



Leader

Cllr Martin Tett



Scope of the Portfolio

Economic Development (including skills and employability, and recovery)

The Economic Growth & Regeneration service are responsible for the strategic planning and vision for Buckinghamshire the place, and for creating a compelling narrative for Buckinghamshire's future. Buckinghamshire has a £14.6bn economy, and 34,400 businesses. 77% of businesses employ less than 5 people. In the past year, the Recovery & Growth proposal for Buckinghamshire 'Succeeding as a Place, Succeeding as a Country' has been developed and published and sets out the strategic case for investment in Buckinghamshire. The proposal has three core ambitions and priorities: Places, High Tech Sectors and Skills and is being used in conversations with Government to promote Buckinghamshire.

We work closely with partners in the public and private sector through the Buckinghamshire Growth Board, which includes representatives from the Council, Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, Higher Education and Further Education Partners, and Central Government. England's Economic Heartland brings together political and business leaders across the region on strategic infrastructure and services, and Buckinghamshire Council is the accountable body.

Buckinghamshire LEP and Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) are two of our key partners. We work closely with both organisations, and even more so since March 2020, to support local businesses challenges and workforce issues (including redundancy and unemployment) resulting from the pandemic. Through the Buckinghamshire Growth Board, Buckinghamshire is in discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions to explore new partnership working for investment in reducing unemployment.

Responding to the pandemic by supporting our town centres is a key area of activity. The Welcome Back Bucks programme seeks to support high street businesses; make sure our town centres are attractive places to be; create vibrancy and activity through a programme of events and activities; and ensure there are positive communications and signage in place.

Scope of the Portfolio

Strategic Infrastructure

Developing and improving infrastructure (including digital infrastructure) is a key area of focus.

The Buckinghamshire Strategic Infrastructure Tool (BSIT) helps develop and translate the vision into schemes that can be delivered around the County. The BSIT identifies infrastructure gaps around the county and seeks to identify funding opportunities to close those gaps to enable delivery for communities.

The Highways Infrastructure Projects team develop and implement new road, sustainable travel and environmental enhancement projects which support economic growth, create jobs, improve transport networks and protect our environment. This year, key link road projects will continue to progress including South East Aylesbury Link Road Phase 1 & 2. Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) projects at Princes Risborough Southern Road Links and Abbey Barn Lane Improvement Scheme are also expected to progress to planning and detailed design. Delivery of the £172m HIF programme for Aylesbury Garden Town has begun, and the HIF Investment Board has been set up to monitor delivery of the programme, ensure it is on time and to budget.

Continuing to fight for money for strategic infrastructure is a key focus and, alongside discussions around the Recovery & Growth proposal, teams continue to seek funding for key schemes. Recent bidding activity includes submissions into the Levelling Up Fund and Major Road Network Fund. Lobbying also continues for the Aylesbury Spur of the East West Rail Link, which will unlock vital new economic development opportunities, reduce congestion and cut emission levels.

A number of projects are underway to improve broadband coverage in Buckinghamshire including the Buckinghamshire Rural Business Broadband project (a £1.8m grant secured from DEFRA to improve superfast broadband success for rural businesses across Buckinghamshire) and promoting central government voucher schemes to help communities improve their digital connectivity.

Some areas of focus:

Key priorities for the Leaders portfolio for this year are:

- Supporting the existing business community, especially our SME's, to grow and flourish
- Improve internet coverage and speeds for all parts of the county
- Fight for money for essential infrastructure
- Continuing to deliver the infrastructure that Buckinghamshire needs ahead of planned growth
- Actively promoting the Council's achievements both locally and nationally to increase the reputation and profile of Buckinghamshire and the Council