



## Council Report for March 2026

Written by your local Conservative team to keep you up to date.

Councillor Clive Hooker Downlands Ward

### West Berkshire Council

#### Council

Council met on 26 March to discuss:

- Swift Bricks
- Statutory Pay Policy 2026/27

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

The next meeting is the Annual Meeting on 14 May.

#### Executive

Executive met on 19 March to discuss:

- Motion to Council: decisions following public consultation (EX4761)
- 2025/26 Performance Report Q3 (EX4712)
- Oral Health Needs Assessment Recommendation (EX4773)
- Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing - Management Response to Task & Finish Group Recommendations (EX4740)
- Proposed development of a Resource Base at Victoria Park Nursery School, Newbury

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

The next meeting is on 21 May.

## Economy

### Pedestrianisation Scandal

#### Newbury Weekly News



There has been a lot of talk in the press ([NWN 1](#), [NWN 2](#), [NWN 3](#)) about the leaked report into the Pedestrianisation of Newbury Town Centre. The decision to extend Newbury’s pedestrianised hours has increased congestion, hit trade and sparked safety fears – according to a damning leaked council report.

Ross Mackinnon, Leader of the Opposition, submitted questions to the most recent Council meeting which were blocked, and has since submitted a motion for an urgent Council Meeting. Despite the public outcry, the administration have so far refused to end the trial – which their own report admits is damaging the local economy – and have scheduled a meeting in May to discuss it.

A petition has been created to reconsider this date, which residents are encouraged to sign [here](#).

## Culture

### New Pop Up Libraries

WBC are launching three new pop-up libraries this April to bring books and library services closer to rural communities.



The new pop-up libraries in Aldworth, Shaw-cum-Donnington and Speen will join the existing services already running in Basildon, Compton and Leckhampstead. Together, they will give more residents easy access to books, reading support, information and friendly advice from trained library staff without having to travel to a permanent library.

Pop-up libraries are delivered in partnership with the local town or parish council or village hall committee, who fund the service so that their community can benefit from enhanced access to West Berkshire Libraries. They offer regular visits to villages that do not have a full-time library and provide a welcoming space for residents of all ages.

### Northcroft Lido reopens

Northcroft Lido is back for spring and summer! The heated pool, interactive splash pad and slides are all now open, ready for a great season of outdoor swimming in Newbury.

After last year’s record-breaking 50,000+ visits, the team are looking forward to welcoming everyone again. Whether it is lane swimming, bringing the family for a fun day out, or enjoying the decking and beach huts, there’s something for all ages and abilities.



Visitor numbers are limited and booking by phone, online or in person is essential to avoid disappointment. Under 8s must be accompanied by an adult.

## ***New Shaw House Visitor Experience***

Residents are invited to come and see the House as never seen before with newly dressed rooms showcasing life from Tudor to Edwardian times. Along with the permanent exhibition telling the story of the House and our special exhibitions 'Dressed for Battle' and 'Dressed for Shaw'.

Entry fees to the House will be £9 adults, £6 children and concessions, under 4s are free. There is also a discounted rate for West Berkshire residents at £6.

The House, exhibition and grounds will be open every day until 30 September. The house and garden improvements are being delivered with thanks to funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Visitors are also welcome to enjoy the gardens free of charge, the café and gift shop will also be open to all visitors selling homemade treats and local products.

## **Environment**

### ***Street Cleaning***



More than 30 volunteers from local businesses, charities and the wider community for a big community litter pick with Newbury BID. Together, everyone collected over 45 bags of rubbish, helping keep Newbury town centre clean, welcoming and looking its best as part of the Great British Spring Clean. Thank you to everyone who rolled up their sleeves and got involved!

The street cleansing teams cover a large district every day, but community litter picks make an amazing difference and help us reach even more places, more often. If you'd like to get involved, we can lend litter picking kits on a first come, first served basis.

Find out how to borrow kits or organise a litter pick on the WBC [website](#).

### ***Plastic Tubes***

Kerbside recycling service has been expanded so that plastic tubes can now be recycled from home!

