

Buckinghamshire Council tops Modeshift STARS league table!

Buckinghamshire Council has topped a league of 59 Local Authorities who are members of the Modeshift STARS scheme – with the council having the highest percentage of schools with a sustainable travel plan. They are also ranked fourth highest in terms of the quality of the travel plans awarded.

The scheme is sponsored by the Department for Transport and encourages school-aged children and young people to walk, bike, scoot or get the bus to school. The scheme awards gradings on a Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze and Green basis to promote sustainable, active, and safe ways of travel for families doing school runs.

There are now 60 schools (a total of 24,668 students) in Buckinghamshire with Modeshift STARS, an increase of 14% from the same time last year. The scheme offers schools an online tool to help them plan, monitor and develop a nationally recognised School Travel Plan against set criteria. This plan is then used to designate the accreditation they will be able to achieve.

Buckinghamshire Council win appeal against ‘inappropriate development’ in Beaconsfield

Plans for the 450 residential property Beeches Park development next to the Amersham Road (A355) and Minerva Way in Beaconsfield were refused at the Council’s South Buckinghamshire Area Planning Committee on 25 November 2021; this decision has now been upheld at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate (decision announced on 20 December).

Buckinghamshire residents receive awards in the New Year’s Honours list

Awards for 20 Buckinghamshire residents were announced today in His Majesty King Charles III’s inaugural New Year Honours List. One from the Ivinghoe Ward -

Mr Alan John Richard Williams: For services to the community in Edlesborough, Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire Council aims to save costs through new Estates Strategy

Buckinghamshire Council’s Cabinet has approved a new Estates Strategy, which will see the council review their office accommodation inherited from the pre-unitary legacy councils. The plans propose a reduction in the council’s operational estate based on organisational need, which could lead to revenue savings of £2.4m a year and capital receipts savings of £4m. The council’s carbon footprint would also be reduced.

Realigning their use of office accommodation reflects the change in work patterns in a post-Covid environment, where more staff are now working from home for at least part of each week.

Buckinghamshire Council confirms 2023/24 budget proposals

Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet has agreed to recommend to full Council its proposed budget and council tax rates for 2023/24. These are subject to further scrutiny by the Finance and Resources Select Committee and agreement by Council.

The budget has been drawn up against a backdrop of global economic turbulence and uncertainty. High inflation driven by the war in Ukraine and extra demands on the council's services are adding an **extra £63 million** in costs for next year before a penny of next year's budget is even spent.

It means the council is proposing a **2.99% rise in the base rate of council tax**. This is set against an increase in inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index of over 10%. In addition, it is planning to take up the Government's proposal for a **Social Care Precept of 2%**, meaning a total rise of **4.99%** in bills. The Cabinet were very aware that helping relieve pressures in social care is fundamental to helping the NHS during the winter peak in demand.

This would mean a rise in council tax of **£1.61 per week for the average home** (Band D) in Buckinghamshire.

The budget proposals also outline which areas the council is allocating funding for – and how much, after nearly 2,000 residents fed in their views on the budget plans. This includes:

- More than £125 million fixing and maintaining roads
- Nearly £143 million for schools improvements
- £20 million on housing and tackling homelessness
- More than £14 million to tackle Climate Change and prevent flooding
- Investing more than £20 million in our waste and recycling facilities

The budget report considered by Cabinet (5/1/23) includes detail about how the Covid-19 pandemic and global factors have created considerable extra pressures on the budget this year. There have been many more people needing support and social care from the council following the pandemic; more children and families are facing need and more adults are receiving social care – 3% more in a year. The economic uncertainty and high inflation also mean the council's own costs are much higher too across the piece, whether that's the cost of materials to fix and build roads, energy costs or the cost of providing social care services.

The council is, however, in a stable and positive financial position compared to many other local authorities – we are able to present a balanced budget which includes major spend on services residents have told us that they want us to focus on. Importantly, we are continuing to achieve savings from becoming a single unitary authority in 2020. The council is finding a total of £10 million in savings across all departments to balance the books in 2023/24.

Buckinghamshire Council reveals first ever county-wide Local Heritage List

Buckinghamshire Council has today announced the adoption of its first ever county-wide heritage list. Using Government funding, the council has developed a Local Heritage List to protect some of the most important sites in the county that contribute to the character and heritage of Buckinghamshire.

There have been more than 2,653 nominations for inclusion on the list and 771 of these sites are now being brought forward for adoption in Phase 1.

The Local Heritage List identifies locally significant heritage sites and celebrates their contribution to local identity and character. These sites include historic buildings (houses, chapels, agricultural

and industrial buildings), archaeological sites (upstanding earthwork remains and buried sites), formal gardens, public open spaces, public works of art, monuments and street furniture.

This is different to statutory listing and designations (e.g., Grade I, II and II* listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and registered parks & gardens), which are assessed nationally by Historic England.

