




A Bicester Town Council
Newsletter for
the Community

BICESTER

GARTH GAZETTE

December 2020 - January 2021



A BUMPER EDITION
FULL OF POSITIVE
BICESTER NEWS
AND EVENTS

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Welcome to Bicester

It is an understatement to say that this year has been challenging. Bicester Town Council's calendar is always full to bursting and it was important to us that we didn't lose the community spirit our events nurture, not to mention the fun that is had. I am very proud to say that where there was a will, we found a way – whether live streaming events that could be watched online or creating online resources to be enjoyed at home. Nothing epitomised Bicester's redoubtable spirit more than the 'Stay-at-home' VE day celebrations, when so many homes in Bicester celebrated the 75th anniversary. This edition of the Garth Gazette is full of fantastic stories of resilience, support and innovation required to overcome not one but two lockdowns. Organisations and groups have met online and managed to continue to support those that need it. It's been

12 months since the last edition was published and although we haven't been able to carry on as normal, we have all carried on, and Bicester and it's community goes from strength to strength. Like the new plants here in Garth Park there are green shoots of hope for a vaccine and a COVID-free 2021. Let us hope we will soon be able to come together as a community and enjoy all the events and activities planned for the new year.

Samantha Shippen

Samantha Shippen

Chief Officer, Bicester Town Council



If you don't see your organisation, group or activity listed or covered in the Garth Gazette, please email at lucy@psmkt.co.uk or call on **07813 846569** to find out how to get free editorial space or book advertising.

Garth Gazette Information

Bicester Town Council publishes the Bicester Garth Gazette. The views expressed are not necessarily those of Bicester Town Council or its members, and the inclusion of advertisements does not constitute an endorsement of any products or services.

Further copies of the Bicester Garth Gazette are available from the Town Council and local libraries. A pdf version can be downloaded from the Council website.

For editorial contributions and diary entries, please call or write to Samantha Shippen on 01869 252915 or at samantha.shippen@bicester.gov.uk. To advertise, please call Lucy Lavers on 07813 846569. Produced and designed by Push Start Marketing Ltd. Printed by Micropress. Distributed by Royal Mail and Leaflet Delivery Team.

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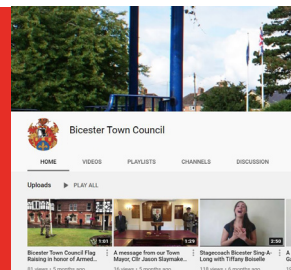


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Bicester Town Council's YouTube Channel

There have been many activities and events that have been cancelled this year but we have been able to hold some online or video events, such as the flag raising on Armed Forces Day that we have shared on our YouTube Channel. Please go and have a look. Search Bicester Town Council on YouTube to find us.



Virtual advent calendar and lights helped get Bicester in a festive mood

The town centre was still lit up this Christmas despite the pandemic putting a dampener on the usual switch-on festivities. The Santa Fun Run was also postponed.

Not to be outdone by the virus, this year saw the town's first-ever virtual advent calendar in a bid to support local organisations and businesses. Designed to raise the Christmas mood, promote local groups and projects, and support local businesses whilst keeping residents safe each day in December, windows opened via the Council's YouTube channel, website, and Facebook page, to reveal a festive message, video, or an incentive.

The advent calendar gave residents the chance to find out about charities, clubs, groups, and businesses that

operate in and around Bicester, and ended with a Christmas message from Bicester's Mayor Cllr Jason Slaymaker on the 25th.

Mayor Cllr Slaymaker said: 'We knew this Christmas was going to be very different from previous years, so as a council we wanted to do something that would bring some festive cheer, as well as support local businesses, charities and groups. This year we have all got used to holding meetings online and communicating with family and friends via online chat platforms, so the idea of the virtual advent calendar was born'.

Thank you to all our participants:

Signature Flowers, Bicester Technology Studio - Black to Spark, Savoir Fare, S&H Coffee and Gifts, Bicester Chamber of Commerce, Bicester Green, Toymaster Bicester, Little Blue Bakery, Home at 96, Bicester Vision, A-Plan Insurance, Elite Dance, Bicester Lions, Nai's House, Hummingbird Centre, Bicester Social Cycling, OYAP Trust, CDC Youth Activators, Stagecoach Bicester, Bicester Ford Garage, Bicester Fire Station & Cadets, Bicester Festival & Soul of Bicester Choir.



Bicester Town Council's emergency grant fund supports the town's community.

Earlier in the year the Town Council made grants of up to £500 available to organisations in the town who have been supporting the community through the coronavirus pandemic.

Applications were invited from groups, clubs, committees and charities who were either based in Bicester, or directly supported people in the town to combat the effects of COVID-19.

Town Council leader Richard Mould said: 'We wanted to support groups and organisations across Bicester with financial help for the work they are doing to support people who have been impacted by the Coronavirus.'

Among those organisations who received the grant were Bicester Food Bank, The Salvation Army and

Citizens Advice North Oxon and South Northants.

Pat Coomber-Wood, Chief Executive Officer comments 'Lock down has been a huge challenge for local charities like Citizens Advice. We had to close our office and work from home which required additional IT equipment and licenses for secure software.'

'Initially our focus was food and essential supplies for people who were isolating or who had no money. Our Advisors issued food bank vouchers but as food banks were also limited by lock down restrictions,

we adapted our Volunteer Driver Service to deliver hundreds of free emergency food parcels. This was critical for people needing time to adjust to new shopping processes, or until they were able to access income.'

'Charities do so much with limited income from grants and donations and having to adapt services so drastically was costly. We are extremely grateful for the Bicester Town Council Covid grant which enabled us to purchase home-working equipment and PPE ensuring services remain available for anyone in need'.

Remembrance Day 2020

Plans for Remembrance Sunday's commemoration in Bicester had to be changed following the Government's announcement of a second lockdown in November.

There had always been plans to broadcast the Service of Remembrance live from St Edburg's Church but the lockdown meant that there was no-one in attendance. Civic and Military dignitaries took part in the service online via Zoom with readings by the Mayor's Cadet Joe Ottaway, Lt Col Alex Atherton, the Commanding Officer of Bicester Garrison, and Miranda Markham, the Oxfordshire Deputy Lieutenant. The Exultation and Kohima was read by Brian Leach, the Bicester Branch Chairman of the Royal British Legion.

Residents were able to watch the service online and encouraged to mark the two minutes' silence from their doorsteps or front gardens

before returning to the service, which continued online.

