

Bucks Councillors Report for December 2021

Two successful business bids for Bucks

Two projects within Buckinghamshire have been successful in achieving funding through the Government's Community Renewal Fund, part of a £200 million boost to help level up communities across the UK. The fund aims to support people and communities to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people into employment.

The two successful Buckinghamshire-based projects are:

Buckinghamshire Business First - £728,250 for the Build Back Better Tourism and Hospitality sector in Buckinghamshire (3BTHB). This is for a range of support work-packages to the Visitor Economy businesses. These work packages aim to support organisational resilience and decarbonisation in the Tourism and Hospitality sector.

Philippa Batting, Managing Director, Buckinghamshire Business First said: "Our Visitor Economy was hit hard during the pandemic and this funding is a fantastic opportunity to help Buckinghamshire's Tourism and Hospitality sector recover and build resilience for the long term. The project will support businesses and their employees to lower their carbon footprint, encourage green and accessible tourism and invest in the range of digital skills needed to improve their short, medium and longer-term productivity and sustainability."

£39, 994 for the Neurodiverse Self Advocacy Partnership – to tool up a mentoring into employment programme - this offers a highly specialised tailored programme designed and led by autistic people for autistic people to enhance and develop their employability. The programme proposes to satisfy autistic needs for growth and recognition, reduce social exclusion and remove the disadvantage of disability through a modern digital experience.

Marie Van Herterycyk from NSAP said: "We are proud to bring the Tool Up mentoring into employment programme to Buckinghamshire. The programme is developed with the help from leading academics. We start by helping to articulate strengths, set goals and provide 20 weeks of support to achieve them whether it is getting a desired job, an apprenticeship or simply to get ready to start job search. Previous runs of the programme resulted in 32% of participants gaining employment. The Tool Up programme also resulted in higher mentee confidence and a statistically significant improvement in Personal Wellbeing Index quality of life measures of satisfaction with achievement in life, future security, being part of the community, life as a whole and positive autism identity. Mentoring is a goal-oriented relationship where the mentee is in the driving seat based on intrinsic motivation. This is the factor of our success."

Buckinghamshire Council's Adoption Readiness Checker reaches 4,000 users

Buckinghamshire Council's Adoption Readiness Checker has reached 4,000 users. The tool is aimed at people considering adoption who are unsure of where to start. The Adoption Readiness Checker can help anyone to determine if they are in a position to adopt and gives practical advice with a personalised plan to prepare people to take the next step in their journey.

Since the site launch in October 2019, over 250 plans have been created with over 4,000 people using the site. Between April 2020 and April 2021, the Council approved 30 people or couples as adopters – many of whom used the Adoption Readiness Tool.

Karen, a prospective adopter (name changed for confidentiality reasons), said:

"I'd been putting off looking into adoption because I was afraid of finding out I'm not what they're looking for but I'm so glad this tool exists as it put my mind at rest. I learned loads and the advice is way more practical than anything else I've come across. Couldn't recommend it enough to anyone thinking of adopting."

The tool is continuing to evolve based on feedback from users, with new sections coming soon. An online tool helping to connect Special Guardians and young people to support, is due to launch early next year.

Buckinghamshire has approximately 25 children at any one time waiting to be adopted. The Adoption Readiness tool aims to dispel myths about adoption and who can adopt, to enable more people to apply.

"We welcome all enquiries, so if you think you could provide a safe and loving home for a child who needs adopting, then please get in touch with our friendly team. You may be able to make a positive difference to a child's life."

Anyone considering adopting with Buckinghamshire Council can use the [Adoption Readiness Checker](#) to see if they are in a position to adopt, and learn more about the process. All enquiries are welcome so if you think you could provide a safe and loving home for a child who needs adopting then please get in touch with the Council's friendly team.

Visit the [adoption webpage](#) or get in touch with the team by calling **01494 586 349** or emailing adoption@buckinghamshire.gov.uk to find out more about adopting with Buckinghamshire Council.

Buckinghamshire Council hits 50% mark in its county-wide gully cleaning programme

Buckinghamshire Council's extensive programme of cleaning highways gullies across the county has now hit the 50% mark.

The drainage improvement works are designed to help prevent flooding on our roads and to keep drains and gullies across Buckinghamshire running freely. The council set aside an extra £4 million to fund the works, as part of a wider improvement programme for residents.

The council is aiming to clean every single one of Buckinghamshire's almost 85,000 gullies at least once. Critical gullies, that need cleaning more often to prevent flooding on the roads, will be cleaned more regularly. Maximising the amount of water that can drain off road surfaces will also help to maintain the condition of the roads themselves.

As part of the improvement scheme, the council will also be carrying out repairs to drainage systems where there is a known local issue, or where a problem comes to light during the cleaning programme. The teams will also be carrying out comprehensive ditch clearance as part of these works and writing to landowners to remind them of their responsibilities to keep their ditches clear to prevent surface water from their land

Flooding from blocked highway drains can blight people's lives – especially during extreme weather – which is why the gully clearing programme is so essential. It's designed to protect people and buildings from the impact of flooding on our roads and footways.

