



Cabinet Member report – Leader

Councillor Martin Tett

Strategic Finance

The Q1 budget monitoring position was taken to Cabinet on 11 July, and this showed an adverse position of £8.3m. This is primarily due to pressures in Health and Wellbeing and Education and Children’s Services from demand and market insufficiency issues, coupled with pressures in Accessible Housing and Resources in Energy budgets, Housing & Homelessness & Regulatory Services in Temporary Accommodation budgets and Transport in Parking income budgets.

Detailed Portfolio Action Plans are already in development to address the pressures, with a view to urgently bringing budgets back into line. These will consider the acceleration of savings plans from future years along with a range of other measures. It is important to remember that the same savings cannot be taken twice.

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

Proposed expansion of the Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) and withdrawal of TfL Travel Cards

The implementation of the ULEZ went ahead on 29th August despite representations from most of the surrounding councils affected by the implementation. I helped bring together other Home Counties Leaders to write several times to the Mayor of London requesting adaptations and mitigations for our residents who will be impacted. I continue to seek mitigations for the residents of Buckinghamshire who to date I do not feel have been fully considered and have asked for more information on scrappage schemes and any planned public transport offering. Additionally, I have requested the opportunity to discuss exemptions for Taxis operating across the border and exemptions for key workers such as Care and NHS staff and non-chargeable ‘corridors’ to adjacent NHS facilities, such as Mount Vernon Hospital and Hillingdon Hospital.

As requested by the last full Council meeting, I have also written to the Mayor of London concerning the proposal to withdraw Day Travelcards, which delivered alongside the expansion of ULEZ, constitute a double blow to Buckinghamshire's residents who need to travel across the border into London to work or visit relatives.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) including SEALR

In late July, the Council received agreement from Central government to the proposals that had been put forward to flex its Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) between projects in Aylesbury. The Council has successfully delivered two schools below budget, as part of the initial funding package (Kingsbrook Primary and Kingsbrook Secondary Schools) and we have now been allowed to use these savings to progress delivery of the South East Aylesbury Link Road which has seen significant inflationary pressures over the last 20 months.

With the revised HIF funding secured, we can progress negotiations with developers in Aylesbury on other projects that had been halted due to inflationary pressures. I look forward to providing you with fuller updates in the coming months on these schemes when these negotiations have concluded.

We are also actively working with developers and central government on progressing the Princes Risborough Southern Road Links. There remain a number of important issues to resolve.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (and Rural England Prosperity Fund)

In June we launched a call for projects to deliver activities to provide support to local business. The call closed in July and 29 applications were received. The call covers funding for 2023/24 & 2024/25, as part of our Shared Prosperity Fund programme. We invited proposals to deliver to local business support on the following themes:

- business start-up and entrepreneurship.
- business growth and productivity.
- business sustainability and journey to net zero; and
- rural business support.

A panel is now assessing the applications and decisions will be made in coming months with projects likely to start in the autumn.

Delivery is continuing on the Energy Doctor and Building Futures programmes which deliver against our other Shared Prosperity Fund priorities.

Bucks Rural Business Grants

The Bucks Rural Business Grant programme (funded through the Rural England Prosperity Fund as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund) provides capital funding to award grants to rural businesses. In Buckinghamshire this funding is focused on grants for small scale investment in micro and small enterprises in rural areas. The programme has £1.8m of funding available for capital projects such as machinery or building costs. We launched the scheme in late June and are actively encouraging eligible businesses to apply. Buckinghamshire Business First are supporting us with the grant scheme given their experience in this area and relationships supporting local businesses.

To date we have had 24 expressions of interest of which 17 have been invited to submit a full application. Our first panel is due to meet in September where we hope to have our first group of applications to assess and make recommendations for funding. To help promote the programme we are building and strengthening relationships with organisations such as Buckinghamshire Business First, Visit Bucks and the NFU, with the rural forum also playing a role in promoting the programme. Details of the grant scheme can be found on the [‘About the Bucks Rural Business Grant’ webpage](#), including how to contact the team to discuss eligibility.

Rural Broadband Contract

The £1.6m Bucks Rural Business Broadband project was completed in January 2023 and in total, 723 premises have benefitted from the scheme. They are now able to access broadband speeds which are 10x faster than the average superfast connection. We have undertaken communications targeted to residents who are now able to take-up the services. Openreach estimated that take-up of the improved service has increased by over 10% in the past quarter. The team are also working with Openreach and BDUK to close off which it is anticipated will be completed by December 2023.

Project Gigabit

Buckinghamshire is part of a broader region with Hertfordshire and East Berkshire known as ‘Lot 26’ in the Government’s Project Gigabit roll out. It is expected that there will be between 20,000-25,000 premises in Bucks alone that will benefit from the scheme. Procurement for Lot 26 is still ongoing and has now entered the tender evaluation stage. Local Authorities have the responsibility of evaluating social value, with the remainder of the tender evaluated by BDUK. We understand that the Lot 26 contract will be awarded in early October and the contract will start that month. Construction work is not expected to begin until 2024 and we will await details of the premises in Buckinghamshire that will be in scope.

Buckinghamshire Place Based Growth Board

The supporting boards which sit underneath the Growth Board are finalising their priorities and forward plans for the next year. The Regeneration Board has already had a deep dive discussion on Aylesbury, completed a site visit to High Wycombe and booked a visit to Chesham to discuss plans for regeneration opportunities. In September the Growth Board will be discussing the draft Skills Strategy and proposals for the new pooled investment fund among other items.

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP)

I joined Cabinet colleagues at the BLEP meeting on Friday 28th July. At the meeting there was continued uncertainty about Government’s direction of travel to cease funding LEPs from April 2024; however, an announcement on this was made on 2nd August. Government has confirmed that funding to LEPs will cease in 2024 and that it is transferring the economic growth and business representation responsibilities of LEP’s to local authorities. The announcement also clarified that council’s would receive transition funding in 2024/25 to support the taking on of these functions, with future funding to be set out at the next Spending Review. We are working closely with the BLEP to consider how best to deliver these functions and manage the transition from April 2024.

At the Board meeting we received presentations from the Westcott Venture Park on their ambitions for development of the site and preparation of a masterplan. There is much opportunity to develop

Westcott and the Enterprise Zone to drive growth locally and develop the space sector in Bucks. I saw the potential for this through a recent visit organised by the LEP to the Harwell campus in Oxfordshire. Harwell has used its EZ status and anchor institutions to create a desirable location for business to locate.

A presentation was given on the economic research and insight ward profiles which will be used to support the development of the Opportunity Bucks actions plans for each identified ward.

A list of the top 100 businesses in Buckinghamshire was presented to the Board. This will ensure that those involved in business support are engaging with the companies that are making, or could potentially make, the greatest contribution to Buckinghamshire's economy.

Support to Buckinghamshire Businesses and Aylesbury Enterprise Zone update

Focus of activity this year is to accelerate pipeline development opportunities including the Westcott Incubation and Accelerator Programme. A bid for £5.86 million to the Space Clusters and Infrastructure Fund on behalf of the Westcott Space Cluster for the development of new facilities has been submitted. This project will help to secure key investment in facilities at Westcott which will support their wider development plans. Successful applicants are expected to be notified in late September, if not sooner.

Bucks Business First – Buckinghamshire Business Leaders Dinner

On the 13th July I was invited to be the guest speaker at the BBF Buckinghamshire Business Leaders Dinner event held at the De Vere De Vere Latimer Estate. During my presentation, I spoke about how the Council is investing in initiatives and strategic ambitions aimed at helping Bucks businesses, including creating a net zero Bucks economy. I also spoke of our focus on recruitment and retention and addressing local skills shortages, and our aims around growth and productivity.

Homes for Ukraine

There are currently close to 1700 Ukrainians living in Buckinghamshire. The Homes for Ukraine team in the Council continue to provide practical support to enable guests to find employment, and 42% have now secured jobs. This support is provided through a variety of activities including promoting English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) lessons, converting Ukrainian qualifications to an equivalent UK qualification and working closely with DWP.

A quarter of our guests have now moved into private rented accommodation, and we are continuing to encourage residents to sign up as rematching sponsors, whilst working to support existing sponsors and Ukrainian guests.

Afghan Resettlement

With the national closure of the bridging hotels and Afghan families being given notice to move out of these hotels, our primary focus recently has been to complete the preparation of nine properties that the Ministry of Defence has made available for eligible Afghan families. To qualify to live in one

of these properties, families must have worked directly with the British Military in Afghanistan and have obtained approval from the Ministry of Defence.

Families have now started to move into these properties, and we are supporting them to register for GPs, find school places for their children and find employment as well as enabling them to integrate into their local communities.

LGA People and Places Board

I am pleased to announce that I have been appointed as Chairman of the LGA People and Places Board, which seeks to champion the role of non-metropolitan authorities. This covers a wide range of issues and activities including the role of rural areas in enabling economic growth for the long-term benefit of residents. I travelled to London on 12 September to chair the first meeting in person.

England's Economic Heartland

England's Economic Heartland's focus continues to be on pressing for investment in order to deliver the region's strategic infrastructure projects. The EEH Strategic Transport Leadership Board recently agreed a new report which sets out the key strategic objectives across the different rail lines within the area, including the Chiltern Line. Separately, EEH is working with Buckinghamshire Council to continue to press how timetable changes along the Chiltern line are disadvantaging residents and businesses.

EEH is reviewing National Highways' route strategies which will feed into the development of the Road Investment Strategy 3 (RIS3) - the capital road infrastructure pipeline in 2025-2030 for the strategic road network. The Oxford-Cambridge road study, developed in partnership between National Highways, Department for Transport and EEH awaits Ministerial agreement and will be presented to EEH Board members as soon as possible.

South East Strategic Leaders (SESL)

Leaders wrote to the Secretary of State for transport setting out ideas and concerns regarding investment in the roads network and highway maintenance.

SESL has written to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Levelling Up regarding devolution and levelling up in the wider South East.





Cabinet Member report – Planning and Regeneration

Councillor Peter Strachan

Enforcement update

Further to my previous reports on planning enforcement matters I am pleased to report our continued positive approach taken by our high performing enforcement team. The team have issued 47 planning enforcement notices in 2023 so far, along with 27 other notices, including Breach of Condition Notices and Temporary Stop Notices. This formal action is taken alongside the day-to-day management of cases which has resulted in over 1500 cases being closed this year so far.

Our officers have achieved remedial action in cases ranging from the removal of waste materials and earth bunds, to the removal of an outbuilding in the Chilterns AONB used as a dwelling. When we seek resolutions, we treat perpetrators in a firm, fair and reasonable way but we will not hesitate to use all the tools available to us to ensure harmful breaches are remedied. This includes undertaking Direct Action, and other legal action where it is appropriate to do so.

