

West Berks Council Newsletter

Burghfield & Mortimer Edition

December 2023

Produced by Liberal Democrat Ward Councillors



Mortimer Fairground

Council Finances

At a recent meeting of the council Executive **[Cllr Iain Cottingham](#)** (Thatcham Central), **Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Services**, introduced the Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2024-25 Revenue budget proposals. He highlighted [here](#) that, along with many other councils, West Berkshire Council faces significant financial pressures caused particularly by inflation, growing demand for services, notably Adult Social Care and Child Services, and below inflation Government funding. As a result, the council seeks your feedback on possible ways to cut spending. Options under consideration include reducing opening hours at waste/recycling centres, reducing litter and dog waste bins, restructuring Adult Social Care care home charges and changing the Adult Social Care transport services. You can read the full list and give your opinion [here](#).

Cllr Cottingham and **Council Leader Cllr Lee Dillon** (Thatcham North East) will be holding a drop-in/surgery in Burghfield Common to hear your views directly on how best to meet the council's funding pressures. If you can't make the face-to-face session, there's an online version on Monday 8 Jan

Budget Consultation drop in session

**Willink
Leisure Centre
Wednesday
3 January
5:30-7:30pm**



Budget Consultation drop in session

**Youtube Live
Monday
8 January
5:30-7:30pm**



Council Leader's Greeting

[Cllr Lee Dillon](#), leader of West Berks Council gives his Christmas message [HERE](#)

Willink School B Block Opening



A two-storey building at the Willink School in Burghfield Common was officially opened by **Cllr Jeremy Cottam**, Chairman of West Berkshire Council on 15 November. 'B Block' was built at a cost of almost £3 million and completed in 2022. The project was paid for by a combination of council funds, a 'basic need' Government grant and a levy applied to house builders (known as Section 106 money). B Block sets out to meet the increased capacity of 75 more pupils from nearby new housing. It provides 7 new classrooms, a humanities office, history seminar room, an English office as well as 3 science classrooms, changing rooms, 2 remodelled social science classrooms central store and WCs. There is also expanded accommodation to enhance provision for SEND students.

The **portfolio holder for Children, Education and Young People's Services, Cllr Heather Codling**, (Chieveley & Cold Ash) said_"This is an impressive project that has enriched the learning and teaching experience of pupils and staff immeasurably. After just a year, it is hard to imagine Willink without the wealth of space and facilities it offers."

Pictured with Cllr Cottam are head teacher Nicolle Browning, former head teacher Peter Fry, senior teacher Dave Green, Burghfield & Newbury district councillor Nick Carter, students, building contractors Morris and Blunt Ltd, ADP Architecture and Project Managers, CGS Consultants. You can read more [here](#).

20mph Zone Trial

The council Executive recently agreed how it could support requests from residents for 20mph speed limits. As a result, a pilot zone was approved and is on trial in Theale. Once the trial is over, the cost/impact of implementing other 20mph zones on roads which meet agreed criteria will be quantified. You can read more about the trial in point 9 of the council's 2 November 2023 meeting [HERE](#). If you want to suggest a 20mph zone in this area, please get in touch.



Electric Vehicle Charging

Nick Carter continues to push the council's "EV team" to provide roadside electric vehicle charge points for residents that have no off-street parking. He hopes parts of Burghfield Common will be included in the next roll out of lamppost powered chargers, assisted by [government funding](#). Areas that look most promising are in Omers Rise, Hollybush Lane and Abbots Road. Mortimer would of course need a different system, since it has few street lights. Such a system will use this [different means of funding](#).



Meanwhile the council is trialling a product that allows residents without a driveway to charge their vehicle from their home. Developed by a UK company **Kerbo Charge** the system uses a through-pavement channel with a self-closing lid, removing the trip hazard of trailing cables. The system has a life expectancy of over 100 years. The trial is happening in Hungerford.

Countryside and Environment

“An Opening To Nowhere”

Cllr Nick Carter, took a call from a concerned landowner, who'd discovered that Thames Water had dug out a bank that enclosed their land, without permission, seemingly with a view to helping drain the road.

He visited the site where the landowner explained that, whilst there was some water present, the area in question was neither at the low point of the road nor did it lead to any ditch that would carry water away.



Worse than that, unhelpfully it seems, Thames Water left a gully, that was at the low point of the road and would have fed a clear ditch, were it not gummed up with mud.

Nick is seeing whether council officers in the environment department can step in to assist.



