



Buckingham Town Council

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Verney Close, Buckingham, MK18 1JP
01280 816426

office@buckingham-tc.gov.uk

Town Clerk: Claire Molyneux

ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Councillor,

You are summoned to a meeting of the Environment Committee of Buckingham Town Council which will be held on Monday 17th February 2025 at 7pm in the Council Chamber, Cornwalls Meadow, Buckingham.

Please note that the meeting will be preceded by a Public Session in accordance with Standing Orders 3.e and 3.f, which will last for a maximum of 15 minutes. Members of the public can attend the meeting in person. If you would like to address the meeting virtually, please email committeeclerk@buckingham-tc.gov.uk or call 01280 816426 for details.

The meeting can be watched live on the Town Council's YouTube channel here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC89BUTwVpjAOEIdSlfcZC9Q/>

Claire Molyneux
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence

Members are asked to receive apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of interest

To receive declarations of any personal or prejudicial interest under consideration on this agenda in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 Sections 26-34 & Schedule 4.

3. Minutes

To agree the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 7th October 2024 and 25th November 2024.

[Copy previously circulated](#)
[Copy previously circulated](#)

4. Canal Society

To receive a [presentation](#) from Mr. Cavendish.



Twinned with Mouvaux, France;

Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany



Members are reminded when making decisions that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 requires Members to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't, and to foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't. All Committee documents can be found on the Buckingham Town Council's website. Alternatively, the Clerk can send you a copy of any minutes, reports, or other information. To do this, send a request using the contact details set out above.

5. Motion: Cllr. Davies

That this committee supports further feasibility studies to be undertaken by other agencies regarding flood mitigation and prevention strategies at sites both up and downstream of Buckingham as well as sites within the town itself.

6. Budgets

To receive the latest figures.

[Appendix A](#)

7. Buckingham Tennis Club

To note a letter from Buckingham Tennis Club.

[Appendix B](#)

8. Metal Detecting on Tingewick Road Cemetery site

To receive a report from the Estates Manager.

[E/140/24](#)
[Appendix C](#)

9. Action report

To receive the report and note the updated information.

[Appendix D](#)

10. Community Centre

To receive a report from the Town Clerk.

[E/141/24](#)

11. News releases

12. Chair's announcements – for information only

13. Date of next meeting: Monday 7th April 2025

To Committee Members:

Cllr. T. Allen

Cllr. F. Davies

Cllr. L. Draper

Cllr. M. Gateley

Cllr. J. Harvey

Cllr. A. Mahi

Chair

Vice Chair

Cllr. L. O'Donoghue

Cllr. A. Ralph

Cllr. A. Schaefer

Cllr. R. Stuchbury

Town Mayor

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 11/02/2025

Month No: 11

Committee Report

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR	Explanation
<u>ENVIRONMENT</u>								
<u>201 Environment EXPENDITURE</u>								
3995 NI Environment	18,529	22,249	3,720		3,720	83.3%		
3996 Pensions ERS Environment	47,145	61,577	14,432		14,432	76.6%		
4004 Salaries environment	198,815	250,670	51,855		51,855	79.3%		
<u>202 Roundabouts INCOME</u>								
1051 Roundabout no. 1	2,805	2,805	0			100.0%		
1052 Roundabout no. 2	1,495	1,495	0			100.0%		
1053 Roundabout no. 3	2,454	2,454	0			100.0%		
1054 Roundabout no. 4	3,127	3,127	0			100.0%		
1056 Roundabout no. 6	3,332	3,332	0			100.0%		
1057 Roundabout no. 7	1,700	1,700	0			100.0%		
<u>202 Roundabouts EXPENDITURE</u>								
4108 Roundabout	553	2,205	1,652		1,652	25.1%		
<u>203 Maintenance EXPENDITURE</u>								
4082 Allotments	2,288	2,288	0		0	100.0%		
<u>204 Devolved services expenses INCOME</u>								
1017 Devolved services income	0	24,000	24,000			0.0%		
<u>205 Grounds maintenance EXPENDITURE</u>								
4033 Waste disposal	4,234	5,610	1,376		1,376	75.5%		
4035 Machinery	1,574	2,915	1,341	867	474	83.7%		
4036 Fuel (Mower)	1,740	2,533	793		793	68.7%		
4037 Sundries	1,559	3,025	1,466	302	1,163	61.5%		
4063 Vehicle hire and running costs	2,991	7,060	4,069	1,650	2,418	65.7%		

