



## **WBC Parish Report for November/December 2022**

**Councillor Clive Hooker, Downlands Ward**

### **Introduction**

This report is up to mid-December and, as with last year, there won't be a further December report - the January report (published at the start of February) will include anything that arises during the rest of December.

So, best wishes for a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

## **West Berkshire Council**

### **Council Meeting**

WBC met on 1 December when the main items on the agenda were the adoption of the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, and agreement to submit the Local Plan to the next review stage, both of which are dealt with in more detail below.

The next scheduled meeting is on 2 March, which will be the Budget Meeting of Council.

### **Executive Meeting**

The Executive met on 3 November and, as well as dealing with public and Members' questions:

- noted the Environment Strategy Annual Progress Report;
- considered the latest Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) figures and their effect on the 2023/24 WBC Budget.
- agreed the Co-Production Framework for West Berkshire;
- approved the creation of, and appointed a Member, to the BOB ICP (Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire & Berkshire West Integrated Care Partnership);
- awarded a contract for the provision of ground maintenance services;
- approved the disposal of the freehold of York House in Newbury (as surplus to WBC requirements) on the open market (either through a marketing agent or auction);
- extended the existing leisure management contract from January 2023 to June 2023.

Papers and a recording of the meeting can be found [here](#).

The next meeting is scheduled for 15 December.

### **Minerals and Waste Local Plan**

As mentioned above, WBC resolved to adopt its Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) at its meeting on Thursday 1 December, in turn following the publication of the Inspector's Report into the examination of the MWLP in October.

The MWLP forms part of the development plan for the district and provides the planning framework for Minerals and Waste development in West Berkshire to 2037. It sets out the long term vision for mineral and waste development and the policy context for assessing planning applications for minerals and waste development within West Berkshire.

The MWLP replaces all saved policies in the Replacement Minerals Local Plan for Berkshire Incorporating the alterations adopted in 1997 and 2001 (RMLP) and the Waste Local Plan for Berkshire, adopted in 1998 (WLPB) for planning decisions in West Berkshire. The MWLP has been informed by extensive consultation and has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) to assess the social, environmental and economic impacts of its policies. All documentation and information regarding the MWLP can be found [here](#).

## Local Plan

The vote at the meeting on 1 December (see above) to move the Local Plan Review submission to the next stage – ‘Regulation 19’ - ensures that West Berkshire remains a plan-led local planning authority. The Local Plan Review, a long-term strategic document used to set out the vision and framework for the area's future development, will become open for public consultation for six weeks beginning on 6 January 2023.

The Local Plan Review is the conclusion of years of work (it began in November 2018), including extensive evidence gathering; thousands of hours of Officer time; consultation with the public, neighbouring authorities, and land owners in the district; and regular cross-party meetings with Councillors who have shaped the Plan.

By 2039, the Local Plan Review will have provided approximately 9,000 new homes in the district, ensuring a mix of new homes, including affordable homes, homes for growing families, for first-time buyers and for downsizers. This includes infrastructure proposals to support new development as well as services to our existing communities.

Following extensive consultation with local stakeholders during the previous Regulation 18 consultation, major themes have been addressed, including a reduction for a new strategic development in north-east Thatcham from 2,500 dwellings to 1,500 (including 600 affordable homes).

The Plan is also business-friendly, with areas for existing West Berkshire businesses to expand and spaces to attract new businesses in to the district, creating new jobs and opportunities. The proposals prioritise the preservation of assets such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and important green spaces, as well as local flora and fauna.

Over 40 development management policies were also updated, including minimum house sizes, the maximum amount of water to be used in new dwellings as well as policies relating to health and well-being, and residential amenity.

## New Executive Director - Place

A new Executive Director has been appointed to join the WBC Senior Leadership Team.



Clare Lawrence will take up the new post in March and will lead the Place directorate – which delivers a broad range of services from housing, transport and environmental delivery through to planning, economic development and public protection.

Clare arrives at West Berkshire Council having spent 30 years in local government working at a number of councils, including two in Berkshire.

Among the key projects Clare will be involved in will be the delivery of a new Council Strategy 2023-27 which will be implemented next year, a review of the West Berkshire Local Plan and the delivery of the town-centre strategies for Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford.

## HM The Queen, Service of Thanksgiving

As anticipated last month, a Service of Thanksgiving for Queen Elizabeth II was held on Friday 4 November.