Direct Action was recently undertaken on a site in Little Chalfont where a derelict caravan was removed along with unauthorised areas of hardstanding and piles of green waste. The team will now seek to recover the costs of undertaking this work from the land owner.

Due to the diligent work and no-nonsense approach from the team, we continue to see harmful breaches of planning control being regularly remedied. We continue to take a firm but fair approach to dealing with breaches of planning control, and this regularly leads to compliance being achieved up and down Buckinghamshire.

Planning Policy update

The government issued an important housing and planning-related announcement on 24 July 2023. As part of this, the Prime Minister confirmed that the government will meet its manifesto commitment to build 1 million homes over the current Parliament. In a related speech, the Housing and Levelling Up Secretary, Michael Gove, set out new measures intended to unblock the planning system and build more homes in the right places where there is local consent. Rather than concreting over the countryside, the government stated that it will focus on prioritising building in inner-city areas where demand is highest and growth is being constrained.

The following day, the government launched a consultation on some detailed proposals for reforming the local plan-making system in England which, if implemented, will be of relevance to the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. The government's vision is for local plans to be simpler to understand and use,

and be positively shaped by the views of communities about how their area should evolve. The government wishes local plans to clearly show what is planned in a local area so that communities and other users of the plan can engage with them more easily, especially while they are being drawn up.

The government also wants them to be prepared more quickly and updated more frequently to ensure more local authorities have up-to-date plans that reflect local needs. Furthermore, it wants them to make the best use of new digital technology, so that people can get involved without having to go through lengthy documents at council offices and to drive improved productivity and efficiency in the plan-making process.

Through this consultation, the government is seeking views on its proposals to implement the parts of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill which relate to plan-making, to make plans simpler, faster to prepare and more accessible. The Planning Policy team is preparing a Council response to this consultation, which closes on 18 October 2023.

The Planning Policy team is also working on the next public engagement exercise for the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire. Subject to agreement, this is planned for early 2024 and will focus on possible high-level growth scenarios for the spatial distribution of new development to meet assessed levels of housing and employment need.

In the meantime, our programme of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) continues to progress. The Aylesbury Vale Residential Design SPD was adopted on 30 June and those for the site-specific Aylesbury Garden Town 1 Masterplan and on Affordable Housing are well advanced. At an earlier stage of preparation, the Planning Policy and Communications teams are gearing up for public consultations on the draft SPDs for the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan strategic housing sites at Shenley Park and RAF Halton in the autumn.

Development Management Update:

The number of new planning and related applications registered has reduced, albeit the overall number of applications determined remains consistent resulting in a slight reduction on the overall number of cases in hand. 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 15 new appeals registered in July. In 2022/23 Buckinghamshire had the highest number of appeal decisions (186) nationally and the second highest number of appeals dismissed (112).

Luton Airport Expansion - Development Consent Order

The expansion of Luton Airport falls under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) consenting regime, whereby the Council is a Consultee/Interested Party in this process, as opposed to the decision-maker. The Development Consent Order (DCO) process for NSIPs is administered by The Planning Inspectorate, with the final decision made by the relevant Secretary of State based on a recommendation by a panel of independent Planning Inspectors (known as 'the Examining Authority').

The Council has registered as an Interested Party in the DCO process and has raised initial concerns which include air quality, noise, climate change and transport. These concerns are currently being considered further, with a more detailed case to be made by the Council towards the end of August 2023 to meet the first deadline, as set by the Examining Authority. The Council has written to the Examining Authority as it has concerns about the timing of this first deadline due to the Summer Holidays. While not ideal, the Council has the resources available to enable it to meet the deadline of 22nd August 2023.

The timetable for the Examination stage of the DCO can be found and is viewable through the following link: [TR020001-001182-R6 Stitch.pdf \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](#) It is currently in draft form and will be confirmed following the Examining Authority's Preliminary Meeting on 10th August 2023. At this present time it is expected that the Examination will close in February 2024, with a decision expected 3 months after that.

The Planning Inspectorate's website will be updated regularly through the Examination stage which can be viewed through the following link: [London Luton Airport Expansion | National Infrastructure Planning \(planninginspectorate.gov.uk\)](#) The DCO application documents, along with representations made by local communities and consultees can also be found using this website.

Local Heritage List artwork unveiled

Following the launch of the Buckinghamshire Local Heritage List project in 2021, many hundreds of buildings, archaeological sites and parks and gardens have been nominated by members of the public. We now have over 3000 nominations, representing those heritage assets important to local people and their communities. Reflecting the interest in the publicly nominated sites, the Local Heritage List team at Buckinghamshire Council have worked collaboratively with Buckinghamshire Culture and Farnham Maltings to commission artwork to celebrate the publicly nominated heritage assets, made possible through grant funding from the Rothschild Foundation.

Two local artists were chosen, Keziah Ferini, who produced a fantastic information panel on the Maids Moreton mound archaeological site, and Henry Rice, who produced a beautiful photographic piece of Thornton Canal Bridge #18.

On July 17th the artwork was unveiled at Buckingham library by Cllr Gary Hall, Deputy Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, and Katy Snelling of Farnham Maltings, where they will stay on permanent display. The artwork is accessible to all, with no booking required or fees attached, and provides a lasting testament to the wonderful Local Heritage List project. The team will be bringing forward another tranche of sites for adoption onto the Local Heritage List this autumn.

For further details please see the blog here: [Local Heritage List Artwork | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Aylesbury Town Centre Update

The Economic Development Team ran a second successful Aylesbury Town Centre Business Forum at the start of June. The forums will be held quarterly and will rotate venues. The June forum was held at The King's Head and had a focus on 'promoting Aylesbury' picking up on one of the priority themes identified through earlier business engagement. A refresh of the Aylesbury place promotion video

produced as part of the 'Welcome Back Fund' work with Visit Bucks has been commissioned on the back of this. The next forum will be held in September. The team have also established a business e-newsletter which will be used to update town centre businesses on council projects and the wider support it provides to businesses. Ongoing engagement with businesses and stakeholders is helping to identify quick win interventions that will help improve the vibrancy of the town.

Visitor Economy Strategy Update

An overview of findings from workshops, 1-to-1 interviews, stakeholder engagement and research and analysis of our visitor economy, will be presented to the GIH Select Committee in September. This will outline the key themes and opportunities for the county and provide a framework for both council and partner delivery. The strategy and action plan will be vital for the county as it will help us outline our approach to making Buckinghamshire a destination of choice, support our visitor economy businesses and generate greater economic vibrancy. The strategy work is due to be completed in Autumn this year.

Town Centre Markets

The Council continues to support our town centre markets and traders. The national picture continues to show that market trader numbers (including Bucks) remain lower than pre-COVID levels. The Council has started a piece of work to review the current state of Buckinghamshire council-led 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.

Aylesbury Market events

Over the summer a series of children's entertainers and music acts will be performing on Aylesbury Market as part of the 'Summer Saturdays' programme: from a magic act to circus skills and different genres of music there is a great variety of entertainment programmed. Building on the 'Love Your Local Market' national campaign in May run by the National Association of British Market Authorities, we are preparing for a 'Be a Market Trader' campaign to encourage more market traders to come to Buckinghamshire. Work is also progressing on the 'Aylesbury Christmas Craft and Gift Fair' that will take place on Sunday 3 December. This is a long established and popular event draws footfall into the town which supports town centre retailers and restaurants too.

Regeneration Strategies

The Buckinghamshire Regeneration Framework provides an overarching framework for delivering regeneration across our key places. Within the framework key principles are described that will support the delivery of initiatives for our major market towns of Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe. As well as providing a tool kit for other key places enabling projects, activities and

partnerships. The Framework is currently going through the internal processes for input and sign off and is due at Cabinet in the Autumn.

Aylesbury

We have been developing a Regeneration Strategy for Aylesbury which sits beneath the overarching Regeneration Framework for Buckinghamshire. The Aylesbury Regeneration Strategy sets out new town centre ambitions as well as following through with the good work that has already been achieved through its Garden Town programme. Although the town centre faces competition from larger nearby towns such as Milton Keynes and Bicester, it is well placed to provide a more distinct, specific proposition as a modern market town centre with vibrant independent shops. The Aylesbury Strategy supports the town centre in becoming a thriving community with greener streets, more outdoor spaces, improved accessibility and greater biodiversity. It will inform our approach to council owned assets. The strategy is due to go to Cabinet in the Autumn.

The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been recently adopted. This is a key SPD which supports delivery of the principles for the Garden Town. We are striving to improve design quality in Aylesbury and build on the design principles contained within the SPD, officers are working with elected members to ensure that planning applications comply with these principles.

Chesham

Regeneration strategies are also being developed for our next two biggest towns: High Wycombe and Chesham. In Chesham, the strategy will enable us to build on the town's rich culture and heritage, position Chesham as a home for creative businesses, and support community events and innovation. Council teams continue to explore opportunities and options for the redevelopment of council owned sites across the town centre. Projects to improve wayfinding and clarifying access points and spaces for pedestrians into the shopping and leisure spaces are being initiated, including options to extend and expand the pedestrianised areas of the high street.

High Wycombe

The Regeneration Board undertook a tour of High Wycombe town centre. The tour (by mini bus and by foot) provided invaluable first hand insight and appreciation of the opportunities in High Wycombe, particularly key council owned sites, as set out in the emerging High Wycombe Regeneration Strategy. The Strategy highlights strategic regeneration opportunities in the 'eastern quarter' – the area from the back and front of the train station down to the Council offices on Queen Victoria Road. The Council is a significant land owner in this quarter and therefore we will be exploring potential future opportunities for this key gateway entry point to the town centre.





Cabinet Member report – Communities

Councillor Arif Hussain

Helping Hand

April '23 – July '23.

The Helping Hand team continues to provide much needed support to those residents who are experiencing significant financial difficulties utilising funds from the fourth tranche of the Household Support Fund (April 2023 – March 2024), provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. The team provides both direct support through the application-based Helping Hand scheme and also supports initiatives and schemes delivered by both the Council and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

During April '23 – July '23.

- Over 14,500 digital food vouchers have been issued to eligible families to provide support during summer holidays.
- Over 14,500 digital food vouchers issued to eligible families to provide support during the May half-term.
- Over 3,300 applications for support have been managed by the team with over 4,400 provisions of support delivered including white goods, essential furniture and emergency food and fuel support.
- Funding has been provided to support over 45 Voluntary and Community Sector initiatives/schemes for residents across Buckinghamshire.

