

## 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 were last week 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 last week 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.

## Bledlow Household Recycling Centre Reopens

As from today, Buckinghamshire Council will officially be reopening the Bledlow Household Recycling Centre (HRC).

From Monday 16 January 2023 the site will be open five days a week, closing every Wednesday and Thursday. It will open 9am-4pm in the winter (Oct-Mar) and 9am-6pm in the summer (Apr-Sep).

The site will look and feel very similar to other household recycling centres in the county. Buckinghamshire residents can visit free of charge, but there will be costs for [disposing of any non-household waste](#).

Bledlow is a rural site so residents are asked to consider the local area when travelling. The site is most suited for small trips and residents with lots of waste are encouraged to use the larger sites such as Aston Clinton and High Wycombe.

To minimise disruption in nearby villages, residents are asked try to avoid visiting at busier times, like school drop off. Visitors should drive slowly and safely and take care of cyclists, farm machinery and other road users when entering and exiting the site. Before visiting, residents are encouraged to check the webcams online to see how busy the site is and for the quieter times to visit. All sites are currently open 9am-4pm however during busy periods, especially at weekends, last entry may be before 4pm to allow those already onsite to unload their waste and exit before the site closes. Residents are asked to consider coming back at another time if the site is busy, especially if there are queues outside the site.

Bucks residents are being reminded to bring proof of address when visiting, such as a:

- council tax statement
- utility bill
- passport
- driving licence

[Waste permits](#) will be needed if residents are visiting in vans, or want to use trailers.

Trade waste is not allowed on site, please find an [alternative site](#).

Oxfordshire residents, for example those living in the Thame and Chinnor areas, must pay to visit the site. Charges start from approximately £20 per trip for a small car, and nearer £50-60 for a medium-sized car. Alternative [household recycling centres in Oxfordshire](#) are available on the Oxfordshire County Council website.

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

“The reopening of Bledlow Household Recycling Centre will benefit local residents needing to make a small trip to the tip.

“We’d like to ask users of the site to be considerate of neighbouring communities and villages by driving slowly and being mindful about the impact of queues on traffic congestion. Please check the online webcams to see how busy the site is before visiting Bledlow HRC. If necessary, consider spreading your visits or visit the Aston Clinton or High Wycombe sites for larger trips.

“Based on other recycling centres in Buckinghamshire, we expect the site to be busiest on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and quietest on Tuesday mornings. To manage potential traffic outside the site, some temporary traffic management will be in place with no access turning right into the site from the south. All users are asked to approach the site from the north via Wigans Lane. Please check the website for more information and remember to plan ahead and allow plenty of time for your trip.”

For more information visit [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/bledlow-hrc](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/bledlow-hrc)

Notes to Editor

All sites open 9am to 6pm (April to September) and 9am to 4pm (October to March).

Sites open seven days a week:

Amersham - London Road East, HP7 9DT

Aston Clinton - College Road North, HP22 5EZ

Beaconsfield - A40 London Road, Lower Pyebushes, HP9 2XB

Buckingham - Yonder Slade, Buckingham Industrial Park, MK18 1RZ

High Wycombe - High Heavens, Clay Lane, Booker, SL7 3DJ

Langley - Langley Park Road, SL3 6DD

Sites open five days a week, closed on Wednesdays and Thursdays:

Aylesbury - Rabans Close, Rabans Lane, HP19 8RS

Bledlow - Wigans Lane, Bledlow Ridge, HP14 4BH

Burnham - Crowpiece Lane, SL2 3TG

Chesham - Latimer Road, HP5 1TL

## **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

**More information on active and sustainable school travel can be found on the [Buckinghamshire School Travel Planning website](#).**

**Further details on the Modeshift STARS system can be found at: <https://modeshiftstars.org>**

## Group A Strep and Invasive Strep A (iGAS) in children – what to do

In colder weather lots of people get sore throats, colds and coughs. Most of these are caused by viruses so do not need antibiotics and should get better without medical help. However, we are aware that there are also some bacterial infections circulating which benefit from treatment with antibiotics.

The bacteria called Group A Strep is common and lots of us carry it on our skin or in our throats without causing problems. However, it can cause throat infections, skin infections and scarlet fever.

Signs of scarlet fever to look out for include:

- a sore throat
- headache
- fever,
- a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a 'sandpapery' feel

Contact NHS 111 or a GP if you think your child has scarlet fever because early treatment with antibiotics will reduce the risk of health complications. Antibiotics are only available from pharmacies/clinicians if you have a prescription.

If your child is diagnosed with scarlet fever, keep them at home until at least 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatments to avoid spreading the infection to others.

It is very rare but when Invasive Group A Strep (iGAS) gets into areas it would not normally be found, such as the lungs or blood stream, this can cause severe illness.

If your child seems seriously unwell, parents should trust their own judgement. Our advice for parents is:

Contact NHS 111 or a GP if:

- your child is getting worse
- your child is feeding or eating much less than normal
- your child has had a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or shows other signs of [dehydration](#)
- your baby is under 3 months and has a temperature of 38°C, or is older than 3 months and has a temperature of 39°C or higher
- your baby feels hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest, or feels sweaty
- your child is very tired or irritable.

