



WBC Parish Report for September 2022

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

HM Queen Elizabeth II

Residents across West Berkshire paid tribute to Her Majesty the Queen following the announcement of her death, and protocols involving WBC were triggered. A huge amount of work was undertaken by Council staff in coordinating and facilitating the local response.

Tributes

Floral tributes to Her Majesty were placed outside Newbury Town Hall in Market Place, Newbury. Books of Condolence were opened at multiple locations across the district and these will be kept by the Council and copies shared with the Royal Household.



Proclamation of King Charles III

Joan and I attended the official announcement for West Berkshire of the new King on Sunday 11 September in Market Place, Newbury.

The proclamation was read by the WBC Chairman, Cllr Rick Jones.

Also participating in the event were Mr Paul Dick OBE JP DL, a Deputy Lieutenant of Berkshire and Cllr Gary Norman, the Mayor of Newbury.

Members of the public and local dignitaries (apparently I'm a local dignitary) attended the reading, which can be seen on the WBC [YouTube](#) channel.



West Berkshire Council

Council

There was no meeting this month. The next meeting is on Thursday (6 October).

Executive

The Executive met on 22 September and, as well as dealing with public and Councillors' questions, dealt with the following and other matters:

- Approved the proposed re-profiling of £4.2m of future capital expenditure from financial year 2022/23 into 2023/24.

- Noted a forecast of a £4.6m revenue overspend, after taking account of provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of budget setting (without this provision, the forecast would be an over spend of £8.1m).
- Approved the Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan (2021-2026).
- Approved the introduction of a scheme designed to help the taxi trade go greener, with up to 100% of certain taxi licensing fees for electric and hybrid vehicles being waived for three years from 1 April 2023.
- Decided that the Adult Social Care (ASC) Service does not progress with the proposed closure of the Notrees care home, but continues to operate the service while further work is undertaken. This will include re-starting permanent admissions.

As well as the business above, Nick Carter and Danusia Morsley presented the Windmill Court petition to the Executive and spoke about it (see more under Parishes below).

Papers and a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#) and the next meeting is scheduled for 3 November.

Cost of Living

Signposting assistance

With the cost of living increasing, HM Government's new Help for Households website brings together 41 support schemes so that people can access all the help available in one place: helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/.

WBC are also on hand to help and have created a West Berkshire version that will make it easier to source local support: westberks.gov.uk/cost-of-living.

Cost of Living Fund

WBC have launched a new Emergency Cost of Living Crisis Fund to help charities support those affected by increases in energy prices and inflation.

The fund, which has been set up in partnership with Greenham Trust, will mean additional help is available to frontline charities supporting residents who are struggling to pay for food and daily costs as energy bills and inflation rise.

Greenham Trust and West Berkshire Council have pledged £50k each in 1:1 match funding, anticipating that with public support a further £100k can be raised for charities to provide emergency assistance to disadvantaged families and individuals.

Charities that provide emergency food support and debt and cost of living crisis management support in West Berkshire are invited to apply for the funding via The Good Exchange. Residents are encouraged to make donations to the fund online [here](#).



£100,000

Emergency Cost of Living Crisis Fund



- ✓ Open to charities and voluntary organisations
- ✓ Helping charities to help those in need this winter
- ✓ Donations will be match-funded

Cost of living support for pensioners through Household Support Fund

WBC is also allocating £200k to four local charities to help pensioners with the significantly rising costs of living.

Available via the Household Support Fund, which is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), this funding forms part of a bigger grant of £694k received during the pandemic to support vulnerable households most in need of help with rising living costs and free school meal vouchers (with pensioners among those likely to be most affected, some of the grant stipulates that money needs to be set aside specifically for residents of pensionable age).

To help provide this assistance, £50k is being allocated to each local charity: Greenham Trust, Age UK Berkshire, Age Concern and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. It will help them provide additional support to pensioners, including both new and existing users of those services who these organisations either already work with or those accessing their services for the first time.

More information is available [here](#).

Economy

Funding for Community Group Projects

A third round of grants for local infrastructure projects is now open. Since 2021, WBC have put aside £1.5m of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money (a charge received from new developments) to go towards community projects.

This fund supports a wide range of projects and, as in previous rounds, it will help local community groups to play an active role in shaping the future of the District and enable projects that communities want and need.

To date, almost £1m in community grants ranging from £10k to £100k have been approved. Successful bids included the renovation of village halls, scout huts and improvements to sports and playground facilities.

Find out more [here](#).

Economic Development Strategy Refresh

An annual review of WBC's Economic Development Strategy Refresh has showcased the achievements over the past year.

The review looked at the progress in delivering the strategy, achievements so far, and some of the feedback received from local businesses. It also set out what WBC has done to respond to external factors, such as the pandemic.

