

Basingstoke & Deane Today



Spring 2024 Large print edition

What's happening in your borough

The newspaper of Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council

www.basingstoke.gov.uk

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**Basingstoke
and Deane**

New water and leisure centre plan

Aquadrome replacement could have soft play and clip and climb

Proposals for a brand-new water and leisure complex to replace the Aquadrome have been agreed.

The formal search will now start for a leisure specialist to design, get planning permission for, build and run the new council-owned centre at Basingstoke Leisure Park.

Proposed facilities at the water and leisure complex, which would move to a new location on the leisure park, include a 25-metre eight-lane competition pool, a 20-metre four-lane teaching pool, leisure waters with flumes, a 150-station gym, three studios and a spin studio, an indoor clip and climb, indoor adventure soft play, party rooms and café.

Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Regeneration Cllr Onnalee Cubitt said: “This represents a big step forward in bringing our aspirations for a brand-new Aquadrome to life and is a massive investment in leisure and wellbeing activities that all our residents can enjoy for years to come.

“We have been visiting other newly built, first-class leisure centres. We know what can be achieved, we know what our residents deserve and we are determined to deliver what they have been promised for a long time as a new, modern and energy-efficient facility.

“New facilities will include two new swimming pools, exciting new leisure waters with flumes and a number of new activities based on what residents have told us they would like to see, including an indoor clip and climb and indoor adventure soft play.”

The existing Aquadrome was originally built as a lido in the 1970s, with additional facilities added over a number of years. However, the council has invested in the building to ensure users can continue to benefit from the facilities until the new water and leisure complex would be ready.

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Howzat new wicket?

Families, friends and anyone with a passion to play cricket can now enjoy the newly-laid artificial wicket in War Memorial Park.

We've replaced the park-based pitch so that it is now better for people of all ages who want to play cricket informally, using a softer ball.

Members of Basingstoke Capital Cricket Club were among those who appealed to the council to replace the surface so that cricket lovers can enjoy playing on it.

It is hoped the new pitch will be a big hit with visitors to the park and encourage more people to get out, have fun and play cricket this summer.

Read more about our investment in sport on page 42.



Welcome

...to the spring 2024 edition from the council's Leader Cllr Paul Harvey and Co-Leader Cllr Gavin James

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the creation of Basingstoke and Deane District Council in 1974.

As the two lead councillors heading up the Cabinet in 2024, we are proud to be the guardians of the current version of that council. In this edition you can read more about what we are doing for today and for the future of our borough.

Our focus is on delivering services to the high standards that our residents deserve. That is why we have committed more resources into putting the pride back into the areas where people live. That means more teams out cleaning the streets and keeping our communities tidy, as well as ensuring money for other frontline services.



Decision-makers before us worked to create a legacy for the borough and it is important that we do the same. For example, their vision created the original Aquadrome and now we are committing to replacing it with a modern and energy-efficient water and leisure complex.

We are taking difficult decisions about where new homes should be built and how we protect the environment through the development of a new Local Plan, which will guide planning decisions for decades to come.

The most important thing that we can do for tomorrow's generations, that you can read about in the pages ahead, is to take action and support others to tackle climate change and encourage biodiversity.

Investing in services

Plans for the council to invest more money in frontline services and priorities as part of the budget for the next year were due to be decided as this edition went to print.

Following public consultation at the end of 2023, final proposals for the budget, which were due to be considered by all councillors at a meeting on Thursday 22 February, included more funding for services such as keeping the streets clean and replacing and updating play equipment for families to enjoy. Funding for priority projects, such as the delivery of more affordable homes, continuing vital support for vulnerable people and action to meet the borough's climate change targets, were also included.

To help cover inflation and rising costs to deliver our services, an average £5 a year increase in the borough's part of council tax for each household and a three per cent increase in fees and charges were part of the final budget proposals.

For more information about the 2024/25 budget, visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/budget2024



Don't miss your chance to vote this May

Residents can vote on Thursday 2 May to elect councillors for Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and a Police and Crime Commissioner for Hampshire.

You must be registered to cast your vote in these elections. You can register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Following changes introduced last year, you must also bring an approved form of photographic identification (ID) when voting at a polling station. A full list of accepted ID can be found at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/voter-id

If you cannot attend or would prefer not to vote at a polling station, you can apply to vote by post. This will allow you to return your postal ballot back by post or hand it in to a member of staff at the council offices or your polling station. If handing in your postal ballot, you must complete a Postal Vote Return Form. Find out more at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote

Alternatively, you can appoint a proxy to vote on your behalf at your polling station at www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote

For more information about the 2024 local elections visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/elections-and-voting

Streets ahead with extra funding

A team tasked with boosting street cleaning and making a difference in communities has hit the streets and is receiving great feedback.

