

(Because I was away during May, this report covers the two months)

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

The Council met for its annual meeting on 8 May, Locally there are two significant changes.

First, I am absolutely delighted that Cllr Carol Jackson-Doerge, who represents Burghfield (along with Ian Morrin), was elected as Chairman of Council for 2019/20.

The other change is that Cllr Graham Bridgeman (Mortimer) moved from the Corporate Services portfolio (a little over 4% of the WBC budget) to the Adult Social Care portfolio (over 32% of the budget and the largest service spend), so challenging times are ahead!

Elections/Appointments

The following were elected/appointed for 2018/19:

Chairman of Council	Carol Jackson-Doerge (<i>Burghfield</i>)
Vice-Chairman of Council	Peter Argyle
Leader of Council	Graham Jones
Deputy Leader of Council	Hilary Cole
Executive:	Graham Jones: Leader, plus Strategy
	Hilary Cole: Deputy Leader, plus Planning, Housing & Waste
	Dominic Boeck: Health and Wellbeing, Leisure & Culture
	Graham Bridgman: Adult Social Care
	Anthony Chadley: Finance and Transformation & Property
	Jeanette Clifford: Highways and Transport & Environment and Countryside
	Lynne Doherty: Children, Education & Young People
	Marcus Franks: Community Resilience & Partnerships
	James Fredrickson: Economic Development & Communications
	Rick Jones: Corporate Services

Ward Boundary Changes

The *West Berkshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2018* was made on 26 April 2018, confirming the new WBC ward boundaries as detailed in previous reports.

It is now official that the WBC elections in May 2019 will see a three-member Burghfield and Mortimer Ward including Beech Hill, Stratfield Mortimer and Wokefield, a single-member Aldermaston Ward including Padworth, and a single-member Bradfield Ward including Ufton Nervet and Sulhamstead

Rural Broadband

According to recent research, West Berkshire has the best rural broadband, as well as the highest median download speed, in the UK! Ranked by the average broadband speed possible if everyone in the area bought the fastest available service, the research found that West Berkshire has 98.4% superfast broadband coverage with average mean best case download speeds of 355 mbps, which is exceeded only by urban areas of Bournemouth and parts of central London.

Public Protection Partnership

The PPP is a collaboration between Wokingham Borough, West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest Councils, and has now been operating for just over a year. The PPP provides services to the three councils including Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards – just as one example of the work the PPP does, the licensing team alone deals with approximately 1,130 premises licences and 5,000+ personal licenses, 2,200 taxi licences (driver/operator/vehicle), 180 animal licences, 70 street trading consents and 60 scrap metal sites and mobile collectors.

Latest Council Collective Energy Switch

West Berkshire householders who signed up for the latest round of the West Berkshire Energy Switch could save an average of £144.44 each following an auction between energy companies.

Households in the district who haven't yet signed up are still able to access the auction winning deals secured through the collective offer by simply signing up via www.westberks.gov.uk/communityswitch before the on-line offer expires on 3 July. Residents without internet access can contact 01635 503267 by 22 June to sign up.

Consultation on a draft Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

SuDS mimic natural drainage to manage surface water run-off from a development and allow for the collection, storage and treatment of surface water in order to reduce flood risk caused by development. They also help to improve water quality and can improve landscape amenity and biodiversity.

WBC is consulting on a draft SuDS SPD (SPDs are material considerations in the planning process and provide further information and additional detail to policies within the Local Plan) until Monday 23 July. The draft SPD provides guidance on the approach that should be taken to SuDS in new developments in West Berkshire so as to manage and mitigate surface water flood risk.

The draft SPD can be viewed at: <http://www.westberks.gov.uk/sudsspd> and at all public libraries in the district during their normal opening hours. Comments can be submitted online by using the Council's consultation portal: <http://consult.westberks.gov.uk/portal>.

