

Buckinghamshire Councillors Report Marsworth Nov mtg 22 –with later input

New home energy schemes for Bucks residents

Hundreds of households in Buckinghamshire are set to benefit from new funding to make their homes more energy efficient as part of a joint project paid for by Central Government funding.

The news will be welcomed by households across the county, many of whom are at risk of being pushed into fuel poverty due to rising fuel costs.

The grants are for households with a gross annual income of less than £30,000 or who are receiving eligible benefits, and properties must have an energy rating of D, E, F or G.

The scheme will benefit both homeowners and those who rent privately. The new grant funding will potentially help more than 400 households in the county, and includes properties that are 'off grid', currently using an alternative energy supply, such as oil.

For owner occupiers, the work will be carried out for free. However, for rental properties (whether private or social), the landlord will be expected to pay at least one third of the cost towards the work.

Applications are open now to eligible households at: buckinghamshire-applications.co.uk

The BEIS (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy) Sustainable Warmth Competition which ran last year invited bids from local authorities for a share of the available funding. Buckinghamshire Council partnered with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub – who applied for funding on the council's behalf, securing just under £5m of capital funding. This will be allocated as follows:

- £3.2 million to support low-income households in Bucks on the gas grid with energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures such as external wall insulation, underfloor insulation and air source heat pumps.
- £1.7 million to support low-income households in Bucks with energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures such as cavity wall insulation, solar PV and loft insulation.

The Hub has since contracted with City Energy who will be the delivery partner for the schemes across Buckinghamshire.

Buckinghamshire Council agrees comprehensive Cost of Living package for residents

Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet has formally agreed a wide-ranging package of support for residents this winter, including how it will spend £2.4 million of the government's Household Support Fund.

The proposals to support struggling Buckinghamshire residents are believed to be among some of the most comprehensive in the country and include initiatives

already underway, such as a new local crisis fund, and the launch of a network of 'Welcoming Spaces' across Buckinghamshire.

The report noted by Cabinet today also details how the £2.4million Household Support Fund will be spent in the county, co-ordinated through the Helping Hand service, the council's support programme in place in Buckinghamshire for local households experiencing hardship.

The Household Support Fund covers the period 1 October 2022- 31 March 2023 and councils have some discretion and flexibility over how they identify local households and set eligibility criteria.

Information for residents is at www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living

Money Matters – have your say on Buckinghamshire Council's spending priorities for 2023/24

Like other councils across the UK, Buckinghamshire is in the process of setting its budget for 2023/24. 82% of the cost of providing all Buckinghamshire Council's services comes from Council Tax – from paying for care packages for adults who need it, to providing emergency accommodation for homeless people and vulnerable children, as well as the essential services everyone relies on like bin collections, road repairs and keeping streets and open spaces clean and safe.

“Money Matters” – the way for residents to tell us what matters most to them when we come to divvy up the available funds during next year. The budget will pay for services such as:

- Pothole repairs, road maintenance and improvement
- The Council's energy costs - from street lighting and operating machinery at household waste depots
- Care for vulnerable children, for example, those who've had to come into our care for their own safety and well-being
- Care for adults who need extra help and support
- Running libraries and leisure centres
- Support for residents facing hardship

The “Money Matters” consultation sets out what proportion of the council's budget is currently spent on which services and invites you to tell us which services you would prioritise in a short survey, which takes less than ten minutes to complete

To give us your views on how next year's Buckinghamshire Council budget should be spent, to go www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/money-matters-consultation

Beacon Road Ringshall - Upcoming Drainage Improvement Works Road Closure

Work will take place on Beacon Road, Ringshall from the National Trust Dockey Wood Car Park to the Steps Hill Car Park. The works are programmed to take place

from (nominally) Monday 31st October, and it is anticipated that they will be completed by Wednesday 23rd November. The work will be carried out using a road closure in operation between 7am and 7pm and temporary traffic lights when necessary.

This type of work is extremely weather dependent, and therefore these dates are subject to change at short notice.

Become a Food Champion and help your local community

Buckinghamshire Council is reaching out to residents to offer a Helping Hand to support those struggling the most with the cost of living crisis. The council is relaunching their Food Champion scheme in partnership with Street Associations and local foodbanks, where residents are invited to set up a food collection service for tinned and dry food in their own road or street.

