



## Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

### **Cost of Living Pressures**

As the situation continues to change, the latest position on the Cost of Living pressures that residents and local businesses face will be provided at the Council meeting following the Autumn Statement.

As a Council, we recognise the growing pressures being faced by our residents linked to the increases in the cost of living. Buckinghamshire Council has made further provision to assist residents who are in need, which is especially important during the winter months, developed through close partnership working, particularly with the voluntary and community sector. During the month I had the honour of visiting the One Can Trust Foodbank in High Wycombe and seeing the excellent work they do in partnership with our Helping Hand team.

Details related to specific support can be found in the Cabinet Member for Communities Report – Cllr Steve Bowles.

### **Strategic Finance**

The Quarter 2 budget monitoring position was taken to Cabinet on 15 November, and this showed a forecast Portfolio overspend of £15.7m. Fortunately this was partially offset by a series of better corporate performances such as higher interest rates, reduced interest payable plus receipt of a non-recurring sum. These reduced the total forecast variance to £1.8m at the end of Quarter 2 compared to a £3.8m adverse position at the end of Quarter 1.

Although this is an improving position the report highlights significant risks to the forecast, although we do still hold a number of unreleased contingencies that could help offset some of the emerging pressures over the second half of the year.

The Medium-Term Financial Planning process for the next period is now well underway with Cabinet Members actively reviewing their budget proposals. This year has been more challenging than most with inflation and demand pressures rising rapidly, along with energy prices. At the same time, the macro-economic position has been volatile, and the government is still developing its response. The challenges that we face are not unique to this Council and you will have all seen the predictions from many other Councils of the difficult decisions that lie ahead.

Our best predictions are that a significant budget gap will still exist for all years. It is widely rumored that there will only be a one-year Local Government Settlement. We expect to receive Buckinghamshire Council's finance settlement in late December, and this will then help Cabinet Members in deciding what actions are required in order to set a balanced budget. The draft budget

will then be scrutinized by the Finance and Resources Select Committee in January before Cabinet then recommend a final budget to Full Council in February.

### **Adult Social Care Reforms**

As Spokesperson for the County and Unitary Councils' Network, I have been lobbying for a delay of the implementation of the social care reforms for one to two years. This would provide local authorities with a reasonable timeframe to deliver the necessary preparations and ensure readiness for the additional demand that the reforms will bring. At the time of writing, the outcome of the Chancellor's Budget Statement on 17th November is unknown and I will provide an update for Members at the Council meeting.

### **Afghan Resettlement**

There have been over 21,450 arrivals into the UK from Afghanistan to date, and it is estimated that between 500-1000 arrivals are entering the UK every month. In Buckinghamshire, we are currently supporting 13 Afghan families across 14 properties, exceeding our target of 10 in the first 12 months.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

We continue to support sponsors and guests as part of the Homes for Ukraine programme. We now have over 1400 Ukrainians who are settling in Buckinghamshire, with a further 400 who have applied for visas here.

Following the last update, further work has been undertaken looking at move on accommodation for the guests. We are aware of the challenges that Ukrainians face moving into private rental and we are looking at how we can address these and have added capacity to our housing team to support guests who are looking at the next steps.

We have had some successful rematches, where guests move from one sponsor household to another, and have launched a campaign to encourage more rematch sponsors to come forward, you will start to see this across our social media. Some guests are moving into private rental, and where required we are supporting them in temporary accommodation whilst alternative accommodation is found. We have been running information events with community groups to talk through housing options and other hot topics.

### **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 proposals that we aim to share with the Government as soon as possible.

We are reviewing our Recovery and Growth deal proposition to ensure that our County Deal complements and can help deliver on 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.

### **Buckinghamshire Growth Board**

The next Buckinghamshire Growth Board meeting is scheduled for the end of November.

At the Board's meeting in September the Opportunity Bucks programme which focusses on levelling up ten key wards in Buckinghamshire was presented. The role of partners in this work to tackle inequalities was acknowledged and there was discussion around exploring opportunities to inspire

more young people to have ambitions for careers. The Board have agreed to return to this item in future meetings.

Updates were given on the submissions of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF), the Buckinghamshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and Rural England Prosperity fund. Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) have also submitted a joint application with Oxfordshire to The Create Growth Fund based on the gaming industry in Oxfordshire and screen in Buckinghamshire.

The Board also heard an update on a working group which has been established to explore options to integrate the Council and Local Enterprise Partnership.

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

I attended the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) Board meeting on 30 September 2022 where a number of agenda items were discussed. Members noted the draft annual accounts, and the audit completed on BLEP operations which was undertaken on a voluntary basis to provide transparency around financial arrangements, and for auditors to advise on any systems improvements for the future.

A joint signed letter between Buckinghamshire Council and the LEP was sent to the then new Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Simon Clarke, upon his appointment. This reaffirmed Buckinghamshire's credentials to be considered for the next wave of County Growth Deals. A similar letter is currently being prepared for Michael Gove who has returned to the post he held previously.

An update was also provided on activity related to Buckinghamshire Enterprise Zones (BEZ) sites which can be found in more detail below and it was noted that once received from Government, the detail on the National Plan for Growth will be shared.

### **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 remains in place to support the continued growth of the BEZ sites, facilitating investment, growth, and skills development. Over the past 18 months our BEZ sites have seen an increase in delivery of floorspace development and as at the end of September 2022, 860 new jobs have been created. BEZ activity in 2022/23 will continue to focus on delivery of new floorspace, in addition to securing land for development, and delivery of commitments to existing projects.

As part of the Truss Plan for Growth we recently submitted an Expression of Interest for an Investment Zone. Our proposal focused on Westcott Venture Park, one of our existing Enterprise Zone sites and the Bosch HQ at Denham. There has been little detail on the Investment Zones, and it remains to be seen whether this new policy withstands the change in government.

### **Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee**

The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee met on 6 October with the agenda focusing on the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, the National Model Design Code pilot, and an affordable housing update.



Buckinghamshire Council has been chosen as one of 16 local authorities to pilot the National Model Design Code, which has been introduced to encourage quality design and allow local influence over design to preserve local character.

### **Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)**

The Council continues its discussions with Homes England to allow funding to be provided over a longer period and in a more prioritised way. This is in reaction to the significant inflationary pressures that continue to be encountered on delivery of the projects. The adjustments will enable delivery of all the projects in the programme to continue. Initial discussions have been positive.

Many people will have seen that the Kingsbrook Secondary School welcomed its first new pupils for the first time in September and on Friday 30th September the multi-million-pound educational establishment was officially opened by Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, Councillor Anita Cranmer.

The new school in Aylesbury has been built with funding from the national Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), Section 106 developer contributions and the government's Basic Need Funding. The opening of the school has been delivered ahead of schedule through the close collaboration of different partners, including Barratts, Insignis Trust, Morgan Sindall, and the council.

Improvement work has also commenced to the Grand Union Canal towpath, to provide the 'missing link' in the Active Travel route between the town centre and the new developments to the East of Aylesbury. We look forward to the provision of an improved Active Travel route in the town with completion due in Spring 2023.

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

There remains 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 license 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 Compulsory Purchase Orders (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 access 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. The drilling under the railway has been completed, which is a significant milestone, and the ducting work is progressing.

Discussions continue with HS2 regarding the bridge assurance, use of materials for the embankment and Phase 2 land. Flood mitigation issues for both Stoke Mandeville Relief Road and Phase 2 have been resolved and the planning application for Phase 2 was submitted on 18 October 2022. Ducting work on Phase 2, which already has planning permission, has also commenced.

### **England's Economic Heartland (EEH)**

England's Economic Heartland continues to press the case for East West Rail's delivery in full, including the link to Aylesbury. At the most recent EEH Strategic Leaders Board in September 2022,

the East West Rail Strategic Narrative was approved, highlighting its role in supporting the region's economic prosperity and connecting communities with sustainable transport options.

The East West Main Line Partnership recently published *Building Better Connections: The business imperative for East West Rail*: [Building-Better-Connections-business-imperative-for-East-West-Rail-v4-LR.pdf \(eastwestrail.org.uk\)](https://eastwestrail.org.uk/building-better-connections-business-imperative-for-east-west-rail-v4-lr.pdf), which had its parliamentary launch on 25th October co-hosted by the East of England.

All Party Parliamentary Group. Work continues to progress in other parts of EEH's portfolio including the Oxford to Cambridge connectivity study for roads, which identified Aylesbury as a key issue for strategic road connectivity in the region. EEH is also continuing with the next tranche of the Connectivity Studies programme, with future studies planned for the new year looking at north-south movements across Buckinghamshire (Northampton – Milton Keynes – Thames Valley) and east-west movements (Southern east-west arc between Buckinghamshire – Hertfordshire and Essex).

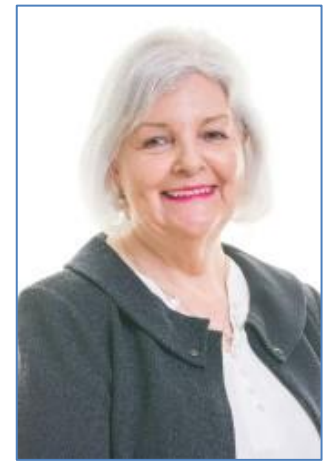
### **South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)**

Leaders have written recently to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and for Health and Social Care setting out ideas on the challenges of inflation and the rising cost of living, social care and levelling up, and requesting delays to the wider introduction of the social care reforms.

Recent meetings have covered best and emerging practices on how to support households facing higher costs of living. There have also been discussions on the learning, challenges, and opportunities of the Government-backed pilot of reforms to adult social care costs and charges.

Leaders worked with consultants to finalise a report on what levelling up and devolution mean for the wider South East. The report is supporting the representations to Government sharing SESL's views on levelling up, growth and devolution.





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

Councillor Anita Cranmer

### **Kingsbrook Secondary School**

On 30 September, I was delighted to officially open the new Kingsbrook Secondary School in Aylesbury along with professional boxers Adam and Hassan Azim. Both shared their inspirational stories about how they have got to where they are today with the Year 7 pupils at the school.



The school has been funded from the national Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), Section 106 developer contributions and Government Basic Need Funding. In

acknowledgement of the current and future housing plans for the area, the school has been very carefully designed so that it can be expanded in the longer term, should the need arise.