Green Hub

Cllr Stuart Gourley, (Newbury, Clayhill), **Portfolio holder for Climate Action, Recycling and Biodiversity**, is pleased to welcome you to your **Green Hub!** The information below is focused on helping residents make more sustainable choices and assist everyone collectively along our journey to Net Zero. Whether you live, work or learn in West Berkshire or are a business owner or visitor, the council hopes you will find relevant help and guidance below. The information has been grouped to cover [energy efficiency](#), [taking climate action](#), [community work](#), and [sustainable business](#).

Certain areas of West Berkshire will be faced with a ten-year high in the water table so...

Would you know what to do in a flood?



**FLOOD
ALERT**

PREPARE

- Prepare a bag that includes medicines and insurance documents
- Visit www.gov.uk/check-flooding



**FLOOD
WARNING**

ACT

- Turn off gas, water and electricity
- Move things upstairs or to safety
- Move family, pets and car to safety



**SEVERE
FLOOD
WARNING**

SURVIVE

- Call 999 if in immediate danger
- Follow advice from emergency services
- Keep yourself and your family safe

Nearly 60% of households at risk from flooding do not believe their homes could flood according to recent research. With wetter weather on its way, it is a good to prepare for flooding with some simple ideas which could help keep you and your family safe and save you thousands of pounds in damages and disruption. Read more on how to prepare yourself [here](#).

Community Projects

Each autumn parish councils and community groups are invited to put forward projects to the Burghfield & Mortimer district councillors for “matched funding” worth £15,000. This year Vicky Poole, Geoff Mayes and Nick Carter backed: ‘Burghfield Common Skate Park 2.0’, a pedestrian safety improvement in Mortimer and a Beech Hill initiative as the year’s projects. Thanks go to those who proposed them and to West Berkshire Council colleagues who identified maximum possible funding for these and a range of others, such that none had to be scaled back. Burghfield Skate Park 2.0 has a way to go to reach its target funding – please consider supporting their campaign [HERE](#)



Burghfield 'Skate Park 2.0'
(Image: Burghfield Parish Council)



Mortimer's missing pavement



Beech Hill (image Beech Hill Parish Council)

Community Welcome Spaces

West Berkshire Council supports communities' that creating Community Welcome Spaces for residents to stay warm and enjoy company, a hot drink and perhaps get advice from partner organisations, including Foodbanks and the Government's Household Support Fund. There are currently 21 such spaces across West Berkshire. We teamed up with community groups to produce a [Connecting Communities Together Map](#) which shows each Community Welcome Spaces. In Mortimer, the Methodist church provides a space on Friday mornings, and Burghfield and Mortimer libraries acts as a Warm Space during opening hours.

Councillor Janine Lewis (Tilehurst and Purley), **Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Countryside** says, *"The map is a brilliant, dedicated resource that helps people to access the support they need locally and brings local community groups and organisations who offer help, support and opportunities to connect with others together. Isolation and loneliness are the cause of many health issues and people can feel more cut off in the cold weather. We want to create even more Welcome Spaces in West Berkshire and are asking communities and organisation to get in touch if they have a space that could be used."*

If you have a community space that you'd like to add to the map, please email rhys.lewis@westberks.gov.uk.

All Aboard for Free Festive Travel 🌲



Robert Williams - CEO Reading Buses

🎅 The last Christmas FREE bus travel date is **Saturday 23 December 2023**. You can hop on and off all day within West Berkshire free AND if you request a return ticket, your return journey is FREE too even if you travel outside West Berkshire (for example to Reading). Thanks go to [Reading Buses](#), [Newbury & District Ltd](#), [Thames Travel](#), and [Stagecoach](#) for making this festive treat possible. The scheme is government funded.

Planning Applications

Some residents have raised concerns that they were not aware of Planning applications that affected them – one example related to the planned foot/cycle/bridle way between Mortimer and Burghfield Common, where a potentially affected resident was completely unaware of the scheme. Whilst it was too late for them, the problem should be avoided in future because the council has (co incidentally) begun sending letters to residents alerting them of such applications. This has already been confirmed to work on a new application, with a resident asking for information. We're looking to simplify the letter but, in the meantime, if you receive a letter, feel free to contact one of the ward members named on it for more information.

Garth Club

Following Nick's drive in April 2022 to find out if there were potential new trustees willing to take on the repair and reopening of the club set up in 1915 by Miss Capron, two groups have applied to the Royal British Legion, the current trustee, to do exactly that. The groups are a local Men's Shed/Repair Café and Royal Berkshire Boxing. We'll watch the next steps with interest.

