

Buckinghamshire Councillors Report – PC May 22

Buckinghamshire Adult Learning shortlisted for 2022 Family Learning Awards

The Family Learning Team at Buckinghamshire Adult Learning have been shortlisted for this year's Family Learning Award. The awards show how organisations are using imaginative, innovative and inclusive ways to deliver learning opportunities which help families in their communities.

The awards, organised by education charity Campaign for Learning, celebrate learning activities that supported families during lockdown and beyond and supported health and wellbeing.

As to be expected, some of the top priorities for organisations were focused around the significant changes to how learning is delivered beyond the pandemic, keeping families connected, boosting mental health and ensuring everyone can access opportunities to learn.

The Buckinghamshire Family Learning team developed a full, interactive online course programme during the pandemic for families, while addressing current learning needs as well as those identified or amplified by recent world events. They supported parents to access online learning as well as developing their own digital skills. All information is shared through a Google Classroom so everyone receives the same information and time for reflection. Learners use the Classroom to communicate with each other and support each other following the session.

Parents have given excellent feedback on the Family Learning courses, stating that they have helped build their confidence, reduce their social isolation, develop their language skills and realise the importance of play.

One parent said: "The courses have given me confidence to explore more play options to encourage my son's learning. It has also been great to have someone to talk over any worries I have as a parent."

The Early Years are particularly important as they lay the foundations for lifelong learning, behaviour, and health. The Family Learning in the Early Years Award shortlist recognised organisations that best demonstrated innovative approaches to delivering family learning aimed at families with children aged between 0-5. The shortlisted organisations are:

- Adult and Community Learning, Warwickshire
- Buckinghamshire Adult Learning
- Learning Unlimited
- The Whitworth Art Gallery

If you are a parent or carer of a child in the county who hasn't yet discovered our free, online Family Learning courses, then I would encourage you to see what's on offer by going to: www.adultlearningbc.ac.uk/family-learning

Chiltern Beechwood Special Area of Conservation - CBSAC

CBSAC or Ashridge Estate/Woods as we locally refer to the area of the Chilterns including the Ivinghoe Hills and Wendover Woods. These areas are suffering significant damage as a result of increasing leisure usage. This has become ever more a problem over the past 6 or 7 years and even more so as a result of Covid 19 encouraging outdoor activities.

The Chiltern Beechwoods (Ashridge) are adversely impacted by ramblers, joggers, bikers and visitors. Obviously increased local population will increase the adverse impact so measures are to be taken to mitigate this.

2 500m exclusion zones have been identified by Dacorum's Local Plan and endorsed by Natural

England. Both zones extend into Bucks. These do not impact Cheddington but will impact areas close to Tring. There is a presumption against any net increase of new homes within these 500 metres of the Special Area of Conservation.

Further, 12.6 kilometres and 1.7 kilometres Zones of Influence have been created which extend throughout the Ivinghoe Ward. The Habitats Regulations are clear that development proposals in the zones of influence must not give rise to adverse effects on the integrity of the Special Area of Conservation either alone or in combination with other plans or development proposals. If it is likely, or even where it is uncertain that a significant adverse effect will occur, then measures must be secured to either avoid or mitigate the impact. If it is not possible to avoid or mitigate an adverse impact, then planning permission will be refused. This will cause delays to all applications for additional housing, especially large scale, but should not affect extensions or replacement houses.

Any new application for development in Pitstone will now have to incorporate mitigation measures, clearly that will take time and prove difficult.

Further information can be found on the Buckinghamshire Council and Dacorum Borough Council Web sites, this included maps and FAQs.

Helping to give taxi drivers the keys to success with their English language skills

From September 2022, anyone who renews a taxi licence in Buckinghamshire will need to pass an English language test to ensure all drivers can speak and understand English at an appropriate level. Taxi drivers are in a unique and ideal position to spot and report safeguarding issues by being able to identify when a passenger is being pressured into doing something or is being taken somewhere against their will.

Previously, all taxi drivers needed to have a good standard of English, but this was not always assessed in an independent test. Now, the government has introduced new requirements, which mean anyone renewing a licence will need to show that they have a standard of English that enables them to identify potential exploitation to protect children and vulnerable adults. If drivers do not pass the test, they will not be able to renew their licence.

In Buckinghamshire, taxi licences are renewed every three years, so those who had a licence issued or renewed three years ago will be the first drivers who need to pass the assessment from September 2022. Drivers who have already passed the test or hold an equivalent qualification do not need to take the test.

