



A Bicester Town Council
Newsletter for
the Community

BICESTER

GARTH GAZETTE

January 2025



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Your Councillors

Your local Councillor is democratically elected to represent the people of the town on the Town Council. Bicester is divided into four wards, with elected Councillors in each ward.

East Ward

- Councillor Tom Beckett**
Tom.beckett@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Sam Holland**
Sam.holland@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Donna Ford**
Donna.ford@bicester.gov.uk

North Ward

- Councillor Nick Mawer**
Nick.mawer@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Rachel Mallows**
Rachel.mallows@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor John Willett**
john.willett@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Paul Wheatley**
Paul.wheatley@bicester.gov.uk

South Ward

- Councillor Alisa Russell**
Alisa.russell@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Nick Cotter**
Nick.cotter@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Christopher Pruden**
Christopher.pruden@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Damien Maguire (Mayor)**
Damien.maguire@bicester.gov.uk

West Ward

- Councillor Harry Knight**
Harry.knight@bicester.gov.uk
- Councillor Dan Hallett**
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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 Phil Evans on: **01869 252915** or at: **phil.evans@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.

Staff

- Town Clerk / **Phil Evans**
- Deputy Clerk / **Paul Canning**
- Service Manager / **Mick Lee**
- Responsible Finance Officer / **Helen Pool**
- Administration Officer & Mayor's PA (Civic & Democratic) / **Maria Galic**
- Administration Officer (Events & Marketing) / **Isobel May**
- Administration Officer (Sports & Facilities) / **Viktorija Kovale**
- Administration Officer (Finance) **Jodi Clarke**
- Outdoor Supervisor / **Conor Pattison**
- Outdoor Technician / **Mark Jones**
- Outdoor Technician / **Kyle Carr**
- Outdoor Technician / **William King**
- Outdoor Technician / **Kane Gray**
- Outdoor Technician / **Simon Knight**
- Outdoor Technician / **Dave Bambrook**
- Outdoor Technician / **Dave Stone**
- Outdoor Technician / **Vacant**
- Whitelands Supervisor / **Paul Tulley**
- Whitelands Operative / **Shane Davison**
- Whitelands Operative / **Helena Cook**
- Whitelands Operative / **Adam Varndell**
- Whitelands Operative / **Craig Johnson**
- Whitelands Operative / **Vacant**

Contacting your Town Council

Log in to Bicester Town Council at: **www.bicester.gov.uk**, phone on: **01869 252915** or email us at: **enquiries@bicester.gov.uk**. The Garth, Launton Road, Bicester, OX26 6PS.

Want to be in the next issue?

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 for community groups and events or book advertising for commercial ventures.

Find us on Facebook: **www.facebook.com/BicesterTownCouncil**

Find us on YouTube search: **BicesterTownCouncil**

Welcome

Happy New Year! I hope you all enjoyed the Festive Season and had a well-deserved break. In this edition of the Garth Gazette you can catch up on the events held in Autumn-Winter of 2024 including Remembrance Day, the Christmas Lights Switch-On, and the Illuminated Light Trail around Garth Park. We were very pleased with the Christmas Shopping Market this year, and hope you found some unique gifts there for loved ones. Bicester Town Council are always so grateful and appreciative of everyone's support, whether you are involved in organising or running the events or are just there to enjoy. Have a look at the back page for the dates we have for this year's events, and be sure to save the dates. There are lots of community groups in



Bicester to get involved with, so whatever your resolutions for 2025 – more exercise or volunteering maybe – you should be able to find some company in achieving them. Wishing you all the best for 2025!

Phil Evans – **Town Clerk, Bicester Town Council**



Whitelands Farm Sports Ground returns to full operation

Bicester Town Council is pleased to announce that Whitelands Farm Sports Ground has returned to full operational capacity.

In late October, an unforeseen but significant staff shortage impacted the Town Council's ability to maintain regular services at the facility. This led to a temporary reduction in operations, particularly affecting weekend activities on the 3G pitches.

Bicester Town Council would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to our users and residents for their patience and understanding during this time. We also commend our dedicated staff, who went above and beyond their contractual obligation to ensure essential services continued. Their flexibility and commitment were instrumental in maintaining operations as effectively as possible.

We are also grateful that members of the community

offered assistance during this period. While we deeply appreciate these offers, insurance and liability considerations limited our ability to accept external support. We acknowledge that our communication during this period could have been more effective, and we apologise for any confusion or inconvenience caused.

Moving forward, the Town Council is implementing measures to help prevent such disruption from occurring again in the future, and we are setting up ways to enhance our communication in such circumstances.

