

Budget Scrutiny Public Questions & Responses

Public questions were invited for submission ahead of the Budget Scrutiny sessions held from 10 to 13 January 2022. Where there was insufficient time to raise the question at the end of the relevant session, and where the question raised was not covered during the main discussion of that session, the appropriate Cabinet Member has provided a response below.

Recordings of the budget scrutiny sessions are available here:

<https://buckinghamshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

Leader – Cllr Martin Tett

How can you ensure that the spend on rural broadband is not spent in areas where BT already supplies an adequate service? Swift Fibre are clearly targeting areas that already have a good BT service in Bourne End

The Council does not have control of commercial decisions that a digital infrastructure provider may make for investment in new or existing areas. However, the Council does play a key role in ensuring that the infrastructure investment from the public sector is used appropriately and in compliance with State Aid regulation. To this end, a key process and deliverable in the government's Project Gigabit programme is to map the roll out plans for the next 3 years of all the broadband suppliers in Buckinghamshire, to ensure the rural broadband funds are targeted to those hard to reach places with no commercial builds planned. This is done via an Open Market Review, where all suppliers submit their plans to Building Digital UK (BDUK) who then analyse, audit, challenge and publish this data for Public Review. The Public review is where anyone in Buckinghamshire can access these Broadband maps and challenge the future builds of all these suppliers if appropriate. The council is working directly with BDUK and the suppliers on this programme and will be able to advise and influence Broadband roll out decisions real time and ongoing. If a good service is already available, no funds will be allocated to that area.

Culture and Leisure – Councillor Clive Harriss

I am involved with one of the community libraries, which, as you know, help deliver a comprehensive library service across the county, and benefit from considerable volunteer time and enthusiasm, and thus represent excellent value for money. With library management understandably having to deal with the big issues of staff restructuring, there is a growing feeling that engagement with community libraries is suffering. This is a great shame, and relevant to the budget, because the perspective and ideas that community libraries and their volunteers can bring, could assist with delivering a better and more efficient service overall. What commitment do you have to engage with community library representatives to allow them to contribute to the ongoing service review?

Thank you for your question. I have been able to visit a number of community libraries and I have been impressed with the quality of service, commitment of volunteers and also the desire to be involved in the wider development of the service.

You are certainly correct in your observation regarding the current pressures on the senior library service management team but I hope to reassure you that the commitment to engaging with community libraries is unchanged.

Three of our most experienced senior library service managers will have retired within the space of three months, and whilst I am confident that our recent appointments will prove to be highly capable replacements, it is clear that there is a lot to be done in terms of induction and hand-over. There will be wider organisational change for the service over the next few months and this will also involve considerable demands on the time of our senior managers.

One of the consequences of these internal changes is that we have rescheduled some elements of our service improvement review until later this year.

The work to date on developing the vision, mission and purpose for the service has been successfully informed by our engagement to date with community library partners and volunteers and please be assured that your contribution is highly valued. As we work up a set of strategic priorities you will also have the opportunity to inform this work.

Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Environment – Cllr Peter Strachan

Has the council followed through with point 43 of the climate change and air quality strategy (Assess the carbon emissions from proposed road schemes)? If emissions are found to be unacceptable, cancellations could lead to huge capital savings.

Initial conversations regarding how to approach this have been undertaken between the climate change team and colleagues from procurement and highways infrastructure teams but this is not complete. We would like to clarify that the aim of this action is to assess the scale of emissions of a given scheme and its constituent sources, so that the most effective approach for reducing these can be identified. This action is not intended to provide a review mechanism through which agreed schemes would be subject to review.

Action 15 of the Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy, is to 'Embed climate change and air quality considerations in policy and decision making'. From your own perspective as nominated lead on climate change, are you comfortable that the budget-setting process enables this, and that all portfolios are giving due attention to climate issues in their choices about expenditure. Are there any changes you would like to see?

