



# Community Board update

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## National planning policy framework (NPPF) consultation

As you may be aware the Government have announced their intention to change the NPPF and have launched a consultation as part of this review:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>

Please note the deadline for responding to the consultation is Tuesday 24 September 2024.

The consultation proposes a number of important changes to national planning rules, for example on how local housing need is calculated and on development in the Green Belt.

For Buckinghamshire, the consultation proposes a housing need figure of 4,122 new homes a year, which is 41.5% higher than the figure derived from the existing government formula for calculating housing need. The consultation also proposes not to allow councils to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to deviate away from this figure.

Alongside these changes there are several others that we would like to bring to your attention, as such we have invited town and parish councils to attend an online meeting, which will outline what the proposed main changes are, what they mean and what the future proposals are.

There is no requirement to let us know which meeting you would like to attend. The meetings are on Tuesday 10 September at 6pm and also on Thursday 12 September at 6pm. Both sessions will be on Teams and will be for an hour and a half. You will only need to attend one session, as they will both follow the same format. Details of how to join the meetings were included in the email that was sent to clerks.

Buckinghamshire Council is considering a response to this consultation at a special Cabinet meeting on 16 September. The papers for this meeting will be published late on Friday 6 September and you will be able to read our draft response here:

<https://buckinghamshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=337&MId=19011>

## A new model for Community Boards

A review of the Community Boards has been undertaken following the outcome of the Boundary Commission Review, which reduces unitary Members from 147 to 97, together with some ward boundary changes.

The Council has agreed to make savings as part of the medium term financial plan (MTFP) which result in a reduced total budget of £1m from 2025/26. Considering all these changes, a report was considered by Cabinet on 10 September which recommended a new model of eight Community Boards - a reduction from the current 16 - which will take effect immediately after the local elections in May 2025.

While the model will increase the geographical boundaries for the Boards, they will build on the strengths we have developed in engaging local partners, identifying key priorities for the local communities and drawing in contributory funding. The new Board areas are also coterminous with the new Buckinghamshire Council ward boundaries which will come into effect in May 2025.

In terms of the use of resources, the model will ensure that each Board is able to have a dedicated community board manager and a total sum of £250k will be available for project funding.

You can read the report in full online, as item 8 of the Cabinet agenda: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 10th September, 2024, 10.00 am - Modern Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

## Consultations

### **Buckinghamshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) (2 September to 13 October 2024)**

We have launched a public consultation on our proposed Buckinghamshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This ambitious plan aims to identify priorities for enhancing and expanding cycling, walking and wheeling networks across Buckinghamshire, with the overall aim of providing increased transport choices, promoting healthier lifestyles, reducing traffic congestion, and contributing to environmental sustainability.

The council has already developed local LCWIPs for Aylesbury Garden Town, Buckingham, and High Wycombe, with each recommending ways to improve walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure in those towns. However, there is currently no comprehensive LCWIP that covers the whole Buckinghamshire Council area.

The Buckinghamshire LCWIP aims to address this by identifying key priorities for new or improved infrastructure that will connect towns and villages, making cycling, wheeling and walking safer, more accessible, and more convenient for residents and visitors alike. The council is now seeking feedback from the public to ensure that the plan meets the needs and expectations of the community.

Find out more information and have your say at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/LCWIP](https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk/LCWIP)

### **Money Matters budget consultation (29 August to 13 October 2024)**

We are preparing our spending plans for 2025/26 and asking residents, businesses and other local stakeholders to give their views on which services should be prioritised.

The 'Money Matters' survey is the opportunity for residents to have a say on what's important to them and how they would like to see the council's budget distributed.

Councils across the country continue to experience significant financial pressures due to rising costs and added demand on services. In particular, Buckinghamshire Council has seen social care costs escalate even further in recent months due to more vulnerable residents needing help.

With continuing pressures on household budgets after a period of high inflation and other turbulence, it's important that residents tell the council how they want to see their council tax spent during the next financial year.

Find out more and have your say at [buckinghamshire.gov.uk/money-matters-consultation](https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk/money-matters-consultation)

### **Tell us what ageing well in Buckinghamshire means to you (16 September to 4 November 2024)**

Helping Buckinghamshire's residents to live healthy, happy lives for longer is the commitment set down in the council's Healthy Ageing Strategy (2024-2029). As the programme enters its second year, people are once again being asked to share their opinions on what is most important to them to help shape priorities for the coming year.

The survey is open to people aged 40 years and over who live, work and/or study in Buckinghamshire. To take part visit: <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/public-health/ageing-well-2024/>

### **Taxi licensing best practice consultation (16 September to 24 November 2024)**

Residents, taxi drivers and operators are invited to help shape the future of taxi services.