The building provides state of the art facilities including a four-court sports hall; activity studio; drama studio; hi tech science and Design Technology classrooms; 3G sports pitch; and extensive external facilities which will provide a fantastic learning environment for the current and future pupils. In addition, the building has excellent sustainable credentials and is designed to ensure it is thermally efficient thereby reducing the

carbon emissions which will help the Council meet its Carbon reduction targets. The building will serve not only the school pupils but will be a wonderful asset to the wider Kingsbrook community who will also be able to benefit from the many facilities available.

### **Celebrating our Care Leavers**

From setting off for university to starting out in exciting new jobs, Buckinghamshire’s care leavers have a lot to be proud of and their achievements have been celebrated as part of National Care Leavers Week which ran from 24 to 28 October 2022. During the week, our Leaving Care Team arranged a number of events including:

- An employability workshop with HR advisors supporting with CV writing, interview skills and employability preparation.

- A care leaver's event showcasing all the support that is available for care experienced adults both within the council and with partner agencies. The event brought together colleagues from health, housing, local counselling services, financial experts, community groups, parenting support, education providers, local employers, training schemes, leisure centres and support agencies to meet and talk to care leavers about the support and services they can access in the local area.
- A care leaver's lunch for young people who are open to the service which will provide a chance to meet and mingle.
- A fun evening trip to The Howl, a spooktacular event at Mead Open Farm arranged by the Youth Voice team.

The Buckinghamshire Leaving Care Team is actively working with 260 young people, who have left care arrangements such as foster placements and community homes and are embarking on their independent adult lives. Nearly three quarters of our care leavers have successfully progressed in education, training and employment roles with careers ranging from paramedics to plumbers and business owners to beauticians. A total of 30 care leavers are currently attending university in a range of subjects including accounting, medicine, events management, teaching, physics, performing arts and business. A number are also studying to be social workers and hoping to use their own experiences to forge future careers helping other young people in care.

It is wonderful to see how successful and ambitious our young care leavers are and rightly so. We want to make sure that all our care leavers have the opportunity to achieve great things and go on to live successful and happy adult lives. We work hard to support them in the way they need for as long as they need, and we are proud of the fantastic achievements they have already made.

### **Celebrating our fantastic foster carers**

Buckinghamshire foster carers do so much for our children in care, but on 30 September 2022, it was the turn of our foster carers to shine, as we held our Annual Foster Carer Excellence Awards. The awards are held to say thank you to our foster carers for all their hard work, to celebrate their achievements and their commitment to the children they care for.

It was such a pleasure meeting so many of our wonderful foster carers and hearing about the fantastic work they are doing in looking after our children in care. Their dedication and commitment in ensuring these children are loved, nurtured and cared for was a joy to see.

To find out more about fostering in Buckinghamshire visit: [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/fostering)

### **Buckinghamshire Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Christmas school holiday**



I am very pleased to announce that our HAF programme will once again be running over the Christmas school holiday period, delivering support to school-aged children and young people in low-income families through access to free, high-quality holiday activities and experiences.

Funded by Central Government and coordinated by the Council, the HAF programme is delivered by experienced activity providers. The Christmas programme will provide over 5,000 holiday club and activity places in more than 40 locations across Buckinghamshire, covering both weeks of the Christmas school holiday period.

HAF holiday clubs offer eligible children positive and enriching activities as well as physical activities, all in a fun format; clubs on offer over the Christmas period include forest school, coding, football, rugby, science experiments, cooking workshops and much more. We are also offering some family tickets to pantomime and meal events in High Wycombe and Aylesbury. A healthy hot meal will also be provided at all activities. The HAF programme also helps give children and families greater knowledge about healthy eating as well as signposting to advice and support for family members.

The programme is targeted to school-aged children in Reception to Year 11 inclusive who receive benefits-related free school meals. A proportion of the places can be accessed by other groups of children and young people; these groups include looked after and previously looked after children, young carers and children with an education, health and care plan. We work with service area teams, our schools and our HAF club providers to identify and invite children from these additional groups to attend. Visit [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf) to find out more.

### **Buckinghamshire Youth Voice**



Following the recent launch of our new Participation Strategy, the service has created Youth Voice Bucks. This county-wide youth forum brings together opportunities for young people to have their say, information for professionals, and examples of good participation work happening across Buckinghamshire.

Our mission for young people is clear: we will listen to you, act on your views and then tell you what difference you have made. You can read about the Participation Strategy, our mission, and our three rules of engagement on the Youth Voice Bucks home page [Youth Voice Bucks - Buckinghamshire Council](#).

In February 2023, the group will be hosting Youth Summit which will invite Buckinghamshire school students to raise and discuss issues that are important to them. The group is welcoming new members, so please spread the word. Further details about the Summit will be made available on the Youth Voice Bucks website in due course.

In addition, a youth voice project is well underway to help shape and improve uptake of the Healthy Activities and Food (HAF) Christmas Programme mentioned above. The project is a partnership between Youth Voice Bucks, the HAF team, Highcrest Academy and their HAF provider, Kiran Sport Ltd. Over 70 students have had their say, and the offer at Christmas is shaped around their interests and requests, including a day trip in to London. A second participation session will involve young people creating the promotional materials for the programme.







## Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources

Councillor John Chilver

### Revenue & Benefits Single System



After two years in the making from tender to final implementation on 28 October 2022 the single revenues and benefits system for the whole of Buckinghamshire has gone live replacing the four legacy district council systems. Collecting over half a billion in revenues a year, with 233,000 live council tax accounts and 15,500 live business rates accounts we are probably the third largest revenues and benefits system in the UK. The project moved over nine million documents, 1.5 million council tax

accounts and 140,000 housing benefit accounts. Now we are live this enables:

- Improved customer self-service functions, for example, checking your council tax balance or setting up a direct debit payment.
- Increased staff productivity and efficiency.
- Savings on printing and postage costs.
- Easier checking to ensure we clamp down on fraud.

This project has been delivered thanks to the determination of the council wide team assigned:

- ICT – technical project management and system analysis.
- Financial operations – cash receipting team storing all our files and changing their format and references.
- Customer services – the front door for our residents helping with enquiries during the shut-down period.
- Comms – keeping residents and businesses informed about the project.
- NEC systems team – performing the data migration.
- Business improvement – driving through improvement to our digital processes.
- Business intelligence – automating our reporting.
- Human resources – supporting us through the service review that gets us ready to take maximum advantage of a single system.

And finally, the fantastic Revenue and Benefits Team of 98 people who have tested, reconciled, checked, scrutinised and worked exceptionally hard over multiple weeks and weekends to deliver this project

## National Customer Service Week

National Customer Service Week (NCSW) is the first full week in October, every year, but this was the first time that Buckinghamshire Council has formally celebrated the event.

NCSW provides the opportunity to raise awareness of customer service and the vital role it plays in service delivery. We wanted to recognise the impact of good customer service and the hard work of the teams making those experiences happen every day. All employees have elements of customer services in their roles across the Council and the purpose of the week was to recognise the importance of remaining customer focussed and understanding the benefits of a great customer experience at all stages of a customer journey.

The week was a huge success with great feedback from staff, senior management, and members.



Throughout the week, videos and articles were added to a dedicated NCSW page on the Source, Buckinghamshire Councils Intranet, to share customer improvements, staff profiles and training opportunities, including the first Customer Experience training module (over 300 staff completed the first module during the week). The content was well viewed by staff during the week and the page will now be an ongoing resource area for sharing Customer First news and updates on demand to the wider workforce and ensure that Customer First framework continues to be visible to staff at all levels

Across the week, there were 43 staff who listened to live customer calls, either virtually or within the Customer Service Centre. Feedback was extremely positive, with staff around the organisation gaining first-hand experience and an appreciation of the current issues faced by our residents as well as the role that customer service agents provide at the start of the customer journey.

It is imperative that we consolidate on the success of this initiative and encourage our staff to continue to listen to live (or recorded) customer calls at regular intervals and not just once a year. Customer Services has extended an “always on” invite to services to access live customer calls and it is recommended that shadowing is included in induction and training plans for new starters within the organisation. In addition, managers within services areas would benefit from regular call listening to better understand customer needs and identify any opportunities to improve customer and/or staff knowledge for resolving enquiries.

## The One Network

The objective of the ONE network project was to replace all the disparate legacy IT networks with a single modern network for Buckinghamshire Council. Aside from providing the council with a modern IT platform on which we can run our services the project will also deliver £1m in savings. This was a joint project with Buckinghamshire NHS Health Trust (BHT) and the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS). The overall joint network covers 197 Council offices, schools, and roadside traffic management equipment locations, as well as 19 Fire Stations and 24 NHS Health Trust premises (including Stoke Mandeville, High Wycombe and Amersham hospitals).

The procurement exercise took place at the start of the pandemic at a time when, overnight, all organisations had a large number of staff working from home. BT were awarded the contract in

December 2020. Over the last two years the project has been subjected to a series of major challenges. The transistor chip shortage resulted in a major delay in the delivery of network equipment and, indeed, that challenge is affecting the project to this day.

All of these challenges have meant a constant reprofiling of the project timelines and deliverables. Despite everything, the priority has been to move off the largest legacy network IT contract. This crucial step was successfully completed in October 2022 and that means the project is on target to deliver the planned £1m in savings.

The plan is now to migrate the remaining ex District network contracts at the Gateway, Amersham and Wycombe. Work on this phase would have started in early November, however we are still to receive the necessary hardware that was ordered a year ago and has been delayed due to microchip shortages. Once this equipment arrives, we will migrate off the remaining legacy networks, the expectation is that this work will be completed by April 2023.

## Property & Assets Update

### Construction

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.

Following the completion of works at Misbourne School, the Misbourne Sports Hall – the Opening Ceremony took place on 11 October 2022 with final sign off planned for July 2023.



The new Kingsbrook Secondary School Opening Ceremony took place on 30 September 2022.

The school has been built with funding from the national Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF), Section 106 developer contributions and the government's Basic Need Funding. It will provide 1,080 places for secondary school age children in the local area. In addition to state-of-the-art facilities, the school will also benefit from a dedicated 32-place unit for young people with special educational needs (SEN), the first of its kind in the county. The school has been delivered through the close collaboration of different partners, including the Council, Barratts, Insignis Trust and Morgan Sindall.



Major expansion works continue at Chiltern Hills Academy to deliver the construction of a new science block accommodating nine science rooms, two science preparation rooms, two science offices and new WC facilities, a new performance hall with 'grab and go' dining facility and six additional general classrooms, two Design Technology rooms, an office with improved drop-off/car parking. The project is expected to complete in November.



Major expansion works continue at Holmer Green including the new four court sports hall, new two storey teaching block, various conversions of the existing accommodations including the provision of additional dining area and a new kitchen extension to the sixth form. The various sections are being completed and signed off from November 2022 until July 2023.



