

Summer 2024 Newsletter from your Labour Councillors

Dear Residents,

Bracknell Forest Council has now been controlled by Labour for over a year; and what a year it has been. We have all been on a very steep learning curve but have achieved a great deal, beginning the changes that were priorities in our manifesto.

Consultation and Action

We promised to make the Council more transparent and accessible and to take the Council to the residents. We have held 12 publicized sessions to consult on the budget proposals. The responses and participation in these sessions have shown how you value the opportunity to have your voice heard.

The plans for proposals for developing the Town Centre - the library area, the bus station area, and the area of the closed, and soon to be demolished, car park in Market street - were shown for two days in Princess Square and then again in different libraries. Officers and Labour Councillors were on hand to answer residents' questions. Thank you to all who called in and who responded to the consultation. We need to hear what you support as well as your concerns.



Other Consultations, all of which reflect the priorities in our manifesto, have involved:

- ▶ the Local Transport Plan,
- ▶ the new Housing Allocation Plan,
- ▶ the proposed Economic Strategy and,
- ▶ the Youth Strategy.

The Housing Allocation Strategy is based on 'need' and not 'want'. It is fairer and more equitable and will enable larger families to be rehoused more quickly - they are presently waiting many, many years for a suitable property to become vacant.

The response to the Youth Strategy showed that young people across Bracknell Forest would welcome somewhere to go with their friends with access to a Youth Worker to improve their health and well-being. Fun projects are in hand involving young people and Youth Workers working together.

A new Youth Club for 14-16's has already opened in the Great Hollands Community Centre every Wednesday evening from 6-8pm run by the Youth Team from Berkshire Youth.

An All-Age Carers' Strategy called 'Caring for our Carers' has also been agreed, having consulted with over 1000 carers in Bracknell Forest, including children, young people and adults. Our vision is for all carers living in Bracknell Forest to be recognised, valued and supported to achieve their aspirations as well as helped in their caring role. There are many carers still not known to the council and we are very keen for them to come forward.

All your responses were read, considered and the strategies changed as a result. We are listening.

Local Planning

The 'Local Plan' which sets out where new homes, businesses and facilities can be located was passed with the support of Conservative, Green and Lib Dem councillors. This was first started 9 years ago! Our priority is to build 'affordable' houses with 'social' rent whenever we can. The new builds in Market Street reflect this.

We have approved spending £6.9m on improving and maintaining the borough's roads, pavements and cycle ways over this next year. This is £1.7m more than the previous programme. We have also allocated a further £100,000 for extra parking spaces.

Education

Improving schools and units for our children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is a priority. We do not have enough facilities for our SEND children within the borough so we have to send them to schools outside the borough and pay for the transport to get them there. We inherited this situation and spent £9m more than the government's allocated funding for their provision in this past year alone. This cannot go on and the 'Safety Valve' programme has been agreed with the government to help us try and resolve these issues. Four new facilities will be built within the borough. A new facility is being provided for September by a conversion of a building in Sandhurst School for secondary children with Social, Emotional and well-being issues. Planning permission will be sought for a new build of a similar facility on the Edgbarrow school site. The government will fund and build a primary school for autistic children in Buckler's Park. The disused school in Warfield will be rebuilt to provide the fourth such facility. We are moving as quickly as we can.

Climate & Environment

In July we held our second Climate Change Summit. This was hosted by 3M and over 140 people attended. Representatives from the NHS, schools, biodiversity groups, Faith and community groups, business and Parish/Town Councils and Bracknell Forest Council residents started to co-produce their Community Climate Emergency Strategy. Bracknell Forest, as a community, has a huge role to play in reducing carbon emissions as the Council directly contributes just 2% of emissions. The Council Strategy is being rewritten and both will have targets to reach net zero as near to 2030 as possible. We all have a part to play.



Fly-tipping, litter and waste bins are ongoing issues but we need to understand where the problems are. Please report any problems to the Council using <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/street-cleaning/litter> or call 01344 352000 or contact your councillors to help.

Policing

Thames Valley police are reappointing Community Police Officers to each of the communities. These have been sadly missed in the past few years. We value working with them in each of our wards, keeping our streets safe for all.

Keeping in Touch

We continue to hold regular surgeries in each of the wards and are always accessible by email. We are enjoying working with you and hearing your concerns and ideas. Please continue to chat to us when you see us about and keep in touch.

And finally...



We celebrate now having a Labour MP, the first ever in Bracknell, Peter Swallow.

Peter will work with us to ensure your views are represented in Westminster and help us to keep you fully informed. **He is working hard to set up his office and will advertise surgery dates as soon as possible.** Peter can be contacted directly at peter.swallow.mp@parliament.uk.

Please get in touch to share your concerns or ideas. Labour Councillors' surgery times can be found on the Labour Party website at <https://bracknell.laboursites.org/councillor-surgeries/>. Councillors can be contacted by email: firstname.lastname@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

