

Parish Council Report for period to 12 July 2019
Councillor Clive Hooker (West Berkshire Council, Downlands Ward)
West Berkshire Council

July Council Meeting

The Council Meeting on 2 July, had only one item of scheduled business which was to agree a new draft revised Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) for planning.

The new draft SCI sets out the policy for involving the community in plan making and the consideration of planning applications within the district (the current SCI dates from September 2014, and the regulations require a five year review period). The new draft was agreed and will now go out to public consultation.

https://citizen.westberks.gov.uk/media/47303/Draft-revised-Statement-of-Community-Involvement-June-2019/pdf/Draft_revised_Statement_of_Community_Involvement_-_June_2019.pdf?m=636971547742070000

Climate Change Motion

Perhaps more in the public limelight, and certainly receiving more press attention, was a cross-party motion, passed unanimously, to declare a climate emergency. Climate change is high on the agenda for the council and features in a number of the new Council Strategy priorities. Details of the motion can be found here

<http://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=5078&Ver=4>

In addition to the Environmental Board (an internal body made up of Members of the Conservative Administration and Council Officers) there is going to be a cross-party Environment Advisory Group (EAG), with a broad remit to scrutinise strategy and provide feedback on the delivery and content of WBC's environmental plan.

Governance

Strategy Delivery Plan and Senior Management Review

The Council Strategy 2019 – 2023; work has now commenced on the Delivery Plan to support it, with a focus on deliverable targets against each of our key priority areas.

https://citizen.westberks.gov.uk/media/47200/West-Berkshire-Council-Strategy-2019-2023/pdf/WB_Council_Strategy_2019_JUNE_LR.pdf?m=636957706952270000

To help deliver our new Strategy we have a new management structure coming in for the upper tiers of the Council to enable our strategic focus to remain on Place, People and Resource. Our new Executive Director for Resources, Joseph Holmes will be joining WBC in September. This will then lead to a gradual slimming down of the next layer of management, replacing 13 Heads of Service with seven Service Directors on an evolutionary rather than revolutionary basis with (at least initially) changes being made as opportunities arise from retirement, departure, etc.

Adult Social Care

Adult Placement Shared Lives (APSL)

The West Berkshire Adult Placement Scheme has received a Care Quality Commission rating of 'Good', reflecting a great deal of hard work by the staff.

APSL is a shared lives service which supports carers to provide a home for people who are unable, or choose not, to live on their own - they live as part of the carer's family. Shared lives carers are not directly employed by the scheme, but are paid a fee which is dependent on the amount and type of support they provide for individuals. People using the service and their carers enjoy shared activities and life experiences. Frequently, the people who use the service have a learning difficulty and/or associated disabilities.

Economic Development and Planning

Draft Economic Development Strategy

WBC is consulting on a new Economic Development Strategy (2019-2036) for the district, taking a long term view of the district's economic needs and looking at how the council and its partners might meet the challenges likely to emerge over the period.

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/drafteds>

The new strategy comes in response to the West Berkshire 2036 Vision (published earlier this year and referred to in the March report) and the Government's Industrial Strategy, which set out what needs to be done to boost productivity and ensure that everybody has the opportunity to benefit from the region's economic success.

The strategy will also contribute to the delivery of important priorities for West Berkshire Council including support for businesses, the development of local infrastructure and growth of the local economy – focusing on four major areas to encourage this: people, places, infrastructure and business environment.

BLIS

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership (TVBLEP) – Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS)

West Berkshire Council has responded to the consultation on this strategy document

<http://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/news?id=110> the consultation is now closed.

5G

VODAFONE has switched on live 5G testing in Newbury. The switch-on is part of its UK-wide trial of the new high-speed mobile service.

Using state-of-the-art technology, 5G mobile data traffic has started streaming across the network from a site near its Newbury headquarters

<https://www.newburytoday.co.uk/news/home/27040/vodafone-switches-on-5g-technology-in-newbury.html>

Market Street Development

Houses at Highfield Avenue have now been demolished as part of the Market Street development which is a key part of the Newbury Vision 2026. In addition to 232 new homes the scheme will deliver additional parking capacity in the town centre, a new station plaza, new landscaped step free pedestrian routes through the site and a new bus station.

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/marketstdevelopment>

Public Health and Community Wellbeing

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System

In June the NHS announced that three new areas are to become 'Integrated Care Systems' (ICS), and that one of these was to cover Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West – to be known as the BOB ICS.

The BOB ICS will serve 1.8 million people and its formation marks a major milestone for partnership working and collective leadership across the area – covering three Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), six NHS Trusts, 14 local authorities and 175 GP surgeries.

The WBC district sits within the Berkshire West CCG which has been an early pioneer of integrated care system working, and the new BOB ICS will continue to build on, and develop, the progress already made in delivering health and care services as locally as possible and in the most joined up and cost effective way.

Space Chase at West Berkshire Libraries

Children aged four to 11 are invited to sign up at WBC libraries to the annual Summer Reading Challenge - to borrow and read any six library books between 1 July and the end of September.

