



Cabinet minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday 19 October 2021 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 11.36 am.

Members present

A Macpherson, G Williams, S Bowles, S Broadbent, J Chilver, A Cranmer, C Harriss, N Naylor and P Strachan

Others in attendance

R Stuchbury, A Wheelhouse and W Whyte

Apologies

M Tett

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor M Tett.

2 Minutes RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September, 2021, be agreed as a correct record.

3 Declarations of interest

Councillor A Macpherson declared a personal interest in Item 9 (Bus Service Improvement Plan) as a Trustee of the Bernwode Community Bus.

4 Hot Topics

The following hot topics were reported:

Cabinet Member for Transport

Cabinet were informed of two issues:

- Members were informed of the formation of the East West Rail Mainline partnership (formerly the EW consortium), that would be chaired by the Cabinet Member. In line with the recent Notice of Motion discussed at full

Council, the Council, Bucks LEP, England's Economic Heartland and the EW mainline partnerships have all submitted bids to Government as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review which included the demand to build the Aylesbury link of EW rail, as had been originally proposed in the Act. The CSR was due to be announced by the end of the month.

- The Grit' Parade –a dry run of winter road gritting arrangements had been undertaken at the weekend. This had included testing vehicles and drivers familiarising themselves by driving routes on the network.

Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment

Cabinet were informed that the current household waste collection arrangements would continue in the former Wycombe and Chiltern Council areas for another 4 weeks. This was due to the HGV driver situation not improving sufficiently nationally to allow the service to revert to the usual arrangements. The situation would continue to be monitored on a daily basis and communications provided to local residents.

Cabinet Member for Communities

Cabinet were informed of two issues:

- Buckinghamshire had been allocated a grant of £2.4m from the Government's £500m Household Support Grant. The grant would support families with children and households in the most need with food, energy and water bills and other essential costs in the period October-March 2022. The Council would need to submit a delivery plan to Government and were currently developing a scheme in discussion with voluntary and community sector partners and other agencies.
- The Cabinet Member highlighted the work of Community Boards, a number of which were engaging with young people on issues they felt were important in their areas. For example, the Wendover Community Board had provided funding to the Wendover Youth Centre for a programme of physical activities for young people. Chesham and Villages Community Board had funded The Theatre Shed for an inclusive community production. The Theatre Shed was a place where young people from every background and ability came together to use the power of drama, music and dance to have fun and build confidence and develop their creativity.

Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

The Council had experienced some IT issues on the release of the secondary school test results on Friday afternoon. This was a difficult time for parents and children affected and thankfully the system had been back up and running by 7pm, which meant that families did receive their results on Friday evening. A letter of apology had been issued to schools, and the Corporate Management Team were reviewing exactly what happened and the lessons learned to ensure this was not repeated in the future.

Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Cabinet were informed of two issues:

- The new pool at Chalfont Leisure Centre had opened to the public on 18 October. The new pool was part of a major refurbishment programme to all facilities at that centre.
- The Council had successfully retained Green Flag Awards for 6 urban parks – The Rye and Hughenden Park in High Wycombe, Higginson Park in Marlow, Vale Park and Bedgrove Park in Aylesbury and Heartlands in Buckingham.

5 Question Time

Question from Councillor Alison Wheelhouse to Councillor Steve Broadbent, Cabinet Member for Transport

A355/London End junction, Beaconsfield

“Given that the Planning Inspector has recently upheld HS2’s Appeal against the Council’s failure or refusal to approve HS2 lorry routes, what next steps will the Council take to obtain and provide clearer, reliable information on how much HS2 traffic is expected to use the A355/London End junction in Beaconsfield; and what measures will you take to manage the increasing level of HS2 traffic on the A355 in Beaconsfield including preventing lorries using other routes in the town?”

Response

Since receiving the Planning Inspectors’ reports, we have subsequently taken further legal advice from Counsel. As a consequence, the Council has (to date) issued the Judicial Review challenge to the inspector’s decisions on two of the lorry routes appeals. Work is underway preparing the appeals for submission for the remaining four lorry route appeals.

