



Report to Cabinet

Date:	12 July 2022
Title:	Buckinghamshire Levelling Up Framework: Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Martin Tett
Contact officer:	Sarah Ashmead Deputy Chief Executive Sarah.Ashmead@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	Booker, Cressex & Castlefield, Totteridge & Bowerdean, Ryemead & Micklefield, Abbey, Terriers & Amersham Hill. West Wycombe, Aylesbury South West, Aylesbury North- West, Aylesbury North, Chesham.
Recommendations:	To agree to the proposals for a Buckinghamshire Levelling Up Framework and to support the programme ‘Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All’
Reason for decision:	In order to establish a shared commitment and approach across Buckinghamshire to addressing disparities in outcomes within our communities.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Outcomes for people living in Buckinghamshire are some of the best in the country. However, there are also parts of the county where residents experience significant hardship. The Council, in discussion with partners, has been exploring the potential for a local approach to ‘levelling up’ within Buckinghamshire designed to address disparities of outcomes experienced by particular communities within the county and promote community wellbeing and increased productivity. The proposed framework attached at Appendix 1 is designed to set the context for this approach,

establish a shared ambition and a programme of work to tackle the underlying issues. This framework will also form part of the negotiations with Government on a County Deal for Buckinghamshire.

- 1.2 At the meeting of Council in April 2022, Members committed to producing a report on Levelling Up within 3 months. This report sets out the initial plans for taking action to secure long term change.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 Residents are currently experiencing unprecedented pressures in the cost of living and rising inflation levels suggest that these pressures will become more acute as the year progresses. The Council has developed a comprehensive programme of support for those struggling with financial hardship, under the umbrella of its Helping Hand brand. However, this support can only be a short-term solution. Long term financial resilience for residents relies on tackling underlying issues including skills, work readiness, employment and debt management.
- 2.2 The Government has placed 'Levelling up' at the heart of its agenda to recover after the pandemic. The Levelling Up White Paper published in February 2022 sets out 12 national missions designed to spread opportunity across the whole UK and improve everyday life and life chances for people in underperforming places. Building on the Levelling Up missions, the attached framework "Opportunity Bucks – Succeeding for All" is aimed at spreading opportunities and promoting pride in place in Buckinghamshire. It is a partner document to the Buckinghamshire proposition "Succeeding as a Place, Succeeding as a Country" which focuses on our ambition for economic recovery and a devolution deal.
- 2.3 'Opportunity Bucks' provides a framework for the Council, key partners and local community groups to focus together on tackling those local priorities that will make a difference to the outcomes of residents. It sets out an ambition to reduce inequality, whilst improving outcomes for all. This will be underpinned by a programme of work focused on five themes:
 - Education and Skills
 - Jobs and career opportunities
 - Quality of our Public Realm
 - Standard of living
 - Health and Wellbeing
- 2.4 Initially, the focus of the programme will be on 10 wards in parts of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham which experience particular challenges in terms of outcomes. These wards are as follows:
 - **High Wycombe –**

- Booker, Cressex & Castlefield
- Totteridge & Bowerdean
- Ryemead & Micklefield
- Abbey
- Terriers & Amersham Hill
- West Wycombe
- **Aylesbury**
 - Aylesbury South West
 - Aylesbury North-West
 - Aylesbury North
- **Chesham**

- 2.4 Local action plans to tackle the five themes will be developed for each area through engagement with the communities, led by the Community Boards. Each plan will need to be designed in a way that adds value to existing activity in the area.
- 2.5 Depending on progress, there may be opportunities to extend the programme to include other areas in the future, and this consideration will form part of the regular monitoring and evaluation.
- 2.6 A 'Levelling Up' Programme Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, has been established to bring partners together to help drive the development and delivery of the programme. This is a multiagency board reporting into the Growth Board, chaired by the Leader. As set out in Appendix 1, a series of metrics will be tracked regularly and reported to Cabinet in order to assess progress and impact.
- 2.7 This strategy will require long term and sustained commitment by the Council and its partners. Partner organisations will also consider the policy framework through their individual governance arrangements over the next few weeks, with a view to signing up to it. The document will be updated to include the logos of all partner organisations prior to the launch.
- 2.8 The Council, in liaison with partners, has submitted a bid to join the 'Making Every Adult Matters' (MEAM) Network to support the programme. This is a national network, support by national lottery funding, which currently supports 32 local areas to transform services and systems for people facing multiple disadvantage. If successful, we will be able to draw on support and advice on the MEAM approach to help shape the Buckinghamshire programme together with training for key staff and opportunities to learn and network with practitioners in other areas.

3. Legal and financial implications

- 3.1 As we develop the detailed action plans, resources may be required for initial investment in the priority areas. It is recommended that £1.5m p.a. for 3-years is put aside to support the programme, with the release of funding being dependent upon

the approval of agreed business cases by the Leader. This will be funded from uncommitted earmarked reserves.

4. Corporate implications

- 4.1 This is a cross-cutting programme which will draw on contributions from all parts of the council. Demand for many of the council's front-line services is disproportionately high within these communities, and the programme therefore offers significant opportunities to support service objectives. As the detailed work to shape the programme progresses, it may require changes in the service delivery models within the specific communities in order to respond to local need. Any such proposals will be determined in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member as appropriate.

5. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 5.1 Meetings are planned with the Chairman of the Community Boards and the local councillors in the wards identified in order to consult them about the key issues to be addressed in each locality, and the role that local members will play in shaping the plans to compliment and build upon existing activity within the communities.

6. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 6.1 Communication and engagement with the local communities will be at the heart of the proposed approach. Community Boards will play a key role in leading the engagement with the communities to identify priorities for the local action plans.
- 6.2 A communications plan will be produced for the programme as a whole, together with individual plans for communication and engagement with the specific communities. This will include mechanisms for gathering regular feedback in order to monitor the impact of the programme.
- 3.4 A conference to launch the programme is being planned for September 2022. This will provide an opportunity to establish a shared vision across a range of stakeholders, raise the profile of the programme across the county, and develop the plans around the five themes.

7. Next steps and review

- 7.1 Next steps in developing the programme will include commencing the engagement with local communities and developing action plans for the local areas and the five strategic themes. It is recommended that an update on progress should be reported to Cabinet in November 2022, and at six monthly intervals after that.

8. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 8.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