Work at the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre continues to progress. The handover of the mid-section of the carpark was completed and an additional 161 parking spaces were made available to the public on 6 October 2022. The new external play area is also expected for handover in November.

Work has begun on the development and procurement of three new major school projects in this period with Design and Commercial teams being appointed by the Council for the second new Primary School at Kingsbrook as well as major expansions of both the Greenridge Academy at Berryfields and Cottesloe School at Wing.

### **Investment & Development**

The Council owned site located off Horns Lane in High Wycombe was allocated in the Wycombe Local Plan for housing. Officers applied for and were granted planning permission for up to 50 houses. The site is currently in the market seeking offers from private developers for planning policy compliant schemes (i.e., with 48% affordable housing) and to affordable housing providers for planning compliant schemes as well as schemes with up to 100% affordable homes. The deadline for bid submission was 25 October 2022, following which, Members will review the offers and balance the capital receipt and affordable housing numbers proposed to select a successful purchaser.

### **Future High Streets Regeneration Programme**

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, completed in September 2022 and tenants are now in occupation. Refurbishment of a second vacant shop acquisition, 16 Church St, also commenced in November 2022.

The Council completed legal formalities for its major 'co-investment' in the re-purposing of Eden's former House of Fraser store, using Future High Street funding. It will bring Primark into Eden, releasing the existing Primark building for comprehensive redevelopment along with the adjoining Chiltern Shopping Centre (subject to planning). This will remove a large amount of redundant retail floorspace from the town centre, bringing in new homes in its place.

The Council also completed the disposal to Hightown Housing Association of nearby Collins House. They are proposing a 49-unit affordable housing redevelopment, creating more town centre living.



## Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles

### Helping Hand

Utilising the Household Support Fund 2 (£2.4 million) which covers the period 1 April to 30 September 2022, we have been able to provide support to over 60,000 financially vulnerable households both directly and through our VCS partners. This support included providing; over £830,000 worth of digital food vouchers to eligible families to provide support during school holiday periods, distributing over £800,000 worth of support to financially vulnerable pensioners, over £110,000 of support through our Voluntary and Community Sector partners, over £220,000 support through our dedicated Heart of Bucks Helping Hand Fund and over £260,000 of direct support through our Helping Hand Team.

The Household Support fund has been extended by Government, and we received a further £2.4 million for the period October 2022 to March 2023. The allocations of these funds were agreed by Cabinet in early October and to date we have utilised nearly £300,000, including provision of over £200,000 of digital food vouchers to eligible families for October half term, direct support provided by the Helping Hand team and funding to support Voluntary and Community Sector projects. The current cost of living challenges are impacting all residents and the Helping Hand team are currently receiving around 50 requests for support on a daily basis.

We continue to develop activities through the Financial Insecurity Partnership to improve the financial vulnerability of residents and on 21 October, as part of our #BackonTrack campaign, we successfully hosted a return-to-work support event at Wycombe Library. A number of our partners joined us at the event and provided tailored advice and support to residents from CV writing to providing tips on interview techniques. We hope to deliver additional events in the future across Buckinghamshire.

### Cost of living

The cost of living crisis is not far from our thoughts and as a council we are continually updating our website to ensure people can access information about the range of support available, including: support with food, fuel and household bills, finding a place to keep warm, obtaining essential household items, support available from Government, support for pensioners and how to contact the Helping Hand team : [Help with the cost of living \(Helping Hand\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Some examples of how we are supporting residents are:

- **Partnership with Heart of Bucks for the crisis appeal**

For those who are in a position to help financially during this crisis, we have partnered with Heart of Bucks to raise funds for those in need. Residents are able to donate money via the

Heart of Bucks Crisis Appeal webpage. [TotalGiving™ - Crisis Appeal for Buckinghamshire - Heart of Bucks - Fundraising Page](#)

- **Welcoming Spaces**

Starting with council and community libraries, these locations will provide a warm, welcoming and supportive space for anyone who needs it. These are places where residents can come into safe and inclusive spaces, free of charge, to stay warm and enjoy a little company. Use of facilities, including free Wi-Fi, will also be available in these places along with information and support. [Find a place to keep warm \(Welcoming Spaces\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Welcoming Spaces will be extending to some private and community venues from November onwards. Information about these will be accessible through the Bucks Online Directory, as well as other organisations such as Christians Against Poverty and Heart of Bucks.

If a community venue wishes to set up as a welcoming space, a toolkit with guidance is also provided in the cost-of-living section of the Council's website.

- **Food and hot meals schemes**

There are many food schemes available in Buckinghamshire. Further information is available in the cost-of-living section of the Council website. [Help buying or accessing food | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

We have also partnered with local organisations to launch the Food Champions Network, whereby residents volunteer to collect food on behalf of their local food banks and deliver it to the food banks. [Become a Food Champion and help your local community | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

If a community organisation wishes to set up a hot meals scheme, a toolkit with guidance on how to do this will also be available in the cost-of-living section of the Council's website.

- **Warm Boxes**

We will soon be trialling a warm box offer for residents that will enable them to collect free essential items to help with keeping warm from selected welcoming spaces. Items available will include things such as blankets, hot water bottles, thermomugs and thermal socks. The offer will initially be available from our nine county libraries – all residents need to do is approach a member of library staff who will be able to help.

For more bespoke help with essential items to keep warm, residents may contact the Helping Hand team using the details further up in this update.

We are continuing to develop our offer of support to residents during the cost-of-living crisis and further information will be published on our website.

## **Afghan Resettlement**

We receive funding to provide wrap around support for people from Afghanistan who are settling in Buckinghamshire as well as English language lessons and support for schools. Our families are doing very well with a successful delivery of integration plans and ongoing support in place. Five adults have already found employment, whilst others are working hard to improve their English.

We are regularly looking for potential accommodation options for future families and are currently working with the Ministry of Defence to identify properties that could accommodate larger families.

### **Asylum Seekers**

The Home Office has introduced a new system to ensure every council takes their fair share of asylum seekers – our target is 431 by December 2023.

There are two ways that asylum seekers whose applications are being assessed are currently housed in Buckinghamshire:

- Dispersal accommodation sourced by Clearsprings Ready Homes – this is private rented accommodation. There are 91 asylum seekers in Buckinghamshire in this type of accommodation.
- Contingency Hotel – asylum seekers have been placed in hotels, overseen by Clearsprings Ready Homes, due to the shortage of rental accommodation across the country. In Buckinghamshire, we have one hotel in the north of the county housing 134 men.

### **Buckinghamshire Council supports White Ribbon Day and the 16 days of action**

The 25 November marked White Ribbon Day and subsequent 16 days of action. It is marked around the world as the largest global initiative to end male violence against women by calling on men to take action to make a difference. Although domestic abuse affects people from all backgrounds and all characteristics, it still disproportionately affects women, with 71% of victims being women and girls. The theme of the campaign is influenced by the World Cup which starts at the same time and focusses on positive masculinity.

Buckinghamshire Council will be raising awareness of domestic abuse in partnership with Thames Valley Police and other partners and has designed a schedule of events running each of the 16 days of the campaign, 25 November to the 10 December. Plans include interviews with players from Wycombe Wanderers FC, match day publicity, the commencement of the Buckinghamshire multiagency domestic abuse training offer, a podcast with Suzy Lamplugh Trust regarding personal safety and Cllr Mimi Harker about stalking, the launch of the Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Website for professionals and victims, awareness stalls in the Buckinghamshire shopping centres and various operations being carried out by Thames Valley Police.

Communications around the campaign includes bus and radio advertising. The success of the campaign will be analysed by looking at traffic to our support services and partnership websites.

### **Anti-Social Behaviour Service Review**

The Community Safety service have commenced an Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) service review to look at how ASB services operate across the county. This includes a partnership survey aimed at finding out how we and our partner agencies manage ASB complaints, what processes we have in place and where there are areas of duplication and training needs. From this we can standardise processes across the county between ourselves and partners and improve our response to residents and communities.

Members will be informed about this in their next newsletter and are urged to respond, as they are a vital stakeholder for reporting and responding to ASB complaints from the community. The survey can be found on <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/corporate-services/7a3aa1a9/>.

## Public Spaces Protection Orders

We have now extended six Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) across the county until 2025. These should continue to provide protection for residents in those areas from anti-social and nuisance behaviour. These include the following PSPOs; -

- Aylesbury Town Centre
- Aylesbury Parks and Open Spaces
- Buckingham Town Centre
- Winslow and Steeple Claydon
- West End Road, High Wycombe
- Chiltern District

We will be consulting upon the remaining PSPOs from the end of November to look at extending these, as they will expire next year. These are the following PSPOs;

- High Wycombe Town Centre
- Desborough Road, High Wycombe
- Buckinghamshire Council Specified Car Parks
- South Bucks District Council (Dorney Lake)

Elected members will be contacted soon in relation to the consultation on these PSPOs.

## Community Boards

Ideas and projects are now starting to be generated at Board meetings and action groups to support cost of living projects such as subsidising ingredients for a weekly recipe, with recipe card, which families can cook at a lower price; local and co-ordinated discussions on warmer places venues; presentations and demos to local groups on saving money (energy and food) and a local business voucher scheme is being considered.

Increasing youth engagement on the Boards is very important and a plan has been established with the youth engagement service on taking this forward. Work has now started on increasing the membership of Youth Voice Bucks with a remit to be the youth representative for specific Board areas. A phased approach is being undertaken by working with seven Boards in the first instance with the aim to have youth engagement representation aligned to the Boards by April 2023, with the remainder by April 2024. It is anticipated the young people will be able to provide advice and insight to the Boards, but also generate their own ideas and projects to support local priorities.



Engagement work continues in local communities, a recent Back on Track Return to Work event was held in Wycombe which engaged with c47 residents, attendance at a Revive Event in Aylesbury also gave good engagement with residents and saw some joining the Community Board and links made with new VCS organisations.

Projects to deliver priorities for Boards continue to be approved such as plastic free street signs reminding people to use reusable cups and water bottles, long covid support care to help with wellbeing, supporting projects to improve access and facilities at sports pavilions as well as



supporting roadshows and information on how to save money on energy and visits to properties to demonstrate heat loss.