We have also been pressing the contractors and HS2 Ltd to publish comprehensive Traffic Guides detailing the volumes of HS2 traffic we can expect and to provide us with monthly lorry monitoring information, which has now been supplied and officers are reviewing the data before determining the next steps.

The council has also specifically invested in monitoring the impact of HS2 construction activity in certain locations, enabling appropriate action to be taken where non-adherence of agreed routes and significant impact on traffic flow occurs. Two mobile CCTV cameras have been deployed on the A355 in Beaconsfield. One at the junction of Amersham Road and Ledborough Lane and the other on the A40 London End/Park Lane roundabout. In the case of both CCTV cameras, footage is reviewed periodically and contractors whose construction traffic does not adhere to what has been agreed, will be approached and instructed to take the necessary action against their sub-contractors. The Council has also used the HS2 Road Safety Fund to purchase a third camera given the extent of the impact on our network.

In addition to the cameras, the Council is funding two marshals who are constantly out on the network, and who, amongst a range of activities, monitor the impact on traffic congestion resulting from HS2 construction in real time. This enables swift

action to be taken, minimising any potential impact.

Question from Councillor Robin Stuchbury to Councillor Anita Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

"Given that the waiting list for children and young people to access CAMHS can be 18 months to 2 years, can the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services please confirm what mitigations are in place to support children with their educational needs whilst they wait to be assessed and what action is the Council taking, e.g. lobbying the local NHS Trust, to improve this situation?"

Response

Please find the list below of activity that the Council is leading on to support the emotional health of children and young people:

Mental Health Support Teams

(MHSTs) complement existing school support for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing by providing expertise and resources to deliver quicker support to individuals who may not typically meet the CAMHS thresholds for involvement, but would benefit from accessing early support. MHSTs aim to bring together education and mental health professionals to develop a systemic and sustainable approach to children and young people's mental health.

The impact of this intervention has been that the project has had reach to 28% of all young people in Buckinghamshire this is a rise from 16.5% last year and will increase further next academic year. Practitioners are engaging directly with students in this work, the outcomes of which are reported directly to Health and Wellbeing board.

Senior Mental Health Leads

Following the government's response to the consultation on the Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health green paper in July 2018, it is the expectation that every school and college will designate a member of their senior leadership team (or individual with equivalent whole-setting authority) to be the Senior Mental Health Lead. This role involves coordination and oversight of mental health and wellbeing provision within the school or college, with a focus on implementing an effective whole-setting approach to supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Whilst this intervention is in the early stage of development, there has been impact in that schools have started to identify senior mental health leads and raise the profile of mental health and wellbeing in their establishments. Training will be delivered in the academic year 2021-22.

Wellbeing for Education Return

The Department for Education's Wellbeing for Education Return (WER) programme was announced in August 2020, requiring local authorities to oversee the

dissemination of training materials out to schools and settings, focussing on a whole-school approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing in the context of the coronavirus pandemic.

The impact of this intervention has been that over 95% of schools attended the training and in each of these settings staff are trained to identify and address low level mental health and wellbeing needs of students and other staff as well as being clear for escalation routes through to other services.

Link Programme

The Link Programme is an evidence-based initiative led by Anna Freud Centre and funded by the Department for Education. The programme brings together schools, colleges and mental health services in a series of workshops led by Clinical Commissioning Groups to deliver sustainable change in the delivery of children and young people's mental health services. In particular, the programme highlights the importance of taking on a collaborative approach when dealing with mental health in children and young people.

The impact of this intervention has been that there has been circulation of information regarding CAMHS and the MHSTs to schools, promotion of the newly-revamped Local Offer webpages, and exploration of ways to best deliver a school liaison group.. This further ensures that schools have the tools to address issues surrounding mental health and wellbeing for their students.

Staff Training and Support

In parallel with the Wellbeing for Education Return programme, Buckinghamshire Council commissioned several projects aimed at developing the knowledge and expertise of school staff in relation to supporting mental health and wellbeing. These included a programme of twilight webinars delivered by experts from a range of agencies and services, providing bespoke continuing professional development in areas such as emotional attachment difficulties and bereavement.

