



Buckingham TownMatters

Spring issue 2021



Thoroughly MODERN
Traditional
BUCKINGHAM

message from your Mayor • the Buckingham survey
flooding • local elections

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR MAYOR



Spring is my favourite time of the year, the lengthening days and warm spring sunshine bringing our gardens and countryside to life. It signifies a time of regrowth and hope.

I know that 2020 was an extremely difficult year for many. It was also a year when Buckingham worked together to help the most vulnerable in our midst.

Early in March Buckingham Food Bank and Emergency Food Bank sprung into action to ensure food parcels were available for anyone in need during Lockdown. Meanwhile Chris Mullis launched the Buckingham Support Network, linking those able to volunteer with self-isolating residents who needed help with shopping or prescription deliveries.

The Food Bank continues to support those who can't afford to buy enough food now. Later in the year, Buckingham Free Meals began operating from the Community Centre. This vital project was celebrated by Premier League Footballer Marcus Rashford, for their work feeding families in need during the Autumn half-term.

Just before Christmas severe flooding came to Buckingham. Members of our community came out to support neighbours, and strangers, with whatever would help most from buckets and places to stay to Christmas dinners. Financial donations poured in for The Bard of Buckingham's flood victim fundraiser, I know receiving the money raised will be a real relief to many impacted by the flooding.



Many other individuals and community groups reached out to help in any way they could, and I thank them all sincerely.

We have added hope this year as the Covid -19 vaccine is taking place in our community, giving protection and helping us all to move forward from the restrictions that we have had to endure.

I urge everyone to take up the vaccination when offered, so we may all look forward to a return of normal life in our community and the world around us.

Geraldine Collins

Cllr Geraldine Collins, Mayor of Buckingham

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Buckingham's Annual Town Meeting, usually held at the Community Centre in Cornwall's Meadow, will this year take place online via Zoom and, technology allowing, will be available for anyone to view and participate. Each year the Town Council facilitates this informal meeting to give residents the chance to ask questions and receive updates on the Town Council and its partner organisations' activities over the previous year. We have decided to move it to the end of May to allow for the Town and Parish elections, currently scheduled for Thursday 6th May 2021.

As always Buckingham residents are welcome and encouraged to attend.

This year's Annual Town Meeting is to be held on Wednesday 26th May, beginning at 7pm. The meeting is not structured round a formal agenda, but highlights the issues that residents want to discuss, and draws on questions previously asked through the Town Council's Annual Online Forum. This will be hosted via the Town Council's Facebook page, and residents are invited to post questions or comment under a variety of topics.



Details of how to access the meeting and how to submit questions in advance will be published well in advance of the meeting date.

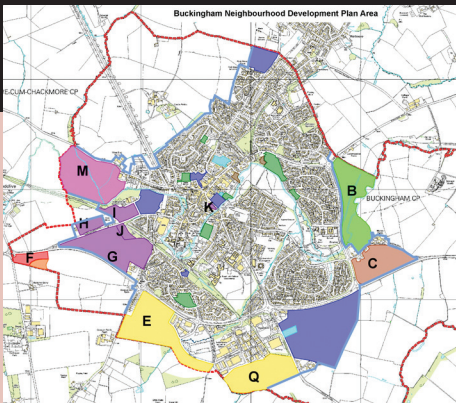
However, if you have a question about a local issue that just can't wait, then come along to one of our weekly Committee meetings. All our Council meetings are being held online, via Zoom and are open to the public. For more information on what to expect from a Town Council meeting please visit our website at:

<https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/your-town-council/committees/attending-council-meeting/>. Our

Buckinghamshire Councillors and newly elected Town Councillors will be 'Zooming in' to answer your queries on matters relating to Buckingham.



THE BUCKINGHAM SURVEY



Flooding

Town flooding has been brought sharply into focus after the events of Christmas 2020, when hundreds of residents were affected. Houses and businesses have suffered major flooding in 1998, 2007 and now in 2020, in addition to lesser inundations. There is a high cost to such incidents, both financially (loss of property and increased insurance premiums) and also in terms of human misery.