Yes, I'm comfortable that the process enables this. Looking at the budgets we have allocated we should acknowledge that only a few months after adopting our strategy, we are already seeing a lot of attention and investment in addressing climate change.

I do think this is action which requires ongoing attention though – I don't think we merely set up a process and walk away. This is also not limited to the budget setting process but how the Council makes decision more broadly and the next area I wish to develop further is consideration within our procurement processes.

At nearly 2.8 million, Solar Car Port & Fleet is a significant capital expenditure - how does it break down?

Please see below breakdown – the £2.79m also includes expenditure on building energy savings (i.e., energy efficiency and onsite renewable generation). This value is also profiled to be spent over multiple years, as shown in the table.

Project	Expenditure / Funding	Funding Detail	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's	2024/25 £000's	2025/26 £000's	Total MTFP £000's	Post 2025/26 £000's	Total £000's
Building Energy Savings	Expenditure		100	250	400	300	1,050		1,050
Solar Car Ports	Expenditure			300	300	340	940		940
Fleet Electrification	Expenditure		20	80	80	80	260	540	260

Why can't you plant less trees or delay planting the trees as this is not critical spending if you know people are facing exceptional challenges with inflation already and not impose such a high increase at such a difficult time?

We want to get the tree planting programme away strongly as it will take 20-30 years for the trees to mature and begin absorbing large amounts of carbon. This is a long term approach and an investment in our future, which if we delay pushes these benefits even further away. We are aware that climate change is a key concern for many residents and so we are investing in our approach to addressing it.

With having had effectively a 4-day weekend followed by a 3-day weekend we have had a long gap in our collection as our usual day being a Friday. I totally accept the reason behind this but could I suggest that consideration is given to putting in extra collections beforehand, so in effect the crews are not just catching up after these long holiday weekends but preparing in advance. So households might not have to wait quiet so long for the delayed collections.

This year there has been longer than usual periods between collections due to the bank holidays. We understand this can be difficult for some residents regarding storage of waste and recycling, however we do accept side waste for recycling. HRC's are also open and able to take any extra waste or recycling, they only close for the bank holidays.

To provide additional collections before the bank holidays would be costly. It would require extra vehicles and crew to enable us to double up on collections.

Are there any incentives planned for insulating homes, switching to electric driving or installing solar? It seems like central government area making little effort in these areas so it'd be good to see a push at a local level

Yes, we have a range of activity and support in these areas. Through the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Deliver (GHG LAD) programme we are supporting fuel poor, low efficiency focus homes to reduce their running costs and reduce carbon emissions. We are providing more EV charging points across the county and I would highlight that the Government still provide grants towards the cost of electric vehicles and charging points. We keep under review opportunities for solar across our estate and in the capital programme have included funding to progress solar car ports.

I'm not quite sure at which Budget Scrutiny session this question should be addressed, but I think it's Tuesday 11th? I assume the Chairman's comment that we can: "Hopefully open another of our local Household Recycling Centres which are so popular with residents." refers to the Improved HRC Provision in the Princes Risborough Area, outlined under Appendix 3 Draft Changes for the Climate Change & Environment portfolio? There is proposed provision in the out years of 360k; 270k; and 280k. If my assumption is correct, I would like to hear during Scrutiny what recent evidence has become available to justify this growth in Waste expenditure. I'll outline my understanding of the background. I live in Whiteleaf, adjacent to Princes Risborough. Until it's closure in 2019 I regularly used the Bledlow Ridge HRC. However, the sound, objective analysis presented at the time showed that usage of this HRC was considerably lower than all other HRCs and its continued funding could not be justified. I accepted this approach as entirely logical, and well-informed. Since then I have used the excellent HRC at Aston Clinton, where the superior lay-out, access and greater number of disposal points makes for greater efficiency and shorter visit times etc. I'm aware of other Princes Risborough residents who, like me, would not go back to using a re-opened Bledlow Ridge HRC even though the distance to travel to it would be less than to Aston Clinton. Visits to the Bledlow HRC were always a voyage of discovery! Often long queues; difficult entry/parking/exit; angry scenes/rage; an ergonomic disaster. In 2019 there was recognition that many visitors to the Bledlow HRC were Oxfordshire residents (mainly from Chinnor, the nearest town to the HRC). I understand that then, Oxfordshire County Council declined an invitation to part-fund this HRC. So I now understand that if the HRC re-opens, it will be exclusively for Buckinghamshire residents. I don't recall statistics to quantify this but I suggest it reasonable to estimate maybe as high as 50% of visits to the HRC being made from Oxfordshire. I'm aware that a petition in favour of retaining the Bledlow HRC apparently gained 4,000 signatures. There are a little over 3,000 households in Princes Risborough. So, I don't understand why the thorough analysis conducted in/prior to 2019, combined with a new policy to deny access to non-Buckinghamshire residents, and the drift of householders to the better HRC facilities at other sites, don't all point to the conclusion that usage of a re-opened Bledlow Ridge HRC would be lower than previously and not justifiable.

