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Arena

Issue 134 • Winter 2026



Opportunities to stay fit and active in Rushmoor

Young Adults' Employment Hub
Practical support to help 16 to 24 year-olds find work

Christmas in Rushmoor
A guide to the festive season

Farnborough Pools and Fitness
Vote for the outdoor play area you would like to see

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Continuing to address your priorities

by Cllr Gareth Williams, Leader of Rushmoor Borough Council

Welcome to the Winter edition of Arena. When I wrote my column in summer we were preparing for changes to councils in 2027. These changes have been delayed by a year and we now expect a decision from the Government by Spring 2027 on the next steps. However, we are not standing still, and the council is working hard to deliver your priorities.

Helping residents stay fit and active is high on our priority list, so I'm pleased to report that the Farnborough Pools and Fitness Centre is set to continue to take shape in 2027. See p9 where you can also find details of a consultation on the play park which will form part of the Centre.

Continuing the theme of keeping everyone active, consultation is underway for two playground refurbishments and you can find out about our award-winning snowsports centre and details of exercise and yoga classes (p8).

Recent reports have highlighted the importance of supporting young people into employment. We are building our Aldershot and Farnborough Growth Partnership to address this, and on p6 you can read about the launch of a new hub in the council offices, which will deliver tailored support to help young adults find a job.

Town centres are vital for creating pride in our borough, and we will be keeping our focus on this in 2027. We are progressing partnerships with external developers on key sites, but small changes also play their part. It is very pleasing to see The Landing in Farnborough and Union Yard in Aldershot being used for events, and Volo Lounge open in The Meads in time for Christmas. We have also been able to use temporary space in Union Yard for the Poppy appeal and now for a Santa's Grotto.

Our fantastic Aldershot Christmas Cracker and Farnborough Frost Fayre brought our community together to celebrate the start of the countdown to Christmas. On p4-5 there is all the information you need to prepare for a great local Christmas in Rushmoor. Don't forget to look up the What's On calendar on our website for more local events.

Whatever the future for Rushmoor Council, we will keep working hard to make our borough a place to be proud of in 2027, but for now I wish you and your families a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Arena Issue 134 - Winter 2026

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Cover: Visit award-winning Alpine Snowsports and experience fun winter sports in Aldershot.

Sleeping Beauty brings festive magic to Princes Hall

The Princes Hall in Aldershot is welcoming audiences back for its annual Christmas pantomime, Sleeping Beauty, running from Friday 4 December to Sunday 3 January.

Join a beautiful young princess, a wicked fairy, a dashing prince and a host of colourful characters in this enchanting tale of curses, magic and true love. With spectacular sets, fabulous costumes, brilliant music, fantastic dancers and plenty of laughs, this year's production promises to be a magical festive treat for the whole family.

The Princes Hall is committed to making theatre accessible to everyone, with relaxed performances offering a more flexible experience for audiences with additional needs. Integrated British Sign Language (BSL) performances also return for the fourth consecutive year, bringing the interpreter into the action as part of the storytelling.

Whether you're a regular panto-goer or discovering the tradition for the first time, Sleeping Beauty is guaranteed to be a pantomime full of fun, laughter and festive spirit.

Tickets are selling fast, so book now to secure the best seats and prices.



You can book online at **www.princeshall.com** or call the box office on **01252 329155**.

What's on

Here are some of the festive events happening this Christmas. To find out what else is happening, visit our What's On calendar at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/whatson.**

Free Santa's Grotto
Rushmoor Voluntary Services are running a free Santa's Grotto on weekends leading up to Christmas. Open every Saturday and Sunday from 28 November to 20 December, 11am - 3pm. Quiet hour 10am-11am. Visit Santa at 6 Union Yard, Aldershot.

Farnborough Christmas Craft Fayre
Saturday 5 December, 9am to 4pm, Queensmead.

Aldershot Christmas Craft Fayre
Inside the The Wellington shopping centre on Saturday 12 December, 10am to 3pm.

Carols in the Bandstand
Saturday 19 December
Free carol concert in Princes Gardens from 5.30pm to 6.30pm. Performers from local churches and community groups will spread Christmas cheer in a traditional evening of carols and a seasonal sing-along.

Christmas messages will be shared by representatives from local churches and there will be free cake and hot drinks from Karuna Coffee House.