Work is already underway to build photographic databases of flood areas, recording the full extent of the December 23rd/24th flood. If you have photographs of Christmas flooding please send them to admin@buckingham-tc.gov.uk

The Neighbourhood Plan is supported by central government's National Planning Policy Framework, which places development restrictions on areas known to flood, particularly where vulnerable residents are involved. But such restrictions can be removed under certain circumstances, and our revised BNDP will seek to challenge this.

In 2019, Buckingham Town Council declared a Climate Emergency. The Council will continue to seek ways to mitigate its effects on our town.



Buckingham Town Council wants to hear your views about Buckingham and its future. The National Census (held every 10 years) is due to take place during 2021, but Buckingham will also have its own local survey.

It is planned to conduct a survey of Buckingham residents and businesses during February and March, subject to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, both online and in a more traditional format.

Ongoing review

Although Buckingham has its own Neighbourhood Plan, made in 2015, there is not yet an up-to-date Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. The VALP should have been made by 2020, before the new Buckinghamshire Council replaced the Aylesbury Vale District Council, but it was initially rejected by the Inspector, who was still undertaking consultation until February 2021. As the current VALP is effectively made up of saved policies from 2004, the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan continues to be the most up-to-date development document for Buckingham.

Your Town Council is already working on refreshing the BNDP, and welcomes your comments and suggestions for consideration for inclusion.

Retaining Town Centre Vibrancy



Even before the Covid lockdowns and tier restrictions, the UK's High Streets and Town Centres were facing challenges. People's expectations and habits are changing. Buckingham remains an historic market town. The question is, what should a market town look like in the 21st century? What shops and services do you want to see in the town? This could be retail; professional services; leisure services; health services? How could the town centre best be used?

The current Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan promotes retail categories as being of greatest importance. Is that still of importance to you, or do you wish to see different services encouraged? How do you shop today, compared to even a year ago, let alone five years ago?

Affordable Housing

We would like to know what your and your family's housing needs are now, as well as looking five or ten years into the future.



Do you think that Buckingham will be able to provide for those needs? What will those needs be? Will these needs change if you might be working from home more often, as a result of changes from the Covid-19 pandemic?

Currently, the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan requires 35% of substantial housing development to be provided as affordable housing. The proposal in the new VALP is for that figure to be only 25%, which we have opposed as too little. Would such a reduction meet the specific needs of residents of Buckingham?

Summary

2021 is looking to be another year of challenges. It is appreciated that you may be recovering from the virus, from your property being flooded, or from living and working within the current tier restrictions, and you have concerns about the future. But please find the time to respond to this important local survey, as it affects you and every one of us.

Keep a lookout on social media, in the local press and around the town for news about the Buckingham Survey. If you need more information in the meantime, please contact our Town Planning Officer Sheena McMurtrie on townplan@buckingham-tc.gov.uk

NB 2021 is the year of the national 10-year Census, which has nothing to do with our local survey.



PAST EVENTS PAST EVENTS PAST EVENTS PAST EVENTS PAST EVENTS



Last year's **Remembrance Sunday** was without its usual parade due to Covid restrictions. Instead, the Royal British Legion arranged a smaller service and wreath-laying ceremony at our War Memorial adjacent to Buckingham Parish Church. Wreaths were laid by our Mayor Cllr Geraldine Collins, on behalf of the people of Buckingham, and by other invited guests.

Members of the public had been encouraged not to attend, but to "Remember at Home" by observing the two-minute silence from their doorstep, while the formal ceremony was recorded for *YouTube* – see it again at <https://bit.ly/2L2XBGU>

Nor could our annual **Christmas Light Switch-on** ceremony around the Christmas tree in the town centre take place.. Instead, we recorded messages from our Mayor Cllr Geraldine Collins, the Bard of Buckingham Dean Jones, and a special message from Santa, which were broadcast across the town council's social media. We also encouraged residents to switch on their own Christmas lights at 7.00pm on Saturday 28 November – the same time that our elves performed their usual magic with the town centre and Christmas tree lights.



Granta Network flew a drone over the town to capture the event on film, which also includes some of your own breath-taking illuminations, and can be seen on the town council's *YouTube* channel <https://bit.ly/2YrBl6S> (the soundtrack was written by the Bard of Buckingham Dean Jones, and performed by Dean and Peter Thirlyby).