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR	Explanation	Appendix A
<u>248 Depot EXPENDITURE</u>									
4013 Equipment purchase	0	5,000	5,000		5,000	0.0%			
4055 Alarm	548	560	12		12	97.9%			
4225 Rates	4,784	4,641	(143)		(143)	103.1%	143	Overspend covered by EMR	
4601 Repairs & maintenance fund	377	900	523		523	41.9%			
4602 Electricity	1,612	2,000	388		388	80.6%			
4603 Water	147	635	488		488	23.1%			
<u>249 C Meadow Toilets/Shopmobility INCOME</u>									
1085 Shopmobility income	311	200	(111)			155.5%		More income than anticipated	
<u>249C Meadow Toilets/Shopmobility EXPENDITURE</u>									
4602 Electricity	0	600	600		600	0.0%			
4603 Water	0	600	600		600	0.0%			
4608 Shopmobility	739	1,002	263	354	(91)	109.1%		Overspend due to unexpected repairs	
4612 Contractor charge	9,553	10,450	897		897	91.4%			
4709 Maintenance	43	6,600	6,557	5,821	736	88.8%			
<u>250 Lace Hill INCOME</u>									
1026 Lace Hill Community Centre	36,697	41,000	4,303			89.5%			
1027 Solar income	0	150	150			0.0%			
<u>250 Lace Hill EXPENDITURE</u>									
4050 Lace Hill playing fields	267	550	283		283	48.6%			
4118 Solar panels	0	380	380		380	0.0%			
4158 Lace Hill gas	1,817	4,600	2,783		2,783	39.5%			
4159 Lace Hill electricity	2,523	6,500	3,977		3,977	38.8%			
4160 Lace Hill water	645	1,086	441		441	59.4%			
4161 Lace Hill Repair & Maintenance	5,031	4,000	(1,031)		(1,031)	125.8%		MUGA repairs, insurance claim received (Resources)	
4162 Lace Hill Planned Maintenance	6,754	7,920	1,166		1,166	85.3%			
4164 Lace Hill equipment	1,702	3,754	2,052		2,052	45.3%			
4225 Rates	10,354	11,048	694		694	93.7%			
<u>251 Chandos Park INCOME</u>									
1030 Bowls income	627	650	23			96.5%			
1035 Tennis Court Rent	778	778	0			100.0%			
<u>251 Chandos Park EXPENDITURE</u>									
4601 Repairs & maintenance fund	757	3,950	3,193	403	2,790	29.4%			
4602 Electricity	811	1,471	661		661	55.1%			
4603 Water	2,150	2,449	299		299	87.8%			
4606 Bowls Club Maintenance	1,655	2,120	465		465	78.1%			
<u>252 Bourton Park EXPENDITURE</u>									
4601 Repairs & maintenance fund	7,365	10,508	3,143		3,143	70.1%			