Ensuring people are proud of where they live is a key priority for the council and more than half a million pounds extra has been invested to help keep our streets clean, tidy and litter free.

This additional resource includes a new specialist Make a Difference team that targets areas across the borough and carries out high priority deep cleaning projects in communities.

The team has started in Popley and Brighton Hill and will move throughout the borough. This will complement the work of our existing street cleaning team who carry out litter picking, sweeping, emptying litter bins, clearing leaf fall and removing graffiti.

Cabinet Member for Residents' Services and Housing Cllr Laura James said: "We want our communities to be proud of their area and clean streets play a big part in this. We are investing in services that matter to our residents."



Carbon-cutting bin collections

We're about to more than halve our council carbon footprint by swapping our kerbside rubbish collection vehicles to biofuel.

With carbon emissions up to 98% lower than diesel, hydrogenated vegetable oil will help to make our air cleaner and our waste and recycling collections more environmentally friendly when our bin trucks swap to the biofuel this spring.

Part of our work to become a carbon-neutral council by December 2025, this biofuel is already used in all our grass mowers, eight sweepers, two tipper trucks and a small van.

Learn more at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/our-climate-action

Extra leisure facilities

Continued from page 2

Working with potential leisure providers, other additions to the new water and leisure complex to replace the Aquadrome that could be considered include extra water space, a sports hall or spa.

And, as part of this project, the council is keen to explore whether there are options and opportunities for providing ice skating facilities for the future, if needed.

The core facilities have been based on consultation feedback and activities identified in the borough's Leisure and Recreational Needs Assessment.

It is expected that a planning application for the new complex would be submitted in summer 2026 and the facility could open in December 2028, subject to planning permission.

To find out more visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/leisure-park-aquadrome

Great Wolf water park resort progress

Plans for a new water park resort that could attract 600,000 extra visitors a year to the borough and create hundreds of new jobs are progressing.

The council is close to finalising an ‘in principle’ deal with US leisure operator Great Wolf Resorts to bring an indoor water park resort to council-owned land at Basingstoke Golf Centre.

The proposed resort, which would complement the facilities at the Aquadrome, could feature a 500-bedroom hotel, an indoor water park, conference facilities, leisure offerings and selection of restaurants, cafés and bars, all subject to getting planning permission.

Great Wolf Resorts currently operates 20 Great Wolf Lodge branded resorts in the United States and Canada. It also has planning permission to build a UK resort near Bicester in Oxfordshire.

The resort could bring an additional 600,000 visitors to the borough each year and provide over 600 good quality new jobs. And the resort would encourage other leisure operators to create new facilities and activities on the leisure park.

Negotiations will continue on the complex deal. Once finalised Great Wolf Resorts will be able to work on submitting a planning application for development of the site.

Recognising the importance of the facilities currently provided at the golf course, proposals to re-provide the facilities are being drawn up.

If plans are realised, the resort would make day passes to its indoor water park facilities available to local residents. In addition to the day passes, there are a host of family-friendly attractions and eateries outside of the indoor water park that local families would be able to enjoy without being an overnight guest.

Visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/water-park-proposal to find out more.

Saving money on energy bills

Book a free home energy survey with the council for no-strings advice on how to keep your home warm, save money and cut your carbon footprint, all at the same time.



Available to every household in the borough, our Green Team's free surveys take just one hour to complete and help create a plan for how you can take action to reduce how much energy it takes to heat and power your home.

Over 150 home energy surveys have been booked since the new year by people looking to save money and cut their carbon emissions.

You can book your free home energy survey or find out more at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/home-energy-saving-initiatives

Here's what people are saying so far:

- “We had the survey done and it is very useful. No one is trying to sell you anything.” **(Yvonne, Basingstoke)**
- “Our surveyor was very friendly and professional, and they offered some good advice and tips on the day that we can implement very quickly.” **(Gary, Tadley)**
- “As grandparents living in our larger family home, we were keen to see how we could reduce our bills. The survey only took an hour and it was really interesting to be shown and explained what was happening throughout. The report came the next day and we’re now thinking about what changes to make.” **(David and Margaret, Baughurst)**



Helping people's gardens to flourish

Our Green Team's free plant and wildlife surveys can help you make a difference for nature in your garden.

Whether you're thinking about dedicating a corner of your garden to nature or you are willing to let it all go wild, these free one-hour surveys will give you tips and ideas for how you can help local wildlife thrive and plants bloom.

