



## Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

- **Condolences on the death of Her Majesty**

It is with deep sadness we mourn the loss of Her Majesty the Queen. We send our deep condolences to the Royal Family on behalf of the residents of Buckinghamshire and share the tremendous sense of sorrow with our residents.

We express gratitude for Her Majesty's life of dedication and service to the British people and pledge our allegiance to King Charles III.

Long Live the King.

- **Cost of Living Pressures**

This is likely to be a key issue in residents' minds as we move towards the winter months. Everyone is reviewing and adjusting household budgets and for many people we know the financial pressures could tip them into significant hardship.

Building on our Helping Hand programme, we are continuing to develop the help and advice available for residents to support them with the rising cost of living, including.

- Those most in need are able to access financial and practical help via our Helping Hand programme and have easy access to other sources of support available to them.
- In partnership with the Heart of Bucks, we have launched a Crisis appeal which will provide funds to help those Buckinghamshire families that need it most.
- We are issuing vouchers to 8,000 pensioners in Buckinghamshire who are in receipt of Council Tax reduction or who have previously been supported by Helping Hand. If you need to contact the Helping Hand team, please call 01296 531 151 or by using our [online contact form](#).
- **'Welcoming Spaces'**- We will be joining forces with other organisations across Buckinghamshire to create a network of welcoming spaces this winter, to assist when the weather turns colder. We will open our libraries and will provide a warm, welcoming and supportive space for anyone who needs it.

For those who are in a position to help others, we are also promoting opportunities, including:

- Donating to the Heart of Bucks Crisis appeal
- Donating to foodbanks

- Volunteering to support key organisations such as Citizens Advice Bureau who are providing valuable services to those experiencing difficulties.

We will be adding more to this support package in the coming months and will update our website as we information becomes available. [Support with food, bills and finances \(Helping Hand\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Further details are also available in the report from the Cabinet member for Communities.

- **Strategic Finance**

The Q1 budget monitoring position was taken to Cabinet on 8 July, and this showed an adverse position of £3.8m which is mainly due to the implications of inflation on energy and the pressure being managed in Adults and Health and Children's Services with rising demand and additional cost due to complexity and market. It is still early in the year, but we will continue to press for ways in which we can find mitigations to bring spend back into line with the approved budget.

The Medium-Term Financial Planning process for the next four years has begun. This is likely to be a very difficult budget-setting process due to the uncertainties around inflation levels and length, future government funding levels and the implications of the cost-of-living crisis on spend and income levels. Cabinet Members are actively reviewing their current budgets and considering options to address the financial challenges that the current position will pose. Cabinet Members are looking at and challenging underlying pressures, examining new options and looking for extra savings and efficiencies to help balance the budget.

- **Levelling Up**

We are addressing disparity and 'levelling up' here in Buckinghamshire through our 'Opportunity Bucks' programme which was launched yesterday (20 September). The programme focusses on ten key wards in three areas; parts of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham, where outcomes for residents aren't as good as in other parts of Buckinghamshire. Overall, this programme provides a framework for bringing partners together to focus our collective resources on tackling those local priorities that will make a difference to the outcomes of residents in these areas.

I have recently visited these wards, spending time in High Wycombe and Aylesbury in June, seeing first-hand the issues that we would like to address. We will do this by working with local communities, partners and the Community Boards to develop local action plans.

- **Helping Hand for Ukraine**

The government recently announced that over 100,000 refugees have come through the Homes for Ukraine Scheme, and we are still seeing arrivals coming to our county even now, some six months after the conflict began. Over 680 hosts now offer accommodation with 1,717 Ukrainian guests stating Buckinghamshire as their destination on their visa applications (data correct as of 18/08/22).

The council is continuing to work hard to make sure the families can access schooling, work, finance, practical items, English language lessons and emotional support through its Helping Hand for Ukraine scheme – to find out more, please check the [dedicated pages on our website](#).

Over the last month we recognised Ukraine Independence Day on 24 August as with those impacted people reflecting on their personal journey and loss. The summer break also brought the challenge of keeping our younger guests occupied and this year we have been able to offer free

holiday activities and food via the HAF scheme and Boredom buster bags from our partners LEAP to keep them busy.

The Council also hosted its first employment fair for Ukrainian guests in July and as a result the Council has employed two further Ukraine guests. Another employment fair is taking place on 28th September at The Hub in High Wycombe. We continue to work with our voluntary sector colleagues and local community groups, now with an eye on the new challenges coming up and what happens at the six-month point especially for those families that have settled into communities and schools. We continue to lobby central government on this issue; I recently met with Lord Harrington, who at the time of our meeting, was the Minister of State for Refugees, to discuss this very difficult situation. We will continue to look at solutions for ongoing support for these families, which will require all tiers of government, the private and voluntary sector to work together.

Some refugees have now been living with their host families for six months and are starting to look for their own longer-term accommodation and like many are facing high rents across the southeast region making finding affordable housing difficult. The impact on both hosts and guests is already evident so we are working with central Government to make sure Bucks' residents' voices are heard and that tangible, long-term solutions are found, and we can continue to support both our residents and our guests.

I'm sure we are all proud of the tremendous efforts made by our staff, and our partners, to mobilise and maintain our local response at such a rapid pace. We now have over 150 of the council's own staff in sponsor liaison roles, in addition to their day jobs, who keep regular one to one contact with sponsor households. This targeted wrap around support remains critical to making sure that refugees continue to be supported as they set up a new life here in Buckinghamshire.

- **Devolution and Recovery Deal**

In light of the changes in central government with a new Prime Minister and Cabinet we are continuing to lobby on our own County Deal proposal that we can submit to Government as soon as possible. We are reviewing our Recovery and Growth deal proposition to ensure that our County Deal complements Government's Levelling Up White Paper framework for devolution. We are still seeking an enhanced level 2 deal to reflect our strong local partnership and desire for greater local devolution. This type of deal would give us the greatest level of freedoms and flexibilities, without requiring introduction of new layers of governance such as through an elected mayor or leader.

- **Buckinghamshire Growth Board**

The next Buckinghamshire Growth Board meeting is scheduled for the last week in September. The Board and its partners have endorsed the Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision for 2050. The board is keen to see strategies that support the county's many businesses that provide the backbone to Buckinghamshire's economy.

Following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper discussions have begun around LEP integration locally. The LEP, Bucks Business First and the Council are working on a new combined Board and will continue to engage with Government to secure an early commitment to a County Deal, which also need to include plans for LEP integration.

The Buckinghamshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund implementation plan has been submitted to Government. Buckinghamshire's funding allocation is extremely small (£5.77M over three years) so we have identified a small number of priorities for focus of the fund locally. Our priorities cover community measures to support cost of living, supporting local business growth and employment for support for economically inactive people, whilst seeking to support local levelling up priorities.

We expect our plan to be approved in the coming months which will enable us to start delivering. We are working up the approach that will bring forward a range of projects to deliver

Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bids have been submitted to government. Six bids (five constituency and one transport) were submitted after Government moved the deadline from the 6<sup>th</sup> of July to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August due to issues with the online application portal. Outcomes will not be known until the Autumn, but MPs were supportive of all our bids. It should be remembered that Buckinghamshire is a category three area and thus deemed lowest priority to benefit from this headline government funding stream.

- **Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)**

As mentioned above the Council and the LEP are working in partnership to develop a new model for economic governance in the county. It will enable Buckinghamshire to bring together programme funding with investment, to accelerate growth in the county. The suggested plan encompasses the broader aspects of the LEP's agenda: digital support, monitoring of capital programmes and planned core team activity in the coming year.

At the LEP Board on 22 July 2022 members noted the work of the Skills Advisory Panel looking at the ability to link high growth areas with areas of deprivation. The work will follow the successes seen in Buckinghamshire as a result of the Kickstart programme.

I also attended the Westcott Space Expo on 28 July which showcased the investment that has taken place at Westcott, the unique nature of the facilities and capacity offered at the site, the cluster continuing to grow, covering design, applications, and testing.

- **Support to Buckinghamshire Businesses and Aylesbury Enterprise Zone update**

Review and monitoring of our Enterprise Zones remains imperative to supporting businesses in Buckinghamshire. The Enterprise Zone Memorandum of Understanding between the LEP and Buckinghamshire Council has been finalised for the next five-year period. The Bucks LEP is still required to report to Government on progress with the Enterprise Zone programme so structured and comprehensive reporting will continue.

We have also been supporting Buckinghamshire businesses through Government's Community Renewal Fund where Bucks Business First were successful in securing funding to deliver a project focussed on supporting the Visitor Economy sector. This project is helping businesses and employees to accelerate the sector's recovery since the pandemic.

- **Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee**

The Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee met on 13 July with the agenda focussing on the Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire. A report examined how the Visitor Economy fits into the Council's broader approach to economic development and ways to develop it further. As the Council looks to develop a Visitor Economy strategy, members will be involved in reviewing the opportunities and potential areas of development and investigate how the Council can work effectively with partners to attract more visitors to Buckinghamshire.



- **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)**

Projects using the Housing Infrastructure Fund have had mixed fortunes in the past few months. The significant issue has been the continuing escalation in costs that are affecting construction projects across the world. It was for this reason, along with concerns about the scheme's impact, effectiveness and overall value for money that has resulted in the council halting the Abbey Barn Lane Improvement Scheme in High Wycombe. With a large shortfall in the budget available and the continued risk of further cost rises the council has had to make hard choices about its priorities. The Council is currently discussing the HIF programme and inflationary impact on associated projects with Homes England to explore funding options.

In July, the Council submitted a planning application to progress the first stage of the Princes Risborough Southern Road Link. The PRSRL scheme is the first of three phases of the Princes Risborough relief road – which is a key piece of infrastructure to support the planned expansion of the town. Further information is available [here](#).

