

Corporate Plan 2009-13 June Statement 2010

Introduction

In September 2009, we published our four-year Corporate Plan which outlined our priorities for the term of the new administration. We also said we would publish an Annual Report in June to report on progress towards achieving these priorities and outlining our plans for the next year.

Over the past two months, the County Council's financial circumstances have changed rapidly, and are changing still. In its June Budget, the new Government set out its plans to reduce the country's debt and this will have significant implications for us, both in-year and beyond. We will only know the extent of the impact on our services after the Spending Review in October.

We do know that to live within our means and still provide high-standard core services, we will need to take difficult decisions about what we can afford to do and what we can no longer provide. We are committed to working with you on this and in September will be talking with communities about this in our 'Bucks Debate'.

This financial uncertainty makes it impossible to accurately predict what we will be able to achieve by the end of 2010-11 and for this reason, we have taken the decision to delay publication of our forward plans until later in the year.

We can still let you know about your County Council's progress over the last year and this document outlines some of the achievements and challenges we faced during 2009-10. It gives examples of how we have been working towards our Corporate Plan priorities, grouped under seven themes.

To deal with the known financial challenge, we are reviewing everything the Council does to see where we could become more efficient, cost-conscious and customer-focused. During 2009-10 we achieved significant savings in particular by reducing management overheads and adopting new ways of working. This will continue during 2010-11 and beyond.

One of the most significant challenges was the long, hard winter which caught the whole country by surprise. Buckinghamshire's roads and pavements suffered badly. Although it is simply not possible to repair a network of this size overnight, our Transport for Buckinghamshire alliance responded rapidly and we allocated additional resources to address structural problems. Work is still continuing in this area.

The economic recession has affected many businesses, families and individuals. With partners in the public, private and voluntary and community sectors we looked at what role we could play in helping Buckinghamshire's economy. Together, in 2009-10, we provided additional funding for Citizens Advice Bureaux to provide debt advice, a business challenge fund and a commitment to paying invoices for small and medium-sized companies within 10 working days.

In 2009-10 we also sought to work with partners where it made sense to do so, and although it was not possible to continue with our planned Shared Services venture with District Councils, we will build on this to find alternative ways of finding the necessary savings. It is clear that working with others will be even more important in the future.

We alone cannot change things. If Buckinghamshire is to remain an excellent place to live and work, I would encourage those who can to get involved in their local areas, their local communities and in decisions that affect them. I strongly believe the best way to overcome problems is finding locally sustainable solutions with, and supported by, local people and communities. By taking personal responsibility where you can, the County Council will be able to focus on supporting those most vulnerable or with the greatest need.

Finally, I would like to thank former Cabinet colleagues, Mike Colston and Marion Clayton who provided excellent leadership for the Adults and Families and the Children and Young People's portfolios over many years.

David Shakespeare
Leader

What difference did we make in 2009/10?

For more information about how the County Council is helping to improve the lives of local people visit www.buckscc.gov.uk. Our full end of year performance report went to the Cabinet meeting on 7 June. To read the report, please follow this link on our website: www.buckscc.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=3869.

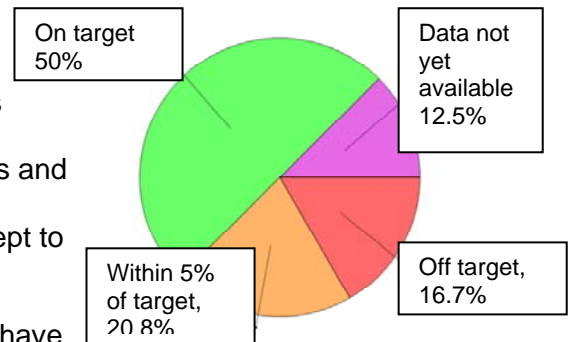
Theme One: Build and sustain prosperity

This is a challenging time for many people and the global economic downturn is likely to have long-lasting effects on individuals and communities across Buckinghamshire. We will support businesses during the economic downturn and look beyond the recession to ensure Buckinghamshire will have a successful economy in the long-term. We will endeavour to strike the right balance between retaining jobs, encouraging job growth and protecting our environment.