Queen's Award for Enterprise - Buckinghamshire winners announced - Six businesses recognised

The awards are the most prestigious awards for UK business. They are designed to recognise and encourage outstanding achievements in the fields of Innovation, International Trade, Sustainable Development and Promoting Opportunity (through social mobility).

The 2022 award winners in Buckinghamshire were successful in two categories: International Trade and Innovation.

Five of the six businesses received their award in the International Trade Category which recognises substantial growth in overseas earnings and in commercial success (for their business

size and sector) through either outstanding achievement over three years or continuous achievement over six years.

- Medical Research Network Ltd, Milton Keynes
- Turville Valley Wines (Rafine Ltd), Haddenham
- M&M Supplies (UK) PLC, Milton Keynes
- Focusrite Audio Engineering Ltd, High Wycombe
- G&L Scientific Limited, Marlow

In the Innovation category achievements are assessed for: invention, design or production of goods; performance of services; marketing and distribution; or, after-sale support of goods or services, that have realised outstanding commercial success over two years or continuous commercial success over five years.

The award has been given to:

- Dawson Group Plc, Milton Keynes

Buckinghamshire Council becomes the first local authority in the UK to support AWorld

On Earth Day 2022, which took place on Friday 22 April, Buckinghamshire Council will become the first local authority in the UK to support the AWorld app.

AWorld is the official platform in support of ActNow, the United Nations campaign for individual action on climate change and sustainability.

The AWorld app guides users towards living sustainably. It does this by showing you how much energy or water you can save by making small changes to your daily life and creating new habits – such as putting the washing machine in eco wash mode or unplugging your charger as soon as your phone is fully charged.

[Download AWorld](#) for free to see the difference small changes can make. Once you've logged into the app, you can also join the Bucks Climate Challenge team, so you can be part of the county-wide effort in reducing carbon emissions and living sustainably.

Promoting the app is just one of the ways that Buckinghamshire Council is helping everyone to reduce their carbon emissions and lead Bucks to a net zero carbon goal by 2050.

The Council is inviting residents to join them on this carbon reduction day to see how much energy they can save by turning things off.

Council Tax rebates being paid to Buckinghamshire residents

Buckinghamshire residents living in homes under Council Tax bands A-D will begin receiving their £150 rebate payments from next week (w/c Mon 2 May). This is part of the national scheme to off-set the rise in energy costs.

Some residents who live in homes in Bands E-H who receive certain benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance will also be able to claim money back on their Council Tax under Buckinghamshire Council's own scheme, which aims to provide extra support for those who need it but who don't qualify for the national Bands A-D scheme.

Buckinghamshire residents who pay Council Tax by Direct Debit, and whose home is in Band A to D **or** who qualify for the Buckinghamshire Council scheme under Bands E-H, will automatically get the £150 back in their bank account in the next few weeks. If residents pay by another method, they will be contacted directly by letter about how to claim the payment.

The Council is also topping up payments under **both** schemes through its own 'Helping Hand' programme, meaning some residents will also be eligible for an extra £25 payment **on top** of the other payments.

Overall, the Council Tax rebates and £25 'top ups' are designed to help as many residents as possible as households face rising fuel and energy prices and increases in other living costs.

Bucks Council wanted to go above and beyond the national scheme to offer extra support to Bucks residents, hence designing our own scheme under our 'Helping Hand' programme. This means we can offer additional payments to a wider number of residents.

BC have taken an approach here in Buckinghamshire to get this money out as quickly as possible, avoiding lengthy application or means testing processes. We want as many people in need as possible to be able to access this cash at a time it's really needed, hence linking our own scheme to those already in receipt of certain benefits.

Overall, it is hoped around half of all Buckinghamshire households will be able to claim payments under these schemes, which I hope will make a difference. I don't lose sight of how squeezed household bills are at the moment so please reach out and access support if you are worried about money and the cost of living, whether you qualify for these schemes or not. Our Helping Hand programme is there to offer help and support to all residents who need it.

Buckinghamshire nears top of the table in planning enforcements

A recently published table shows that Buckinghamshire Council is the second most active council outside London and the seventh most active in the country in issuing planning enforcement notices.

The table, produced by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) monitors and ranks councils by the number of planning enforcement notices they issue. It reveals that some areas are more active than others in issuing legal notices for contravention of planning rules and that 35 councils issued no notices at all.

