

Spring 2022

Basingstoke & Deane Today

The newspaper of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

Large print version

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Basingstoke
and Deane

Focus on staying a great place

Taking action to ensure the borough's sustainable future

Big decisions and actions are being taken over the coming year that will shape what the borough will be like in the decades to come – and it is important that everyone gives us their views.

The green thread running through our work and plans is how we achieve the challenging target of making the borough carbon neutral by 2030, under our climate emergency declaration, and ensure it is more welcoming for wildlife after declaring an ecological emergency.

As we get back to a more normal life after the pandemic, the council is looking further ahead to make plans for the kind of thriving and successful place we want to be.

We've already heard lots of ideas about how Basingstoke town centre could be given a new lease of life and we are working on the vision to start taking that forward.

Through the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, the council will decide on the policies to guide where new homes and businesses will be built and how the environment can be protected and biodiversity enhanced. Consultation on the first draft of the updated local plan is set to start in the summer.

Proposals are being drawn up to give our ageing Aquadrome and Basingstoke Leisure Park a brighter and more sustainable future. You can give your views now on what kind of facilities the park and Aquadrome could provide in the future.

We are already taking action to support the local economy to bounce back and provide great employment opportunities including supporting businesses to play their part in digital innovations, such as 5G.

See inside for the latest snapshot of what is happening to take this all forward.

Walk this way to better health

Basingstoke Wellbeing Walks give people of all ages the chance to take part in regular, short walks in their own communities. Walking can help improve health while enjoying local, natural spaces with others.

The fun, free walks led by trained volunteers are now run by Basingstoke Voluntary Action, supported by the council, under the Walking for Health scheme.

For more information visit www.bvaction.org.uk/basingstoke-wellbeing-walks

Welcome

...to the 2022 spring edition from Acting Leader Cllr Simon Bound

Our key focus, as a council, continues to be on investing in frontline services that are most important to our residents and setting a clear vision for a brighter future.

In the last two years we have had to concentrate on supporting our residents and businesses through the pandemic, dealing with the impact on our services and helping our communities and economy to bounce back. COVID-19 will continue to have an impact on our lives, but we can focus on bringing back an even better 'new normal'.

This spring edition aims to give you updates on what we are doing to move things forward for our borough.

Despite resources being stretched and keeping our part of council tax low, our budget is putting more money into on the ground services that make a difference to where you live every day. This includes street cleaning, litter picking and collecting waste and recycling.

We are also making plans to protect our environment, provide the right infrastructure, enhance our much-loved open and public spaces, and upgrade our facilities.

In everything we do we must contribute to addressing the climate emergency and protecting our biodiversity.

Balancing all of this is a challenge to get right. We want to do our best for everyone, so please make sure you give us your views.

Investing in services you value

Investment in frontline services and shaping the future of the borough while keeping council tax low are the focus of the council's budget for the year from April.

As Basingstoke & Deane Today went to press, councillors were due to vote on the council's budget for the 2022/23 year, following public consultation.

Proposals include additional funding for frontline services, such as street cleaning, picking up litter, looking after parks and open spaces and housing and homelessness support. Investing in an extra waste and recycling crew is proposed to make rounds quicker and reduce missed collections across the borough. There is continued support for other services that residents value, such as community safety patrols.

Additional commitments to fund economic recovery post-pandemic and initiatives to meet the borough's challenging climate change targets are proposed.

Our part of the council tax is likely to remain among the lowest of all districts in the country, going up by just £5 a year, or 10p per week, for the average household. A three per cent average increase in fees and charges is proposed to help fund these services.

Yet the council still spends one of the highest amounts per resident on services of all districts in England.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/budget2022

Financial facts

- We receive the second smallest share of the council tax you pay, with most of it going to Hampshire County Council.
- We get almost twice as much money from our property rents than we get from council tax to invest in services.
- We receive minimal support from the government towards our services, not getting a revenue support grant since 2019/20.

Borough set to go to the polls

Don't miss your chance to have your say in this year's council elections by registering to vote.

Residents across the borough will go to the polls in May to elect one third of the borough's 54 councillors.

At the time of going to press, elections are due to take place on Thursday 5 May to elect 18 councillors for the borough council who will serve until May 2026.

Residents can cast their votes by voting in a polling station, voting by post or by appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf, which is known as a proxy vote.

The government is proposing changes to the electoral system which will mean that voters at polling stations will need to show photo identification before they receive their ballot paper. However, these changes are still being considered by the government and will not apply for this May's local elections.

To register to vote in the May elections, visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/vote

Give your views on leisure park future

Residents, community groups and Basingstoke Leisure Park users are being asked to share their views on how the popular destination can be given a more sustainable future.

