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Arena

Issue 131 • Winter 2025



**Our brilliant
community
of volunteers**

Christmas and new year

Bin changes and our
opening times

Pride in our towns

Making our towns clean,
safe and welcoming

Farnborough Leisure Centre

Planning application
submitted

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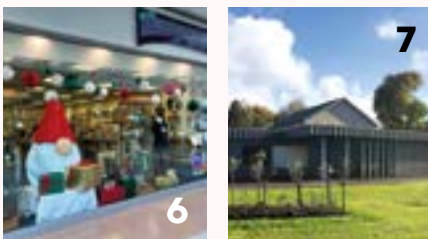
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Pride in our people

by Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of Rushmoor Borough Council

Welcome to this edition of Arena, with news from your local council and updates on how we are working to improve the lives of residents.

This month we celebrate the people who make Aldershot and Farnborough such great places to live. You can read more inside about the Community Grub Hub and wellbeing walks (p4), pond volunteers (p9), Binfluencers (p8) and Rotary (p6).

So many in our borough give up their time for others, it is hard to pick out just a few. Please consider those featured in this magazine as representatives of the far greater number who volunteer throughout the year in charities and community groups. Thank you for everything you do - you make our towns special!

Another set of unsung heroes are celebrated in the feature on Pride in Place (p 8 & 9), one of our key council priorities. We have an amazing team who work hard to keep our towns clean and safe, but they need your help. You can read about what you can do to report fly-tipping, clean up litter and do your bit to recycle.

We have more exciting news on local

facilities, with updates on the leisure centre and Union Yard (p5). We have also completed refurbishment of Aldershot Crematorium, with improved facilities which you can read about on p7.

By the time this magazine lands on your doorstep, Christmas will be upon us and there are activities to keep adults and children entertained, from Christmas fayres to carol concerts, and not forgetting the return of the Princes Hall pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk, which runs until 4 January (details on p13).

Don't forget too that you can park for free in many council car parks in the Sundays leading up to Christmas so please come along and support your local traders.

As we face a time of significant change in local councils, it is vital that we keep our local groups alive and continue to foster the spirit of community in our towns. We want to hear your views, so please get in touch in our residents survey, consultations on new councils or you can now ask a question at council meetings – see page 11 for details.

It just remains for me to wish you a wonderful Christmas and the best of health and happiness for the new year.

Gareth Williams

Arena Issue 131 - Winter 2025

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Did you know that Arena is available as a talking newspaper? Each edition is recorded

as an mp3 file and is available free. It is also available in large print. If you have any problems receiving Arena please don't hesitate to call Gill Chisnall on **01252 398 744** or email her at gill.chisnall@rushmoor.gov.uk

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nextdoor





Heroes don't always wear a cape and fight crime like they do in the Marvel universe. Some are volunteers like Steven and Christine from the Community Grub Hub, which acts as a community hub and foodbank for residents.

With a rota of more than 60 volunteers, plus a waiting list of people keen to start, the Community Grub Hub is open every Tuesday, from 10am

to 4pm, providing a donated basket of food for free for each household, from its base in Windsor Way, Aldershot.

No referrals are needed – you just need to register during your first visit, and to live in the borough. Customers can then visit each week for as long as required.

Volunteer Steven Baxendale said: "I love being here – it is the best thing I have ever done." Aldershot-born Steven, who

started volunteering when he retired, said: "It is the people that make this place special. Most visitors are so nice, and some of our volunteers are ex-customers who now want to give something back."

Volunteers mostly work in the shop, with some collecting donated food from supermarkets, and they range from students to 80-year-old Norma, who has volunteered since the hub opened four years ago.

The hub has averaged 237 visitors a week in the last year and has provided 72 tonnes of food.

No food is wasted – any surplus is given to other foodbanks in the area.

Financial donations can be made at the Community Grub Hub website, www.communitygrubhub.org

Skills can also be donated by traders willing to give expertise or free help with repairs.

