

Buckingham's Annual Town Meeting

Thursday, 23rd March 2023

This year's Annual Town Meeting offered residents and businesses an opportunity to meet local representatives, ask questions, voice concerns, and put forward ideas on the following topical issues:

- Health
- Police
- Cost of living
- Planning/future of the town
- Eco matters
- The river and green spaces
- Other matters

Discussion tables for topics were chaired by an officer from Buckingham Town Council or a local representative to answer questions and take notes throughout the meeting. A summary of the main points raised was offered in the Mayor's feedback session at the end of the meeting.

Attendees had the opportunity to visit information stands from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Buckingham Town Council's Equality, Community Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group, Project Street Life, and the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office.

Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs hosted an information stall, highlighting the achievements of their Committee throughout the year.

Feedback on spending and the benefits to the town from this year's grant recipients was presented as a 'looped' video on a large screen.

The Mayor opened the meeting at 7pm, welcoming residents and representatives.



Health

Dr. Gavriel, from The Swan Practice, chaired the Health table. The Operations Manager from The Swan Practice, Emma Vye, was also in attendance.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Capacity issue for The Swan Practice.
2. Objecting to new housing developments to protect the health resources in the town.
3. Space for external services.
4. Delay with Lace Hill medical centre plans and feedback to residents following the public consultation.
5. Joining forces with community groups, for example local churches.
6. Recruitment of GPs.



Police

Inspector James Davies chaired the Police table. The Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Barber, was also in attendance.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Lack of police officer visibility.
2. Issues with youth engagement.
3. Cannabis use by young people.
4. Anti-social behaviour in Chandos Park and the Skate Park.



Cost of living

Jane Mordue, from the Citizens Advice Bureau, chaired the Cost of Living table. Katie Galvin, Community Support Manager from the Helping Hands Team and Dorota, who leads Buckinghamshire Councils Cost of Living Programme, were also available at the table to answer questions and listen to residents' concerns and ideas.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Public transport (buses): accessibility, stigma around using buses and the problems of rural transport (no shelter, unreliable, waiting hours).
2. Programmes that are available: Cost of Living, Helping Hands, and Welcoming Spaces.
3. Rising prices in local shops.
4. Poverty models to target support.
5. Financial dire straits for many and concerns re. loan sharks and gambling.
6. The local parks are good for mental health and the edible woodland is really good – perhaps vegetables can be grown in town planters?
7. Food schemes (food banks and community fridges).



River and Green Spaces

Claire Molyneux, Buckingham's Town Clerk, chaired the River and Green Spaces table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Some paths in Bourton Park are in poor condition and make it difficult for runners/people with mobility scooters/prams.
2. The ford on Ford Street needs a good tidy – it is packed with grass.
3. Anti-social behaviour and vandalism in the parks – more activities are needed to divert troublemakers.

4. The old churchyard needs more maintenance.
5. Residents enjoy the green spaces.
6. The riverbank at Chandos Park needs repairing.
7. More bins are needed on Chris Nichols walk.
8. A lovely area for walking dogs.



Eco matters

Nina Stockill, the Estates Administrator, chaired the Eco Matters table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Single use plastic coffee cups – how best for businesses to deal with waste.
2. Congestion and fumes from increased traffic using Buckingham – it is a rat run from Oxford to Milton Keynes.
3. Bike racks outside Tesco Express and Smarts.
4. Holiday transport – fewer flights.
5. Eco agriculture land management.
6. Motorbike parking labelled 'MC parking' with signage on Cornwalls Meadow car park.



Planning/future of the town

Sheena McMurtrie, Buckingham's Town Plan Officer, chaired the Planning/future of the town table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Pedestrianise the town centre.
2. Improve traffic flow through and around town.
3. Free parking to encourage local shopping.
4. Entice independent traders to regenerate the town.
5. From new planning applications secure s106 monies to be spent to revive our town.
6. Hurry up with the skate park revamp.
7. Better mix of housing type.
8. Declare Buckingham a free-speech zone.
9. Put dog agility equipment in the paddock and enclose it.
10. Positive points: lots of community events, green spaces, variety of walks, feeling safe in the town, the range of community groups, dog walking.



Other matters

Steve Beech, Projects and Compliance Manager for Buckingham Town Council, chaired the Other Matters table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. A new entertainment venue.
2. Coronation Big Help Out – how to connect volunteers with groups that need them.
3. Greater public consultation before s106 requests made.



Public consultation

Five questions were presented to residents via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) in the week preceding the meeting:

Q1 If you could change one thing about Buckingham it would be...

- More trees.
- Train connection.
- Free parking.
- At least two hours' free parking.
- Town Council to have more influence over planning.
- Infrastructure to be built before new housing estates.
- Main car park could be multi-storey.
- Don't want the main car park to be multi-storey.
- Pavements with no trip hazards, and permanently kept that way.
- Clear rubbish and debris from riverbanks and river.
- Repair footpaths leading to skatepark.
- All walks and footpaths wide enough for mobility scooters, prams etc.
- Flood prevention measures.
- New skate park.
- Improved access to primary healthcare.
- Reinstate the old railway route as a gravel track between Buckingham and Brackley. This would extend the cycle path from Winslow and provide a genuine benefit for the town and villages suffering destruction and disruption as a result of this (HS2) development.
- Escalator on Page Hill.
- I love our town and will be starting up planting the trough in High Street next week. Hope you will like and respect it.
- Pedestrianisation of the town with controlled vehicle access for town centre residents and rising bollards. Specifically, the section from the White Hart to the Old Gaol roundabout.
- Returning to free short-stay parking in the town centre.
- Remind residents and businesses to remove waste bins and rubbish bags from the pavements on residential streets. Except on collection day.

- More trees and 20mph blanket speed throughout the centre of town with speed cameras.
- New medical centre before any more houses get built (Milton Keynes can do it and also get new schools included in the planning as well, e.g., Whitehouse Park where a Primary School and Health Centre were built before the houses).
- It would be at the seaside.

Q2 What ideas do you have that could improve the parks and green spaces in Buckingham?

- Stop building on the green spaces/wild areas in town, such as those I passed today up Moreton Road. These areas are great for nature (almost certainly more so than plain grass fields).
- The paddock area in Bourton Park is enclosed so it can be a dog field open to everyone. That could be the specific off lead area. Great for dogs like mine who are friendly but have terrible re-call and also great for non-dog lovers who prefer to walk through the park without dogs running up to them.
- Keeping river and banks maintained.
- As many wildflower spaces as possible - instead of mowed areas.

Q3 If I could change one thing about health provision in Buckingham, it would be...

- No responses.

Q4 How do you think walking, cycling, and driving around Buckingham could be made safer and easier?

- More parking **P** as we go electric ⚡ they will need to spend longer in spaces charging. To attract people to the town we need more & better parking. Speed bumps on the high street would help discourage the dangerous driving that takes place regularly and make walking safer

Q5 What more could be done to reduce crime and the fear of crime in Buckingham?

- Bobbies on the beat.

Future actions

Responses will be passed to the relevant organisation/authority as appropriate.