



Holybrook Parish Council

Serving the communities of Beansheaf Farm and Fords Farm

Council Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting	Thursday 6 th May 2021
Location	Zoom Virtual Meeting
Present	Cllrs. Bedwell (Chair), Collard, Lenaghan, Littlewood, H. Mistry, Oloko, Somner and Tull. Also present: Pam Kirkpatrick (Clerk) and Caroline Lenaghan (Administration Assistant),
Circulation	All Council and Ward Members

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panels Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) came into force on the 4 April 2020. The Regulations remove the legal obligation to hold local authority meetings at a specified physical location, by permitting members and others attending the meeting to do so by way of ‘remote attendance’. The obligation to hold an Annual Meeting was also removed.

All virtual meetings held by the Parish Council before 7th May 2021 (NOTE: the date could be brought forward if the Government rules are relaxed) are enabled by this legislative change. This Protocol applies to meetings of the Council and/or its Committees, that would, but for the coronavirus pandemic and the Regulations, be held in public. All other Standing Orders remain in place.

No.	Notes	Action
17/21/22	<p>Open forum for members of the public</p> <p>Colline Watts, Educafe – short presentation on the vision of Educafe. Members requested the Colline provide the Council with written information and that a separate meeting be set up in the future to discuss possible implementation of the Educafe in Holybrook.</p> <p>19:38 ENTER CLLR LITTLEWOOD</p> <p>Angie Anderson. To observe the proceedings.</p>	
18/21/22	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Members accepted apologies from Cllrs Baker and Croal.</p>	
19/21/22	<p>Declarations of Interest relevant to the Agenda</p> <p>Cllr Somner, non-pecuniary, items: 6 – District Councillors’ report, 7, 8, 9 and 10 – Planning and 13 – Devolution and CIL spending priorities.</p>	
20/21/22	<p>Approval and adoption of the minutes of:</p> <p>a) the Planning Committee meeting on Monday 19th April 2021 (Planning Committee Members only). APPROVED: Proposed by Cllr Collard and seconded by Cllr Lenaghan;</p> <p>b) the Council meeting on Monday 19th April 2021. APPROVED. Proposed by Cllr Tull and seconded by Cllr Somner;</p> <p>(Please note that the minutes will be issued by post to the Chairman following the meeting for signing).</p>	

