



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.

Supporting Refugees from Afghanistan

The current situation in Afghanistan is clearly very concerning. Many people who have supported British troops as interpreters, or in similar roles within the former Afghan Government and society are at very genuine risk to their lives.

The Council believes these are exceptional circumstances where it is important to support the British Government's efforts to relocate the most vulnerable to the United Kingdom and we have formally pledged our support to assist the Government's efforts to relocate the most vulnerable and helping families rebuild their lives in the UK.

As part of this support, we are actively working with Government Agencies including the South East Migration Partnership to understand exactly what is required and when. We are currently in discussion with Government regarding the exact matching of refugees to receiving locations. This takes into account both numbers and the needs of the families but also community links, school place availability, health and social care support and mental health counselling where applicable.

We are aware that in the short term there will be a need for accommodation and we are progressing discussions with various parties and housing providers to explore all possibilities. We know that the average size of arriving families is relatively large and that accommodation should be for an extended period of time, say a year. However, accommodation is not the only requirement, and it will be necessary to consider the other support needs such as health, schooling and potentially psychological support. We have extended our 'Helping Hand' programme which supports vulnerable families, to include these new arrivals. The programme will provide a range of support arrangements and opportunities to promote a positive arrival and integration.

Our residents, business, charities, schools and universities are once again showing their kindness and desire to offer a helping hand and already, we have received a number of generous offers of support. We have set up a dedicated page on our website where the public can indicate what support they are able to offer which we can then check against the support that is needed: [Offer your support to the Afghan Crisis | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

We have collaborated with Heart of Bucks and have launched a specific crisis fund which will provide additional support to help address the specific needs of the arriving families. In its first week the crisis fund received over 80 donations resulting in over £20,000 and this continues to grow.

We are in discussions with the voluntary and community sector in Buckinghamshire to both structure support and enable the public and community groups to contribute in an effective manner. We are working closely with our partners to plan a warm welcome with sustainable packages of accommodation, health, schooling, employment support and potentially psychological support. A coordinated response is critical to ensure suitable short-term support as well as enabling stability for families to rebuild their lives and become connected to our local communities

Clearly Buckinghamshire, along with some other areas in the South East, faces significant challenges in sourcing affordable and suitable accommodation, particularly for larger families. The financial support offered through the recently announced Government programmes will be critical in helping the Council secure appropriate accommodation and to assist the families integrate successfully. The Council is in regular dialogue with Government in order to fully understand the details of these programmes including the associated funding packages.

Finally, to ensure our residents can find out the latest position we have launched a dedicated section on the Council's website- [Helping Hand for Afghanistan](#)

HS2 and East West Rail (EWR)

With the intensity of activity by HS2 Ltd increasing, the Council continues to emphasise its continued opposition to the HS2 project and now construction has started, is trying to hold HS2 and EWR to account on several issues including contractor compliance. The Council is currently in an appeal process with HS2 Ltd on a number of lorry route approvals impacting the A413/A355 and the A422 and expects a decision imminently. 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.

Buckinghamshire Recovery and Growth Proposal

Council and Bucks LEP partners have been progressing discussions with the government to promote our ambitions for a place-based deal and investment for Buckinghamshire. This has included formally submitting an 'expression of interest' to be one of the government's first 'County Deals' and continuing positive engagement with civil servants and ministers in a range of government departments, including DWP, DCMS, MHCLG and HM Treasury. We have been following up on our recent presentation of our vision to a range of Ministers.

Buckinghamshire Growth Board

Since the last update, the Buckinghamshire Growth Board has convened twice, working together to facilitate joined-up discussions between key public and private sectors partners. In July, the Board welcomed the Chair of Buckinghamshire's Skills Advisory Panel and discussions were focused on Buckinghamshire's skills landscape, including how we plan to approach the skills requirements of the future for Buckinghamshire. The Board also received updates on our Recovery and Growth Proposal

and Homes England's Capacity Building Programme to enable local governments to access support and funding easier.

In September, the agenda included discussions around Buckinghamshire's emerging collaborative response to the Oxford Cambridge Arc Spatial Framework, an update on the progress of Buckinghamshire's Local Plan. The Board also received an update on the progress of our Recovery and Growth Proposal.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

Two Local Growth Fund capital projects supported by Buckinghamshire LEP have recently been completed and will be opening shortly. The Bucks Healthcare Research and Innovation Centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital will provide a centre of excellence for upper limb rehabilitation, prosthetic innovation, patient treatment and therapy linked to clinical trials at the Stoke Mandeville campus. Bucks Healthcare Trust are already working with over 25 medical companies, developing innovative new therapies and technologies.

The University of Buckingham has also made great progress with the refurbishment of the Franciscan Building for the School of Computing and Centre for Artificial Intelligence. Helping address the national need for data scientists and advance research into the ethical use of AI, the new curriculum is already proving a popular attraction for new students and the new facilities are open for use this academic year.

BLEP are currently developing an economic intelligence [Observatory](#) website to make it easier for people to access LEP and other Economic research outputs and to ensure bodies across the county are making best use of the data and intelligence available. The Buckinghamshire Business First Growth Hub has started the second year of the [Peer Networks](#) programme enabling business leaders to support their growth plans by learning from their peer groups in a series of facilitated sessions. A new mentoring programme has also been launched providing all business owners with the opportunity to be mentored by another.

On 14 July, BLEP hosted the Skills Hub Annual Headteacher Careers Conference which brought together almost 100 school leaders, career leads and industry leaders from across the county. Discussion topics included developing a whole school approach to careers and ensuring that every pupil is supported in finding a career destination that is right for them. Plans are already well underway for two editions of the Buckinghamshire Skills Show: a virtual online event will be held in November and a face-to-face event will be held in March 2022 having received welcome funding support from the Rothschild Foundation.

Buckinghamshire has been included within the next phase of the national Project Gigabit initiative which will significantly improve digital connectivity to approximately 142,000 premises in the county. Over the coming few weeks BLEP will be supporting the DCMS Building Digital UK (BDUK) team in undertaking an initial market assessment to plan for delivery ahead of procurement in 2022.

Enterprise Zone Update

Construction of the commercial units in phase 3 of the development at Silverstone Park continues in earnest. KW Special Projects occupy one of the completed phase 2 units hosts, a futuristic 20,000sq. ft Digital Manufacturing Centre (DMC) which will use latest industry processes to deliver engineering solutions for sectors such as space, medical, marine, energy and automotive. The DMC becomes the latest world class specialist high-tech facility at the Park and will provide a step-change in efficiency and part quality, distinguishing the DMC from other suppliers and helping to level up the UK

manufacturing and the national supply chain. This shows further growth at Silverstone Park and of the Silverstone Technology Cluster which is holding its annual conference on 5 October at Horwood House with its key aims to promote growth and new opportunities for the businesses in the cluster.

The Westcott Expo event, ‘Space for the Future’ was held at the end of July both in-person and virtually, celebrating the success of the Westcott Space Cluster and showcased the Westcott companies who shared their amazing journeys and innovative products and services they are developing. The event also featured a ground-breaking ceremony for a brand new £multi-million facility at Westcott, the latest in the Space Application Catapult’s linked network of Disruptive Innovation for Space Centres (DISC).

At the Woodlands Enterprise Zone site, Tritax Symmetry has started construction on its final phase of 3 units, totalling 391,000sq. ft, and which will be available early 2022.

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

In Aylesbury, the Kingsbrook View Primary Academy school was handed over on Monday 9 August on time and under budget. The project was delivered in a collaborative and positive way between the main contractor, Morgan Sindall, the Academy Trust, and the Council. The School will open its doors to the first pupils on Friday 3 September. Kingsbrook Secondary School started on site in April 2021 and is progressing at a pace. Foundations are in, and the steel frame is being erected. Earthworks to the sports pitches are complete and the drainage scheme is being installed. The school remains on track to open in September 2022.

Talks have already begun with developers regarding improving the Aston Clinton roundabout on the A41, where the Eastern Link Road (South) and Southern Link Road will meet the A41.

In the South West of Aylesbury, the Council has recently secured some capacity funding from Homes England to help co-ordinate the very complex interface of new infrastructure, new homes, and existing homes and businesses. All stakeholders are working together to produce a coherent programme of delivery to ensure that the SEALR, the South West Aylesbury Link Road, the Stoke Mandeville Relief Road, the Princes Risborough line realignment, the HS2 works, and associated Rights of Way all deliver the infrastructure in the most efficient way over the coming years.

