

Buckinghamshire Councillors Report Edlesborough PC mtg Feb 16th 2023

Digital tools help speed up the planning process in Buckinghamshire

A government minister has been to Buckinghamshire to see how the council is trialling innovative digital tools aimed at speeding up the planning process.

It's part of a government project funded by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Buckinghamshire is one of three councils already using the pioneering approach to co-design, build, test and launch more efficient software for planning.

As part of the project, Buckinghamshire residents can use this prototype software to check if they need planning permission using [an online tool on the Council's website](#). Buckinghamshire residents can also [apply online for a lawful development certificate](#) – which certifies works they're undertaking don't need planning permission or to certify that past works are lawful.

The new software under development will help manage cases and applications more quickly and efficiently, ultimately helping planning officers to reach decisions more quickly. The new systems will also help planning officers and applicants to communicate directly more easily.

number of organisations including the Department for Education, Now Teach and a number of local school and university-based Initial Teacher Training providers. The event will include all the information needed on how to train to become a teacher including how to apply, the qualifications needed, the different routes into teaching and training programmes around the county. There will also be information on the scholarships and bursaries available.

Council calls for ULEZ expansion to be scrapped

Buckinghamshire Council is calling for the planned extension of the Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in London to be scrapped.

Cabinet Member for Transport, Steven Broadbent, wrote to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, last year to express concerns over the proposals. Since then, the expansion plans have been approved by Transport for London (TfL) and are

due to come into effect from the end of August 2023, prompting the council to contact the Mayor of London once again.

One of the council's main concerns is the cost implications for the many residents who commute into the Greater London area, particularly at a time when other cost of living pressures are already having a serious impact on people's lives.

Don't pay cash to remove your trash, council urges

Buckinghamshire Council is renewing its call for residents not to pay in cash when employing someone to take away their waste.

However big or small the amount, if dumped illegally, the original owner of the waste can be liable for prosecution.

You may be tempted to pay cash as a cheaper option but sadly, speaking from experience, we know that it is statistically more likely to be dumped illegally and the fly-tipper is less likely to be caught without any electric or paper trail available, proving their involvement. In these cases, if the waste can be traced back to the original homeowner, they are then liable for the offence and can be prosecuted

Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet approves 2023-24 budget plans

The Cabinet considered the overall income and spending plans for 2023/24, which cover how the council will raise enough money to cover the costs of providing its essential services such as social care, as well as how it will pay for big projects like improvements to roads and schools, as well as further investment in waste services, environmental projects and tackling homelessness.

High inflation and added demand mean that, in spite of ongoing savings from becoming a unitary authority, the council needs to find an extra £63 million to cover its costs for the coming year. Like most councils with responsibility for social care, it means that, to raise enough money and to present a balanced budget, the Cabinet has agreed to put forward to Council a **2.99% rise in the base rate of council tax** and a plan to take up the Government's proposal for a **Social Care Precept of 2%**, meaning a **total rise of 4.99%** in bills.

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

Healthy Libraries – more than just books!

This month sees the launch of Buckinghamshire Council's 'Healthy Libraries' pilot programme in a number of libraries across the county.

The programme seeks to highlight that our libraries are a diverse and interactive place for people from all walks of life. Divided up into three categories: Start Well;

Live Well and Age Well, Healthy Libraries will cover activities, events and information that aim to promote healthier, happier lives for Buckinghamshire residents.

Libraries act as hives of activity with strong links within the local community and so are ideally placed to support residents whilst promoting health and wellbeing. Whether you want to learn about healthy eating or have a chat about your mental health, there are many ways the selected libraries will be able to support you with your health and wellbeing over the next few months.

Running from February to April, the Healthy Libraries pilot is taking place at libraries in the following locations:

- Aylesbury
- Buckingham
- Burnham
- Chesham
- High Wycombe

Buckinghamshire Council aims to improve local air quality with £120k grant

Buckinghamshire Council's Strategic Environmental Protection Team has been awarded £120,000 from the Government's Air Quality Grant Scheme to carry out a travel planning and eco-driving project.

The team will be working with local business engagement groups such as [Bucks Business First](#) (BBF) to lead a campaign to accelerate a shift away from single occupancy car use to more active travel and sustainable ways of travel in Buckinghamshire.

The project will be aimed at employers and their staff.

Unlike the electric vehicle (EV) campaign that the council received funding for in 2020 and which focused upon businesses with more than 100 employees, this project will target small to medium enterprises (under 100 employees) that were ineligible under the previous project. The new initiative will give small and medium sized enterprises within the county the opportunity to create active travel plans and to trial an app to encourage a safer eco-friendlier style of driving.

Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Environment, commented:

Councillor Derek Town