The event is coordinated by Aldershot Churches Together, with funding and support from Rushmoor Borough Council.

Graphics Kara Nich/stock.adobe.com



Christmas is coming

This December, Farnborough and Rushmoor Rotary Clubs will bring festive cheer as they take their Christmas floats around the streets of Farnborough and Aldershot, collecting door to door for local charities. See details of the routes and dates on the clubs' websites and Facebook pages.

Christmas in Rushmoor

Christmas is just around the corner. Here is a practical guide to everything you need to know to get you through the festive season.

Christmas at Aldershot Crematorium



Christmas is always a special time of year at Aldershot Crematorium, when many people visit to remember loved ones.

Our popular memorial Christmas tree will be available in our Hall of Remembrance during December, and visitors can write a special message on a card and tie it to a branch of the tree.

We will be holding a special memorial service on Tuesday 15 December, please arrive from 6pm onwards with the service starting at 6.30pm. Everyone is welcome.

The grounds of Aldershot Crematorium (and also our cemeteries) will be open every day through 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**.

Christmas and New Year opening times

Our offices will be open as usual until 3pm on Christmas Eve, before closing for the Christmas break. From 29 to 31 December, our offices will be shut but you will be able to contact us as normal by phone and email.

We will be closed on New Year's Day and will reopen on Monday 4 January.

Many of our services are available online at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk**. If you need to contact us in an emergency, please call **01252 398 399**. When our offices are closed, you can also find details of how to contact our out-of-hours service online.

Christmas bin collection calendar

There will be changes to your bin collection days over Christmas and new year. See the calendar to find out when we will empty your bin or visit **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/bincollections**. Collections will return to normal w/c **11 January 2027**.

Your normal collection day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
w/c 21 December	No change	No change	No change	No change	Mon 28
w/c 28 December	Tues 29	Wed 30	Thurs 31	Sat 2	Mon 4
w/c 4 January	Tues 5	Wed 6	Thurs 7	Fri 8	Sat 9

Christmas tree recycling

Once the festive season is over, give your real Christmas tree a second life by booking a free collection for recycling.

You must book your collection in advance, so we can confirm the day your tree will be collected.

The easiest way to book is through our website at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/christmastrees** or call us on **01252 398399** during opening hours.

Last year, we collected 1,975 real Christmas trees for recycling. They were taken to a composting site in Basingstoke where they were shredded and transformed into high-quality Soil Association certified compost.

Recycle batteries safely this Christmas

With Christmas bringing new toys, gadgets and electrical gifts, remember to recycle batteries safely. Never put batteries in your rubbish or recycling bins as they can cause fires. This includes electrical items with hidden batteries such as electric toothbrushes.

You can return used batteries to shops that sell them or if you have your own individual household bin, you can place batteries in a sealed bag on top for collection.

Help for businesses

Whether you are growing a business, developing your workforce, looking for a job or building new skills, there is support available in Rushmoor.

Did you know...
For anyone starting a business or looking to grow an existing one, IncuHive provides free business support funded by Rushmoor Borough Council. Entrepreneurs can receive expert advice on funding, marketing, bookkeeping and business planning, together with tailored one-to-one mentoring designed to help their business thrive.

Did you know...
The jobs and careers pages on our website bring together links to job boards, free courses, work experience and organisations that can help people into employment. The Young Adults' Employment Hub also supports 16 to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit into training, education and work.

Did you know...
Rushmoor's town centres and events team run weekly markets, craft fayres and major community events, including Victoria Day, Armed Forces Day and Christmas celebrations. The team also supports individuals and organisations that want to deliver events of their own.

Explore these links to grow, thrive and succeed:

- **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/businesssupport**
- **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/jobhelp**

Contact the skills team: **skills@rushmoor.gov.uk** or **01252 398 399**.



Connect, Support, Help

Vision4Youth, a local charity, offers free youth social prescribing with one-to-one support for young people for up to three months. But just what is 'social prescribing'?

Designed for 11-18-year-olds, youth social prescribing is a support service offered by a link worker as an alternative to clinical medical treatment for young people experiencing isolation, anxiety or other complex social needs.

Abby Roper at Vision4Youth explains: "Young people are referred to us from someone who knows the young person and has recognised that they may benefit from extra support. The social prescriber will first meet or speak with the referrer to understand the reasons for the referral and any relevant background. They will then speak directly with the young person, giving them time and space to explain what matters to them, what they are finding difficult and what they would like to change."

