



WBC Parish Report for April 2022

Councillor Clive Hooker, Downlands Ward

West Berkshire Council

Council

There was no Council meeting this month. The next scheduled meeting is the Annual Meeting on 10 May when I stand down, and the new Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council will be elected, the Executive membership announced by the Leader, committee memberships confirmed or changed, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees elected, etc.

Executive

The Executive meeting scheduled for 28 April was cancelled - the next scheduled meeting is on 9 June.

Cllr Tom Marino joins the Executive

The Leader recently announced that Cllr Tom Marino (Tilehurst & Purley) will be joining the Executive with effect from the Annual Meeting on 10 May, with responsibility for Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships.

Other changes to Portfolio responsibilities include:

- Cllr Howard Woollaston is relinquishing Internal Governance, but adding Housing to his portfolio of Culture & Leisure.
- Cllr Steve Ardagh-Walter is adding Transformation to his Environment portfolio.
- Cllr Hilary Cole is stepping down from the Executive after 13 years to solely focus on her ward and residents.



Women in Politics



We are lucky to have some excellent women serving on West Berkshire Council, but there is always room for more! WBC are hosting a webinar all about women in local politics on June 1 at 19:00, so please share these details with anyone who may be interested.

(Pictured: Jo Stewart, Executive Member for Adult Social Care; Hilary Cole, who has held a number of portfolios during her 13 years on the Executive; Lynne Doherty, the Leader of WBC; and Claire Rowles, Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee.)

This webinar is non-political and it is hoped that this will generate more interest in local politics. The focus of this webinar is engagement with more women and if this event is a success WBC hope to hold regular events in the future that feature other groups of underrepresented people.

Anyone wanting to attend the webinar needs to register [here](#), and other information can be found online at westberks.gov.uk/womeninpolitics and westberks.gov.uk/beingacouncillor.

Education

School places announced for September 2022

This year WBC received 1,655 applications from the parents of children starting school in September. Of these, 1,553 children were given a place at their first-choice school, meaning that 94% of children are going to their first choice schools.

The WBC [website](#) has more information about primary school places and the next steps for parents including how to make a late application, waiting lists and the answers to other FAQs. There is also more detail about this year's place allocations.

Community

Awards ceremony for Community Champions

The latest recipients of Community Champion Awards were invited to an awards ceremony at Shaw House last month.

Winners in the 2021 awards - which recognise people who have done something special for their local community over the past year - were announced in January. You can find out more about the winners and what they have done for their communities on the [website](#).

The ceremony was a chance to celebrate their community spirit, and for the Chairman and Leader of the Council to say thank you in person to these unsung heroes.



Cost of Living

£150 Government Energy Rebate

HM Government announced that around 20 million households in England in Council Tax bands A-D will get a £150 rebate from April.

WBC are working hard to make the £150 payments to customers who paid their Council Tax by Direct Debit to them by the same Direct Debit soon.

Customers in Bands A to D who do not pay by Direct Debit will be contacted shortly with information on how they can claim their Rebate.

Business

New Business Website

The new [Business West Berkshire website](#) is now live. This website is intended to give businesses all the latest information and support channels they need to start up, relocate, and grow in West Berkshire.

As a business, there can be an overwhelming amount of information coming from different sources when you want to find out about what a place has to offer. With that in mind WBC aimed to create a one stop shop - a consolidated essential information hub for businesses in the district. This new website focuses on why you should invest in West Berkshire, business support services available, the local economy, and current projects the council is undertaking.

In the coming months and years, WBC aim to introduce more features to the website to make it a business community for all existing and potential West Berkshire businesses.

All businesses should look on the site and if anyone has any feedback or areas of improvements, please email chloe.guo1@westberks.gov.uk.

eCargo bikes available to loan

New eCargo bikes are being offered to local businesses in the district to try out as part of a new environment scheme.

Two new bikes are available with large capacity 700 litre cool boxes to hire with a third bike will be available at a later date. These are eye-catching vehicles that can be branded with vinyl if the business wishes to, so long as they are removed on return. Ideas for their use could include:

- Static / mobile promotion - indoors or outdoors, at summer fayres or events etc.
- Local deliveries, in place of small vans, demonstrating a commitment to zero-carbon transport as they have a range of about 30 miles on one charge.



