

District Councillors report – Sept 2023



Nick's Report

Bins Revisited

There have been more reports of unemptied/overflowing bins, notably in Bunces Lane Burghfield, at the entrance to Wokefield Common. It's clear that residents had already reported it via the report-a-problem web site [HERE](#) so I chased it with the Countryside team on 22 August, who arranged a same-day emptying. They/the district council apologises for these repeated incidents and of course doesn't expect residents to repeatedly act as 'bin monitors', reporting whenever they need emptying. The problem is not unique to Burghfield & Mortimer – for example [THIS](#) Newbury-based Facebook group features it prominently. The amount of dog waste has almost doubled within a year. The waste contractor has recently added an extra member of staff to try to better deal with this across the district's 580 dog bins. Recruitment and staff turnover has been difficult since January and it takes a while for new staff to locate the bins using a mobile mapping system.

Thanks to the resident who both made running repairs to the Bunces Lane bin lid and extinguished a fire caused by a disposable barbecue at Burghfield Rec. Whilst the council tries to improve service, please continue to report unemptied bins that you notice via the the report-a-problem web site [HERE](#) (only) - phoning in only applies to emergencies. You can also reduce the demand on our operatives, and ultimately the cost of the service, by taking dog waste home and putting it in your black bin.

Poor Drainage

A Burghfield Common resident raised concerns at claimed flooding said to be caused by block drains in multiple location, including Clayhill Road. I'll follow up with him and the Highways team.

Members Bids

The deadline approaches for submission of proposals from parish councils and community groups, for projects to be considered under the Members Bid scheme. The scheme offers a matched funding of £5,000 per ward member. This means that, for example, 3 projects each costing £10,000, or one costing £30,000 could in principle be funded. So far there's been an application from Beech Hill parish council, an indicative proposal from a Burghfield Common school and a suggestion by me for Mortimer.

Parish councils and/or community groups should please get in touch with any ideas as soon as possible – the application form and guidance note, which was sent to local parish councils is available on request.

Food Waste

Further to the item on Food Waste in the last newsletter here, a Stratfield Mortimer parish councillor raised his concern that the “don't put food waste in here” stickers recently applied to black bins, were made of plastic, and appeared to fly in the face of the council's desire to reduce plastic usage. I raised this with the officers who had issued the stickers (without councillors' knowledge). They respond that plastic was chosen for this one-off campaign, because of the need for the labels to be durable and weather-resistant, to reliably convey the message. They will try to try to use paper or compostable materials in future for similar uses. They add that they feel the need to balance this with the effectiveness of the communication and the cost.

The sticker campaign itself was done owing to successes of similar campaigns by other councils in raising the level of residential food waste collection. The West Berks campaign resulted in a 18% increase in food collection, which represents about 10 extra tonnes per week being directed to our composting facility at Padworth.

if you are a green waste subscriber, please use *only* your food caddy for food waste because it is important to maintain the segregation of food and garden waste.

The council is keen to hear your ideas on how best to further improving food recycling take up. Would, for example, communicating its environmental benefit; making it easier/free to get food bags; or reducing the frequency of black wheelie bin collection help? Please get in touch.

Green Waste

In line with the manifesto commitment, the garden waste charges will be phased out as funding allows, starting with those most in financial need. The new subscription period has just started and you will have notices a rise in the price of collection. This rise was set by the previous administration. The rise will be offset by a rebate within next year's charges. The

council will confirm the rebate level later this year. Separately, the government is consulting on whether garden waste collection should be made free of charge across all local authorities;

Padworth Waste & Recycling Centre

It's now possible to book same day appointments, about 90 mins ahead, at the Padworth (and Newbury) Waste & Recycling Centres. The district councillors are discussing further booking enhancements with the council's waste team.

Mortimer Neighbourhood Plan

Following public consultation, the land set aside in 2017 for a new infant school and doctors' surgery, is expected to be re-assigned for school sports and play facilities, a dental practice and parking, with the remainder kept reserved for a possible (but seemingly unlikely) new doctors' surgery. I've supported the Steering Group by discussing the implementation options with the relevant council officers and the landowner. I expect the land owner (TA Fisher) to submit a planning application for the preferred proposal, which has public support. This application would be made after the separate matter of Phase 2c of the 110 home housebuilding programme behind the Horse & Groom has been resolved.

Catapults

There have been a number of reports from residents about damage and injury caused by youths with catapults in Mortimer. The local Sargeant reports that: the police will (if not already) allocate all reports to an Officer to investigate; Mortimer is on his team's patrol plan during daytime and evening, when not deployed to other matters across the area; they carried out a leaflet drop and engaged with a group of youths during week of 4 Sept. He advises that CCTV/doorbell cam footage can be used to assist in a prosecution, as one piece of evidence. He goes on to say that the Police they follow all reasonable lines of enquiry and once completed, assess whether the available evidence meets the threshold to progress a prosecution. There is more information about this at www.CPS.gov.uk

Birch Lane, Mortimer

Residents approached me for support relating to a claimed encroachment on the highway and other concerns. The Planning enforcement team conducted a site visit some weeks ago. I'm promised an update after a meeting between the relevant officers on 14 September and will update the residents.

Four Houses Corner Redevelopment

A planning application has been submitted to re-develop the Four Houses Corner permanent Gypsy/Traveller/Romany site, to meet the council's statutory duty and obligations. The budgeted costs were approved by the previous administration. The main elements within that budget and their approximate relative amounts are:

- Construction 75%
- Security (unless completion) 12%
- Consultants 6%
- Abnormals/contingency 8%

The cost and the completion date are subject to contractors' responses to a proposed tender, to be let if the application is approved. The council estimates that if approved, the site would be occupied in about two years

Foot/Cycle/Bridleway Between Mortimer and Burghfield Common

Further to [THIS](#) planning application for a foot/cycle/bridleway between Mortimer and Burghfield Common, the parish councils appointed project management company has provided a estimate construction cost of about £950K. This pretty much matches an informal estimate given in a council meeting some months ago by a Quantity Surveyor. It seems clear that the near term focus will be on establishing whether funding sources can be found to allow this project to be delivered. It would seem to need a cross community effort to reach the level needed.

Action Tracker

A summary of some issues raised by residents that I have dealt with/am dealing with:

Topic	Raised	Action	Status
Replace Mortimer zebra crossing outside St John's school, with a button controlled crossing.	7 July	Sought parish council support at 16 July meeting.	Proposal was turned down. Resident informed. Closed.
Birch Lane residents concern at encroachment on highway/breach of TPO.	27 June	Resident concerns over alleged encroachment/Planning/other issues in Birch Lane	Update expected after meeting on 14 Sept.
Grass verge Dury Lane/Stamore Gardens	4 Sept	Discussed with Highways.	Highways to chase Gigaclear to make good.
Windmill Court	Pre election	Supporting residents requirement and engaging with housing association	Communication plan and summarising its changes compared to what existed.

Food waste recycling stickers		See report	
Resident concern over planning application.	tbd	Discussed with case officer.	Progressing with case officer

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7 Sept 2023