

Parish Council Report for period to 10 September 2019

Cllr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Burghfield and Mortimer Ward)

PC Andrew Harper

I am sure that everyone, like me, was shocked and saddened by the death of PC Harper when responding to a report of a burglary near to Sulhamstead earlier in the month. The matters are now part of a criminal investigation and I cannot add any additional comment.

Along with many other organisations, WBC observed a minute's silence and the flag at our Market Street office was lowered to half-mast. There is a book of condolence in the Council reception area for anyone wishing to sign.

WBC has a good working relationship with Thames Valley Police and this has continued through this difficult time.

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

August is generally a quiet month and there were no significant public meetings of the Executive or Council.

The Executive met last Thursday (5 September) and discussed a number of items including financial updates and target hardening of sites susceptible to traveller incursion (as to which, more below under the NAG heading). Financially we are closer to expected income/spend than this time last year when you may recall we had a large overspend/under budgeting, principally in Adult Social Care. The budget is substantially more on target.

The September Council meeting will be held on Thursday (12 September) and the agenda includes a report on the Heathrow fourth runway consultation and various motions.

Four Houses Corner

As everyone is no doubt aware, Four Houses Corner featured in the investigations by TVP following the death of PC Harper.

WBC has a statutory duty to provide sites within the district for gypsy and travelling families and Hilary Cole, the Portfolio Holder for Housing, is meeting fortnightly with TVP, assessing the difficult relationship which continues with the residents at Four Houses Corner and various authorities. The situation is kept carefully monitored.

There remain half a dozen or so occupied properties, however some residents have over a period of time been found alternative accommodation. It has long been intended that in due course the site will be cleared, cleaned and refurbished.

Planning permission granted to Newbury College

Further to my report last month about the loan from WBC to the college, plans to establish the University Centre at Newbury (UCN) took a significant step forward with the recent granting of planning permission for the multi-million pound development. The Centre will provide degrees and other higher level qualifications in the key sectors of digital technology, business and finance, engineering, health and social care and construction.

The original timescales for the completion of the building have been extended to focus on state-of-the-art digital facilities and achieve the demanding zero-carbon standard; constructing the first public building in West Berkshire to achieve this new level in sustainability.

A Level results

The results for this year's A levels were announced on 15 August.

There were 2,478 A level entries, with more than a fifth of results (22%) at grade A* or A, and 71% results at grade C or above. Many congratulations to all (and to their parents!).

GCSE results

Picking up their results on 22 August was the culmination of two years of hard work by more than 1,700 students and the school staff.

West Berkshire secondary schools have performed above the national average in all key measures. In English, the pass rate is provisionally 14% above the average, and 16% above in higher grades, and in Mathematics the results exceeded the national average by 11%. In two schools, combined English and Maths results improved by five or more percentage points from 2018.

Updated Local List of Heritage Assets

Further to my report last month, and following a six-week public consultation period, Iverne House in Burghfield is one of a further six heritage assets added to the Local List of Heritage Assets.

West Berkshire Climate Conference

The West Berkshire Climate Conference will explore different ways residents, businesses, local organisations and the Council in West Berkshire can help tackle the climate crisis.

The free conference will be held on Monday 28 October at Newbury College. Tickets will go on release on 16 September via the Council's website and more information about the conference will be published in the coming weeks on the WBC website and via Facebook and Twitter.

Thames Valley Berkshire Smart City Cluster project funding

WBC has awarded Berkshire-based company Thingitude a grant of £100k from the Thames Valley Berkshire Smart City Cluster project (funded by Thames Valley Berkshire LEP) to deliver an innovative real world trial until next February, to address the issues and impacts that slips, trips and falls have on the elderly, help them to look after themselves better and provide valuable information to help with care planning.

The award is one of four to be made in the first round of competitive calls and gives WBC the opportunity and innovation to work directly with local businesses to improve services for our residents - preventing falls among our most vulnerable residents and, more widely, providing excellent adult social care are among our top priorities as a council and this ground-breaking project is enabling us to do that.

I am due to be interviewed for That's TV on Friday (13 September) about this project.

Local Matters

Burghfield and Mortimer Neighbourhood Action Group

Further to previous reports, the new BMNAG Constitution was agreed last Wednesday (4 September). The area for the NAG is now formalised as the parishes of Beech Hill, Burghfield, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer, Sulhamstead, Ufton Nervet and Wokefield, with BPC and SMPC appointing two members and the other parishes appointing one each (this does not preclude other parish councillors from being co-opted as members in another capacity).

The meeting discussed traveller incursions at length and the use of police powers, landowners' civil powers (eg the recent use of bailiffs by SMPC to clear the Fairground), local injunctions and local

authority powers. Further discussions are intended in the near future (on top of which I am looking at the current WBC/TVP protocol on encampments), so this subject is most definitely on the radar.

[District / Parish Conference – 22 October \(18:00 for 18:30\)](#)

A date for the diary with more details to follow.

[Thames Valley Police - Special Constable recruitment](#)

TVP is seeking volunteer police officers:

- Applicants must be at least 18 to apply and join;
- There is no upper age limit for applying to the police service (but the normal retirement age for police officers is 60 years, and Special Constables have to undertake a significant amount of training before they can patrol independently);
- Applicants must either be a British Citizen, a citizen of the EU or other states in the EEA, or a Commonwealth citizen or foreign national with indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- Other criteria relate to convictions, physical and mental fitness, etc.

For more information see <http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/joinus.htm> and the guidance notes.

Parishes

[Burghfield](#)

[Planning Appeal - land at Clayhill Road and Sulhamstead Road](#)

I note the appeal (18/03014/OUTMAJ) and will be liaising with Royce about representation before the inspector (etc).

[Stratfield Mortimer](#)

[VE Day](#)

Preliminary planning by the working group, subject to agreement by SMPC (and seeking support from MVP, Mortimer Music Live, etc) is underway and Cllr Beard (no doubt ably supported by Cllr Field) will be presenting our thoughts to SMPC on Thursday (12 September).

[Birch Lane](#)

I have had a couple of meetings – with residents and with Planning Enforcement/Environmental Health. Hopefully there should be a site meeting with residents in the not too distant future.

[Budgens planning application](#)

The application to develop apartments in the car park will be going to Eastern Area Planning Committee on 18 September. The site visit is tomorrow (11 September) but I will be in Warwick, so I have given some suggestions by email as to things to review.

Graham Bridgman

10 September 2019