Mayor Cllr Jason Slaymaker said: 'I would like to thank the church and Town Council staff for adapting the plans for Remembrance so quickly. They were able to rearrange the entire service with less than a week to go, so we could ensure Bicester's Service of Remembrance still went ahead. The virtual world means we can stay safe and all still take part in this important annual event that enables us to pay our respects to the service men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice'.

Thank you to Revd Canon Verena Breed who hosted the Service of Remembrance.



Miranda Markham the Oxfordshire Deputy Lieutenant.



Bicester Town Council Wreath

Bicester Community Fridge 'Unsung Heroes' praised by MP Victoria Prentis

A Community Fridge is a simple way of enabling communities and businesses to share good food that would otherwise go to waste and Bicester volunteers have been running one for the town since October 2019.

The volunteers at Bicester's Community Fridge were recognised for their hard work and dedication during lockdown by local MP Victoria Prentis. The project continued delivering small food parcels to households across the Bicester area

– reaching around 100 households at its peak during the pandemic.

The fridge is run by Bicester Community Support Service on Launton Road, although Bicester Town Council stepped in to give the town's Community Fridge project a temporary home, and is one of a network of fridges in Oxfordshire that are all run voluntarily.

Bicester's MP Victoria Prentis has recognised the work of the team by presenting them with an 'Unsung Hero' award, which seeks

to recognise the work of those who have gone above and beyond during the outbreak.

Lucy Stanton, business manager at Oxfordshire County Council's community support services, who helped to set up the fridge, was 'delighted' to receive the award.

'We all work for the project on a voluntary basis, and what is great is that the Council's Bicester Community Support Service has been very supportive of the fridge and has been a fab host to us'.

Winter bedding and improvements for Garth Park

A large improvement project in Garth Park's formal gardens has begun in earnest.

The formal gardens and area around the bandstand should be a place to sit and relax while enjoying a beautiful view of the park, so we have planted a wide variety of shrubs, bulbs and herbaceous plants from Asters to Veronica to give a beautiful display of flowers throughout the year. As well as creating a stunning, scented park we also wanted to encourage more wildlife within the park. Adding a variety of flowering plants will help the local bee population by providing habitats and a constant supply of food. In total, 2366 plants and 3300 bulbs have been added throughout the park's 580sqm of flower beds.

As well as the replanting works, the fountain received some attention. The pond was completely drained



and we discovered 120 fish living in there. Along with the six cubic metres of silt and dirt removed were two t-shirts, a pair of trousers, a shoe, the seat and partial frame of a push bike, eight iron stakes, 15 rocks

from the rockery, a hammer, a large chain and a pair of handcuffs!

We hope once spring and summer arrive the gardens can be enjoyed in all their glory.

Could you write a letter to a care home resident?

Join the Facebook group that links care homes whose residents would appreciate some hand written cards with those willing to write them.

Search Facebook for 'Letters for Residents'

Armed Forces Day

The Armed Forces Flag flew proud alongside the Union Flag in front of Bicester Town Council's offices in Garth Park, off Launton Road.

The flag was officially raised into position on Friday, June 26, to honour Armed Services Day and salute Bicester's strong military links, and remained there until July 3.

Armed Forces Day is a nationwide event and a chance for communities to show their support for the military. The Armed Forces Flag is raised on buildings and famous landmarks across the country.

In Bicester, in-line with COVID-19 restrictions, a small socially-distanced ceremony took place

which was recorded to share with residents.

Those in attendance were Bicester's Mayor Cllr Jason Slaymaker, Deputy Commander of Bicester Garrison Major Matthew Barton, Garrison Sergeant Major WO1 Adam Lodwig, WO2 Sam Lingwood, Sergeant Kevin Harbour, Council Leader Richard Mould, Chief Officer Samantha Shippen and Administration Officer, and Administration Officer (Civil and Democratic) Julie Trinder.

Mayor Cllr Slaymaker said: 'Armed Forces Day gives us a few moments to honour our country's military and reflect on the sacrifices so many have made.

'Bicester has long history with the military and it continues to play a special role in every day town life. In fact, many residents were in the Services themselves and later made their home here, while many others have worked at one of the local military bases.

'It was an honour for me to be part of this celebration and I would like to thank WO1 Adam Lodwig, who was instrumental in organising this event'.

Usually, on Armed Forces Day the town's residents come together for a joint carnival and Armed Forces celebration, but this year's planned event was cancelled due to Coronavirus.



You can view the flag raising ceremony followed by a message from the Mayor on YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=-O4YEQizfGY



Photo is from 2019 Flag Raising

COVID fails to dampen creative flame as Bicester Festival returns



Bicester's annual arts celebration returned in September, showcasing local talent and creativity.

The Festival, traditionally staged live at venues throughout the town, took place on Facebook this year due to COVID.

Organised by community volunteers and supported by Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council, OYAP Trust, and The Mill Art Centre, the eclectic mix of music, performance, and art proved a huge success. The event attracted an average audience reach of 2,700 people on Facebook, with viewers

tuning in from as far away Idaho in the US.

Emma Doupé, from Evolve Vocal Studio, coordinated programming for the virtual event. Emma says: 'There was a point in March where we had no idea if the festival could go ahead. But it soon became clear that the arts were playing a hugely important role in people's lives during lockdown, giving them an outlet to express themselves during a very difficult time. The theme,

keeping the flame alive, suddenly took on new meaning and the idea of an online celebration was created'.

2021 plans are already underway with the theme 'Sea Change' to reflect big environmental and social changes, globally and locally.

To get involved, email info@bicesterfestival.org, follow on Facebook [@BicesterFestival](https://www.facebook.com/BicesterFestival) or head to www.BicesterFestival.org

VE Day stay-at-home street party

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day people across Bicester decorated their homes with bunting and flags and joined a 'stay at home street party'.

Bicester Town Council was forced to cancel planned celebrations for Victory in Europe Day, but instead of letting the important anniversary slip, the Council urged people to bring their corner of the town to life and recreate some of the magic of the day more than seven decades ago.

VE Day officially signalled the formal surrender of Nazi Germany, ending the Second World War in Europe. Back in 1945 there was a huge celebration in Market Square with a bonfire, fireworks and a street party. For 2020, the Council asked residents to decorate their windows with bunting and have their own picnic in gardens, driveways, or homes, and toast the 75th anniversary - whilst maintaining social distancing guidelines.

