



## Cabinet Member report - Leader

### **Role during COVID-19 emergency**

The period since 1<sup>st</sup> April has been dominated by the response of the new council collectively to the COVID crisis. I have worked closely with Cabinet colleagues and our Chief Executive to help support our residents and businesses across the council area. This included taking part in daily emergency response meetings, aligning Cabinet members to the 'Cell's alongside senior officers, ensuring that local businesses received support grants and signposting them to other funding and helping set up the community response 'hubs'. There was a key role in communications with members and residents via daily Updates at the height of the crisis, with details of the support available to them from the council and also the wider voluntary and community sector.

### **Liaison with MPs and the NHS**

Weekly briefings have been held with the five Bucks MPs and the NHS on issues affecting Buckinghamshire residents and businesses. These have been invaluable in communicating key messages and 'asks' to Government. It has also ensured a close alignment and understanding between MPs, the NHS and the council. Our MPs have been outstanding individually and collectively in supporting Buckinghamshire. In addition, I participated in weekly meetings with Bucks Business First, the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Voluntary and Community sector. This group has been monitoring the health of the Bucks economy and is helping develop a Buckinghamshire Recovery Strategy.

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

In April the Council was awarded £172.3m in response to the HIF bid developed jointly by the former County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council. Officers are working on 'pre-contract' conditions, which will allow us to draw down funds, and planning the delivery of the projects in the bid.

### **Bucks Local Enterprise Partnership (BLEP) Board**

At the last meeting in May, I joined with other Board members to review the impact of COVID-19 to the Buckinghamshire economy and considered the Buckinghamshire Local Industrial and Recovery Plan and the separate Digital Strategy. The Board also considered the list of projects previously circulated in response to the request received from MHCLG on 11 June 2020 for LEPS to come forward with ideas to accelerate existing capital funded projects and suggest "exceptional, additional shovel-ready capital projects" deliverable in the next 18 months.

## **England Economic Heartland**

I chaired a recent meeting of EEH which was very positive and is focused on lobbying Government around economic growth and increased investment in critically needed infrastructure to support already planned growth. It was therefore disappointing to see so little invested in Bucks as a result of the recent Infrastructure announcements. The meeting also included updates on how we decarbonise the region's transport system and statutory status.

EEH will be launching its Draft Transport Strategy on July 14 and a free webinar, which will include MP for Buckingham, Greg Smith, is being held on the day. The strategy is available on the EEH website and is subject to a consultation running until October 6. EEH is also consulting on its proposal to become a statutory Sub-national Transport Body for the region covering Swindon across to Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire down to Hertfordshire.

## **HS2**

In June the Chief Executive, Nick Naylor and I met with HS2 Ltd at a senior level. We communicated the continued opposition to the project alongside our frustration at lack of information and engagement with local communities along the route. We asked for more local engagement with members and parishes. HS2 agreed to come back with proposals for this.

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

Recently I appeared before the important Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee. A strategic overview was provided at the June meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on the business community, strategic infrastructure projects, town centre regeneration and key council services, such as planning and housing. An explanation of the work being undertaken to mitigate the negative impacts for each area was provided, for example, the council working in partnership with Buckinghamshire Business First to offer the Business Rates Relief Grant and the Discretionary Business Grant Fund.

## **LGA's People and Places Board**

Meetings in March and June included discussions on: growth funding and fiscal devolution; principles of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; improving rural digital connectivity; economic growth; and above all, the economic impact of COVID-19 on regional sectors in the short and longer terms and how Members can help with developing sustainable economic resilience.

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

I chaired a SESL meeting in June, including discussions with the Permanent Secretary of MHCLG and the Director General for Adult Social Care in DHSC. Colleagues and I stressed the importance of: meeting the full costs of responding to the COVID-19 crisis; providing long-term certainty for local government funding including for adult social care; devolving powers, freedoms and flexibilities to strategic authorities in rebuilding services and the economy; including the South East in the levelling-up agenda; clarity in identifying where lockdowns may be needed and how they would be achieved; and the future of the care sector and its relationship with health care.

## **Strategic Finance**

The financial implications of COVID-19 in the current financial year are being forecast based on potential scenarios and taking into the account the funding so far allocated by central government. This is likely to lead to a funding shortfall and the strategies to mitigate this are currently being developed. Furthermore, we have started to model the future year impacts arising as a result of both the pandemic and other existing financial pressures as we kick off the Medium-Term Financial Planning process.





## Cabinet Member report – Adult Social Care

### **ASC Covid response cited as LGA good practice**

The way that adult social care has responded to Covid has been cited as good practice by the LGA with examples published on its Good Practice Case Studies website. I am delighted that this has been recognised and that we can share what we've been doing with other authorities across the country.

There are three particular areas that have been highlighted:

- the setting up of Olympic Lodge as an emergency respite/reablement facility;
- the joint work with the CCG to quickly set up a supply of emergency PPE to the sector; and
- the support for providers.

### **Learning from Covid-19**

During the Covid-19 response, the health and social care sector has had to rapidly change the way in which services are provided. Some of these changes have enabled the service, clients and partners to think differently about the way needs are met. The Council's ambition, set out in the Better Lives Strategy, is to enable more people to remain independent and in their own homes for as long as possible. In the forthcoming weeks and months, adult social care will be exploring the potential of these opportunities with partners, clients and their families.

One example that the service has already adopted is in relation to the calls being made to our most vulnerable clients during Covid-19, through volunteers and redeployed staff. This service has been extremely well received and, given the benefit to clients, we have been able to sustain this approach beyond Covid-19 by transferring the service to our commissioned provider of Prevention Matters, who have agreed to deliver these calls in future.

