

Buckinghamshire Council January Report

Provided by Cllr Anne Wight – 21st January 2021

New Covid Business Grants

Local businesses severely impacted by coronavirus restrictions can apply now for part of a £12 million pot to help them over the festive season and into the new year.

Buckinghamshire Council is launching a package of support measures to help bring relief to the local economy and support hard-hit businesses at what would have been their busiest time of year.

The council is distributing up to £12 million of government funding in three ways:

- Approximately £4m will be distributed as part of the recurring support for businesses closed or severely impacted by the lockdown restrictions through the Bucks Local Restrictions Support Grant (Bucks LRSB).
- For those businesses in receipt of the Bucks LRSB the council will provide an additional Bucks December Top-Up grant up to a 100% match of the Bucks LRSB amount.
- For those businesses which are not eligible for the Bucks LRSB, but nonetheless are severely impacted, the council will offer support for December through the Bucks Additional Restrictions Grant.

In addition there is a one-off £1,000 Bucks Business Grant for wet-led pubs (pubs where more than 50% of sales come from alcohol rather than food).

Businesses are encouraged to apply as soon as possible and processing of the applications will start on Monday 4 January.

We have received funding from government to use at our discretion and we have allocated this money to support our local businesses and economy through our Bucks Business Grants. While we cannot fully compensate all businesses for the trade they have lost, we understand that this may be one of the most generous allocations for business in the country.

Please do take a look at our website to see if you are eligible and to apply.

To check eligibility and to apply go to <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/coronavirus-business-support-hub/coronavirus-business-grants/>

You may be eligible for the [Bucks Additional Restrictions Grant](#) if you have been heavily impacted as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions during December 2020, and have not been able to get support through the Local Restrictions Support Grant scheme or the Self employed income support scheme. This is a separate ARG grant to the one that was available for Nov so you will need to apply afresh to this one if you think you are eligible.

The grant is open to applicants [until 31 January 2021 at midnight](#).

You may be a business rates payer but it's not essential to be eligible for this fund, but:

- your business income in December 2020 must be at least 30% less than your business income in December 2019.

You will not be eligible if:

- you are already eligible for the LRS (closed, open or sector) from 2 December 2020.
- you are a self-employed individual already receiving support through the government's Self Employment Income Support Scheme.

In addition, your business must:

- be based in Buckinghamshire - Milton Keynes based businesses should apply to the Milton Keynes Council for their version of this fund

The amount awarded will be determined by the number of employees in the business:–

Self employed (Not claiming SEISS)	£1,500
4 or less employees	£2,250
5 or more employees	£4,500

More Covid Vaccination Centres

More COVID-19 vaccination centres are coming to Buckinghamshire this week, with GP-led sites opening in High Wycombe Town Centre and Aylesbury this week, in addition to the 5 sites which are already up and running to deliver vaccines to patients aged 80 and over.

Another GP-led site will follow soon in Buckingham, and a further site is being planned for the south of the county, as the vaccination programme continues to gather pace across Buckinghamshire.

We expect that by the end of this month all patients over the age of 80 should receive an invitation for a vaccination appointment.

A number of pharmacy vaccination sites will also be launched in Buckinghamshire; sites in Marlow and Wycombe are due to open and start vaccinating people during next week. Additional sites in other areas of the county are due to open very soon too.

And two more mass vaccination centres are also in the process of being set up – more details will follow on these in due course.

So far more than 12,000 vaccinations have been given to patients across Buckinghamshire, including nearly 2,000 delivered to health and social care staff at a 'Hospital Hub' managed by Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust.

GP-led vaccination sites for patients are already up and running in:

- Chalfont St Peter
- Winslow
- Princes Risborough
- Chesham
- High Wycombe

Several national mass vaccination sites are also being set up by the NHS which are outside of the county. Some Buckinghamshire residents aged 80 and over, who live 30-45 minutes from the nearest of these sites, may have received a letter on these from the NHS in recent days. This letter explains how they can book a slot through the national system if they do not wish to use the local system (the GP-led sites described above).

Currently, the mass vaccination sites closest to Buckinghamshire are:

- Epsom racecourse in Surrey (South East)
- Excel Centre in London (London)
- Robertson House in Stevenage (East of England)

If residents have received a letter but do not want to attend one of these Mass Vaccination sites, it will not affect their ability to get an appointment at a local site through your GP.

As well as people aged 80 and over, care home residents and staff, along with health and social care workers are being prioritised in this first phase of the national vaccination rollout. This is in line with the national Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) prioritisation programme.