Your garden doesn't need to be a nature reserve to benefit plants and animals. These surveys will help you nurture yours into a wildlife haven that you can enjoy in harmony with nature that helps to capture carbon and tackle climate change too.

To book your free garden survey and to find out more visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/garden-survey



Get inspired to go green

A week-long celebration of local action to tackle climate change and protect nature returns this summer.



Taking place this year from Saturday 8 June to Sunday 16 June, Basingstoke Green Week is an annual week of activities organised by communities with our support.

To inspire us all to think about how we can make a difference for our planet, this year's festivities will include performances by artist Junk Jodie, e-bike trials and a green market where you'll be able to browse stalls and get in-person sustainable lifestyle advice from our carbon-busting Green Team.

Learn more and get involved at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/greenweek

Driving forward low emission taxis

New accessible and ultra-low emission taxis could take to the streets of the borough this year.

To help cut carbon emissions and improve air quality, we are looking to work with the London Electric Vehicle Company to offer local taxi drivers a £5,000 discount on new electrically powered Hackney carriages.

Compared to diesel taxis, these new ultra-low emission taxis will significantly reduce carbon emissions and running costs for drivers.

Learn more about how we are working with communities to achieve our goal for a net zero carbon borough by 2030 at

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/climate

Plan for growing borough's biodiversity

An ambitious plan to lead in protecting and enhancing biodiversity in the borough is close to completion as part of the council's commitment to tackle the ecological emergency.

Helping to focus priorities and understand where further improvements can be made, the new biodiversity strategy will set out approaches to halting the decline in biodiversity and for restoring nature.

A borough-wide audit of biodiversity is under way as part of this work and a partnership is being created to harness the knowledge and passion of our many conservation experts in the borough.

Cabinet Member for Climate and Ecological Emergency Cllr Chris Tomblin said: "We can already celebrate the great work taking place across our borough but to move forward we need a plan that guides us, sets out our priorities for our land and pushes us to deliver our ambition to be a leading council in responding to both the climate and ecological emergencies."

Visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/ecology

Tree planting at The Larches

Around 1,000 trees will be planted as part of a native woodland restoration project at The Larches in Sherfield Park to enhance the biodiversity of the area.



The once-ancient woodland has recently been felled to remove trees in a poor condition.

Volunteers have been working with the council and Natural Basingstoke to restore the land. A tree planting event is planned for Saturday 16 March and a conservation group is being set up.

For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/sherfield-park-AWR-project



Local Plan progresses

An updated Local Plan that will guide development and planning decisions in Basingstoke and Deane until 2040 continues to move forward following a public consultation.

The consultation on the draft Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan Update gave people the chance to get involved in deciding the future of the borough, including where homes and other types of development will be built and how the environment can be protected.

Progressing the Local Plan is a key priority and work has taken place to introduce a more ambitious planning policy framework to meet the area's needs. This includes supporting the council's climate and ecological emergency declarations and the delivery of much-needed affordable housing.

The draft plan includes a 'stepped trajectory' approach reducing the current government figure of building 850 homes a year, to under 700 a year from 2025 for the first five years of the plan.



Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Cllr Andy Konieczko said: “All the time we don’t have a plan that has been shaped by the local community, we run the risk of developers making decisions about the future of our borough rather than the people who live here.

“The consultation has given us valuable insight into what people think of the draft proposals and we’ll now consider every comment when updating the plan.”

The outcomes of the consultation are being considered alongside evolving evidence work and the next draft of the Local Plan will be drawn up later in the year.

Visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/LPU

Helping to change lives at home

Home adaptations including wet rooms, stairlifts and ramps can change the lives of many disabled children, adults and their families.

Last year between April and September 2023, the council provided 109 disabled facilities grants, totalling £1,049,688, which funded adaptations to homes.

All grants are means tested and available to owner-occupiers or tenants to help with the cost of adapting their home to meet the needs of an occupant with a disability. Children and those in receipt of certain benefits are eligible for a grant without requiring a means test.

Borough residents should apply for a grant through Hampshire County Council’s Occupational Therapy team, who will arrange to assess the person’s needs and then refer to us for a grant if they think they qualify.

Our team is responsible for guiding residents through the grant application, planning the works, tendering and checking they are completed correctly.

Find out more at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grant



Derek and Ann in Brighton Hill applied for a disabled facilities grant to allow Ann to access their bathroom in her wheelchair.

“It means the world to us to have had the adaptations made to our bathroom as it allows us to be independent in our home for longer” said Derek.

“The council helped us through the application stage. We are over the moon with the results.”