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR	Explanation	Appendix A
<u>253 Cemeteries INCOME</u>									
1041 Burial fees	22,078	29,400	7,322			75.1%			
<u>253 Cemeteries EXPENDITURE</u>									
4225 Rates	2,421	2,349	(72)		(72)	103.1%	72	Overspend covered by EMR	
4265 New cemetery maintenance	0	7,000	7,000	3,500	3,500	50.0%			
4601 Repairs & maintenance fund	1,754	5,825	4,071		4,071	30.1%			
4602 Electricity	(409)	1,000	1,409		1,409	(40.9%)			
4617 Memorial testing	4,770	4,330	(440)		(440)	110.2%	2,000		
4619 Cemeteries Development	141,359	106,415	(34,944)	650	(35,594)	133.4%	121,676	Land purchase covered by EMR	
4620 Expenses for burial duties	3,586	5,785	2,199		2,199	62.0%			
 <u>254 Chandos Park toilets EXPENDITURE</u>									
4612 Contractor charge	9,553	10,450	897		897	91.4%			
4709 Maintenance	9,649	14,035	4,386	292	4,094	70.8%			
 <u>255 Railway Walk & Castle Hill EXPENDITURE</u>									
4709 Maintenance	3,726	1,145	(2,581)		(2,581)	325.4%	3,400	Overspend covered by EMR	
 <u>256 Storage Premises EXPENDITURE</u>									
4066 Grenville garage rent	548	626	78		78	87.5%			
 <u>258 Cemetery Lodge INCOME</u>									
1061 Cemetery Lodge rental income	10,873	11,781	908			92.3%			
 <u>258 Cemetery Lodge EXPENDITURE</u>									
4034 PWLB repayments inc. interest	2,351	4,702	2,351		2,351	50.0%			
4609 Cemetery Lodge maintenance	10,962	3,260	(7,702)		(7,702)	336.3%	7,340	Overspend to be covered by EMR	
 <u>260 CCTV EXPENDITURE</u>									
4100 CCTV maintenance	2,304	4,000	1,696		1,696	57.6%			

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR	Explanation	Appendix A
<u>261 Community Centre EXPENDITURE</u>									
4085	Structural repairs	18,731	30,390	11,659	2,850	8,809	71.0%		
4091	Chamber	231	1,100	869		869	21.0%		
<u>262 Parks General EXPENDITURE</u>									
4101	Seats and bins	1,666	1,765	99		99	94.4%		
4102	Dog bins	0	13,686	13,686	4,072	9,614	29.7%		
4106	Play area maintenance	4,109	9,316	5,207	44	5,163	44.6%		
4112	Environment Equipment	1,408	11,286	9,878	387	9,491	15.9%		
4122	Tree works	13,690	36,105	22,415		22,415	37.9%		
4168	Defibrillators	283	550	267		267	51.4%		
4275	Play area replacement fund	0	10,000	10,000		10,000	0.0%		
4276	Tree wardens	0	2,240	2,240		2,240	0.0%		
4280	Machinery Repair / Replace	0	2,500	2,500		2,500	0.0%		
4281	Vehicle Repair / Replace	0	2,500	2,500		2,500	0.0%		
<u>264 New Cemetery EXPENDITURE</u>									
4282	New Cemetery PWLB Repayments	0	2,600	2,600		2,600	0.0%		
Grand Totals:- Income		86,277	122,872	36,595			70.2%		
Expenditure		571,757	748,416	176,659	21,191	155,468	79.2%		
Net Income over Expenditure		(485,479)	(625,544)	(140,065)					