During Covid-19, the integrated commissioning service developed an 'Enhanced Offer' for care providers in Buckinghamshire. This enabled care providers to access a range of additional advice and support from the Council and partners, including infection control, communications with service users and families, mental health, technology, human resources and staff knowledge and skills. For example, following discussions with care homes, a Methodist minister was found who was willing to be a single point of contact for homes in Buckinghamshire. She then uses her contacts to link homes to sources of chaplaincy or other faith support near the home. The service will be considering what the 'Enhanced Offer' could include post Covid.

## **Social Work Apprenticeships Scheme**

One of the long-term challenges in social work is around recruitment and retention of staff. As part of the adult social care workforce strategy, a 'grow your own' approach has been developed. Working with our partners in Bucks New University, a Social Work Apprenticeship scheme has been developed, which will enable some of our Social Work Assistants to convert to Qualified Social Workers. Our first cohort of 10-15 staff will start in October. This is very exciting and the first time we have had a home-grown, locally based model for upskilling our own workforce.





## Cabinet Member report – Resources

### **Enabling remote working**

With 3,500 staff working remotely, the IT team have been working really hard to keep us all online. This necessitated a full roll out of MS Teams which has helped us all keep in contact through the lockdown period. The ICT helpdesks at Walton Street and King George V House experienced a 65% and 46% uplift in request for support compared to previous periods to assist employees who had either never worked remotely before or were infrequent users. At the same time the team implemented a new network design to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to allow everyone to work at home successfully. This has all been done while still fulfilling key tasks related to the unitary process, including moving us all to our new email addresses.

### **Coaching for Performance appraisal process**

On 3 June we launched Coaching for Performance, our new appraisal system to help everyone achieve their potential. The new appraisal process was launched virtually and has been very well received throughout the Council, along with the materials created to introduce this to our colleagues. Employee engagement has been high with over 350 views of the online tutorial and over 300 people attending the goal setting webinars. The new system is designed to improve communication between employees and their manager with regular informal chats, as well as the formal twice yearly reviews.

### **Customer Services and supporting vulnerable people to self-isolate**

The Customer Service Centre reconfigured its service provision to ensure that we could respond to customer/ resident enquiries and all Customer Service Centre Agents were working from home and fully operational within 24 hours of the national lockdown. The Customer Service Centre continues to make initial calls to new shielding residents and take calls from residents who are struggling, triaging calls and signposting where possible. Business Operations continues to contribute to shifting to a more settled delivery model and supporting the new Local Outbreak Control Boards. For the w.c 22 June the Customer Contact team took over 9,800 telephone calls with 91.1% answered (our target is 90%)

### **Business Rates Relief Grant**

Buckinghamshire received over £91m from the government to fund the grants. Working with Bucks Business First we identified those businesses who would be eligible and contacted over 6500 businesses across Buckinghamshire. The scheme is available to businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors and those receiving Small Business Rate Relief or Rural Rate Relief. In order to ensure that businesses received funding as soon as possible, we developed a five working day end to end process from receipt of the application to the money arriving in the business bank account. We have asked staff to work over weekends to ensure that this money reaches our business as soon as possible. To date, we have received and processed applications from over 6140 eligible businesses and awarded c£80.6M.

### **Supporting our Staff**

We have put in place daily staff communications and Health & Wellbeing Tips and this includes Promotion of PAM Assist – our Employee Assistance provider - and our Mental Health First Aiders/Allies. This has generated a threefold increase in PAM website usage. We have held specialist webinars and had group reflective sessions to support staff.

Staff availability has remained very high across the pandemic with in excess of 80% of staff available and working and our Staff survey shows very strong positive results: Engagement Index: 82% positive +18%; Managing Change 72% positive +18%; Wellbeing and Resilience 83% positive +12%.





## Cabinet Member report – Town Centre Regeneration

### **Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT)**

Over the last 12 months the AGT programme has been largely focussed on progressing the Draft Masterplan. Now that the Masterplan is in the process of being endorsed by the Council, we are now able to focus on how we move to delivering its key projects. Given the largely long term and regenerative impacts of the programme, the projects identified represent a major opportunity to enhance the environment, economy and social role of Aylesbury over the coming years and decades.

Two key projects are already being progressed, these are the Gardenway project and the Town Centre Action Plan. The Gardenway concept received wide spread support as part of the Masterplan consultation and is intended to be a new transformative piece of sustainable infrastructure, an orbital park/green space in Aylesbury. The intention is to commission the design for the strategic route this summer together with a delivery plan, these will be developed over the next 6-9 months. The Masterplan sets the town centre as the social, cultural and economic heart of a sustainable Aylesbury and identifies 8 opportunity areas for regeneration and redevelopment, identifying the need for an action plan for the town centre as a top priority. We are now in the process of commissioning work to assess the commercial and socio-economic opportunities for two of the opportunity areas, the Station Quarter and Waterside, with a more detailed Area Action Plan being developed over the next 6-12 months.



**Aylesbury Gardenway illustrative concept plan, taken from Aylesbury Garden Town Masterplan (Alan Baxter Associates)**



## Cabinet Member report – Environment & Climate Change

### **Household Recycling Centres**

We have now opened all household recycling centres. The sites remain on their usual summer opening hours of 9am-6pm, we have been accepting all waste residents would usually bring. All the sites look and feel a bit different, this is to ensure we can manage them safely with social distancing.. Since we opened we have had in excess of 175,000 visits, with the social distancing measures all sites are seeing more than 75% of normal visits for this time of year and are experiencing in excess of 25% extra waste per visit. This is great considering we can currently only use 50% of each sites parking spaces.

### **Waste & Recycling Collection**

Despite the impacts of COVID19 on the service, we were delighted to see the overwhelming public reaction and support for crews which helped keep spirits high. We hope this acknowledgment and change of perception to frontline staff continues as colleagues continue to work hard to deliver services. We put a number of measures in place to ensure that staff were kept as safe as possible while working.