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21/21/22	<p>Matters arising from the Minutes</p> <p>06/21/21 – District Councillors report: Cllr Somner advised that information on electric vehicle charging points is progressing and IKEA has three rapid chargers in their car park.</p> <p>: There still is no confirmed date for the Eastern Area Planning Committee meeting regarding the Pincents Hill planning application.</p> <p>176/20/21 b) ii) – Financial Information: The outstanding debt has been successfully recovered (this sum was £24.00 and not £30.00 as originally reported).</p>																																					
22/21/22	<p>District Councillors’ report</p> <p>A verbal report was provided which members acknowledged (APPENDIX 1)</p>																																					
23/21/22	<p>New Planning Applications: AGREED</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="252 824 1533 1693"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="252 824 520 857">Application no</th> <th data-bbox="520 824 746 857">Applicant</th> <th data-bbox="746 824 1027 857">Address</th> <th data-bbox="1027 824 1533 857">Proposal</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 857 520 954">21/00822/HOUSE</td> <td data-bbox="520 857 746 954">Mr & Mrs Stent</td> <td data-bbox="746 857 1027 954">23 Bath Road, Calcot</td> <td data-bbox="1027 857 1533 954">New roof light in existing lounge flat roof and single storey rear extension with flat roof and roof light.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" data-bbox="252 954 1533 1010">NO OBJECTIONS</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 1010 520 1227">21/00913/FULMAJ</td> <td data-bbox="520 1010 746 1227">Aldi Stores</td> <td data-bbox="746 1010 1027 1227">Aldi, Bath Road, Calcot</td> <td data-bbox="1027 1010 1533 1227">Section 73: Variation of condition 3 (delivery hours) of previously approve application 16/01218/FULMAJ: section 73 variation of condition 2 (opening hours) and 3 (delivery hours) of planning permission 12/01833/FULMAJ.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" data-bbox="252 1227 1533 1283">OBJECT</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 1283 520 1458">21/00970/HOUSE</td> <td data-bbox="520 1283 746 1458">Mr Lim & Ms Yong</td> <td data-bbox="746 1283 1027 1458">2 Goodwin Close, Calcot</td> <td data-bbox="1027 1283 1533 1458">Proposed single storey front/side extension. Proposed double storey side and rear extension. Proposed single storey rear extension. Proposed loft conversion of new taller roof structure.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" data-bbox="252 1458 1533 1514">OBJECT</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 1514 520 1626">21/00975/HOUSE</td> <td data-bbox="520 1514 746 1626">Mr I. Darker-Larkings</td> <td data-bbox="746 1514 1027 1626">17 Bath Road, Calcot</td> <td data-bbox="1027 1514 1533 1626">Proposed two-storey side, single storey rear extension and conversion of an existing loft.</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4" data-bbox="252 1626 1533 1693">OBJECT</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Application no	Applicant	Address	Proposal	21/00822/HOUSE	Mr & Mrs Stent	23 Bath Road, Calcot	New roof light in existing lounge flat roof and single storey rear extension with flat roof and roof light.	NO OBJECTIONS				21/00913/FULMAJ	Aldi Stores	Aldi, Bath Road, Calcot	Section 73: Variation of condition 3 (delivery hours) of previously approve application 16/01218/FULMAJ: section 73 variation of condition 2 (opening hours) and 3 (delivery hours) of planning permission 12/01833/FULMAJ.	OBJECT				21/00970/HOUSE	Mr Lim & Ms Yong	2 Goodwin Close, Calcot	Proposed single storey front/side extension. Proposed double storey side and rear extension. Proposed single storey rear extension. Proposed loft conversion of new taller roof structure.	OBJECT				21/00975/HOUSE	Mr I. Darker-Larkings	17 Bath Road, Calcot	Proposed two-storey side, single storey rear extension and conversion of an existing loft.	OBJECT				
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24/21/22	<p>Other Planning</p> <p>a) Members acknowledged a verbal update on the Bellway Homes development at Dorking Way and reported breaches of the Construction Method Statement and subsequently AGREED the following:</p> <p>i) Proposed amendment to minute 171/20/21 in accordance with Standing Order 10a:</p> <p>1) A meeting be held with Michael Butler (WBC Principal Planning Officer) and, if possible, Environmental Health to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the construction programme and assess potential issues in order to open discussions with Bellway to avoid them if possible and/or mitigate them; - Detail the current issues in tandem with the CMS; <p>2) Item a) i) 1) to be enacted as soon as possible with the Clerk and Cllrs Tull and Bedwell proposed to meet with Officers. Allow time for action and improvement e.g. two weeks;</p> <p>3) The previously agreed leaflet drop to residents should be proactive rather than reactive (more and better communication as required in the CMS from Bellway to residents and resolve current issues to start with);</p> <p>4) Follow up item 1) with a meeting to review and hopefully report improvements - ideally before the end of May and follow up with any further actions;</p> <p>5) Communication with residents early June.</p> <p>b) Members AGREED the amended plans for application: 21/00762/FULEXT (Land west of Dorking Way, Calcot). However, it was further AGREED that it must be stressed that the newly proposed hours are only accepted by the Council if 'no working' on Sundays and Bank Holidays means absolutely no working whatsoever no matter the type of work i.e. this also includes internal fittings works.</p>	
25/21/22	<p>West Berkshire Council Planning decisions</p> <p>Members acknowledged the following planning decisions as made by West Berkshire Council:</p> <p>21/00515/HOUSE: 4 Blackwater Rise, Calcot: Demolition of front garage and porch canopy. Construction of a single storey front extension as part of a garage conversion to form a new living room, cloakroom and porch. GRANTED.</p> <p>21/00531/HOUSE: 21 Latimer Drive, Calcot: Proposed single storey rear extension to existing dwelling. GRANTED.</p>	
26/21/22	<p>Planning Appeal – Decision</p> <p>Members acknowledged the following appeal decision:</p> <p>APP/W0340/W/20/3261927: Mayberry, Mill Lane, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire, UK RG31 7RS: relaxation of a condition relating to planning application number 143454 for the removal and lopping of Leylandii trees. THE APPEAL IS ALLOWED AND PLANNING PERMISSION IS GRANTED.</p>	