11/02/2025

Buckingham Town Council

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Earmarked Reserves

Account	Opening Balance	Net Transfers	Closing Balance
320 EARMARKED RESERVES	321,140.00	-321,140.00	0.00
325 EMR YOUTH COUNCIL	0.00	2,015.00	2,015.00
326 EMR CEMETERY DEVELOPMENT	0.00	47,144.74	47,144.74
327 EMR LEGAL COSTS	0.00	530.17	530.17
328 EMR FLOOD RELIEF FUND	0.00	826.00	826.00
329 EMR WAR MEMORIAL	0.00	600.00	600.00
330 EMR CHRISTMAS LIGHTS	0.00	2,171.00	2,171.00
331 EMR TOWN IN BLOOM	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
332 EMR CHARTER FAIRS	0.00	5,141.00	5,141.00
333 EMR PLAY AREA REPLACEMENT	0.00	57,932.00	57,932.00
334 EMR TOURISM LEAFLETS	0.00	883.00	883.00
335 EMR GREEN SPACES DEVELOPMENT	0.00	8,916.00	8,916.00
336 EMR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN	0.00	-11,739.00	-11,739.00
337 EMR BRIDGE REPAIRS	0.00	44,640.00	44,640.00
338 EMR OFFICE DEVELOPMENT / FURNI	0.00	156.00	156.00
339 EMR DEPOT EQUIPMENT	0.00	7,850.00	7,850.00
340 EMR AEDS	0.00	850.00	850.00
341 EMR LHSCC REPAIRS & MAINT	0.00	25,000.00	25,000.00
342 EMR CEMETERY LODGE REPAIRS	0.00	500.00	500.00
343 EMR BOWLS PAVILION REPAIRS	0.00	2,493.00	2,493.00
344 EMR MAKING GOOD/BOUNDARY REP	0.00	45,000.00	45,000.00
345 EMR EMERGENCY GRANTS	0.00	3,000.00	3,000.00
346 EMR TWINNING	0.00	2,483.00	2,483.00
348 EMR SCULPTURE TRAIL	0.00	800.00	800.00
349 EMR TRAINING	0.00	8,953.00	8,953.00
350 EMR COMPUTERS & SOFTWARE	0.00	5,633.00	5,633.00
351 EMR RATES	0.00	1,491.69	1,491.69
352 EMR ACCESSIBILITY	0.00	2,513.00	2,513.00
353 EMR WILDLIFE CONSERVATION VOLU	0.00	1,461.00	1,461.00
354 EMR MACHINERY REPLACE & REPAIR	0.00	9,949.00	9,949.00
355 EMR BUILDINGS REPLACE & REPAIR	0.00	6,500.00	6,500.00
356 EMR RESOURCING RESERVE	0.00	38,466.00	38,466.00
357 EMR VEHICLE REPLACEMENT & REPA	0.00	3,445.00	3,445.00
358 EMR STAFFING COSTS	0.00	3,949.42	3,949.42
	321,140.00	9,413.02	330,553.02

Dear Town Council,

I am a member of Buckingham Tennis Club and have joined a group tasked with looking into options for relocation of the club. We are in early stages of planning and I'd like to make you aware of our intentions and motivations for our investigation.

There is increasing concern that the frequency of flooding is becoming problematic. While the courts can be jet washed after they have been flooded they often remain slippery and the paint/surface degrades after each flooding event. Painting costs approximately £7000, resurfacing is significantly more expensive and is a drain on our membership funds.

We are also investigating how we make the club more appealing to the community as a whole and are keen to increase the membership by introducing variations of tennis such as Pickle Ball and Padel, however we have limited scope to expand in our current location and, with the added risk of flooding, the desire improve our current site is low.

Our approach at this stage is to appraise you of the situation and seek your support with the search for a new site and sources of funding. We are very keen to share our plans and would welcome any opportunity to discuss it with the Town Council.

With Best Regards

Phil Davies (On behalf of Buckingham Tennis Club)

BUCKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

MONDAY 17th February 2025

Contact Officer: Lee Phillips, Estates Manager

Metal Detecting Requests

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. It is recommended that the Council gives permission for detecting on the Council's land to members of the National Council for Metal Detecting who sign the model contract (example attached), at the discretion of the Estates Manager, providing the Estates Manager agrees to the timing and scope of each search.
- 1.2. It is recommended that the agreement shall continue in force from the 17th February 2025 until the 15th April 2025.
- 1.3. It is recommended that, following the 15th April 2025, additional permission agreements will need to be sought and agreed with the Estates Manager with precise conditions and area boundaries.
- 1.4. It is recommended that one of the conditions of the permission agreement is that the Town Council can restrict access to the site should construction begin earlier than the expiry of the permission.
- 1.5. It is recommended that this does NOT include Brackley Road Cemetery, once this is obtained.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council has received requests from detectorists to carry out metal detecting at the new cemetery and allotment site. The requests are from a member of the National Council for Metal Detecting who is covered by £10m insurance. The detectorist would only detect to a depth of 6 to 8 inches and immediately make good any holes.
- 1.6. The National Council for Metal Detecting provides a model agreement for metal detecting, which is attached.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR METAL DETECTING