There was a range of resources on the Town Council's website including a template to make bunting, recipes thanks to café Savoir Fare, and pre-recorded messages from a range of contributors. A social media competition was held for the best-decorated home using the hashtags **#VE75Bicester** **#GreatBritishBunting** **#VEDay75** and was won by Miles and Milly (pictured).



Congratulations to Miles (age 6) and Connie (age 4) who are winners of our competition for Bicester's Best Bunting for VE Day 75. An outstanding effort with home-made decorations and dress up!

There was a special church service on Sunday May 10 led by St Edburg's Church and broadcast online via Zoom so all could enjoy.

Bicester's Mayor, Cllr Jason Slaymaker said: 'This was not quite the celebration we had planned. Sadly, we couldn't all come together to mark this important day due to social distancing restrictions, but

we loved seeing windows decorated and people celebrating in their homes, gardens and driveways'.

Participants were encouraged to make a £2 donation to Services' charity SSAFA, which supports the Armed Forces, veterans and their families via **www.ssafo.org.uk/donate** if they were able.



A special mention for Brian Tegg, whose garden and vehicle decorations also really captured the spirit of the day.

Superhero Day goes virtual

Bicester Town Council was a super-hero by salvaging one of its most popular summer events by transforming it into a super virtual event.

In a bid to bring holiday fun to the town's young people, Superhero Day went online and was streamed live on the Council's Facebook page on Wednesday, August 5, from 11am to 2pm. Virtual Superhero Day was a joint initiative between Bicester Town Council and Healthy Bicester and brought together storytelling, party fun, games and dress-up. People made their own superhero costumes and joined in the fun - there was even a costume competition, won by Freddie Cowburn.

Templates for superhero costumes were available to download from the Town Council's website and included real-life heroes such as nurses and doctors.

There was lots going on and to do on the day. Cherwell District Council's Sports Activators created an early years' activity pack and pre-recorded sports activities for people to take part in on the day, and there was an activity sheet full of more fun things to do at home.

Jollypop Entertainment ran an interactive party session and staff from Bicester's Clip 'n Climb read a superhero story. Aaron Williams Entertainer (pictured) held a live fun and silly variety show and we would like to thank all of our local groups and businesses for being a part of the day, Crafty Cooks Oxford, Elite Dance, Everyday Active, OYAP Trust, Peekaboos music and play club and

Rugby Tots Bicester.

Mayor Cllr Jason Slaymaker said: 'We are so pleased to have been able to bring this event online. Superhero Day is always one of our most popular events, when thousands of young people descend on Garth Park for a day of free fun. After we were forced to cancel this event due to Coronavirus restrictions, we have worked hard behind the scenes to transform this into a virtual event. We have so many talented people in Bicester and we wanted to give this platform to those people to show off their skills and be part of this fun day'.



You can watch the Superhero Video on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/BicesterTownCouncil/videos



Residents flock to Healthy Bicester's blue lines for exercise during lockdown

Hundreds of residents have been lacing up their trainers and heading to our 5K health routes for exercise during COVID-19.

Maintained by Cherwell District Council, the three routes painted onto pavements in Langford, Bicester West and North East Bicester, have been particularly well used during lockdown. In Langford, pedestrian counters indicate that almost 500 people walked the line each day over the Easter period, up 104 per cent on the previous year.

Meanwhile, the data collected from Bure Park, part of the Bicester West route, showed almost 900 daily users over Easter, up from around 670 people during the same holiday period in 2019.

And with quicker COVID recovery rates for those in good physical health, Healthy Bicester acquired the help of resident Gill Power to nudge people off their sofas and onto the blue lines, using the NHS Couch to 5K app. To follow her nine-week journey, from jogging for one minute to continuous running for 30 minutes, search for @Healthy Bicester on Facebook.

Downloadable maps for our 5K health routes, cycle routes and green spaces can be found at www.cherwell.gov.uk/downloads/download/1154/health-routes-in-bicester



Alchester Running Club goes the extra mile to support Bicester

Volunteers from Alchester Running Club in Bicester have joined sports men and women from across Cherwell to deliver 1,300 prescriptions to self-isolating residents during COVID-19.

The Oxfordshire Supply Runs initiative, set up by the team behind Healthy Bicester at Cherwell District Council, eased pressure on

pharmacies by using local athletes to deliver much needed medication to those unable to leave their homes. The runners and cyclists covered a

combined distance of 4,300 miles. That's the equivalent of running from Cherwell to Turkey and back!

Cllr Andrew McHugh, Cherwell's lead member for health and wellbeing said: 'This impressive scheme goes right to the heart of what community is all about. At times of extreme difficulty, we've seen volunteers who have really gone the extra mile, supporting the most vulnerable people in our district by delivering essential medication. I can't thank them enough for their efforts in taking part in this excellent project'.

The final deliveries were made in Banbury and Bicester at the end of July, but the groups, including Banbury Harriers Athletics Club and Banbury Star Cyclists' Club, have committed to restarting the initiative should the need arise.

www.alchester-runningclub.co.uk



Bicester youngsters lead the way in race to be crowned Street Tag champions!

Schools across Cherwell have been invited to take part in a new game, encouraging families to explore their local area by walking and cycling.

Street Tag is an app which, when downloaded, turns Cherwell into a virtual treasure hunt, displaying hidden markers for the player to collect on their phone.

The initiative has been piloted in Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington, and has proved so popular it has now been rolled out across Oxfordshire, with the creation of a county schools league.

Cherwell is currently topping the table, with Bicester's Kings Meadow Primary School amassing the highest number of tags, with more than three million points already collected! PE coordinator at Kings Meadow, Steve Roberts, said: 'I hope all those who have signed up are enjoying themselves. It's great to hear so much excitement in the school about how many steps the children have done and how many tags they have found'!

For more information about Street Tag, including how to join, head to www.cherwell.gov.uk/street-tag. Other COVID-secure sport and wellbeing initiatives from Cherwell District Council, including the latest FAST offers, can be found at www.cherwell.gov.uk/activity-and-wellbeing-hub



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- ✓ Do you have an idea that could help older people or those in need of support to access the community?
- ✓ Do you have an idea that could help?
- ✓ Do you need help to turn your idea into an enterprise or small community venture?
- ✓ Are you already helping people and would like to do more?

Community Enterprise Project

This project is a new and exciting initiative, delivered in partnership with social enterprise Community Catalysts and Oxfordshire County Council. The two-year programme offers support to local people to set up and run their own very small enterprises, offering help and support at home for older people and support for disabled people who want to live life their way or similar. This may include community groups. The project will have an initial focus on the Cherwell District.