We are committed to reviewing our taxi licensing policy every five years. However, in November 2023 the Department for Transport updated their best practice guidance (BPG) for taxi licensing which differed in some key areas from our own licensing policy. Because of this we have decided on an early review of our policy. This consultation is part of the review.

The consultation covers key areas including driver applications, vehicle requirements, accessibility, private hire operators and CCTV in licensed vehicles. Criminal records and unacceptable behaviour will be addressed in a future consultation.

Survey results will be supplemented by workshops with specific interest groups to inform an updated policy.

Find out more information and have your say at

<https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/regulatory-services/taxi-licensing/>

**All consultation and engagement activities being run by Buckinghamshire Council can be found on the website: [yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com](https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com)**

## **Campaigns**

### **Could you get Pension Credit?**

#### **Drive to encourage eligible older people to apply for pension credit**

Following the decision by government to discontinue universal payment of the winter fuel payment, we are encouraging eligible residents to apply for pension credit.

The government recently agreed to withdraw the universal winter fuel payment for pensioners. The payment will now only be available to those people aged 66 and over, who are receiving pension credit or a limited number of other benefits.

Pension credit offers support for a range of household expenses including the winter fuel payment, but many pensioners are not aware and are not claiming the support that they are eligible for. According to the government, only about 60% of eligible people currently claim pension credit countrywide. This means four out of 10 eligible pensioners are missing out on benefits of up to £3,900 a year.

**To find out all about pension credit, including whether you or someone you know could qualify and how to apply, go to [Buckinghamshire.gov.uk/pension-credit](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/pension-credit)**

Additional support is also available through Buckinghamshire Council's Helping Hand service for people who may not qualify for pension credit but who are still struggling financially. The team can offer emergency support, practical guidance or supply contact details for other organisations that provide food support or specialist advice.

## **Present for their future – new campaign to improve school attendance in Buckinghamshire**

Buckinghamshire Council is launching a major drive to remind parents and carers about the importance of children attending school and promoting the wide range of support that's available for anyone struggling with school attendance.

School absence rates have been higher across the whole country since the Covid pandemic, with many complex reasons behind this. While Buckinghamshire has better attendance rates than the national average, a higher number of Buckinghamshire students are missing school and this increasing absence is a trend the council wants to reverse.

For most pupils, the best place to be is in school, surrounded by the support of their friends and teachers as well as learning support staff and other staff. This is important not just for a child's learning, but also for their overall wellbeing, wider development and their mental health.

Pupils benefit from being at school and every lesson counts. Regular attendance is vital to help children achieve and get the best possible start in life. Children who frequently miss school often fall behind, in fact, there is a strong link between regular school attendance and achieving good grades at GCSE.

But the benefits of being in school go beyond exam results, attending school is also vital to a child's wellbeing and development. When children miss school, it's not just about missing lessons, it's also about losing valuable moments spent with their friends and teachers and the assistance provided by learning support staff and other staff.

Children may struggle to attend school for a wide range of reasons and the council wants to remind students and their families that support is available that can help remove barriers and support attendance at school.

Some children need more help to attend school every day and that support is available from the council and from the school the child attends.

More information is available on our website - [Present for Their Future | Buckinghamshire Council](#)

### **Skills bootcamp - Enroll this September**

From enhancing career prospects, or giving businesses a boost, Skills Bootcamps are here to help! [View the current Skills Bootcamps on offer in Buckinghamshire](#) including: cyber security, TV & film, agriculture, bricklaying, property management, renewable energies as well as leadership and management

### **Fostering - Are you ready for your biggest and most rewarding challenge?**

We've launched a campaign called 'If You Can...' in which our Fostering Recruitment & Support Team highlights how a whole variety of skills and traits can make a foster carer and without knowing it, you may already have lots of key skills and experience to be part of a child's journey. If you can engage with children, show kindness, be patient, teach, learn, adapt and protect – you could become a foster carer. There are over 500 children in Buckinghamshire needing safe, secure and loving homes. Foster with Bucks offers 24/7 support, extensive training, competitive financial allowances, a generous perks and benefits package and much more to help you give our children the best care.

Find out more at: <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/campaign/you-could-foster/>

### **Check Before You Travel**

We know there is more work than usual happening on the roads across the county. This will be no surprise to people who are already experiencing more disruption as a result.

Utility firms are dealing with ageing pipes and networks that need repairs and upgrades. At the same time demand for high broadband speeds means a lot of new cable is being laid. We are also investing in a major programme of repairs and improvement works. All of this means more work on the roads. This is in addition to the major disruption being caused by HS2 and East West Rail. Emergency works also take place without warning. We can't plan for these, which means sometimes they happen at the same time as other work on the roads. We carefully monitor any emergency works and manage the impact where possible.

For more tips, tools and information about work taking place across the county, visit [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/check-before-you-travel](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/check-before-you-travel)