



Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

Helping Hand for Ukraine

It is heartening to see so many people offering to open their homes to a refugee from Ukraine, with Buckinghamshire receiving a vast number of expressions of interests from residents across the County.

The Council has formed a local strategic partnership to be in the best possible position across the whole of Buckinghamshire to co-ordinate a strong response to whatever scenario presents. It means we have representatives from education, health, safeguarding, fire, police, housing associations and the voluntary sector aligned to support arrivals as best we can. Matching sponsors with Ukrainian families is currently being co-ordinated through charities and other channels.

As a Council, we have a lot of experience from our Afghan resettlement programme and recognise the trauma that these families will likely have been through. Targeted wrap around support will be critical to ensuring that refugees are facilitated to set up a new life here in Buckinghamshire.

We are currently aware of around 859 refugees stating Buckinghamshire as their destination on their visa applications (data correct as of 12/04). The Council is helping practically with administering housing, welfare checks and DBS checks for sponsors who have found guests they would like to stay with them as well as administering the government grant to sponsors. Housing checks are already taking place and a welcome pack has been produced. This has been sent to sponsors along with a translated version for the Ukrainian families.

I'm sure we're all proud of the tremendous efforts made by our staff, and our partners, to mobilise our local response at such a rapid pace. In less than four weeks of the launch of the national scheme, our environmental health service has undertaken 282 home checks, children's and adults social care have together completed 313 safeguarding checks, and the Probation Service have carried out a further 530 checks. Over 100 of the Council's staff have come forward to take on sponsor liaison roles, in addition to their day jobs, and are already in contact with sponsor households in preparation for arrivals. I know that they have received very positive feedback from sponsors in appreciation of their work

We are encouraging community groups that are offering support to people arriving from Ukraine to add their information to the [Bucks Online Directory](#) – please can I ask you all to promote this in your local areas. As the Ukrainian guests begin to arrive, Members will have a key role to play in helping to welcome them and connect them into the local community groups which are being set up.

We know that there are a number of issues with the national scheme that need to be resolved, including, in particular, the support for individuals arriving on the Ukraine Family Visa scheme, as well as the development of a rematching process in the event that a sponsor arrangement is not successful. I recently had the opportunity to speak directly to Lord Harrington on the situation and to pass on some of the issues we have been facing. He promised to look at how things could be made easier and was keen to receive suggestions on where the process can be improved.

As the situation continues to evolve and change, the latest position on the Homes for Ukraine scheme will be updated at the Council meeting.

Social Care Funding

As the Adult Social Care Spokesperson for the County Councils Network (CCN), I remain concerned that the Adult Social Care charging reform proposals are likely to have a serious impact on the care sector across the country, widening the funding gap that we are currently facing and creating additional uncertainty about future funding periods.

The CCN has released a new [independent report](#) by healthcare market specialists LaingBuisson. This concluded that the government's proposed allocation 'seriously underestimates' the amount of new funding required and could cause a 'severe sustainability risk' to care homes across the country.

Devolution and Recovery Deal

Government published the Levelling Up white paper in early February which sets out a proposed framework for devolution to local areas. The first wave of new county deal areas was confirmed which does not include Buckinghamshire, but we continue to work with our partners to set out our devolution proposals to government as our Strategic Vision remains clear and consistent.

It has become apparent through the white paper announcements that the Oxford to Cambridge Arc for growth no longer has a formal basis in government policy approach and government ambitions for a planning policy framework for this region are not being progressed. Buckinghamshire withdrew its support for the Ox-Cam Arc governance structures in 2020 so this shift in government approach is welcomed.

Buckinghamshire Growth Board

Growth Board local partners met in February to consider reactions to the levelling up white paper and consider our strategic approach. The Board's Strategic Vision for Buckinghamshire, which sets out our ambitions for the county, is currently with partner organisations for endorsement and is due to be adopted by the Board at its next meeting in May.

Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee met on 17 February. The agenda included an update on digital infrastructure, the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy, town centre regeneration and the final report of the member engagement in planning review group.

The digital infrastructure item provided a detailed update on the status of broadband roll out contracts and details of the government's new Project Gigabit which seeks to deliver gigabit capable broadband to areas that would otherwise be left behind from commercial broadband roll out programmes.



Buckinghamshire is part of a regional procurement by government which covers Hertfordshire and part of Berkshire and will have an anticipated contract commencement date of Spring 2023.

Skills and Employment

The Economic Growth and Regeneration Team continue to monitor employment levels across the county. Covid and lockdowns caused many employers to lay people off due to business closures. This has prompted many people to reconsider the sector they work in or re-evaluate the skills they have.

The Council recently hosted our first Jobs and Apprentice Fair in Chesham, led by Cllr Joe Baum and the Chesham and Villages Community Board. It provided a platform for employers to promote their vacancies and careers, support agencies to promote their employment support services and for residents to think about various vacancies and careers they could get into, with over 35 employers in attendance and over 700 attendees over the course of the event. Further jobs fairs are being considered in other parts of the county where there is a particular need for such support.

Support to Buckinghamshire Businesses

The Council has continued to support local businesses negatively impacted by Covid and has paid £3.2 million to 866 businesses under the Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG). The main benefactors of this grant are restaurants, cafes, and public houses. The grant application process closed on 18 March and all payments have now been processed prior to the year-end deadline.

The Additional Restrictions Grant has seen over £22 million re-invested to support recovery of vital businesses across Buckinghamshire. Nearly £1million allocated for activities that help recovery of our town centres has been invested across Buckinghamshire town centres. We have worked with a range of partners including Community Boards. The funding helped deliver planters, temporary road closures to enable cafes and restaurants to provide outside seating, public art, place promotion materials, welcome back ambassadors and many other activities.

The [Covid Additional Relief Fund \(CARF\) application](#) process is live. This is mainly for secondary hospitality businesses which were not eligible for the expanded retail relief. A link to apply for CARF has been sent to ratepayers who have previously expressed hardship due to COVID restrictions and Bucks Business First will also help to signpost local businesses.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

The LEP board agreed at its February meeting to develop a multi-year business plan utilising organisational reserves with the fundamental aim of driving forward economic growth in the county. The detailed plan and budget will be brought before the board at its next meeting.

Secondly, the LEP partnered with Bucks Skills Hub to produce the second annual Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report. Both organisations are leading the way nationally in terms of their thinking around training and skills and addressing any sort of skills gaps as they emerge. A key focus outlined in the report for the current year will be green skills provision to facilitate the transition to a net zero economy. Complementing this report, the Buckinghamshire Skills Show took place at the Westcott Venture Park bringing together thousands of young people and over a hundred businesses.

Finally, The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Levelling Up White Paper confirmed the continued role of LEPs in developing and leading local economic strategy.



Strategic Finance

At our last Council meeting, members agreed the proposed Budget, however since then additional pressures or risks have been identified. These include:

- Inflationary pressures – global economic upheaval is impacting on supply-chains and has pushed inflation up to 6.2% with expectations of this increasing further by the end of the year.
- Social care demand – recent months forecasting has highlighted additional pressures particularly in external placement costs.
- Ukraine response – recent Government announcements on the ‘Homes for Ukraine’ visa scheme has provided some funding although this may not fully cover the additional costs likely to be incurred.
- Adult social care reforms – it is looking increasingly likely that the financial implications arising from the introduction of the reforms will far exceed the funding provided.
- Finance Reform / Levelling-Up Agenda – a consultation is expected shortly but there is emerging evidence to suggest that funding will be reallocated from the south-east to the midlands / north.

Cabinet is keeping financial pressures under constant review.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

Work progresses apace on the new Kingsbrook Secondary School. Despite all the ongoing challenges due to covid, supply chain issues and escalating costs, the school is still due to open in September and is currently under budget. This is thanks to the excellent work of our Education and Property teams, and their construction partners Morgan Sindall and Mace.

The Council have helped facilitate discussions with HS2 and developers in the South West of Aylesbury to help enable the delivery of the South West Link Road (running south of the A418). This is still a few years away, but the constructive dialogue with all parties is helping co-ordinate a very complicated infrastructure arrangement in the area where HS2, South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR), the South West Link Road, the new Stoke Mandeville Relief Road, and the Princes Risborough railway line all meet.

The South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) is progressing, and the Highways Infrastructure Projects Team are battling with the same supply chain pressures and associated escalating costs. These issues are proving enormously challenging and have caused a slight delay to the project whilst we review internally to ensure the council is getting value for money.

The planning application for the Woodlands development was agreed by Strategic Sites Committee on 7th April, this includes the provision of the Eastern Link Road.

The claim for judicial review of the decision on the Hampden Fields development (brought by the Hampden Fields Action Group) has been dismissed. Officers will continue working with the developers of the site to ensure that infrastructure is brought forward in a timely manner, including the development of the Southern Link Road.

