



WBC Parish Report for January 2023

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

West Berkshire Council

Council

There was no WBC meeting in January. The next meetings are on 23 February (an Extraordinary Meeting to deal with a parish boundaries issue), 2 March (the Budget Meeting) and 16 March (an Ordinary Meeting).

Executive

The Executive met on 12 January and, as well as dealing with public and Members' questions:

- Considered the draft Council Strategy 2023-2027, recommended amendments to its content, and approved it for public consultation (see Current Consultations below);
- Approved the Customer Charter;
- Noted the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy 2019-2023 Delivery Plan - a maintained strong performance for the core business areas, good results for the majority of the measures relating to the council's priorities for improvement, and remedial actions taken where performance is below target;
- Noted the Social Value Update, the council will continue to monitor the implementation of the Social Value policy to determine how it is embedded within the procurement process and what benefits are derived in the future.

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

The next meeting is on 9 February.

Health and Wellbeing and District/Parish Conferences

I chaired the annual Health and Wellbeing Conference, and biannual District/Parish Conference, which each took place, with the HWC during the afternoon and the DPC in the evening, on 31 January. Both conferences were well attended - physically in the Council Chamber at the WBC offices and with many more joining on-line.

The theme for the HWC was 'Creating Resilient Communities' with presentations on the WBC Cost of Living Hub, etc, as well as updates on the Integrated Care System, Mental Health, etc (available on YouTube [here](#)).

The DPC concentrated on presentations from Thames Valley Police and the WBC Planning Service. Both sets of presentations evoked questions from the room and virtually, and were well received.

May Elections

On Thursday 4 May, voters will go to the polls to elect councillors to represent West Berkshire Council and town and parish councils.

Since elections were last held in May 2019, HM Government has introduced a requirement for voters to show photo ID when voting at a polling station at some elections. This new requirement will apply for the first time in England at the May local elections.

Voters may already have a form of photo ID that is acceptable. They can use any of the following:

- Passport
- Driving licence (including provisional license)
- Blue badge
- Certain concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (Proof of Age Standards Scheme)
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards

If they don't already have an accepted form of photo ID, or they're not sure whether the photo ID still looks like them, voters can apply for a free voter ID document, known as a Voter Authority Certificate. This can be applied for on the Electoral Commission website or by post (see www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id).

Planning

Local Plan 2022-2039 Regulation 19 Consultation

The consultation (anticipated in last month's report) commenced on 20 January and will run until 4 March (see Current Consultations below).

The Local Plan Review 2022-2039 Proposed Submission Document (LPR), along with a substantial evidence base is available on the WBC website.

There has been extensive consultation on the LPR to get to this point (since 2019). If no significant changes are proposed in response to the Regulation 19 consultation (any significant changes will be automatically sent back to Council for consideration), the Plan will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate for review.

Transport

Bus Travel Capped

Bus journeys across West Berkshire are capped at £2.00 for a single journey and £4.00 for a return journey until 31 March 2023.

HM Government has announced that a three month fare cap has been introduced across most bus services in England. The intention is to provide affordable bus travel for passengers travelling any time of the day. The scheme forms part of HM Government's Help for Households campaign, as the new cap can deliver real savings for those most affected by the rising cost of living.

Roadworks on the former Sterling Cables site, Newbury

If you are travelling into Newbury, please note parts of Kings Road, Hambridge Road and Boundary Road have been undergoing modification work (from 23 January 2023 for 12 weeks).

The works are being undertaken by Cognition Land and Water Limited to carry out highway and drainage improvements associated with the development of the adjacent former Sterling Cables site. It is proposed that the modifications to Kings Road and Boundary Road adjacent to the development will be undertaken until the end of April. However, the dates are flexible and could change depending on the progression of the different phases of work.