The decision to close the site was difficult for the legacy council. The consultation documents and reports stated the primary reason to close the site was to reduce contract costs to save the Council money in the short term to medium term. Other service changes included a reduction from 7 to 5 days-a-week opening for three sites and the introduction of charging for non-household waste across the HRC network.

HRC site betterment over the medium to long-term including planning for growth/need remained for the unitary council to consider. The HRC network locations are considered through spatial planning needs, historically the site locations evolved due to legacy administrative boundaries. The Councils Waste Acceptance and Access Policy recognises there is considerable future growth planned across the administrative area including the north of the county.

As unitary council, waste management services can now be viewed as a whole system. This provides opportunities to consider long term needs, harmonisation, whole system costs and where possible provide improvements / access to frontline services to local communities.

Historically (prior to 2019 site closure) Bledlow HRC would typically see between 32-35% of visitors from Oxfordshire as cross border users, therefore 65-68% of visitors were from Buckinghamshire. Direct administrative arrangements between local authorities remain unsupported by Oxfordshire CC.

Since all the service changes were introduced in 2019, all nine HRC sites have seen a lower volume of waste and visitors. This mean HRC sites which previously, were exceeding or nearing tonnage capacity are now less congested and see less waste at each HRC. At present no detail work/ analysis has been undertaken, if Bledlow HRC was to re-open and more so if the site was solely for Buckinghamshire residents it would be reasonable to assume similar lower waste volume & visitor trends.

If proposals are to be put forward which include the possible reopening of the Wigans Lane Household Recycling Centre during the forthcoming series of Budget Scrutiny Select Committee meetings, Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council wishes to put forward the following questions:

1. Overall, does Buckinghamshire Council plan to open the site in its previous form or will you set aside sufficient budget to address the issues raised by the Parish Council, the recommendations of Buckinghamshire County Council and Buckinghamshire Council's own officers during the previous planning process, and the recommendations of the Secretary of State's examiner following the CIC's unsuccessful appeal? The Parish Council's full position is set out in the attached letter of 23rd November 2021 sent to Martin Tett following the 'premature announcement' of the reopening of the site last year. Our main questions to the Scrutiny Committee are:
2. Cars awaiting access often queue during peak periods on Wigans Lane. Will you fund measures to ensure safety on what is a steep hill with limited visibility?
3. The HRC exceeded its 5,500 tonnes p.a. limit in 2016/17. With the expansion of Princes Risborough, Longwick, Haddenham, Kimble and across the Oxfordshire border in Chinnor and Thame, demand will grow beyond the site's allowed capacity. We calculate the

10,670 houses in 2020 for which the site is the nearest facility will grow to 14,230 by 2030. Have you budgeted for facilities to accommodate this increased demand?

4. Approach routes are mostly unsuitable for HGVs removing waste from the site, and none are ideal. Will you budget for a system of governance so those directly affected by the HRC have a substantial influence over the way the site is operated?

