council Access Points (CAP) have launched successfully apart from Marlow which will re-open in November following the refurbishment of the library.

A total of 237 enquiries were received by the library Council Access Points during August. In addition to general library enquiries the most popular topics of enquiry have been around travel, including bus passes and blue badges.

The following examples, received at Beaconsfield Library CAP, provide an indication of the breadth of enquiries received:

- Adult social care, Care packages
- Power of Attorney details
- Accessing planning applications

- Paying council tax at the library?
- Do you need ID to use the local recycling centre?
- Reporting a tree overhanging a public highway
- Can you have a bonfire?
- Accessing Citizenship website and contact details

Oxwell Student Survey

This Oxford University led study included 19,000 students from 237 schools across Berkshire East, Berkshire West, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, South Gloucestershire, and Wiltshire. In Buckinghamshire, 3,853 students from across 30 primary and 13 secondary schools participated in the survey. Students in Years 4 to 13 (aged 8-18 years) completed the Oxwell School Survey 2020, either while at school or at home.

The purpose of the survey was to assess the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and altered school attendance on mental wellbeing, anxiety, indicators of vulnerability, sleep patterns, online safety. The survey also assessed the impact on protective factors, such as exercise, social interaction and attitudes to accessing mental health support to help schools to plan for the return of students to normal lessons from September 2020. The analysis of results is on-going with some students reporting worse mental wellbeing and loneliness during lockdown and others reporting improved mental wellbeing.

The findings will be used by our Public Health team and the wider system as we continue our work to support the mental health and wellbeing of children across Buckinghamshire and to make sure their needs are being met by our health and care services.

Listening exercise

As part of our health and wellbeing recovery planning, a listening exercise was conducted to understand the impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown measures on our residents' health and wellbeing.

The listening exercise consisted of three parts. The first part was the Buckinghamshire Coronavirus Health & Wellbeing Resident Survey, which ran for four weeks (8th July – 5th Aug 2020) through the 'Your Voice Bucks' website. The survey had a good response rate, being completed by 5,349 residents. The second part was Behavioural Insight Research, to understand the lived experiences of key groups within Buckinghamshire, including BAME groups, people with mental health needs and people using foodbanks. Feedback has been positive with residents and stakeholders valuing the opportunity to share their experiences with the council and have their voices heard. The final part was the Members' survey and interviews, which gathered intelligence and insight into the health and wellbeing impact of communities. This provided a rich source of information and showcased how communities had responded locally.

Devolution

Buckinghamshire Council believes that local devolution of services and assets to local communities, particularly to Town and Parish Councils, can make a significant contribution to enabling them to be stronger, more resilient and sustainable. We invited local organisations to submit expressions of interest for devolution and following extensive engagement received a high number of responses. Officer and Member Devolution Boards have been established to review the expressions of interest received and select 14 devolution pilots as part of Phase 1 of the devolution programme. Given the size and complexity of this emerging programme, the Devolution Boards will be responsible for regularly monitoring its implementation and members will be provided with regular updates.



Cabinet Member Report – Culture

Cllr Patrick Hogan

Buckinghamshire Heritage Portal

The new Buckinghamshire Heritage Portal was launched in August and replaces UBP (Unlocking Buckinghamshire's Past). The portal is the online version of Buckinghamshire's Historic Environment Record (HER), which has been maintained by the archaeology service at Buckinghamshire Council (and formerly the County Council) for nearly 50 years.

The new heritage portal holds around 35,000 records and links directly to historic mapping, monument records, photos and documents held in the HER. There is a blog so recent discoveries can be mentioned, and members of the public will be able to post comments about individual sites through the monument records. There are also teaching resources on the portal for key stages 2 and 3, perfect for online learning, and there is a handy timeline, which outlines the prehistoric and historic periods in Buckinghamshire. The new portal is more compatible with new technology and can therefore be accessed from home or on mobile devices and is completely free to view.

The portal can be viewed at <https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>

Buckinghamshire Virtual History Festival

Buckinghamshire Virtual History Festival (VHF) took place on 12-13 September, offering content in a range of formats including videos, blogs, podcasts and social media take overs. The festival line-up was designed to appeal to a wider range of audiences than previous festivals, with content for children and families in addition to the more traditional audience. It drew on Buckinghamshire Archive contacts locally and around the world to provide pieces on a range of subjects that aimed to inform and entertain. In the week of the festival there were 1,205 unique visitors to the website. The top performing podcast had 105 'listens', the top performing video had 76 views and the top blog 48. These were higher numbers than for physical equivalents in the past; the 2019 History Fair attracted 274 people in total with top performing talks attended by 30 people. The festival was a successful collaboration between a number of partners and it has served as the proof of concept for a way for Buckinghamshire Archives to deliver services around the county, where doing so physically in a number of locations would be impossible. A History Festival Fringe is running until mid-October, featuring content that there wasn't space for in the main festival as well as contributions from partners who saw publicity and wanted to be involved. The festival website can be viewed at <https://buckshistoryfestival.co.uk/>

Buckinghamshire Archives re-opened its doors to customers in August with a reduced service due to Covid restrictions. The offer is being reviewed monthly with a view to increasing the services

available as soon as possible. A new County Archivist has been appointed and starts with Buckinghamshire Council in early November.

Cross Portfolio working

A number of cross portfolio discussions have taken place to date including planning, town centre regeneration, property and economic development, as well as work with the Localities team on Community Boards.

Work is starting with Communications to create a Comms plan to ensure the cultural agenda and activities remain visible to Cabinet members and other stakeholders.

Cultural Partnership

The Development Board for the new partnership has now met three times and has agreed clear priorities and governance arrangements for the immediate future. The Partnership's successful online project *Bucks in 100 Objects* continues, with plans to develop this into a physical touring exhibition with trails around the county as soon as National Lottery Heritage Fund project funding opens. The Partnership is currently planning a pilot storytelling festival across Bucks in 2021, in advance of a large scale flagship festival in 2023. An application has been made to Arts Council England for funding to support this project.

In addition, Buckinghamshire Culture has developed a multi-faceted programme designed to help the cultural sector get back on its feet and re-engage with its audiences, as well as building sector leadership and looking at how to re-set practice to 'build back better' after Covid-19. This programme will take place from October 2020 – September 2021, subject to funding from Rothschild Foundation, in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Rothschild Foundation, Arts Council England and South East Museum Development Programme.

This project also focuses on the wider role of culture in supporting recovery; informed by the Buckinghamshire Recovery Plan areas and developed in line with priorities identified by officers responsible for each detailed plan. By co-commissioning bespoke projects that address social issues, inequalities or Covid-19 challenges, it aims to increase the use of culture and creativity as tools for positive change.

Buckinghamshire Council plans to support the partnership with a Communications Strategy to aid a formal launch of the partnership later this year.

Museums

The Bucks County Museum in Aylesbury ran outdoor activities through August, and although currently closed, they are currently considering half term craft activities in October. Wycombe Museum has taken a unit in the Eden Centre and is operating a pop-up museum there with a changing programme of exhibitions, from mid-20th century furniture to the Windrush generation. Both museums have been successful in obtaining emergency and recovery funding from various sources including ArtFund, Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Heart of Bucks between them.

Theatres

Both the Aylesbury Waterside Theatre and Wycombe Swan remain closed until 2021.



