

Parish Council Report for period up to 11 July 2018
CLr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Mortimer Ward) and
CLrs Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin (West Berkshire Council, Burghfield Ward)

Introduction

Now that the Parliamentary Order (the *West Berkshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2018*) has been passed to confirm the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ward changes for West Berkshire Council (with effect from the May 2019 elections), and particularly in anticipation of the new Burghfield & Mortimer Ward, we have decided to combine our monthly reports into one.

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

The Council met on 3 July for a fairly short agenda preceded by presentations from the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable.

Members' questions to the Chief Constable concentrated on issues associated with traveller incursion onto land and the frustration that arises within communities at the seeming inability of the police to do anything. The response from Acting Superintendent Lindsay Finch, the Area Commander (Jim Weems is currently dealing with the imminent visit of President Trump, having only just got over being the local commander for the royal wedding!) was the need for evidence if they are to act – it is no good knowing that criminal damage has occurred to allow travellers onto a piece of ground (eg a broken padlock), without knowing who specifically caused it. Another response from Lindsay related to the question of uninsured vehicles – she said that travellers' vehicles are often insured because they use them to tow their homes.

Ian also raised the issue of drugs searches at The Willink as to which more below.

The PCC's annual report can be found at: https://thamesvalley.s3.amazonaws.com/Documents/Performance/PCC_Annual_Report_2018_website_080618.pdf.

So far as the Council meeting itself is concerned, there were two items of formal business discussed and agreed – first, an extension of £50m to WBC's current capital budget ("pot") for the acquisition of commercial property in accordance with the WBC Investment and Borrowing Strategy, to bring the total capital budget up to £100m, and second a motion to support the two recently announced Heathrow strategies – the western rail access and the third runway.

Delayed Transfer of Care (DTOC)

With Graham's Adult Social Care Portfolio hat on, something he is really pleased about is that WBC's DTOC numbers have halved - sometimes referred to as 'bed blocking', the DTOC figure reflects those patients who are ready to leave hospital or a similar care provider (for example to go home or to a supported care facility), but cannot for various reasons and still occupy a bed.

A number of strategies have been employed by our DTOC team to bring down the total, including a greater use of the 'step down' beds at the WBC Birchwood Care Home (recently refurbished after we took it over from the previous provider), a focussed approach from the council's Reablement Team to allow more people to regain their independence and live at home, the introduction of a Link Worker at Prospect Park Hospital to identify opportunities to safely discharge Mental Health patients, and improvements in our working with health partners.

Evidence that these measures are working comes from figures recently published on the NHS website that show a significant improvement. In April 2017, 950 'bed days' (the total number of days that NHS beds were occupied [for a number of reasons] by those who didn't need to) were reported, but by April 2018 this has dropped to 469 - a decrease of 51%.

As Graham said in a press release, *"These figures reflect the hard work and dedication shown by everyone involved in the DTOC process, whether on the frontline or behind the scenes, and show that collaboration with our NHS colleagues is working for the good of our residents"*.

Housing Joint Venture

Graham has been involved in discussions since last year that have now led to WBC and Sovereign Housing Association agreeing in principle to create a new joint body to contribute to building the homes we need.

The WBC Executive agreed to create the Joint Venture (JV) at our meeting on 14 June. The JV will bring together the land, investment and skills of the two organisations to help towards achieving our target to provide 1,000 new affordable homes in West Berkshire by 2020.

Sovereign is the district's largest social housing provider and WBC has enjoyed a long relationship with them – the joint approach is intended to give WBC and Sovereign the flexibility that is key to meeting individual housing needs in West Berkshire by offering mixed tenure housing using a combination of council and Sovereign land acquired specifically for housing purposes.

It is anticipated that the JV will be formally created in the autumn.

Community Transport Schemes

WBC is aiming to help the Community Transport Schemes in the district to recruit more volunteer drivers (the schemes need drivers for their community buses and Handybuses, and own car drivers for their Community Car Schemes).

Handybuses provide regular transport for the elderly and disabled for shopping trips, visits to clubs, as well as occasional days out such as trip to the seaside or Christmas Market - If an individual has a category D1 on their driving licence they can drive one of the 10/11 seater minibuses modified to provide easy access, with full-training given.

The Community Car Scheme takes individuals to where they need to be, such as a hospital appointment, and needs individuals who are happy to use their own vehicle for this - fuel costs are fully reimbursed.

Volunteers provide a life-line to those who otherwise run the risk of becoming socially isolated and, as Garry Poulson, the Director of Volunteer Centre West Berkshire said: "This is one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways of helping in your community. Our volunteers provide an amazing service helping groups of people or individuals. The work is fun, relaxing and you know that you're making a real contribution to the life of the area."

Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer driver for one of the 14 Community Transport Groups in the district can call 01635 503248 or visit www.westberks.gov.uk/transport.

Public Health

A recent WBC Members' Development Session regarding public health challenges (and how to deliver an effective public health system towards 2036) showed up some very interesting statistics including that:

- There are approximately 79,500 overweight (including obese and morbidly obese) adults in the district and this is expected to rise to over 88,000 by 2036;

- Physical activity is by far the best general defence to illness – with risk reductions of more than 20% and as much as 80% in relation to a host of health issues (including stroke, diabetes, cancers, depression, Alzheimer’s – just part of a lengthy list) – someone over 40 who moves from a sedentary lifestyle to 10 hours per week leisure time activity will live for over three years longer than someone who doesn’t;
- Loneliness is as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day;
- For the over 65’s, dementia is predicted to rise from just over 1,800 individuals in the district in 2016 to just over 3,500 by 2036.

There was quite a lot more detail and we can share this with anyone interested.

