

Cost of Living Programme – Community Board Update February

As a Council, we recognise the growing pressures being faced by our residents linked to the increases in the cost of living.

Buckinghamshire Council has made further provision to assist residents who are in need, which is especially important during the winter months, developed through close partnership working, particularly with the voluntary and community sector.

We are continuing to develop our offer of support to residents, which is summarised below, and further information and updates will be published on our website.

- **Help with the cost of living council homepage** – Our updated website ensures people can access information about the range of support available, including: support with food, fuel and household bills, finding a place to keep warm, obtaining essential household items, support available from Government, support for pensioners and how to contact the Helping Hand team: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living/>
- **Helping Hand** - Our Helping Hand service provides support to local individuals and families who are experiencing financial hardship. The team can be contacted on 01296 531 151 or through the [online contact form](#). You can read more about the help available on the [dedicated section of our website](#).
- **Food and hot meals schemes** – There are many food schemes available in Buckinghamshire. Further information is available in the cost of living section of the Council website. [Help buying or accessing food | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

We have also partnered with local organisations to launch the Food Champions Network, whereby residents volunteer to collect food on behalf of their local food banks and deliver it to the food banks. [Become a Food Champion and help your local community | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

If a community organisation wishes to set up a hot meals scheme, a toolkit with guidance on how to do this will also be available in the cost of living section of the Council's website [Toolkit: hot meal provision for groups | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

- **Social media campaign** – We are providing a range of cost of living and energy efficiency related content and links for residents through our social media outlets – Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Printed materials are also available in libraries and other welcoming spaces.
- **Partnership with Heart of Bucks for the crisis appeal** – For those who are in a position to help financially during this crisis, we have partnered with Heart of Bucks to raise funds for those in need. Residents are able to donate money via the Heart of Bucks Crisis Appeal webpage. [TotalGiving™ - Crisis Appeal for Buckinghamshire - Heart of Bucks - Fundraising Page](#)
- **Welcoming Spaces** - Starting with council and community libraries, these locations will provide a warm, welcoming and supportive space for anyone who needs it. These are places where residents can come into safe and inclusive spaces, free of charge, to stay warm and enjoy a little company. Use of facilities, including free wifi, will also be available in these places along with information and support. [Find a place to keep warm \(Welcoming Spaces\) | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

Welcoming Spaces have started extending to some private and community venues. Information about these will be accessible through the Bucks Online Directory and [Find a Warm Welcome Space Today](#).

If a community venue wishes to set up as a welcoming space, a toolkit with guidance is also provided in the cost of living section of the Council's website .

- **Wycombe Wanderers Warm Hub** - Operating every Tuesday and Thursday from 5pm-8pm until 28th February, the Warm Hub is accessible to anyone aged over 65 and attendees can be accompanied by 1 guest (pre-booking is required to detail any access or dietary requirements). 4 family days, open to the entire community, will also be communicated in due course. More details are available at [Warm Hub - Wycombe Wanderers \(wwfc.com\)](#)

- **Warm Boxes** – We have launched a warm box offer for residents that will enable them to collect free essential items to help with keeping warm from selected welcoming spaces. Items available include things such as blankets, hot water bottles, thermomugs and thermal socks. The offer is currently available from our 9 county libraries plus the locations below:
 - Wycombe Wanderers Warm Hub
Over 65's (with a +1) Every Tues/ Thurs in Jan / Feb 2023 between 5-8 pm

 - Wycombe Museum – Priory Avenue High Wycombe
10am-5pm Tues – Fri & Sunday (closed Saturday)

 - St Vincent De Paul Society
Open Wednesday, in Upper room, after mass 9:30am. Hot drinks, biscuits. Listed under <https://www.warmwelcome.uk>

 - Christ The Servant King – Booker
9am-11.30am. Tuesday morning sessions are especially arranged for carers/parents and toddlers, 9am-12pm- Wednesday Community Cafe. New4You- 10th Feb and 10th March. 0-5 year old clothing, warm drink and cake all free, 10-11.30am

 - All Saints Church - High Wycombe
Mustard Seed cafe, Mon 10-2, Tues 10-1, Wed 10-12, Th 10.30-1, Fri 10-12.30, Sat 10.30-12.30

 - Hills Café – Micklefield
Mon- sat 9.15-1.30pm

 - St Andrews Church – Totteridge
Every Wednesday 9.30-11.30am. Renew space- chat and a cup of tea and bring a hobby - parking, free WIFI, hot drinks, accessible toilets

 - St Peter's Church – Coventon Rd Aylesbury
Thursday morning Community Cafe and Warming space soup lunch 10:00am - 1:00pm, Foodbank also present each week and Helping Hand member attends once a month

- Southcourt Baptist Church – Penn Rd Aylesbury
- Aylesbury Vineyard- Gatehouse Close Aylesbury
Foodbank, Job Club and drop in on Tuesday morning

Residents can ask a member of staff who will be able to help.

If you know of any community projects that may wish to purchase some warm boxes then please raise this with the Community Board manager.

For more bespoke help with essential items to keep warm, residents may contact the Helping Hand team.

- **Library Fines Amnesty Jan & Feb** – There will be a fines amnesty in all [Bucks Libraries](#) during January and February. Residents can just drop into one of the libraries during this time and ask a team member to have all historic fines on their accounts cleared. Any fines on items returned late during these months will also be waived.
- **Better Housing Better Health** - Better Housing, Better Health (previously called the Affordable Warmth Helpline) helps Buckinghamshire residents keep warm and well at home and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

For self-referrals residents may visit the [Better Housing, Better Health website](#) or call [0800 107 0044](#).

We also offer guidance for [saving energy and tackling climate change at home and in other buildings](#).

- **Get around for £2 on the bus scheme** - From 1st January to 31st March a single bus journey within the Arriva bus zone will cost no more than £2. This includes Buckinghamshire and cross-county routes with some exclusions. More details are available at: [Get around for £2 | Help for Households | Arriva Bus UK](#), where residents may check if their local bus route is included in the scheme.
- **Pay council tax over 12 months instead of 10** – Residents now have the option of paying council tax evenly across the year instead of 10 months with a two month break in February and March. This should spread out the cost of an annual Council Tax bill into 12 smaller, monthly payments. More details and the request form are available at: [Different ways you can pay your Council Tax bill | Buckinghamshire Council](#)
- **Resident Support Leaflet** – A printed Resident Support Leaflet summarising available cost of living support will soon be available in libraries and from partner organisations such as Citizens Advice Bucks and food banks. These will also be distributed directly to vulnerable residents by partner organisations.