

Parish Council Report for period up to 12 September 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 meets tomorrow (Thursday 13 September) with a limited agenda including agreeing the annual charging scheme for Family Hubs and a number of questions and motions.

Green Waste Charging

Further to our report last month, the latest numbers are that about 23,000 households have signed up for the green waste service and we are on track to achieve the income target we set ourselves.

Budget

We are going to need all the income we can achieve because there are pressures on the WBC budget, particularly relating to Adult Social Care, where the figures at the end of the first quarter of 2018/19 (ie to the end of June) gave an indicative service overspend of £2.4m (5.6% of a net ASC revenue budget of £42.8m). The overspend is mainly due to market increases in the cost of care, something being faced by local authorities throughout the country, and mitigation is underway across all services within the council.

West Berkshire best in England for residential care

A recent analysis of Care Quality Commission reports by the BBC has shown that West Berkshire has the highest rate of good care homes in England – 98% of the district's care homes (61 out of 62) are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by the CQC – whereas a fifth of English care homes are rated 'Inadequate' or 'Requires Improvement'.

As Graham (WBC's Executive Member for Adult Social Care) said in a press release: *"I am delighted to see these figures, which are testament to the excellent service provided by care staff across West Berkshire. I congratulate all staff in our own care homes and in the independent sector on having this recognition for their efforts."*

The one care home not rated Good or Outstanding is Birchwood, which we reported on last month and is the subject of an improvement plan.

Examination results

A-Level

In the second year of the reformed, more rigorous, A-levels, West Berkshire students have celebrated an outstanding set of results, with 78% awarded the higher A*-C grade (an improvement on last year and in contrast to a decrease seen across England). Entries achieving A*-B improved by 4.52% at 53.7% (again above the England average of 52.7%).

Overall, the pass rate in West Berkshire is 98.43%, comparing favourably with an average of 97.6% across England.

BTEC

BTEC results were equally impressive, with 58.5% of the 287 entries being awarded at least one Distinction grade.

GCSE

West Berkshire has seen its best ever result for combined English and Mathematics at GCSE (the standard comparator measure in England) - 72% of students achieved at least a score of 4 in English and Maths combined, 1% above last year's figure.

The increase is mainly due to an improvement in Maths attainment and early indications suggest that West Berkshire students' results are well above national performance. Equally pleasing is the high proportion of pupils gaining 7+ (previous Grade A or above) in English and in Maths. Attainment 8, which compiles the scores across 8 subjects, has also risen.

(Because almost all GCSEs are now graded 9-1, the 2018 results look different to last year [a score of 9 is above the old A* and a 4 represents an old grade C].)

Libraries

Paul James (WBC Culture & Libraries Manager) recently wrote to all parishes with library usage data.

Paul is in the process of asking parishes to make a financial contribution in this financial year - as the usage data demonstrates, residents in all parishes use libraries and many use more than one branch as well as the Mobile Library. When a parish makes a voluntary financial contribution WBC apportions it, pro rata, to the parts of the service their residents actually use – so, if most of their residents who use libraries use the Burghfield and Mortimer branches, their contribution is ring-fenced within the budgets for those branches. Thus there is transparency as to any requirement to only fund things that directly benefit parishioners.

Cycling and walking

According to statistics published recently by the Department for Transport, West Berkshire has the highest cycling and walking rates of any Berkshire local authority Department for Transport - over 85% of residents cycle or walk at least once a month, the highest in Berkshire. It was also found that almost 40% of residents do so at least five times per week, more than any neighbouring authority.

Community Champion Awards

WBC launched its annual Community Champion Awards on Monday (10 September).

The awards started with the Junior Citizen Award in 2001 and have now grown to consist of four awards to recognise the valuable contribution many local residents make to West Berkshire. The four categories are:

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

WBC want to hear about residents of West Berkshire who make a valuable contribution to their community. This contribution can be made in many ways; organising environmental work, running social groups, organising community sports activities and events, co-ordinating resident groups or any other activities that improve the lives of the people of West Berkshire.