No.	Notes	Action
27/21/22	<p>Financial Information</p> <p>a) Payments – Members AGREED the payment of items listed on payment sheet 01-21/22;</p> <p>Please note that the payment sheet will be issued to the Finance Committee Chairman by post after the meeting for signing.</p> <p>b) Members acknowledged that the 2020-21 year-end accounts were completed by the Clerk and Accountant remotely and the accounts are now closed. Members unanimously reviewed and APPROVED the following documentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The Assets Register as agreed with the Accountant; ii) The Unaudited Financial Statements 2020/21; iii) The Annual Return financial data for 2020/21. <p>c) Members acknowledged that a final VAT claim has been submitted for the 2020/21 financial year for the period 1st January 2021 to 31st March 2021 totalling £4,832.45. Over the last financial year the Council has reclaimed a total of: £15,515.02 in VAT.</p> <p>d) Members acknowledged the Year End Income vs Expenditure report with no comment;</p> <p>20:38 RESIDENT EXITED THE MEETING</p> <p>e) Members acknowledged that the Council will receive the sum of £46,608.85 for the period 1st October 2020 to 31st March 2021 from planning application: 19/01544/FULEXT Land West Of Dorking Way, Dorking Way, Calcot, Reading, Berkshire. Monies are expected on 11th May 2021.</p> <p>f) Possible projects for a Members' Bid Application were discussed and the following order of priority was AGREED: repair the broken steps at the Holymead play area and two x portable SIDs. Wildflower planting was not prioritised at this time.</p> <p>g) Members acknowledged that a Property Taxation Officer from WBC has advised that they are now submitting the Council's details to the Valuation Office Agency to request they re-assess the current assessment to take into consideration The Garage. However, as the Council is currently in receipt of the Small Business Rates Relief and the Officer is going to be reporting this new building as an increase rather than a new assessment, the Small Business Rates Relief the Council currently receives will remain eligible depending on the new Rateable Value.</p>	
28/21/22	<p>Internal Audit – Financial Year 2020/21</p> <p>Members acknowledged that the Accountant provided the Internal Auditor with the year-end accounts on Tuesday 4th May 2021. The Internal Audit report is expected in time for the Council's June 2021 meeting so that the AGAR can be agreed prior to completion of the Internal Audit and all documents submitted to the external auditor before the July deadline.</p>	
29/21/22	<p>Meeting with West Berkshire Council regarding devolution and Shared CIL monies projects:</p> <p>The written detail from WBC had not been received prior to the meeting and this item is, therefore, moved to June 2021.</p>	

No.	Notes	Action
30/21/22	<p>Meeting with WBC re the Cycle Hub and additional storage</p> <p>Members acknowledged that WBC has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agreed three possible locations for additional storage; - Stated that the storage unit must be a container; - Stated that the storage unit must be as small as possible and not used to store any unnecessary items; - Stated that the container should be placed on a concrete base; - Confirmed that they will pay for the cost of the storage unit. <p>WBC is very keen to progress with the Cycle Hub and some fun days have been scheduled for the summer months. Ideally, The Garage would be cleared in preparation for these days but they could go ahead without it.</p> <p>Members AGREED that The Garage can be cleared but not until the new storage unit is in place.</p> <p>Members AGREED that the Council would be prepared to hire a skip to enable the clearance.</p>	
31/21/22	<p>Educafe</p> <p>Information was provided in 'Open Forum'. However, Cllr Oloko agreed to become a member of the Community and Environment Committee. Supported by all Councillors. AGREED.</p>	
32/21/22	<p>Chairman's Remarks</p> <p>The Chairman reminded members that the next full council meeting, scheduled to take place on Monday 21st June 2021, will be a face-to-face meeting in the Beansheaf Centre unless the Government make any changes to their recent decision on Council meetings.</p> <p>Members AGREED that the Zoom subscription should remain in place for one more month.</p>	
	<p>There being no other business, the meeting closed at 21.13</p>	

Signed: Dated:

Minutes prepared by	Pam Kirkpatrick, Clerk
Minutes dated	12 th May 2021



Parish Council Report for the period to 4th May 2021

Cllrs Argyle and Somner

(Tilehurst South & Holybrook Ward)

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

Council

The Annual Meeting of Council was held virtually on 4th May, having been brought forward from the original date of 11th May due to the rules on virtual meetings (more below).

At the meeting we elected Cllr Clive Hooker as Chairman of Council and Cllr Rick Jones as Vice-Chairman, with a video shown of a ceremonial hand over of the chain of office recorded previously in the grounds of Shaw House. Congratulations to Cllrs Hooker and Jones, and many thanks to Cllr Graham Pask, the outgoing Chairman, who ended up serving two years in the Chair due to the impact of Covid on Council business.

The Leader of Council, Lynne Doherty, announced some changes to the Executive (further to those announced at the Executive meeting on 25th March) and the full list is set out below.

There were also some changes to membership of committees and a rotation of some Committee Chairmen, plus appointments to certain outside bodies (with the usual adjournment of the main meeting and series of “stand up then sit down” annual committee meetings replaced by a series of Zoom committee meetings after the main meeting).

In addition we considered a refresh of the Council Strategy and new health scrutiny arrangements (more below), and a restructuring of the Place Directorate.

Executive

Amongst other items, the recent Executive meeting on 29th April approved the new Risk Management Strategy (subject to slight amendment) and the draft terms relating to the proposed agreement with Newbury Rugby Club in relation to the Sports Ground provision at their site.

The next meeting of the Executive will be on 10th June.