### **Armed Forces**

The Civilian Military Partnership Board met on 26 October where the Armed Forces Annual Report 2021/22 was presented. The report highlights the fantastic work done by the council and our partners to support our armed forces community over the past year and is backed up by an action plan for the year ahead. A needs assessment has also been produced by the council's Business Intelligence team drawing on publicly available data to help identify the areas of need within Buckinghamshire. Partner organisations, such as Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust, can contribute to the needs assessment going forward to form a more complete picture. The Annual Report can be viewed at [here](#). The Armed Forces Staff Network met for the first time in October, with 12 members of staff in attendance from various areas of the council. The network provides an opportunity for staff who are part of the armed forces community to come together and discuss shared issues and challenges, as well as to provide feedback from a staff perspective on the council's armed forces policies and activities.

### **Aylesbury Town Open Spaces (Parks) Action Group**

In January 2022 the Council's Community Safety Team set up a multi-agency action group to identify and find solutions to make our green spaces and open spaces better places to visit. The aim of the group is to make residents feel safe and confident when out and about to enjoy our open spaces whether they are alone, with family or friends or part of a community or sports group using our parks. Over the last few months, the group has delivered:

- Outreach youth engagement work to meet and engage with young people to offer support and sign post them to meaningful activities.
- Design and implementation of the innovative use of QR Code Cards (for mobile phone links) containing details of local support organisations for young people, these are handed out by police, street wardens and youth workers when engaging with young people.
- Working with Public Health and the Parks team on initiatives to increase usage of the parks for all residents, for example the Active Communities walks initiative.
- Conducted an online local residents survey to hear their voices and understand their concerns and opinions.
- Increased patrols by our street wardens and Thames Valley Police and focused police operations.



## Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

### Libraries

Buckinghamshire Libraries are proud to be supporting the Welcoming Spaces initiative for the Council, providing warm, free and safe spaces for residents as the weather starts to turn colder. All County and Community Libraries are spaces where people will receive a warm welcome from the teams and if needed, be able to find information on additional avenues of support. With our countywide network, access to computers, free wi-fi and a range of community events, we will be working with partners and local communities to support residents through the coming months.

NHS Health Checks have been taking place across the libraries in partnership with Parkwood Healthcare as part of the Live Well, Stay Well campaign. The free NHS Health Check is offered to adults between 40-74 years old and takes 20-30 minutes to complete. It is designed to spot the early signs of cardiovascular diseases such as stroke, heart disease and type two diabetes. Following on from health checks that took place earlier this year in some of our busiest libraries, this has been expanded over the last four months to take place in Princes Risborough, Bourne End, Winslow, Great Missenden, Hazlemere and Haddenham Libraries as well. Further information, including details of future venues/dates, can be found [here](#).

October was a busy month for wider activities in libraries, with various displays and events including film evenings and author talks to celebrate Black History Month; Get Online Week from 17 to 23 October, where a social media campaign was launched to promote digital inclusion and lifelong learning; a partnership event at High Wycombe library, Back on Track, supporting those wishing to get back into employment, on 21 October; and a live-illustrated storytelling show for families at High Wycombe library as part of half-term activities.

We also welcomed around 120 people to an engagement day at Wendover Community Library on 22 October to showcase the design concept and plans for the new library. The plans were well received in the community, with a lot of enthusiasm shared on the prospects of additional meeting spaces and an improved children's library; attendees also had some excellent suggestions for further improvement. Following a competitive process, we have commissioned artist Kremena Dimitrova to create a unique art installation for the transformed library, inspired by Wendover's heritage and communities. Kremena is an illustrator-as-historian, storyteller and lecturer in visual culture and history, who specialises in children's illustration, comics, murals, public art installations, mapmaking/trails, and visual storytelling in the museum and heritage sectors. To view the plans for the Wendover Community Library improvement project visit:

[www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/wendover-library](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/wendover-library).

## Culture

During October half-term, the Discover Bucks Museum held well-attended Diwali Art sessions, Meet a Paralympian Archer and Halloween Kids activities. The Wycombe Museum also delivered cost-effective cultural engagement sessions through October including Discover and Make for Halloween.

[Together We Build](#), a project celebrating 10 years since London 2012 and Buckinghamshire's Paralympic Legacy, saw ten disabled Community Curators choosing objects from the National Paralympic Heritage Trust, Buckinghamshire Archives, Discover Bucks Museum and Waddesdon Manor's collections to be displayed across multiple cultural venues in the county throughout the autumn.

The Archives Service has been running a countywide [History Festival](#) during November. This year the festival features over 30 fascinating events, mainly in-person, with highlights including advice on looking after your own family photos and documents, a talk on Buckinghamshire's connections to the sea, '*Remembering the Bucks Heroes of World War One*,' and '*London 2012 Paralympic Games: Ten Years On*'. The service has also increased its opening hours and introduced an online payment system for customers, improving the customer journey and access to the collections; and has been working with Stony Dean School in Amersham to have a supported intern, the first Council department to do so.



## Buckinghamshire Film Office

The new Buckinghamshire Film Office officially launched with an event at Pinewood Studios this month. A collaborative approach between Buckinghamshire Council, Pinewood Studios, the LEP and Creative England to support priorities around growth in the creative industries and ambitions to significantly increase inward investment in the film and high-end TV sector.

## Country Parks, Parks and Play Areas

Visitor numbers at the Country Parks are on track to achieve 1.2m by the end of the financial year and customer satisfaction remains high for all recorded park sites across the county, with average scores of 4.4/5.0 from online reviews.



Black Park Country Park is about to complete a major forestry operation, developed and licensed by the Forestry Commission, to harvest over 1,000 tonnes of timber. The trees being removed are part of the normal operations for the commercial woodlands which help rejuvenate the area allowing the mature trees space to grow and set seed in the cleared areas and then space for seedlings and saplings to develop. The works will ensure that the woods in Black Park are in a great condition for future generations to enjoy. The operations are being completed by an enormous machine called a

harvester (see image) that cuts the trees down and then processes the trees depending on their size and quality. The trees will be converted into a variety of timber-based products: pulp for paper, woodchip for animal bedding, composite boards or as structural timber that you might find at the local timber yard.

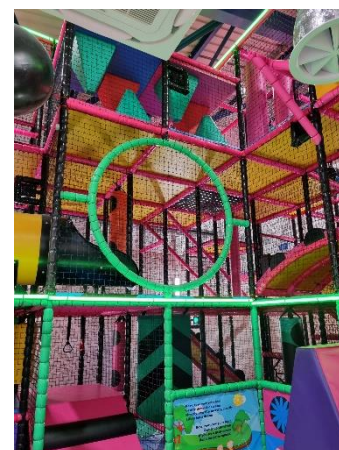
A number of productions have successfully been filmed in Black Park and Langley Park over the last few months, including a major Amazon production which has seen a large cottage set built on the open area in Langley Park with a backdrop of the wonderful oak woodlands.

The replacement play area at Desborough Recreation Ground in High Wycombe has been completed and is open. Further projects are planned for Higginson Park in Marlow, the Rye in High Wycombe and Vale Park in Aylesbury. The project to build a larger skatepark at Bridge Street in Buckingham can now be progressed following approval from the Environment Agency.



## Leisure

We are continuing to see good visitor numbers to our leisure centres and are on track to reach our target of 2.9m visits for 22/23. The next section of the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre car park (161 additional spaces) has opened and the new children's play area in the front of the centre has also been installed. This centre is nearing its one millionth visitor; to mark its one-year anniversary the leisure operator, Everyone Active, will be organising and hosting an Open Day on 10 December to give the local community an opportunity to trial a wide range of activities free of charge. The centre's success can be attributed to the continued growth in fitness memberships and swimming lessons; these have increased by 238% and 47% respectively compared to the former Chiltern Pools facility.



At Chesham Leisure Centre, a new soft play and sensory space opened on 12 September. It has been very popular and is bringing new customers to the centre that may not have visited before; the feedback has been very positive.



## Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Mark Winn

### **Gypsy and Traveller Service**

Buckinghamshire remained quiet throughout the summer months and this trend has continued into the autumn as many Gypsy/Traveller children returned to school in September to continue their education. This coincides with the drop in temperatures and Travellers returning to their fixed abodes or looking for somewhere to settle during the winter months. This year has been somewhat of an anomaly with unprecedented low numbers of encampments throughout the spring and summer months. The newly available Police Section 60C powers which were enacted in June 2022 have so far not been used in the county of Buckinghamshire, although this legislation may have contributed to lower levels of encampments than normal.

On a positive note, there has only been one encampment in Buckinghamshire this year relating to organised waste crime. The Council continues to work alongside Thames Valley Police and the Environment Agency providing a multi-agency approach in finding new ways to detect and disrupt these groups. Despite there being a reduction in unauthorised encampment numbers in many areas across the country, Travellers have continued to reside on public land albeit less frequently, with the new law having already been tested nearby in Milton Keynes. We are likely to see a truer reflection of the impact of the changes in 2023, due to improved officer training within the Police, and Travellers having a better understanding of the new legislation.

### **Trading Standards**

**Avian Flu** – The national situation became quite extreme in October with sadly over two million birds lost in that month. National risk was assessed as high and various additional biosecurity measures were bought in, including the requirement to house all captive birds from 7 November, in an attempt to separate them from wild birds that may carry the disease. The situation is changing frequently. At time of writing there have been no outbreaks in Buckinghamshire. The Council has plans to cover any such eventuality.

**Illegal tobacco** - Two individuals pleaded guilty to offences related to the supply of illegal tobacco from a shop in Aylesbury, at High Wycombe Magistrates court in October. One of them was fined and ordered to pay costs. The other is awaiting trial for a 7<sup>th</sup> related offence that he pleaded not guilty to. The trial is scheduled for February, and he will be sentenced for the six offences already pleaded guilty to after that trial.



Following further test purchasing of illegal tobacco, Trading Standards carried out another operation with a tobacco detection dog. This led to two seizures of illegal tobacco, one of which was found in a very sophisticated hide where a false wall had been built.

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

**Fireworks** – Trading Standards worked with the Police and their cadets to carry out underage test purchasing of fireworks during half term. We are pleased to report that there were no sales. We have also been working to ensure that fireworks are being stored safely by retailers, visiting shops and giving advice to ensure that fireworks are stored in line with the licence conditions that reduce the chance of harm to people and buildings.

**Cost of living related scams** – we continue to warn people about the range of scams circulating linked to the cost of living and particularly energy rebates and would urge everyone to be on their guard. People can arm themselves with knowledge of scams by signing up to our fortnightly e-newsletter which contains information about the latest scams by going to this web address:

[Newsletter Sign-Up \(newsweaver.co.uk\)](https://newsweaver.co.uk) :

<https://scc.newsweaver.co.uk/tradingstandards/rm5bkdog2dx?lang=en&a=6&p=62278665&t=32113691>

### **Licensing Services**

Following a recent procurement exercise five new contracts for [approved taxi and private hire vehicle testing centres](#) have been mobilised across the Buckinghamshire Council area in locations in Aylesbury, Chesham, High Wycombe and Taplow. Vehicles will also continue to be tested at the Councils in-house testing facility at Pembroke Road in Aylesbury. These contracts will ensure an accessible and consistent high-quality approach to testing across the Council area.

