

Parish Council Report for October 2019

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

(This report covers the period from 10 September to the end of October.)

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

Council met on 12 September.

There were vigorous debates about Brexit and a third runway at Heathrow, and we unanimously adopted a proposal for the Personnel Committee to create a Parental Leave Policy for Councillors, seeking to encourage new or prospective parents (and particularly women) in standing for election and, if elected, reducing barriers to their fulfilling their role.

The next full Council meeting will be on 5 December.

Updated Local List of Heritage Assets

Last time I reported that Iverne House in Burghfield was designated as a heritage asset. A further consultation on five new proposed heritage assets, including Manor House/Little Manor in Burghfield (RG30 3TG), has commenced and will run until 5 December. Details can be found at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/locallist>.

Budget

The spending announcement from HMG last month (the one year Spending Review for 2020/21) included proposals for funding social care to include additional grant funding and the option for councils to levy an Adult Social Care precept at 2%. Favourable announcements were also made on the continuation of New Homes Bonus and on special educational needs funding. Unfortunately, WBC will no longer be a Business Rates Pilot authority for 2020/21 which means we will forego around £1.5m that we are benefiting from this year.

At the start of the year we decided that we would divide our savings programme for 2020/21 into two phases. Phase 1 (£4m of savings) was seen as likely to be required given our financial forecasting at the time. Phase 2 (£3m of savings) would hopefully not be required but this all depended on how the Government decided to respond to the financial challenges in social care and across the sector. Work to identify the savings needed to meet Phase 1 is virtually complete, plus the latest financial modelling suggests that demand for Adult Social Care next year may not be quite as high as we initially thought (although we will need to keep this under review).

So, whilst we await the detail in the Local Government Financial Settlement for next year (which usually arrives around Christmas), our position is currently looking more positive than it has often appeared at this time in earlier years.

Officers are currently finalising the Council Strategy Delivery Plan alongside the Executive and through that we are identifying the additional resources we will need to realise our ambitions for the next four years.

Sports and Leisure Centre Satisfaction Survey 2019

WBC is carrying out a survey of West Berkshire leisure centre users to find out how our centres are performing, and to identify areas for potential improvement.

Centre users aged 11 years or over, who use the centres to take part in an activity, watch an activity, use another service (eg onsite café or business service) or attend a non-sporting activity (eg a party or

meeting) are encouraged to give feedback - the survey should only no more than 15 minutes to complete, and responses will be used to help develop better leisure services and to guide future investments.

All completed surveys, where participants have provided their contact details, will be entered into a draw to win a year's free membership to WBC leisure centres.

For more, go to <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=36354>.

West Berkshire Climate Conference

A reminder that the conference is on Monday (28 October) at Newbury College.

Environment Strategy

The draft environment strategy following the Climate Conference (see above) will go out for public consultation in mid-November and provide six weeks for residents, businesses and town/parish councils to comment. The analysis will take place in the New Year and the recommendations will be brought to the Executive in February.

Local Matters

The Willink - Maths Hub for the South West

The Willink has been selected as a Maths Hub Lead school for the South West of England following a successful bid to the Department for Education.

Maths Hubs help schools and colleges lead improvement in mathematics education in England. They harness all the maths leadership and expertise in primary, secondary and post-16 sectors within an area to develop and spread excellent practice to continually improve the level of teaching for this key subject.

There are 37 Maths Hubs nationwide and each is a partnership, led locally by an outstanding school or college or Teaching School. The lead school identifies strategic partners, who help plan and evaluate the hub's work, and operational partners, who help carry out the hub's work.

Essentially, The Willink will be a maths leadership network centre involving schools, colleges and other organisations with maths education expertise from across its dedicate area – an exciting opportunity for The Willink that will provide opportunities for developing and sharing of best practice, in turn benefiting the students.

M4 Smart Motorway project

The M4 will be closed between junctions 6 and 8/9 over the weekends of 15-18 November and 29 November-2 December for the demolition of bridges and associated works.

Police & Crime Commissioner - Police Property Act Fund

This from the latest newsletter from Matthew Barber, Deputy PCC: *"Voluntary and community organisations have been awarded £106,733 from the Police Property Act Fund.*

The Fund, jointly managed by the PCC and the Chief Constable, is created from money recovered by the police and the proceeds from the sale of items that cannot be returned to identified owners, including seizures from criminals.

There were 61 applications to the current funding round with 27 organisations successful in receiving funding of between £1,000 – £6,925 to support the PCC's Police and Crime Plan strategic priorities of Reducing Re-Offending and Serious Organised Crime and Terrorism.

The successful projects will receive funding to support a range of issues including domestic violence perpetrators, exploitation of vulnerable people, gangs and knife crime, offender management, public awareness and substance abuse."

Burghfield and Mortimer Neighbourhood Action Group

We had a well-attended meeting on 16 October and actions are underway with a view to create two community conversations – one for The Willink and one for Mortimer (we have had one for Burghfield in the past). More on these as things firm up.

Southern Housing Group

The SHG Board has approved a strategy to re-evaluate its housing stock, meaning that where they own a limited number of properties, and this includes Burghfield and Mortimer, they intend to transfer them by 31 March 2020 to an alternative Registered Provider capable of meeting the residents' needs. There is now a consultation with such residents underway.

Mortimer Fire Station

At the annual awards ceremony for the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service on 27 September, Mortimer Fire Station was awarded Fire Station of the Year. The crew received the award for increasing the number of on-call firefighters at the fire station, leading to better fire engine availability to respond to emergencies, ultimately resulting in a more resilient service being provided to the local community.

Many congratulations to everyone at the Station!

Parishes

Stratfield Mortimer

St John's Car Park

We had a useful meeting with Chris Vidler from WBC Highways on Wednesday (23 October) and I look forward to some traffic calming proposals coming before SMPC.

Wokefield

James Lane

Just to record that Cllr Thorne and I met with Andrew Reynolds to discuss the state of James Lane – we now await a schedule of work (the main work – surface dressing – will take place in the next financial year, but some of the pre-patching may be sooner).

Graham Bridgman

27 October 2019