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Referrals

Helping Hand has identified a cohort of resident who are within Opportunity Bucks areas and have made a high number of applications for support from the team. These cases have been referred on to our Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) Team who can offer intensive support to these residents to develop a better understanding of the challenges they are facing and helping to connect them with services who can support.

Community Boards



The Community Boards Proud of Bucks awards have now been held, they have been excellent events, well attended by local communities and well organised by the boards. Both those nominated and those who received awards do amazing things to improve and help people in their day to day lives. It has also been great to hear how they work closely with the boards in delivering your priorities too.

The individual Community Board priorities for 2023/24 have now been set and issued to stakeholders and partners. There are similar themes across many boards – health & wellbeing, environment, community safety/resilience. This year has also seen a new theme with some commonality around community pride and spirit.

The Chairs will be meeting early in September consider all the priorities and where there may opportunities for joint delivery for better value money and a wider community impact. Boards also seeing success in developing their own projects to deliver their priorities, and engagement work continues to help communities support themselves. A recent Grow to Give project originally developed by a Board, is now being run by a local allotment champion who co-ordinates the goods and collections.



to
be
for
are

The summer has been very busy with attendance at lots of local events, show casing the work of the Boards and asking residents about what is important in their communities, as well as linking people and organisations together.

Town & Parish Councils

Two in-person Clerks Forums were held in July with good attendance at both. There was good discussion around a variety of topics, and an open forum saw clerk-to-clerk discussions and information exchanges on some good practice and opportunities for joint working. These forums will continue on a quarterly basis.

The town & parish survey which was open from May to July is now closed with the results being analysed to help us better understand what is currently working well, and not so well, for town and parish councils. In total we had 51 responses. Over the past month I have made several visits to town and parish councils which has been really helpful in understanding some of the local challenges and opportunities, as well building on the existing relationships that exist.

An BMKALC meeting was also held during July, this was the first face-to-face meeting since April 2022, and it was good to see so many town and parishes represented. The BMKALC meetings will also continue quarterly in person, and BMKALC will work with us to agree a theme for the meeting and also have time for discussion and interaction across the organisations present.

VCSE Sector Resilience Fund

The Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Resilience Fund remains open for applications. More details can be found on The Heart of Bucks website - [Voluntary Sector Resilience Fund - Heart of Bucks Community Foundation](#)



The Resilience Fund has been funded through donations from The Mulberry Trust and Rothchild Foundation and the Buckinghamshire Lottery Community Fund.

The Buckinghamshire Lottery supports local good causes and with proceeds from the lottery supporting local projects and organisations that make a positive impact on the community. There are over 370 good causes registered from animal charities to scout groups. If you are part of a local good cause looking to boost your fundraising in 2023, why not sign up to the Buckinghamshire Lottery. It is completely free to sign up, there is no admin, and no risk, free marketing and support are provided to get you started. For more information, visit: www.buckinghamshirelottery.co.uk/good-causes

Community Safety

Community Safety has led on and organized our first two Community Engagement Days of Action in two of the [Opportunity Bucks](#) wards; Quarrendon and Meadowcroft, and Totteridge and Bowerdean.

The aim of the days was to visit areas and roads in the wards which agencies have had the greatest level of involvement in and undertake a range of activities. It was also a great opportunity for residents to meet local teams and agencies.

Key highlights and outcomes over the two days were:

- 23 blood pressure and health checks completed.
- Visual audits undertaken and local concerns identified by the community.
- Undertook visual audits of hotspot areas for Crime and ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour)
- Anti-social behaviour concerns raised by residents and community members.
- Interest in 4 new Neighbourhood Watch schemes

- Nearly 40 volunteers supporting litter picks.
- 80 bags of waste collected by litter pickers.
- A minimum of 2 vans of bulky waste collected.
- Weeds cleared.
- 50 engagement home safety checks undertaken by the Fire Service
- A lost dog found and taken to a local vet.
- Bike security marking
- Abandoned vehicles identified.
- Dangerous building reported.
- Police & Street Warden patrols; leaflet drops on how to report matters to the Council and Police

A whole range of agencies and teams supported us on both days including;- Street Wardens, Community Safety team, Thames Valley Police, Bucks Fire & Rescue Service, Neighbourhood Watch, Ward partnerships (CED (Community Engagement and Development) Team), Public Health, Waste Service, NHS Healthy Lifestyles, Street Scene, Community/ Council Volunteers (Chiltern Rangers), NHS volunteers, Helping Hands team, Redkite Housing, Fairhive Housing, Energy Doctor, Highways, Transport team - Bike Marking, Parks Services, Pressure station for heart and blood pressure testing, One Can Food Bank, SPACE Buckinghamshire, Mediation Bucks, Mosaic Café and Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Community Centre.



Future engagement days have been arranged for the following areas and dates.

- 20th September - Aylesbury North -Elmhurst family centre, Dunsham Lane, Aylesbury, HP20 2DB.
- 21st September – Ryemead and Micklefield – St Anne’s and St Peter’s Church, 245 MickleField Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7HU.
- 25th October – Aylesbury Town centre – Friars Sq. shopping centre.
- 26th October – Abbey ward- Eden shopping centre- Wycombe Town centre.

Resilience Service

September is Preparedness Month which is a national campaign which aims to boost personal and collective resilience and preparedness through daily, themed information based on the National Risk Register (NRR),

It will provide and share resources, links, and activities to:

- connect and facilitate the understanding of risks.
- empower personal preparedness through easy steps.
- inform recovery and resilience.

Daily themes are discussed under hashtag **#30days30waysUK** throughout September across a wide range of partners, to enable people to follow along at their leisure, accessing free resources such as informative video, household emergency plan leaflets and templates.

An annual [household preparedness survey](#) will also be running – please take part.

We will host 15 of the themes on our webpages, <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/planning-for-emergencies/>

The Resilience Service attended the County Show on the 31st of August, speaking to the public on several issues with regards to personal and household resilience. We were also able to engage with local communities to develop local Community Emergency Plans, providing them with handouts and interactive demonstrations on how to access to our web page to look at what activities are available for our communities to get involved with.

Summer to Winter Readiness

Building on the success of winter readiness and response framework a summer version was designed which commenced on the 1st of June and ended on the 15th of September following Government Heat-Health Forecast guidance. The Summer planning assumptions have not played out as expected due to the changing weather patterns over the last month or so, as we did not experience excessive heat. Learning from feedback from the winter framework we invited four external partners. 3 x water utility companies and the Met Office, to be involved in our summer version which has helped provide re-assurance and guidance.

Marlow Town Flood Fayre

The Resilience Service supported and presented at the Marlow Town Flood Fayre which was hosted by Buckinghamshire Council's Strategic Flood Management Team, South West Chilterns Community Board, Project Groundwater and Marlow Town Council, on Tuesday, 19 September, 2pm-8pm and Wednesday, 20 September, 9.30am-12.30pm at Court Garden House.





Cabinet Member report – Culture and Leisure

Councillor Clive Harriss

WhizzFizzFest

This year WhizzFizzFest, the Council’s popular family arts festival, reached out to even more children in more parts of the county, with a focus on the ‘Opportunity Bucks’ priority areas. The programme included artists’ workshops in 15 schools and three Family Centres engaging over 800 children; theatre shows in six libraries; and three festival celebration events in partnership with local organisers in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham over consecutive weekends, which included street performances, crafting activities, dance workshops and stage performances from local groups, giving our local cultural organisations a chance to showcase their offer.



Open Weekend

Buckinghamshire Culture’s flagship event, Open Weekend, took place this year on 27-30 July. Supported by Buckinghamshire Council, the Rothschild Foundation and Visit Buckinghamshire, events and activities were delivered by individual creatives and community groups as well as larger venues. This year’s theme ‘One World’ inspired projects which focused on sustainability/preserving our planet as well as an expression of inclusivity of the wide range of local communities around Buckinghamshire. Activities included craft workshops, exhibitions, free theatre performances, dance performances and classes, textile workshops, opera, concerts, choir



sessions for families and much more. More details of some of the events can be found on the Buckinghamshire Culture website [here](#).

Summer Reading Challenge Success

Buckinghamshire Libraries successfully delivered the Summer Reading Challenge between 8 July and 16 September. By mid-August, we had 3,879 participants across the county, with many libraries exceeding last year's participant figures, and 1,273 new under 12s library members. With over 100 supporting events, we have been thrilled to welcome so many children and families into our libraries this summer. Images shown are the Summer Reading Challenge Completer display at High Wycombe Library and a fabulous poem written at an 'I love my bike' poetry workshop, a free event for families linked to the Challenge.



Library Partnerships

Buckinghamshire Libraries have continued to develop partnerships that enhance our service offer and make efficient use of our library buildings. Below are two more recent examples.

On 30 June, the first temporary Banking Hub in the UK opened at Buckingham Library. Facilitated by CashAccessUK, there are community bankers from four different banks available to offer customers advice on a rotation basis throughout the week, allowing customers to withdraw cash and process a variety of transactions from a large number of UK banks. The long-term plan is to have a permanent Banking Hub offer in Buckingham at a separate site, but in order to facilitate access to services quickly, the Buckingham Library team were pleased to be able to offer their assistance as a temporary site. This is a great example of partnership working between Buckinghamshire Council, Buckingham Town Council, CashAccessUK and the Post Office Team.

On 24 July, local radio station Marlow FM started to broadcast from their new temporary studio on the upper floor of Marlow Library, with presenters broadcasting live from 7am each morning. Long term Marlow FM are due to be moving to new premises in the town, but needed a temporary home whilst their new studio site is refurbished. Feedback on their new location has been extremely positive and the library team are looking forward to seeing how we can work together with the radio station in the local community to promote library services and activities.

Country Parks & Green Spaces

Visitor numbers to our Country Parks reflect the poor weather this summer, totalling approximately 440,000 from April to July, compared to approximately 470,000 for the same period last year. Although numbers have reduced, satisfaction across a range of sites throughout the county showed a slight improvement, with 91% posting an excellent or good rating and only 2.69% being dissatisfied (Google reviews).

There has been an extensive programme of events and activities across both parks and country parks through the summer including film walks, outdoor theatre, fairs, a regatta and a pop-up sand pit using sand recovered from a film set at Black Park.

Despite the US writer's strike, filming in the Country Parks is set to be one of the busiest years ever with continued interest in our sites; current productions include a BBC Natural History series and a significant international feature film, the third this year. Indications from the industry are that once the strike ends, impacts could be seen in terms of delays with filming recommencing or new productions coming online.

The new play area facilities in Higginson Park, Marlow, were completed and reopened officially on 2 August to very positive reviews.



We are also pleased that works have begun on the long-awaited Bridge Street skate park in Buckingham; these works are expected to be completed in the late Autumn.

