

Report for:	Shadow Executive
Meeting Date:	03 December 2019

Title of Report:	Buckinghamshire Unitary Council Programme Update
Shadow Portfolio Holder	Councillor Martin Tett
Responsible Officer	Rachael Shimmin, Interim Head of Paid Service, Chief Executive Buckinghamshire Council, Chief Executive Buckinghamshire County Council
Report Author Officer Contact:	Roger Goodes, Programme Manager 01296 674486; rgoodes@bucksc.gov.uk
Recommendations:	That the update is noted
Corporate Implications:	n/a
Options: (If any)	n/a
Reason:	This report provides an update on the progress made with the programme to establish the new unitary council for Buckinghamshire.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress made with the programme to establish the new unitary council for Buckinghamshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Following meetings of the Senior Appointments Committee on the 10th and 11th October, appointments to the Corporate Management Team for the new council were confirmed. Following this the recruitment of Tier 3 managers has begun which aims to conclude by the middle of December.
- 2.2 Members of the Shadow Executive when they met on 22nd October 2019 confirmed a new brand for the new council and work is progressing on developing a branding strategy which will determine the approach to rebranding council assets up to and following Vesting Day on 1st April 2020.
- 2.3 At their next meeting on 12th November the Shadow Executive agreed a new Council Tax Reduction scheme which had been subject to a public consultation. Members also agreed a new payscale for employees of the new Council, which will apply to new

employees and existing employees taking up new positions within the council and a Devolution offer which will be piloted before it is rolled out more widely.

- 2.4 The public consultation on the new council's priorities and budget continues until 25th November 2019 and has already attracted nearly 2,200 responses.
- 2.5 Following agreement on an implementation budget of £12.8m the current position on the budget and forecasted outturn is showing a small underspend of £24,000.

3. Progress

Shadow Executive

- 3.1 At the Shadow Executive meeting on the 22nd September 2019, the Executive agreed a new brand for the new council. This had been designed by officers from across the five councils at no cost. A consultation on a shortlist of designs was then undertaken with members of the public, members and staff.
- 3.2 The chosen brand is below:



- 3.3 Officers are now developing a branding strategy which aims to take a pragmatic and cost effective approach to rebranding the assets and services of the new council.
- 3.4 At their meeting on 12th November the Shadow Executive agreed a new Council Tax Reduction scheme, a new payscale for employees of the new Council and a Devolution offer.
- 3.5 The Council Tax Reduction scheme follows a public consultation and will ensure residents across the county who require it can access help with their council tax bill.
- 3.6 The new employee payscale is required for new employees of the new council and for existing employees who take up new positions. As members will know all current employees will TUPE transfer across to the new council on their existing terms and conditions. They would only move to the new scheme if they chose to apply for a different job or they moved to a different job following a restructure. Should an existing employee following a restructure move to a position where the new terms and conditions are less favourable than their existing ones, the new scheme provides a period of pay protection.
- 3.7 The Devolution offer is within the Localism portfolio of work being developed for the new council. Members will recall this work contains three strands, Customer Access

Points, Devolution and Community Boards. Members have already agreed on 17 Customer Access Points which will be available from 1st April 2020 for residents to access services in person. A proposal for Community Boards is being developed following a public consultation and it is expected members will consider this when the Shadow Executive meets in December 2019.

- 3.8 The Devolution offer agreed at the meeting on 12th November 2019 proposes a three year programme with a phased roll out. The proposal builds on existing devolution offers available for highways and green spaces within the Wycombe area, provides support for organisations wishing to consider taking over assets or services and sets out a policy for the new council, which would be piloted prior to roll out through a series of place based pilots.
- 3.9 Following a decision on 10th September 2019 to establish a shadow Buckinghamshire Growth Board, the Board has now been established and held its first official meeting on the 14th November.
- 3.10 The Board currently comprises of Leaders of the 5 Local Authorities, the Chief Executive, the joint chairs of the Housing, Growth and Economy Board, the LEP, the CCG, and a number of central government agencies.
- 3.11 The Board will support an ambitious delivery programme which evidences the challenges and coordinates the response to growth in the county (as already agreed to the mid 2030's). It is also an important platform for discussing strategic growth issues and ensuring a joined up approach to delivery and meeting key objectives around sustainability, the environment, economic growth, and connectivity.

Organisational Structure

- 3.12 The Corporate Management Team recruitment (Tier 2) concluded with the final interviews held on 10th and 11th October 2019. Following the interviews the Senior Appointments Committee met and agreed the following appointments:
- **Sarah Ashmead** has been appointed as the Deputy Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire Council. Sarah is currently the Director of Resources and Assistant Chief Executive at Buckinghamshire County Council.
 - **Richard Barker** has been appointed as the Corporate Director for Communities and has recently worked at the London Borough of Waltham Forest as their Corporate Director of Communities.
 - **Joe O'Sullivan** has been appointed as the Corporate Director for Resources. Joe has undertaken a similar role within the Armed Forces and has recently worked with Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police.
 - **Gill Quinton** has been confirmed as the Corporate Director for Adult Services and Health. Gill is the current Executive Director for Communities Health and Social Care at Buckinghamshire County Council.