Bicester Town Council remains committed to provide consistent, high-quality services to the Bicester Community.

Bicester – Consultation on proposed 20mph speed limits

Oxfordshire County Council wants to make our towns and villages safer and more attractive places to walk and cycle.

To enable this, 20mph speed restrictions are being used to help promote alternative modes of transport for local travel.

We're therefore asking for your views on proposals for new 20mph speed limits on the residential roads within Bicester, but with most of the major traffic routes remaining at 30mph.

You can view the details of the proposals and express your views using the following link: **letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/bicester_20mph2025**

This link also includes details of the decision-making process following the close of the consultation.

The consultation is due to close on 14 February 2025.



Bicester fell silent for Remembrance Sunday

Residents gathered in Bicester's Market Square to commemorate Remembrance Sunday.

Bicester Town Council once again led the town's tributes on Remembrance Sunday, November 10, joining the rest of the country to honour the servicemen and women who lost their lives in the First and Second World Wars, as well as in other conflicts around the world.

Hundreds of people from uniformed organisations and local military units participated in the event, which began at 10:30 am with a parade from St. Edburg's Church to Market Square, where the outdoor service was held. The parade was led by ATC 2507 (Bicester) Marching Band, accompanied by members of 1 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps and the Royal British Legion.

Once in the Market Square, participants were lined up by the Parade Marshal from 1 Regt RLC in preparation for the service and wreath-laying, which started at 10:55 am. Wreaths were laid by Deputy Lieutenant Miranda Markham; Bicester's Mayor, Councillor Damien Maguire; a Royal British Legion representative; and Calum Miller, the MP for Bicester & Woodstock. During the wreath-laying ceremony, the Bicester Military Wives Choir performed.

Afterwards, the Mayor, the Commanding Officer of 1 Regt RLC Lt. Col. Lucinda Butler MBE, and the Deputy Lieutenant took the salute as the parade marched back to the church. At this point, groups including 1st Bicester Intrepid Scout, 7th Bicester Scout Group, Bicester Detachment Army Cadet Force, 1st Langford Village Scout Group, 1st Southwold Scout Group, Police Cadets, Fire Station Cadets and other organizations joined the parade.

At the church, an Honour Guard received wreaths from representatives of local organizations, individuals and companies, which were then laid at the memorial. A service of remembrance followed in St. Edburg's Church at 12 noon, led by The Rev. Peter Wright.

Reflecting on the day, the Mayor, Councillor Damien Maguire, said: "Remembrance Sunday is always a significant day in the council's calendar. It's a time for us to reflect and pay our respects to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. We might be uncomfortable, cold, and wet for a short while, which is a lesser sacrifice than that of the people we are gathered to remember.

"Bicester has a long historical connection to the military, and as always, this event was a collaboration with Bicester Garrison, St. Edburg's Church, and the Royal British Legion. It was particularly poignant for me, as I served in the British Army for five years, and Remembrance Sunday was always a very important day for us all.

"Two years ago, the council decided to move the majority of the Remembrance Service outdoors to the Market Square, creating a larger space for more people to participate. With that in mind, I invited residents to join us on Sunday, November 10 to mark this special day."

Poppy Appeal 2024

The 2024 Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal also began, with stands at local supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's, Cherwell Valley Services, Bicester Village, and street collections across the town and nearby villages.

Last year, residents of the Bicester and District area raised a record £70,143.50 for the charity.

Chris Dalby, Poppy Appeal Organiser, expressed gratitude, saying: "We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the phenomenal generosity of the people of Bicester and District." He added that volunteers interested in helping in 2025 can email: bicesterpoppyappeal@gmail.com.

Santa Fun Run

The Santa Fun Run was lucky with the weather this year and avoided the storms of previous weekends.

As always there were serious runners looking for a personal best for the 5k course, as well as fun runners and families just wanting to take part and have the bacon butty to finish. All runners got their Santa Suits, a bacon butty and a medal for taking part. The proceeds raised went to the Mayor's chosen charities: Bicester Foodbank and Nai's House. Thank you again to all who took part and supported the event.



Bicester Town Christmas Lights Event and Christmas Shopping Market

This year, the Christmas Lights Switch-On, on Friday 30th November, sponsored by Alexander & Co, heralded the start of a two-day Christmas Market.

On the Friday, there was a host of activities and entertainment including street performers, toddler rides, and more. A Christmas stage and story took place from 4pm, and the lights were turned on at 6pm by Bicester's own Olympic gold-medallist Kieran Bird. Christmas Carols and music followed, and despite the drizzle, Bicester showed true Christmas spirit.

