

Background to Chiltern District Council & South Bucks District Council

Message from the Cllr Isobel Darby (Leader of Chiltern District Council) and Cllr Nick Naylor (Leader of South Bucks District Council)



Cllr Isobel Darby



Cllr Nick Naylor

Both the Councils of Chiltern (population 94,545) and South Bucks (population 69,120) share a common boundary, a prosperous population with demanding service users, a tradition of being customer focussed enabling authorities and a high quality environment including the metropolitan green belt. They have offices nine miles apart and are financially prudent high performing authorities. Their economies are externally focused, with good rail and road links to London, the Thames Valley and Heathrow, but with some important international employers in health, media and telecommunications, and some of the highest rates of small business formation.

The two websites are www.chiltern.gov.uk and www.southbucks.gov.uk.

The characteristics of the community are developed in the Chiltern and South Bucks Community Strategy developed under the auspices of our joint partnership. [Links to the relevant documents on our websites:](#)

www.chiltern.gov.uk/chilternpartnership

www.southbucks.gov.uk/localstrategicpartnership

The Councils have a common Business Planning Framework and the two Councils have published a Joint Business Plan. The [Joint Business Plan can be found via these links:](#)

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/Aims-and-Objectives>

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/prioritiesandperformance>

All service plans can be accessed via:

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/strategies>

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/serviceplanssummaries>

Both Councils are Investors in People and have committed, hardworking staff (CDC 197.8 FTE and SBDC 118.7 FTE) that are experiencing a great deal of change.

The two Councils following agreement with UNISON have harmonised terms and conditions. As of 1 January 2017, 100% of the Councils' staff is on joint terms and conditions.

Political and constitutional arrangements

Both Councils modernised in 2000 with executive arrangements of Cabinet, Scrutiny, Regulatory and other committees closely following Government guidance.

The last district elections in 2015 produced two strongly Conservative authorities, unchanged for many years, with the following current political balance.

Shared management arrangements

The governance arrangements between the two Councils are designed to maintain their separate sovereign status and facilitate the shared management arrangements. There are two main elements.

Joint Committee: the two Cabinets, which considers strategic direction, programming, resources and business cases.

<https://isa.chiltern.gov.uk/democracy/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=330>

Joint Staffing Committee and its Sub-Committees which considers the appointment and personnel aspects.

<http://sbdc-spider2.southbucks.gov.uk/democracy/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=306>

Joint Working

The two Councils commenced their joint working in 2012, initially bring together the senior management of the two Councils into a single joint structure that comprises:

- A shared Chief Executive
- Two shared Directors, one of whom is the shared s151 officer
- Seven shared Heads of Service

In 2013 the Councils commenced the phase of joint working that involved bring together the operational teams of the two Councils into joint teams. This was achieved through a series of services reviews delivered with in-house resources. By January 2017 all services had moved to be delivered by joint teams with the exception of Planning Services. The review of Planning Services is now well underway and will be completed by the end of 2017..

The Council has completed the unification of its ICT networks and infrastructure into a single arrangement.

The joint working to date has delivered £1.9m in annual savings to the two Councils.

The Councils have now commenced on the next phase of joint working, "Stronger in Partnership" which aims to transform services and create a culture of flexible, customer focused service delivery. The Stronger in Partnership document can be accessed via the link below.

<http://sbdc-spider2.southbucks.gov.uk/democracy/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=241&MId=2397&Ver=4>

Organisational development

A programme of organisational development and culture change is currently underway. For details please refer to the downloads section.

Partnerships and partners

Chiltern and South Bucks Partnership

A revised and joint strategy was agreed in 2013. Full details are on both websites:

www.chiltern.gov.uk/chilternpartnership

www.southbucks.gov.uk/localstrategicpartnership

All the key partner agencies are involved in this umbrella partnership including:

- Bucks County Council (officers and members)
- Thames Valley Police: Area Commander
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) (based in the Council Offices, Amersham where existing joint working could be further enhanced)
- Bucks Fire and Rescue
- Paradigm and London and Quadrant Housing Associations
- Town and Parish Councils
- Voluntary Sector

The combined Community Safety Partnership feeds into this and steps are being taken to ensure the implementation of the key priorities, for example through setting up the economy group.