Case Study
Leanne (not her real name) spent break-time at school hiding in the toilet rather than mixing with her classmates. After a few meetings with a social prescriber in a quiet area at school, Leanne found the confidence to go to the area alone and met another young person. She now has a friend she can spend her free time with.

Find out more at: **https://vision4youth.org.uk/social-prescribing**

Young Adults' Employment Hub

If you're aged 16 to 24, live in or around Aldershot and Farnborough and receive Universal Credit, you can get support from us to find employment.

Working with the Department for Work and Pensions, we can offer a range of support to help you find a job:

- Minimum of three months one-to-one support from a member of our team
- Use our Wi-Fi and computers for free
- Get support to create or update your CV and cover letters
- Meet local training providers and businesses
- Access free online and in-person courses to help boost your confidence, communication, help with anxiety and gain digital skills
- Meet your work coach and employment advisor, all under the same roof
- Signposting and help with referrals to any additional support.

Contact your work coach to get referred for support.



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What House? Awards 2025 Housebuilder of the Year

First Time Buyer Readers' Awards 2026

Weston Homes

Playground refurbishment soon to be in full swing!


Keith Lucas playground

Improvement work to Keith Lucas playground in Farnborough will be getting under way in the new year, thanks to a cash injection of £100,000 from Rushmoor Borough Council.

Investing in playgrounds is one of the priorities in our Council Delivery Plan, with the council investing £200,000 in the current year, and a further £200,000 for 2027/28.

Sites identified for renewal or refurbishment - some with equipment which is more than 25 to 30 years old - include Keith Lucas Road and Sunnybank Road playgrounds.

Work is due to begin in the new year, following consultation with residents about the type of equipment needed and the age group the playground should cater for, which will inform the new design.

Residents close to Sunnybank Road playground in Farnborough have also been consulted about equipment for their playground.

Keith Lucas and Sunnybank Road are among five playgrounds in Farnborough and Aldershot set to be refurbished or renewed over the next two years.

Work will also be carried out at Aspen Grove in Aldershot and Montgomery Road and Cumbria Court in Farnborough in 2027/28.

To find out the location of playgrounds in Rushmoor, visit **www.rushmoor.gov.uk**.


Sunnybank Road playground

Try something new at Alpine Snowsports



If you're looking for a new hobby in 2027, why not visit Alpine Snowsports Aldershot, the area's premier dry slope alpine winter sports complex?

Whether you're preparing for your next holiday or have never tried skiing or snowboarding before, there's something for all ages and abilities.

You can book a session with one of the fantastic instructors or test your skills in a solo open practice session.

As well as skiing and snowboarding, you can try donutting – a fun alternative to sledging. Family activities, birthday parties and group events are also available, making Alpine Snowsports a great place to get active, have fun and try something new.

Visit the website for more information: **www.everyoneactive.com/alpine**

Farnborough Pools and Fitness takes shape

If you have visited Farnborough recently, you will have noticed the huge progress that has been made on the site of the new Farnborough Pools and Fitness facility in the town centre.

In the autumn, we joined with partners for a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the work already completed.

On site, the main pool areas have been excavated, and work has already started on the construction of a new car park on the adjacent Pinehurst site. Completion and fit out of the building is scheduled for late 2027, and we can't wait to welcome you all.

Once complete, Farnborough Pools and Fitness will have two swimming pools, a gym, two studio spaces, a spin studio, soft play area and a café.

The main swimming pool will be 25 metres in length with six lanes which will make it suitable for recreational swimming as well as lessons and club training.





Help choose the design for the new play area

We're excited to share with you our plans for a new outdoor play area for families as part of Farnborough Pools and Fitness.

We have two fantastic designs which have been inspired by Farnborough's links with aviation, and we'd like you to help us decide which one to choose.

One design takes inspiration from the iconic control tower at Farnborough Airport with a silver spiral tube slide and a mini jet for toddlers.

The second design features a climbing frame inspired by a Blenheim Bomber, with climbing nets on the wings, cockpit controls and a control tower for toddlers.

To find out more and see the designs, go to **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/farnboroughpoolsplayarea** and get your votes into us by Friday 18 December.