### **Southern Waste Collection Provider change**

The new contract with Veolia begins on 7<sup>th</sup> September and offers a number of benefits compared with existing service provision. The new supplier is commercially sustainable, is the largest supplier of waste services in the UK and comes with a wealth of industry knowledge and innovation. Customers will be able to report missed collections as soon as the vehicle leaves the street (rather than after 12pm each day) and will have full visibility of when their street will be cleansed (rather than having to request that information). Residents will also be able to book, adjust and cancel bulky collections online themselves rather than having to phone the Council. Each collection round will now cover 900 households rather than 1400 meaning that more care can be taken with each collection.

### **Fly Tipping and Enforcement**

On 21st April 2020 Cabinet agreed a revised Enforcement Policy, which will also allow the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) against fly-tipping offences soon. Fixed Penalty Notices are an alternative to cautions against fly-tipping offences. We will continue to do everything to track criminals down and bring them to justice and have chosen to use the maximum fine of £400 for minor offences relating to fly-tipping. We always operate a zero tolerance approach to fly tipping. The system to issue FPNs is being developed and may be ready later this year.

### **Agricultural Estate Policy**

A planned review of the Agricultural Estate Policy will look at how emerging national environment policy (i.e. tree planting, renewable energy opportunities such as solar farms and a new environmental land management scheme) could be incorporated, as well as our ongoing

responsibilities regarding property management and how the policy could further support local Small and Medium Sized Enterprises. Work is underway on a Tree Strategy for Buckinghamshire Council.

### **Chilterns Conservation Board (CCB)**

Following the publication of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan last year, discussions are now taking place on shared priorities for the year one action plan.

### **Bucks and Milton Keynes Environmental Record Centre (BMERC)**

During lockdown, there has been a focus on improving the BMERC website and starting a newsletter which has been circulated to the community of volunteers, recorders and several partner organisations. The BMERC has continued to work on the backlog of incoming data and has added over 60,000 wildlife records to the database.

### **Buckinghamshire and MK Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) Update**

As well as to continuing work around the “Doubling Nature” ambition and biodiversity net gain, the NEP are encouraging Local Enterprise Partnerships to embrace the principles of a greener recovery post-COVID.





## Cabinet Member report – Property & Assets

### **Building Maintenance**

As a result of COVID19, Property Services and their contractors (working in accordance with the Government's COVID site guidance) have had additional access to the schools estate during what would normally be term time. This has enabled them to carry out planned maintenance projects such as playground resurfacing, reroofing, and heating replacement works ahead of schedule. There has also been less restricted access for carrying out planned plant servicing visits, in particular hard-wired electrical testing which can normally be quite disruptive and ordinarily only possible in schools out-of-hours.

### **Market Square and Kingsbury Square, Aylesbury**

Untitled Practice have been appointed as the public realm architects for the Market Square and Kingsbury public realm improvements. Both are important historic squares in the centre of Aylesbury. The £4.5m approved capital investment will help address the different challenges each space presents and help the town build on its reputation for leisure and events.

### **Capital Projects**

Property Services continue to project manage the delivery of substantial projects including:

- Continued delivery of the Chiltern Leisure Centre (on behalf of the Culture, Sports & Leisure service)
- Demolition of the Winslow Centre, which will be on site from July 2020 for 12 weeks and will see demolition and clearance of existing buildings.
- Jet Construction are due to commence the refurbishment works at Marlow Library. The works will comprise internal alterations of the ground floor and first floor areas. The library is being remodelled as a community hub and Marlow Town Council will lease the newly refurbished first floor. The ground floor will accommodate a new meeting room and staff room with associated ancillary accommodation, while the first floor will be remodelled to accommodate the Town Council offices with ancillary accommodation. The works will take 12 weeks to complete.



## Cabinet Member report – Education & Skills

### **School provision in Buckinghamshire**

As the Leader has alluded to in his presentation on our response as a Council to Covid-19, the response from our community of schools across the county since their partial closure on 24 March 2020, has been excellent. Our local data suggests that the majority of our schools have opened each day, though the number fluctuates each day depending on need and staff availability. This is a remarkable achievement given the challenges and issues schools face to ensure their sites continue to open in the safest way possible.

Following the government's most recent announcement that they want all pupils in all year groups to go back to school full time in September, we are working extremely hard with school leaders on the planning and preparation for this; however, we are still waiting for further guidance to be released.

### **Laptops for vulnerable pupils**

As part of a package announced by the Education secretary, Gavin Williamson, to support online learning opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged young people across the country during the Coronavirus outbreak, Buckinghamshire has been allocated an initial 850 laptops and 145 4G routers from the Department for Education.

The devices will be distributed to care leavers and children aged up to 19 with a social worker who do not already have a device at home. We are so pleased to be able to help roll out this extra support to our most disadvantaged pupils.. It will mean those students will be able to much more easily access online learning until they are able to return to school. It will also give an additional boost to the work we're already doing with our most vulnerable students through, for example, our Virtual School.

### **Integrated Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Service**

As most will be aware, Buckinghamshire is still waiting for our local area inspection by Ofsted and the Quality Care Commission. Currently, Ofsted has temporarily suspended inspections as a result of Covid-19, and we expect further guidance on the future of inspection cycles shortly. When the inspection does happen, it will focus on 3 key questions:

- 1) How well does the local area identify the needs of children and young people with SEND?
- 2) How well does the local area meet the needs of children and young people with SEND?
- 3) How well does the local area improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND?