As a mark of the quality of our parks and green spaces, we have once again achieved six prestigious Green Flag Awards for notable parks across Buckinghamshire, from Heartlands in Buckingham, Vale Park and Bedgrove Park in Aylesbury, Hughenden Park and The Rye in Wycombe to Higginson Park in Marlow. This award recognises excellence in parks management and is testament to the hard work of officers, contractors and volunteers who keep our parks at the highest of standards. We will be looking to put forward Black Park and Langley Park Country Parks for this award in 2024.



Leisure

Our leisure centres continue to see strong visitor numbers. From April to June, there have been 950,419 visits, an increase on the same period last year (915,812) and a positive step to improving again on our overall numbers from last year of 3.6m visits.

Investment to improve facilities for residents is continuing at both Wycombe Leisure Centre and at the Little Marlow Athletics Track. A full gym refit took place at Wycombe Leisure Centre during August, which has created a really positive enhanced environment for customers. The refit represents £500k of investment into the site from Places Leisure as part of their ongoing contract and commitment to improving the range and quality of the fitness offer for residents.



The works at the Little Marlow Athletics Track included repairing and resurfacing the track and replacing the throwing cage. Despite the challenges of the rain throughout July, the work progressed with only minor delays and the clubs returned to a much-improved facility in early September. This investment will ensure that the track will continue to hold UK Athletics TrackMark accreditation for the future.

Simply Walk

On 21 July, nearly 90 people gathered in the Orchard of Hughenden Manor to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the popular Simply Walk initiative. Simply Walk is a health walks scheme supported by funding from Public Health which encourages people of all ages and abilities to take part in regular walks across the county. There are currently more than 65 walks, most of which take place weekly, with over 2,000 people regularly taking part and more than 250 volunteers. It is free to join (although donations are welcome) and no need to book. Every walk is led by a trained volunteer leader and backmarker to ensure no-one gets left behind. More information on Simply Walk can be found [here](#).





Cabinet Member report – Accessible Housing and Resources

Councillor John Chilver

Resources update

Human Resources and CIPD September Awards Shortlisting

HR's submission to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) for best health and well-being initiative for a public/third sector organisation has been shortlisted for the prestigious CIPD September awards. HR's submission focussed on the diverse range of support put in place including the cost-of-living staff network, hardship fund, flexible resource pool, office pantries and additional mental health and well-being support sessions. The award will be announced on 21st September.



HR has also submitted an entry for the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEI) for enhancing well-being and belonging at work and will hear in mid-October if the submission has been shortlisted and then in November if the entry has won. In 2023, HR has submitted 13 award entries and has won/been highly commended for 3 around well-being and recruitment has been shortlisted for a further 6.

IRRV Annual Award – Revenues and Benefits Shortlisting

The Revenues and Benefits team entered the professional bodies (Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation) annual awards and have been shortlisted in three categories:

- Revenues Team of the Year
- Most improved Team of the Year
- Excellence in Innovation

The team have been recognised over the last two years for delivering the single revenues and benefits system on time, quality and budget, achieving the £725k savings, while issuing £92m in business grants and improving performance all under COVID working conditions. To be shortlisted for three awards is an amazing achievement. The results will be announced on the 5th October.

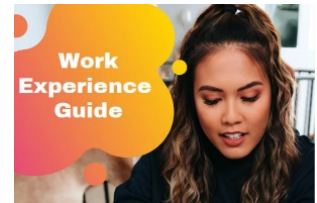


Single Person Discount Review

Between May and August, the Revenue & Benefits team completed the Council Tax Single Person Discount Review. This is the first time the Council has contacted all residents to check that their single person discount continues to be valid and is a great example of the benefits of the move onto the new single Revs and Bens system. In total, 50,000 letters were sent, including 12,000 reminder letters, which has led to 5,500 discounts being cancelled. This has resulted in almost £1.5m more Council tax now being available to support other Council work.

Virtual Work Experience

We have developed a virtual work experience portal with Youth Employment UK that will sit on the council careers pages and meets the Gatsby Benchmark for experience of workplaces, the eight Gatsby benchmarks are a framework for good career guidance developed to support secondary schools and colleges in providing students with the best possible careers education, information, advice, and guidance. The virtual work experience portal went live at the end of August and, ensures a fair and consistent way of offering work experience to all schools across the county, and not just those we have capacity to offer in-person placements. The platform and accompanying workbooks give students an insight into the breadth of careers at Buckinghamshire Council, whilst raising our profile as an employer of choice within schools at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, when students begin considering their career options.



Our longer-term aim is to use insights and learning from the virtual platform and rotational in-person placement (piloted in April 2023), to help offer a fair and accessible face-to-face work experience programme; but this will be proportionate to the capacity available in HR to coordinate this. With both approaches, we aim to ensure that we are focussing on addressing the skills shortage in our workforce, and pockets of need within the deprived wards as identified by Opportunity Bucks.



[Buckinghamshire Council Work Experience Guide - Youth Employment UK](#)

Discover more about careers at Buckinghamshire Council with Youth Employment UK. Know your options!

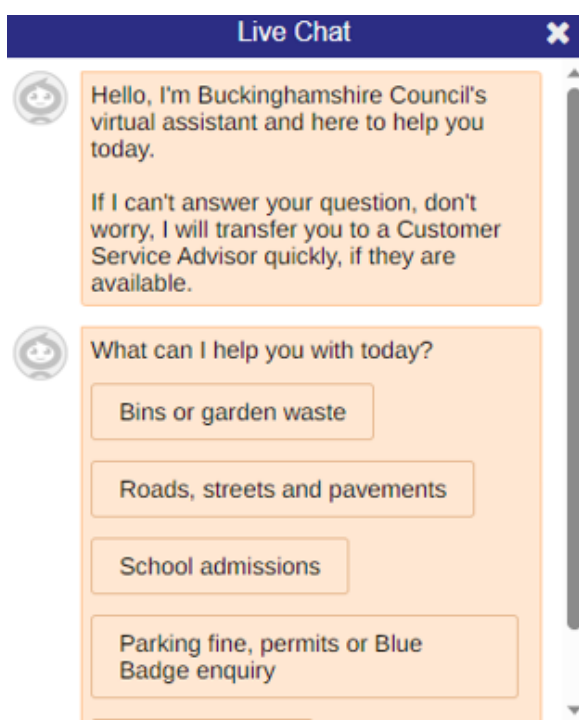
www.youthemployment.org.uk

ChatBot – 24/7 access to information

In mid-July Customer Improvement launched an automated chatbot, giving customers 24/7 access to helpful information and signposting if they choose to contact us using the web chat service online.

The previous web chat service has been available for some time to customers during working hours only and required a Customer Service Agent to be reading and answering the web chat questions being asked. Whilst Web chat is popular due to the convenience offered to customers not having to wait on a call queue, it's not fully self-serving so offers a middle ground for customers who need some extra guidance and support.

The new automated chatbot takes this capability one stage further as it triages the customer enquiry and offers information for the most popular web chat enquiries, asking a series of questions to help the customer self-serve online for these services. Waste, Fix my street reporting, parking enquiries and school admissions have been added to the first iteration of the chatbot and so far, Waste is proving to be the most popular enquiry.



At key points in the chat the customer is offered the chance to be transferred to a Customer Service Advisor who will be able to help with more specific enquiries or where the enquiry is not covered by the services currently offered by the Chatbot.

Following the introduction, we can already see that it is having a positive impact - in a recent 7 day period, 1,549 Chatbot automated interactions were started, of which 337 chats then escalated through to an advisor. This means that over 1,200 queries were resolved via the Chatbot, without the need for direct conversation with our customer service team – freeing them up to focus on conversations with those most in need of our assisted services. It also means that customers can get answers in the evening and over a weekend when we aren't available to help first hand.

The service areas covered on the chatbot can be adjusted to suit service peaks and we are exploring other popular services to add on such as Council Tax.

We're really pleased with the promising figures and look forward to sharing more success over the coming months.

Property & Assets Update

Construction Update:

Working collaboratively with other Council 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 second new Primary School at Kingsbrook; The Council entered into a Pre-Construction Agreement with the successful contractor in June to develop and agree design. The target date for planning submission is November 2023 with the commencement of works on site June 2024.

The Major extension at Green Ridge Academy at Berryfields; The Council entered into a Pre-Construction Agreement with the successful contractor in June to develop and agree design. The target date for planning submission for a non-material amendment is September 2023 with the commencement of works on site May 2024.

The Major extension Cottesloe School in Wing; The Council entered into a Pre-Construction Agreement with the successful contractor in June to develop and agree design. The target date for planning submission is October 2023 with the commencement of works on site May 2024.

Chiltern Wood School (Cressex site, High Wycombe) Remodelling Demolition and New Two Storey Teaching Block project. Procurement of external teams via the NHS SBS Construction Consultancy Services Framework will be completed in September. The target date for commencement of works on site is currently March 2025.

The new Kingsbrook Secondary School, the project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for January 2024.

Phase 2 of the Kingsbrook Secondary School to provide an expansion from 6 to 8 forms of entry. Work has progressed on the procurement of the project's external consultant teams. The school has been designed to be able to be expanded from the current 6fe, to 8fe and ultimately up to 10fe should demand necessitate.

A new 3FE Primary School at Hampden Fields has now been instructed via Education. Procurement of the project's external consultant teams is planned to commence in October 2023.

Major expansion works at Holmer Green, the project is currently being managed through the rectification periods with various sections being completed with final sign off planned for October 2023.

Major expansion works at Chiltern Hills Academy, the project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

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

The Chilterns Lifestyle Centre, the project is currently being managed through the rectification period with final sign off planned for December 2023.

Special Projects Update:

The focus has been on progressing the Council's £15m 'Future High Streets' (FHS) programme in High Wycombe, on behalf of Regeneration. One strand of which is to bring back into use vacant shops in the Old Town. Following the successful 're-purposing' of 37 High Street, the refurbishment of 16 Church Street is to be followed by the improvement of recently acquired adjoining 22 Queen Square.

Another strand of FHS is to reduce redundant retail floorspace in the town. Therefore £4m of FHS funding has been co-invested with the owners of Eden (of which the Council are ground landlords), in the £12m conversion of the former House of Fraser building, for Primark to relocate into Eden and to bring new leisure attractions into the upper floors. Works are well underway. This will enable the comprehensive redevelopment of the old Chiltern Shopping Centre, for 300+ apartments which is subject to planning.

A third strand of the FHS programme is 'Gateways' – improving visitor perception of the town. The council's Brunel building refurbishment is an example ('Northern Gateway'). FHS is to be used to acquire and refurbish the High Wycombe Social Club, the former Liberal Club building, prominently located on Abbey Way Gyratory ('Southern Gateway'). It is proposed that the first floor former ballroom be converted to a galley/store for Wycombe Museum's 'Chair Collection', to provide anew visitor attraction, exhibiting the town's former chair making history (CGI visual below). A third major 'Western Gateway' is being planned.