Our priorities are to:

1. Make it easier to do business in Buckinghamshire
2. Promote Buckinghamshire as the place to do business
3. Develop a local workforce for local businesses
4. Manage growth so that the right infrastructure, services and jobs are available at the right time
5. Make sure our transport networks work well and are kept to a good standard

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:



How well we met our Implementation Plan targets

In June 2009, the County Council and Buckinghamshire Economic and Learning Partnership (BELP) set up a £100,000 Business Challenge Fund to support local enterprises through the economic downturn. In all 27 Buckinghamshire-based organisations won grants of up to £5,000 to invest in new equipment, hire extra staff or improve training opportunities.

The Aylesbury Youth Motor Project used its £3,750 grant to buy a range of new equipment.

“We’ve now invested in a second hydraulic car lift so more young people can work on more cars, rather than having to wait to take turns. As old tools wear out, we have been able to replace them. This grant is helping more young people learn about mechanics, gain on-the-spot workshop experience and create career opportunities in the industry too.”

Bob Hardie, Project Manager for the Aylesbury

The worst winter the UK has seen in a generation resulted in unprecedented damage to roads all over the county. The snow and ice took its toll and throughout the bad weather the Council’s area maintenance teams worked tirelessly to try to keep roads open and fill pot holes. During the snowfall at Christmas, Transport for Buckinghamshire staff worked around the clock to grit roads. Six extra highways maintenance gangs were immediately drafted in January, bringing the total to 15, increasing further to 20 gangs at the peak. Around 25 -30 potholes per gang were filled a day - around 2,500 to 3,000 potholes repaired per week across the county.

Recognising the scale of the weather damage, £2m was released from the Council’s reserve funds to deal with the urgent problem and return roads to a fit state as soon as possible.

Youth unemployment is of concern nationally and in Buckinghamshire the number of young people out of work and claiming Jobseekers Allowance has almost trebled over the last two years. Today one quarter of our residents claiming Jobseekers Allowance are aged 24 or younger. In 2009/10 the Bucks Economic and Learning Partnership made a successful bid to the Future Jobs Fund securing £481,000 to create 74 new jobs for young people aged 18-24 who have been unemployed for more than 6 months. These jobs are being created in 2010/11 by 10 employers from the private, public and third sector, and will last a minimum of 6 months.

A new Connexions Centre, designed with young people for young people, was opened in the centre of High Wycombe in September 2009. The Centre is open every weekday, making it easy for young people to get to, and provides a wide range of free information, advice and guidance from careers, employment and training through to money and health issues.

Connexions Personal Advisers are also available to give professional guidance. After getting help from the Connexions Centre one young person said “Connexions has helped me so much with my career choices and helped me to get onto a college course even though I failed all my GCSEs.” After working with a Personal Adviser on his CV, another young man said that he wished he had come in sooner as he had been looking for work for nearly a year and could see things moving forward now. He was going to recommend the Centre to all his friends also looking for work.

Despite the recession, Connexions Buckinghamshire helped move nearly 1,000 young people back into employment, education or training.

Transport for Buckinghamshire is growing its workforce so that it can deliver a wider range of works on the ground. As an example, we have started urban grass-cutting in the south of Buckinghamshire, investing not only in new equipment but employing local people. Delivering work ourselves means that we are able to be more flexible and able to put resource where it is most needed.

Our Economic Summits bring together large numbers of companies from across the County to debate the economy. The latest event included high-profile speakers, shared the latest economic analysis, and provided essential business support advice and the opportunity to network. The Summit attracted over 350 people and is part of a series of events aimed at providing businesses with support through the recession, helping towards ensuring a quick recovery.