Unlocking doors to more housing options

Local Housing Allowance – the maximum amount of housing costs that can be considered for tenants living in private rented homes – is increasing from April 2024.

The change means that households on lower incomes and living in private rented homes across the borough may get more help to pay their rent and it is hoped the change will encourage more landlords to bring empty homes back into use.

Our refreshed Housing and Homelessness Strategy sets out a package of measures to support residents and open up the range of housing options available locally, working closely with local housing providers.

The increase in the allowance will complement these initiatives and open up a wider range of options to prevent homelessness.

We also work closely with landlords to encourage them to bring empty homes back into use and to help resolve disputes between landlords and tenants.

Our rent bond scheme also matches landlords with tenants who are in a good position to start a long-term tenancy in private housing, to prevent residents from becoming homeless.

Landlords can find out more about the support available from the council at a free event taking place at the council offices between 6pm and 8.30pm on Tuesday 26 March. Speakers will include the National Residential Landlords Association, Stop Domestic Abuse and the council's Housing, Environmental Health and Green teams. Landlords interested in attending should email PrivateRent@basingstoke.gov.uk to book their place.

Domestic abuse support - help is available

Domestic abuse is coercive behaviour including physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, financial or sexual abuse and the council works with partners to provide support to victims.

If you or any of your family members are in immediate danger, call the police on 999. If you are not safe to speak, press 55 on your mobile when prompted to be transferred to the police.

If you are not in immediate danger but cannot stay safely in your home, you can access support. Housing association tenants should first contact their housing officer. Tenants of any other landlord, homeowners or those living in someone else's home should contact us by calling 01256 844844 or visit the council offices in London Road, Basingstoke.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/domestic-abuse

Council tax support

Vital support for residents who need additional help to pay their council tax is available through the council tax support scheme.

The updated scheme, which will be in place from Monday 1 April, will see residents in receipt of benefit payments or on low incomes given help to pay their council tax bills. For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/BenefitAdvice

It also includes a discount for young care leavers aged between 18 and 25 to support them as they set up home on their own or with others after previously being in care. For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/council-tax-discount

Partnership pledge

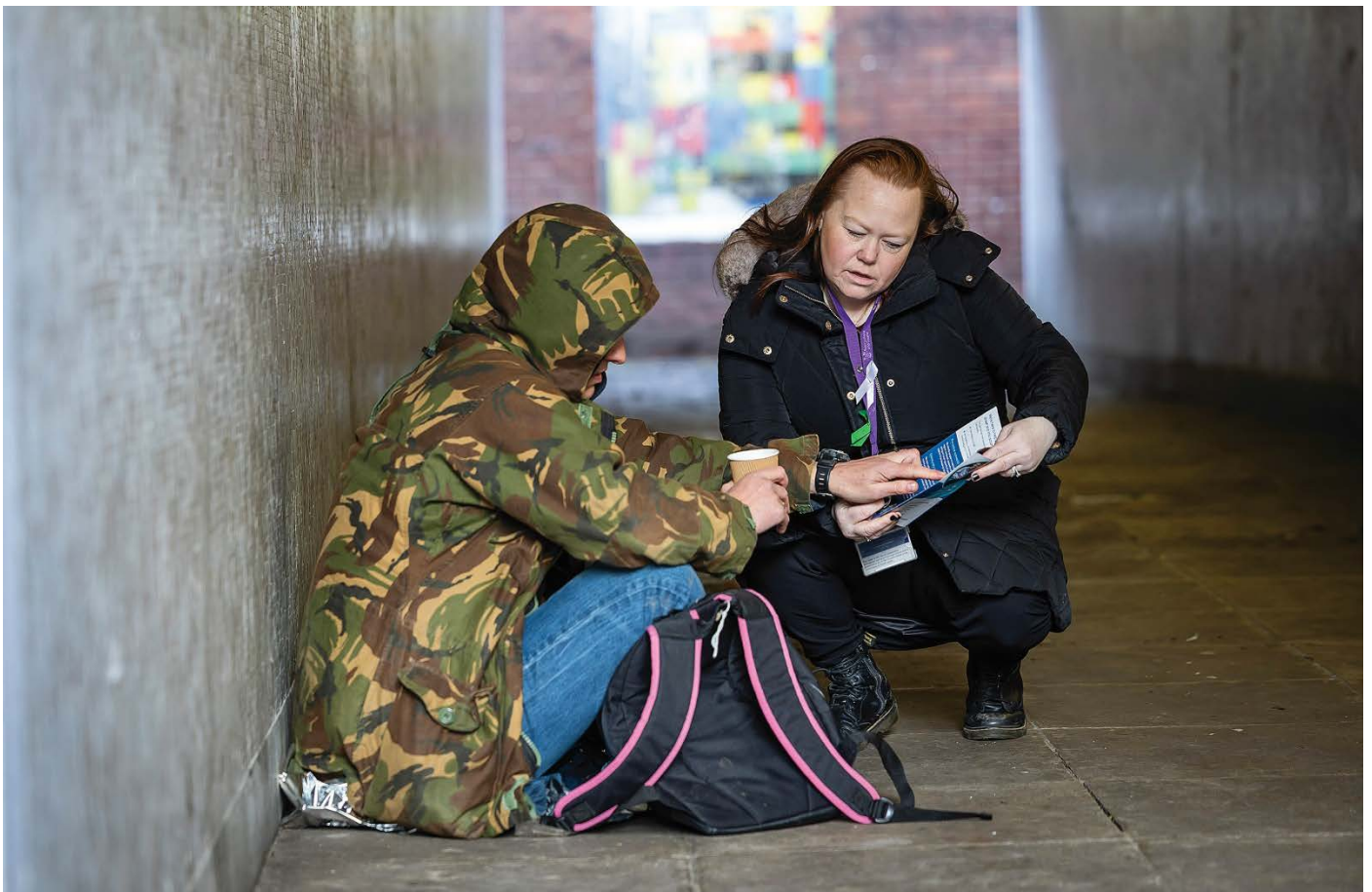
The Basingstoke and Deane Social Inclusion Partnership has been working together to provide vital support to make sure that nobody is left out in the cold in the winter.