Community Enterprise

All community enterprises aim to make a difference to the lives of local people. They:

- have eight or fewer full-time staff or volunteers
- are independent of any larger organisation
- are set up in many different and creative ways such as: sole trader, partnership, small business, social enterprise, charity or voluntary organisation

Support from the project

Community Catalysts runs a development programme which can:

- offer you a friendly and supportive point of contact to explore ideas
- support you to develop your community enterprise
- give you practical information on regulation, training and opportunities in the health and social care sectors
- direct you to other organisations who can help

Get in touch

For more information about the project contact Anita Wingad the Community Enterprise Catalyst on **a.wingad@communitycatalysts.co.uk | 07341425126**

Graven Hill awarded best residential development of the year

Graven Hill has been named the best residential development of the year by Oxfordshire property awards, Oxprop.

The Bicester-based development beat off stiff competition to win the award, recognising housing developments that manage to match the requirements of planners, as well as the local community, and help to fulfil the needs of Oxfordshire's housing plans.

Award-winning project, 'The Street', is the first completed phase of Graven Hill, revolutionising how properties are designed and built. Graven Hill's approach has become the prototype for similar local authority and private housebuilding developments throughout the UK and, once complete, the project will have delivered over 1,900 new homes.

Karen Curtin, managing director at Graven Hill, said: 'The OxProp awards are a brilliant opportunity to showcase the projects at the heart of the Oxfordshire property community, so a win in this category is fantastic. We are extremely proud of the community that is taking shape at Graven Hill and the role



we are playing in helping people to discover their perfect home. By promoting a high degree of design creativity and prioritising wellbeing, Graven Hill is fulfilling the dreams of many and boosting the local area'.

Graven Hill unveils first community house project

Graven Hill, the UK's largest self and custom build development, has opened its first community space for residents.

Located at Graven Hill, the community house provides a social hub for neighbours while the site continues to grow.

Built in partnership with Bromford Housing Association and Cherwell District Council, the two-storey, end-of-terrace home answers residents' calls for a designated area to host small meetings and gatherings.

Karen Curtin, managing director at Graven Hill said: 'Graven Hill has been designed around one central aim, to create a thriving community. A natural step in bringing this

vision to life has been to provide a space that neighbours, friends, and families can enjoy together.

'This is just the beginning of a very exciting future – plans are also in place for a permanent community centre to be built as the site expands. Until then, we look forward to seeing a variety of local groups and clubs use the space to its full potential'.

To ensure the community hub remains COVID-secure, people are being advised to follow specific health and safety guidelines and to maintain social distancing.



Bicester in the driving seat for new electric vehicle park and charge scheme

Bicester residents will be the first to take advantage of a multi-million-pound scheme, supporting the switch to driving electric cars by making it easier to charge them.

The £5.2 million Park and Charge Oxfordshire programme is amongst the first of its kind in the UK, and is being delivered by a consortium of local partners including Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. Preparation work began in November to convert 12 bays at Bicester's Cattle Market car park into an electric vehicle charging hub. These will be made available in early 2021.

Councillor Dan Sames, Cherwell District Council's Lead Member for Clean and Green, said: 'Electric vehicles are set to be more and more common over the next few years, and supporting this move is a key part of our commitment for action on climate change. Many residents have been asking us to provide electric charging in our car parks, so I'm sure that this will be welcomed'.

With interest in electric vehicle ownership on the rise in the

county, one key factor holding people back is the inability to easily charge them outside their homes, with an estimated 35 per cent of residents having no access to off-street parking. The new Park and Charge Oxfordshire project offers an alternative solution by providing residents with the opportunity to park for free overnight in Council-owned car parks, while giving access to top of the range electric charging points.

Supporting the creation of green infrastructure that uses low-carbon, energy-positive technology is a core principle of the Bicester Garden Town project, with Bicester-based company Zeta developing a state-of-the-art charger for the scheme.

Zeta CEO, Phil Shadbolt OBE, said: 'This project leads the way for electric vehicle charging into the future. These hubs are needed to meet demand as the take up grows.

Oxfordshire will be a trailblazer for this technology as we ramp up the production of chargers in Bicester'.

By 2025, an estimated 25,000 battery electric vehicles will be driven on Oxfordshire's roads. To meet with this demand, a further 23 car parks have been selected for the project in the county, including in Kidlington, Banbury and Bicester. These will be rolled out later in 2021.

The Park and Charge Oxfordshire project has been awarded funding from Innovate UK as part of the Government's investment into British engineering to transform electric charging infrastructure. SSE Enterprise, Urban Integrated UK, the University of Oxford, West Oxfordshire District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council and the Vale of the White Horse District Council are also all supporting the scheme.

Bicester is home to Wahl's British Barber Shop of the Year

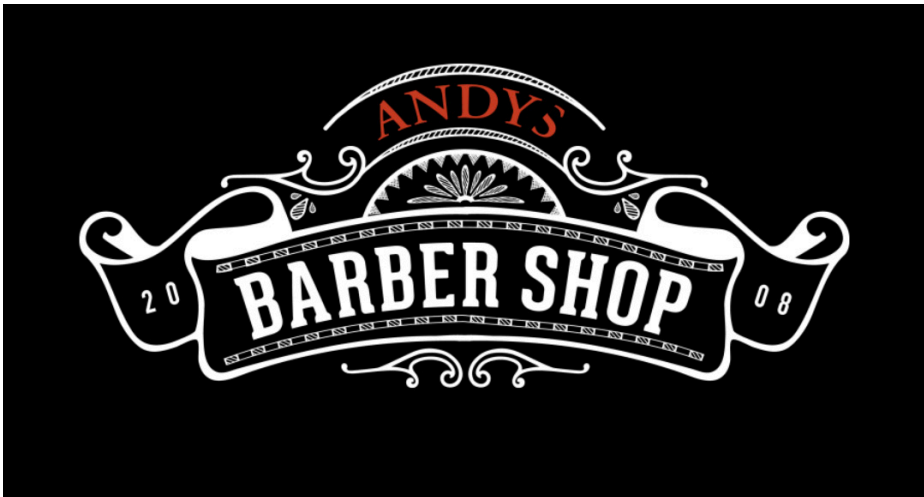
After a year of ups and downs, Andy's Barber Shop is delighted to be crowned Wahl's British Barber Shop of the Year. This fiercely competitive national competition saw the Barber Shop, located in Pioneer Square, battle it out against some of the biggest names in the industry.