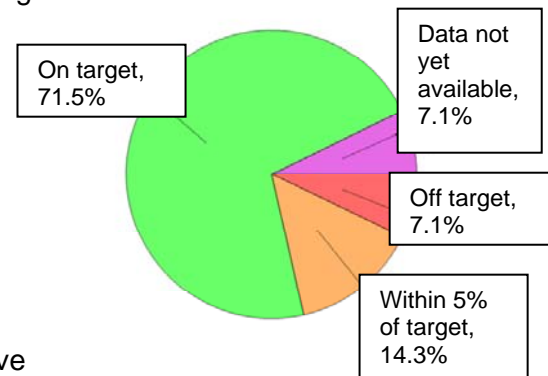
Theme Two: Manage, improve and protect our exceptional environment

We will protect our unique, historic and beautiful environment by tackling the issues raised by challenges such as climate change, housing growth and enhancing the economy.

Our priorities:

6. Cut our carbon dioxide emissions and reduce our carbon footprint and energy use
7. Encourage people to live in a way which protects our environment
8. Give people choice about the way they travel
9. Protect our beautiful countryside

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:



How well we met our Implementation Plan targets

Schools have been working closely with the county council to reduce energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions, which in turn brings lower utility bills. Schools, including Aylesbury High, Aylesbury Grammar, John Colet and Misbourne, have already taken advantage of the interest-free loans available for energy efficiency projects. The match-funded loans come from Salix, a Carbon-Trust funded company that provides money to local authorities for energy saving projects.

Projects are underway on installing cavity wall and loft insulation, boiler-room pipe insulation, and the installation of smart gas meters and Building Energy Management Systems. So far, projects have brought a potential carbon dioxide saving of almost 170 tonnes, equal to that emitted by over 500 double decker buses.

Over the past 3 years, with your help, we have increased the amount of waste we recycle and compost by 8.2%. Brill Church of England Combined School leads by example, teaching its children the importance of looking after the environment. The school has a wind turbine, a ground source heat pump and solar water heater. It also has its own 'Eco Council', recycling bins in each classroom and an organic garden for composting.

"It's vital our pupils understand the difference they can make to improving the environment during the 21st century. One of the ways they can help is by understanding the importance of recycling and the fact that items such as paper, can have more than one life."

Marie-Claire Nixon, Teacher, Brill CoE School

"The world can be a better place without lots of rubbish – so it will help if we all recycle items into something new." "I recycle paper and plastic at home. If we don't recycle old paper a lot of trees may have to be cut down – so recycling is important."

Jack and Katie, aged 8, Eco Councillors, Brill CoE School

Visitor numbers to the County Council's country parks were higher than expected in 2009. Over 600,000 visits were made to the five parks – 48,000 more than expected. Three of the County Council-run country parks were honoured with the 2009 Green Flag Award, Langley Park, Denham Park and Black Park in Wexham. The award recognises top-class facilities, amenities and signage.

Twenty three walk-to-school schemes have received a cash boost for another year from a £15,000 grant. The money comes as the last installment in a three-year government-funded Walking to School Initiative.

In the first year of the scheme, 36 schools in Buckinghamshire received a grant to help reduce single-occupancy car journeys to school. Seven schools set up new Crocodile or Allig8or trails, which involve pupils walking in high visibility jackets escorted by adults along a risk-assessed route. Other schools used the money to support existing walk-to-school schemes by buying incentives for pupils, or improving pedestrian entrances. One school bought permits for a nearby car park so that parents could walk their children to the school gate. In the last academic year 66% of pupils in participating schools travelled sustainably by walking, cycling, catching a bus or sharing a lift.

The majority of bus services in Buckinghamshire are operated by commercial bus operators. We work with those companies to make sure that the bus network is as good as it can be. In 2009/10, the new A30 service was launched to link Chesham and Heathrow. The service runs hourly and calls at Amersham, the Chalfonts, Gerrards Cross, Denham and Uxbridge.

“We’re really excited about the launch of this route. We believe it is ideal for passengers whether travelling to work, on a shopping trip or off to catch a plane.”