The SEALR phase I has now met all its planning conditions and will progress to construction once all necessary land has been secured after the CPO enquiry in November 2021.

England Economic Heartland (EEH)

England’s Economic Heartland (EEH) is currently finalising its submission for the government’s anticipated three-year Spending Review. This will include making the strongest case for delivery of the Milton Keynes-Aylesbury East West Rail link, which is a core part of the overall scheme and a key priority for the region.

In July EEH welcomed publication of the government’s transport decarbonisation plan. The plan acknowledges that different places require different solutions to reach net zero and, moreover, that decarbonisation provides an opportunity to improve places, reduce congestion and create new opportunities for the economy. It sets out the role of local and regional leadership and specifically sub-national transport bodies in working with government to achieve net zero.

During the summer, EEH published its ‘Passenger Rail Study Phase Two’ study in collaboration with Network Rail, which identifies 36 regional and long-distance journeys where rail is best placed to improve connectivity. Also published was a study which looked at the potential legacy of COVID-19

and increased homeworking on releasing capacity on the region's roads. EEH's annual report for 2020/21 sets out its achievements over the last year, together with a look ahead to its work programme over the next year. All documents are available on EEH's website. Naomi Green has been made EEH's interim programme director following the departure of Martin Tugwell to Transport for the North at the end of July. A recruitment process to appoint his permanent successor has begun.

EEH is being restructured as part of a Governance Review with the abolition of both the Leaders' Group and the Transport Board. These will be replaced by a single new Board.

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

Since the last update, I am pleased to report that I have been re-elected as the Chairman of SESL. SESL has met Paul Wedgwood and Rob Hatcher (Associate Director and Senior Manager) of The Carbon Trust to explore positive steps for strategic authorities in addressing carbon emissions.

SESL has also met Michelle Dyson (Director General, Adult Social Care) of the Department of Health and Social Care where we discussed experiences of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and their role in the Government's plans to reform the NHS. The meeting was followed up by a letter confirming the views expressed by Leaders.

SESL continues 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).

Strategic Finance

The Q1 budget monitoring position was taken to Cabinet on 20 July and this showed a small forecast overspend of £500k which was mainly due to the Covid implications around income levels. It is still early in the year, but we will continue to pressure for ways in which we can find mitigations to bring spend back into line with the approved budget.

The Medium-Term Financial Planning process for the next four years has begun. This is likely to be a very difficult budget-setting process due to the uncertainties around both future government funding levels and the implications of the pandemic on spend and income levels. Cabinet Members are actively reviewing their current budgets and are being assisted by other Members of the administration through Majority Group 'Portfolio Challenge Groups'. These groups will effectively do a 'deep dive' into the budgets looking at and challenging underlying pressures, examining new options and looking for extra savings and efficiencies to balance the budget.



Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

Adults Safeguarding Campaign

During September, the Council will be launching a 6-month campaign, *See Something, Say Something, Do Something*, to raise awareness of adult safeguarding and convey the message that safeguarding is everyone's business across Buckinghamshire. The campaign will seek to raise awareness of the different types of abuse and how to recognise the signs, as well as encouraging residents to report any case of suspected abuse and the process for doing so.

The campaign will cover a range of medias and channels including:

Buckinghamshire Council press releases	Internal communications across the Council
Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Adults Board website updates	Partner networking (e.g. schools, surgeries, hospitals, housing providers, care providers, family centres)
Bespoke posters and digital screens	Your Buckinghamshire resident magazine
A comprehensive social media campaign e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Newsletters (residents, Members, Town and Parish Councils)
Radio advertising	Libraries and community libraries
Community Board co-ordinators	Council-run car park noticeboards

As active leaders within communities, Councillors will be asked to take a key role in the campaign, promoting the importance that everyone has to ensure the safety and well-being of families, friends, neighbours, colleagues and other members of the public in our local communities.

To support Councillors, a Safeguarding campaign pack will be provided, which will include all the supporting information and materials needed such as information flyers, safeguarding question and answers sheet and contact details for key staff within the Council.

Mandatory Vaccination

The mandatory vaccination regulations for care homes come in to force on 11th November 2021. Data from the NHS capacity tracker shows that in Buckinghamshire, 84% of care home staff have had their first dose and 74% second dose, with a total of 815 staff across all care homes still to receive a vaccination. Work is still taking place to increase the uptake of vaccination including:

- Clinical consultations for individual staff who have concerns and anxiety about receiving the vaccination
- Guidance, webinars and FAQs to support managers and organisations in engaging with their staff
- Co-ordination of the ‘Health on the Move’ bus which has been attending care homes to vaccinate staff
- Promotion of the ‘vaccine voices’ training to encourage peer support within care homes

The Council is also working with agencies to encourage their staff to take up the offer of vaccinations.

Small Outbreaks

At the time of writing there are six open cases of outbreaks in care homes. During 26th July to 16th August 2021, a total of 24 outbreaks were recorded. These involved a total of 21 residents (100% vaccinated) and 48 staff (90% vaccinated), although there were no hospital admissions or Covid-related deaths. The Council continues to support care providers with the management of outbreaks, communicating guidance, risk assessments and linking with Public Health England.

Health and Wellbeing Board Council Update

On 22nd July I held the first meeting as chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. Partners from the NHS, CCG and voluntary and community sector were present, and it was the first time meeting in person since the start of the pandemic. Our facilities team at The Gateway did a great job in ensuring that we were able to meet safely.

The key priority for the Board is improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and work continues on the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, *Happier Healthier Lives*, to deliver this. Workshops to develop the underpinning action plans have taken place over the past few months and another workshop dedicated to the Age Well part of the strategy is planned for September.

In addition to overseeing the Health and Wellbeing Recovery Plan, the Board is keen to understand the impact of the upcoming changes resulting from the new Health and Care Bill going through Parliament. The Bill is expected to gain Royal Assent in the new year and will impact arrangements at both the Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) and Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) level. The Board is anticipating playing a key part in the local ‘place’ arrangements and in ensuring the ongoing health and wellbeing of Buckinghamshire’s residents as part of the wider Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West system.

Finally, I believe that the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board should be influenced and informed by our residents. I am committed to ensuring the Board is outward-facing and that it communicates clearly to the public. Our voluntary and community sector partners provide great insight and a voice

for our residents, and over the coming months I will be exploring how this could be incorporated further into the Board's work.

A Residents' Action Plan

Fresh thinking and new ways of working can come from a more collaborative and equal relationship between residents and professionals. During 2020 the Council established a service user/carer forum in adult social care, to provide additional opportunities for residents to share their experiences and agree a programme of actions and activities to improve the delivery of services. This included, for example, making changes to the new adult social care webpages launched in August 2021.

The Residents' Action Plan is currently being finalised and will form part of wider work around developing a co-production approach to the way adult social care services are developed and delivered. The approach, whereby decision makers, customers, families, carers and service providers collaborate, will create solutions which work for all.

Day opportunities and Overnight Short Breaks Update

A series of engagement events and an online survey are planned for August and September which will bring together service users, parents/carers, providers of day opportunities and overnight short breaks, residential and supported living providers, Community Board representatives and key partners in the health and voluntary sectors.

The purpose of the engagement is to explore the changes that the pandemic has had in the way services are delivered by providers and received by service users and carers, to explore the findings of the day opportunities and overnight short breaks needs assessment, and to discuss ideas for improvement. These discussions will inform the development of an options appraisal and business case later in the autumn.

Launch of the National Autism Strategy

The National Autism Strategy was launched at the beginning of July and focusses on six key themes:

- improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society
- improving autistic children and young people's access to education, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood
- supporting more autistic people into employment
- tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
- building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care
- improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

The themes will be used to develop a Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy and action plan. This work will be overseen by the recently developed Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board and will link two existing areas of the Partnership's work in relation to reasonable adjustments, which involves making changes to make services more accessible, and co-production, to develop services and initiatives with individuals and their families.

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

At the end of 2019, the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust began to review and update the health strategy for Buckinghamshire, which looks to 2025 and beyond. It sets out how the Trust will meet the needs of our growing population, improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. The strategy outlines changes being considered in urgent and emergency care, planned care, community services, diagnostics, and rehabilitation, including the national spinal injuries centre. It describes partnerships and new ways of delivering care that make the best use of digital advances and technology. Importantly, it provides options to improve the Trust's facilities making them fit for the 21st Century.

The Trust hopes to publish the strategy at the end of September 2021.