Barber Andy Willis said: 'In 28 years of barbering I've never been so shocked, surprised and proud. This is the biggest award we've ever won. We've a fantastic team here at Andy's Barber Shop and they thoroughly deserve the accolades that come with this. We're absolutely chuffed to bits'.

The award, organised by Wahl Professional UK, considers every aspect of the business from quality

of barbering to customer experience and interior. Andy added: 'I'm passionate about my home town and although we're surrounded by shops that are closing, I hope this helps to

show that there's still local business thriving in the town. Thank you to all our loyal customers, we're so proud to have won this prestigious award'.



Tree policy summary

Bicester Town Council has responsibility for thousands of trees across the town. A policy which will guide how we deal with those trees has been adopted, for more information and to read the policy in detail please see www.bicester.gov.uk/the-council/strategic-documents/

Bicester Town Council is only responsible for trees on land owned by us. Other trees are the responsibility of the relevant landowner. It is worth noting our policy does not cover tree preservation orders, which are the responsibility of Cherwell District Council.

Bicester Town Council has a duty of care to take all reasonable steps to ensure hazards are addressed and all tree works fall in line with wildlife and conservation laws. As such, all trees undergo regular inspection and any works authorised will be progressed on a risk basis.

All requests for work made by the public will be considered, however, the Council has no obligation to prune overhanging trees unless they are causing direct damage to property or are considered dangerous. In the case of subsidence/heave all claims will be forwarded through Bicester Town Council insurers.

A request to prune trees because of a poor satellite reception will be considered only if all engineering solutions have been exhausted. We will not fell or prune a tree based on natural and/or seasonal phenomena.

Adjacent property owners are entitled to prune trees – but in doing so must not unbalance them or cause greater damage to the tree itself. Any felling or pruning undertaken on a tree located on council land will be considered anti-social behaviour

the matter will be investigated and potentially a community protection notice will be issued which could result in fines up to £2500.

The Bicester Town Council's intention for tree management is:

Retention: Ensuring the retention, wherever practicable or desirable, of trees on Council land;

Replacement: Replace mature trees lost through natural wastage and those that have outgrown their environment so tree populations do not decline;

Enhancement: Where appropriate, to increase the tree cover and species diversity in those areas of the council's land that are lacking in trees. Where this will have a significant impact in enhancing the character of the area;

Continuous Tree Cover: To undertake the management ensuring that there is a continuous programme of tree replacement;

Species Selection: Planting appropriate species for the particular space;

Conservation: Encourage nature conservation through tree planting;



Publicity and Promotion: Increase public awareness by encouraging public involvement in decision making and planting schemes;

Sponsorship: Encourage sponsorship via a Tree Donation Scheme;

Adoption: Encourage local residents to adopt trees and undertake some of the maintenance/monitoring tasks in the first few years.

Oxfordshire County Council as highways authority can assist when trees & shrubs overhang footpaths & roads. They can be contacted via [Contact us | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

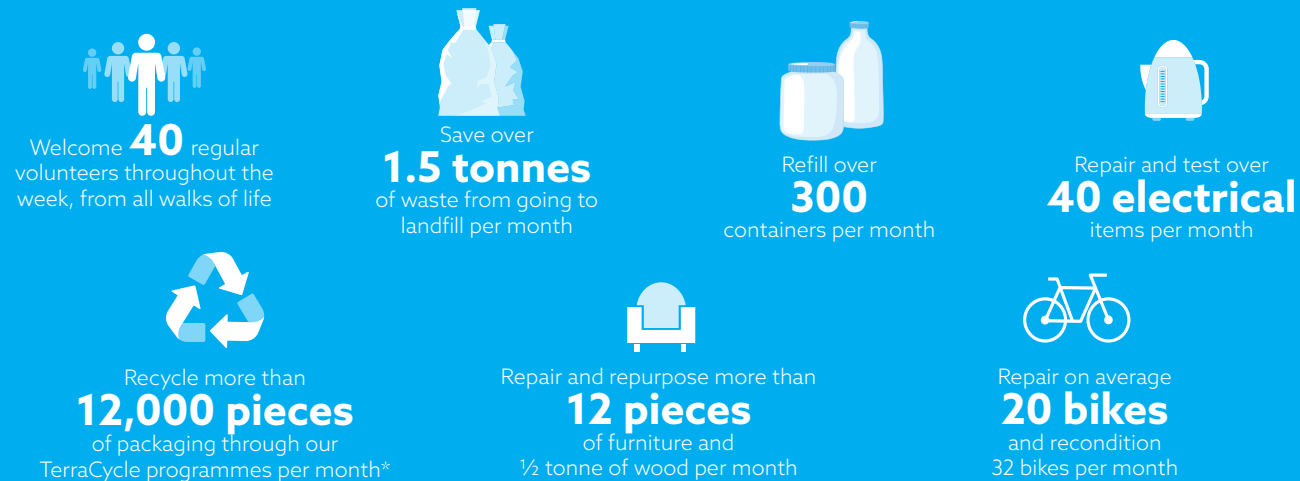
Cherwell District Council oversee Tree Preservation Orders. You should check whether a tree is protected Tree preservation orders | [Tree preservation orders | Cherwell District Council](#)



Bicester Green

Our nearly 3000 Facebook followers and our regular customers will know what we've been up to in this unusual year, but much of Bicester and the surrounding areas still might not know we even exist. We've a feeling that more and more local folk are becoming aware of us as a resource, and almost despite the current pandemic we're seeing new faces coming to find out about what we do and how they can get involved (once restrictions allow).

What we do in numbers...



...And have fun doing all of it!

So, what does all of this mean to the average Bicester resident?

Quite a lot, we like to think. We are all consumers, and as we have seen by the sheer volume of wrappers in our TerraCycle bins, we have a weakness for crisps and confectionery. But those wrappers and packets that can't go in our kerbside recycling CAN still be recycled through TerraCycle, and we are a drop off point for nine of the TerraCycle programmes (crisp packets and confectionery wrappers amongst them).