New social and exercise group for Nepali residents

It can be tempting to put off exercise but that is not the case for those attending a new social and physical activity group for Nepali residents, based in Farnborough.

It has been set up to encourage older people to stay active and form friendships, as part of a campaign called Live Longer Better.

Set up with funding from Hampshire County Council and delivered by local charity Rushmoor Healthy Living (RHL), the group is for Nepali adults aged over 65 and meets on Fridays at Mayfield community centre from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

For more information: www.hants.gov.uk/socialcareandhealth/publichealth/livelongerbetter or to request a booklet, email: communitydevelopment@rushmoor.gov.uk

RHL has many low-cost classes offering opportunities for exercise and social connection and free trials if you want to give it a go first.

Health Circuit is a low impact circuit-style class at the Princes Hall, Aldershot every Thursday from 9.30am to 10.20am for anyone living with a health condition.

Chair Pilates classes are held at St Andrews Church Hall, Aldershot every Wednesday from 11.15am to 12.05pm.

To see the full timetable, go to: www.rhl.org.uk

Enjoy a walk in our lovely borough!

Getting some much-needed fresh air on a walk is good for the mind and body, especially in winter when the weather is cold, and days are short.



So why not enjoy one of our regular free wellbeing walks, which start from several locations in the borough and are designed to encourage people to keep fit, enjoy nature and make new friends.

The walks are funded by the council, led by Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS), and open to everyone, whether you are retired, a parent with a baby in a pram, someone working at home needing a break, or anyone who needs a bit of exercise during the day – just turn up and join in!

Walks start from Brickfields Country Park in Aldershot (Monday), Southwood Country Park, Farnborough (Tuesday and Thursday), St Peter's Church, Farnborough (Tuesday), Aldershot Canal and Chalk Farm Lake in Aldershot (Thursday), and Aldershot Park (Friday).

For more information and times, please see: www.rvs.org.uk/individual-support/wellbeing-walks/

Farnborough Leisure Centre planning application submitted



We were pleased to submit the planning application outlining our exciting plans for a new leisure centre in Farnborough at the end of October.

The proposals also give us a unique opportunity to rejuvenate the town centre, and we want to provide a brand-new facility that we can all be really proud of.

The new centre is set to include a 25-metre swimming pool and learner pool, along with a gym offering more than 100 fitness stations (including special power-assisted

equipment for people who are less mobile or active), studio space, a spin studio, soft play and a café.

Thank you to everyone who took part in our public consultation this summer, ahead of the planning application.

In response to your feedback, we have injected more colour and character into the designs, giving the building

more visual impact and increasing the use of glazing in the design to give a more welcoming community feel.

We've also drawn inspiration from other modern buildings in Farnborough and the town's unique connection with aviation and the Farnborough International Airshow.

To view the planning application, go to: www.rushmoor.gov.uk/farnboroughleisurecentre

The council's Development Management Committee will consider the planning application in the new year.



With more businesses being welcomed to Union Yard, we are pleased that our flagship development is heralding a new era for Aldershot town centre.

The latest to open their doors at Union Yard are BB Dog Boutique and Serenity Greetings, joining Starbucks and Shakeaway and the traders in our increasingly popular Makers' Yard. As Arena went to print, we were waiting for news on more businesses set to open.

BB Dog Boutique sells stylish harnesses, playful accessories, toys, and delicious treats for your best friends. You can also book your pups into a private doggy soft play zone –

a safe and vibrant place for them to explore (booking is a must!).

Owner Caroline Burrow said: "What I like about Union Yard is the sense of community, with the other shop owners being so supportive and welcoming. The local community have been fantastic in supporting our business – which was originally market-based - moving into retail premises!"

New arrival Serenity Greetings offers cards, gifts, party and craft supplies, pocket money toys and homemade 3D models – ideal for the festive season.

At the Makers' Yard, there's a choice of bespoke fashion from Kitschy Bits Boutique and Our Soul Clothing, expert tailoring by Perfect Fashion Design N Alterations, personalised gifts from Gifty The Gift Factory and Papillons, and Ava Violet Photography. Also check out some inspiring art and photography by local artist Xoanxo or pop into Aldershot Contemp which showcases local artists.