Asset Management

The Asset Management Team is working hard to deliver our budgets and other critical targets in terms of occupational and functional requirements, safety, and the environment. Ongoing improvements to our operating model continue to reduce risk and are helping us to ensure that portfolio performance, especially in the context of challenging market and economic conditions, is best supported in terms of people, processes, and systems.

Our Strategic Asset Management Plan, which will deliver a clear statement of our objectives and plans for the entire property estate, including the investment portfolio, our operational portfolio, and our Agricultural and strategic land holdings, is now at a draft consultation stage and we look forward to completion of this process during the remainder of 2023.

A major item of work over the last quarter has been to organise the open market re-tendering of our principle external service provider. It is of vital importance that we access best value in terms of the cost of services acquired, and also to ensure access to the very best available services and expertise, to support our real estate endeavours over the coming years. This process is scheduled to complete, with a service provider appointed, by November 2023.





Cabinet Member report – Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Angela Macpherson



Adult Social Care in Buckinghamshire: Annual Reflective Review 2022/23

The 'Adult Social Care in Buckinghamshire: Annual Reflective Review 2022/23' gives a plain English overview of how the council's Adult Social Care services have helped residents with care and support needs and their carers in 2022/23.

Previously known as the Local Account, we renamed this annual report after talking with residents and hearing their suggestions.



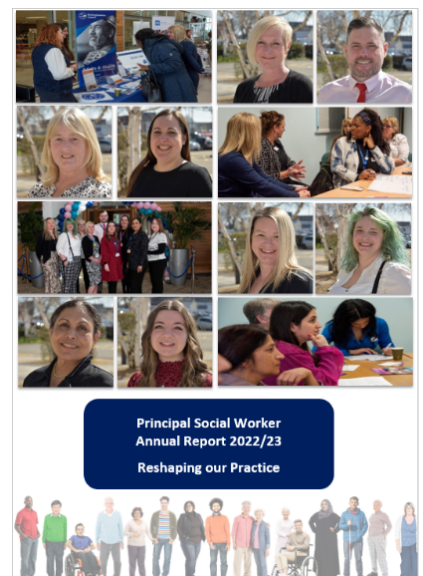
The Reflective Review can be read [here](#). Adult Social Care undertook 14,990 assessments last year and provided support to 12,103 residents. The Home Independence service support 943 residents to regain their independence and 74,300 items of equipment were provided to support over 29,000 residents. In addition to facts and figures about the service, it includes case studies of how we have worked with residents to help them retain them live fulfilling lives, even when their health may be failing.

Principal Social Worker Annual Report

The Principal Social Work (PSW) role is a key role in upholding excellence in social work.

This annual report, written by our Adult Social Care PSW, highlights the work undertaken to promote and improve the quality of social work practice and outlines the key priority areas of work for 2022-23. It is also a reflective account highlighting the collaborative approach adopted within social care to improve the delivery of excellent social work practice. The PSW annual report will be published on the council's website later this month.

Key achievements include the roll out of the named worker approach, the development of a social work taskforce group and a thematic review of sensory services in partnership with Bucksvision which currently provides the Buckinghamshire Integrated Sensory Service.



This review involved a number of service users and identified areas of good practice as well as opportunities to improve social care staff knowledge.

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance of Adult Social Care



As many members already know, the Health & Care Act 2022 reintroduced CQC inspection of how well local authorities are delivering their Care Act functions. The CQC's interim guidance on local authority inspection, along with the draft framework, can be read [here](#).

At the last Council meeting on July 12th, I reported on the preparation being undertaken by the CQC. The CQC had previously planned to start assessing all the 152 English councils in scope over twenty-four months starting in September 2023. The CQC has recently announced the start of formal assessments is now delayed until later in the year. We still do not know when Buckinghamshire is likely to be formally assessed - the CQC is developing how it will select the first councils to be assessed and will publish more information on this before the start of formal assessments.

Autumn Vaccination Programmes (Covid and flu) 2023/24

At the end of August, NHS England announced that the rollout of this year's Autumn/Winter Flu and COVID-19 vaccination delivery programme would begin on 11th September. It is planned that all care home residents are vaccinated by 22nd October.

Vaccinations remain critically important in reducing serious illness and hospitalisation in the most vulnerable groups of the population. Operational delivery of the vaccination programme is an NHS responsibility. However, the Council remains a key partner in providing support and guidance to the NHS, providing a voice for our residents, and sharing key messages with our communities.

Eligibility: Eligibility criteria for the 2023/24 vaccination programmes are different from last year. The following people should be offered **both covid and flu vaccines**: all adults aged 65 years and over, residents of older adult care homes, pregnant women, people in a clinical risk group, those living with someone who is immunosuppressed, carers, and frontline health and social care workers. In addition, the **flu vaccine only** will be offered to children aged 2 to school Year 11. A full list of those eligible is available [here](#).

Roll-Out: The autumn flu vaccination programme for children will start from September. Due to the emergence of a new covid variant in August, it was announced on 30th August that roll-out of adult vaccinations for flu and covid will be brought forwards to begin from 11th September (for care home residents) and from 18th September (for other eligible groups). The NHS will invite eligible people at greatest risk first. Where practically feasible, receiving both covid and flu vaccines at the same time is both efficient and safe and therefore is encouraged.

Participating Sites: Vaccination venues will include a mix of pharmacies, GPs and hospital sites. We know there have been different levels of vaccination uptake between communities for previous campaigns. The Council continues to work with the NHS in designing engagement and outreach plans to proactively try to reduce these inequalities. Councillors, as leaders in our communities, can continue to identify residents' needs and help to build confidence in both the covid and flu vaccines.

Autism Strategy Consultation

Consultation on Buckinghamshire Council's Autism Strategy was launched at the end of July and lasts until September 24th. During this time, we will collect and listen to feedback so that we can keep improving the strategy, and making sure it really represents the views and needs of Buckinghamshire residents.

The strategy has been developed in collaboration with several hundred residents with lived experience, as well as numerous health and social care professionals who have provided their input. We are confident that we have captured the needs of our population better than ever before, and the draft strategy includes clear and impactful goals. The consultation gives a wider opportunity for stakeholders to feedback, and we would really value your comments on the strategy.

Since going live on our website, the Autism Strategy consultation has received over 240 responses from Autistic People, Parents, Carers, Family members and Friends. If you would like to provide your feedback on the strategy or share your experiences, please do follow the weblink below.



The link will take you to our consultation page that includes our online strategy and survey, as well as accessible and young people focussed versions too. There is also a timetable of engagement events if you would prefer to hear more or feedback in person.

[Buckinghamshire Autism Strategy 2023 to 2027 consultation - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)

The finalised strategy will work hand-in-hand with a new Autism Steering Group and Action plan so we can drive the change and developments needed to offer excellent support services to Autistic people as well as their families and care networks.

Vaping and disposable vapes

Although vaping can assist people to stop smoking, the long-term effects are unknown. A particular concern is the impact of vaping on children and young people whose bodies are especially vulnerable. I will be pleased to support the motion being brought by colleagues, proposing the banning of disposable vapes.

In Buckinghamshire one of our Tobacco Control Strategy priorities is deterring people, especially children and young people, from taking up smoking and vaping. Young people are most at risk of becoming smokers or vapers themselves if they grow up in communities where smoking and vaping is the norm. Healthwatch Bucks will carry out insight work focused on vaping amongst children and young people later in 2023 which will help shape our approach moving forwards. Some of our current and planned initiatives are:

- Smoke Free gates: This is a collaboration between Public Health and Buckinghamshire Schools to promote smoke and vape free school gates. This will be starting in the autumn term.
- Smoke Free sidelines, to stop smoking at football matches: We now have 11 clubs signed up including one (Aylesbury Vale Dynamos) which is in an Opportunity Bucks ward.
- Smokefree Parks and Playgrounds: We are working with Community Boards and Parish Councils to identify parks and playgrounds to be made smoke-free. Currently, 14 parks/playgrounds have had Smokefree signage installed. Building on the success of the Design a Sign competition at

Millbrook Combined School, we will be working with other primary schools to host similar “design a sign” competitions.

- The Illegal Tobacco Roadshow took place in the marketplaces of High Wycombe and Aylesbury on 22 and 23 August. Although largely focused on cigarettes, the roadshow also covered vaping and the risks of using illegal vape products. The roadshow aimed to encourage residents to share intelligence anonymously with Trading Standards.
- Public Health is funding additional capacity in Trading Standards to focus on underage sales of tobacco, vapes and nitrous oxide and prosecutions.



Councillor Macpherson, our Public Health and Trading Standards teams and partners at the Illegal Tobacco Roadshow on 23rd August 2023 in Aylesbury Market Square

Women’s Heart Health

We are developing a new Women’s Heart Health campaign which forms part of Love Your Heart Bucks, the campaign to reduce cardiovascular disease (CVD) in Buckinghamshire. We are currently working up what the campaign will look like and will provide further information over the coming months. I hope you will support us in raising awareness for this important initiative.

Although CVD is commonly associated with men, in 2021 women made up approximately 50% of the deaths caused by CVD-related illness in Buckinghamshire. Women have a 50% higher chance of receiving the wrong initial diagnosis after a heart attack and are 50% less likely than men to receive the recommended heart attack treatments. In light of these staggering statistics, the main aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of the signs and symptoms of a heart attack in women and take pre-emptive measure to reduce their chances of having a heart attack, by adopting a healthy lifestyle.



Eliminating Hepatitis C

Buckinghamshire Council’s Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service, provided by One Recovery Bucks, has recently achieved a major milestone in eliminating hepatitis C virus from its service users.

Hepatitis C is a virus that can affect the liver. The virus is spread through blood-to-blood contact and people who inject drugs are at the highest risk of becoming infected. No vaccine is available, and if left untreated it can result in serious and sometimes life-threatening liver damage. However, the good news is that detecting and treating hepatitis C can prevent liver damage and make sure the infection is not passed on to other people.

One Recovery Bucks has been awarded ‘micro-elimination’ status – meaning that everyone who has previously injected drugs who has accessed the service across the whole of Buckinghamshire has been tested for hepatitis C, and more than 9 in 10 people who have tested positive have either started treatment or cleared the virus naturally.



One Recovery Bucks is the first county-wide service to achieve this nationally, representing a major achievement for Buckinghamshire. In doing so, we are supporting the ambition to eliminate hepatitis C nationally by 2025 – ahead of the rest of the world.