The bikes are available to support the vision that West Berkshire's town centres are innovative and entrepreneurial while promoting sustainability, biodiversity and healthy living.

Anyone wishing to enquire further can contact the team via environment@westberks.gov.uk

£696k paid to local businesses through the ARG Challenge Fund



The Council's Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Challenge Fund has come to a close, and WBC have been able to distribute £696,601 to 44 local businesses through the scheme, following a very competitive assessment process.

The successful applicants can now use the funding to implement the projects they proposed to recover from the impacts of Covid-19 and stimulate economic growth. There was a strong focus from the applications received on purchasing new environmentally friendly equipment to expand services and reduce carbon emissions, along with digital assets to reach new customers or improve efficiency.

All 44 projects will be taking shape over the next few months with a big impact for the applicants and on the wider local economy. Many have committed to using local suppliers which will mean the funding continues to circulate within West Berkshire.

Environment

Thank you to all the Great British Spring Cleaners!

A big thank all who went out into their communities to clean-up as part of the Great British Spring Clean – including Cllrs Jo Stewart and Richard Somner (pictured).

Across West Berkshire communities have been organising their own litter picks - and WBC have been supporting some of these. This year the waste team collected more than 100 bags of litter, supporting groups in Ashampstead, Bucklebury, Chieveley, Mortimer, Pangbourne, Shaw Cum Donnington, Streatley, Sulhampstead Tilehurst Ufton Nervet and Woolhampton to name just a few. This included loaning out litter picking equipment and arranging the pick-up of all the rubbish collected - as well organising their own team litter-pick!

Over the past year, together with the Council's waste contractor, WBC have supported 46 community litter picking events. There are 160 adult litter pickers and 70 kids litter pickers that can be borrowed by community groups – you can find out more and apply to borrow the equipment [here](#).



Everyone has a responsibility to keep local communities clean. Please remember if public bins are full to take your rubbish home with you and recycle as much as you can.

Stamping out fly-tipping

The Public Protection Partnership are reminding anyone having a spring clean help stamp out fly tipping by always checking that anyone taking waste away has a waste carriers licence – if someone's waste carrier isn't registered and their waste is fly-tipped they could be facing a £200 fixed penalty notice.

Everyone can help by following these pointers:

- Always check someone offering to take your waste away is registered (see link above)
- Get into the habit of asking tradespeople for their waste carriers licence too
- Question why someone might be offering to take away your waste much cheaper than other quotes you've had
- Double check the licence details they've given you are valid and match who they say they are (see link above)
- If you're a tradesperson, or a waste carrier, make it a point to tell customers you're registered and show customers your licence details



Community Protection

Public Protection Partnership

Bracknell Forest West Berkshire



A shared service provided by Bracknell Forest Council and West Berkshire Council



It's really simple to check to see if someone offering to take away your waste is registered, just enter their details in the [register of waste carriers, brokers and dealers](#).

Summer opening hours at Newtown Road Recycling Centre

Extended summer opening hours at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Newtown Road, Newbury have begun.

The longer opening time means the HWRC will be open until 20:00 on Thursdays between April and September each year. On other days, the site will open as normal from 09:00 to 18:00.

There is more about the new, longer opening hours [here](#).

Levelling Up

West Berkshire is to receive over £1.6m from HM Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to help level up the community – from regenerating run down high streets to fighting anti-social behaviour.

The funding also includes free tutoring, digital training and flexible courses to help adults with low-level maths skills get back into work, as well as measures to get more young people into high-skilled jobs.

The £2.6bn UKSPF is to deliver HMG's stated aim to level up the United Kingdom – regenerating communities, tackling economic decline, and reversing geographical inequalities to ensure that everyone can fulfil their potential, via the local authorities and leaders who best know what their communities need.

Current Consultations

- [School Streets Schemes – the Calcot Schools](#) – closes 30/09/22
- [Proposal for a New Sports Pitch at Manor Park, Newbury](#) – closes 12/06/22
- [The Future of Notrees Care Home, Kintbury](#) – closes 08/06/22
- [Community and Strategic Digital Signposting for West Berkshire](#) – closes 11/05/22
- [Separate Weekly Food Waste Collection Service](#) – 03/05/2022