Also, in July the Council entered a contract with the Canal and Rivers Trust to provide the missing link in the towpath upgrade on the Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal to create a wider, Active Travel route into and out of the town centre. The route is 1.1km / 0.7 of a mile long between lock 15 (near Victoria Park) and Bridge 15 (where the canal goes under Broughton Lane). Work is due to start in September and will take approximately 14 weeks.



Kingsbrook secondary school is nearing completion on time, and under budget, despite all the challenges that Covid and supply chain issues have caused. We are looking forward to a formal opening event at the end of September, and more information will be provided in press releases in due course.

- **South East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) Update**

There is significant financial pressure on the project due to increasing costs as a result of inflation as well as other factors. The Secretaries of State confirmed the CPO/SRO/open space orders on 31st March 2022. All licence agreements have been put in place to enable vegetation clearance work as well as archaeology work to facilitate the UKPN diversion works. The Council also took possession of a number of parcels of land under the CPO powers at the end of July.

A recent decision has been taken to allow elements of early work to progress including the ordering of the significant Thames Water diversion work at the Wendover Road end of the project, land acquisition costs, site accesses and 1km of haul roads. The haul roads are to allow the UKPN and contractor (Galliford Try) construction vehicles to access the site to drill under the railway and install the c1.2km of ducting for the electricity cables. There are also other utility diversions on both Lower Road and Wendover Road.

Discussions continue with HS2 regarding the bridge assurance, use of materials for the embankment, Phase 2 land and flood mitigation requirements for both Stoke Mandeville Relief Road and Phase 2. The latter is currently delaying design work and the Phase 2 planning application. The application is currently expected to be submitted at the end of September.

- **England Economic Heartland (EEH)**

England's Economic Heartland continues to work with national agencies and local authorities to secure investment in the region's transport infrastructure priorities. EEH's connectivity study between Oxford and Milton Keynes is due to be published shortly and will be available on the EEH website. EEH has also submitted a response to the Department for Transport consultation on rail reform – in particular, this called for formal recognition of the role of sub-national transport bodies such as EEH in determining rail priorities in the region. Work is also ongoing, in conjunction with the East West Main Line Partnership, to make the strongest case for East West Rail's delivery in full to Cambridge, including the link to Aylesbury.

England's Economic Heartland's annual conference is being held in Milton Keynes on 16 November. Interested parties can register to attend via the link on the EEH website.

- **South East Strategic Leaders (SESL) –**

In June, Leaders received a detailed letter from Lord Harrington (Minister of State for Refugees) in response to their letter setting out ideas on how central and local government can work together to best support Ukrainian refugees.

Senior officers from SESL member authorities have worked with consultants commissioned by SESL to explore what levelling up and devolution mean for the wider South East.

SESL has taken the opportunity to consider refreshing its work programme, reflecting the changing economic circumstances and evolving priorities for communities across the wider South East.





## Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources

Councillor John Chilver



### Resources Update

#### MK Job Show – September 2021



- **14** Buckinghamshire Council employees volunteered from HR & OD, Adult Social Care, PGS, Digital, and Children's Social Care to attend the MK Job Show to showcase the careers and opportunities across the Council
- **63** CVs collected and followed up by the Resourcing team – candidates with a variety of backgrounds and experience levels, interested in roles including Customer Care, Legal, Apprenticeships, Teaching, Finance, IT, Planning, Social Care, and many more...
- **217** sign-ups to Buckinghamshire Council job alerts



#### Feedback from event attendees - provided by MK Job Show

*'I would definitely recommend attending the MK Job Show. There was a wide variety of employers to talk to which appealed to all age groups. It was really good talking to people face to face as this gave me a good feel for the different organisations and the staff who work there.'* – event attendee

## Homes For Ukraine Information & Recruitment Event



- 65 CVs collected and followed up by the Resourcing team
- Positive feedback received from both attendees and partners
- 3 Ukrainians as a result of this event have secured permanent employment to date with others at interview stage.

## Hybrid Digital Post Room

Work is progressing well in implementing a hybrid digital post room as part of the Work Smart Programme. The project, which is due to go live in October 2022, supports the ambition to drive efficiency through the use of modern technology which will allow staff to both receive and send mail items in a digitally enabled way. The new post room will deliver savings, will deliver reduced carbon emissions from reducing the need to travel into the office and deliver a modern way of working that moves away from a reliance on paper.

The new hybrid digital post room will be managed and delivered

Based on an audit carried out earlier in the year we estimate that the council deals with 137,000 inbound items of mail and 860,000 outbound items. This is a decrease of about 40% compared to pre-pandemic levels, so this builds on the trend to move to digital methods of communications and transactions.

by the Corporate Business Support team from a single central location at Walton Street. All **inbound mail** (for the main offices) will be delivered to Walton Street where it will be opened, sorted and where approximately 80% of it will be scanned to create digital files. These will then be shared with the relevant recipient or team via SharePoint alongside an email alert. A traditional post room function will be retained for items delivered that cannot be scanned.

Currently all services deal with their own **outbound mail**, with the post room teams only dealing with the final elements of the process. When the new system goes live, officers will simply send their outbound item electronically to the digital post room where the jobs will be prioritised, printed, folded, and inserted into envelopes with minimal human intervention. This new system can deal with a single letter to a resident through to large scale mailouts of thousands.

## Revenue & Benefits Phase 2

We currently use 3 Revenues and Benefits software systems covering different geographical areas within Buckinghamshire and this phase 2 project involves merging all three systems into one, that's over 20 million items.

A single unified system will:

- mean a more efficient and consistent service to council tax payers, benefit recipients and business rates payers
- provide a range of self-service options
- allow customers to access, check and update their details quickly

During the upgrade we have had to close our systems down for a period of time to allow for all the information to be moved across to the new system, but the majority of residents will not be

impacted as benefit payments will be made as normal and council tax collected on the normal Direct debit dates.

The systems will be closed:

- for former Chiltern and South Bucks district areas from Monday 15 August 2022
- for former Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe district areas from Thursday 22 September 2022

The new single system is expected to be available from Thursday 27 October 2022.

During this period online forms will be available so citizens can tell us about changes to their circumstances and make requests to the service and we will continue supporting vulnerable customers and those who are less able to self-serve.

For any resident who needs to contact us please do so as we are available to take calls as normal and if a resident is in hardship we can help with emergency payments.

We will process requests and reply to emails in date order once we are able to do so at the beginning of November 2022, we've brought in 14 additional resources to help clear the backlog by the end of January 2023.

## Property & Assets Update

### Expansion works

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



*Misbourne School*

We have completed works at Misbourne School with the Council issuing Practical Completion July 2022. This project delivered a new sports hall, and new additional car and coach parking.



*Misbourne School*

Amersham School expansion delivered a new classroom and science blocks, a new reception area, a dining area and staff car park.

The new Kingsbrook Secondary School with SEN provision has also made good progress with programmed completion now due in September 2022.



Major expansion works continue at Chiltern Hills Academy to deliver an expansion including a new fit for purpose science block.



*Amersham School*

Finally, work at the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre continues to progress following the demolition of the old Leisure Centre and ancillary buildings. This has seen a continuation of external works including the new car parks, hard and soft landscaping and external play areas being delivered with phase 1 of the car parking open to the public on 25 July.

*Chiltern Hills Academy*

landscaping and external play areas being delivered with phase 1 of the car parking open



*Chiltern Lifestyle Centre car park*

### Future High Streets Regeneration Programme



37 High St: Before



After

The Council's Future High Streets ('FHS') regeneration programme for High Wycombe is progressing. Refurbishment of the first of the vacant shop acquisitions, 37 High St, is due to complete in September 2022. Tenants are lined up to occupy. Refurbishment of a second vacant shop acquisition, 16 Church St, will also commence in September 2022.



## Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles

### Helping Hand

During the period 1 April – 30 June, utilising the Government Household Support Fund, the Helping Hand team managed 4696 support requests from 1780 residents. These included over 2,280 food support requests, 834 fuel vouchers issued for pre-payment meters plus many other services offered to support with other furniture, school uniform, clothing and hot meals. In addition, the Helping Hand Fund, managed through Heart of Bucks, provided over £153,261 of grant support to help households in financial hardship with issues such as utility debt.

The Household Support Fund that covers the period 1 April to 30 September 2022 also enabled over £650,000 of support to be provided to families eligible for Free School Meals and Early Years support during the summer holidays and will be funding support to over 8,200 pensioner households who are in receipt of Council Tax reduction or who have been supported by the Helping Hand team. During August and early September these pensioners will receive a post office letter with £90 voucher that can be cashed at their local post office to assist them with their household bills/food.

We are currently awaiting details from Government regarding the next round of Household Support Fund which will cover the period 1 October to 31 March 2023. We will be working up plans to ensure we can use this money in collaboration with our VCSE partners to support those in most need during the challenging months ahead.

We continue to develop activities through the Financial Insecurity Partnership to improve the financial vulnerability of residents and on the 16 September as part of our #BackonTrack campaign, we will be hosting a return to work support event at the Wycombe Library. There will be a number of partners who will be present who can provide tailored advice and support to residents from CV writing to providing tips on interview techniques.

With the cost of living crisis, now more than ever, its time to pull together and rely on the generosity of others to offer a helping hand to those that need it most. We are really proud to once again be partnering with Heart of Bucks to support and promote their Crisis appeal which will help Buckinghamshire families in need. [TotalGiving™ - Crisis Appeal for Buckinghamshire - Heart of Bucks - Fundraising Page](#). We are also working with our partners to pull together advice and support and will add more information onto our website as it becomes available. Our partners also have lots of valuable information on their websites.

