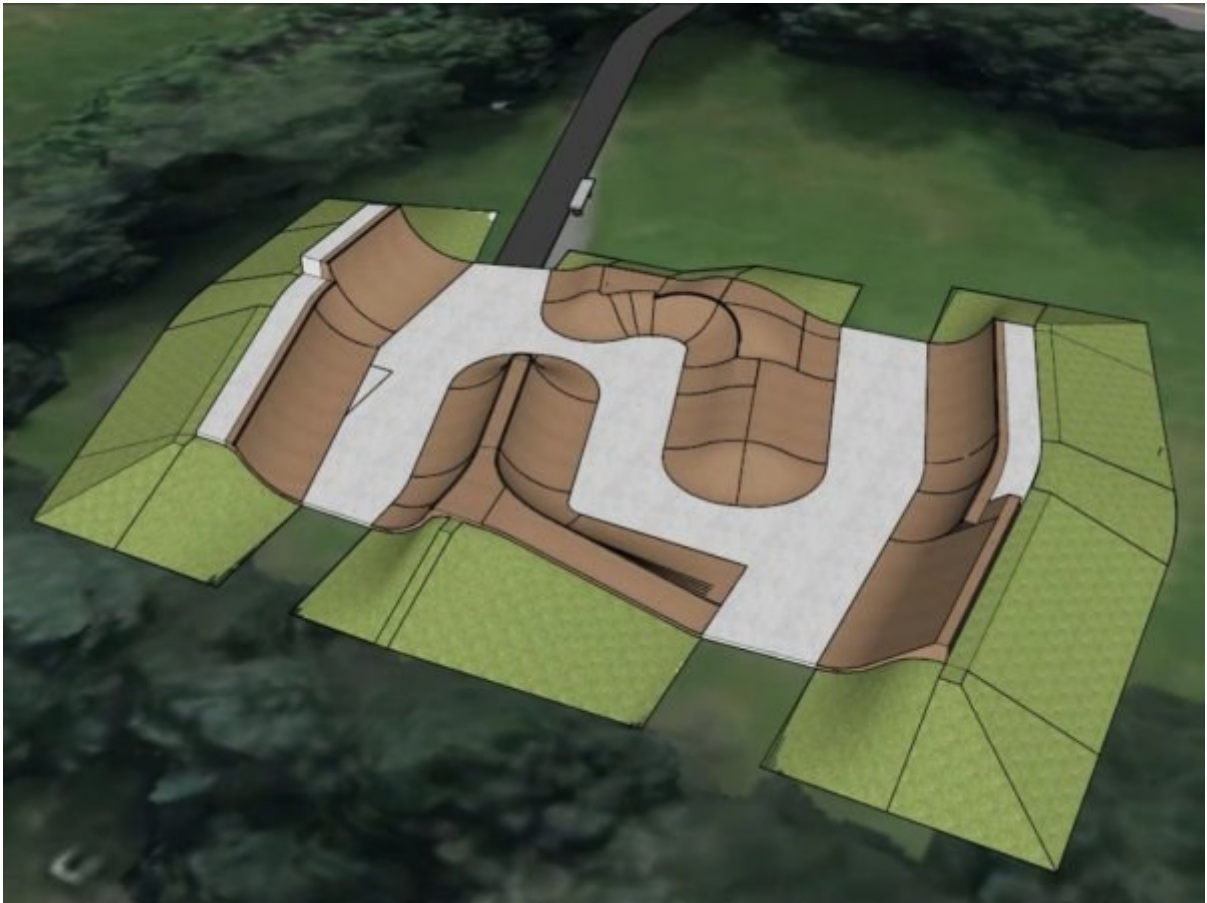


Issue 10 - November 2024

# Burghfield & Mortimer Newsletter

from Councillor Nick



## Work Starts On Burghfield Skate Park “2.0”

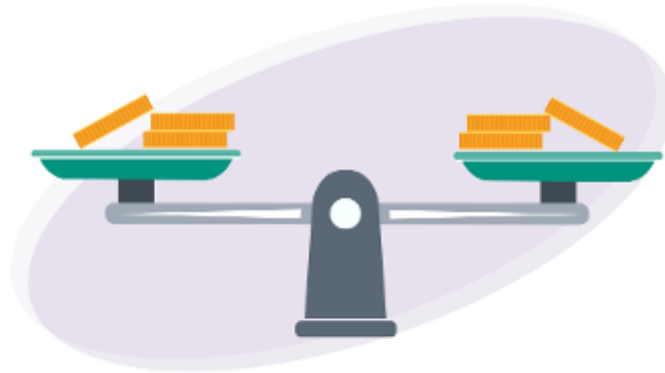
The district council has awarded a grant of £100K to 'Burghfield Skate Park 2.0', the full amount requested to allow work to start. I'm delighted to report that building work has indeed begun. Congratulations to Alex Woodward and all those helping to make this a reality.