Running until Sunday 20 March, a consultation survey is gathering feedback as a master plan is being drawn up to modernise the park, improve its environment and make the best use of under-utilised land to support its regeneration. It also asks for thoughts on improved facilities that could be provided in a modernised or new Aquadrome.

The early engagement comes as the council, working with a team of experts, looks at options for upgrading the leisure park and the council-owned Aquadrome. This follows the end of a previous development agreement with NewRiver to regenerate the leisure park that was terminated as it was no longer viable in the post-COVID world.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Major Projects Cllr John Izett said: “Our leisure park is a well-loved facility enjoyed by many of our residents and their families. But it does need to be updated and improved.

“We want to hear from as many residents as possible at this early stage. Through the questionnaire, we are hoping to gather lots of views to help us reach conclusions on a new master plan for the park and mix of facilities for the Aquadrome that will make this a ‘must visit’ place in the years ahead.”

Although the leisure park itself belongs to the borough council, most of the buildings there are owned on long leases by the operators or their landlords, who are being consulted to understand their own vision for the future of their facilities, encouraging them to update what they offer to the borough.

Facilities for an updated Aquadrome?

A larger competition swimming pool with eight lanes, upgraded flumes and family leisure water area, a spinning studio, a multi-level soft play zone and an indoor adventure climbing wall are among new facilities that a modernised Aquadrome could provide.

Other improvements being suggested include a larger fitness suite with more stations and extra health suite facilities.

Options for an improved Aquadrome have been drawn up by sports and leisure sector experts. They looked at what was likely to be most successful after exploring current usage, gaps in what is provided in the area and wider trends.

The well-used Aquadrome is the only council owned and operated facility at the leisure park. Managed by Basingstoke and Community Leisure Trust and run by Serco, it provides a wide range of facilities and activities for all ages and abilities, including a gym, three swimming pools, water flumes, a health suite and fitness studios.

The council is considering replacing the Aquadrome to make sure it remains a popular facility for future generations to enjoy. The funding of the new facility will be a crucial part of this process.

A renewed Aquadrome would represent a significant investment in Basingstoke and the health and wellbeing of local people at a time when other councils around the country are cutting back on their leisure investment.

Decision ensures access to leisure and fitness

Basingstoke and Deane Community Leisure Trust and Serco Leisure will continue to manage three key leisure facilities in the borough for the next three years.

Through the leisure trust, Serco manages Basingstoke Aquadrome, Basingstoke Golf Centre and Tadley Health and Fitness Centre on behalf of the council. The current contract is to be extended until 31 December 2025 while longer-term options are considered.

To make sure residents can continue to enjoy facilities at the Aquadrome while we develop plans for its future, essential maintenance work to protect the flumes is expected to start shortly.

Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Leisure Cllr Rebecca Bean said: “Ensuring our residents have a high quality of life and have access to a range of services and facilities to improve their health and wellbeing is a key priority for us.

“I am pleased that the leisure trust and Serco will continue to manage these important facilities for the next three years. As a result, residents can continue to enjoy important leisure activities while we consider a longer-term strategy for the management of these council-owned facilities to meet changing customer needs in a post-COVID world.”

For more information on the Basingstoke Leisure Park and Aquadrome options and to give your views visit

www.leisureparkbasingstoke.co.uk

Ecological emergency pledge to protect wildlife

We're the first council in Hampshire to declare an ecological emergency to make the natural environment a strategic priority within our work.



The cross-council commitment to protect and restore the natural environment builds on our climate emergency declaration pledge to become a carbon neutral council in our operations by 2025 and a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

The council already has a number of initiatives to protect the borough's natural environment and biodiversity including:

- the Green Infrastructure Strategy planning how people and wildlife benefit from natural areas and green open spaces and natural and ecological processes are enhanced
- the Living Landscapes Strategy setting out the habitats, landscape characteristics and species most in need of attention and our council's approach to protecting and improving the natural environment
- the Biodiversity Improvement Zone pilot in Hatch Warren and Beggarwood.

Pilot project aims to make our community wild

Teaming up with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, we're keen to start a Wilder Basingstoke pilot project to help communities or groups to develop schemes that benefit wildlife.

Borough communities or groups can apply to take part in projects, for example connecting gardens with hedgehog holes, adopting small areas of local open space, or working with local schools to plant wildflower meadows on their land.

One community will be chosen for the pilot from applications via the trust's website at www.hiwwt.org.uk

Call for fairer borough housing target

A fairer housing target that reflects the speed the borough has grown, to allow infrastructure the time to catch up, is being pushed for by the council.

The Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, that currently covers the period to 2029, is being updated by the borough council to guide planning decisions until at least 2039.

The council would like to see a housing figure for the borough that slows down the high level of home building experienced in the last two decades. This would be lower than the baseline currently proposed by the government.