Better Points Update



To encourage people to get more active and make healthy choices, we have introduced BetterPoints.

BetterPoints is a free [app](#) open for our residents aged 14+. People earn rewards residents for making positive changes to their lives, such as walking, accessing support services through [Be Healthy Bucks](#) and even taking the bus.

We have 1065 registered users, with 33% of these registered users coming from Opportunity Bucks wards which are our priority areas. Between the 1st January and 30th June 2023, 106,982 active and sustainable

journeys have been recorded, with 52% of these journeys directly replacing single occupancy car journeys. Sixty percent of participants at 12-weeks reported they were more active because of the campaign.

Physical Activity Strategy 2024-2029

The Physical Activity Strategy 2024-2029 will be published later in September this year. This builds upon the previous strategy to encourage our residents to adopt a more active lifestyle and increase physical activity for all.

We are really grateful to the Buckinghamshire Physical Activity Steering Group, made up of 44 members from 17 different organisations and council services for their work in developing the strategy and their ongoing commitment to its implementation. We would also like to express our thanks to the five focus groups of residents who contributed to the strategy and annual action plan.





Cabinet Member report – Education and Children’s Services

Councillor Anita Cranmer

To Planet Care We Go! book launch



Our We Do Care team are pleased to announce the launch of ‘To Planet Care We Go!’ – a story about coming into care.

This book is the result of a brilliant youth voice project that involved members of our We Do Care Juniors group. The children used a creative story-telling approach to write a book that is for both children in care and the grown-ups who work with and support them.

The children developed the book to help people understand how children might feel when they first come into care. They also hope that the book helps other children and young people feel less alone, understand better what is happening, and why they might have lots of different feelings.

We held a successful launch event on Thursday 20 July at Aylesbury Library for the children who developed the book, along with their carers, friends and family. The event was an opportunity for colleagues from Children’s Services and Buckinghamshire Health Trust to meet the children who created the book, hear a live reading of ‘To Planet Care We Go!’ and receive signed copies.

The book is available now to borrow from all Buckinghamshire libraries, hard copies will also be available in the members’ suite at The Gateway or you can watch an animation of the story [here](#). Please visit your local library and show your support, by borrowing this book and telling others about it.

In addition, the We Do Care team also held our annual children in care celebration event on Wednesday 23 August. I was thrilled that so many of children and young people in care and their foster carers attended and pleased to report that the sun shined and a fun-filled day was had by all. All children attending the event were given their certificates of achievement.

National Co-production Week (3 – 9 July 2023)

We marked National Co-production Week in July by sharing an update on what has been happening across the Local Area to bring more co-production into our collective work with children and young people with SEND and their families. The annual [National Co-production Week](#) is an opportunity to celebrate the benefits of co-production, share good practice and promote the contribution of everyone who uses co-production to develop better services.

Details were shared with colleagues on current work happening across the Local Area which is using co-production. These include the co-production of the Therapies Strategy, the co-production of the All-age Autism Strategy and development of a needs-based model to strengthen Early Intervention SEND support.

The [Buckinghamshire SEND Co-production Charter](#) sets out our shared principles and ways of working using co-production and describes how we do this individually, collectively in teams or groups and strategically in organisations and schools. Our [SEND Co-production Promise](#) is a simple way for anyone involved in co-production to sign-up to support the Buckinghamshire SEND Co-production Charter.

Our SEND co-production webpages showcase the new SEND co-production toolkit along with other resources and information at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coproduction

Holiday Activities and Food Summer activity programme



I'm very pleased to update members that thanks to our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, thousands of children from low-income families across Buckinghamshire have enjoyed a packed summer of free, high-quality activity clubs, with over 15,000 holiday club places on offer in around 50 locations across the county.

The programme is targeted to school-aged children in Reception to Year 11 inclusive who receive benefits-related free school meals. The Council also offers up to 15% of the overall HAF programme places to other children who are not eligible for benefits-related free school meals but who could benefit from HAF club provision; these groups include looked after and previously looked after children, young carers and children with an education, health and care plan. We have been working with our schools and our HAF club providers to identify and invite children from these additional groups to attend. We know that the long summer school holiday can be a difficult time for some families. I am pleased that we have supported local children and families to access these fantastic free holiday clubs, eat a healthy meal at every session, learn about good nutrition and physical health – and just as importantly, have the



opportunity to make new friends and have fun. The HAF programme will return for the Christmas school holiday period. Information on the programme is at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf

Academic results

Ofqual announced last autumn that for 2023 the grading structure would return to pre-pandemic standards for GCSE, AS and A level, although with some protection for this cohort to acknowledge the disruption their education has faced and to prevent grading falling too far below 2019 pre-pandemic levels. Ofqual were expecting this to mean 2023 results would be lower than 2022 and much closer to pre-pandemic years than results since 2020.

For GCSEs, we have received grade information from approximately 45% of the pupils in Buckinghamshire schools, with 17 out of 36 secondary schools sharing their data with us on a voluntary basis. The emerging picture demonstrates that our students have performed broadly comparably with the 2019 benchmark and this is similar to the national picture. This means that we can expect Buckinghamshire results to be more than 10% above national figures and in line with our high comparative performance in previous years.

In looking at A level results, 21 secondary schools, out of a possible 36, have shared results with us representing just under 65% of the expected pupil cohort. From the initial response, we can see that the percentage of pupils achieving the top A* grade in Buckinghamshire, was lower than in 2022 but still significantly higher than the emerging England figure, which has also decreased. Across all our early measures it looks like whilst our results have dropped since 2022, they are above the 2019 results which are the last comparable figures, and have overall dropped less than the national picture, meaning that our students have performed very well indeed.

Results are still provisional at this stage and may change. Final figures for both sets of exams which can be shared will be released by the Department for Education later in the Autumn after late results, appeals and possible re-marks are taken into consideration.

Well done to all those students who have worked hard and got the results they wanted. We know that the effects of the pandemic are still impacting children and young people of all ages, so the achievements are testament to their resilience, and they should be very proud. We also know there may be some students who may not do as well as they hoped or expected, and our schools have been on hand to provide help and support to those who need it.

Improving Educational outcomes for Disadvantaged Pupils



Educational Outcomes in Buckinghamshire are extremely strong, with the majority of young people across our county leaving school with very good results. However, this is not always the case for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Disadvantaged pupils continue to achieve less well than their non-disadvantaged peers.

One of the biggest challenges faced by schools across the county is therefore how to mitigate against the effects of disadvantage on educational attainment at all stages in a child's education. The Buckinghamshire Challenge is an ongoing collaborative programme to collectively upskill schools in the latest research and understanding and to support schools to undertake the cultural changes that will make the biggest differences to all pupils, but especially those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. As part of the programme, Buckinghamshire Disadvantaged Handbook for Schools has been developed, in partnership with Marc Rowland (Unity Research School, the Education Endowment Foundation, DfE Advisor on Pupil Premium) in collaboration with Buckinghamshire schools. It contains learning and best practice on raising attainment for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds in Buckinghamshire schools, national good practice and latest research.

The Buckinghamshire Challenge continues, with a focus for 2023/24 and beyond, linking with the Council's Opportunity Bucks programme to improve everyday lives and life chances for people resident in underperforming places across the county. Opportunity Bucks will enable collective resources to be coordinated to ensure that pupils living in disadvantaged wards of Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe achieve a good standard of education and skills and access the same level of opportunity as their county-wide peers. The handbook will continue to be updated with latest learning from the project.

Important developments in Children's Social Work Practice

As part of the wider Children's Services transformation programme, the service has embarked on a journey to ensure services delivered to families in Buckinghamshire demonstrate consistently high-quality practice. This programme of transformation has provided the service with an opportunity to consider our approach when working with children and families, ensuring it is aligned to a practice methodology that all our staff are trained in. The agreed approach will follow 3 distinct approaches to evidence-based practice including:

1. Consolidating the use of the 'Strengthening Families' approach: Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.
2. Motivational Interviewing training: Motivational interviewing is a strengths-based conversational approach to counselling that encourages families to improve their child's welfare by enhancing their readiness for change.
3. Trauma informed training: Trauma-informed practice incorporates core principles of safety, trust, collaboration, choice, and empowerment and delivers services in a manner that avoids inadvertently repeating unhealthy interpersonal dynamics in the helping relationship.

The underlying principles for this training include having a strong focus on relationships, ensuring all practitioners are continuously forging strong connections with the families and the communities they work with, to bring about positive change. The programme of training will start in September 2023 and will be delivered incrementally to all staff, starting with staff within Children's Social Care teams and the Family Support Service. Training will be ongoing with a schedule of continued training and support for staff, recognising the importance of revisiting and ensuring the organisation and leadership is clear on what we want to achieve for all children and families engaged with a

practitioner. Crucially, this will be a cycle of learning, testing of learning and evidence of improved outcomes for children and families ensuring our frontline managers and staff fully understand the ask in terms of practice and that this is monitored and evaluated through regular quality assurance activity.

Our ambition is to create a culture of learning and we look forward to seeing the impact this training on the professional skillset of our staff, and most crucially the impact this work has for our children and families.





Cabinet Member report – Transport

Councillor Steve Broadbent

Buckinghamshire Highways

The new Buckinghamshire Highways service is delivering substantial improvements to our road network following the very harsh winter and its impact on our network. Over 19,000 highway defects have been fixed since April. Up to 17 crews have been working on repairs, with cover 7 days a week, with schemes being accelerated to tackle the highest priority routes in many areas. Other maintenance and repairs are also making excellent progress, with 39,000 gullies cleansed and 1600 streetlights fixed since 1st April 2023.

Our larger, capital intensive carriageway re-surfacing programme has continued apace over the summer. As of mid-August, 66 surfacing schemes were fully complete out of the 216 that we have planned during the year, with another 51 schemes already fully designed and programmed to start and over 90 more being developed for later in the year.



Before



Before and completion photos –
Hillbottom Road, High Wycombe



After



Before and completion photos –
Hatters Lane, High Wycombe



The capital programme for other highways areas is now fully underway following the early focus on road repairs, works are commencing to deliver 22 street lighting schemes, including replacement and repair of illuminated bollards and signs, 8 road safety schemes, 17 drainage schemes, 21 signals schemes and 3 major structures schemes.

Preparations for the delivery of the winter plan are advanced, the gritters are ready and the team alert to the start of the winter season in mid-October.

HS2 and EWR

The Council continues to hold both HS2 and East West Rail (EWR) to account for the impact of their construction on our environment, residents, communities, and businesses.

HS2 negotiations on road repairs are progressing following a previous meeting with the Rail Minister. EWR reinstatement works to permanently repair the damage caused by their construction works are underway across north Buckinghamshire, this is part of the programme of 12 roads in 12 months that was agreed by EWR following work by councillors and council officers. Repairs on Verney Road were completed in July and these are being swiftly followed by repairs to Little Horwood Road and Sandhill Road by the end of September.