5. Will there be funding for a pre-commencement plan as recommended by Buckinghamshire Council's own Appeal Position report? While the site's ownership and mode of operation may change, the issues remain.

As there has been no previous funding aligned there has been no detail work undertaken to consider the re-opening of the site. The questions raised by the parish council are noted and will be considered in due course.

Could you please answer as to why it is justified to spend a vast amount of money on another household waste site when multiple sites have had their days cut?? Why on earth would anyone think this is a priority after the last 2 years of terrible financial strain on people! Surely this is unnecessary - reopen the current sites full time and reassess in the future perhaps rather than take so much more money from the public at such a difficult time

Three sites have reduced opening hours, mid-weekdays see's lower visitors and waste volumes meaning customer usage is low. The Council has no legal duty to accept non household waste free of charge. Charging for construction and demolition waste enables the Council to meet the savings targets and continue to manage associated risks of further HRC site service model changes including site closures. This not only helps save money but enables efficient and effective use of the whole network.

If we are opening another recycling centre why is my local centre on Rabans Lane closed two days a week? Or perhaps I should pollute the Earth by driving and queuing at Aston Clinton. Would love to hear your reasoning.

Three sites have reduced opening days (mid-weekday – Wednesday and Thursday), this is due to lower customer/visitor usage. This not only helps save money, also enables efficient and effective use of the whole network. The modern/purpose designed super sites such as Aston Clinton HRC, are capable of meeting high customer usage /demands, the site is capable of accommodate high volume of cars without causing queuing and designed to stack 100 cars as part of traffic assessment to minimise risks of traffic queuing onto the A41,

You mention in your report finding a new recycling centre. I suppose you have already considered reopening the old site at Bledlow Ridge? This is already set up and shouldn't cost as much as a new site.

As there has been no previous funding aligned there has been no detail work undertaken to consider the re-opening of the site or building a new site. The site was decommissioned during 2019, there would be some recommissioning costs of the former Bledlow site. It is reasonable to assume it is more cost effective to open a

consented (built and operationally permitted) HRC site. This would continue to be reasonable to assume, even if, some capital works were to be undertaken over a period of time. Typical cost for a new site range between £11-£15million (depends if land remediation works are necessary e.g. brownfield / contaminated and/or a land acquisition).

Portfolio Holder for Transport – Cllr Steve Broadbent

There were a number of queries around why the Council, and subsequently taxpayers appeared to be responsible for road repairs caused by damage from HS2 and East West Rail infrastructure projects.

Whilst the financial aspects of these questions were discussed in the budget scrutiny meeting, the Council secured funding from HS2 for three mobile CCTV cameras to check on HGV movements across the county's road network. The Council has additionally secured forward funding from HS2 Ltd for the coming year to repair potholes and other associated damage caused to Buckinghamshire's highway. The Council will receive a sum on an annual basis over the life of the construction period, the figure to be determined and reviewed annually.

Additionally, the Council is submitting a number of claims for road damaged cause by HS2 traffic to HS2 Ltd and also pressing HS2 Ltd and their contractors to repair damage on an ad hoc basis.

Please can you tell me how much you are spending on taking the HS2 to Judicial review to stop lorries going through Wendover and surrounding areas
<https://www.buckinghamshirelive.com/news/buckinghamshire-news/buckinghamshire-council-issue-appeal-against-6200921>

The JR process is currently live and to date, £145k has been spent by the Council on legal costs to limit the impact of HS2 construction traffic within Buckinghamshire.

Who makes the decision on whether tax payers money should be spent in this way?

Buckinghamshire Council is a member-led authority and in line with this, the decision to appeal was a member one, which followed both officer and legal advice.