Work is underway to review the delivery of the [Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy](#) a year on from implementation, including the budget position and fees and charges. Licensing Committee will receive reports on this as well as an annual review of enforcement activity undertaken by the Service, at their next meeting on 12 December.

Over the summer months Licensing Officers, alongside colleagues from Environmental Health, carried out compliance visits to a number of large and medium scale licensed outdoor weekend events and festivals across the Council area. The vast majority of events visited were both successful and compliant. The Service is now seeing an anticipated increase in applications and notifications for events over the Christmas and New Year period.

### **Cemeteries and Crematoria Services**

The delivery of the capital improvement programme to replace the three aging cremators at the Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham has reached a significant milestone with all three new cremators now in-situ, commissioned and operational on-site. The delivery of the project was planned to ensure that there was resilience and capacity within the service over the winter months. Associated

construction works will continue on the site until March 2023 and will include the full refurbishment of the smaller Hampden Chapel.

The Crematoria Service will be running free ticketed Christmas carol remembrance services at both the [Chilterns](#) and [Bierton](#) Crematoria in December for families and friends of loved ones lost.

Changes to [national medical examination services](#) are due to be rolled out in Buckinghamshire by April 2023 which will soon look at all deaths that occur in the community, as well as in hospital settings. Officers have been working with the NHS and colleagues in Registration and Coroners Services to understand any potential impacts of these changes.

Buckinghamshire Council is a member of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and officers link with the ICCM for training and learning opportunities. Cemetery officers recently visited the Gardens of Peace Cemetery in North London (which is a privately operated Muslim cemetery) to understand their approach to delivering Muslim burial services and any learning points for the operation of our own burial grounds.

## **Housing**

**Rough Sleeping** - We continue to see high numbers of new approaches to the homelessness team in terms of rough sleepers across Buckinghamshire and we are now preparing for the annual rough sleeper count.

The high numbers are largely due to releases from prison, clients moving into the area or losing their accommodation due to their behaviour or being difficult to place due to their multiple or complex needs.

The number of verified rough sleepers has reduced from 45 at the end of June, to 18 at the end of September 2022. Significant efforts have been made to bring clients into emergency accommodation by statutory and voluntary agencies and this work continues, with planning and arrangements for emergency accommodation over the winter months now underway.

Accommodation has now been identified.

The Council continues to work with all partners involved in tackling rough sleeping, including drug and alcohol services, the Blue Light Project and Adult Social Care.

**Homelessness Service Demand** - Very significant pressures on the homelessness service continue to be felt, including the number of new homelessness applications. The situation has been exacerbated by the increase in Ukrainian families whose sponsorships are ending.

51 Ukrainian families have approached the homeless service for assistance over the past four months, with 34 in September. More approaches are expected in the coming months.

In September, there were 404 homelessness approaches in total, compared to a pre-pandemic monthly average of 322

**Temporary Accommodation** - At the end of September, the Council had 334 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 Ukraine and



*Bridge Court, Desborough Road – Exterior  
(Premier Modular)*

Afghan refugee approaches, cost of living pressures on households and the limited affordable housing options in Buckinghamshire. We continue to increase our direct lets into social housing for homeless households to try to manage the pressures and are strategically considering temporary accommodation supply as a whole and how we can increase this. Bridge Court in Wycombe should be coming online early next year and Saunderton Lodge has remained open as a response to the situation.

**Private rent** - Some private landlords are choosing to end tenancies or leave the market, following the impacts of the pandemic. We are still managing to find a small number of properties each month to join the Council's 'private rented' scheme, and some Ukraine guests have managed to source their own private rented accommodation with financial support from the Council.

**Bucks Home Choice** - There continues to be a very high demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme. Overall, as of 30 September 2022, we had 8124 households registered on the scheme (either live or pending applications) with approximately 590 new applications in August. Demand for social housing continues to significantly exceed supply. Since January 2022 Bucks Home Choice has let 1,277 new tenancies.

**Grants and Adaptations** - The Council continues to operate a significant programme of DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) to support adaptation works. As of 30 September, 461 DFG requests were on our books with 25 completed in September. Increasing building costs still remain a significant pressure on the existing funding caps, particularly for larger extensions.

### **Housing Strategy Development**

The Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy reviews are underway with all stakeholder events now completed and events for Members planned for later this year. Officers are progressing background information and collating all stakeholder feedback at this stage. Some very positive feedback has been received from a broad range of service areas and external partners within Buckinghamshire.

**Grant funding opportunity** - A new grant funding opportunity has been announced by DLUHC - the 'Single Homeless Accommodation Program' (SHAP). This is a capital funding opportunity similar to previous grants which have delivered 34 units for homeless people in Buckinghamshire, including locations such as Ardenham House, OneYMCA, seven units at various locations, and units to be delivered in 2023. Officers will be meeting with DLUHC and partners such as RPs to consider and develop the best approach to formulating a bid for Buckinghamshire.

### **Environmental Health**

The Commercial Team continues to make progress towards the Food Standards Agency's "Recovery Road Map" targets. Since the pandemic, the number of food businesses in the county has increased, meaning officers are focussing their inspections between new businesses that have not had an intervention previously and those which have previously been inspected. Premises deemed to be the highest risk will always be prioritised. The team is drafting a Food and Health and Safety Service Plan and an associated enforcement policy.



In September, Full Council approved the resolutions to adopt the registration requirements and adopt model bylaws in respect to skin piercing activities. Legal Services are now leading on obtaining draft approval from the Secretary of State which will then trigger the publication of public notices and the final steps to enable the bylaws to be adopted.

The Strategic Environmental Protection Team released, in conjunction with other Council services, its first progress report with respect to the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy 2021 to 22 which revealed a 70% reduction in the Council's greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990. Specifically in regard to air quality the report found that there has been a consistent reduction in recorded levels of nitrogen dioxide. It was also noted that the recorded concentrations of nitrogen dioxide have not returned to pre-Covid pandemic levels. It is thought this is as a result of people's behaviours following the pandemic to work from home more or to use alternative forms of transport.

The Housing and Domestic Team continues to inspect homes offered as part of the Government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme. To date they have visited in over 825\* premises and continue to provide advice concerning potential housing solutions to increase the pool of properties available for the scheme. It is important that properties are safe for guests and do not become overcrowded. (*\*figure as of 21 October 2022*).

All teams are involved with a number of significant investigations some of which are likely to lead to formal action. Updates will be provided in future briefings.

Work continues on updating information on our website, including advice for tenants, statutory information concerning air quality and advice on how to register a food business.

### **Registration Service**

The service is now at business as usual, and all appointments are 'face to face'. We are considering a change to the way customers pay for certificates and hope to trial a "pay at time of booking" system with the Contact Centre and also for online bookings. This will reduce the need for officers to handle cash. Officers will also have payment cards to allow them to pay cash in at various pay points, as some customers still want to pay by cash.

The Registration service review is now complete. A significant amount of feedback was received from the team, which has influenced the new structure and the operational model. The implementation date for the new structure is 1 February 2023.

### **Coroner's Service**

The service is currently at business as usual. There is a significant four-week jury inquest starting mid-November which is being covered by an Assistant Coroner, as an additional resource.

We are still working on a 'go-live' date with partners at Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust for the 'WPC Portal' - software which will allow doctors to refer cases to the Coroners themselves. So far, all Medical Examiner Officers have been trained and this will be cascaded down to the doctors in the first instance, with a view to asking all GPs to use the system from April 2023.



## Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

### Gully Cleansing

Good progress continues to be made in the gully cleansing programme, with 43,224 (56% cleansed as of 21 October) gullies having been cleansed in the first half of the year. High Wycombe in particular, have achieved almost 65%, with Aylesbury managing to cleanse 4,038 gullies (11%) in September. This year we have encountered much fewer broken and stuck covers, following last years' programme of repairs, and reduced silt levels, now averaging 54%.



### 'Failed Roads' Programme



In July and August, the Failed Roads programme commenced, which included four regeneration schemes where the failed road is pulverised and recycled in-situ using a specialist supply chain partner, Stabilised Pavement Limited. This offered a 69% reduction in CO2 emissions and 79.5% reduction in cost based on conventional methods of resurfacing to the same depths. The process also, used waste from other resurfacing sites, reducing disposal of contaminated waste. Two further sites will be delivered this winter.

*Failed Road Regeneration, Marsh Gibbon*

### Plastic Road Trial

During October and November, we started the "Recycled Plastic Road" trial. The process, which reduces the amount of bitumen by melting recycled plastic pellets with the asphalt mix, has been used on two resurfacing schemes in Denham and Holmer Green reducing plastic waste (568kg of recycled plastic was used across the trial sites). The schemes will be monitored for performance and maintenance benefits, if successful the process could be used for other future projects.



*Plastic Road Trial, Oxford Road, Denham*

## Rights of Way – Capital Projects

Over the summer, most of the Rights of Way Capital projects that were included in this year's work programme have been completed. This included surface and drainage work to three sections of the Thames Path National Trail in Marlow which was a match funded project with the Thames Path National Trails Office. Two replacement bridges in Aylesbury Vale, Ashendon and Marsworth, and a larger bridge structure install in Gawcott. In Wexham a larger bridge structure was installed on a very busy route that had caused some inconvenience to local residents when it had been closed for repairs and safety.

Surface improvement works have also been undertaken on a link path to the Ridgeway in Wendover, this was a gullied bridleway which had become quite hazardous to use. A bridleway in Chalfont St Giles required an Ecologist on site due to a badger sett, and a footpath which runs alongside the River Chess in Chesham. This last project was joint funded with the Chiltern Society, it is a heavily used local path and also part of the Chess Valley Walk.



**Chess Valley Walk**

**Before**

**After**

Still remaining for this year's projects are a replacement footbridge in Stoke Poges and a horse bridge in Denham, both projects are proceeding to plan. Berry Hill Footbridge across the Jubilee River in Taplow remains on hold pending approval of the design by the Environment Agency, these works are planned for 2023.