Cabinet Member report – Climate Change & Environment

Councillor Peter Strachan

Flood Management

The Floodmobile is an innovative mobile demonstration community outreach vehicle that has been designed to bring Property Flood Resilience to life. It is packed with around 50 different property flood resilience measures, to show homeowners and businesses, what property-level adaptations can be introduced to a property to help reduce the impact future flooding can have. An event was held at Sands in High Wycombe using the Floodmobile to raise awareness of flood risk in that community and to provide the different options for residents' homes, with experts on hand to explain what may be right in different situations. Deputy Cabinet member for Environment, Jilly Jordan, supported the event alongside members of the Strategic Flood Management Team. Discussions are ongoing to identify when and where the Floodmobile could be used at other locations at risk of flooding within Buckinghamshire.

Successful Funding Bid – Thomas Harding Junior School, Chesham

The Strategic Flood Risk team has secured £49k in funding from the Department for Education to install flood resilience measures at the Thomas Harding Junior School in Chesham. The measures will include flood barriers, waterproof rendering, non-return valves and anti-flood air bricks. The team are proposing to install the measures in the October half term and, once complete, will provide the School with significant protection from flooding. The works are part of the wider flood resilience project in Chesham which is aiming to complete individual property flood resilience measures to over 40 properties at risk of flooding.

Tree Planting Work

We are undertaking several areas of work to support tree planting in Buckinghamshire, as part of our work to address climate change and recognising the wider biodiversity, air quality and amenity benefits these deliver. We have bid for over £200k in the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LAFT) to support tree planting in non-forest locations, the outcome of which is being awaited. We have offered each school and care home in Buckinghamshire a free tree as part of our support for the Queen's Green Canopy, a project marking Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. We are also progressing detailed planting designs and specification for the first phase sites which will contribute towards our target of planting 543,000 trees.

Climate Change & Air Quality Strategy

Before the pre-election period, we undertook a series of engagement events with Community Boards, Parish and Town Councils and attended a detailed session with the Transport, Environment and Climate Change (TECC) Select Committee to review the draft Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy. Feedback has been positive with particular support noted for nature based approaches to mitigating climate change, such as through the planting of trees and hedgerows. We now intend to adopt the Strategy as soon as practical and focus on its delivery.

Energy Supply Contracts

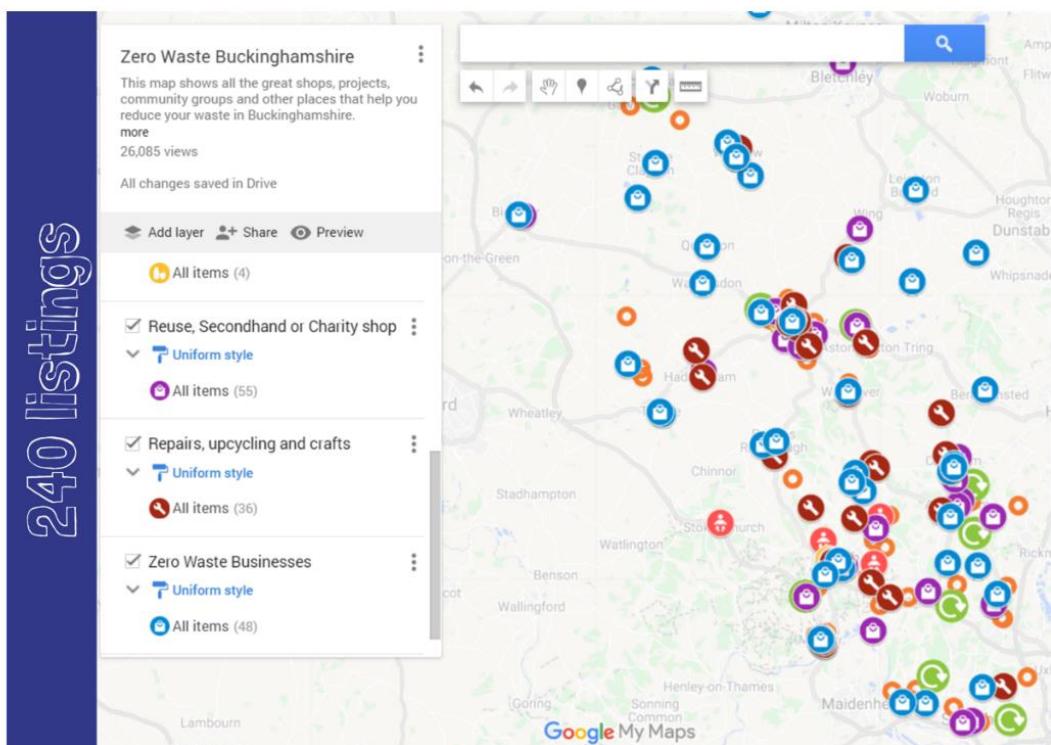
The gas and electricity supply contracts we use can be changed with effect from 1 October 2022 and we are reviewing in detail the various supply options open to us. A key aspect of this work is looking at the various renewable options which are available and how robust their carbon credentials are. Members may be aware that the Government has recently launched a call for evidence into the transparency of carbon claims from energy suppliers and our approach will ensure we are clear about the costs and benefits of any renewable supplies.

Green Homes Grants / Domestic Energy Efficiency

We continue to work across multiple funding rounds to support domestic energy efficiency, chiefly through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHG LAD) programme. These are focused on improving the energy efficiency of homes with poor insulation and where the household income is low. Working with the Greater South East (GSE) Energy Hub, we have submitted an application for the Sustainable Warmth Competition which incorporates GHG LAD round 3 and the Home Upgrade Grant; the outcome is awaited.

'Best Local Authority Recycling Initiative'

Neighbourhood Services has won 'Best Local Authority Recycling Initiative' for its innovative Zero Waste Map at the Awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management ceremony on 21 July. The Zero Waste Map – which has already been viewed by more than 29,000 people since its launch in September 2020 – is an interactive online map that lists over 200 local shops, businesses, projects and public recycling and repair drop-off locations across Buckinghamshire. Andrew Jenkins, Waste Promotions Lead Officer, said "It's great to be recognised for a national award and get the chance to showcase the map to other Local Authorities. One of the major benefits is that other Local Authorities can replicate it so easily and give their residents easy access to local Zero Waste options."



The link to the Zero Waste Map is here - <https://bit.ly/ZeroWasteMapBucks>

Biffa De-mobilisation

The Biffa Contract in the former South Bucks region ends on 31st October 2021. Veolia will take over collections and street scene activities from 1st November who will then cover waste services for the entire South of Buckinghamshire. De-mobilisation activities are running smoothly with TUPE meetings complete, Depot Dilapidation surveys underway and property and rounds data verified and ready to go live.

HGV Driver Shortage

This challenge has been well covered in the press, there is currently an estimated shortage of 100,000 qualified HGV drivers in the UK. Veolia, who run waste services in the former Chiltern and Wycombe area have been impacted by this. Driver numbers are currently at a bare minimum with little flexibility for leave or sickness. Veolia are working hard to encourage loaders to get fast track trained as HGV drivers and have a retention bonus scheme in place to keep current HGV drivers.



Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss



Culture

Over the long weekend of 22 to 25 July, we showcased the cultural and creative offering of local organisations and community groups as part of the first ever Buckinghamshire 'Open Weekend'. Co-ordinated by Buckinghamshire Culture in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council, there were over 70 events across the county from Stowe to Marlow, including online, face-to-face and activities to make and do at home. Events included literary and heritage walks, performances, open days, trails, concerts, film screenings, exhibitions and story-telling events. The Story Stall project, with artists engaging residents in storytelling about what makes them happy in Buckinghamshire, continued over July and August. There were also Story Packs (including dance, spoken word and arts activities) with creative activities available online.

Throughout the summer holidays, we provided activities for younger children through 'Play around the Parishes' with 27 half-day sessions and eight fun days taking place.

On 19 August, the national and international spotlight was on the unique heritage of Stoke Mandeville as the birthplace of the Paralympic Movement; the Paralympic Heritage Flame Lighting Ceremony was organised by the Council working with our local and international partners and featured on the Channel 4 News. We also worked with our internal communications team and staff equalities network to promote the launch of the International Paralympic Committee's disability awareness campaign 'We the 15', highlighting that an estimated 15% of the population across the world have a disability. Key council buildings were lit up and a video montage promoted internally featuring some of our Buckinghamshire staff showing their support for the campaign.