Local Matters

Padworth Household Waste Recycling Centre

Further to previous reports, Padworth now accepts general waste – the items that can’t be taken there are asbestos, furniture and gas bottles (these can be taken to Newtown Road).

An announcement regarding the extension to opening hours is awaited.

The Grazeley project and Mortimer Station

See below regarding comments from the AWE LLC meeting.

AWE

Graham and Ian are members of the AWE Local Liaison Committee and at its meeting last week (4 July) there were a number of interesting items discussed, including a proposal to apply in the future for Local Development Orders for both the Aldermaston and Burghfield sites and a presentation about the level of discharge monitoring and how effluent discharged into local sewers and brooks is checked to ensure that it is safe.

The new Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone was discussed and Graham mentioned that the Grazeley project community session he attended (along with various local parish councillors) a few months ago had included a proposed new station on the line within the DEPZ. The response was that AWE/ONR have made it clear to Wokingham BC (as lead authority) that there will be objections to anything proposed to be built within the DEPZ (although using it as green space will be acceptable) – thus it appears that any station proposal would have to be to the south of the site and even closer to Mortimer Station – we will see how this pans out as the Grazeley discussion continues (if, of course, infrastructure funding is forthcoming).

There was also an introductory presentation regarding general development proposals for both sites and after the meeting Graham and Ian spoke to John Steele of AWE regarding a possible presentation to local parishes, hopefully in a combined meeting, about their general plans for the future (especially) of the Burghfield site. We will progress this and liaise with Clerks as needed.

New Police Property Act Fund grant round

£100,000 is available to be bid from by community and voluntary groups - the Fund 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. Applications are invited from local voluntary and community groups who can contribute towards two of the PCC’s strategic objectives in his Police and Crime Plan priorities, which are:

- Reducing Re-Offending; and
- Serious Organised Crime and Terrorism.

Some examples of projects that may be considered include those that aim to reduce exploitation of young people through gang membership, reduce or prevent violent crime, rehabilitate offenders or prevent exploitation by organised criminals.

The closing date for this round of applications is 12:00 on Tuesday 17 July and more information and the application form can be found at: <https://www.thamesvalley-pcc.gov.uk/get-involved/police-property-act-fund/>.

The Willink

Following the meeting we three had with the police, BPC and The Willink and reported on last month, there was a drug search using a dog at the school recently. In emails between Lindsay Finch (acting Area Commander) and Ian, following up the Council meeting (see above), she said: *"The funding that I have agreed was for Willink School for a future operation to enable ongoing opportunities with the drugs dog, and I may be able to provide additional support if this proved to be necessary / preventative at some other schools.*

I'm sure we would be happy to be part of any ongoing work in relation to any drugs issues in schools – realistically we can offer enforcement options (which may be a last resort); educational support via our schools engagement officer; and involvement in any planned operations".

Parishes

Beech Hill

Mobile library

It is pleasing to see the correspondence between the WBC Library Service and the Clerk regarding the first mobile library visit to the Memorial Hall being set for Friday 5 October between 13:00 and 14:00, with a three weekly visit cycle to be reviewed after three months.

Footpath Beech Hill 5

Following up previous reports, the view of the WBC legal team is that a Planning Inspector would be unlikely to deviate from the previous Inspector's decision (not to allow a diversion) unless material changes have occurred.

Since the informal views of the Open Spaces Society and BHPC are against the proposed diversion - the OSS have given a detailed objection reiterating the same points of objection as in 2000, and BHPC has of course responded along the same lines - the recommendation is likely to be that no order is made.

Burghfield

Burghfield Park

Ian is due to be meeting the developer and Peter Fry, Headteacher at The Willink, tomorrow (12 July) to discuss site safety given the proximity to the school.

Stratfield Mortimer

The NDP Site and Fairwinds/Tower House

The latest we have from Simon Till (WPC Planning) regarding the main NDP site is that there have been considerable delays due to difficulties with the originally submitted layout and affordable housing distribution.

He has received a number of amended drawings that WBC has re-consulted on with SMPC and other consultees.

He had been hopeful that the application would be put before the Eastern Area Planning Committee last week (4 July) but a number of matters were still outstanding, including some concerns raised by the highways officer, a pending response from the archaeologist regarding the proposed programme of archaeological works, and a query to the WBC drainage engineers as to whether the drainage strategy proposed is compliant with Policy GD3 of the NDP. He is pursuing a conclusion on all of these matters with a view to getting the application before the EAPC meeting on 25 July, but based on experience is making no promises.

He has also advised regarding application 18/00821/FULEXT, which is for a variation to the planning permission granted for the Fairwinds/Tower House site. This application seeks a set of comparatively minor alterations to the scheme for 17 houses, proposing the removal of a section of footway and realignment of plots 13 to 17 – he notes that SMPC have not objected (and, indeed, Graham has been in correspondence with members of the SMPC Planning Committee regarding this).

The Street & Station Road- resurfacing

Further to last month's report, today (Wednesday 11 July) Volker Highways are due to begin installing a short section of new kerb outside the Cinnamon Tree, prior to the road being resurfaced at the end of August. The work is due to take three days to complete (between 09:30 and 16:00 each day) and will be undertaken using temporary traffic signals.

Closure of Drury Lane, 16 to 18 July

Drury Lane will be closed, as above, so that Thames Water can carry out sewer works in the vicinity of Mariken.

There will be a diversion via Turks Lane and Pitfield Lane, and any enquires should be addressed to Thames Water on 0203 577 8228.

Members' Bid

As reported verbally at the last SMPC meeting, Graham's SID (Speed Indicator Device) bid was successful, since confirmed by WBC, and the Clerk is on the case.

Graham Bridgman, Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin

11 July 2018