

# Buckingham's Annual Town Meeting

## Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Annual Town Meeting

This year's Annual Town Meeting offered residents and businesses an opportunity to have their say on 'the future of Buckingham'. There were six topic-based tables, chaired by Officers and Councillors, where people were able to discuss their ideas, voice concerns and have their questions answered:

- Planning and Transport
- Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Eco Matters
- Accessibility and Diversity
- Shopping and Tourism
- The River and Green Spaces

Committee Chairs hosted stalls showing the achievements of their Committee throughout the year.

There were excellent information stalls from Waste Busters, the Repair Café, and the Climate Café, highlighting how residents can reuse, repair, and recycle. The Old Gaol Museum brought along some wonderful and interesting artefacts and the Shopmobility stall offered information about hiring wheelchairs and free scooters.

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 formally opened the meeting at 6:30pm.

### **Planning and Transport**

Cllr. Howard Mordue, Buckingham Town Councillor and Buckinghamshire County Councillor, chaired the Planning and Transport table, assisted by Cllr. Ralph, Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Pedestrianise the town centre.
2. Stop cars cutting through the town centre.
3. Traffic calming.
4. Bus transport for late night visits to Milton Keynes and Bicester.
5. Put cycle racks outside Tesco Express.
6. Make the ford in Ford Street passable and improve landscape features.
7. Lack of sustainability in rural areas surrounding Buckingham.
8. Quality of new house builds for private buyers.
9. Lack of self-build options.
10. Lack of eco-friendly build options.

11. More bollards in the town centre to stop cars from parking on the paths.
12. More signage in the centre pointing to interesting aspects of Buckingham.
13. Stop HGV lorries coming into town.
14. Controlled hire of e-bikes and scooters.
15. Improve small craft access along the river.
16. Over emphasis on building in Buckingham.
17. Infrastructure needed.
18. More local power.

## **Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan**

The Deputy Town Clerk and the Town Plan Officer chaired the BNDP table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. What is happening with the Lace Hill health centre?
2. Building of cycleways/bridleways with recycled materials, e.g. recycled plastic paths.
3. Importance of green walks through parks and rivers.
4. Biodiversity of natural spaces, not generic sterile fields.
5. Sewage capacity.
6. Wildlife corridors.
7. Motion sensor footpath lights.
8. Line up dropped kerbs.
9. Ask Local Authority about dropped kerbs on Summer House Hill.
10. How many houses are occupied - is there a low occupancy issue?
11. Green space impressive but concern about children being able to buy/rent and stay here.
12. Concern about biodiversity in canal area – development, people and wildlife don't mix.
13. Southern area beyond Lace Hill looks very large as a development in comparison to Lace Hill.
14. Cycleway along the bridleway Page Hill to Lace Hill.
15. Protecting the native corridor balance.
16. Maximise brownfield sites – high density.
17. Buckingham cannot support more housing without a proper by-pass linking Milton Keynes and the Tingewick Bypass.
18. Western relief road needed to protect the town centre and conservation area.

## **Eco Matters**

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

Points/ideas raised:

1. Environmental considerations for developers to be built into the BNDP.
2. Exemplar work of the Royal Latin School's Green Touch Team.
3. Climate change resilient planting.
4. Community gardening.

5. Businesses – how do they dispose of waste, and do they recycle enough?
6. Importance of volunteer groups such as river and tree wardens and those here tonight.
7. Create a network for climate change eco groups.
8. Litter on highway verge near Starbucks/Shell.
9. Corporate responsibility.
10. Community gardening.
11. Volunteer gardening in public spaces.
12. Need a litterbin in the layby after the Tingewick Road roundabout.
13. Weeding Wednesday volunteers.

### **Accessibility and Diversity.**

Jackie Ohene-Djan, Vice-Chair of the Equality, Community Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group, and Cllr. Margaret Gateley chaired the Accessibility and Diversity table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Some parts of the town are not accessible to wheelchair users and for pushchairs.
2. No parent/child parking spaces.
3. Bins obstructing pathways.
4. Review of salt boxes needed.
5. Difficulty pushing trolleys to the car park – uneven pavements are potentially dangerous.
6. Ban pavement parking.
7. More wheelchair-accessible picnic tables in the park.
8. Properly aligned dropped kerbs.

