



Cabinet Member report – Leader
Councillor Martin Tett



Strategic Finance

Budget Scrutiny took place in January with a number of question-and-answer sessions held on the overall budget proposals and financial strategy. The budget for 2023/24 was approved by Full Council on the 22 February.

Whilst still in very uncertain times the assumptions used to set the budget remain valid and so the new financial year starts with the Council on a firm footing in terms of delivering the Council's priorities within approved budgets. The final outturn position for 2022/23 is still being finalised but there is confidence that the Council will come in on budget which is a major achievement in these particularly difficult times.

The year ahead remains financially challenging with the forward Capital programme under significant pressure.

Road Repairs

I am very pleased that the council agreed to my motion to release an additional £5m from General Fund Reserves to help repair our roads after the damage done by the appalling cold and rain this winter. Since then, we have also received an extra £2.3m from the Government. I have lobbied the Secretary of State for Transport that this will not be sufficient given the scale of the task and that its allocation does not take into account the intensity of usage of Buckinghamshire's roads.

Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Board

In January, Cabinet agreed a proposal to initiate a new 'Place Based Growth Board' as a consolidation of the existing Growth Board and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board. This new Place Based Growth Board launches this spring and includes newly created 'sub-boards' which focus on Regeneration and Skills. The existing Opportunity Bucks Board will also be aligned as a sub-board of the new Place Based Growth Board. The decision to integrate the Growth and LEP Boards aligns with the recent Government announcements proposing the winding down of LEPs nationally by next year.

The most recent meeting of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board meeting took place in February and a further workshop took place on the 16 March to discuss the focus and priorities of the new Place-Based Growth Board.

Also discussed at the meeting was an update on the progress of the Multiply project, Buckinghamshire's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) projects and future allocation process, and the Rural England Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.

The Board also received an update on the Levelling Up Fund round two bidding outcomes. Buckinghamshire was not successful in receiving funding for any of the five bids that were submitted although feedback has been received from DLUHC and proposals are being considered on how to approach round three. The announcement in the spring budget was that round three would be open later in 2023 but we continue to see Levelling Up related funding being targeted at areas categorized as priority 1 (Bucks is in the lowest priority category 3).

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

I attended the LEP Board meeting on 27 January 2023 where a number of agenda items were discussed. Information was shared around the so called 'Oxford-Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership'.

To date, I have still not received any approach regarding involvement with this project. Government will not enforce Buckinghamshire being a part of this new partnership and not being a member will not preclude bidding for funding available.

The Board noted contents of the Chairman's report including the LEP delivery plan, capital investment programme, budget, Growth Hub, updates on the Enterprise Zones and updates from the Skills Advisory Panel.

The Board also agreed unanimously, in principle, and subject to satisfactory governance and evaluation and monitoring frameworks being in place, to move towards the new Buckinghamshire Place-Based Growth Model.

Devolution and County Deal

The new Place-Based Growth Board will continue previous discussions on a Buckinghamshire County deal proposal that we aim to share with Government. We are reviewing our Recovery and Growth deal proposition to ensure that our County Deal proposals complement and can help deliver on the 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 although the indications from government are that only deals which include the establishment of a directly elected Mayor/Leader will be supported.

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. Efforts for 2023-24 are to accelerate pipeline development opportunities through planning to construction stages or risk losing valuable retained rates as we moved through year eight into nine. This includes a clear focus on Westcott and Woodlands, where future opportunities lie. This may also mean there is a need to invest directly in floorspace delivery as well as to support infrastructure development of business needs.

Bosch

I was pleased to be asked to address the main Board of Bosch as a keynote speaker on the 125th Anniversary of their establishment. They remain a key local business and a strong force for green energy Research and Development.

Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

The Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee met on 16 February with the agenda focusing on housing standards, an update on key planning, transport and regeneration strategies alignment and an update on planning enforcement. The housing standards report followed the tragic death of 2-year-old Awaab Ishak in Rochdale. Government wrote to all local authorities directing them to provide information concerning matters pertaining to damp and mould in rented housing accommodation. We have undertaken an array of activities to ensure we have reviewed our own processes and enforcement arrangements. The team also prepared and subsequently sent a response to the Government outlining what we currently have in place, along with relevant data.

The key planning, transport and regeneration strategies alignment update sets out the three-way relationship between the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire, Local Transport Plan 5, and the Regeneration ambitions for Buckinghamshire and how they are being synergized and aligned.

The planning enforcement report had been prepared to provide an overview of the planning compliance and enforcement service.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)



Over the past year, we have encountered significant cost pressures on our construction activities, and the Aylesbury and Princes Risborough HIF projects are no different. In response to this, officers, Members and local MPs have been working with England's Economic Heartland, central government and developers to secure sufficient funding to enable the progress of critical infrastructure. Current projects captured in those discussions include South East Aylesbury Link Road, Eastern Link Road, Woodlands development site, Aylesbury Electricity Grid, and the Princes

Risborough Southern Road Link.

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 31 March 2022. All licence agreements have been put in place to enable vegetation clearance work as well as archaeology work to facilitate the UKPN diversion and other works. We also took possession of a number of parcels of land under the CPO powers at the end of July last year.

In December 2022, it was agreed at Cabinet that decisions on the progress of the project in 2023 would be delegated. Decisions on the delivery of the roundabouts and the project are expected to be taken in the coming months.



Significant work continues with regard to the ongoing archaeological dig and the Thames Water diversion work at the Wendover Road end of the project. The work to put the overhead power cables underground is fully complete and this will allow the new public open space to be opened. Further vegetation work has recently been undertaken under the watchful eye of trained ecologists to ensure that all rules have been followed.

Thames Water Diversion Works

Discussions continue with HS2 regarding the bridge assurance and use of materials for the embankment. Phase 2 planning application was submitted on 18 October 2022 and is expected to go to committee soon.



Archaeological excavations Lower Road, Stoke Mandeville Roundabout
(Between Wendover Road & Lower Road)

Opportunity Bucks

Opportunity Bucks, our local approach to levelling up, officially launched on 7 December with an event at Adams Park in High Wycombe. This is our flagship programme, working with partners and local communities to improve outcomes for people who are experiencing the most hardship across the county.

We have established partnerships with local Councillors, Community Board Chairmen, local organisations and community representatives to identify priorities in 10 priority wards and are now progressing initiatives to improve things in these areas. Recent successes include the targeting of the Multiply (Adult Numeracy) courses into the 10 wards which were promoted through a mobile unit that toured these areas, and the delivery of the Bucks Skills Show in Aylesbury to raise aspirations amongst young people.

Homes for Ukraine

We have recently passed the one-year mark of Ukrainians arriving in Buckinghamshire and we continue to support over 1500 Ukrainians who are settling in Buckinghamshire and making it their home.

Since the last update we have introduced top up payments for sponsors who continue to provide accommodation for Ukrainian guests and are supporting Ukrainian guests into private rental accommodation where possible. We are also utilising the Local Authority Housing Fund which was announced by the Government in December to source some more properties for Ukrainian guests in Buckinghamshire, which we will be able to use to alleviate wider housing pressures in the longer term.

To date, we have made over 100 rematches, and we are continually working to expand our pool of rematch sponsors. We have recently delivered a series of roadshows within our libraries talking to residents about opportunities for sponsorships.

We are continuing to support Ukrainian guests into employment. We currently have a skills survey open to Ukrainian guests to understand the roles that the guests had before they arrived in the UK, are assisting with the translation of qualifications and will be working with businesses to support the guests into sectors relevant to their qualifications.

Cost of Living Pressures

We have continued to develop and deliver a range of initiatives this year to support residents and staff in response to these cost-of-living pressures and have committed to ensuring the continuation of our Helping Hand service to provide support to residents who need it most. We have been allocated a further £4.8 million from the Household Support Fund.

Key initiatives have included a comprehensive package of support for staff, the relaunch of the Food Champions network, the launch of Welcoming Spaces for residents to access and the distribution of 'warm boxes' to residents in most need.

Nominations

We celebrated our third anniversary as a single unitary authority for Buckinghamshire on 1 April.

Paul Rowsell CBE Head of Governance Reform and Democracy Unit Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities visited the council in March for a really positive meeting where we were able to reflect on our successes and points of learning after the first three years as a new unitary council.

At this time, I am delighted to share that despite our young age, we have been shortlisted for the LGC Council of the Year award 2023. The winner will be announced in June and will be chosen on the basis of the delivery of strong outcomes, the quality of the council's community leadership, and the evidence that the council is doing the best for its area, all in response to the specific challenge the council has faced in all areas of its work. In addition, we have also been shortlisted for a number of other awards in the LGC, MJ and national awards.

England's Economic Heartland

EEH's next tranche of connectivity studies, which identify potential transport interventions along a number of strategic corridors, have commenced. These cover the geographies 'Thames Valley-Buckinghamshire-Milton Keynes-Northampton' and 'Southern East West movements' (central and southern Buckinghamshire across to Hertfordshire's border with Essex). A call for evidence, inviting interested parties to submit their views on connectivity in these two corridors, will launch in May. EEH officers are meeting with cabinet members from the relevant local authorities and Buckinghamshire Council officers are closely engaged with the studies through the project steering group. A study on the Oxford-Milton Keynes corridor has already been completed and is available on the EEH website.

[Oxford-Milton Keynes connectivity study.pdf \(eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/Oxford-Milton_Keynes_connectivity_study.pdf)

EEH continues to press the case for investment in the region, particularly focusing on securing funding for major roads, including the Aylesbury link roads, while it is also working with the East West Main Line Partnership and Buckinghamshire Council on pressing the case for the East West Rail link to Aylesbury. The opening of the line from Oxford to Milton Keynes, via Winslow, remains on schedule for late 2024/ early 2025. An announcement is expected in May which will set the preferred route for East West Rail from Milton Keynes to Cambridge.

In March, EEH published the most in-depth guidance yet on how to develop business cases for mobility hubs (which are accessible spaces where public, shared and active travel modes are co-located). The guidance focuses particularly on more rural areas and will support local authorities in the region – and potentially across the country – as they plan visible, safe, and accessible co-located spaces. [England's Economic Heartland providing leadership on mobility hubs - England's Economic Heartland \(englandseconomicheartland.com\)](https://englandseconomicheartland.com)

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

Leaders wrote to the new Secretaries of State for Health and Social Care, setting out concerns and ideas regarding adult social care and the Government's proposals to reform charging and costs, seeking a delay to the changes.

Leaders wrote to the new Prime Minister, setting out ideas on the challenges of inflation and the rising cost of living, concerns about social care, and ideas for levelling up. The ideas about levelling up and devolution were also presented in letters to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Minister for Levelling Up.

We also wrote to the Minister for Immigration regarding families from Ukraine and other countries, asylum seekers, the role of strategic authorities and pressures on services.

In November, Leaders held a meeting focused on budget setting and the outlook for strategic authorities in the wider South East.

In December's conference, Leaders met the Local Government Minister to discuss local government finance, priorities and challenges. We also met senior civil servants to discuss the long-term reform of adults' social care, and the President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services to discuss the pressures and challenges on children's service ahead of the anticipated plans for reforms.





Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services
Councillor Anita Cranmer

Youth Voice Bucks

On Thursday 23 February 2023, the first ever Bucks Youth Summit took place at the Waterside Theatre in Aylesbury. The event was planned and hosted by the young people in our county-wide Youth Forum, Youth Voice. The event invited students from schools across the county to share their voice on the biggest issues and areas of interest for young people in Buckinghamshire today. The event also acted as the launch of the Youth Participation Strategy for young people.



142 students from 16 schools attended and spoke about a number of key themes that matter to them, ranging from mental health, a youth-led conversation on sexual violence and access for young people in rural communities

The event was youth-led, exciting, lively, and empowering for the young people that took part, and the feedback has been incredible. The outputs of each conversation are being collated by facilitators and workstreams are launching to ensure action is taken in response to the young people’s feedback. These workstreams will be monitored by the Youth



Voice forum and young attendees will be kept updated on progress via email and the YouthVoiceBucks website. Due to the event’s huge success, Youth Voice Bucks and the Youth Voice forum plan to make this an annual event! The next Youth Summit will take place on Wednesday 28 February 2024, again at The Waterside Theatre. For more information about the Youth Voice Bucks programme, please explore www.YouthVoiceBucks.co.uk and/or contact youthvoicebucks@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

Local Area SEND Co-production Event

Colleagues across our local area partner organisations, schools and parent/carer representatives all came together at an event held on Tuesday 7 March 2023 to talk about co-production. Co-production is about developing equal working partnerships between children and young people who use services, their families, carers and professionals.

