

Parish Council Report for period up to 10 October 2018
CLlr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Mortimer Ward) and
CLlrs Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin (West Berkshire Council, Burghfield Ward)

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

Council met on 13 September with (as we reported last month) a fairly limited agenda. The next scheduled meeting is on 6 December.

Over and above agreeing the annual charging scheme for Family Hubs, a Motion regarding traveller encroachment was passed to the Executive to deal with, and one to ban the use of sky lanterns (aka 'Chinese', 'Wish', 'Floating' and 'Party' Lanterns) on WBC owned land and property was passed unanimously.

A View from the Chair

Now that Carol has been Chairman of WBC for a few months, we thought it might be interesting for her to reflect on what she has been up to.

Introduction

"Reflecting over the last six months as Chairman of the Council, I look back with some pride at having had the opportunity to represent West Berkshire and to meet a wide range of volunteers involved in a range of superb activities across the district. I have had great pleasure in seeing some incredible results as a direct result of communities working together – much of this would not have taken place without individuals stepping forward.

One aspect of the role which perhaps I didn't fully appreciate the importance of is that I am the First Citizen of the District, as a result of which I have been invited to a number of interesting events.

For example:

- *The launch of the Greenham Common Control Tower - a building used by the US Air force which had lain dormant for more than 25 years, now brought back to life as a café and exhibition, and with a viewing gallery over Greenham Common;*
- *The Burghfield and Area School Pastors 5th Anniversary Celebration;*
- *The final memorial service to the Men of Tigris – a memorial service to mark the 70th anniversary of the sinking of Newbury's adopted Second World War submarine, HMS Tigris;*
- *A ceremony to mark the start of the Judicial Year;*
- *The South Berks Concert Band Summer Concert held on the Fairground in Mortimer following Fun Day;*
- *The unveiling of Kennet School/Hub artwork, a partnership project between the children of Kennet School and the Thatcham Family Hub;*
- *Citizenship Ceremonies – these are a wonderful experience and there is huge pleasure in welcoming those taking their final step to becoming British Citizens.*

West Berkshire events continue to support local communities and I am looking forward to attending many more events in the coming months."

Silver Sunday

“It was also a pleasure to be part of Silver Sunday - hosted by TiM Friends - for the elderly residents of Burghfield, Ufton Nervet, Mortimer and Sulhamstead, held on Sunday 7 October. Silver Sunday is a national initiative with the aim of to celebrate older residents, recognise their contribution to their communities and help them get out and about to meet new people.”

Geoff Bushnell

“Finally, I recently attended the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service Awards Ceremony, where Watch Manager Geoff Bushnell, a retained firefighter at Mortimer Fire Station, received a long-service award. He joined the services in 1998 and his community spirit has kept him there ever since. He is currently a Watch Manager in Development.

Many congratulations to Geoff and huge thanks for his contribution to the RBFRS.”

Budget

As reported last month, in-year budget pressures are considerable and a great deal of work is being done to achieve a balanced figure by the end of this financial year. The drafting of the 2018/19 budget is also progressing, taking into account the work of the Financial Challenge Panel on which both Graham and Ian sit (and upon which we have reported previously) and it is anticipated that any proposals that require consultation will be published in November.

(Incidentally, to continue a theme that we have developed over a few reports regarding the age demographic of West Berkshire and its consequent budgetary effect, the Summer 2018 data dashboard from South East England Councils shows that the south east has the country's largest older population, with 820k over 75's currently, and this is due to nearly double to 1.5m by 2041.)

Green Waste Charging

The latest numbers are that just under 25,000 households have signed up for the green waste service so we have met the initial income target – of course, with our budget pressures, the more income we can achieve from this scheme the better.

Market Street Redevelopment in Newbury

This has seemingly received some negative press so, purely on the financial side of the project, we will say that WBC has not 'given away' land worth £3.9m!

The site was certainly valued at £3.9m (as part of the process of obtaining permission from the then Department for Communities and Local Government, now Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, to dispose of the site). This sum thus represents the council's contribution to bring forward the development (of a high quality residential scheme) in collaboration with Grainger, and to create a new gateway into Newbury – such a collaborative approach would not have been possible if the site had been sold to a different developer.