HS2/East West Rail

The construction of HS2 continues to raise significant challenges for residents, communities and for Buckinghamshire Council. Despite the challenges we continue to work with HS2 Ltd and its contractors to ensure disruption is minimised as far as reasonably practicable. The following year sees the start of the mass haul of material along the route of the line although it is hoped that as

much traffic as possible is kept on dedicated newly constructed haul roads and kept off the public highway.

I recently met with Sir Mark Worthington, Independent Construction Commissioner and discussed the poor engagement of HS2 with both Buckinghamshire Council and residents, S17 applications, unsympathetic and inappropriate design of structures such as bridges, road repairs and failure to follow the Code of Construction Practice in relation to gritting. The visit was well received with highways repairs being the top issue discussed. Sir Mark also met with Cllrs Peter Martin, Kelly Gates, Frank Mahon, and Mark Sloane to go through a number of issues relating to the HS2 construction works and to visit a property affected by the works. A subsequent visit has been requested for Sir Mark to visit Stoke Mandeville and Wendover.

The slow responses from HS2 Ltd and EWRA to address damage to the highway continues to be an issue. We have escalated this with Ministers and continue to hold both infrastructure projects to account to ensure that the Buckinghamshire taxpayer does not foot the cost of road repairs caused as a result of their HGVs on our network.

Princes Risborough Southern Road Link

Cabinet considered and agreed to the report on this scheme on 9th November on Princes Risborough Southern Road Link. A pre-planning public consultation was undertaken between 19th November – 12th December. It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in April 2022, subject to due diligence checks and any amendments to the existing design, in particular around resident's accesses. Contact with impacted landowners has been undertaken and the Council has engaged with our surveyors, Carter Jonas, to commence land negotiations, and will undertake land referencing work in preparation for any potential CPO. The Sumitomo land has been purchased by the Council using delegated powers from the 9th November Cabinet Report and is a key acquisition to enable this project to progress.

Enterprise Zone update

Over the last two to three years, the Enterprise Zone programme has provided 55% of all of the new commercial floor space in the county.

Silverstone Park has welcomed a new investor into the enterprise zone taking occupancy of a unit with the aim of becoming a leading global electric vehicle company.

And finally, at Westcott Park, the Satellite Applications Catapult, in partnership with Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership, has announced its expansion at Westcott Venture Park due to a £5.7m investment in new facilities. The new 'Building 4000' is set to house an in-orbit servicing and manufacturing facility alongside the expansion of the healthy and agri living labs.

England Economic Heartland (EEH)

EEH, along with the East West Mainline Partnership, are leading a programme of activity to refresh and update the strategic narrative for East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge, including the link to Aylesbury. The purpose of the work will be to reinforce the need for investment of East West Rail, including the link to Aylesbury, in full.

The section of East West Rail between Oxford and Bletchley via Winslow is currently under construction and expected to be operational by 2025. It is expected that funding to continue development and delivery of the next phase of East West Rail to Cambridge will be confirmed by DfT, pending internal decisions within government. However, a number of recent government policy

announcements, alongside the general squeeze on public sector spending, have led to the need for a locally determined refresh of the already-strong rationale for delivery of East West Rail in full.

The first phase of EEH's active travel strategy has been published. It includes a literature review of local, regional, and national policy, and an assessment of the opportunities and challenges for active travel in the region. Phase two of the strategy will consider how the vision set out in phase one can be achieved.

Naomi Green has been appointed EEH's new managing director. Naomi worked in both the government's Cities and Local Growth Unit and the Department for Transport before joining EEH in September 2018 as the head of technical programme.

LGA's People and Places Board

LGA's People and Places Board met for the 5th time in mid-March. Discussions centred around the levelling up agenda and devolution.

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

During their conference in December 2021, Leaders discussed the Government's proposals for integrating health and social care with the Chief Executive of NHS Clinical Commissioners and the President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services.

Leaders discussed the roles for strategic authorities in facilitating economic growth and supporting people into employment with representatives of the CBI and the Learning and Work Institute. They also considered what devolution and levelling up mean for the wider South East.

In their March meeting, SESL further developed their understanding of the Government's agendas and priorities for levelling up and devolution. They considered how these might best be progressed in the wider South East, whilst supporting the agendas across the country. The Leaders were joined in that discussion by a senior member of the Government's Cabinet Office team and Levelling Up Taskforce.

Leaders also took a deeper look at the implications for strategic authorities of the Government's proposed changes to social care costs, caps, and funding. The Director of Integration from the Department of Health and Social Care participated in the meeting to explain the Government's intentions and hear local views and suggestions.

During that meeting, Leaders shared ideas regarding the evolving situation in Ukraine and people seeking refuge in the UK. SESL remains keen to explore how central and local government can work together to best support refugees, and recently arranged a meeting with Lord Harrington to discuss the situation and pass on our ideas for how things can improve.





Cabinet Member report – Climate Change & Environment

Councillor Peter Strachan

Groundwater Resilience and Community Engagement (GRACE)– Outline Business Case Approved

GRACE has received formal approval of its Business Case by the Environment Agency. The project team were the first of the 25 innovation and resilience projects being funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), to reach this significant milestone. This approves the remaining £6.7 million of funding over the five years of the project. The next key milestone is the engagement contract which will lead to the work beginning on the ground with the 10 pilot communities later in the year, which will use innovative techniques to improve resilience against flooding for communities in Buckinghamshire.

Decarbonisation of the Council's Fleet

£578,000 has been secured from Defra's Air Quality Grant to renovate a 10 year old Dennis Eagle 26 tonne Refuse Collection Vehicle to become fully electric. The money also covers tools for the workshop in Pembroke Road to service the vehicle and five years' worth of replacement parts. The successful bid was a result of collaboration by teams across the Council in Climate Response Team, Waste and Environmental Health. As a result of using the electric refuse vehicle, over 10 tonnes of greenhouse gas, 69 kg of oxides of nitrogen (NOx), and half a kilo of particulate matter emissions will be saved per year – contributing to the achievement of net zero carbon targets and better air quality. We have also secured Workplace Charging Scheme grants for two fleet charge points that will support new electric vehicles for Children's Services.

Tree Planting

As part of our ambition to plant 543,000 trees, 3,450 trees have been planted at Billet Field and the site is now registered on the UK Land Carbon Registry. The volunteer day that was rearranged due to Storm Eunice attracted good media attention, including YouTube video coverage by Bucks Radio. We are registering this project on the Queen's Green Canopy map. Other projects that have occurred this planting season that contribute towards our target include 586 trees planted with funding from the Local Authority Treescaping Fund grant, and 168 other Queens Green Canopy trees planted on Council land (e.g., school sites). This brings the current total up to 4204.



In the next couple of months, we will be submitting our Local Authority Treescaping Fund post-planting claim for the projects delivered by our partners at Transition Town Marlow,

Buckland Parish Council, Chiltern Rangers C.I.C., Sue Ryder Prayer Fellowship, Haddenham Parish Council, and Transport for Buckinghamshire.

We have requested over 1,000 trees from HS2 to give away to community groups and it's understood that these will be with us shortly.

Domestic Energy Projects

Further to the progress being made to improve the energy efficiency of low income homes that have poor energy performance under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme, the Council is supporting a group-buying scheme called Solar Together Buckinghamshire. This will help homeowners and small businesses interested in installing solar PV and battery storage (with an option for an electric vehicle charging point). Pre-approved installers will compete (via a reverse auction process in Summer 2022) to have their offer presented to registrants who will then be able to make an informed decision to select a high-quality installation at a competitive price. Solar Together programmes operating elsewhere have secured average savings of more than 30% last year.

Local Heritage List

Over 2000 candidate sites have now been nominated for inclusion in our Local Heritage List. The list seeks to identify and celebrate locally significant assets and nominations so far include clocktowers, road signs, post boxes, bridges and lamp posts, as well as historic buildings and archaeological sites. Maintaining a local heritage list is a proven way to protect the heritage of Buckinghamshire, and we have seen planning decisions made by the council to protect those buildings on the list being supported by independent planning inspectors. We have recently had a push for more volunteers to help this compile this list which is a unique opportunity to help preserve and protect some of the most important and iconic assets around the county.

Fly-Tipping Enforcement Update:

'Fly-Tipping remains a significant problem in Buckinghamshire and the Council continues to take a robust and zero tolerance approach.

Since March 2020, 159 cases have been investigated and were found to comprise 79 (49.7%) household waste (which could have been disposed for free at the Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HRC)), 67 (42.1%) trade waste (chargeable status unchanged at HRC site), and 13 included some element of chargeable item(s) (8.2% only). 110 of the cases (68.8%) involved waste brought into Bucks from elsewhere, while 50 were Bucks-produced waste (31.2%).

Buckinghamshire Council has successfully secured £50,000 in external funding from DEFRA with which will target the cross border "imports" of waste which is fly-tipped in Bucks.