The aim of the event was for colleagues to find out more about the benefits of co-production, what is currently happening in Buckinghamshire and how we can all play our part in championing co-production in SEND services. During the day, the Buckinghamshire SEND Co-production Charter was launched. The Charter is the agreed shared principles and way of working for co-production in SEND services across the Buckinghamshire local area. We also launched the Buckinghamshire Co-production Promise, a way for people to sign-up to support the Buckinghamshire Co-production Charter.



The event was very well attended with almost 100 colleagues coming together to hear guest speakers share examples and case studies of co-production they have worked on with children and young people with SEND and their families. Attendees also took part in a group workshop activity, the outputs of which will feed into the ongoing SEND improvement work programme. Feedback from attendees about the event was extremely positive.

Alongside the event, resources are being developed to help co-production embed across the local area; including a co-production toolkit, aimed at anyone working with children and young people with SEND and/or their families. The toolkit will give a practical understanding of what co-production is, how effective it can be and how to do it well. We plan to continue the co-production conversation during National Co-production Week in July 2023 and on an ongoing basis. Find out more at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coproduction.

Buckinghamshire pupils swap the school classroom for the international conference room

On Friday 3 March 2023, nearly 100 pupils from eight different secondary schools across Buckinghamshire, swapped their classrooms for the conference room as they took part in a live action role-play event modelled on the global United Nations Conference. The Buckinghamshire Model United Nations (Bucks MUN) Conference took place at the Council Chamber in High Wycombe. A total of 93 students took part, representing 27 different countries and five international media organisations.



The theme of this year's event was Freedom of Movement. The students were asked to discuss and consider a range of topics linked to the movement of people around the world. From refugees fleeing civil war

or natural disasters, to those proactively seeking to move to another country to pursue a better life, there are millions of people moving around the globe for a variety of reasons. The students taking part in the event were prompted to consider the impacts and implications of this movement in a humanitarian, political and economic capacity, both for the individuals and the countries involved.

The Bucks MUN event, now in its 12th year, is organised by Buckinghamshire Council in partnership with schools across the county, but the origins of MUN go back to the United States in the 1930s. Its aim is to engage students in current world affairs and develop communication, negotiation and debating skills. It helps students develop skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection as well as deepening their understanding of identity, diversity, equality and community. The event is designed to simulate the format of real-world international forums.

At the end of the day awards were presented to the pupils who excelled in a range of skills including public speaking, diplomacy, delivery and media skills. Some of these pupils could well be the negotiators, diplomats and policy makers of tomorrow and all our school children of today will have a future part to play in the continued protection of our planet and its people. The small lessons and insights they have learned as part of this event will help them in whatever job they pursue.

Placements for Looked After Children



As you will all be aware, when a child comes into care, the council becomes their Corporate Parent. As Corporate Parents it is our collective responsibility to provide the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us. Looking after and protecting children and young people is one of the most important jobs that councils do and when a child, for whatever reason, cannot safely stay at home, it is up to us as the local authority to step in and give them the care, support and stability that they deserve. The local authority has the legal responsibility for

placing looked after children in either foster placements or children's homes. Buckinghamshire, like all local authorities, utilises a mixture of internal placements, those run by the Council, and external placements run by private organisations. Currently, the service has 18 residential beds available across our four children's homes, this includes four beds within our newly established parent and baby unit, Sunflower House. The quality of provision across our homes is also extremely high with two of them now rated by Ofsted as 'Outstanding'. We are delighted that the hard work and determination of our residential teams has been recognised by Ofsted. Our children receive the highest level of care and are all fully engaged with their education and an array of activities. Our home managers work tirelessly to achieve the best outcomes for the children in their care and receiving our two outstanding judgements recognises this.

Children's Services Transformation

There is corporate and political recognition that we must work differently in order to realise our shared ambition to deliver good quality services to children. The service has refined, throughout its improvement journey, a comprehensive self-assessment from which a whole system Children's Services Transformation Programme has been developed. The Transformation Programme aims to:

- Enhance the effectiveness of support provided by improving collaboration through better sharing of information and increased system-wide multi-disciplinary ways of working.

- Target need variation through locality specific services and development of responsive, community-based interventions.
- Ensure children and families are supported at the earliest possible stage through effective partnership interventions that improve outcomes without the need for escalation to more intrusive statutory support.
- Rebalance from a model of process and performance to enhance availability of system-wide support that can reduce avoidable demand by focusing on the most prevalent presenting needs.
- Develop a sustainable approach to placement sufficiency in response to unprecedented challenges arising from changes within the external placements market.
- Develop a highly skilled, permanent Children's Services workforce where the workforce feels valued and supported and are encouraged to develop their skills and capabilities in order to secure good quality outcomes for children and young people.

The proposed changes to the way in which the Service operates are in line with national policy direction and are based on ensuring that children receive a consistent, purposeful and child centred approach wherever they are on their journey of need from early help through to being in care. A Children's Transformation Board has been set up to maintain oversight of the delivery of the programme and will provide direction, challenge and rigour whilst ensuring partner involvement in the programme's delivery. It will provide essential governance and assurance to the transformation workstreams, supporting Children's Services' vision and commitment to delivering good services to children.





Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

Developing a new vision and strategy for our libraries

Buckinghamshire Libraries have evolved in recent years and while traditional book borrowing remains at their core, these cherished places are developing as hubs for the local community. Libraries host various classes, events and workshops; have provided Welcoming Spaces (warm and friendly places) this winter; provide free digital access for residents; and many also now operate as Council Access Points.

After a wide consultation with residents, staff, volunteers, councillors, and partners, we have developed a new vision and strategy for our libraries, with a clear set of priorities to ensure we continue meeting the evolving needs of our communities and maximise libraries' contribution to key agendas across Buckinghamshire; this was approved by Cabinet on 21 March. The strategy sets out how we will work in partnership to:

- encourage reading and learning, and grow the libraries' cultural offer
- build stronger communities
- promote health and well-being through the Healthy Libraries programme and
- enable access, information and inclusion.

Early Years Communication Week

From 27 February to 3 March, Buckinghamshire Libraries worked in partnership with Early Years to host various events to promote the value of 'Engage with Chat, Explore with Play, Encourage to Read' for young children and babies. This included bestselling and multi award-winning children's author Karl Newson reading his fabulous and very funny 'I Really, Really Need a Wee!' at a special online event. Over the week, the libraries also held 53 Bounce and Rhyme and Storytime sessions, with 584 attendees.

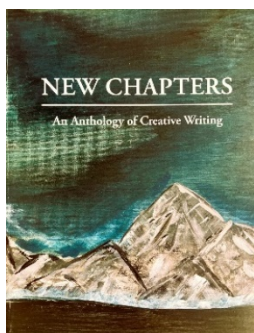
Healthy Libraries

The service has been working with Public Health to develop and pilot an overarching health and wellbeing framework for libraries, delivering a co-ordinated programme of activities based on the needs of local communities. The programme aims to encompass and enhance the range of information, support and community activity available in local libraries to improve healthy lifestyles, connectedness and wellbeing, focusing on the themes of the Buckinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy – Start Well, Live Well, Age Well. The initial pilot involves seven libraries across the county.



As part of the pilot, Buckingham Library and the Alzheimer Society Local Service in Buckinghamshire produced a new set of resources that are available to support people living with dementia and their families and carers. The new resources include an information stand and reminiscence materials that contain various games, activities and books. The Dementia Friendly Community Support initiative was launched at Buckingham Library in March.

New Chapters



Delivered by The National Literacy Trust, the New Chapters project aims to support and inspire people in prisons, young offender institutions (YOIs) and other secure settings through the power of creative writing. The project ran in a number of settings in Buckinghamshire including HMP Aylesbury, Oakhill STC, HMP Grendon and HMP Springhill. Creative writing workshops were led by authors with lived experience relatable to the participants; the National Literacy Trust also collated an anthology of participants' work which was showcased across the prison estate and at Buckinghamshire libraries, community festivals and beyond.

Online room booking

Buckinghamshire Libraries have launched a new online room booking and payments system, giving customers increased access to and visibility of our facilities. The system is available 24/7 for customers to book rooms in 11 libraries, using a real-time availability calendar. It has also streamlined processes for staff and provides robust reporting, enabling us to continuously improve our services by reviewing trends and proactively reacting to customer behaviours. To view the new system visit [Find a library | Buckinghamshire Council](#), select a library and click on book a room.

Culture

Buckinghamshire Archives has recently made a number of improvements in response to customer feedback, including rearranging its public access space, increasing opening times, and reintroduction of on-the-day production of original documents.

Buckinghamshire Culture, the county's independent cultural partnership, ran its first ever conference, '*Cultural Capital*', at Missenden Abbey on 23 March. Booked to capacity, the event included keynote speakers Jenny Sealey OBE and Mark Damazer CBE.

The '*Together We Build*' project celebrating 10 years since London 2012 and Buckinghamshire's Paralympic Legacy, concluded with a celebration event at the Elgiva Theatre in Chesham on 18 March. The event was attended by all the project partners, including Buckinghamshire Archives, and many participants.

The Discover Bucks Museum's exhibition '*Your Amazing Brain*' ran until mid-April and proved popular with visitors. There was an excellent and varied programme of events running alongside the exhibition, including a lecture series, brain-themed craft days and optical illusion-based events.

Plans are well underway for WhizzFizzFest, the Council's annual family-friendly arts festival. This year we are working with partners around the county to bring creative activity to three fantastic events:

- **Sunday 2 July** – WhizzFizzFest @ Aylesbury on Sea with Aylesbury Town Council
- **Saturday 8 July** – WhizzFizzFest @ Desborough Carnival with High Wycombe BIDCo
- **Saturday 15 July** – WhizzFizzFest @ Hats Off Chesham with Chesham Connect

The festival programme will also feature a family-friendly show which will visit libraries and a children's author event at Discover Bucks Museum. Keep an eye on our [What's On](#) page for further information as details are announced.



Country Parks, Parks and Play Areas

Parks (country parks and urban parks) customer satisfaction levels (excellent or very good) remain stable at an excellent 91.9% using Google and Trip Advisor reviews with 11,385 reviews completed.

Play area replacement projects in parks across the county are ongoing. Higginson Park in Marlow completed a consultation exercise with the local community to inform the design brief for the replacement play area in the park; one of the key features of the new design is that the plastics used in the products come from recovered and recycled ocean plastics. We hope the works to install the new play area will be completed before the start of the summer holidays. A similar consultation exercise is underway for the replacement of the popular Ropes on the Rye play area in High Wycombe. Works on the Bridge Street skate park in Buckingham are also due to start in the near future and as soon as dates are confirmed by the contractor communications will be sent out to the community and other key stakeholders.

The new country park near Stoke Poges has been progressing at pace, with the site now being shaped into the undulating form of the landscape design. Soil importations will continue for a while longer as materials are delivered to construct the final visitor facilities, alongside transforming the former clubhouse into a new café with associated facilities. A soft opening of the site is anticipated for late 2023, with formal opening next year after the site has settled and as plants begin to grow.

The Litter Bugs trail at Black Park Country Park was shortlisted as a finalist for the 2023 Keep Britain Tidy Network Awards (Community Engagement category), receiving the runner-up award. This free trail of giant bugs made from litter was back in the park from mid-March to mid-April, in conjunction with the Keep Britain Tidy Great British Spring Clean 2023 campaign. A giant woodlouse made from helium balloons can be seen in this picture.



Leisure Centres

Our leisure centres have continued to see strong visitor numbers during the final quarter of the year, with visits expected to exceed 3.5m during 2022/23, including over 1.5m visits to the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre. Investment in other new facilities such as the soft play at Chesham Leisure Centre is encouraging and supporting new groups to enjoy this venue, including a new Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) session on Saturday mornings, enabling families to use the soft play and sensory space in a relaxed noise-free environment with no music or bright lights. Work will also begin shortly on the athletics track at Little Marlow, with track repairs and field event equipment.



Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

Buckinghamshire Highways – New Service Model

The new arrangements for the Council's 'Buckinghamshire Highways' service commenced on 1st April 2023. The previous 'Transport for Buckinghamshire' contract ceased with Ringway Jacobs and contracts with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP), as the new term maintenance contractor, and Atkins, as the new term consultant, are now operational. Both providers are working in close partnership with the Council's client team and will be known collectively as Buckinghamshire Highways. They will be supported by a number of contractors for certain activities and specialisms which have been appointed via framework agreements. The key objectives are to improve service delivery, customer engagement and satisfaction, be able to better demonstrate value for money and maximise innovation and opportunities. There is an information page for Members to refer to and social media accounts for the public -@Bucks_Highways on Twitter and BucksHighways on Facebook.



**Buckinghamshire
Highways**

Highway defects

The teams have been working tirelessly, including weekend work, to respond to the surge in reports. The very cold weather that started in December continued into January/February. This combined with very wet conditions, led to unprecedented levels of defects reported with over 4,000 reports (predominantly potholes) in January alone reported through Fix My Street, the most effective way to report issues on the highway. Over 3,500 were made safe within five days and any outstanding or requiring permanent repairs are added to forthcoming programmes. Additional resources have been brought in to help address the number of defects received and this has already shown good progress. The confirmation of additional council funding of £5m and central government funding of £2.3m specifically to tackle the effects of the harsh winter is adding to the record capital funding of £105m over four years being made available to tackle our roads. A programme of additional schemes to tackle the effects of this harsh winter on our network are being planned and programmed to be delivered when we have drier and warmer weather. This will include plane and patch schemes, specialist surfacing, traditional surfacing and use of the innovative 'pothole pro' machine.

Gully Cleansing



This year, our highways gullies crews faced many challenges, including extremely cold weather and vehicles parked over 4,214 gullies which prevented cleaning them first time. Gully machines cannot operate in sub-zero temperatures and efforts to suspend parking and advise motorists were also hampered by the need to frequently change the programme due to the weather. The team involved were also flexibly deployed to help tackle the significant number of potholes we saw in January. Despite these setbacks, a huge effort has been put in from all involved in the programme, especially the crews out on the network carrying out the work.

Investigative and reactive works plus revisits to gullies that were not able to be cleaned first time have continued too. The crews have cleaned 330 manholes, 336 catchpits and 155 soakaways. Additionally, 2396 channels/pipes have been cleared with 33,015m of channels / drainage pipes inspected. As a result of the enhanced programme, we have seen a 16% reduction in average silt levels this year compared to last year and those gullies yet to be cleansed by the end of March will be first on the rolling programme this year.

Completed Capital Maintenance Programme for 2022/23

We completed our Capital Maintenance Programme for 2022/23 which addressed some of the significant schemes that require substantial repair. This year we completed 151 sites including Network Safety Schemes, plane and patch schemes and failed road sites.



Quinton Path Reopening

Following pressure on HS2 by our Strategic Access Officers, their contractor EKFB has reopened part of Bridleway QUA/28/1 earlier than planned, this brings back a long network of walks for residents on the west side of Quinton village that would otherwise have remained closed until March 2025. The link forms a triangle between Towns End Farm, Railway Cottage and Shipton Lee.

A41 PPTC



All construction works for the A41 priority public transport corridor project were completed at the end of March, alongside work to fine-tune the signal timings of the junction and help it adapt to traffic flows and patterns so the junction runs as efficiently as possible. The new technology (Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)) that have been installed will work in conjunction with the highway changes along the A41 to reduce congestion, reduce journey times, improve journey time reliability, and improve bus service information.

The Ridgeway at 50

Popularly known as 'Britain's oldest road', The Ridgeway still follows the same route over the high ground used since prehistoric times by travellers, herdsman and soldiers. Today it is popular with walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders and people using mobility scooters.

Buckinghamshire Council is a member of the Ridgeway Partnership, which oversees the management and promotion of this national trail between Overton Hill near Avebury to Ivinghoe Beacon. Celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the opening ceremony on Coombe Hill, Wendover, will take place in September this year and residents are invited to take part. The [Ridgeway Top 50 launch](#)

[video](#) starts a year-long treasure hunt revealing things about The Ridgeway National Trail as one way of celebrating.

Anti-social behaviour in car parks

An Injunction Order was granted at High Wycombe County Court on 7th March 2023 to address persons sleeping in Easton Street and the Swan multi-storey car parks, along with the Town Hall arches and QVR. Street Wardens work with the Homeless team to find accommodation and signpost all those that are open to receiving support and we work with our security provider to increase the level of patrols, support cleaning regimes and help reduce the safety risks.

Additionally, we are trialling anti-graffiti paint at a car park in High Wycombe and security shutters have been fitted to Easton Street car park. From 17 April 2023 the car park will be closed overnight. The timings are Sunday to Thursday closed 11pm to 6am, Friday/Saturday closed 12 Midnight to 6am. The Swan multi-storey car park will remain open with extra security measures.

Wycombe Barrier Car Parks (Easton Street/Swan/Handy Cross)

Barriers and equipment were removed in March this year from the Handy Cross Park and Ride car park, Swan and Easton Street and new contactless card payment machines installed. The alternative payment method is via RingGo, this provides more flexibility for customers to pay for parking.

School Transport Contract Compliance

The Client Transport team provide transport assistance to children and young people who are [eligible for free school transport](#). They play a pivotal role in ensuring the safety of clients that travel on home to school and social care transport.



In 2022, the Client Transport Compliance Team carried out:

- Over 1,100 spot checks and visited 176 schools and other establishments.
- 735 Buckinghamshire Council ID badge applications for drivers and passenger assistants working on Council-commissioned contracts.
- 46 wheelchair training courses and 68 safeguarding and induction training courses resulting in:
 - 412 drivers and passenger assistants completing Safeguarding and Induction Training
 - 218 drivers and passenger assistants wheelchair trained

Public Bus Services

The Government announced that the £2 bus fare cap for is to be extended until the end of June 2023 and operators have been invited to continue to take part in the scheme.

The Public Transport team has worked with local commercial bus operators to bring forward two new support schemes for passengers which will continue after the fare cap scheme ends.

This Spring, Arriva and Carousel Buses are introducing subscription-based ticketing for High Wycombe [Smart Zone](#). This will give users a 9% discount over the course of a year when compared to the cost of 13, four-week tickets, which are currently the cheapest Smart Zone tickets.

From 1st April to the 31st August, all bus operators in Buckinghamshire will offer pre- 09:00 use of the Concessionary Fares (Older and Disabled Persons) bus pass. This means it will cost £1 to use the pass before 09:00 on weekdays instead of paying the full single fare. Bus use with a concessionary pass remains free between 09:00 and 24:00 on weekdays and all day at weekends.

Local Transport Plan 5

The Council will be undertaking public consultation on the Vision and Objectives for both our forthcoming Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LP4B) and Local Transport Plan (LTP5). This will be the first LTP created for Buckinghamshire Council, superseding the Buckinghamshire County Council LTP4, published in 2016.

The two consultations will take place on [Your Voice Bucks](#), starting in April 2023 and remaining open for six weeks. Once this is complete, we will review feedback from the consultation survey and incorporate this into the development of the main LTP5 documents, to be developed later this year. We are aiming to carry out a further public consultation on the draft LTP5 in Winter 2023. Dates for this are yet to be confirmed.

Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Update

The Council has commenced installation of 128 new electric vehicle (EV) charging bays in 16 Buckinghamshire Council-managed car parks. These are funded by the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) through their On-Street Residential ChargePoint Scheme (ORCS). Installation is progressing speedily and expected to complete by May 2023.

We have recently received £142k funding from OZEV's Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund. £70k of this is to support a trial of on-street EV infrastructure in Wendover. This will include new on-street lamppost or bollard-mounted chargepoints and/or in-pavement cable channels; allowing households without a driveway to run charging cables safely underneath the pavement.

Active Travel Funding

In the first nationwide assessment of local transport authorities' capabilities to deliver active travel led by Active Travel England, the Council was rated as a Level 2, defined as 'strong local leadership, with clear plans that form the basis of an emerging network with a few elements already in place'.

The Council has since been awarded £397k through the Active Travel Capability and Ambition Fund. The Council will be using this funding to plan future active travel networks, carry out feasibility work for future routes, promote and monitor new routes and provide resources to schools to encourage children and young people to walk, cycle and scoot to and from school.

The Council also submitted a bid through Active Travel Fund 4 to seek funding to develop and deliver new active travel infrastructure. The Council's bid focused on routes in Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Buckingham and Iver, aligned with the Fund objectives and our existing/emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (or equivalent local network plans). The designs of the funded routes will be developed further in consultation with local members, stakeholders and communities, with delivery planned for 2024/25.

Platinum Way



The 3rd and final phase in the upgrade to the Platinum Way cycleway was completed in March with the construction of three parallel (Tiger) crossings. The scheme funded by the Department for Transport (£1.398m) will also help to increase active travel. The new crossings are part of a programme of improvements to the route from Aylesbury town centre to Fairford Leys, Haydon Hill and beyond and joining on to the very popular Waddesdon Greenway. The project benefitted from community groups getting involved to plant trees, hedges

and wildflowers helping create important habitat for local wildlife and a more attractive route for walkers and cyclists.



HS2 and EWR

The Council continues to challenge ongoing construction work on HS2 and East West Rail to hold both companies and their contractors to account across a wide range of issues against the impacts on our environment, residents, communities and businesses. We continue to challenge on proposed designs including overbridges across the county and wider impact on the landscapes. We also continue to press for further recompense from HS2 Ltd to adequately fix the damage they are causing and we have secured a programme of permanent repairs to [12 roads in 12 months](#) from EWR to reinstate roads as a result of their construction activities.





Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing
Councillor Angela Macpherson

Market Sustainability Plan

In October 2022 the Adult Social Care Reforms, originally due to be implemented from October 2023, were delayed for two years. Despite the delay, local authorities were required to complete two actions - to publish summarised outcomes of our Fair Cost of Care exercises and publish (and submit to Department of Health and Social Care) a Market Sustainability Plan (MSP) by the end of March.

The Buckinghamshire Fair Cost of Care information and Market Sustainability Plan can be read [here](#) and paper copies can be requested from businessstrategyadults@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

CQC Short assurance of Seeleys Breaks Centre

Buckinghamshire Council runs the Seeleys House Short Breaks Centre in Beaconsfield – Seeleys provides respite care for people with learning and/or physical disabilities to provide their carers with a valuable break. I am delighted to report that following inspection in January 2023, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) awarded a rating of “good”.



The service received a consistent ‘Good’ rating across all criteria, including safety, effectiveness and leadership. This marks a significant improvement for Seeleys House, which previously received a rating of ‘Requires Improvement’ in 2019. The full CQC report has been published and is available to read on the CQC website.

The report highlights the appropriate, professional interaction between staff and residents, with residents observed to be smiling, laughing and relaxed in the home.

Relatives of residents described the staff as:

- "Excellent."
- "Professional and friendly."
- "Approachable, caring, efficient, interested in who they are looking after."

Community Cafes

February 2023 was the 1st year anniversary of the social care community café service, which has gone from strength to strength. The community cafes offer an alternative way for people to receive adult social care support and guidance, providing a face-to-face service in community locations. The cafés are now also supported by Occupational Therapy, the Council’s Helping Hands service and Voluntary Sector partners such as One Recovery Bucks, Women’s Aid and Connections Support.

Three community cafés are held each week, operating from Aylesbury, Chesham, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, High Wycombe, and Burnham. 1,114 people have used the service in the 12

months up to February 2023 - an average of 86 people per week. An online booking system is also being developed so that people can book straight into a café. Feedback from residents using the café service has been really good - but it's hard to track the impact of the cafes, beyond immediate feedback, as the service is usually advice and guidance, and we will be exploring how to evaluate the longer-term impact of the service.

Co-production

During the last six months we have been developing a co-production approach to support and embed a way of working that ensures that people who draw on social care are central in how our services are designed and delivered. I have been championing this as it is an important part of our Better Lives Strategy which includes a commitment to “co-produce and design services with people receiving support from Adult Social Care”.

