

Buckinghamshire Councillors Report Marsworth PC meeting 12th June 2023

Buckinghamshire Council outlines further cost-of-living support for residents

Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet has today agreed a comprehensive package of continuing support for residents struggling with cost-of-living pressures.

The council has been allocated a further £4.8 million of Household Support Fund money from the Department for Work and Pensions to provide support until March 2024. It's now set out how the funding will be used to provide the best help possible to residents who need it most.

The council recognises the cost-of-living pressures have not gone away and high inflation and recent annual bill rises are continuing to impact households across the county. The council is pleased the funding is for a full twelve months of support and today the Cabinet has agreed to continue with a range of initiatives to help local households, including its flagship Helping Hand service.

The Council will spend the new tranche of money in the same way it has done previously, by providing food vouchers to eligible residents, direct support through the Helping Hand service and using the funds to support local organisations like foodbanks, which are providing vital community-based support.

Creating a safer Buckinghamshire for all

The Safer Bucks Strategy 2023-26 is the product of many months of work to identify the community safety issues that matter most to Buckinghamshire residents, working with partner agencies and analysing available data.

The five identified priorities are:

- Neighbourhood crime - raising awareness of fraud, scams and cybercrime; and undertaking multiagency problem solving to tackle crime hotspots
- Anti-social behaviour - Tackling repeat victimisation and encouraging reporting and working with partners to address concerns
- Serious Violence - Raising awareness of serious violence and supporting early intervention and prevention for young people at risk
- Violence Against Women and Girls - Raising awareness through education and training of professionals and increasing confidence in reporting
- Exploitation of Vulnerable People - Identifying vulnerable locations where exploitation is at risk of occurring and ensuring communities can recognise the signs and how to report exploitation

To help set the priorities, in September last year a public consultation was run to gain an understanding of how safe residents feel in Buckinghamshire. Some of the key findings included:

- Fraud and scams continue to be of most concern to respondents, followed by theft from a vehicle
- Anti-social behaviour continues to be a significant concern for residents
- There has been an increase in criminal damage and vandalism

The Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership Board is the multi-agency partnership responsible for tackling crime and disorder within Buckinghamshire. The central vision of the Safer Buckinghamshire Partnership is for Buckinghamshire to continue to be one of the safest places to grow up, raise a family, live, work and do business.

Pothole Pro gets to work fixing problem potholes

Buckinghamshire Council's latest tool in the fight against potholes has been hard at work tackling some of the most troublesome road defects around the county.

The Pothole Pro is a specialist three-in-one vehicle that speeds up the process of repairing potholes and large sections of the road surface.

The machine starts by cutting into the road surface where a pothole has appeared. It planes out the defective area then crops the perimeter of the hole neatly, minimising the amount of material that needs to be removed and allowing a watertight seal. It then brushes away and collects the debris afterwards. All that is then needed following this is for highways teams to seal, lay and compact the asphalt into the prepared area to complete the repair.

The harsh winter weather caused significant damage to many roads across the county, compounded by the extra HGVs working on projects including HS2 and East West Rail. The council's road crews were trained and ready to spring into action with the new machine once suitable dry weather conditions allowed them to get out and start making permanent repairs to the roads. During the previous wet and cold weather the crews could only make temporary emergency repairs.

Condition surveys of the county's road are carried out by the Highway Inspectors who, along with the Local Area Technicians, identify areas that require repairs. The number and size of the defects are recorded, measured and assessed to determine the best way of making the repairs. The Pothole Pro is being used to repair defects measuring 21.5sqf (2sqm) and above. For larger areas with multiple defects, use of the Pothole Pro for planing and sweeping is combined with the more practical methods of Plane and Patch or resurfacing is used, where the old road surface is removed in its entirety and a new surface laid. To date the largest patch of road repaired by the Pothole Pro has measured 2,637 sq ft (245sqm).

You can't evade the law when it comes to fly-tipping in Bucks

A man from London has discovered that trying to evade the law doesn't pay when it comes to fly-tipping in Buckinghamshire.

Abdul Azim, 43, from London, was arrested by police after failing to attend a court summons in April regarding a fly-tipping offence in Gerrards Cross in December 2022. Appearing before magistrates at High Wycombe Magistrates Court on 10 May, Azim finally pleaded guilty to the charge.