Steve Burns, Managing Director, Carousel Buses

In areas and at times where the commercial bus network is not viable, the County Council has contracted services, particularly where there are access issues, such as in rural areas, or to help address congestion. Where we can we will continue to do this but our budgets are under pressure and in 2009/10 we had to make changes to some routes. As finances are unlikely to get easier, during 2010/11 we will be talking with local people to explore affordable ways of meeting needs.

Two Household Waste and Recycling Centres were opened this year in Buckinghamshire. The first was a major upgrade of the High Heavens site in Wycombe which is now three times the size of the old facility. The second was the opening of a new site at Aston Clinton near Aylesbury which was built on an existing brownfield site, using recycled materials. Residents are now able to recycle a wide range of waste from paper and card to tyres, batteries and electrical waste, textiles and garden waste. Both sites have a layout, signage and lighting that maximises traffic flows, and both can process around 15,000 tonnes of waste per year.

Since its opening in April 2009, there have been 35,000 visits to the Aston Clinton site, which has achieved a recycling rate of 80%.

New technology is making it easier for people to make choices about the way they travel. Ibis units have been fitted to key bus stops throughout the Wycombe area. These units which are solar powered, use satellite technology to track buses and provide ‘real time’ information about how long people will have to wait. The units also show maps, timetables and local interest pages and as they are web-based, important information such as road closures and journey disruptions can be put on easily. Thirty units have been installed across High Wycombe, Marlow, Lacey Green, Naphill and Princes Risborough and more are due to be installed across the county.

During 2009 the Council updated its fleet of mobile libraries with two new vehicles that use the latest technology to reduce their carbon footprint, and provide high quality facilities and services for their customers. Both vehicles have roof mounted solar panels that can provide up to 100% of their vehicles internal power, and use outback regulators, low energy lighting and heating to ensure maximum efficiency in energy consumption.

One of the vehicles, which now serves rural communities in the North of the county, won the premier award at the National Mobile meet in May 2009.

Since April 2009, over 40,000 people have used the mobile library service and 128,800 items have been loaned.

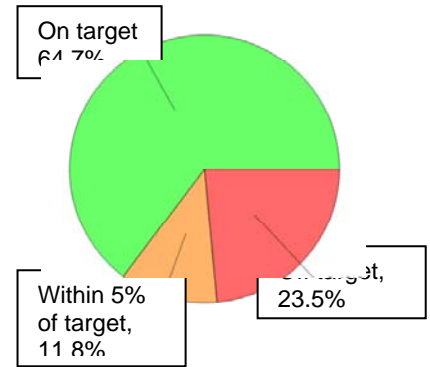
Theme Three: Promote opportunities for all

From the earliest years, through an excellent education system and into adulthood, we will promote opportunities for all residents to make their lives as rewarding and enjoyable as possible.

Our priorities:

- 10. Give all children and young people the chance to develop the skills they will need to do well in life
- 11. Encourage everyone to keep learning throughout their lives
- 12. Encourage people to lead healthier lives

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:



How well we met our Implementation Plan targets

In autumn 2009 the County Council's Green Park staff organised an adventure week at the Calvert Trust centre near Keswick in the Lake District for a group of young people with additional and special needs. The expedition gave the young people a chance to try new activities, including rock climbing, sailing, swimming and horse-riding.

One mother saw changes in her son that she had not seen before. "For the first time in 15 years I watched a lonely and misunderstood child lacking in self-esteem evolve in front of my very own eyes. He took part in all the activities. The support and encouragement given by all the children and outdoor staff from Green Park spurred him on to reach new heights."

She said that her son had come away with increased confidence and independence, more able to make choices and friends.

Dorney County Combined School has been twinned with Chenies School in Hertfordshire as part of the Schools Linking Network project. The Network gives pupils the opportunity to meet and find out about their different communities, areas and religions.