Acting Leader Cllr Simon Bound said: "No area in Hampshire, the south and probably the whole of England has delivered as many homes in the last 20 years, proportional to the number of existing homes. Facilities, infrastructure and public services, including emergency services, health, social care and criminal justice, need time to catch up

with our growth. This is essential to be able to plan and deliver the right services for our residents now and in the future.”

The council is considering the policies that will guide housing development and also assessing potential sites put forward by landowners and developers. This work needs to continue to ensure that the council prepares a robust local plan to guide future growth and protect the borough from speculative housing development applications.

Meanwhile, evidence is being gathered to support the council’s argument to the government for fairer housing targets based on the borough’s exceptional circumstances, under national planning policy.

Potential development sites will be set out in a draft Local Plan Update, that is due to go out to public consultation later this year. As well as deciding where new homes should go, the plan will also help protect the environment, encourage healthy lifestyles and combat climate change. It will set out what infrastructure is needed to support new homes and provide enough places for people to work and run businesses.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/about-lpu

Top marks for parks

Two popular Basingstoke parks have been given Green Flag Award status putting them among the very best green spaces in the UK.

War Memorial Park and Eastrop Park have retained the award for being well maintained, clean and safe, with facilities for visitors. Eastrop Park has held Green Flag status for the past 22 years, while War Memorial Park has received the same award for 14 years.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/local-parks

Bringing town centre vision to life

Further work is now under way to shape the future of Basingstoke town centre.

Throughout 2021, residents, businesses and visitors were asked to share their views on what they would like to see in the town centre and early thoughts on how the area could be transformed.

Ideas included opening up the town centre to make it more accessible, making the most of the town's entrepreneurial spirit, creating opportunities for more community and cultural activities and providing new homes while celebrating the borough's rich heritage.

Helping to meet the borough's challenging climate change targets and encouraging a healthier lifestyle, other suggestions included creating a 'greener' feel through new green spaces as well as improving the area's biodiversity.

Further investigation work and studies are now under way, alongside town centre landowners, to understand how the area could evolve, how much this would cost and if certain projects could be completed earlier, in order to finalise a vision and master plan to guide development.

Climate emergency updates

Everyone can do their bit to help us reach our challenging climate emergency target of making the borough carbon neutral by 2030. Find out more about some of the things we are doing under our action plan in this feature and by visiting www.basingstoke.gov.uk/climate



Good tips for climate change and your pocket

From turning down your thermostat and switching off lights to cycling rather than getting in your car and buying local produce, there are loads of small steps you and your family can take to cut your carbon footprint.

An interactive toolkit has been launched by the council to help residents and communities to take positive action to tackle climate change.

It provides tips and advice on a range of topics, helping people start with some easy changes and progress to making a really big difference. It is an interactive and evolving tool and will be updated regularly to make sure that it contains the latest information. Residents and community groups are encouraged to give the council feedback on information they would like to see included in the future.

Cabinet Member for the Natural Environment and Climate Improvement Cllr Mark Ruffell said: "We can all take action to reduce our impact on the climate but it can be difficult to know where to start. This toolkit is designed to help local people and groups understand what they can do to make a difference. Many of the actions in the toolkit bring wider benefits too, such as saving money and improving our health. I would encourage everyone to see how they can help the borough reach its climate emergency targets."

Find the toolkit at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/climate and let us know what you would like to see included in it in the future by emailing climatechange@basingstoke.gov.uk

Helping small businesses cut carbon

Businesses in the borough can now apply for up to £10,000 of grant funding to help them reduce their costs by improving energy efficiency or growing their low carbon or environmental business.

We have joined forces with other local authorities across the region in the LoCASE (Low Carbon Across the South and East) Programme, which has access to the European Regional Development Fund, to provide a free business support programme for small and medium sized companies.

The programme aims to help business to become more competitive and profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions. Funding is available until spring 2023.

To find out more visit www.locase.co.uk

Encouraging score for climate plan

The council's climate change action plan ranks above the national average and second highest in the county, according to figures published by Climate Emergency UK.

Along with those from 409 other UK councils, our plan was assessed by a team trained and overseen by not-for-profit co-operative Climate Emergency UK and scored 54%, with the average being 46%. In Hampshire, only Fareham Borough Council's plan scored more with 61%.

Scores were based on plans, rather than actions, and the council is already taking steps to address the climate emergency, including launching the climate change toolkit as well as improving the energy efficiency of its buildings.

And work has also started to reduce carbon emissions in the longer term. Sustainable development policies are being drafted as part of updating the

Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan and other projects are being considered, including installing electric vehicle charging points in addition to those in Overton, Whitchurch and Basingstoke town centre to further encourage sustainable travel choices.

View the scores for all the councils' climate change action plans at www.councilclimatescorecards.uk

Warmer homes

Living in a cold home and struggling to pay your bills? We're offering government grants of up to £10,000 to low income households to provide energy-efficient home improvements such as solar panel systems, park home insulation, solid wall insulation and low carbon heating systems.