A notable recent case involved joint-working between Bucks and LB Hillingdon officers and saw an offender who fly-tipped in both areas imprisoned for 21 months at a case heard at Aylesbury Crown Court. This case shows that the Council has correctly identified a major issue here and will continue to do what is necessary to target offenders.'

Big Bucks Tidy Up

The 21/22 Big Bucks Tidy Up programme has been completed and saw waste teams work with Community Boards and key stakeholders across Buckinghamshire to deliver a number of litter picking, street cleansing and fly tipping activities. These activities helped to support an 87% increase in litter and street cleansing tonnage collected across all of Buckinghamshire compared with the previous year. During the BBTU programme service requests for litter picking and street cleansing reduced by 50% reflecting the impact of additional street cleansing activities.

Waste Prevention and Behaviour Change update

The Waste Prevention Team continue to work with community groups and national partners to reduce waste across Buckinghamshire. In recent months the team have supported national campaigns like Food Waste Action Week, The Great British Spring Clean and the SCRAP Fly-tipping campaign. They have also launched the nine month partnership with Kitche 'the food waste prevention app' which will enable Buckinghamshire residents to track their food waste at home and reduce it through helpful tips, recipe ideas and regular reminders of what they have at home when shopping on the go.

Work continues to support local community groups who are delivering projects like Repair Cafes, Library of Things, Scrap Stores and more. All of which help local residents reduce waste.

Garden Waste Harmonisation

On 29 March 2022 Cabinet approved a Garden Waste report which will harmonise garden waste services across Buckinghamshire by introducing an Opt-in' garden waste charged service for Wycombe area residents and harmonise the operational arrangements for the garden waste service; for example, the length of time there is a winter service suspension.

Buckinghamshire currently has an imbalanced garden waste service, particularly in terms of charges; all Wycombe area residents receive a free garden waste bin collection, whereas all other areas, residents have to Opt-In and pay for their garden waste collections. This decision will ensure a fair and balanced service to all Buckinghamshire residents. Charges will start on 4 July 2022, ahead of this a comprehensive communication plan will be delivered to ensure all impacted residents are aware of the introduction of charges.



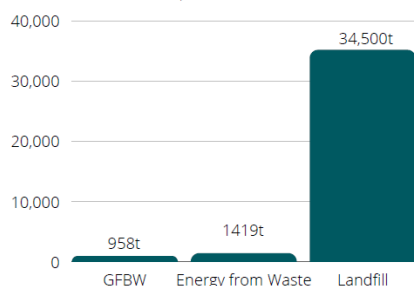
Carbon Impact of the Green, Food, Bulky and Wood (GFBW) contract Year 1

Carbon impact of the GFBW contract Year 1

An infographic showing the Global Warming Potential (GWP) of the Green, Food, Bulky and Wood (GFBW) Waste Contract

GFBW & alternative treatment

Total GWP generated by GFBW compared to alternative treatments, all of which produce more CO₂e



5 year contract

FCC Recycling (UK) Limited was awarded a 5 year contract for the transfer, management & treatment of the Council's Green, Food, Bulky and Wood Waste which commenced on 1st Feb 2021.



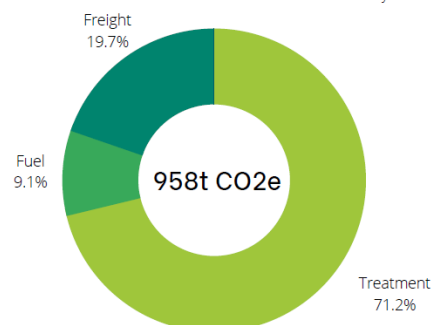
Where waste goes?

100%

All waste from GFBW contract is treated in Buckinghamshire or neighbouring Counties (within 25 miles of border)

Global Warming Potential in 2021-22

Total GWP for the contract broken down into activity.





Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles

Armed Forces

The Civilian-Military Partnership board has held its fourth meeting since being reconvened in July 2021. Working with our partners in Fire, DWP, and NHS, the monthly drop-in centre at Marlow fire station has been going from strength to strength for the past six months helping the most vulnerable members of the armed force community access veteran-specific help services. The Government passed the Armed Forces Act in December which incorporates the armed forces covenant into law to help prevent disadvantages faced by the armed forces community due to the unique nature of military service. We have reviewed council policies and refreshed our armed forces council webpages to prepare us for the new statutory duty to have due regard for the principles of the armed forces covenant.

Community Boards

The last couple of months have seen increased engagement with communities in Community Boards – we've had our first successful community event in Amersham in February, and a big event in Marlow at Higginson Park on 2 April which saw a whole host of partners involved and live broadcasting of the board's Proud of Bucks winners. The council's first Job and Apprenticeship Fair was a huge success for the Chesham Community Board who worked with local councillors and partners with 800 local residents coming along to hear from the council as well as a number of other fantastic employers in Bucks. There will be a community event in every Board area throughout the spring and summer and will be a great opportunity for the Boards and colleagues to engage with our residents and community partners.

The Community Board function is currently undergoing changes following Member recommendations on improvements to the operational functionality of the Boards and funding process; this is being aligned with changes to the management and team structure following a Better Buckinghamshire review, which will come into place during April. These changes will see staged improvements to the project application and funding process and a more focused management structure with improved support across the Community Board area.

Prevent

In December 2021 the Home Office informed us via a letter that it has been decided that Buckinghamshire would cease to be a Prevent priority area from 31 March 2023. The Prevent Local Delivery will fund the two core posts in Buckinghamshire Council for 2022/23 but will not be providing additional funding for posts or projects and there will be no future central government funding for Prevent.

In February 2022 we received confirmation that we will receive £167,069 of funding in this final year. Whilst this is disappointing, we are committed to continuing to work in this area to protect our residents from extremism and terrorism. The statutory requirements of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 remain in place, whether we receive Home Office funding or not. We will use the two remaining posts to develop a new way of delivering these duties in the next 12 months. After which time all future management of Prevent will be subsumed within the Community Safety Service function. We will continue to safeguard our communities, working closely with Thames Valley Police and other key partners. The Channel function will remain unchanged, and our residents should not see any difference in the quality of service that they receive in this area.

Household Support Fund

The previously awarded Government Household Support Fund (£2,399,190.54) has been successfully fully utilised through the Helping Hand service by the fund deadline of 31 March 2022. This fund has enabled food, energy and other essential household bill support to be provided to financially vulnerable households through a number of approaches including holiday food voucher support for eligible students/young people, (63%), direct support from the Helping hand team (8%) and through various schemes delivered through the Voluntary and Community Sector including food banks and crisis grant scheme (22%). Following the announcement of an extension to the Household Support Fund, the Council has recently been notified that it will receive a further (£2,399,190.54). The framework for the new fund requires that at least one third of the fund must be used to support families and at least one third used to support pensioners. A delivery plan for the fund is currently being developed. This extension to the fund must be fully utilised by the 30 September 2022.





Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

WhizzFizzFest

Ticket sales launched at the end of March for the WhizzFizzFest event taking place on 2 July. The programme will feature a wide variety of family arts activities, performances and hands-on experiences as well as the return of the school's parade. This year we are also planning a new touring element to visit libraries throughout the county. Further details can be found on the website [here](#).

Paralympic Heritage Flame Lighting



Working with partners, we were proud to organise the Heritage Flame Lighting ceremony for the Beijing Winter Paralympics at Stoke Mandeville Stadium (birthplace of the Paralympics) on 28 February. As well as social media coverage, footage of the event was featured as part of official proceedings in Beijing.

Credited to: Roger Bool on behalf of WheelPower

Chilterns Lifestyle Centre

We were delighted to officially open and welcome the very first customers into the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre on 6 December, the culmination of much work during all the challenges of the past two years. The centre is proving to be extremely popular with residents; from the opening to the end of February there were nearly 200,000 visits, with figures increasing month on month. The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre has always been about bringing together a range of community facilities and the new library in the centre is also proving to be exceptionally popular. Since opening, our library team have welcomed 947 new first-time members, issued 20,943 books and seen 28,411 visitors. The co-location is clearly having a positive impact; as one family told us, “we never used the old library, now we use it every week after swimming lessons, it’s so convenient”.

We are now focused on Phase 2 of the project, which involves the demolition of the old Chiltern Pools, Drake Hall, nursery and youth centre to create a new car park for the centre. Demolition work

began on 21 March and the car park will be established in phases over the coming months. The initial phase, which includes disabled car parking spaces, should be complete by this summer.

The wider picture for the recovery of leisure across all our leisure sites has continued to be positive, with January always being a key month for leisure centre use and new membership sales. This uplift in memberships and levels of use at the start of the year has seen overall attendances since reopening last year exceed 2 million visits (figures to the end of February).

Country Parks, Parks and Play Areas

Despite a slight dip in visitor numbers since the exceptional highs of 2020/21 (1.76million), numbers have remained elevated over the last twelve months, with a predicted 1.4million visits to the Country Parks by the end of the financial year (40% higher than pre-COVID levels).