The impact of this is that across the 2020/21 academic year there were 903 attendees in total, with over 90% of evaluations indicating that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the training.

Critical Incident Support

The Educational Psychology team within Buckinghamshire Council are responsible for providing direct support to schools and settings with respect to 'critical incidents' In these circumstances, the focus of the educational psychologists is typically to work in close collaboration with school senior leaders in order to guide and facilitate the practical and emotional support provided to pupils, staff and families, both in the immediate aftermath and over the longer term.

The Educational Psychology team responded to 21 critical incidents during the 2020/21 academic year, across nursery, primary, secondary and college settings. The support provided ranged from advice and consultations with key senior staff

through to home visits for families directly impacted by the critical incident.

The impact of this work varies depending on the specific incident, but the aims are for staff to have the mental resilience to manage a critical incident and to have the tools at their disposal to support the pupils who have been affected by it.

Future plans to address mental health and wellbeing in Buckinghamshire schools

The Department for Education announced an extension to the Wellbeing for Education Return grant funding for the 2021/22 academic year. The stated aims are for local authorities to continue the work from the 2020/21 programme whilst also helping schools to find sustainable ways of working together, and expanding existing programmes supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools.

The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Strategic Group has identified five key areas of activity in order to deliver against these objectives:

- a. School improvement support on best use of recovery and PP funding. Link to The Bucks Challenge Board and the closing the gap agenda, working collaboratively with Ed Psych team to establish a local evidence base.
- b. Aspire commission for 2021/22 – updating training for school and college leads (inc. local directory and support to cascade), training to examine well-being support in a post-COVID system.
- c. Liaison Group Well-being Champion Network developed (link to MHST). Promotion of a single whole-school approach to well-being, potentially align with a well-being award/quality mark.
- d. Oxwell school survey – triage school results & provide bespoke support for schools with greatest need (e.g. 1:1 support, action plans). Support for all schools through drop in clinics.
- e. Review current support to determine areas of greatest need/impact. Projects to include: senior MH lead training, suicide prevention training, supervision of Headteachers, ELSA, Nurture Groups, Headteacher Wellbeing Support & Advice Line, mental health and well-being training sessions.

Expected Outcomes from Future Work

- School staff are trained to better recognise and support wellbeing and mental health concerns amongst students and staff and able to address low level issues.
- School staff are clear on escalation routes for significant concerns and have experience of engagement with partner organisations such as CAMHS.
- A wider understanding of wellbeing and mental health issues and how they affect children and young people – both in the short and long term, and that this is everyone's responsibility.
- Staff recognise and access support for their own mental health and wellbeing
- Where children and young people are in crisis, this is recognised earlier leading to a decrease in acute presentation at paediatric services.

6 **Forward Plan (28 Day Notice)**

Councillor Macpherson introduced the Forward Plan and commended it to all Members of the Council and the public, as a document that gave forewarning of what Cabinet would be discussing at forthcoming meetings.

RESOLVED –

That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

7 **Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change introduced a report on the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy that had been developed following the motion at Council on 15 July 2020 regarding climate change. It had subsequently been approved at Cabinet in February 2021 for further engagement. Climate change was a global emergency and it was critical that everyone played their part.

The Strategy set out the approach to addressing climate change and air quality across Buckinghamshire, including targets for emissions reduction from the Council's direct operations. Further engagement activity had been undertaken since Cabinet last considered this Strategy, the feedback from which had been supportive.

Members were informed that one amendment needed to be made to paragraph 3.11 of the Officers' report to reflect the current position and for the Strategy moving forward. As such, paragraph 3.11 should be replaced with the following text:

"We have already made some progress on EV charging but there is more to do. The Government are also seeking views on accelerating the provision of EV infrastructure as part of their Future of Transport consultation. To allow us to match this ambition our strategy will look for opportunities to accelerate our own provision based on focused engagement with key stakeholders and partners. This will ensure we increase provision of EV charging points across Buckinghamshire in a speedy manner."