For more information and to apply visit www.warmerhomes.org.uk/lad-programme where the next round of applications will open in March.

Helping young people into work

Young job seekers in the borough have additional help to find job and training opportunities as part of a new North Hampshire Employment Skills Zone.

As part of our support for the local economic recovery, we are working with Rushmoor Borough Council and Hart District Council to deliver a new service to support young people into further training and employment.

Following a rise in youth unemployment as a result of the pandemic, the North Hampshire Employment Skills Zone will help young people to prepare for work, build confidence and find the most appropriate support.

A new website brings together a host of employment, skills, training and careers information and will make it easier for young people to find out what support is available locally. Young people can also subscribe to the website for free access to careers toolkits, discussion forums and online training.

Face-to-face help will also be available so 18 to 24 year olds can find out more about the help available, meet local employers and get support from a range of local organisations.

For more information about the Employment Skills Zone, visit www.esznorthhants.org.uk

Give us road name ideas that are up your street!

From Caribbean islands to composers and painters – have you ever wondered how your street ended up with its name?

The council is responsible for allocating house numbers and road names to new developments and approving amendments to existing residential and commercial addresses. It keeps the definitive record of all street names and property addresses in the borough, known as the Local Land and Property Gazetteer. This is crucial as it is used by organisations and companies, including the emergency services and Royal Mail.

Suggested themes for new roads are identified by us or put forward by residents or developers and they have a link to the local area if possible. They are considered by the parish or town councils and ward councillors before being approved.

And there are lots of interesting themes to discover. In Whitchurch there's Richard Adams Way, named after the author of Watership Down. Surrounding streets are also named after rabbit characters from the novel including Blackberry Lane and Hazel Way. Alternatively venture to Portico Way in Chineham and you will find road names related to the architectural features of The Vyne or features in the grounds.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/street and if you have an idea for a theme for new roads email GMSTeam@basingstoke.gov.uk

Unauthorised encampments ban stays

An injunction banning the setting up of any unauthorised encampments in a large section of the borough will stay in place after the council won an appeal to keep it.

In April 2019, the borough council and Hampshire County Council were granted a five year injunction by the High Court, prohibiting identified people and new people from setting up unauthorised encampments within the urbanised area of Basingstoke town, as well as the areas of Bramley, Silchester, Tadley Common and a small parcel of land at Stratfield Turgis.

Following an application for a similar injunction to the High Court by the London Borough of Bromley, all 37 injunctions granted to local authorities were reviewed by the High Court. A total of 16 councils – including Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council – appealed the points raised, most specifically the application of the injunction to new, non-identified people setting up unauthorised encampments within the injunction area.

In January, the High Court allowed the appeal, meaning that the injunction remains in place to include both identified people as well as unidentified people.

The injunction gives greater power to landowners and the police and means that anyone setting up an encampment in the injunction area will be prohibited from doing so and will be asked to leave immediately. The area covered in the injunction captures those communities most regularly experiencing the negative impacts of unauthorised encampments.

To find out more visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/encampments

5G Living Lab to boost borough's economic growth

A £3.8million cutting-edge project will see 5G, artificial reality and virtual reality infrastructure available in Basing View, giving companies access to 5G connectivity in a boost to the borough's economic recovery.

The 5G Living Lab, funded by telecoms specialist Cellnex and the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, will enable entrepreneurs and businesses to trial products, services and applications to bring these to the market faster.

The project aims to create a thriving 5G ecosystem that will foster technological development and innovation, support economic growth, lead to job creation and attract inward investment.

Delivering vital support for businesses

Since the start of the pandemic, we have distributed over £92 million of emergency COVID-19 funding to businesses across Basingstoke and Deane.

Over £10 million of grants have been paid to small businesses, £18 million of retail grants have been paid to 1,410 businesses, £6 million in discretionary grants have been given to businesses unable to benefit from other grant schemes and £11 million of funding has been awarded to businesses forced to close or severely impacted during periods of restrictions.

This is alongside £47 million of business rates relief and a rent and service charge holiday for all 344 small businesses in council-owned properties with annual rents of up to £50,000.

To target support for businesses heavily impacted by the Omicron variant, including the travel, events, hospitality, leisure, accommodation, personal care and sports sectors, a new scheme providing vital funding was launched by the council in January, in addition to the government support.

Brighton Hill roundabout

Hampshire County Council's major scheme to improve Brighton Hill roundabout began in January and is expected to be completed in winter 2023.

The £19.3 million project will widen and signalise Brighton Hill roundabout and add additional capacity to its main arms. For more information visit www.hants.gov.uk/transport/transportchemes/A30brightonhillroundabout

At the heart of the community

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the power of people coming together in the heart of our borough's communities to help those who need support.

