

Parish Council Report for period up to 15 November 2018
Cllr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Mortimer Ward) and
Cllrs Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin (West Berkshire Council, Burghfield Ward)

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

The next scheduled meeting of Council is on 6 December.

Budget

Overview

Further to details of budget pressures in previous monthly reports, particularly in relation to care services (and even more specifically in relation to Adult Social Care), it is noteworthy to understand the changing priorities for the WBC budget between care services and non-care. Even more stark is the change over the same period in the sources of core funding of services between government grants and council tax/retained business rates (and see Graham Jones' comments below):

- In 2014/15 the split was 44%/56% care/non-care, but by 2018/19 this had become 53%/47%.
- In 2014/15 the split was 21%/79% government/local funding. By 2018/19 this was 3%/97%.

In relation to Adult Social Care there have been two recent funding announcements from Government. First, the £240m in-year (2018/19) Adult Social Care winter pressure funding for DTOC (delayed transfers of care, or "bed blocking") has produced just over £500k for WBC. Second, the £650m Social Care funding for 2019/20 announced in the Budget is comprised of a further £240m for DTOC, plus £410m for social care generally – we understand that this produces another £500k for DTOC and £855k for adult and children social care.

WBC's budget consultation has begun so that it can conclude before Xmas (see below), but the main budget driver will be the Government's local authority financial settlement which won't be announced until 6 December.

Consultation

On Monday (12 November), WBC began a six-week budget consultation on budget proposals affecting some frontline services. Details can be found at www.westberks.gov.uk/budgetproposal with the consultation open until Sunday 23 December.

The proposals being consulted upon are designed to deliver budget reductions of £295k through reducing spending or increasing charges. The proposals include a reduction in spending on the Adult Substance Misuse Programme and Get Berkshire Active and the introduction of charges for advice on planning and transport policy.

Cllr Graham Jones, the WBC Leader, has commented: *"Every year our communities are asking more from the services we provide but we are receiving less money to deliver those services. To give some context to this, a grant worth £24m from the Government to us six years ago has been phased out while we have seen a significant increase in demand for adult social care. I'm proud of our track record supporting vulnerable residents not only when they are elderly but throughout their lives. It's the right thing to do and makes a real difference to them and their families."*

“However, changes to funding and demand mean we are continually having to look at what we do and how we do it. Next year we will again have to find ways to save money or generate income if the Council is to live within its means. Most of this will come from within the organisation but inevitably some will affect frontline services. I hope residents will look at our proposals for the year ahead and have their say before we sit down and make our decisions in the new year.”

West Berkshire Local Plan Review (LPR) to 2036

WBC is reviewing its Local Plan to cover the period up to 2036. Between February and March 2018 comments were invited on the proposed scope and content of the Review. The comments and suggestions received are summarised in a Scoping Report Consultation Statement and will be taken forward in the development of the spatial strategy and both strategic and local policies as appropriate.

A second six-week round of consultation began on 9 November and will conclude at 16:30 on 21 December. This consultation takes into account revised national policy (as set out in the new National Planning Policy Framework that was published in July) and the revisions made to parts of the national Planning Practice Guidance. Comments are sought on the vision for the LPR; a revision of the existing spatial areas; the methodology for reviewing the existing settlement hierarchy; the criteria for the settlement boundary review; and an update of the assessment of existing Local Plan policies.

This latest consultation will be followed up with another in the summer of 2019 with the publication of the assessments of sites that have been submitted to WBC as part of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The easiest way of responding is via the consultation portal: <http://consult.westberks.gov.uk/portal> and completed representation forms can be returned by email to planningpolicy@westberks.gov.uk (and questions to the same email address).

Waste Service

Subscriptions to Green Waste service

The latest numbers are that over 26,000 households have signed up for the annual green waste service. The income target has been met, but as we said last month the more income we can achieve from this scheme so as to offset some of the budget pressures the better.

Removal of unwanted Green Bins

WBC will be arranging collection of unwanted green bins over the next few months and residents who do not wish to subscribe to the garden waste service or use their green bin to recycle food waste (or, eg, as a water butt, wormery or composter) can request removal via www.westberks.gov.uk/unwantedgreenbin.