Pop-up night shelters, which have been co-ordinated by a network of churches and an army of volunteers, have given those who have found themselves sleeping on the streets a warm welcome and the chance to have a hot meal and a warm bed.

Other support has included access to emergency accommodation, food parcels and warm clothing as part of the service provided by the council and charity Julian House's outreach team, working with partners.

In Basingstoke and Deane the number of people sleeping on the streets has fallen from 26 in 2016 to four in 2023.

For more information visit <http://RealChangeBasingstoke.org.uk>



More patrollers out on the streets

Our community safety patrollers are now out in force, showing the council's commitment to making people feel safer.

There are a few new faces out on the streets of the borough, following a successful recruitment drive, with 12 patrollers now in the team. This means they can carry out more patrols and build relationships with communities and businesses to tackle the issues that really matter to them.

Working with the police and other partners, the patrollers have a range of powers and run campaigns to help them address antisocial behaviour and crime that can be a blight on how people feel about their area. This includes littering, dog fouling, fly-tipping and throwing fireworks.

Cabinet Member for Communities, Partnerships and Inclusion Cllr John McKay said: "We are committed to continuing to fund our community safety patrol officers. There is a larger team on the streets of our borough than most other district councils in the country, as we know the difference they make. This responds to residents telling us that the level of antisocial behaviour plays a large role in making them feel their area is a good place to live."

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/CSPO-team



New spaces for borough's families

Children will be able to enjoy new places to play thanks to the major refurbishment of four of the borough's play areas.

Play areas at Hatch Warren Park and Mathias Walk in Brighton Hill ward, Moorhams Avenue in Hatch Warren and Beggarwood ward and Oakfields Close in Ecchinswell in the Evingar ward will be replaced with exciting new equipment.

This year's replacement schemes range in cost from £50,000 up to £100,000. They have been funded through the council's play area refurbishment programme as part of its commitment to ensure play areas are accessible to all, well maintained and fun places for families.

The new equipment is expected to be installed in late spring. After this, work to improve further identified play areas in the borough will start.

In addition to the funding to refurbish play areas, the council has committed to double the amount of money spent on maintaining and repairing play equipment from £170,000 to £350,000.

Funding for a new role to carry out a strategic review of all of the council's parks and play areas and lead on the delivery of an agreed work programme of improvements has also been agreed.

For more information on the play area refurbishment programme visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/play-area-refurbishment-programme

Investing in community pride

Projects to create walking and cycling trails in Overton, refurbish an outdoor swimming pool in Whitchurch and help the village hall in Old Basing (pictured) to only use solar panels for electricity have been funded by a council grant designed to boost pride in our communities.

Launched in October last year, the first round of the Pride in Place Fund awarded grants of up to £25,000 to 18 local community projects aimed at enhancing the quality of life of residents and improving their living environment. A second round has also recently closed.

Find out more information about the fund at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/pride-in-place-fund



Supporting South Ham services to continue

Activities and services for residents in South Ham are running at other locations following the closure of Westside Community Centre, after reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) panels were found in the building.

