

## **Buckinghamshire Councillors Report Marsworth PC Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> Mar 2023**

### **Council calls for ULEZ expansion to be scrapped**

Buckinghamshire Council is calling for the planned extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London to be scrapped.

Cabinet Member for Transport, Steven Broadbent, wrote to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, last year to express concerns over the proposals. Since then, the expansion plans have been approved by Transport for London (TfL) and are due to come into effect from the end of August 2023, prompting the council to contact the Mayor of London once again.

One of the council's main concerns is the cost implications for the many residents who commute into the Greater London area, particularly at a time when other cost of living pressures are already having a serious impact on people's lives.

### **Don't pay cash to remove your trash, council urges**

Buckinghamshire Council is renewing its call for residents not to pay in cash when employing someone to take away their waste.

However big or small the amount, if dumped illegally, the original owner of the waste can be liable for prosecution.

You may be tempted to pay cash as a cheaper option but sadly, speaking from experience, we know that it is statistically more likely to be dumped illegally and the fly-tipper is less likely to be caught without any electric or paper trail available, proving their involvement. In these cases, if the waste can be traced back to the original homeowner, they are then liable for the offence and can be prosecuted

### **Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet approves 2023-24 budget.**

The Cabinet considered the overall income and spending plans for 2023/24, which cover how the council will raise enough money to cover the costs of providing its essential services such as social care, as well as how it will pay for big projects like improvements to roads and schools, as well as further investment in waste services, environmental projects and tackling homelessness.

High inflation and added demand mean that, in spite of ongoing savings from becoming a unitary authority, the council needs to find an extra £63 million to cover its costs for the coming year. Like most councils with responsibility for social care, it means that, to raise enough money and to present a balanced budget, the Cabinet has agreed to put forward to Council a **2.99% rise in the base rate of council**

**tax** and a plan to take up the Government's proposal for a **Social Care Precept** of **2%**, meaning a **total rise of 4.99%** in bills.

This equates to a rise in council tax of **£1.61 per week for the average home** (Band D) in Buckinghamshire.

## **Healthy Libraries – more than just books!**

This month sees the launch of Buckinghamshire Council's 'Healthy Libraries' pilot programme in a number of libraries across the county.

The programme seeks to highlight that our libraries are a diverse and interactive place for people from all walks of life. Divided up into three categories: Start Well; Live Well and Age Well, Healthy Libraries will cover activities, events and information that aim to promote healthier, happier lives for Buckinghamshire residents.

Libraries act as hives of activity with strong links within the local community and so are ideally placed to support residents whilst promoting health and wellbeing. Whether you want to learn about healthy eating or have a chat about your mental health, there are many ways the selected libraries will be able to support you with your health and wellbeing over the next few months.

Running from February to April, the Healthy Libraries pilot is taking place at libraries in the following locations:

- Aylesbury
- Buckingham
- Burnham
- Chesham
- High Wycombe

## **Buckinghamshire Council aims to improve local air quality with £120k grant**

Buckinghamshire Council's Strategic Environmental Protection Team has been awarded £120,000 from the Government's Air Quality Grant Scheme to carry out a travel planning and eco-driving project.

The team will be working with local business engagement groups such as [Bucks Business First](#) (BBF) to lead a campaign to accelerate a shift away from single occupancy car use to more active travel and sustainable ways of travel in Buckinghamshire.

The project will be aimed at employers and their staff.

Unlike the electric vehicle (EV) campaign that the council received funding for in 2020 and which focused upon businesses with more than 100 employees, this project will target small to medium enterprises (under 100 employees) that were ineligible under the previous project. The new initiative will give small and medium sized enterprises within the county the opportunity to create active travel plans and to trial an app to encourage a safer eco-friendlier style of driving.

Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment, commented:

## **Council welcomes £4.8m funding boost to support struggling households**

Buckinghamshire Council has welcomed the news that it is to receive £4.8m of funding to continue supporting households and residents in Buckinghamshire who are struggling with the ongoing cost of living pressures.

The funding has been allocated through the government's Household Support Fund (HSF) and enables local authorities to use the money to directly support residents and households facing hardship and challenges brought on by cost of living pressures.

This funding will cover the full year from this April, through to the end of March next year. Previous allocations have been for six-month periods

## **New photo ID requirements announced for local and national elections**

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023 it will also apply to UK General elections.

The Electoral Commission's website lists the [accepted forms of photo ID](#).

People who do not have an accepted photo ID can [apply for a free voter ID document](#), which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate. Applicants will need to provide their name, address, date of birth, national insurance number and a recent digital photo of themselves.

For people registered to vote by post, no photo ID will be required. This is because postal voting requires other identification checks, such as signature and date of birth verification.

## **Buckinghamshire Council announces extra investment in county's roads**

Buckinghamshire Council is investing an extra £5 million in the county's road network, on top of £100 million it's already committed to spending on the roads over a four-year period.

The announcement was made at a meeting of full Council last Wednesday night, where the full budget for 2023/24 was set. Council Leader Martin Tett made the extra funds for roads available from our Reserves acknowledging the heavy toll of wet and freezing conditions this winter plus increased HGV traffic from HS2 and East West Rail.

It means that in total, **£105 million** is now allocated directly to maintaining and improving the county's road network. Overall, **£130 million in funding** is being dedicated to roads and other highways infrastructure in Buckinghamshire including pavements, drains, street lighting and bridges during the council term.

It's part of an overall package of investment in local services agreed by councillors last night, who went through and agreed the detail of the 2023/24 budget. The agreed budget outlines which services and projects are being prioritised, and how these are being paid for. The spending plans were shaped by residents who outlined how they wanted council tax to be spent during a consultation last year.

