



Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett



Role during COVID-19

As the situation continues to change, the latest position on COVID-19 will be provided at the Council meeting.

Election and appointment of Cabinet

The first elections to the Buckinghamshire Council were successfully held on 6 May 2021. This was a significant undertaking with 366 polling stations, over 1200 staff and delivered along with the elections for the Parish and Town Councils and Police and Crime Commissioner.

Buckinghamshire Recovery and Growth Proposal

Council and Bucks LEP partners have been progressing discussions with government to promote our ambitions for a recovery and growth deal and investment for Buckinghamshire. Discussions have been positive with engagement with civil servants and ministers in a range of government departments including DWP, DCMS, and MHCLG.

Buckinghamshire Growth Board

The Buckinghamshire Growth Board met for the first time following the local elections on the 10th June. There was a change in membership with Cllrs Broadbent, Cranmer, Strachan and Williams joining the Board on behalf of the council. The Board discussed its Terms of Reference with strong support from partners for the strength and work of the Board. Partners retain their own decision-making authority, but the Board is able to form strategic recommendations due to the geographic and strategic alignment of partners involved.

The Board also agreed plans to launch engagement on its 'Vision for Buckinghamshire' with key stakeholders over the summer and early autumn. The Board also supported submission of multiple strategic funding bids for Buckinghamshire to Government; £2,603,084 for nine projects from a range of organisations were submitted to the Community Renewal Fund and £117M for five Levelling Up Fund bids for the county.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

The Government's Getting Building Fund allocated £7.7m to Bucks LEP which is being invested to support the development of a Disruptive Innovation Space Centre (DISC) at Westcott and towards a voucher scheme in the Rural Broadband Programme. Bucks LEP also invited expressions of interest for further exciting projects to benefit from the funds and which have now been allocated towards supporting three other projects at Westcott as well as development of a Bucks Operator Skills Hub,

East West Rail fibre provision upgrade also supported by England's Economic Heartland, expansion of Lunaz Applied Technologies and development of an Advanced Braking Facility for D2H Advanced Technologies, both at Silverstone Technology Park. These funded projects, due to be delivered by March 2022, are expected to deliver high value growth, jobs, training and facilities through investment in Buckinghamshire's innovative sectors and supporting economic recovery in the country.

Business Support Grants

Most of the mandatory Covid grant schemes that were operating during 2020/21 have now closed. The last of these, the Restart Grant scheme has a closing date of the 30th of June. Since the start of the pandemic, between all the various business grant schemes, Buckinghamshire Council has distributed over £166m to support businesses in Buckinghamshire.

One of the schemes delivered was the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), a discretionary pot of funding allocated to the Council. In total, Buckinghamshire received £21m for the ARG and used it to support businesses for five of the winter/spring lockdown months. Buckinghamshire's ARG scheme was designed to support as many businesses as quickly as possible, in particular businesses which were not able to access support from other grant schemes. The Council and was a top performing council in terms of % of funding distributed as per the latest national B.E.I.S. reporting statistics.

Over the monthly rounds of funding, the ARG provided grants to 4544 businesses and self-employed individuals which supported over 16,000 employees in Buckinghamshire.

Enterprise Zone update

Following the successful letting for 260,000 sq ft in 2020, MEPC has commissioned work to construct a further 265,000 sq ft of speculative industrial buildings at Silverstone Park. The scheme, phase 3 of the 2million sq ft of outline planning consent, will comprise the largest properties yet constructed by MEPC at Silverstone Park, the largest buildings will offer over 90,000 sq ft of accommodation, providing larger facilities for growing companies, attracted to the area because of the skills in advanced engineering. Silverstone Technology Cluster is also part way through a growth programme with government backed 'Be the Business' which offers, amongst other things, companies in its area free, specialist one to one support for 12 months from senior figures in businesses such as Siemens, BAE Systems, Amazon and Rolls-Royce.

The new gold standard national rocket test facility at Westcott was unveiled by Science Minister Amanda Solloway in June. This will allow UK companies and academics to test state-of-the-art space propulsion engines at a more affordable rate than international rivals. As mentioned in my Bucks LEP update, Westcott is also benefiting from Getting Building Funds, so as well as the DISC, the funds are being used towards the innovation ecosystem expansion and acceleration of additional sector capabilities with Satellite Applications Catapult, a Novel Test Facility, a testing site for water-based propulsion systems for satellites and a Centre of Excellence for Rocket Engine and Flow Tests Facility, all to be delivered by March 2022. These public sector investments continue to build on the reputation and recognition that Westcott is an integral part of the UK space sector growth strategy. This success of the Cluster over the last three years and vision for the future is also being celebrated at an Expo event at the end of July.

Within the Woodlands EZ site, an updated planning consent was granted in April 2021 for a 3-unit scheme (combined floorspace 35,800 sqm at Symmetry Park) which also permits film production use giving potential for the expansion of a creative sector hub in this location.

Although new businesses taking up occupation in the Enterprise Zone sites post 1st April 2021 can no longer benefit from 100% rates relief, the future looks positive for our economic assets as activity, investment and progress continues to move forward. This is being embedded into a new five year business plan for the Enterprise Zone, being approved this month.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR)

In Aylesbury, the new Kingsbrook Secondary School received detailed planning consent in April, and work has now started on the site. We hope to welcome the first pupils through the door in September 2022. The completion of the Kingsbrook Primary School is due very soon, with new pupils attending classes in September this year.

Planning consent was also granted for the South East Aylesbury Link Road (Phase I) in February 2021, and funds have been negotiated and secured from HS2 to enable its delivery. Preparations for the CPO inquiry for Phase 1 are underway with the expectation of an Inquiry in late 2021. A key decision was taken in March to continue with the SEALR Phase 2 project with a planning application expected to be submitted in Summer 2021.

Work continues to secure the land that will enable the delivery of the new link roads around Aylesbury, and Homes England are happy with the Council's progress in overcoming significant challenges on some very complex road projects in Aylesbury, Princes Risborough and High Wycombe.

HS2 & East West Rail (EWR)

With the intensity of activity by HS2 Ltd increasing, the Council continues to emphasise its continued opposition to the project and, now construction has started, to try and hold HS2 to account. The Council is currently in an appeals process with HS2 Ltd on a number of lorry route approvals impacting the A413 and the A422. The Council did not determine these applications as it was considered that we had not received sufficient information and reassurances regarding the cumulative impacts of the lorry movements on the Council's highway network.

There has been a number of complaints in relation to dust / vibration and noise, EWR are investing in a new product to help minimise the dust issue and this should be rolled out over the next few weeks, as they are awaiting delivery. Co-ordination activities are continuing between HS2 and EWR, which are being led by BC Officers.

There continues to be ongoing concern regarding the damage being caused to the highway by EWR in the north of the county, meetings are underway to further discuss a programme of repairs and how best to share inspections between BC and EWR. Some repair works have already taken place. The Council are currently seeking funding for road repairs from both HS2 and EWR.

England Economic Heartland (EEH)

Work on England's Economic Heartland's first two connectivity studies, Oxford-Milton Keynes and Peterborough-Northampton-Oxford, continues at pace. The studies will consider the broadest range of options for improving connectivity in their respective areas, in order to cut emissions and support economic growth, as set out in EEH's transport strategy. Buckinghamshire Council and Buckinghamshire LEP are part of the Oxford-Milton Keynes study's steering group, providing study governance, checking and challenging each phase of the study and ensuring they progress in the right direction. Throughout June EEH held a call for evidence for the studies, to gain the views of broader stakeholders along each corridor. EEH Programme Director Martin Tugwell will be leaving EEH at the end of July to join Transport for the North. Interim arrangements are in place and work is underway to appoint his successor.

LGA's People and Places Board

The most recent meeting of the board took place on the 8th June, the agenda included discussions around the Levelling Up white paper and the work completed by the board over the last year around jobs and skills how we plan to influence this agenda moving forward, including the setting up of a LGA 'Jobs Taskforce'.