We have an Improvement Plan in place and a thorough self-assessment of our services for children and young people with SEND has been completed. There is a genuine commitment across the local area at all levels to improve outcomes, working alongside children and families to realise our ambitions. While it is recognised that the challenge is significant, progress is being made and we hope to continue to build on this over the coming year.





## Cabinet Member report – Housing & Homelessness

### **Housing Services non Covid related work**

1. New KPIs have been developed for the Buckinghamshire Housing service.
2. Work has started on three key strategic pieces:
  - Exit strategy to provide longer term facilities to accommodate rough sleepers as COVID restrictions start to lift.
  - Strategy and partnerships - setting up Buckinghamshire wide forums and processes to engage with RPs, landlords and 3rd sector partners.
  - New housing allocations (choice based lettings) policy. The policy will be realigned and developed to reflect the priorities of the new unitary authority.
3. Post vesting day transformation work continues, on harmonisation of procedures.
4. Affordable housing schemes are now being delivered following a pause due to Covid. Work on delivery of further sites has also re-started.
5. Since vesting day the housing teams have continued to provide support and to allocate properties to homeless families, those suffering domestic violence and other clients. The Registered Providers in Buckinghamshire have allowed tenants to view and then move into properties using a virtual process.
6. Proportionate enforcement activity has continued in private rented accommodation, including Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and a number of interventions have been required to protect the safety of Buckinghamshire tenants.



## Cabinet Member report – Youth Provision

### **Youth offer in Buckinghamshire**

As part of my first update and now that we are a Unitary Authority, I thought it would be useful to provide some background and context to how youth provision is delivered across the county. Prior to the introduction of the Buckinghamshire County Council's Family Support Services in September 2019, support for young people was provided through a number of different commissioned providers, as well as the Councils.

The new, locality based Family Support Service has brought these areas of service delivery together in line with the Early Help Strategy, with services targeted towards those most in need of additional support. All aspects of the youth offer now sit fully within this service area, with the exception of 16 volunteer delivered youth clubs. The support and development of this provision; however, is overseen and managed by the service. One example of this is the creation of a virtual professional network, bringing together practitioners from the Council and the community to share good practice. Our teams provide advice, guidance and support to community based youth clubs to promote consistent, high standards of youth provision.

A key focus for us this year is to strengthen our youth support further, by establishing links with Parish and Town Councils, faith groups and community providers. We are already looking to align youth projects which have legacy funding from the former District Councils with the Family Support Service to ensure that they are effectively supported and continue to deliver against their original purpose, but as an integral part of our wider, strategic youth offer across the County.

### **Fostering and Adoption**

Within my remit and to support the ongoing improvement in the service, Cllr Mark Shaw as Lead Member of Children's Services has asked that I maintain oversight of fostering and adoption.

During the last year, as a result of a targeted recruitment campaign and improving the support and training available for our in-house foster carers, we significantly increased the number of children placed with in-house foster carers. Between April 2019 and April 2020, the number of in-house fostering placements increased by 33 and this was largely due to the 21 new fostering households which were approved during the year. This exceeded our target and is an increase on the previous year in which 13 new households were approved. A further 15 households are currently being assessed meaning the team are already on track to meet this year's target.

There is still more work to do and we are in the process of organising a specialist recruitment campaign to enable us to place more complex children and young people with in-house carers, rather

than relying on independent carers which cost more.. In addition, we will also be continuing to engage with specific communities to recruit more diverse carers to better match our children's needs. Through this work, we want to ensure that we continue to deliver high quality services and grow in-house fostering so as many children and young people as possible are placed within Buckinghamshire.





## Cabinet Member report – Sports and Leisure

### **Country parks, parks and green spaces**

1 July marks 50 years since the planning committee of Buckinghamshire County Council approved the establishment of Black Park and Langley Park as formal country parks under the 1968 Countryside Act. Sadly our anniversary events have been cancelled due to the pandemic but you will see a series of social media posts celebrating the anniversary and a roe deer sculpture by local artist Charles Elliot, from Chesham, was installed in Langley Park on 1 July.

Since the easing of the lockdown restrictions, country parks' visitor numbers have peaked at levels never seen before during the months of May and June. Unfortunately this has led to some inconsiderate and dangerous parking on the local roads, which has been managed through the implementation of Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders, parking suspensions and ticketing. There has also been an increase in litter in the parks and on local farmland, along with an increase in anti-social behaviour. What has become apparent is the significant value placed on Council-owned country parks, parks and green spaces by residents and visitors alike and it is a credit to the teams that manage our parks that they remain top quality facilities for our residents. Over recent years we have started to use Trip Advisor as a measure of customer satisfaction and the responses for 'very good' and 'excellent' account for 94% of the reviews. The team strive for excellence in all aspects of parks management and these reviews are testament to their efforts. Finally, look out for Black Park featuring in a piece for ITV's This Morning with Strictly Come Dancing star Anton du Beke, due to be aired in July.

Since April 2020 we have been installing new outdoor play and outdoor gym equipment in a number of local parks and green spaces, including Vale Park (brand new calisthenics outdoor gymnasium area), Cottesloe Green (brand new calisthenics outdoor gymnasium area and new replacement zip wire), Rustics Close in Calvert Green (new improved toddler/early years play area) and Dunsham Park (new improved toddler/junior play area).

The Council also arranged a formal carpet bed display outside High Wycombe Town Hall to commemorate the centenary of the Buckinghamshire Federation of Women's Institutes (BFWI). Sadly most of their centenary plans have been cancelled due to Covid-19.