As a council, we are committed to enabling and empowering community groups to deliver activities and projects for everyone to easily use or access in their neighbourhoods, making a difference to residents' lives. In this feature, you can find out more about Basingstoke and Deane's umbrella organisation providing vital support for volunteers and the voluntary sector, Basingstoke Voluntary Action.

You can make a difference

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen us spend more time in our communities and come together to help those who need it.

Whether it be delivering vital supplies to neighbours, being a friendly voice on the end of the phone or supporting the local vaccination drive, hundreds of new volunteers have come forward over the past two years to support their communities.

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people and connect with your community and provides an opportunity to gain career experience, learn valuable new skills and increase your self-confidence.

It doesn't matter how much time you have to give or what your skills are, there will be an opportunity for you.

If you would like to know more about volunteering and local opportunities, visit www.bvaction.org.uk You can also contact Basingstoke Voluntary Action (BVA) by calling **01256 423816** or emailing contact@bvaction.org.uk

Helping groups to thrive

Basingstoke Voluntary Action (BVA) is an independent charity that works with individuals, community and voluntary groups across Basingstoke and Deane to shape a vibrant and sustainable voluntary sector which champions the borough's communities.

Through its free membership offer, BVA supports community groups and organisations with development opportunities and information and guidance to help them flourish. Alongside this, the team ensures groups can access a talented pool of volunteers by matching them to available opportunities.

As well as direct support for communities, through a host of local and national networks BVA ensures that its members' voices are heard at a strategic level.

Leading community action, the team has been instrumental in bringing communities and key organisations together in the fight against COVID-19, supporting key activities, including the community hub that delivered vital support to vulnerable residents, the local vaccine rollout and the local response to the government's Afghan resettlement scheme.

This is alongside a host of free activities and programmes that the team delivers, including weekly wellbeing walks, ReBoot It, the volunteer led project providing refurbished IT equipment and training to disadvantaged people and the BOSS partnership that supports groups with practical solutions to run their organisations.

Chief Executive Tony Capon said: "We're immensely proud to be the representative body for voluntary and community action and helping to lead the local community response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will continue to work closely with the council, groups and volunteers to support our communities to thrive."

Supporting communities

The council provides grant funding to a range of voluntary and community sector organisations to improve residents' wellbeing and help meet our priorities.

This includes strategic grants for organisations delivering services and activities to help meet the council's priorities and programme grants to support community projects.

To ensure our programme grant funding makes the biggest difference to residents across the borough, we are working with BVA to develop a new community grant scheme which is expected to launch in April 2022.

Managed by Basingstoke Voluntary Action (BVA), the scheme aims to support local community groups and organisations to become more resilient and drive innovation to enable them to better meet community needs.

As part of the scheme, BVA will provide targeted advice and support for applicants and help them to access other sources of funding available locally and nationally.

More information will be available at www.bvaction.org.uk in the spring.

Give your recycling a lot of bottle!

The plastic bottles that you put into your green recycling bin will be given a whole new lease of life, either as a new bottle or as a range of other products including fleece clothing, pens, garden furniture and carpets.

With plastic litter a global problem and a growing movement to reduce the amount of single use plastic used in packaging and production, it is important that you don't waste valuable resources and put all your plastic bottles in your green bin.

While most plastic packaging says that it is 'widely recyclable', what determines whether a product can be recycled is the availability of secure, local, ethical and sustainable markets to make the recycling into new products.

In Hampshire two types of plastic can be recycled – PET and HDPE - and 97% of plastic bottles are made from this material. Typically, these will be drinks bottles, milk bottles, shampoo bottles and cleaning products.

Other plastic packaging, such as pots, tubs, trays and films, are made of different plastic and there are currently limited markets available for these. If we were to collect these plastics, there is no guarantee that they could be recycled or processed in the UK at this time. Shipping plastics long-distance has a negative environmental impact.

There has been a drop in sustainable markets for these materials but we continue to monitor the markets and look for ways to increase the range of items that can be recycled in Hampshire. The recycling we collect in Basingstoke and Deane goes to a material recovery facility in Alton. By collecting what we know we can process locally, we keep the carbon footprint of our waste down.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/recycle

Plastic bottle recycling tips

- Leave lids on
- Wash and squash
- Look for non-plastic alternatives such as glass.

Zero tolerance approach to fly-tippers

We won't tolerate fly-tipping and we're taking strong action against it with the support of our communities.

Creating an eyesore in our local communities, fly-tipping is harmful to the environment and wildlife, causes a nuisance for people living nearby and is costly to clean up. We're tackling this issue head on by working with our communities, identifying hotspots for patrols, looking at ways to prevent offences and prosecuting offenders.