The overall strategy was based upon the Council's ability to control or influence different sources of emissions. The degree of control or influence was reflected in the nature of the actions for an emission source. The influence had been articulated across four levels / approaches:

- (i) **Direct Control:** Where we have direct control, we will take action to reduce emissions, for example by installing renewable energy systems (such as solar panels) on our buildings.
- (ii) **Financial / Regulatory Role:** Where we have financial or regulatory influence, we will look to use these abilities to reduce emissions, for example using our local planning powers to reduce emissions from new developments.
- (iii) **Enabling Change:** Where we can enable others to reduce emissions, we will support that change, for example by providing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

- (iv) **Inform and Influence:** In other circumstances, we shall seek to inform and influence those who do have control over emissions, for example by raising public awareness of climate change and air quality issues.

The strategy was ambitious with 60 proposed actions across a range of emission sources, with the actions being arranged in sections aligned with the degree of control model – importantly it was a costed and deliverable plan which would put the Council on the path to reducing emissions by 75% by 2030 and 90% by 2040 reaching net zero by no later than 2050 and put Buckinghamshire on a sharper decline than the UK’s national approach:

- (a) The Council’s Emissions – covering how we will reduce our direct emissions.
- (b) Suppliers and Partners – covering how we will work with Community Boards, schools, suppliers and partner organisations to reduce emissions.
- (c) County-wide – covering how we’ll work to reduce emissions from non-council sources of emissions across Buckinghamshire, such as a from transportation and new developments.

The strategy explained in more detail:

- about carbon emission targets and the actions that would support achieving emission targets.
- this Council and its predecessors have a long history of tackling climate change and in recent months have been particularly supporting nature base solutions. These included securing over £200k from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund (LAFT) to support tree planting in non-forest locations as part of a bid with 5 partner organisations, working with several community groups who were interested in planting trees in road verges, and supporting the Queen’s Green Canopy initiative to mark Her Majesty’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022 and have offered every school and care home a free tree that they can plant in their own grounds. The Council were now out to tender to deliver on the first of those sites.
- the Council were simplifying the process in planting trees in road verges and would help those interested in undertaking planting to access resources on re-wilding road verges and other materials to support individuals and organisations to plant trees.
- information on building and transport emissions that were under the direct control of the Council and how they would be reduced.
- information on the Council’s carbon emissions for 2020-21, which showed there had been a 75% reduction in emission since the 1990 baseline, and a 40% reduction compared to the 2018/19 carbon audit.
- emissions were expected to increase next year following Covid and the return to normal working practices although there were more flexible ways of working.
- the Cabinet Member would be launching today the Bucks Climate Green Challenge Campaign to raise awareness and encourage everyone to make a change in their lives to reduce their impact on the climate and the environment.
- whilst most people would aim to move to electric vehicles for many it was

not an affordable option to date however the Cabinet Member highlighted there were still low cost measures that could make a difference. In support of COP 26 the Council would be taking part in a regional event called green wheels in motion hosted by the Leonards Group at their facility in the Silverstone Technology Park where the decarbonising of transport was being developed and trialled in Buckinghamshire.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- A Cabinet Member commented that Buckinghamshire seemed to be leading the way especially with EV charging and commended embedding climate change into all the service areas of the Council. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment reported that this Council was doing well compared to other councils but it was important to reach out to other Councils and identify any good initiatives which could be adopted by Buckinghamshire. It was important to embed this area into all Council processes for example procurement – to ask contractors to ensure they follow the Strategy as far as possible.
- In response to a question, the Cabinet Member agreed to regularly suggest small low cost measures that residents could undertake to make a difference.
- The Cabinet Member who was responsible for the agricultural estate had visited all sites in the first phase for tree planting and was excited that the first phase would be undertaken this winter. He commented it was important to engage with Parish Councils, Community Boards and schools to get their input, ideas and ownership by the local community. Reference was made to cultivation licences and the cost and bureaucracy involved in obtaining them and whether this process could be simplified. In response the Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment reported that there were two types of planting programme; one on Council land following the correct governance processes and the other through Parishes and Community Boards. It was crucial to offer appropriate advice that the right tree was planted correctly in the right place and some form of maintenance was included in this.
- Air quality – a Cabinet Member commented that it was important to look at impact of major infrastructure projects such as HS2 and to monitor compliance. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment acknowledged that it was important that major projects did not impact on air quality and said that the Council were monitoring HS2 on a daily basis.
- COP 26 – reference was made to the need to be agile to any policy changes. The Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment reported that they would expect additional Government funding for any initiatives arising from COP 26. The Service area would remain flexible to any new initiatives and their ability to make a better environment for all. The aim was to meet and match Government legislation if not improve it. The Energy and Climate Change Manager reported that the Government would be issuing a Net Zero Strategy which had a heating and building strand to it; the first part