## School Transport consultation is underway

On 19 October the Client Transport Team launched its Home to School Transport Consultation inviting residents to share their views on the Spare Seats Scheme and charging options along with updates to the Home to School Transport Policy (0-to 25-Year-Olds) and the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024. The consultation is open until 4 December and any changes will apply to both new and existing customers for the 2023 to 2024 academic year onwards.

The Spare Seats Scheme offers paid-for seats on timetabled Council-run school buses, after all young people who are eligible for free school transport have been allocated a seat.

The consultation proposes three options for simplified school bus ticket charges. Under all proposed options, non-Buckinghamshire Council residents will pay a higher fee to customers who live within Buckinghamshire.

The online survey can be completed at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-consultation](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/school-transport-consultation).

### Pick Me Up: Demand Responsive Transport



The High Wycombe Demand Responsive Transport “Pick Me Up” service successfully launched on Tuesday 27 September and five DRT minibuses are now running in part of the High Wycombe area (see website [here](#)). It provides service to areas including Booker, Daws Hill, Downley and Wooburn Green and was already catering for 170 passengers per day, on average, by the end of the first month. We were very pleased that the service has hit 200 trips on a single day for the first time. The service runs on weekdays between 6am and 7pm and is particularly intended to cater for those

without access to a regular bus service or where service is limited to certain times of day only.

It is being used by people across the community including to access school or work, to access appointments or even to connect with coaches at Handy Cross. We look forward to continuing to build on this service over the coming weeks and months.



### Buckinghamshire to Berryfields Greenway



The route providing a 1.7km off-road shared use path between the Berryfields and Buckingham Park developments in Aylesbury is now complete with planting due to complete next Spring.

The traffic free route connects to key locations such as Aylesbury Vale Parkway station, Waddesdon Greenway (leading to Waddesdon Manor), and the wider Aylesbury cycle network via the Platinum and Ruby Way routes.

The project has been delivered under budget and in record time, with construction work completed in just six weeks. The £397k scheme was funded from the Aylesbury Land Use and Transportation Strategy fund, developer contributions, and the Department for Transport (DfT) Cycle Rail fund.

On Wednesday 12 October 2022, the new route was officially opened to the public, attended by landowners, local Members, the local school, residents, the DfT and Active Travel England.

Over the winter we will be working with local groups to plant hedges and small woodland areas along the path. In the spring we will be tidying up the verges so that they are level for mowing. For further information please view the [project webpage](#).

### Vivacity sensor trial

We have recently commissioned Vivacity to install a small number of their Artificial Intelligence-based camera sensors to improve our data and evidence gathering capabilities. Five sensors will be installed in Aylesbury, where they will be able to assess interactions between 10 different types of road user at key junctions and road crossing points, including walkers, cyclists, micro-mobility users and multiple types of motor vehicle. The sensors will initially be in place for one year, to test their viability for wider deployment.

Further information on the sensors can be found here: <https://vivacitylabs.com/technology/sensors/>

### Electric Vehicle Chargepoints

Since the publication of our Electric Vehicle Action Plan (EVAP), we have been undertaking several projects to increase the amount of EV charging infrastructure in Buckinghamshire. A report was

presented to the Transport and Environment Select Committee (TECC) on 3 November, which outlined progress to date against EVAP objectives.

We have recently been successful in our largest ever bid to the national On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) fund. They have awarded us £406k, which will be match funded with £261k from our supplier BP Pulse, enabling us to install chargepoints serving 128 vehicle bays in our car parks, focusing on areas which currently lack access to public chargepoints. We will be working with BP Pulse to deliver these chargepoints over the winter.

We plan to submit a further bid to the ORCS scheme this financial year, which aims to work with town and parish councils to support installation of chargepoints in their car parks and are working with interested councils to ensure they meet the ORCS requirements.

We also submitted a bid to the pilot Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund in June 2022 which was heavily oversubscribed (£10m nationally) and whilst we were unsuccessful in this round, we received very good feedback and encouragement from LEVI to resubmit the bid for the main funding when it opens in 2023. In the meantime, we are using our EV capital funding to progress a trial of in-pavement cable channels and on-street chargers to support those who do not have access to off street parking at home.

### **E-Scooter Trial – Extension**

On 11 October 2022, Cabinet agreed to extend the e-scooter trial in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Princes Risborough until 31 May 2024. This follows the Department for Transport (DfT) extending the national e-scooter trial to continue their assessment of impacts and allow legislation to be put in place to legalise all e-scooters.

The e-scooter trial is managed at zero cost to the Council as it is run as a private business by Zipp Mobility. E-scooters are only permitted to ride on the roads or cycleways and are illegal to use on the pavement. We use geofencing technology to prevent e-scooters from riding in certain areas, such as pedestrianised zones or private roads. We have had over 218,000 rides (covering 340k miles) so far since the trials started in November 2020. Around 20% of rides have replaced car/van/taxi-based trips and we have calculated this equates to just over 21 tonnes of carbon emissions saved.

### **HS2 and EWR**

Construction work on HS2 and East West Rail continues to have significant negative impacts on our environment and the lives of our residents, communities and businesses. The council has fought long and hard against HS2 and continues to oppose the project twelve years on. The Council continues to work tirelessly to hold both companies and their contractors to account across a wide range of issues.

- We are challenging proposed designs to overbridges across the county which, in our view, are out of keeping with the local landscapes. We have also negotiated considerable improvements to the design of other major structures including Wendover Dean Viaduct, Small Dean Viaduct and Thame Valley Viaduct.
- Following residents' serious concerns about access for very large loads via local roads and under narrow bridges to the North Portal in Great Missenden, the council pressed HS2 Ltd to hold an abnormal load vehicle trial along their routes at night, to check all vehicles can pass safely and without causing damage. The trial was viewed by council officers, members and parish councillors and was completed successfully.
- The increased construction traffic also means damage to our road network. Disappointingly, this year we were allocated extremely limited funding from the HS2 Ltd's road deterioration fund but this will only cover the costs of repairing a few potholes.

- As a result of our lobbying, HS2 Ltd has made other contributions towards larger scale reparation for damage they have caused – including the A412/A40 junction area at Denham and Station Road, Quainton. We are continuing to press for further recompense from HS2 Ltd to adequately fix the damage they are causing.
- We have insisted East West Rail rectify the damage to Queen Catherine Road in Steeple Claydon which is now undergoing significant repairs.





## Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Peter Strachan

### **Political Awareness Training**

One of the recommendations from the Select Committee review into ‘Member Engagement in Planning’ earlier this year was that political awareness training should be offered to planning staff to help them to understand the formal political structures of the Council and to gain some insight into the competing responsibilities that members have to juggle and identify how officers and members can work together in an effective and collaborative way.

During September and October, six sessions were scheduled, hosted by the Cabinet Member or Deputy Cabinet Members for Planning and Regeneration, alongside a Planning Committee Chairman and the Democratic Services team. Over 100 members of staff attended the sessions.

The sessions included opportunities for informal discussions where staff were able to share their experiences of working with members and seek advice about different situations. Feedback from the sessions has been shared with the Management team and will also be shared with the Member Development Working Group, who oversee training and development for members.

### **Development Management Update**

The number of new planning and related applications registered as valid remains around 1,000 a month, which remains the same as our monthly determination rate. This means that our ongoing workload (cases in hand) has remained relatively static at around 3,700 over the last few months. This is however significantly reduced from 4,300 in the last of quarter of 2021/22, as the team have continued to clear historic cases.

The number of planning appeals being received from the Planning Inspectorate continues to be very high, with 28 new appeals registered in August, which places a huge demand on our resources. Public Inquiries are particularly resource intensive, even more so when they are to be hosted as “blended events” – in person, but with the option for witnesses to join through a Microsoft Teams Link.

The team have hosted two significant Planning Inquiries over the last few months; Tralee Farm, Hazlemere and Minerva Way, Beaconsfield. The team has robustly defended the Council’s case with support from Kings Counsel, legal services and specialist consultees, and we now await the Planning Inspectors decision on both sites.

### **Enforcement Update**

Further to my previous reports on planning enforcement matters I am pleased to be able to report that the statistics for Quarter 1 and 2 of 2022 are published on the government website and Buckinghamshire remains 4<sup>th</sup> overall and the highest authority outside London in terms of issuing

Planning Enforcement Notices. We are also only two notices behind 3<sup>rd</sup> place and with a number of notices in the pipeline to be issued this year we will watch with interest how that plays out in quarter 3.

In the meantime, I also continue to see reports from the team where compliance is being achieved following formal enforcement action. The breaches being remedied by these actions range from the unauthorised accesses, to new dwellings and even a storage container used for Air BnB. Many of these breaches were occurring in our most highly sensitive areas like Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which I am pleased to say is being protected with vigour.

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.

The team are also in the process of rolling out a program of pro-active monitoring of conditions on the larger development sites. We hope that our 'on-site' presence at the larger sites will mean we can start addressing issues before they cause serious impact to our residents. We also hope that those visits can be complemented by us being able to address any 'trending issues' at our officer led forum with the developers, agents and architects where we will reiterate the need to recognise the importance of developers complying with the planning consents granted.

I can only therefore reiterate that the team's performance and our general approach to dealing with breaches of planning control should act as a warning and deterrent that Buckinghamshire is not the place to come if you intend to breach planning control and that when we seek resolutions, we will use all the tools available to us to ensure it occurs.

### **Historic Milepost Restored**

A historic milepost, found in an Oxfordshire garden, has been restored and placed back in its original location in Hillesden. Thanks to local historian and milepost expert, Peter Gulland, the milepost was brought to the attention of our Archaeology department. Together, they identified where the 19<sup>th</sup> century milepost had come from and took it to a blacksmith's to be restored. Transport for Buckinghamshire then arranged for the milepost to be reinstated in its original, roadside location.

It is fantastic that this piece of Buckinghamshire's heritage has now been restored, and we wish to say a big thank you to Peter Gulland for finding the milepost and paying for its conservation and repainting. The newly restored and relocated milestone will be reviewed for inclusion in our [Local Heritage List](#), along with all other mileposts in the county.







Photo 1: Before Restoration



Photo 2: After Restoration



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

Both the High Wycombe Town Centre BID (HWBIDCo) and the Cressex Business Park BID commenced their new five-year terms and business plan delivery on 1 October 2022.

Cllr Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE and Cllr Tony Green are Board representatives on HWBIDCo. Cllr Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE has also been appointed as an Advisory Member to the Cressex Business Park BID Board. The Economic Development remain connected to both BIDs with regular catch ups.