The skate park was one of 11 community projects, awarded a total of £500k from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), a charge levied on new housebuilding, that can be used to create new infrastructure/facilities.

Unfortunately, the application from the team working to restore Garth Club wasn't successful owing mainly to concerns about its completion date. Hopefully they will obtain other funding.



# Council Budget For 2025/6



West Berkshire Council has published a draft budget for the next financial year, starting April '25. The lion's share of councils' costs comes from Adult Social Care and Children's Services, a cost that continues to grow. This council is not alone in being short of funds and still needs to find ways to cut costs and improve efficiency. You can read the plans and reasoning [HERE](#). The council seeks your feedback on these 7 proposed reductions in or changes to services:

1. [Explore reducing the cost of Adult Social Care \(ASC\) Resource Centre services, through the use of another provider or others ways to deliver the service](#)
2. [Increase some Adult Social Care \(ASC\) fees and charges above the inflation rate.](#)
3. [End the Mobile Library Service, that visits Burghfield, Mortimer and Beech Hill.](#)
4. [enable a charitable giving option for non-statutory council services](#)
5. [Turn off residential streetlights between midnight and 5am](#)
6. [Reduce the number of winter gritting routes](#)
7. [Remove the Downland Sports Centre in Newbury from the council's leisure management contract](#)

Please have your say on any or all of these proposals, particularly those that affect you or your family.

The council also wishes to hear your view on where it should focus its spending, and whether it should increase fees and charges by 5%.

It did take account of public comments last year, changing some of its plans as a result.

If you think you have better/other suggestions on how to cut cost/increase efficiency, feel free to table them via the survey(s) or you to me directly if you prefer.

The surveys close on Monday 23 December.

## Bus Service Review

There have been regular calls, over the years, from residents and parish councils for a re-introduced bus service between the Mortimer centre and the train station, and a link with Beech Hill.

When I and then then portfolio lead, Cllr Gaines, met Reading Buses' CEO Robert Williams last year, he explained how they consider such service improvement requests. Taking this together with excellent insights from Beech Hill parish council, I tabled a request to Reading Buses to evaluate my request for new services. This *interim* response from them, outlines the challenges and how they might be overcome.

### **including Mortimer train station:**

there is no suitable place to turn buses around - they would need to reverse into a side road, which is theoretically permitted, but not desirable

buses would need to wait for significant periods at the station, to meet the various trains and synchronise with the school day. This would require an additional vehicle and substantially increase running costs which may not be recoverable through higher passenger revenue.

### **including St Mary's junior school**

cars parked in the road make it hard for a bus to get through.

Serving the school creates a gap in the timetable whilst the bus was away from the much busier regular route.

When a bus last ran to the school, usage had fallen to one person per day.



## Linking with Beech Hill

Linking Beech Hill to the Mortimer/station circuit may remove the need for buses to turn around, and may add revenue through greater usage. However Beech Hill is not densely populated.

## Linking to Mere oak Park & Ride

The park & ride is not a significant destination in its own right, making it difficult to see how sufficient patronage could be generated to support the running costs of a service to there. The 15-20 minute journey time would mean two vehicles were required to extend the whole service effectively.

Although the bus company is owned by Reading Borough Council and does not have to make a profit, it does need to cover its running costs. I have gone back to the bus company, via council staff, to ask if/how I can assist gauging demand for the various service and I'll share more news in a future newsletter.

# Free Festive Bus Travel



The district council is pleased to offer FREE bus travel across West Berkshire on selected Saturdays - 16 November, 14 December, and 21 December. The cost of doing this is met through Government funding. More information [HERE](#)

## Flood Alleviation



The council recently cleaned the drainage system, jetted lines and surveyed the underground connections in part of the Ward. Earlier this week, I attended a site meeting with residents, our portfolio lead Cllr Stuart Gourlay and the council's Highways team. We heard residents' concerns and views on the cause of and possible solutions to their issues. Highways staff explained the results of a recent underground survey, that had found damage to the Highway drainage system, such that surface water is not draining properly. It's estimated to cost £250K to replace the system. The council will try to get this work done as soon as possible, notwithstanding its financial constraints and the need to weigh this up with other similar cases in the district. In this particular case, the root cause



is ground water levels, but the team believes that a replacement surface water drainage system will help disperse such water. The residents thanked the council staff for listening to their issues and agreeing to try to resolve them. I'll keep you posted on developments.