Libraries

More than 2,700 children signed up to the Summer Reading Challenge in our libraries which was open to primary school age children and designed for all reading abilities. Children could sign up for free at a participating library during the summer holidays and read whatever they liked, whether it was fiction, fact books, poetry, joke books, picture books, graphic novels, audio books or eBooks. They received special rewards each time they finished a book and there was also a certificate for everyone who completed the Challenge. Throughout the Challenge, library staff and volunteers supported children, helping them to explore a wide range of different types of books and enjoy a range of creative activities and events.

Buckinghamshire Libraries also recently submitted an expression of interest for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's [Libraries Improvement Fund](#) which is administered by Arts Council England, for capital schemes that deliver digital inclusion, commercial opportunities, flexibility and sustainability. I am pleased to say that we have now been invited to progress to the next stage and submit a full funding application for our plan to re-model Wendover Community Library as a local community hub, developed in partnership with Wendover Community Library Trust and Wendover Parish Council. The aim is to increase the size of the library and create flexible meeting spaces that will enable partners such as Wendover Parish Council and Thames Valley Police to have a presence in the building. Local resident and stakeholder engagement was undertaken during 2019/20 which evidenced strong support for more meeting spaces and an enhanced library offer. The library already operates as a Council Access Point and if funding is secured, this project will establish the library hub as the focal point for Wendover. We should know the outcome of our application in February.

Leisure

We were delighted to see Covid-19 restrictions ease further from 19 July, in line with the Government's roadmap. Our leisure centres have seen a positive response in terms of customers returning now there is increased capacity for both group exercise and swim classes; the latter are particularly important as children make up for lost time in building swimming confidence and skills. Feedback from our leisure operators is that the ability to book swim sessions in advance, both for recreational lane swimming and family swimming, has proved very popular with customers, encouraged people to commit to more regular exercise, and enabled pool programmes to be adjusted to maximise opportunities for swimming lessons. The focus is now on building back the wide range of wellbeing and rehabilitation sessions that were available pre-pandemic, including active heart programmes, GP referral schemes, cancer rehabilitation and Covid-19 recovery programmes. Our leisure operators are also working closely with colleagues in Public Health on the Active Communities and Live Well Stay Well programmes.

The pool replacement work at Chalfont Leisure Centre has continued to progress positively; testing of the new pool tank has been completed successfully and the tiling of the pool is now fully underway with the project still remaining on course and the centre to be reopened in early autumn. The new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre remains a key priority and there is intense focus and resource being targeted on the remaining work required from all key parties involved to ensure the autumn completion and opening is achieved as expected. Over the coming weeks we will also see recruitment underway for new staff at the centre; this site along with our other sites are also working to ensure that there will be opportunities available for young people through the Government's Kickstart Scheme.

The South Buckinghamshire Golf Course has remained busy, with golfing income 25% up in comparison with the same period in 2020, although function bookings continue to be affected by Covid-19. Farnham Park Playing Fields has also been busy following the start of the new football season on 4/5 September. All the regular block booking teams who played in 2020-21 returned, along with a new junior section.

Country Parks, parks and play areas

Despite some poor weather since the last Council meeting, park visitor numbers have remained high, with 426,600 visits between 1 April and 31 July. We were pleased that Park Run activities recommenced throughout the county on 24 July. Events have also returned to the Country Parks, with Jungle Book and Romeo and Juliet outdoor theatre in Langley Park in August and outdoor cinema in Black Park in early September; all three events have been well received. A revised schedule of car

park charges was implemented at the end of June incorporating a 10p increase on day tickets and a £10 increase in season tickets. The money raised by car parking charges is used to protect our parks for future generations, to carry out necessary maintenance and conservation work and to combat the wear and tear that growing visitor numbers bring.

Architects have been appointed for the new visitor facility at Black Park adjacent to the main car park, which will include a new café and toilet facilities; if all goes to plan this should be open to the public in 2023. Landscape designs for the new Country Park in Stoke Poges are in their final design phase and these will be shared with the local members and the community during the autumn.

Following damage to the Grade II listed Langley Park Avenue gates in a road traffic accident, an application for listed building/structures consent to repair the gates and walls has been submitted; the costs of repair will be sought through the driver's insurance.

Construction of the new pylon at Denham for HS2 enabling works continues at pace despite flooding of the park throughout the summer months. Discussions are ongoing with HS2 and National Grid regarding the final details of the restoration plan after the site is vacated later this year/early next year.

New toddler play facilities were formally opened in Alfred Rose Park in Aylesbury on 20 August. Despite some challenges during construction, this new area now completes a great family facility in this wonderful community open space.

Tender documents have now been released for play area improvement/replacement projects at Calvert Green, Haydon Hill, Cottesloe Green and Walton Court and these projects should be completed by the end of this financial year.

A licence to allow Network Rail to access their embankment to complete essential stabilisation works through Riverside Park South (between Haydon Hill and Berryfields) has been agreed for the next couple of months; Property colleagues have assisted and negotiated fees for this temporary access.



Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Gareth Williams



One Uniform project

Buckinghamshire Council is the Local Planning Authority with responsibility for all planning functions. Planning is a significant service area in terms of size and complexity. The services it provides are critical to our residents, councillors and businesses as well as helping us meet our statutory obligations as a council. Having inherited a mix of back office IT business systems, planning have an urgent need to agree a consolidation strategy onto a new single system. The initial decision has been made to move to a single back office solution called “Uniform”. This will involve many different teams and services both within planning and beyond; environmental health, licencing, land charges, street naming and numbering, housing, estates, contaminated land, anti-social behaviour, etc. The first stage of the project requires considerable preparation by the services using each “module.” The complexity of this preparation work will vary by service, but as an example, preparing the migration of planning data is likely to take many months. A detailed business case is being prepared, but our best estimate for the completion of this project is between one and two years.

New Website

Teams across planning and building control have been helping with the effort to rethink content for the new website and make it easier for users to find and use our services. We have learnt that planning terminology is a barrier for the general public, and so it is not always easy for users to find or understand the information they need. We are tackling this by looking at how we can organise content around what users are trying to do – having their say on planned developments, for example, or checking what they need to do before starting home improvements. We have held user testing on our first prototype page and discussed the findings at a workshop with several service team leads. Key learnings from observing users showed it is easy for users to miss important information due to the order of content on the page and the location of the call-to-action button. We are now looking to develop an overall approach to migration, and to begin the process of planning and drafting content. An outline content plan has been drafted and a roadmap is in preparation. The web-team are holding regular show and tells with the P&E staff, providing updates on the progress being made.

Planning Enforcement

The team continues to provide a firm but fair service seeking to use the most effective and efficient solution to resolve breaches of planning control. Whilst the initial approach is usually through amicable negotiation, where that approach fails or where the breach occurring is serious, and where it is appropriate to do so, we take decisive and firm formal enforcement action. Since becoming a unitary authority we have served over 70 enforcement notices and have closed more than 1400

enquiries into alleged breaches of planning control. You will recall that our performance in relation to issuing enforcement notices had us placed 12th overall in the 2020 calendar year. I am pleased to report that our continued approach to planning enforcement has resulted in us moving up to 11th overall in the 20/21 financial year (5th outside of Greater London) and were only one notice off equally 10th overall.

There remains improvement works within the team, but progress is being made in key areas such as a single inquiry form and the register of formal notices. The team are still recovering from the impacts of the pandemic and lockdowns which includes a backlog in site inspections as well as a high level of enforcement notice appeals (currently 28 in hand). The high level of appeals is, of course, a bi-product of issuing more notices. The team have, however, now completed their management restructure and are focussing on a number of high priority projects including reducing existing caseloads and a review of extant enforcement notices, all the while also dealing with business as usual, the day-to-day service provision and the increase in formal notice and appeals.

An example of our firm but fair action was recently reported in both local and national press articles and related to a case where the former Wycombe District Council (WDC) successfully secured the clear up of unsightly clutter in the garden of a property in Whitelands Road, High Wycombe. Following complaints and concerns from neighbours, two planning enforcement notices were served on the owners back in 2013. Despite numerous site visits and regular contact with the owners, old dishwashers, washing machines and gas canisters remained in the garden. With the owner taking no action, the only option was to use direct action powers to clear the land. The WDC hired a specialist contractor to clear the site and recharged the costs to the owner. Since then Buckinghamshire Council (BC) have been seeking to recover the money spent and forced the property to be taken to auction. This action was sufficient to encourage the owner to repay BC the cost of the works undertaken, totalling £59,000.