Plastic recycling

Over the past few weeks some councils have reduced the collection of plastics due to the rising costs of recycling the materials and the lack of a market for the plastic. In West Berkshire only plastic bottles can be recycled – this is one of the most common types of plastic waste and can be recycled in kerbside collections or (eg) at Padworth. Plastic bottles are made from high quality plastic and are easy to recycle into new products. The market for this plastic remains strong across the globe – West Berkshire’s plastic is recycled here in the UK. There are no plans to change which types of plastic we recycle.

Plastic tubs and trays are not recycled in West Berkshire because they are made from lower-grade plastics. There are limited recycling options and there is very limited demand for the recycled material. These items

should be put into the black bin – this type of waste is sent to an Energy from Waste facility where it will be turned into power for the National Grid.

West Berkshire Lottery

A new West Berkshire Lottery will be launched next year to benefit good causes across the district. Tickets will cost £1, with 60p going to charities, voluntary organisations and good causes across West Berkshire, and the balance paying for prizes and operating costs. The draw will be weekly, with a jackpot of £25,000 for a matching sequence of six numbers, plus other prizes.

West Berkshire good causes will be able to set up their own lottery page, and will receive 50p in every pound spent by players using this method, with a further 10p in every pound going into a general West Berkshire good causes fund. Players who do not wish to support a specific cause can still take part, with 60p of their ticket price going into the general good causes fund. The general good causes fund will be distributed by West Berkshire Council.

Good causes are invited to two information events to find out more about the lottery, how it works and how they will benefit from being involved. The events are on Wednesday 28 November at 14:00 and 18:00 at the council offices in Newbury - spaces are limited and should be booked online in advance: <http://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/1PSuCYvxXC08Kmh00j0J?domain=track.vuelio.uk.com>.

NHS Integrated Care System (ICS)

Graham recently attended a Berkshire West ICS public discovery session – the aim was to improve public and community involvement in the local integrated care system and to test and develop this approach to public involvement. It was a useful meeting and highlighted the joined up thinking currently underway – for example a reduction in waiting times for patients suffering from high levels of pain for a specialist appointment from nine months to one – good for the patient and saving the NHS more than £200k a year.

Support With Confidence and CareMatch

In his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Adult Social care, Graham recently attended a meeting at WBC to promote these schemes across the district (and handed out some certificates to those qualifying for Support With Confidence).

Support with Confidence provides a list of approved care and support services in conjunction with Adult Social Care across West Berkshire – a Trusted Trader type kitemark offering professional carers who sign up e-learning and training; new client referrals; support with professional documents; networking opportunities with other carers; and a listing on the West Berkshire Council website. Those passing the qualification tests join a list of approved care and support services that have been vetted on the grounds of quality, safety and training.

CareMatch is a private scheme that WBC is endorsing and offers a sort of Uber platform for professional carers, linking them with clients through a hub system which means less travel and more support.

Businesses in West Berkshire

WBC is promoting the Thames Valley LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) Growth Hub – offering a specialised, fully-funded service offering tailored business support to small and medium businesses around Berkshire.

For more information visit <https://www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk/>.

Fracking

Since this has been in the news we thought it might be of use to note that fracking is geologically impossible in West Berkshire due to fact that that it is a chalk and gravel area, and fracking is undertaken in areas where there is shale.

Winter Service Plan

WBC has activated its Winter Service Plan and is ready to grit key routes whenever road temperatures are forecast to fall below zero. There is 1,500 tonnes of rock salt to hand at the Chieveley Depot with a further 1,000 tonnes on standby.

Primary routes (40% of the district's almost 800 miles of road) are gritted whenever ice or a frost is forecast. These routes include all A and B roads and some strategically important C roads. Secondary routes (20%) are gritted once sub-zero temperatures are experienced through a continuous period of 72 hours.

There are also 480 roadside salt bins to help keep the road network and council offices and public buildings accessible. Of these, 31 are owned and maintained by West Berkshire Council and 449 by the Parish or Town Councils.