An additional investment this year to clear every drain and gully whilst repairing those which require fixing. The aim is to clean as many as possible before the winter rain sets in. More information on Buckinghamshire Council's road maintenance and repairs can be found

at: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-repairs

Festive help and support for local families this Christmas

Children and their families across the county can get access to extra help and support this Christmas thanks to two schemes being run by Buckinghamshire Council.

Firstly, holiday activity and food (HAF) programme holiday clubs are making a welcome return providing eligible children aged 5-16 years with a wide range of things to do in their local area with each holiday club place coming with a nutritious, hot meal.

Thousands of children benefitted from a similar scheme run over the summer, and activities on offer this time include sport, dance, cooking, art and festive parties. Some providers are even offering day trips to local venues so that children can enjoy a fun day out.

Eligible children will be able to attend up to four HAF sessions, with HAF holiday clubs running all over Buckinghamshire. All activities will be run in a Covid-safe way.

Secondly, £30 digital food vouchers will be provided to eligible families over the Christmas school holiday period to help with the costs of food at this time of year. The food vouchers can be used at Asda, Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Marks & Spencer Food or Aldi.

Both schemes are funded by the government and delivered on the ground by local councils. Eligible families will receive a letter via their child's school very shortly explaining more about each scheme and how to access the support.

Buckinghamshire Financial Insecurity partnership launched to help those with money problems

The last 18 months have put a strain on everybody in different ways – some physically, some emotionally, and for some, financially. With the Covid-19 pandemic causing a lot of people to be furloughed or left out of work entirely, money worries have become a prevalent issue across the country.

Whether you're struggling to pay your heating bills, finding yourself at risk of homelessness or just need some additional support in a crisis, the Buckinghamshire Financial Insecurity Partnership has been set up to not only help with making ends meet today, but also with a long-term solution to help you get back on track.

Working with several organisations, both in the county and nationally, the Partnership includes Buckinghamshire Council, Citizens Advice Bucks, Department for Work & Pensions, Bucks Skills Hub, Housing Associations, Christians Against Poverty, Oasis Partnership, Bucks Business First, Food Support organisations, mental health and wellbeing organisations and many others.

Focusing on the Wycombe area initially, a significant amount of work has been carried out with local organisations to provide residents with a front door for advice and support, raising awareness of the amount of help available to them. This approach is now being rolled out to Chesham and Aylesbury and then the rest of the county.

If you're interested in the help available to you and would like to find out more, why not attend our first #backontrack event, hosted by Red Kite Community Housing? The free, online event takes place on Thursday 2nd December from 10am-2pm and is available to anybody living in Buckinghamshire who is worried about money and looking for guidance – you don't have to be a Red Kite tenant.

There will be plenty of support and information provided on the day from a variety of speakers, including the Helping Hand service who can provide support with household costs, Trading Standards, who will be talking about scam awareness and protecting your finances, Step Change who will be discussing coping with debt, money saving coaches and many more.

For more information about the event, to view the full schedule of speakers and to secure your space, visit [Back on Track virtual event - Red Kite Community Housing \(redkitehousing.org.uk\)](https://redkitehousing.org.uk). For those unable to make the event, a link will be made available on this page after the event. The first 20 signups will win a £20 Amazon voucher, so be quick!

How would YOU like to see us plan for the future?

One of the most challenging roles that we have in local government is preparing a Local Plan which describes what we want Buckinghamshire to look like in years to come. This covers issues such as new housing, employment, the Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, our town centres and the environment generally, including how we manage mitigating Climate Change.

Preparing the new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire is something that national government requires us to do and it is an important way of deciding what sort of development we do want and where, and conversely what we don't want. The way the Plan has to be done and what it contains is laid down by government. If we don't follow this precisely then the Plan can be found 'unsound' and thrown out by an independent Planning Inspector. The way government want us to make the Plan may change but it is important that we make a start as it is a long process.

As a first stage in preparing the new Plan we are asking local people about the future of Buckinghamshire in a survey we have just launched. The survey, which takes only a few minutes to complete, asks about where you live, local housing needs, the local economy and you views on what should be protected and what's precious about Buckinghamshire.

It's the first stage of involving local people in shaping the future through the new Local Plan.

New initiative launched to help householders be warmer, greener and save on fuel bills this winter

Residents are being encouraged to check if they are eligible for a new scheme to improve the warmth of their homes, lower carbon emissions, and save money on fuel bills this winter.

Under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme, delivered by Warmworks on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council and through funding from the UK Government, householders can apply to receive improvements to their home.

The scheme offers a wide range of insulation measures and renewable heating technologies which are designed to support homes to reduce their impact on the environment, including air source, ground source, and hybrid heat pumps.

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme is open to homeowners, private tenants and people in social rented accommodation, where the home has a low energy rating and a low annual income.