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

Since the last update, SESL has submitted evidence to an inquiry by the House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee into the use, effects and implications of Permitted Development Rights to convert commercial premises to housing.

SESL received a response from Chris Philp MP (Minister for Immigration Compliance and Justice) acknowledging SESL's views on the proposed changes to the National Transfer Scheme for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

Following the local elections, SESL invited the Leaders of the new unitary councils of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire to join SESL in representing communities.

SESL has continued to work on proposals to revise the duties and responsibilities relating to home to school transport, following correspondence with Nick Gibb MP (Minister for Schools).

Kickstart Launch event

On the 19th May I attended the Pinewood Studios for their Kickstart Scheme launch, which was also attended by Mims Davies MP, Minister for Employment, Thérèse Coffey, Secretary of State DWP, and Ben Roberts, Chief Executive, British Film Institute (BFI).

The Kickstart Scheme is a government funded initiative aimed at combatting long-term unemployment for young people, a section of society hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pinewood is one of a number of organisations taking part through a Kickstart gateway administered by the BFI and have taken on eight young people to join them on a six month placement.

Strategic Partners Board

On 7th June the Strategic Partners Board met for the first time since the elections. This Board has grown from last year bringing together critical senior leaders from across the public, private and community sectors. It enables us to keep each other informed on our priorities and drive forward our shared objectives. With over 30 people on the board now, the Lord Lieutenant, Chief Executive of Chilterns ANOB and Chairs of the Cultural Partnership joined an impressive list of our partners to focus on collaboration. Given we are all adjusting to new ways of working, this meeting explored working in the 'new normal'. Considering what this means for our workplace across the different sectors and what that means for our towns and communities.

Strategic Finance

The outturn for 2020/21 was taken to Cabinet on the 8th June and I am pleased to report that a small underspend of £400k was achieved (subject to audit). This is a major achievement for the Council in its first year of operation, especially when considering the year we have had and knowing that many authorities are in real financial difficulty. Now that the new Cabinet has been formed, we will start to look at budget priorities for 2022/23 and beyond and ensure that our financial and service planning fully align.



Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

Annual User Survey

Results of the national user survey for 2020-21 have been released which show improvements in satisfaction with the Council's adult social care services, despite the pandemic. Satisfaction with the care and support that people receive is now higher (68%) than last year's benchmark levels (65% CIPFA comparators, 64% England average). Only 3% were dissatisfied with the service they receive.

It is vital that the services we provide improve people's lives and it is pleasing to see that the number of those reporting that they have control over their daily lives has risen from 75% to 83% (78% CIPFA, 77% England), and those who say that they feel safe has increased to 77% from 68% (71% CIPFA, 70% England). The results were based on the views of 579 clients, representing a 28% return rate on the survey.

Health and Wellbeing Recovery

The COVID pandemic has affected the health and wellbeing of all our residents in multiple ways. Some residents were particularly affected including older people, those with pre-existing long-term conditions such as heart disease and diabetes, people from certain ethnic groups and those living in more deprived areas.

We know from national evidence and our own local survey that during the pandemic many people's mental and physical health worsened. In response to this, the Council is working in partnership with communities, the NHS and the voluntary sector to address mental health and social isolation, help residents to stay healthy by tackling unhealthy behaviours, and help prevent heart disease and diabetes. This partnership work also includes programmes promoting physical activity, obesity and addressing food poverty. Where possible, projects will be co-designed with communities and key partners.

We have been very successful in keeping COVID infection rates low in Buckinghamshire and supporting the roll out of vaccination. I would like to record my thanks to all the teams involved and to the residents themselves. However, the rise of the more infectious Delta variant poses challenges. At the time of writing, rates were rising in secondary school age children and young adults. The Council would still strongly encourage everyone to continue with protective behaviours (hands, face, space, fresh air), to strictly isolate if symptomatic or if they test positive, and for all adults to get vaccinated as soon as possible. We hope in this way all of our residents will be able to enjoy more freedoms over the summer.

Covid and Care Providers

The level of COVID in care homes has reduced dramatically and I am pleased to report that, again at the time of writing, there is now only an occasional, isolated case. The roll out of the vaccination programme in care homes has made a significant impact in reducing infections. Care homes continue to undertake whole home testing for staff and residents and all providers within the care sector have access to testing.

Subject to parliamentary approval and a subsequent 16-week grace period, from October anyone working in a CQC-registered older people's care home in England must have been fully vaccinated. The legislation will also apply to anyone entering homes for work, such as social workers. The Council is currently considering implications for its workforce and will be closely monitoring any impact on care providers. In addition, the Council is encouraging staff in care homes who are unvaccinated to take up the offer. The local health and care system has developed a range of innovative approaches to encourage vaccination take up, including outreach and pop up clinics in care homes, one-to-one clinical consultation for staff, targeted information (FAQs, social media etc), webinars and support to record accurate data.

The Council continues to support care providers with a renewed focus on recovery and resilience and we have maintained our enhanced offer of support ([COVID-19 Support Offer.pdf \(buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/s3.amazonaws.com)).

Care providers have also benefited from the effective distribution of financial support which has included infection control grants, rapid testing grants and workforce capacity grants.

The Government has just announced an additional £250m to support the adult social care sector to continue with COVID-19 protection. This is made up of £142.5 million Infection Control Funding and £108.8 million for testing. The fund will continue to meet the cost of rigorous infection prevention and control measures, helping protect people in adult social care as restrictions in society are eased, and supporting rapid, regular testing of staff to prevent COVID-19 transmission. Local authority allocations are yet to be announced.

Continuation of the Discharge to Assess (D2A) programme

The Council has been working with NHS partners to provide 'Discharge to Assess' (D2A). D2A is a programme that ensures those people who are medically fit to leave hospital can be transferred to another setting for short-term intervention or any further assessment to plan their longer-term care needs. This approach has a double benefit. Firstly, for the individual, as evidence demonstrates that staying in hospital longer than necessary has a negative impact on patient outcomes, and secondly as the approach also helps maintain capacity in hospitals. D2A was initially started in response to COVID but has been ongoing and continues to be developed. The focus of D2A is 'Home First', which means that partners in Buckinghamshire are working together to help people to return to their own home for further assessment wherever possible, and to only secure care home beds for those for whom this is not an option.

Commissioning Activity

Over the next two years, the Integrated Commissioning service will be introducing a new way of procuring packages of care for people. The approach will allow the Council to set out new terms relating to price and quality. Providers who have met these terms will then be able to bid for packages of care through an online portal. This will make our process of procuring services much more efficient. It will help us to improve quality and make sure we are delivering value for money. It will also give us

the opportunity to ensure our service specifications are aligned to the principles set out in the Council's Better Lives Strategy.

A new approach around delivering day opportunities and overnight short breaks by Buckinghamshire Council was approved in October 2019. Called 'Community Opportunities', it linked delivering the ambitions of the Better Lives Strategy with the Short Break Strategy. The ethos brought together the offer for day opportunities, supported employment and overnight short breaks via a single short break service. Its concept was about social inclusion, enabling people to explore a wider community offer, developing independence, learning new skills, attending training, accessing volunteering and, where possible, work.

During the pandemic, the work was paused and at present the Council is in the process of reviewing the needs assessment for day opportunities and overnight short breaks to understand the position in a post-Covid context. This will include engagement with service users and their carers, external providers and members of Community Boards to inform the future approach.





Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Gareth Williams

Development Management

I am very pleased to be able to report that following several successful recruitment campaigns, the Development Management team have welcomed a number of new starters and we expect also to be welcoming more very soon. We have managed to reduce our legacy vacancies by over half this year which in turn will enable us to alleviate the reliance we have had to have on short-term contractors.