## **Bucks Data Exchange**

On the 6 September I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Bucks Data Exchange. The Bucks Data Exchange brings together data and resources about the local area and its population. It will provide an unprecedented opportunity for the voluntary and community sector to use solid data on the needs of local people to make strategic decisions and investments.

This platform, built by Aylesbury based agency Framework Digital, is the result of months of hard work and collaboration between the Rothschild Foundation, Buckinghamshire Council, Leap, Heart of Bucks, Buckinghamshire's Local Enterprise Partnership, Thames Valley's Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Bucks VCSE Partnership Board.

On the free to access website, visitors can view data on population, carbon emissions, recycling rates, broadband speeds, life expectancy, rates of smoking, community safety and much more. The published data is the most recent available, focuses on Buckinghamshire and is aggregated so it contains no personal information.

Project organisers are encouraging charities, community organisations and anyone with an interest in Buckinghamshire to visit the Bucks Data Exchange website, sign up for updates and follow the Bucks Data Exchange online. The platform will continue to develop, and more data will be added. [www.bucksdataexchange.org](http://www.bucksdataexchange.org)

## **Safe Spaces web portal now live on the Buckinghamshire Council website**

The online Safe Spaces web portal to support people experiencing domestic abuse is now live on the Buckinghamshire Council website. [Online Safe Spaces](#), is operated by Hestia as part of their UK SAYS NO MORE campaign. It is a discreet portal that opens in a pop-up window from Buckinghamshire Council's website. The portal provides support, advice and helpful contact numbers for those at risk of domestic abuse. It leaves no internet history trace and provides quick exit options for the person seeking information.

To access the portal, simply click on the Safe Spaces logo, which can be found on the footer of every page of Buckinghamshire Council's website.

## **Community Safety supports the fight against fly-tipping.**

New 'smart cameras' have been installed in fly-tipping hotspots which can identify when a person or vehicle is leaving rubbish behind. In real time, they can provide a video report of the incident to enforcement officers, including the registration of the vehicle, making it easier to identify and prosecute fly-tippers. It means CCTV operatives will no longer have to trawl through hours of footage to try and identify the offender. The cameras have been funded by the Department for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs. As part of the crackdown, unofficial lay-by areas are being blocked and turned into grassy banks in another tactic to deter the criminals.

## **Community Safety Consultation**

To support the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Strategic Assessment, an annual public consultation is undertaken to reach those that live and work within Buckinghamshire. This consultation helps guide what areas should be a priority for the CSP. The consultation was launched on Monday 5 September on the [Your Voice Bucks website](#) and is due to run for 6 weeks, closing on Friday 16 October. The consultation will be shared across our community safety, corporate and internal communications channels. The results of the survey will be

combined with an analysis of all crimes that happen in the county to help Safer Bucks set priorities for the year.

### **Aylesbury Town Centre – Anti-Social Behaviour Engagement Event**

On the Monday, 25 July 2022, Police, Street Wardens, and outreach workers from the One Recovery Bucks and Here4Youth Bucks carried out joint engagement work in Aylesbury town centre and local parks, Vale and Whitehill.

During our patrols we engaged with street drinkers, providing information in relation to the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), and talking with groups of young people in the park areas. People drinking alcohol within the PSPO area received warning notices to explain the alcohol prohibitions and 5 individuals were required to surrender their alcohol containers. We also engaged positively with groups of young people, handing out support cards with signposting to local youth services and further information on substance misuse.

It was a successful afternoon, and another engagement day is planned for August.

### **Resilience Service**

We continue to develop our community resilience framework and held our first community workshop with Chepping Wycombe Parish Council at the end of July. The workshop was well received by Parish Council Members, and we are awaiting a follow up with them. We have been engaging with Marlow Town Council as well to support them with the development of their Flood Plan.

The [Resilience Service website](#) was launched four weeks ago with a range of new and updated information which includes the provision of various toolkits for residents and communities to develop their own plans with regards to resilience. To support this the Resilience Service have adopted the 30days in 30ways campaign with regards to working alongside other local authorities, and September is designated as Preparedness Month. We will therefore be running a number of different topics on the website on specific days throughout September. The Resilience Service will also have a presence at this year's Bucks County Show to support the Council and engage with our communities to promote the Resilience Service with regards to emergency and contingency planning for communities and households.

### **Community Boards**

As part of the Cabinet Member engagement with Community Board catch-up sessions have been held with each Chairman and Vice-Chairmen. The Boards are operating well with positive feedback received in relation to the work undertaken by the Community Board team, how it is making a positive impact on Boards and how they operate.

Community Board Managers have been able to turn to the main purpose of their roles which is to engage with their local communities to talk about their Community Board priorities and discuss with local people and organisations how they can help deliver those priorities. Many projects are now completed with communities seeing the benefits from community board funding:



A solar project at Spinfield School has seen pupils help install solar panels on the school roof with £15k funding from South West Chilterns Community Board. The project will save c 289 tonnes of carbon over 23 years, equivalent to planting c600 trees.



Winslow & Villages Community Board attended the Winslow Show over the Bank Holiday weekend. The Community Board stall was very busy with lots of interest in the Board with people also learning more about the projects the Board has supported. On display at the show was the Winslow wheelchair vehicle which received funding from the Community Board alongside other local funders. The vehicle provides access for

electric wheelchair users and is used daily, including allowing a resident to return to full time employment, attendance at hospital appointments and even supporting family members to attend events such as weddings that they may not have otherwise been able to get to. Below is the accessible vehicle and the community board team at the show.



North West Chilterns Community Board has provided funding towards a play café which provides a safe space in the community for parents and guardians to gather. This enables people to build relationships with others in a similar situation, making friendships and receiving appropriate support where needed, including signposting to other provisions within the community (debt support, parenting courses, food poverty support).

Children and young people have been able to interact and engage with their peers in a safe environment and offer opportunities for children to learn key child developmental skills as they enter other early years environments.

There have also been some excellent community engagement events held by the Boards - a 5-day community event in Haddenham & Waddesdon which included the Board engagement event, as well as the Wendover Board community engagement event.

### **Town and Parish Charter**

The Town and Parish Charter was agreed by Cabinet in July and has now been published on the Buckinghamshire Council website along with a link to a downloadable version for town and parish councils <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/town-and-parish-charter/>.

There has been an ongoing programme of work including engagement with local councils and members to create a document that articulates our commitment to partnership working and effective communication which will strengthen the relationship between all tiers of local government. Alongside the charter itself, we have also produced an action plan we are now implementing.

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

During August we publish our [Equality Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Annual Plan](#), detailing our delivery in this area between March 2021 and April 2022. We have also published our [EDI Action Plan 2022-2023](#), highlighting our focus areas for development during the current financial year, including a variety of aspects aimed at improving how we interact and serve our less heard communities. On 2 July, staff from Buckinghamshire Council also walked in the London Pride parade, representing the Council and our community for the first time at such an event, sponsored by our partners Pinewood.



## Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

### Cllr Clive Harriss – Cabinet Member Report – September 2022

#### Culture

Open Weekend this year saw lots of creative and cultural opportunities themed to trees! There were tree stories, tree crafts, tree walks, tree dance, tree heritage, tree dreaming and journey sticks! Activities took place all over the county from Buckingham in the North to Iver in the South. Visitors were able to join Discover Bucks Museum, Wycombe Museum, Garsington Opera, Chiltern Open Air Museum, Hughenden Manor, Buckinghamshire Archives or Milton's Cottage for their events. There were lots of opportunities to discover something new, such as: storytelling events, backstage tours, painting with natural colours, walking tours around cultural content or photo walks, performances of songs and poetry readings.



Our local museums and theatres provided some special summer activities including a 'Seaside Family Fun Day' at Wycombe Museum on 21 August as well as 'Discover and Make' activity sessions. The Discover Bucks Museum's 'Feel the Force' summer science festival ran from 25 July to 3 September, with over 20 hands-on interactive exhibits including an anti-gravity wheel, magnetic fields, whirlpools, windy city, magnetic pendulum and flying wing plus lots more fun science activities to discover around the museum.

Whilst August is traditionally a quieter time for theatre performances, some family friendly activities were offered at the Wycombe Swan Theatre, including Cinderella storytelling and craft workshops in conjunction with the library and a Technical Masterclass Workshop for children.

#### Play around the Parishes

It has been a busy and hot summer for our Play around the Parishes team who were out and about taking play activities to parks around the county for children and their families to enjoy together. The Play Team visits were booked and paid for by Town and Parish Councils, with 21 locations booking a total of 38 sessions. Activities included giant games, inflatables, construction toys, arts and crafts, and sports.

### **Country Parks, Parks and Play Areas**

The heatwave caused problems and risks for all parks services. This had a significant impact on trees throughout the county with trees dropping their leaves as a consequence of the lack of water. Other issues like 'sudden limb drop', where a tree can lose a large branch, also becomes more prevalent in these conditions. The teams also dealt with fire incidents as well as monitoring the impacts of reducing water supplies.

Bedgrove Park, Heartlands Park, Higginson Park, Hughenden Park and Vale Park have all retained their Green Flag Awards. This is an annual award that recognises excellence in parks and green space management and is an acknowledgement of all the hard work put into these sites by our in-house and contracted grounds maintenance teams. See [here](#) for further details.



Three of our parks in Aylesbury have benefitted from new play equipment being installed in recent months. Cottesloe Green, Haydon Hill and Walton Court have seen significant improvements to the play equipment. A formal opening took place at Haydon Hill on 4 August to coincide with Keep Britain Tidy's national 'Love Parks Week 2022' resulting in some great local press coverage. See [here](#) for further details. Desborough Recreation Ground play area in High Wycombe is also undergoing major improvements, scheduled for completion

shortly.