Get active from the comfort of your own home

Looking to get more active in 2027? You don't need to join a gym or even leave home to improve your health and wellbeing.

Rushmoor Healthy Living offers friendly, low-cost online exercise classes, including Keep Moving Keep Fit, Pilates and Chair Pilates. Suitable for beginners, the classes can help improve fitness, flexibility, strength and balance, helping you stay independent for longer.

If you currently do less than 30 minutes of structured exercise per week, you may be eligible for a free 12-week course.

Online classes are ideal if you have limited time, transport difficulties or caring responsibilities.

To find out more, email **classes@rhl.org.uk** call **01252 957 430** or visit **www.rhl.org.uk**.

Make a fresh start with free community classes in Farnborough

Is getting more active or meeting new people one of your new year's resolutions? The Roots & Belonging community programme in Farnborough offers a welcoming way to get started, with free classes and social events for everyone.

Enjoy gentle chair yoga at 10.30am on Tuesdays, with no floor work required, or try chair exercise with weights at 2.30pm on Wednesdays, using light weights or none at all.

There are also monthly Saturday evening events, including sound baths, poetry evenings and local talks, or simply drop in for a free cuppa and a chat.

Everything is free, and everyone is welcome. Just come along or call **07401 101 163** to find out more. The programme is funded by Rushmoor Borough Council.



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SJP Approved 14/07/2026

New Volo Lounge brings fresh flavour to Farnborough

A quick morning coffee, 'just one' after work, a relaxed brunch or a tasty dinner – the new Volo Lounge in Farnborough offers a welcoming place to meet and enjoy the town centre.

From 25 November this all-day venue serves breakfast, brunch, lunch, dinner and drinks in a relaxed, family-friendly setting designed to feel like a 'home away from home'.

More than just a social venue, Volo Lounge has brought jobs and investment into the area and is part of a wider programme of improvements the council is making across Farnborough and Aldershot.

Lounge, whose venues are individually named and decorated to reflect their communities, says it has been searching for the right Farnborough site for some time, and are hopeful that this will become a popular local haunt for residents and visitors to the local area.

Volo Lounge is located at 16-18 The Meads, looking out over The Landing. You can find out more about Volo Lounge at **https://thelounges.co.uk/volo**.



New affordable homes for Aldershot



New affordable homes will be available in Aldershot town centre as part of the Union Yard regeneration scheme. Housing provider VIVID will manage 82 one and two-bedroom flats, including 47 social housing homes and 35 shared ownership homes. Close to shops, services, leisure facilities and the railway station, the homes will offer more choice for local people. Social housing will be advertised through the council's choice-based lettings scheme, while shared ownership homes will be available through VIVID.

A new Local Plan for Rushmoor

We've started preparing for a new Local Plan. It will be an important document and will explain how our area could develop in the future. It will help guide changes to our town centres, the types of workspaces needed and the services and facilities our communities need.

It will also identify sites for new homes and set out the planning policies we will use to decide whether to approve planning applications.

We recently asked residents, businesses and others with an interest in the borough to help shape our new Local Plan.

As part of our consultation in the summer, we asked what the plan should cover and how people would like to be involved as it develops.

We also met community groups and held workshops with local schools and businesses.

We received more than 180 responses. People supported helping the local economy grow and providing homes that meet local needs. They also wanted us to make the best use of land that has already been developed and bring new life to Aldershot and Farnborough town centres.

Other priorities included protecting our local heritage and environment, improving infrastructure and community facilities, and tackling climate change.

The next consultation on the Local Plan is expected to take place between February and March 2027 and will seek views on proposed plan content and the evidence that informs it.

Help your community project take flight



Have you got an idea that could make your neighbourhood greener, healthier or more welcoming? The Farnborough Airport Community Environmental Fund could help turn it into reality. Every time an aircraft takes off or lands at Farnborough Airport, the airport contributes a £2 or £5 levy to support environmental improvements in nearby communities.

Local community groups and organisations can apply for projects within 5km, or around 3 miles, of the airport. The area must be regularly affected by aircraft travelling to and from the airport, and projects should be publicly accessible so that the whole community can benefit. Proposals must also deliver an environmental improvement – perhaps through planting, cutting carbon or demonstrating practical climate action. Applications are considered monthly while funding remains available.