As part of developing this approach, local people were asked, what is important to them when we work together and what values should underpin our approach. Following this series of events and conversations, we are creating a resource to guide people who work in social care and those who draw on social care to work together and co-produce how services are provided. This guide will soon be available on-line; and will also be available for other council services to use.

Co-production is not completely new – and there are excellent examples of co-production across my portfolio – but this new approach will support co-production being systematically embedded and will be continuously reviewed to ensure that it reflects learning and best practice.

CQC Assurance

The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance of how councils are discharging their adult social care duties as defined by the Care Act. Councils were last subject to CQC assurance of adult social care in 2010. Buckinghamshire County Council was inspected in 2008 with an outcome of “good”.

The CQC started this new assurance regime in April, starting with some national desktop benchmarking of councils and a number of pilot assessments to help establish a baseline; and then will commence assurance of all councils responsible for adult social care over the following two years. A clear focus in the assessment will be the experience of people using our social care services and for this reason, CQC will be keen to hear the views of service users, residents and partners. At this stage, we do not know when Buckinghamshire is likely to be inspected.

Hewitt Review

The Hewitt Review has looked at integrated care systems and how they can be improved to benefit population health; and Buckinghamshire Council responded to the call for evidence in January. The [Hewitt Review published its findings](#) on 4th April.

I am really pleased that the review recommends a clear focus on prevention, that health and social care have parity in the remit of ICSs and the importance of a focus on children and young people and children's social care – all of which reflect points that we made in our submission. The government will make its response later this year but, in the meantime, I will be promoting these recommendations in my role within the BOB ICS.

The BOB Integrated Care Partnership – of which I am vice-chair – agreed its [strategy](#) on 24th March following extensive public consultation in December and January; and I am very pleased that it closely aligns with the priorities of the Buckinghamshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

DHSC Webinar on Managing Quality in Commissioned Social Care Services

The Integrated Commissioning Service was recently invited to present a best practice webinar on behalf of the Social Care Institute of Excellence and the Department of Health and Social Care. Over the last two years, the Integrated Commissioning Service has been developing a more consistent and

robust approach to the quality oversight of commissioned care and support providers for adults. For example, when monitoring concerns with a provider, the service will take into account a much wider range of information than is typically undertaken. This has been formalised in a Quality Monitoring Framework which has been welcomed by both the CQC and providers. The SCIE webinar can be viewed online at: [Webinar: Provider Quality Oversight – practice sharing \(scie.org.uk\)](https://www.scie.org.uk/webinars/provider-quality-oversight-practice-sharing)

The approaches developed within Integrated Commissioning have received external praise, including from the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University, who are using some of the work as best practice examples in their training for local authorities.

Healthy Lifestyle Service



Buckinghamshire Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have recently recommissioned the Healthy Lifestyle Services in Buckinghamshire. The Be Healthy Bucks service will include stop smoking, adult and child weight management, outreach NHS Health Checks and enhanced alcohol brief intervention. In addition, it will have a Single Point of Access for these services and signposting to other healthy lifestyle services – residents can self-refer digitally or by phone where they will speak with a Health and Wellbeing Coach in the first instance.

There will be three community engagement and partnership workers who will be place-based directly in the key target communities and will be able to work with people face-to-face and sign them up there and then to services.

The new service started on April 1st - the website is [here](#) where people can find out more about it and also self-refer.

Better Points Launches in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Council Public Health team has partnered with Better Points, a behaviour change programme that incentivises and rewards people for making positive changes to their lives.

Users collect points through completing physical activities which earn them vouchers which they can spend on the high street or donate to charity. We have also partnered with leisure centres, Wycombe Wanderers Football Club and Be Healthy Bucks to offer extra points when accessing their sessions or facilities too. Individuals are also rewarded for engaging in wider healthy life initiatives such as stopping smoking and weight management programmes.



This video [Changing behaviour with BetterPoints – YouTube](#) provides a good overview of the programme. The BetterPoints app can be downloaded from the Apple app store and Google Play.

Since 1st January, when BetterPoints Bucks launched, 775 residents have registered with 39% of those coming from within our Opportunity Bucks wards. Current engagement with the app is 53% - this exceeds expectations and experience elsewhere with similar apps.

Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds



Public Health is working with Community Boards and Parish Councils to implement a Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds initiative, aimed at reducing the impact of smoking in the community.

Cold Harbour Parish has installed Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds signage at eleven of the parish's play parks. Steeple Claydon Parish Council has installed Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds signage in the children's corner play area and multi-use games area of Steeple Claydon park. It will be launched locally in April 2023. The signs were created as part of the Stoke Mandeville Combined School, 'Design a Sign' competition for the Eskdale Road Play Park and were used as part of a pre-designed sign package for Steeple Claydon. A 'Design a Sign' competition is currently running for Millbrook Combined School. This will allow the school to create a bespoke sign for Desborough Road Recreational Ground and play park. Signage designed by local children builds further awareness and support from the local community for the Smokefree Parks and Playground initiative. The winning design will be announced on 19 May 2023.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening with the Homeless Community in High Wycombe

The Buckinghamshire Council public health team worked with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), colleagues in the BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB), specialist tuberculosis (TB) services and the local Voluntary and Community Sector to deliver a TB screening event for members of the local homeless community in December.

During the successful event, alongside ad hoc GP consultations delivered by the Priory Surgery, warm clothes, hot drinks and food voucher distribution, the team on site delivered:

- 57 Chest Xray's (active TB screening)
- 33 tests for blood borne viruses
- 11 urine tests for sexually transmitted diseases
- 15 COVID vaccinations and 17 seasonal influenza vaccinations
- Two enrolled to One Recovery Bucks
- Eight identified with various health problems and now under the care of the relevant team

The impact of this event cannot be underestimated as homeless are exceptionally vulnerable to poor health and are very likely to slip through the net of usual health services.

My thanks to Wycombe Homeless Connection, the YMCA, One Recovery Bucks, Terrence Higgins Trust, the TB screening team, the Priory Surgery, Street Wardens and everyone else involved for making the event such a success.

Innovation in Public Health Awards

The UKPHR (UK Public Health Register) Innovation in Public Health Awards, offers an opportunity to celebrate achievements in improving public health and reducing inequalities. Buckinghamshire Public Health were finalists in the following two categories:



- **Translating evidence into practice:** For the 'Behavioural Science Trailblazer' programme, which is adding to the evidence base for the use of behavioural science by Local Authority Public Health teams and has already led to us employing a Behavioural Science Practitioner. The judges complimented us on our exemplary example of translating evidence into practice and how this has led to a major change in the team.
- **Outstanding employer of the year:** For the 'Practitioner Trainee' role we created to provide a career pathway into public health by gaining on the job experience whilst consolidating this with the UKPHR registration. We have also supported several existing staff to undertake UKPHR registration. The team also support the UKPHR scheme by volunteering as mentors, assessors, and verifiers. The judges felt we had an innovative and comprehensive approach, and specifically complimented us on our recruitment and personal development plan process and the success of the Practitioner Trainee role.



Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration
Councillor Peter Strachan

Business Improvement District (BID) Update

The Council remain close delivery partners with the High Wycombe Town Centre BID (HWBIDCo) and the two business park BIDs at Cressex (High Wycombe) and Globe Park (Marlow). Anti-Social Behaviour is a key current focus for HWBIDCo – and recent traffic congestion being the main issue for our businesses on Cressex Business Park. Both matters are being looked at to reach solutions and resolutions for such issues. Cllr Mrs Lesley Clarke OBE has been appointed as the Advisory member on the Cressex Business Park BID Board and the inaugural meeting took place on 31 January 2023. Helen Keats (Smartcomm) and Emma Gray (Mediplus Ltd) both local businesses, accepted continuing as Chair and Vice Chair of the BID board.

Aylesbury Town Centre Update

The Economic Development Team ran a successful Aylesbury Business Forum at Metro Bank in February. Feedback received from attendees is being used to schedule a series of future forums as well as to consider other ways to expand and support the network of key stakeholders in Aylesbury Town Centre. Ongoing engagement with businesses and stakeholder is helping to identify small scale interventions that will help improve the vibrancy of the town, such as refreshing the decals on the Jahoots building on the High Street for example.

Visitor Economy Strategy Update

Workshops, 121 interviews and stakeholder engagement have now been carried out as part of the development of a Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire. This will be used to develop key themes and opportunities for the county and provide a framework for both council and partner delivery. This is an important new strategy for the county as it will help us outline our approach to making Buckinghamshire a destination of choice and supporting its tourism related businesses and activities in generating greater economic vibrancy.

Town Centre Markets

The Council continues to support our town centre markets and traders. The national picture shows that market trader numbers remain lower than pre-COVID levels and this is the case for Bucks' local markets too. The Council is undertaking a piece of work to review the current state of markets and to identify measures that can be taken forward to initiate activities to improve the quality of our markets and increase footfall to them. Markets have an important role in bringing activity and liveliness to our public spaces and also provide opportunities to support the growth of our local business communities. For people wanting to create new businesses, markets can provide that first public trading opportunity to test new products and build an initial customer base. An expansion of the 'On the High Street' pilot in High Wycombe to support start-ups (carried out as part of the 'Welcome Back Fund') is currently being investigated for Aylesbury and Chesham markets. We are

also preparing for a campaign to encourage more market traders to come to Buckinghamshire and this will feed into that national 'Love Your Local Market' campaign in May.

Regeneration

In *Aylesbury*, the garden town's communities programme has supported the renewal of the station platform beds at Aylesbury Railway station. This was a partnership project with Chiltern Railways to improve the arrival experience for residents and visitors to Aylesbury.

The Secret window project is a visual installation under the arches of a grade 2 listed building which has been recently completed. It celebrates Aylesbury's rich music history, the installation will help to improve the environment under the arches and will be revealed to the public shortly.

The Council is currently in discussions with Homes England about the ongoing funding and what implications that has for Buckinghamshire's participation in the national Garden Town Programme. Indications are that the funding we receive locally may decrease substantially or cease altogether as resource is directed to the newly announced Garden Town areas. Clarity on this national programme will inform next year's activities to take the Aylesbury Garden Town masterplan forward.

Within *Chesham M&CO* has recently fallen into administration which has a prominent location on Chesham High Street. The building it occupies is close to the Broadway and has rear parking facing Lowndes Park next to Star Yard car park, locations which feature in the emerging strategy and neighbourhood development order plans for Chesham as having potential to unlock regeneration. Council teams are urgently investigating this potential, including opportunities to lease or purchase the building, costs, and viability, planning and other practical considerations and will move reports through the appropriate boards as soon as is practicable.

There are also a number of small projects in the early stages of development such the redecoration of the alley next to Waitrose which leads to the high street, *in a partnership between the town council, Waitrose and Chesham Museum* and other interventions around air-quality, active movement and wayfinding.

White Hart Street is a public realm enhancement scheme in the heart of *High Wycombe*. The location, between the historic High Street and Eden shopping centre will be transformed into a destination that prioritises pedestrians and encourages dwell time. The new space will be economically, socially and environmentally resilient and fit for purposes for the 21st century. The scheme is now being managed internally, with a delivery consultant to be commissioned in April 2023. Detailed design due to complete in summer 2023 and, following a public consultation, construction delivery is due to begin in the autumn.

Future High Streets Fund activity continues with progress on 16 Church Street, The Guildhall, Little Market House, 22 Queen's Sq. The repurposing of House of Fraser is due to complete in October 2023. The option to purchase has now been signed with the Liberal Club and DLUC has agreed to add 22 Church Street (repurposing a long-term vacant ground floor unit) to the programme.

Local Heritage List

I am pleased to announce that the first phase of sites on the Buckinghamshire Local Heritage List were formally adopted by Cabinet in January 2023. This means that 771 sites across the county have been recognised for their local heritage significance and given a level of protection through the planning process. All owners have been notified in writing. The sites include 546 historic buildings, 77 parks and gardens, 86 archaeological sites and 62 landmarks or pieces of public art.

The Local Heritage List project has been very successful with nearly 3000 sites nominated on the web platform. The team are busy working their way through these, visiting and assessing them, and will bring the second phase of sites forward for adoption in November. We have 211 people signed up and actively using the platform, nominating sites and enhancing our records. Do take a look and see the wide range of sites that are being considered for Local Listing at [Home - Buckinghamshire's Local Heritage List \(local-heritage-list.org.uk\)](https://www.local-heritage-list.org.uk)

Digital Planning

Our planning team is working with the Open Digital Planning team within the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities on a visionary pilot project to co-design the next generation of planning services for local government.