Over the summer we partnered with the Lawn Tennis Association, Tennis for Free and local tennis clubs to offer free coach-led sessions for adults and children aged 12+ at three locations in the county – Desborough Recreation Ground, Bedgrove Park and Vale Park. The scheme is aimed at getting more people playing tennis and improving their physical and mental wellbeing.

### **Leisure**

We are continuing to see positive levels of attendance across our leisure centres. The first phase of the car park at the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre, which is predominantly parking spaces for blue badge holders, is now available for use and the final stages of the project, including a new children's play area to the front of the Centre, is due to be completed before the end of the year. Work to install a new soft play and sensory space in Chesham Leisure Centre continues to progress very well and is on course to open shortly.

One of our leisure operators, Everyone Active, runs a national Sporting Champions Scheme which provides more than 1,000 up and coming athletes in the UK with free access to its 200+ leisure facilities across the country. A number of talented athletes in Buckinghamshire have been accepted on to the scheme and will gain much-needed support. Alongside free access to Everyone Active centres, Sporting Champions will also get the chance to receive valuable one-to-one and group mentoring sessions and guidance from some of the UK's most influential sports stars. Olympic silver medallist, Colin Jackson CBE, will be working alongside the scheme's impressive line-up of elite athletes featuring several Olympians and Paralympians including Lutalo Muhammad, Jennifer and Jessica Gadirova, Richard Kilty, Lauren Steadman, Kadeena Cox and

Maisie Summers-Newton whose experience and expertise will help to support athletes accepted on the scheme this year.

### **Libraries**

On Friday 28 July, as part of our ongoing partnership with Action4Youth, BBC Radio 4's Any Questions was broadcast live from The Junction at High Wycombe Library. Host, Ben Wright, oversaw a lively debate with questions posed by local residents, including one from Cllr Martin Tett, Leader of the Council, to the panel of Thangham Debbonaire MP, Jackie Doyle-Price MP, David Gauke and Ash Sarkar. The event was a huge success and another example of the benefits of the partnership between Action4Youth and the High Wycombe Library Team to expand the type of experiences that we can offer to local residents within our library space.

After successfully securing funding, plans are progressing to transform Wendover Community Library into an inclusive, multi-use community hub that offers a single point of contact for local services. Buckinghamshire Libraries has begun the process of engaging with local groups, volunteers and the community with the design concept making sure the library will be more appealing, have additional flexible spaces and have greater visibility. The new library will also have



facilities for a range of social, educational, health and cultural activities that promote community cohesion and wellbeing. The first Community Engagement drop-in day took place in mid-September with a further drop-in day scheduled for 22 October. Working with Buckinghamshire Culture, the new library will have an art installation to maximise the impact of the new design of the library building with an installation that is inspired by

Wendover's heritage and/or communities.



**Wendover Library design concept**



## Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment

Councillor Gareth Williams

### South Waste Collection Service

The waste collection service in the South of the county is delivered through a contractor with Veolia. As part of the agreed contract, Veolia implemented a re-organisation of the collection rounds from Monday 9th May. This re-organisation is expected to deliver a more effective and resilient waste service with fewer missed containers and collection rounds arranged more closer together to reduce the impact if a vehicle breaks down for example. We know that these bin collection changes have caused far greater than anticipated disruption in certain areas as crews get used to the new bin collection days and I apologise for the continued anguish that is being caused. The Council has been working extremely closely with Veolia to urgently improve the service to residents and additional collection crews, more supervisors, weekend collections and more call handlers in the Council's Customer Service Centre are all in place. Veolia have further built on their management and supervisory provision by bringing in an extra manager, 2 extra supervisors and an extra data / admin manager to expedite a return to better than BAU as quickly as possible. We recognise that there is still work to do to achieve a satisfactory service and the Council will continue to work with Veolia until the required service standards are being consistently achieved.

### Garden Waste Collection Service

The Chargeable Garden waste collection service is due to commence in the former Wycombe area on 26 September 2022. Residents can begin signing up to the new service although the subscription will not start until 26th September 2022, residents can sign up, or find more information about the service at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/garden-waste](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/garden-waste).

### Fly-Tipping Enforcement Team Update:

'Fly-Tipping remains a significant problem in Buckinghamshire. Fly-tipping has fallen back from peak 'Covid' levels, but they remain at a level corresponding to a continuance from pre-Covid rising trend.

As of April this year, BC has recorded that of 188 such incidents 131 (69.7%) involved waste which was carried into Bucks from elsewhere (either commercially or otherwise). 79 of the incidents (42.0%) involved waste which was carried commercially – i.e. waste which would always have incurred a charge for deposit and recycling. 15 of the incidents (8.0%) involved one or more non-household waste items which were not carried commercially. Most of these incidents involved one or two chargeable items at most. This leaves a total of 173 incidents (92.0%) where the waste was entirely unaffected by the charges introduced by BC in 2019.

Buckinghamshire Council has successfully won £50,000 in external funding from DEFRA with which to target the cross border “imports” of waste which is fly-tipped in Bucks. Intelligent cameras have been installed in hot spot areas in the south of the county. In a bid to reduce the places where fly-tippers can dump, the council has carried out work to build up grass banks at several locations. The work has been carried out by re-using 400 tonnes of inert (tested) soil that was illegally dumped previously elsewhere in Bucks’

The council has taken a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping for over a decade and has successfully prosecuted hundreds of offenders. It costs the council over £600k each year to clear up rubbish that has been illegally dumped on public land – money that could be spent on providing other much needed services to the county’s residents.

Using £50k of funding from DEFRA (Dept for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs), the new cameras can identify when a vehicle has left rubbish behind and in real time, will provide a video report of the incident to enforcement officers, including the registration of the vehicle, making it easier to identify and prosecute fly-tippers’

### Archaeology Day

As part of the national Festival of Archaeology event and Bucks Open Weekend, Buckinghamshire Council Heritage and Archaeology Team ran an Open Day on July 30th in North Marston. Residents of North Marston and visitors from much further afield enjoyed the family friendly activities and informative displays which also covered built heritage.

Guided walking tours of the village in partnership with the Local history society were a huge success and helped to promote the Buckinghamshire local List Project. Guest exhibitors included the Young Archaeologists Club and Buckinghamshire Archaeology Society, and the Buckinghamshire Finds Liaison Officer, Edwin, was on hand to identify mysterious artefacts discovered in residents’ gardens – the star find was a large Palaeolithic hand axe!

### Solar Together

A Buckinghamshire Solar Together scheme was launched on 9th May 2022. The aim of the initiative is to help residents and small business owner-occupiers interested in installing solar PV and battery storage (with an option for an electric vehicle charging point) receive offers for installing these measures that are up to 30% less than those typically provided by the market. Following a postal mailout to 151,340 addresses (identified as potentially being eligible for the scheme), there were 6,990 registrations to the scheme. Installers, approved by IChoosr, competed (via a reverse auction process in summer 2022) to have their offer presented to registrants, and registrants received their

offers by 28th July 2022. As of 15th August 2022, over 950 offers have been accepted and it's projected that the scheme will result in 675 tonnes of carbon emissions being saved per year.

### 25% renewable

As of 1 October 2022, 25% of the electricity we use will be purchased from renewable sources. This decision helps support the renewable generation sector, reduces emissions of greenhouse gases and other air pollutants, and our dependence on fossil fuels. The extraction, processing, and transportation of fossil fuels has various negative environmental impacts so this purchasing decision helps improve the Council's environmental performance overall.

This is an important step in supporting our commitment to address climate change and we will look to see this percentage increase in the coming years. This current change is forecast to save nearly 1,000 tonnes of carbon emissions per year.

### Project Groundwater Update

We have renamed our DEFRA funded Flood Innovation Resilience Project, GRACE as 'Project Groundwater – Are You Flood Resilient?'. The name change is in advance of our engagement work with communities and will help create a more accessible brand that conveys greater meaning than the acronym we'd been using to date. We will shortly be launching a website and social media channels, plus a regular newsletter of updates. We expect to begin engaging with the pilot communities in the new year, once our procurement process has been completed for the engagement delivery suppliers.

Over the past few months significant progress has been made with the technical elements of the project, with initial reports out for review on the monitoring and flood alerts. We will shortly also be issuing a report on resilience and the modelling outputs are nearing their first set of outputs.

### The Buckinghamshire Cloth Nappy scheme

With the Council's objective of reducing the amount of refuse each household generates, we recently launched a scheme to encourage more parents to use reusable cloth nappies.

- 5,543 babies were born in Buckinghamshire in 2020, each going through over 2,000 nappy changes in their first year, most of these are disposable nappies.
- Research conducted by Real Nappies for London suggests those 5,543 babies will generate 2,900 tonnes of disposable nappies in their first year alone! Costing the Council over £250,000 to dispose of.
- Whereas, if those babies wore reusable cloth nappies, they would only need 20-30 nappies from birth to potty!

We have partnered with three Cloth Nappy Suppliers to offer residents in Buckinghamshire a £30 voucher to spend with them on purchasing cloth nappies. The cost to the Council will be recouped through avoided disposal costs of disposable nappies. It is also helping residents make sustainable choices.

In the first three days of the scheme launching, we have had over 160 applications. We will continue to add more suppliers to offer a wider range and promote the scheme across the County. We are also working with a local nappy reusable cloth library to develop their service and support vulnerable families by subsidising their nappy loan charges.