Since May 2018 we have achieved 39 successful prosecutions for fly-tipping related crimes, with more currently going through the courts, and have one of the highest prosecution rates in Hampshire. The support of the community has been crucial in our investigations.

Cabinet Member for Recycling, Waste and Regulatory Services Cllr Hayley Eachus said: "We know that fly-tipping is an issue that our communities want us to take action on. Our message to would-be fly-tippers is clear. We will prosecute whenever we can so you are risking a substantial fine and a criminal record, or even imprisonment.

"Tackling this illegal and antisocial behaviour is greatly helped by the support of the community, so I would appeal to anyone who has any information about incidents of fly-tipping, to contact the council to help us to bring the offenders to justice."

Offences of fly-tipping carry a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment at Crown Court. Report fly-tipping to us, giving as much information as you can if you witnessed the incident, by visiting www.basingstoke.gov.uk/flytipping or calling 01256 844844.

Encouraging more kerbside recycling

As residents can recycle paper, card and glass using the kerbside service, some collection banks have been removed.

The move, which will cut unnecessary car journeys, follows antisocial behaviour and fly-tipping at the recycling banks, causing distress to nearby residents and businesses. Some recycling banks for other items that can't be recycled at the kerbside are still available in other locations.

Recycling banks will stay open for other items that can't be recycled at the kerbside. For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/recyclingsites

Partnership effort to tackle rough sleeping

Partners across the borough have reaffirmed their commitment to tackling homelessness.

Each year, local authorities are asked to submit the number of people sleeping rough in their area.

Over recent years, the number in Basingstoke and Deane has consistently fallen and remains very low.

Tougher penalties for town centre antisocial drinking

A crackdown on antisocial street drinking has seen the introduction of a public spaces protection order in Basingstoke.

The order makes it an offence to drink alcohol in designated areas after authorised officers have asked an individual to dispose of it.

Non-compliance will result in an on-the-spot fine of £100 or a £500 fine if convicted by a Magistrates Court. Areas covered include the town centre, War Memorial Park, Eastrop Park, Glebe Gardens, Holy Ghost Cemetery and small sections of Brookvale, Norden and Eastrop.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/pspo

Help onto the property ladder

Are you looking to get onto the housing ladder but need some help? There are plenty of low-cost home ownership options available locally that are designed to help first time buyers.

Low-cost home ownership options include rent to buy and shared ownership schemes, but there are two other schemes that give help towards buying a home.

A new government scheme, First Homes, will help buy a new property up to the market value of £250,000. To be eligible, residents must have a local connection to the borough, be a first-time buyer with a mortgage to fund at least 50% of the discounted purchase price and have a household income of under £80,000 per year. Key workers who provide an essential service to the borough are also eligible. As First Homes opportunities become available in the borough, more information will be available at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/low-cost-home-ownership

The council's Own Home Loan scheme also supports first-time buyers with a loan of up to 20% of the value of a property up to a maximum of £30,000. Interest free for the first five years, these loans are

available to single people, couples and families with children. They can be used to purchase a new build or older home up to the value of £250,000, with loans to help with the mortgage deposit or to bridge the gap between the maximum mortgage offer and property purchase value.

Applications are considered on a first come first served basis. To qualify, you must be a first-time buyer living or working in the borough and registered on the council's housing register, with a household income of under £50,000 and able to provide a 5% deposit and pass an external financial assessment carried out by Parity Trust.

We are currently reviewing the eligibility criteria for the Own Home Loan scheme in line with the introduction of First Homes. For regular updates and more information, visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/own-home-loan

Cabinet Member for Homes and Housing Regeneration Cllr Tristan Robinson said: "One of our priorities is to give people access to housing that meets their needs at all stages of their lives, including a range of options and opportunities to own their own home.

"We are always looking at new and innovative ways that we can open the door to home ownership. I would encourage those looking to take their first step on the housing ladder to visit our website or get in touch with the housing team to talk through their options."

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/low-cost-home-ownership

For regular updates on new opportunities, sign up for our Your Home emailer at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/buyaffordablehomes

Manydown development work set to start

Initial infrastructure work at Manydown in western Basingstoke is set to begin in the coming months, in advance of homes starting to be built in 2023.

A 250-acre countryside park, giving public access for walks and a range of other activities, will be included as part of the development of new homes, schools, shops and community facilities.

With preparatory surveys for archaeology, ecology and utilities connections recently completed, master developer Urban&Civic – on behalf of its partnership with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Hampshire County Council and charity Wellcome Trust – is now set to start delivering Manydown at pace. This follows the finalisation of the legal agreements granting the councils, as owners of a long lease on the land, outline planning permission.

Urban&Civic is planning community engagement, including a series of events in the coming months and over the next year.