### **Leisure**

Work has continued on the Lifestyle Centre project in Amersham, a new multipurpose community/leisure facility including a leisure centre, spa, a new community centre, library, nursery and more, scheduled for completion late next year. Installation of the steel frame commenced on 1 June and, along with precast concrete and steel decking, will take approximately 13 weeks. Other major activities progressed include the excavation of the basement plant room, formation of new ground slabs and underground drainage. The four external play areas; outdoor gym, street snooker,

skate park and children's play area are substantially complete and a date will be agreed shortly for Amersham Town Council to take possession of these to operate and maintain. Refurbishment works at the Court Garden Leisure Centre in Marlow are also scheduled to be completed by mid-July. At the time of writing we await further government guidance around reopening of indoor facilities and swimming pools.





## Cabinet Member report – Culture

### **Cultural Strategy/Partnership**

Buckinghamshire Council has supported two online projects recently launched by the Buckinghamshire Cultural Partnership. These are both pilot projects aligned with the cultural strategy objectives:

- Lockdown Stories – a micro-project in partnership with the University of Buckingham that offers Bucks residents the opportunity to share stories and creative writing inspired by Lockdown: <https://buckingham.news/take-part/>
- Bucks in 100 Objects – an online campaign and discussion about telling the story of Buckinghamshire in 100 objects: <https://buckinghamshireculture.wordpress.com/bucks-in-100-objects/> We're keen to promote this to members and residents to nominate an object they feel best defines Buckinghamshire for them. Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher, Rachael Shimmin and I have all participated, and there are some fascinating contributions from a range of well-known people.

The projects have secured local media coverage and the council's Communications team has shared them on social media and are looking at including in residents' newsletters in the future.

Progress has also been made with the organisational development for Buckinghamshire Culture. The first strategic Development Board meeting for the Cultural Partnership was held in May to begin the process of developing and implementing the best possible structure and governance for the new cultural partnership. The Board members are taken from a broad range of countywide organisations to recognise the impact of culture across many agendas and sectors, and put culture at the heart of development and growth. The Board has been set up for a 12 month period and will meet every two months over this period.

### **Cross-Portfolio Meetings**

Cognisant of the significant contribution of culture to a range of strategic agendas, I am programming a range of cross-portfolio meetings to maximise the opportunities. Thus far I have held positive discussions with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers from Planning and Enforcement and Town Centre Regeneration.

## **Buckinghamshire Archives and the History Festival**

Buckinghamshire Archives (the new name for the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies) is leading on the Buckinghamshire History Festival, which will be taking place in September to coincide with Heritage Open Days, and aims to reach a wider audience than previous events. The festival will be a virtual festival which has allowed the service to draw on a much wider range of speakers than would normally be accessible, so contributions have been agreed with Buckinghamshire Archives contacts based in the United States and Australia, as well as locally.

Speakers will be talking on subjects as diverse as the Paralympic Games, execution ballads, the development of Milton Keynes, the Windrush generation in High Wycombe, the history of mental healthcare, murder in Marlow and the Verneys of Claydon. There will also be updates from a series of heritage projects underway in the county. Other options currently being pursued include a quiz, a behind the scenes tour, a children's craft/drawing event with the illustrator of Horrible Histories and a photographic competition. There will be around 30 talks, with the main event on 12 September and some released in the week running up to the event. Following the event, the talks will continue to be hosted on YouTube to provide ongoing value. Lessons learned from this event will be carried forward to future years, with the possibility of holding a virtual event alongside the physical in future.





## Cabinet Member report – Logistics

### **Home to School Transport**

- Transport Services is at peak activity, ensuring that school transport will be delivered effectively in September. Offers of places on our commissioned buses are being sent to students. All newly eligible children and those continuing with an existing paid for transport place will receive their passes by the end of the summer term. Those on the waiting list will be notified of the outcome of their application by the end July.
- A trade dispute with suppliers has now been resolved; and backlogs in supplier payments have been addressed.
- The introduction of Public Service Vehicle Access Regulations has created difficulties for our commissioned providers, independent bus operators and schools. We are working to mitigate the impact on school transport.
- The Transport Services team has made a huge effort over the last three months, to ensure that all required school and client transport has been put in place. The team has arranged for over 1000 students to resume travel to school across primary, secondary, special schools and alternative educational settings. This has involved coordinating much more complex transport arrangements than normal, due to the differing opening arrangements at each school. I am proud of the hard work the team has carried out, ensuring that transport is in place for all students who need it.
- The team ensures that school transport is available for children of key workers and for vulnerable children. Our suppliers are also providing transport to support the work of the volunteer hubs.

### **Public Transport**

- The Team has been working with bus companies to co-ordinate revised Covid19 bus timetables; and with NHS colleagues to focus services on routes used by key workers.
- Our bus stations and bus stops have been reviewed in light of social distancing restrictions.
- DfT Better Bus Funding has allocated us a grant of £381,000. This can be used to support bus services during the pandemic; or to fund service improvements on our network.
- We are working with Arriva and Carousel in High Wycombe to extend the recently introduced “Smartzone” multi-operator bus ticketing scheme, introduced for adults in January; and for those under 18 by September.

## Parking

- On-street parking has seen a completely revised enforcement regime in response to changing parking patterns. Because of severe parking issues near to our country parks and beauty spots, we have implemented a number of temporary and permanent restrictions. Parking charges both on-street and in our car parks remain suspended until 1st August.
- From 1st April, Buckinghamshire Council's Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) are all wearing the same branded uniform. Residents will see our CEOs working hard to keep our car parks and highways operating safely and efficiently.





## Cabinet Member report – Transport

### **Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB)**

Since the start of the financial year, TfB has taken advantage of the lower traffic levels to accelerate the programme of work, bringing forward some key schemes and taking the opportunity for day-time working to deliver schemes more cost effectively.