The service was held at St Nicolas Church in Newbury with residents and dignitaries alike joined in celebrating the late Queen Elizabeth II. It reflected her connection to West Berkshire and fondness for horse racing and gave thanks for her lifetime of service to the country and its people.

Guests were greeted by retired racehorse 'Barber Shop', who was the last foal bred by the late Queen Mother and was owned by the late Queen Elizabeth II. We were also joined by choirs from The Castle School and Falkland Primary School who both performed fantastic songs that all enjoyed.

The service is available to watch on their [YouTube](#) channel.



## Economy

### Cost of Living Hub

The Cost of Living Support Hub is available for residents to get help if needed.

Anyone who needs advice and support around cost of living issues should contact staff who will provide advice and match their needs with support available nationally and locally, including from local charities and voluntary organisations.

The initiative has been set up by WBC in partnership with Greenham Trust and the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire and will work closely with the local community and voluntary sector.

The hub is open Monday-Thursday from 08:30 to 17:00 and on Fridays from 08:30 to 16:30. More information about the hub and an online contact form can be found on the WBC website [westberks.gov.uk/cost-of-living](https://westberks.gov.uk/cost-of-living) or residents can contact the hub by email at [costofliving@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:costofliving@westberks.gov.uk) or by calling 01635 503333.

### Rural Prosperity Fund

West Berkshire has been provisionally allocated nearly £598k as its share of the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) – the only local authority in Berkshire to receive it.

REPF is a top-up of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, for the purpose of investing in capital projects in small businesses and community infrastructure in rural areas in order to improve productivity, connectivity and access to services. It is aimed at addressing the economic imbalances between rural and urban areas.

WBC will be working with rural stakeholders to decide how best to spend the money across a range of projects, and will be setting this out in an investment plan to be submitted to HM Government.

### Town Centre Regeneration Plans

As part of WBC's programme of work to protect and enhance the high streets and town centres of the district, Hemingway Design have been appointed to develop Place-Making Strategies for Thatcham and Hungerford town centres.

The Place-Making Strategies will include a range of suggested improvements and uses in the town centres which will enhance their vitality and economic success.

WBC will be holding an open public consultation to formulate the final plans, and hope to match the success of the Newbury Masterplan consultation which received 5,000 responses.

### Investment Zone expression of interest

The recently announced Investment Zones scheme seeks to designate specific sites around England where a number of tax incentives, regulatory flexibilities and simplified planning frameworks will apply within the site boundary.

The intention of Investment Zones is to encourage economic growth including more jobs and commercial space, particularly in under-developed areas.

WBC submitted an expression of interest to potentially designate the London Road Industrial Estate (LRIE) as an Investment Zone. It is hoped that the tax incentives could potentially bring forward additional investment in order to accelerate and enhance the existing regeneration programme for LRIE, subject the statutory planning process.

## Children and Families

### *Fostering within West Berkshire*

Many residents will have seen the John Lewis Christmas advert, and possibly considered Fostering.

WBC are proud to make sure children in care and their foster families feel supported and part of the community - by fostering, residents are able to provide a safe environment and a family life to a child unable to live at home. Their warmth and passion could help them reach their full potential and write the next chapter of their lives.

WBC hold weekly coffee mornings, informal training evenings and activity days with something for everyone. Officers can guide and support anyone interested - there are different types of foster placements, and WBC will work to help decide which works best in each individual situation.

Anyone thinking about becoming a foster carer can call the team on 01635 503429 or [email](#) them.

## Health

### *Keeping Homes Free from Damp and Mould*

One of the main causes of damp and mould in homes is condensation. This [leaflet](#) explains how condensation is formed and how to keep it to a minimum.

If you don't get rid of moisture it will encourage the growth of mould. Mould is a fungus and grows wherever there is moisture. You will see black pinpricks of mould on walls and ceilings. You will also notice a musty smell and items in cupboards can get covered in green fur. Damp and mould increase the risk of mites and can cause respiratory problems if it remains untreated.

Residents who are having issues within a private rented property and whose landlord is not helping or supporting, can contact the Environmental Health Housing Team on: 01635 503242, [email](#) or at West Berkshire Council Environmental Health and Licensing Market Street, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 5LD.

## Transport

### *Free Bus Travel this Christmas season*

Christmas is upon us and this year residents will have even more reason to leave the car at home as free bus travel will be offered again across West Berkshire.

Following on from previous successful free travel initiatives over the last year, all bus journeys within West Berkshire will be free all day on Saturday 17 and Saturday 24 December (Christmas Eve – services may finish earlier than usual).