Over the Saturday and Sunday, the Market Square really seemed to have some extra Christmas magic as people enjoyed the festive sweet treats, street food and shopped for unique handmade gifts. We'd like to thank everyone who joined us for the Christmas Lights Switch-On or visited the Christmas Market, as well as all the entertainers, vendors and residents involved in the event.

Another fantastic year for the illuminated light trail

Once again, Garth House and Park came alive at night with a dazzling festive light show. Visitors strolled through the park, which had been transformed into a magical wonderland of illuminated walkways, cheerful holiday music and stunning light displays.

Santa made a much-anticipated return this year, greeting children in his grotto before they enjoyed the delicious treats on offer from Savoir Fare Café and other food stalls.

Phil Evans, Town Clerk of Bicester Town Council, commented: "The Council would like to thank everyone involved in making the Christmas Lights Trail such a successful and enjoyable event. 2024

was the fourth year of the Bicester Light Trail, and we're sure all our visitors would agree that each year it gets better and better."

The light trail is full accessible to buggies, mobility scooters and wheelchairs so families can enjoy the evening together. Be sure to check the back cover of this edition to save the dates of 2025's trail.







Have you got more than 3 friends?

If so, one of them will be a victim
of domestic abuse at some point

Want to help? Become a DA Friend



They Listen



They Link



**Lend a hand to
raise awareness**

To find out more friends@reducingtherisk.org.uk
If you need support **Oxfordshire Helpline 0800 731 0055**



Christmas event celebrates festive season with moment of reflection

For all the joy Christmas brings, it can also be a tough time for those who have lost a loved one.

With that in mind, cancer support charity The Hummingbird Centre opened its doors for its traditional Light the Light event on 6th December.

Ahead of the day, The Hummingbird Centre volunteers carefully unwrapped tiny hearts bearing the names of almost 3,500 loved ones, which were hung on two large Memory Trees. In the months running up to Christmas, staff and inmates at Bullingdon Prison made wooden stars to help support the centre's fund raising. They were available to buy to add a name or message, and were added to the tree.

Mechelle Harris, Founder of The Hummingbird Centre, said: "The Light the Light event has been a long-held tradition for the centre, and is a low-key ceremony aimed at bringing the community together with the opportunity to remember loved ones we have lost, or just reflect on the year. It is an open invitation for all the community, for our guests and their families."

Mechelle added: "We would like to thank the staff and inmates of HMP Bullingdon Prison for making the stars for us. They were a wonderful addition to our Christmas event."

The Hummingbird Centre is open from Tuesday to Friday, from 10am to 4pm, supporting people with cancer and their families across Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. Their message is: if people can get to the centre they will be supported.

For more information, email: info@thehummingbirdcentre.org.uk or call: **01869 244244**.

Greetings from Bicester Hospital League of Friends

We hope you all had a good Christmas, and that 2025 will be a good year for you.

It has once again been a quiet year for the League of Friends, as we are still unable to go into the hospital and give our usual help. We keep in touch with the staff, and we are ready to give any help we can.

Our Santa, Ray Rushby, went into the hospital on Christmas Day to give gifts that we had purchased to the patients. Ray has been doing this for nearly 30 years. We know the patients love to see him, so we give a large thank you to Ray and to his family for sharing Ray with us on Christmas Day.

We held our Christmas coffee morning/bring and buy on 15th November 2024 at the Littlebury Hotel. We were disappointed at the low turnout, but due to the generosity of those who attended in just hour and a half we raised £407.20. Our thanks go to Michael for

hosting us and providing the tea and coffee. We thank John Bailey at Headmasters for donating a voucher for a hair appointment, and all the helpers who donated and helped on the day.

We thank members of Bicester Ladies Circle who donated £800 to The League of Friends. This generous donation will help us get items to make the patients' stay in hospital a little better — things that NHS do not supply.

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.

Rose Stratford, Bicester Community Hospital League of Friends, Treasurer, 8 Queens Court, Bicester OX26 6JX or email: rosetjstratford@outlook.com

Introducing CHIPS

CHIPs (Community Help and Information Points) offer support to help people self-help, guiding them to the right information for their individual needs.

CHIPs are also the front door to Citizens Advice services, and we can then refer people to further support from our specialist advisors.

Help and support is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1pm - 3pm at Cafe 103, at Bicester Methodist Church and also on Fridays at The Open Doors Cafe, 12pm - 1.30pm, also held at Bicester Methodist Church, Bell Lane, Bicester OX26 6JQ.