For more information, including about these upcoming events, visit the Facebook and Twitter pages **@ManydownLife** and www.manydownlife.co.uk/connect

Help to prevent homelessness

Financial help is available for private renters at risk of homelessness, thanks to the council getting almost £150,000 in government funding.

Through this funding boost from the Homelessness Prevention Grant Fund, grants are now available to residents who are renting privately in the borough to help pay for rent arrears or to give them support to prevent them from becoming homeless.

Landlords are also eligible for funding to pay rent arrears for struggling tenants facing eviction or to use empty properties for those who have lost their homes owing to the pandemic.

To support residents living in social and supported housing and facing hardship this winter, we have also been working with Sovereign Housing Association and VIVID to deliver financial help with housing costs, food, energy and water bills.

For more about the homelessness prevention grants, email housing@basingstoke.gov.uk

Property buyer help

Councils keep a local land charges register with a variety of information affecting land and properties important to prospective purchasers.

Our local land charges team keeps and searches the register for solicitors and licensed conveyancers on behalf of prospective buyers. To help move things quicker, the team returns many of its searches in five to seven working days. Even throughout the high demand for searches during the stamp duty holiday in 2020/21, the team kept its seven year standard of returning 100% of searches within 10 working days.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/local-land-charges

Taking a walk down memory lane

Basingstoke town centre's fascinating history is brought to life as part of a self-guided trail.

Updated by the Basingstoke Heritage Society in partnership with the council and Love Basingstoke, the Basingstoke trail gives residents and visitors the chance to find out more about the town's heritage from the Domesday Book through to the modern day. The self-guided walk starts at the Top of the Town and there is also a new video featuring people sharing their knowledge of local history.

The trail includes the places where Jane Austen came to dance and the humble beginnings of what is now one of the biggest international fashion brands, Burberry, whose owner Thomas Burberry owned shops and workshops in the town.

It also features some of the many visits from notable figures. Oliver Cromwell stayed at the former Falcon Inn in London Street – now occupied by the Tea Bar – in 1645 and Catherine of Aragon lodged overnight in the home of Richard Kingsmill on her way to meet her future husband Prince Arthur in 1501. After Arthur died, she went on to marry his younger brother and became the first of Henry VIII's six wives.

Walking the full trail takes approximately 90 minutes, or it can be followed in smaller sections. The town trail booklet can be picked up from many businesses in Basingstoke's Top of the Town and the Willis Museum. To watch the video or for more information visit

www.lovebasingstoke.co.uk

Making the borough more AccessAble

Thanks to a partnership between the council and AccessAble, there are over 200 Access Guides to places of interest in the borough, including leisure centres, beauty spots, cultural venues, restaurants and shops.

Developed through working with disabled people and carers, AccessAble creates online guides to help people understand the accessibility of venues and attractions in the borough before they visit.

The AccessAble website and free app give detailed information about access into and around venues. Each guide is created and regularly updated through an in-person assessment by a trained surveyor.

For more information on accessible locations in the borough visit www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/basingstoke-and-deane

Investing in the arts

Showing our commitment to culture, we continue to be one of the highest investors in the arts of district councils in the region.

Our highest grant for arts and culture organisations in the borough is set to go to Anvil Arts in 2022/23, with £395,000 for the coming year. Under this arrangement Anvil Arts will continue to manage The Haymarket, a key council-owned theatre and an important part of Basingstoke's historic Top of the Town, for the next three years, as well as The Anvil.

This will allow Anvil Arts to explore opportunities to increase the range of activities on offer and additional sources of funding in line with its new business plan. Options for how the facility will be managed after 2025 will continue to be explored by the council.

Fun play funding

Two parks in Winklebury have benefited from £110,000 of improvements, thanks to joint funding from the borough council, Winklebury and Manydown Community Action Group, the Worting Trust and former Hampshire County Councillor Robert Taylor.

In Oaklands Park this included toddler multi-play units, swings, seesaws and fitness equipment for older children. In Winklebury Park multi-play units, swings for all, an accessible roundabout and springers were installed. Safety surfacing and seating for parents and carers were also fitted at both sites.

To find your local park or to discover a new one visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/playareas

Looking for things to do or want to plan some spring fun?

This is the place to visit!

www.LoveBasingstoke.co.uk

The website with lots of brilliant ideas for days out, borough walks, great places to meet, sustainable shopping and inspiration for new things to try and places to go. Keep updated on the fantastic range of exciting events across Basingstoke and Deane this spring so you don't miss out.

Facebook: @LoveBasingstoke

Twitter: @LoveBstoke

Instagram: @LoveBasingstoke

Basingstoke's very own repair shop needs your help

Are you looking to spring clean and get rid of some unwanted furniture or curtains? Or do you need a new sofa or table and chairs? Then you could help local charity the Community Furniture Project and stop things going to waste.