Meetings – The Remote Meeting Rules

As reported last month, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 cease to have effect on Friday (7th May) (hence the bringing forward of the Council’s Annual Meeting). The court action referred to last month was heard on 22nd April and judgment was handed down on 28 April.

The judgment of the Administrative Court was that “place” in Schedule 12, LGA 1972 means a physical, not a virtual, place:

“Conclusion

89 *For these reasons, we conclude that the Secretary of State was correct in November 2016 and July 2019 to say that primary legislation would be required to allow local authority “meetings” under the 1972 Act to take place remotely. In our view, once the Flexibility Regulations cease to apply, such meetings*

must take place at a single, specified geographical location; attending a meeting at such a location means physically going to it; and being "present" at such a meeting involves physical presence at that location.

90 *We recognise that there are powerful arguments in favour of permitting remote meetings. But, as the consultation documents show, there are also arguments against doing so. The decision whether to permit some or all local authority meetings to be conducted remotely, and if so, how and subject to what safeguards, involves difficult policy choices on which there is likely to be a range of competing views. These choices have been made legislatively for Scotland by the Scottish Parliament and for Wales by the Senedd. In England, they are for Parliament, not the courts.*

91 *Subject to what follows, the claim will be dismissed.*

Postscript

92 *After the judgment was circulated in draft, it was pointed out that we have not determined the question whether a meeting which is required by the 1972 Act to take place in person is "open to the public" or "held in public" if the only means by which the public are permitted to access it are remote. There was brief reference to the meaning of these phrases in submissions, but we were not asked to determine the question now raised. However, we have decided to permit the parties to address us separately on it in the light of our conclusions on the meaning of "meeting", "place", "present" and "attend" in the 1972 Act.*

93 *Accordingly, we shall give directions for the parties to make submissions on this point before making a final order in this case."*

As also reported last month, there is a call for evidence by the Government seeking to understand the experience of local authorities regarding remote meetings. WBC is providing evidence of the success (as we see it) of our holding meetings remotely and, indeed, WBC has been singled out by the Local Government Association as an exemplar in the field.

Meetings – Physical, Hybrid or Virtual?

WBC is continuing to review how to hold public meetings in a Covid safe fashion, coupled with a desire to continue to stream our meetings via YouTube.

Hopefully we will be able to get back to "normal" meetings after 21st June, but in the interim the restrictions posed by the health and safety limits on the number of individuals a meeting room can accommodate in a Covid safe manner (for example the normal capacity of the Council Chamber is reasonably substantial, as anyone who has attended a District-Parish Conference will attest, but the fully Covid safe capacity is 18), and the desire to stream meetings (the Council Chamber is the room with the best facilities), mean that some meetings may look and feel somewhat different to pre-Covid.

We expect to publish fresh meeting guidance shortly.

Executive Membership

The new Executive roles are:

- Leader of Council and portfolio holder for District Strategy and Communications - Lynne Doherty
- Deputy Leader of Council and portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing - Graham Bridgman
- Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care - Jo Stewart
- Portfolio holder for Children, Young People and Education - Dominic Boeck
- Portfolio holder for Environment and Waste - Steve Ardagh-Walter
- Portfolio holder for Finance and Economic Development - Ross Mackinnon
- Portfolio holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation - Hilary Cole
- Portfolio holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture - Howard Woollaston
- Portfolio holder for Planning, Transport and Countryside - Richard Somner

Committees

As mentioned above, there have been some changes to membership of committees and to Committee Chairmen, etc. An updated list will be on the website shortly.

Health Scrutiny

Health Scrutiny Committee

Prior to the creation of this new Committee at the Annual Council Meeting, health scrutiny had been allocated to the Overview and Management Scrutiny Commission. More focussed emphasis on health scrutiny was desired, due to:

- the proposals for change in the Health and Social Care White Paper (changes to the structure of the NHS, putting Integrated Care Systems on a statutory footing, integrating Clinical Commissioning Groups at the system footprint, etc)
- the fact that both the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust and the Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are preparing proposals and supporting business cases for redevelopment of their existing hospitals (or even construction of brand new hospitals) that will be going out to consultation in the coming months; and
- the importance of health matters having increased considerably as a result of the Covid pandemic (and the expectation that this will remain a key focus as we enter the recovery phase).

So, the new Committee has been formed and will also link into health scrutiny at a system level as set out below.

BOB JHOSC

Yet more acronyms. At the Annual Meeting we also agreed to engage with the formation of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission for the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (“BOB”) to conduct health scrutiny at a system level.

Council Strategy Refresh

The Council Strategy was agreed in 2019 to cover the four years to 2023 and this is a half time refresh to articulate the progress that has been made, and to introduce new or updated projects to support the delivery of the Council’s core business and priorities for improvement.