However, those successes have been impacted more recently by the steep climb in the number of cases since the turn of the year. Buckinghamshire alone has seen a 36% increase in the number of planning applications being submitted, a trend that is repeated across the whole of the South East. As the second largest planning authority in the country, an increase of that magnitude is a considerable number of additional applications to process each week. We are now seeing some 1300 applications per month. Therefore, whilst the recruitment success is a positive move in the right direction, with the fluctuations in workload and the work of the Planning Improvement Board in its early stages, there will be some inevitable delays in decision making which we are focused on trying to minimise as much as we can.

Planning Improvement Board

The Planning Improvement Board was set up in April 2021 to provide an oversight of the improvement work across the Planning & Environment service. This will help identify where resources need to be deployed to accelerate improvement. The membership of the Board includes an external critical friend.

There are five workstreams associated with the Planning Improvement Board: Customer & Culture; Digital and Systems; Service Standards; KPIs & Performance; and Finance & Commerciality. Each workstream has a planning service and corporate co-lead and a work programme of improvement projects. Examples of the projects included in the work programmes are:

- Customer journey mapping to identify improvements and standardise the journey and associated processes.
- A single back office system for Planning.
- Consistent site notices and neighbour notification letters.
- Review of the performance indicators across the service.
- Review of Fees and Charges to ensure consistency.

Design Code Pilot

Earlier this year, Buckinghamshire Council received a grant of £50,000 to help the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) test the use of Design Codes in the planning process. After some delay to appointment, I am pleased to say the team is beginning this important piece of work.

Our administrative area is vast, with a rich and diverse geography, and many different and distinctive settlements. Developing a single Design Code to help us deliver high quality design outcomes across the whole of this area will therefore be a challenge. To overcome this challenge, we are focussing on fundamental, universally-applicable principles such as connected movement networks to help people get where they need to go, provision of Green Infrastructure to provide more beautiful places that provide opportunities for recreation and address climate change, and so on. The code will not cover building types and architectural design, as such guidance will need to be developed more locally.

The team is working hard to update the programme, and I expect to provide more detail on this programme and engagement opportunities very soon.

Local Plans

The further public hearings on the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) were completed in April and we hope to receive the Planning Inspector's final report soon enabling us to proceed to adopt the Plan a bit later in the year.

On the Buckinghamshire Local Plan optimising the level of brownfield development is a priority. To this end we have completed a first "brownfield call for sites" and are currently assessing the many sites that have been suggested. We will re-open that brownfield call after the summer break and will also undertake wider community engagement on key issues for the Plan. Work is also progressing on more detailed planning guidance (supplementary planning documents) including for specific sites such as Aylesbury South (AGT1) and Hollands Farm, together with introducing a new system of biodiversity accounting to secure a "net gain" in biodiversity on new development sites.

Planning Enforcement

The team continues to operate a firm but fair enforcement service and pursues breaches of planning control with urgency and competence. Q1 statistics are on par with Q1 in 20/21 in relation to Notices issued, cases logged and performance against appeals. There has been a significant increase in the number of cases closed which is attributed to the progression of the management structure and the associated pressure release on the staff resource. The team currently have 1580 open enforcement investigations in hand and are dealing with 19 enforcement notice appeals, including four public Inquiries.

The team are in the process of recruiting to the final vacant Team Leader position to complete the management structure and I am extremely pleased by the number of applicants applying for this vacancy. Experienced Planning Enforcement staff are difficult to find and retain and therefore key roles such as this Team Leader are notoriously difficult to fill. It is really encouraging to see lots of experienced planners wanting to come and work in the planning department at Buckinghamshire Council. In the meantime, and there have been a number of really good successes over the past quarter where serious breaches of planning control have been resolved.

Aylesbury Garden Town

The Delivery Plan for the Station Quarter and Waterside/Exchange area of the Town Centre is now underway with Montagu Evans commissioned to lead the Plan alongside a team including Urban

Movement, Urban Initiatives, Untitled Practice and Aecom. The team have a clear track record in the town already, working on existing projects including the Gardenway. The baseline work is already underway, with plans for wider public consultation later in the year. The wider AGT programme is continuing at pace with the Gardenway project continuing to progress alongside work on design and quality across the Garden Town. Stakeholder and community projects are continuing and greening successfully implemented.

Regeneration Framework

The council is seeking external resource to support the development of an ambitious regeneration programme. This will include the development of an overarching strategic regeneration framework for the county as well as the production of town-specific strategies and place-shaping activities.

The Regeneration Framework will set out an overarching approach to town centre regeneration across Buckinghamshire. It will incorporate and inform existing and future place-specific strategies and plans, and the commission also includes the development of more detailed outputs for the towns of High Wycombe and Chesham. The High Wycombe and Chesham work will sit alongside the work already underway and much further progressed in Aylesbury under the Garden Town Programme.





Cabinet Member report – Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Nick Naylor

Trading Standards

The team have been acting on intelligence provided by the National Food Crime Unit and with the support of Thames Valley Police, teams recently executed a search warrant to investigate possible use of animal by-products in food destined for human consumption. The investigation is ongoing. With funding from the Office for Product Safety and Standards (part of BEIS) test purchases have been carried out on a wide variety of products such as electric scooters, bikes and skateboards; and PPE – in the form of face masks. Early outcomes of the testing show several safety issues across a range of products which are being followed up.

On 'Dog sniffer day' (22nd June), with the assistance of a tobacco detection dog funded by HMRC, Trading Standards has followed up various reports of illicit tobacco being sold in shops across Bucks. 11 shops were visited, with suspected illicit and counterfeit tobacco and/or alcohol seized from three of these. These are now being investigated.

Trading Standards continues to train people to become "Friends Against Scams" - a national initiative aiming to protect and prevent people from becoming victims of scams by empowering people to take a stand against scams. Businesses Against Scams is a fairly new initiative which provides resources for companies to share with their employees to educate them on a variety of common business-related frauds. Since April, two virtual training sessions have taken place. Places for both of these initiatives can be booked [here](#). Call blockers are a key tool in stopping criminals accessing vulnerable residents in their own homes by allowing calls from pre-programmed known numbers and asking others to declare who they are or speak to a different person before being allowed through. Trading Standards currently have 368 active call blockers installed in more vulnerable peoples' homes which have blocked 99.7% of scam and nuisance calls. If you know a person who is vulnerable to telephone scams and would benefit from a call blocker please refer them to [Trading Standards](#).

Coroners

The service is recovering to business as usual and is working to the guidance issued by the Chief Coroner to achieve this. Whilst death referrals are returning to usual levels for the summertime, there continue to be pressures on the service from Covid, due to the number of Inquest hearings.

Shorter inquests have been scheduled until the end of 2021, with larger inquests and those requiring a jury currently scheduled for 2022, on the assumption that the current restrictions and social distancing requirements will have been removed, which will allow for hearings to take place in the court accommodation at Beaconsfield.

Registration Service

The Registration Service has recovered well, and birth and death registrations are now operating as usual. The Government easement for deaths to be registered by phone remains in place until September, when a wider review of Covid easements for deaths will be undertaken.

The changes and restrictions imposed on ceremonies have had significant impacts throughout the pandemic period. In the last two months there has been extremely high demand for new bookings on top of ceremonies already booked for 2021. The priority has been to ensure all legal paperwork is in place to allow ceremonies to take place. The Council's own ceremony rooms are now fully booked for the most popular days and times until October. Similarly, ceremonies registrars working at approved external venues such as hotels and stately homes are heavily booked for the next few months.

At the beginning of May, a major legislative change was introduced, with the removal of marriage registers and the introduction of a schedule system. This change also saw the inclusion of the mother's details in a registration, along with gender neutral parents and the ability to include up to six witnesses for marriages. This change has been significant to many, particularly the inclusion of mother's details. On the first day of the change, the service registered a marriage where both the mother and her wife were registered as the bride's parents – very much to the delight of the wedding party. A further national change on 1st July removed the requirement for all EU and non-EU nationals to give notice at designated register offices and couples can now attend their local register office instead.