The Community Furniture Project collects unwanted furniture, appliances and household items and then repairs and restores them for local people to buy at low cost.

The project, based in Basingstoke, gives additional discounts for those on low incomes and free items to families and individuals who are in exceptional need.

The project supports local people with learning disabilities or mental health conditions and offers supported volunteering opportunities and accredited training helping some people move on to paid employment.

Basingstoke and Deane Mayor Cllr Onnalee Cubitt is a great supporter of the organisation and has chosen it as one of her two charities for her year in office, alongside The Friends of St Michael's Hospice. For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/mayorcharity

Visiting the workshop earlier in the year, Cllr Cubitt said: "The Community Furniture Project is an amazing charity, providing learning opportunities for young people and volunteering opportunities for the community. It stops 40 to 50 tonnes of waste being thrown away every month and instead turns it into something that someone else can use. Please donate your items to the shop if you can and make sure you visit for a browse to see if you can find a hidden treasure. The team would really appreciate your support."

For more information about the Community Furniture Project visit www.n-c-r-c.org/community-furniture-project-basingstoke or call **01256 320700**.

Mayor's event

Charity show – Pirates of Penzance

Saturday 5 March

The Anvil

The talented Basingstoke Amateur Operatic Society will be dropping anchor at The Anvil on Saturday 5 March to perform Gilbert and Sullivan's popular opera The Pirates of Penzance.

The show will raise funds for the Mayor's Charity Appeal and tickets are available from the box office www.anvilarts.org.uk/book/instance/164801 or by calling 01256 366935.

For more information on Mayor's events visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/mayorevents

Celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee

This year, Her Majesty The Queen will become the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee, marking 70 years of service.

The four-day bank holiday weekend from Thursday 2 June to Sunday 5 June will provide an opportunity to celebrate the historic milestone including public events, community activities and national moments of reflection.

Basingstoke and Deane residents are encouraged to plan and enjoy their own celebrations to commemorate the milestone. They can also check with their local parish council or community association to find out what local events are planned, share ideas or get involved. To keep everyone safe, those organising a street party should get in touch with the council's events team by emailing events@basingstoke.gov.uk to seek

advice and guidance, providing basic information about what is being planned and the details of any roads you may need to close.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/streetparties

If you're seeing this, your customers could too!

If you run a business you could advertise in ***Basingstoke & Deane Today***, which goes out to over 78,000 homes in the borough twice a year.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/bdtoday

Make a summer date with the festival

Basingstoke Festival will return from Friday 24 June to Sunday 10 July 2022 after a bumper event in 2021.

During last year's festival crowds enjoyed Eko the Sea Giant in the Top of the Town, watched the Urban Astronaut as he soared over Eastrop Park, were left breathless at the astonishing acrobatics from Inverted Theatre and Mimbire Acrobats and discovered the delights of Basingstoke's very own Scratchbuilt Productions as they brought their Magical Market Stall to life.

The festival programme is being developed for this year to bring more of the very best of outdoor arts and street theatre to your doorstep. From circus to visual arts and dance to theatre, it will offer something for everyone.

For updates visit www.basingstokefestival.co.uk or see:

Facebook @basingstokefestival

Twitter and Instagram @bstokefestival

Bank holiday bin collections

There will be no changes to bin collections on **Good Friday (15 April 2022)** and **Easter Monday (18 April 2022)** or the bank holidays for Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee bank holidays on **Thursday 2 June and Friday 3 June**. Please put your bins out as normal. You can find your collection dates at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/bincollections

If just your bin has been missed, you can report this on the website at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/MissedBin and this message will go direct to our waste and recycling contractor, Serco, so a crew can return to collect it. The crews work all day, so you need to wait until after 6pm on your collection day before reporting it.

If your whole street has been missed, leave your bins out and the crew will get to you as soon as they can.

Manage your bills online

Don't forget that you can manage your council tax account and benefit claims online at the touch of a button.

Residents signing up to our council tax and benefit online accounts can choose to get paperless bills, view upcoming payments, change the way they pay and let the council know if they have problems paying from their smartphones, tablets and computers.

It's not just residents who will benefit from the online service, as businesses and landlords are also able to view business rates and benefit payments.

If you cannot access the service you require online, call us on **01256 844844**.

How to get in contact with us

There are plenty of ways to connect with us:

Visit the website

www.basingstoke.gov.uk

See social media updates on Facebook and Twitter @BasingstokeGov

Call us on 01256 844844 Mondays to Fridays (except on bank holidays). In an emergency at the weekend, on a bank holiday or in the evenings, call this number and stay on the line to be connected with the out-of-hours service.

Text phone and Minicom users can dial 18001 followed by 01256 845276 to contact us via the Relay UK service.

This newspaper is also available in other formats including large print. For a copy, please call 01256 844844.

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