HS2 Ltd's contractor EKFB is undertaking extensive works on the Princes Risborough Aylesbury (PRA) line under blockade between Sat 19 Aug 2023 – Sun 29 October 2023 (10 weeks). The works will be 24 hours with the exception of school hours to mitigate the impact to Booker Park School. EKFB has informed us that they have engaged extensively with the local parishes, communities and directly impacted residents. They have developed a bespoke community support package for residents in the vicinity. We are monitoring this work closely.

The Council continues to work with both organisations to minimise the impact of traffic management and road closures.

Rights of Way

The Council had intended to replace the mid-section of the Berryhill footbridge in Taplow during the summer and autumn. Unfortunately, the Environment Agency (EA) had held back the necessary consent to allow the Council to carry out the replacement, because it had its own work programme ongoing on the Taplow Gantry, which is very close to Berry Hill bridge. They advised that it was not possible to have the two projects operating at the same time. As the EA's infrastructure forms part of the flood alleviation requirements for the Thames River its work programme had to take priority. The EA's works have been completed, and a new application for the bridge replacement will be submitted to the EA for formal approval.

Assuming approval is granted then it is intended that Berry Hill Footbridge will be reopened over this coming winter/spring.

Clearance crews have been operating across the Rights of Way network over the summer months carrying out surface clearance. Surface growth has been particularly vigorous this year due to the warm and wet conditions but all the jobs from the clearance schedule have now been completed.

Clearance issues notified to the Council will continue to be undertaken with the help of volunteer groups and the Council's own contractor work crews. Thank you to all volunteers who help with this work.

Local Transport Plan 5 (LTP5)

A public consultation on the draft Local Transport Plan 5 (and Local Plan for Buckinghamshire) Vision and Objectives was undertaken from 19 April – 4 June 2023. Analysis of the results from this consultation has shown the majority of the respondents support the draft vision which has three overarching objectives: connecting our economy, decarbonising our transport system and building places for people. The feedback from this consultation will inform and shape the development of our future transport policies and implementation plan. We are now in a position to proceed with drafting the core Local Transport Plan 5 document, with the aim of holding a further public consultation in 2024.

Electric Vehicles – Project updates

An award of £72k received from the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Capability fund for 2022/23 will be utilised to increase the number of staff available to the Council for EV-related projects, including any necessary training. A further application to the LEVI Capability fund has resulted in additional staff resource funding of £165,230 per annum for financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 to progress further schemes.

Progress continues with the installation of 128 new electric vehicle (EV) charging bays in sixteen Buckinghamshire Council-managed car parks. A total of 88 charging bays across eleven sites are fully operational with the remaining sites suffering delays due to a delay in works undertaken by the Distribution Network Operators (DNO) for the electricity supply. These sites are expected to go live in the autumn.

Moving Traffic Enforcement (MTE)

We are in the process of reviewing the next round of camera locations for Moving Traffic Enforcement (MTE), the aim of which is for implementation by the end of December 2023. For the locations that have gone live, we are already starting to see a reduction in the level of abuse, leading to a safer and more efficient travel flow.

Pick Me Up, Wycombe – expansion of the service

The Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) scheme '[Pick me up](#)' launched as a pilot in October 2022. DRT is a flexible type of bus service that allows users to book their journey on demand as they require it, between any two points within the area covered by the route. The service runs Monday to Friday from 6am to 7pm.



Since the scheme was launched the Council has received several requests to expand the scheme and from 29th August the area served now includes Flackwell Heath. This enables the best use of buses and will improve connectivity links for residents where there is no direct bus service.

Wycombe Park and Ride improvements

Working in partnership with the bus operator, new improvements have been made to the park and ride service in High Wycombe with the aim of increasing passenger numbers and longer-term viability. The Park and Ride has been combined with the existing Service 28 service to provide journeys up to every 20 minutes between High Wycombe town centre and Coachway (Park and Ride). Service 8 will serve Cressex, including the Business Park, and Service X8 will operate an express service to the town centre using Marlow Hill. This should result in a reduced peak journey time from 17-22 minutes to 7 minutes between the Coachway and the railway station, providing a better service for passengers.

Extension of travel for £1 pre 09:00 scheme for concessionary bus pass holders

The current local [scheme](#) offering travel for £1 before 09:00 on weekdays to concessionary pass holders will now be extended through to the end of October 2023. Bus use with a concessionary pass remains free between 09:00 and 24:00 on weekdays and all day at weekends.

School bus arrangements

Officers have worked extremely hard to prepare for the start of the new school term in September. 2023/24 timetable details for school buses for children who are eligible for Council transport assistance have been published and are available on our [website](#).

The Council's [spare seat scheme](#) continues to operate. This scheme enables parents who do not qualify for free transport assistance for their child to apply to buy a spare seat on a Council-run school bus where there is space available (after seats are allocated to eligible children). As at the end of August, 368 spare seat passenger places have been arranged for the coming academic year.





Cabinet Member report – Climate Change and Environment

Councillor Gareth Williams

Fly Tipping Enforcement

On 31 July 2023 the Government increased the maximum allowable fixed penalty rates for fly-tipping, failure in duty of care by householders (whose waste is removed by waste carrier and later found fly-tipped). Buckinghamshire Council will review its provision for fixed penalties in the light of this over the next few months. These fixed penalties are issued for more minor offences, and usually where there is positive co-operation with investigations. Since 2020, 136 FPNs have been issued in Bucks for these offences (85 for fly-tipping, 54 for Duty of Care failures), compared with 110 (more serious) cases prosecuted at court (86 for fly-tipping, 24 for duty of care failures).

Littering

Bucks is beginning to see deterrent publicity following cases where people have been 'fined' for dropping and leaving litter at the roadside. Two images here show individuals recently 'fined' £150 each for littering in Bucks. A report is being prepared to set out a broader Litter Enforcement Strategy for Council consideration later in the year, which will also review the fines for fixed penalties for littering.



Household Recycling Centre Charging – Government announcement on future changes

The Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) announced in June that when implemented later this year, households will be able to deposit limited amounts of DIY waste for free at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs). The announced changes still need to go through the legislative process, so it is important we are all aware that these changes are yet to come into effect. The current charging system for non-household waste, which is outlined in detail on our website, is still in place at all Buckinghamshire HWRCs.

If the policy needs to change to reflect updated legislation, this will happen in due course, and we will keep residents fully informed as to the timetable and any changes to charges. We continue to await the publication of the draft legislation. It is important to note the proposed changes will allow some currently charged waste in for free but that it won't be limitless. The detail of the draft legislation is needed to inform the control measures and practical changes needed and when the change in legislation applies.

The consequence of these changes will be substantially increased costs and loss of income for managing more waste which local authorities do not have duties to do so. These financial impacts will have to be managed through the MTFP process. Also based on past experience, the Council does not expect to see a decrease in fly tipping with the implementation of these proposed charging changes.

The Council has an extremely strong track record with regard to tackling fly tipping and has implemented a number of successful initiatives with government. Furthermore, in June 2021 the national body WRAP published a report, 'The relationship between fly-tipping rates and HWRC charging' which concluded there was no link between charging and fly tipping at recycling centres. The research also considered a range of other factors such as deprivation, which again did not find evidence that HWRC charging is associated with higher rates of fly tipping.

South Waste Collection and Street Scene

Continuous affective contract management activities and ongoing work with Veolia has resulted in the first quarter of 2023/24 (April - June) KPI target of 0.20% for missed bins being achieved. Veolia continue to meet the contractual target for container deliveries, residents receiving bins within 10 working days. Enhanced cleansing in public realm areas have seen improvements in challenging areas such as car parks which often suffer from anti-social behaviour and require additional cleansing.

Garden waste subscriptions are increasing, especially in the Wycombe area where we recently introduced charging. We have 49% of Wycombe residents signed up to the garden waste service. Chiltern area has 43% and South Bucks 37% subscribers.

The first 'Community Action Day' under the Opportunity Bucks Programme took place in the first of seven South ward areas, Totteridge and Bowerdean. The day was a success with community and staff volunteers and operational support teams from Veolia clearing litter and areas of fly tipped waste. Work will continue in this ward area to improve community areas through engagement and work with stakeholders, such as Redkite Housing and local businesses. Plans are now in progress for the next set of action days scheduled for later this year.



Environmental Protection

The Strategic Environmental Protection Team (within the Environmental Health service) have been busy meeting more Community Boards across the county as part of the Clean Our Air Campaign. In addition, the latest Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) has been completed to schedule and has been submitted to Department for Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Local Nature Recovery Strategy - work underway to reverse the decline in nature in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

The Government has recently announced 48 areas where there will be a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) put in place over the next 12-18 months. Together these 48 [strategy areas](#) cover the whole of England with no gaps or overlaps. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes comprise one of the nominated areas and work has now commenced on the production of this important strategy. Each local nature recovery strategy will agree priorities for nature recovery and propose actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities.

LNRSs are a key requirement set out in the Environment Act 2021 aimed at reversing the decline in England's nature. This new requirement will support efforts to:

- recover nature across England
- help deliver national environment targets
- support the delivery of biodiversity net gain in the planning system
- help planning authorities incorporate nature recovery objectives

Buckinghamshire Council has been designated the Responsible Authority (RA) – or the local authority responsible for producing the strategy for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes - with Milton Keynes City Council and Natural England serving as key supporting authorities. The Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership (NEP), the area's successful Local Nature Partnership, will be leading the strategy creation process. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy process will work closely with communities and other stakeholders to map out how and where to recover nature and identify priorities that also achieve wider environmental benefits. Buckinghamshire was chosen to be part of a pilot LNRS process in 2020-2021 to help to inform and determine the final regulations and guidance for producing a LNRS.

To start the LNRS process a series of 8 introductory webinars were held in July, targeted at land managers/owners, environmental organisations, developers, Parish/Town Councils, businesses and residents. The sessions were very well attended where the project team provided more information about what an LNRS is, together with why and how stakeholders can get involved in the process and importantly action to deliver it.

Further information is available here:

[Local Nature Recovery Strategy Overview – Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership \(bucks.mknep.co.uk\)](https://bucks.mknep.co.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy-overview)



Cabinet Member report – Homelessness and Regulatory Services

Councillor Mark Winn

Environmental Protection

One of the key roles the service undertakes is responding to planning and licensing consultations and attendance of Safety Advisory Groups for large events. The service is also currently supporting the planning policy team on the expansion of the Luton Airport Development Consent Order. Officers are providing expert advice on air quality and noise. Required documents have been submitted on time and briefing papers are being prepared for our Barrister. Issue specific hearings will take place at the end of September when we will be prepared to give evidence. We are working with key stakeholders to minimise potential impact.