A planning enforcement notice is a legal document which is issued when there has been a breach of planning control that cannot be resolved through negotiation and is so serious that it requires formal action. It sets out what steps need to be taken to resolve the breach. In 2021 the team at Buckinghamshire Council investigated 1,675 new cases and issued 65 planning enforcement notices. **In the last year, breaches in Buckinghamshire have included unauthorised residential extensions, changes of use, untidy land, airport parking and illegal works to listed buildings.**

Bucks residents offered discounted home composting equipment

Buckinghamshire Council is offering residents discounts of up to 40% on home compost bins, hot composters and food waste digesters. Many of these items are made from recycled plastic and all of them are made in the UK.

Composting is an inexpensive, natural process that transforms your kitchen and garden waste into a valuable and nutrient rich food for your garden. Compost is easy to use and a home composting bin can divert around 150 kg of organic waste per year from disposal per household.

Inspired by International Compost Awareness Week (1-7 May), Buckinghamshire Council is also offering an 'Introduction to Home Composting' webinar hosted by UK charity [Garden Organic](#).

During the free one-hour webinar, residents will find out the:

- Benefits of home composting
- Composting process
- Bin types and methods
- Uses of compost in the garden
- Benefits to the environment
- Answers to common composting questions

The webinar will take place on three dates:

- [Session 1](#): Friday 6 May at 1pm
- [Session 2](#): Wednesday 25 May at 7pm
- [Session 3](#): Thursday 16 June at 7pm

You can also pick up a discounted composter or food waste digester at our [Recycle for Bucks website](#)."

For more ways to reduce your carbon emissions and to help the environment, please see the [Bucks Climate Challenge webpage](#).

Play Streets scheme launches in Bucks

Children across Bucks are being given the opportunity to play safely outside on their doorstep through a new scheme that's been launched by Buckinghamshire Council. Neighbours can now apply for a Play Streets session to close their road for a few hours at a time, so that communities can come together and children can meet up and have fun outdoors.

Play Streets already take place in many other areas across the UK and have proved very popular, encouraging children to get active in the fresh air and also helping to tackle social isolation by connecting neighbours. The scheme first started in Bristol through the national organisation 'Playing Out'.

Two trial events took place in Aylesbury and High Wycombe and children enjoyed being able to scoot and cycle on their street, while adults chatted and got to know each other.

Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration, commented:

"We're delighted to bring Play Streets to Bucks. Many of us will remember playing out on the street when we were younger, but lots of children just don't have that opportunity now. Play Streets gives them that freedom again, to grab their bike or skipping rope and make friends outside their front door."

Emma Bornebroek organised the Play Streets trial event in High Wycombe and found it really helped bring her neighbours together. She said:

"Our road can be quite busy with traffic and so it's not possible for children to play on the street. Being able to close it for a few hours made a huge difference and the kids had a fantastic time playing. It was

also great for adults to meet up and connect with people they hadn't met before or seen for some time due to the Covid pandemic.”

Residents can apply to see if their street is suitable for a Play Streets session on [Buckinghamshire Council's Play Streets webpage](#) – and there is more information about the scheme on the national [Playing Out website](#).

Buckinghamshire Council announces fresh financial support package for residents in need

Buckinghamshire Council has finalised a new package of support for residents facing financial hardship and who are struggling with rising bills and costs.

The Council has already announced additional measures it's put in place on top of the government's national council tax rebate scheme. As well as that help, today Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet has finalised how it will allocate a further £2.4 million of funding from the Government's Household Support Fund, to help residents struggling to pay bills and buy food.

Residents facing severe financial hardship can contact the council's Helping Hand service which can:

- help with energy, cooking, lighting and water bills
- support with food costs through vouchers
- pay for household essentials such as sanitary products, boiler servicing, warm clothing costs

£880,000 of the funding has been allocated to provide food vouchers to families in need, including covering children's meals during school holidays if they are eligible for free school meals during term time. These digital food vouchers will also be available for Afghan and Ukrainian families who've arrived in Buckinghamshire as a package of wider support for these families under Helping Hand.

The Household Support Fund package is designed - through Helping Hand - to help families with children, pensioners and other vulnerable households who are struggling with paying for the basics of food, clothing and heating.

This new wave of Helping Hand funding comes on top of extra support the council is giving to residents who may not be in crisis but who are still struggling with the sharp increase in household bills.

