

# Basingstoke and Deane Council Plan: Putting Residents at the Heart of Everything We Do

## Leader's introduction

In a time of challenging national politics, I would like to reconfirm Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's plan to improve your life as local residents, businesses and organisations. In this plan we aim to set out the priorities for the borough, not just to 2024 but long into the future. We want to provide you with the best possible place to live, work and enjoy your leisure time. This plan is informed by the findings of the Horizon 2050 vision for the future of Basingstoke and Deane, ensuring that the council delivers a future that residents, businesses and organisations have told us that they want to see.

In recognition that the whole of the council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 we have a duty to ensure that actions to tackle climate change run through every element of our council plan.

We know that the vast majority of residents think that this is a good place to live. We have ambitious plans for working with partners, both well established and new, to build upon this reputation. Although your satisfaction with what we do and what we are is high, we need to sustain that and improve on it. This will include a greater commitment to enhance the already wonderful countryside, including the species living within it. Alongside a commitment to clean up and reinvigorate some areas in our borough.

It is not enough that we have a great place to live, we need to attract jobs, not just for now but for the future and therefore attracting new businesses and supporting apprenticeships throughout the area will be vital.

The four priorities are:

- Strengthening communities
- Protecting and enhancing our environment
- Improving safety
- Planning for the future

Undoubtedly 'protecting and enhancing our environment' will shape each of the other three priorities as we respond to the climate emergency. We have committed to becoming a zero carbon council by 2025 and improving our recycling and clean energy generation, with air quality and the health of our children paramount in our thought process. You as our residents need to feel safe and therefore there will be a greater focus on reducing antisocial behaviour and supporting the most vulnerable in our society.

There is also a commitment to making what this council does more efficient, not just in terms of cost, but in how we use our energy and provide services to you. In doing that, we commit to maintaining low levels of council tax for your borough services and value-for-money in everything we do. Residents, businesses and partners are at the heart of making this council plan a success. We cannot achieve all that we want to do, without all of us understanding what we need to do to improve the borough, because no one can do everything but everyone can do something.

Cllr Ken Rhatigan  
Leader of the council

## Our priorities on a page

Putting residents at the heart of everything we do by focusing on these priorities:

### Strengthening communities

- Delivering high quality services
- Supporting local communities
- Outstanding leisure, sport and culture
- Improving health and mental wellbeing
- Being accessible and inclusive

### Protecting and enhancing our environment

- Responding to the climate emergency
- Becoming a zero carbon council by 2025
- Improving air quality
- Improving biodiversity
- Improving river and landscape quality

### Improving Safety

- Prioritising funding for community safety patrol officers
- Reducing antisocial behaviour
- Working alongside partner organisations to tackle crime
- Responding to emergencies
- Supporting our most vulnerable residents

### Planning for the future

- Promoting more sustainable and better transport options and connections
- Shaping high quality sustainable communities
- Well-designed, well-built homes
- Supporting jobs and business growth
- Supporting initiatives for a new hospital

## Strengthening communities

### Delivering high quality services

We are committed to delivering high quality value-for-money services. This includes continuing the valued weekly waste collection service and keeping council tax as low as possible.

We know that residents value the beauty of our natural environment and that having clean and litter free streets is important. We will continue to improve services in these areas, to ensure our borough is as pristine as it can be.

We will ensure that we are fit for the future so that we can provide relevant, innovative and efficient public services for residents to interact with, including utilising the latest technology to speed up processes and enable online access, but not leave any residents behind.

We know that residents want to feel informed and for us to listen, consult and communicate with them when making decisions. So we will monitor, review and redesign our services in consultation with our residents.

We will continue to explore income generating opportunities to work in partnership with other public sector authorities and private sector partners, where this can bring real benefits to our residents.