- Phase one of refurbishing Marlow Bridge included tower roof repairs and repainting chains, kerbs and hangers and was completed two weeks ahead of schedule.
- Resurfacing of three roundabouts on the Buckingham ring road, also taking advantage of the closure to carry out gully cleaning and tree trimming.
- The road resurfacing programme is well under way. The Surface Dressing Programme, which includes 20 schemes, began in June with daily updates posted on social media. Additionally, 22 of 79 Plane and Patch schemes have been completed.
- Grass cutting and weed spraying work has started for the summer and is ahead of schedule in some areas.
- £7.5m of funding from the Department for Transport's Infrastructure Investment Fund has been allocated to Buckinghamshire Council. This will be used for Plane & Patch and carriageway resurfacing in 20/21.
- A new Streetworks Permit scheme launched in April covering the whole of the Buckinghamshire road network and aims to give better coordination and control of roadworks.

### **Highways Infrastructure Projects**

Work is ongoing on a number of high profile highways infrastructure schemes across the county. These include Westcott Roundabout which will unlock major business growth at the Westcott Venture Park, A40 London Road High Wycombe and A418 Oxford Road, Aylesbury.

### **Pednormead End Flood Management Capital Project progress**

Over the past few months, the Flood Management team have been working closely with TfB/Ringway Jacobs to progress the flood management project at Pednormead End in Chesham. The design for the culvert replacement under Church Street is now in place and agreements reached for moving the services. Construction is planned for the later summer. The second phase of the project is also progressing with all the surveys for the Property Flood Resilience measures for 58 individual properties completed and discussions started with the property owners around the specific details for each property. These measures should be installed in Spring 2021. The project is ongoing with more property owners being contacted and encouraged to take up the offer.

### **Rights of Way**

Following the adoption of the 10-year Rights of Way Improvement Plan in April, work is now underway to produce our year one Action Plan. This will set out deliverables for the next year and

will focus attention on various areas of Rights of Way work for the coming months. The action plan should be completed by October. Recently completed maintenance projects on the public Rights of Way include footbridge replacement on Wing Footpath 18 and footbridge deck renovation on Cublington Footpath 1.

### **DfT Emergency Active Travel Fund**

Buckinghamshire Council been allocated £514,000 to implement a suite of temporary 'pop-up' walking and cycling measures, focused on reallocating existing road space. We have achieved an increase from the provisional allocation originally published by the Government due to the strength of our proposal. Following an extensive shortlisting process, schemes are currently being progressed in Amersham, Aylesbury, Chalfont St Peter, Haddenham, High Wycombe and Gerrard's Cross, with potential for further schemes in Buckingham and Marlow subject to funding. Design work is ongoing, in consultation with local members, community board chairs and town/parish councils, with works on site starting by the end of July.

### **DfT Rural Mobility Fund**

Expressions of Interest for the Rural Mobility Fund were submitted for High Wycombe and Aylesbury in April. We expect to hear back from the DfT on whether we can progress to stage 2 (bidding) in autumn 2020.

### **HS2**

A joint highways and planning team has been formed as part of the move to a unitary council to manage the impacts of the HS2 construction activity. Work from this includes: Colne Valley Viaduct, Small Dean Viaduct, Link Road Great Missenden, temporary traffic management and reviewing new proposals relating to Station Road.

### **East West Rail**

The EWR Alliance are commencing construction of the works compounds resulting in road and footpath locations in several locations across the County. Construction activity will be ramping up over the summer.





## Cabinet Member report – Children's Services

### **The passing of Bibaa Henry**

As you will be aware, we recently heard the terrible news about the tragic death of one of our social workers, Bibaa Henry and her sister, Nicole Smallman. I am sure I speak for all of us when I say that the deaths of Bibaa and Nicole were a senseless and desperately sad act. We are all deeply shocked and distressed at the tragic news. Understandably, many of Bibaa's colleagues have been hit hard and I am sure her death will take some time to come to terms with.

Bibaa was a well-respected, well-liked and highly-valued member of our social care team. She was committed to caring for and supporting children and young people across Buckinghamshire.

As a council we want to play our part in honouring Bibaa's memory. One of the ways in which we will do this is through a book of memories and condolences to be given to Bibaa's family at the appropriate time. I would like to invite all members to contribute a personal message of condolence to [rememberingbibaa@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:rememberingbibaa@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) so that we can include it in the specially produced book. All messages will be treated in the very strictest confidence.

I'm very aware of how distressing the news about Bibaa has been for staff right across the council, whether they knew Bibaa or not. I hope you'll be reassured to know that we have put in place a range of support measures for any member of staff who has been affected by this shocking and very sad event.

On behalf of everyone, I would like to convey our heartfelt condolences to Bibaa's family, friends and colleagues at this most difficult of times.

### **My new role**

I would like to take this opportunity to share how delighted I am to have been elected as the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. I am extremely passionate and committed to the improvement journey that the service is on and as a directorate, our number one priority is to ensure that we improve outcomes for the children, young people and families in Buckinghamshire. Since being in post, I have spent a considerable amount of time with senior officer and recently attended the Senior Management's Team meeting where I had the chance to meet (virtually, of course) all the Heads of Service. In addition, I have also been fortunate to spend some time with the Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust so that I gain a better understanding of the Children's Services issues our colleagues in Health face. Over the coming months, I look forward to spending more time with our staff and I am keen to understand how they are feeling, the support that is available and what else we could be doing to help them in this current time. I have been amazed by the innovation, resilience and

dedication shown by all of our workers to deliver services to families despite the significant challenges that the covid-19 crisis has and continues to present. Thank you all very much.





## Cabinet Member report – Planning & Enforcement

### **Planning Committees**

Buckinghamshire Council has adopted a new committee structure comprising of 5 area planning committees and a strategic planning committee. Despite the challenges resulting from COVID19, the first planning committee of Buckinghamshire Council was held on the 9th June. With support from Democratic and Electoral Services, all 6 committees have now been held virtually determining 23 applications and involving 65 public speakers. I am pleased to report that we have received positive feedback from both applicants and members of the public on the organisation and accessibility of the virtual meetings, which are available to view on webcast.