Nominations are now open for the Proud of Bucks Awards

Nominations are now open for Buckinghamshire Council's Proud of Bucks Awards 2022 – generously sponsored by The Clare Foundation.

The awards aim to recognise and celebrate outstanding community contribution carried out by local volunteers, groups and organisations during 2022. They acknowledge Buckinghamshire's communities that have made a positive impact in their local areas.

Just like last year, each of Buckinghamshire's 16 Community Boards will be celebrating local people in three award categories. Members of the public are invited to send in their nominations for those who they feel deserve recognition and praise. The three award categories are:

- **Local Community Champion** – For an individual (aged 21 and over) who has made a clear and positive impact in their local community during 2022.
- **Young Community Champion** – For a young person (under age 21) who has made a clear and positive impact in their local community or towards their peers during 2022.
- **Community Group Contribution** – Recognises and celebrates a group in the Community Board area who has made a clear and positive impact on the community during 2022.

There are lots of ways to nominate someone for a Proud of Bucks Award, including submitting a nomination online or downloading a form and returning it by email. People can also visit their local Buckinghamshire library to pick up or drop off a printed paper copy. Find out more at: www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/PoB-awards

The closing date for nominations is **Sunday 12 February**. Nominations will be reviewed by a panel of judges and the winners will be announced in the spring.

Buckinghamshire Council secures £397k in government funding to support active travel in the county

Buckinghamshire Council has been awarded £397k in funding from the Active Travel Capability and Ambition Fund – a national initiative from Active Travel England and the Department for Transport that aims to support local authorities to plan active travel infrastructure, develop expertise and deliver behaviour change activities.

The funding will be used by the council to support:

- Development of a Buckinghamshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) that will identify priorities for future investment in the active travel network
- Resources to encourage school-aged children and young people to walk, cycle and scoot to and from school
- Feasibility work for future active travel schemes
- Promotion and monitoring of recently constructed active travel routes, alongside wider activities to encourage behaviour change
- Training for officers and councillors on active travel infrastructure design

The one-year revenue Active Travel Capability and Ambition funding reflects Buckinghamshire Council being assessed by national government as being an authority with strong leadership and support for active travel, with strong plans and an emerging network. This Fund builds on the

previous Local Authority Capability Fund, which provided £111k funding to Buckinghamshire Council through this initiative in 2021/22.

Feeling Blue? Don't suffer in silence – help is available in Buckinghamshire

January can be an inspiring start to the new year, but some may still face challenges during the first few weeks. Current cost-of-living pressures have affected us all in different ways, and for many it has meant that this year has started differently to the previous ones.

The colder, shorter days of winter can also have an impact on how we're feeling so it's important to know what mental health support is available, and how to access it. It's good to note that it's okay to not feel okay, and that during these difficult times, some people might be facing mental health difficulties for the first time. This is why it's especially important to look out for others and reach out for help when it's needed.

If you are struggling to cope, and feeling low or worried, the most important thing to remember is that you are not alone, and that help is widely available across the county.

If you are struggling to heat your home or afford bills, [Buckinghamshire Council's Helping Hand initiative](#) can help to ease financial pressures and support individuals or families in need, or those on low incomes. You can also visit the page to access advice, information and support if you are facing a financial emergency or a crisis.

Residents in Buckinghamshire also have a range of options when it comes to mental health support and where to find it. If you are concerned about your mental wellbeing, contacting your GP is an excellent first point of contact to establish what support is right for you.

Additionally, you can contact NHS 111 at any time to speak to an NHS mental health professional, who is ready to support adults and children if they are concerned about their mental health, or the mental health of others. For a full list of organisations and helplines that can help you to support your wellbeing, visit [Buckinghamshire Council's Care Advice Mental health and wellbeing webpages](#).

Buckinghamshire Lottery: Strike it lucky and support local good causes

Buckinghamshire residents can support local good causes while also potentially winning big with Buckinghamshire Lottery. By purchasing a ticket for just £1 per week, players not only have the opportunity to win cash prizes up to £25,000, but they also support local good causes such as community groups, sports clubs and charities.

All proceeds from the lottery go towards supporting local projects and organisations that make a positive impact on the community. Whether it's supporting a local sports team, helping to preserve a historic building, or funding youth programmes, the Buckinghamshire Lottery is an easy way for residents to make a difference.

Buckinghamshire Lottery offers a 1 in 50 chance of winning – much better odds than the National Lottery. Recent winners include Mr M from Dunstable, who won a whopping £2,000 on Christmas Eve while supporting Stoke Mandeville-based wheelchair sport charity WheelPower.

To purchase a ticket and support local causes, go to: www.buckinghamshirelottery.co.uk

If you're part of a local good cause looking to boost your fundraising in 2023, why not sign up to the Buckinghamshire Lottery. It's completely free to sign up, there's no admin and no risk. Free marketing and support are provided to get you started. For more information, visit: www.buckinghamshirelottery.co.uk/good-causes