Call 999 or go to A&E if:

- your child has difficulty breathing: you may notice grunting noises, or their tummy sucking under their ribs
- there are pauses when your child breathes
- your child's [skin, tongue or lips are blue](#) ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and search 'blue skin or lips')
- your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.

If you are entering a healthcare building please wear a mask to prevent further spread of the infection.

Councillor Angela Macpherson, Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing said: "We know many parents are anxious about these infections and we want them to have the facts to hand so they are able to make the right decisions for their families. We want to reassure them that this is not a new strain of the Group A Strep infection but one that we see most years."

Jane O'Grady, Director of Public Health for Buckinghamshire, added: "It's usually a mild illness, but it can be easily passed between people, so making sure everyone washes their hands carefully and regularly is important to stop the spread. Also ensure coughs and sneezes are caught in a tissue and these are disposed of in a bin."

Further advice and reassurance for parents from South East Regional Chief Nurse, Acosia Nyanin, can be found on this video:  
<https://www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk/blog/2022/12/08/update-on-scarlet-fever-and-invasive-group-a-streptococci/>

More information on scarlet fever and Group A Strep is available on the government website: [UKHSA update on scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep](#)

**Contact us at [communications@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:communications@buckinghamshire.gov.uk) during office hours. For urgent out of hours enquiries, please call 07825 430 978.**

## **Proud of Bucks Awards: Nominations open 9 January**

Who has gone above and beyond in 2022? Are there community groups or volunteers that deserve recognition?

The Proud of Bucks Awards will soon be back again, celebrating local community contributions during 2022 across our 16 Community Board areas. Nominations open on 9 January 2023 and the categories for this year are: Local Community Champion, Young Community Champion (under 21s) and Community Group Contribution.

**End of year message from Martin Tett, Leader of Buckinghamshire Council**

As 2022 draws to a close, it seems like an opportune moment to pause and reflect on the past year, as well as to look ahead to what 2023 may bring for us here in Buckinghamshire.

We know that 2022 has continued to challenge us in a multitude of ways. Times are hard right now, with all of us feeling some impact from the cost-of-living pressures. As a council, in addition to maintaining and continuing to improve all our services, we are focusing a large part of our effort on supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Earlier this year we welcomed the news that more support was being targeted nationally. The Government's Household Support Fund has helped us to continue to develop our local Helping Hand service which is channelling support directly to our residents facing the greatest hardship. It has allowed us to provide food vouchers for pensioners and families on low incomes and to fund schemes like our HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme giving young people who have free school meals, access to free activities and clubs during school holidays.

We are ever grateful for the additional support provided by our partners and the outstanding voluntary and community sector we have here in Buckinghamshire. I have also been overwhelmed by the donations made to our crisis fund that we set up earlier this year, in partnership with Heart of Bucks. More than £180,000 has now been donated, an incredible amount of money which will be used to help more people locally.

I am not surprised by the generosity shown by local people. You only have to look at the response we have had to requests for support for our families escaping turmoil in Ukraine and Afghanistan to know how inclusive and welcoming people in Bucks can be. I would like to say a personal thank you to everyone who has helped in some way.

None of us knows what the future may hold but we do know that we face some very tough decisions early in the new year when we must set our budget for 2023/24. Shrewd financial planning has placed us in a better position than some, but we know that with costs continuing to rise and pressures across all our service areas, we are going to have to look very hard at how we prioritise our spending to fund our essential services and continue to make improvements going forward.

Despite these financial constraints, we are committed to continuing to deliver on the promises we have made to our residents. One of our key focuses is on addressing the impacts of the climate crisis at a local level. We have made great strides this year including planting thousands more trees, expanding our network of electric vehicle charging points and encouraging greater use of more sustainable modes of transport by extending our e-scooter trials, introducing a new on-demand bus service and improving a number of our active travel routes across the county.

Our programme of work to invest in our roads has continued apace this year. We are injecting £100m into an array of repairs and improvements which will benefit all our local communities. This work includes embarking on another round of drain clearing, using innovative technologies to repair roads and pavements and introducing new and improved means to increase road safety.

These works sit alongside ongoing efforts to bring about improvements in other areas. This includes bringing our Children's Services Ofsted rating up towards Good and continuing to clamp down hard on those who blight our local countryside by fly-tipping.



Earlier this month we took the first step in progressing our ambition to create equal opportunities for everyone in Buckinghamshire with the launch of our Opportunity Bucks initiative, our local version of the Government's Levelling Up programme. Our aim is to buck the trend of poorer outcomes around health, work and education in some of our communities and ensure residents are able to access the same level of opportunity regardless of where they live. It will be a long-term programme, but we are investing funds, focusing on key areas and working closely with partners to ensure its success. We will keep you updated on progress and developments over coming months.

Martin