The refreshed Council Strategy builds on the enhanced strategic framework developed during the first two years of the Strategy (eg the Environment Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy, the Communication and Engagement Strategy and the Recovery and Renewal Strategy) and sets out the priorities for improvement over the remaining two years, reaffirming the commitment to continue the delivery of the core services that people in West Berkshire need and value.

The revised and refreshed Strategy will be available on the council’s website shortly.

Covid-19

Supporting Communities

There is no doubt what a difficult year we have all been through. However, tremendous work has been witnessed in our communities and Council staff have made strenuous efforts to respond to the needs of residents throughout the pandemic, over and above a huge amount of regular work.

You can see some of the highlights in a booklet prepared by the Council’s communications team.

Blossom in to Spring

As a Council we have thought deeply about how we could all reflect on those we have lost during the pandemic. Ornamental white cherry trees will be planted across West Berkshire in an act of remembrance of the 248 lives taken by Covid-19 since March 2020. Later in the year we will be working with parish and town councils, and with employers, to identify suitable sites – the WBC Countryside and Building Communities Together Teams will co-ordinate this project. We feel certain that there will be no shortage of volunteers across the district to care for these trees in the same way our communities have cared for each other in recent times.

The Roadmap Out Of Lockdown

12th April saw the next step of the roadmap out of lockdown with the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres.

Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms could also reopen (but only for use by people on their own or in household groups).

Self-contained accommodation such as campsites and holiday lets, where indoor facilities are not shared with other households, were also permitted to reopen.



With the next step – on 17th May, if the tests are met - the government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.

This means that most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of Six, or two households, will apply.

The Government has outlined the four tests of Pace, Efficacy, Pressure on the NHS, and Risk of Variants - further information about the easing of lockdown can be found in the Four Step Plan.

Local Infection Rates



Berkshire generally continues to see a reduction in Covid-19 infection rates although there remain a small number of new cases being reported daily. At the time of writing the rolling weekly rate in West Berkshire is around 14 cases per 100,000 and has been relatively low for the whole of April.

As previously referred to, Berkshire local Covid information about the daily reported cases in the district (and across Berkshire), and the weekly per 100,000 rate (one of the principal factors in any decision making) can be accessed from Berkshire Public Health website.

Vaccinations – National Position

Weekly reports on the vaccine rollout are being published by NHS here, giving data at an Integrated Care System (ICS) level – in our case at the level of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (“BOB”) ICS. Additionally, Government data can be found here.

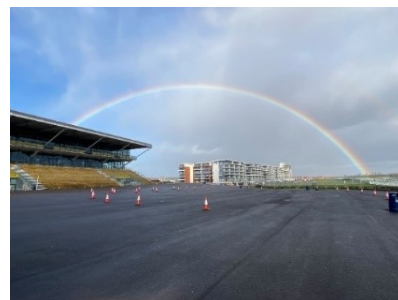
Vaccinations – Local Position

The GP led vaccination centre at Newbury Racecourse is focusing on second vaccinations for cohorts 1 – 9 and will be closing in the next few weeks when that is complete. Arrangements are being firmed up about the location of ongoing community vaccination delivery in the week commencing 3 May, but is thought likely to be pharmacy based (but no official announcement has yet been made).

Anyone in cohorts 1 – 9 who have not yet been invited to receive their first vaccine are encouraged to either contact or register with a GP or book direct.

The direct booking system can also be used as the NHS calls further age groups forward for vaccination.

Further information regarding vaccination can be found on the Berkshire Public Health website.



Community Testing - free home test kits



Rapid widespread testing – also known as lateral flow testing or community testing - is a key tool in the fight against Coronavirus. Lateral flow testing can identify people who are asymptomatic and may be spreading the virus without knowing it (and is only to be used by people who don't have coronavirus symptoms).

Free home testing kits can be collected from our community testing centres, our mobile collect van (see below), and participating pharmacies – for more see here.

Using this method for twice-weekly testing in the months ahead can help us all get back to normal.

West Berkshire Mobile Community Collect

WBC are distributing lateral flow device testing home kits across the district.

Community Collect is a government programme to make lateral flow device testing home kits available to families and households with children and young people at Primary or Secondary School, or College, including childcare and support bubbles.

West Berkshire Mobile Community Collect is in operation from Monday to Friday, with a different specified route around the district each day - the routes and timetable are available at the link above.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board

The Local Outbreak Engagement Board continues to meet fortnightly to update residents of the current activities relating to Covid-19 in and around the district (and beyond). Public meetings are available on the Council's YouTube channel and further information about the Board can be found here.

Coronavirus Information on the WBC Website

The Council keeps up to date information for residents and businesses on the website.