You can travel at any time on these days, so why not take the opportunity to go Christmas shopping, look at festive lights, attend the panto at the Corn Exchange, go for a bite to eat in the local eateries, take in some of the outstanding scenery, or do a round of pre-Christmas visits to family and friends.

Additionally, the Council will put on a free "Christmas Shopper" service for selected villages around West Berkshire who don't have a bus service on Saturdays until Christmas Eve. Further details are outlined by following the [link](#).



## Community

### Community Champion Awards 2022



**COMMUNITY CHAMPION  
AWARDS 2022**



Nominations for the WBC Community Champion Awards are open. The awards are a great opportunity to say thank you to people who have done something special for the local community and will honour individuals and

community groups who have gone above and beyond to support others throughout West Berkshire this past year.

There are four categories:

- Community Group of the Year
- Lifetime Achievement Award
- The Pat Eastop Junior Citizen of the Year Award
- Volunteer of the Year

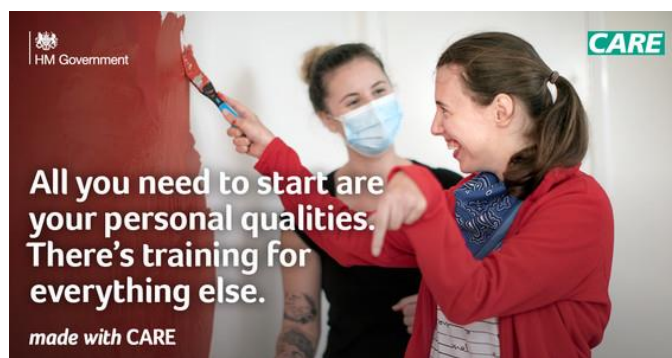
Past winners include: Cara Herman who helped set up 'All Yours Period Box' and helped raise over £27k towards period poverty; Mortimer Lunch Club which provides somewhere for older residents to meet and socialise to combat isolation and loneliness and Trevor Goodall, who following the death of his prematurely born twins in 1995, worked for his charity 'New Life' to raise over £1m over the last 25 years for specialist equipment, to increase survival for premature and seriously ill babies.

Nominations are open until 2 January. All of the awards will be judged by an independent panel and the winners will be presented with their award at a ceremony in February 2023.

### Made With Care

A new national campaign #MadeWithCare has launched to highlight the range of roles available in Adult Social Care and the difference made by these vital workers.

WBC currently have a range of roles available including social workers, occupational therapists, and wellbeing and activities coordinators for WBC's care homes. You can find out more about WBC's Adult Social Care team and see current vacancies [here](#).



### Food Waste Recycling

In the first two weeks of the new weekly food waste collection service, WBC have collected 173 tonnes of food waste to be processed into a soil conditioner.

Collections from flats and communal dwellings are now beginning.

## Environment

### Dual-Use Bins



Open spaces at Almond Avenue/Shaw Riverside, Linear Park, Northcroft & Goldwell Parks and Snelsmore Common have had some new dual-use bins installed. These bins are suitable for both litter and bagged dog waste and are part of a pilot project to help keep open spaces looking beautiful.

The benefits of dual-use bins are numerous, but the main bonus is the capacity of the new bins is over twice that of the old bins and therefore they shouldn't fill up so quickly and the rubbish will stay within the bin.



The bins look smarter, are simpler to use and are animal proof - special flaps stop animals getting in and rubbish getting out. In addition, whilst the bins are robust and durable, when they are ready to be replaced they can be recycled.

WBC are looking into the provision of bins for recyclable litter in some open spaces and hope to provide an update in new year.

### *Sustainable Warmth Energy Grant*



Funding is available for household energy-efficiency measures for low-income and low energy efficient homes.

Sustainable Warmth is a new Government grant scheme designed to fund energy-efficiency upgrades to residents who are most likely to be impacted by the high cost of rising bills. These improvements will help residents to use less energy and spend less on their energy bills. The deadline to apply is 31 December 2022. For more, see [here](#).

### **Current Consultations**

[Community Orchard at Almond Avenue Open Space, Newbury](#): closes 30 December 2022

[Lawrence's Lane, Thatcham / Cold Ash – Prohibition of Motor Vehicles \(Experimental Order\)](#): closes 19 January 2023

[Station Road, Newbury - Prohibition of Motor Vehicles \(Experimental Order\)](#): closes 22 February 2023