A **Pumpkin Letter Trail** was organised in the lead up to Halloween to ensure some safe family-friendly fun despite all of our annual autumn events being cancelled. The aim was for participants to explore the local shops and enjoy what Buckingham town centre had to offer.

To take part, you had to download the Pumpkin Trail answer sheet from the Buckingham Town Council website and then let the clues guide you around the town in search for the hidden pumpkins in local shop windows so you could reveal the secret word!

Once the answer sheet was completed, event participants had to visit The Buckingham University book shop and show their answer sheet to the shop keeper to win £1 off of any half price children's book.

Buckingham Town Council launched its first ever **Mayor's Christmas Card Competition** in 2020. Our Mayor, Cllr Geraldine Collins invited local school children to submit a design based on the theme "Christmas in Buckingham".



The community competition was a great success, we received 50 colourful and creative designs. This was absolutely amazing considering there were just two weeks to enter. The three winning designs were printed and the cards were sold in the Buckingham TIC to help raise funds for the Mayor's local charities. In fact, it was so good, we plan on running the competition slightly earlier again this year!



Once again, thank you to all the children who entered, the parents who sent us their design and the teachers who encouraged the competition. We are also very grateful to our sponsor, Christina Newman of Black Dog Design – Buckingham.



PAST EVENTS PAST EVENTS

In November 2020 we launched **Buckingham's Rubbish Campaign**, an online litter picking initiative inspired by the work of @Recycle4Bucks. We received some fantastic photographs from individuals to families that are out Litter picking on a regular basis – what Litter Heroes! Our Mayor and Town Clerk had the hard job of choosing four winners



and first prize went to Jo Smith and her son Alex, who regularly conduct early morning clear ups in Chandos Park after they finish playing tennis. They take the litter home to recycle the glass bottles and cans. Alex even had time to play an air guitar!



Alex said 'we don't want it to end up in the river or hurt any wildlife.'

The **Christmas Parade** did not take place in 2020. The decision was made by the Christmas Parade Committee to cancel the event as the parade attracts a large crowd to Buckingham Town Centre and so social distancing would have been a problem. The **Community Fair** which takes place in the Community Centre after the Christmas Parade in December was also cancelled due to the Government Guidelines in place at the time around indoor events.

The annual **Pancake Race** usually takes place during half term in February. Based on current Government Guidelines this year's races were cancelled.

FUTURE EVENTS FUTURE EVENTS



The Town Centre & Events Committee has big plans for 2021, including a brand-new summer surprise event.

We know that the year ahead might bring changes to our schedule, so for all the latest news

on the events, follow @BuckinghamTC on social media or check our website calendar.



FLOODING

On the 23rd and 24th December 2020, at the end of a difficult year for many, the River Great Ouse burst its banks amid extremely heavy rainfall, and serious flooding inundated Buckingham.

Many local residents immediately jumped to the aid of their neighbours. From turning up with buckets or supplying water pumps to help clear water to opening their homes to those in need, many people did what they could to help. Buckingham Free Meals, led by 14-year-old Sulayman, coordinated free hot food and drinks and ongoing food parcels. The Bard of Buckingham, Dean Jones, launched a fundraiser to support those flooded with rebuilding their lives. The nearly £20,000 raised will be held and distributed by the Town Council based on decisions made by an independent panel. A further £10,000 Immediate Impact Flood Fund was also provided by the Buckingham and Villages Community Board.

Staff from Buckingham Town Council joined those from Buckinghamshire Council and Transport for Buckinghamshire to help close roads, deliver sandbags and clear up the mess. It took over a week to sanitise and reopen play areas and the public toilets, as well as clearing large amounts of debris from across the parks. The Council's Shopmobility unit was flooded, and some equipment damaged.



The Council passed on a flood alert from the Environment Agency in the morning of 22nd December. Unfortunately, the EA's flood gauge does not appear to have been working correctly, and no Flood Warning was issued.

The Town Council is reviewing the Community Flood Action Plan. Any suggestions for changes would be gratefully received. The Council is also looking to sign up Flood Volunteers to help with future floods and other emergencies. Residents from homes NOT at risk of flooding are ideal for this role, as those directly affected are less able to immediately help others.

The Town Council now has a direct arrangement with the Bucks and Oxon Response Group (BORG) who will again be prepared to use their 4x4 vehicles to help with any future events.