We are looking for volunteers

We are looking for friendly, dedicated people who have 2 or more hours per week to spare and would like to help others within their community. Help us provide face-to-face support and make a real impact in your community. You will be supporting clients, providing information and referring them for further assistance. If you're interested, email: recruitment@cawnac.org.uk.

Community Help and Information Point

**Cafe 103 Bicester Methodist
Church, Bell Lane, Bicester
OX26 6JU**

**Tuesdays
1.00pm - 3.00pm
&
Thursdays
1.00pm-3.00pm
&
Fridays
12.00pm-1.30pm**

(No Bank Holidays)

**citizens
advice**

**West Northants
& Cherwell**



**NEXT COURSE
STARTING IN
JANUARY 25**



Reasons to volunteer for Home-Start



- 📌 Families need support more than ever
- 📌 Make a difference in your own community
- 📌 Gain valuable new skills and experience
- 📌 Ongoing support from our friendly staff team
- 📌 Full training provided
- 📌 Expenses paid

Interested? If you have parenting experience and 2-3 hours a week to spare, please get in touch to find out more!

info@home-startbanbury.org.uk

01295 266358

Applicants will be subject to a DBS check

Find out more
here



**HOME
START**

**Banbury, Bicester &
Chipping Norton**



Apple Day with Langford Community Orchard Group

Langford Community Orchard Group would like to thank everyone who attended and enjoyed Apple Day on Sunday 20th October, including Bicester Town's Mayor, Cllr Damien Maguire, and other community groups.

When the Mayor arrived, the rain was heavy and the gusts of wind strong but this passed into a dry, bright afternoon, encouraging people to visit us and watch the apple-pressing process. Some people brought their own apples to taste as fresh juice, and there were cakes and plants for sale.

There was a variety of apples to see, with questions being asked and help in identifying people's own apples. We had comments of 'we love Apple Day' and 'the fresh apple juice tastes so much better than bought'.

This year we had some additions to the orchard; we have some painted, wooden 'stepping stones' in the path of the bluebell wood and had some lovely 'animals' dotted around.

Langford Community Orchard Group meet every first and third Sunday of the month from 10.00 am if you would like to volunteer with us.

For more information email:
langfordorchardcommunity@gmail.com

Start tapping your toes to toe-tapping music

Learn to square dance in fun and friendly company to the sound of catchy music that makes you come back for more.

You will quickly learn that Tuesday evenings at St Edburg's Church Hall is the 'in' place to be. Square dancing is suitable for all ages, as well as being a healthy activity recommended by the British Medical Association as being good for the heart and mentally stimulating. It's

healthy on the pocket as well; an evening session costs just £2. Evenings start at 7.45pm. You will leave with a smile on your face.

Call Bob on **07903 164789** for more information, and make a date with the Heyford Hoofers Square Dance Club.

BEAUTY & BICESTER PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES

My name is Gong Xi (Eddy), I am Bicester's well known friendly neighbourhood cameraman, my aim is to provide you with high quality and stunning images, supported by exceptional service and speedy delivery to exceed your expectations. I offer a number of services for business and private clients:

Event Photography & Videography, Architecture & Interior Photography, Drone Photography & Videography, Promotional Video, I also sell Bicester Photobook, Calendar, Greeting Cards and original high-res photographs of Bicester.

Please contact me for a bespoke quotation to fit your business needs. My rates include local travel and unlimited images.

    BeautyandBicester@gmail.com



We take donations of clean baby, toddler and children's items from 0-12 years and distribute them to families in need.

Opening Hours

Tuesday 12pm - 2pm
Wednesday 9.30am - 11am
Friday 12pm - 2pm

Please check our Facebook page for any updates to opening hours before visiting.

Cinch Self Storage, Arkwright Road, Bicester,
Oxfordshire, OX26 4SU

info@bicesterbabybank.org.uk
<http://www.bicesterbabybank.org.uk>

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Proudly supported by



Donate via GoFundMe search 'Bicester Baby Bank'

Bicester Concert Band's Winter Concert

Bicester Concert Band were pleased to hold their annual Winter Concert at St Edburg's Church on Saturday 14th Dec with our guests: the Five Acres Primary School Choir.

A packed church were treated to some Christmas-themed music, a recorder group, and of course, some fine singing from the school choir.

Rosalind Mason (pictured), who also plays saxophone in the band, directed the school choir with enthusiasm and a smile, and brought cheers from the audience at the end of each piece. It was clear they were well prepared.