Member of: The Sport and Recreation Alliance

NCMD



TO PROMOTE
TO PROTECT
TO ENCOURAGE

PERMISSION AGREEMENT

Name of Landowner/Occupier Buckingham Town Council Name of Detectorist: [REDACTED]

Land situated at Tingewick Road Cemetery Buckingham

I agree to pay the landowner / occupier of 50% of the value or rewards arising from the recovery of any property or objects found by the undersigned [herein after called the licensee(s)] over the value of £ 20

The licensee(s) may enter the said land or part thereof to search for items of buried or other material, whether antique or modern.

This agreement shall continue in force from (date) 17/2/2025 until (date) 15/4/2025

Provided that: -

1. The licensee(s) shall hold a current NCMD membership card showing, details of their £10,000,000 Public Liability Insurance cover.

2. The licensee(s) shall always observe and adhere to the Code of Conduct as set out by the NCMD which is a condition of membership and includes reference to the voluntary Code of Practise for Responsible Metal Detecting (See overleaf).

3. The licensee(s) shall strictly observe and adhere to any guidelines or special conditions and area boundaries, which may be set out by the owner / occupier from time to time and to any terms and conditions with respect to metal detecting access specified in agri-environment agreements which may cover all or part of the said land.

4. The licensee(s) shall record finds made on the said land with third parties including The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), Historic Environment Records (HER) or any museum service only after gaining the appropriate permission of the landowner and then only to an accuracy of find spots that all parties are comfortable with.

All parties must abide by the terms and conditions of any agri-environment schemes that specify mandatory reporting of all finds made on land covered by such agreements with the PAS. (Agri-Environmental Schemes are not applicable to Scotland and Wales).

Special conditions and boundaries,.....

Signed Owner / occupier Date.....

Signed [REDACTED] Licensee Date 30/01/2025

Address of Detectorist: [REDACTED]

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR METAL DETECTING

Member of: The Sport and Recreation Alliance



CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Do not trespass. Obtain permission before venturing on to any land.
2. Respect the Country Code, leave gates and property as you find them and do not damage crops, frighten animals or disturb nesting birds.
3. Wherever the site, do not leave a mess or an unsafe surface for those who may follow. It is perfectly simple to extract a coin or other small object buried a few inches below the ground without digging a great hole. Use a suitable digging implement to cut a neat flap (do not remove the plug of earth entirely from the ground), extract the object, reinstate the grass, sand or soil carefully, and even you will have difficulty in locating the find spot again.
4. If you discover any live ammunition or any lethal object such as an unexploded bomb or mine, do not disturb it. Mark the site carefully and report the find to the local police and landowner.
5. Help keep Britain tidy. Safely dispose of refuse you come across.
6. Report all unusual historical finds to the landowner, and acquaint yourself with current NCMD policy relating to the Voluntary Reporting of Portable Antiquities in England and Wales and the mandatory reporting requirements in Scotland. See: <http://www.treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/index.asp>
7. Remember it is illegal for anyone to use a metal detector on a designated area (e.g. Scheduled Monuments (SM), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), or Ministry of Defence property) without permission from the appropriate authority. It is also a condition of most agri-environment agreements that metal detecting access is subject to certain rules and regulations including mandatory finds recording. Details of these agreements and the access conditions they impose are detailed on the NCMD website.
8. Acquaint yourself with the terms and definitions used in the following documents: -
 - (1) Treasure contained in the Treasure Act 1996 and its associated Code of Practice, making sure you understand your responsibilities.
 - (2) Advice for Finders of Archaeological Objects including Treasure 2006.
 - (3) The voluntary Code of Practise for Responsible Metal Detecting to which the NCMD is an endorsee.
 - (4) Advice for finders in Scotland: see <http://www.treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/html/finders.asp>
9. Remember that when you are out with your metal detector you are an ambassador for our hobby. Do nothing that might give it a bad name.
10. Never miss an opportunity to explain your hobby to anyone who asks about it.