To help increase collections, Food Champions are encouraged to coordinate monthly food drops within their street or even their place of work and deliver these directly to the foodbanks. Once delivered, the vital provisions will help make up food parcels for vulnerable local individuals and families which will be distributed by the foodbanks direct.

To find out more about the Food Champions scheme – or to set up a scheme in your street – please visit: [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/food-champions](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/food-champions)

Residents struggling to afford food can locate and contact their local foodbank by going to: [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

Have your say on the Home to School Transport Consultation

Buckinghamshire Council has today launched its Home to School Transport Consultation inviting residents to share their views on proposed changes to council-run school bus charges (Spare Seats Scheme), the Home to School Transport Policy (0- to 25-Year-Olds) and the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024.

Until midnight on Sunday 4 December, people in Buckinghamshire will be able to provide their views on proposals for:

- Spare Seats Scheme charging options
- Updates to our home to school transport policies

Any changes will apply for the 2023 to 2024 academic year onwards and will apply to both new and existing customers.

The Spare Seats Scheme offers paid-for seats on timetabled Council-run school buses, after all young people who are eligible for free school transport have been allocated a seat.

The changes will even out the cost of travel over a child's whole school career by reducing the cost of post-16 travel for some Spare Seats passengers, making it easier

for parents and carers to know upfront how much they will have to pay before applying for a seat.

The consultation addresses concerns that the Spare Seats fee structure is complex and difficult to understand and proposes three options for simplified school bus ticket charges.

Buckinghamshire Council receives £2.7m funding to support rough sleepers in the county

The Government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has awarded Buckinghamshire Council £2.7 million of funding to help rough sleepers.

The funding – which covers five schemes running up until March 2025 – was granted following a successful bid by the council and will help support rough sleeper initiatives such as emergency beds, housing first support, and drug and alcohol outreach.

Last chance to help reshape constituencies

Final chance for public to help reshape constituency map as Boundary Commission for England launches consultation on new revised proposals for constituencies

The Boundary Commission for England today (8 November) publishes new revised proposals for constituencies across the country and opens a final month-long consultation, giving the public a last opportunity to send in their views.

The Commission has taken into consideration over 45,000 comments sent in by the public during the previous two stages of public consultation, and has changed nearly half of its initial proposals based on this feedback. A third and final consultation on the new map of revised constituency proposals is open now until 5 December. The public are invited to view and comment on the new map at bcereviews.org.uk.

The Commission is undertaking an independent review of all constituencies in England as requested by Parliament. The number of electors within each constituency currently varies widely due to population changes since the last boundary review. The 2023 Boundary Review will rebalance the number of electors each MP represents, resulting in significant change to the existing constituency map. As part of the review, the number of constituencies in England will increase from 533 to 543.

After this final consultation has closed on 5 December, the Commission will analyse the responses and form its final recommendations. These will be submitted to Parliament by 1st July 2023.

Final deadline to cash council tax rebate vouchers approaches

PLEASE NOTE CORRECTION TO PHONE NUMBER BELOW

Buckinghamshire residents who haven't yet cashed their council tax energy rebate vouchers are being reminded that the deadline is fast approaching, at the end of this month.

Earlier this year the Government announced that all households in council tax bands A to D would receive a £150 payment as part of a range of measures to support people with the rising cost of energy pressures. Residents who were eligible for an energy rebate who had not received a BACS transfer were sent a voucher in the post in August this year. The vouchers need to be taken with a form of photo ID, to a post office, where they can be exchanged for £150.

Latest figures show that around 3,600 vouchers are still waiting to be cashed in Buckinghamshire.

The original vouchers sent out are only valid for 90 days so some will no longer be redeemable, but the council can still make a payment by BACS transfer for residents to receive the payment. Anyone who needs to do this must telephone the council before 24 November to arrange this. Call 0300 131 6000, choose Option 3 and then Option 6. The last payment run will be made on 25 November.

If your voucher is still valid but you are unable to get to the Post Office yourself, you can nominate someone else to collect the money on your behalf. The nominee will need to take the original letter and relevant photo identification to the Post Office. The process is fully explained in the voucher letter and on the council website: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/council-tax

Anyone who has been sent a voucher but is in a position not to need it, please consider cashing it in and donating the funds to the Heart of Bucks Crisis Appeal which is helping local people who are struggling to make ends meet as a result of the rising cost of living.

Your donation could help someone in need buy food and household essentials, contribute towards moving costs for someone fleeing domestic abuse or help with energy costs.

Councillor Derek Town