Environmental Health

The post unitary transformation of the Environmental Health service has commenced as the service moves away from the model, which was delivered by legacy district councils, to a single countywide service. COVID activities remain the primary focus of the team, which continues to provide advice and guidance to businesses to assist them in complying with revised legislation as the country moves through the various steps in the Government's roadmap. Currently, the team is dealing with a high number of enquiries concerning organised events which were originally planned to be held post 21 June (the earliest date that Step 4 may have been implemented). Officers also continue to undertake visits both inside and outside normal working hours, to monitor Covid safe compliance; this activity is often in partnership with the Police. The team also continues to work with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in an exercise to monitor compliance in certain business sectors.

Following a direction from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) the proactive food premises inspection programme was altered in March 2020. The FSA has now provided its recovery plan and the team will be implementing the scheme outlined by the FSA. This programme will form a large part of the team's work over the next year.

Housing and Homelessness

The implementation of the new Housing Service structure is now underway. The new structure comprises of two parts - Homelessness and Advice and Housing Options and Supply – and will go live from 1st August 2021.

The national moratorium on repossession action (which prevented bailiffs from carrying out evictions except for some exceptional cases) came to an end on 31st May 2021. The Government is also phasing out the extended possession notice periods that it introduced last year. Housing will continue to monitor the local impacts however an upturn in the number of clients approaching the Council for assistance after being served a Section 21 (i.e. a "no fault") notice has not yet emerged.

Our teams have continued to support and accommodate rough sleepers in line with the Government's "Everybody In" initiative and secured accommodation for over 280 rough sleepers since the initiative started in March 2020. As of the end of June, the Council was accommodating 94 rough sleepers. As Covid restrictions continue to reduce, officers are developing plans for the next stage of 'moving on' rough sleepers currently accommodated and for the delivery of advice and support offered to rough sleepers going forward. A further seven units of move-on accommodation are due to be available from July 2021, operated by Harrow Churches Housing Association (funded via the Council's successful bid to the Next Steps Programme). The Council has successfully secured further funding from the Rough Sleeper Initiative 4 programme for a range of support services and has made bids to the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme to secure further funding for more units of move-on accommodation. The construction of the new temporary accommodation scheme at Desborough Road in High Wycombe is progressing well and is currently scheduled for completion in October 2021.

Licensing

Work continues to implement the new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy from the 6th September 2021. A number of enabling decisions have been taken or are in process through Cabinet and Licensing Committee. These include the removal of the legacy council hackney carriage zones, the setting of new hackney carriage tariffs and the setting of new taxi licensing fees and charges. Work is also underway to ensure that operational and digital changes needed to support the implementation of the Policy are delivered for September. Licensing Act and Gambling Act Policies which are statutorily required by April 2023 are also being progressed and draft policies will be presented to Licensing Committee over the coming months.

The Service has been extremely busy as a result of the lifting of restrictions for the hospitality industry and has been working hard to support and assist businesses return to trading. There are a number of larger events now scheduled to take place in the coming months, including the British Grand Prix and Pennfest music festival, and officers will be working closely internally and with organisers to ensure events are safe and compliant.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

Following a period of high demand through the winter owing to Covid-19 impacts this service has now returned to a more normal level of activity. The team are working to recruit to vacancies and to deliver a number of projects, including increasing temporary office capacity and refurbishment of some of the public facing areas at The Chilterns Crematorium.

Bierton Crematorium has been shortlisted for a RIBA award. The RIBA National Awards are given to buildings across the UK recognised as having significant contributions to architecture. Judges visited the site recently and the outcome is awaited.

The Chilterns Crematorium replacement cremator project (due for delivery in 22/23) continues to progress with Invitation to Tender documents to procure the replacement of the specialist cremator equipment currently issued. Officers will be working hard over the next 18 months to ensure that the right solution is in place to enable the Crematorium to continue to deliver a high-quality service to residents.

At Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens officers have been working with volunteers to create a Tree Trail within the garden, which is sponsored by SEGRO, Slough Trading Estate, as part of their centenary celebrations. The trail was officially opened on the 8th July 2021.

Gypsy and Traveller Service (GTS) Update

Unauthorised encampments across the last three fiscal years show a steady decline – 38 encampments in 19/20, 18 encampments in 20/21 and nine encampments in 21/22. This is a combination of the impact of the pandemic alongside a holistic and proportionate approach. The GTS continued to deal with encampments following government guidance during the pandemic, balancing both the welfare needs of the Travellers and the rights and freedom of the settled community. Robust action was taken on groups when required and rationalised levels of toleration to families that adhere to the Council's code of conduct. Development of the forward looking strategy is due to start this year and will build on the existing good work and ensure a long term plan is in place to manage the Gypsy and Traveller service.





Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

Kingsbrook View Primary Academy

Construction of the new 420 pupil school with a 52-place nursery on the Kingsbrook development on the outskirts of Aylesbury is progressing well. The new school will be ready to welcome children at the start of September 2021. The new school will be run by Inspiring Futures Partnership Trust, a Buckinghamshire based multi-academy trust.



As well as high quality teaching spaces the Kingsbrook View Primary Academy will benefit from a multi-use games area, hard and soft play areas, a wildlife area and a forest school. The development includes a new car park with electric charging points, bicycle and scooter storage for use by pupils and staff.

The following links show the progress of the development during May 2021.
<https://vimeo.com/555135806/be3cfa5d4e>

The Kingsbrook Secondary School

Works have also recently commenced on the construction of the new Kingsbrook Secondary School. Following the successful approval of the planning application and land transfer, work commenced in April 2021. The new school should be ready July 2022 in order to open for pupils in September 2022. The new school will accommodate 1080 pupils when it reaches its maximum capacity. The school will open initially with 180 year 7 pupils and will grow year on year up to its full capacity. It will be the first in the County to have a purpose built 32-place Social, Emotional and Mental Health Unit for children with Special Educational Needs.



The school will also be run by The Insignis Academy Trust. As well as high quality teaching spaces the new secondary school will benefit from extensive sports facilities including a 3G pitch, a multi-use games area, a four court sports hall, an activity studio and performance areas, all of which will be available for hire by the community.

In addition, the new school will have very strong sustainability credentials which exceed the current Department for Education requirements and align with the Buckinghamshire Council Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and its emerging actions.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Sufficiency

Following a detailed piece of data analysis looking at the current needs of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Buckinghamshire, the six-week Education - SEND and Inclusion Sufficiency consultation opened on 7 June 2021. This is a public consultation, the contents of which have been contributed to by the Buckinghamshire parent / carer forum and form a key part of the Local Area SEND Improvement work.

Publication of the subsequent Education - SEND and Inclusion Sufficiency Strategy is expected later in the year and will run for the next five years. It will outline the projected plans for expansion of the specialist education sector, additionally resourced provisions and plans to expand greater inclusion within mainstream schools.

Buckinghamshire Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Programme

We know that school holidays can be pressure points for some families because of increased costs, such as food and childcare, as well as reduced incomes. For some families this can lead to a holiday experience gap, with those children being less likely to access organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health and more likely to experience social isolation. To that end, Buckinghamshire Council is delivering a Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme in 2021, as part of the Department for Education nationally funded scheme. Our HAF Programme will offer free holiday activities in the summer and Christmas school holidays to school-aged children, aged 5 to 16 years, who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. The programme will run across four weeks of the summer holidays and for one week in the Christmas holidays.

The HAF programme is designed to tackle these issues by providing free holiday activities through clubs and organised sessions. Children and young people attending sessions will be able to enjoy quality holiday activities and a healthy hot meal at each session they attend. This will support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people, encouraging them to engage in enriching and fun holiday activities and providing them with access to a healthy hot meal. Information and support for wider family members is built in to all HAF holiday sessions.

We are currently finalising our summer HAF activity programme, working alongside the voluntary and community sector; and we are aiming to offer a wide range of fun and physical activities which are appealing and engaging for all ages and abilities of children and young people. Families will be able to choose and book free HAF activity sessions from a selection that will be on offer.