### Supporting local communities

The borough is home to a range of rural and urban communities. We are committed to supporting these communities to seek improvements to their local area. We will put forward funds to support areas in need of regeneration, including biodiversity, and allocate councillor community grants for each of the borough's wards. We will continue to improve local community facilities through grant schemes and investment in community buildings. We will also support the use of community assets to build community cohesion.

The voluntary sector and its volunteers underpins a number of our priorities and is highly valued and appreciated. We will continue to support and champion the voluntary sector, strengthening it, promoting volunteering opportunities and working in partnership wherever possible.

The borough is becoming a more diverse place and we want to build community cohesion and enable everyone to reach their full potential. We will continue to support local arts and cultural events that bring different people together and celebrate, and recognise the value of, our differences.

We will recognise and embrace the principles of inclusion and equality and will support and conserve the borough's natural, heritage and cultural assets.

### Outstanding leisure, sport and culture

The borough is already home to a wide range of leisure and sports facilities and we want this to continue and expand. Basingstoke Leisure Park has a variety of facilities

that attract both local and regional visitors. Our plan to regenerate the Leisure Park aims to attract investment and new high profile attractions that secures a 21st century offer. We also want a new country park at Manydown for borough residents of all ages to enjoy through a wide range of activities and educational opportunities. These facilities will contribute to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle for our residents.

We want to encourage participation in sport and physical activity for all ages, and to develop stars of the future.

Local arts and cultural activities bring enjoyment to many residents and we want to enable this sector to thrive, delivering a strong daytime and night time leisure economy.

### Improving health and mental wellbeing

Physical and mental wellbeing are fundamental to healthy communities. We will continue to push for suitable funding and provision for local GP and mental health services, alongside innovative models of delivery. We will carry on working with partners to ensure a wide range of accessible wellbeing activities are available for everyone, including walking and cycling routes.

The council will directly play its part by becoming an Autism Friendly council and support activities that prevent ill health within our own and supported facilities and green spaces.

### Being accessible and inclusive

The age profile of the borough's communities will continue to change with an ageing population. We will support individuals as they get older. This includes the provision of appropriate local housing options on new developments, as well as disabled facilities grants to fund home adaptations so that residents can live well in their own homes for as long as possible. The council itself will become a Dementia Friendly council.

In addition to supporting older residents, we will also fund community initiatives that bring all residents together for sport and wellbeing activities in order to prevent loneliness and isolation and promote inclusion. This includes facilities that are accessible for all.

We will also continue to support future generations, encouraging young people to play a part in their community and have a voice so that we respond to and meet their needs.

## Protecting and enhancing our environment

### Responding to the climate emergency

The council has declared a climate emergency with the aim that the borough is carbon neutral by 2030. To achieve this, ideas, expertise, energy and enthusiasm of residents, partners, groups and businesses in the borough needs to be pooled and co-ordinated. There will be challenges and difficult conversations will need to be had.

We are committed to increasing recycling, seeking to ensure that we send no waste to landfill and starting to deliver clean energy generation. We will encourage partners to upgrade buildings to be more environmentally-friendly, both in terms of their heating source and levels of insulation.

### Becoming a zero carbon council by 2025

The council will respond to the climate emergency by leading the way in delivering services to residents in a more environmentally-friendly way, with the target of carbon neutral operations by December 2025. This includes:

- aiming to have 100% of its heating and electrical needs supplied by renewable sources;
- purchasing and/or leasing only low emission vehicles;
- and ensuring that reducing carbon emissions is included in all council decision making.

### Improving air quality

We recognise the importance of having clean air and want to improve air quality. We will work with partners to reduce traffic congestion, encourage walking and cycling and increase the availability of facilities to charge electric vehicles, in public places, workplaces and around individual homes.

We will continue to work with Hampshire County Council and the voluntary sector to reduce air pollution levels around schools, directly through education, by monitoring pollution levels and other appropriate measures.

Our new waste collection vehicles produce less pollution than their predecessors and are working on more environmentally efficient routes. We are investing a further £2 million in replacement vehicles for the street cleansing and grounds maintenance teams. We have recently introduced a new taxi licensing scheme which includes a maximum age limit for vehicles to encourage lower emission vehicles. We will continue to build on these initiatives.