- The £150 council tax rebate is now being paid to eligible households (council tax bands A-D) across Buckinghamshire as part of the national scheme to offset the cost of energy bills – the Buckinghamshire scheme has been designed so the funds can be issued as quickly as possible and this is now happening sooner than in some other council areas
- On top of the national council tax scheme, the council has **introduced its own scheme** and is making £150 payments to eligible residents who live in Bands E-H who are in receipt of certain benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance
- Under a further strand of Buckinghamshire Council help, the council is also topping up payments under **both** schemes through the Helping Hand programme, meaning some residents will also be eligible for an extra £25 payment **on top** of the other payments.

The council is also providing extra support for families during the school holidays through its HAF (holiday activities and food) scheme, ensuring families have access to quality food and care outside of term-time.

We are working closely with a number of local organisations to ensure support is there for all who need it, from general financial advice, to those who sadly have been pushed into severe hardship. We know people need different levels of help at the moment, that we're all feeling the pinch and our aim is to help as many Buckinghamshire households as possible who are experiencing varying amounts of financial pressure."

- For the full breakdown of how Buckinghamshire Council is allocating the Household Support Fund, please go to: <https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s42765/Government%20funding%20supporting%20Buckinghamshire%20Residents%202022-05-10%20v1.3%20-%20Cabinet.pdf>
- For **Helping Hand** queries please call **01296 531 151** – this line operates **Mon – Thu 9am – 5:30pm** and **Fri 9am – 5pm**.
- You can also use the online contact form on the Helping Hand webpage: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/helping-hand.
- For information on the council's HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme please go to www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/haf
- For general advice on money matters, go to www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/backontrack

Buckinghamshire Council takes steps to secure more affordable housing in the county

Buckinghamshire Council is taking proactive steps to tackle the challenges around delivering enough affordable housing in Buckinghamshire. As a key priority for the council, the council's Cabinet has, this week, agreed an affordable housing position statement and committed to some specific actions. These include exploring the viability of piloting of an affordable housing development on disused council owned sites to help increase the delivery of affordable housing.

Over the next 12 months, as well as exploring the piloting of an affordable housing development using one of its own disused sites, Buckinghamshire Council will:

- work closely with house builders and use planning obligations to maximise delivery of affordable housing on all new sites. Developers who apply for planning permission for homes have to supply a percentage of affordable homes within their development. On average, this system has delivered 643 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire each year.
- work closely with Registered Social Landlords to support them to deliver their development plans and also use s106 funds and other enabling grants to make nomination rights for affordable rented accommodation available to those on the Bucks Home Choice system.
- engage with private house builders to explore the viability of acquiring homes to accommodate key workers. Provided this is a viable option, the Council will deliver at least one scheme in 2022.
- review and catalogue empty homes in Buckinghamshire and explore if these can be brought back into use. Council Tax charges for persistently empty homes will also be reviewed.

Councillor Nick Naylor, Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services said:

Having a safe and secure home is a basic need we all have a right to, so we're looking at a suite of options to secure greater numbers of affordable homes across the county.

Buckinghamshire Council has also set out how the Government's First Homes scheme will work in Buckinghamshire. The scheme is designed to help local first time buyers and key workers onto the property ladder, by offering homes at a discount of at least 30% compared to the market price. This could save each buyer a significant amount of money, making deposits and mortgages more affordable. The discounts will apply to the homes forever, meaning that generations of new buyers and the local community will continue to benefit every time the property is sold.

The council has set local eligibility criteria restrictions so that First Homes have the best chance to be sold to local people and key workers.

Buckinghamshire Council offers free events in support of Dementia Action Week

To mark Dementia Action Week 2022, which runs from 16 to 22 May, Buckinghamshire Council is running a series of events in the county. The awareness week is run annually by the Alzheimer's Society, with this year's theme being diagnosis.

Diagnosis rates for dementia have fallen to a five-year low and the Alzheimer's Society is encouraging those experiencing common dementia symptoms, such as memory loss, personality changes and changes in behaviour, to seek guidance and support in understanding those symptoms.

Research by the Society indicates that the biggest barrier to those seeking a diagnosis is the misconception that memory loss is a normal sign of ageing.

This year's Dementia Action Week aims to help those who might be living with undiagnosed dementia to understand potential symptoms, to come forward for guidance and support, and to feel empowered to take the next steps towards diagnosis.