The team have also worked with the Cemeteries and Crematoria Service on the environmental permitting of the Chilterns Crematorium as part of its recent upgrading project and are extremely pleased with the significant collaboration and positive way the scheme has been undertaken.

Following on from the successful health and safety project looking at workplace transport, Environment Health Commercial Team Officers have turned their attentions to gas safety in catering businesses with a particular emphasis on ovens. Evidence has suggested that the ignition devices on some ovens do not always work and staff have to resort to lighting them with burning paper. Therefore, following training from Gas Safe engineers, officers will be looking at gas safety in kitchens and raising awareness of the need for appropriate controls, maintenance and certification. Where necessary, enforcement action will be taken where it is found that appliances are unsafe.

Officers had a successful weekend at Silverstone F1, inspecting campsites for public safety and welfare, water sampling at the campsites, inspections of mobile caterers both outside and inside the circuit and the main hospitality providers. Officers are now focusing their attention on the Moto GP and Silverstone Festival.

The harmonised skin piercing byelaws approved by Council on 21 September 2022 have now been confirmed by the Secretary of State for Health and came into force on 5th August 2023.

Housing and Domestic

As part of Opportunity Bucks the team have had two days where they have focused on identifying unlicensed HMOs (houses in multiple occupation.) During an exercise in Chesham the team did a door knock on 750 properties in 12 streets. This identified one urgent issue and another property of serious concern. They also flagged approx. 50 properties for a follow up letter as they were unable to gain access.

A similar exercise was undertaken in Aylesbury which targeted 30 properties identified through intelligence. One unlicensed HMO has been identified and there are some more properties that require a follow up due to either the inability to gain access or due to other concerns. A similar exercise will happen in the coming weeks in the Wycombe area.

The team continue to undertake inspections as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. They have recently completed their 1000th visit since the scheme started March 2022.

The Homelessness Service

The Homelessness Service continues to receive high numbers coming through to the service, a 27% increase in presentations in July 2023 compared to July 2022.

There has been an increase in debt advice cases with higher rates of households struggling with rent/mortgage arrears which is reflected in the rising numbers of Rough Sleepers where we currently have 31 across Buckinghamshire (9 clients in the North and 22 in the South). Underlying causes for the recent Rough Sleepers include evictions from privately rented accommodation and/ other supported accommodation as well as issues with relationship/family breakdowns. Compounded with this is a lack of available emergency beds, suitable move on accommodation and affordable private rentals.

Homelessness Officers work in partnership with the Make Every Adult Matter (MEAM) team to provide extra support to the long term rough sleepers targeting the cohort in High Wycombe. This has recently been successful in placing two entrenched clients. To further support this work, a portion of the Housing First Funding has been identified to increase the number of emergency beds available (five additional). Housing First is a philosophy which differentiates housing from support needs, setting housing as a first priority and removing support requirement conditions (although support is still offered). It is aimed at those with complex needs, often entrenched rough sleepers.

Disabled Facilities Grant

As at the end of July 2023, we had 481 ongoing applications for Disabled Facilities Grant for property adaptations, of which 80 have been completed. We are still in the process of reviewing the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant and Financial Assistance policy to reflect the increase in costs.

Bucks Home Choice – Demand for Social Housing

The demand for social housing tenancies via the Council's Bucks Home Choice scheme remains high and as at the end of July 2023, we had 5,853 live applications on the register, an increase of 264 since my last Cabinet report in May.

Registration Service

The service continues to register all births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships which have taken place in the county and is now planning for the busy autumn season of excess births during September and the increase in deaths as we head towards the winter.

The Buckingham Library is being prepared to enable registrations at that location one day a week starting this autumn. Information on when this is up and running will be available on our website as well as notification to local members in advance with more detail.

Bookings for ceremonies for the current year stand at 1520, with the total for last year being 1851. It is too early to conclude that bookings will be lower for the end of the current year, but officers will be monitoring this closely for the remaining six months. 542 ceremonies have already been booked for 2024/25 which is encouraging.

Coroner's Service

There continues to be instances of uncertified deaths due to delays in GPs not seeing patients within 28 days of death. This is a national issue, and the General Register Office continues to liaise with various government departments in order to try and find a solution to this.

Crematoria and Cemeteries Service

The team at Chilterns Crematorium were given the opportunity to host a visit by Councillors Mark Winn and Carl Jackson and were delighted to be able to showcase the outcomes of the recent cremator replacement project and improvement works and tell them about the positive comments received from Funeral Directors and Celebrants who use the services on a regular basis.

The Councillors were also able to present a long-standing crematoria staff member Clive Dickens with a card celebrating his 40-year anniversary of working at Chilterns Crematoria.



The service has continued to be busy recruiting following completion of the crematoria service review and implementation of a new staffing structure. Once the new team members are fully trained new rotas will be introduced and the cremation service times at both Chilterns and Bierton crematoria will be extended to increase the number of cremation service times available giving service users greater choice.

Our commitment to continuous improvement continues with work to install concrete plinths in Penn Road Cemetery due to be completed in July. Installation of the plinths will enable bereaved families to erect headstones more quickly following a burial and will improve the appearance of the cemetery as the headstones will not be adversely affected by ground subsidence following the excavation.

Gypsy and Traveller Service

The number of unauthorised encampments this summer has so far remained relatively low in Buckinghamshire in line with our previous report, this may be testament to the Bucks Gypsy and Traveller Services team efficiency in visiting new groups very quickly upon arrival to address any welfare issues, which is a mandatory part of the eviction process. Although numbers across the country are lower since the Covid pandemic began, there are still many groups travelling up and down the country. We are still seeing more and more of the settled community taking to living on the roadside in vans/caravans/motorhomes, these can be more time consuming to deal with due to issues such as awaiting an outreach visit, the provision of homelessness advice, or complete referrals. We are committed to supporting where possible rather than seeing families moved from one place to another and not addressing their welfare needs.

Out of the eight unauthorised encampments that we have dealt with this fiscal year 37.5% have been people living in vans/caravans/motorhomes from the settled community. There have been several more that have been reported to the Bucks Gypsy and Traveller service that have been referred to homelessness, and the DVLA for vehicles which were untaxed or declared SORN.

Policies Update

Having already carried out public consultations this year on the new draft Charitable Collections Policy and draft Animal Licensing Policy, the consultation on the new draft Scrap Metal Licensing Policy has also been carried out. The Council is responsible for the licensing of all scrap metal dealers, including mobile collectors who wish to collect scrap metal within Buckinghamshire Council's area and those operating scrap metal sites. The draft policy provides guidance on the application process, a brief overview of relevant legislation, links to Government guidance on the Scrap Metal Dealers Act and outlines matters which the Council will take into consideration when deciding if someone is suitable to hold a licence. The policy also sets out how best practice recommendations, such as carrying out compliance visits, partnership working with other agencies and intelligence sharing will be incorporated into day to day working practices.

It is hoped that feedback on the draft policies will have been considered by Licensing Committee by the end of the year with meetings scheduled for 5th September and 7th November 2023.

A pre policy engagement survey to inform the draft of a new Street Trading Policy for Buckinghamshire has also been carried out and will be reported to Licensing Committee at the November meeting.

Licensing Act 2003 – updates

Following a public consultation, the Home Office have announced that the regulatory easements relating to off sales for alcohol licensing in the Business and Planning Act 2020 will now be extended until March 2025. During the extension period government have advised they will be working on a permanent solution to create a unified pavement licence scheme that includes licensing consent for the consumption and sale of alcohol in outside pavement areas. They will be engaging with local authorities to inform this work.

Regulatory easements relating to temporary event notices (TENs) will not be extended and will lapse on 31 December 2023. This means that in 2024 licensed premises will only be able to apply for 15 TENs to run over a maximum of 21 days in total over the year, instead of the 20 TENs over a maximum of 26 days they have been allowed this year.

Guidance for Licensing Authorities has also been amended by the Home Office to reflect the recommendations made following the Manchester Arena bombing inquiry. The guidance recommends that licensing authorities pay particular attention to terrorist threats when making specific licence conditions in relation to security or health care provision at appropriate premises and events applying for a licence. This is most likely to be relevant to high profile or large premises or events. Any licence conditions would need to be appropriate and proportionate. The Licensing Service are working with Environmental Health colleagues and the Safety Advisory Group to incorporate this guidance into supporting organisers with the safe planning and delivery of events that are notified to the Council.

Proactive Enforcement Work

Over the summer months both the Commercial and Taxi Licensing teams have carried out a number of enforcement operations to check compliance with both Licensing Act (alcohol and entertainment) and hackney carriage and private hire requirements. These have included events such as the British Grand Prix at Silverstone, Pennfest, Towersey Festival and spot checks at adult social care centres with colleagues from Client Transport. Officers from the Commercial Licensing team have also carried out a number of compliance checks of animal exhibitors licensed under Licensing of Activities Involving Animals Regulations (LAIA) at events such as the Buckingham Country Show and Bucks County Show, ensuring exhibitors have acceptable standards of animal welfare in place.

Both the Taxi and Commercial Licensing teams continue to build upon our good working relationships with external and internal stakeholders such as Thames Valley Police and Trading Standards as we work jointly with their officers to undertake proactive enforcement work and targeted spot checks to protect and promote public safety.

Animal licensing prosecution

Following a lengthy investigation into unlicensed dog breeding and animal welfare concerns two defendants were sentenced to imprisonment at Amersham Law Courts on the 11th September 2023 for offences including unlicensed dog breeding, causing unnecessary suffering and failing to ensure animal welfare. Following complaints from concerned members of the public, Licensing Officers obtained Court warrants to enter two houses in Aylesbury in September 2021 where 24 bull breed dogs were found in squalid conditions. A number of the dogs were taken into the Council's possession

and, following further visits, the remaining dogs were removed by the RSPCA. Officers used forensic analysis of digital devices to help identify the details of the illegal activity taking place. Evidence showed that dogs had been intensively bred, in several cases having had two litters in less than a year and had been subjected to repeated caesarean sections. Unfortunately fighting had also led to the death of two of the dogs. The dogs that were removed and the puppies that were subsequently born, were cared for by the RSPCA and Appledown Rescue and Rehoming Kennels. With assistance from these charities, all the dogs have now been successfully rehomed. The outcome of this case will assist the Council in promoting animal welfare and encouraging people to buy puppies through licensed reputable breeders, as well as send a warning to others engaged in illegal dog breeding activity that we will act on information received. Concerns about unlicensed breeders can be reported to the Licensing Team via the [website](#).