Not only that, but we care about the environment and sustainability of our locality. So, we offer a refill solution, where you can bring your empty containers and refill with our fabulous SESI products. All of which are cruelty free, vegan, biodegradable and manufactured in the UK (except the olive oil). We offer household cleaning products (laundry cleaning to toilet cleaning and dishes to surfaces), personal care products (hair, body, cleaning and moisturising) and cooking oils (olive oil, rapeseed oil and

sunflower oil). And coming soon there will be even more plastic-free options. But we also have a long-standing partnership with Banbury-based Nothing but Footprints, who operate a full zero waste shop. This partnership gives everyone the opportunity to access packaging-free food stuffs such as pasta, rice, pulses, nuts, seed, herbs and spices, cereals, sweet treats, and condiments and sauces, through a click and collect service at Bicester Green. It's so simple, order online (www.refillnotlandfill.co.uk) and your order is dropped off at Bicester Green in preloved recyclable containers for you to collect.

If your household electrical items need a bit of TLC to keep them working, our volunteers can take a look and try to repair them; if they can't we may have a replacement already in our shop, fully tested and ready to go. If you need a bike, or a bike repaired, then the bike team have you covered, and our woodwork team can recondition your furniture or take on your

commission. This year alone, we have made mud kitchens and planters galore, restored a Queen Anne chair and various Ercol pieces, and made handles for garden tools. Not to mention our commissioned dispensers for SESI that are now all over the UK! Oh, and if you need a reusable face covering, then our volunteers are on the case there too. We've even set up an online shop (www.bicestergreen.org.uk/shop).

None of this is possible without our team of volunteers, they are our heartbeat, literally the life and soul of Bicester Green, and when adversity hits, you can be assured these amazing human beings are there to help in any way they can.

To find out more about Bicester Green, how to join us and get involved, follow us on **Facebook.com/BicesterGreen**, or visit **www.bicestergreen.org.uk**. And pop in to see us at The Yard, next to the Garth, Launton Road, Bicester (opening hours have changed due to restrictions – check online before coming in!)

Enjoy reading with Bicester Book Group

We have been meeting for the last 11 years to discuss and review a book every month. We meet at 7.30pm, usually on the first Tuesday of the month, virtually at the moment, but hopefully back at The Littlebury Hotel in 2021. If you love to read and would like to share your thoughts with a variety of like-minded people then the Bicester Book Group is for you!

You will be introduced to books you may never have thought of reading. We can't promise you'll always enjoy them but they should hopefully provide plenty of lively discussion. We read all sorts of books from fiction to non-fiction, from fantasy to crime thrillers, nothing is off limits. All members are encouraged to suggest books for the group to

read and we select books a couple of months in advance. Recent books include: This Boy by Alan Johnson and People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks.

There is also a sub-group that meets on the 2nd Monday of the month, reading different books to those above.

Everyone is really welcome and we are always open to new people coming along. There are no joining or subscription fees.

So, if you want to see what it's all about, please look up 'Bicester Book Group' on Facebook.

facebook.com/groups/Bicesterbookgroup/

The Bicester Good Neighbour Scheme

Bicester Good Neighbour Scheme volunteers provide friendship and support to local older people, and during 2020 this proved vital.

When lockdown limited face-to-face visits, we arranged to make regular telephone calls to all our BGNS friends. The weekly chats with their trusted volunteers gave reassurance and helped reduce feelings of isolation.

Our Scheme Coordinator worked extra hours as enquiries increased and older residents turned to us for assistance. We were pleased to also support the wider community by offering advice and linking people to other local services, including

the Coronavirus Helpers group, who did great work across Bicester. COVID-19 emergency funding from Bicester Town Council allowed BGNS to keep the phone manned and to focus on providing help, at a time when we were unable to hold public fundraising events.

Our DBS-checked volunteers did essential shopping and prescription collections for housebound and vulnerable folk. When one volunteer heard that his BGNS friend missed his Friday fish & chips, he personally

delivered a fish supper to their door. This thoughtful act is now a weekly highlight and a chance for a doorstep catch-up.

We thank all our fantastic volunteers for giving their time throughout the year. Donations to support BGNS can be made online at **www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/bgns2020**

To get help or ask about volunteering, please call **07849 799530** or email **BGNS@live.com**

www.goodneighbourscheme.com



Mid-Counties Co-op helps the Forget Me Not (Bicester) Ltd club

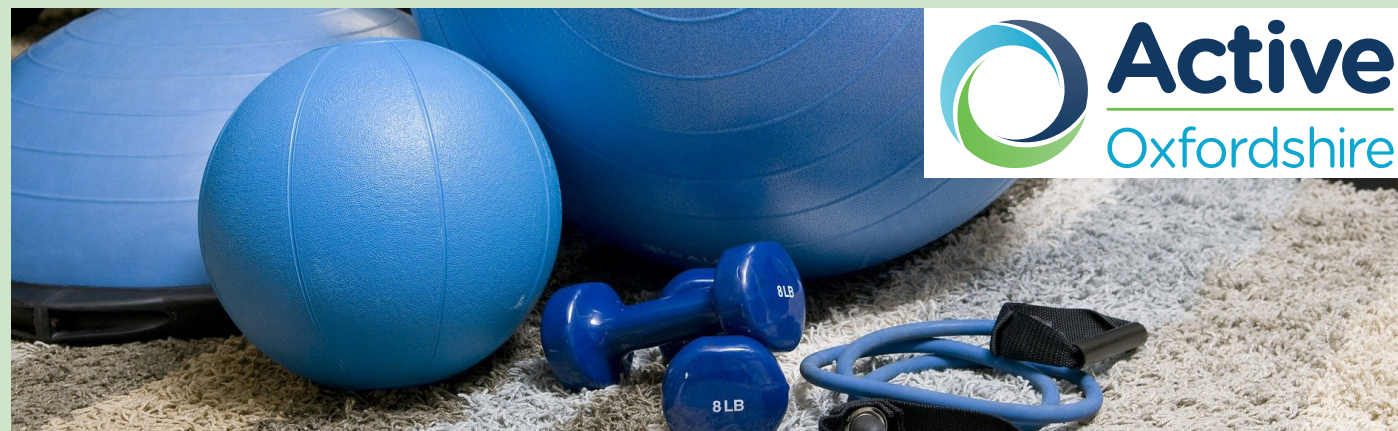
When lockdown happened in March, the staff of Bicester friendship and lunch club decided to keep in regular contact with their clients and volunteers by having regular phone chats.

It was never imagined that lockdown would go on so long, and as the lockdown continued, they were given a much appreciated helping hand by Mid-Counties Co-op, who provided a grant to enable the club to send out lovely cards to their clients (pictured).

It is always a treat to receive a pleasant surprise in the post.