Cabinet Member report – Education & Skills

Cllr Anita Cranmer

School provision in Buckinghamshire

In order to support the full return of pupils to school, there was significant work completed to provide schools with clarity and guidance. This included:

- Support for providers in early years.
- Identification of key duties during re-opening.
- A framework to support national guidance.
- Planning Checklist.
- Specific guidance regarding the wearing of face coverings in schools.
- An Outbreak Guide from the Public Health Team, to provide an overview of the framework for the response to COVID-19 outbreaks that occur in schools and other early years settings within Buckinghamshire.
- Guidance from Public Health and Education to support schools with planning for 'bubbles', mixing pupil groups and providing wrap-around care.
- Business Continuity Planning for School Transport.
- Information from Buckinghamshire Grammar Schools on changes to the timing of the Secondary Transfer Test.

It was well understood that during the first few days of the autumn term there would be a period where schools would need to support their pupils in adapting to the changes that have needed to be made for social distancing. As a result, the expectation was that schools would phase their opening as required up until Friday 11 September 2020, with a view that all classes should have returned full time by that point.

As of 5 October 2020, 100% of schools were open. So far, there have been 53 incidences where schools have had to close year groups or send pupils home due to pupils or staff testing positive for Covid-19. In each case, the issue has been addressed directly with the school and the service has worked closely with Public Health to support. The School Improvement Team hold a central record of each case to support our understanding of the situation across Buckinghamshire.

Throughout this period, there has been regular communication with schools, including:

- All updates to local guidance have been sent to schools directly.
- The chairs of the school representative bodies, Primary Executive Board (PEB), Buckinghamshire Association of Secondary Heads (BASH) and the Special School Head Teachers (SSHT) have contacted schools at least twice weekly since March in order to update them on current issues and actions that they need to take.

- The Director of Education has written directly to all parents in the county to thank them for their support.
- The communications team have sent out regular updates via social media to help parents.

The Transport Team has also worked closely with schools to better understand their requirements across this period. Guidance has been issued to schools and parents to clarify the situation which includes:

- Where possible, asking parents to transport eligible students to school themselves and claim mileage for the journey.
- Provide additional public transport bus provision to ensure social distancing can be maintained (support from central government grant funding).
- Increasing the number of school busses on some routes.
- Support transport suppliers to understand and follow the specific guidance for transport operators issued by the Department for Transport and Public Health England.
- Guidance for parents and students on social distancing whilst using school transport.

The response from our community of schools across the county since their partial closure on 24 March 2020 has been excellent. It is remarkable how schools continue to open in the safest way possible, despite the challenges and issues they face every single day.

Buckinghamshire's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Strategy

A new Buckinghamshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy is currently being finalised that sets out our collective aspirations for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) over the next 3 years. The strategy has been co-produced with key stakeholders, including professionals, young people and parent representatives from Families and Carers Together (FACT) Bucks, the Parent/Carer forum and Buckinghamshire SEND IAS.

“The strategy development process has been a great example of co-production - at the outset I asked for it to be an open, honest and co-produced process aimed at raising our aspirations as a Local Area. This has been delivered in full. Parents and Carers welcomed the tone and direction of the strategy during the consultations ... We will now work together to take it forward to focus on key aspects to improve the offer being made and ultimately improve the outcomes of SEND CYP in Bucks. We do not underestimate the scale of the task but it begins from a firm foundation.”
(Andrew Howard, Chair of FACT Bucks)

The initial ideas were formulated with young people at a Shout Out for SEND Conference held in November 2019 where young people shared their experiences of growing up with SEND in Buckinghamshire. These ideas were built upon through consultation and collaboration with key partners, leading to a public consultation in March 2020. The Strategy is structured around the four Preparation for Adulthood outcomes that are detailed in the SEND Code of Practice (2015) to reflect our ambition that all children and young people are supported to become as independent as they are able.

Work is currently underway to refresh the existing SEND Improvement Plan to ensure the actions contained within it will enable us to meet the ambitions of the strategy. Once this review has been completed, the Strategy and associated Improvement Plan will be shared with the SEND Integrated Services Board, which provides multi-agency governance to the SEND improvement journey.

Skills Agenda

Skills and employability is a key priority within the Economic Recovery Plan for Buckinghamshire. We are working closely with partners to understand the challenges emerging in the local labour market, develop and deliver interventions to support a sustainable recovery, and ensure that the skills required for a thriving Buckinghamshire economy in the future are developed across the current and future labour resource. A Skills and Workforce board is in the process of being established within the Council to both support our developing strategy and to ensure an effective interface with the broader skills system across Buckinghamshire.





Cabinet Member report – Environment & Climate Change

Cllr Bill Chapple OBE

Climate Change

Since the Council passed a motion on Climate Change on 15th July, work has been progressing well in the development of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, which will also address the closely related issue of air quality. Specifically we have:

- Run two public surveys on climate change and air quality, asking for residents' views and priorities – this has received more than 1300 responses.
- Met with the Transport, Environment and Climate Change (TECC) Select Committee's Climate Change Working Group twice, to discuss the strategy development. This has provided valuable feedback on our approach and helped to shape the strategy.
- Held internal workshops with input from across all directorates of the Council to help shape the actions and deliverables of the strategy, including how we can work with the Community Boards to support their ambitions for this agenda.
- Spoken with several voluntary and community groups with an interest in climate change, to understand their work and how the strategy can support their work within communities.
- Made progress with the development of a programme of large-scale tree planting on the Council's estate, and our approach to further reducing emissions from the Council's estate is well underway.

With this rapid progress we are still on course to report back to Cabinet in February with our Climate Change Strategy.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity net gain is one of the key government commitments originally set out in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan that will be mandated as part of the Environment Bill currently going through parliament. Nature is in long-term decline globally and within this country. This is of critical importance because nature - our ecosystems and their component species - plays a vital role not only in relation to climate change mitigation but as well as in pollination, flood alleviation, air quality and public health and wellbeing as well as being of value in its own right. Integrating and delivering biodiversity net gain into the planning system will provide a step change in how planning and development is delivered. Thanks to the hard work of Bucks & MK Natural Environment Partnership and officers from Buckinghamshire Council, we are now at an advanced stage of preparation in readiness for the implementation of a local biodiversity net gain scheme to ensure that all new developments deliver at least a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. One of the key next steps envisaged later this autumn will be consultation on a Supplementary Planning Document on biodiversity net gain.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot

I am delighted to report that Buckinghamshire Council has been selected by DEFRA/Natural England to be one of five local authorities nationally to pilot a key part of the government's national Nature Recovery Network initiative. The other four authorities were Cumbria, Northumberland, Manchester, and Cornwall, so we are the only county in the region to take part. The initiative is an ambitious plan to strengthen and renew the natural environment across England by potentially creating Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) in every county area. Each LNRS will combine local knowledge with expert information and advice to plan for more coordinated, practical and focused action to support nature recovery. Producing LNRSs will become a statutory responsibility for county and unitary authorities, assuming the current Environment Bill successfully passes through Parliament. They will provide the key mechanism for planning local delivery of the Nature Recovery Network, a major commitment in the Government's 25 year Environment Plan.

Buckinghamshire has been chosen for the pilot on the basis of our collaborative relationship with our Local Nature Partnership and the Chilterns Conservation Board, our emerging Biodiversity Action Plan, our award-winning Environmental Record Centre, our well-developed biodiversity net gain scheme and existing good progress with natural capital mapping. The strategy will also provide an excellent evidence base for the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan.