In return, WBC will receive a freehold multi storey car park costing £5m (and thus in turn the revenue that this will bring) and a contributions towards the loss of the bus station and temporary housing accommodation with a value of £1m.

Over and above this, CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) will amount to £1.7m and there will be affordable housing (although not as much as we would like because of the viability assessment - something outside

WBC's control as Graham learnt when arguing in favour of affordable housing on the Tower House/Fairwinds site, which argument was lost on appeal).

Overall the development agreement represents good value for the council and council tax payers, and means that WBC is working alongside a partner with an excellent track record.

Local Matters

M4 Smart Highway Project

There was a presentation by Highways England recently regarding the project to upgrade the M4 from junction 3 to junction 12, due to be completed by March 2022. Work is underway, focused on central reservation works and developing a main compound between junctions 10 and 8/9.

In brief, the project introduces variable speed limits and converts the hard shoulder to a permanent driving lane with emergency areas every 1.1 to 1.6 miles (one a minute at 60mph) and considerable signage (eg so that a lane can be closed to traffic through use of a red "X"), vehicle monitoring, cameras, etc. If you have driven (for example) on the northern section of the M25, you'll know what to expect.

As you might anticipate, the work will be considerable, particularly given the number of bridges that will need to be replaced because they don't span the hard shoulder, plus all the cable laying needed for the traffic monitoring, etc. The upside is that the project increases capacity by a third, alongside which traffic flow is smoothed by the variable speed limit. On top of this, experience shows a reduction in the casualty rate of 27%.

Some of the work is being/will be carried out under carriageway restrictions, but other work will require the motorway to be closed – we will try to keep everyone up to date (eg via Facebook) as we receive notifications.

For more information and details of current restrictions, etc, go to: <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/m4-junctions-3-12-smart-motorway>.

Victims First Connect

In the latest Police and Crime Commissioner newsletter there is an article about this scheme to allow victims and witnesses of crime to access information on support in their local community.

The information points will include community centres, shops, leisure centres, colleges, universities and libraries. People will be able to find out more about the services available to victims of crime, receive crime prevention/ safety advice, report a hate crime and/or have someone process a referral for support on their behalf.

The scheme is structured into three different tiers which will provide different levels of information and/or immediate support - from Tier1 which consists of displaying a poster and contact details to Tier 3 which will have the added benefit of a trained member of staff who can talk through the support that is available. They will also be able to provide basic crime prevention and safety advice if necessary, instigate a referral to Victims First and are able to process third party reports of hate crime.

If anyone wants further information or know a group or premises that would like to be involved in supporting victims of crime locally please email opcc.comms@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk.

Poppy Appeal 2018

The Appeal is looking for volunteers to help fill the slots in the collection rotas or to help in delivering Poppy boxes to various static sites around the area.

As in previous years they are collecting at the M4 Service Station (Burghfield) and the Costco warehouse in Reading (various dates between Saturday 27 October and Saturday 10 November). The slots are two hours and will be busy and enjoyable. The more volunteers, the less onerous the task!

Please contact Carol (carol.jackson-doerge@westberks.gov.uk) to be put in touch with the organisers if you would like to help.

Digital Booking System

WBC are about to launch a digital booking app, aimed at making it easier for residents to book rooms for events across the District, and Ian recently facilitated a meeting between WBC and the Chair and Clerk from Burghfield PC to discuss how this could be used across the room assets in Burghfield.

The app will initially allow rooms in the libraries at Newbury and Theale to be booked, followed by a selection of sports pitches and rooms at Shaw House. The pilot is expected to be completed by March 2019, by which time WBC will be looking at how to roll this out across Parish and School buildings.

If you would like more information please get in touch with Ian (ian.morrin@westberks.gov.uk).

AWE - meeting regarding future development of Burghfield site.

We are still sorting out a date.

Overnight road closure affecting the main road from Mortimer to M4 J11

The railway bridge at Cross Lane / Bloomfield Hatch Lane will be closed overnight next Tuesday and Wednesday (16/17 October) for the installation of fibre optic cables by Gigaclear.