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

After a lengthy examination by an independent planning inspector I am pleased to say that the inspector has now issued his final report to the council and, subject to making the modifications he recommends, has found the Plan sound and capable of being adopted by the council. I will now be bringing this to Cabinet and Council to consider the adoption of the Plan.

Buckinghamshire Local Plan

As you know I am very keen to ensure the new plan optimises the level of brownfield development that takes place in Buckinghamshire. As such, we held a brownfield call for sites earlier in the year. I am pleased to say we had a good response to that call, but I will be encouraging more brownfield site suggestions later this year. This will be part of some wider engagement we are planning, seeking views on the key issues that will shape the Plan going forward.

I would also like to highlight the significance of the Planning Bill due to be laid before parliament towards the end of the year. This is likely to have wide ranging implications for how we take forward the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan. I will, of course, keep members updated on this, as and when we have more details.

Neighbourhood Planning in Buckinghamshire

As you know neighbourhood plans enable communities to influence and create planning policies for their own residents. A neighbourhood plan will be made part of the development plan for that area if it is supported by a majority in a referendum.

Across Buckinghamshire, we now have 28 neighbourhood plans in place and another 17 neighbourhood plans in progress. Additionally, 20 areas have a neighbourhood area designated, meaning they are on the first step in the neighbourhood plan process. The latest area to be designated was Penn Parish. Some of the earlier neighbourhood plans across the Buckinghamshire Council area are now coming up for renewal and some neighbourhood plan groups are in the process of modifying their existing neighbourhood plans.

Since the end of lockdown, we have held two neighbourhood plan referendums at Ickford and Great and Little Kimble Cum Marsh and, in both, the people who voted, voted in favour of their plans being made part of the development plan. Additionally, the council has supported the examination of two plans, with the latest position being the Stewkley neighbourhood plan proceeding to a referendum in October 2021.



Cabinet Member report – Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Nick Naylor

Environmental Health

Post unitary transformation of the Environmental Health Service has started, and officers are now transitioning into their new roles. Teams are now working to harmonise activity to give a 'single service' approach.

The primary focus continues to be Covid-19 work activity. Whilst Step 4 of the Government's roadmap is now in place, officers are still supporting businesses and event organisers with interpretation of the remaining requirements.

Officers continue to work closely with Thames Valley Police on compliance (especially regarding allegations of breaches of the requirement to self-isolate). Whist the majority of legal restrictions /requirements have now been lifted, businesses still have duties to implement measures required as part of health and safety risk assessments to protect both employees and visitors.

The British Grand Prix at Silverstone took place just before the start of step 4 but had 'Event Research Programme status' and involved well organised partnership working between the circuit and other agencies. Other sporting venues have now also opened and large events have taken place, where officers have offered guidance and monitored as appropriate.

During the pandemic there was a large increase in the number of new food businesses being set up. To help deal with demand, the service has obtained funding from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to assist in triaging and assessing these new businesses. Officers are also implementing the FSA's recovery plan with regard to assessing established and previously inspected businesses. Officers continue to support the Council's Primary Authority Partnerships, and also other food exporting businesses, as they continue to adapt to the impacts of EU exit.

Coroner Service

The Coroner Service is working within usual tolerances in terms of referrals. Due to staff holidays, there have been some delays with post mortems being performed by Bucks Healthcare Trust (BHT) - the contracted provider. As a result, there have been holdups in ascertaining causes of death, but no funeral arrangements have been affected to date, as alternative arrangements have been put in place using other mortuaries / Pathologists to address the reduced service locally. Further discussions are taking place with BHT in relation to their tender submission for a new mortuary and pathology contract, and consequently the new contract's start date is yet to be confirmed.

Registration Service

Birth and death registrations have generally returned to normal levels, although the number of deaths being registered currently is slightly higher than for the same period last year. Demand for Notices of Marriage / Civil Partnerships continues at a high level, and many of these ceremonies are booked at short notice. The number of ceremonies booked across the summer remains well above usual levels and additional temporary staff from Housing & Regulatory Services have been trained and will provide support and resilience as deputy registrars at venues across Buckinghamshire.

Group citizenship ceremonies resumed on 16 July at the Oculus, following nine months of virtual ceremonies. This was the first group ceremony following a review and refresh of the ceremonies arrangements and ceremony content carried out by the Registration Service and the Buckinghamshire Lieutenancy Office. Virtual ceremonies remain available for exceptional circumstances.

Housing

The implementation of the new Housing structure is continuing, and appointments were made to posts during June and July 2021. The new service structure had a soft launch on 1st August 2021. Interim service delivery arrangements will be in place to allow staff to transition into new roles. The Government has announced the end of the "Everybody in" policy which was put in place at the start of the Covid emergency, to bring all rough sleepers off the streets. The Government has ceased to fund discretionary housing placements and stated that it expects Councils to move on those who remain accommodated under the policy. During the course of "Everybody in" the Council accommodated over 300 verified rough sleepers. Nearly 70 clients remain accommodated at present. Officers are now implementing 'step down' arrangements whereby notices are served on remaining clients (on a staggered basis) to bring their placements to an end whilst providing one-to-one support (via the Council and our partner agencies) to help them to secure alternative accommodation ready for when their notice expires. There is a risk that we may see some clients return to rough sleeping if they will not engage with this process or if they do not make their own housing arrangements. In this event, established rough sleeper services will continue to try to engage with these clients via Outreach, other specialist support and links to short term emergency beds or accommodation. The Government is phasing out the protections and extended possession notice periods for renters, introduced in response to the Covid emergency. From 30th September 2021, all the protections will have come to an end and the pre-Covid arrangements will apply. To date, the number of people approaching the Council for homelessness assistance following a landlord's notice has not shown a significant upturn, but officers continue to monitor this as the final protections are withdrawn.

Trading Standards

Tackling the availability of illicit tobacco remains a high priority for the service. As a cheap source of tobacco, often with no health warnings in English and sometimes not in plain packaging, illicit tobacco is linked to smoking in young people and those from more deprived groups for whom price affects how much they can smoke. Because smoking is so harmful (smoking remains the biggest single cause of preventable mortality and morbidity) differences in smoking prevalence across the population translate to health inequalities. An operation took place in June with a tobacco detection (sniffer) dog, funded by HMRC, and a further campaign is planned for Autumn, again using a sniffer dog.

Gypsy & 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 13 encampments in 21/22. This is a combination of the impact of the pandemic alongside a holistic and proportionate local 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 existing good work, ensuring a long term plan is in place to manage the GTS.

Licensing

Work continues to progress with the new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy which was implemented on 6th September 2021. The Service worked to a communications plan to ensure that, as far as possible, the licensed trade was briefed on the changes being implemented before the Policy went live. A new Policy webpage has been created, where up to date information can be found, at <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/business/licences-and-permits/taxi-licensing/new-taxi-and-private-hire-licensing-policy/>.

The draft Licensing Act Policy was approved for consultation purposes by the Licensing Committee at their meeting on the 22nd July. A full public consultation will commence w/c 23rd August and run to October 2021. The draft Gambling Act Policy is currently with our legal team for input and will be presented to the Licensing Committee on the 20th October with a view to approval for public consultation which will then be carried out in November and December 2021. Both policies will then come forward to Full Council for approval and adoption. Under transitional arrangements, both of these policies must be in place for the new council by 1st April 2022.

The implementation of the new Licensing Service structure has commenced following consultation and the majority of the management posts have now been appointed to. The new Service structure went live from the 1st September and consists of a taxi licensing and commercial licensing team ultimately delivering services across the whole Council area. As we harmonise licensing policies, we will simultaneously look to harmonise customer experience and application processes, focusing on digital improvement and system changes to support this.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

The crematoria management team has been expanded to support the further development of the Service and the capital improvement programme and we have now recruited into two senior roles in the Service. Service improvement has enabled us to align the direction of the cemeteries and crematoria so that they are now within one service area and are overseen by a single senior manager.

We are currently recruiting into the Cemeteries Service and anticipate the structure will be complete in the near future. This will allow us to start to work on harmonising the cemeteries systems and processes across the council area and to ensure that we are providing a consistent high-quality service to our customers.

We are very pleased that Bierton Crematorium has been listed as a RIBA South Award winner. The RIBA National Awards are given to buildings across the UK recognised as having significant contributions to architecture <https://www.architecture.com/awards-and-competitions-landing-page/awards/riba-regional-awards/riba-south-award-winners/2021/bierton-crematorium>.