In his latest update of 07/01/22, Martin Tett talking about setting the budget says "I am very proud that we are a strong and financially prudent Council and we are in a much better position than many other local authorities. It means that we're able to propose continued spending on the areas that matter most to our residents". After carefully analysing this statement and reading the rest of the spending proposals, my thoughts quickly turn from positive to absolutely negative. Mr Tett mentions the huge sums being spent on roads and clearing gully's, very admirable, however, it's years of under investment that means we have to spend so much now. Now when a lot of roads are beyond repair. How can you justify having big reserves of cash against not having a suitable sustainable year on year plan of proper preventive maintenance?

Our investment in Highway Maintenance over the years has always been maximised whilst keeping within available budgets for the Authority. Deployment of these budgets is largely driven by a strategy of preventative maintenance (known as an Asset Management approach) that seeks to invest funds at the optimal time in the roads' deterioration cycle to enable the best "bang for our buck". We also operate a robust inspection and monitoring regime through our Highways Safety Inspection Policy to identify and act on defects through a risk based approach to prioritization, which includes assessment of the needs of all road users.

The council is proposing an investment of more than £100 million in "a comprehensive programme of road and pavement improvements". Can you be more precise in how these funds are to be allocated? I have just moved to Steeple Claydon and the roads around this area are quite frankly a disgrace and extremely dangerous, to both motorists and cyclists.

Investment of our funding is guided by the Highways Asset Management approach that uses data regarding the condition and traffic use of each element. This allows us to invest funding in our roads at the optimal time in the deterioration cycle. This technical appraisal is checked through with local Councillors to allow local knowledge to be applied to the final decisions.

You mention in your recent email that there is money in the pot for improving pavements and roads but I have been asking for years to have the pavements in manor park area looked at especially Tindal road but was told that they are within spec which is rubbish as my pregnant wife tripped up and so have my kids. Most of the slabs are broken and dangerous I suggest you take a walk around the manor park area it will take you 10/15mins. Also the road outside the prison is also in a bad way causing damage to cars! I am not submitting any more forms on your website as they keep getting rejected.

We inspect roads and footways on a regular basis depending on the level of use of each element. Furthermore, we inspect every fault reported using FixMyStreet (<https://www.fixmystreet.com/>) so please report any faults you see. I will arrange for Tindall Road footways to be inspected in light of this question.

When are you getting around to fixing all the pot holes. Damaged tarmacs in the town of high Wycombe. I have added things to fix my street and with an hour there said to be within. Limits of potholes etc. this is not. True. As there is no way anyone can go a view the problems within a few hours over night

We inspect roads and footways on a regular basis depending on the level of use of each element. Furthermore, we inspect every fault reported using FixMyStreet (<https://www.fixmystreet.com/>) so please continue to report any faults that you see. We do seek to inspect these reported faults very quickly but we may also rely on previous inspections if we are clear that the fault reported is one that has recently been reported. On occasion, when a report is received on fix my street, it will have been inspected very recently, either through our routine inspection process, or via a similar report, so an answer can be given without a further inspection at that time

The Leader's budget shows £1.9million over 4 years for cycle infrastructure. What and where is this for?

The £1.9m allocated to cycle infrastructure is the funding that Buckinghamshire Council secured through Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). The schemes, both of which are still in development, identified in the HIF contract were:

- **Significant improvements to a section of the Grand Union canal towpath**
- **A new route linking the town centre with the Hampden Fields development.**

And why is this separate from the Highways Budget of £4.7million for cycleway schemes?

The budget is held separately because HIF is held under the Leader's portfolio and the highways budget comes under the Transport Portfolio for which the Cabinet Member is Cllr Steve Broadbent. The Council arranges its budgets by Portfolio.

Has all this money already been allocated to specific schemes?