Due to high winds caused by Storm Eunice, our Country Parks closed on Friday 18 February. Black Park was most severely impacted, with over 50 mature trees being directly affected by the winds – most notably a number of the mature Scots pine trees which provide significant landscape value to Black Park were either uprooted or splintered. The sites were made safe over the weekend of 19/20 February by the Country Parks team, but the specialist clear up work continues with contractors when they are available.

Our dedicated volunteers have collected over 316 bags of rubbish from the parks as part of our 'Adopt a Patch' scheme. A month-long anti-litter campaign began on 28th March linked to the Keep Britain Tidy - Great British Spring Clean.

Work is now complete on the new Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP) in Calvert Green Park. A full reworking of the play facilities saw outdated equipment replaced with a co-ordinated play area on the village green, which was officially opened with local Buckinghamshire Council members and Parish Councillors on 24 February.



Other play area improvement works in progress include Bridge Street Skatepark, Cottesloe Park and Walton Court Park, Haydon Hill Park play area and Desborough Recreation Ground.

Wendover Community Library Hub

Buckinghamshire Libraries have successfully secured £310,000 from the Arts Council England Libraries Improvement Fund. When including match funding from Buckinghamshire Council, Wendover Parish Council, Wendover Community Library Trust and others, the total value of this scheme is just over £500,000. The scheme will transform Wendover Community Library into an inclusive, multi-use community hub that offers a single point of contact for local services in Wendover and provides facilities for a range of social, educational, health and cultural activities that promote community cohesion and wellbeing. In addition, the project will further support the engagement of community volunteers.

The investment seeks to make the library more appealing, more user-friendly and raise its profile. More specifically, the adoption of new technologies will facilitate a more than doubling of the hours of access, as well as increase digital inclusion. The creation of additional and better community spaces and increased hours of access are expected to attract significantly more community groups and support a wider range of uses, with the increase in commercial hires generating additional income that will make the library more sustainable. Service delivery is expanded to span health and wellbeing, culture, digital inclusion and education.

Library events

Libraries are central in all our communities and we have a great opportunity and honour of bringing residents and readers together in celebrating Her Majesty's historic reign. Over the next couple of

months, we will be working with our community groups and volunteers to plan a series of exciting activities in our branches that will engage and excite our customers in the Jubilee celebrations. We will host countywide activities and local activities to ensure we maximise involvement and impact. Planned activities include:

- **Big Jubilee Read:** delivering a reading for pleasure Commonwealth literature campaign to celebrate the Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee connecting a broad audience of readers of all levels of confidence and ability through the sharing of great reads by celebrated authors from the Commonwealth.
- **Touring Exhibition:** working in collaboration with Archives/Local Studies we will be touring a pull up exhibition around our libraries showing images of how previous Royal celebrations and Jubilees have been celebrated in the county.
- **Memory bags:** to generate conversations between those living with dementia, their families and carers, two royalty themed memory bags with historic artefacts, games, and books will be available to borrow free of charge.
- **Poets in Residence:** Poetry Workshops with families, children and adults themed on the Queens Canopy in Libraries.
- **Reminiscence group activities for dementia friendly groups**
- **Creative writing:** working with local school children to create a story book.

The Library Jubilee offer will attract a wide audience offering inclusive activities promoting reading, culture and support for participation for everyone in our communities.

Community-supported libraries have also run a variety of events in recent months, such as Christmas-themed crafts events for children which included making and decorating pencil potholders and other Christmassy items like snowflakes. Wendover Community Library had a visit from Santa himself and also took part in the Wendover Christmas trail. Bourne End Community Library stayed open for an evening of mulled wine served by the Women's Institute and hosted charity stalls which were very popular. Some libraries such as Iver Heath Community Library also held their regular Storytime sessions but with a Christmas theme. Artist Amy Beckwith visited Micklefield Community Library for a 'Paint Your Own' workshop - she even painted a robin with the opportunity for customers to watch the process.

Discover Bucks Museum

We were delighted to support the official opening of the new Discover Bucks Galleries at the Discover Bucks Museum in Aylesbury, which launched on 2 April. These brand new galleries tell the story of Bucks people and landscapes from 200 million years ago to today, featuring star objects from the Museum collections, including fossils revealing the prehistoric creatures that swam in Jurassic seas and giant Woolly mammoths that lived here during the Ice Age; the largest hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins ever found; a spectacular costume case; an extraordinary piano; the work of artists past and present, including portraits, landscapes and the magnificent Stowe statues of Saxon gods - and much more!

The Tourism Summit

The Tourism Summit held in March this year was an opportunity for Buckinghamshire's leisure and tourism related businesses to come together to share their experiences during Covid. The conference provided discussion, inspiration and information on how to improve business prospects as we emerge from lockdowns and travel and leisure restrictions. Bucks Business First shared the support and programmes they have in place to respond to challenges faced by this sector. We continue to work with Partners and the sector itself to ensure they are providing a decent offer to visitors to Buckinghamshire and supporting the visitor economy to go from strength to strength.





Cabinet Member report – Education and Children's Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) Re-inspection

As reported to Cabinet last month, in December 2021 Ofsted conducted their re-inspection of Children's Services following the November 2017 'Inadequate' judgement.

We are pleased that the service has moved from an 'Inadequate' rating to 'requires improvement to be good'. This reflects the considerable improvements and progress made within the service despite the ongoing Covid-19 challenges.

This outcome is testament to the hard work, dedication and skill of our colleagues across the Council and partner agencies. This has been a real joint effort, and we are pleased that Ofsted have acknowledged our progress in providing an effective service to keep young people safe.

The service is currently in the process of developing a Post Inspection Action Plan in response to the Ofsted recommendations and will submit this to Ofsted prior to the Wednesday 25 May 2022 deadline.

An independently chaired Board will continue to meet every two months. The Board will maintain oversight of the progress being made against the Ofsted recommendations and other improvements required across the service. John Coughlan, CBE, will continue to be the Independent Chair.

You can read the full report [here](#).

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection

A local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection took place between 28 February and 11 March 2022. This inspection was completed by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

The inspection found a number of strengths across the local area, despite the ongoing Covid-19 challenges. It recognises the considerable activity that is happening as part of our SEND improvement programme and confirms that our self-evaluation accurately reflects our progress.

As a result of the inspection findings, the local area is required to submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to address significant areas of weakness. These relate to the provision of specific health services for children and young people with SEND. The local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group (CCG) are jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

We will, of course, focus our efforts on improving the areas of significant weakness identified, while continuing with our broader improvement journey across organisations to ensure the support children with SEND receive in Buckinghamshire is high quality and effective.

The full report is due to be published on Friday 29 April 2022.

School Inspections

Since the start of the new school year in September 2021, schools have seen the resumption of regular Ofsted inspections. So far, 24 schools being visited. Of these, 18 were primary schools, five were secondary schools and one special school. There has been a change in the methodology for the selection of schools for inspection to now routinely visit those with an 'outstanding' grade. Some of these schools have not had an inspection in well over ten years.

Overall, our schools have performed well in inspections. Of the 17 schools whose outcomes have been published, one has improved their judgment, 10 have maintained their judgement and sadly, two have shown a decline.

Where inspections have been challenging this academic year, a theme of safeguarding is a thread that has been identified in the reports, which is mirrored in feedback across the south east. This is something that we are working proactively with school leaders to address and have provided training and support for all schools as well as bespoke work in schools where this is identified as a vulnerability.

The evolution of the Early Help Offer

The Buckinghamshire Partnership Early Help Strategy has been reviewed and refreshed, as it is now three years since we published our first strategy document. The emphasis within the refreshed strategy for 2022-25 is focused on two broad areas. Firstly, strengthening the partnership offer and oversight, as we look to expand and streamline access to our increasingly broad early help offer across the county. Secondly, ensuring the offer responds effectively to emerging issues, including minimising the long-term impact of the pandemic on our children, young people, and families in Buckinghamshire.

Early help maintained its service offer with some adaptations, throughout the different stages of the pandemic and, as with all Children's Service areas, demand has never been higher. Services have been fully operational for some months now and we are re-establishing the wide range of activities led by the Family Support Service, partner agencies and community groups in our network of Family Centres. Family Centres were acknowledged by Ofsted during the recent inspection, as key support hubs within communities and we continue to develop locally based programmes. We are also keen to develop these sites into Family Hubs, in line with the national model, so that they become community access points for a wide range of services and support at a locality level.

The Family Support Service is also launching for the first time, a Participation Strategy for Young People. This strategy describes a new approach to engaging all young people, building their interest and participation in local democracy, working alongside officers so that we can develop and design practice, policy, and strategy, enabling the Council to benefit from listening to and acting upon the views and wishes of young people in the recruitment of staff, service improvement and policy development.