Consultation on a new strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

WBC is consulting until Friday 20 July on this new draft strategy setting out WBC's overarching vision and direction for SEND services over the next five years. The draft strategy sets out a commitment to ensuring that all young people with SEND reach their full potential and are effectively prepared for their life beyond school, training and further education, in five key strands:

- Improving inclusion and education outcomes for children with SEND in Early Years settings and mainstream schools;
- Developing more local provision to meet the needs of children with SEND;

Enabling young people with SEND to have good physical and mental health and wellbeing;

- Improving Post-16 education, learning, employment and training; and
- Improving transitions for young people with SEND to enable them to prepare for adulthood.

More information on how the strategy has been developed, and the consultation, can be found at www.westberks.gov.uk/sendstrategy2018.

Once the consultation has closed an anonymised summary of the comments received will be published explaining where any proposals have changed or, if changes are not made, why not. The final Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 2018-2023 will be published in the autumn.

Local Matters

Community Conversation – Drugs

Last week I met with Graham Bridgman and Ian Morrin (WBC councillors for Mortimer and Burghfield), the Rt Hon John Redwood MP, Inspector Chris Ward (Thames Valley Police local area commander), Ian Macfarland (Burghfield Parish Councillor), Cally Morris (Burghfield Parish Clerk) and a representative from Willink School to discuss how we can work together to improve the health and wellbeing of young people and mitigate any potential use of cannabis in public spaces across our area.

It was encouraging to hear the work the Willink has been doing in being visible both pre and post-school on the recreation ground. There is also some concern regarding smoking on the walking route to and from school and it was suggested that this activity could be disrupted by encouraging dog owners to walk their dogs in Wokefield Common during these times.

The recreation ground has CCTV and some footage was shown of possible criminal damage being carried out to lights on the Pavilion - this has now been passed to TVP for further investigation

It was agreed to investigate the cost of using a sniffer dog to visit the Willink termly (something the Willink is keen upon, (but doesn't have the resources for) to send a clear message both to the children and parents of our intent to protect the children from drifting into the use of cannabis. GB said that he would take this up with SMPC, whilst Carol, Ian, Ian and Cally take it up with BPC (Chris Ward is also to explore possible TVP funding to get it started – but not ongoing funding).

We also discussed having a community conversation at the Willink to take the issue forward and the Willink is currently looking at arranging a meeting.

The Good Exchange

Cllr Jackson-Doerge meet with Julian May of Greenham Common The Good Exchange for an initial discussion re potential options for funding for community projects. These include but limited to, upgrading of garages in Hunters Hill area, maintenance of unadopted roads within Burghfield etc.

Years of budget cuts have made austerity the new reality in the UK and The Good Exchange sees the pain it's causing. Using Digital technology that brings multiple grants, donations and fundraising activities together and instantly matches the grant makers and donors that have money to give, with the charities and community groups that need money is where it starts.

Garland School

Cll Morrin & Jackson-Doerge, meet with Emily Dawkins Headteacher Garland School to discuss pre planning application for an additional classroom/space for pre and post school facilities and also providing facilities for the future growth of the school,

Heathrow Rail Link

Network Rail is proposing to build a 6.5km rail link connecting Reading and Slough with Heathrow Airport. The new link – most of which would be underground – would speed up journeys by allowing passengers from the district to travel to the airport without going via London Paddington.

As well as quicker, more convenient, journeys, a new tunnel is intended to reduce congestion and improve air quality, and support local businesses in competing in international markets. Network Rail is currently holding a consultation on the proposal and residents are encouraged to take part - the consultation is available at www.networkrail.co.uk/heathrow and open until 22 June.

Chief Constable's annual Visit to WBC

The Chief Constable will be attending WBC on 3rd July prior to the full council meeting, to provide members with his annual update. The PCC and LPA Commander, Supt Lindsey Finch will also be in attendance.

Should BPC wish councillors to ask any questions on your behalf these must be submitted by 26th June. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions on your behalf on the day.

Burghfield Box Kart Bash – Sunday 24 June

Hermits Hill, The Hatch and Theale Road will all be closed to through traffic between 09:00 and 19:00 on the 24th while Burghfield Santas hold the Box Kart Bash on Hermits Hill (= Reading Road). All traffic will be diverted via Clayhill Road, Hawksworth Road, and vice versa. There will also be no waiting permitted on any of the roads to be closed or its diversion route as necessary.