Appendix A to the NCMD Constitution

Revised February 2000

Amended AGM June 2012

Committee	Minute No.	Action	Action Required	Action Owner	Update	Deadline
Environment	92/15; 904/15;640/16 ; 309.4/17- 463; 206/18; 126/19	Sports Pitch Provision	Historical correspondence and agreements to be reviewed by the Town Clerk.	Town Clerk	To be reviewed following the new SPD introduction/ with BNDP at this time	NB Neighbourhood Plan due to go to examiner. Await updated local plan.
Environment	884/18	Compliments and Complaints Log	Members AGREED the report be brought back to Environment Committee in six months time in the same format.	Committee Clerk		Due 7th April 2025 Agenda
Environment	319/20	Lace Hill Doors	AGREED for a report regarding an additional external fire exit door is brought back to the next committee meeting.	Estates Manager	This project will need to be restarted. The walls in the Sports will need to be completed first.	Paused
Environment	771/20 & 1088/20	Tingewick Road Greenspaces	Members AGREED for the Town Council to take on the green spaces and play areas, provided that Barratts agree a suitable initial payment, and that the development of the green spaces are completed satisfactorily, in line with the agreed plans.	Town Clerk	Offer received and legal team have been instructed to start transfer process	Legal documentation being worked on by legal team - due diligence being completed.
Environment	70/23 193/23	Bourton Park bridges.	Members agreed to add the bridges to the action list. Cllr. Stuchbury Proposed an explanatory press release regarding the current status of the bridges. Cllr. Harvey Seconded. Member unanimously AGREED .	Estates Manager	ROW application has been submitted. Bucks Council seeking legal advice on the application.	Awaiting update from rights of way PR when appropriate
Environment	192/23	Solar panels - Buckingham Community Centre	A request will be made to the Town Clerk for an update on Community Centre solar panels.	Town Clerk	Roof repairs completed. Second leak under investigation. Options being explored.	On agenda
Environment	439/23	Shrub bed at Community Centre	Members requested that this is added to the action list.	Environment Committee	Buckingham Society in discussions with Buckinghamshire Council	No current actions
Environment	619/23	Motion: No idle zones	Cllr. Gateley offered to draft a letter to be sent to schools. The Compliance and Projects Manager suggested that the letter is agreed by the office who will approach schools initially to seek engagement.	Town Clerk when draft received.	letters sent, visited schools, community board involved with schools.	Completed
Environment	623/23	Value of trees	Cllr. Stuchbury Proposed that the Estates Manager looks at the system of adding a value to trees.	Estates Manager	Tree surveys in process. Full BC survey due 24-25.	On going
Environment	Public session	Boules court	The Town Clerk will make contact to discuss this further and a report can be brought to a future Environment Committee meeting.	Town Clerk	No suitable site identified at this time.	Awaiting update from twinning.

Committee	Minute No.	Action	Action Required	Action Owner	Update	Deadline
Environment	198/24	Cornwalls Meadow toilet doors	<p>Double check that the other toilets in the town are available.</p> <p>Write to the original contractor to tell them that this work is being undertaken due to their poor quality work.</p> <p>Ask the Community Centre Management Committee to open the Community Centre toilets during the closure.</p>	Estates Manager	Completed	Completed
Environment	302/24 7/10/24	Motion: Cllr. Harvey	"This Committee agrees to create a Seating Strategy - to take stock of existing provision and to consider how best to improve the availability of public benches (etc.) where there is need and demand, and to take into account previous decisions about seating and benches made by this Council."	Estates Administrator		On agenda
Environment	407/24.3 25/11/24	Budget	Add £2000 biodiversity audit budget line.	Town Clerk		Completed
Environment	408/24 25/11/24	Motion: Cllr. Gateley	In order to take the issue of No Idling Zones outside primary schools further, I propose that Buckingham Town Council Members carry out a survey to ascertain the scale of the problem, and how to proceed thereafter. Carried.	Cllr. Gateley and Cllr. Davies		Awaiting updates
	411/24 25/11/24	Public seating	Cllr. Ralph will raise the possibility of a new bench at the Buckingham Society meeting.	Cllr. Ralph		Awaiting updates