The agreed budget also includes the following investment:

- nearly **£143 million** for improvements to schools
- **£20 million** on housing and tackling homelessness
- **more than £14 million** to tackle Climate Change and prevent flooding
- **more than £20 million** towards our waste and recycling facilities

## **Have your say as a member of Buckinghamshire Council's Customer Partnership Panel**

Buckinghamshire Council is calling on residents to join its Customer Partnership Panel, giving them the chance to offer their views and feedback on how the council can improve its website, online forms and other communication methods.

The panel was launched late last year and is now seeking new members aged 18 and over from all walks of life. Applicants must live within the Buckinghamshire Council area.

As a panel member, residents will have the opportunity to participate in surveys several times a year to provide their views on how the council communicates with residents, as well as providing feedback on the council's digital services.

Panel members will be invited to participate in up to four surveys a year and the majority of these will be conducted online. However, some may involve a telephone call or focus groups. Panel members can choose how they wish to be contacted and whether they wish to participate. They can also leave the panel whenever they wish. Members of the panel will be reimbursed for reasonable traveling expenses and offered refreshments at any face-to-face meetings.

## **Adoption is for all - build a family through adoption with Buckinghamshire Council**

As the LGBTQ+ Adoption week begins on Monday 6 March, Buckinghamshire Council is using the opportunity to share the power of adoption through real stories, hoping to encourage people who identify as LGBTQ+ to explore whether adoption might be right for them. The council is also keen to break down perceptions about who can adopt and highlight the council-led support that is available for anyone considering adoption.

Buckinghamshire Council is hosting a special information evening on 4 April, where a guest speaker will share their experience of adopting as an LGBTQ+ person. Everyone interested in adoption is encouraged to attend, and book now to avoid disappointment, as places are limited.

## **Drainage Improvement Works Beacon Road, Ringshall (Monday 6 March to Friday 10 March)**

Installing a borehole using a 24-hour road closure in operation Monday to Friday.

## **Buckinghamshire Council announces new highways contractors**

Buckinghamshire Council has today announced the 12 approved contractors who will be working on highways, maintenance and infrastructure projects within the county from 1 April 2023.

The announcement completes all elements of the transition of the council's highways and maintenance contract work to new partners, as part of a planned move as the contract with current partner, Ringway Jacobs, comes to a close at the end of this month.

Last year Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) were awarded the council's Term Maintenance Contract and the Term Consultancy Contract was awarded to Atkins, starting from 1 April 2023. The 12 newly-appointed contractors will work alongside BBLP and Atkins to carry out the works needed, under new Framework 1 and Framework 2 contracts which will run for a period of four years.

The 12 contractors have been appointed following a procurement process and will operate as follows:

### **Buckinghamshire Highways Framework One - Minor Works**

#### **Lot 1: Conventional Surfacing Work**

- Balfour Beatty Living Places Limited
- Eurovia Infrastructure Limited
- O'Hara Bros Surfacing Limited

#### **Lot 2: Surface Treatments including Surface Dressing**

- Colas Limited

- Eurovia Infrastructure Limited
- Kier Highways Limited

### **Lot 3: Minor Works (under £500K)**

- Balfour Beatty Living Places Limited
- J McCann and Co Limited
- O'Hara Bros Surfacing Limited

### **Buckinghamshire Highways Framework Two - Major Works (over £500K)**

- Balfour Beatty Living Places Limited
- Keltbray Highways Limited
- Tilbury Douglas Construction Limited

The frameworks have been set up in this way to deliver value for money and to allow the council to align delivery of highways and regeneration infrastructure projects under a new delivery model. The new model will mean other council services such as Flooding and Development, Transport Strategy and Rights of Way teams can benefit from the wide range of expertise and experience provided by the range of contractors

## **Support available for Bucks residents struggling with Council Tax payments**

Buckinghamshire residents are reminded that annual Council Tax bills will start being posted from Monday 13 March. Residents worried about their ability to pay their Council Tax are urged to contact Buckinghamshire Council as soon as possible. The council offers several options to help ease financial pressures, including checking for discounts or exemptions, switching payment dates, and spreading payments over 12 months.

The council is encouraging residents to sign up for a [Customer Access online account](#), which provides people with 24/7 access to manage their Council Tax account – including checking balances, payments, bills, and setting up or amending their Direct Debit. To sign up for a Customer Access account, residents need their account number and online key, both of which can be found on their Council Tax bill. For information and help with any money-related issues, residents should visit [Buckinghamshire Council's website](#) or contact the Helping Hand team on 01296 531151.

[Citizen's Advice](#) also offers free, independent advice and support around Council Tax payments

## **Find out how to become one of Buckinghamshire's Ukraine Rematching Sponsors at your local library**

The generosity of Buckinghamshire residents to support the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, set up in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, has been invaluable. Locally, more than 700 sponsors have already welcomed over 1,500 Ukrainian guests providing not just accommodation, but a warm welcome, a network of support and help with settling into the UK.

While many residents are happy to extend their sponsorship agreement, for some it isn't feasible to continue beyond the first six months – which is why there is an immediate requirement to encourage and support people to register their interest in becoming Rematching Sponsors.

A Rematching Sponsor is a sponsor who agrees to host an individual guest or guest family after their original sponsorship placement has ended. As the guest or guest family has already been in Buckinghamshire, lots of the essential steps to help them settle have already been completed.

To promote the benefits of rematching, a series of information events will be taking place at Buckinghamshire Council's libraries between **Tuesday 14**

**March** and **Thursday 30 March**. The events will provide people in Buckinghamshire with a fantastic opportunity to speak face-to-face with one of the council's Ukraine Rematching experts, find out more about the process of becoming a Rematching Sponsor, and see the support available to sponsors to make a difference to Ukrainian guests in Buckinghamshire communities.

Councillor Derek Town