

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Finance and General Purposes 07/12/2023

West Berkshire Council's (WBC) "Balancing the Council's Budget - Consultation

Agenda item 23/058 4: To receive details of the consultation and agree further actions.

BACKGROUND

The information below has been received from WBC regarding their consultation on a range of savings proposals which are part of their next year's budget and on which they are seeking the views of town and parish councils (in addition to members of the public and other interested parties). The closing date for responses is Thursday the 11th of January.

As you are probably aware, West Berkshire Council, along with many other local authorities, is facing unprecedented financial pressures due to a number of national and global factors which has left a significant funding gap in next year's budget. In order to address this budget gap, savings are needed which could affect a number of front-line services, some of which sit within the Council's Environment Department. The Council is currently consulting on a range of savings proposals, but before any decision is taken, we would like your views. The savings currently being consulted on are detailed below.

<u>Close or find an alternative provider to run Willows Edge Care Home</u>	<u>Reduce opening hours at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)</u>
<u>Reduce contributions to community transport</u>	<u>Reduce weed spraying treatment</u>
<u>Reduce frequency of parks, open spaces and verge maintenance</u>	<u>Restructure Adult Social Care care-home charges</u>
<u>Reduce funding for gully emptying and bridge maintenance</u>	<u>Restructure funding for Adult Social Care transport services</u>
<u>Reduce litter bins and dog waste bins</u>	<u>Restructure parking fees and charges</u>

One of the proposals, which would specifically affect Parish and Town Councils, relates to the number of litter and dog waste bins we provide across the district. The proposal looks to reduce the number of litter and dog waste bins that we provide, as such it is likely to directly affect your parish. The proposals involve the Council ceasing the service currently provided to Town and Parish Councils regarding the emptying of their litter and dog waste bins. However, we are open Town and Parish Councils sourcing their own contractor to empty their litter and dog bins in their parks and open spaces; this could lead to a more flexible and responsive service for Town and Parish Councils. If this would be of interest to you, we'd encourage you to mention this in your consultation

response. The list of bins we are proposing to maintain or remove can be found at: <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/bp2425-bins>.

Please note our waste contractor empties litter bins along the public highway, within town centres, residential areas and selected laybys when they are full or nearly full based on contractor inspections, checks done by council staff or following reports from members of the public. Litter bins and dog waste bins in parks and open spaces are emptied by our grounds maintenance contractor up to three times per week. We would like to encourage other local organisations or community groups to 'adopt' or sponsor a litter bin emptied by our waste contractor by covering the costs of its emptying and maintenance, which would mean that we could retain it in place. If this would be of interest to you, we would encourage you to mention this in your consultation response.

Please visit [Balancing our budget for 2024/25 - West Berkshire Council](#) for further background to the Council's financial position, further information on the individual savings proposals and for details on how to respond to the consultation. Responses are requested by midnight on Thursday, 11 January 2024.

Clerk 01/12/2023