The £4.7M within the highways budget has been secured from external sources and has been allocated to specific projects. It is not solely for cycleway schemes, but it is a combination of highway and cycleway schemes. A summary of the breakdown of this funding is as follows:

Source	Funding Secured	Scheme Allocations
Department for Transport Active Travel Fund Tranche 2	£1.348M	Emerald Way Improvements, Aylesbury – active travel route between Haydon Hill and Aylesbury town centre.
Department for Transport funding via Sustrans	£0.027M	Final works for the Haydon Hill extension to the Waddesdon Greenway.
Section 106 Developer Contributions	£3.022M	A combination of highways and cycleway schemes (including traffic calming, bus stops, pedestrian crossings, active travel links etc.) All funding is secured with associated conditions on what it can be spent on and will be local to the specific development site.
High Speed 2	£0.163M	A variety of schemes to help mitigate against the impact of HS2.
National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF)	£0.125M	Works associated with corridor improvements to the A40 London Road in High Wycombe and A418 Oxford Road in Aylesbury.
TOTAL	£4.685M	

Regarding the Transport Portfolio priority for a new Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan:

Why is Buckinghamshire Council producing this plan?

The development of a Buckinghamshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) will enable the Council to establish a comprehensive future walking and cycling network across the council area and identify future investment priorities for walking and cycling infrastructure.

Key reasons for producing the Buckinghamshire LCWIP include:

- **To build on and consolidate existing local policies, strategies, and walking and cycling route aspirations into a coherent overall network**
- **To provide an evidence base that can inform and strengthen future funding bids for new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure. The DfT have stated that Active Travel funding will not be available to local authorities without an LCWIP.**
- **To feed into the forthcoming Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan 5**
- **To support the Council in embracing and responding to national policy, design guidance and funding announcements relating to walking and cycling and infrastructure provision**
- **To support the delivery of walking and cycling infrastructure that can support progress towards Buckinghamshire Council's key priorities and wider objectives, including reducing carbon, improving health and wellbeing and supporting regeneration.**

Who in Transport is writing this plan?

The LCWIP will be developed by Buckinghamshire Council's Transport Strategy team in conjunction with an appointed (experienced) transport planning consultancy.

What involvement will local members and community boards have on the plan?

Engagement activities will be undertaken as part of the development of the LCWIP. Whilst the arrangements for this engagement are to be confirmed, it is anticipated that workshops will be held with a range of internal and external stakeholders. It is also proposed that input will be sought from the Council's Community Boards to understand key local walking and cycling aspirations for each Board area that can be considered as part of the development of the LCWIP.

Will there be a public consultation for it?

Yes, a public consultation will be undertaken on a draft version of the LCWIP.

When will it be published?

It is anticipated that the Buckinghamshire LCWIP will be published in the 2022/2023 financial year.

Appendix 3 anticipates a post-covid growth in car-parking income. Can I suggest that income could be boosted by cancelling the free parking days before Christmas. When the Council professes to support sustainable modes of travel, these give a completely inappropriate signal. If it is too complex to transfer this amount of money to subsidise bus fares on those days, because of difficulties of administration, it would at least not risk undermining fares income.

Free parking before Christmas on certain days has been provided for many years by each of the District Councils. We have opted to honour these arrangements for the time being, given the strong local desire to hold a positive social and economically beneficial event at that time of year. I recognise your views regarding sustainable transport and understand that there is a fine balance to be struck here given that transport and parking act as a facilitator to other activities. We intend to review our approach to parking across the whole authority in the coming term and this aspect will be incorporated into this review.

I understand that there is a road-space booking system for contractors undertaking work on the highways. Does this include a fines regime for occupying the highway when work is not being done, and, if so, how much income has been raised from this source? Could monitoring and enforcement of these rules be beefed up and robustly applied, perhaps by making it easy for all Bucks Council employees, other agencies, and members of the public, to report “phantom” roadworks. This would either increase income or reduce unnecessary congestion and delays, to the benefit of air quality and carbon emissions.