announced was gas boilers moving over to heat pumps in 15 or so years and to understand the details of funding support for residents.

- Climate change would be embedded in the emerging Local Plan and there were expected changes coming through in legislation.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the outcomes of the recent engagement activity be noted.**
- (2) That the ongoing work being done to address climate change and reduce carbon emissions in 2020/21 be noted.**
- (3) That the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy be agreed and adopted, subject to the updated information provided on paragraph 3.11 of the Officers' report.**
- (4) That the MTFP be amended to reflect the revenue and capital budgets for the Strategy.**
- (5) That Cabinet be provided with an annual update on the implementation of the Strategy.**

8 Youth Justice Strategic Plan

Councillor Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services introduced a report on the Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-2022 which provided details of progress made against agreed outcomes for Children and Young People. The plan outlined priorities, alongside potential future challenges for the partnership over the coming year. It also highlighted the partnership arrangements and budget position for the Youth Offending Service Partnership.

Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service was a multi-agency partnership between the Police, Children's Services, Health Services, Probation, Community Safety and both voluntary and private sector providers. The Youth Offending Service (YOS) played a key role in keeping communities, families, children and young people safe through the prevention of offending and reoffending, reduction in the use of custody and through contribution to multi-agency protection and safeguarding.

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan had been produced in compliance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Section 40 which required each local authority, after consultation with the relevant persons and bodies, to formulate and implement for each year a plan (a "youth justice plan") setting out:

- (i) How youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded; and
- (ii) How the Youth Offending Team (YOT) or teams established by them (whether alone or jointly with one or more other local authorities) would be composed and funded, how they would operate, and what functions they would carry out.

The plan also incorporated guidance from the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and had to be submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales and published in accordance with the directions of the Secretary of State.

Members were informed that Multi-agency YOT/YOS had been established in 2000 following the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act with the intention of reducing the risk of young people offending and re-offending, and to provide counsel and rehabilitation to those who do offend. The act stipulated the composition of the YOT and identified statutory partners to work alongside the Local Authority.

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) had set three national outcome indicators for all YOTs which formed the baseline for performance information included within this year's plan. These were as follows:

- Reduce the number of First Time Entrants (FTE) to the Youth Justice System.
- Reduce Re-offending
- Reduce the Use of Custody

The Cabinet report provided local context information for Buckinghamshire on areas including first time entrants to the youth justice system, re-offending rates and on the use of custodial sentences. The statistics on sentencing showed that Buckinghamshire's figure was lower than the National average and the South East figure but slightly higher than the Thames Valley figure.

There had been an increase in both the number of young people remanded to custody and the number of bed nights accrued in 2019-20, that was reflective of the seriousness of offending which was a national trend.

Members were informed that all young people offered a Prevention programme by Buckinghamshire YOS had been tracked for 12 months to monitor whether they commit any offences and subsequently become a first-time entrant. Of the 58 young people offered a voluntary programme in 2019-20, 1 (1.7%) went on to commit offences and become a first time entrant within 12 months, that was similar to 2018-19 and compared positively to 2017-18. The Council had been successful in obtaining external funding.