Cabinet Member report – Finance, Resources, Property and Assets

Councillor John Chilver

Customer Experience Update

Change of Address – Customer Triage of Services

Customer Improvement, in collaboration with colleagues in Revenues, have developed a customer-focused change of address process. If a resident notifies Buckinghamshire Council of an address change, the expectation should be that they only have to tell us once. This process brings us towards achieving that ambition.

When a customer completes a change of address form for Council Tax, the process captures the address change details to notify waste services, licensing, and the blue badge team. It also provides signposting towards electoral roll, schools admissions, parking permits, and the housing register at Bucks Home Choice.

We plan to develop this further, providing confirmation for other services such as client transport and libraries. We also plan to use the facility to generate revenue, showcasing the wide range of leisure services and other tangible products we can offer our residents.

Customer Feedback Loops

Giving and understanding feedback shouldn't be hard, and better experiences can be created when the voice of the resident facilitates change. To that end, we are piloting the use of feedback loops within requests raised on Fix My Street and from Household Waste Services.

We will be using this to capture the mood of our residents, to gauge if they are happy with the speed and professionalism of our service delivery, and communication through the journey.

Our plan is to add this feedback into the performance metrics which will be available to service areas in easy to interpret performance dashboards, providing "at a glance" metrics and a deeper dive into the data as needed.

Once trialled with these two service areas, we plan to develop this across other customer facing functions.

Kickstart Scheme Success

We have now completed the recruitment phase for the Kickstart Scheme, and our final number of placements will be 45.

To date, 11 participants have concluded their placements with us and we have achieved the following successful conversion rates:

- Two participants have now left the scheme and have moved onto roles with external employers.
- Five participants have secured full-time fixed-term roles at the Council.

- Two participants have moved into full-time permanent roles at the Council.
- One participant is moving into an apprenticeship at the Council.
- Only one participant has concluded their placement with no further employment. This is due to personal circumstances.

Nationally the recruitment phase of the kickstart scheme has now ended and we are now focussing on those Kickstarters who are still on placement with us and we are helping them identify their next career move. As our Kickstarters come to the end of their placements, we have also been requesting feedback from them and their managers. Here are some comments we have received so far:

From Kickstart employees:

"My time at Buckinghamshire Council has been one of the best, most life-changing experiences of my life. Feeling a part of something greater and the level of support I received has been unmatched. Having the opportunity to grow and evolve into a more employable person could not have been possible at any other workplace. It was a perfect taster of life in the professional world as a student this was invaluable to me. I am really grateful for the opportunities presented to me in this placement. I have gained the utmost respect for everyone who puts their unstinting effort into making Buckinghamshire Council, not only a beautiful place to work, but a pillar of support for all the communities within Buckinghamshire."

"I really appreciated my time in the Kickstart Scheme and am excited for my follow-on role within the Council. I was able to learn on the job and was supported the entire way, making it a comfortable place to earn money and transferable office skills at the same time."

Recent Lettings

Rental income from our property estate is important to supporting the delivery of our corporate priorities both financially and also from a regeneration perspective. Recent letting activity includes:

- Vale Retail Park, Aylesbury - the Letting of Unit 5 Vale Retail Park to Bensons-for-Beds completed in December with the tenant opening on 25th February. This replaces the store shared with Harvey's at Aylesbury Retail Park when the two became standalone companies in 2020 and enhances the improving retail offering at Vale Retail Park.
- Abbey Place, High Wycombe - The Council completed the acquisition of Abbey Place, High Wycombe, a 9,600 sq ft office in December 2021. The property is available to let and forms a strategic part of the Council's regeneration plans around the station in High Wycombe.
- Green Park Activity Centre, Aston Clinton – The Council has completed the letting of Green Park Activity Centre to Kingswood, a national provider of outdoor education and activity centres, following the departure of the previous operator. Kingswood will embark on an ambitious investment programme into the activity centre over the coming years to improve and expand the current offering to create a fun, challenging and safe environment for young people in Buckinghamshire and beyond.
- 66 High Street, Aylesbury - NES Holdings (UK) completed works to the second floor and occupied at the end of March. The Department of Works and Pensions also completed works on the ground and first floor with the Job Centre on the ground floor and opened at the end of March.
- The Exchange, Aylesbury - A Sri Lankan restaurant, Herali, completed its fit-out of Unit 2, Long Lion and opened in early April. Unit 1 should also be open in early summer with the remaining unit in The Exchange opening late summer.

One Public Estate – Phase 9 Funding round

Buckinghamshire Public Estate Partnership has been awarded another £370,000 for projects in Buckinghamshire. The funds will facilitate the Health On The High Street programme which will aim to look at the potential to provide Health Services in Buckinghamshire Council owned property in towns across the County, and we will continue to work collaboratively with our health partners on these schemes.

Community Centres – Aylesbury

Community Centre bookings have been gradually increasing as customer confidence grows, with some Centres returning close to Pre-Covid hiring levels. The team has been working in partnership with the NHS and have hosted drop-in vaccine clinics at the Southcourt and Alfred Rose Centres.

Capital Projects

Working collaboratively with other Portfolios including Education, Culture and Leisure and Planning and Regeneration, we have continued to deliver against our significant and substantial capital programme.

Since the last report we have completed works at Holmer Green and Amersham Schools. We continue to progress works at the Kingsbrook Secondary (new Secondary School with SEN provision); Chiltern Hills Academy (major expansion works); and Misbourne Schools (major expansion and sports hall works). Further projects are now at the early stages of procurement development; these include Kingsbrook Primary B, Green Ridge Primary Phase 2, and Cottesloe Major Expansion.



The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre building was officially opened by the Leader of the Council in December 2021. Phase 2 of the project has commenced on site which will see the demolition of the old leisure centre and ancillary buildings, and the completion of external works including car parks, hard and soft landscaping, and external play areas, which is anticipated to complete in November 2022.



Works have also completed on the regeneration of the Brunel Shed, a Grade 2 Listed redundant railway shed, and extension on adjacent land for commercial rent, and on Desborough Road Temporary Housing scheme which provides 58 self-contained low energy, good quality temporary accommodation units in High Wycombe.



Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

Local Improvements in Adult Social Care

Adult social care's Care Act 2014 duties are underpinned by prevention and intervening early. However, as a result of the pandemic the service is experiencing unprecedented demand. This has meant that the Early Resolution and Safeguarding Service has had to review and reshape the way it responds to vulnerable residents, to keep them safe and to undertake assessments in a timely way.

One of the new developments is our Community Cafes. These are located across the county in our seven day opportunities centres and provide timely, face-to-face appointments for residents. There are 60 community café appointments available each week, with the most northerly in Buckingham and the most southerly in Burnham. In addition, Community Cafes provide the opportunity for residents to speak with other multi-agency professionals, such as One Recovery Bucks, Occupational Therapy and Connection Support. Changing the way we work, meeting residents closer to home, has halved waiting times to see a social care professional from 4-6 weeks to two weeks.

Although the waiting time for allocation to a worker for a social care or carer assessment remains over four weeks, our triage approach, which offers residents an initial discussion by phone call or face-to-face meeting within two weeks, has been welcomed by residents at a time when, because of the impact of Covid, they have reported difficulty in accessing support. Phone calls and the community cafes have also been useful in sharing other sources of support such as from the voluntary and community sector, which people may access whilst waiting for a social care assessment.

These changes to services are one of the ways in which we are delivering on the ambition set out in our Better Lives Strategy, which was refreshed in January this year.

Social Care Reforms

Since my last Cabinet Member report to council, the Government has published two White Papers of particular relevance to adult social care. The first, *People at the Heart of Care* published in early December, set out the much-awaited social care reforms. These include an £86,000 cap on the cost that any individual needs to pay for their Care Act eligible personal care costs, and more generous capital limits. In addition, the Government will be enacting S18(3) of the Care Act 2014, which means that from October 2023, people who fund their own care can ask the council to assess their needs and arrange care for them at the rate that the council usually pays for that type of care. Our modelling shows that there will be significant financial implications both in terms of demand for services, and therefore the workforce to manage that demand.

The second White Paper, *Joining up Care for People Places and Populations*, was published in February. It sets out the Government's ambition for improving the way in which health and social care organisations work together. The mechanisms for achieving this include encouraging more pooled or aligned budgets across health and social care; supporting organisations to reach a much higher level of digital maturity to improve information sharing; and making it much easier for people working in health or social care to move around the sector by creating integrated skills passports, which will enable health and care staff to transfer their skills and knowledge between the NHS, public health and social care. The White Paper builds on the Health and Care Bill currently going through Parliament.

Cardiovascular Disease in Faith Communities

Cardiovascular disease is one of the most significant causes of preventable death in Buckinghamshire and is more common in people living in deprived areas and certain ethnic groups. To try to reduce the risk, the council's public health team is working with faith communities in High Wycombe in spring this year to pilot a new approach to designing tailored blood pressure interventions.