Union Yard was recently shortlisted in the Best Regeneration Project (for 101-500 homes) category at the Inside Housing Development Awards.

Union Yard also includes 100 contemporary apartments and 128 modern student units, helping to bring new life and footfall into the town.

For the latest, visit www.union-yard.co.uk

Experience work experience virtually

Local games developer nDreams has launched a brand-new virtual work experience, funded by the council through a grant from the UKSPF, offering a behind-the-scenes look at careers in gaming.

The free programme gives students the chance to experience roles in design, development, and production. For more information, go to www.u-explore.com/page/ndreams-vwex

The Farnborough company is also working with charity IntoGames to support Farnborough secondary schools through hands-on workshops, inspiring the next generation of game creators.

Make a local trader smile this Christmas!



As the festive season arrives again, it's a great time to explore our local businesses in Farnborough, Aldershot and North Camp.

If you're looking for something a bit different, Farnborough has The Crafters' Collective in Princes Mead,

featuring handmade products from more than 70 local makers.

Aldershot's mix of long-standing independents and high street names has been boosted this year with the opening of our Union Yard development and its first businesses. Our Makers' Yard, offering space for small independent traders, is also thriving, with all eight units occupied – see page 5.

North Camp has always enjoyed a special village feel, with a variety of independent shops to browse and cafés to relax in as part of your visit. The traders in North Camp will be organising events over Christmas and new year – go to www.visitnorthcamp.co.uk for more details.

There will also be gifts galore at our Christmas craft fayres – see page 13.

Our Christmas window competition will be back, bringing festive sparkle to shopfronts across the borough. Vote for your favourite soon at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/christmaswindow

Whether you're looking for the perfect gift, supporting local talent, or simply enjoying the seasonal atmosphere, it's a great idea to shop local and send a bit of love to our businesses!

Free festive parking

Wherever you head, we have festive parking in most of our council car parks on the three Sundays leading up to Christmas – 7, 14 and 21 December! Find out more at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/christmasparking

Christmas and new year bin changes

Your bin collections will change for three weeks over Christmas and the new year, returning to normal on 12 January.



Your normal collection day	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
w/c 22 Dec	Mon 22 Dec	Tues 23 Dec	Weds 24 Dec	Sat 27 Dec	Mon 29 Dec
w/c 29 Dec	Tues 30 Dec	Weds 31 Dec	Fri 2 Jan	Sat 3 Jan	Mon 5 Jan
w/c 5 Jan	Tues 6 Jan	Weds 7 Jan	Thurs 8 Jan	Fri 9 Jan	Sat 10 Jan

To see full details of your bin collections, please visit our website at: www.rushmoor.gov.uk/bincollections

Our Christmas and new year opening times



Our offices will be open as normal until 3pm on Christmas Eve, reopening on Monday 29 December through to Wednesday 31 December.

We will be closed on New Year's Day. On Friday 2 January, our offices will be shut, but you will be able to contact us as normal by phone or email.

You'll find a lot of our services available on our website, www.rushmoor.gov.uk. If you need to contact us in an emergency, please call us on **01252 398 399**. If our offices are closed, you will find details of how to contact our out-of-hours service.

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Rotary clubs swing into Christmas action!

Christmas floats will be out and about this festive season as their collectors bring Santa and Christmas joy to our streets!

Every year, the Rotary Clubs of Farnborough and Rushmoor raise around £30,000 between them for local charities, including through their popular Christmas floats.

From now until Christmas Eve, watch out for Santa and the musical floats on your street and in our town centres.

You can find the daily schedule on the Rushmoor and Farnborough Rotary Clubs' Facebook pages and their websites, but most of the collection routes start at 6.30pm and finish at 8.30pm.



Recycle your Christmas tree



Every year we collect real Christmas trees for recycling. The service is free and you can book your slot now!