Some of the themes tackled at the twice a year meetings include housing and affordable housing, economic development including skills, the ageing population and social isolation, changes to the NHS and healthcare, the transport network, safer communities and engaging with local groups/the voluntary sector.

The minutes of the meetings, agendas and minutes can be found on both websites:

<https://isa.chiltern.gov.uk/democracy/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=373>

<http://sbdc-spider2.southbucks.gov.uk/democracy/ieListMeetings.aspx?Cid=261&Year=0>

Waste Services

Chiltern DC and Wycombe DC entered into a shared service for waste and recycling collections and street cleansing on 4 March 2012 after a joint procurement project which resulted in the contract being awarded to SERCO. The contract delivered significant savings to the two Councils. Alongside the mobilisation of the new joint contract, a new joint client team was established at Chiltern for both Councils as well as joint customer service delivery based at Chiltern.

South Bucks: waste collection is provided under a contract with BIFFA. Both waste contracts end in 2021.

There is a single joint waste client team that manages both the SERCO and BIFFA contracts, as well as running recycling and other projects or initiatives on behalf of the Councils.

Housing

The two Councils were amongst the first to transfer their housing stocks in the 1990's. The key RSL partners in the Districts are Paradigm (Chiltern) and L&Q (South Bucks).

Both Councils face significant challenges in providing affordable housing due to high land values and shortage of sites. This is reflected in the numbers placed in temporary accommodation and B&B.

CDC - Average Length of stay in B & B temporary accommodation for all households (snapshot at end of quarter) – twelve weeks

SBDC - Average Length of stay in B & B temporary accommodation for all households (snapshot at end of quarter) – 14 weeks

August 2016:

CDC - Number of households living in temporary accommodation (snapshot at the end of the month) – 36

SBDC - Number of households living in temporary accommodation (snapshot at the end of the month) - 63

Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee

The Chilterns Crematorium is one of the busiest in the country and offers a high standard of service. A major development of a new crematorium at Aylesbury is currently in the planning stage.

Chiltern is the lead authority (Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe Districts are the other partners). For details of the Chilterns Crematorium Joint Committee please refer to the Chiltern District Council website:

<https://isa.chiltern.gov.uk/democracy/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=280>

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL)

GLL is the leisure operator for both Chiltern and South Bucks under separate contracts. As client for the three leisure centres in Chiltern, the Council is considering the future of Chiltern Pools which will require redevelopment and offers significant opportunities for the development of leisure in the area.

Farnham Park Trust

SBDC is a corporate trustee for land providing an 18-hole golf course and a sports field provision. The Council has recently invested £2m in improving the facilities at the golf course in the form of a new club-house. The sports fields host a national facility for softball alongside a number of local sports clubs. As part of the SBDC leisure strategy, the use of Farnham Park will be reviewed as it represents a key site for open space leisure.

Health and Well Being Board

This is composed of Bucks County Council, the CCG and the Acute Health Trusts in partnership and operate at a strategic level across Bucks. The four Bucks districts are represented on this. Cllr Isobel Darby, Leader at Chiltern and Cllr Ralph Bagge, Leader at South Bucks, sit on the board.

Safeguarding Boards

Although the two districts have found it increasingly difficult to support the many county-wide boards, we retain representation on the Safeguarding Board. It is important the districts continue to be engaged in this national priority area. The Council is also a member of the Vulnerable Adults Board.

Three Tier Local Government

A number of service specific partnerships have been reviewed in this report which involves **Buckinghamshire County Council** (BCC) for example on health, waste, welfare reform, community safety, safeguarding and economic development. The County are also represented at officer and member level at the main umbrella partnerships such as the Chiltern and South Bucks Community Partnership. The County is going through its own reshaping programme and both Councils have received a presentation on this from the relevant Cabinet Member, Cllr Peter Hardy.