Waste Collection

Southern Waste Contract

The Southern Waste Contract has been successfully mobilised with Veolia Environmental Services on 7 September 2020. During summer 2020 all mobilisation activities were completed to ensure a successful transfer of operations including TUPE of Staff, transfer of vehicles, depots and other assets as well as delivering IT and data improvements. The previous contractor left a number of legacy challenges, particularly around rounds which were not complete, and vehicles which required repairs and maintenance to improve their reliability. Veolia have obviously been rectifying these which impacts on the day to day service. The new Southern Waste Contract will provide an entirely new fleet in February 2021 (delayed from Sept 2020 due to Covid-19). Additional benefits include a seamless customer service in terms of reporting and requesting services; for example, residents are able to choose specific bulky waste slots at their convenience. Collection rounds will be reduced in capacity from collecting on average 1,400 properties per day with the previous contractor to 900 on average with Veolia, this provides a more robust service which will generate fewer missed collections and better customer satisfaction. Further improvements include a trial of electric collection vehicles, hybrid cleansing vehicles and solar panels installed at depots.

Pembroke Road Depot

Phase 1 of the Pembroke Road Depot redevelopment project was successfully completed in early September with the opening of a new workshop. The workshop became fully operational within a matter of days following the handover from construction firm Morgan Sindall. The operational activity involves public MOTs, in addition to in-house servicing and maintenance of Waste and Street Scene vehicles.

Phase 2 of the project is due to be completed in early 2021 with the opening of the new Waste Transfer Station including recycling tipping bays, a weighbridge, skip operations, staff and vehicle parking.



Cabinet Member report – Housing & Homelessness

Cllr Isobel Darby

Service Transformation

Post vesting day work has started on joining up the four former district housing services and formation of staff groups has commenced with meetings taking place to ensure all staff are briefed. This will continue apace with a view to completion by March 2021.

There is also significant work to be undertaken in aligning the various policies and strategies from the four legacy housing authorities and work is underway on this too. There are likely to be several consultations in the coming months.

'Business as Usual' under Covid

During the pandemic, there was some reduction in people moving during lockdown, but there were still some folk who needed to be housed and our team worked tirelessly to facilitate this wherever possible.

After the start of lockdown in March, Registered Providers are also now able to undertake lettings to homeless applicants, transfers and those registered on the housing waiting list and are continuing to undertake virtual lettings.

The housing team is building on its success in supporting applicants remotely and continues to find innovative ways to assist applicants, including virtual home visits.

Successful bids to MHCLG

The Council has recently been awarded £485,000 from the first round of the Next Steps Accommodation Programme, short term revenue fund. The majority of this funding will be used to offset the cost of the emergency accommodation provided under the 'Everyone In' initiative which has been extended across the Autumn/Winter period. The remainder has been awarded to fund rent deposits for single homeless persons, including rough sleepers, and to assist the cohort of former rough sleepers without recourse to public funds into accommodation and employment.

The Council has also been successful in a capital bid (subject to contract) and will receive, a further £650,000 funding to enable the grant funding of a partner housing association to purchase 15 one bedroom units for former rough sleepers currently in supported housing. This will free up spaces for those currently, or threatened with rough sleeping to access.

We are also waiting for the outcome of another bid which will hopefully facilitate a further nine units in Aylesbury for 'high need' rough sleepers.

This funding, coupled with the tremendous work by our housing team and partner agencies, will mean that we have provided accommodation for over 170 people since March. We have enabled many to move on to core permanent accommodation and have provided support to clients with lifestyle changes to enable them to move on.

New Affordable Homes

Hightown Housing Association is one of Buckinghamshire Council's Development Partners with a great track record of building affordable homes in the area. The Council was asked by Hightown to attend a virtual opening ceremony on 24th September and I had the pleasure of declaring Kingfisher Place, Aylesbury open.

This scheme delivered 135 much needed new affordable homes. Located on the old 'Hazells' site, this development saw Hightown bringing forward all 135 properties as affordable new homes for our residents. Hightown worked with Homes England, with support from the Council, to secure the funding to deliver the entire site as affordable housing.

This development brings 46 new shared ownership properties for low income families with the remaining homes being offered for rent, predominantly to families from the Council's housing register. The Council was also able to work with Hightown and the developer, Ridgepoint Homes, to provide funding to convert four ground floor flats on the site to a wheelchair adaptable specification. The site is in a prime location for access to amenities, schools and green spaces.

In March 2017 the former South Bucks District Council purchased the former Gerrards Cross Police station site on Oxford Road, Tatling End for redevelopment. Work has now been completed on this project in partnership with Willmott Dixon and the properties transferred to the ownership of Consilio Property Ltd, a property investment company set up in 2018. The company is now a subsidiary of Buckinghamshire Council.

Of the 34 apartments, 20 are one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartments available for private rent, with the remaining 14 two-bedroom apartments to be let at affordable rent via the Bucks Home Choice and managed by a housing association. This has provided much needed affordable housing in the area. The site is located just off the A40 Oxford Road which allows easy access to amenities such as schools, shops, medical facilities, leisure sites, work opportunities and has good transport links.

Thanks to the team

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and expertise of the members of the housing team, most of whom found themselves working from home at very little notice. I should like to put on record my sincere thanks to them.





Cabinet Member report – Logistics

Cllr David Martin

Home to School Transport – September Term Start

The run up to the start of the academic year has been a somewhat challenging period in Covid. Significant service improvements have been introduced to enable school transport to run effectively:

- Over 7,500 students are being transported to school with bus passes issued for the start of term. 5000 of these are on one of the 130 bus routes provided by the Council.
- A further 35 additional coaches, and 40 public bus route additions were put in place to support social distancing as a result of government grant funding.
- A Council grant of £377,000 was provided to commercial school coach operators to support the sector in the absence of direct central government funding. Without this support from Buckingham Council, many operators would have faced significant financial difficulties, thereby putting school transport for 2,000 of our pupils at risk.
- School transport pages on the Council's website have been improved and work continues on this and other areas of communications.
- A range of Covid related safety measures have been put in place with detailed guidance online.

The service is on a journey of improvement and, informed by lessons learned from the current return to school exercise, organisational and operational changes will be made. Following a service restructure, the permanent management team in client transport will be fully in place from November 2020. The Transport, Environment & Climate Change Select Committee scrutinised school transport at its meeting on 17 September; and members have made suggestions for improvements. To help inform the decisions to be made during the next phase of the improvement process, a working group is being formed that will include elected members with knowledge and understanding of the issues.

On and Off-Street Parking

Work has commenced on streamlining the off-street parking teams to provide a consistent approach for customers across the county; and deliver an improved service in terms of management, enforcement and recovery. This will feed into the wider parking services review, which will inform our decisions in bringing together as one entity the current patchwork of operating systems, managers and teams to create a single centre of excellence for all on and off-street parking throughout the county.

Parking Income, Enforcement Figures and Trends

The Council suspended parking charges and civil enforcement at the height of the pandemic from March to 1 August, since when the team has been closely monitoring car park usage and income levels. Early indications show that usage has varied considerably, with greater levels of occupancy in those car parks serving shopping centres; and less in the car parks that traditionally are used by longer stay commuters. We have noticed an increase in anti-social and illegal parking near some of our schools since the start of term; and believe that at least some of this is attributable to increased working from home, with some parents who previously would be commuting now taking their children to school. Until late September there was an increase in car park use at our country parks.

