



**Cllr Jilly Jordan**

**Soulbury Parish Council Meeting Monday 17th June 2024**

## **Celebrating Bucks' communities**

June is the 'Month of Community' and Buckinghamshire Council is taking the opportunity to celebrate all the great work our communities do.

From fundraisers to food champions and support networks to street associations, our local communities are made up of people committed to helping others and improving life in their local area.

Shining a spotlight on the work the council does with local communities to make them even stronger, including the work of our Community Boards and our work with partner organisations.

Sharing information on how people can get more involved in their local community, including volunteering opportunities and other community initiatives.

For the month of June, the focus is on celebrating everything that makes our communities great, including:

### **Week 1 – 3 to 9 June**

[Volunteers Week](#)

[Big Lunch](#) (9 June) – The Dairy Maid pub in Aylesbury.

D-Day 80th Anniversary celebrations (6 June) – Take a look at [Bucks Online Directory](#) to see if there are any events in your area.

[Community Food Chain](#) – All the ways people can lend a helping hand to ensure food gets to those in need of support in Buckinghamshire.

### **Week 2 – 10 to 16 June**

[Men's Health Week](#)

[Loneliness Awareness Week](#) – Combatting loneliness and isolation.

[Carers week](#)

### **Week 3 – 17 to 23 June**

[Refugee Week](#) – a festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary.

[Learning Disability Week](#) – ‘Do you see me?’ theme about being seen, heard and valued.

The Great Get Together (21-23 June)

#### **Week 4 – 24 to 30 June**

Armed Forces Week – includes flag raising on 24 June, Reserves Day on 26 June, and Armed Forces Day on 29 June.

Pride – 29 June

The Month of Community is a time for unity and celebration, illuminating the remarkable communities we live in. It’s an opportunity to acknowledge and value the extraordinary efforts of our residents, who contribute daily to making this county an exceptional place to live, work and thrive. Whether through volunteering, fundraising, or simply being good neighbours, their impact is immeasurable.

Buckinghamshire Council remains steadfast in our commitment to supporting and empowering our communities. Witnessing the progress we achieve together is truly inspiring. To all those who have played a part in shaping Bucks into the special place it is, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for their ongoing contributions.

There are lots of ways you can get involved in your local community. For volunteering opportunities, check out the [Buckinghamshire Volunteer Matching Service](#) run by Community Impact Bucks.

One of the best ways to learn more about community projects and initiatives in your local area is via your Community Board. Find information on your local board on the council’s [website](#). Also see the [Bucks Online Directory](#), which connects residents with a wide range of local services, activities, and support groups.

Communities are being encouraged to tag their events during the month with the #MonthOfCommunityBucks hashtag and to share on social media.

## Buckinghamshire Council elects new Chairman

Councillor Mimi Harker OBE has been appointed as the new Chairman of Buckinghamshire Council, with Cllr Sarfaraz Khan Raja elected as the new Vice-Chairman for the coming twelve months.

Under the council's constitution, a new Chairman is elected annually, and Mimi Harker OBE was formally appointed at last week's Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Buckinghamshire Council.

Mimi has served as Vice-Chairman for the last twelve months and is Ward Councillor for Great Missenden, representing Missenden and Prestwood. She said:

"It is a great honour to serve Buckinghamshire Council in this way and I look forward to undertaking my duties as Chairman in the year ahead. There are many challenges that face us this forthcoming year, but I am here to perform my duties to the very best of my ability and to serve our communities in the way they expect and deserve.

"I have chosen three charities to support this year; South Bucks Hospice because of the compassionate and caring work they do with people suffering from life limiting illnesses, and the difference they make at the most difficult of times, Oasis Partnership, a critical charity with services across Buckinghamshire, that support people with alcohol and substance misuse issues and Heart of Bucks, which supports vital community projects across our county."