The plan included priorities for the coming year and mentioned that despite challenges presented by Covid 19, the Youth Offending Service continued to deliver creative solutions to maintain service delivery. The YOS worked alongside partners to continue to assess the quality of provision being delivered, including adapting the performance framework to focus on Covid related intervention delivery. There were a number of systemic issues which led young people into the Criminal Justice System. The YOS was keen to influence change across the organisation to not only prevent young people entering the Criminal Justice System but also to secure more positive outcomes for those that have already entered. The YOS would continue to underpin all the work they did on the following 3 areas to contribute to systematic change across the wider organisation.

- Continuing to address disproportionality.
- Addressing exploitation of young people; this priority will also consider focussing on serious youth violence given the introduction of the new statutory duty.
- Embedding an evidence based model of practice.

For 2021/22 the YOS would continue to make progress towards the above strategic priorities and alongside Covid recovery planning, would progress work streams and work towards securing positive outcomes against the three national indicators.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- A question was asked about what role schools play in the early identification of children being involved in crime. The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Service reported that the YOS continued to have an excellent relationship with schools and training was also provided. Schools were good at identifying children who were at risk, as children spend a long time at school and once identified they agree with partners what steps to take going forward.
- Further to this question the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services was asked about children being criminally exploited. The YOS worked with children services and partners in this area and provided interventions for children at risk of exploitation who would have been identified through schools or the police or other partners. This was a collaborative effort which was led by the staff in the YOS. The Corporate Director for Children's Services reported that early identification was crucial and that criminal and/or sexual exploitation meant that children could be victims as well as perpetrators and it was important that there was a strong multi-agency response. The Council worked hard with partners to share information about children and young people where necessary to identify if they needed an intervention to stop them being exploited in the future.
- Reference was made to Section 2 of the report and data received on the decrease in offending with regard to the work that had been carried out to improve target levels. There were lower numbers but seriousness increased. An application had been made for increased external funding to support increased provision around prevention which included youth workers based in schools. There was also a mentoring programme specifically for black and minority groups who were transitioning from primary to secondary – It was an unsettling time for them and they needed extra mentoring. Other measures were in place. The Corporate Director drew Members attention to 2.9 and 2.10 of the report; 2.9 referred to the use of custody – the numbers were very small at 0.04 per 1000 for under 17s. However small, the use of custody was a significant event and only used when required. Under 2.10 of the report the measure referred to the fact bed nights had increased; covid 19 would have an impact and also the length of time waiting for a court case. The Council were working with partners regarding the increase in serious violence, which was being experienced across the Country.
- There was a Serious Violence Task Force investigating reasons for the

increased violence which was putting in stronger measures and working with the Youth Justice Team to address the situation. Reference was made to exploitation. Some youths between 10 and 17 have been involved with serious offences and been arrested. Work was being carried out about the risks of future violence and measures taken to reduce that risk. There was a multi-agency response to all incidents.

- The reasons for crime were complex – children lost their base and schooling, family groups splintered coupled with the fact there were growing exploitation groups preying on children through the internet or in person.
- The Corporate Director reported that the more challenging individuals were not solely Looked After Children. There were 506 Looked After Children in Buckinghamshire many of whom were in good foster homes and 25 LAC were adopted every year. For all youths who offend reasons for this could often be linked to their early years so the Council work with education and concentrate on early years help to ensure core values were established. Children need aspirations for the future and preventative work was undertaken to lead them on the right path for a strong future and economic wellbeing which removed the motivation for crime and not caring about consequences.
- If children offended outside of Buckinghamshire but lived in Buckinghamshire they were included in the Council's local data. The Council have partnerships with local council to help the individual.

RESOLVED –

That the Buckinghamshire Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2021-22 be endorsed and Council recommended to adopt it.

9 Bus Service Improvement Plan

Cabinet had received and agreed a report on 29 June, 2021, on the 'Bus Back Better' National Bus Strategy that required Local Authorities to enter into Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators. Actions included agreeing a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by 31 October 2021 to secure long term funding for vital bus services. An Enhanced Partnership with bus operators would have to be entered into by no later than 31 March 2022.