The fund is already making a difference. In 2025, ten projects received grants totalling £72,513, supporting community gardening, creative workshops, bike maintenance and recycling. The Source Young People's Charity received £7,500 for its V-Team recycling and employability project, supporting seven young people facing mental health and wellbeing challenges. They each volunteered between 30 and 100 hours, refurbishing 81 donated bikes: 37 were sold or offered for sale at a local charity shop and 44 were given to local people in need. All seven young people gained a Bikestart certificate of competence, and four also achieved the nationally recognised Cytech Level 1 bike maintenance qualification, opening up opportunities for paid work as bike mechanics. The project helped participants build communication and social skills, confidence and self-esteem, while giving unwanted bikes a new lease of life. Six continued volunteering at Bikestart after their initial commitment ended.

With £49,688 available for community environmental projects as of November 2026, now is the time to get your idea off the ground.

More information including the application form can be found at **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/airportfund**.

Farnborough Airport planning application

In November last year, Farnborough Airport submitted a planning application to the council to:

- Increase the number of flights arriving and leaving the airport over the weekend and on bank holidays
- Change the weight rules so that aircraft between 50 and 55 tonnes meeting specified noise standards no longer count towards the airport's annual limit for heavier aircraft
- Replace two existing planning conditions with one requiring maps of the runway-end safety zones that meet national requirements.

In May, we asked for more information to add to the application's Environmental Statement to help us understand the likely effects of the proposed development. However, the airport came back to us saying it was appealing to the Planning Inspectorate because a decision had not been made. This is known as a 'non-determination' appeal.

Now that the appeal has been submitted, the council can no longer decide the application. Planning Inspectors, appointed by the Secretary of State, will make an independent decision instead.

The appeal will be considered at a public inquiry, which is currently expected to start in May 2027. You can find more information on the council's website: **www.rushmoor.gov.uk/farnboroughairport/planningapplication**

Rushmoor's hidden gems

Looking for a unique gift, a treat with friends or something special for your home? Our borough is bursting with independent businesses offering character, creativity and a warm local welcome.

In Aldershot, enjoy coffee and waffles at VERO Coffee and Waffle, explore Ope's Stationery and Press tucked away in Makers' Yard at Union Yard, or visit the Games Shop, a community favourite since 1981, offering everything from Pokémon and Warhammer to board games.

Over in North Camp, A Few of My Favourite Things is a beautiful gift shop packed with inspiration for finding something special. In Princes Mead shopping centre in Farnborough, the Crafter's Collective showcases unique creations from more than 70 local makers, perfect for discovering something truly one-of-a-kind.

Don't forget Rushmoor's markets either! Aldershot Market runs on Thursdays and Saturdays, while Farnborough Market takes place on Tuesdays and Fridays, both from 9am to 4pm. Browse fresh produce, clothing and household essentials while meeting local traders.

Shop local, uncover hidden gems and help Rushmoor's independent businesses and communities thrive. Every purchase makes a difference!

Follow Aldershot Town Centre and Farnborough Town Centre on Facebook and Instagram.

Join the lottery family and win!



Are you part of a community group in need of a fundraising boost?

The Rushmoor Community Lottery is looking for new members and it's never too late to start your fundraising journey.

The Lottery is open to voluntary groups, sports clubs, societies, charities, or schools, and by selling just 50 tickets a week, groups can raise £1,300 a year.

As a member, you can also apply for lottery grants – helping you to get your bigger projects off the ground.

One such member is Hart & Rushmoor Young Carers who have raised over £500 from ticket sales and received grants totalling £4,997 in support of young carers aged 7-25 who care for a family member with an illness, disability, mental health condition or addiction.

"The lottery has been a wonderful source of support for us over the years, helping us provide opportunities that make a real difference to the lives of young people with caring responsibilities," says Lindsay Graham, from Hart & Rushmoor Young Carers.

"From cooking and life skills to our Young Carers Board, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Christmas activities, the funding has enabled us to offer valuable experiences and give young carers a much-needed break from their caring roles.

"We are incredibly grateful for this support and would wholeheartedly encourage other groups to get involved."

For your supporters, a weekly ticket costs just £1, with the chance to win up to £25,000 each week.

Since 2017, the lottery has raised more than £300,000 for good causes and paid out more than £65,000 in cash prizes.

To find out more go to **www.rushmoorlottery.co.uk**.



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