Handy Cross Car Park

The Council has completed a review of car park charges (locally and in High Wycombe town centre) and following a public consultation has proposed to Cabinet that parking at Handy Cross, up to now totally free to users, should be paid for. A realistic charging structure is proposed that will enable the car park to be effectively managed, meet the requirements of long and short stay customers, generate an income for the Council and support the park and ride facility. Customers using the park and ride facility will continue to benefit from local CIL money, enabling them to park and travel on the bus for free.

Future Delivery Programme

Colleagues in the Parking Team and Network Improvement Team are working with Community Boards and local members to identify future on-street parking schemes. Most of these meetings have taken place and once commissions have been received, a detailed programme will be developed. There are currently 18 schemes ongoing across the county.

Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)

Survey works have been completed for all moving, speeding and on and off-street parking orders. This will lead to the consolidation of our district orders into one county-wide order. The County TRO, when operational, will cover all on-street parking, off-street parking, moving traffic offences and country parks. In addition to the obvious operational advantages of one single county-wide order, once completed, Buckinghamshire will have all arrangements fully digitalised on a public-facing web site that will allow residents to review all current and proposed orders.

Three parking TRO schemes are in progress for:

- Iver and Richings Park
- Little Chalfont and Amersham
- Chalfont St Peter/Chalfont St Giles

The purpose of these schemes is to reduce the impact of commuter parking on residents and assist local businesses. It is anticipated that the two latter schemes will be in place by the end of November.

Public Transport

Bus services outside London are 'deregulated' meaning that main bus routes are run commercially by bus companies operating routes mainly with no financial support from local or national government. Subsidy is needed where routes generate insufficient revenue to cover the cost of operation, mainly in rural areas; to help provide evening and weekend journeys; and support introduction of new routes.

The total subsidy for 2020/21 will be £2.0M. This supports 43 bus services around the county carrying 2.2M passengers per year (just over 20% of all bus journeys made).

Covid19 has caused significant problems but, to date, the picture remains positive in Buckinghamshire, with the bus network despite significant operational and financial challenges remaining intact. We have maintained all our contract payments to bus companies and are using additional grant funding from the Department for Transport to replace lost fares income and to give further support to routes at risk of withdrawal.

Many school and college students use buses and we have been able to use extra funding to ensure that social distancing measures have not prevented pupils getting to school by public bus. 30 extra buses have been commissioned to operate at school run times, plus over 40 other routes are now using larger buses or running for students only. Recent good news is that the Department for Transport has just announced this funding will continue at least until Christmas.

2020 has seen the launch of “Smartzone” in High Wycombe; a multi-operator ticket scheme that includes new contactless ticket machines on buses (very timely given the need to reduce cash usage during Covid) plus online, smartcard and mobile ticketing. Pump primed with council Community Infrastructure Levy funding the project started with a range of adult tickets with ‘under 18s’ products launching shortly.

Our Staff

The last seven months have been a significantly challenging period for our staff; and all officers whether working in school transport provision, parking or public transport have each faced numerous new difficulties, operational and personal. I commend each one of them for having risen to the occasion; and thank them all for their dedication and hard work in delivering these vital services so very effectively during such extraordinarily difficult times.





Cabinet Member report – Planning & Enforcement

Cllr Warren Whyte

Local Plans

We have nearly submitted to the Planning Inspector all of the Council's responses to the representations received on the Main Modifications to the VALP, including the findings from the latest traffic modelling. Once the Inspector has considered these there is likely to be consultation on some further main modifications. In July, a legal challenge to the adopted Wycombe Local Plan was rejected by the High Court although the claimants, Keep Bourne End Green, are seeking permission to take the case to the Court of Appeal. We are awaiting the decision on that application. Meanwhile, good progress is being made on preparations for the Buckinghamshire Local Plan, as reported to Cabinet on 28th July. However, we are currently reviewing the implications of the Planning White Paper for the new Local Plan, given the wide-ranging changes proposed to the local plans system.

The Planning White Paper

Members will be aware that during the summer the Government published two important consultations affecting the future of the planning system. The Council has responded to the first of those consultations "Changes to the current Planning System" and a response to the Planning White Paper "Planning for the Future" was agreed by Cabinet last week.

Members will note from the Council response that we are concerned with the direction of travel from the Government. We believe the system is in need of modernisation and improvement but the changes being proposed in those consultations amount to a dilution of local democratic accountability. In my view the Planning White Paper seeks to centralise and standardise far too much of the current system and this will lead to communities not having a say in important decisions affecting local areas. Above all, I am most concerned at the proposal to re-introduce top-down housing targets using an algorithm that would see the housing requirement in Buckinghamshire more than triple compared to current performance. This simply cannot be right; it will lead to widespread dissatisfaction with the planning system. I have written to all of the Buckinghamshire MPs to seek their support in asking Government to look again at their proposals to modernise the system.

The Planning for the Future White Paper sets out MHCLG's proposals to digitise, improve and innovate the planning system. Central to these proposals are two key projects, the Back-office Planning System project (BoPS) and the Reducing Invalid Planning Application project (RIPA).

Back-office Planning System (BoPS) - The project seeks to create a user-centred back-office planning system that makes planning data and records easily accessible, increases efficiency across

the planning application process, and fits the need of its users (Planning Officers and Planning Staff).

Reducing Invalid Planning Applications (RIPA) - The RIPA project is developing a digital service pattern called 'Apply for Planning Permission' that:

- Allows applicants and their agents to submit planning applications to councils as data, as far as possible.
- Makes preparing and submitting a planning application as easy, unthreatening and painless as possible for users.
- Removes the causes of invalidation in 80% of cases.
- Is interoperable with new and legacy back-office platforms.
- Is open source, easy to adopt and adapt.

By capturing data rather than documents, users only need to be asked for information that is relevant to their project, and mistakes can often be detected automatically. The result would be a simpler, easier, more accessible and more transparent planning service for everyone.

Who is involved: Buckinghamshire Council is collaborating with several other local authorities on these projects; they include: The London Boroughs of Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Camden, Hackney, Croydon, Northumberland County Council, Braintree District Council, Coventry City Council and Surrey Heath Borough Council. The delivery partners for these projects are Unboxed (BoPs) and Open Systems Lab (RIPA). Both projects are funded by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Local Digital Fund and have been awarded a combined total of almost £1m for the discovery, alpha, and beta phases.

Where the projects are currently: Buckinghamshire Council will be proceeding to a closed-beta trial of the BoPS and RIPA tools. This would initially involve testing the submission of a small number of live Certificate of Lawfulness planning applications through the RIPA tool and processing them from validation to decision stage through the BoPS tool.

Buckinghamshire Council's involvement in the project has meant we have been able to ensure the prototype meets our specific needs (such as managing development in the Chilterns AONB and rural areas). Our work on the beta testing phase of the BoPS and RIPA projects will allow us to shape the final product into a tool to be used by officers and the public to tackle the issues surrounding invalid planning applications.

Planning Enforcement

The Planning Enforcement service has continued to make improvements with a notable increase in the level of enforcement actions, improved response times and communication especially in relation to some key cases as well as notable early interventions that prevent further breaches occurring. The team has issued multiple formal notices as reflected in the Q2 KPI's and are pursuing a number of legal actions. The team is also continuing to successfully negotiate solutions to remedy breaches of planning control without the need for formal action and this remains a primary tool in the team's toolbox which often produces the most efficient outcomes. A fair but firm approach to planning enforcement is being actively implemented across the service area with the full spectrum of enforcement tools being used to remedy the planning harm caused by unauthorised development.