### **Shopping and Tourism**

The Town Centre and External Services Manager chaired the Shopping and Tourism table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. More could be done to entice people into town – make Buckingham a foodie destination because we cater for everyone. People love a range of eateries.
2. Focus on local offers/produce because it attracts people in – speak with local farms/ farm shops.
3. Love the independent shops, just need more variety and a mix.
4. No clothes shops for children, other than infants.
5. Shuttle bus from Buckingham to Winslow once the station is open.
6. The banking hub has improved the town.
7. Pop-up shop/gallery.
8. Buckingham water course idea – promote it like Olney/Newport Pagnell.
9. The street market has declined – there are not enough traders.
10. Used to have more shops.
11. Somewhere to buy household home items.

12. No white goods shop.
13. Lack of men's clothing shops.

## River and Green Spaces

Claire Molyneux, Buckingham's Town Clerk, assisted by the Compliance and Projects Manager, chaired the River and Green Spaces table.

Points/ideas raised:

1. Improvements to the river – open up for recreation.
2. Flooding – how to drain the water away – what more can be done?
3. Can more be done to clean the river?
4. I like the green spaces.
5. I have no complaints.
6. Great Ouse:
  - Fish ladders
  - Modify weirs to encourage white water and paddle sports.
  - Improve the ford as a feature.
  - Portage points.

At 8pm the Town Mayor thanked residents for attending the meeting and presented a short summary of the discussions and points raised from each table.



## Public consultation

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

### **Q1 How can we make Buckingham an even better place to shop and visit?**

- Cheaper/free car parking – the majority of comments were about this.
- Lower rent for independent small businesses to be able to establish shops in the town.
- Pedestrianise the market square to enable restaurant outside eating.
- More charity events in the cattle pens/market square.
- Lobby for lower rates for independent businesses.
- Fight to stop extending hours of charged parking.
- More greenery/planting.
- Build something useful for the townspeople on the old Hartridges site.
- Pavements are lethal to disabled people in particular.
- Open Town Hall for dances.
- Community minibus for theatre trips as no late buses back.
- Build a ring road that's actually a ring road.
- Police station.
- Encourage a more diverse range of shops.
- Add bench seating.
- Tidy the town's buildings.
- Update the market – frames etc. look dated and unappealing.
- Lower cost retailers.
- Indoor family attractions.
- A bank of decent EV chargers.
- Encourage landlords to offer lower rent.
- Less charity shops, hairdressers, and coffee shops.
- Parent/child bays.
- Clean up the public loos – they are a disgrace or incentivise businesses/library etc. to open their toilets to the public.

### **Q2 What are your special buildings in Buckingham and why?**

- The Railway Walk in its entirety is special.
- Will there be news about the health centre on Lace Hill?

### **Q3 How can we make Buckingham more accessible for everyone?**

- Remind people that their hedges should not cover paths.
- The buildings are all old, which makes some pubs like the White Hart difficult for wheelchair users.
- Maybe provide ramps that can be borrowed from the Town Council so that people can access buildings more easily.
- Pedestrian areas need to be improved.
- The town should be accessible and welcoming to all.
- Repair the pavements please.
- Provide dropped kerbs where needed.

- More disabled parking in the town.
- Places to sit and rest, perhaps with a shelter.
- Difficulty navigating trees at the bus stop - makes it difficult to cross the road safely on a rollator.
- Some of the pavements are very narrow and are not passable on bin day with a buggy or wheelchair meaning you have to enter the road to get by.

**Q4 What more can be done to reduce Buckingham’s carbon footprint individually as well as collectively?**

- Buildings in town have rotten windows that need to be replaced. They will let out huge sums of heat. Better insulated buildings would help. Are there restrictions around the small tile solar panels?
- Solar panels on buildings instead of in fields. Electric buses/shuttles, reduced traffic/traffic calming, safer cycling, wider pavements to encourage walking.

**Q5 What are your hopes for the future of Buckingham?**

- It continues to develop into a thriving town with affordable housing so all generations can live here.
- Better infrastructure, we’ve had so much building but no expansion of services, doctors, dentists, buses.
- Pop-up shops, more interactive activities for all age groups, there’s not much for teens in the town.
- More doctors’ surgeries and NHS dentists.
- Stability in terms of infrastructure to meet and match the growth of the town (health centre, roads, parking, sports facilities, youth, disabled and older people provision etc.)
- Security in terms of antisocial behaviour, drugs, sense of belonging, community.
- I think a period of understanding where we are, what we have and making that work well and sustainably before we move to any more change or expansion.

*This report has been sent to Buckinghamshire Council’s Service Directors/Heads of Services responsible for Highways and Technical Services and Planning and Environment requesting a response to the issues raised by residents.*

Mayor of Buckingham ..... Date .....