Community Support Hub

The WBC support hub can still be contacted on 01635 503579 if needed.

Local Economy

Support for Businesses

WBC has been focussing its efforts to distribute the new one-off Government Restart Grants to businesses in the district as quickly as possible. Grants up to £18k are being awarded to individual businesses that were forced to close due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Since the new scheme was announced in March, the Council has processed almost £6.5m worth of grants to businesses in the non-essential retail, hospitality, accommodation, personal care and leisure categories.

To make it simpler for businesses, the Council has automatically processed payments to those who have received a business grant previously. Any business that has not received a grant from the Council before, and believes they are eligible to receive one, should apply. Information about eligibility and how to apply can be found on the Council's web page.

Education

Primary School Preferences

The proportion of children given a place at their preferred primary school has increased this year with West Berkshire Council allocating the first choice place in almost 95% of cases.

Parents were told which school their children had been allocated in April. This 1,675 applications were made by the parents of children starting school in September 2021 - of these, 1,581 children were given a place at their first-choice school.

Choosing the right primary school is something parents think about very carefully so we're delighted to be able to offer most people their top choice of school this year.



Consultation on specialist education centre in Theale

Following a positive response to a consultation at the end of 2020 on a proposal to develop a specialist resourced provision for up to 42 secondary aged learners (aged 11 to 18 years) with complex social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), views on the development of the old Theale Primary School site at Church Street, Theale are now being sought via a consultation closing at midnight on Sunday, 13 June.

Active Walking and Cycling Proposals



Berks AT Schemes – commonplace.

Although the opportunity to comment on our West Berks Active Streets and Calcot School Streets proposed schemes to make streets safer for walking and cycling closed on 23rd April, you can still find out more about what School Streets schemes are by clicking on the video link here

If you have any specific walking and cycling proposals of your own, please use the West Berkshire Active Travel Heat Map in our engagement platform to choose a location and add your suggestion in the comments by Friday, 2nd July 2021: Have Your Say Today – West

Environment

Carbon savings grants help schools to be greener

Carbon savings grants secured from the Government are being used to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills, with the projects supporting our target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 as part of our Environment Strategy.

Earlier this year, The Downs School in Compton was awarded a Government grant of £232k to be spent on decarbonisation projects to help the school be greener.



The funding was used to install 31 new aluminium windows across various buildings in the school, LED lighting to 80% of the school buildings, and solar panels to two buildings.

We congratulate The Downs School on completing this project in a tight timescale, especially as the work coincided with the return of pupils to school after the Covid-19 lockdown.

Carbon reduction projects worth nearly £0.5m secured for three schools and a community centre

WBC has secured a grant of £487k from the Government for further decarbonisation works. Projects have been put forward for schools in Hermitage, Hungerford, and Thatcham Park, along with Thatcham Family Hub, to benefit from the grant.

The work will include replacing existing heating systems with "greener" solutions such as air source heat pumps, solar electricity, LED lighting, and building management systems. Detailed design is underway and work is expected to be carried out over the summer of 2021 with a completion date expected by the end of September 2021.

Climate Change Bond Investors donate their interest to Wildflower Verges

1 in 6 people who invested in West Berkshire's ground-breaking Climate Change Bond liked the idea so much they have donated their interest back to the scheme.

The Council launched the country's first Community Municipal Investment last July, offering residents and community groups a unique way to invest directly in a greener future for the district. It supports West Berkshire Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and is a key part of its new Environment Strategy.

More than a hundred people who invested in the scheme chose to donate their returns back to the Council so it can be used on more green projects, rather than take the money.

West Berkshire has already used its CMI to **fully or partially finance** a number of green projects in the district, including:

- installing solar panels in six West Berkshire locations at a cost of £520k funded entirely by the bond;
- retro-fitting traffic lights at 17 locations with LED lights - the bond provided the £80k project cost which will offer energy efficiency benefits of 38207 kWh per year, equating to 21 CO2 (t) saved (some subway lighting has been upgraded to LED too);
- replacing 217 steel lighting columns with fully recyclable aluminium at a cost of £200k - the new columns have twice the life span of steel columns, which will save around £20k per year in maintenance costs;
- developing the Council's local walking and cycling infrastructure plan – including a £100k upgrade to the Thatcham to Brimpton towpath in October 2020;
- £100k of habitat restoration and capital investment in our country parks through the Council's partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT);
- tree planting and habitat creation as part of the Dunstan Park and South East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme costing £100k, to be completed this year.

The additional funds from the donation of interest are being used to support BBOWT's project to introduce wildflower verges on roads in the district. The money will go towards providing communities with wildflower guides so they can be more engaged in monitoring the verges in their local area, boosting local knowledge which can then be used to inform future projects.