For more information visit [www.recycleforbuckinghamshire.co.uk/nappyscheme](http://www.recycleforbuckinghamshire.co.uk/nappyscheme)





## Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson



### **Thames Valley Suicide Bereavement Service**

People bereaved by suicide often experience particularly intense shock and face specific challenges arising from the stigma around suicide. They are less likely to have support from family and friends compared with other people going through a bereavement, and suicide bereavement also leaves people at a higher risk of suicide themselves. The provision of support after a suspected suicide is critical to reducing the risk of suicide and improving the bereaved person's mental wellbeing, and can also reduce the significant cost to the economy resulting from the impact on the lives of those bereaved.

The latest three-year Buckinghamshire Suicide Audit is currently being finalised. However, during 2017/19 there were 141 suicides in the county. Of these, 95 were men and 46 women, with the highest number of suicides from people aged 50-54, followed by the 18-24 year old age group.

To improve suicide bereavement support across the Thames Valley, local councils (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and Berkshire) recently bid and have been successful in securing funding from NHS England. The funding to March 2024 will also provide additional capacity for Thames Valley Police to help them have initial conversations with those bereaved and make onward referrals to the Bereavement Support Service.

The new service, run by Amparo Thames Valley, was formally launched on World Suicide Prevention Day, 10<sup>th</sup> September. The service is completely confidential and offers an online referral service seven days a week. Referrals are coordinated through a national team and are picked up within 24 hours by a dedicated local team of three liaison workers in the Thames Valley. These liaison workers provide a range of support including:

- immediate emotional and listening support
- dealing with police and coroners
- helping with media enquiries
- preparing for and attending inquest
- finding other appropriate, local wrap-around support services.

## Simply Walks 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Volunteers' Celebration



On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July, my Deputy Cabinet Member for Public Health, Cllr Zahir Mohammed, joined the Chairman of the Council at the Simply Walks 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Volunteers' celebration, to thank the 200+ volunteers who support the scheme.

More than 70 Simply Walk volunteers enjoyed the 'thank you' picnic at Hughenden Manor. The scheme includes 72 walks across the county every week and is wholly dependent on the volunteers who do everything from leading walks to behind-the-scenes organisation.

Simply Walk began in 2002 and has grown year-on-year, attracting more than 500 walkers per week at peak times. The scheme is suitable for people of all ages and abilities, and in addition to improving physical health, the walks also offer the opportunity for people to socialise and boost their mental wellbeing. More information can be found on the Council's website:

<http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/simply-walk>

### Combatting Drugs Partnership

A new cross-government, 10-year national drugs strategy was published earlier this year, with the priorities of breaking drug supply chains, reducing the demand for drugs, and improving drug treatment and recovery services.

Recent guidance has set out the expectation for all areas to have a multi-agency Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) to provide strategic oversight and drive action locally. Work has taken place with leaders from a range of organisations including the Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Probation Service to decide the local approach. As a result of these discussions, it has been agreed that the Combatting Drugs Partnership will cover the area of Buckinghamshire local authority and will be led by the Council's Director of Public Health, Early Help and Prevention, Dr Jane O'Grady. Work is now underway to establish the membership and governance arrangements and to produce a local needs assessment. A Combatting Drugs Strategy and action plan will be developed by partners in autumn/winter 2022.

### Social Care Reforms Update

The Operational Guidance to implement a lifetime cap on care costs was updated in July 2022. Whilst most of the guidance related to the technical aspects of implementing the reforms, in response to lobbying, the Government has decided to take a staged approach to the implementation of Section 18(3) of the Care Act 2014. This Section of the Act says that if an adult has eligible care needs under the Act, they can ask the council to arrange their care even if their financial resources are above the financial limit.

The change to the Guidance means that for the first 18 months of the reforms, only people entering residential care after October 2023 will be able to ask the council to arrange their care. Those people who were already in care at October 2023 will have to wait until April 2025 to ask for the council to arrange their care.

The Council continues with its preparations for the implementation of the reforms, particularly focussing on modelling expected increases in demand, the workforce requirements to meet the demand and on delivering the Fair Cost of Care exercise and Market Sustainability Plan to the Department of Health and Social Care by 14<sup>th</sup> October. A briefing for all Members on the reforms is being scheduled.

### Illegal Tobacco Campaign

In a collaboration across the Health & Wellbeing portfolio and the Homelessness & Regulatory Services portfolio, this summer saw the launch of the Illegal Tobacco campaign. I was delighted, with Rob Butler MP, to add my support to the campaign roadshow which was held in High Wycombe market on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and in Aylesbury market on 3<sup>rd</sup> August.



The Illegal Tobacco Roadshow included Pippa the sniffer dog and her handler from Wagtails, and was aimed at encouraging residents to anonymously report any intelligence they had on the selling of local illegal tobacco. Pippa and her handler provided demonstrations on the day and staff from Live Well Stay Well, the Council's public health team and the Buckinghamshire and Surrey trading standards service were available for residents to speak with. Across both days, 99 members of the public talked to the team (84 adults and 15 young people/children) and 7 referrals were made to the Live Well Stay Well service.

Following on from the roadshows, the trading standards service visited a number of locations across the Aylesbury and High Wycombe area and seized a significant amount of illegal/illicit tobacco and vapes, with a view to prosecution. Pippa and her handler were instrumental in these visits and guided trading standards officers to the sophisticated hideaways.

### Stoptober Campaign

The national Stoptober campaign is back in October, which encourages smokers to try and stop smoking. This year's theme is '*You've got what it takes to quit this Stoptober*' and specifically targets smokers aged 25 to 50 from more deprived socio-economic groups. The Public Health team are working with partners to design the national promotional materials and make them local to Buckinghamshire. By doing so it is hoped that more smokers will use our commissioned service Live Well Stop Well to stop smoking. There will be a promotional toolkit and leaflets which will be shared with partners within the next few weeks.



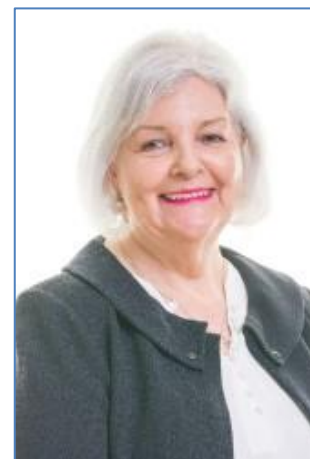
## **Integrated Care Partnerships**

The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced significant changes to the local NHS structures. Making Integrated Care Systems (ICS) statutory bodies, the Act also made it a requirement for each ICS to have an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). The purpose of the Partnership is to improve the general health and wellbeing of the local population through the delivery of a new Integrated Care Strategy.

All Integrated Care Partnerships are joint committees between the ICS and all local authorities that fall within the System's area. Although Buckinghamshire primarily falls within the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System, a small part in the north of the county also falls within the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System.

With representation on both Partnerships, the Council can make sure that the health and wellbeing needs of Buckinghamshire residents inform the planning of health and care services at the Integrated Care System level.





## Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

### **Ofsted Annual Conversation**

Under the Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) inspection framework, Ofsted arrange an annual conversation with every local authority.

In Buckinghamshire, the annual conversation was held in July 2022 and in preparation for the meeting with Ofsted, the Service shared the latest self-assessment and performance data for both children’s social care and education. Ofsted use the annual conversation as an opportunity to scrutinise performance, service development and progress on any actions set at the last inspection. This assists Ofsted in determining the timing and scope of any subsequent inspection activity.

Feedback received from Ofsted at the end of the annual conversation was positive and the Service’s self-assessment was accepted in full.

In line with the current framework, the Service anticipates receiving a focused visit which will evaluate an aspect of service, a theme or the experiences of a cohort of children, towards the end of 2022.

### **School Results**

GCSE and A level results were released to students during August 2022. Many of our local secondary schools have passed their results information onto the Council for analysis; however, we do not hold a full picture. Based on the results shared with us, the unvalidated position across both types of assessment indicates that Buckinghamshire pupils have performed well, and their results are higher than both the emerging national picture and also against the 2019 data which was the last time that students sat written exams. The Department for Education will release the full validated results in October 2022.

### **Buckinghamshire Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Summer activity programme**

I am very pleased to update members that thanks to our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, thousands of children from low-income families across Buckinghamshire have enjoyed

a packed summer of free, high-quality activity clubs, with 16,000 holiday club places on offer across the county.

Activities enjoyed by children ranged from football, dodgeball and a host of other sports, through to theatre workshops, cooking classes and coding. A healthy meal has also been provided at every session.

The HAF programme is delivered by experienced holiday club providers and has operated in 40 locations across Buckinghamshire this summer, covering five weeks of the school summer break.

The programme is targeted to school-aged children in Reception to Year 11 inclusive who receive benefits-related free school meals. The Council has also been able to offer up to 15% of the overall HAF programme places to other children who are not eligible for benefits-related free school meals but who could benefit from HAF club provision; these groups include looked after and previously looked after children, young carers and children with an education, health and care plan. We have been working with service area teams, our schools and our HAF club providers to identify and invite children from these additional groups to attend.

We know that the long summer school holiday can be a difficult time for some families. I am pleased that we have supported local children and families to access free, high-quality holiday clubs, eat a healthy meal at every session, learn about good nutrition and physical health – and just as importantly, the opportunity for children and young people to have fun and make new friends.

### **Looked After Children in Buckinghamshire Celebration Event**

On Monday 1 August 2022, the 10th Annual Celebration Event for Looked After Children in Buckinghamshire was held at Wycombe Museum.

After two years of being unable to host this key event due to covid restrictions, which we know has been hard for everyone but perhaps particularly challenging for children in our care, it made it even more satisfying to see our young people and their carers having such a fantastic day together. The event was attended by over 75 children and young people and 50 carers, and we also welcomed a number of our local councillors to join in the celebrations, which included activities such as dance workshops, inflatables, mobile zoo, face painting, T-shirt printing, drumming, mocktail making and creative arts.