This year's challenge is Space Chase - inspired by the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing. Children are asked to help super space family the Rockets track down books nabbed by mischievous aliens, and as they read library books, they will solve clues and collect special stickers to complete their mission folder.

It's free to take part and there are incentives along the way, plus certificates and golden medals for all who complete the Challenge. West Berkshire libraries also run a summer Mini Challenge for younger members and one for adults too.

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/westberks/enterprise/files/20_summer_reading_challenge_a4_poster.pdf

Newbury LIDO

The Lido is now open for the summer season <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/lido>

Public Protection

REPPIR 2019

In May the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 replaced REPPIR 2001. The new rules include a greatly increased role for local authorities (and thus WBC in relation to AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield) in determining the area to be covered by detailed planning – the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ). Previously this has been set by the ONR (Office for Nuclear Regulation) in consultation with the site operators and local authority, but the new regulations require the local authority to determine the area on the basis of a consequence report from the operator and their local knowledge.

The amount of work this involves for WBC officers is considerable, and it remains to be seen how the Burghfield DEPZ will change and how this might affect (e.g.) the proposals for Grazeley.

Transport and Countryside

Hamstead Norreys to Hermitage footpath

West Berkshire Council has announced the start of work on a new travel route between Hermitage and Hampstead Norreys.

It is hoped that walkers, cyclists and horse riders will take advantage of will take advantage of the ‘active travel route’ – which runs over a derelict railway track. The construction of the route is being funded by Highways England.

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=36230>

A339/Bear Lane improvements - Newbury

The next few days will see a significant change of emphasis in the A339/Bear Lane/Cheap Street Highway Improvement Project.

The new traffic lights outside the cinema at the junction of Cheap Street and Market Street have been switched on. The new lights will manage the flow of traffic at this junction and also provide crossing points for pedestrians. This marks the completion of Phase 2 of the project.

Next week, the focus will switch to the final phase of the project, i.e. the completion of the improvements to the A339 “Sainsbury’s” roundabout. On Monday, the exit from the roundabout into Bear Lane will be closed permanently and any traffic heading from the A339 to the town centre, including the Council Offices and public car parks, will need to use the new A339/Cheap Street junction and the Cheap Street/Market Street junction. This has been advertised in advance with yellow signs at the roadside and has also been on the Newbury Weekly News website for the last couple of days.

It will inevitably take a few days for drivers to get used to the changes and we may need to adjust the settings of the new traffic lights to get the best out of them. Please bear with us

while things settle down but be assured that we will be continually monitoring the traffic following the change.

If you have not already seen it, the Network Improvements team issues a weekly update on the project at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/a339> and drawings of the final road layouts can be downloaded from here.

The next major change will be the removal of the old life-expired traffic lights at the roundabout and replacement with new equipment and resurfacing of the roundabout itself, details of which will be posted on the web page in advance.

Grass Cutting of Verges

Although in general the verges in the district are mown every four weeks, the system of grass verge cutting may vary within an area and is done to a) allow pollinating insects, birds and wildlife to feed on the seed heads and exploit the ground cover and b) to ensure safe viewing lines at junctions.

Environment

Clean Air Day

West Berkshire Council participated in the annual Clean Air Day on 20 June and joined forces with Wokingham and Bracknell Forest Public Protection Partnership.

<https://publicprotectionpartnership.org.uk/news-articles/18-jun-2019-doing-our-bit-to-tackle-air-pollution-on-clean-air-day-west-berkshire-council/>

Environment Conference

Following on from the Climate Emergency Declaration, a district conference will be facilitated by the Council in the autumn. Plans are currently in progress and the agenda and format of the conference has not yet been agreed, but what we do know is it will be held on Monday 28 October at Newbury College. We are anticipating a high level of interest this event and it is therefore a ticket system is likely to apply. We are delighted that Newbury College have offered this facility free of charge. Further details will be circulated in due course.

Recycling Centres

A wide range of recycling is available at the West Berkshire facilities at both Newbury and Padworth and you can check what can be recycled here

<https://info.westberks.gov.uk/article/34354>

Padworth is currently trialling extended opening hours until September 2019 and is open 8am – 6pm seven days a week.

Children, Young People and Education

Key stage 2 – Latest figures show big improvements in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils. <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=36249>

John O’Gaunt – rated Good for the first time following its OFSTED inspection.

John Rankin – rated Good in its recent OFSTED inspection.

Theale School – building work is progressing and we're excited that Theale's new primary school is taking shape. It opens next year and will provide a fabulous learning environment for 315 pupils.

Highwood Copse – following the contractor going in to administration, the Council is currently in the re-tendering process to continue the build. Disappointingly the opening date has necessarily been deferred to September 2020. All children who were due to be admitted this September have been found alternative school places.

Schools deficit

Although schools are continue to find managing their budget a difficult task, the school deficit is currently within

Learner Achievement Awards

The seventeenth annual Learner Achievement Awards were held on 7 June at Shaw House, Newbury. The awards celebrate the success of adult learning in West Berkshire and cover a range of provision including apprenticeships, professional qualifications, and health and wellbeing courses. <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/laa2019>