The planned phases are:

- Phase 1 - Kings Road South/Boundary Road (adjacent to development), including a temporary closure of Boundary Road (south) for southbound traffic;
- Phase 2 - Kings Road South/Boundary Road (adjacent to development), including a temporary closure of Boundary Road (south) for southbound traffic;

- Phase 3 - Kings Road (north east quadrant);
- Phase 4 - Kings Road (north);
- Phase 5 - Full night time road closure for the final carriageway re-surfacing.

Parking bays within the site will also be suspended for the duration of the works.

Please follow the diversion signs and use the A4 and the A339 during this time.

Environment

Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme



Following the devastating floods of 2007 when around 1,200 homes in and around were flooded, WBC have been working in partnership with a number of agencies, local stakeholders and businesses to ensure that over 1,000 properties in Thatcham are better protected from possible future flooding.

So far, construction work has been completed at Cold Ash Hill, Tull Way, Floral Way and South East Thatcham, protecting 913 properties via the WBC Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The next phase of the scheme will involve the construction of three flood attenuation ponds at Bowling Green Road, Heath Lane and East Thatcham. Initial works for these three areas are set to start soon and will involve vegetation clearance and the construction of entrances into each site.

The main construction project is scheduled to start in late March 2023. Once completed, this will protect another 107 properties from the impact of surface water flooding.

Mini Recycling Centre in Tilehurst

In partnership with its waste contractor Veolia, WBC has opened another new mini recycling centre in the district. The new site is located in Tilehurst at Cotswold Sports Centre, Downs Way, RG31 6SL.

The mini recycling centre has banks for:

- plastic pots, tubs, trays and cans;
- small electricals;
- paper and cardboard;
- food and drink cartons (including paper tubes with metal ends);
- textiles.

This new facility will bring the total number of WBC mini recycling centres to nine.

Leisure

West Berkshire Remains Top of Summer Reading Challenge Table



West Berkshire Libraries have topped the Summer Reading Challenge table in the South East for the second year in a row.

With over 3,000 children visiting their local library, taking the 2022 challenge to read six books over the summer holidays, and 200 more joining digitally via the Summer Reading Challenge website, West Berkshire remains at the top of the tree.

It's free to join and borrow books from West Berkshire Libraries for all people living, working, or studying in West Berkshire.

Babies and young children can have their own library cards and borrow up to 15 books at a time. There are also e-books and e-audiobooks available to borrow for free.

Newbury Lido

Exciting changes are afoot at the Northcroft Lido.

Work is progressing well towards delivering a fantastic new facility this summer, not just for locals but for the population of the entire district.

WBC have created a video update to show how the lido is coming along which can be viewed online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDkwXlqKt0&feature=youtu.be>

Economy

Rural Economy

As reported in December, WBC has been provisionally allocated nearly £600k over the next two years as its share of the Rural England Prosperity Fund – the only local authority in Berkshire to receive anything.

WBC now needs to submit an investment plan to HM Government and details will be available to rural businesses on how to apply in the coming months.

Shared Prosperity Fund

WBC will be receiving the first tranche of an allocated £1m funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in 2023 with the majority coming in 2024. The main focus of the funding will include:

- Creating three new junior football pitches and a cricket field at Goosecroft Sportsground in Purley-on-Thames;
- Re-designing part of Newbury Wharf to create a public event space as proposed in the Newbury Masterplan;
- Building a public art trail initiative across some of our rural villages;
- Recruiting a new Council Officer to work on attracting major private investment into West Berkshire;
- Funding bespoke coaching and advice for local businesses, through the Berkshire Growth Hub (see below).

Business Start-Up Course

The WBC Economic Development Team is sponsoring a business start-up course with the other Berkshire authorities to help residents in the area who are looking to start their own business. The course is run by the Berkshire Growth Hub and is a hybrid of online and offline sessions. It is suggested that this would be a great chance for anyone looking to start a business full time or just as a side hobby.

Anyone interested can find more information and sign up [here](#) - the closing date for registration is the 14 February, with the course starting on 28 February.