We are working closely with Westside Community Association and Sovereign Network Group to look at temporary premises that could be used to provide other services and activities. This is while long term solutions are considered.

For a full list of the services still running visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/community-centres and follow Westside Community Centre on Facebook.

Don't let your recycling go to waste

What you put in your bin really does make a difference, it can have an impact on the amount we are able to recycle and can even put our crews' lives at risk.

Placing the wrong items in your green recycling bin can mean that the whole truck load is rejected and your recycling becomes rubbish.

One of the most frequent mistakes people make is to place their recycling in plastic bags and put these into their green bin. The recycling facility cannot open the bags, meaning your recycling could be refused.

A whole bin truck load of recycled items in the Winklebury area had to be destroyed after engine oil and an oil filter were discovered among them.

We are also finding batteries and vapes are being dumped in the grey waste bin, which can catch fire. These items can cause serious damage to both the bin trucks and endanger the lives of the crews working hard to collect your rubbish and recycling.

For information on recycling or waste disposal visit
www.basingstoke.gov.uk/a-z-waste-and-recycling



Items to be recycled in your green bin

- ✓ Paper, newspapers and magazines
- ✓ Junk mail
- ✓ Envelopes
- ✓ Telephone directories, brochures and catalogues
- ✓ Cardboard (flatten larger cardboard boxes and put next to your bin)
- ✓ Greeting cards
- ✓ Drinks cans
- ✓ Clean food tins
- ✓ Clean plastic bottles, including drink, shampoo, cleaning products (lids can be left on)
- ✓ Empty aerosol cans

Growing garden waste collections

With the spring months upon us, it's a great time to sign up to the council's garden waste collection service and cut carbon on unnecessary trips to the tip.

As green-fingered residents get back into their gardens, the convenient service will collect your garden waste every fortnight from your home.

Over 15,000 customers are already signed up to the service which costs £61.80 for a full year, with prices due to increase after April.

With new customers joining across the borough, we've recently reviewed collection rounds to ensure they are efficient and continue to provide a reliable service to existing and new customers.

Subscribers to the service get:

- a 240-litre brown bin
- year-round fortnightly collections, only stopping for two weeks over Christmas
- the collection of real Christmas trees after the festive period.

There is a one-off charge for a 240-litre brown wheeled bin and a reduced pricing option for a 140-litre bin service. Discounts for people receiving housing benefit or council tax support are available.

Find out more at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/GardenWaste

Boost for community buildings

Players at Stratfield Turgis and Hartley Wespall Cricket Club have been bowled over after receiving a grant of £12,480 to refurbish the showers and changing rooms at the club's pavilion.

The expanding club, which is keen to keep growing its women's team (pictured) and youth section, needed to make the improvements so the facility is more appealing to new and existing members.

They are one of 14 community and voluntary organisations who were successful in achieving a grant from the council's Community Infrastructure Fund to enhance, modernise and improve facilities in the borough.

The £300,000 fund offered grants of between £5,000 and £50,000 for organisations to improve their existing facilities for users, increase income and reduce costs or make environmental improvements.

Recipients sharing the pot include Cliddesden Village Hall, which received a £10,000 grant to replace draughty exterior fire doors, and Barlow's Park Management Association, which received £40,000 to install solar panels on the Stacey Pavilion at Barlow's Park in Tadley.



Hill Rise Hall Community Association in Brighton Hill, Melrose Community Association in Popley and Silchester Village Hall in Silchester also all received grants for toilet refurbishments at their community facilities.

For the full list of grant recipients and further information about the fund criteria and application process visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/InfrastructureFund

Mayor celebrates borough's treasures

Being Mayor is always a special honour, but for Cllr David Leeks it has been an extra special experience as the borough council marks its 50th anniversary year.

Since May last year Cllr David Leeks, accompanied by his wife Amanda as Mayoress, has carried out 250 engagements supporting local charities and meeting with many organisations, community groups and residents - and he's not done yet.

Cllr Leeks has also been busy championing the borough, showcasing local businesses and attractions. Last September, he welcomed civic representatives from around the county to visit some of Basingstoke and Deane's treasures, including The Vyne (pictured).

The Mayoress is one of many people who volunteer to maintain the gardens at the National Trust treasure. Cllr Leeks also has a passion for volunteering - a key theme of his mayoral year.

Cllr Leeks said: "I have spent my Mayoral year meeting so many inspiring people and wonderful charities and community groups who are achieving really special things within our borough. But an important part of my role is also to share all of this with people outside of the borough and to shout about what a great place it is to live, work in and visit."