All roads will be re-opened as soon as the event is over, and the roads are cleared.

Unauthorised Traveller Encampments

Since 3 May there have been 22 unauthorised encampments within the WBC district. Whilst most of these have not presented any significant problems Thames Valley Police and WBC have worked with travellers and the community generally to address issues as they have arisen.

Whilst there can be understandable frustration at what might appear to be slow progress sometimes, must undertake due process and follow the procedures set out in legislation, which can require a formal application to the Magistrates' Court to obtain a Court Order to secure compliance. (This process can take up to two weeks to complete, but it is often dealt with more quickly than that.)

From Acting Superintendent Lindsey Finch of TVP: *"I would like to reassure people that we are visiting and monitoring all of those unauthorised encampments. We do so on a regular basis, either on our own or together with West Berkshire Council, and we assess levels of criminality as well as the welfare of people who are living on those sites. This helps us to make sure that everybody, is kept safe. We'll continue to do that and will deal with those situations as and when they arise."*

Anti-Social Behaviour

Following the spate of damage to buses and other vehicles from stones and catapults referred to in my last report, we have contacted Inspector Chris Ward of TVP and his response was: *"Things seem to have quietened down in Burghfield as regards the buses. The neighbourhood team have been in the area and whilst there were a couple of further reports of general stone throwing, the buses have not been targeted again. I could find only two reported offences on our crime system though I am sure there were more occurrences. However, of greater note was the fact that when we spoke to Reading Buses they said they had never had any intention of suspending the service so suggestions that this was ever likely were an overreaction."* I have been in correspondence with Cllr Dave Kilshaw (SMPC) about this and we wait to see if ASB flares up again.

Padworth Household Waste Recycling Centre

The two planning applications – for extended hours and to accept household waste – were considered at the Eastern Area Planning Committee meeting on 23 May and both were granted.

GB spoke as a Ward Member - as well as joining in the debate as a member of the committee – and made the point that he was representing two different schools of thought - Padworth residents had deep concerns about road safety and excessive traffic travelling south from the site (the official route is via the A4) dating back to the application for the existing site and the existing use, whilst many residents in the east of the district were unhappy at being unable to use the Smallmead HWRC and were keen to make use of this site for non-recyclable waste.

GB manage to get an informative about signage within the site added to the permissions because I think this could be improved, and I would ask all residents from the other parishes to access the site via the A4 and not via Silver Lane, Rectory Road, etc.

West Berkshire Council will receive a boost thanks to a £200,000 grant from the Government

A number of new initiatives will be enabled by the funding including the recruitment of outreach and project workers to engage with a community which is often hard to reach and a fund to help remove barriers to finding stable accommodation.

The funding was secured following a successful bid by West Berkshire Council to a £30 million Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant created by the Government. The bid was created with the support and involvement of local partners including A2 Dominion, Sovereign Housing Association, Loose Ends, Eight Bells, Two Saints (hostel), Adult Social Care, Healthwatch West Berkshire, Thames Valley Police, Swanswell, West Berkshire Homelessness Charity, Greenham Common Trust, CCG.

rough sleepers, plus an extension to the prison release scheme to allow more time for people leaving prison to find somewhere to live so that they don't become rough sleepers.

£3 million road resurfacing project underway

West Berkshire Council has been awarded an additional £3 million from the Department of Transport (DfT) to resurface a number of its A, B and C roads.

The cash will enable the council to resurface twelve sites including 1.74 miles of the A340 Pangbourne Road from the M4 over bridge to the A4 roundabout at Theale.

This is the largest of the twelve projects and works started on Monday 11 June and are scheduled to be completed by Thursday 5 July 2018 ahead of the series of large-scale summer concerts being held at Englefield.

The work is being done overnight (between 08:00pm to 05:00am) to minimise disruption for commuters and drivers who use this busy stretch of road.

A diversion will be in place along the A4 in to Reading and then out on the A329 to Pangbourne. There will also be some shorter diversions around Bradfield for light vehicles.