At their first meeting, the Year 4 children from the two schools were involved in producing art, and were taught some Caribbean and gospel songs which they will be performing at Adams Park, High Wycombe, in June 2010.

The aim of the project is to help children build relationships with others from different faith, economic and ethnic backgrounds. At the end of the first day, firm friendships were already being formed by children from Dorney County and Chenies schools. In the longer-term it is hoped that this type of project will help strengthen understanding and tolerance between people.

Research has found that more than 33% of 12-15 year olds have faced some sort of bullying, and at 28% the rate in Buckinghamshire is lower than national figure. The County Council's 2009 anti-bullying campaign focussed on cyberbullying – bullying via a mobile phone or the internet.

Schools have tackled cyberbullying in a number of ways. Beaconsfield High School held a presentation evening for parents and at Sir Henry Floyd Grammar School parents learnt about e-safety, risk and the Virtual Learning Environment. Holmer Green Upper school won a Diana Award for its work to promote tolerance of others and now provide a 'drop in' service for victims every lunchtime.

The Council's successful bid for £1.4 million Big Lottery funding meant the completion of one new library and two major refurbishments in the south of the county. Micklefield in High Wycombe has a brand new building with nearly three times the floor space of the old library, while Bourne End and Burnham libraries have been refurbished and extended.

Community Management groups have played a key part in the design and creation of the libraries, and will continue to play an active role. All three libraries now have rooms that are fully equipped for formal and informal learning, and can be used by the community for meetings and activities.

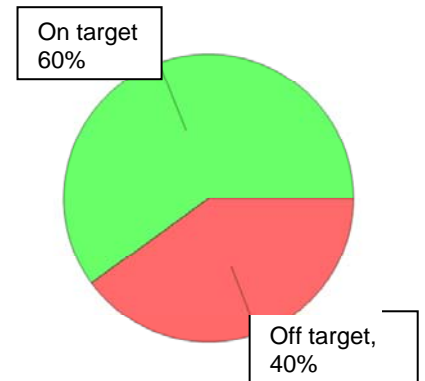
Theme Four: Support people who need our help

Although Buckinghamshire is a relatively prosperous county, some areas are doing less well. People living in these places are less likely than others to be successful. We will support those people who most need our help, when they need it, and will work with others to tackle disadvantage and encourage self-reliance.

Our priorities:

13. Support those who need help to live independently
14. Work with families to help them to reach their potential
15. Help to improve the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people
16. Provide support early on to help prevent people and families from slipping into crisis

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:



How well we met our Implementation Plan targets

In 2009/10 over 450 parents took part in Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy programmes to improve their skills and help them support their children's learning.

Mum of two Joan Richardson enrolled on three adult learning courses to help her children with their homework and benefited so much she decided to become a classroom teaching assistant.

"I did the courses so I could be there to help Leah and Steffen with their homework. In 2004 I enrolled on the Family Numeracy course for parents at St Mary's Farnham Royal School and then joined a Family Literacy course. The courses were really great fun and I found them very rewarding. We were given help with things like spelling, letter writing and CVs, which was great. They gave me the confidence to make a change in my life and definitely helped with my job application. Oh, and the good thing was I was able to help with my children's homework!"

Joan Richardson, Classroom Teaching Assistant

Funding from the County Council for the Buckinghamshire Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) has helped around 350 residents manage more than £7m worth of debt through its Money Advice Project. The council allocated £200,000 over two years to provide advice to people with money and debt issues during the economic recession.

In the first nine months of the project, CABs gave over 1,559 additional support hours, provided financial capability training sessions for 183 people in the Chilterns and put 86 debt repayment plans in place.

As snow fell and temperatures dropped below zero this winter, a small team of County Council staff was methodically checking the welfare of more than 700 vulnerable people. Over 20 social care workers and staff from the Council's 'InTouch' service provided an emergency telephone check service.

Care staff, joined by Head of Service Provision Kerry Stevens trudged through snow to make home visits, while others worked late into the night. One care worker went out in her own time at 10pm to visit a vulnerable woman to make sure she was coping, while another walked for two hours to check an elderly resident in a rural area near Amersham. Home care staff who were not on duty volunteered to make visits during the day and evening.