In addition to the above, we are continuing our Helping Hand Initiative by providing our most vulnerable families with support to buy food over the summer holiday period. It is being run through schools and targeted at families with children and young people eligible for free school meals. The initiative will provide families with a £70 electronic food voucher per child ahead of the holiday

period. The digital food voucher can be used at the majority of supermarkets. Families can also split their voucher across multiple supermarkets, if they wish.

Transforming Quality Assurance and Audit Activity across Children's Services

The Ofsted Focused Visit in February 2021 identified two areas requiring further improvement. Firstly, 'the effectiveness of management oversight and supervision to ensure that actions are completed, and that children's plans are progressed.' Secondly, 'the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements, promoting the involvement of practitioners in case auditing and increasing the focus on the impact of practice on children's experiences.'

The recent appointment of an Assistant Director for Quality Assurance has provided momentum to drive these improvements forward, alongside a comprehensive review of our Quality Assurance Framework and associated Audit Activity Schedule. The schedule has been developed using our knowledge and learning to date about the quality of our practice; quality of our service management and delivery; and the quality of the management of our work force. Quality Assurance activity is undertaken by all managers at all levels. This includes but is not limited to Case File Audits, Moderation, Dip Samples, Practice Observations, Check and Challenge sessions, Peer Reviews, and Quality Assurance Visits to the front line.

Quality assurance activity this year is informed by previous audit findings and trends, as well as our Improvement Plan and recent findings from the Ofsted Focused Visit. This year's activity will include a whole service approach to quality assurance and co-ordination across all areas of the directorate.





Cabinet Member report – Climate Change & Environment

Councillor Peter Strachan

Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy

Following agreement at Cabinet in February on the draft Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy, targeted engagement with Community Boards and with parish and town councils has been held. The discussions have generated useful feedback and in particular highlighted support from attendees for the use of nature-based approaches to addressing climate change such as through the planting of trees and hedgerows. Moving forward on the strategy's aims is a key priority for this portfolio.

Large Scale Tree Planting Programme

Work to turn our ambition to plant over 500,000 trees is well underway with initial Woodland Creation Design Plans for the Phase 1 sites produced and the finer detail of the programme being developed rapidly. A grant funding bid to cover some of the planting and maintenance costs is envisaged to be submitted in late summer.

Work on this large-scale programme is complimented by a separate funding bid for the Local Authority Treescapes Fund that is designed to support small (<0.5 ha) community and roadside tree planting projects in non-woodland areas. The bid covers funding for nine identified community projects and was submitted at the end June and, if successful, the planting would be undertaken during the next planting season.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Buckinghamshire was chosen by the Government as one of five Pilot Authorities to test the process to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). These strategies are a new system of spatial strategies for nature, that higher tier authorities will be required to be produce by the Environment Bill 2021. The Environment Bill is currently proceeding through Parliament and is envisaged to receive Royal Assent later this year. LNRSs are designed as tools to drive more coordinated, practical and focussed action to help nature, and they also deliver wider environmental outcomes. LNRSs will support delivery of mandatory biodiversity net gain in the planning system and provide a focus for a strengthened duty on all public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity. It is also envisaged that they will be used to guide and channel investment from other funding sources i.e. new Environment Land Management scheme into local priorities for protection, creation and enhancement.

The Buckinghamshire LNRS Pilot area team led the testing of the steps in the proposed process to produce a LNRS from Autumn 2020 until May 2021. A draft prototype Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Buckinghamshire was submitted to government at the end of May 2021. The lessons learnt from the five pilots will be used to help inform the national regulations and guidance to support this new duty on local authorities once the requirements of Environment Bill come into force.

Groundwater Resilience and Community Action (GRACE)

Groundwater flooding has seen the lowest levels of investment, action and consideration by risk management authorities compared with the focus of attention seen by fluvial and coastal and more recently surface water flooding. Yet, the impacts of groundwater flooding can be more devastating and severe than from other sources. The flooding can last for weeks or even months, which results in very high social and economic impacts. The Council has received £7.5m to support the GRACE project which through partnership working will use new approaches and technologies to prompt new thinking and fresh ideas. The project will improve quality of life and reduce social and financial impacts for thousands of homeowners in the Chilterns and Berkshire Downs. The GRACE project has several strings to it, including:

- Partnerships with local communities
- Investigating and developing responses to mental health impacts of flooding
- Using new highways gully sensors for monitoring
- New modelling and mapping of groundwater flood risk areas
- Developing a new groundwater flood alert system
- Researching and improving property flood resilience measures
- Identifying and trialling Natural Flood Management measures to reduce groundwater flooding

Southern Waste Service Update

The South of Buckinghamshire Waste Collection services have experienced some service disruption in June 2021 owing to increased tonnage (80-100% more Garden Waste) as well as staffing challenges including a minor outbreak of Covid-19 which is being managed by Veolia. The last of the old 'Serco' vehicles, which have suffered recent breakdowns have been replaced with new vehicles throughout June. Veolia have now introduced a full fleet of new, more fuel efficient, reliable waste collection and cleansing vehicles, improving reliability of the Southern Waste Service. Similarly, staffing challenges will be addressed by loaders and drivers being bussed in from other areas. Biffa Demobilisation continues successfully.

Waste Services

The procurement of the new Household Recycling Centre contract is well underway with tender evaluations set for the summer. Despite a tight timescale for the procurement of the running of all nine Household Recycling Centres a new service contract is required to be in place by 1st April 2022.

Buckinghamshire Council recently successfully prosecuted its 800th fly-tipping case with fines in excess of £1.1million showing our continued zero tolerance to illegal dumping of any kind. There has been a national increase in fly-tipping since March 2020 which is reflected locally as well. 71% of the prosecutions since March 2020 involved dumping of waste brought into Buckinghamshire from elsewhere. We continue to ask all residents and businesses to avoid paying cash for waste disposal and follow the [SCRAP code](#) to make sure their waste does not end up in the wrong hands.

Finally, Waste Services has been shortlisted twice in Awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management. The Council has been shortlisted for The Best Local Authority Recycling Initiative for its [Zero Waste Map](#) – an online map listing over 200 places across Buckinghamshire that help residents move towards Zero Waste. High Heavens Household Recycling Centre (HRC) in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire Council and FCC Environment have been shortlisted for Civic Amenity Site of the Year. The entry submission highlighted the work achieved during the Covid-19 pandemic

and the improvements that have been made to the site to make a trip to the tip easier for local visitors. The ceremony is on the 21st July where we hope to be double winners.

MP Rob Butler Visits Pembroke Road Waste Transfer Station

On Friday 11th June the team at Pembroke Road Waste Transfer Station welcomed Rob Butler MP to site for a tour of the recently re-developed site operations. Since the visit, Rob has sent a letter of appreciation for frontline operational staff.

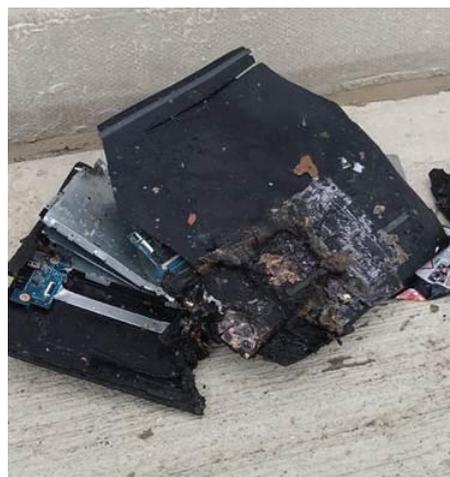


Garden Waste Update

Due to the time of year, we are entering into the peak season of garden waste collections and recent rain spells are resulting in additional growth which the team are working hard to accommodate. From the 5th July an additional garden waste collection round has been introduced in the north of the county each day to ensure rounds can complete.