### Improving biodiversity

Protecting and enhancing the local environment that our residents enjoy is important, as is the protection of priority habitats for our diverse local wildlife. We are committed to improving biodiversity on the land we manage, such as managing road side verges to encourage more wildflowers and provide wildlife corridors. Measures to improve habitats are consistent with and support our declaration of a climate

emergency, given the significant benefits that our natural environment provides and the threat to our native species.

The work of volunteers and the need to foster awareness and understanding of the natural environment in future generations is recognised and appreciated. To reflect this, we will support this work. The greenness of our borough is something that residents cherish. The new 250 acre country park at Manydown will be managed for important species. Such species are supported by the wide variety of open and green spaces that provide connectivity within the borough. We will engage local groups to help develop ideas for the park.

### Improving river and landscape quality

We will continue to work with the Environment Agency and water companies to protect and improve the water quality of the Loddon and the Test. We will protect and enhance the features that define the different characters of the landscape within the borough including the nationally designated North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We will employ robust environmental enforcement where necessary to protect our residents and landscapes, this includes a zero tolerance approach to fly-tipping, action against the breach of planning conditions or unauthorised development and, where required, seeking legal injunctions against unauthorised encampments.

## Improving safety

### Prioritising funding for community safety patrol officers

Community safety patrol officers (CSPOs), funded by this council, work within the borough to improve the wellbeing of local residents, to reassure, and respond to issues as they arise. The CSPOs, in conjunction with other council teams, work with all partners and sectors and develop a deep understanding of local neighbourhoods and the needs of local residents, businesses and community groups. We will increase funding to invest more in this invaluable service supporting community cohesion, community resilience and community safety across the borough.

### Reducing antisocial behaviour

Residents tell us that dealing with antisocial behaviour is a key priority for them. We will continue to dedicate resources to this priority service which is essential for quality of life, to reducing fear of crime, and helping residents feel safe in their local neighbourhoods. Working with the CSPOs, other council teams, partners and community organisations, we will continue to identify reasons for antisocial behaviour, understand and tackle the root causes, deliver solutions, including early intervention, public health approaches and diversionary activities, and reduce levels.

### Working alongside partner organisations to tackle crime

We will continue to work in close partnership with the police, other organisations and the community to reduce crime. This includes supporting communities to identify local issues and help empower residents to tackle them. Through the Safer North Hampshire partnership, we will support crime reduction initiatives and programmes. We will also work with neighbouring councils to tackle cross boundary crime, including serious violence.

### Responding to emergencies

We will make considered preparations for emergency situations so that we are able to react quickly and appropriately when needed. This includes partnership working with Hampshire County Council, the Local Resilience Forum and statutory and voluntary sector organisations to identify risk, and build capacity to mitigate and respond.

### Supporting our most vulnerable residents

With an ageing population, as well as some areas of relative disadvantage, we are committed to reducing inequality of opportunity and ensuring people get support when they need it.

The council plays a significant part in supporting the most vulnerable residents in the borough through statutory responsibilities such as homelessness prevention and supporting people who are, or are at risk of being, victims of crime. For example, domestic violence survivors, which are given support to find safe local accommodation.

The Social Inclusion Partnership brings together a range of specialist, voluntary, statutory, faith and community groups all working together to reduce homelessness and exclusion. This extends to supporting people in the transition to Universal Credit and commissioning supported housing programmes for people with mental health or other support needs. We will continue to improve and extend our efforts alongside partners to reach and assist our most vulnerable residents.