## **Council pledges extra £500k for gully cleansing and roadside drainage repairs**

Buckinghamshire Council has pledged an additional £500,000 for repeat gully cleansing and repairing roadside drainage as part of a programme to ensure the county is as protected as possible against heavy rainfall and potential flooding. The funding is on top of the £110m committed over four years from the council's budget to tackle highways repairs, with extra focus being given to a number of high priority areas.

With the highest rainfall for more than 200 years throughout winter and spring, in recent months many areas within Buckinghamshire have experienced flooding and related problems. To bolster resilience to flooding and heavy rain, the council will use the new funding to carry out extra cleansing of high priority gullies that need it in addition to its regular planned gully maintenance, to ensure they are in prime condition to cope with periods of sudden heavy or prolonged rainfall. New ditches and 'grips' to remove water from the road will also be created in some problem areas, and damaged drainage systems will be repaired so that water can flow away more easily.

As we know, it has been a very wet winter and the excessive amounts of rain have caused issues for many of our communities as drainage systems struggled to deal with volumes of water rarely seen in Buckinghamshire. While dealing with sewers and mains water pipes remains the responsibility of water companies, as a council we need to ensure that roads are clear of standing water wherever possible. Clearing gullies and ditches of leaves and debris and making repairs where needed allows the water to drain away more quickly and helps to prevent some flooding.

For the past four years, the council has allocated funding to clean all 85,000 gullies across the county as part of a regular cycle. Gullies are an important part of the highway drainage system that minimise flood damage. This will be the fourth year of clearing out the gullies and making repairs where necessary, helping the gullies to work at their best, protecting property and minimising the damage to highways caused by runoff from roads.

We will be visiting every highway gully across our roads network and cleaning and making repairs as needed – residents can help by paying attention to any signs put up on their road to give advance notice of gully cleansing and making sure that vehicles are moved so as not to block our crews from getting access to gullies. By taking this additional action now we hope we can better prepare ourselves for the future.

## **Buckinghamshire to get new specialist SEN School**

Buckinghamshire Council has welcomed confirmation from the Department for Education today (Thu 9 May) that it will fund a brand new special educational needs free school in the county.

The council put forward a successful bid to be one of sixteen locations for the new special free schools, to create significantly more specialist provision in the county for children with additional needs. Building the new school is a key part of Buckinghamshire Council's SEND sufficiency strategy, which aims to ensure all children with identified SEND can access a high quality education that caters for their needs.

The new school will provide high quality provision for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs who require therapeutic support. The council will now work with the Department for Education to identify a sponsor for the new school and to bring the proposal forward, confirming the site and timeframes. It's proposed that the new school will offer 152 places for children aged 7-19, offering a high-quality education with therapeutic support, offering Maths, English and Science at Btec and GCSE level alongside other vocational subjects.

We are delighted to have been awarded this vital funding which will allow us to build a brand new special educational needs free school in Buckinghamshire. As is the case in many other places, we have seen a growing number of students on Education, Health and Care Plans and this will allow us to create a number of additional places for our children and families in Buckinghamshire so that they can access the education they need to thrive and flourish.

We are looking forward to working on this project with the Department for Education and the school's future sponsors to develop a truly outstanding school for children with SEND in Buckinghamshire.

This is a crucial part of our long-term plan to deliver on our SEND sufficiency strategy to make sure the needs of all our Buckinghamshire students can be met.

## Council confirms cost of living support for eligible Buckinghamshire residents

Buckinghamshire Council has welcomed a £2.4 million Household Support Fund (HSF) allocation from the Department for Work and Pensions. Covering the period April to September 2024, this new funding will help the council to continue to provide support to residents struggling with the cost of living, including support during school holidays.

Recognising that some residents may not qualify for other government assistance, the extended funding period allows the council to provide direct support through our [Helping Hand service](#). We will continue to work with partners and the voluntary and community sector to ensure provision is available for residents throughout the county with a focus on specific groups facing difficulties including in our Opportunity Bucks wards\*.