TOWN ACTION COMMISSION: TREES

A report was produced by the Town Action Commission (TAC) in March 2017 due to concerns about the loss of trees, hedgerows and open spaces, largely resulting from new housing developments. The group's objective was "the protection, creation and enhancement of trees, hedgerows and green spaces in new developments". A series of meetings between interested parties, including representatives of local councils, conservation groups and other stakeholders was held and an Action Plan was devised. At a recent meeting of the Environment Committee Members reviewed a summary of progress against each action, a copy of the updated Action report can be found on the Town Council website: <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/our-services/parks-and-green-spaces/>

Environment Committee recommended that the Buckingham Tree wardens, formed from the TAC, are asked to carry out an initial survey to identify potential tree planting locations around the town and any other prospects for schemes e.g. hedgerow restoration work in Buckingham. It is hoped this will provide the Council with plenty of new planting opportunities to explore for the future.

What is that tree?

In Buckingham we are blessed with a plethora of interesting and varied tree species, but how many of us know our Hawthorn from our Blackthorn, or our Hazel from our Elder? To the untrained eye a lot of trees look alike. Yet the identification of trees can be a fun way to notice the variety of nature. Where to start? The best option

is to get out in the parks and woods and start observing the trees around you. You can bring a tree identification book (highly recommended) or even a smartphone app.

We've put together this simple guide to four common (small) tree species in our parks and hedgerows to help people become more connected to the treescape around them. Buckingham's green spaces have a wide variety of trees, shrubs and flowers, offering food in the form of leaves, flower nectar, berries and nuts.

Hazels were often coppiced (cut back) in the past for fence posts, walking sticks and other uses but as the need for these materials has diminished, the coppices have grown up, creating adult trees. Hazel nuts – cobnuts – are prized by many animals, especially the grey squirrel.

Hawthorn is best known for its perfumed creamy white blossoms – mayflower – which bloom in masses across the countryside for a few short weeks in May.

Blackthorn is one of the earliest blossoming trees offering tiny stars of white flowers to give a little spark of hope that winter will soon be over. This small tree defends itself with sharp thorns and is best known for its autumn fruit, dark purple sloes – great for gin!

Elder is valuable to wildlife and foraging humans alike. The distinctive white flower-plates are highly scented and make a delicious (elderflower) cordial. Claret-coloured berries are a favourite snack for dormice, bank voles and birds, and are good cooked in pies, preserves and wine.



Hazel

See it: January to March



Hawthorn

See it: April to May



Blackthorn

See it: March to April



Elder

See it: May to June

PLAY AREA SAFETY



COVID-19 UPDATE

Since the last edition of this Buckingham Town Council Newsletter, the town has changed Tiers several times

and in January entered a National Lockdown. Town Council services have adapted in response, with many staff continuing to work from home. Lace Hill Sports & Community Centre, the Tourist Information Centre and Shopmobility are all closed or partially closed at the time of writing.

The Tourist Information Centre has adapted by selling some stock online, including

Buckingham calendars and art prints of Buckingham. <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/shop/>

Throughout the entire period of restrictions our Green Spaces Team have worked out and about in Buckingham, maintaining the safety of our parks and buildings, including clearing up after the floods on Christmas Eve. **In order to keep our team safe, we strongly request that you do not approach any members of our team while they are working.** Maintaining social distance from our staff helps keep them healthy and is really important.

If you have any questions for the team, please email admin@buckingham-tc.gov.uk



PONTIO

Our students also know the importance of being part of a civic university. Last year they helped the local area in the fight against coronavirus by volunteering in local general practice surgeries and hospitals, as well as working with the council to conduct check-in calls with those who were shielding.

And this year, we launched a campaign to help get laptops to school children struggling to work from home. This began with giving 22 laptops to local schools and starting a fundraising campaign for more.

During 2021, it is our hope to continue the great work of the Pontio Group, collaborating with schools, businesses and other not for profit institutions to help support in the development skills and opportunities for all who live, study, work, play and visit in Buckingham.

I want to ensure that the University of Buckingham, not only enriches the lives of our students, but also plays a role in enriching the lives of our wider community.