There are extensive tree felling works taking place at Chilterns Crematorium over several weekends, to minimise disruption to funeral services, from the 21st August through to October. Surveys have identified in the region of 280 ash trees in the woodlands that have Ash Dieback, a disease which infects the trees, making them brittle and liable to lose branches and split during strong winds. By the winter of 2021 some of these infected trees will be potentially dangerous. The trees are in the areas of the crematorium grounds where, for over 50 years, people have scattered the cremated ashes of their loved ones. This does make the removal of the trees particularly sensitive and we have been telling people about the felling via signage on site and on the crematorium website for several months in advance of felling work starting. A communications plan accompanies the felling work which may include some proactive media releases.

In the spring, replanting of many new Chilterns-friendly young trees (the exact make up and species have been identified already by the Forestry Commission) will begin. We would like to invite local residents, school children and community groups, as well as families, who have scattered ashes in the woodlands, to help plan and plant the new trees.



Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer



Fostering & Adoption Service becomes ‘Friend of WWSET’

Buckinghamshire Council’s Fostering and Adoption teams have become ‘Friends of WWSET’, a partnership with the official charity partner of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club, Wycombe Wanderers Sports and Education Trust (WWSET).

WWSET harnesses the significant power of the Wycombe Wanderers brand to deliver projects and activities that educate, motivate and inspire the High Wycombe and South Bucks community through the power of sport.

The Friends of WWSET partnership package includes opportunities to our Fostering and Adoption Services for not only recruitment but also retention of foster carers and support for adopters. This includes:

- Being placed in the matchday programme of every home game, with attendance of up to 10,000 fans.
- 30 seconds of pitch-side LED advertising for both services.
- A marketing reach of over 250,000 digital eyes and 6,000 participant eyes monthly.
- Joining the Adams Park Business Hub – a network of over 100 local companies in every trade. In particular, this will provide the opportunity to engage local businesses into becoming ‘Fostering Friendly Employers’.
- Have marketing literature distributed through WWSET’s network of participants, parents and partners.
- Unprecedented matchday benefits including free tickets for our looked after children.

WWSET have a social media following of nearly 260,000, giving us a large local audience to engage with. The football club is diverse and family orientated, broadening our marketing potential for both fostering and adoption. This partnership enables both our Fostering and Adoption teams to connect with local people and spread the message of the need for foster carers and adopters for local children.

The partnership launched on Saturday 7 August 2021 where football fans were back at Wycombe Wanderer's first competitive match since March 2020 in full numbers. The launch also included a press release where the need for families for local children through fostering and adoption, particularly for brothers and sisters, children from Black and Minority Ethnic heritage, older children and children with significant needs, was highlighted.

You can find out more about what the partnership means [here](#).

Thomas Hickman Nursery

In 2018, the Department for Education launched the School Nursery Capital Fund in order to support the delivery of Government funded two-year-old places for eligible children. The funding was aimed at schools that have more than 20% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals; as there is a correlation between this and eligibility for the funded two year old offer. A review of all schools in Buckinghamshire meeting the criteria was undertaken to identify potential opportunities for expansion, where additional provision was needed. Thomas Hickman School in Aylesbury was identified as the most appropriate school with 23.4% of pupils eligible for Free School Meals as well as being in an area where further capacity was required.

A successful application to the Department for Education's School Nursery Capital Fund provided 50% of the funding towards the £750K new purpose-built space at Thomas Hickman for funded two-year olds and out of hours childcare for school age children. The new nursery can accommodate up to 39 children at any one time. Despite the impact of Covid, the building was successfully completed on schedule and handed over to the school at the end of the summer term. The new building opened at the beginning of September 2021.

Buckinghamshire Adult Learning

Buckinghamshire Adult Learning (BAL) adapted and has responded extremely well to the unprecedented challenges created by the Covid-19 Pandemic. During the last academic year, BAL have moved most classes online, offering virtual tuition and learner support. This has enabled them to achieve strong performance and retain their allocation of grant funding. This core activity has been supported by ongoing participation in the Supported Internship and traineeship programmes as well as supporting apprenticeships, as the Council's preferred provider.

BAL is funded via external grants and contracts issued from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), through levy funding draw down via the Digital Apprenticeship System (DAS) and fees collected from its customers. As part of this arrangement, BAL is required to target and deliver education to meet the local needs of its residents.

By becoming an increasingly efficient service, BAL will be enabled to deliver better value for Government grants with ambitious future targets of delivering more provision within an efficient, sustainable service. The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically reduced BAL's in-year fees and as a result of changes to the local economy, it is expected that continued reduction in fees may be seen for the next few years; however, BAL is working hard to promote courses and encourage learning delivered on-line and at nine dedicated sites across the county.

Apprenticeships are a key deliverable in the Council's economic strategy and for its own staff. BAL is the Council's preferred apprenticeship provider for business programmes, such as management, team-leading, business administration, customer service and finance. Also delivering support teaching, early years educator and playworker roles in Buckinghamshire's schools. Although

apprentice numbers reduced during Covid-19, predicted numbers for 2021/22 and beyond for the council and local schools are now showing an upturn which is pleasing.

Educational Psychologist Offer

Over the past eighteen months, our team of Educational Psychologists within the SEND service has gone through significant change. A new Principal Educational Psychologist joined the team in January 2020 and has been instrumental in driving forward change, including the launch of a highly successful recruitment campaign, including a real focus on 'growing our own'. At the beginning of September, for the first time ever, five trainee Educational Psychologists joined the team. Also, from September, Educational Psychologists started to offer consultations to schools for their pupils without an Education, Health and Care Plan to ensure that children are supported at the earliest opportunity, with an aim of preventing further escalation of need. They will also be taking on a number of projects with an aim to have a wider impact on school practice, including focusing on emotional based school avoidance, and co-production with children and young people, ensuring their voices are heard. They will also continue the nurture based work recommenced this year, including the Holding Hands and Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programmes. In addition, they will also be offering a form of clinical supervision to all primary school headteachers in Buckinghamshire, recognising that the headteacher is at the heart of the school and supporting them to have the resilience and emotional capacity to lead, which will in turn promote an authentic and inclusive leadership style that will further impact our children.



Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles



Armed Forces

We are affirming our commitment to Armed Forces Community and Armed Forces Covenant recognising Buckinghamshire's proud and historic links to the Armed Forces. The Armed Forces (Civilian-Military) Partnership Board has been re-established, with the board meeting quarterly moving forward. The board has identified four initial priorities and created dedicated task and finish groups to deliver i.e. Veteran Clubs. One of the priorities will build on the activity and work that awarded us a Silver Defence Employer Recognition award in July 2020 and strive towards achieving the gold award.

Community Safety

I am pleased to announce that following a service review, the new Community Safety Team was launched on 16 August 2021. On vesting day, teams from all legacy councils joined and have been working hard to understand best practice and move the service forward. Both Arif Hussain and I attended the new teams' launch and were impressed by their commitment, enthusiasm and ideas. Now the team have a new structure in place there will be regular member briefings, the first of which will be in late September. This will help members know more about the teams' work plans, connections with partners, as well as the critical programme of work under the Safer Buckinghamshire Board. In addition, plans are underway for a Prevent Community Roundtable which will take place in the Wycombe area in early October. The aim of this event is to provide a better understanding of the Prevent agenda to communities that have a risk of radicalisation and give them an opportunity to ask questions.

A Serious Violence Coordinator is part of the new structure and funded by the Home Office. The post will support our preparation for the new statutory Serious Violence Duty which is expected to be enacted in April 2022. This duty is intended to create the right conditions for agencies including local authorities to collaborate and communicate regularly, to use existing partnerships and to share information and take effective coordinated action to reduce serious violence in their local areas.

Relationships with Ethnic Minority Community and Faith Leaders

Our Community Engagement and Development team are building greater links and positive relationships with ethnic minority communities and faith leaders. A dedicated officer is engaging with a number of informal networks and contacts around Covid-19 recovery and other local priorities. The team have doubled the number of ethnic minority faith and local leaders and community organisations they support, currently sharing resources with over 100 contacts. The team have facilitated 20 meetings with community leaders and public health to support Covid-19 response

and recovery and other health inequalities. To support the vaccine roll-out, the team are regularly engaging with 30 community and faith leaders to gather insight around vaccine barriers to inform vaccine equalities initiatives.