In addition to the Household Support Fund, the council has implemented several programs to enhance residents' wellbeing:

- **Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM):** This initiative addresses the complex needs of individuals facing multiple disadvantages, including homelessness, substance misuse, and mental health challenges. Collaborating with partner agencies, the council is providing holistic support to tackle underlying issues.
- **Welcoming Spaces:** Libraries, community centres and local hubs serve as welcoming environments where residents can keep warm, save money on heating and access free support, advice and Wi-Fi, as well as meet new people, find local groups and activities to take part in.
- **Energy Doctor:** Recognising the impact of energy costs on household budgets, the council is offering energy-saving advice and practical solutions. Our Energy Doctor program provides practical support and intervention for eligible residents to reduce utility bills while promoting sustainability.

Our residents are at the heart of everything we do. The new allocation of the Household Support Fund will allow us to continue supporting vulnerable individuals who need it most during difficult times and enable them to get back on their feet. Thank you to the government for providing this extra funding. Hopefully there will be more funding to come in the near future.

Our work with charities, local businesses and organisations means we can continue to give residents a helping hand to help ease some the financial pressures they are facing – which in turn can help with mental health and wellbeing pressures. Together, we can build a stronger, more resilient Buckinghamshire.

Buckinghamshire Council remains dedicated to fostering a compassionate and resilient community. Residents are encouraged to reach out if they require assistance or have questions about the available support. They can do this by going to: [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living)

- Buckinghamshire residents who are in need can contact Helping Hand to request help accessing or paying for food, bills, essentials, and debt advice. [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/helping-hand](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/helping-hand)
- Household Support Fund 5 funding is allocated for 1 April to 30 September 2024. More information on spending allocation is available here: [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living/household-support-fund](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living/household-support-fund)

\*[Opportunity Bucks](#) is the council's flagship programme to improve opportunities for people in Buckinghamshire.

The Opportunity Bucks programme focuses on 10 wards in Buckinghamshire across 3 areas where people are experiencing the most hardship. Our ward partnerships work with the communities to bring about improvements to their local areas:

#### **Aylesbury**

- Aylesbury North
- Aylesbury North-West
- Aylesbury South-West

#### **Chesham**

#### **High Wycombe**

- Abbey
- Booker, Cressex & Castlefield
- Ryemead & Micklefield
- Terriers & Amersham Hill
- Totteridge & Bowerdean
- West Wycombe

Find out more about the Opportunity Bucks programme at: [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/opportunity-bucks](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/opportunity-bucks)

## **Bucks Tree Mission flourishes with more than 193,000 trees planted so far**

Buckinghamshire Council is celebrating the significant progress made in its Bucks Tree Mission, with over 193,000 trees planted since the beginning of the programme.

The overall mission, which began in 2021, is to plant over 543,000 new trees on council-owned land in Buckinghamshire within a decade – one for every resident. This is part of the council's comprehensive [Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy](#).

The most recent tree planting season ran from October 2023 to March 2024. Key projects in the county have included a mix of large-scale tree planting on council land and a wide variety of local community planting initiatives, including several new Tiny Forests.

At Wing Wood, the final 23,000 trees have been planted, bringing this woodland up to its full complement of 132,000 trees. A well-attended volunteer day in Wing saw over 600 of the new trees planted by members of the local community.

Communities have also been enjoying opportunities to plant more Miyawaki forests in Buckinghamshire, with five of these Tiny Forests being planted over the last few months – totalling 3,000 trees planted with funding the council secured from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund. This funding has also enabled community planting in Stoke Hammond, Gerrards Cross, Buckingham and Marlow.

Trees provide a range of ecosystem services beyond capturing carbon, which will help deliver biodiversity and climate change adaptation improvements.

Thomas Broom, Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment, said:

"This winter has seen a fantastic community effort across the entire county, and it's inspiring to witness such progress in planting a whole new generation of trees in Buckinghamshire. Over the past three years, literally hundreds of volunteers of all ages, from individuals to school students and community groups, have come together to help us to plant an amazing 193,000 trees since the start of our programme.

"This is all part of our Bucks Tree Mission to plant over half a million trees in Buckinghamshire as part of our climate change commitment to reach net zero by 2050."