In terms of **towns and parishes**, Chiltern has 17 and South Bucks 12. Engagement thus far in the Chiltern and South Bucks Partnership is actively encouraged but has been patchy with only a few towns and parishes having the capacity to do this. Liaison is maintained at officer level through separate town and parish clerk meetings with the County also attending in terms of local highways liaison.

Performance and Strategic Risks

The performance reports for both councils can be found on each of the websites:

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/Aims-and-Objectives>

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/prioritiesandperformance>

Planning

The two authorities have agreed to develop a Joint Local Plan and are currently well advanced with this work. Public consultation on the pre-submission Local Plan is due to start in 2018 with submission expected very soon after. Work on the Local Plan is technically very challenging with each of the Council's and the neighbouring Council's declaring varying degrees of unmet need. Therefore in order to progress with Local Plans all Councils are undertaking a significant amount of duty to cooperate conversations. More information on our Local Plan progress can be found on our websites at:

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/planning/localplan2014-2036>

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/planning/localplan2014-2036>

Economic Development

Both are very prosperous and have weathered the recession well. The economies are very 'open' – with London and the Thames Valley driving growth, but have a strong entrepreneurial culture. Some of the firms, for example GE Healthcare (radiological pharmaceuticals) (formerly Amersham International) are world leaders, and there is a major media presence at Pinewood. The level of NEETs is low – around 150 with 40 unemployed for more than six months across the two districts.

Both Councils are active on the Bucks Thames Valley LEP, each District Leader has a place on the Board, and the Chief Executive and Director of Services are Directors of Bucks Advantage which is the implementation arm established in the summer of 2014.

The Councils have recently adopted an Economic Development Strategy for the area and the next phase will be for the Council to ensure the function is appropriately resourced in order that the strategy can be fully implemented.

Property

Both Councils have a number of assets which they manage on a day to day basis. Both Councils also have an ambition to develop their commercial activities so as to complement their income.

South Bucks has recently established an arms-length property company, Consilio Property Limited, with a view to entering into both the private commercial and residential markets and providing a commercial income stream to the Council. The Chief Executive and Director of Services are appointed as the Directors to the company.

Major Infrastructure Projects

Both Councils are deeply affected by major infrastructure projects currently being planned or considered.

HS2: The proposed High Speed rail route from London to Birmingham has been granted Royal Assent and is now an Act of Law, the scheme passes through the Chiltern and South Bucks districts, significantly disrupting the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Colne Valley Regional Park. There remains huge community opposition to the route which will continue through the years of construction and somewhat operation.

Both Councils were part of the 51m alliance (18 local authorities) which campaigned against the proposal and judicially reviewed the Government's decision to proceed with the scheme unsuccessfully. Chiltern was one of the leading authorities in the judicial challenge with Bucks County Council and London Boroughs of Camden and Hillingdon.

Both Chiltern and South Bucks petitioned at the Houses of Commons Select Committee, with various degrees of success with Chiltern securing an extended tunnel of 1.6 km, the establishment of the AONB Review Group and for SBDC the establishment of the Colne Valley Regional Park Panel and significant improvements on the design of the viaduct. Chiltern petitioned further at the Houses of Lords Select Committee, culminating in various assurances undertakings that have provided and will provide further level of engagement and joint control over some aspects of the project.

The project has now moved to the implementation stage and the Main Works Civil Contractors were appointed in the summer of 2017 and are currently in the design stage, with local authorities and interest groups meetings taking place. We have begun to receive pre application requests for Schedule 17 submissions, full submissions and S61 applications on noise matters and is gearing up to respond to the work as the project gains momentum.

South Bucks is in close proximity to Heathrow. Although this is a major economic driver, it also creates noise, traffic and other infrastructure related problems.