As Carol said in her WBC press release: *"In my role as Chairman of West Berkshire Council, I am looking forward to being part of the 2018 awards. The standard of nominations in previous years have been very impressive and it is a pleasure to be presenting the awards to the winners this year."*

The closing date for nominations is Friday 26 October 2018 and more information about the categories and the nomination form can be found at www.westberks.gov.uk/communitychampion.

Local Matters

Parliamentary Boundary Commission Review

The Commission published its final recommendations to the Government on 5 September and these can be found at www.bce2018.org.uk. The proposals would reduce the number of parliamentary constituencies from 650 to 600.

No changes are proposed for the Wokingham constituency. The major local changes result from proposed changes to the boundaries of the Reading constituencies and a reduction in the size of the Newbury constituency (somewhat counter-intuitively when the overall effect of the review is to make constituencies larger) – it is proposed for example that Reading West extends as far west as Hermitage.

The parishes within the current Burghfield, Mortimer and Sulhamstead Wards will all remain in Wokingham for parliamentary purposes if the report is adopted as written. The new ward of Burghfield and Mortimer would remain wholly within Wokingham, and the new ward of Aldermaston would be split between the Newbury and Wokingham constituencies, as was to be the case before. The change is to the new Bradfield ward, now to be split between Reading West and Wokingham rather than Newbury and Wokingham.

AWE - meeting regarding future development of Burghfield site.

Further to our report last month, Graham and Ian agreed a date with John Steele from AWE to give a presentation to local parishes in a combined meeting, but venues proved difficult. Efforts continue and as soon as a fresh date and venue have been firmed up we will make sure all councillors are invited.

Road resurfacing

As anticipated in previous reports, various road resurfacing projects in the Wards have now been completed, even if there were some issues regarding the routed diversions!

Parishes

Padworth

A4 Roadworks at Padworth

As councillors will know, works to the A4 Bath Road in Padworth commenced on Monday (10 September).

They are due to last for approximately two weeks and involve the re-alignment of an existing footpath and dropped crossings across the A4 in the vicinity of Beenham Hill, with a temporary 30mph speed limit in place in both directions of the A4 between the roundabout with the A340 and its junction with Lambdens Hill, plus a prohibition of right hand turn into and out of Beenham Hill for the duration of the works.

All enquiries should be directed to Maverick Property Investments Ltd on 07947 955502 or info.laureusdevelopments@gmail.com. A plan of the restrictions can be found at <https://roadworks.org/>.

Aldermaston Wharf Lifting Bridge - day time closure on 22/23 September

The Aldermaston Wharf Lifting Bridge six monthly electrical and mechanical service will be carried out over the weekend of Saturday 22 September and Sunday 23 September 2018 (08:00 to 17:00 each day). The works will be carried out with a full road closure and diversion route via Frouds Lane with a temporary footbridge in place and working off the pontoon with the canal open to narrow boat traffic.

Any queries regarding this project - please contact Michael De-Honri on 01635 519839.

Parish Community Plan

Graham has been in email correspondence with Cllr Murray, particularly regarding the issue of a fire break between the properties in Mill Lane and The Fallows, and is following the issue up with WBC Officers.

Stratfield Mortimer

Tower House / the NDP site

As Graham has posted to Facebook, he was emailed by Katherine Miles (Planning Director at Pro Vision, the planners for T A Fisher in respect of the Tower House and NDP sites) to inform him that, with the agreement of the Englefield Estate and once the harvest is over, T A Fisher would be establishing a temporary site compound on the MOR006 site (the NDP site) to the south of, and adjacent to, the boundary of T A Fisher's current development at Tower House.

Regrettably the work was being carried out this week (Tuesday 11 September) before the harvest, but Graham has been assured by Katherine that this is agreed with the Estate. The primary purpose of the compound is to enable contractors to park on site (and thus not on the road or in local car parks) but so as not to be in the way of the Tower House construction. Katherine assures us that the compound is purely for the purposes of the Tower House development and is not a commencement of development on MOR006.

Ufton Nervet

SUN fete

Graham did a stint on the parish council stall at the fete and fended a few questions, particularly about green waste charging!

Graham Bridgman, Carol Jackson-Doerge & Ian Morrin
12 September 2018