A message from the new Vice-chancellor of the University of Buckingham, Professor James Tooley (pictured above)

As a small University in a close-knit town, we are always eager to be involved in community projects and try to ensure we make a positive impact. The Pontio Group (a joint committee of the University and the Town Council) was created during the summer of 2018 and great things have happened since, including numerous events such as EntFest (a unique celebration of enterprise and entrepreneurship), The Buckingham Literary Festival and the Duck Race.

HOMELESSNESS AND COVID-19

Over 170 rough sleepers in Buckinghamshire were helped by the government's **Everyone In** scheme at the beginning of the pandemic. The Aylesbury Vale team from Buckinghamshire Council remains active in contacting rough sleepers and those in high risk groups, assisting them where possible including through **Next Steps** funding, rent deposits, supported accommodation and more. Please visit **Buckinghamshire Council's Housing Team** website or call **01296 585168** to apply for help.

What can I do if I see someone in need?

- Use the streetlink website [streetlink.org.uk](https://www.streetlink.org.uk) or phone **0300 500 0914** to identify rough sleepers to local outreach workers.
- If you see anyone you believe to be under the age of 18, or are worried about the health or welfare of someone sleeping rough, please call **999**.

BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL



Precept 2021-2022

PRECEPT

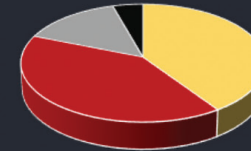
The Precept is the Town Council's share of council tax. This year the precept will rise by 8p per week on a band D property; an increase of £4.21 or 2.49% to £169.16 a year. The rise is due to fewer people in the town paying Council Tax, because Council Tax benefit claims have increased.

TOTAL PRECEPT

The total amount Buckingham Town Council will receive from council tax in 2021-2022 is **£903,930** Which is exactly the same amount as it was in 2020-2021.

THE COUNCIL HAS FOUR SUB-COMMITTEES WHICH EACH GET A PERCENTAGE OF THE PRECEPT

- Resources
- Environment
- Town Centre & Events
- Planning



BUCKINGHAM EVENTS

Buckingham Town Council runs a programme of events each year. This year will see an emphasis on helping the Town's businesses bounce back from the effects of the Covid crisis. £1,250 has been budgeted for a new voluntary and community sector event.

PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

Buckingham is proud of its parks and green spaces. The Environment Committee will receive £366,896 from the precept to take care of them. Work is also continuing to develop the new cemetery.

TOURISM AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

Once it is able to, the Tourist Information Centre will open on Sundays during the Summer. Businesses will receive additional support from the new Town Centre Manager who will manage projects to bring customers into Buckingham.

LACE HILL SPORTS AND COMMUNITY CENTRE

Buckingham Town Council manages the Lace Hill Sports and Community Centre. £3,000 from the precept will pay for a new footpath to the Lace Hill sports pitches.

To find out more about what we do with your money visit our website at www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk

STANDING FOR ELECTION

Local elections: how to stand for a seat

Elections for Buckingham Town Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley, and Buckinghamshire Council were delayed last year due to Coronavirus and are currently scheduled to take place on the 6th May 2021.

17 people will be elected to the Town Council and six people will be elected to represent Buckingham and surrounding parishes on the new Buckinghamshire Council. Any local resident over the age of 18 can stand (with a few exceptions).

What is involved?

Most Monday nights there are meetings of the Full Council or one of the Council's committees considering specialist matters, including planning applications, the environment and local events. Councillors are also sometimes asked to represent the Council at meetings of other local organisations or with other councils in the area.

While Councillors don't have to attend every meeting, there is a significant time commitment, with a minimum of 12 meetings a year to attend, preparation time and plenty

of opportunities for additional responsibilities. Councillor training is available.

Details of who is eligible to stand for election are available through Buckinghamshire Council's local democracy team, including election packs with guidance about standing and relevant forms.

If you might be interested in standing, or are just interested in finding out more about what the Town Council does, visit our website for information about attending a meeting, past minutes and agendas. Since March 2020 all Council meetings are also live streamed on our YouTube channel and remain available to be watched at any time.

How to vote

While we don't know exactly what the situation may be with regards to Coronavirus, voting in person will be allowed for elections.