Vehicle Fires

Thursday 24th June saw the 15th vehicle fire in the last 18 months. This is a serious issue and all root causes are residents disposing of items in the wrong bin. Mainly batteries and small electrical items. On this occasion it was a laptop that had been put into a recycling bin. Luckily, due to the quick response from the crew, no one was injured, and the vehicle did not suffer any damage. However, there is always a knock on effect to delivering statutory services and the clean-up operation on site is resource heavy. Despite numerous press releases and social media posts, it appears the message is not reaching all residents and the team would value your help to inform residents that batteries and small electrical items need to be placed on top of their bin for collection rather than inside.





Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

Culture

After last year's event was postponed due to the lockdown, I was pleased to see the success of our family-friendly literature and arts festival, WhizzFizzFest, on 26 June; this was planned in line with the current stage of the Government's Covid-19 roadmap, with a mixture of online sessions and in-person activities in Aylesbury town centre. The Culture team has been working with colleagues and local partners on a range of such activities to support the reopening and recovery of high streets across the county. In June, the provision of street entertainers and a 'Story Stall' project began, with artists engaging residents in storytelling activity; this will continue throughout the summer. Additional activity in town centres will take place from 22 to 25 July over Buckinghamshire's first 'Open Weekend', showcasing the cultural and creative offering of our organisations and community groups around the county. During the school holidays, activities for younger children will be provided through 'Play around the Parishes' sessions in some parks across the county. Our disability sports/dance sessions have also resumed, although numbers are slightly down on pre-pandemic levels as there is still some caution from participants in returning.

Buckinghamshire Archives

The Archives Service is open for researchers to book appointments and has been fully booked on most days it is open. The service has a strong social media presence and its #GreatBucksTour of the archives continues to be popular. In June, it launched a Black History research project to uncover relevant stories within the archives; and it has also been supporting LGBTQ+ Pride month with podcasts.

Libraries

Buckinghamshire libraries launched a free customer app (Spydus Mobile) on 1 July. While library customers have been able to access our services online for many years, the addition of this smartphone app allows for self-service borrowing of books in libraries using the phone's camera. It also allows you to:

- Search and reserve from our entire collection.
- View your loans, reservations and payments.
- Update your personal details.
- Save lists of favourite items for later.
- Discover featured titles and recommendations.
- Use your camera to scan an ISBN of any book to check if it is in our collection.

We have also recently introduced Hublets (loanable tablets), which were previously available in Aylesbury and Marlow libraries, to our libraries in High Wycombe, Chesham and Buckingham. These are set up so that they can only be used within a library, connecting to the free Wi-Fi, and customers can borrow one for up to an hour by self-issuing to themselves using their library card and pin. The Hublets have a range of useful apps pre-loaded, giving access to library resources and internet browsing for council services, health and wellbeing resources and general information, email, job sites etc. They can also be used by people who have an online assessment or job interview, as they can be taken to a quiet spot within the library.

Work is in progress on the new Amersham library within the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre, which will include a bespoke children's library with sensory wall, a computer suite and printing, loanable tablets, self-service technology, flexible meeting and study space, along with over 10,000 books to delight readers of all ages. The new library will also be the first Buckinghamshire library to introduce staff-less technology, enabling customers to access the library during extended opening hours.

In a project commissioned by Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Farnham Maltings, and with funding from the Rothschild Foundation, an 'artist in residence' Lasana Shabazz has been working with local communities and the staff at High Wycombe and Micklefield libraries, talking about their stories of living in Buckinghamshire. 'I Am Wycombe' draws on experiences shared by participants and the artist's own story; Lasana has created a series of seven films – these can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/user2431627> (please note that some of the videos have content warnings and may not be suitable for young viewers). Each film stands alone but watched together they paint a picture of Wycombe's residents through the themes of home, family and belonging. The artist has captured a powerful snapshot of people and place, creating an important platform for the stories that often remain untold, placing voices of the diverse and varied community of Wycombe firmly at the centre of the artistic process.

Finally, the library service has also continued to support the council's Covid-19 Rapid Testing programme, with Buckingham and High Wycombe libraries hosting Rapid Test sites where trained staff provide assisted Rapid (or lateral flow) tests for people, with results in 30 minutes, as well as handing out home testing kits; libraries staff were also redeployed to support the wider Rapid Testing team until libraries reopened.

Leisure

In line with the Government roadmap, all our leisure centres reopened with mainly gym and swim activities on 12 April, followed by the return of group exercise classes on 17 May. The return of customers to the centres has been very positive, particularly for those residents using Chesham and Chalfont Leisure Centres who can finally make use of the fully renewed gym facilities and interactive fitness studios following the completion of refurbishments in December. At the time of writing my report, we eagerly await the anticipated wider lifting of Covid restrictions on 19 July, which will permit increased customer capacity at all our centres.

Work to replace the swimming pool at the Chalfont Leisure Centre is progressing well, with the new concrete pool tank now constructed and testing underway prior to tiling work commencing. Our primary focus remains on the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre development in Amersham, where both the pace and volume of construction work remains significant. Both the Chalfont pool and the new Lifestyle Centre are expected to open in the autumn; the teams are working closely to ensure that certainty on the date of completion can be given to all our key stakeholders and residents as soon as practically possible.

The South Buckinghamshire Golf Course has been very busy since reopening on 29 March, with over 8,500 rounds of golf being played (an increase of over 1,000 rounds on the same period in 2019). As the football season was extended from the normal April finish to the end of June, our pitches have also been very busy, including at Farnham Park Sports Fields, where nearly 90 matches were accommodated in a 12-week period, and softball restarted in April, with the first large event on 5-6 June attracting over 500 players.

Country Parks

Despite the relaxation of lockdown measures, the Country Parks continue to be extremely popular, with over 300,000 visitors in April and May. The focus remains on maintaining high quality visitor services with these unprecedented levels of use. Major projects are in development which include plans for new visitor facilities at Black Park; extensive mitigation for the HS2 enabling works at Denham Country Park (with over £196,000 secured from the HS2 Colne Valley Additional Mitigation Fund for access and ecological improvements); and the development of a new Country Park to open in 2023, where it is hoped that some of the planned tree planting can coincide with the Queens Green Canopy proposals that are in development.

Parks and Play Areas

There are a number of projects to renovate and replace play equipment:-

- Renewal of the toddler play area in the Alfred Rose Park in Aylesbury is well underway and should be completed by the end of July.
- The complete renovation of the Bridge Street skate park in Buckingham has been delayed while additional permissions from the Environment Agency are sought.
- Design consultations have been completed for the Calvert Green NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play).
- Replacement play areas for Haydon Hill, Cottlesloe Green and Walton Court in Aylesbury; tender documents for these are due to be released by mid-July for project completion before the end of March 2022.





Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles

Helping Hand

The Helping Hand service will continue to support our most vulnerable residents working closely with services across the council and partners including local councils and the voluntary sector. The team will continue to help direct people to the support that is right for them. This may be from the voluntary or community sector or direct from the council. If anyone is worried about access to food or other essentials, and not sure what help is available, contact the council's Helping Hand support line on 01296 531151.

Summer Holiday Support

Following the Government announcement on 21 June regarding the £160 million extension to the COVID Local Support Grant, Buckinghamshire was awarded £910,591.83 to provide additional Food and Warmth support to those families within Buckinghamshire who require some extra assistance.

These additional monies have facilitated the continuation of the Holiday Food voucher scheme that has been successfully operating since the Christmas Holidays and has already provided over 43,000 vouchers totalling approx. £1.1million support to families with children/young people who are eligible for Free School Meals support, early years' pupil premium or 2-year old funded free education places. The vouchers will complement the Holiday Activity and Food Programme being delivered as part of a national scheme funded by the Department for Education and managed by the Education Service.

Community Safety

In order to provide a response to the new Domestic Abuse Bill the Community Safety Service has expanded its domestic abuse capacity. Government funding of £850,000 has been provided for Buckinghamshire to ensure that we are able to safeguard the wide range of victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA), through the design, development and delivery of new DVA services. This is a complex piece of legislation and work is progressing well, further updates will be available as work progresses.