Community Boards

The first board meetings were held in July and the next meetings will be in October/November. Action groups have been formed across all boards and each board will have their annual Action Plan in place by mid-September. The first Annual Report on the work of the Community Boards was recently discussed at Cabinet. This captures the start of the boards' journey last year and the ambitions over the next 12 months. This new way of working can make a considerable difference to local communities, both at accelerating plans for local ideas and projects, as well as hearing local voices and what matters most to them. We are having fortnightly funding review meetings and I can see the variety of local creative ideas that are coming from the boards that will have significant impact. I would urge all local members to take an active part in their community boards to help develop the model. There will be regular member briefings and a newsletter to help keep everyone updated on activity across all the boards.

Town and Parish

Town and Parish Councils remain key partners for the Council. We are committed to working closely with local councils, understanding, and complementing each other's roles for the benefit of our people. We share the goal to make our county, towns and villages, great places to live, work and bring up a family and know that there is strength and value in doing that together. The Town and Parish Charter highlights that commitment to working together. A draft has been shared with local councils for feedback and the Charter is due to be formally launched in October, with the aim for as many councils as possible to sign up to it.

Financial Insecurity Partnership

Work has been progressing at pace to support those residents whose financial security has been significantly challenged because of the pandemic. The Financial Insecurity Partnership, whose membership includes stakeholders such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Housing Associations and the Department of Work and Pensions, has been gathering data and exploring this issue over the last few months. Work highlighted that the former Wycombe District area has a high proportion of households in poverty with a disproportionate number of claimants and a decrease in job postings. There is collective agreement across the Partnership to deliver a pilot in the Wycombe area, working across multiple organisations to understand the issues more fully, especially at a granular level, and collaboratively develop and implement support measures. This pilot has now started with the first workshops taking place within the next couple of weeks.

Food Partnership

The Financial Insecurity Partnership work dovetails into the Buckinghamshire Food Partnership work on food insecurity. Recent modelling by the University of Sheffield utilised data from a survey commissioned by the Food Foundation and, for the first time, allowed us to understand food insecurity at a local authority scale. We are currently engaging with the authors of the report and food support organisations to understand, more fully, the situation within Buckinghamshire.

In addition, we have been supporting vulnerable residents using COVID Government Support Grants which, to date, totals just under £2.5 million. We have utilised this money to provide approximately £1.2 million of Holiday Food vouchers to families in receipt of Free School Meals, provide direct support to households via the Helping Hand team and through our voluntary sector partners embracing a collaborative funding approach with our partners and Community Boards.





Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

HS2 and EWR Update

There continues to be ongoing concern regarding the damage being caused to the highway by EWR in the north of the county; the Council is working with EWR to tackle the significant repairs needed on Queen Catherine Road, Main Street and Herds Hill. These roads, which were never designed for the heavy construction traffic needed for the EWR project, have deteriorated very quickly and are now in a very poor condition. Specialist engineers from both the Council and EWR have been on site to plan the most appropriate repairs needed to bring the road back up to a suitable standard as quickly as possible. Works of this type need detailed design and planning to ensure that the final repairs are suitable for the traffic using the road and the EWR engineers are working with Transport for Bucks (TfB) to make sure their plans are appropriate and sufficiently robust to last for the entirety of their period of works. Specialist contractors are also needed to undertake the work on the ground. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by mid-October 2021 and as soon as firm plans are in place, we will be notifying local residents. Until these substantive works are complete, temporary road repairs will continue to make the worst of the defects safe.

Discussions with HS2 Ltd are ongoing in parallel and combined to EWR conversations to secure the necessary funding to repair the damage caused as a result of their construction traffic on our highways network.

Appointment of HS2 and EWR Marshal

Due to the significant increase in the HS2 & EWR works across the county, Buckinghamshire Council has appointed two HS2 & EWR Marshals to help residents impacted by the projects. The Marshals will be the Council's eyes and ears on the ground addressing highways and planning issues caused by HS2 Ltd, the EWR Alliance and their appointed agents, contractors and subcontractors. A major part of the Marshal's role will be to respond to complaints and queries relating to traffic management, highways activities and planning related issues of HS2 and EWR. To achieve this, they will ensure that all works and site operations are completed within the agreed plans, programmes and timescales. They will also have the Council's planning powers of entry to check works and mitigation are compliant with the Town and Country Planning and Local Government Acts.

Transport for Buckinghamshire Update

The summer season is traditionally a very busy time for the service, delivering a wide range of capital road maintenance schemes and general highways maintenance activities. With very welcome significant additional funding for surfacing works and drainage schemes, this year has been particularly busy.

Although delivery on the ground continues apace, national shortages of HGV drivers, difficulties with supply chain delivery and recruitment and Covid related impacts have hindered delivery against programme in some areas.

By the 25th August 25,375 gullies had been inspected, with 22,445 cleansed and operational after the visit. This is against a total of over 85,000 and represents a step change in previous years' cleansing. However, the programme has fallen a few weeks behind where we had planned to be by now, because of the issues outlined above. To try and address this and get back on track, before the winter service begins, TfB in-house crews have been working evenings and weekends, our existing supply chain partners are being equally responsive and are procuring further gully cleaning companies to ensure additional crews can work on the programme.

The capital drainage schemes to repair and improve key highways drainage schemes are on track with a full programme of 31 major schemes planned by year end. In addition, around 70 ditching and minor schemes have been delivered so far. The LATs are continuing to raise new works orders for repairs as these are identified through the cleansing programme and so far, over 1100 gullies have been brought back into operation through this work.

Our annual surface dressing programme was completed in August, with 26 full schemes delivered. Footway and plane and patch schemes will now ramp up in September to deliver the programmed 58 plane and patch and 41 footway schemes by the end of the financial year.

Following a successful bid submission, Buckinghamshire Council have been awarded a £500K traffic signals maintenance grant by the Department for Transport toward a refurbishment scheme for the Walton Street Gyratory. This award will greatly help both refurbish and future proof this critical traffic junction. The outline scheme is now being taken to detailed design for delivery in the next financial year.



Opening of the Haydon Hill Cycle Link

On 24th August we officially opened the Haydon Hill Cycle Link to provide a continuous off-road link between Haydon Hill to the Aylesbury Park Way Station and onto the Waddesdon Greenway. The route forms part of the Buckinghamshire Greenway Project to ultimately provide a high quality cycle route from Silverstone in the north of the county to the Misbourne Valley in the south of the county. Locally, the route will connect with the Ruby Way and Emerald Way cycle routes and the existing and future off-road route to Buckingham Park and Watermead.

Capability Fund

We have been awarded £115,000 towards capability funding to help support behaviour change to active travel modes and for the development of deployable active travel schemes so that they can be implemented more quickly or utilised to respond rapidly to funding opportunities. We are focusing this on additional resources to change the way people travel to schools and work through supporting Living Streets and their WOW (walking to school) tracker.

Back to School - Travel to School Awareness Campaign

We are starting a mini campaign to encourage more sustainable travel to school as schools go back. The campaign focuses on:

- Encouraging More Sustainable Travel Modes to School – with a press release and banners at school encouraging walking, cycling, scooter, or bus to school.
- Safety of School Crossing Patrollers. Look for our Stop means Stop – Watch your Speed notices on the back of buses.
- Think before you Park and Parents Parking Promise - highlighting the issues of poor parking round schools as it is one of the main safety concerns around schools.

School Bus Arrangements and Additional Commercial School Bus Routes

Officers have worked extremely hard to prepare for the start of term on 2nd September. 74 new Council-run bus routes are in place to ensure that children who are eligible for Council transport assistance are supported to get to school. All new timetable details are published on the Council's website and can be [found here](#). The Council's spare seat scheme continues to operate. This scheme enables parents who do not qualify for free transport assistance for their child to apply to buy a spare seat on a Council-run bus where there is space available (after seats are allocated to eligible children). Over 600 parents/carers have bought spare seats on Council buses for the academic year 21/22. This includes 188 new students and 443 continuing students (data provided 31 August). 328 new applications were received this year with 276 offers made (84% success rate for the parents who applied).

As part of school bus changes, we have worked with local commercial bus companies so that those routes that carry few or no eligible children are taken over as [commercial school bus routes from September 2021](#). We are really pleased that there are 14 extra commercial routes operating across the county to support parents to get their child to school. All children who paid for a seat on a council-run school bus in the 2020/21 academic year who wanted a seat on a bus from September 2021 had the opportunity to buy a seat on a council or commercial school bus or on a public bus or train.