During the week, Buckinghamshire Council will be running a series of events which are open to residents across the county to raise awareness of dementia-related conditions.

Tuesday 17 May

- Aylesbury – To celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, Aylesbury Town Council and Aylesbury Library will be hosting a FREE event as part of our dementia friendly initiative in Dementia Action Week.
- Buckingham – Free drop-in session at Buckingham Library 10am – 1pm.

Wednesday 18 May

- Adult Social Care Commissioning Virtual Post Diagnosis Information session. This session is for anyone who has had a diagnosis of dementia and their carers and would like to find out more about the condition, how to manage symptoms and live well and find out what support is available. It's also an opportunity to ask questions to the Dementia Advisors. The session runs from 10:30am – 12pm.

In addition to the above, Virtual Dementia Tours – organised by Buckinghamshire Council's Community Boards and local Dementia Action Alliances – will be available to interested residents.

The Virtual Dementia Tour is a life-changing experience and the only scientifically and medically proven method of giving a person with a healthy brain an experience of what dementia might be like. Enter the world of a person with dementia and understand the simple changes you can make to your practice and to the environment to improve the lives of people with dementia.

The Virtual Dementia Tour is taken by over 200,000 people per year in the UK and is the benchmark training used by multiple NHS Trusts, HSE Trusts, care homes, nursing homes, families and more.

Available dates and locations for the Virtual Dementia Tour are:

Monday 16 May – Burnham Park Hall Interactive Dementia Awareness Experience - [Monday 16 May, multiple times | Eventbrite](#)

Tuesday 17 May – Beaconsfield Town Hall, Penn Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 2PP - Interactive Dementia Awareness Experience - [Tuesday 17 May, multiple times | Eventbrite](#)

Wednesday 18 May – Lace Hill Manor Care Home - Virtual Dementia Tour Session 2 Buckingham Tickets - [Wednesday 18 May at 10:30am | Eventbrite](#)

Thursday 19 May – Bourne End Community Centre, Wakeman Rd, Wooburn Green, Bourne End SL8 5SX
Friday 20 May Risborough Community Centre, Wades Park, Stratton Road, Princes Risborough, HP27 9AX – Interactive Dementia Awareness Experience - [Friday 20 May, multiple times | Eventbrite](#)

There are four sessions available on every day, each with nine places, including an interactive experience on the specially designed vehicle followed by a group debrief.

Council asks for residents' help in tackling the costly problem of food waste

It's a priority for Buckinghamshire Council to take local action to reduce food waste, and to do this it's asking local people to share their experience in an online survey of why almost a third of the food we buy never makes it to a plate. The results will be used to plan projects and positive campaigns which help local people reduce food waste.

Food waste is a serious issue - for the average family, wasted food costs £720 a year, at a time when the cost of living is increasing at a rate not seen for many years.

Nationally, 4.5 million tonnes of edible food is wasted every year. And globally, wasted food not only contributes to serious food scarcity, but plays a major part in causing the carbon emissions that are behind climate change.

That's why Buckinghamshire Council is working hard to address the problem at a local level. To better do this, the Council's waste team wants to find out more about the day-to-day reasons why food goes to waste, and they want to hear from you. The online survey just takes a few minutes at yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/communities/food-waste-survey-2022 and a completed survey means you get to enter a £250 prize draw!

Whatever your excuse, there's no excuse for speeding

"I was late for work." "I didn't see the sign." "There was no one else on the road!"

All these excuses are commonly heard when people are stopped for speeding. Buckinghamshire Council's road safety initiative, Travel Safe Bucks is launching a new campaign to remind people that whatever the excuse, there's no excuse for speeding.

Managing speed is something a lot of drivers and riders seem to struggle with, for many and varied reasons. The 'No Excuses, No Speeding' campaign looks to remind people of all the excuses that may be used to justify their speeding and all the ways these excuses can be challenged.

Managing speed is about knowing the speed limit for the road, planning and concentration. It's important for drivers and riders to plan their journey to allow plenty of time to get to their destination, as being late is an excuse frequently used as a justification for speeding. It's also important to keep an eye on the speedometer, especially when leaving faster roads and to look out for road signs when turning into a new road.

It's not just about tackling the excuses for speeding, but also about reminding people that the speed limit depends on the vehicle you're in and the type of road you are driving on. For example, vans and lorries may have different speed limits on some roads compared to cars.

Councillor Derek Town