

Council welcomes £4.8m funding boost to support struggling households

Buckinghamshire Council has welcomed the news that it is to receive £4.8m of funding to continue supporting households and residents in Buckinghamshire who are struggling with the ongoing cost of living pressures.

The funding has been allocated through the government's Household Support Fund (HSF) and enables local authorities to use the money to directly support residents and households facing hardship and challenges brought on by cost of living pressures.

This funding will cover the full year from this April, through to the end of March next year. Previous allocations have been for six-month periods

New photo ID requirements announced for local and national elections

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

This will apply to:

- Local elections
- Police and Crime Commissioner elections
- UK parliamentary by-elections
- Recall petitions

From October 2023 it will also apply to UK General elections.

The Electoral Commission's website lists the [accepted forms of photo ID](#).

People who do not have an accepted photo ID can [apply for a free voter ID document](#), which is known as a Voter Authority Certificate. Applicants will need to provide their name, address, date of birth, national insurance number and a recent digital photo of themselves.

For people registered to vote by post, no photo ID will be required. This is because postal voting requires other identification checks, such as signature and date of birth verification.

Buckinghamshire Council announces extra investment in county's roads

Buckinghamshire Council is investing an extra £5 million in the county's road network, on top of £100 million it's already committed to spending on the roads over a four-year period.

The announcement was made at a meeting of full Council last Wednesday night, where the full budget for 2023/24 was set. Council Leader Martin Tett made the extra funds for roads available from our Reserves acknowledging the heavy toll of wet and freezing conditions this winter plus increased HGV traffic from HS2 and East West Rail.

It means that in total, **£105 million** is now allocated directly to maintaining and improving the county's road network. Overall, **£130 million in funding** is being dedicated to roads and other highways infrastructure in Buckinghamshire including pavements, drains, street lighting and bridges during the council term.

It's part of an overall package of investment in local services agreed by councillors last night, who went through and agreed the detail of the 2023/24 budget. The agreed budget outlines which services and projects are being prioritised, and how these are being paid for. The spending plans were shaped by residents who outlined how they wanted council tax to be spent during a consultation last year.

The agreed budget also includes the following investment:

- nearly **£143 million** for improvements to schools
- **£20 million** on housing and tackling homelessness
- **more than £14 million** to tackle Climate Change and prevent flooding
- **more than £20 million** towards our waste and recycling facilities

Have your say as a member of Buckinghamshire Council's Customer Partnership Panel

Buckinghamshire Council is calling on residents to join its Customer Partnership Panel, giving them the chance to offer their views and feedback on how the council can improve its website, online forms and other communication methods.

The panel was launched late last year and is now seeking new members aged 18 and over from all walks of life. Applicants must live within the Buckinghamshire Council area.

As a panel member, residents will have the opportunity to participate in surveys several times a year to provide their views on how the council communicates with residents, as well as providing feedback on the council's digital services.

Panel members will be invited to participate in up to four surveys a year and the majority of these will be conducted online. However, some may involve a telephone call or focus groups. Panel members can choose how they wish to be contacted and whether they wish to participate. They can also leave the panel whenever they wish.

Members of the panel will be reimbursed for reasonable traveling expenses and offered refreshments at any face-to-face meetings.

Buckinghamshire Council announces new highways contractors

Buckinghamshire Council has today announced the 12 approved contractors who will be working on highways, maintenance and infrastructure projects within the county from 1 April 2023.

The announcement completes all elements of the transition of the council's highways and maintenance contract work to new partners, as part of a planned move as the contract with current partner, Ringway Jacobs, comes to a close at the end of this month.

Last year Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) were awarded the council's Term Maintenance Contract and the Term Consultancy Contract was awarded to Atkins, starting from 1 April 2023. The 12 newly-appointed contractors will work alongside BBLP and Atkins to carry out the works needed, under new Framework 1 and Framework 2 contracts which will run for a period of four years.

The 12 contractors have been appointed following a procurement process and will operate as follows:

Buckinghamshire Highways Framework One - Minor Works

Lot 1: Conventional Surfacing Work

- Balfour Beatty Living Places Limited
- Eurovia Infrastructure Limited
- O'Hara Bros Surfacing Limited

Lot 2: Surface Treatments including Surface Dressing

- Colas Limited
- Eurovia Infrastructure Limited
- Kier Highways Limited

Lot 3: Minor Works (under £500K)

- Balfour Beatty Living Places Limited
- J McCann and Co Limited
- O'Hara Bros Surfacing Limited

Buckinghamshire Highways Framework Two - Major Works (over £500K)

- Balfour Beatty Living Places Limited
- Keltbray Highways Limited
- Tilbury Douglas Construction Limited

The frameworks have been set up in this way to deliver value for money and to allow the council to align delivery of highways and regeneration infrastructure projects under a new delivery model. The new model will mean other council services such as Flooding and Development, Transport Strategy and Rights of Way teams can benefit from the wide range of expertise and experience provided by the range of contractors

Support available for Bucks residents struggling with Council Tax payments

Buckinghamshire residents are reminded that annual Council Tax bills will start being posted from Monday 13 March. Residents worried about their ability to pay their Council Tax are urged to contact Buckinghamshire Council as soon as possible.

The council offers several options to help ease financial pressures, including checking for discounts or exemptions, switching payment dates, and spreading payments over 12 months.

The council is encouraging residents to sign up for a [Customer Access online account](#), which provides people with 24/7 access to manage their Council Tax account – including checking balances, payments, bills, and setting up or amending their Direct Debit. To sign up for a Customer Access account, residents need their account number and online key, both of which can be found on their Council Tax bill.

For information and help with any money-related issues, residents should visit [Buckinghamshire Council's website](#) or contact the Helping Hand team on 01296 531151.

[Citizen's Advice](#) also offers free, independent advice and support around Council Tax payments

Free, fun and flavourful – Buckinghamshire Council continues support and countywide holiday clubs for eligible families this Easter

This Easter, Buckinghamshire Council is continuing its support for eligible children and families during the Easter Holidays as part of its ongoing Helping Hand and Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programmes. These services provide a range of assistance, including food vouchers, holiday clubs and hot meals. There is also a range of support and advice. Details of all the HAF holiday activities are available on [Buckinghamshire Council's website](#). We are available to help with the cost of living for families in Buckinghamshire.

Councillor Derek Town