The collaboration of the legacy authority teams is going very well with a joined-up approach across the different areas and disciplines of the service. For example, the team issued a temporary Stop Notice in September which incorporated a number of different developments which ranged across mainstream planning issues as well as waste and minerals enforcement. Such actions would previously have been dealt with separately by the District Authority and the County Waste & Minerals teams in two separate notices in a duplication of work.

The Enforcement service successfully operated an Out of Hours service over the Bank Holiday weekends in May and August with the team being called out and issuing notices on both occasions. The enforcement service review has started and is making progress with some early scoping work being undertaken and all areas of the service being considered.





Cabinet Member report – Property & Assets

Cllr John Chilver

Marlow Library

Jet Construction is due to complete the refurbishment works at Marlow Library on 16th October 2020. The works comprise internal alterations to the ground floor and first floor. The library has been remodelled as a community access point and Marlow Town Council will lease the newly refurbished first floor. The ground floor now has a new meeting room and staff room with associated ancillary accommodation.

Winslow Demolition

Demolition of the Winslow Centre was scheduled to commence in July 2020 and last for 12 weeks. Works commenced but were halted due to delays with utility connections. Works recommenced on the 21st September and are now scheduled to last for 12 weeks. A report on plans for the future development of the Winslow Centre site and new Sports Hub is on the 13th October Cabinet agenda.

Tatling End Housing – Peel Close

The Tatling End Housing development near Gerrards Cross was successfully completed on 5th August 2020 and sold to Consilio Property Ltd, the Council's wholly owned subsidiary, on 20th August.

Consilio report that 17 of the 20 market rental apartments have now been let and occupied and the arrangements for the affordable rental properties, which represent over 40% of the development, are progressing.

The development comprises 34 residential dwellings set out in four separate buildings, a three storey building which replaces the former Police Station, and three two storey pitched roofed properties developed across the remainder of the site. These include:

- 14 x two bedroom affordable apartments
- 6 x one bedroom market rental apartments
- 14 x two bedroom market rental apartments

Chilterns Lifestyle Centre – Amersham

The project is on schedule with the Lifestyle Centre due to be completed in September 2021.

Major milestones have been achieved:

- The four external play areas - outdoor gym, street snooker, skate park and the external King George V play area - have been successfully completed and were opened to the public on Friday 10 July 2020. They have been received well and noted as being well used.
- The steel frame has been installed, exposing the full extent of the building. Significant progress has been made with concreting to the upper floor slabs, cladding and roofing works. Sub-structure works to the dive pool and main swimming pool are progressing including concrete pours to the dive pool walls.

As part of the construction programme the contractor workforce is expected to grow for multiple activities within the building. Due to Covid-19 restrictions the Contractor requires additional welfare facilities for the growing workforce. These cannot be accommodated on the current site and additional welfare facilities are being planned for part of the adjacent Chiltern Avenue Car Park, which will be incorporated into the site. Updates including live camera available at: <https://chilternslifestylecentre.com/>



Cabinet Member report – Regulatory Services

Cllr Fred Wilson

Licensing

The Licensing Service is on track to deliver a new harmonised taxi and private hire licensing policy for the Buckinghamshire Council area in year 1. The policy will incorporate the new statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards, promote the highest possible standards to secure public safety, support the Council's key priorities of protecting the vulnerable and improving the environment and promote the local economy. A full public consultation with the taxi trade, residents and key stakeholders is planned for November/December 2020 and following consideration by Licensing Committee should come to Full Council for approval early next year.

The Council is also required to implement harmonised Licensing Act and Gambling Act policies for the new Buckinghamshire Council area by April 2022 and work is underway to start this process including pre-engagement with key stakeholders.

Licensing Services were significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and a number of changes to services were implemented during lockdown including an increased use of digital technology. The Service has worked hard to get back to a business as usual position following the easing of lockdown restrictions, and is now carrying out face to face appointments for customers and inspections for businesses where required. The Licensing Service continues to work closely with Environmental Health to provide Covid-19 advice and support to businesses where needed, including on changes to licensing requirements. A new Pavement Licence process for tables and chairs is now available to fast track applications for businesses wishing to use space on the public highway for drinking and dining.

Cemeteries & Crematoria

A review of the Crematoria Service response to the first peak of the Covid-19 pandemic has been carried out to ensure that the service is ready to respond to a second peak if it is required to do so. This has included the installation of additional temporary office space at The Chilterns crematorium to facilitate Covid secure workplace arrangements and enable additional staff to work within the service if it becomes necessary.

There are a number of cemetery extensions underway at the moment with the Penn Road, Wycombe extension nearing completion and due for handover imminently. Phase 1 works on improvements and the extension of Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens have now been completed with phase 2 works due to commence shortly. These works will provide additional family memorial gardens and planting to this beautiful facility. Works are also due to commence on the Parkside cemetery extension in South Bucks soon, and design work is underway for the Great Missenden

cemetery extension. These projects were planned prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and remain on schedule.

A new Crematorium Manager has been recruited to lead the Crematoria Services and will start working with the Service in January 2021. Charles Howlett, the current postholder, is retiring after 30 years working in the Council's crematoria and leaves Buckinghamshire Council with a thriving and prestigious legacy Service to take forward for the future, including the newly opened Berton Crematorium. I would like to thank him for his commitment to the Service over the years and wish him all the best for the future.

Environmental Health

Environmental Health has responded to Covid-19 enquiries and complaints from both businesses and residents, offering advice and guidance on current government covid-19 requirements. As part of a proactive initiative the team have carried out numerous covid-19 secure interventions focusing on the hospitality industry which includes pubs, restaurants and cafes and the hair and beauty industry, offering covid-19 secure advice and issuing formal warnings where necessary. The team is currently working on a joint initiative with the Health and Safety Executive to carry out further work in the beauty industry.

The team has worked closely with the Public Health team to formulate plans and procedures to respond to Covid outbreaks in a variety of settings and have developed risk assessments for officers to ensure they can carry out site visits safely.

During this period the team has also focused on event safety and has worked closely with a number of high profile events (including Silverstone and a local funfair) to ensure the events are safe for participants and the public. Covid risk assessments are now a key requirement of any event.

Whilst there has inevitably been a focus on the Covid response the team continues to provide statutory services to businesses and the public. For example, carrying out priority high risk food safety inspections in line with current Food Standards Agency advice, and investigating noise and air quality complaints. Some challenging and high profile nuisance investigations and enforcements are currently under way, and these involve successful cross council working and cooperation with external partners. These 'businesses as usual' activities continue in order to protect the wellbeing of our residents and to provide a level playing field for businesses.

Air Quality

Air quality continues to be a key focus and work continues on delivering on the Air Quality Action plans which seek to improve air quality across the district. In addition, a Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy is currently being drafted by the Energy, Transport Strategy and Environmental Health Teams. Wycombe Abbey continuous air quality monitoring station - has been moved to a new, nearby site, within the grounds of the school. This was instigated by taking the opportunity to move the station to a more suitable location following the failure, and replacement, of older monitoring equipment. It is expected that this will give us a substantial period of time without the threat of the monitoring equipment failing. This was funded by a successful application for CIL funding.

Stokenchurch continuous air quality monitoring station - will soon have new monitoring equipment installed on the same site. The equipment is of a similar age to the failed Wycombe Abbey equipment and, though it has not failed itself, it is showing signs of fatigue. An order has been raised for the replacement, again funded by a successful application for CIL funding.