Council Meetings

The council's public meetings are open to the public in person at Market Street Newbury or online via YouTube. The meeting calendar with links to the agendas and papers is [here](#). This is where dial in details are provided, shortly before each meeting. Some upcoming meetings are:

- **[Licencing Committee](#)** Monday 8 January 2024, 16.30
- **[Eastern Area Planning](#)** Wednesday 10 January 18.30. This will consider the reinstatement of the Four Houses Corner permanent Gypsy/Traveller site.
- **[District Planning](#)** Wednesday 17 January 18.30
- **[Schools Forum](#)** Monday 22 January 17.00
- **[Environment Advisory Group Open Forum](#)** Monday 29 January 17.00. This meeting is open to the public and generally has guest speakers on diverse topics.

Re-opening of Faraday Road Football Ground



In line with the new administration's commitment to do so, the Faraday Road football pitch in Newbury was reopened on 19 November. Pictured is council chairman, **[Cllr Jeremy Cottam](#)** (Thatcham North East), leader, **[Cllr Lee Dillon](#)**, Mayor of Newbury **[Cllr Nigel Foot](#)** (Newbury, Clayhill), **[Cllr Janine Lewis](#)** (Tilehurst and Purley) and the under 8s five-a-side team who did a penalty shoot-out. There was a 'good luck' message from former England and Arsenal captain Tony Adams [here](#). Our Countryside team has worked hard since May to get the pitch ready for teams from AFC Newbury Boys and Girls FC and CSA 07 FC. The video from opening day is [here](#)

Meeting You/"Surgeries"



[Nick Carter](#) is at **Baobab** on the **first Saturday** from **10-11.00**, if you want to raise an issue face to face, whilst fellow ward member [Vicky Poole](#) is in **Burghfield library** at the same times/dates monthly. Nick will be at Baobab on Sat 6 Jan, not in February, then on Sat 2 March.

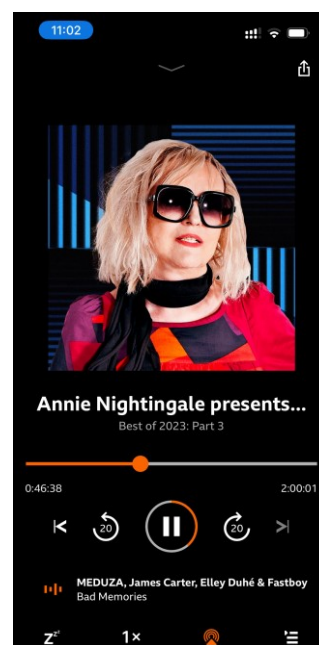
Some fellow Mortimer parish councillors are doing surgeries too - check [the web site](#) for news.

Tunes Of The Times

As playlists and TV adverts turn to [Christmas music](#) and a [70s diva](#), 2023 marked the Fab Four's [last song](#) and the [death of Shane MacGowan](#).

More locally this week [Sam Ryder took his campaign for Christmas No.1 to Reading's Oracle](#) Centre and veteran Radio 1 DJ Annie Nightingale chose [Bad Memories](#), premiered at [Mortimer's Jubilee Party](#) for her "Tunes of 2023" set.

The district council wishes you a happy and peaceful Christmas and a healthy 2024.



Click the Seasons Greetings for greetings from the Kennet Radio team.

Christmas & New Year Roadside Waste and Recycling Collection

Garden waste collections are suspended between Monday 25 December 2023 and Monday 8 January 2024, resuming on Tuesday 9 January. Up to 3 extra open-topped bags of garden waste will be collected on your first January garden waste collection. Please do not put out Hippo or tonnage bags. Recycling and food waste service continues as shown below.

Normal Collection Day	Revised Collection Day
Monday 25 December	Wednesday 27 December
Tuesday 26 December	Thursday 28 December
Wednesday 27 December	Friday 29 December
Thursday 28 December	Saturday 30 December
Friday 29 December	Tuesday 2 January
Monday 1 January	Wednesday 3 January
Tuesday 2 January	Thursday 4 January
Wednesday 3 January	Friday 5 January
Thursday 4 January	Saturday 6 January
Friday 5 January	Monday 8 January
Monday 8 January	Tuesday 9 January
Tuesday 9 January	Wednesday 10 January
Wednesday 10 January	Thursday 11 January
Thursday 11 January	Friday 12 January
Friday 12 January	Saturday 13 January

There are tips on how to have a “Waste Less” Christmas [HERE](#).

To receive future newsletters directly contact [Nick](#). Back issues are [Edition 1](#) June 2023, [Edition 2](#) July 2023, [Edition 3](#) September 2023 and [Edition 4](#) November 2023.