This is the first time a new BID term has commenced since the creation of Buckinghamshire Council and work on developing new Operating and Baseline Agreements, for both these BIDs, is near completion. These agreements set out the scope of the council's responsibilities and deliverables under BID legislation. This work will form the basis of any future BID agreements.

The Globe Park BID five-year term runs until 31 December 2024.

### **Aylesbury Town Centre Management Review Update**

The review of the Town Centre Management function is being reviewed currently and has sought input from internal teams, Members, stakeholders and businesses. The final report will pass through PGS Management Team and CMT before being presented to informal Cabinet for consideration and decision on future delivery. Subject to decision, the implementation of the new model of town centre management will commence thereafter.

### **Visitor Economy**

Following on from the report at the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Committee on the Visitor Economy, a Visitor Economy Strategy is being developed that will help us outline our approach to making Buckinghamshire a destination of choice and supporting its tourism related businesses and activities generating greater economic vibrancy in the County.

The Strategy will involve stakeholders, businesses and Members and be available early next year.

## **Aylesbury Garden Town**

The Garden Town Board meet for the first time in person since the pandemic in October. Cllr Rachael Matthews chairs the Board supported with his longstanding involvement in the garden town programme by Cllr Bill Chapple as Deputy Chair.

The Board received updates on key workstreams as well as the HIF programme and town centre management review. The Board was supportive of the current consultation on the Supplementary Planning Documents for the VALP which will aid delivery of the garden town vision.

The Board is next due to meet in January 2023. Changes in membership of the board for the representative for the southern AGT area parishes is currently underway since the previous representative from Stoke Mandeville has left.

The action plan that supports the Garden Town Masterplan is being reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate and deliverable. It seeks to capture all projects that bring forward the principles of the garden town. The format has changed, making the document user friendly, and will be taken to the Board at its next meeting.

Work continues to identify the priorities and opportunities for regeneration in Aylesbury Town Centre with particular focus on sites in the council's ownership.





## Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson

### Local Account

Each year the Council publishes a 'Local Account', a document for the public which explains how the Council has helped residents with care and support needs, and their carers, over the past year. The 2021/22 Local Account has just been published on our Care Advice Bucks website and can be found alongside previous editions here: <https://careadvice.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/information-and-advice/local-account>.



The Local Account provides statistics and other information about the support we have provided. In line with our Better Lives Strategy, which sets out our intention to help people live independently, regain independence or live with long-term support, the Local Account provides some interesting case studies. These demonstrate the breadth of the support the council provides and how adult social care has made a real difference to people's lives.

### World Mental Health Day

Monday 10 October marked World Mental Health Day. The theme of 2022's World Mental Health Day, set by the World Federation for Mental Health, was 'Making mental health and wellbeing for all a global priority'.

The local objective was to ensure mental health is a priority for all in the county. A four-week campaign reminded Buckinghamshire communities about the national and local mental health support available and how to access it. As part of the campaign, the Buckinghamshire local mental health anti-stigma campaign, Champion the Change (previously known as Bucks Time to Change) promoted awareness of mental health in the workplace through the 'Employer Pledge'. More information can be found at <https://www.bucksmind.org.uk/champion-the-change>.



The main objective of the Employer's Pledge is to support local organisations to take positive action to help end the stigma of mental health and discrimination, and to develop a positive mental health culture in the workplace.

Signing the Pledge demonstrates a commitment from each organisation to deliver a set of agreed actions. These include providing free support to raise awareness of mental health; providing guidance for line managers; and providing staff with information on where and how

to get support for their mental health. To mark World Mental Health Day, I was delighted to sign the pledge to give my support to Champion the Change.

### **Social Care Reforms Update**

In preparation for the social care reforms in Buckinghamshire, the Fair Cost of Care exercise and the draft Market Sustainability Plan were submitted as required to the Department for Health and Social Care in October and we await feedback on both documents.

The early preparation work undertaken during the summer put Buckinghamshire in a much stronger position than many other authorities in understanding the impact of the likely demand on adult social care services and wider teams across the council.

Following the Government's budget announcement that the adult social care reform implementation will be delayed until October 2025, a reprofiling of the transformation work is taking place. It is now vital that we use this time to improve our systems and make it as easy as possible to access care and pay for care through self-service and online support, as well as making the necessary workforce changes.

### **Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection of Council Adult Social Care Services**

The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced CQC inspections of council adult social care services, specifically how local authorities deliver their duties defined in the Care Act 2014. This CQC inspection regime will run alongside a similar approach for integrated care systems.

The CQC has spent the last year developing the framework for inspection of council adult social care services. The framework will be published in the new year, following sign off by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The framework is based on four themes:

- Working with people – how councils assess needs and support people to live healthier lives.
- Providing support – how councils support good provision of services and continuity of care .
- Ensuring safety – safeguarding and ensuring people move through health and social care safely.
- Leadership – how well the service is planned and managed.

## **Health and Wellbeing Board Update**

At our most recent meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on 22nd September 2022 we agreed a refreshed Buckinghamshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Happier, Healthier Lives 2022-2025.

The Strategy sets out what partners on the Board, the NHS, social care and the voluntary and community sector, have agreed to do to help improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for all our residents in the county. Together we are committed to improving health and social care in the long term and to reducing health inequalities in Buckinghamshire.

At the September meeting Healthwatch Bucks shared the findings from their social prescribing survey. This showed that while awareness of social prescribing was low, people who had accessed the service were very positive about the benefits. The results of the report have been shared with local health professionals to help raise awareness.

Members of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) steering group also attended the meeting. The group works on behalf of the Board to assess whether the current and future pharmacy provision meets the needs of the people in Buckinghamshire. The Board approved the PNA which found that Buckinghamshire is well served in relation to the number and location of pharmacies. The PNA will be one of the pieces of evidence that the NHS uses when deciding on pharmacy applications.

Lastly, I am pleased to be able to share that the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Board website has been refreshed. I hope that this makes it easier for people to know what the Board does and to comment on what we do. To see how you can get involved please do visit the Health and Wellbeing Board website:

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/health-wellbeing-and-sports/buckinghamshire-health-and-wellbeing-board>.

## **Winter Vaccination Programme**

Cases of flu infection are starting to rise across England. As of the end of October, over 177,000 flu vaccinations have been delivered in Buckinghamshire this autumn. Uptake of the seasonal flu vaccine among the over 65s is currently on track with last year's figures which were the highest uptake ever in that age group. However, in Buckinghamshire and across the South East uptake in other high-risk population groups (pregnant women, clinically vulnerable and 2-3yr olds) is slightly down compared to the same point last year. The 2-3yr old children are of particular concern, as this age cohort is less likely than usual to have been exposed to influenza in their lives and so may have less natural immunity. Work is taking place to raise awareness of the importance of eligible groups taking up the offer of vaccination. The public health team is working with education to promote flu vaccination for 2 and 3 year olds through early years settings and the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB) is working with midwives to promote vaccination to pregnant women in antenatal clinics.

In mid-October, 1 in 30 people in the South East were estimated to have covid infection and case numbers were still rising. However, the rising cases in the community do not seem to be translating into hospital admissions in the way that they would have previously, which it is believed is largely due to the effect of the vaccine. By the end of October, 53% of our residents aged 50 and over had received their autumn covid booster vaccine, in line with our Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) system peers. However, there are inequalities in uptake so the Integrated Care Board (ICB) is planning additional vaccination offers to ensure wide access to the booster, including the Health on the Move van and other outreach sites.

All Buckinghamshire care homes have been visited to provide covid boosters to residents and work is taking place on promoting the offer for care home staff. Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust is also running vaccination clinics for staff (including social care staff) at Wycombe, Stoke Mandeville and Amersham hospitals every week.

Unfortunately, the mass vaccination site at the Guttman Centre in Aylesbury had to close a few weeks earlier than planned, but community pharmacies continue to offer the autumn booster. Sites are listed on the ICB website:

([www.bucksoxonberksw.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/buckinghamshire-vaccination-clinics](http://www.bucksoxonberksw.icb.nhs.uk/your-health/buckinghamshire-vaccination-clinics)) and residents can search for their nearest available appointments on the National Booking System ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) or by calling 119.

### **Access All Areas Event**

There are over 2400 people with learning difficulties and over 5000 people with autism in Buckinghamshire, many of whom are not accessing activities or services that can support and encourage them with healthy lifestyles and wellbeing.

Access All Areas are events which aim to support and promote equality for people with learning difficulties and autism. Access All Areas is a partnership between Buckinghamshire Council and the Buckinghamshire Integrated Care Board team. Two events were held this autumn, in Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The events were free and aimed at young people (14+) and adults, their carers, family members, friends and care workers.



This year's events showcased over 33 services including community learning disability health services, such as Buckinghamshire Health Trust learning disability liaison nurses and the Hertfordshire Foundation Partnership Trust Bucks Community Learning Disability Health Team. Students from Pebble Brook SEND School came along to The Gateway event to help out.

Teams from JobCentre Plus provided careers advice and community safety teams, including Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue and South Central Ambulance Service provided help on living safely.

Active in the Community and Talkback were there to encourage people to take part in sport activities including Wheels 4 Power, which are adaptive cycles for everyone to try.

The events had over 170 attendees and feedback was overwhelmingly positive with people saying that they learnt a great deal from the events.

Quality and user experience is the key focus across each theme. This is expressed through a series of statements to capture people's experiences of using the services and the ambition of the council (and its partners) in providing services.

CQC assurance is due to start in April 2023. The initial programme is expected to run over two or more years as the CQC evaluates each of the 152 local authorities with social care responsibilities in England and establishes a baseline for subsequent assessments. Although the CQC assurance responsibility formally starts in April 2023, we are advised that assessments will not start then and the inspection schedule will be announced in due course.

In preparation for a future CQC assessment, adult social care has conducted a self-assessment to help identify its strengths and areas for improvement; created a library of resources and evidence that it is known the CQC will want to view; and been briefing staff and partners who it is anticipated the CQC may want to involve. This preparation will continue over coming months and is proving to be a valuable exercise with considerable synergy with the social care reform preparations.

### **Compliments**

The council receives regular compliments for the support and work provided by adult social care to its clients across the county. The number of compliments sent to staff and teams has increased year on year and is a positive reflection of the importance that adult social care has placed on improving services in recent years through our Better Lives Strategy.

*"I lack words to express my gratitude for your patience, trouble, time and efforts that you put in to make the impossible, possible just to make life worth living for fairly and really disabled people, cope with various situations. I'm sincerely overwhelmed"*

So far this year adult social care has received 140 compliments, which is another increase on previous years and is a result of the hard work that has taken place to improve residents' experiences of services. People have been particularly complimentary about the occupational therapy, home independence and short breaks services.