Wendy Marks had rehearsed the band well and they played some challenging pieces. She was conducting her last concert with the band and they are sad to see her go. The band played some seasonal favourites, including *Danse Perpetuo* (J.K. Nitsch), *The Clapping Song* (Standridge) and ending with *Fairytale of New York* (Finer and MacGowan) and *It's The Most Wonderful Time of the Year* (Pola and Wyle) to bring the concert to a close.

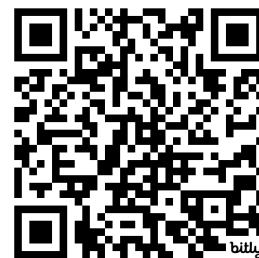
Bicester Concert Band are looking forward to entertaining Bicester in the Summer of 2025.

Any brass players who want to join us, we would make you very welcome, especially trumpet, trombone or tuba players. Please email: info@bicesterconcertband.org.uk.



Help Cygnets revamp their garden!

*Hayley and her team at Cygnets Preschool are excited to announce a new project that needs the support of our community: **Help Us Revamp Our Garden!***



Spending time in nature has countless benefits for children's development, from boosting their creativity to improving their physical and mental health. We're looking to create a magical space where our children aged between 2-4 years have daily access to quality outdoor learning, to explore nature, get their hands dirty, and to experience natural elements like foliage, rocks, insects and more.

Our children will learn how to view nature, the importance of caring for the environment and taking responsibility for our planet and the world around them. Every donation, no matter how big or small, will make a difference; a sponsor, match funding or a partnership would be amazing. Your generosity will help us upgrade our garden space by levelling out the garden, providing a wheeled toy area and raised beds, with gardening

tools and outdoor toys. We need your support to create fun and engaging spaces, enhancing our outdoor learning resources. We'll use your donations to bring in contractors, purchase equipment, artificial turf, wood, soil, plants/seeds, and other educational materials to create a beautiful and welcoming environment: Your contribution will help us transform our garden into a place where children can thrive. Join us in making a difference!

With your help, we can transform our outdoor classroom into an inspiring place for learning and exploration. Donations of any size will be gratefully received. To learn more about our project and donate, please visit our website at **bit.ly/cygnetsgofund** or scan the QR code above.

BYHP is back...

...with an inspiring story about conquering fears and overcoming obstacles, all in the name of youth homelessness.

BYHP is local charity dedicated to tackling the root causes of youth homelessness in North Oxfordshire. We work with 13-25 year olds and their families with an array of services from family mediation to mental health support. With the unprecedented rise in youth unemployment, BYHP also play a part in preventing Oxfordshire's youth from missing out on having a place in society, with a NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) program that gets young people back on their feet.

Their commitment extends beyond just providing services; they also actively engage in community and fundraising events that not only raise funds but also awareness about the cause.

Recently, BYHP's dedicated Wellbeing Practitioner Libby undertook a remarkable challenge to support our work. Libby completed the arduous Santiago de Compostela to Finisterre walk, covering a distance of 90 kilometers as part of the famed Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route. Over four days, she walked through beautiful landscapes and historic paths, each step raising vital funds for BYHP. Her incredible effort has raised over £1,700 to date, with donations still being accepted through her Localgiving page. The funds raised will directly contribute to sustaining and expanding BYHP services. Please follow our journey and support our cause through our Instagram page, where updates and links to Libby's donation page can be found.





Overcome your fear in the new year

261 Fearless Club Bicester invites you to our weekly meet run.

We meet on Thursdays at 9:30am and 6:30pm at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground, Bicester. We are a women's only, non-competitive, non-judgemental running group with a twist!

Our aim is to have fun whilst moving our bodies - how? We forget adulting for an hour and realise we can do more than we think. All abilities are welcome, and we promise you will never be last.

Come as you are and see how running can help you feel empowered in every area of your life. For more information, please email: bicester@261clubuk.co.uk or visit 261clubuk.co.uk.

We are also looking for new coaches. If you are over the age of 18 and want to give back to running, please get in touch with us to see how volunteering with 261 Club UK can enhance your sense of well-being.

EVENTS 2025



A Bicester Town Council
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the Community

8
MAY

VE DAY (80 YEARS)

12
MAY

MAYOR MAKING

27
JUN

CIVIC FLAG-RAISING DAY

28
JUN

ARMED FORCES DAY

26
JUL

OUTDOOR CINEMA

6
AUG

FAMILY FUN DAY

30
AUG

MUSIC EVENT

14
SEP

CIVIC SERVICE

9
NOV

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

29
NOV

XMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON

4-14
DEC

XMAS LIGHT TRAIL

21
DEC

SANTA FUN RUN

Please note these dates are subject to change, any updates can be found at www.bicester.gov.uk or on our Facebook page.