The first pilot will be in High Wycombe. Initially information will be gathered through WISE Mosque to understanding the extent to which members of the Mosque "know their numbers" for blood pressure and know what to do about it. Two members of the Mosque will be trained to undertake blood pressure readings, provide advice and have a short conversation with people. They will then hold weekly sessions over four weeks during prayers for any adult to have their blood pressure taken.

This will then be used by the community and the public health team to design together an appropriate intervention to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in the community.

High Wycombe community board have helped to facilitate the early work with WISE and Karima and local GPs are involved and keen to support this work. A similar pilot is being scoped in Aylesbury, which it is anticipated will happen in the autumn.

Named Worker Approach

Adult Social Care in Buckinghamshire are working towards implementing a named worker model across the Long-term and Review teams located in the North, East, South, and Central localities within the county. The aim is to improve resident outcomes in line with the Care Act duties and principles by taking a proactive, relationship-based, person-centred approach to social care practice. A Named Worker is a dedicated worker and coordinator who will be a voice of challenge and advocacy for the person they support, a trusted support network for people and their families, and someone who will work towards making the best future a reality for the individual. The benefit for residents of Buckinghamshire is that they will be able to have a single point of contact who will support the individual to access the right support at the right time and achieve Better Lives outcomes. In addition, practitioners will be given the opportunity to build relationships with residents and engage in meaningful social work practice to help people flourish and support them within their communities.

Increasing Diversity in the Public Health Workforce

The Public Health team has been successful in securing funding from the Health Education England for a social mobility project. The council has been selected as an intervention site which will enable us to develop, pilot and evaluate career support for non-clinical, core public health careers within local authority public health teams.

The project will provide opportunities to people from ethnic minority groups affected by inequalities to develop a career in public health. It is hoped that the project will also widen participation and encourage a diverse workforce, more representative of the communities they serve.

There are two phases to the project. Phase 1 (2022-2023) will involve conducting research and developing, with ethnic minority groups, a proven approach which will be piloted in Phase 2.

Platinum Jubilee Planning

As part of the planning for the celebrations in June of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, the adult social care service has created and shared an activity pack specifically designed for care homes. The pack includes lots of ideas for ways to commemorate the special occasion, including creative makes, baking and decoration ideas, intergenerational projects, ideas for choirs and longer-term projects such as tree planting and establishing wildflower meadows.





Cabinet Member report – Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Nick Naylor

Registration Service

The Registration Service has now returned to business as usual across all its activities, Covid easements allowing for death registrations by phone rather than face-to-face ended on 24 March 2022.

There has been high demand for ceremony bookings (weddings and civil partnerships) with diaries across the summer months now being extremely busy. Some ceremony venues in Buckinghamshire are now fully booked in the main season. The Council's ceremony rooms are proving to be popular, with an increase in bookings, as the service sees a trend towards smaller and less costly ceremonies.

Changes made to how citizenship ceremonies are carried out have been very successful. The ceremonies now take place in the 'Oculus' with both the Chairman of the Council and the Lord Lieutenant or a Deputy Lieutenant attending to give speeches, which add to the celebratory atmosphere. Feedback from customers has been excellent.

Coroner's Service

Due to Covid restrictions and availability of specialist colleagues, several longer inquests involving a jury had to be rescheduled from 20/21 and moved into 2022. These have now been completed and all inquests may now be scheduled as usual.

The Court has now been fitted with a new audio visual system, which allows for remote attendance by family, witnesses and expert witnesses as well as others not legally required to be present. The system also provides for digital audio recordings of inquest hearings and their safe storage.

On 1st January the service entered into a five year contract with Bucks Healthcare Trust for the provision of mortuary and pathology services. Through partnership working, this contract brings service resilience and efficiencies in terms of resourcing and charging arrangements.

Gypsy and Traveller Service (GTS) Update

Unauthorised encampments across the last three years show a steady decline – 38 encampments in 19/20, 18 encampments in 20/21 and 13 encampments in 21/22, 21/22 has now risen to 14 as we approach the end of the current year.

Although unauthorised encampments can arrive at any time of the year, the main bulk of the numbers are generally seasonal, between the months of Spring – Autumn. With Covid-19 restrictions now being close to ending we are returning to what is described as the "new normal", we continue to deal with every encampment on its own merit and provide a robust, but proportionate approach.

Trading Standards

Illicit Tobacco and Alcohol – Over the last year, the Service has used funding from HMRC to conduct test purchasing and use tobacco detection dogs to locate hidden tobacco. As a result, there are a number of ongoing investigations into the supply of both illicit tobacco and alcohol. These products have been found to be counterfeit, non-duty paid, missing clear health warnings in English or combinations of all of these. These investigations often involve working with the Council's Licensing team and recently the combined evidence provided by the two services saw an appeal against a Licence Revocation refused, with the Council being awarded costs.

Vaping – Since the start of 2022 the Service has seen a significant increase in complaints about vapes being sold to under age (under 18) customers and is following these up with test purchases, advice to retailers and investigations where appropriate.

Fraud – In February, guilty pleas to fraudulent trading, aggressive practices and breaching professional diligence were entered, following a home improvement fraud investigation by the service, which involved households in Buckinghamshire and the Thames Valley. We await sentencing and there will be a press release at that point.

Fraud/Scams – the service is part of a new 'Multi Agency Approach to Fraud' to amplify and increase the effectiveness of our efforts to raise awareness and prevent and investigate fraud. Partners include Buckinghamshire's Community Safety team and Thames Valley Police. Over time we hope to also engage with third sector partners that also do work in this space.

The service continues to put out a steady stream of warnings related to the latest scams. As well as long term ones (such as 'HMRC' and 'Microsoft') this year the information has included scams that follow storm damage to people's homes and gardens, ongoing Covid issues (vaccine, testing, isolation etc.) and more recently Ukraine related scams.

Advice to Businesses – The service is assisting relevant businesses to get ready for new legislation for 2022 relating to calorie labelling of foods consumed outside the home and the placement and promotion for sale of food considered high in fat, salt, and sugar. One aspect of this has included working closely with one of our Primary Authority Partners, the Association of Convenience Stores, to produce guidance for their 30,000+ members across the country. Recently we have also been advising businesses on how to stay compliant and safe in the face of some ingredient shortages linked to the war in Ukraine.

Housing

Member Development Briefings on the workings of Council's Housing Service and Homelessness Strategy took place on 21st March 2022.

1209 social housing tenancies were let via the Bucks Home Choice scheme, as at 31st January 2022. There are approximately 4,800 applications currently registered for rehousing via the scheme (including applications pending an assessment). The current estimate of new affordable housing delivered during 2021/22 is an additional 387 rented properties and 153 shared ownership properties.

The Council is continuing to deliver a strong DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) programme, which provides adaptations in the home. Currently, we are administering 479 DFG applications.

Public consultation on the Council's new Homelessness Strategy closed on 21st March 2022 and the responses are being reviewed ahead of finalising the strategy for presentation to full Council for adoption.

The results of the national annual rough sleeper estimate 2021 were published in February 2022. Buckinghamshire recorded less than five rough sleepers on the night that the estimate was undertaken. Five rough sleepers were recorded in the previous year's count. Although the annual rough sleeper estimate for Buckinghamshire remained low, we have seen a significant number of rough sleepers verified during the winter period and they have been accommodated and supported under the Council's winter homelessness provisions (which were also operated in response to the Omicron variant). These provisions came to an end in March 2022 and the Housing Service and its partners are working to support rough sleepers and place them in sustainable longer term accommodation.

The Council has submitted a bid to DLUHC for funding under the RSI 5 (Rough Sleeping Initiative 5) to support services over the three year 2022-2025 period. We are awaiting the decision on this bid.

Environmental Health

A premises licence application consultation was received by the Environmental Health Team for a shisha lounge and bar establishment in New Denham. This business had previously been the subject of numerous high profile complaints and extensive investigations by a number of agencies, including Environmental Health, for breaches of smoke control, noise nuisance, licensing and planning legislation, which resulted in a successful prosecution in October 2021.

A licensing hearing was held on 8th March 2022 at which the applicant substantially changed the application to that of a restaurant, closing the shisha area and altering the nature of the business entirely. The Licensing Panel was disappointed with the late submission of the substantial amendments to the application, which responsible bodies and interested parties had not been able to consider in any detail. The Panel noted that the Police and the Fire Authority had been given no opportunity to consider the revised application and provide any response to the new proposals. The application was refused.

Officers in the Commercial Team continue to make progress towards the Food Standards Agency 'Recovery Roadmap' targets for food premises inspections. The team has seen a significant increase in the number of events being organised this year, including those for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and they are working with organisers and agencies to ensure that events are run safely.