At Seeleys House, Beaconsfield, the council's respite care unit for people with learning disabilities, staff and managers stayed overnight as the night team was unable to get in through the weather. They then carried on with their shift the following day, supported by volunteers.

As part of the targeted work in Castlefield, High Wycombe, the County Council co-funded a health event in the area in March 2010. A local group, the Castlefield and Oakridge Trust, had identified that many local people, particularly those from the Asian community, were not aware of the healthcare services available to them.

The event was held to raise awareness of services in the local area and included a range of organisations including the Blind Association, Carers Bucks, the NHS and Adult Social Care. Information was provided on a variety of health topics and most importantly, the local people were given the opportunity to have a mini health-check. Those attending the event were given a 'health card' and visited different health check stations to record height, weight, BMI, blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and smoking status. The health card was given to the individual and, with the individual's permission, a copy was sent to their GP. People were encouraged to make an appointment with their GP to discuss the results in more detail if they felt it was necessary.

Over 100 people took the mini health-check and 20 signed up for services on the day. In all, over 110 people attended the event and feedback from the organisations and those attending showed how valuable it had been.

Our programme of Self Directed Support, 'Putting People First', provided 465 people with a personal budget by the end of March 2010. Personal budgets mean that people can choose how and what care to buy. In addition to services like personal care, this can mean much more. In 2009 people with personal budgets used their funding in a variety of ways to improve their lives, including buying a computer to keep in touch with distant family, employing flexible carer support to help with University studies, guitar lessons and allotment gardening.

As people get older they often need extra help in their lives. Many Buckinghamshire residents are able to pay for their own care needs but find it difficult to discover the range of options available to them. Many people enter long-term residential care before they really need to and as a result can find themselves running out of funding and needing council support.

To help older people and their families at the best time, we are working with others to make it easier to find out about the services available. This year we have worked with the Department of Work and Pensions and other local service providers to increase the uptake of benefits by older people. During the year our Welfare Benefits team accessed over £4m for 1,200 service users.

We have also secured funding from the regional Improvement Agency to work with three private financial services organisations to provide registered information and advice for individuals to help them make the best use of their resources.

For the second consecutive year, our internal Home Care service was independently assessed as being the best service provider compared with similar authorities.

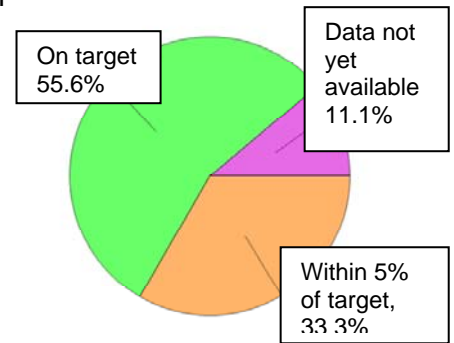
Theme Five: Promote community spirit

Although community spirit in Buckinghamshire is generally strong, there are concerns in some areas, particularly around community safety and the impact of growth. We will work with communities to build neighbourliness and a sense of belonging.

Our priorities:

17. Work with you to make you and your communities safer
18. Work with you to build neighbourliness

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:



How well we met our Implementation Plan targets

The County Council and Thames Valley Police have joined forces to provide vulnerable domestic abuse victims with GPS personal trackers in Buckinghamshire. The Buddi alarms, funded in part by the County Council, will be made available to victims of domestic abuse and people who are vulnerable to honour-based violence

When the alarm is activated, the system allows the police to locate an individual within 10 metres 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year online, by phone or by text. The personal tracker tells the police who the alarm belongs to, and with the GPS mapping dramatically cuts police response times to the person in need of help.

“Protecting vulnerable people is a priority for Thames Valley Police and we welcome any system which increases the protection of any victims of domestic abuse and honour-based violence and improves our service when helping to protect them and lock up the offenders.”