Throughout the year, Cllr Leeks has been raising money to support Citizens Advice Basingstoke and Tadley and Shopmobility Basingstoke. To donate to these charities, visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/MayorCharity

Neighbourhood plans

We are continuing to support communities across the borough to help shape future development in their area through neighbourhood planning.

There are 14 neighbourhood plans now in place and more being drawn up.

Residents were recently asked to comment on draft neighbourhood plans for Cliddesden and Sherborne St John as both areas look to put new plans in place. Other parishes, including Overton, are also updating their plans to make sure they remain up-to-date and meet future needs.

Neighbourhood planning allows local people to have an input into decisions about the future development of their communities. This localised approach to planning is also supported in the draft Local Plan featured on page 17.

For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/NeighbourhoodPlansProgress

Couch to 2km

People looking to make positive changes to their wellbeing are being encouraged to step forward for a beginners' jogging or walking course.

The council is keen to support setting up new Couch to 2km sessions in the borough and is encouraging people to sign up for courses in the spring.

No previous experience is required and the course is designed for complete beginners who want to build up their fitness to achieve either walking or jogging the 2km distance.

If you are over 18 and interested, contact philippa.northam@basingstoke.gov.uk giving your name and the area of the borough you'd like a course to run from.

New tennis management plans to be a big hit

The new company running both the council-owned Basingstoke Indoor Tennis Centre at War Memorial Park and the outdoor courts at Stratton Park is already creating exciting changes for the facilities.

In a move to encourage more people to play racket sports and work on their wellbeing, National Tennis Association has introduced more new flexible membership options and ways to just pay and play.

Courts for both venues can now be booked online and there are a range of options to play tennis and other racket sports across both sites.

Plans to rejuvenate the John Arlott Pavilion space are also on the cards, including modernising the entrance, lounge and kitchen area for users of the facility and visitors to the park. Phase two includes refurbishing the changing rooms and toilet facilities.

For more information visit <https://BasingstokeTennis.org.uk>



Help for community projects

Local organisations and groups have been given a funding boost thanks to this year's Councillor Community Grant scheme.

Money from the scheme, which funds projects that aim to bring communities together, has helped to buy new toys for Treasure Island Parent and Toddler Group in Popley (pictured below) and a new coffee machine for the community shop in the Headley and Ashford Hill area. Using a grant of £710, volunteers at Baughurst Repair Café at Heath End Village Hall (pictured on the next page) now have new electrical safety testing equipment, scales and uniforms.



Children at Oakridge Tuesday Tots are enjoying more messy and fun play with the addition of more storage, arts and crafts equipment and replacement toys, while a new group in Brighton Hill – Autism Matters to Youth – will benefit from a printer, arts and craft bundles and sensory equipment, thanks to its grant of nearly £500.

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Each borough councillor has an allocation of £2,000 and can award grants of between £250 and £2,000 to local groups and organisations. Councillors can also pool funding with other councillors to provide grants of up to £3,000.

For more information visit

www.basingstoke.gov.uk/cllr-community-grants



Greater access to public toilets

More council-run toilets across the borough are being reopened or opening hours extended as part of the council's drive to increase access to these facilities.

Visitors to Basingstoke town centre's Eastrop Park can now use the public toilets all year round and opening times at the facilities at Kingsclere and Overton have been extended to include the weekend.

Hundreds of runners at the free weekly parkrun event held at War Memorial Park in Basingstoke can now use the toilet facilities at the council-owned John Arlott Pavilion. And the accessible toilet in the park will be available throughout the week, with plans to reopen the male and female toilets as well.

Restoring our heritage

A restoration project which will see two key grade two listed heritage sites protected for future years has started.

Work to repair the stone of Bolton Arch at Crabtree Plantation and the ruins of the Chapel of the Holy Ghost in South View is now under way and is expected to be complete this summer.

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



Celebrating diversity

A new public art mural to celebrate the diversity of the borough looks set to be created later this year.

Working with local community groups, the project will see a colourful mural created in the borough, with work to explore possible locations currently under way and workshops due to take place later this summer.

The community art project was launched last October during Black History Month, which saw Black communities celebrated through a series of events and activities.

Basingstoke Festival back with a bang

The dates have been announced for this year's Basingstoke Festival, opening Friday 21 June and running each weekend until Sunday 7 July.

Across the three weekends people will be able to enjoy circus, dance, music and theatre from a mix of national and local acts, with lots of opportunities to get involved.

An exciting act already secured is Orchestra of Objects (pictured) whose performers invent their own musical instruments out of almost anything they can find. They will be asking families to help them construct a new musical installation playground for Basingstoke.

Local favourite performers will return with new acts and the festival will build on last year's theme to make it more accessible to all.