The Government has announced that the top four priority groups in the JCVI list will be completed by mid-February.

Residents are being asked to please not contact their GP surgery to arrange an appointment. The NHS will contact patients when the time is right for their vaccination appointment to be arranged.

Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, said: "These are extremely difficult times for all of us, but it is important to remember that the pace of the vaccination programme is increasing in Buckinghamshire and we are pushing hard to make sure things move faster going forward. We hope that residents can be reassured that there is a way out of this pandemic, and that their area will soon be covered by a vaccination centre if it is not already. More age groups and vulnerable patients will be offered the vaccination over the coming weeks and months, in line with the national priorities of the phased rollout.

"We would ask that residents please be patient and not call their GP practice to arrange a vaccination appointment. The NHS will instead contact you when the time is right. I appreciate this has been a frustrating time and we are all eager to see those most in need get their vaccinations as soon as possible, but your patience and support is greatly appreciated.

“In the meantime, I would ask everyone to please continue to follow the ‘Stay at Home’ rules to the letter to help keep yourself and your loved ones safe, and to protect the NHS.”

Details of the vaccination programme in Buckinghamshire can be found on the Council's website <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/community-hub/covid-19-vaccination-programme/>

An open letter from Neil Macdonald, CEO, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust to our communities, patients and colleagues

With the New Year upon us I wanted to reflect on what a challenging year it has been. We've been through lockdowns and restrictions that have kept us apart from family and friends and changed the way we work. But we've also seen some of the best of humanity. Our colleagues in intensive care and across the Trust have gone the extra mile to care for patients who could not see their loved ones. They delivered letters for patients and organised tablets to enable them to video call their families. Our adult and children's community services donned their PPE and went to see the most vulnerable in our community.

Our colleagues offered more than clinical care, they offered kindness and compassion. And in return we were overwhelmed with acts of kindness from our local community.

We've navigated our way through one of the worst pandemics any of us will have ever experienced and we could not have done it without our amazing colleagues, our partners across the health and care sector, our volunteers, local businesses and the community. Let's also not forget that while some of our colleagues will be taking a well-deserved break this festive season, many will be working throughout, so a huge thank you to them as well.

You will have seen the fantastic news about the COVID-19 vaccine breakthrough by Pfizer and the rollout of the biggest vaccination programme in NHS history has begun. Nurses, paramedics, pharmacists and other NHS staff will work alongside GPs to vaccinate those aged 80 and over, as well as care home workers and residents, identified as priority groups for the life-saving vaccine. The NHS will contact people in the priority groups when it is their turn to receive the vaccine.

Since the first wave of COVID-19, we have learnt so much more about the virus, how it affects us, how it is transmitted and what treatments can help. Outcomes are better, and vaccination will help reduce case numbers and protect us all in the long run.

However, in the meantime, cases are still rising steeply across Buckinghamshire and we are treating an increasing number of COVID and non-COVID patients. While we have plans in place to care for more patients affected by the virus, we are under increasing pressure. Our hospitals are even busier than at this time in a normal winter and, as well as COVID, we are also looking after patients who are suffering from normal winter viruses like flu and norovirus.

I want to reassure you that we are still here for you whenever you need us – and if you are offered an appointment would urge you to keep it - but we need your help at this really busy time to keep our hospitals for those that need them most and are seriously ill.

If you are feeling unwell and are not sure which service you need, contact NHS111 for advice. They will make sure that you are seen by the right people, in the right place as quickly as possible whether that is your GP, the Urgent Treatment Centre or the Emergency Department (A&E). They can book you an appointment so that you won't have to wait about unnecessarily.

Everyone, including businesses, voluntary groups, and charities has a role to play in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and since the recent rise to tier 4 in Buckinghamshire, following the guidance the government has issued is the best place for us to start. Please ask your friends and family to continue to follow the rules which are there to protect us all and to get this virus back under control. Wash your hands regularly and when you are in a public place, please wear a mask or face covering if you can and make sure you keep your distance from people not from your household.

We know this is tough and we know it is asking a lot but there is a very clear link that more contacts lead to more cases of COVID, which will result in more hospital admissions and, unfortunately, more people becoming extremely sick and requiring intensive support. The truth is the less contact we have with others, the less this virus will spread and affect those we love. By working together earlier in the year, we have shown that we can bring down the rate of transmission and help keep each other safe and take pressure off your hospitals and health services. We now need to do that again.

