



For Immediate Release

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### **Try your hand at tennis for free this Easter**

People of all ages look set to enjoy improved facilities at Stratton Park tennis courts for free this Easter half-term following the scheduled reopening of outdoor sports facilities from Monday 29 March.

Over £90,000 of improvement work funded by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, the Lawn Tennis Association, Sport England and developer contributions were completed in October 2020.

This included resurfacing and repainting of the courts, improving accessibility for people with a disability, and the installation of new remote access system linked to the Lawn Tennis Association's ClubSpark online booking system. In addition, new nets, posts and new floodlighting have been installed at two of the courts.

A small fee to use the courts, with a number of pricing options to meet residents' needs, was due to be introduced from 1 April 2021 as this was a condition of the external funding for the improvements and to support ongoing maintenance costs. This includes a £25 annual household membership or £6 for a pay and play session.

However, due to the facility being closed since December due to the national COVID restrictions, the introduction of this fee will now begin on Monday 19 April to allow residents to enjoy a free game during the school half-term break.

The council is also planning to hold some free taster sessions later this year to let families try their hand and encourage more people to take up tennis.

Cabinet Member for Borough Development and Improvement Cllr Rebecca Bean said: "I am pleased that we will be able to reopen the upgraded facilities at Stratton Park tennis courts from Monday 29 March, subject to the government's roadmap continuing.

"We know that restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have been difficult for everyone and it has been hard to get out and exercise as freely as people usually would. During the pandemic and looking ahead to the borough's recovery, we have also seen how important managing our mental and physical wellbeing is so I am pleased that we have been able to help increase participation by allowing people of all ages to try their hand at tennis for free until Monday 19 April.

"Ensuring we have high quality sporting facilities and increasing participation in sport is a top priority for us and the improvements made at Stratton Park demonstrates our continued commitment. Later in the year, when it is safe to do so, we will also be offering free tennis taster sessions to encourage more take-up of tennis locally."

**ENDS**

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