Visit www.BasingstokeFestival.co.uk

Facebook: BasingstokeFestival

X and Instagram: bstokefestival



Refurbishment for Tadley health suite

Customers at the health suite at Tadley Health and Fitness Centre are benefiting from new facilities after a major refurbishment.

The suite now features a new steam room and electric sauna, accessibility improvements and new showers in the shower area, as well as new tiling and furniture. Work has also taken place to install a new plant room for the steam room and the spa pool.

The council has invested almost £200,000 to renovate and repair the health suite to meet the needs of customers.

Work has also been brought forward at the centre, which is managed by Basingstoke and Deane Community Leisure Trust, to replace the spa pool to complement the new facilities in the health suite. This work is expected to take place before April and updates will be provided on the website and social media.



Love spring events

Looking for things to do this spring? Look up the Love Basingstoke website for ideas for days out, countryside walks, local history and inspiration for new places to go.

Upcoming events include an Easter trail in Basingstoke town centre where visitors can spot Easter eggs hidden in shop windows and solve puzzles.

Later in 2024, the council-funded weekly Fri-YAY events will return with lots of free summer activities for kids during the holidays.

Visit www.LoveBasingstoke.co.uk or follow **@LoveBasingstoke** on social media, or go to this website and sign up to the new Love Basingstoke e-newsletter to get ideas straight to your inbox.

Growing our rural economy

Rural businesses and organisations have benefited from grants from the Basingstoke and Deane Rural England Prosperity Fund which aims to support the delivery of new projects that improve community facilities and enhance visitors' experiences.

Successful projects include a gelato business in the Candovers, improving access to green space in Whitchurch and the creation of an immersive event space in Dummer.

For more information visit www.basingstoke.gov.uk/rural-fund

Investing in supporting grassroots sport for all ages

Every year the council provides hundreds of thousands of pounds to improve facilities that allow thousands of people of all ages to play a range of sports.

This ranges from sports like cricket, football, hockey, netball, rugby and tennis to athletics, bowls, martial arts, swimming and gym facilities to support health and fitness. Some of the benefits of this funding are featured in this edition.

In fact, a recent survey named the council as one of the best in the country for providing all-weather pitches that mean less cancellations for football matches in the winter.

For some, this investment has been a kickstart to competing at high levels. But for others it is a way of making sure that they enjoy more active leisure time.

Cabinet Member for Sports, Leisure and Culture Cllr Kerry Morrow said: “We recognise the importance of being active and the other wellbeing benefits of sport and being part of a team or sporting community. That’s why the council continues to invest in improved facilities to support grassroots clubs across lots of different activities at a time when other councils are having to cut back their spend on leisure.”

New Olympic standard playing pitch for Down Grange

Hockey and football players of all ages in the borough are set to benefit from a new world class playing surface at the council-owned Down Grange Sports Complex in Kempshott.

Having reached the end of its life, the artificial pitch next to the athletics track is being replaced with a brand-new surface that is the first of its kind in the country.

The Poligras Paris GT zero pitch has been funded by the council as part of its commitment to support sport in the borough. This same type of pitch will also be used for hockey at the Paris Olympics this year.

Work started on the new council-owned pitch in January and is set to be finished in the spring. Users of the facility include Basingstoke Hockey Club whose members (some pictured) can't wait to start playing on the new pitch.



Photo credit: Duncan Rounding

Claire Brockbank, Chair of Basingstoke Hockey Club which boasts nearly 500 members and 22 teams, said: "This tremendous development creates a wonderful playing surface and surrounding safety features to help make the club compliant with new safety regulations.

"It means we can now expand and offer more opportunities to new members who would like to try out this incredible sport."

Bank holiday rubbish and recycling

There will be no changes to bin collections on Good Friday 29 March and Easter Monday 1 April, or the bank holidays on Monday 6 May, Monday 27 May and Monday 26 August.

Please put your bins out as normal. You can find your collection dates at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/BinCollections

If your bin has been missed, you can report this on the website at www.basingstoke.gov.uk/missed-bin-form

Bins out by 6am

Don't forget to put your bins out for collection by 6am from Wednesday 1 May to Saturday 31 August, as our crews start collecting earlier in the warmer months.

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Spring family fun at The Vyne

This Easter and May half-term, enjoy family outdoor activities in the gardens of this seventeenth-century family home. Parking is free and the woods are perfect for welly-walks and jumping in puddles. Picnics are welcome and there's a tea-room. National Trust members go free. £3 per Easter trail sheet and prize. What3words: pizzeria.person.gone.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-vyne

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 X @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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