This collaborative work is creating new front end planning software and services which improve the user-experience for residents who are applying for planning permission. Last year we were one of only three local authorities who were first to go live with these new digital services. We introduced two new user services– the first, find out if you need planning permission and the second, apply for a lawful development certificate. The project also introduced a back-office planning system which reduces errors, time and costs for planning officers.

On 15 March 2023 the Open Digital Planning team, which we are part of, won the Digital Change Project of the Year Award at the national Government Project Delivery Awards. These awards celebrate individuals and teams who are delivering complex and ambitious projects right across Government, so it was a real honour to be recognised at national level for the ground breaking collaborative work we are part of.

DLUHC Housing and Planning Minister visits Buckinghamshire Council to see new Digital Planning software in action

Lucy Frazer, former Housing and Planning Minister, visited Buckinghamshire Council on 26 January to learn more about Buckinghamshire's experience of being part of the Open Digital Planning (ODP) project, demo new user-centred Digital Planning services and hear more about the council's wider ideas for streamlining the planning system as part of the department's Digital Planning Programme.

The minister met with a range of representatives from across the council including the leader, Planning and Environment portfolio members and council officers who have been directly involved in the DLUHC funded ODP Project, which brings together pioneering councils who have joined together with digital agencies to co-design, build, test and launch better software used for planning. Together with ODP project partners Lambeth and Southwark Councils, Buckinghamshire was one of the first LPAs to launch new live services in 2022. Two of the ODP products were demonstrated to Minister Frazer during the visit - PlanX and BOPS (formally RIPA and BOPS).

PlanX is a digital platform designed to simplify citizen-facing services, including the "Find Out If You Need Planning Permission" guidance service and "Apply for a Lawful Development Certificate" application service. These two services help residents and professionals to understand which permitted development rights exist on a property, and to submit proposals where planning permission is unlikely to be needed. A Lawful Development Certificate is the proof that a project is lawful for planning purposes, such as works allowed under permitted development.

PlanX allows planners to write planning legislation and policies in a machine-readable way based around simple rules such as whether a proposed extension is above or below a specified height. This simple approach to permitted development rights allows applicants to learn what they can do by answering a series of simple questions written in plain English and supported by visual guides.

Lawful Development Certificate applications received by local councils can then be validated and processed via the Back Office Planning System (BOPS) service. BOPS is primarily a user-centred case-management system for local authorities, allowing planning officers to reach planning decisions quickly, but it also enables direct communications between planning officers and applicants, for example, when amendments to a proposal are needed.

BOPS clearly indicates whether the application meets the criteria set out in the rules-based elements of the system, and points planning officers to the core decision they need to make using their experience and judgement.

Minister Lucy Frazer said:

“It was fantastic to hear about the work going on in Buckinghamshire in the Digital Planning space. We want to ensure the public are better connected to the planning issues and decisions that affect them whilst also supporting councils to develop cutting edge services which will save them time and money. These new digital services will modernise the planning system, speeding up applications and help us to deliver our levelling up mission.”

Development Management Update

The number of new planning and related applications registered as valid remains around 950 a month, which remains the same as our monthly determination rate. This increased in March to 1092 applications determined. Planning applications (major, minor and other) are being determined above the KPI targets set for speed of decision. The number of planning appeals being received from the Planning Inspectorate continues to be very high, with 24 new appeals registered in March, which continues to place a considerable demand on our resources.

I would also like to draw members attention to two applications that have recently been considered by our Strategic Sites Planning Committee:

PL/22/2657/FA - Land South of Pinewood Studios and Alderbourne Farm, Pinewood Road, Iver Heath

Part A - A full application for the change in use of 25.6 ha of land at Alderbourne Farm to a nature reserve. Part B - Outline application - with all matters reserved (except for principal points of access) for land at Alderbourne Farm to comprise backlots and up to 35,000 sq ft (3,252 sqm) of associated film production buildings (workshops) together with access roads and parking; Part C - Outline application for 32.6 ha of land at Pinewood South with all matters reserved (except for three principal points of access) to comprise up to 1,365,000sqft (126,817sqm) of film production buildings (to include sound stages, workshops, offices and ancillary uses), education and business hubs with associated ancillary structures together with backlot, multi storey car parks, accesses and green and blue infrastructure.

22/07549/FUL - Land at South Corner, Wycombe Air Park, Clay Lane, Booker

Creation of new film and TV studios incorporating the retention of 1 x existing sound stage, construction of further new production facilities including 7 x sound stages, 10 x workshops, 4 x production facility buildings, 1 x rehearsal building, ancillary offices, cafe and amenity space, parking, landscaping and new vehicular access off Marlow Road

Such decisions contribute to ensuring the ongoing prosperity of Buckinghamshire as a successful place to do business.



Tree Preservation Order

A Tree Preservation Order was served on HS2 Ltd on Thursday 30 April with respect to an area measuring approximately 800m by 30m at the western edge of Sheepphouse Wood, Calvert Green Parish.

The need to serve the TPO has emerged during pre-application discussion, including the bat mitigation structure that would sit across the railway to the west of Sheepphouse Wood, between Council Officers and the HS2 Ltd contractor, EKFB. In November 2022, it became apparent to Officers that HS2 Ltd intends to undertake work to 'manage' trees adjacent to the route of the railway, but outside the Act Limits (the Limits of Land to Be Acquired or Used – LLAU). HS2 Ltd had received the necessary 'licence' (Assent) from Natural England with respect to work on an SSSI, in September 2022, but there had been no conversation with the Council at that time.

HS2 Ltd and other interested parties have until 27 April to submit comments. After this date, and before 27 September 2023, the Council will review the information received and make a decision whether to confirm the TPO, confirm the TPO with modifications, or not to confirm the TPO. Separately, but related to this process, Officers continue to request full details and have suggested dates for workshops to discuss an appropriate course of action for the management of trees at Sheepphouse Wood.

Enforcement update

Further to my previous reports on planning enforcement matters I am pleased to report that the firm but fair approach to dealing with breaches of planning control continues to run through the heart of the service and is being delivered in a consistent way across the Council area.

I am delighted to report that the statistics for the whole of 2022 have been published on the government website and Buckinghamshire have successfully improved their position up the league table and are now 3rd overall. Buckinghamshire remains the highest planning authority outside London in terms of issuing Planning Enforcement Notices, only beaten by two of London's enforcement big hitters, Brent and Westminster.

In the meantime, whilst these stats show our continued commitment to taking formal action, I also regularly see reports from the team where compliance is being achieved 'on the ground'. The breaches being remedied vary massively from fences and walls to illegal dwellings, caravan sites and changes of use where we use the full spectrum of our enforcement powers. Over the past few months, I have seen compliance being achieved from highly skilled amicable negotiation all the way up to formal actions like high court injunctions and contractors being sent in to undertake works in default. In fact, we have instructed contractors to enter land and take direct action on three sites in the past three months and whilst these actions are often seen as a last resort, the protection of our area remains of paramount importance, and we will use these powers as necessary and appropriate.

In addition, having recently rolled out a programme of pro-actively monitoring conditions on larger development sites the team are finding an increased number of breaches as a result of our onsite presence. Generally, the team see these breaches, such as lack of wheel washing facilities or incorrect contractor parking, being resolved quickly and often before they are even reported. At this stage the project appears to be resulting in breaches of conditions being resolved before they become a local issue and is securing holistic site compliance with conditions.

Our high performing enforcement service and general no-nonsense 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.

Planning Policy Update

As the government continues work on reforming the planning system, our work progressing the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire also continues. In March this year the Council responded to the government's consultation on their proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and we hope that our comments will help the government shape the way the planning system works in the future.

In the meantime, we have been working on the evidence base for the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. The sites submitted during our Calls for Sites (including 2x previous Brownfield Calls and the follow up wider calls for all sites) have now been mapped by the team and published on the Council website. There were over 1000 sites submitted and we have commenced work assessing those sites accordingly.

The Council will be undertaking a public consultation on the Vision and Objectives for both our forthcoming Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (LP4B) and Local Transport Plan (LTP5). This will be the first LTP created for Buckinghamshire Council, superseding the Buckinghamshire County Council LTP4, published in 2016. Both consultations will take place together in April 2023, allowing residents to share views on our overarching aims for Buckinghamshire over the coming years, and enabling improved integration between planning and transport services. The two consultations will take place on [Your Voice Bucks](#), starting in April 2023 and remaining open for six weeks.

Our programme of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) also continues to progress with work being furthered on the SPDs associated with strategic site allocations in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan as well as Affordable Housing and Residential Design SPDs.

Planning Resource Planning Awards

Finally, I'm delighted to report that the Planning and Environment service has been shortlisted by Planning Resource under the category of '*Local Planning Authority of the Year*' at this year's Planning Awards. Our submission highlighted the excellent work that the teams across the Planning and Environment service have been doing over the past 12 months, so my congratulations go to teams across Planning and Environment on this notable success.

In addition, Buckinghamshire Council has also been shortlisted in the '*Award for Use of Digital Technology in Planning*' for the Power BI for Planning Teams. This is an excellent shortlisting and reflects the incredible work that the team is doing to bring digital enhancements to the Planning world.

The awards will be presented on 8 June, and we wish those teams the best of luck with the outcome.





Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources
Councillor John Chilver



Customer Partnership Panel

In late 2022, Buckinghamshire Council launched its Customer Partnership Panel which invites our residents to help inform the design of our digital services and communication methods. The panel is open to all residents over 18, providing they reside within our boundaries. Those who have registered their interest will be contacted several times a year to take part in surveys, digital focus groups and occasionally we will also meet with them in person. Panellists will receive regular feedback showing how the results have influenced decisions, with survey results published online.

Through focussed communication via social media, digital screens throughout the council access points, and through printed media the panel has grown from 15 to 100 residents, and we hope to see the panel grow even further throughout 2023. We are particularly keen to see a response from younger residents, and our communications are targeted to encourage this cohort, we are asking all Councillors to help promote the panel especially when they are in forums with those younger residents.

We have already started to use the Panel and the first research campaign concluded in February, where members of the panel were asked to give their insight over why people were telephoning to report a missed bin, rather than use our online forms and processes. The feedback received has facilitated two changes, firstly in order to reduce the number of online steps, we have removed the nudge to create an online account, sending residents directly to the missed bin form and secondly, behavioural prompts have been added, highlighting evidence that reporting online is quicker, more efficient and offers the same level of service. [Here is a link to the survey results](#). Our ambition is to publish one campaign per month.

This engagement with our residents ensures that the access to our services works for everyone and the Customer Partnership Panel is a powerful way of ensuring our focus is on inclusive access and that for our digital tools these are by design, not by default.

Employee Together Survey

The Together Survey is held twice a year to gather employee feedback against five key indices that can be benchmarked against other organisations. Our last survey was held in November 2022 with a council wide response rate of 58%, up from 53% in May. Our KPI target response rate is 60%.

Results for November were very positive with all five indices showing a positive increase on the previous survey.

- **Engagement** 74% up from 72% (external benchmark 65%)
- **Managing Change** 62% up from 60% (external benchmark 64%)

- **Wellbeing and Resilience** 77% up from 75% (external benchmark 72%)
- **Our Council** 77% up from 73% (external benchmark 70%)
- **Diversity and Inclusion** 70% up from 68% (external benchmark 80%)

There was an increase in colleagues feeling that the council cares about employee wellbeing, reflecting all the work to prioritise and promote wellbeing resources, particularly around financial hardship, and the support available for staff.

The free text question in November, reported colleagues' thoughts about opportunities for growth and development. These are being used to help shape our Talent Academy and Career Development thinking – see further details below. The next survey will be held in May 2023.

November 2022 Together Survey Results



Employer Brand and Talent Academy

96% of new joiners responding to our onboarding survey in 2022 said they were proud to work for the council and 93% would recommend the council as a place to work. 78% of leavers over the same period also said they would recommend the council as a place to work. These figures highlight high levels of engagement and a strong employer brand.

During 2022 we further developed this brand based on conversations with colleagues who work for the council. They helped to synthesise the following four top attraction factors that sum up why people join, stay, and are motivated to do their best during their careers at Buckinghamshire Council.