Mid-Counties Co-op are keen to support the local community and have made Forget Me Not one of their community partners.

By shopping at a Mid-Counties Co-op store, part of the profit made goes into helping local groups, which make it a winner all round – the customer buys quality products whilst helping the local community at the same time.



Get moving and Share your Warmth with Active Oxfordshire

Active Oxfordshire are running a joint campaign with Sir Muir Gray to help older people be more active and connected during this difficult time. We currently run Zoom classes as well as send our exercise DVDs and home exercise booklets to people in Oxfordshire who would like to be more active.

Could you donate your heating allowance?

This winter, as we continue to live through the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, thousands of older people in Oxfordshire are at great risk of isolation, loneliness and inactivity. That's why we have brought back the Share your Warmth campaign, to help keep older people active, healthy and connected during these difficult times. We are asking older people in Oxfordshire who feel able to spare their winter fuel allowance to donate it to Share your Warmth and transform the lives of vulnerable older people in our community.

Your £200 could:

- ✓ Support 20 housebound people to do specialist seated exercises at home with a home exercise pack.
- ✓ Support 40 older people to attend a tailored group exercise class, keeping them active, mobile and socially connected.
- ✓ Enable 100 housebound older people in Oxfordshire to receive a friendly phone call.

We also welcome donations of any amount from all generations, so that we can all come together to fight inactivity, loneliness and isolation this winter. Please donate here:

www.justgiving.com/campaign/warmth

For more information visit activeoxfordshire.org

Hummingbird launches new competition for all creative writers

Lockdown has certainly brought out people's creative side – with many rekindling old hobbies or learning new artistic skills.

Drawing on that creativity, The Hummingbird Centre launched a new competition and is hoping to discover the next JK Rowling or John Lennon – when perhaps the writer themselves isn't even aware of their talents.

Writers of all ages were asked to put pen to paper and enter the Bicester-based cancer support centre's inaugural creative writing competition. Entries could be anything from five to 5,000 words, a poem, song, short story or a diary entry about a person's cancer journey.

The closing date for entries was December 20 and a panel of judges will pick three winners – who each will receive a Kindle – when the results are announced at the end of January.

The Hummingbird Centre organiser Diane Mbangwa said: 'This year has been very tough for everyone, so we decided to do something that we hope will spread some joy and lift people's spirits.

'We all know talking about things is good for our well-being, but so is writing. With this in mind I would love as many people as possible to enter our competition. The piece of writing doesn't have to be a story – it could be just about anything, a song, a journal entry or a poem. So, if you are a budding writer we would love to hear from you.

'I would finally like to thank Nicholsons, Bicester Chamber of Commerce and Norbar Torque Tools for donating the Kindles'.



The Hummingbird Centre, based in Launton near Bicester, is a support centre for people with cancer and their families, and offers counselling, friendship, advice, and a host of therapies and pampering. It opened its doors in 2014 after a promise Hummingbird founder Mechelle Harris made to her late father Raymond Hurcombe to create something good out of their loss as a family.

So far, The Hummingbird Centre has supported more than 16,500 people and has become very much part of the community. It relies 100 per cent on donations and volunteers to enable it to operate as every penny raised goes back into the centre.

To find out more email info@thehummingbirdcentre.org.uk or view www.thehummingbirdcentre.org.uk

NICHOLSONS
Plants Forestry Landscapes

Bicester Chamber
WORKING TOGETHER FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

Norbar
Norbar Torque Tools

Confessions of an addict

Heroin it's not, but the card game - Bridge - is addictive. When the first lockdown came, all the bridge clubs had to close.

This spread consternation among those of us addicted to the sport. We're used to a regular fix, playing cards with friends in a pleasant location with a bar. We also knew the lockdown would be long. There's not much social distancing with fifteen tables of four people sitting less than a metre apart and passing packs of cards from one table to another. We knew we would be cold turkey for at least the lockdown duration.

So we, like everyone else, had to go online. This was no problem for the younger and more technically savvy of the group. They took in their stride implementing Zoom to talk to people and Bridge Online to play. For the older generations, grandparents and great grandparents, it presented a huge challenge. Some of us had welcomed the white heat of technology only as far as using

a mobile phone for making and receiving phone calls, and that wasn't always successful. (My nephew Dave has been heard to mutter angrily between his teeth, 'Old people and phones!' when he was asked for the umpteenth time how to put a new number into contacts.)

But we did it; we're addicts so we had to. We got the hang of playing online. And, of course, the software got better. Now we don't need Zoom, but we can still see and talk to the other three people sitting at our table, and at the end of a round move to another table, virtually of course.

It's pretty similar to face-to-face bridge. Indeed, in one way it's better than being in the club - we can only hear the people at our table. There's no distraction from players who, having finished a round, talk too



loudly and occasionally create chaos by knocking over a drink or a chair or even a table. I hope we all want to go back to playing in the club!

So, join us if you fancy it. Just give me a call or even a Zoom. I know what to do - click the green button in the middle of the screen; click Join with Video and then Join with Audio. Voila, as easy as playing a trump card; so, eat your heart out nephew Dave.

Ken Langdon **07850 616069**,
Bicester Bridge Club

Hello from Bicester Hospital League of Friends

We hope that you are all safe and well during these worrying and difficult times. The year 2020 will be one we will remember for a long time but for the wrong reasons.

Although our wonderful volunteers have not been allowed into the hospital during this pandemic, the League of Friends have still been there supporting our wonderful NHS staff where we could.

We had a goodies hamper made up for the staff, also some funds to allow them to buy a few treats, our way of saying thank you to them all.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to have our usual Christmas coffee morning this year, which is very disappointing, as it is a time when we can all get together, have a chat with friends and often make new friends. There is, however, something for us to look forward to; Michael at the Littlebury in his usual kind and generous way has offered us the use of the Littlebury dining room to hold a coffee morning next year as soon

as we are able to mix again.

The League of Friends has given the hospital money to buy Christmas extras and gifts for the patients, also some money for something towards the staff's Christmas.

It is through the support of all of you that were able to give a little help in these ways.

We are always pleased to receive donations; cheques should be made payable to League of Friends Bicester Community Hospital and sent to me at the address below.

We hope you all stay safe and well. Hope you have a good and Happy Christmas, that 2021 will be a better year, we beat this virus, we all meet up with family and friends, that we all have a very big hug.

