**Buckinghamshire Council Annual Report 2022/23**

Thank you for the opportunity to give a short update on some of the past year’s activities and achievements for Buckinghamshire Council. I just wanted to take a few moments to highlight some of the achievements which reflect our four key corporate priorities, strengthening our communities, protecting the vulnerable, improving our environment and increasing prosperity.

Of course, given the current audience it would be remiss of me not to mention that one of the key achievements of the last year was the adoption of a Town and Parish Charter for Buckinghamshire which was formally adopted last July.

As Councils within Buckinghamshire, we have a common purpose to improve the economic, environmental, health and social wellbeing of Buckinghamshire, its residents, businesses and visitors. We understand that as an independent democratically elected bodies you work within your own financial constraints and represent communities at a truly local level and we recognize that Parishes and Town Councils are a key connection between the Unitary Council and their community who can help improve services and foster greater community empowerment.

The purpose of the Charter is to articulate and demonstrate our commitment to work together with all local Council in Buckinghamshire and we have developed an action plan alongside it to help embed the Charter and its aims across the Council.

In addition to this some of the other key Buckinghamshire Council achievements I would like to share with you are:

**Strengthening our communities**:

* Our sixteen Community Boards have continued to move forward in bringing together local communities to discuss and agree priorities to tackle local issues. In the year 2021/22 they delivered 415 projects totaling some £3.2m. Since there launch in 2020 841 projects have been delivered totaling £4.9m.
* We helped thousands of customers inc. 367,300 calls handled, 5,815,584 visits to our website, 29,334 webchats and 23,740 face-to-face visits.
* Launched our Buckinghamshire Swan Envoy scheme, a network of ambassadors who help to inspire, encourage others and promote Buckinghamshire.
* Trained 20 volunteer cooking tutors to deliver targeted 5-week cookery courses to key community groups across Bucks.
* Through our Buckinghamshire Active Communities (piloted in priority wards in Aylesbury and Wycombe), supported residents to reduce their sedentary behaviour by helping everyone to make small daily changes to increase their movement, we engaged with 4,826 residents including 1200 children through schools.
* 9,569 baby and young child checks by Health Visitors in Buckinghamshire between April and September 2022.
* 6,736 free NHS health checks have been delivered to those aged 40 to 74, which identifies early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia.
* As of 21st March, around 3.5m visits to our leisure centers in 2022/23 and lots of new activities to help people stay healthy.
* An additional 555 affordable homes were delivered via Registered Provider partners during the twelve months from October 2021 to September 2022.
* Joined the Marketing Every Adult Matters network to work intensively with people who are facing multiple disadvantages.

**Improving our Environment.**

* Five Green Flag awards for our parks:

Heathlands in Buckingham, Vale Park and Bedgrove Park in Aylesbury, Higginson Park in Marlow and Hughenden Park in High Wycombe.

* We have completed 31 prosecutions, 20 fixed penalty notices and 18 simple cautions for fly-tipping offences.
* Completed 17,484 pothole repairs.
* Continue to deliver against our commitment to spend £100m making improvements to our highways network.
* As of 20th March a total of 18,900 trees had been planted with an additional 14,900 by the end of the financial year.
* Secured Government grants in excess of £10.3m to progress climate change projects,

**Protecting the Vulnerable**

* Nearly 14,000 children and young people eligible for free school meals, early years pupil premium or two-year-old funded early education are receiving additional support through the Household Support Grant in the form of supermarket vouchers for the school holidays.
* Under the Council Tax Energy Rebate Scheme and in addition our own Helping Hand Scheme, we paid out £19.2m to over 137,254 Buckinghamshire households so far. £18.8m was given out under the mandatory scheme and £444k under the Discretionary Scheme (12,071 households).
* Increase in in-house-fostering capacity resulting in 1670 in-house placements as at end of November 2022, compared to 130 in April 2018.
* There has been an increase in the number of adoptive families, up from 4 between April and September 2021 to 11 between April and September 2022.
* In November 2022, 70 percent of the percentage of 19–21-year-olds who have left care were in education, employment or training, compared to 57 percent across the south-east.
* From April 2022 to November 2022 Live Well Stay Well (LWSW) received 8,259 referrals compared to 6,231 for the same period in 2021. During the same period, 1,542 adults accessed a weight management service through LWSW programme compared to 1,047 for the same period in 2021. 72 percent of adults completing the Weight Management Programme achieving a 3 percent weight loss and 57 percent achieving 5 percent weight loss.
* 7200 Home to School Transport passengers transported to school every day with over 458 families taking up personal transport budgets.
* Community Safety Officers, Street Wardens and Neighbourhood Policing carried out 55 visits throughout November and December to encourage premises to sign up the Ask for Angels scheme.
* As part of White Ribbon Day (WRD) we, with Thames Valley Police, held 16 days of action.
* Recruited a further 186 Domestic Abuse Champions.
* Increased satisfaction survey results show the proportion of people who are satisfied with their care and support still above average at 66 percent.
* Public Health and support the NHS to see over 180,000 people receive a covid Autumn booster vaccine within Buckinghamshire. This is over 70 percent of over 50’s and over 85 percent of over 75’s.
* Buckinghamshire has welcomed families fleeing war zones. We have accommodated 15 families from, Afghanistan and welcomed 1500 plus Ukrainian guests into the County.
* We’ve set up an innovative local crisis fund with local charity partner Heart Of Bucks to provide further help to residents experiencing cost-of-living hardship. This has raised a further £180,000 to date giving us an extra pot of money through which to help residents in need.

**Increasing Prosperity**

* Agreed the Buckinghamshire Strategic Vision for 2050 setting out the current strengths and opportunities present within our County and setting out our aims and ambitions to achieve a thriving resilient and successful Buckinghamshire.
* Secured £5.8m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will support a range of local priorities including support local business communities and place and people and skills.
* Allocated £1.8m of funding through the Rural England Prosperity Fund for grants to rural businesses.
* The Council spent £22.8m of s106 funds on infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of new developments.
* The Council has continued to support local businesses negatively impacted by Covid and has paid £3.5m to 126 businesses COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF). The fund was available to support those businesses that were affected by the pandemic but were ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.
* Buckinghamshire Council recruited 45 young people on 6-month contracts as part of the Government Kickstart Scheme. 17 Kickstarters have secured a permanent role within the Council.
* 89.3 percent of schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted compared to 88.5 percent nationally (November 2022), and 98 percent of early years providers are also rated good or outstanding compared with 97 percent nationally.
* Key Stage 4 (GCSE and equivalent) results continue to be above national. In 2022 the attainment 8 score in Buckinghamshire was 57.3 compared with 48.8

**Cllr. Michael Rand. Member for Grendon Underwood Ward. April 2023.**