Signed diversions will be in place for HGV etc traffic (but, as with the resurfacing of The Street, locals will no doubt find shorter diversions).

Enquires should be addressed to Gigaclear on 07866 126020 and the closure can be viewed on [roadworks.org](https://roadworks.org/?tm=108855294) (<https://roadworks.org/?tm=108855294>).

Parishes

Beech Hill

Patching work – Park Lane

By the time councillors read this the work will be underway/completed, but just to note that WBC Highways have announced that an opportunity has arisen to carry out some minor patching works on various roads in the district, including Park Lane (over its entire length) between 12:00 and 15:00 today (10 October).

Burghfield

MP's visit

Along with the Rt Hon John Redwood MP, Carol, Ian and Graham recently walked around parts of Burghfield and engaged with residents on issues that affect them:

- Burghfield Toy Library currently meet in Mortimer due to lack of space in Burghfield to hire. They would love to be included in the planning of space within the planned Hub development – Carol and Ian will be taking this up with the parish.
- For a resident who is isolated, we have started to connect with TiM Friends to see what can be done.
- Flooding issues at Reading Road close to the roundabout were raised - we are working with WBC Highways and Streetcare to take this further.
- We visited Willink School and met Mr Fry (Headteacher) and Mr Sizer (Deputy) to discuss the results from the Drug Dog search earlier in the year

Co-Op, Clayhill Road

As councillors will know, in June a fire took hold in one of the two flats above the Burghfield Co-op.

Carol has been, and will continue to be, in regular communication with the Community resilience office at the Co-op and their construction consultants, MAC Consulting. The building has now been made secure with scaffolding and they are planning to enter the cleaning phase to ascertain what works need to be done. They are hoping to have the new roof completed by November. During the initial building works they will be installing a portable structure for the building staff, housing an office and toilets etc (the current pop-up shop will remain during the works, although the suitability of its location will be assessed as the work progresses).

A planning application has recently been submitted to WBC to extend the back of the store further towards Hunters Hill.

Fly tipping

Residents in Hunter's Hill / Stones Walk have been affected by fly tipping outside the Sovereign Housing bin stores - Carol met with Sovereign yesterday (Tuesday 9 October) to discuss the installation of a portable CCTV camera.

Sailing Club Appeal (Theale Lake floating homes inquiry)

Carol attended the first day of the appeal against WBC's refusal of the development of 24 Can-Float Homes and 201 conventional homes at Theale Lake. However, on the evening before the appeal hearing, the Environment Agency submitted last minute information indicating that the development would be in a high-risk flood zone, despite what had been indicated previously.

The planning inspector concluded that an adjournment was necessary in fairness to all parties so that they can review the newly submitted document. It was agreed the inquiry to resume in January 2019 (with a 10 day sitting).

Carol was interviewed by the Reading Chronical as Ward Member and Chairman of WBC and told them:

“It was the right thing to do to give all the parties the opportunity to look at the new information that came forward. The experts in the field are there to advise us on both sides. The Environment Agency have come out with some evidence that needs to be reviewed on both sides.

The evidence only came in the night before the inquiry began. It is a very important decision that needs to be looked at for the benefit of our whole community.”

(It was previously thought that most of the development was in Flood Zone 1, where the risk is low, but the new information suggests much of it is located in the high-risk Flood Zone 3B.)

Stratfield Mortimer

Planning Applications

As Graham has posted to Facebook, the Budgens’ application (18/00477/FUL) has been rejected by WBC planning officers. Graham is hoping to facilitate getting Charles Mills from Budgens and the SMPC Planning Committee together to discuss aspects of the application (but is staying entirely neutral in the process given that he sits on the WBC planning committee).

Graham is also intending to discuss the appeal by the applicant regarding land at 42 West End Road (18/00249/FULD) with the SMPC planning committee.

Wokefield

Caravan, etc, parked on highway on Goodboy’s Lane near Wokefield Park

Graham has been in email correspondence with Cllr Faulkner and is following up with WBC.

Graham Bridgman, Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin

10 October 2018