Thank you once again for your support and I would like to thank all of my health and social care colleagues who will be working tirelessly over the festive break to make sure that they continue to provide safe and compassionate care to the residents of Buckinghamshire.

Neil Macdonald
Chief Executive Officer Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Further Support Information links and contact numbers:

- [Helping Hands](#) – Call [01296 531 151](tel:01296531151) to get support with food and energy bills over winter. The phone line is open [Monday to Thursday, 9am](#) to 5:30pm, [Friday, 9am to 5pm](#). In an emergency, please call our out of hours team on [0800 999 7677](tel:08009997677).
- [Test and Trace Support Payments](#) – If you are asked to self-isolate, you may be entitled to a Test and Trace Support Payment of £500, depending on your personal circumstances. (See the link for full details.)
- [Local Emergency Support](#) – If you live in Buckinghamshire, you may be able to apply for Local Emergency Support. This is intended to cover urgent short-term emergencies (i.e. no immediate food, no heating or lighting) through the use of food banks, food vouchers, and utility meter top-ups. Apply online or call us on [01296 382 414](tel:01296382414) during office hours. An out of hours service is also available by calling [0800 999 7677](tel:08009997677).

If you or anyone from your household develops COVID-19 symptoms, it is important to be tested as soon as possible. Call [119](tel:119) or [book a test online](#). If you or someone in your household is feeling unwell (about anything), call [111](tel:111) for information and advice or call [999](tel:999) if it's an emergency.

If you have a less urgent concern or a minor illness, I'd like to remind you that excellent sources of health advice are also available via the [Ask NHS app](#), [NHS 111 online](#) and at your local pharmacy. By using these options for minor health concerns, you can help GP practices ensure that we support patients with the most urgent needs more quickly.

Lots of other health and wellbeing information, including advice on self-care and looking after your mental health, is available via the [Buckinghamshire Ready for Winter page](#).

Vaccinations

Our NHS partners are working hard to get the vaccines rolled out as quickly as possible and we are expecting more local sites to come on stream in the next few weeks. The NHS will be announcing these as soon as possible. You will also be advised when it is your turn to be vaccinated.

We are so close to turning the corner on the control of this horrible pandemic. I am confident that by late spring things should have improved significantly and we can begin to look forward to a return to something nearer normality. However, please don't let us fall at this final hurdle. There is still time for many vulnerable people to contract COVID-19, with possibly fatal consequences, in this winter period. An overloaded local health system can also endanger the lives of those with other serious health conditions. So, for the coming weeks please, if you can, stay at home, stay safe, and protect Bucks and each other.

Information for those who are Extremely Clinically Vulnerable

During the Prime Minister's address to the nation on 4 January, he announced that people who are clinically extremely vulnerable will be asked to shield again.

What does this mean?

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable you will receive a letter from the government in the coming days outlining what precautions you should take. You should not leave the house to go to work, to the shops or the pharmacy. When you receive your letter you will need to register on - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-shielding-support> - if you require support or wish to access a priority supermarket delivery slot.

If you would like to look at what local support is available to help you shield effectively, visit the Bucks Online Directory - <https://directory.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>

If you need urgent help, fill in the contact us form on our website –

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/contact-us/>

or call the council on [01296 395000](tel:01296395000).

For the latest shielding advice please visit –

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

I am not clinically extremely vulnerable but need support during the lockdown

Residents of Buckinghamshire who are struggling during lockdown can get support from the Council and the local community in a number of ways:

- To see a list of local support groups and services near you, visit - <https://directory.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/>
- Log onto our website and let us know what support you need – fill in the 'contact us' form – <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/contact-us/>
- If you need to speak to someone about the impact of COVID on a vulnerable person or family, please call the Council on [01296 395000](tel:01296395000).

Following the announcement of a new national lockdown in England, Buckinghamshire Council has made some urgent changes to several of its key services.

Libraries

Library staff will be deployed to assist with the vulnerable and shielding programme, so [from Wednesday 6 January](#) all Buckinghamshire libraries will be closed until further notice.

Loans have been extended and no fines will be charged during the lockdown, so customers are advised to keep their books at home and to not worry about returning them at the moment.

On site access to Buckinghamshire Archives will also remain closed – see this page for more information: <http://bit.ly/BucksArchives>

The online library is still available for eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines, eNewspapers and online reference services such as Ancestry, and new members can join online at : www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/libraries

Internet access as well as ‘emergency assistance’ will be available for residents through the Council Access Points located at:

- Walton Street, Aylesbury
- The Gateway, Aylesbury
- King George V House, Amersham
- Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe

Schools and colleges

All have now switched to remote learning. However, children of key workers and vulnerable children can still go to school.