The easiest way to book is through our website, www.rushmoor.gov.uk/christmastrees or call us on **01252 398 399** during opening hours.

Aldershot Crematorium to re-open after major refurbishment



As Arena went to print, we were busy getting Aldershot Crematorium ready to re-open after our major refurbishment project.

We've made some big improvements to modernise the building — including a new roof, better insulation, solar panels, and new windows.

We've also added a second cremator, improved accessibility for people with disabilities, and given the chapel a contemporary new look.

"We are really looking forward to welcoming everyone back," said Kelly

Chambers, our bereavement services manager.

"Christmas is always a special time of year at the crematorium, when people visit us to remember loved ones.

"Our grounds always look particularly



beautiful during the winter months.

After all the refurbishment work, we are really pleased to be bringing back our memorial Christmas tree in the Hall of Remembrance from December.

Visitors can write a special message on one of our free cards and tie it to a branch of the tree.



The grounds of Aldershot Crematorium (and also our cemeteries) will be open every day throughout the festive season, from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, and from 10am to 4pm on weekends and bank holidays.

For more information, please go to www.rushmoor.gov.uk/crematorium

Reapply for your postal vote

If you signed up to receive a postal vote more than three years ago, time is running out to confirm you want to continue using it – the deadline is 31 January.

Under changes introduced by the government, a postal

vote arrangement expires after three years, so, if it has been in place since before 30 January 2024, your postal vote will expire at the end of January.

We have had a good response to the letters and emails we have sent out asking residents to reapply for their postal votes – but a significant number are due to expire.

If you have received a letter and have not already responded and want to continue to vote by post at future elections, please let us know as soon as possible.

Please complete the application form that is included on the back of the letter and return it to our elections team – see the address on the form. Or you

can reapply anytime at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote

If you have any questions, please contact elections@rushmoor.gov.uk or call us on **01252 398 824**.

The next scheduled election in Rushmoor will be held on 7 May 2026.

Keep up to date with our latest news

You can keep up to date with our latest news by signing up to our email newsletter and we will send you regular email updates straight to your inbox.

Our emails include all the latest council news, plus details of community events to add to your diary and opportunities to have your say on local issues. Plus,

we'll send you handy bin collection reminders and the local results on election night.

To sign up, go to www.rushmoor.gov.uk/news

If you'd also prefer to receive your council tax bill straight to your inbox, go to www.rushmoor.gov.uk/ebilling to find out more and sign up. You'll need your council tax billing number which is at the top of your bill.

Taking pride in our towns

Keeping Aldershot and Farnborough clean, safe and welcoming is one of our top priorities.

Fly-tipping, dog fouling and littering not only spoil the look of our streets and parks but also damage our environment, harm wildlife and cost thousands of pounds each year to clean up. But together, this is something that we can all tackle.

Everyone has a legal duty of care to make sure rubbish is disposed of responsibly. That means if you hand your rubbish to someone who is not licensed to carry waste and it ends up being dumped, you could face a fine or prosecution. This can be as much as £1,000 for fly-tippers and £600 for duty of care offences.

Our Place Protection team investigates every report of fly-tipping and since April we have issued 56 fixed penalty notices.

Please use a licensed waste



carrier, the council's bulky waste service, the local recycling centres, or donate to a charity shop instead.

Dog poo is unpleasant, antisocial and dangerous, especially for children, as it can carry harmful parasites. Earlier this year, we launched a new

'Scoop that Poop' campaign, which includes our high visibility 'poo patrol' teams, who are out in hotspot areas.

Preventing littering in the first place is also important, which is why we support community groups, such as the Rushmoor Binfluencers

who organise regular litter picks, and engage with local schools and businesses.

Help us keep Rushmoor clean by reporting issues at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/reportit** or by calling us on **01252 398 399**.

Check the scores and eat safely this Christmas!

Avoid the unwanted gift of food poisoning this Christmas by making sure you look up the food hygiene rating of a restaurant before you eat out.

