

## **Buckinghamshire Councillors Report for Marsworth PC mtg and Newsletter Dec 11th 2023**

### **Food waste - Don't bin it – Recycle it!**

Buckinghamshire Council is asking residents to think twice before throwing food waste in the bin and to recycle it instead.

Currently around a third of the waste thrown in the regular rubbish bin in Buckinghamshire is food waste. This equates to around 28,000 tonnes of food every year, an average of 2kg per household per week. It is enough to fill Big Ben more than one and a half times each year. Not only does this cost local taxpayers more than £600,000 a year in disposal costs, disposing of food waste in this way also damages the environment as it produces double the amount of carbon emissions compared to recycling food waste.

As part of a renewed drive to encourage more people to recycle their food waste, over the next few weeks the council will be delivering leaflets, putting stickers on rubbish bins, and letting people know about the many benefits of food recycling. Attention is particularly being focused on areas where there is more scope to increase food recycling rates.

### **Buckinghamshire Council cracks down on fraudsters**

Buckinghamshire Council is encouraging residents to help them fight fraud as part of International Fraud Awareness Week (12-18 November).

The council's Fraud Team tackles housing benefit cheating, council tax scams, cybercrime and more. Losses from fraud cost taxpayers thousands of pounds yearly.

Recent action by the Fraud Team includes a joint operation with Parking Services aimed at targeting Blue Badge misuse. Investigators caught several people using expired badges or overstaying time limits in disabled parking bays. Offenders were issued a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) for their parking contravention and sent warning letters.

### **Get better health and wellbeing with BetterPoints**

Buckinghamshire Council is reminding residents that there is no better time to get active with BetterPoints. The free health and wellbeing app has been helping thousands of people in the county to move more and make simple but effective lifestyle changes to improve their health and wellbeing. Now could be the perfect time for new users to start as a range of extra incentives have recently been added.

BetterPoints is an easy-to-use mobile app that motivates users to be more active and offers incentives in the form of points which can then be converted into vouchers to spend in local shops or given to local charities as a monetary donation.

Since the initiative launched earlier this year, more than 2000 residents in Bucks have downloaded the app and been using it, earning points when they walk, cycle, run or visit a leisure centre. The simple tool encourages people to make healthier lifestyle choices to boost their health and wellbeing.

Extra points are on offer for residents who would like to lose weight or give up smoking when they access support via [Be Healthy Bucks](#). Be Healthy Bucks is Buckinghamshire's free health and wellbeing service to help residents make small changes to lead a healthy life. They offer stop smoking support, healthy weight programmes, NHS health checks and support to cut down on alcohol.

You can go one better with Better Points during November and December. A range of incentives have been added where users can redeem their Better Points for shopping vouchers to help towards the cost of Christmas.

There are also weekly 'Gift of Giving' prize draws where Better Points users will be entered to win 10,000 points – worth £10 – and a £20 donation to a local charity of their choice.

## **Tree-mendous programme of tree-planting continues in Bucks**

Buckinghamshire Council is making great progress in its 'Bucks Tree Mission' to plant half a million new trees (one for every resident), as part of its efforts to address climate change and boost the natural landscape of the county.

National Tree Week runs from 25 November to 3 December. It marks the start of the next tree planting season which finishes at the end of March. It's a great time to take stock of what we've achieved so far and to let people know about some of the new tree planting projects coming up.

In the last twelve months, we've created new woodlands at Wing Woods near Leighton Buzzard and at Grange Farm and Bury Farm in the south of the county.

The site at Wing Woods, which is managed by Forestry England, includes 109,000 new trees with a further 23,000 trees being added in the coming months. Species planted include native trees such as common beech, common oak, silver birch and black poplar.

We have also secured over £264k from the Forestry Commission's Local Authorities TreescapE Fund. The fund aims to restore tree cover in non-woodland areas affected by disease, habitat loss or ageing tree stock. We will be working with partners including Earthwatch and ReLeaf Marlow on these exciting planting projects.

There will also be another 5,000 new trees planted across Buckinghamshire this season through various community projects, including some new, so-called, 'Tiny Forests'. This involves planting up to 600 specially selected young native trees in a small, prepared area to encourage faster growth. Tiny Forests have already been planted at Princes Risborough and at Bourton Park in Buckingham and the new ones are being planted in 'Opportunity Bucks' areas in the county.

Opportunity Bucks is a flagship programme for the council, focussing on ten wards in Buckinghamshire to improve outcomes for the people who live there. Much work is being done to allow better access to all kinds of opportunities in these areas, from supporting residents into work and training, to improving the local environment, hence focussing these projects in these places. New Tiny Forests will be planted at Hamilton Academy, Brooker Recreation Ground, Totteridge Recreation Ground and Desborough Park in High Wycombe and at Walton Court in Aylesbury.

## Can you give something back to your community this Christmas?

As the festive season comes into full swing and people plan activities and shopping, Buckinghamshire Council is asking residents to get into the true spirit of Christmas and think about what they can give back to their local community to ensure everyone has an enjoyable festive season.

From donations to your local food bank or community fridge to volunteering time to support a local community initiative, there are lots of easy ways people can do something small that can make a real difference to those less fortunate.

There are many ways you can help:

- Donate gifts or money to collections such as the [Inspire Bucks Christmas Gift Appeal](#) which distributes new toys and gifts to local children and young people in need
- Donate items to your [local food bank or community fridge](#)
- Donate to the [Heart of Bucks together against poverty](#) appeal
- Volunteer your time to a local initiative. Community Impact Bucks runs a [volunteering matching service](#) that allows you to match your skills and time commitment to the volunteering opportunities available, including those within Opportunity Bucks areas.
- Become a Buckinghamshire Food Champion and collect Christmas donations for your street or local area - [Set up a food collection point on your street \(Food Champions\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

There are lots of other ways you can help others. Take a look at the council website for more information: [How you can help others | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

## Businesses in Bucks boosted by investment

Buckinghamshire Council has awarded £1.6m to help boost support for businesses and entrepreneurs in Buckinghamshire. The funding is from central government and

will help support a range of local businesses and entrepreneurs as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The UKSPF forms part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda. Its aim is to make funding available to help build pride in local areas, support high quality skills training, support pay, employment and productivity growth and increase life chances. The funding will be used to strengthen the local economy by providing tailored support to help businesses to start, grow, increase productivity, and drive innovation, and employment.

Business support organisations were invited to bid for a share of the Buckinghamshire funding earlier this year. Applications needed to focus on four key priorities – rural business support; business growth and productivity; business start-ups and entrepreneurship; and sustainability and the journey to net zero.

Through the competitive process, 4 organisations were granted funding for a range of initiatives:

- Enterprise Nation - £207k for its Next Generation Bucks programme to boost the number of start-ups in the county.
- Buckinghamshire Business First - £509k for its Growth Programme, offering tailored growth advice and support to local businesses.
- Maybe Solutions - £136k for a programme of social media support focusing on high street business growth.
- Retail Revival - £167k for providing tailored support to retail businesses to help increase productivity and growth.
- Buckinghamshire Business First - £506k to work with local businesses to calculate carbon emissions and support with ways to reduce them.
- Buckinghamshire Business First - £69k to provide support to rural businesses in the county.

## **Shining a light on streetlight repairs**

Buckinghamshire Council is making steady progress with its plan to upgrade and fix broken streetlights around the county.

Since April this year, crews have fixed more than 1,150 broken or damaged streetlights, alongside the ongoing programme to upgrade all lanterns to use more energy efficient LED bulbs

Councillor Derek Town