### **Agreement of the new Planning Enforcement Policy**

The Council adopted a new Local Enforcement & Monitoring Plan in June. This new plan takes the best parts of the existing teams' processes to drive the development of a streamlined, efficient and effective planning enforcement and monitoring service through this transformation period. This plan sets out how the Council will provide that service and what residents can expect from the service. The new plan puts residents at the heart of the way that this service will operate and paves the way for the implementation of a new and improved planning enforcement service across the Buckinghamshire Council area. With amended priorities, reduced timescales and a commitment to pursuing harmful breaches of planning control, this plan is just the start of improvements to the service that will benefit our residents and make a real difference to our environment. We are confident that this plan will frame the way we do things going forward and help the new Council provide an outstanding Compliance service whilst underpinning the integrity of the planning process.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

Prior to the COVID19 pandemic, it was originally intended for a workshop to be held for Parish and Town Councils regarding their continued role in the planning process. Unfortunately, these were unable to take place and instead a guidance note was sent to all Parish and Town Councils setting out details regarding consultations, comments and the scheme of delegation. Recognising the important role that Parish and Town Councils have in the planning process and the local knowledge that they can bring, training is currently being developed in association with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC). It is anticipated that the first information/training presentation will be available through the BMKALC web site shortly. Thereafter further training presentations will be provided with the aim of returning to face to face training sessions, when it is safe to do so.

We already have a number of Parish and Town Councils who have actively engaged in the planning process by preparing neighbourhood plans and we would support further approaches from town and parish councils interested in promoting some sustainable development in their areas. The preparation of neighbourhood plans is a very important part of the planning framework in Buckinghamshire and I am very happy to re-iterate the Council's support for any Parish and Town

Councils wishing to prepare a plan for their area. Following a recent update in Government guidance on neighbourhood planning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are advising town and parish councils wishing to continue to prepare their neighbourhood plans to contact the relevant Planning Policy team for their area for detailed discussions.

### **Service Transformation**

I am also pleased to report that from this month, some of the services within my Portfolio will be amongst the first wave of services to commence a service review. The review of the service is an important next step in bringing together the planning and enforcement functions from the 5 previous Council's. The review will look at how the service operates now, critically evaluating this comparing to best practice across the country. One of the key outcomes of the review will be to ensure the service places the customer at the heart of everything we do. In order to achieve this we will be engaging with all stakeholders in the planning process to capture their input to the future service design. This is an exciting time for the new Council and the review will enable us to build a brand new planning service that is fit for the future, learns from the best, innovates and builds on the opportunities created by being one of the largest planning services in the country. I look forward to reporting on progress.





## Cabinet Member report – Communities & Public Health

### **Community Boards**

In response to Covid-19, we have already seen locality working well with fantastic community spirit and communities coming together to help solve local problems. The 16 community boards will build on the great work of the Covid-19 Area Coordinators in creating local networks for conversations about local issues, making it easy for people to have a real influence over decisions in their local areas. The Chairman of the community boards have already met and appointed their Vice Chairman and the new 16 Community Board Coordinators have been appointed. The boards will foster collaborative working to make the best use of people's expertise, skills, knowledge and passions. The first of the boards will be taking place w/c 6 July, with a focus on setting priorities and developing action plans, including Covid-19 recovery plans and all Members will have received induction material on how these boards will work in practice. To support community boards in monitoring health and wellbeing in their areas, the Public Health team is creating health and wellbeing profiles for each Board. These highlight areas where things are going well and, importantly, where things could be better, so that the Boards can prioritise improvement activity.

Although the community boards had not been fully implemented, to support the council's local response to Covid-19 the Councillor Crisis Fund was quickly established. This fund allowed all councillors to access £250k of Public Health funding set aside for community boards and was split by community board area based on population. In addition, as part of our partnership working, we were delighted that one of our partners, the Rothschild Foundation, contributed £50k to the fund. The fund has allowed a diverse range of activities across Buckinghamshire, supporting those most vulnerable via a range of community and voluntary groups and organisations. As of 30 June, the following funds have been paid out:

<b>Community Board</b>	<b>Total spend to date</b>
Amersham	£9,000
Aylesbury	£26,266.92
Beaconsfield and Chepping Wye	£9,161.75
Beeches	£8,500
Buckingham & Villages	£5,431
Chesham & Villages	£19,687
Denham, Gerrards Cross and Chalfont	£14,000

Haddenham and Waddesdon	£14,561
High Wycombe	£43,501
Missendens	£8,615
North West Chilterns	£14,500
South West Chilterns	£10,000
Wendover	£7,759.69
Wexham and Ivers	£12,250
Wing and Ivinghoe	£12,440
Winslow & Villages	£4,950
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£220,623.36</b>

As part of our Covid response work we have also supported 6500 people who told us they needed help through the hubs, with 132 members of staff redeploying to the front line.

### **Partnership Working**

We have been championing, right across the Council, the importance of early collaboration with a range of partners, and the need to map activity to avoid duplication, maximise resources, skills, ideas and talents. There are two key partners we are keen to establish strong relationships with, town and parish councils and our voluntary sector. I have been chairing fortnightly meetings with our voluntary sector colleagues to ensure, particularly during the pandemic, we share intelligence, have easy communication channels and work together well. I am particularly grateful for the strong partnerships formed in the weekly VCS Funding Group which identified available external funding streams to support vulnerable people and together we have delivered almost £1m to groups across the County in a coordinated partnership. I know work is underway to ensure our valuable voluntary and community sector needs are fully understood, are part of the recovery programmes and that we have a co-designed VCS Strategy in the autumn. Our town and parish councils are essential partners and we have had weekly discussions with clerks and the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils (BMKALC) to again, understand key needs and future work.