## The flood and mud-prone pavement



During the recent half-term, the council highways team worked on the pavement outside St John's school Mortimer, to address its regularly flooding and becoming muddy. It's something I'd pressed for, with limited success, before joining the district council. I was pleased to learn that, despite the council's funding crisis, it was possible to do this work as part of the council's footway improvement plan. Thanks go also to both Lynn the parish council Clerk for lobbying on this and a resident who raised his pedestrian safety concerns with me.

## Online Prescription Management



The image shows a hand holding a smartphone displaying the NHS app interface. The screen shows the NHS logo, the text "Access your NHS services", and a "Continue with NHS login" button. A blue beam of light points from the screen to a blister pack of green pills. To the right of the blister pack, there are three icons: a location pin, a clock, and an information icon, each followed by text describing the app's features.

-  easily choose where your prescriptions are sent
-  order at a time that suits you
-  need help? Access support in the app or visit [nhs.uk/helpmeapp](https://nhs.uk/helpmeapp)

Earlier this year, at the [Health Scrutiny committee](#) (this is a very productive forum, that's open to the public), that I'm a member of, I asked representatives of the NHS Integrated Care Board, when the antiquated method of prescription request transfer between Mortimer Surgery and Little Village Pharmacy would be automated. At present a staff member trudges between the two premises twice per day to take and collect paperwork. I was assured that when the surgery moved to its new IT system, this process would be automated. Now



that the IT change has happened, I am checking the status of the prescription automation and will report back soon.

Meanwhile the surgery's move to the new IT system, delivers online access (via website or Mobile App) to appointment booking, request prescriptions and potentially medical records. App users needed to re-register, to regain access to the existing services, and the additional ones. I trialled the process and wrote it up on my Facebook page [HERE](#). If you'd like me to email you this information, just let me know.

## Remembrance Sunday



Burghfield's Remembrance Sunday event is one of the largest in Berkshire. The parade, led by a Scottish piper, marched along the Reading Road, to St Mary's



Church war memorial. The service, featured a perfectly-timed chinook fly past from RAF Odiham directly over the churchyard just before 11am. In Mortimer, the service took place at the War Memorial and afterwards at St John's church, where the names of the fallen were read out.

## Small Electrical Recycling



As mentioned in previous newsletters, I'm pleased to report that I have agreement to install an recycling bank for small electrical items in the West End Road car park, Mortimer. This will be similar to the

existing one at the Willink Leisure Centre. Small electrical was chosen, in place of plastic food trays/TETRA cartons, because the council hopes to collect the latter at the roadside in the near future as part of its waste and recycling strategy.

## Other News

### **Wokefield Common Car Park**

Wokefield Common Car Park will be temporarily closed from 18 November for several weeks as part of Forestry Operations by the landowner. The car park will be repaired to an improved standard as part of these works. Limited alternative parking is available in the layby at the end of Bunces Lane, or by visiting Padworth Common.

### **Sit With a VIP**





On 8 October, fans of all ages took a pew next to a Very Important Peruvian, in Newbury's Northbrook Street and Reading's Broad Street, as part of STUDIOCANAL's *Paddington Visits*, a trail of Paddington Bear statues across the UK and Ireland to celebrate the release of PADDINGTON IN PERU. You can see and follow all his routes [HERE](#)

## Faraday Road Football



Outside our patch, but a central part of the Lib Dem administration's manifesto, the council, in partnership with Newbury Community Football Group (NCFG) and supported by Newbury Town Council, was delighted to see the return of Newbury Football Club to Faraday Road for its first home game on 9 November, against Abingdon Abbots FC, in the Berks and Bucks cup. (They lost 0-3 but can now focus on the league). New portable changing facilities for teams and officials, alongside a portable Clubhouse and toilet facilities have been installed along with new dugouts and floodlights for evening training sessions.

# Getting In Touch

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*Meet me at my drop in/'surgery' each **first Saturday at The Baobab**, West End Road Mortimer **10.00-11.00***