Sign up to our Environment Newsletter to keep up to date with up to date with progress on our Environment Strategy as we build these new projects.

HWRC Live Webcams

WBC residents can now view the recycling centres through new live site webcams. These webcams will give residents the opportunity to have a look at real-time site conditions before they set off on their visits. View them online: Newtown Road Recycling Centre and Padworth Recycling Centre.

Rubbish and Recycling collection on Bank Holidays



Don't forget that WBC now collects rubbish and recycling on bank holidays.

If your normal collection day falls over a bank holiday, please ensure that your bin or recycling containers are out by 06:00 that day.

Planning, Transport and Countryside

Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Work has started on an improvement plan for public rights of way across West Berkshire. In order to ensure that the plan meets the needs of residents, we welcome your views. Please take our online survey to let us know:

- about your experience of using public rights of way;
- how important the network is to your health and wellbeing;
- if you've encountered any problems using public rights of way and whether your concerns were addressed.

The survey closes on 30th May.

Changes to West Berkshire's Community Transport Services

Community transport service Readibus has notified West Berkshire Council that they will cease to provide their transport services in Newbury and Thatcham.

The dial-a-ride service will continue to operate in the east of West Berkshire - which includes Tilehurst and Calcot - for as long as possible.

West Berkshire Council is grateful to Readibus for the service provided, and whilst this is regrettable for passengers who use Readibus services in Newbury and Thatcham, we wanted to ensure that those passengers are aware that there are other community transport groups providing services for local residents who are unable to use public transport and need to attend medical appointments or make shopping trips.

Community transport groups operating in Newbury and Thatcham, include:

- Thatcham Volunteer Bureau, which operates a car scheme for residents living in and around Thatcham - including Cold Ash, Crookham, and Woolhampton (to book, call 01635 862306 between 10:00 and 12:00 Monday to Friday);
- Volunteer Centre West Berkshire (VCWB), which operates a Handybus and a car scheme within Newbury and the surrounding areas:
 - contact the Car Scheme on 01635 49004 between 10:00 and 13:00 Monday to Friday;
 - contact the Handybus on 01635 37111 between 09:00 and 13:00 Monday to Friday;
 - Contact Shopmobility on 01635 523854 between 09:30 and 16:00 Monday to Saturday.

Information on all community transport schemes operating in West Berkshire, along with details on other local groups, can be found [here](#).

Health and Wellbeing

Community Forum – Mental Health and Wellbeing in West Berkshire

On Friday (30th April), Greenham Trust along with Laura Farris MP hosted a Mental Health and Wellbeing in West Berkshire Community Forum.

The forum featured expert speakers discussing the challenges and opportunities faced across West Berkshire and also highlighted some of the resources available to help.

Adult Social Care

Care Home Visiting Protocol

A revised Care Home Visitors Protocol has been issued. The principal change allows up to two named visitors and babies and young children under the age of two years old by permission of the care home manager.

Leisure and Culture

Libraries



In line with the restrictions still in place, customers will be asked to wear a face mask (unless exempt), maintain social distancing, use hand sanitiser as they enter the library, and provide details for Test and Trace.

Details of all current library opening hours, together with the Mobile Library timetable, can be found on the website [here](#). Customers will be able to choose books and use library computers for up to one hour per day. Printing, scanning and photocopying services will also be available. Visitors will need to bring their library

membership card with them in order to borrow books or DVDs and to use the computers. Visitors will also need their 4-digit library PIN, which can be reset online if needed.

The 'At Home' service delivers books and audiobooks to people who are currently self-isolating or unable to collect books from the library because of age, disability or other special circumstance. More details about this service can be obtained by calling 01635 519827 or emailing library@westberks.gov.uk.

In addition, residents can take advantage of the West Berkshire Libraries' new initiative giving customers access to 'Your Library in One App.' The free app is a quick and easy way for library users to search the catalogue, renew and reserve books and keep up to date with news from West Berkshire Libraries. Users will also have instant access to the extensive collection of free e-books, e-magazines, e-newspapers and e-audiobooks.

Customers who are not already members of the library can join online to get free, instant access to the e-library. Details can be obtained on: www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries.

Communities

Educafe wins bid to become West Berkshire's Diverse Ethnic Communities Support

Agency

WBC has appointed Educafe as the district's Diverse Ethnic Communities Support Agency, following a comprehensive bidding process conducted by the Council, Thames Valley Police and NHS Berkshire West.

In line with the Council's "Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020 – 2030," the community engagement organisation will provide a voice for local diverse ethnic communities. The Council and its partners will work with Educafe to find the best ways to meet the needs of these communities.