With an estimated 2.4 million cases of food poisoning in the UK each year, it makes sense not just to check out the menu if you're planning a get-together with family, friends or colleagues.

We inspect more than 400 food business in Aldershot and

Farnborough every year and rate them using the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme operated by The Food Standards Agency (FSA).

Each business receives a food hygiene rating from 'zero – urgent improvement necessary' to '5 – very good'. These are then published on the FSA website at **ratings.food.gov.uk**, where you can look before you book.

This year, our environmental health officers have cautioned several

businesses which failed to make the grade on food hygiene, and our interventions have made sure food safety remains a top priority.

* If you operate a food business in Rushmoor, there are a number of free resources you can use to tell customers about your rating in the business guidance section of the FSA website, **www.food.gov.uk**

Pond volunteers need you!



Do you love nature and have a bit of time on your hands to volunteer? If so, the Friends of King George V Pond in Farnborough would love to hear from you!

This dynamic group was formed in 2022, and after securing grants from us

and Hampshire County Council, the group set about restoring the historic pond for future generations to enjoy.

Meeting monthly to clean, tidy, and perform tasks such as planting and weeding around the pond, the volunteers are hoping to

attract community-minded people of all ages to get involved.

Volunteer and secretary of the group Clare Ray said: "From routine tasks, to emptying and cleaning the pond two years ago, the work we do is very varied.

"The pond is a vibrant ecosystem, supporting over 200 fish and visiting duck families, and provides an attractive and calming experience for all who visit. That is our aim."

To get involved, email: **friendsofkinggeorgevpnd@gmail.com**, or phone **01252 652984**.

The group raises funds from the Rushmoor Community Lottery for new plants and equipment as needed.

To help support the group and other community groups and charities, why not buy a lottery ticket? A weekly lottery ticket costs £1, with half of the money raised going to local causes. You can buy tickets on the Rushmoor Community Lottery website, **www.rushmoorlottery.co.uk**

Thank you for thinking pink!

Our new pink collection banks for recycling your small electrical items are proving to be very popular.

The banks, funded by Materials Focus, make it even easier to recycle small electrical items and old gadgets and help the environment at the same time.

The small electrical recycling banks can be found at the Tesco superstore, Aldershot Park and Ivy Road Playing Fields in Aldershot; Morrisons, Asda and Cove Green

pavilion car park in Farnborough and Peabody Road car park in North Camp.

The banks can take small electrical items, up to the size of an average microwave, so why not have a clear out of all those old cables and broken gadgets?

Residents with individual bins can also still put a small electrical item on top of their rubbish or recycling bin for collection.

For more on recycling your small electricals, go to **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/smallelectricals** and to **www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk**



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Proposals for new councils – update

As Arena went to print, we were expecting the government to launch a public consultation on potential options to restructure local councils in Hampshire.

This would create fewer, but bigger unitary councils that would provide all your services, including those run locally by Hampshire County Council and our own services.

In late September, along with other councils in Hampshire, we submitted our proposals to the government for local government reorganisation.

Our preferred option is for a new unitary council for north Hampshire, which would cover the Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane areas. This would

be one of four mainland councils, with a separate one for the Isle of Wight.

This followed wide public consultation over the summer – thanks to everyone who took part. You told us that it was important to you for decisions on local services to be made by people who understand the local area and most of you agreed you would support the changes if it helped protect council services.

We anticipate that following its own consultation, the government will decide on the future structure of councils in Hampshire early next year. There would then be shadow elections in 2027, and the new councils would come into effect in April 2028.



In preparation for the council changes, we have also been looking at whether there should be additional local arrangements put in place, such as parish (or town) councils or neighbourhood area committees. Currently, we don't have these in Rushmoor.