1. The nature of work
2. Opportunities for learning and development
3. Work life balance and flexible working
4. It's local to where I live

We style this as: *'our work matters'* and *'part of something bigger'*.

From these, we have developed headline messages, complemented by employee stories and professional photography to promote Buckinghamshire Council as a great place to work. This branding is used extensively on our social media accounts:

- [Buckinghamshire Council Careers | Facebook](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council Careers \(@bucks_careers\) / Twitter](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council | LinkedIn](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Council Careers | Instagram](#)



An integral part of our brand is our commitment to Learning and Development. We have developed the **Buckinghamshire Talent Academy** to visibly demonstrate this commitment to career progression and personal growth. The Talent Academy sets out our learning and development offer to ensure internal colleagues and potential new joiners can see and understand the wide range of inclusive career opportunities that are available - encouraging everyone, at every stage of their career, to think about how they can learn and develop. The Talent Academy programmes are an integral part of our

Details of the Talent Academy Programmes – who they are aimed at and how they support colleagues

Supporting equality and inclusion for colleagues and our future workforce	Promoting Careers and Attracting Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Branding and Attraction Strategies – including strategies for scarce skills • Work experience and internships to showcase our careers at all levels including career changers and those facing barriers to employment
	Entry level and Early Careers Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckinghamshire Horizons programme – opening doors for new and changing careers • Early Careers Networks • Entry level and upskilling apprenticeships • Graduate entry programmes & development
	Career Planning & Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Development planning and workshops for all staff • Soft skills and face to face training • Workforce and Succession Planning • Coaching and Mentoring including reverse mentoring
	Management Careers & Management Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiring Manager programmes • Buckinghamshire Manager framework and workshops • Leadership Development
	Professional Development & Professional Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service led professional development programmes and career offers for areas of scarce skills • Specialist apprenticeships

attraction and retention strategy to help develop our own internal resourcing pipelines to grow our future workforce and focus particularly on our areas of scarce skills and skills shortage.

Property and 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.

The new Kingsbrook Secondary School achieved Practical Completion in December 2022. The school was delivered through the close collaboration of different partners, including the Council, Barratts, Insignis Trust and Morgan Sindall. The project has now been named as finalists for the Constructing Excellence SECBE Awards having been shortlisted in the award categories for ‘Integration and Collaboration’ and ‘Client of the Year’; the winners are being announced in June 2023. The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Major expansion works at Chiltern Hills Academy achieved Practical Completion in December 2022. The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Major expansion works have achieved practical completion 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 together with an extension to the sixth form. These are currently being managed through the rectification periods with various sections being completed with final sign off planned for July 2023.

Misbourne School and the new Misbourne Sports Hall project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for July 2023.

Work has progressed on the procurement of three major school projects including the second Primary School at Kingsbrook as well as major expansions of both the Green Ridge Academy at Berryfields and Cottesloe School in Wing. In this period all three projects have been issued for competitive tender via the SCF Construct Framework. The Council aim to be able to make contract awards by the end of April.



The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre Section 2 which included carparking (272 Spaces), new children's play area, a new MUGA and external hard and soft landscaping achieved Practical Completion in December 2022. The project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Investment and Development:

Wycombe Film Studio

Planning permission has been granted to Stage 50 to develop the Wycombe Film Studios at land adjacent to the Wycombe Airpark. This comprises of new film and TV studios incorporating the retention of 1 x existing sound stage, construction of further new production facilities including 7 x sound stages, 10 x workshops, 4 x production facility buildings, 1 x rehearsal building, ancillary offices, cafe and amenity space, parking, landscaping and a new vehicular access off Marlow Road. Stage 50 will be developing the site over the few months and have already received interest from a number of production companies to use the site. The use of the site will create new jobs in the area once the site is fully operational.

The Council have agreed a new lease with Stage 50 with an option to buy a long leasehold. This arrangement will regenerate the land, provide additional rental revenue to the Council which will support council services and will also have a positive impact upon the local economy through the knock on benefits of having this employment site in the area.

Horns Lane Land Sale for 100% Affordable Housing Scheme

Following the last update where we reported that the Council owned site located off Horns Lane in High Wycombe was being put on the market, we have now successfully completed the sale to a developer who is working with a national Housing Association and will work to deliver a 50-unit scheme with 100% affordable homes. The capital receipt received was only 6% lower than the full market price which would have delivered only 48% affordable homes. The scheme will be made up of half affordable rented homes and half shared ownership bringing much needed affordable accommodation to the people of Buckinghamshire. The Housing Association have committed to actively engage with the waiting lists of prospective tenants as early as possible, and to support applicants nominated to them focussing on the lower income earning tenants. They will proactively assist residents in work/training/looking to get back into work, thereby indirectly relieving pressures on other public sector services.

Councils Estate Strategy

The Councils operational office estate strategy was approved at Cabinet in January and since then work has begun on the initiative contained in the report. The first milestone of moving out of Wycombe Old Library and into the Councils main Wycombe Offices opposite has been achieved and further the vacated offices have now been let to a commercial occupier producing a revenue saving to the Council and a rental income.



Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Steve Bowles



Helping Hand

All of Buckinghamshire Council's allocation of the third tranche of the Household Support Fund, provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, has been utilised to provide essential support to financially vulnerable households. The Helping Hand team have led the coordination of this work, ensuring that the £2.4 million allocation was directed to those most in need between 1 October to 31 March.

The Fund has enabled over 56,200 digital food vouchers, with a combined value of over £1.2 million, to be distributed to eligible pupils during each of the school holidays since 1 October and including the Easter holidays. In addition, it has enabled the Helping Hand team to deliver direct support to residents on more than 8,300 occasions in total, including delivery of over 830 white goods items, 561 other essential household items and financial support for emergency food and fuel on more than 4,400 occasions. Nearly £450,000 was provided to Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, including Heart of Bucks, who collectively provide a range of key support services to residents including food parcels, community fridges and crisis grant support.

The Department for Work and Pensions have now confirmed that Buckinghamshire has been allocated a further £4.8 million in the next tranche of the Household Support Fund. We are currently developing a plan for the effective disbursement of these funds to support our financially vulnerable households within the stipulated grant conditions.

Afghan Resettlement

In Buckinghamshire, we have welcomed 15 families to date. We are currently working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Home Office to use 16 MoD properties for a further 15 families (and moving an existing family into one of these homes) to meet our target of welcoming 30 families. The families are all settling well with many, who speak good English, now in employment - ranging from working at the BBC to translation services, mechanics, and retail. All have taken up the opportunity of ESOL lessons with Adult Learning to help progress their spoken and/or written English and are doing well. The children have settled well in their schools and are also doing well.

We have introduced monthly Hub sessions at Buckingham, Aylesbury and Wycombe libraries allowing a range of topics to be discussed including finances and budgeting, mental health and also includes talks from partner organisations like the Police and the Fire Service. As well as being informative, these also aim to support conversational English and are well attended.

Community Boards

This year the Community Boards launched the **Proud of Bucks Awards** in January to recognise and celebrate those who went the extra mile for their community in 2022.

A small team from the Boards and communications designed and delivered the awards which saw some 398 nominations, 46 winners and 48 commended, and one special posthumous award across three categories: **Local Community Champion** (an individual over 21) and **Young Community Champion** (a young person under 21) who have made a clear and positive impact in their local community during 2022, and a **Community Group Contribution** which recognises and celebrates a group in the Community Board area who also has made a clear and positive impact on the community during 2022.



There were some fantastic nominations and the awards recognised people and organisations across Buckinghamshire. With so many exceptional and worthy nominations, judging was a tough job for the Boards. Whilst not everyone can win, it was inspirational to read how many people are going above and beyond to help others, so it is very pleasing to see so many people formally commended.

The awards will be presented from April onwards at engagement events being organised by each Board and celebrated in the community.

The Boards have also been at several key events including the Bucks Youth Summit where they spoke directly with young people to understand the issues they face within their areas and what they would like to see as a priority for the Community Boards. These views are now captured and will provide insight to the Community Boards to investigate further.

An Autism Awareness Day was organised by the Community Boards in partnership with the Longridge Centre. Families and individuals attended over 130 sessions organised at Longridge which encouraged young people to try different skills and activities, but also for everyone to understand and learn more about autism generally.

A health and wellbeing event in Amersham for older people highlighted local community groups, activities and services that can support residents to remain independent at home for longer. Attended by 29 stallholders including Amersham National Trust, Active in the Community, CAB and trading standards, the event also provided a networking opportunity for stallholders to enhance their knowledge of local provision and helped to strengthen signposting pathways.

Other events have included engagement with residents to discuss board priorities for 2023/34, including what these mean to residents and what improvements they would expect to see from them.

VCSE Sector Resilience Fund

On Tuesday 14 March we launched the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Resilience Fund.

The £230,000 fund has been established in partnership with [Heart of Bucks](#) and funded by Buckinghamshire Council, The Mulberry Trust, and [The Rothschild Foundation](#). It is designed to support organisations suffering from increased operating costs, due to cost-of-living pressures, which they have not been able to manage in other ways.

Organisations can apply for grants of up to £10,000 with additional priority given to organisations aiming to reduce inequalities amongst residents living in the most disadvantaged areas of the county.



Armed Forces



On 27 February 2023, we attended the National Transition Event at Silverstone to promote Buckinghamshire Council as an employer to service leavers. The event was attended by over 500 serving personnel, and their families, who will be leaving the armed forces in the near future and are considering their next steps. A wide range of employers from sectors such as motorsport, engineering and construction exhibited at the event, alongside employers from the public sector. Chris Geen, Community Safety Team Leader, was part of the team which attended the event and was able to share his experiences of leaving the armed forces and transitioning into civilian life.

In March, we shared information with over 650 businesses via our Business Improvement Districts regarding the Armed Forces Covenant and the benefits of signing it as an organisation. We produced an e-leaflet in conjunction with a local Reserve unit, advocating the benefits that employing ex-service personnel and serving Reservists can bring to a business, including the wealth of skills and experience that they have. We also highlighted that making goods and services “Forces Friendly” is a great way of growing a customer base as well as giving back to the Armed Forces Community. Any businesses or organisations who would like to find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant or are interested in signing can contact the council at armedforces@buckinghamshire.gov.uk for more information.

Consultation on the restructure of Thames Valley Police

Thames Valley Police are undertaking a review of their force structure which aims to make sure it is structured in the best possible way to meet current and future challenges. Two local policing models are being considered:

- 1) continue with the existing 11 Local Policing Area (LPA) model, with enhancements where possible
- 2) change to a five-area command model. The five areas would be Oxfordshire, Berkshire West, Berkshire East, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Both proposals, will keep the same number of neighbourhood teams and seek to increase the number of officers in visible patrol roles. There will be 80 additional neighbourhood officers across TVP funded by the PCC.

We are drafting a response to the consultation and would encourage local residents to share their views. The consultation ends on 28 April 2023. [Local policing proposals | Thames Valley Police](#)

Community Safety Partnerships and anti-social behaviour powers

On 27 March 2023 the Home Office announced that the phase one national consultation of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Review has now been launched alongside the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Action Plan.

The purpose of the consultation is to:

- seek views on the relationship between CSPs and PCCs, with the aim of enhancing the accountability of CSPs
- consider how CSPs and PCCs work together to tackle ASB, with the aim of strengthening this co-operative working

- consider the expansion of ASB powers, and whether amendments are required to ensure they are being used effectively.

The consultation is open to the public until 22 May 2023 and targeted to those with experience working in, or with, Community Safety Partnerships, as well as those with an interest in ASB powers. The Safer Buckinghamshire Board will be responding to the consultation.

Council Resilience Group

Focussing on the continued development of the Council Resilience Framework and Standards Policy, we have held two Executive Council Resilience Group (CRG) meetings in the last six months. The theme has been to focus on a One Council Approach to deliver across both council services and collaboration with local communities. Members have been provided with two training sessions during February and March on Emergency Management and the Council Resilience Framework. Up to 70 Members took part in these sessions and positive feedback was received with regards to the content and support the sessions provided Members.