Marlow Low Emission Zone feasibility study – we are finalising the project plan with our contractors, Ricardo E&E, before starting the study. Multiple departments from Buckinghamshire Council will be consulted, along with local groups, businesses and the public. The project will not only determine the feasibility of introducing a low emission zone but will explore options for what form the zone may take as well as alternative options to introducing a low emission zone. This will be funded by a previously successful application for CIL funding.

Registration Services

Registration Services has reacted quickly to all Government advice regarding ceremonies, moving and rebooking well over 1,100 ceremonies and providing refunds where necessary in quick order. Despite the stringent and changing restrictions the service has delivered 141 weddings and 24 civil partnerships between 4th July 2020 when Government allowed them to resume, and now. The service conducted ceremonies on the first day they were legally allowed by Government. The service has undertaken Registrar General Licence weddings (death bed marriages) & Notice Waivers to allow marriages to go ahead within the 28-day waiting period. The service has kept staff all working in our offices to deliver services, with the introduction of screens, and PPE being made available to all customers and staff.

We have re-opened the High Wycombe Library office to accommodate customers who live in that area and have liaised closely with the Library staff to arrange this.

The Citizenship Ceremonies backlog has been dealt with – all prospective citizens now have a space at a ceremony over the next 3 months. The birth registrations backlog has now been reduced to normal levels and the team has returned to business as usual. Staff have worked very hard and also at weekends to get through the backlog of 1300 births due to the national lockdown between March and June.

Changes to death registrations were introduced quickly so as not to affect the families of the deceased and to ensure the registration process was as straightforward as possible.

Two new venues are just about to gain approval to hold ceremonies – Bradmoor Farm and the Betsey Wynne pub.





Cabinet Member report – Sports and Leisure

CLlr Clive Harriss

Leisure

The Council's leisure centres across the county have gradually re-opened their facilities over the last few weeks; officers have worked closely with our leisure operators to ensure all the current required Covid-safe measures are in place and that all our sites provide customers with the opportunity to return to activity in a safe and well-managed environment. The general feedback across all sites continues to be positive, and the response to re-engage with the swim school programme has been encouraging; while noting that the number of customers visiting is constrained by social distancing restrictions. The operators have been re-introducing more activities across all sites where the guidance allows:

- Wycombe Leisure Centre – soft play from 14 September.
- Aqua Vale – proposed re-opening of leisure waters from 4/5 October, weekends only with capacity reduced to 50.
- Chiltern Pools – aqua-fitness family swim session later this month.
- Beacon Centre – gymnastics and martial arts clubs from 21 September.
- Evreham – football, grass and all-weather pitches from 14 September.

Following the completion of the refurbishment work at Court Garden Leisure Centre (that saw £2m invested in much needed improvements to the swimming pool, including a new roof and re-configured changing areas, a new sports hall floor, boilers and plant replaced along with the main building's roof), Court Garden was able to re-open on 17 August. With capacity in the pool reduced to ensure a Covid-secure environment, a new timetable is in place to try and accommodate as wide a programme of swim classes as possible which have always been very popular at this centre. Refurbishment works at Chalfont and Chesham leisure centres are also underway.

New Outdoor Play Areas and Skate Park in Amersham

A new playground, skate park, outdoor gym and street snooker opened in July at the King George V Playing Field in Amersham. These are the first areas of the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre development to be completed and have been handed over to Amersham Town Council to manage. The facilities have been well received by residents with lots of families visiting the site over the summer holidays.

Wycombe Rye Boathouse Café

The new Boathouse Café, which is planned to be complete for the New Year, will provide toilets, a small internal café seating area, a kitchen area and a store for boat equipment, tables and chairs. Double doors from the café area will open out onto a patio area for



outside seating with views of the Dyke. Construction of the new modular building started off-site in August and it is due to be delivered in October; the old boathouse was demolished and removed in September.

Bridge Street Skate Park, Buckingham

As part of the ongoing repair and renewals programme for play areas in the Aylesbury Vale Area, work has been ongoing with the Town Council and Community Groups to devise and implement a replacement £200k (est.) skate park at Bridge Street in Buckingham. The sum of £135k has already been allocated from S106 funds with the potential to allocate further S106 funds if bids to additional funding streams, recommended by Skateboard England, are unsuccessful. Documents are being prepared to procure a design and build contract that will also include consultation with users and other stakeholders to design the new facility. It is anticipated that the tendering process will commence in October with consultation and design work being completed during the winter, ready for construction commencing in spring 2021.

Farnham Park Playing Fields

Eighteen football teams have booked pitches at Farnham Park for the 20/21 season which is an increase of three new teams. The first football matches took place at the end of August/first weekend of September with a number of friendlies being booked. A Football Foundation grant application was successful with a sum of £8,640 being awarded towards the purchase of six new adult goals. Positive feedback has been provided from the Foundation to a further application being submitted for three new goals to accommodate junior football; this could provide £4,320 in funding. Once the new goals have been delivered, we will be applying for further funding to purchase new maintenance equipment to include a large tractor, with detachable mower and aerator.

Country Parks

Attendance across the Country Parks since lockdown restrictions were relaxed continues to break all previous records; with numbers for April-September exceeding last year's total by almost 90,000. Due to these increases in visitor numbers, parking on local roads became a particular problem during the summer. This ultimately led to Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders being implemented to prevent dangerous and inconsiderate parking in the immediate locality. In addition, we have been working with the RingGo team to get the RingGo Parking App system operational in the Country Parks car parks to address customer feedback. We are pleased to announce that the system was successfully activated on 21 September and appears to have had an immediate positive affect.

After filming their live fashion show event in Black Park in September, Burberry has donated £25,000 to Groundwork South (GWS) as part of corporate efforts to reduce their impact on the environment; they have also committed to make the show carbon neutral. Burberry specifically wanted to donate to a local charity that worked in conservation and supported people engaging more with nature – GWS was recommended by Country Parks officers. GWS and the Country Parks team are currently developing a new project to continue the restoration/creation of heathland in Black Park; the donation will partially be used to match fund this project and potentially create traineeships to support the development of countryside management skills in the local area.

At the end of August one of the bridges across the River Colne collapsed and a major project is underway with the Rights of Way team to replace the bridge; contractors have visited the site and confirmed that replacement will be extremely challenging.

HS2/National Grid Works at Denham Country Park

The Country Parks Team has been working closely with the Council's HS2 team and National Grid to minimise the impacts of the enabling works in Denham Country Park. A new route avoiding ponds with Great Crested Newts has been agreed in principle; detailed arrangements between the Golf Club and HS2 are still to be agreed (as at 28 September). Formal possession of the Country Parks land was taken on 7 September and works on site to mitigate bat disturbance, required to be implemented before construction commences, started on 8 September. Significant numbers of protesters continue to occupy parts of the Golf Club land, some in treetop camps that are causing a number of issues around the Country Park. They continue to receive support (food and materials) from local people opposed to the works. Until the site is vacated by the protesters, it will be impossible to quantify the damage that has been caused by their activities.





Cabinet Member report – Town Centre Regeneration

Cllr Steve Bowles

Reopening High Streets Safely Fund

The authority was awarded just over £480,000 through the Reopening High Street Safely Fund to support local high streets get safely back to business. The fund aims to “introduce a range of safety measures in a move to kick-start local economies, get people back to work and customers back to the shops.” The funding so far has been used to introduce measures in Buckinghamshire town centres and local centres including temporary highways mitigation, such as additional crossing points, pedestrianizing areas and reduced speed limits, and public safety messaging through signs and stickers. Further work will be undertaken to consider further measures which may be needed to support businesses and communities with their local high street and centres in line with government guidelines.