Protecting Vulnerable People, Det Insp Chris Innes

Injuries to motorcyclists are far out of proportion to their presence on the roads. Nationally bikers represent only one per cent of traffic, but make up 18 per cent of those killed or seriously injured on the roads. Motorcyclists are 16 times more likely to be killed or injured in crashes than car drivers. In 2009 three bikers were killed and 52 were seriously injured on Buckinghamshire’s roads.

In response to these statistics, the road safety team at Transport for Buckinghamshire launched a road safety campaign that aims to reduce the number of motorcycle-related crashes on the county’s roads. Twenty THINK! Bike signs have been installed on routes where bikers have been known to crash. The aim is to encourage car drivers to take notice of motorcyclists and for motorcyclists to take steps reduce their own personal risk.

As a result of campaigns like THINK! Bike and other road safety work, this year the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents was 11 per cent lower than expected.

The County Council was given an Improvement and Efficiency South East award in March for its ‘Building community capacity’ project. The project has been running in two local community areas, Chesham and Haddenham, bringing together 27 organisations, including public sector, Dial-a-Ride, Age Concern and the Red Cross to improve the health of older people.

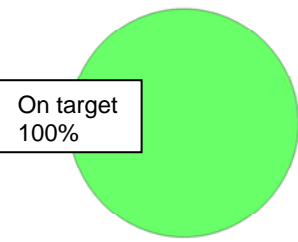
The project improves the way that services are provided by sharing information and signposting services. This joined-up way of working significantly reduces the time between people coming into contact with and getting advice from different types of service. Providing proper introductions to services also encourages older and more isolated people to meet new people.

Theme Six: Tailor services to meet local need

We will work with residents and local communities to identify local priorities, find local solutions and give more people a say in what and how services are delivered.

Our priorities:

19. Strengthen local leadership
20. Provide more opportunities for you to influence local decisions
21. Join up services locally



On target
100%

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:

*How well we met our
Implementation Plan targets*

When the Chepping Wye Valley Local Community Partnership (LCP) held a community planning workshop last year, the top priority for all who took part was the provision of more activities for young people across the whole area. As a result, the members of the LCP agreed to allocate the entire Local Priorities Budget of £8,000 towards achieving this.

Councillors took part in discussions with partners and providers, including the Police, Bucks Community Action, the Youth Service and the voluntary sector, to plan programme of activities and local charity Street Dreams, which specialises in this area of provision, was commissioned to deliver all the sessions. The programme included sessions on street dance, music recording, a mobile climbing wall, basketball and a mobile diary room amongst others.

Sessions are held in different parish areas each Friday night, and the response from local young people has been overwhelmingly positive. More sessions have been requested and some young people have been inspired to try setting up their own local projects, with help from Street Dreams and funding from the Youth Opportunities Fund.

This year Transport for Buckinghamshire delegated £500,000 to local people to spend through their Local Area Forums (LAFs). The funding is typically used on road and pavement improvements needed in a locality but which is not part of the countywide repair programme.

In addition, £17,000 is given to each LAF area for the work of a maintenance gang 10 weeks per year. Gangs deliver a range of services, including hedge cutting, fixing and cleaning traffic signs and minor repairs.

These are two ways in which local people, through their local Councillors and the LAF, are able to influence road and maintenance repairs in their area.

This year County Councillors used their Community Leaders' Fund to help a wide range of local groups and projects across Buckinghamshire. The Fund is available to all Councillors for use in their local area and in 2009-10 contributions made were as diverse as:

- A Christmas meal at the Afro Caribbean Day Centre in Aylesbury;
- Construction of changing rooms for Buckingham Rugby Club;
- A cooker at Totteridge and District Community Centre;
- Restoration of three churchyards in Chiltern Ridges; and
- A ramp for disabled access at Amersham & District British Legion

Local Area Forums (LAFs) were given a total of £152,000 (£8,000 each) this year to spend on local priorities identified by the Forums. The money was spent on 85 schemes ranging from youth activities, support for elderly and vulnerable people, community safety projects and environmental improvements.