South Bucks has sections of the Great Western Main Line and stations on the Cross Rail route which will improve connectivity to London on this line. The Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRATH) proposal is largely in the district though mostly underground.

The infrastructure proposals create development interest and create particular pressure in the Iver area.

Changing flight patterns also impacts on other parts of the two districts, and the northern part of Chiltern is also affected by Luton Airport.

Finance and Resources

The key financial indicators for the two Councils are as follows:-

ClassificationMarking

	Chiltern 2017/18 (£000's)	South Bucks 2017/18 (£000's)
2017/18 Net Service Expenditure	9276	7912
2017/18 Budget Requirement	10747	7783
2017/18 Investment Income	100	200
General Revenue Reserves 31/3/17		
Earmarked Revenue Reserves 31/3/17	3594	2939
Unapplied Capital Receipts 31/3/17	10729	6628

Note: * Both authorities are debt free, but intend to undertake prudential borrowing in 2017/18.

Both Councils are in a good financial position but face common challenges in the future from reducing government funding. There are sound systems of financial control in both Councils and there are no significant audit issues. The internal auditor is the same for both Councils. Ernst and Young are the external auditors for both authorities and their most recent audit letter may be found at

<http://www.southbucks.gov.uk/article/7160/Annual-Audit-Letter>

<http://www.chiltern.gov.uk/audit>

The healthy level of reserves at Chiltern has given the Council the financial capacity to champion the strong community opposition to the HS2 proposals, and to identify funding to move forward its plans in key areas such as affordable housing provision and leisure services.

Both Councils face financial challenges in the medium term as a result of declining Government funding and limitations on other income sources. This is illustrated by their Medium Term Financial Strategies [see downloads section]

Key Issues

From the brief resume above, it will be clear there is a lot going on in terms of service delivery, change and meeting external challenges. The key issues are summarised in the Key Priorities set out in the two Councils' Medium Term Financial Strategies [see downloads section]

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGIES – KEY PRIORITIES

CHILTERN

Financial Stability & Resilience

Eliminating the funding gap
Growing income base
Funding only from Business Rates, Council Tax and Fees & charges and rents
Reserves to buffer recession effects
Reserves for specific major projects
Funding investment (Prudential Borrowing)
Continuing efficient and effective use of resources
Strong cost control
Temporary accommodation supply
Affordable housing supply
Use of s106 funds

Local Housing needs

Parking Strategy

Focus initial on Amersham issues (AMSCP).

Amersham site (Pool & KGVH)

Maximising use of Property Assets

Leisure Strategy

Implementing outcomes of leisure needs survey, especially in respect of Amersham site

Supporting local businesses

Broadband extension and development
Skills agenda
Progression the economic development strategy
Encourage tax base growth

The local environment

HS2 mitigation
Local Plan work

Joint Working including Transformation

Stronger in Partnership Programme
Office Accommodation plans

SOUTH BUCKS

Financial Stability & Resilience

Eliminating the funding gap
Growing income base
Funding only from Business Rates, Council Tax and Fees & charges
Reserves to buffer recession effects
Reserves for specific major projects
Funding investment (Prudential Borrowing)
Continuing efficient and effective use of resources
Strong cost control
Temporary accommodation supply
Affordable housing supply
Use of s106 funds

Local Housing needs

Parking Strategy

Initially focus on Gerrards Cross, but will widen to cover Burnham; Iver; Beaconsfield

Maximising use of Property Assets

Outcomes of strategic asset and investment potential review exercise.
Beaconsfield TC development

Leisure needs, including Farnham Park

Evreham re-provision in context of Open Space Leisure needs survey; FPPF development; Academy redevelopment; Beacon Centre

Supporting local businesses

Broadband extension and development
Skills agenda
Progression the economic development strategy
Encourage tax base growth

The local environment

Iver issues
Local Plan work

Joint Working including Transformation

Stronger in Partnership Programme
Office Accommodation plans