All the children were individually nominated by their social workers and/or foster carers to recognise how amazing they are, something we all need reminding of sometimes - and they were presented with a certificate to recognise this. Carers, young people and staff have all commented what a brilliant event it was and how much it means to the children and young

### **School Places for Ukrainian Children**

As a Council, we have been working very hard to support families that have arrived from Ukraine, and ensuring their children have access to a school place forms a significant part of the Council's offer. By the end of the 2021/22 academic year in July, we had received and processed in year

applications on behalf of 305 Ukrainian pupils of which only 1 was still pending at the end of the academic year.

At the time of compiling this data we have received and processed 43 applications for September 2022 entry, 42 allocations have been made and just 1 is pending a school place offer. More than 100 schools have now admitted, or will be admitting, Ukrainian children and young people with 25 schools admitting four or more children.

The response from the school community has continued to be exceptional, and as we start the new school term, I am confident that any further new arrivals will be offered the same access to high quality education and childcare in Buckinghamshire as our long-term residents.

I am enormously grateful to our family of schools for supporting children arriving from Ukraine as they adjust to their new life and their continued hard work to ensure that children access education as soon as possible following their arrival. It is our commitment to ensure that all Ukrainian children in the UK are offered the same access to high quality education and childcare as UK citizens.

### **The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment Academy**

In 2019, the Service created a Social Work Academy to enable the Council to develop Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) through their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). The ASYE Academy provides a protected and supported environment for the induction and training of NQSWs which helps:

- Recruit and retain staff.
- Drive up the standards of social work practice and in turn outcomes for children and young people.
- Enable NQSWs to understand the child / young person's journey through our organisation.

NQSWs are based within the Academy for their first 6 months where they complete a thorough induction and all essential and mandatory professional and systems training. They will also have worked through a range of more complex cases and tasks, with intensive supervision and support. The training follows the young person's journey through the Service with a strong focus on best practice and the voice of the child or young person. Managing a small caseload alongside training helps NQSWs to effectively integrate learning. At the end of the first 6 months or when the NQSW is ready, they then join their permanent front-line team for the remaining 6 months of the ASYE with continued support through the programme. This support includes regular reflective supervision from an Advanced Practitioner who has demonstrable skills and experience in developing others. The focus is on learning and developing, critical reflection and supporting the NQSW to understand the links between theory and practice.

Between 2019 and August 2022, 42 of the 60 NQSWs that have been through the Academy remain within the service. Given the success and in order to alleviate some of the significant challenge in recruiting high quality social workers, the Academy has recently been expanded to support a further 60 newly qualified social workers by April 2023.

Having a permanent workforce and reducing reliance on agency staff is one of the main priorities for the Service and achieving this will no doubt lead to better service outcomes for children and young people as well as reducing expenditure.





## Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Mark Winn

### **Gypsy & Traveller Service**

Buckinghamshire continues to see low encampment numbers this year, and there may be several reasons for this. COVID 19 infection levels still remain high, which has inevitably had an effect on unauthorised encampments (UEs) as families do not want to put vulnerable relatives at risk by frequent travelling. The recent enactment of the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill 2022 is also likely to have resulted in a reduction of UE numbers. The new legislation was recently tested when a large UE at the Oakgrove School field in Milton Keynes saw the Travellers refuse to leave, resulting in the Police making several arrests, alongside seizing vehicles and caravans. This will undoubtedly echo around the gypsy and traveller community that any form of anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated in Buckinghamshire and the surrounding areas.

Buckinghamshire remains a target for groups involved in waste crime with a recent encampment at an abandoned pub in George Green, South Bucks. Although this was on private land, the Buckinghamshire Gypsy and Traveller Service (BGTS) team visited and gathered evidence to follow up on duty of care failures and possible future prosecutions.

BGTS have a good working relationship with Inspector Stuart Hutchings who heads up the recently formed Thames Valley Police Rural Crime taskforce. This team aims to improve partnership working at an early stage and use technology such as drone footage to capture crimes that are in progress, which will result in earlier arrests and seizure of vehicle/property etc., thus limiting damage caused and landowner clear up costs.

Work is ongoing to forge joint working protocols with both Thames Valley Police and the Environment Agency to deliver positive outcomes through a partnership approach. The small but highly experienced team in the Gypsy and Travellers service always deal with any illegal encampments that occur in a sensitive but ultimately efficiently in line with current legislation, and they work in partnership with Thames Valley Police.

## **Trading Standards**

### **Illegal Tobacco**

Illegal tobacco remains a high priority for the Service and since the last report we have been working with Public Health on a campaign to highlight the dangers and issues with illegal tobacco. This included encouraging people to report sellers and together we ran two public roadshows (in High Wycombe and Aylesbury) at the beginning of August. The tobacco detection dog, Pippa, was there to show off her skills. [do we have a pic of Pippa]?



*Pippa the tobacco detection dog (from Surrey News - Surrey CC)*

Following up on intelligence, Trading Standards carried out a further operation and found and seized in total nearly 2,000 packs of 20 cigarettes and over 5Kg of hand rolling tobacco at three shops in Aylesbury and High Wycombe. Some of the tobacco was hidden in sophisticated hides using electromagnets to seal the tobacco away from a visual inspection. Pippa was quite adamant that tobacco was present which helped our officers and her handler to be tenacious in looking for the hidden storage. In one shop there was a store hidden behind wall shelving that could only be accessed by operating the electromagnets. Another was stored in the top of a freezer unit, again only accessible by finding the means to operate the electromagnets. Investigations into these premises are ongoing.

### **Illegal Vapes and Underage Sales**

Vaping, both from the perspective of under 18s buying vapes and the safety/compliance of vape products used by adults, continues to be a concern. All complaints received about specific premises are followed up with advice to the shop. Test purchasing is also being undertaken to identify sellers who are ignoring the rules, although we are pleased to report that during the last test purchasing in August no sales were made to our under-age volunteer. On the recent operation looking for illicit tobacco, officers also seized nearly 500 bottles of illegal vape fluid.

Since last autumn the UK has seen its largest Avian Influenza / Bird Flu outbreak, with over 130 confirmed cases in poultry / captive birds across the country. We are pleased to note that Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Animal & Plant Health Agency) has now assessed the risk to domestic and commercial flocks as low and lifted the Avian Influenza Prevention Zone (which required enhanced bio-security measures since last November) for poultry and captive birds from 16 August.

## **Licensing Services**

Fee harmonisation work across the legacy areas continues with recent approval of the harmonisation of fees for [animal licensing](#), following the presentation of a report to Licensing Committee on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022. The new fees come into effect from the 29<sup>th</sup> August 2022 and will provide a consistent charging regime across the council area that more effectively covers the cost of delivering the service.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the Licensing Service will be running online training sessions for town and parish council clerks and councillors. The training will focus on how to review and make representations and comments on alcohol and entertainment licence applications made under the Licensing Act 2003. Buckinghamshire Councillors are very welcome to attend these sessions. Please contact [Licensing@Buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:Licensing@Buckinghamshire.gov.uk) for more information.

The provision of a new single back-office system for the Licensing Service has been approved. This is an important change for the staff within the Service as well as for our customers and will mean that we are able to work more effectively and consistently across the council area. A single back-office system is already in place for taxi licensing, and we hope to have all other areas of the Service migrated to the new system by the end of February 2023. As part of this work, we will be introducing more online integrated front end-application forms for customers and the ability to check the status of applications, upload documents and contact the service easily.

We have recently made changes to the way we administer enhanced disclosure barring service (DBS) checks for taxi licensing by outsourcing this work to an approved provider. This enables applicants to apply for and access DBS checks online at a time that is convenient to them. Once the check is received, they can then apply for their licence with all the information required to do so. Adopting this approach means that the Service can more quickly process licence applications, providing a better service for the customer. We are also working to implement 'webchat' alongside the other established ways to contact the service so that we can support our customers in a way that suits them.

A [key decision](#) on increasing hackney carriage tariffs (the maximum fares that can be charged to passengers) was taken on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2022. The recommendation to increase tariffs reflects the significant increases in fuel prices experienced across the transport sector in recent months. No representations were received during the statutory advertisement period and the new tariffs came into effect on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 2022 (note: the Council does not have any statutory powers to set private hire vehicle fares/tariffs).

## **Cemeteries & Crematoria Services**

The new [Penn Road Cemetery](#) in Hazlemere was formally opened on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and is now providing burial services. The cemetery, which was funded from High Wycombe Town Committee special expenses funds, operates alongside High Wycombe Cemetery as part of a combined cemetery provision, primarily serving the unparished area of High Wycombe.



*Opening Penn Road Cemetery*

Work continues on the £2.3 million capital improvement programme (funded from crematoria reserves) to replace the 3 aging cremators at Chilterns Crematorium in Amersham, with construction activity due to continue until March 2023. Two of the three cremators have now been replaced and are operational, with the final cremator due to be installed by the beginning of November 2022. All works are being carried out on the site alongside our normal Service activity with any potential impacts to our customers carefully managed and mitigated. As part of the [project](#) works additional abatement plant for nitrogen oxide will be installed which is over and above current statutory requirements, supporting the Councils key priority to improve the environment and tackle climate change.



*Penn Road Cemetery*

## Housing

We have seen a significant upturn in the number of rough sleepers across Buckinghamshire during the summer period. This was anticipated due to the end of the winter / Omicron emergency accommodation arrangements and the improved weather.

The number of verified rough sleepers rose from 25 at the end of May 2022 to 45 at the end of June 2022. Subsequently, significant efforts from statutory and voluntary agencies working with rough sleepers helped to reduce this number to **16** at the end of July 2022.