A new path, linking two large woodland areas in Lane End, near High Wycombe, is now open to the public. The new route, linking Widdenton Park Wood and Moor Wood, runs through beautiful woodlands next to the B482 Marlow Road. The need for a new path was identified by local people in the Lane End parish plan.

Previously, walkers had to use the busy main road to access the footpath network either side of the B482. Buckinghamshire County Council worked with local residents, the Lane End Parish Council and local landowner Lord Parmoor, to find an alternative route to the busy road.

The Tourist Information Centre in High Wycombe moved to the new library this year. The new service, in the foyer area of the library, is more visible and more accessible for visitors to the town.

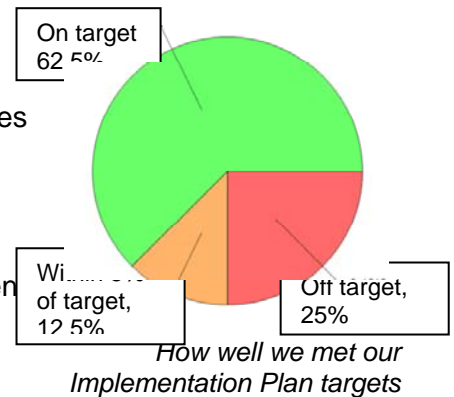
Theme Seven: Deliver effective and efficient services

There are some basic principles that do not change and we will continue to represent and serve the people of Buckinghamshire to the best of our ability. We must become more streamlined, cost effective and efficient, working in innovative ways with partners to reduce costs and provide services tailored to meet the needs of residents.

Our priorities:

22. Make it much easier for you to find out about and access services
23. Provide the highest value for every pound we spend on your behalf
24. Find new, better ways of doing things

Here is just a selection of the work that, with our partners, we have been doing in 2009/10 to help us achieve these priorities:



In October we changed the way we order stationery, as part of the way we are transforming how the County Council works. We radically reviewed the way we buy stationery, reducing the choice of items from 3,800 to 1,300, and as a consequence, we are well on track to achieve around £100,000 savings in the first year.

In July we launched our partnership with Hays to create a more streamlined and cost-effective recruitment service. The new service created an online system to make it easier to search and apply for jobs with the County Council, reducing the time it takes to process applications. To date the partnership has saved over £500,000.

Responding to the wishes of many older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, the County Council is developing Telecare and Telehealth services. These systems involve remotely monitoring activity and health in someone's home. Telecare systems can include a range of sophisticated technology. Falls detectors, for example, provide a rapid response and greatly lower the risk of people being left on the floor for long periods of time and door detectors, can allow carers to work in the garden, for example, while a dementia sufferer is in the house. Since April 2009 over 600 people have benefited from our Telecare services.

Telehealth is used to monitor weight, blood pressure, pulse rate and oxygen levels, which are then transmitted down a phone line to the GP's surgery. To date 50 people have had Telehealth equipment installed and although it is still in its early stages, Telehealth has already been shown to reduce hospital admissions, shorten hospital stays and reduce the need for medical home visits.

Transport for Buckinghamshire, our new partnership, started in April 2009. The ground-breaking contract between the County Council and Ringway Jacobs was the first of its kind in the country. Although the County Council retains a few members of staff to commission and monitor the contract, Ringway Jacobs will deliver the Council's entire transportation service for the next 8 years. Local residents will benefit from use of the best technology to deliver efficient and high quality transport services for Buckinghamshire.

By changing the way that the Council is structured and flattening the layers of management we have significantly reduced management overheads. Including reductions in other staff, we have saved £3m in 2009-10.

Like many other large organisations, over time the Council has placed teams in many different offices, often within a short distance from each other. We are working to reduce costs by minimising the number of properties we need. We have started by providing modern, open plan office space in the New County Offices tower block which accommodates more people in the same space.