You can find out if you are eligible for the scheme by completing the short application form at <https://www.warmworks.co.uk/greenhomesgrant/>.

Buckinghamshire Council's commitment to involving local people in planning decisions

Cabinet Members at Buckinghamshire Council today underlined their commitment to notify and involve local people in its planning policies and decision making. At a meeting today, they approved the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, or SCI. The main aim of the SCI is to make consultation and involvement in planning more transparent, accessible, collaborative, inclusive and consistent.

The SCI sets out how the Council will consult the public and other bodies on how they can get involved in planning issues, including the local plan and planning applications. It explains when, how, and for what reasons the community will be able to participate in planning issues. These include plan making (local plans), Supplementary Planning Documents, neighbourhood plans, planning applications, and planning enforcement.

Gareth Williams, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration at Buckinghamshire Council said: "We are keen to make it easier for people to be involved in planning policies and decisions about where they live. We've listened to and acted on the feedback from our public consultation and, by promising to consult on a draft local plan, we are showing our firm commitment to public participation in shaping our planning policies."

Before becoming a unitary authority, each of the legacy councils had a different statement of community involvement. Now there is a single statement of community involvement for all of Buckinghamshire which goes over and above minimum commitments.

Following a public consultation held earlier this year, Buckinghamshire Council has updated the SCI to reflect feedback from the public.

- We have increased the number of things we will commit to doing when consulting on planning policies and decisions.
- We will prepare a Neighbour Consultation procedure which will provide detailed guidelines for the use of planning notices, neighbour letters and a range of other measures to increase awareness and inclusion.
- The way local plans are produced is set to change. Under the proposed [Planning White Paper](#) there is no requirement for councils to consult on a draft local plan. However, given the strength of public feeling from the consultation we have included a firm commitment to consult on a draft local plan for Buckinghamshire.

70 Trees for 70 Years

Do you have a favourite tree or woodland in Buckinghamshire? An ancient oak you always pass on your walks? An area of woodland where you love to sit and enjoy the sunshine? Or somewhere that evokes fond childhood memories?

Bucks Council are looking for the best-loved trees and woodlands in Buckinghamshire, as part of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

To mark her Jubilee year in 2022, HM The Queen has launched a unique tree planting initiative called The Queen's Green Canopy which invites people from across the United Kingdom to **"Plant a Tree for the Jubilee"**.

As well as inviting the planting of new trees, *The Queen's Green Canopy* BC dedicate a network of 70 Ancient Woodlands across the United Kingdom and identify 70 Ancient Trees to celebrate Her Majesty's 70 years of service.

Alongside this, we would like to celebrate more of Buckinghamshire's trees and woodlands, and are inviting residents to nominate their favourites. We are aiming to compile a list of the 70 most-loved trees and woodlands in Buckinghamshire.

To take part, take a photo of your chosen tree or woodland, tell us where it is and why it is meaningful to you, and send it to us via social media @BucksCouncil or 70trees@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

By submitting your photograph, you are consenting to its reproduction across Buckinghamshire Council social media channels and its use by the media. You can use a photograph you have taken at any time of the tree or woodland. The photograph must have been taken by you.

The trees or woodland must not be on private land that is not accessible to members of the public.

You can nominate more than one tree or woodland. If more than 70 trees are nominated, the top 70 with the most nominations will be chosen.

Nominations close at midnight on 1st May 2022.

Find out more about the Queen's Jubilee and how you can celebrate via our website <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/the-queens-platinum-jubilee/>

BC are encouraging residents and community groups to support tree planting as part of the Bucks Tree Mission - a shared mission to plant trees for a greener future.

The Bucks Tree Mission is an important part of our [Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy](#). The strategy will reduce our carbon emissions by 75% by 2030 on the way to achieving net-zero no later than 2050.

For information about Bucks Tree Mission <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/environment/trees-and-hedges/tree-planting-schemes/>

Buckinghamshire Council wins national award for 'Best Promotion of Two-Year-Old Funding'

At the National Association of Family Information Services (NAFIS) awards in November 2021, Buckinghamshire Council's Family Information Service won a national award for the 'Best Promotion of Two-Year-Old Funding'. Entries for the award were judged by a panel of parent champions.

Two-Year-Old Funding is available for parents who meet certain criteria. It entitles them to 15 hours per week (term-time) or 11 hours per week (all year) childcare at a nursery, pre-school or childminders.

The award was achieved due to the close collaboration with the council's Early Years and Childcare Two-Year-Old Funding team to develop an effective campaign that uses a range of promotional materials across digital channels. This includes videos exploring what Two-Year-Old Funding is, the

benefits of taking up a funded childcare place, and a targeted video which goes out alongside the distribution of leaflets across the county.

“Parents and carers who are interested in finding out more about the funding can do so by going to <https://familyinfo.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/childcare-and-early-years/paying-childcare/2yo-funded-childcare>.”