Winter Readiness and Response Framework

Building on the One Council Approach we have developed a council winter readiness and response framework that has been in place since November and concluded on 31 March. This framework provided an overarching review of the council's winter preparedness utilising 15 front line services including:

- Service areas dealing with vulnerability such as Health, Social Care and Housing.
- Service areas dealing with front line operational activity i.e., Waste Management Buckinghamshire Highways, Country parks.
- Service areas dealing with emergency or risk i.e., Resilience Service, Business Assurance and Community Safety.

These Service Areas also formed a winter cell which met monthly. This approach proved very successful in supporting the council and provided re-assurance across the board. As a result, we will be setting up a Summer Framework utilising the same blueprint as the winter framework, this will run from June till September. As part of the feedback process, we have managed to engage a number of external partners to be part of the Summer Framework.





Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Mark Winn



Gypsy and Traveller Service

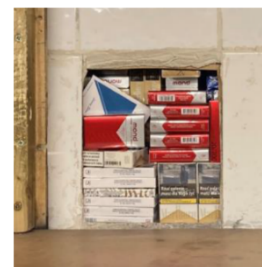
As anticipated, there have been few unauthorised encampments throughout the winter months. A recent incursion saw a large number of French Travellers in February passing through Buckinghamshire. This consisted of twenty-one caravans which were located in the car park of the Holmers Farm Recreation Ground in High Wycombe. Although the group were very pleasant there was a need to expedite the removal process due to the car park being inaccessible for visitors who were due to attend planned sporting events which were scheduled to take place that weekend, for this reason enforcement agents were employed which ensured a timely resolution. The caravans were moved on with no resistance and the site was left clean and tidy.

Following the enactment of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill last summer we expect to get a more realistic idea of unauthorised encampment numbers this year and a better understanding of how and when Thames Valley Police will utilise their new available powers, with this said the primary responsibility for removal of encampments on all land lies with the landowner. The Buckinghamshire approach to dealing with unauthorised encampments is robust but fair, and our management of unauthorised encampments is individually assessed with our response tailored to each group's specific behaviours.

Trading Standards

Following an investigation by Trading Standards, three suspects have been convicted and were sentenced in relation to home improvement fraud; in these cases, vulnerable older residents were conned into believing that they needed expensive work for their homes with threats and other intimidating behaviour used to ensure payment. Following the investigation, the victims have, between them, received nearly £200,000 in compensation for their losses which the company paid prior to its conviction.

February saw the conclusion to an illegal tobacco case reported in the last update to Council. Following the conviction in October of one defendant and the partial conviction of another, February saw the matter concluded with a guilty plea to the final charge for the second defendant. Because of the repeated nature of the offending, the person was awarded a suspended prison sentence which will be activated should he repeat this offending during the next year. The picture below shows where the tobacco was found on one of the occasions with the help of a tobacco detection dog. The Service continues to carry out regular test purchasing to locate sellers of illegal tobacco.



Dangerous Electric Blankets – With the help of a grant from Electrical Safety First, the service recently offered residents free testing of electric blankets. Over 80% of the blankets tested were unsafe and were destroyed. Thanks to a donation from Dreams, all unsafe blankets were replaced free of charge with a new electric blanket. Some blankets were over 30 years old and scorch marks were clearly visible on another that was found to be unsafe.

Unsafe electrical products and energy saving claim lies - We have tested a range of plug-in electrical devices and electric heaters that claimed to reduce energy consumption and save money. All were widely available on online marketplaces, all failed safety tests. Energy saving claims were found to be misleading where all increased, rather than decreased consumption, and many were poorly constructed with access to live parts. Following our intervention, they have now been withdrawn from the market.

Ensuring residents get what they pay for –In recent months over 100 petrol pumps were tested to ensure that consumers are getting the amount of fuel they are paying for. Approximately 5% were giving short measure and were taken out of use until repaired. On average every time a car was filled up £1 extra was charged by those delivering short measure.

Cemeteries and Crematoria Services

At Chilterns Crematorium, refurbishment of the Hampden Chapel has been completed and it was reopened for cremation services on Monday 13 March 2023. There have been a significant number of improvements incorporated into the refurbishment including upholstered pews for customer comfort with removable seating sections to accommodate wheelchair users sitting with their family members, a larger catafalque with a bespoke curtain track, new curtains and voiles and an upgraded lectern with touch screen controls for the media system, curtains and voiles.

An energy efficient climate control system has been installed along with energy saving Halo lighting and a new hearing loop. A glass balustrade has been fitted to the mezzanine floor to make this area more inclusive to mourners who benefit from sitting in a quieter area and to accommodate larger funeral parties. The seating capacity in the chapel has increased from 80 to 100 people. There are still some ongoing works related to the wider improvement project but these are mainly external and include reinstatement of fencing, roof repairs and final installation works to the electric vehicle charging points.



The music and media systems at both Chilterns and Bierton Crematoria have been replaced with the Obitus audio visual and sound system. This is a high quality system that offers a number of benefits to service users including lyrics to popular funeral hymns displayed on the chapel screens and there is the capability to embed visual tributes into webcasts improving the experience for those viewing the service remotely.

Licensing

The Licensing Committee have agreed a new draft Charitable Collections Policy. The Council is responsible for dealing with permit and licence applications for charitable collections which may take place in either public areas or in the form of house to house. There is currently no single policy in force covering the whole Council area for these activities. It is considered necessary and appropriate to have such a policy to ensure there is fairness, consistency and transparency in the Council's approach to dealing with applications. The draft policy will be subject to a six week public consultation, with the results being reported back to Licensing Committee for final consideration and final determination.

The Licensing Service have commenced work on the development of a single Street Trading Policy for Buckinghamshire. The Council is able to determine whether or not it wishes to regulate street trading in publicly accessible areas. Currently street trading is regulated according to policies and procedures adopted by the former legacy District Councils. The development of a new policy is an opportunity to harmonise the Council's approach, review current arrangements and determine to what extent the Council wishes to regulate this activity. The work is likely to attract interest from a wide range of stakeholders including Ward, Town and Parish Councils and those various agencies responsible for planning and managing how the Council's public spaces are used. The work is at an early scoping stage to identify relevant stakeholders who will be invited to share their views through organised engagement sessions, prior to development of a draft policy and full public consultation.

Following a further procurement exercise, an additional garage in the Wycombe area has been added to the existing five garages approved by the Council to conduct tests on taxi and private hire vehicles.

Operation Holly – On 20 and 21 December 2022, Council licensing officers joined officers from TVP Roads Policing team. The officers travelled in a marked police vehicle, supported by an unmarked car on the second day. Officers visited Aylesbury, Wendover, Stoke Mandeville, High Wycombe and Princess Risborough areas. Of the 19 Buckinghamshire Council licensed vehicles stopped at random, five had no issues at all, three were suspended with immediate effect (two with tyre issues and one with a faulty door) and the remainder had minor issues which were dealt with via enforcement notices. Two drivers were not wearing their badges and three were not wearing their seat belts correctly. Immediately following the operation all licensed trade members were contacted and provided with compliance advice. A similar operation is planned soon, and it is expected that a higher level of compliance will be found. These outcomes are comparable to findings in other Council areas when these types of operation are conducted. In a national context, Buckinghamshire Council continues to apply among the highest standards in terms of licensing requirements to ensure the public remain protected.

At the beginning of March, the Licensing Service successfully defended a decision on appeal to the Magistrates Court to revoke the licence of a driver who was witnessed by police officers using a mobile phone while reversing his vehicle into a junction.

Housing

Rough Sleeping: During the course of the winter months, the Council has had to implement the SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) on five separate occasions due to temperatures consistently falling below freezing. On each occasion, the Council worked extensively with partner agencies to make emergency accommodation available for all rough sleepers until temperatures improved.

In February 2023, DLUHC published the results of the annual national rough sleeper count carried out by all local authorities during October/November 2022 and providing a snapshot of rough sleeper numbers on a single evening. The annual snapshot for Buckinghamshire identified 16 verified rough

sleepers. While this is an increase on the previous year's figure, it still remains significantly below the snapshot figures that were being recorded prior to the pandemic. During the 2016-2019 period, Buckinghamshire was recording an average of 37 rough sleepers per year in the annual snapshot. Therefore, the 16 rough sleepers recorded in the 2022 snapshot still represents a 56% reduction against the pre-pandemic figure. As at the end January 2023, 12 verified rough sleepers were recorded across Buckinghamshire. Many of these are clients with challenging and complex needs and the Council and its partner agencies continue to work extensively to try to support these persons.

Temporary Accommodation: At the end of February 2023, the Council had 420 homeless households placed in temporary accommodation (this compares to an average number of 225 pre-pandemic). This continues a month on month trend of increasing numbers of households in temporary accommodation and we anticipate that these high levels of demand will continue, due to factors including increased cost of living pressures on households, Ukraine and Afghan refugee approaches, and the limited affordable housing options in Buckinghamshire. We continue to look to make the best use of existing social housing stock to help manage these pressures by increasing our direct lets into social housing for homeless households. We are also actively working to identify and develop new additional temporary housing stock and reduce our reliance on expensive nightly booked accommodation. The new Council-owned temporary accommodation scheme at Bridge Court in Wycombe which is due to open in early May 2023. I would like to thank the staff and our contractors in advance of that for putting together what is a big improvement in the provision of Temporary accommodation in High Wycombe and the surrounding area. It should start to reduce the numbers in expensive B&B style accommodation.



Bridge Court, Desborough Road – Exterior

Bucks Home Choice: There continues to be a very high demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme and we have seen an upturn in applications since Christmas. Overall, at the end of February 2023, we had 5,238 live applications registered on the scheme which is the highest level since the creation of the Buckinghamshire Council in 2020. To date in 2022/23 (April 2022 – February 2023) 1398 new tenancies have been let via Bucks Home Choice.

Grants and Adaptations: The Council continues to operate a significant programme of DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grants) to support adaptation works. As at the end of February 2023, we had completed 207 DFG schemes to date in 2022/23 with a further 497 DFG requests at pre-approval stage. Increasing building costs still remain a significant pressure on the existing funding caps, particularly for larger extensions and these are being reviewed as part of the overall review of the DFG and Financial Assistance Policy.

Environmental Health

Commercial (Food and Health & Safety): The team continue to make progress towards the Food Standards Agency's recovery roadmap which was put in place during the pandemic. This will end at the end of March and the inspection programme will resume as 'business as usual'. The service continues to see an increase in the number of new businesses registering this year which outpace the number of closures, increasing the overall number of food and beverage and other commercial food establishments. The Food and Health and Safety Service Plan for 2022/24 and the associated Enforcement Policy have been agreed by Cabinet and has now been adopted.

With respect to the adoption of the model byelaws concerning skin piercing activities, the proposed byelaws are currently under consultation. Once this has closed on 17 April 2023, the final step will be confirmation by the Secretary of State for Health and the resulting implementation of these nationally consistent byelaws.

Housing and Domestic: Following the tragic death of a two year old child in Rochdale, the issue of housing standards has had a heightened profile both nationally and for the Council. The service has seen a large increase in requests for service concerning reports of poor housing conditions, many of which relate to damp and mould. In a nine-week period from 7 November 2022, the service saw a 241% increase in cases being reported compared to the same period the previous year. With respect to cases that specifically mentioned damp and mould there was a 488% increase (17 cases compared to 83). The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, wrote to all local authorities at the end of last year to survey data and processes/ procedures on a national basis. This request from Michael Gove and the local situation regarding household mould was discussed at the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee in February 2023 with follow on actions agreed by the service and a further update session to be scheduled in the autumn.

The team continue to inspect homes which have been offered as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and we are approaching 950 properties having had been inspected over the past 12 months.

In March the team successfully prosecuted a landlord who was operating an unlicensed HMO. Initially the landlord tried to deceive officers by claiming it was occupied by a single family, however, further information was identified indicating the property was an HMO. An unannounced inspection was undertaken and confirmed the property's status as an HMO and there were a number of matters identified concerning the lack of appropriate amenities and fire safety measures. The landlord was found guilty and was fined £5000, ordered to pay the Council's costs of £6878.96 and a victim surcharge of £190 totalling £12,068.96. This should be a clear message to landlords that the Council will take formal action when appropriate to do so.