The Cabinet Member for Transport introduced a report and explained that the National Bus Strategy identified two alternative approaches to delivering bus service improvements: franchising and enhanced partnerships. Buckinghamshire Council had opted to enter into an Enhanced Partnership with Bus Operators in June 2021 as the franchising option was not considered appropriate.

An Enhanced Partnership was a statutory arrangement under the 2017 Bus Services Act which could specify, for example, bus priority, timetables and multi-operator ticketing, This was a more formal extension of the joint working that had existed in Buckinghamshire for a number of years, which had led to a number of successful initiatives including introduction of the High Wycombe 'SMART zone' multi-operator

ticketing scheme and coordinated timetables on two bus corridors via Bus Qualifying Agreements.

The BSIP represented the Bus Strategy for Buckinghamshire and was required by the DfT to include a number of objective, priorities and targets for the whole of the LTA's entire bus service network. To benefit from new funding, LTAs would be expected to implement ambitious bus priority schemes and draw up ambitious BSIPs. Statutory traffic management guidance would be updated to make promoting bus reliability an integral part of highway authorities' Network Management Duty. However, it should be recognised that the guidance of BSIP was focused on more densely populated urban areas.

The Buckinghamshire BSIP had been developed in line with and followed the structure set out in DfT guidance and had included engaging with bus operators. The Council had met individually with every bus operator in Buckinghamshire to identify their challenges, opportunities and priorities to improve the future of bus services in Buckinghamshire. Buckinghamshire had a strong network of urban and inter-urban bus services that were operated by a range of large and smaller bus operators including Arriva; Carousel; First Bus; Langston and Tasker; Red Group (Red Eagle, Redline, Red Rose); Stagecoach East; Star Travel; Thames Valley; Transport for London, and Z & S Travel.

A Task and Finish group had been established, chaired by the Cabinet Member for Transport, and was comprised of elected Members representing the broad geographical area of the county. The group had helped to monitor progress of the development of the BSIP and identified member priorities for improving bus services in Buckinghamshire. A total of five meetings had taken place to date.

Further information was provided on the "Your Voice" survey that had run between August and 3 September, aimed at all members of the public, including bus users. One of the DfT's requirements for the BSIP was to include priorities from members of the public as part of the overall scheme prioritisation process. To address this, a survey had been published through "your Voice" between August and 3 September 2021. This had been advertised online and at key bus stops, as well as communicated through Buckinghamshire's Community Board network.

During discussion the following points were noted:-

- The main aim of the Strategy was to put the transport user first therefore making use of the bus easier and more attractive, to encourage and expand the local network which will play a part in the climate change strategy. On the primary network they were looking at Euro 6 buses and for the remaining network Euro 5 buses which would improve the emission situation. Capital investment was required with improvements to the network and bus stations and bus stops. The tables in the appendices were not an exhaustive list and would be reviewed annually. There would be a closer relationship with bus operators. There was a £3billion fund nationally.

