



WBC Parish Report for July 2022

CLlr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Burghfield and Mortimer Ward)

West Berkshire Council

Council

There was no meeting this month. The next scheduled meeting is on 6 October.

Executive

The Executive met on 7 July and, as well as dealing with public and Members' questions, we:

- resolved that the Adult Social Care Strategy be adopted and published;
- agreed to award the contract for expansion works at the Downlands Sports Centre;
- agreed to award the contract for Phase 4 Main Works of The Castle at Theale Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH)/Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Secondary Provision project;
- approved the disbanding of Covid-19 recovery work and to move any outstanding work into 'business as usual' or to form part of the Council Strategy 2023-27; and
- noted the 2021/22 Performance Report for Q4.

Papers and a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The next scheduled meeting is on 22 September.

Community and Leisure

Summer Fun 2022 Guide



In time for the school holidays, WBC has published its annual on-line guide to summer activities – [here](#).

The guide is perfect for families looking for activities to do when term ends. From woodland walks to story times, from open air theatre to brushing up on cycling skills, there's something for everyone.

Perhaps of particular note is that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will be running again for four weeks, providing free enjoyable activities and nutritious meals for primary and secondary school aged children (4-16) who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals.

The sessions will include a variety of fun and enriching physical activities, including sports, music, arts and other exciting opportunities to learn and develop skills, alongside a free nutritious meal each day. Nutritional resources and learning will also be made available to children attending the sessions.

Surge in demand for library services

West Berkshire Libraries are enjoying a surge in demand - over the past three months:

- there have been over 60,000 visits to WBC libraries - an 86% increase on the first quarter of last year;
- almost 150,000 items were borrowed - an increase of 20,000 or 15% on pre-pandemic figures.

The most borrowed book

Did you know that the most-borrowed library book last year was *The Thursday Murder Club* by Richard Osman?

Copies of this and many other titles are available to borrow in print (hardback and paperback), audio (CD) and e-book formats.



Funding for new pitch in Hungerford

WBC have announced a £75k contribution to help build a new football pitch at John O'Gaunt School.

The existing artificial grass pitch is at the end of its life and, if the bid is successful, the playing area will be increased to a full size football pitch, and changed to a 3G surface, enabling match play to take place on it.

The new pitch will help deliver the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy as well as the Local Football Facility Plan which has been produced by the Football Foundation and Berks and Bucks Football Association.

The total cost of the project is expected to be around £600,000. Greenham Trust is match-funding WBC's contribution and Hungerford Town Football Club is fundraising. It is hoped that a strong bid to the Football Foundation will secure the remainder of the funding.

The joint bid is being made by the Council, John O'Gaunt School, Hungerford Town Council, Hungerford Town Football Club, the Football Foundation and Greenham Trust.

New free audio guides for Shaw House

With over 400 years of history, Shaw House, just north of Newbury town centre, has many tales to tell.

New, free, audio guide handsets and headphones are available from reception during public opening hours, subject to availability. With these new guides, visitors can listen to stories of the people that lived at Shaw House, the royal visitors, the requisitioning of the House during the Second World War, and the hustle and bustle of the school years.

Visitors can also purchase a full colour printed guide to the House to take home as a souvenir.

Entry to the House is free, but donations are welcomed.



Theatre at Shaw House



On Wednesday 17 August (gates open at 17:00, performance at 18:00), Immersion Theatre will be presenting their brand-new musical adaptation of the classic fairy tale *Rapunzel* at Shaw House.

Suitable for ages four and over (Adults £13, Children £9), the production promises to be a fast-paced and larger-than-life show, with heaps of

audience interaction, a host of catchy songs, unforgettable characters (and the odd water gun or two!).

Book online at www.westberkshireheritage.org/whats-on.

Sculpture Show at Shaw House

The popular Open Air Sculpture Exhibition 'Altered States' has returned to Shaw House and will run until 25 September (free entry, 11:00 to 16:00 each day, except for 20/21 August when the exhibition will be closed for a private event).

The Orangery Lawn will be transformed into a sculpture trail where visitors can discover artworks by acclaimed sculptors in the grounds of this lovely historic setting, and all works on display will be available for purchase.



For more information about the exhibiting artists please visit www.alteredstatessculptures.co.uk

Parks among the UK's best



Two local parks have been awarded Green Flag Awards - an international accolade recognising well-managed parks and green spaces.

Northcroft and Goldwell Parks in Newbury received a Green Flag alongside Linear Park in Calcot. The parks are all managed by West Berkshire Council with the support of local volunteer groups.

After two years that have seen parks and green spaces play a vital role for people through lockdowns as a place to relax, exercise and meet friends and family safely, the news of the two Green Flag Awards is testament to the hard work and dedication of the team and the volunteers that make these green spaces great places that everyone can enjoy.

Education

Castle@Theale project taking shape

Construction of a new provision for secondary aged children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs at the site of the old Theale Primary School is well underway.



The new centre will take its first cohort of 12 children in September 2022 and will eventually accommodate 42 children. The multi-million pound project is a significant investment which will provide a boost in facilities for pupils with special educational needs.

Demolition and site clearance has already taken place on site and work is now underway to establish a new multi-use games area and car park. In addition, planned refurbishment of a modular building has nearly been completed. Further work is planned to refurbish the main school site, old school house and to build a new horticulture and design technology block for pupils.

School runners-up in conservation award

Children at Curridge Primary School are delighted to have been awarded second place in the Dorothy Morley Conservation Award and to scoop a £500 prize.



Across the school, children have been busy throughout the year with their 'Grow' project. They've planted wildlife friendly gardens, planted, cared for and harvested vegetables, flowers and herbs for cooking, and written letters to 10 Downing Street about climate change offering their ideas to improve the environment for everyone.