### **Devolution**

Devolution is all about supporting communities wanting to take ownership and manage local spaces, services and assets that are important to their local area. We are pleased that we have had 120 expressions of interest (EOI) from town and parish councils and other community organisations; these covered a range of community assets and services such as green spaces, community buildings, toilets, memorials and allotments. As a new unitary council we have an opportunity to energise devolution programmes. Given Covid-19 we naturally needed to pause this work, however as we begin moving back to business as usual we will be developing our devolution toolkit and framework ensuring an application and implementation process is as smooth as possible. We are currently reviewing all 120 EOIs in detail with a view to confirming pilots and starting discussions in September.

### **Health Impact Assessment**

To help with recovery planning, the Public Health team is researching how the pandemic and lockdown have affected Buckinghamshire's residents. The team is collating information from a wide range of stakeholders including residents, Councillors, police, voluntary and community

organisations, health and social care providers and faith leaders. Surveys will be used to capture the day to day living experiences of residents, such as work, family relationships, health related behaviours and general health and personal wellbeing. The analysis will be used to help prioritise our efforts for recovery, both strategically and at community board level.

### **Mental Health**

Experience from previous pandemics has shown the importance of supporting mental health during outbreaks. In the early stages of the pandemic, a multi-agency Covid-19 mental health strategic group was set up which identified actions to support the mental health of our residents. Initial work has focused on increasing capacity for bereavement support, developing support for health and care staff on the frontline and the role of the voluntary sector. A programme of mental health training opportunities is being developed, including an offer for the voluntary sector developed with our local mental health charity- MIND.

### **Reducing the impact of Covid-19 on black and minority ethnic groups in Buckinghamshire**

In a reflection of the national picture, Buckinghamshire residents from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds have suffered more during the pandemic both in terms of illness and deaths from the infections. Some of this is due to socioeconomic factors and underlying health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. The Public Health team will be working closely with BAME communities through our community boards, the NHS and voluntary sector organisations to co-produce an action plan to tackle the impacts of Covid-19 on residents in these communities.

### **Libraries**

Work on a scheme to re-model and refurbish Marlow library will commence on starts on site 13 July. The works are scheduled for fourteen weeks and so completion is estimated for late October/early November. The library will be transformed with a complete re-decoration and fit-out, a new meeting room, self-service technology and loanable tablets. An interim library service will be delivered from Marlow Infants School, Sandy Gate Road from 20 July.

Our Libraries closed on Saturday 24 March 2020 and so the focus has moved to our digital offer with a 50% increase in eMagazines, 100% increase in eAudio books and a massive 200% increase in eBooks.

<b>Digital offer</b>	<b>Jan - Mar</b>	<b>Apr - Jun</b>	<b>%</b>
eMagazines	9,842	14,882	50%+
eAudio books	8,006	16,886	100%+
eBooks	20,230	42,730	200%+





## Cabinet Member report – Regulatory Services

### Licensing

Licensing services have been largely focused on responding to COVID19, the changes this has brought for licensed businesses and the impact on delivering the services. The service has also been working on:

- Licensing services from the legacy district areas are continuing to work collaboratively to deliver a consistent high quality service to customers. Wherever possible, decisions that impact the customer are considered in a holistic manner to ensure a consistent approach and as the service transforms we will look to build on this.
- As part of the preparation for the unitary council, it was identified that the taxi licensing policy should be reviewed and harmonised to bring together the three existing policies and the impact this has on both the taxi trade and travelling public. This is ongoing and we anticipate having a draft policy ready for public consultation later on this year.
- On the 1<sup>st</sup> April, new Buckinghamshire Council branded taxi livery (plates and door signs) were



rolled out for all new and renewal licensed taxi and private hire vehicles. Some examples of this are as below:

- We are working collaboratively with the Client Transport Team to identify opportunities to work together in ensuring high standards across both service areas where licensed driver and vehicles provide a transport service to the Council.
- The service is also working closely with colleagues at the Pembroke Road depot on the delivery of the new vehicle testing workshop which will provide a testing service for licensed taxi vehicles as well as supporting the servicing and maintenance needs of the waste fleet.

### Environmental Health

- A new pest control contract will provide continuity of service provision to residents across the County, as well as a new dog control contract which will continue to deliver existing levels of service.
- A grant of £52,500 from DEFRA has been received for a feasibility study for the Air Quality Action Plan in the south of the county. The project will be used to ensure that the Council makes best use of available funding for air quality issues.

- £152k has also been awarded to trial sensors to measure pollution in the Heathrow area. The equipment provided from the funding will also be used to assess the effects of an 'anti-idling' campaign, awareness raising at schools on National Clean Air Day and to measure the efficacy of pollution mitigation measures at Heathrow Airport.

### **Cemeteries & Crematoria**

- At the Chiltern's Crematorium, planned capital programme works to improve the sewage systems have been successfully delivered with no disruption to the Service and planned capital programme road resurfacing works and additional building maintenance improvements have been successfully tendered and are due to commence imminently
- Several new family plot gardens of remembrance have been created as part of a wider improvement project at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens and are now available for sale to customers.
- I would like to use this opportunity to say a special thank you to our Cemeteries and Crematoria teams and the staff volunteers who have been working with them during the pandemic. This service was placed under huge pressure, particularly as a neighbouring crematorium ceased providing funeral services early on. The teams have coped brilliantly and done more than could be asked of them to ensure the service was delivered in immensely trying circumstances. My hat off to all of them. Fantastic!