- **Ian Thompson** has been appointed as the Corporate Director for Planning, Growth and Sustainability. Ian is currently Corporate Director Regeneration and Economic Development / Regeneration and Local Services at Durham County Council.
 - **Tolis Vouyioukas** has been confirmed as the Corporate Director Children's Services. Tolis is currently the Executive Director Children's Services for Buckinghamshire County Council.
- 3.13 Richard Barker and Joe O'Sullivan took up their appointments on 4th November 2019, the third external appointment Ian Thompson is expected to start in January 2020.
- 3.14 Sarah Ashmead as Deputy Chief Executive will also act as the monitoring officer for the new council and following her appointment has also taken over as interim monitoring officer for the Shadow Authority. Members of the Shadow Executive expressed their thanks to Cath Whitehead who had undertaken the role since the Shadow Authority was established earlier this year.
- 3.15 The recruitment for managers at the next level (those people who report to members of the Corporate Management Team) is now underway with posts to be appointed to no later than mid-December 2019.
- 3.16 Initially these posts are just being advertised internally and are open to all employees who can demonstrate they meet the essential criteria. The one exception is the post of Service Director Corporate Finance as this post will also be the statutory Section 151 officer for the new council and as a result is also being advertised externally.

Programme Boards Update

- 3.17 Further work has been undertaken to review the 128 critical 'must haves' which had been identified previously and which outline the critical work required to deliver the new Council. These have been agreed based on a number of criteria including what is legally required and what needs to be in place for business, political and reputational reasons.
- 3.18 This review has included a session with the Overview and Scrutiny Implementation Task and Finish Group. Following the review some additional 'Must Haves' have been identified, a number have been brought together, some have been removed as they are no longer necessary for Vesting Day and others renamed to more accurately reflect the work required. As a result there are now 116 proposed 'Must Haves'.
- 3.19 The delivery dates have also been reviewed to ensure the work necessary is delivered as early as possible before April 2020, reflecting the inevitability that with a programme as complex as this there will be some slippage and others things required that haven't been identified yet.
- 3.20 Following the revision to the programme governance model the Programme Board chairs together with the Programme Management Office are to carry out a further detailed review of the revised list of 'Must Haves' and a detailed summary of the 'Must Haves' following this review will be included in the next Programme Update Report.

3.21 The table below shows the current number of 'Must Haves' to be delivered in each of the remaining months until 1st April 2020. The table also shows that a number will not be delivered until after the 1st April as these are linked to the date the new council starts, as well as the date of the May 2020 election.

Completed	October	November	December	January	February	March	Post March
7	4	8	14	13	16	35	19

3.22 Progress on the delivery of the 'Must Haves' continues to progress well. A number have slipped however and are shown as 'Amber'. They all however have a plan in place to ensure they are delivered in time. The Programme Management Office continues to review progress weekly and Programme Boards at each meeting also review the progress of their 'Must Haves'.

3.23 The current overall status of the 'Must Haves' is shown below:

Completed	Red	Amber	Green
7	0	10	99

3.24 Following the detailed review to be undertaken by the Programme Boards the Implementation Plan will then be updated.

4. MHCLG

4.1 As part of the monitoring of the programme, there are regular face to face meetings with MHCLG, as well as fortnightly telephone calls.

4.2 These provide reassurance to central government on the progress of the programme and help resolve any issues with the remaining legislation that needs to be laid before parliament.

5. Implementation Budget

5.1 The Shadow Executive agreed an implementation budget for the transition period of £12.85m.

5.2 This has been allocated across the programme based on the work undertaken to identify the critical activity required to establish the new council on 1st April 2020.

5.3 The overall position against the budget remains on track. A breakdown of the budget is contained at Appendix A. The current forecast as at the end of quarter 2 is a small underspend of £24,000. There have been no requests at this stage for any draw-down against the £1m central contingency agreed as part of the budget.

6. Residents

6.1 For the majority of services, these will be available from 1st April 2020 exactly as they are now, with little or no change. The aim of the programme being to ensure there is no service distribution. However where we can we will aim to improve services and an example of this is the agreement made recently on customer access points.

- 6.2 This decision will ensure when the new council comes into being on 1 April 2020, Buckinghamshire residents will be able to access information, advice and support on a range of topics near where they live or work, with the access points being based at the heart of local community life in existing buildings throughout Buckinghamshire.
- 6.3 Though these residents will be able to get face to face help on the spot from staff who will also be on hand to guide people, signpost them to help, support them with online services and in some locations discuss more complex issues.
- 6.4 Five 'access plus' centres, located in the current council offices in the county's main towns, will offer extra services from Monday to Friday for residents who have more complex enquiries.
- 6.5 Other council access points will operate from existing buildings, such as libraries, spread across the county stretching from Buckingham in the north to Burnham in the south. The ambition is to evolve the access points to create wider one-stop community hubs based in multi-purpose buildings at the heart of community life.
- 6.6 Other work planned will introduce a new single website and telephone number again aimed at making it easier for residents to access information and advice. We have appointed an external partner to help with the website development and as part of this they will be engaging with residents and local organisations for their views on what they would like to see in the new website.

7. Communications Plan

- 7.1 Regular communications to all our key stakeholders continues.
- 7.2 A communications strategy for the run up to 1st April 2020 has been produced and work is now focussed on the detailed activities required to deliver this strategy which will ensure residents and partners know how to contact the new council and to publicise any changes to how services will be delivered. A detailed training programme for officers is also being developed which will sit alongside a comprehensive induction programme for members elected to the new council next May.
- 7.3 A very successful member's engagement event was held on 7 November 2019, where members were able to receive updates from workstreams on their progress and to hear from Baroness Jane Scott, who had previously led Wiltshire Council when they became a unitary council in 2009.
- 7.4 We also establishing a Strategic Partner Board which will meet two or three times a year. This group will bring senior leaders from across the public, private and community sectors together, allowing us to further improve the ways in which we share information, improve collaboration and keep each other informed on our priorities, direction of travel and shared objectives.
- 7.5 The first meeting of this group is on 9th January 2020.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Confidence remains strong that the new council will be successfully established on 1st April 2020.
- 8.2 The appointment of the new Corporate Management Team will bring a fresh perspective to the programme and help ensure the work creates a strong platform for the significant improvement programme they will lead, that will follow the creation of the new council.

Background Papers	None
--------------------------	------