For more information contact: Rose

Stratford, Bicester Community Hospital League of Friends Treasurer,
8 Queens Court, Bicester OX26 6JX.
E-mail **rosetjstratford@outlook.com**



Quite the picture with Bicester Camera Club

Bicester Camera Club is still meeting - over Zoom of course at the moment. We have continued with a varied programme and even managed to carry out a practical evening which was enjoyed by all. If you are interested in photography you would be most welcome to join us.

We Zoom on alternate Monday evenings at 7.00pm.

Please contact: **lynnehooper@virginmedia.com**



© Ian Jones



© Rodney Hughes



© Bill Jeffries



© Tony Hallas

Support for unpaid carers

If you are looking after a loved one or friend who could not cope without your help, the team at Action for Carers Oxfordshire are here to support you. We have a dedicated team based all around Oxfordshire who are working hard to ensure family carers receive long-term specialised support and practical advice, and we are making sure that we stay in contact for a regular chat

to reassure carers they are not alone.

And if someone you have been caring for has moved or is moving into residential care our team is here to help support you through the challenging and emotional times.

If you would like more information call our Carersline on **01235 424715** or email **carersreferrals@carersoxfordshire.org.uk**.



Grant for food banks and similar schemes still available

Since it went live on September 1, £17,465 of the funding has already been committed and £52,535 is still to be distributed.

The grants so far issued have funded: a food bank storage container and hygiene hub at Banbury Mosque; community food services and training at Cherwell Larder and the Sunshine Centre; and a food sustainability training project at Community First Oxfordshire.

Cherwell District Council's Community Hub Emergency Relief Fund is designed to support the voluntary and community organisations which run food banks and other similar schemes. The Council is inviting applications to this fund and to the COVID-19 Councillor Priority Fund.

Councillor Andrew McHugh, Cherwell's Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing, said: 'The Coronavirus restrictions are essential to protect the health of our communities. But we know that in many cases they will have caused additional hardships to people who were already struggling.

'Cherwell has, for many years,

worked closely with the local organisations who run food banks. I cannot praise them highly enough for the way they have redoubled their efforts during this pandemic. I believe they are the best way for us as a District Council to continue to address the essential issue of food insecurity in the future'.

Organisations can apply for up to £5,000 to meet the needs of residents who are struggling to afford food and other essentials. The funding can also be used to help economically disadvantaged residents access longer-term support such as benefits

The Councillor Priority Fund has also been used to fund a number of vital food projects during the pandemic and still has over £42,000 available for organisations to apply for. This fund has a broader scope and can fund activities including delivering food, supplies and medicines to those in vulnerable situations. It

can also fund organisations offering support to the homeless, those suffering domestic abuse and for mental health.

To date, the councillors' fund has provided funding for food banks, help with shopping for essential supplies, training and PPE for volunteers, meals on wheels, and more.

Cllr McHugh continued: 'These funding streams could make a big difference to any organisation that is looking to expand its offerings to those who are struggling. Anyone who is uncertain about whether these funding opportunities could be right for them should get in touch with our grants team who can offer support and guidance'.

The Community Hub Emergency Relief Fund has been financed by the Department of Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) through Oxfordshire County Council.

For advice email **grants@cherwell-dc.gov.uk** or call **01295 221538**.

Arts activities update from OYAP Trust

OYAP welcomed participants back to Studi02 in September and October, the highlight being our Fright Night production for Halloween.

Young people from our Youth Theatre and Sound Effects groups created a weird and wonderful show! This year it was filmed and can still be watched on Facebook if you are after a spooky spectacular....

With Lockdown 2 we were determined to make sure young people in Bicester could still access creative activities, so we have been busy putting together a programme of online activities, many are free on Facebook, and some are online group sessions. This includes drama, visual arts, music and more – check the What's On page of our website, www.oyap.org.uk, and follow us on

Facebook, [oyaptrustpage](https://www.facebook.com/oyaptrustpage). Join in over the festive period and share what you create with us on social media, we'd love to see!

In spring we return to face to face sessions – sign up now for weekly Youth Theatre and Rock School, and monthly Ukulele, DJ and Drawing Clubs.

We'd also love to see new faces in our Youth Action Teams – free projects to develop skills and make a difference in the community. Youth of Bicester use acts of kindness to bring the community together, Gig Committee meet to plan, create, and deliver live music events, Cocoon

are working to make Bicester more accessible for all.

For more information email **admin@oyap.org.uk**



THE BRASENOSE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT



We have a bar menu for more informal meals or try our 1777 Restaurant menu.

Dogs are welcome. We are the perfect place for dinner and drink after a walk along the canal.

Just 20 minutes from Bicester.

Visit our Facebook page for information on live music and special events.

www.thebrasenose.co.uk

The Brasenose | Station Rd | Cropredy | Banbury | OX17 1PW | 01295 750244

SAVE THE DATES!



Bicester Town Council is tentatively putting together its 2021 list of events.

Following a year whereby almost every single face to face event was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic, the council is proceeding with cautious optimism for 2021.

Dates are yet to be confirmed, but councillors have approved planning to start on a series of events for 2021.

EVENT	DATE	VENUE	TIME
Family Fun Day & Armed Forces Day	Sat 26th June	Pingle Field	11:00 - 15:00
Superhero Activity Day	Weds 4th Aug	The Garth Park	11:00 - 14:00
Music Event	Sat 14th Aug	The Garth Park	18.30 - 22.30
Music Event	Sat 28th Aug	The Garth Park	18.30 - 22.30
Christmas Light Switch-On	Sat 27th Nov	Bicester Town Centre	10:00 - 18:00
Garth House Illuminated Trail	Tue 7th- Sun 12th Dec	The Garth Park	16.00 - 22.00

Please note dates and times are subject to change

Bicester Town Council would love to help to share your event!

Please use the form on our website www.bicester.gov.uk/community-events/ to submit your event to be published onto the Town Council's Events Calendar. Once submitted we aim to review within ten working days. Please submit your event at least two weeks in advance of the event date to allow sufficient approval time.

Note that we can only accept non-profit events from charities or organisations, in which the event is to benefit the residents of Bicester.

Your event, once approved will appear on the calendar (see example below):

Top tips:

When submitting, please enter as much information as possible, including dates, times, cost and location details (there will be prompts for all of these within the form).

Do upload a visual of your event; if you don't have a poster, maybe use an image of your group or event location. The image will appear as a pop up on the calendar when viewers scroll across the calendar.

If you experience any difficulties submitting your event, please contact:
enquiries@bicester.gov.uk