Buckinghamshire Council operates a Permit Scheme to help manage all works on the highway with a particular view to minimise disruption and remove potential clashes of work and traffic diversions. All those who have a right to work on our highway network require permits to do so. They are required to state how long their works will last and this is checked by our team to establish reasonable timescales. The Permit is then granted on that basis and if the works extends beyond this, without agreed, valid reasons, penalties may be charged. Legislation requires the Permit Scheme to be cost neutral overall so that the income fully funds the Council’s costs for operating the Scheme, but that a surplus is not made. The fees charged are reviewed annually to ensure this is the case and currently our permit fees are close to the maximum allowed. Whilst we inspect and monitor a large proportion of works to ensure utility companies and others working on our highways are doing so efficiently, there are a number of valid reasons why traffic management might be in place without any activity being seen on the site. This could include curing of materials or availability of specialist teams for a particular aspect of the work. For context, this year the team has issued over 50,000 permits for works on our network.

In light of the council's goal of reducing carbon emissions from transportation, what proportion of the budget is being allocated to traffic reduction measures in comparison to the sums allocated to road building? And has any assessment been carried out of the potential savings that could be made on road maintenance by reducing traffic volumes, given that we are due to spend 30.5 million on this in next year's capital budget?

Whilst it may seem that there would be a direct correlation between a reduction in traffic levels and less need for highway maintenance, most of the damage done to our roads is by HGVs and environmental issues such as the impact of the erosion caused by the weather.

Even with a reduction in HGVs there would still be an underlying need for capital maintenance.

HGV volumes in Buckinghamshire are increasing due to:

- **the number of major infrastructure projects in the area, e.g. HS2 and EWR;**
- **HGVs and LGVs have significantly increased during the Covid pandemic due to the changes in the way we shop.**

In terms of reducing carbon emission, the Council has been developing additional walking and cycling links to provide more choice for residents. We have also submitted a Bus Service Improvement Plan to central government and we are waiting to hear about any funding allocation for Buckinghamshire to deliver this plan. The provision of walking and cycling infrastructure, together with reliable bus services provide the basis for encouraging sustainable travel.

We have adopted a Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy and our LTP will need to look at how emissions from local transport can be reduced We intend to start the development of a new Local Transport Plan this year. The Department for Transport has already stated that they expect these to set out carbon reduction targets and how they will be achieved. Further guidance on Local Transport Plans is expected from DfT during 2022.

To support the reduction in carbon the Council is in the process of producing an EV Action Plan. This aims to provide a network of EV Chargers across the Council area to support residents transition to EV vehicles.

I am glad to see from the latest email from Martin Tett that the council is continuing to invest in roads and pavements. I have a specific request regarding pavements as in the area I live there are many roads without pavements. Where I may have encouraged my children to walk or cycle for local trips, I have to drive them as the roads are far too treacherous. I even drive them to the local school bus stop. Does the council have any plans to address this? I suspect in years gone by when there was less traffic it would have been possible for cars to share the roads but this simply isn't the case anymore. While I appreciate the difficulties (as either side of the roads is often private property) it means that we increasingly become a car dependent society which is bad for everyone.

The addition of footways to roads that don't currently have them will be considered for funding by the local Community Board. I suggest that you raise your specific issues with your local Councillors in the first instance. As you say, if a footway requires acquisition of private property (eg. Gardens), this can be challenging procedurally and will be expensive.

Drain and Gully, Pednor Bottom, Chesham just beyond the junction with Westdean Lane - This was thought to be cleared and left in an operational state about 6 Months ago but is now totally flooded again. Would you please at the very least carry out a survey straight away and include in your schedule of work to be done. It seems probable that the soak away that was prepared is inadequate. You may feel there is some urgency because you will recall one of the regular runners that take this route was badly injured last year when he fell trying to negotiate the flood and broke his femur. The road is not safe while in this state.

I can assure you that the gulley cleansing process does include a check to ensure that it is flowing freely. Furthermore, the process will also ensure that more significant problems with the whole drainage system (e.g. main carrier drains, soakaways etc.) are identified and scheduled for longer term solutions. With regard to this specific location, the need for further works has been identified and these works were programmed to commence on the 17th January.