The Strategic Environmental Protection Team, in collaboration with the Climate Change Team and Waste Services has been awarded £578k of funding to renovate a 10-year old Dennis Eagle 26 tonne Refuse Collection Vehicle (RCV) to include an electric powertrain (and other items required for five years' worth of maintenance). The upcycled electric RCV (eRCV) will operate in the north of the County, frequently travelling through Air Quality Management Areas, covering around 412 miles each week.

In addition, Buckinghamshire Council as part of a working group with Spelthorne Council and Ricardo Energy and Environment has received £91,273 to continue with an air pollution sensor trial utilising existing multi-pollutant sensors, and to purchase and trial new electronic diffusion tubes. The diffusion tubes will be utilised by Community Boards and local schools to monitor the impact of campaigns to reduce air pollution carried out during the year, in particular Clean Air Day in June 2022. This activity is intended to improve knowledge and information about air quality in Buckinghamshire

and to help people understand what steps they may take to help reduce their exposure to air pollution.

Housing and Domestic Team officers have been supporting the Afghan resettlement programme and are currently working on the many home visits for the Ukrainian sponsorship scheme. Both programmes require advisory visits to homes to provide safety guidance to help sponsors prepare for the safe arrival of refugees. Both programmes have been stood up in a short time and the service has responded well, showing a high level of commitment and flexibility in the face of an urgent need. As of 6th April, officers had carried out 247 advisory home visits for the Ukrainian visa scheme.

Licensing

The new Licensing Act Policy was approved by Full Council on the 24th November 2021 and implemented on the 7th March 2022. The Policy harmonises requirements for alcohol and entertainment licensing across the Buckinghamshire Council area. Information on the new Policy and on alcohol and entertainment licensing can be found at <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/business/business-licences-and-permits/alcohol-and-entertainment-licences/>

The new Gambling Act Policy Statement was approved by Full Council on the 23rd February 2022 and will be implemented from the 1st April 2022. The Policy harmonises requirements for the licensing of gambling premises and activities across the Buckinghamshire Council area. The service has worked hard to harmonise customer experience and application processes as policies are harmonised and is continuing to focus on digital improvement and system changes to support this. Under transitional arrangements both of these policies had to be in place for the new council by 1st April 2022 and their delivery was a Cabinet Member priority in year one and year two. The Service has worked very hard to deliver against these priorities alongside business-as-usual activities. In addition, the new Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy changes which were implemented in September 2021 are bedding in well and the Service has recently had a positive internal audit of the new systems and processes that were put in place to support the delivery of the service.

Cemeteries and Crematoria

The cremator replacement project at Chilterns Crematorium continues with work scheduled to commence in July 2022. This is a significant capital improvement project for the Chilterns Crematorium site which will see all three of the existing aged cremators replaced alongside the continuing operation of the service as well as refurbishment works to the smaller Hampden Chapel, waiting rooms and some staff areas.

Penn Road Cemetery in Hazlemere is due to open in April 2022 with a formal opening ceremony to be arranged in late April/early May. The cemetery will operate as part of a combined burial provision alongside High Wycombe Cemetery serving primarily the residents of the unparished area of High Wycombe.

We have successfully recruited several new team members into the Cemeteries Service, including a new Cemeteries Manager, and will be working to improve capacity and resilience across the Buckinghamshire Council area, as well as harmonising customer experience, where appropriate, over the coming months.





Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Gareth Williams

Enforcement Update

The team now has an established and embedded approach to dealing with alleged breaches of planning control in a consistent way across the Council area. The team continues to focus on delivering efficient and effective solutions to resolve breaches of planning control and to remedy planning harm.

The stabilised management team has enabled early decision making and helped with case progression which, in turn, is improving the overall service delivery. These working practices, combined with our no-nonsense approach to planning enforcement case management, has resulted in a further increase in formal actions taken and a significant increase in case resolutions. In 2021/22, the team issued 141 formal notices. This includes 49 Breach of Condition Notices, two Listed Building Enforcement Notices, three Temporary Stop Notices, three Section 215 (untidy land) notices and 85 Planning Enforcement Notices. The increase in the number of Planning Enforcement Notices issued is the second consecutive year of increased formal action taken since becoming a unitary authority and is more than double that of the combined action taken by legacy authorities in the year prior to Unitary.

In addition to the formal action taken, our improved case management and quicker decision making has contributed to a reduction in the overall caseload. Whilst the team received 1950 new reports in FY21-22, the team closed 2683 cases in 2021/22 following a program of data cleansing and regular case reviews.

In other work, the team have continued to roll out a programme of increased monitoring inspections of our authorised Waste and Minerals sites, undertaking a total number of 46 chargeable visits. This is set to more than double to 96 visits in 22/23. Increased site presence is providing the authority with a greater practical understanding of operational realities of our consented Minerals and Waste sites, which in turn improves our understanding of waste management capacity and aggregate resource within the County.

Brownfield Calls for Sites

The first call for brownfield sites consultation ran from 16 February to 6 April 2021. We received 275 site submissions which we are assessing for their suitability, availability and achievability for development. Whilst this remains subject to the outcome of our assessment, the overall capacity of the sites submitted for potential identification for residential use is approximately 4,900 homes. A second call for brownfield sites was launched on 6 December 2021. This will remain open for as long as possible. Thus far, an additional 47 sites have been submitted for assessment.

Chiltern Special Area of Conservation (SAC):

The Chiltern Beechwoods SAC is made up of nine constituent Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSI). There is evidence of significant recreational pressures on the SAC arising from a Zone of Influence (Zoi) of 12.6km from Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI and 1.7km for Tring Woodlands SSSI. These Zones of Influence extend into Buckinghamshire. This matter has arisen as a result of evidence produced in the preparation of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (DBC). The evidence gathered by DBC concludes that the integrity of the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC, particularly at Ashridge Commons and Woods SSSI is being harmed as a result of public access and disturbance. The evidence can be found on Dacorum Borough Council's website.

Natural England (NE) in its advice to Buckinghamshire Council and other neighbouring authorities stated that there could be a serious potential conflict between the plans for any new housing development in the area around the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC and conservation objectives for the protected features there.

The Council will shortly begin work on a mitigation strategy. This could take six months to get it in place. This will assist smaller scale schemes to proceed where they are not in the exclusion zone. Natural England is advising that a more strategic form of mitigation for larger developments such as Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space may be required – this could take longer to get into place.

While strategies are put in place, Planning Officers will continue to work on those applications which are unable to be determined or decided for reasons relating to the Habitat Regulations Assessment, to ensure that delays are kept to a minimum. More information can be found on our Frequently Asked Questions page.

Local Plan update

Whilst the details of the government's proposed planning reforms continue to be awaited, we conducted an Attitudes Survey consultation as part of the 'Discovery and Exploration' phase of the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. This closed on 11 February 2022 and attracted a total of 3,439 responses, which is a very healthy response rate at this early stage in the plan's preparation. These responses are currently being analysed.

Neighbourhood Plans

Buckinghamshire Council takes a proactive and positive approach to neighbourhood planning, providing advice and support to those communities interested in producing Neighbourhood Development Plans, Neighbourhood Development Orders or Community Right to Build Orders as part of our "duty to support". It was because of this positive approach that a new neighbourhood planning coordinator post was created and filled in October 2021. There are currently:

- 30 'made' Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) in Buckinghamshire, Stewkley NDP (December 2021) and Denham NDP (January 2022) being the most recent plans to be 'made' after a hiatus due to the pandemic in early 2020
- 38 NDPs are in progress (including four reviews of 'made' plans)
- 64 parishes in Buckinghamshire have a designated neighbourhood area (40% of the parishes in Buckinghamshire).

A further six new plans and two modified plans are forecast to be 'made' in 2022. A new Neighbourhood Planning webpage includes a list of plans and has a map to show the geographical coverage of neighbourhood plans in Buckinghamshire. We regularly meet with the Town and Parish

Council to ensure that they are aware of the relevant contact details for our Neighbourhood Plans officer and to help offer assistance with any Neighbourhood Plans issues.

Beaconsfield Relief Road

The new Beaconsfield relief road opened on 5 April. The relief road has been a long-term aspiration to improve north-south connectivity in Buckinghamshire by easing the heavy congestion on the A355 corridor and London End roundabout making this new section of road a key strategic scheme. It will also provide a more suitable route for HS2 construction traffic.

The relief road will connect to the existing road network through a new junction at Maxwell Road at the northern end, and with the Pyebush Roundabout and the A40 at the southern end. The scheme has been delivered in two parts by Buckinghamshire Council working with developer Inland Homes. The northern section of the road from Maxwell Road to Minerva Way was designed and constructed by Buckinghamshire Council and the connecting southern section from Minerva Way to Pyebush Roundabout has been provided by Inland Homes as part of their Wilton Park housing development.