The situation remains fluid and we continue to see a significant proportion of rough sleeping clients who have high, multiple and complex needs which makes it very difficult for the Council or its partners to secure safe and appropriate accommodation for them.

The Council continues working with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors (including the Council-funded Rough Sleeper Outreach service operated by Connection Support) to engage with rough sleepers and, where possible, move them off the streets and into accommodation.



*Opening Ardenham House move on accommodation for former rough sleepers*

## Significant Pressures on the Housing Service

The overall demand for homelessness advice and support from the Council remains high with applications continuing to exceed pre-pandemic levels. June and July 2022 saw approximately 400 homelessness applications per month (compared to a pre-pandemic average of 322 in a typical month).

At the end of July, the Council had 355 homeless households placed in temporary accommodation (this compares to an average number of 225 pre-pandemic). We anticipate that these high levels of demand will continue, due to factors including cost of living pressures on households and the limited affordable housing options in Buckinghamshire. In addition, some private landlords are choosing to end tenancies or leave the market following the impact of the pandemic.

Similarly, there continues to be a very high demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme. Overall, as at 31 July 2022 we had 5,859 households registered on the scheme (either live or pending applications) with approximately 480 new applications being received per month (based on May-July 2022). The demand for social housing continues to significantly exceed supply. To illustrate this, to date in 2022 we have let 1,076 new tenancies via Bucks Home Choice at an average of 154 lettings per month.

Following the Council's adoption of the Affordable Housing Position Statement by Cabinet on 10 May 2022, a workshop was hosted in July with local Registered Provider partners to review current partnership working arrangements and look at how we can maximise affordable housing delivery together going forward. The findings from this workshop are being developed into an action plan.

The Council continues to operate a significant programme of DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) to support adaptation works. As at 31 July 2022, 430 DFG requests were on our books.

### **Environmental Health**

Officers continue to make progress towards the Food Standards Agency 'Recovery Road Map' targets. Work has been undertaken with West Northants Council, Silverstone Circuit Ltd and local campsites on plans for the 2022 British Grand Prix and Moto GP which were held in July and August. Officers visited before the events looking at food safety and undertaking public safety and welfare checks at the campsites.

To harmonise standards across the county, a report was taken to Licensing Committee in July regarding skin piercing by-laws. Committee agreed that the appropriate provisions of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 should be adopted and has recommended that full council adopts this recommendation.

Officers continue to work with external partners, internal departments and community boards on air quality management. The annual technical annual status report has been submitted to DEFRA and work continues with the Major Projects Team on HS2 environmental issues. Officers are currently working with Strategic Transport on responding to regional consultations and with the Climate Change Team on the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy initiatives.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

Environmental Health is leading on the Home Safety Checks which are required as part of the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme. To date over 700 visits have been completed by officers and this is where the lion's share of our resources have predominantly been focused since mid-March. Due to the sheer volume of work involved, extra support is being recruited into this area.

The Government has published a White Paper on the reforms to the Private Rented Housing Sector and officers are currently reviewing the proposals to assess the implications. It appears that a requirement for a central database of private landlords is planned and also a requirement that the private rented sector meets the 'Decent Homes Standard'. This standard that has been in place for social housing landlords for over 10 years.



## **Registration Service**

All appointments are now 'face to face' and customers have options to book appointments online or over the telephone. Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (which the certifying doctor needs to complete following a death) must still be scanned and emailed to the Registration Office from the GP surgeries and these are sometimes delayed despite reminders sent out by the General Register Office through the DHSC. These delays can impact on our KPIs for registering deaths within five days.

So far, the service has had a very successful summer for ceremonies and staff are very busy covering bookings across the county. There was an increase of 44 wedding bookings May to September 2022 compared with 2021, which was a busy time in its own right compared with the previous years.

The upcoming service review will reach the consultation stage mid-September with a proposed new structure and suggestions for changes to some of the current processes to improve efficiency.

## **Coroner's Service**

The service is currently at business as usual and we hope to have dealt with 90 inquests between mid-July and mid-September, one of these is a resource intensive jury case.

We are hoping for a 1<sup>st</sup> October 'go-live' date with partners at Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust for the 'WPC Portal' - software which will allow for doctors to refer cases to the Coroner's themselves. The service review is now at the 'Design Stage' and there is good process mapping in place to ensure a uniform service, more efficient processes, and high quality training tools for new staff.





## Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Peter Strachan

### Local Heritage List

Great progress has been made on the Local Heritage List with nearly 750 sites having been assessed in the past nine months, which is a huge achievement. Each site has to be visited, photographed, and assessed against our criteria, before being considered by an expert panel. We have 156 people registered on our Local Heritage List platform, nominating sites and enhancing records for us. Please do take a look and nominate any buildings or sites that you consider worthy of local listing: <https://local-heritage-list.org.uk/buckinghamshire>

### BNG SPD Adoption

The Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (BNG SPD) was adopted by Cabinet in July 2022. This is our first thematic, county-wide SPD, and will provide much needed guidance for developers, planners and the public on this emerging national requirement to improve our natural environment.

‘Find out if you need planning permission’ service now live in Buckinghamshire

A new online self-service planning tool has been launched that enables anyone in Buckinghamshire to check if an idea they have for a project is likely to be allowed under national permitted development rights or whether it may require planning permission. The service is part of a national pilot by the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUCH) to improve submitting and processing planning applications. We are one of just three councils in the UK to offer this new online self-service planning tool.

The new service works by doing a high-level check of the project against legislation and Geographic Information System (GIS) data to see if the project may fall under ‘permitted development’. The service also warns if other types of consent, such as prior approval, tree consent or listed building consent may additionally be required.

This new service is available to use now on Buckinghamshire Council’s website and will make it easier for homeowners and planning professionals to determine the correct steps with their projects and it will also free up valuable resources within our Planning Team – enabling them to dedicate more time to projects that require planning permission.

## **Enforcement Update**

At the last Cabinet meeting, I explained that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published tables showing during the period April 2021 – April 2022, Buckinghamshire Council's Planning Enforcement team were the highest performing authority outside of London in terms of issuing Planning Enforcement Notices. Following on from that, I can advise that the team were also the highest performing authority in the country, including London Authorities, in terms of issuing Breach of Condition Notices and in terms of being granted High Court Injunctions during that same period.

Notwithstanding this data the team is also performing highly in relation to following up on previously issued Planning Enforcement Notices. I have the pleasure of regularly seeing reports from the team where compliance has been achieved following the expiration of a planning enforcement notice compliance period. These resolutions are regularly achieved following the intervention from our officers and is the part of the planning enforcement service that makes a real physical difference to our Council area and to our residents' lives.

In the meantime, our no-nonsense, firm but fair approach to dealing with alleged breaches of planning control continues to run through the heart of the service and continues to be delivered in a consistent way across the Council area.

In July, I reported that in April 2022 the team undertook its first direct action (works in default) to undertake works to ensure compliance with a number of planning enforcement notices. In the meantime, part 2 of a 2-stage program has undertaken a further direct action to achieve compliance with other notices on the same site. Following on from this action the team has acted to seek to recover the costs incurred from the landowner and we are now focussing in on other sites in Buckinghamshire where more direct action is being pursued to achieve remedies where the landowners/occupants have failed to comply.

The team's performance and our general approach to dealing with breaches of planning control is making a real difference to the communities in which our residents live and should act as a warning and deterrent that Buckinghamshire is not the place to come if you intend to breach planning control. When we seek resolution we will use all the tools available to us to ensure a remedy is achieved.

## **Local Plan update**

The Council continues to await further details from the Government in relation to amendments being made to the procedure that we will need to follow to produce a Local Plan, including process changes and timings. Recent national changes have thrown the progress of the Levelling Up Bill into a degree of uncertainty, we are continuing to make progress with the Local Plan.

Our call for all sites closed on 11 September. The Planning Policy team have commenced the process of assessing the sites submitted in terms of their appropriateness, deliverability, sustainability etc. Whilst we maintain a strong Brown Before Green aspiration, we recognise that the Brownfield sites submitted are likely to under achieve the land that we anticipate we will need in order to meet the growth targets that we are likely to require. We continue to push government to make amendments to the standard methodology for calculating growth in our area and will keep a keen eye on how that as it develops over the coming weeks and months.



### **Supplementary Planning Documents Consultations**

On 5 September the Council commenced a 6-week public consultation on 3 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). These key policy documents will help to set the way in which development will be undertaken in the future in the Buckinghamshire Council area and will contribute to shaping how developers will submit planning applications as well as being key policy documents for the Council to consider when determining the acceptability of a planning application.

The 3 SPD's relate to Affordable Housing, a Design Guide (both cover the North and Central Planning areas) and a development site allocated in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) near Stoke Mandeville (known as AGT1). You can get involved and have your say by taking part in the live consultations which are running from 10:00 on Wednesday 7 September 2022 to 23:59 on Wednesday 19 October 2022. The Council will be holding public exhibitions on the SPDs at Stoke Mandeville Stadium on 26 and 27 September. More information can be found on the Council website and social media platforms or by attending the exhibition.

### **Business Improvement District (BID) Update**

In my last update I reported that Buckinghamshire Council had arranged the ballots for a third five-year term for the High Wycombe Town Centre Business Improvement District (HWBIDCo) and the creation of a new BID on Cressex Business Park – both of which achieved a yes vote.

HWBIDCo achieved a yes vote on the 7 July with 86.9% in favour by number and 97.3% by rateable value (RV) – which is a 26 and 24 percentage point increase on the result achieved in 2017. Cllrs Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE and Cllr Tony Green are Board representatives.