Visiting our Compliance and Safeguarding

On 29th July I was pleased to visit the Client Transport Compliance and Safeguarding team at the Mandeville Training Centre. The team deliver several training courses to taxi and coach drivers, as well as to the passenger assistants that transport our most vulnerable clients on Council contracts.

I joined their specialist wheelchair training course with a group of six others, starting with a classroom presentation, followed by a demonstration and finally a practical test on a wheelchair accessible vehicle. The candidates have to show their proficiency in securing a wheelchair user inside a vehicle before they are allowed to do this on our contracts.

During the school term there are approximately 1,650 contracts run daily of which about 144 are wheelchair users. The safeguarding training has been adapted to be delivered online and the wheelchair courses that were restarted in April 2021 has seen more than 180 contracted staff members attend.



Bus Service Improvement Plan Update

As required in the National Bus Strategy (*Bus Back Better*) published in March 2021, the Council is currently drawing up a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP is a joint project between the Transport Strategy and Public Transport teams and outlines the ambitions of both the Council and local bus operators on how bus services can be improved in order to attract more passengers and reduce local car journeys. This in turn will help to inform the creation of an Enhanced Partnership between the Council and bus operators.

The Council has been working with bus operators to establish their key priorities to improve bus services and have undertaken a survey with both bus users and the wider community to determine which measures for improving bus services to prioritise. An update will be brought to the Transport, Economy and Climate Change Select Committee on 16th September, followed by a report to Cabinet on 19th October.

Bus occupancy indicators

Public Transport have been working with bus operators and our real time display contractor VIX to indicate to passengers how busy the next few buses due at their stop will be. These are initially being rolled out over the summer period on the 60 'Solent' digital bus screens located across the county. Arriva and Carousel routes will be marked as:

- Bus quiet/quiet - meaning seats are available
- Fairly busy - meaning a few seats available
- Busy - meaning standing room only

17:00	 37	Bourne End	 quiet	Due
	 104	Uxbridge	 quiet	2 min
	 32	Micklefield	 quiet	4 min
	 36	Bourne End Station	 quiet	15 min

We are working with other bus companies to roll this out further. The software has been funded by part of the Travel Demand Management grant received from the Department for Transport to help local authorities manage public transport usage during the pandemic.

Changes to local bus services

Local operators are making various changes to their commercial bus services across the county for the beginning of the academic year. Timetables are being adjusted following the lifting of restrictions over the summer and in anticipation of travel increasing from September onwards.

The Public Transport team have been busy working on about 40 new/revised local bus timetables for the start of the academic year. This information will go on the website, into the national Traveline Journey Planner, on Real Time Information displays and at bus stops. Over 1,500 of our bus stop timetables will be updated. Details of all local bus service revisions can now be found on our [service changes page](#).



Cabinet Member report – Finance, Resources, Property and Assets

Councillor John Chilver



Public Sector Network cyber security compliance

In July the Cabinet Office confirmed that the new Buckinghamshire Council had successfully passed its Public Sector Network (PSN) compliance. The PSN enables the council to securely connect to other public sector agencies e.g. our ability to share electronic data with the DWP. It is also seen as a positive marker for our overall IT cyber security approach. To achieve compliance, we must meet strict Government security standards and prove that our security arrangements, policies, and controls are sufficiently rigorous to interact with other public sector agencies (evidenced by a detailed confidential submission to the Cabinet Office). Previously each legacy council had its own individual PSN accreditation. Given the major challenges we face in managing all the legacy council IT environments our new single council accreditation reflects the substantial effort made by all the IT staff involved.

Together Survey

The Together Survey is a staff pulse survey which is undertaken 3 times a year and invites employees to share how much they agree or disagree with ten core statements. The survey results measure how employees are feeling about the council, work, the impact of Covid and their job.

The last survey was completed in July and across the Council 49% of staff responded. The questions are grouped into 5 index scores and these results for the first four indices are compared to the external benchmark data. The results continue to be positive with staff agreeing and strongly agreeing as follows

- Engagement – 73% (external benchmark 65%)
- Managing Change – 59% (external benchmark 64%)
- Well-being & resilience - 73% (external benchmark 72%)
- Covid-19 and its impact - 80% (external benchmark 74%)
- Our New Council- 69%

Results are shared and discussed with all staff at an individual, team, service and Directorate level. We acknowledge what we are doing well and we also highlight areas for improvement ensuring that the 'You said We did' messages reach everyone.

The next survey is in November and we will be introducing an option for staff to provide narrative so that can build on the discussions we have within teams to address staff concerns and issues.

Website Developments - Revenues and Benefits

August has seen the new online content for Council Tax, Benefits and Business Rates go live on the new Buckinghamshire.gov.uk website. The digital team have worked closely with the Revs and Bens team to deliver an improved customer experience, remove duplicate content from the legacy district sites and pave the way for the introduction of the new single portal for all Revs and Bens users in Buckinghamshire in December. Across all three services we have created much simpler and effective user content and journeys and reduced legacy content by up to 60%.

Aylesbury courts complex generates income from filming

The vacant court complex has recently been utilised as a filming location with productions from Amazon and Netflix already completed and a number of upcoming productions for BBC and ITV in the pipeline. The old Aylesbury Crown Court has benefited from the closure of Kingston Crown Court for development and has enabled the council to attract significant interest because of the location and style of Court 1.

The filming is carefully managed and supervised to ensure that the Listed Building and its contents are respected and protected. Local restaurants and cafes have been benefiting from the activity, particularly those in the adjacent Exchange complex.

A business plan for the bringing the courts back into community/commercial use longer term is currently being developed for Members' consideration in due course.

Aylesbury Community Centres

Following the relaxation of the Government Guidelines on Covid restrictions on hiring venues in July, there has been a steady return of customers booking our venues. We are continuing to work with our regular hirers, in particular groups offering activities for the older age groups on reassuring them the venues are still Covid secure and the majority of these are re-hiring from September 2021.

Following the loss of the Preschool at the Alfred Rose Centre in January, working with the Council's Early Years Team, a new operator has been found. Pending their Ofsted Inspection and agreement to the licence to Occupy, they will be offering this valuable service to the Community from September 2021.

In August, the newly refurbished Southcourt Community Centre play space opened. This was part funded from S106 funds and support from Morgan Sindall who provided free labour and paint as part of their Neighbourhood week.



Vale Retail Park

Terms have been agreed with a major retailer to take space at Units 1, 2 and 3 at Vale Retail Park, subject to planning approval. The Council will combine the three retail units whilst also retaining a smaller Unit 3b to let separately and undertake improvements to the frontage and car park. The letting will secure a significant income for the Council at the retail park and create new jobs. Terms have also been agreed on Units 3b and 5 with national retailers.

Green Park

Terms have been agreed with a new operator at Green Park to preserve the venue as an outdoor learning centre and they are now in occupation, operating the facility ahead of the lease completion. Green Park will benefit from a tenant led investment programme, providing financial savings for the Council and creating local employment.

Friars Square Shopping Centre, Aylesbury

Following the acquisition of the Shopping Centre in April, business has continued as usual. The Centre has fully re-opened following the lifting of the Covid restrictions and footfall has been increasing month-on-month. There are only 2 retail vacancies.

Old County Offices

The planning consent to convert Old County Offices to 46 residential units has been granted. Further detailed design will now be undertaken, and subject to Cabinet awarding a construction budget, this iconic non listed heritage asset in Aylesbury Town Centre will be converted. Work could start on site as early as spring 2022 with completion in autumn 2023. This is a positive step forward to delivering high quality housing in a highly sustainable location.

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. Since our last report a number of projects have achieved Practical Completion including the Amersham School expansion and the new Kingsbrook Primary. We continue to progress the Kingsbrook Secondary (development of new secondary school); Chiltern Hills Academy (major expansion works); Holmer Green and Misbourne School (major expansion and sports hall works).

Property Services continue to work with colleagues in Culture, Sport and Leisure on the development and delivery of new leisure facilities including the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre in Amersham and the installation of a new swimming pool in Chalfont Leisure Centre, both scheduled to open in the autumn; 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.

High Wycombe Major Projects

Cressex Island – Crest Rd signalisation will be completed on time and on cost. The Council has now sold a development site subject to Planning and the developer continues to work up its plans for bringing forward the project and a Planning Application.

HQube- 12 unit small workspace development has achieved Practical Completion and is already largely let.

Handy X Hub – The Council has agreed a conditional disposal subject to Planning on the site. The developer operator continues to work up a Planning Application for the site.