This includes toothpaste tubes (hard and flexible), cosmetic tubes, and food tubes such as herb pastes, icing, hand creams and moisturisers. If it's plastic and tube-shaped - squeeze it, cap it, and recycle it.

To help ensure successful recycling, please empty tubes fully, leave the cap on, and keep them flat rather than rolled, as this makes them easier to process.

This simple change makes it even easier to recycle more and reduce waste as part of regular household collections.

### ***New Cycle Pods***

WBC have provided new cycle stands at Cotswold Sports Centre in Tilehurst!

The new 'StreetPods' will be maintained by the centre's operator, Everyone Active. These new facilities help give people the option of cycling to and from their local leisure centre.



## Transport

### *Fare Changes*

Connect tickets are valid on many local bus services. A range of options are available: day, seven day, 30 day, group day and FlexiConnect (10 trip) tickets, providing flexible ticketing for frequent and occasional travellers.

From 1 April 2026, prices will change including a difference in urban and rural day prices. Current prices remain available until 31 March, which may benefit those buying seven day, 30 day or FlexiConnect tickets.

The Early Bird Urban Concessionary ticket will also change. Tickets can be purchased on the bus or on operator apps. Buses offer a convenient and sustainable way to travel for work, education, shopping and leisure.

Full details are available [here](#).

## Public Protection

### *Easter reminder: chocolate is dangerous for dogs*



With chocolate eggs and treats everywhere, please remember that chocolate and dogs don't mix. Chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine, which dogs cannot process safely. Dark and baking chocolate pose the highest risk, but even milk chocolate can make dogs ill, especially smaller breeds.

Keep pets safe by storing eggs, boxes and baskets out of reach; supervising egg hunts; counting eggs before and after; keeping handbags and children's baskets off the floor; and tidying every wrapper. It is also a good idea to inform visitors and children.

Watch for symptoms (often within hours): vomiting, diarrhoea, drooling, restlessness, panting, a fast heartbeat, tremors, seizures or collapse. If a dog has eaten chocolate, call the vet immediately - don't wait for symptoms. Note the dog's weight, the type and amount of chocolate, and when it was eaten; take the packaging; and never induce vomiting unless advised to by a vet.

Other Easter hazards include hot cross buns (raisins), sugar-free sweets and gum (xylitol), macadamia nuts and alcohol in desserts. If in doubt, ask a vet for advice. Have a happy, pet-safe Easter!

## Education

### *Bikeability in May Half Term*

WBC are running three Bikeability training courses during May half-term for children aged 10 and above.

- 26/27 May, Level 1 and 2 combined course at Kennet Leisure Centre, Stoney Lane, Thatcham, RG19 4LJ
- 28/29 May, Level 1 and 2 combined course at Kennet Leisure Centre
- 27 May (morning only), Level 3 at Cotswold Sports Centre, Downs Way, Tilehurst, RG31 6SL



All the courses are run by DBS checked, fully-qualified Bikeability instructors and cost £25 per course. The child's bike must be fully road-worthy and the right size. The instructors have the right to refuse training if the bike is deemed unsafe.

## Planning

### Planning Public Access service



WBC are asking for feedback on the Planning Public Access service, also known as West Berkshire Council's Planning Portal, which is the online system for viewing and commenting on planning applications.

Residents can use the service to follow the progress of applications, view plans and documents, search for applications and decisions, and submit comments on proposals that matter to them.

WBC want to understand how clear and easy the service is to use, whether residents can find the information they need, and what could be improved. WBC are also asking for feedback on neighbour notification letters and whether they help residents understand and comment on nearby planning applications.

Submitted views will help improve how planning information is shared and make the service more accessible for everyone.

The [survey](#) is open until Thursday 7 May 2026 and should only take a few minutes to complete.

### Current Consultations

- [Proposed nominations for the Local List of Heritage Assets \(March 2026\)](#) Closes 30 April 2026
- [Planning Public Access Service feedback survey 2026](#) Closes 7 May 2026
- [Residents' Survey \(2026\)](#) Closes 10 May 2026
- [Proposed amendment to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2025-2030 with respect to protected plates and accessibility](#) Closes 15 May 2026

## Clive Hooker

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