- In terms of impacts in the first year of the Strategy, the primary concern was to get the patronage back on the buses particularly after the pandemic, which currently stood at 70% and to make buses an attractive, reliable alternative to private vehicles. Bus passenger numbers fell with an increased amount of friction in the journey e.g. ticketing. The Cabinet Member for Transport referred to the successful Smart zone scheme in High Wycombe where users could tap in and out of different bus networks. In the first year it would be good to expand this scheme and connect to other areas such as Amersham and Chesham to afford those benefits to a greater number of people. The Council needed to undertake improvements with bus operators on training, cleanliness, improving bus stops and vehicles and start feasibility work to identify bus priority measures.
- Buckinghamshire was a county of very different geography with urban conurbations and rural areas. In terms of rural areas, the plan had to reflect all user groups. In the first year it was important to strengthen and enhance the core network that already existed but it was important that rural areas connected better to towns so the bus service was a viable alternative to private transport. In Wycombe and Aylesbury the Council was undertaking demand responsive trials so people could come into town on a non-existent route so the route was dynamic. This had come about as a result of the Rural Mobility Fund bid and was a pilot. Community buses also played an important part in rural areas and would be involved in the enhanced partnership.
- The Service Area had a very restricted timescale to submit the bid so it was difficult to undertake a full consultation. A Member Task and Finish Group had been set up which involved Members across the County from urban and rural areas helping to shape the Strategy. Discussions had also been held with bus operators. Table 15 in the report showed the top five priority themes. A number of aspects had been pulled out which required greater focus such as significant improvements to the network, remove friction for a bus/ rail ticket and enhance multi-mode transport . A public survey had been undertaken which included understanding what prevented people using the bus. Written feedback had been obtained from Community Boards as there had been no August meetings whilst the survey was being carried out.
- Once this strategy had been agreed a formal enhanced partnership agreement needed to be developed once the Council had received information from Government about whether they had been successful in their bid at the end of March 2022.
- The quality and location of bus stations played a factor on whether residents took the bus. Aylesbury and Buckingham were included in that list. Winslow had a purpose built station which should link in with Network Rail and bus operators facilities. In terms of the new East- West Rail Station there were conversations underway in term of additional rail connectivity into Aylesbury. With bus stations acting as transport hubs the Council were trialling e scooter schemes and e bikes as an option (Aylesbury Vale Parkway). It was important to make the journey as seamless as possible and improve reliability and service. Linking buses to all modes of transport and a

refresh of stations would make it more appealing to users. Enhancement to Aylesbury bus station should be undertaken in the first year.

- Air quality - with Euro 6 and 5 buses being the aspiration there would be incremental steps to get these on the network and to improve the fleet incrementally removing older buses. Increasing bus journeys rather than the private car and making buses more environmentally friendly would help improve air quality.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) be approved, as set out in Appendix 1, to support long term funding for bus services.**
- (2) That the submission of the BSIP to the Department of Transport by the 31 October 2021 deadline, as well as publishing it on the Council’s website, be agreed.**
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Director for Transport Services, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, to make minor amendments to the plan if required for accuracy or updating.**
- (4) That the Council’s agreed commitment to entering an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators by no later than 31 March 2022 be noted, as the mechanism for prioritising and delivering measures in the BSIP.**

10 Support to the Provider Market as a result of COVID-19

In March 2021 a report relating to support to the provider market was presented and approved by Cabinet, which resulted in a package of financial support and a commitment to return to Cabinet with the viable options for the commissioning of services making note of the key commercial considerations. This was as a result of the impact of the pandemic on the provider market and was a national issue.

The confidential report provided an update on the current position and outlined the options for next steps. The approaches proposed aim was to provide the best foundation for managing the current care market whilst preparing for the future delivery of care and support for older people. Core to the proposals were ensuring the delivery of good quality care, value for money and ensuring market stability in line with our obligations under the Care Act 2014.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the update on the provider market be noted, as detailed in the confidential report.**
- (2) That the Corporate Director for Adults and Health be authorised to**

continue to negotiate with a provider on appropriate contract variations.

- (3) That the funding request for 2021/22, as detailed in the confidential report and appendix, be approved for immediate project resource, to be met from the General Contingency budget – Economic Uncertainty.
- (4) To note that a request for additional Adults and Social Care contingency, as detailed in the confidential report and appendix, will be considered as part of the overall MTFP process, to mitigate the potential wider financial impacts in 2022/23 to 2025/26.

11 Exclusion of the public (if required)

RESOLVED –

That pursuant to Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Minutes No 12 and 13, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act as defined as follows:

Minute 12 – Support to the Provider Market as a result of Covid-19.

Minute 13 – Confidential Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 September, 2021.

The items include Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) (Paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972) (The need to maintain the exemptions outweighs the public interest in disclosure, because disclosure could prejudice the Council's position in any future process or negotiations).

12 Confidential appendix for Support to the Provider Market as a result of COVID-19

The confidential appendices were discussed in confidential session and the decision taken has been included within the public minute 10.

13 Confidential Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 September 2021

RESOLVED –

That the confidential Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 28 September, 2021, be approved as a correct record.

14 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 9 November 2021, at 10am.