We ran some initial consultation this summer, which showed that there was support for extra arrangements, although there were some concerns about extra council tax charges. We have just finished a more detailed round of consultation on what these arrangements could be and will let you know the outcome as soon as we can. If we were to go ahead with parish councils, these would come into effect from next May. For the latest, visit www.rushmoor.gov.uk/communityreview

For the latest details, visit www.rushmoor.gov.uk/localgovernmentreorganisation

Take part in our residents' survey

We want to make sure that we do the right things to support our residents and communities, and you can give us your views on the services we provide by taking part in our residents' survey.

The survey runs until midnight on Sunday 7 December and is available on our website at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/currentconsultations

You can also call us on **01252 398 399** for a paper copy.

Questions at council



Following approval at a recent council meeting, you can now ask questions at the beginning of every full council meeting.

Although our council meetings have always been open to the public, there was no process for people to ask questions – now that has changed.

If you'd like to ask a question, you need to submit it to us at least four working days before the meeting. So, for example, with full council usually on a Thursday evening, the deadline would be 5pm on the previous Friday.

You can send questions to committeeservices@rushmoor.gov.uk

For more information on the scheme, please see www.rushmoor.gov.uk/questionsatcouncil

You can find all our meeting dates and agendas on our website at www.rushmoor.gov.uk/meetingscalendar



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It's time for panto – oh yes, it is!



A magical production of Jack and the Beanstalk will take to the stage at the Princes Hall this month for this year's much-anticipated Christmas panto.

When Jack sells the family cow for a handful of magic beans, he and his mum

Dame Trott end up in a mysterious land far up in the clouds and must defeat a giant to save the town.

Robert Hopkins and Donovan Christian-Cary return with a classic panto stuffed full of songs, dancing, costumes and

laughter, as well as the funniest Twelve Days of Christmas song around.

With both BSL and relaxed performances available on set dates, this production will run until 4 January.

Looking ahead to the new year, future highlights at Princes Hall include The Very Best of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, starring Peter Andre on 14 and 15 January, Madama Butterfly on 5 February, comedian Chris McCausland on 6 February, and Dinosaurs Live on 16 February.

For a full rundown of what's on and to secure your tickets, go to **www.princeshall.com** or call **01252 329155**.

Christmas events round up



Find some unique Christmas gifts or festive flourishes for your home at our Christmas craft fayre at The Landing in

Farnborough town centre on Saturday 6 December from 9am to 4pm.

On Sunday 7 December, A Winter's Gift will arrive at The Landing from midday to 4pm. Explore a magical installation of giant gift boxes, decorated by local schoolchildren, plus craft activities for families and enchanting winter stories from around the globe.

If you fancy a festive sing-a-long, the North Town carol concert takes place on

Wednesday 10 December from 6.30pm.

On Saturday 13 December, our friendly crafters will be back for the Aldershot craft fayre, setting up in the warmth of The Wellington shopping centre between 10am and 3pm.

You can also enjoy a festive evening of Carols in the Bandstand hosted by Aldershot Churches

Together at Princes Gardens on Saturday 20 December from 5.30pm.

Find out more at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/events**



Bringing snow sports to our doorsteps!



Alpine Snowsports is the perfect place to enjoy some snow sports over the Christmas holidays with skiing, snowboarding, and donutting all available for some seasonal family fun!

For full details, go to: **www.placesleisure.org** and search for Aldershot.

Christmas carol concerts

Look out from some festive performances from the Hart Male Voice Choir this Christmas.

The choir will be performing their Christmas carol concert at the Royal Garrison Church of All Saints, Aldershot on Saturday 6 December from 3pm.

You can also see them perform carols at the Royal British Legion Club, Farnborough on Friday 12

December from 8pm.

The health-related benefits of singing are well known, and the friendly group is always on the lookout for new members with many members already from Aldershot and Farnborough.

To find out more go to **www.hartmvc.org.uk**, email **joinhmv@gmail.com** or call David on **07792 754738**.



Now Selling: Apartments in Yateley Village

Exclusively for the over-60s, Gayton House offers elegant, accessible and low-maintenance living in the heart of Yateley Village. Perfect for those looking to downsize, apartments in this welcoming community are now selling. Visit our show apartment to see the difference for yourself.

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