Strategic Environmental Protection: The Council has been successful in obtaining a grant from DEFRA for £120k which will build upon the initiative run by Bucks Business First (BBF) who approach local businesses about travel plans and access to work through sustainable modes. Working with businesses, BBF has created an action plan to reduce the pollutant emissions created by their current operations. This project targets small and medium sized businesses (where it is more likely that larger organisations have travel plans in place). As part of the personal travel planning, we would offer access to online eco-driver training module for car, van and HGV drivers. The Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy was published in October 2021 and this grant embraces the Council's role in influencing businesses and residents to reduce their emissions.

Registration Service

The service implemented its new structure borne from the service review on 1 February 2023.

There were 4531 births from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, only slightly lower than the year before of 4552 births. There were 3778 deaths registered from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 (excluding inquests) which was 544 more than the previous year of 3234 deaths. Ceremonies are getting back up to pre-covid levels with 1750 marriages and 48 civil partnerships completed in 2022/23 against 1768 marriages and 89 civil partnerships in 2021/22. Ceremonies booked in so far for 2023/24 are 1235 which is the usual amount of bookings for this time of year. Many registration office weddings are booked within three to four months of the date of the ceremony. Buckinghamshire has a wide range of venues for couples to choose from and still proves to be a popular county to marry.

Coroner's Service

In collaboration with Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust, we have launched our WPC Portal, which forms part of the coroners' case management system. After presenting to the Medical Examiners Officer, and roll out to the hospital doctors, all deaths that are reported to the coroner are now made via the portal. This benefits the officers, saving time in inputting deaths whilst allowing the Trust to monitor the progress of the case and see the medical cause of death, meaning that weekly returns to the Trust are no longer required. The next steps are to introduce the same system to the community GPs in preparation for the 'go live' date of the National Medical Examiners System, which has been delayed from 1 April 2023.

At the end of February, the annual return to the Ministry of Justice was completed for year ending 2022. This showed that the office had 1353 deaths reported, seeing a year on year increase over the past few years.

- 571 cases had a post mortem examination.
- 234 Inquests were heard of which five Inquests were heard with a jury.
- 11 Treasure Inquests were heard.

On 20 February 2023, the Chief Coroner, HH Judge Thomas Teague KC, visited the Buckinghamshire Coroner's Office. The purpose of the visit was a welfare tour to enquire as to the wellbeing of the officers and to thank the officers for all their hard work, particularly over the COVID period as they remained front line workers. The Chief Coroner also enquired as to the working relationship between the local authority and the coroner, in terms of working conditions, resources, welfare. It was a very successful visit.





Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment
Councillor Gareth Williams



Tree Planting

We have made impressive progress regarding the number of trees planted across Buckinghamshire, this includes 29,200 trees planted on parts of our agricultural estate in Amersham and Widmer End (High Wycombe) (which are part funded by over £215K of grant funding from the Forestry Commission), and 4,000 new trees along the new Platinum Park Way active travel route. Several community based tree planting initiatives have benefitted from the funding secured from our Local Authority Treescapes Fund '22/'23 bid, which has resulted in two tiny forests being established at Princes Risborough School and Bourton Park. Under the partnership agreement we have with them, I'm pleased to confirm that Forestry England will start planting at the Council's 51 hectare site in Wing this month – leading to the creation of a large mixed species 132,000 tree woodland.

Domestic Property Resource Efficiency and Decarbonisation Initiatives

455 solar photovoltaic system installations have been completed under the current Buckinghamshire Solar Together scheme, and we expect that there will be at least another 219 installations in the next couple of months. Our 'Energy Doctor' scheme is up and running and the first visit was made on 5 April. With funding under the Sustainable Warmth scheme the energy performance of 155 domestic premises has been improved following the installation of renewable or energy efficiency measures such as wall insulation.

Fly-Tipping Enforcement

Investigations have recently been targeted more towards repeat fly-tipping offenders and cross-border waste movements preceding fly-tipping. That means fewer but arguably more complex individual cases which have the highest impact by tonnage on the dumping affecting Bucks. Lower level offences are frequently dealt with by the issue of a fixed penalty (at the national maximum level allowed by Government of £400) in accordance with guidelines recommended by our legal department. A recent example of this is a live investigation involving the deposit of 12-20 truckloads of waste in the area of southern Buckinghamshire between the Chalfonts and Fulmer which has even involved the blocking of roads. A suspect was arrested by Thames Valley Police (Rural Crime Task Force) in a joint operation with Buckinghamshire Council officers and BC

investigations are ongoing after the suspect was 'reported for consideration of summonses' by BC officers while he was in TVP custody.

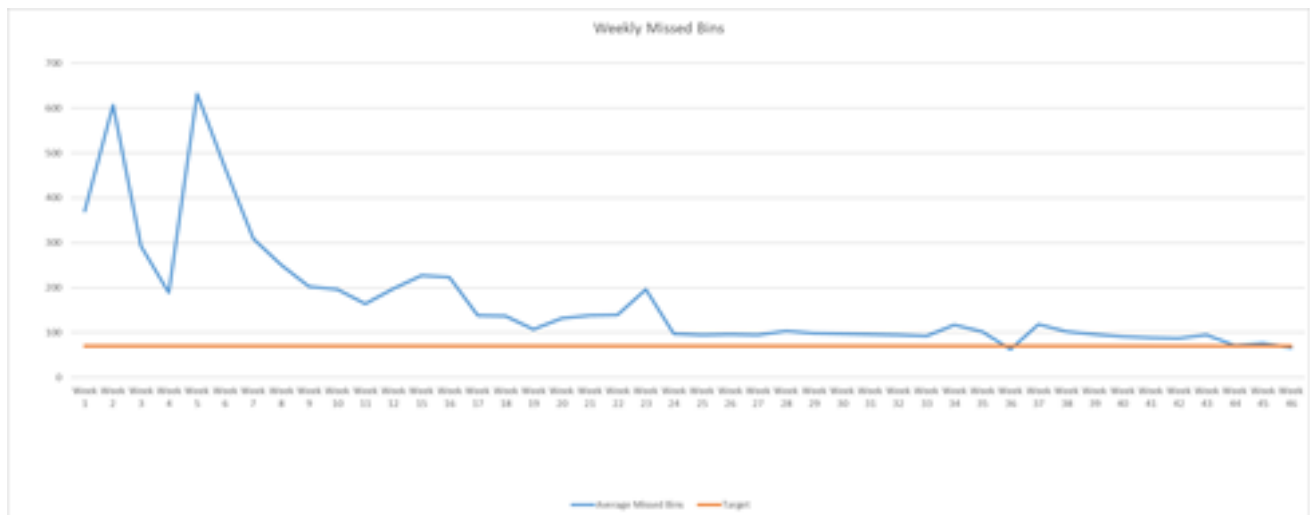
Littering

Work is also being carried out to develop an Enforcement Strategy against littering offences in Bucks and we hope this will lead to a county-wide campaign including enforcement responses. The Council will be asked to consider options once these have been given full consideration by colleagues affected by littering across the local spectrum.

South Waste Collection and Street Scene

We are pleased to say that the weekly missed bins and rounds being completed are now back to pre-reorganisation levels with good week on week improvements, reaching the contractual SLA levels.

The Council will continue to work with Veolia until the required service standards are being consistently achieved. Please see the graph below, which shows missed bins from the reorganisation up to current day:



North Waste Collection and Street Scene

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 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.

Over the winter months the team have successfully delivered on a Christmas and New Year operation which involved collecting an additional 30% more waste, whilst Street Scene were vital to gritting operations. The Grounds Maintenance team completed all scheduled winter works which included hedge cutting and shrub bed maintenance and it was also the first year that the garden waste suspension period was aligned between the North and South services as the team continue to harmonise service delivery for residents.

In February, a small percentage of residents' collection day changed to optimise waste collection rounds which had been operating since 2018. The project was a success, with missed bins remaining low and resident complaints equating to zero.

In March the Street Cleansing team will commence the bi-annual litter pick on high-speed roads, whilst the Grounds Maintenance team will be starting their spring services such as grass cutting and sports pitch renovations.

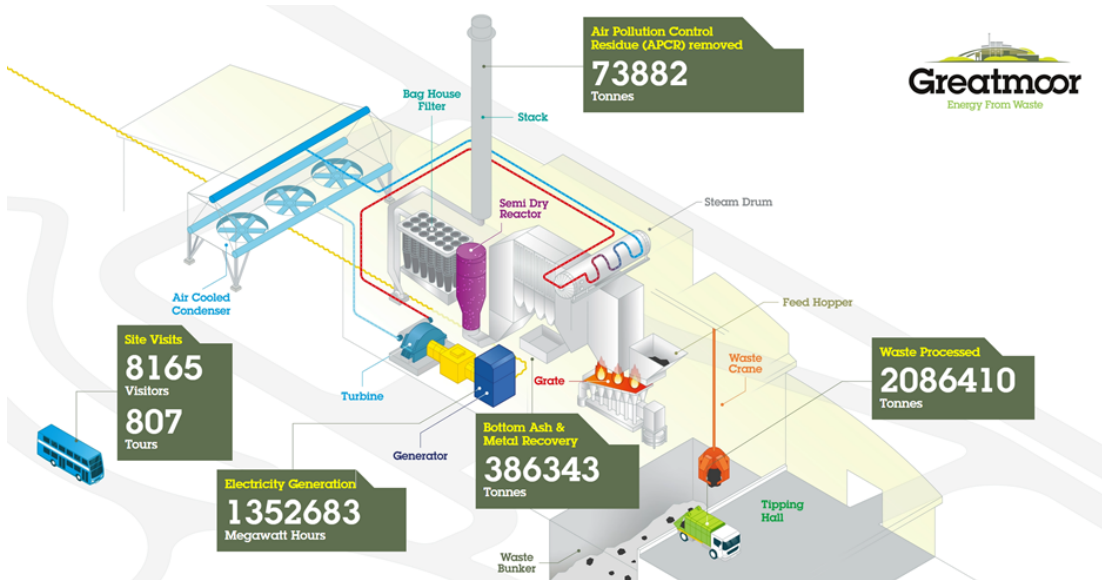
In April the team are expecting the delivery of the 7x 26tonne vehicles awarded to Faun Zoeller, 2x 26tonne narrow access vehicles awarded to Dennis Eagle and an additional award of 2x 12t food waste vehicles awarded to Farid Hillend. The transport team have already started procurement proceedings for 2023/24 with a £2.3m vehicle capital investment, with further procurement aimed at replacing the aging vehicle within the fleet. This is a continuous replacement programme to ensure the fleet and the operation is reliable and efficient.

Energy From Waste (EFW)

The Greatmoor EFW facility continues to operate very successfully, treating all of Buckinghamshire's household residual waste and producing electricity in the process. Now in its seventh year of operation, the facility is an asset the Council is proud to own, having invested nearly £180 million back in 2016 to ensure the Council's waste is managed to the highest regulatory and compliance standards for 30 years. The facility has saved the council some £30 million to date against the costs of the previous disposal route to landfill, and is on track to deliver savings of over £150 million across the 30-year contract.

The EFW facility has a dedicated visitor centre which has now welcomed in excess of 8,000 people to take in a tour and see in detail all the key parts, as highlighted in Figure 1 below. The tours are a great opportunity to understand how the whole process of treating residual waste works, covering areas like how emissions are controlled to meet Environment Agency standards. More information on all of this, including how to book a tour can be found on the dedicated EFW website www.greatmoor.co.uk.

Figure 1: Overview of the Greatmoor EFW facility



Project Groundwater

Year 2 of 6 of Project Groundwater is complete. The project to date has delivered new improved modelling and mapping techniques for groundwater flood risk, completed a community survey, launched its website and social media channels, fully scoped research into natural flood management, property flood resilience and flood warning. Year 3 will focus on working with the 9 pilot communities to develop a new flood warning service, portal and also investigate the repurposing of military drones for water table measurement.

Smarter Water Catchments – River Chess Catchment

The Chess Smarter Water Catchment has produced a 'State of the Chess' report and highlights issues with poor water quality, water usage pressures, declining wildlife and invasive species. The project is aiming to address these problems through partnership with a range of local organisations including Buckinghamshire Council. We are leading on the urban water quality theme and have produced a technical options report which identifies several possible mitigation methods using sustainable drainage systems. The next year of the project will focus in on the best options that will look to improve the water quality of the Chess by reducing the impact of run off from roads, farmland and urban areas.