The Council and Educafe share a common goal to ensure that residents from diverse ethnic communities are made aware of the support that the Council, NHS, local charities and other voluntary organisations can provide. This joint aim is to help reduce health inequalities and address employment, racial and other inequalities. As part of their service, Educafe will operate a confidential Helpdesk that will direct people to the relevant service provider to meet their needs.

The Council will work in partnership with Educafe to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the wider community, agencies and public services so that they can provide the required support to the diverse ethnic community population.

Educafe will work directly with local providers to ensure that their services embrace different cultures and promote social inclusion, health and wellbeing through events, food, education and language support. There will also be opportunities for local providers to meet residents and inform them about their services at 'pop up' Community Cafés set up by Educafe.

Pop-up ethnic market stalls will also take place throughout the year to support local ethnic community enterprises. These events will promote commerce as well as shine a spotlight on the rich cultures of diverse ethnic communities amongst the wider community.

Educafe will run a free six week Job Support Club and English for Work course for people who speak English as an additional language looking to start or return to work. The course will take place from 11th June to 18th July at Newbury Town Hall, with appropriate Covid-19 safety measures in place. Further information can be obtained [here](#).

Water Safety Partnership

WBC, Thames Valley Police, the Canal & River Trust, the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, South Central Ambulance Service and the NHS have come together to work on a Water Safety Partnership in West Berkshire.

The aim of the partnership is to work closely together to improve the safety of the waterway through the district for residents and visitors using the canals and rivers. It will also look at addressing the broad issues of water safety and river usage, working to raise awareness of the risks of waterways amongst communities most at risk and engaging with the public, private and voluntary sectors with responsibility for waterways.

Communications Channels

As well as Twitter there are also a number of Facebook pages which the Council uses, for example:

- West Berkshire Council;
- West Berkshire Community Support Hub Group;
- West Berkshire Libraries.



The WBC website also contains more about the CSH and useful information for residents and businesses:

- Residents <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-residents>
- Business <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-business>
- Community hub <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub>
- Broadcast meetings [West Berkshire Council YouTube Channel](#)

Linked to all of these initiatives is the WBC Customer Service telephone line: 01635 551111.

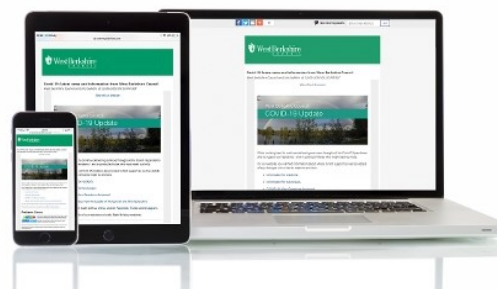
Newsletters

WBC news direct to inboxes

WBC has launched a new email subscription service to make it easier for residents to receive news and information about council services.

Residents can **sign up** to receive information on a range of topics - from general news to specific updates on Covid-19, the environment, waste and recycling and business news.

It's easy to subscribe - simply fill in your email address and select the topics you would like to hear more about. You can manage your preferences at any time through the link above or by following links in the emails you receive.



Other Matters

May Elections

It won't have passed anyone's attention that elections for the Thames Valley PCC and for some town and parish council vacancies are to be held (delayed due to Covid-19) on Thursday (6th May). A reminder that Polling Stations will be subject to stringent Government Covid safety measures to ensure electors can vote safely.

Statement in response to comments made by Unison West Berkshire following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh

The Council became aware late on the evening of the announcement of the death of The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh of statements made by Unison West Berkshire on their social media.

WBC distanced themselves from them completely. Nick Carter, the Council's Chief Executive has taken the matter up with the Chairman of the West Berkshire Branch of Unison as well as their National office.

The Council's own response to the sad news of the Duke's passing were published on Friday both internally and to the wider community. Members of the public wishing to express their condolences can also send a message to the Royal Family at <https://www.royal.uk/books-condolence>.

Nick Carter announces retirement

Nick Carter, Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council announced his planned retirement in August this year. Nick has been with WBC for twenty three years, serving as Chief Executive for over fifteen of those. A cross party working group made up of the Leader, portfolio holders and opposition representation has met to profile the role of Chief Executive and recruitment is currently taking place.

RBH Trust - Governor Elections

The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust will be having elections for nine Governors in June, including for one public seat representing West Berkshire and Borders.

Full details are at <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/open-elections.htm> - potential Governors need to be members of the Trust before they are eligible to stand in an election (but it's quick and easy to become a member – full details on the website).

Parish Matters

Members Bids

The opportunity for capital funding through Members bids has been shared for the 2021/22 municipal year – this has been passed on to the Clerk for consideration and will once again permit a fund of £5,000 per Ward Member.

The bid process stipulates the need to meet given criteria and to be match funded by the Parish / Organisation applying.