## Planning for the future

### Promoting more sustainable and better transport options and connections

The way that local residents, visitors and workers move around the borough will need to continue to evolve and advance in a sustainable way, including through increased walking and cycling and a reduction in car use. We will work with partners to ensure that this movement is efficient, safe, healthy and environmentally-friendly. This includes delivering on the ambitions in Basingstoke's Transport Strategy, including a step change in the provision of public transport, through the future development and implementation of a Mass Rapid Transit system for Basingstoke town, serving key corridors and sites in and around Basingstoke, including the new Leisure Park and Manydown.

Alongside this are proposals to provide improved connections and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, as well as meeting the needs of drivers. The borough's good connectivity by road and rail to key UK locations important to employment and continuing prosperity will also continue to be a priority, including seeking improvements to rail links to Heathrow Airport.

### Shaping high quality sustainable communities

Our plan is to create great places of which people can be proud, and where they want to live. Ensuring that residents continue to benefit from top-class services and facilities that contribute to the overall sense of place.

The borough's current adopted Local Plan, alongside a number of neighbourhood plans, provides excellent planning policies and a framework to deliver and shape local development. Local residents will be consulted on a new Local Plan, which we aim to approve during the course of this council plan period, to ensure it continues to deliver new development to meet local needs in a controlled and sustainable way. Including features that encourage residents to feel safe and enhance the natural and historic environment.

As part of this new plan, the council will aim to strengthen current design, quality and sustainability policies further, helping to ensure the provision of well-planned and designed, high quality, environmentally ambitious development and places. With a focus on enabling new communities as well as regenerating and revitalising existing ones.

The council's jointly-owned Manydown development is a significant opportunity to create an amazing place and bring much needed homes and facilities through a well-planned approach, delivering a beacon of great design, sustainability and building standards.

We will aim to build on brownfield land where possible, recognising the contribution this land can make to the borough's housing needs.

## Well-designed, well-built homes

We are committed to enabling the provision of a range of homes that are fit to serve our residents throughout their lifetime, including a choice of ownership and rental options. Alongside government and housing providers, we are exploring new and innovative models for delivering homes and helping local people take that first step on to the housing ladder.

We understand the importance of home ownership to local people and recognise that current local rent and house prices in certain parts of the borough mean that some individuals and families are unable to save to achieve their aspirations. That's why we're setting up a loan scheme to help residents under the age of 35 raise a deposit for their first home.

We also understand the importance of providing homes for a variety of tenures, including social, affordable and private rent for individuals, families and households in multiple occupation. We will continue to ensure that homes that are affordable to rent and buy are provided on new housing developments in the borough, in line with our planning policies.

## Supporting jobs and business growth

Strong, prosperous town centres play a vital role in the social, cultural and economic health of our communities. At a time when many retail centres across the country are experiencing major structural challenges, we will work with partners to maintain the vigour of our town centres, actively promoting and supporting new and existing small and large businesses and entrepreneurs. Alongside the businesses themselves, we will build on the successes of recent years to ensure that the borough is a dynamic and attractive employment location, including the development of a new Basingstoke Town Centre Strategy, including the Top of the Town so that it remains both popular and successful and is equipped for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Significant progress has been made in recent times in regenerating our Central Business District, Basing View. We will maintain the tempo of new investment and jobs by enabling further office development of council owned and controlled sites and buildings, deepening our successful relationships with the M3 Local Enterprise Partnership and private sector investors and developers. This council's role as a catalyst for new investment and development will be maintained so as to continue to attract new jobs and investment and support our growing and nationally significant high tech and digital economy.

We are working with business and education partners to help connect those seeking work to potential employers, and support the provision of education for a work ready workforce, including the introduction of university degree level courses. We are also promoting apprenticeships within the council and across the borough.

## Supporting initiatives for a new hospital

We support the need for a new hospital serving the residents of North Hampshire and delivered in Basingstoke. The existing hospital provides excellent services to our residents but the campus buildings are now not of a standard suitable for the health

needs of a growing 21<sup>st</sup> century population. Delivering a new hospital is a priority and we will work constructively and strenuously with central government, Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Board and other partners to take this project forward, including the provision of a research centre and health satellite education centre.