A successful Domestic Homicide partnership event was held on 23rd June with over 270 people in attendance. The online learning event had the theme of BAED (Black, Asian & Ethnically Diverse) victims and involved some extremely inspiring speakers sharing personal experiences.

Community Boards

There has been an intensive induction programme for Chairman and Vice Chairman with everyone keen to get going and help embed the boards in their communities. With a collective budget of £3.9m

and last year's carry forward funds there is a real passion to make the boards a success and work with the community and our partners on local projects that will make a difference. Our key focuses this year include improving the environment and supporting economic recovery. We have already made a great start at exploring with council services how the boards can address these at a truly local level and in the right way for their community. Each board will have a dashboard that will enable regular reporting to all members as well as ensuring examples of the wonderful local initiatives across the board are widely communicated.

Voluntary and Community Sector

In the first year of the new Council, the pandemic has been a catalyst for collaboration with the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector and the new VCSE Partnership Board is a key connector. The VCSE partnership board have agreed their new terms of reference and will be a permanent feature of the partnership landscape. We will be working closely with the board to drive forward the ambitions within the co-designed [VCSE Strategic Framework](#), approved by Cabinet in March. The Board are hosting a series of bitesize collaboration events with Cabinet Members and Service Directors over the summer to support getting to know one another and harness new innovative ways of working together.

Town and Parish

Town and Parish Councils are key partners for the council. The service is developing strong links and relationships to ensure effective partnerships and joint working between the two tiers of local government. A new All Councils Charter will set out how we build collaborative cultures, and covers our structures for joint working, including Community Boards, Parish Liaison Meetings, Clerks Forums, Parish Drop ins and Regional Highways Forums. The next town and parish liaison meeting will take place on Wednesday 14 July.

Workforce Profile

In April we published our [annual Workforce Profile Report for 2020 to 2021](#), to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The Workforce Profile Report provides examples of how we are complying with the Duty and demonstrates our performance on equalities. In addition to this, we also published our [Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#) which sets out how we are delivering our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusions for our workforce.

Externally, we are supporting the establishment of the new community-based Bucks BAME Network and its workstreams. Our officers are now able to link in with these workstreams to have conversations with residents from ethnic minority communities and discuss how council services – such as housing, health, community safety and so on - impact our residents.





Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

Changes to School Bus Arrangements

From September this year, there will be some changes to [school bus arrangements](#). Two briefing sessions have been held for all members on the changes in June 2021, and we have also been communicating these changes to parents, schools and Community Boards. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) have been made available online [here](#).

New contracts will be in place with bus operators to run school buses for children who are eligible for transport assistance under the Council's Home to School Transport Policy, with any remaining spare seats available for sale. [Detailed bus routes](#) for Council-run bus services for the next school year have been published, and [school bus timetables](#) will be published on 15th August.

Applications for the Spare Seat Scheme, which provides an opportunity for parents/carers on non-eligible students to apply for seats on Council-run bus services, were open between 28th June and 19th July, and information about the number of seats available for each route was available online so that parents had more information about the limited seats available. Applicants to this discretionary service will be notified if they have a seat for their child by the end of July.

We are working in partnership with bus companies to increase the number of commercial school bus services across Buckinghamshire to cater for non-eligible children, whereby bus companies sell tickets directly to parents. Currently 15 new commercially run school bus routes are planned for this September. Further details can be found [here](#).

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnerships

Following the Government's publication of the *Bus Back Better* approach, Cabinet have given approval to enter Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators. The next stage of this process is to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which will provide greater opportunity to work with operators to achieve higher quality more regular services, the opportunity to review existing services to create higher frequencies, better accessibility, reliability, cleanliness and more energy efficient and cleaner vehicles. The plan is being developed and will be considered by Cabinet before being submitted to the Government in October.

HS2 and East West Rail

We are lobbying HS2 hard to reach an agreement, with all Highways Authorities, on funding for road repairs to address the detrimental damage being done by HS2 to our highway network. I also recently wrote to the HS2 Programme Director to seek reassurance on the infrastructure maintenance depot (IMD) at Calvert following local concerns about the size, use and purpose. In particular, to understand if the depot would be used as a training centre following concerns about the traffic it

would generate, additional parking pressures and further urbanisation of this rural location. The response from HS2 Ltd indicated that there will be a training facility on the site for essential specialist training and competence assessment for maintenance operatives based at the IMD in Calvert as well as operatives from other HS2 sites. HS2 Ltd confirmed that there is no requirement for any additional car parking to meet this training need. The planning approval under the hybrid Act for the IMD Depot is scheduled to be submitted in March 2022.

I recently wrote to East West Rail (EWR) in response to their consultation on the next phase of EWR to emphasise the importance of the Aylesbury-Milton Keynes Link and raise concerns around customer experience, electrification, and digital connectivity. Buckinghamshire Council supports the development of the EWR Main Line in principle, and in order to maximise the economic benefits of the route it is important that the whole route, including the link from Aylesbury to Claydon Junction, is delivered. Currently, Aylesbury has poor strategic connections with other parts of the UK, particularly locations other than London, and this extension is key to opening up opportunities for residents with better connections to Milton Keynes, Oxford and Cambridge.

EV Charging Points

32 additional EV Charging bays are being implemented in Buckinghamshire. This supports the Council's commitment to the Climate Change Strategy and providing local residents without off-street parking the opportunity to own an electric vehicle. These are being installed in Western Avenue, Coopers Yard Aylesbury, Waterside North Aylesbury, and Cornwalls Meadow in Buckingham. In addition, the Council has installed its first rapid charger in Sycamore Road car park, Amersham. Rapid chargers are also coming soon to Amersham Old Town car park, and Star Yard car park, Chesham. A fast charging point will accompany the rapid charge point at these locations. In partnership with Char.gy, work has begun to install a pad-charger at Liston Road car park in Marlow and should be completed in August. Customers will be able to register to book a session to drive the car which is specially configured to charge from the pad-charging point. We intend to submit a further bid this year to provide additional charging points for residents without off-street parking.

Buckinghamshire Greenway

Work has started on the next phase of the Buckinghamshire Greenway that will provide an off-road active travel walking and cycle route between Wendover and Great Missenden railway stations. This forms part of the Buckinghamshire Greenway which will then provide a continuous north-south walking and cycling route running the whole length of the county. The scheme is being delivered by Sustrans with funding from the Department for Transport. Works are due to be completed by spring 2022. The Council is working closely with Sustrans on development of the remaining sections of the Misbourne Greenway between Great Missenden and the Colne Valley via Amersham and the Chalfonts, with a view to securing delivery funding.

Bikeability

We have secured funding through the Bikeability Trust to train families in safe cycling. This training can be accessed by contacting Cycle4Life, though limited places are available. The aim of the trial scheme is to encourage and give families confidence in bike riding, be more active and give them the confidence to safely adopt more active travel choices. Our usual Bikeability training has restarted in schools following the pause due to Covid and is proving very popular.

E-Scooter Trial – Expanded to Princes Risborough

The Council's E-Scooter Trial, which is already running in High Wycombe and Aylesbury, has expanded and is now up and running in Princes Risborough. The trial will provide better connectivity with the town and station, providing an alternative to the car for short journeys through the town.

Highways Infrastructure Projects

Construction work started on a number of Highways Infrastructure Projects in recent months with the A4010 John Hall Way/Crest Road junction getting underway in January and on track to be completed in September 2021. The Haydon Hill Cycleway started in April to provide an extension to the Waddesdon Greenway, to connect the new Roman Park site with Haydon Hill at Gogh Road in Aylesbury. Successful installation of the largest of three bridges to be installed took place very recently and the project is due for completion by late Summer 2021 and when complete provides a route all the way from Waddesdon Manor to Aylesbury town centre. Great Missenden Car Park and Coach Turning, funded via HS2 Assurance, has now commenced on site on the 7th June, after achieving planning approval in April. Work is ongoing to finalise legal agreements for access rights between the School and the Parish Council. This will enable a 2nd phase of the project to commence on the 5th July. The scheme has an anticipated completion in August 2021.