Buckingham Town Council
Environment Committee
Monday 17th February 2025.

Contact Officer: Town Clerk / Estates Manager

Buckingham Community Centre

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. It is recommended to note this report and to further note the Town Clerk is awaiting a response from Buckinghamshire Council before putting options to Members.

2. Background

- 2.1. Buckingham Town Council currently have access to £23,982 remaining from a New Homes Bonus (NHB) fund held by Buckinghamshire Council (BC). The money was granted for an extensive project to renovate the Town Council chamber and add air conditioning throughout the building. This part of the project has been completed. The original bid included adding solar panels to the roof of the Community Centre. This has proved extremely problematic.
- 2.2. The building is beginning to age, and there are problems with the unconventional roof, which has had multiple leaks. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors state that an asbestos cement roof has a life expectancy of 25-40 years, the Community Centre is 43yo. Beneath the tiles, there is a network of crawl tunnels and other inaccessible voids which means that water ingress points may actually originate from leaks on the opposite side of the roof. However, access to many of the voids is impossible, as staff and contractors cannot be expected to belly-crawl through unstable spaces. The situation is compounded by the fact that the roof tiles are made from asbestos. Therefore, not only must specialised contractors complete any work or inspection, no one will risk placing weight on the roof for fear of cracking a tile. Some of the tiles are starting to crumble and we have needed to replace them on an ad hoc basis.
- 2.3. Several surveys, fire assessments and contractor assessments have been undertaken this year, hampered by it being one of the wettest years on record. Additionally, this year, £2,560 from the NHB has been spent on building a custom walkway and removing cracked asbestos tiles to access a loft void for further survey work. Whilst this has improved our understanding of parts of the roof's condition, there remain uncertainties, including the suitability of several joists for drilling and the overall state of the roof membrane which is now beyond its expected lifespan. When a solar panel company attended site, they refused to quote stating the panels would not be financially viable to us as their customer.

- 2.4. Installing the panels would be irresponsible at this time. Even if we were to use all the outstanding funds to engage an expensive specialist to place an insignificant array on the roof, we would be unable to access it for servicing and maintenance. Moreover, it would be a waste of public money, as the panels would inevitably need to be removed at great expense to repair the roof. The panels should have a working life of 20-25 years, but the roof beneath is already failing.
- 2.5. The Town Clerk has written to BC to request the outstanding money be rolled over to the next financial year and to ask if it could be used to replace the south side of the roof and prepare it to take solar panels. BC will not hold this money indefinitely and this project needs to have a clear plan to move forward. The roof repair has been costed at £19,930 excluding VAT. This solution will not only provide a safe, long-lasting platform for the panels but will also help protect the already completed work from water damage. The remaining funds would be used to provide suitable ducts and fittings ready to host a solar array. This is more complex than usual, as the roof area's design significantly increases the fire risk. Independent assessments carried out during this year's exploratory work have identified additional precautions required, including cut-off switches that will need to be routed through the building.
- 2.6. A further complication is the rotting of the floor in the main entrance area. The Estates Manager has been attempting to locate the source of the water ingress but as noted above the irregular design of the building makes this extremely difficult. During the next few months a contractor will begin removing parts of the flooring to examine the decomposition of the joists underneath. Members will be updated once some facts are known.