Regeneration

In High Wycombe, work on the Brunel Shed will shortly start in earnest, kicking off the first Phase of the Eastern Quarter Regeneration Programme. Feasibility work has already commenced on further phases of the programme which will eventually generate a new business district for Buckinghamshire, along with high quality residential development.

In order to deliver regeneration, it is important to ensure that interested parties are kept informed and can contribute to place-making initiatives. More formal governance structures for key Buckinghamshire towns are being considered and discussed with local stakeholders.

Aylesbury Garden Town

Aylesbury Garden Town have been busy over the summer supporting a number of schemes in the town centre. These include the installation of new cycle racks at Hale Leys shopping centre and Aylesbury Railway Station; all part of AGT’s drive toward sustainable healthy travel, both of which were opened by Councillor Bowles. AGT have also supported the temporary closure of streets within the town centre to provide more space for dining and movement of people in response to COVID 19.

Progress has been made in the commission of consultants, Urban Movement, to commence work on the design and implementation of the Garden Way, one of the key transformational projects for AGT. The Garden Way will be a community led project which aims to have a positive and lasting impact on the quality of life of Aylesbury’s residents.

AGT have also commissioned Hatch Regeneris and Cushman and Wakefield to undertake a Socio-Economic Assessment of the Town Centre to assess the opportunities for regeneration and the

impacts of COVID 19. This work will inform a detailed commission for town centre opportunity areas identified within the AGT Masterplan.

Progress has also been made by the consultants leading the public realm improvements for Kingsbury and Market Square following an online consultation over the summer.

Town Centre Management

Working closely with local businesses and organisations, council teams have supported the recovery of town centres across Buckinghamshire. The Aylesbury Leadership Recovery team was established at the beginning of lockdown and collectively we have identified short and medium term projects which will support the recovery of Aylesbury Town Centre.

Council teams, including the highways service, have acted swiftly to support works that support businesses to 're-open' during continued social distancing restrictions. For example, temporary road closures for Cambridge Street and George Street in Aylesbury have enabled adjacent restaurants and cafes to move service out into the road and pavements. We've also worked with local businesses to encourage outside street trading.

Support has been put into place for our market traders. Officers have helped to design and implement new operating practices about how our markets can trade under current and ongoing social distancing restrictions. A regular bi-weekly update is provided to local businesses which includes information from Government about grants and furloughing, information about what we are doing locally and what businesses and leisure providers have reopened.





Cabinet Member report – Transport

Cllr Nick Naylor

Transport for Buckinghamshire

Surface Dressing Programme 2020 - The surface dressing programme for 2020 was completed on 21st July with 302,000m² of treatment laid during the 24-day programme. As well as the 20 sites scheduled on the programme, a number of roads were added to complete outstanding remedial work. Consideration was given to deliver the programme around the access required to the household waste site in Amersham, and filming at Pinewood Studios. The communications regarding the programme were stepped up this year, with regular updates and images on TfB's social media channels, which were well received by the public and local councillors. Monitoring will continue on all sites throughout the autumn and winter.

Drainage Throughout Downpours - During August 2020 we experienced heavy downpours resulting in flash flooding across Buckinghamshire. Drainage systems in general coped well however we did experience high volumes of calls both in and out of hours for flooding and flash flooding. Crews during the 13th, 14th and 15th of August were diverted to undertake 2-hour emergencies and we delivered over 250 sandbags. Follow-up inspections were carried out by the technicians following the heavy rainfall. Some of these led to reactive drainage clearance or reviews regarding potential future improvement works. Most of the heavy downpours resulted in flash flooding and these areas dispersed within three hours of the heavy showers.

Marlow Bridge Bollards - Local Members and selected key stakeholders were consulted about, and generally agreed in principle with, TfB's plans to improve the HGV prevention measures at Marlow Suspension Bridge. A driver awareness and education campaign will be undertaken prior to the bollard modification works and options are being investigated. The bollard modification work is expected to take place in early 2021.

Annual Stakeholder Conference - This was held virtually in September this year. It was very well attended by Members and wider stakeholder groups, with a high level of engagement and positive feedback. The slide decks and recordings of each session have been made available on the Member and Parish portals, for those who were unable to attend.

Winter Plan - The winter service is due to start on 12th October and TfB's gritting crews have already been out for their pre-winter training, providing refresher training to current staff and training new operatives.

Essential Working during Lockdown - TfB continued to maintain the road network across Buckinghamshire during lockdown, keeping them open and ensuring essential workers can travel and deliveries can be made to the vulnerable, whilst minimising disruption when traffic levels

returned to normal. While traffic volumes around Buckinghamshire were at an all-time low, TfB accelerated activities with much needed repair works on main traffic routes including surfacing work at Dominos Roundabout, Aylesbury and Big Hand Mo's / Hen and the Chickens Roundabout, Aylesbury.

Pednormead End Flood Management Scheme

This project, to manage the flood risk for up to 80 properties in the Pednormead End area of Chesham, has now started on the ground.

Phase 1 Culvert Refurbishment -The contractor Ringway Jacob mobilised on site on 24 August 2020 to replace the culvert under the junction of Missenden Road, Church Street and Wey Lane, Chesham. The site set up has been completed and pedestrian access and provision for access to local businesses has been completed. The contractor has been undertaking excavation works for utilities relocation.

Phase 2 Property Flood Resilience measures - Lakeside Flood Solutions Ltd has been appointed to carry out the installation of Property Flood Resilience measures to properties in Pednormead End. Around 50 properties have been surveyed and issued with their Property Flood Survey report. More than 23 properties have agreed to progress with the installation. A robust engagement is currently being carried out to increase the take up and more surveys are being carried out by RAB Ltd.

E-Bikes

As part of the Live Labs Program, we are currently in the process of installing a small fleet of Electric Bikes at either end of the greenway that connects Aylesbury Vale Parkway Station and Waddesdon Manor. We currently have the E-BIKES live at Waddesdon Manor and are working with Chiltern Railways to get the infrastructure in place at the station. We are hoping to have the second charging station installed by the end of October and will monitor usage of these over the remaining period of the program.

E-Scooters

Buckinghamshire Council has recently had a proposal approved by the Department of Transport to run a rental e-scooter trial. The trial will run for 12 months and will focus on Aylesbury and High Wycombe, with a potential launch in October. We are engaging with local members and other stakeholders to ensure all potential routes are safe for riders, other road users and our communities. E-scooters are not allowed on pedestrian only pavements/pathways and we will use geo-fencing technology to enforce restrictions and create no-go zones and slow zones.

Westcott Roundabout

The construction of Westcott Roundabout has been completed on time and within budget. This is a key piece of infrastructure that will help support the growth and development of Westcott Venture Park, part of the Aylesbury Enterprise Zone. Led by the Council in partnership with Westcott Venture Park, works proceeded throughout lockdown and the final scheme will also help improve access to Westcott village.

Walking and Cycling

Buckinghamshire has successfully bid for Funding for Tranche 1 of the Emergency Active Travel Schemes to support more local trips to be undertaken by bike and foot as a response to the Covid Pandemic. These have been challenging schemes to deliver due to the short timescales between funding and implementation. They offer real benefits in terms of improved health, lower congestion and better air quality. We are currently implementing schemes in Haddenham and

Southcourt and are developing schemes in: Amersham, High Wycombe and Buckingham. We have submitted an ambitious bid for Tranche 2 of the funding and are awaiting a response from central government.