Azim was traced when a Buckinghamshire Council enforcement officer attended Lower Road in Gerrards Cross to investigate a report of fly-tipping. The source of the waste was discovered to be a householder in West London. Statistics show that around 70% of waste fly-tipped in Buckinghamshire comes from London and areas outside the county. The householder was interviewed and told council officers that she had hired Azim as a contractor to carry out some minor DIY works and to dispose of some waste for her.

In court Azim admitted dumping some of the waste found and revealed he had lost his job because of the incident and subsequently his home because he could no longer afford the rent. He admitted that the whole incident was, "a harsh lesson learnt".

Azim was fined £200 and ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £80 and £1,140 towards the council's costs, making a total to pay of £1,360.

If you spot fly-tipping anywhere in Buckinghamshire report it online – www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/fix-my-street

Celebrating Bucks communities

June is the 'Month of Community' and in Buckinghamshire we are taking the opportunity to celebrate all the great work our communities do.

From fundraisers to [food champions](#) and support networks to [street associations](#), our local communities are made up of people committed to helping others and improving life in their local area.

For the month of June, the focus is on celebrating everything that makes our communities great, including:

- Saying a big thank you to all those who volunteer, in whatever capacity, including those who have offered assistance as part of our Helping Hand for Afghanistan and Ukraine schemes, as well as our unpaid carers.
- Shining a spotlight on the work the council does with local communities to make them even stronger, including the work of our Community Boards and our work with partner organisations.
- Sharing information on how people can get more involved in their local community, including volunteering opportunities and other community initiatives.

- Raising awareness of the [Bucks Online Directory](#) which gives details of ongoing activities, schemes and community groups that people can get involved with.

Throughout June, the focus will be on different elements of community, tying into national campaigns and promoting local schemes and initiatives, including:

- Volunteering and [Refugee Week](#) (19 to 25 June) – a festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.
- Spotlight on the Armed Forces – coinciding with [Armed Forces Day](#) (24 June) and including our [Armed Forces Conference](#) in Aylesbury (12 June).
- Combatting loneliness and isolation, with [Loneliness Awareness Week](#) (13 to 17 June).
- Getting involved in your community and increasing health and wellbeing.

Vehicle Crime

In recent months we have seen a spike in catalytic converter thefts, theft from vehicles and tools being taken from vans. To protect Buckinghamshire residents and their property we have put together some useful information and crime prevention tips.

Catalytic Converter Theft

A catalytic converter helps to reduce vehicle pollution by controlling and converting exhaust emissions from your vehicle into less toxic substances. Unfortunately, such thefts have increased due to the value of precious metals within the converter itself.

To keep your vehicle safe:

- Park your vehicle in a locked garage where possible. If this isn't an option, park in a well-lit and well-populated area.
 - Park close to fences, walls or curbs with the exhaust being closest to them to make the theft more difficult.
 - Avoid parking your vehicle half on the pavement as this will make it easier for thieves.
 - If parking in a public car park, consider parking alongside other cars and facing your bonnet towards the wall – with the catalytic converter positioned at the front of your vehicle, this will make it harder to access.
 - If your catalytic converter is bolted on, you can ask your local garage to weld the bolts to make it more difficult to remove.
 - Purchase a cage clamp; a device that locks in around the catalytic converter.
 -
-

Tool Theft

Tool crime can have a devastating effect on businesses not only in lost time and revenue, but also in the outlay for new tools. Often criminals are opportunists and will take advantage if they see an easy steal.

To keep your property safe and secure:

- Take your tools in from your van overnight; it may be the last thing you want to do after a day's work but losing your tools would be worse.
- If you can't bring your tools in overnight or will be leaving your van unattended for a long time during the day, it's a good idea to park in a way that will prevent or deter thieves from getting easy access to the doors. Try to park in a busy, well-lit area.
- Check you have tools insurance. This can help pay for the cost of replacing your tools should they be stolen.
- Ensure you mark your property. There are several options to permanently mark your kit; ultraviolet pens, permanent marker, CREMARK, selecta DNA to name a few. Just put down your house number or the first two letters of the house name and the postcode in a visible place. Record the make, model and serial number on a register such as [Immobilise](#).

If you are a Buckinghamshire resident and would like a free 'No tools left in this van' sticker* contact us via email - communitysafety@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Councillor Derek Town