Some of the key achievements highlighted in the review include:

- Distribution of £6.4m of Covid support grants to local businesses
- Setting a new way forward for the redevelopment of the London Road Industrial Estate
- Delivering a Masterplan for Newbury town centre with similar work on the way for both Thatcham and Hungerford
- Targeted support for employment and skills through the Kickstart scheme and Rebel Business School
- Enhancing our engagement with local businesses and delivering a Business West Berkshire website.

The commitment to being 'Open for Business' remains, with a busy programme of activity through to May 2023 when the Strategy's priorities will be reviewed to ensure WBC continue to support and grow the local economy.

Environment

Ash Dieback



Ash dieback is prevalent across most of West Berkshire.

With nearly 10,000 ash trees across the district, an annual summer survey is carried out to monitor the Ash population, and where trees are identified as needing work this is then carried out.

If you are concerned about an Ash tree or group of trees please contact WBC.

Kerbside Food Waste

A reminder that kerbside food waste collections will start from 31 October (and for residents with communal bins from 28 November).

A [video](#) has been made showing how to use the new food waste collection.



Naming our new Food Waste Vehicles

Primary school pupils across West Berkshire are being asked to help name the new food waste collection vehicles. Eight new vehicles will be joining the fleet ready for the new separate weekly collection of food waste, which starts (see above) from Monday 31 October.

The competition is being run through schools - and it is hoped there will be some fun suggestions to put a smile on residents' faces as they venture out across the district. Book tokens and family swim passes are up for grabs for the schools and pupils who submit winning entries.

Details of the competition and how to enter have been emailed directly to all primary schools within West Berkshire.

Community

Over 3,000 children take Summer Reading Challenge in West Berkshire

The theme was 'Gadgeteers', a celebration of creative thinking and teamwork, developed by national charity The Reading Agency in partnership with the Science Museum Group.



2,969 children visited a West Berkshire library to take part in the challenge to read six books over the summer holidays, while over 200 more joined in digitally via the SRC website. All children who completed their challenge received a certificate and medal to celebrate their achievement.

421 pre-school children also took part in a Mini Challenge and 751 people took the Grown-Ups2! challenge. Those who completed the grown-ups challenge were entered into a prize draw to win a Wi-Fi tablet. This year's winner was John Brook, who completed his challenge at Pangbourne Library.

National Inclusion Week

Leader of the Council, Cllr Lynne Doherty, has written a blog around National Inclusion Week which has been published online [here](#).

Lynne said: "As an organisation I believe that West Berkshire Council has taken many positive steps to make all people feel warmly welcomed into it. Over recent years it has focused on those who may feel marginalized or excluded."



Current Consultations

[Proposed Development of a SEMH Unit for 12 Children at Kennet Valley School](#): closes 31 October 2022

[Lawrence's Lane, Thatcham / Cold Ash – Prohibition of Motor Vehicles \(Experimental Order\)](#): closes 19 January 2023

[Station Road, Newbury - Prohibition of Motor Vehicles \(Experimental Order\)](#): closes 22 February 2023

Parish Matters

New Round of Members' Community Bids

A new round of Members' Bids has been announced, but with a maximum grant size of £3k per WBC Member. If anyone is interested in my making a bid for a local project, please contact me for more details. I will put a personal deadline for the end of October for ideas, so as to leave enough time to complete the bidding process by the deadline (25 November).

Burghfield

Café application

I have been acting as a go-between for BPC and have finally managed to get Emergency Planning to make contact regarding the site-specific emergency plan (but, allowances must be given because they bore the brunt of putting Operation London Bridge into operation upon the death of Her Majesty, and have been extremely busy to put it mildly).

Library refurbishment - reminder

Another reminder that the Library will be closed from Monday 10 to Friday 14 October inclusive for preparatory work (moving all the books), followed by redecoration, and that during this period no books borrowed from the library will be due for return.

Stratfield Mortimer

Windmill Court

As mentioned above, the petition was presented to the WBC Executive on 22 September.

I am hoping that the conversations we are having with Sovereign mean that many of the issues raised will be resolved before the Executive comes to consider the petition.

Sovereign Properties

The conversations we've been having with Sovereign about Windmill Court have meant that when I was approached recently by the neighbour of a Sovereign property with concerns about that property, I was able to pass those concerns on to my contacts, such that action took place later the same day, much to the delight of the neighbour.

The Street Footway

WBC Highways have told us (Cllr Morsley and me) that further work to improve the pavement from The Berries mini-roundabout to the pedestrian crossing after Kiln Lane will be carried out during the October half term (w/c 24 October).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Graham Bridgman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Graham Bridgman

Council Member for Burghfield and Mortimer

Deputy Leader of Council and Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing

3 October 2022