In addition, we are developing an ambitious walking and cycling network plan for High Wycombe, and working with partners to progress design and implementation of priority schemes such as at Haydon Hill (Aylesbury), Wendover to Great Missenden and between Aylesbury, Haddenham and Thame. We continue to negotiate with HS2 Limited for improvements to their designs to 'future-proof' aspirational cycle links.

High Wycombe Transport Strategy

A place-based draft strategy is being produced in consultation with the High Wycombe Town Committee and a five-week public consultation in Nov-Dec will be undertaken. It sets the policy context for our e-scooter, walking and cycling investment and demand responsive transport trials. It is anticipated that the strategy will be adopted in March 2021.

E-Charging

An Electric Vehicle Charging Point Action Plan is being developed to support the Low Emissions Strategy and which will outline how the Council intends to increase the number of charging points across the county, as well as working with businesses and within the Council to encourage conversion to e-vehicles. In support of this we are preparing a bid to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles to fund public charging points.

Demand Responsive Transport trials

In June we submitted two Expressions of Interest for funding for DRT trials in rural areas as part of the DfT's Better Buses fund. We are awaiting an update from the DfT as to whether we have been successful and the new timeline to proceed to the second stage of the bid.

School Travel Awards

31 schools in Buckinghamshire have been recognised for their school travel plans. The Modeshift Stars is a three-level scheme which promotes active, safe and sustainable travel by families making the school journey. To gain accreditation, each school develops a programme to encourage pupils to be more active through cycling and walking, to identify traffic and transport issues for the school, and to reduce the number of cars outside the school to improve air quality. One school - Elangeni, in Amersham - won promotion from silver to gold level, while 12 maintained their gold level, six maintained silver and 12 maintained bronze for another year.

Simply Walk Re-Start

Simply Walk, restarted some of its group walks, on 4 September, after being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first week, nearly 500 people attended on a total of 38 walks. Walking for Health organised group walks, such as Simply Walk, are categorised as outdoor physical activity events, which are exempt from the latest restrictions, as we have put extra measures in place to reduce the risks of COVID-19.

Return of the School Crossing Patrollers

We welcomed back our team of school crossing patrollers (around 60 in total) to a new world of 2m distances and extended patrol times to support schools staggered start times. We have also put in place additional measures and PPE to ensure that they are COVID-19 safe.



Cabinet Member report – Youth Provision

Cllr Tony Green

Youth offer in Buckinghamshire

Building on my last update, I thought it would be beneficial to provide a further update on our core offer of provision to specifically target the needs of young people. Young people can access support themselves, or they can be supported to refer in by their family, school or anyone else who is working with them.

There are a variety of youth groups, forums and activities in the local community that are accessible to young people. These are suitable for all young people but can also be particularly beneficial for those who need support to engage in positive social activities and/or develop social skills. It is also a good step forward from more intensive support methods.

Each secondary school has a Youth Worker who attends the school one morning a fortnight to offer informal information, guidance and signposting for young people and teachers. Support is likely to be a one-off session and if more intensive support is required, then a referral would be made.

Weekly Youth Drop-Ins are also available in each locality area where young people can access information, advice and guidance. From here they can also be signposted to other organisations and services. Support is provided to any young person on a range of issues, including:

- Employability
- Health and Wellbeing
- School Issues
- Relationships
- Confidence and Self esteem
- Stress, Anxiety and Low Mood
- Transitions (to secondary school)
- Risk Taking Behaviours

A series of weekly one to one sessions are offered to young people targeting specific, identified needs. The length of the intervention is dependent on the support required. An average intervention would be eight sessions, but this can be extended dependent on engagement and level of need. This is suitable for young people with more complex support needs or who require support that cannot be gained through the other parts of the offer.

#YouCanAdopt – debunking myths about adoption in Buckinghamshire

Sam is six years old and he is full of life and energy. He loves football, cricket and riding his bike, as well as gardening and making cakes. Sadly, Sam has already had lots of moves in his young life between family and foster carers. This is because he has been exposed to mental health and substance misuse issues in his birth family and they can no longer care for him. Sam's doing really well with his foster carers; he worries a lot, but this is easing as he starts to trust them and his school teachers more.

Sam (not his real name) is typical of the kind of child we, as a Council, need to find an adoptive family for and typically we have around 25 children at any one time who need adoptive families in Buckinghamshire. During last month, we took part in the national #YouCanAdopt campaign to do our best to make sure local families are not ruling themselves out of adopting without finding out more. The #YouCanAdopt campaign seeks to debunk some of the many myths that still surround adoption. The truth is, if you can offer a child a loving and stable home, the chances are that you will be eligible to adopt. Like in many other places, here in Buckinghamshire we have some children who wait longer for an adoptive family. These tend to be older children, sibling groups, or children whose past experiences may mean they have some emotional and behavioural challenges. We also always need adopters we can match to children from Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds.

We have our own unique [Adoption Readiness Checker](#) to help families learn more about the process so they can take the first steps towards adoption. We also offer full training and support every step of the way, including after the adoption is complete.

Care Leavers at University

Every child, including those who are looked after, has the right to expect an excellent education regardless of their circumstances. We all recognise that good educational attainment can provide the gateway to future stability, security and an independent, fulfilling life. However, we also know that outcomes for looked after children rarely compare favourably with other children. They are less likely to achieve good educational qualifications, have greater health and housing needs and are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system. That said, in Buckinghamshire we are doing our utmost to improve their outcomes and life chances through our Virtual School. The Virtual School works extremely hard to raise the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after and care leavers.

Children who were previously looked after continue to receive the support of the local authority after they reach 18 through our aftercare teams. A key part of this is supporting those who wish to continue on to university. University means that they can continue to study to reach their full potential. During the last year, we have strengthened the guidance and improved the process to give young people clarity on what we can offer to support them in achieving a degree. We have also introduced a regular panel to look at the needs of all young people currently at university or wishing to attend in future. Young people are able to attend the panel to share their views, needs and enable us to identify additional areas where further work can be done to work with universities to support their attendance.

At present, we have the highest number of Buckinghamshire care leavers studying at university than ever before. Currently, there are 25 in total, two of which have just started their Master's degree and this is in addition to three care leavers that have recently graduated. As their corporate parents, we are extremely proud and excited to see what comes next for these young adults. It is important to recognise that that university will not be the ambition of all our young people and that is why we provide all our care leavers with the support they need to access appropriate training or other educational opportunities.

Increasing placement sufficiency for looked our children

In April 2018 we launched an ambitious recruitment and retention strategy with the aim of growing and developing our 'in-house' fostering service over three years to increase the number of children living with our carers within the County. At the end of our second year of this strategy we have made significant progress with an increased number of children living with 'in-house' carers and thus within county. This has a number of benefits to how we can support our Looked After Children as well as financial savings. The target for recruitment of new carers for the last year was exceeded, with 23 new households being approved. We have also continued to develop the support offer to carers working for the local authority which has seen an improvement in carer retention.

Over the last year, we have continued to place young people with 'in-house' foster carers, or with family and friends or 'connected' foster carers whenever appropriate. This has resulted in us increasing the proportion of young people placed in-house to 33% compared to just 24% in April 2018.

Despite this growth, there is still a need for more people to help provide safe and loving homes for children in need. A series of fostering events will outline information about the fostering assessment process and training available, and answer any other questions people may have. The next online session is being held Thursday 12 November 2020 (7.00 - 8.30pm), followed by another online session in early December. A full list of events can be found [here](#).