The A41 Bicester Road Primary Public Transport Corridor project advanced works, including ducting and other communications related work for the new traffic signals, started on site on 15 June. The main works are expected to be on site in early August with the project expected to be completed in May 2022. The A404/A4155 Westhorpe, Marlow project is currently progressing through the detailed design approval phase involving Highways England. Delays encountered during the approval process means construction is now expected to commence in Autumn 2021.

Transport for Buckinghamshire Update

Despite a warm April and the wettest May on record resulting in good growing conditions for grass (members will have experienced this in their own gardens), the rural cutting programme is very much on schedule and one week ahead of last year. Two out of the three annual rural junction visibility cuts have been completed and the 1m width cut along other sections of road is on programme. Our plans to manage the verges that are particularly rich in wildflowers, to encourage their viability and biodiversity will be completed in mid-July.

Drainage works are well underway, with an active programme of coordinated gully cleansing, follow up reactive work, ditching and longer planned drainage schemes. All 85,000 gullies will receive at least one cleanse this year, whilst those in known flooding locations will be cleansed twice. By the end of June, over 13,000 gullies have been cleansed.

Of the 32 planned drainage schemes to be designed and constructed this year, three are in the construction stage to be followed by an average of four per month for the remaining year. This work centres around repairs and improvements to existing infrastructure to improve capacity and resilience in the system. Working methods have been improved to include latest environmental good practice and several local supply chain partners are being used to support this particular work activity.

Extreme wet weather events have put standby teams to the test, as the number of emergency 'call outs' has been a challenge, but good planning and coordination with the Civil Contingencies Team has resulted in a positive outcome.



Cabinet Member report – Finance, Resources, Property and Assets

Councillor John Chilver

Telephony

Work to harmonise the Customer Service Centre telephony platforms was successfully completed in April 2021, with all Customer Service Centre calls now being answered on the CTalk platform.

This interim arrangement enables us to quickly and efficiently transfer resource to support areas where there are increased call volumes. A single telephony platform also offers more resilience and helps stabilise the service by reducing call abandonment and wait times for customers. In addition, we are now able to consolidate reporting and undertake consistent performance monitoring.

Wycombe Customer Service Centre

Following the creation of the new Council and the consolidation of our activities we have been working with Capita and stakeholders across the Council to prepare for the re-integration of the Wycombe Customer Service Centre back into our in house operation.

Bringing the service back in house will deliver financial efficiencies for the Council allowing us to save up to £266k per annum.

Other significant benefits include:

- enabling us to provide an improved and more consistent service to our customers,
- the ability to resolve more calls at the first point of contact
- providing a holistic view of the day to day service across the whole county,
- the ability to have all resident inbound calls within a single telephony platform,
- improved insight, resilience, and performance.

Windows 10 Roll Out

The Council has now completed the roll out of Windows 10 across all the legacy IT environments. This project faced major challenges including IT having to support and resource 3,500 staff working from home due to Covid and pressure on IT hardware supplies due to both Covid demand for IT equipment and a worldwide shortage of components.

Windows 10 brings many advantages to the Council including enhanced security, new features to make it easier for staff to log in (Facial recognition) and full integration into all our business critical Microsoft applications (Email, Teams etc). Our current Windows 10 laptops are an enabler for more flexible working and will support the Council's Work Smart programme.

Client Transport Service – Resourcing Overview – April 2020 – June 2021

Since April 2020 the HR & OD Resourcing team have supported the service area successfully recruit to 13 posts which now means that there are no agency workers engaged within the service.

The success of resourcing campaigns has been due to creating new refreshed adverts with a targeted advertising campaign to specific transport industry markets with a heavy push on social media in promoting the service and the opportunities available.

Underspend 21/22

The Council has achieved a small underspend (£400k) in its first year of operation despite the increasing demands put on us as a result of the pandemic. This is an amazing achievement when considering the fact that a number of local authorities are struggling to balance their budgets.

COVID Grants

During 2020/21 the council has received 47 separate additional grants totalling c£330m of funding. This has provided support across a wide range of activities to help support our residents, businesses and communities. These grants have been vital in helping areas such as businesses adversely impacted by the Covid pandemic, additional support to the most vulnerable in our communities, measures to help manage and contain any outbreaks, and the provision of rapid testing and track and trace. It has also helped to provide support for re-opening our High Streets and accommodation to shelter the homeless. A number of grants will continue into the new year to support Covid outbreak control and supporting vulnerable communities.

Capita Income Management and Paye.net Update

Following the creation of our new Council and as part of our consolidation of processes and systems the Council went live with the Capita Pay360 Income Management System. Capita Pay360 is an income management system that is designed to hold all data relating to all income received by Buckinghamshire Council in one place as part of us becoming one Council.

Cash Receipting System is the means by which income is collected and processed for Buckinghamshire Council.

This includes:

- Council Tax
- Business Rates
- Housing Benefit
- Debtor Invoices

This new solution means that there will be processing efficiency with the Council using a single income management system and one payment channel.

Old Council Offices

In April this year, delegated approval to proceed was given by the Planning Committee for the Old County Offices scheme that will deliver 47 flats and regenerate part of central Aylesbury, bringing a building back into use that has been unoccupied for some time. We are working up options for the next stage of the project for delivery and will submit a report to Cabinet in the Autumn.

Winslow Development

The emerging plans for this site see the provision of a new community facility which will include a library that will allow us to offer local services through one front door. This will be alongside planned

new Extra Care and market and affordable residential housing. We are exploring various layouts with our design team and look forward to sharing these soon. New plans for the re-provision of sports pitches have been developed providing for a purpose-built sports facility on the nearby Redfield Farm to replace the required outdated existing facilities at the Winslow Centre. We are also working to secure additional funding from relevant bodies to provide enhanced facilities offered and futureproof the development. Winslow Town Council are supporting the development and we are exploring with them what further additional extra facilities could be introduced onto the site. The next stage of the project will be to start public consultations and to engage with local residents. With both sites the emphasis is on opening up Council owned land to the wider community and to provide green open spaces in a central location for the local residents to enjoy.

Kingsbury and Market Square public realm improvement schemes

Discussions are continuing to add the detail to the design. The input of Highways in particular is needed to work through the logistical implications of restricting vehicle access to achieve pedestrianisation as defined by the different stakeholder access groups with whom the Council is consulting. Traffic Management Orders are already in place which do restrict access. A survey is currently being conducted with businesses to understand their current delivery, collection, and servicing vehicle movements, and to see if these can be retimed if the plans for pedestrianisation are approved. The tree and planting strategy together with the light and street furniture strategy are all in design based on the feedback from the wider stakeholder and community engagement.

Capital Schools Project

Property Services continue to work with colleagues in Children's Services to bring forward the development and delivery of our substantial new schools and expansion programme. A number of works are underway including Amersham School; Kingsbrook Primary; Kingsbrook Secondary; Chiltern Hills Academy; Holmer Green and Misbourne School. Expansion works at Buckingham School achieved practical completion in May 2021.

We also continue to work with colleagues in Culture, Sport and Leisure on the development and delivery of new £35m leisure facilities including the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre in Amersham and the installation of a new swimming pool in Chalfont Leisure Centre; and with colleagues in the Economic Regeneration Team on the regeneration of the Brunel Shed, a Grade 2 listed redundant railway shed and extension on adjacent land for commercial rent.

Better Buckinghamshire

The Better Buckinghamshire programme is the programme of work that is looking to build and develop services for the new Council and deliver on the unitary business case savings.

The vision for the programme is to create a better place to live, raise a family and do business by creating an agile organisation with high quality services that offer value for money, can adapt to changing requirements and meet customer needs

The programme of service reviews started in July 2020. In total there are 14 service areas which are currently progressing through the review process.