Open to all Berkshire Schools, the Dorothy Morley Conservation Award offers prizes of £1,000 and £500 for the two best school projects that promote environmental conservation in its widest sense.

iCollege site set for £2m revamp

A brand new learning centre will be built on the iCollege site in Calcot as part of the investment in alternative education provision.

The new £2m building will provide a modern, purpose-built, space for pupils who find it difficult to access mainstream education (the current facility is too small and no longer suitable for delivering the full curriculum).

The redevelopment of the Calcot site comes soon after its recent Ofsted inspection, which rated it 'Good' for overall effectiveness. It was found to be 'Good' across the board including the quality of education, leadership and management, and behaviour and attitudes.



Building work is due to begin in September and last for the full 2022/23 academic year. Whilst the work is carried out staff and students currently based at the Calcot site will temporarily relocate to the former infant school in Thatcham. The bespoke nature of iCollege teaching means there will only be a maximum of 12 students on site at any one time. West Berkshire Council is working with iCollege and the Parsons Down Partnership of Schools (who will be adjacent to iCollege) to manage the move and ensure it goes smoothly for pupils, parents, school staff and the wider community.

Health and Wellbeing

Public Spaces Protection Order for Thatcham Town Centre

Thames Valley Police asked WBC to consider introducing a PSPO for the centre of Thatcham, as a result of which the Council undertook a public consultation, with people who live, visit or work in the area taking part and answering questions on anti-social behaviour.

84.67% of respondents supported the proposed anti-social behaviour restriction and WBC has now formally granted the application.

The restriction is preventative - if people are asked to stop their behaviour by a Police Officer or Police Community Support Officer they must do so. If they don't comply, they will be committing a criminal offence which could result in a fixed penalty notice of up to £100, or a fine of up to £1,000 if they are prosecuted and convicted.

2021 Census

Initial data from the 2021 Census is beginning to flow through.

See [here](#) for details of population changes in the district (and nationally) over the last ten years.

The West Berkshire usual resident population is now 161,400 – a 4.9% increase since 2011, but lower than the increases for South East (7.5%) or for England (6.6%).

The usual resident population by sex is female 50.6% (81,700) and male 49.4% (79,700), and by age is 0-19 23% (37,700), 20-64 57% (92,100) and 65+ 20% (31,600). For comparison, for England 18.4% are 65 and over.

Our population density is 229 residents per square kilometre (England average = 434) and we have 66,700 households with at least one usual resident.

Within these numbers, the age profile comparison to 2011 makes stark reading. Over the last ten years, our 0-15 population has decreased by 1.4% (cf 5% increase for England); 15-64 has remained static (3.6% increase for England); whilst our 65+ population has increased by 33.8% (20.1% increase for England) – West Berkshire has an increasingly ageing population with all that means for social care spending.

Environment

New Mini Waste Recycling Centres

Two new MWRCs – one in Theale (at the north end of the High Street, replacing the existing smaller site) and one in East Garston (in the Queens Arms overflow car park) – are opening, with a third planned to come on stream soon.

All of them will include large containers for plastic pots, tubs and trays, as well as smaller ones for waste electrical items and lined cardboard (Tetra Pak, Pringles tubes etc), and the longer-established collections of paper, cardboard and textiles.

So far, residents have recycled over 29 tonnes of plastic from the District's MWRCs – a small contribution in terms of the overall amount of recycling, but a visible and practical way for people to contribute to building the circular economy and reducing waste.

Current Consultations

- [School Streets Schemes – the Calcot Schools](#) – closes 30 September 2022;
- [Draft Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2022-2027](#) - closes 4 October 2022;

- [Phase Two of the Community Governance Review for Greenham Parish 2022](#) - closes 9 September 2022;
- [Need Help with Numeracy?](#) - extended until 30 September 2022.

Parish Matters

Burghfield

Library refurbishment

The Library will be closed from Monday 10 to Friday 14 October inclusive for preparatory work (moving all the books), followed by redecoration. During this time no books borrowed from the library will be due for return.

Planning appeal – 5 Regis Manor Road

I note the Planning Inspectors dismissal of this appeal, due to the proximity of the proposal to The Hollies (18m – WBC’s policy requiring a minimum separation distance of 21m) – *“I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect upon the living conditions of the occupiers of the appeal property and the neighbouring property at The Hollies with particular regard to privacy”*.

Café application

An interesting Eastern Area Planning Committee meeting! Having called the application in to committee if officers recommended refusal (which they did), the debate regarding the DEPZ brought out the issues that I hoped it would. Let’s see what transpires vis-a-vis the ONR...

Stratfield Mortimer

Windmill Court

Having deliberately abstained from any votes at the last SMPC meeting regarding actions to be taken vis-à-vis WBC (because, of course, I am a member of the WBC Executive so I cannot be seen to be pre-determined on anything that I might subsequently need to vote upon), I have nevertheless continued to take part in discussions – having arranged a meeting between residents, parish councillors and the WBC Portfolio Holder for Housing, and having continued to speak to Sovereign.

I am hopeful that there can be movement from Sovereign so that we can address both the needs of the current residents, and the question of future housing provision for the village – time will tell.

Wokefield

‘Land adjoining James Lane’ planning appeal

I have made a submission regarding the appeal against refusal to build a house on this site highlighting (a) that (in my opinion) this isn’t infill or within a cluster (and so should be refused as failing to comply with WBC policy C1), and (b) the explicit ONR objection.



Graham Bridgman

Council Member for Burghfield and Mortimer

Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing

4 August 2022