Cressex Business Park BID achieved a yes vote on the 14 July with 65% in favour by number and 72% by RV – a credible result for a first time BID. Local Member Cllr Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE will be appointed as an

Advisory Member to the new business-led BID Board. Both five-year BID terms will commence from the 1 October 2022.





## Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

### **Resurfacing**



July and early August is the key time for delivering our cost-effective surface dressing programme. Six schemes are complete, including the innovative use of “Golden Gravel” in Hambleden Village. A seventh scheme is programmed to start shortly, with a further 18 preparatory schemes completed. Eleven major resurfacing schemes are also now complete, and the annual micro-surfacing programme has commenced.

*Hambleden “Golden Gravel” Scheme*

### **Failed Roads Programme**

Agreed additional funding of £3M has allowed TfB to address advanced deterioration on a number of prioritised ‘Failed Roads’, with eight being delivered this year. To maximise value for money we are using an innovative in-situ recycling process on four suitable sites. The process pulverises the existing road, before mixing and binding it back together with cement additives to produce a strengthened layer. We then apply surface material to provide a good running surface, and to seal and protect the new road structure from water ingress. As well as cost reduction, the process has significant environmental benefit through the reduction of waste being generated from site and the re-use of existing road materials. Whilst each site is unique, typically there is approximately a 70% saving in CO2 when compared to the traditional asphalt based resurfacing approach.

### **Gullies**

As of 26th August, 37.5% of all gullies have been cleansed (32,004 out of a gully asset of 85,393) with the programme on target for completion by end of March 2023. Across the County since April 2022, over 2,000 defects have been attended to (including sections of blocked pipe, of varying length being defined as a ‘defect’), around 780 stuck covers and 360 broken/damaged covers have been identified and programmed to be released or replaced. From April to the end of August 2022,

219 catchpits, 57 soakaways and 206 manholes have also been emptied with 24,180 meterage of drainage pipe jetted.

### **Extreme Weather response**



The recent extreme heat events have led to some roads suffering with the bitumen “bleeding” to the surface. To counteract this, we have used granite dust, spread by gritters, to both minimise the bleed and maintain road safety. During the July heatwave (15 – 19th) a total of 10 roads were treated with granite road dusting with many more being constantly monitored for signs of melting. A further 15 roads were dusted during the August heatwave (11 - 12th), with 3 of those being repeat visits from July. In one case, the A4010 at Pedestal Roundabout, an emergency full re-surfacing scheme was undertaken due to the extent of the road surface temperature on the carriageway, with specialist contractors mobilised in very quick time to keep this key route open and safe.

*Emergency re-surfacing on the A4010 during extreme heat*

### **Fly Tipping**

TfB have been working closely with colleagues in the Waste Enforcement team in a move to reduce the places where fly-tippers have been known to dump, carrying out work to build up grass banks at several locations. This re-used 400 tonnes of inert (tested) soil that was illegally dumped previously elsewhere in Bucks.

### **Moving Traffic Enforcement**

Good progress has been made with the implementation of MTE (Moving Traffic Enforcement). The first cameras are on target to start being installed in December 2022. This will benefit Buckinghamshire by reducing congestion, improving road safety, making roads safer and promoting active traffic and clean air policies. The cameras will enforce a variety of restrictions including No right turn / No U Turn, No entry, box junctions, environmental weight restrictions, and school keep clears.

## **Rights of Way path volunteers**



Before



After

Since 2015, a number of small, dedicated volunteer groups work regularly on the local rights of way network. One of these, known as rRIPPLE (Ramblers Repairing and Improving Public Paths for Leisure & Exercise) will shortly be installing their 300<sup>th</sup> gate installation in late September/early October.

rRIPPLE undertake the work with the Landowner's agreement, and with the support of Buckinghamshire Council usually supplying metal gates. The group are now going out weekly to replace one or two damaged stiles with metal gates which are more user-friendly than the existing stile structures.

They also have a 'Donate a Gate' scheme which allows a donor to donate money to support the installation of a gate, which can be dedicated to a specific person or cause. Further information can be found [here](#).

*Gate installation in Oakley Parish*

## **HS2 and East West Rail**

Buckinghamshire Council remains committed to holding HS2 and EWR to account for the impact that the construction of these schemes is having on the local environment and on our residents and businesses. Following robust Counsel advice, we believe we had strong and very valid reasons to challenge the decisions of the Inspector(s) in allowing lorry routes to be used which will have an enormous and detrimental impact on our local roads. On 21 July, in the High Court, Sir Duncan Ouseley dismissed the appeals brought by Buckinghamshire Council to quash decisions made by the Planning Inspectors to allow four environmentally damaging lorry routes submitted by HS2 Limited in 2021. We are bitterly disappointed with the result but the decision to go ahead and take these appeals to the High Court was always the right thing to do for our residents and communities

The High Court decision puts a further financial burden on us to provide more and more evidence when challenging anything HS2 does in our area. This is so unjust when our residents are already incurring the cost of a huge infrastructure project whose construction is causing disruption to a wide swathe of Buckinghamshire. We have now met with our legal representatives to discuss options and after careful consideration we have decided not to appeal the decision.

### **A41 Bicester Road Primary Public Transport Corridor**

Since September 2021 construction work has progressed at pace and despite prolonged spells of extreme weather during the summer, is on programme to be completed in October 2022. Following the successful completion of the commissioning process, a major milestone has been accomplished, with the new traffic signals at the A41/Jackson Road/Dickens Way junction going live on the 1 September 2022. In conjunction with this activity, the temporary side road closures were also removed and we would like to thank residents for their patience during these periods of closure. Work to fine-tune the signal timings of the junction and help it adapt to traffic flows and patterns, so the junction runs as efficiently as possible, is now ongoing. Upcoming work will then focus on optimising the co-ordination of all traffic signals along the A41 corridor between the Paradise Orchard/Sir Henry Lee Crescent and the Jackson Road/Dickens Way junctions. Whilst road users have experienced some delays to journey times during construction, the phasing of work along with temporary traffic management arrangements have allowed for two-way traffic flows to be maintained along the A41 during peak times. Recent works have involved overnight working which has caused some disturbance to residents for which we apologise. To help inform local members and residents there are regular project e-bulletins and a project webpage linked [here](#). Road users are also updated via the use of on-site electronic variable message signs.

### **High Wycombe Transport Strategy and High Wycombe Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan**

As part of our remit to improve transport in Buckinghamshire, a draft High Wycombe Transport Strategy (HWTS) and a High Wycombe Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) have been developed. The HWTS vision is that “by 2050, High Wycombe will be among the best connected and most innovative towns in the Thames Valley, where all journeys, from start to finish, are low emission, seamless, and safe for all residents, businesses and visitors”. The document sets out a number of ambitious and high level potential interventions that could help us to achieve this vision over the short, medium and long term. The supporting LCWIP document focuses down on improving cycling and walking provision in High Wycombe. It outlines a future walking and cycling network within a 25 min cycling catchment and a prioritised programme of infrastructure investment. Both draft plans have been created through extensive engagement with various stakeholders including Members, Officers, the High Wycombe Town Committee and Community Board. Both draft documents are expected go out to public consultation on the 30th September and we invite feedback on all elements of the plans.

### **School Transport for the new academic year**

The Client Transport team have been working hard to ensure around 7000 students receive the appropriate transport support to their needs. This work is completed in collaboration with colleagues in education to ensure that the needs of each child are treated with the utmost care. Our team of Travel Assessors have completed assessments for all EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) holders and Transport Officers have put in place suitable transport arrangements including Personal Transport Budgets where cost effective. The procurement of any new transport needed is underway. Parents/carers have been informed of arrangements ahead of the new term to ensure

each family is familiar with timetables, the transport operator they have been assigned, and if required have received their bus pass.

For those parent/carers who have purchased a spare seat on a council provided school bus, bus passes were issued before the start of term where payment was made on time.

[School transport | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

### **Demand Responsive Transport**

Demand Responsive Transport is a modern alternative to the traditional fixed and timetabled bus services. It is led by passenger bookings and flexibly routed. This means it can serve harder to reach areas which do not have a traditional bus route and provide direct links to destinations that would normally require a change of buses. Passengers can get picked up and dropped off at a wide variety of locations beyond traditional bus stops and the service is easily accessible through an app with real time information on journey time.

Contracts for the two Demand Responsive Transport pilot schemes have now been awarded. Arriva will be operating the Aylesbury scheme and Go-Ahead Carousel Buses the High Wycombe one.

The pilot serve the High Wycombe area, including the communities of Downley, Loudwater, Booker, Sands and Wooburn Green, the “Pick Me Up” service (website [here](#)) allows passengers to book a bus to come to them when they like and take them directly to their destination. The Arriva Click service for Aylesbury area will launch later in the autumn. Local Member briefings took place in the first week of September for the Wycombe scheme and will take place in early October for Aylesbury. The services will run with fares that are closer to local bus fares than taxi fares and with a greater flexibility to reach places that traditional buses cannot, and we are looking forward to these services developing.

These pilots are funded by the Government’s Rural Mobility Fund and with an initial contract term of three years. If these pilots are successful, they may become a more permanent fixture in county.

### **£2 Bus Fare Cap**

The Department for Transport has recently announced an initiative to cap all bus fares in England to £2.

See [here](#) for details of this announcement.

Buckinghamshire Council is aware of this, but at this time have no detail about how this will be implemented or the terms of the scheme. As such, it is not yet possible to definitively state the effect this will have on bus services in Buckinghamshire, however many fares with the main towns in our County are already under £2 per journey. It may also have an impact on how we set the fares for the Demand Responsive Transport scheme. We await further details on this and will update once this is known.