Local Matters

AWE

Health & Safety Prosecution

A major issue discussed at the recent Local Liaison Committee meeting that Graham attended was the Health & Safety prosecution of AWE for a breach resulting in an electrical burn to an operative's forearm, reported in the press last week. AWE had pleaded guilty to the offence and were awaiting sentencing. The sentence since handed down is a fine of £1m.

Meeting regarding future development of Burghfield site.

Further to references in previous reports we got a date organised (and Graham and Ian announced it to various parish councils), but then discovered it clashed with a Burghfield Neighbourhood Development Plan meeting! We will get a date sorted and let everyone know as soon as possible.

Donation to St John's Infant school in Mortimer.

Please see further below under Mortimer.

Mortimer Station

Jeanette Clifford, the WBC Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, Environment and Countryside, has written to Great Western Railway today (15 November) to support a bid for Access for All Funding for the station.

As Jeanette says in her letter "*Mortimer's rail links are of great importance to the local community and the demand for access to rail services is continuing to increase. The Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan includes a project to increase the car parking at the station demonstrating the key role that the station plays and the willingness within the local community to work to make improvements to this*

valuable asset. Currently the station is not accessible which limits its ability to effectively serve all in the local area. Accessibility audits have been carried out for Mortimer Station and it would be of real benefit if Access for All Funding enabled the work identified to be carried out”.

Burghfield and Mortimer Neighbourhood Action Group

There were various issues discussed at the meeting yesterday (14 November) including the regular topics of local crime, speeding and traveller encroachment. Particular items for discussion in addition were concerns about knife crime and drugs raised by students at The Willink with one of the local PCSOs who has been engaging with them, and possible bids to encourage the use of Smartwater identification of property (Smartwater is a hidden, unique, identifier so that stolen property can be identified as stolen and returned to its owner – it also gives a method for second hand shops, etc, to identify goods offered for sale as stolen).

There was also a wide-ranging discussion about the role of the NAG, publicising its activities, furthering police/parish engagement, etc – this will be an ongoing topic.

Ian has been talking to the Chairman of the NAG along with other local stakeholders, Schools, Police, WBC about hosting events that engage the wider community. One of the options in discussion is to host a NAG meeting at a local School engaging parents and pupils in the answers - more information to follow.

Parishes

Burghfield

Theale Lakes planning appeal

The appeal (nb, not Burghfield Sailing Club, which is ongoing) was turned down by the planning inspector, in the main due to adequate housing numbers in the West Berkshire area, with WBC's five year land supply (ie housing number) being judged as adequate.

Burghfield Park

Ian is continuing to discuss ongoing issues with the Developer, in particular with relation to deliveries and the mud that is being deposited on the road as the weather deteriorates.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Work continues on the NDP and we expect to see an update on progress and a questionnaire being published in the early part of 2019

Padworth

The Old Rectory

The application for a premises licence is out for comment (and presumably there will be a planning application in due course for change of use given that the premises appear to be currently classed as domestic).

Fallows Area

There are clearly some issues regarding the frequency and timing of grass cutting and Graham has been involved in various emails. Hopefully, things will bottom out now that the new contractor has been engaged.

Stratfield Mortimer

AWE funding to St John's Infant School

A member of staff at the school approached Graham to see if he could put them in touch with the AWE Charity Fund regarding their Eco Warrior project to compost all food waste on site.

The school had raised some funds and had also secured match funding from Greenham Common Trust's Good Exchange. This meant that they needed £1,015 to complete the project and Graham was very pleased to see that the AWE Charity Fund agreed to donate that amount so that the school could purchase the new equipment.

Birch Lane

A full response is awaited from WBC Planning regarding resident's concerns in relation to encroachment from Fairfield Park.

The Street/Station Road

In the not too distant future two areas of remedial work will be undertaken in relation to the recent resurfacing – these are being paid for by the asphalt supplier as there were problems with their batching plant and the material was not to their specification. There will be no cost to WBC.

One thing that has held the work up was a concern expressed by a resident that there was excess speed at the mini roundabout and that it should be domed. Graham queried this and a speed survey has been undertaken (on all three approaches). This has shown that "the average speeds after the resurfacing are low with only a couple of vehicles exceeding the limit either late at night or very early in the morning", so things will stay as they are.

Graham Bridgman, Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin

15 November 2018