Funerals and weddings

Funerals can still take place with up to 30 guests. Weddings and equivalent ceremonies will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and with up to six people.

Household bin collections

These will continue as normal, and residents can check their bin collection dates by going to: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/bin-collection-recycling-and-waste

Household Recycling Centres

All sites will remain open during the lockdown.

Road repairs and street cleaning

These services will carry on as normal.

Parks and green spaces

Buckinghamshire’s three country parks will remain open.

Leisure centres and sports facilities

In line with current restrictions, all Buckinghamshire Council leisure and sports centres – with the exception of playgrounds – will remain closed during the lockdown. This includes The South Buckinghamshire Golf Course and outdoor sports courts and multi-use games areas.

Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member for Communities & Public Health, said:

"I know that many people will find the new national lockdown difficult to deal with, but in order to stem the rise in coronavirus cases in Buckinghamshire, it's vital that we all continue to play our part by only going out when necessary, and sticking to the government's 'Hands, Face, Space' guidance.

"Hopefully, with the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccines across the county, we will soon start to see the tide turning on coronavirus cases. Once this happens, we can then look forward to beginning a return to normality.

"If you need to contact the council during the lockdown, please do so via our Contact Centre either by calling [0300 131 6000](tel:03001316000) or going online to www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/contact-us."

For the latest information on Buckinghamshire Council services, please visit: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Buckinghamshire Council Budget Proposals

Cabinet today has announced its budget proposals for the next financial year starting in April, which includes plans for a 1.99% increase in basic council tax, together with a 2% rise in the Government proposed Adult Social Care Precept to help fund care for the elderly and vulnerable.

Described as 'incredibly difficult', the billion pound plans focus primarily on next year. This is due to the uncertainties over future funding levels given the on-going effects of the coronavirus pandemic and comes the day after a third lockdown was announced by the Government.

Cabinet's proposals, which factor in the increasing demand for services and loss of income to the council as a result of the pandemic, are being seen as a 'Covid-19 response and recovery' budget. However, the proposals also include investment in key service areas such as schools and school improvement, road maintenance, strategic transport and infrastructure projects, waste, housing and homelessness and leisure centres. A small amount of the council's reserves (£115k) is also planned to be used to help balance the books and reduce future identified risks.

Speaking after the Cabinet meeting, Leader of the Council, Martin Tett said the pandemic was having a momentous effect on budget planning. "While we are grateful for the significant Government grants we are getting to cope with the effects of the virus, it remains incredibly difficult to deliver a legally balanced budget. Yesterday's lockdown announcement just highlights the uncertainty and the difficulty of knowing what's round the next corner.

"That said, we believe these proposals are realistic, flexible, and most importantly, affordable to local taxpayers given the circumstances. Indeed, the Government proposes councils increase the amount they raise specifically for Adult Social Care by 3%, however, while there remains acute pressures in adult social care, we believe that this would not be reasonable given the pressure on residents' finances as a result of Covid. We are therefore proposing only to increase this by 2%, rather than the 3% allowed by Government.

"While I see this as a budget that manages current pressures, it's also a budget that paves the way for longer term economic recovery post-Covid, which invests in infrastructure and also puts us firmly in the starting blocks to help rebuild Buckinghamshire and importantly jobs, after the pandemic ends."

The proposals will now go on to be fully scrutinised next week by a special cross-party Budget Select Committee. Their findings will be presented to Cabinet [on 16 February](#) so Cabinet members can agree the final budget proposals to be presented to the full Council at its meeting [on 24 February](#).

Night Flight Restriction Consultation

There is a current consultation on Night Flight Restrictions for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports which will end on 3rd March, 2021. It has two main purposes. Firstly, to consult on the proposal to maintain existing night flight restrictions at the designated airports from 2022 to 2024 and the proposal to ban QC4 rated aircraft movements between 11:30pm and 6am. The second purpose is to acquire early views and evidence about future night flight policy both at the designated airports and nationally beyond 2024.

More information on this can be found at the link below, as well as links to participate and respond to the consultation survey.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/night-flight-restrictions-at-heathrow-gatwick-and-stansted-airports-between-2022-and-2024-plus-future-night-flight-policy/night-flight-restrictions>