The completed road is the result of public and private funding coming together to deliver a key piece of local infrastructure. Working together, Buckinghamshire Council and the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership secured funding to deliver the northern section through the Government's Local Growth Deal and Housing Infrastructure Fund. Developer Inland Homes has financed the connecting southern section as part of its planning obligations for their Wilton Park development.

Aylesbury Garden Town

Work on the commission to develop deliverable propositions for regeneration of the Town Centre continues. Detailed work on the financial assumptions for this work and requirements for further studies are being identified by officers. Options will be shared with stakeholders, including local Councillors, once proposals have been reviewed and deemed to be robust. Announcement of the capacity funding used to support the Garden Town programme of work is still awaited from Homes England and therefore detailed proposals for the future work programme remain to be confirmed.

Community based activity supported by the Garden Town programme has seen success in recent months through the Play Streets pilot in Fairford Leys, community based growing projects and enhancement projects at the rail and bus stations.

Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework

The purpose of the Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework is to outline a high-level approach to regeneration across all our towns and villages. It will assist in the delivery of agreed programmes of place shaping that help define both physical and social regeneration that drives better social and economic outcomes in our Places. It will be the first of its kind in Buckinghamshire with an articulated vision of resilience, infrastructure, relevance and a strong future of town centres in Buckinghamshire.





Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)

Following last year's successful bid for government funding, we are working on two exciting DRT pilot schemes in Aylesbury and High Wycombe. DRT is flexible, it doesn't follow a fixed route like a traditional bus service and passengers are able to travel by picking a boarding point and destination via an app, website or phone. This gives direct links to destinations that would normally require a change of buses and allow us to serve areas where demand isn't high enough for a regular bus route. A tender process is taking place and we hope to start operating in Summer 2022. Further information will follow in due course.

New Capita ONE software live

Following a 19-month implementation project, Client Transport went live with Capita ONE on 1st February 2022. Capita ONE is the administration system used by Children's Services to manage education records and Client Transport are now using the Transport module within ONE. The key benefits of implementing the Capita ONE Transport module include holding a single client record and improved service resilience and data security and integrity. This is a key milestone in the Client Transport improvement journey and a major achievement by the team.

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

The Government have announced BSIP funding and have awarded funding to 31 authorities only. Forty authorities will receive no funding at this stage and, unfortunately, Buckinghamshire is one of those. I will be writing to the minister to express dismay at the funding decision and will also seek feedback from DfT. We have to continue developing an Enhanced Partnership with bus companies. We are continuing to promote bus services to help tackle climate change and residents are encouraged to try the bus again if they can.

Minibus Driver receives award



Sakhy Badshah put his safeguarding training into practice and acted fast to get eight pupils on board his Buckinghamshire Council school transport service to Wingrave Church of England School to safety when their vehicle's engine caught fire. He received a 'Proud of Bucks' award for his actions which were commended by Janet Lee, Assistant Head Teacher.

Rights of Way Update - Work to remove and replace the Berry Hill Footbridge in Taplow continues. This large timber footbridge was closed to the general public in May 2021 after suffering unforeseen

structural deterioration and was then demolished on health and safety grounds in December 2021 in close collaboration with the Environment Agency. Subject to design and approvals, the new footbridge is planned to be installed by the end of Autumn 2022 to enable this Right of Way to reopen.

Volunteer path surveyors have nearly completed the annual condition survey of the Rights of Way network, which samples 5% of the network. The results so far indicate that 74.6% of the paths walked were easy to use, 93% of structures were accessible and 93% of direction signage at roadside was in place. Any defects found from the survey are recorded for action and prioritised for repair as necessary.

Over the past financial year, the Rights of Way Operations Team capital works programme has delivered improvement works to repair and replace bridges and resurface paths in the parishes of Marlow (along the Thames Path National Trail), Wing, Amersham, Buckland, Bledlow, Chesham, Chartridge, Haddenham, Pitstone, and Westcott. Rail and step works have been undertaken in Halton and Hambleden parishes.

Celebrating the Queen's Jubilee

To help communities celebrate the occasion of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee on Thursday 2nd June 2022 guidance for holding a street party has been issued. The fee for residents and communities wanting a temporary road closure for a Jubilee street party has been waived. The deadline for applications is: 6th May 2022. Further guidance is given on our website [here](#).



In this Jubilee Year, we are also promoting the Bernwood Jubilee Way – a 61-mile trail cutting across 27 parishes in the north of Buckinghamshire. This important foundation route was originally developed for the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and links together sections of the Rights of Way network to give access to the forgotten ancient forest of Bernwood. Work has begun to survey the path and install new signage in time for a relaunch for the coming celebrations in the Summer.

'Recycled Plastic Road' trial

Plans are progressing to trial the use of recycled plastic in road surfacing materials at two sites this summer- one a heavily used main A road and the other a more minor local road. We will lay this innovative material alongside standard materials to see how it performs on these two different roads. This approach will allow us to tease out any issues with installation and we will monitor its performance annually in direct comparison with the adjacent traditional materials. Similar products are being installed elsewhere in the country (including through the ADEPT Live Labs programme). Another innovation this year will be the increased use of lower temperature "warm mix" asphalt which delivers carbon reduction benefits over previous hot mix asphalt methods.

Gully Cleaning

This programme has remained a constant challenge and focus throughout the year. Despite the significant resourcing difficulties posed by HGV driver shortage, to date over 70,800 gullies have been cleansed at least once. Follow up repair work has been undertaken, with over 650 gully covers being unstuck and over 350 replaced. The additional investment in drainage has enabled a programme of further investigation, ditch clearance, high pressure jetting, CCTV surveys and repair work to damaged gullies and drainage systems. The long-term benefits of this work are anticipated to reduce localised flooding of the carriageway and the subsequent safety risks caused to road users, reduce

flood damage to property in certain areas and prevent unnecessary deterioration of the road surface. All gullies within Buckinghamshire will be cleansed again in the next year.

Capital Programme for 2021/22

As part of the “£100m Investing in your roads” four year programme £32.4m was delivered on this busy schedule of works in 2021/22. Road markings have been refreshed at 49 sites consisting of a mixture of strategic routes and local area choices, led by the LAT’s. Safety barriers, complex ITS upgrades, network improvement sites and 23 drainage schemes have also been completed. TfB and its supply chain have been extremely busy delivering 28 footway schemes alongside 34 surfacing sites, 26 surface dressing sites, 16 sites treated with micro asphalt and 77 sites repaired under plane and patch. During 2022/23 there will be a further investment of £31.5m in the roads across the county under this programme.

HS2 and East West Rail

Buckinghamshire Council remains committed to holding HS2 and EWR to account for the impact that these schemes as their construction are having on our special environment and on our residents and businesses.

The date for the Judicial Review on Buckinghamshire council’s appeals against six HS2 lorry route decisions has been confirmed as 8th – 9th June 2022. The lorry routes the Judicial Review relates to are:

- Brackley Road
- Wendover Green Tunnel
- Small Dean Lane, Wendover to the Strategic Road Network
- Small Dean Viaduct, Wendover to the Strategic Road Network
- Chiltern Tunnel North Portal to the Strategic Road Network, and
- Three worksites at Little Missenden, Chesham and the North Portal to the Strategic Road Network

Second Tranche of HS2 Road Safety Fund (RSF)

The second tranche of the HS2 Road Safety Fund is now open for applications from or supported by Parish Councils. Applicants wishing to apply will need to do so by 31st May 2022.

£1.6m is being made available in 2022 from Buckinghamshire’s £3.95m share of the HS2 Road Safety Fund. This funding was allocated by the Department for Transport in recognition of the likely disruption to communities that are not used to the volume and impact of heavy traffic associated with major construction works such as the HS2 project.

The funds are expected to be in high demand so schemes to be funded will be carefully selected to benefit the communities that have been most significantly impacted by HS2 construction and to maximise the long-term road safety benefits across the county.

You can find more information, including fund criteria and guidance for applicants [here](#). Queries should be sent to hs2roadsafetyfund@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Extension of e-scooter trials

The Government have allowed an extension of the e-scooter trials taking place across England to November 2022 and Buckinghamshire Council has agreed to continue to participate in these trials. These have proven a success so far with over 120,000 rides having taken place so far across our three locations: Aylesbury, Princes Risborough and High Wycombe. The extension of the trials will enable additional user and safety data to be collected for the Department for Transport, helping to

understand the uptake, user demographics, carbon impacts and the suitability of e-scooters as a new transport mode and their future legalisation.

Emergency Active Travel Fund Schemes

The first tranche of the Department for Transport's 'Emergency' Active Travel Fund (ATF) was announced during the pandemic, primarily focussed on introducing temporary or trial schemes (encouraging reallocation of road space during a time when there were fewer vehicles on the roads) to enable more local journeys to be made on foot or by bike.

Two of the trial schemes (Southcourt, Aylesbury and Trinity Road, Marlow) have recently been out to statutory consultation and are now being made permanent, with all works scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2022.