You could consider registering for a postal or proxy ballot. There is a lot of information and forms to download and complete on the Electoral Commission's website. <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/how-cast-your-vote>

YOUR VIEWS COUNT

Buckingham Town Matters is produced by Buckingham Town Council in order to provide you with a taste of what keeps Councillors and staff busy. But this is also an invitation for you to tell us what you think of what we do and what you think we should be doing. We are all working together to make Buckingham an even better place, so please let us know:

- what you think we should carry on doing
- what you think we should stop doing, or do less of
- what you think we should start doing, or do a lot more of

Just a reminder... all Town Council meetings are open to the public. You are invited to come along and give us your views.

You can email us at or just drop us a line at the address opposite. We look forward to hearing from you:

BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Geraldine Collins – Mayor	01280 823 006	Cllr. Andy Mahi	01280 816 562
Cllr. Martin Try – Deputy Mayor	01280 816 202	Cllr. Howard Mordue	01280 815 418
Cllr. Robina Ahmed	07515 338283	Cllr. Ruth Newell	01280 815 229
Cllr. Terry Bloomfield	01280 815 336	Cllr. Lisa O'Donoghue	01280 824 624
Cllr. Mark Cole JP	01280 816 005	Cllr. Anthony Ralph	01280 813 710
Cllr. Paddy Collins	01280 823 006	Cllr. Mike Smith	07717 377314
Cllr. Margaret Gateley	01280 816 317	Cllr. Christine Strain-Clark	01280 816 832
Cllr. Jon Harvey	01280 812 711	Cllr. Robin Stuchbury	07752 394 162
Cllr. Paul Hirons	01280 812 072	Mr Paul Hodson – Town Clerk	01280 816 426

USEFUL NUMBERS

Buckingham Town Council	01280 816 426	Domestic Violence Helpline	0808 2000 247
Buckingham Cemetery	01280 816 801	Thames Valley Police	101
Buckingham Shopmobility	07738 314 027	NHS Urgent Care	111
Lace Hill Sports & Community Centre	01280 812 872	National Power Cut Helpline	105
Buckingham Community Hall	01280 823 584	National Gas Helpline	0800 11 11
Buckingham Tourist Information Centre	01280 823 020	Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Buckinghamshire Council	01895 837200	Floodline	0345 988 1188
Transport for Buckinghamshire	01296 382 416	ChildLine	0800 111 999
Citizens Advice Aylesbury Vale	0344 245 1289	Samaritans	01908 667 777
		StreetLink (rough sleeping)	0300 500 0914

Town Council Office, Buckingham Centre, Verney Close, Buckingham, MK18 1JP

Email: office@buckingham-tc.gov.uk or visit: www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk

Call: 01280 816 426 (Please phone for appointments)

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This edition of **BTM** has been designed by Black Dog Design (www.black-dog-design.co.uk), printed by Oxuniprint and distributed to the homes and businesses of Buckingham by In Business Magazines.

This is delivered to approx. 6,500 homes and businesses. It is also available on our website as a PDF and an audio version. Please contact the Town Council if you would like to request a large print copy.

Please note, events organised by Buckingham Town Council may be photographed and these photographs may be published.

CONTINUED HELP AND SUPPORT



For detailed information about Coronavirus in Buckingham and how to access support visit: www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/coronavirus

Buckinghamshire Council is still here to help with vulnerable people dealing with coronavirus. Call: **01296 383204**. This is a 24-hour phone line.

Buckinghamshire Adult Social Care is available to support adults, families and carers. Call: **01296 383 402**

For advice on how to manage money, debts, benefits, housing, employment issues Citizens Advice can help. Call: **01280 816787**

If you are concerned that you or someone else has been a victim of fraud, contact Action Fraud. Call: **0300 123 2040** as well as your bank.

Samaritans is aimed at providing emotional support to anyone in emotional distress, struggling to cope, or at risk of suicide throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. There is a 24-hour helpline number you can access 365 days a year. Call: **116 123**

If you need to report non-emergency incidents such as criminal damage, anti-social behaviour or stolen vehicles, please contact Thames Valley Police. **101**.

Buckinghamshire Social Services safeguards and promotes the welfare of vulnerable children and adults and can provide a wide range of services to children and their parents. Call: **01296 395000**.

If your home or business is at risk of flooding please make sure you have signed up for flood warnings <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings> or by calling Flood Line on **0345 988 1188**.

