

Buckinghamshire Councillors Report Marsworth PC Mtg 3rd April 2023

Free, fun and flavourful – Buckinghamshire Council continues support and countywide holiday clubs for eligible families this Easter

This Easter, Buckinghamshire Council is continuing its support for eligible children and families during the Easter Holidays as part of its ongoing Helping Hand and Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes. These services provide a range of assistance, including food vouchers, holiday clubs and hot meals. There is also a range of support and advice available to help with the cost of living for families in Buckinghamshire. Details of all the HAF holiday activities are available on [Buckinghamshire Council's website](#).

Council joins forces with Forestry England to create new woodland in Wing

Plans to plant a brand-new woodland in Wing have been given the green light in a joint project between Forestry England and Buckinghamshire Council. The new Wing Wood will see 132,000 trees planted on land owned by Buckinghamshire Council, creating an inspiring green space for local people, a valuable habitat for wildlife and a sustainable source of timber.

The decision to create the new woodland on the 51-hectare site follows a public consultation last year and local and national organisations were also involved in discussions over the woodland plan. Wing Wood will include a mix of tree species suited to the locality, five new wildlife ponds and a community orchard as well as accessible paths for walking and cycling. As part of the woodland design, Forestry England hope to link the new Wing Wood with Long Spinney Wood, creating clear paths and an easy connection between the two areas.

Forestry England will begin planting this year and aim to get most of the trees in the ground before the end of April with the rest planted in the autumn and winter. The 132,000 trees will form part of the council's pledge to plant 543,000 trees, one for every resident in Buckinghamshire by 2031, as part of its Climate Change Strategy.

Vision for future of Buckinghamshire libraries is agreed

Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet has today reviewed and agreed a vision and strategy for Buckinghamshire's library service.

As well as traditional reading and book-borrowing, Buckinghamshire's library service has transformed to offer many more services including free computer classes, health

checks, loanable tablets and a broad range of educational, social and cultural activities for all ages.

Over this winter our libraries have also become important welcoming spaces for anyone who needs a warm, free and safe space to visit during the colder months.

The strategy for Buckinghamshire's libraries adopted today has been developed after extensive consultation with users, staff, volunteers and stakeholders. It outlines the priorities for the service and agrees a clear vision for the future – which is that Buckinghamshire libraries “*provide welcoming and safe spaces for everyone to access reading, culture and the information and services they need to learn, discover, imagine and thrive.*”

With reading and book-borrowing still at the heart of our libraries, the new strategy reflects the growing use of libraries as community hubs accommodating other services too, for example, registrars and the Junction Youth Club in partnership with Action4Youth at High Wycombe library. Many libraries also now operate as Council Access Points, helping residents with information on wider council services.

New parking charges to come in across Buckinghamshire

New charges for on and off-street parking across Buckinghamshire will come into force from Monday 3 April. The changes are being introduced following a review by the council's budget scrutiny committee.

The changes will see an increase of 20p per tariff for on street parking and 10p per tariff for off street parking. Where applicable, free parking periods are expected to remain unchanged.

Buckinghamshire Council awarded £576k to provide energy efficiency and clean heating upgrades to low-income households in the county

Buckinghamshire Council has been awarded £576,000 from the government's Home Upgrade Grant to provide energy efficiency and clean heating upgrades to owner occupied and private rented properties in the county. The upgrades are aimed at tackling fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions.

The scheme enables eligible households to benefit from a range of energy and cost saving upgrades, depending on the specific circumstances such as the fuel source, energy efficiency and EPC rating of the home. The majority of the funding will be made available for the least efficient homes heated by the most polluting fuel sources.

Chilterns Beachwood Special Area of Conservation (CBSAC)

When will the Council be able to issue a decision on the White Lion application?

The council is developing measures to achieve mitigation:

- *a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy which is a financial contribution from each net new home to pay for projects that directly address the improvements required to restore the damage from recreational disturbance within the Ashridge Commons and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest;*
- *Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace; and*
- *Gateway Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace in partnership with the National Trust.*

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS)

The council agreed the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy with its partner authorities, Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and the government's conservation body Natural England in November 2022.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

The council is in discussion with a number of developers, trusts, other local authorities and conservation bodies to secure the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. For developments of 10 or more homes, specific Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces within the proximity of the site will need to be identified and agreed. For developments of 9 or less homes (or equivalent) the council is seeking financial contributions for offsite Strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space within the Zone of Influence. Large sites are expected to make provision on site for their own bespoke Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace solution and early discussion with the council and Natural England is encouraged through the relevant pre-application processes. An illustrative table is appended as an example of potential SANG criteria for providing a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space.

*The council is confident that it will have certainty over the delivery of its first Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace by late summer/ early autumn 2023. Work will also be undertaken on Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace capacity, qualifying criteria and allocations process, as well as the financial contribution. **The council acknowledges that it is further behind Dacorum Borough Council as it does not own any existing open space within the Zone of Influence capable of being upgraded to provide Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. It is currently exploring Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace options with various partners and has appointed The Landscape Partnerships to assist the identification of potential sites** Further updates will be provided at the appropriate time.*

BC are hoping to publish the latest FAQ's next week and once it is available to posted on the BC website. Until BC have both a SAMM and a SANG strategy BC as the LPA are still legally unable to proceed positively with the determination of these applications.

Councillor Derek Town