I am keen that anyone who uses our services lets us know how we are doing, good and bad, as it helps us improve services where it is needed and to celebrate where our support has made a real difference to someone's life.





## Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment

Councillor Gareth Williams

### **Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy**

The recently published 2021-2022 Progress Report details 51 activities undertaken to tackle climate change and poor air quality, many of which address several actions in the Strategy. Key points to note from the Report are that:

- Carbon emissions area-wide decreased by 10.61% from 2019 to 2020.
- The Council generated 6,095 tonnes of greenhouse gases (TCO<sub>2</sub>e) in '21/'22, over 1,000 tonnes less than our carbon budget for the period (7,407 TCO<sub>2</sub>e) and 70% lower than our emissions from 1990. As such, we are on track to reduce our carbon emissions by at least 75% by 2030.
- Nitrogen dioxide concentrations are lower than the 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> (micrograms per cubic metre) annual mean in 2020 and 2021 across all monitoring locations in Buckinghamshire. This benefits the health of those living and working, and plants and animals in the area.
- We have secured Government grants in excess of £10.3m to progress projects. Originally it was profiled that the Council would access over £5m from external sources to add to the £5m Climate Change Fund to deliver initiatives, of which £3.8m was to come from Government funding schemes. We have clearly exceeded our aspirations and will continue to pursue appropriate sources of finance to support emission mitigation and climate change adaptation projects.

### **Fly-Tipping Enforcement Team Update**

Fly-Tipping remains a significant problem in Buckinghamshire with levels corresponding to just below that which we would expect from the national rising trend. We are taking measures to address these levels across the board and at specific 'hot-spot' locations.

The anti-fly-tipping intervention project funded by a £50k DEFRA award (administered by WRAP) was successfully implemented at some of the heaviest hit areas in Bucks. This involved blocking off heavily hit areas, installing new signage and implementing a new CCTV camera system including the innovative use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). All three aspects were successfully implemented and we have seen very significant local falls in fly-tipping, even at these sites which were among the worst in Buckinghamshire prior to the project. Data will continue to be compiled over subsequent months to assess possibilities for similar work to be undertaken elsewhere.

Buckinghamshire residents regularly show their willingness to assist in challenging fly-tipping and a recent case was prosecuted after the dumper was spotted and challenged by three horse riders at



Great Brickhill. The case was taken to court despite the man having removed the waste on being challenged and filmed resulting in a total to pay of over £700 on conviction.

### **South Waste Collection Service**

Since the beginning of October, the service delivered in the South of the County, through contractor Veolia, has started to improve. We have seen fewer missed bins and rounds are being completed on the scheduled day. 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 and apologise for the inconvenience this has caused to residents.

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 extra managers, six extra supervisors and an extra data / admin manager to expedite a return to better than BAU as quickly as possible.

### **Council Land Tree Planting Programme**

The selection of contractors to plant over 28,000 trees across two sites (in Amersham and Widmer End) will be completed soon. A bid to the Woodland Creation Accelerator Fund (managed by Defra) on 8th July 2022 was successful and the Council will receive over £144k to fund two new posts in the Climate Response Team to support the Council Land Tree Planting Programme.

### **Garden Waste Collection Service**

The Chargeable Garden waste collection service commenced in the former Wycombe area on 26 September 2022. So far over 26,000 residents have subscribed to the chargeable service. Residents can still sign up, find more information about the service at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/garden-waste](http://buckinghamshire.gov.uk/garden-waste).

### **North Waste Collection and Street Scene Services Update**

The in-house service in the North delivers waste collection, street cleansing and grounds maintenance functions. The services operate from Pembroke Road depot where recycling collected from the North is tipped, bulked, and transferred for onward processing. The site, which has undergone extensive redevelopment in recent years, also houses an in-house vehicle workshop to maintain and repair a fleet of over 60 vehicles as well as being one of the Council's approved taxi MOT stations. Overall, all services operate well with low missed bins and high resident satisfaction.

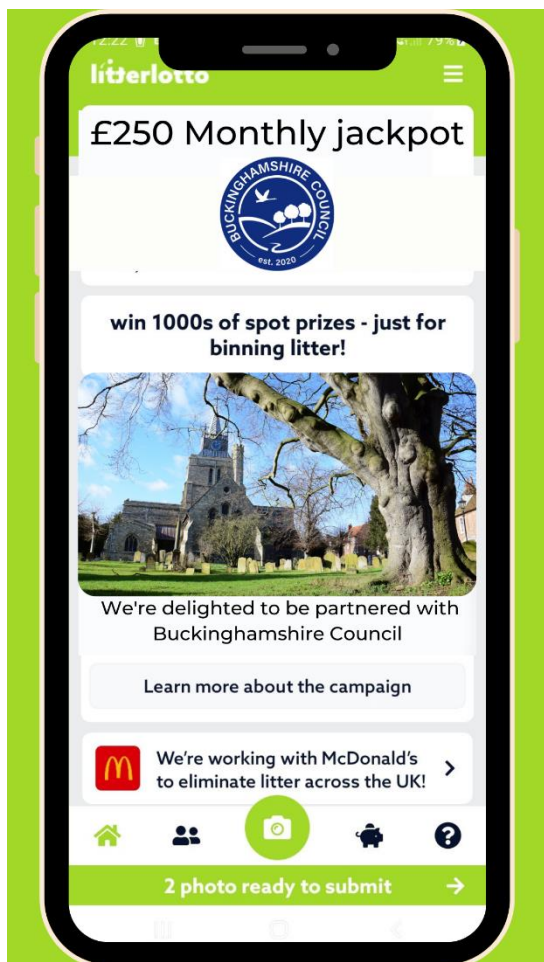
The team have recently completed a full tender procurement exercise for replacement vehicles. 7x 26tonne vehicles have been awarded to Faun Zoeller and 2x 26tonne narrow access vehicles to Dennis Eagle. The programme ensures that the operation is running safely, compliantly and efficiently. In the drive to work towards a sustainable, non-diesel reliant operation, the team have also been working closely with the Climate and Sustainability Team and will shortly be releasing a contract for tender that would see a current aging refuse collection vehicle (RCV) be converted into a fully electric vehicle. This would be the first electric RCV for Buckinghamshire.

As we move into autumn, leaf clearance operations have commenced to ensure that pavements and roads remain safe to all users and both Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance teams are readying supplies in preparation for their winter maintenance schedules, with de-icing and gritting of town centres and pavements at the forefront. The waste collection team are also busy planning Christmas/New Year waste collection arrangements in order to accommodate the 30% higher waste yields collected over the festive period and additional bank holidays this year, with Christmas and

New Year's falling on a weekend. All this planning will ensure little to no negative impact on residents' waste collections in the North over the festive period.

### Litter Lotto Local launched to reward Buckinghamshire residents for binning litter

We have worked with Litter Lotto to launch an extra monthly prize for residents who do the right thing and bin their waste. By working closely with Litter Lotto to create a geofence around Buckinghamshire, the Council can now reward local people who bin their rubbish and help keep litter off the streets and out of our beautiful countryside.



The Council has worked with Litter Lotto since it launched in the UK in 2021. LitterLotto is a free to enter Prize Draw, with regular spot prizes and jackpots. To enter, residents simply use the app to take a picture of litter as they place it in a bin. 85% of litter binned via the app is 'fugitive' that is, rubbish that was on the floor, hedge or just out in the environment. The more local users of the app the more litter will end up in the right place, the bin.

We spend £2.5million cleaning the streets of Buckinghamshire and much of this is litter, despite having over 4,000 bins emptied regularly across the County. The new Litter Lotto Local initiative is the first of its kind with a Council and sees an extra monthly prize draw of £250 just for binning litter in Buckinghamshire. Most people are doing the right thing and binning their litter.

If we can get more litter in bins, we can save money currently spent litter picking and divert it to other projects or services.

The initiative with Litter Lotto launched on 1<sup>st</sup> November and will run for 12months across the County. Local groups, individuals, businesses or Town and Parish Councils who wish to spread the word about Litter Lotto

Local can email [waste\\_strategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:waste_strategy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) to receive a supporters pack, including posters, stickers & digital content.

### EFW Summary of the Year

The EFW facility has had a very successful year in terms of operational availability (avoidance of plant shutdowns), with record quantities of waste being processed - a total of 310,695 tonnes of residual waste were processed for energy recovery and the greatest amount of electricity produced yet in a single year – a total of 211,975 MegaWatt hours (MWh) of electrical power was exported to the National Grid. This is an increase of nearly 23,000 MWh on 2020-21 power generation.

These numbers are a reflection of the extended period without any unplanned outages, with Plant availability at 94.3%, 5.3% above the base case model of 89%. Indeed, the facility had its longest uninterrupted run since the facility opened in 2016, with a total of 293 days between outages from 27 May 2021 to 16 March 2022.

The ongoing operational success of the facility was celebrated recently with the unveiling of a sculpture of a Phoenix rising from the flames at the Greatmoor facility. The EFW facility operated in partnership with FCC Environment, marked a significant operational milestone of processing two million tonnes of non-recyclable waste, and celebrating six successful years of operation. In that time the plant has welcomed more than 5,000 visitors, with over 6,000 children and adults engaged through their community outreach programme.



The Phoenix sculpture (pictured above) is displayed on a 2-metre-high plinth of recycled bricks as an homage to the sites' former use as a brickworks, the aim of the brief, to sculptor Julie Grose, was to design and make a breathtakingly beautiful sculpture that uses reclaimed waste items or recycled materials.

### **Project Groundwater**

Work is progressing well with scoping reports produced and available for flood alerts, water level monitoring, property flood resilience and our initial groundwater modelling outputs. An engagement delivery partner has been appointed (Groundwork South) who will begin in the new year to work with communities to improve resilience their groundwater flooding. We have also appointed JBA Consulting to lead the Placemaking workstream to consider how we can use natural flood management techniques and sustainable drainage systems to help communities manage groundwater flooding.

### **Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) Conference 2022 – Climate Change – Practical Local Actions**

On 25<sup>th</sup> October the Council provided three workshops on Grant Funding for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption Projects and an afternoon talk on Nature Based Solutions to Climate Change highlighting the benefits of tree planting and sustainable agricultural practices. Town and parish council attendees also benefitted from information and advice from representatives from the Environmental and Climate Change and Highways Services regarding the [Local Heritage List](#), [flood risk mitigation](#), the [Wilder Road Verges Project](#), and climate change mitigation and adaptation work.