Health

Pharmacy Provision at Sainsbury's

NHS England has been notified by Lloyds Pharmacy Ltd that they will permanently close their pharmacies within the Sainsbury's stores at Calcot and Newbury from 22 April.

As Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing I have made enquiries and the indications are that "Sainsbury's are not intending to replace the pharmacy supplier in their stores".

New Urgent Care Centre

Reading now has an Urgent Care Centre in the Broad Street Mall for those needing urgent (non-life threatening) medical attention, open from 08:00 to 20:00, seven days a week.

Alternatively those needing medical help can go online to 111.nhs.uk to be assessed and directed to the most appropriate service near them, plus the West Berkshire Community Hospital in Thatcham has a Minor Injuries Unit which can help with minor injuries and conditions (but appointments should be booked via NHS 111 before visiting the unit).

For life threatening illness or injury the advice remains to call 999 or go to the nearest A&E.



Current Consultations

[Proposed School Term and Holiday Dates for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2024/25](#): closes 17 February 2023

[Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy January 2023](#): closes 19 February 2023

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

[Draft Newbury Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan](#): closes 23 February 2023

[Draft Council Strategy 2023-27](#): closes 26 February 2023

[Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation](#): closes 4 March 2023

Stop Press

Judgment in the Monks Lane Judicial Review handed down

On 3 February, His Honour Judge Jarman KC (sitting as a Judge of the High Court) released his [judgment](#) in the case of *The King (on the application of Mr Alan Pearce) (Claimant) and West Berkshire Council (Defendant)*, finding for the Defendant Council and rejecting the Claimant's argument (principally that officers had materially misled planning committee members by advising that they should treat the application to build a new Sports Hub at Newbury Rugby Club as a stand-alone proposal).

WBC has been awarded its costs of the court action to be paid by Mr Pearce.

Parish Matters

Coronation Event

With my Mortimer Music Live CIC hat on, I am involved (along with Cllr Dave Kilshaw and Ryan Saunders) in planning the Coronation event for Mortimer on Saturday 6 May in conjunction with Mortimer Village Partnership – amongst other things utilising the premises licence that MML holds in respect of Mortimer Fairground.

It promises to be a busy week, with the local elections on the Thursday, the election count and the event set-up on Friday and the event itself on Saturday – all good fun!

Burghfield

Fly tipping – Bunces Lane

Just to mention that this is still on the radar and I am awaiting an update for the WBC Waste team.

Stratfield Mortimer

Gigaclear

The Clerk - Lynn Hannawin, Cllr Dave Kilshaw and I have had a virtual meeting with Gigaclear about their plans to roll out Fibre To The Property (FTTP) ultrafast broadband to parts of the village. With many thanks to Lynn, here is a distillation of elements of the conversation:

- the build out for Mortimer is still in validation and is subject to change;

- the design is not finished yet but when finished will show what will be included, ie just the centre of Mortimer or further out to farms etc;
- Gigaclear are now able to use BT infrastructure*;
- Gigaclear do not cherry pick areas – any areas where FTTP is not provided would probably be due to lack of permission (eg for a wayleave from landowners);
- Gigaclear will be holding public consultation sessions and will be arranging a presentation for SMPC.

*From personal experience of Gigaclear putting fibre into the footway and the disturbance that causes, their informing us that they can now use BT infrastructure (ducts, poles, etc) is (at least to my mind) a game-changer.

Neighbourhood Plan

Having been involved in the public consultation meetings about the new NP, and noting the comments (to my perception all positive) about the possible way forward in respect of the reserved land in the current NDP, I want to set on record my appreciation of the efforts of all those on the working group who are pushing things forward.

Fairground CCTV and Members' Bid

Because it is likely that SMPC will need to obtain planning permission for the installation (because the proposed pole height exceeds that automatically allowed under permitted development) I have asked for an extension to the timeframe for spending the bid award, just in case it is needed. A decision is awaited.

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

8 February 2023