

Parish Council Report for period up to 10 July 2019
Cllr Graham Bridgman (West Berkshire Council, Burghfield and Mortimer Ward)

West Berkshire Council

Meeting

We held a Council Meeting on 2 July, where the only item of scheduled business was to agree a new draft revised statement of community involvement for planning.

Statement of Community Involvement - 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 dating from September 2014, and the regulations requiring a five year review period). The new draft was agreed and will now go out to public consultation.

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. The motion followed the climate change petition presented to the Council Meeting on 30 May, which I reported on last month. Climate change is high on the agenda for the council and features in a number of the new Council Strategy priorities.

The motion read:

"This Council notes that:

1. *All levels of government (national, regional and local) have a responsibility to limit the negative impacts of Climate Breakdown. It is important for the residents of West Berkshire and the UK that we commit to working towards carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.*
2. *The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C are so severe that preventing this from happening must be of the utmost urgency.*
3. *Bold climate action can deliver economic benefits in terms of new jobs, economic savings and market opportunities (as well as improved health and well-being) but will also require changes in individual's lifestyles and have a cost implication to both the individual and the state.*

West Berkshire Council therefore:

1. *Declares a Climate Emergency.*
2. *Will create a strategic plan for West Berkshire that aims to deliver carbon neutral by 2030.*
3. *Calls on HM Government to provide the Council with the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible.*
4. *Will work with other authorities to determine and implement where practicable best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C.*
5. *Will continue to work with businesses, residents and other stakeholders across the district to deliver this new goal via all relevant strategies and plans.*
6. *The newly formed Environment Board will provide an interim report to the Executive in September 2019 with the progress made to date."*

Steve Ardagh-Walter, WBC Executive Member for the Environment: *"It is the responsibility of government at all levels to limit the negative impact of climate breakdown, and we need to start working on this right now.*

"We are responding to this urgent call for change by making a firm pledge to do everything we can to deliver carbon neutrality by 2030.

"However, we do realise that it will take time for the level of change we need to take place. That is why we

have created an Environmental Board that will work with residents, businesses and neighbouring authorities to create a strategic plan for change."

In addition to the Environmental Board there is going to be a cross-party advisory group with a broad remit to scrutinise strategy and provide feedback on the delivery and content of WBC's environmental plan.

Strategy Delivery Plan and Senior Management Review

I referred to the new Council Strategy last month and work has now commenced on the Delivery Plan to support it, with a focus on deliverable targets against each of our key priority areas.

To help deliver our new Strategy we have a new structure coming in for the upper tiers of the Council to enable our strategic focus to remain on Place, People and Resource. I was part of an appointment panel recently that resulted in the appointment of Joseph Holmes (currently with Winchester City Council) as our new Executive Director for Resources and he 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, but on an evolutionary rather than revolutionary basis with (at least initially) changes being made as opportunities arise from retirement, departure, etc.

WBC Constitution and PC Codes of Conduct etc.

The WBC Governance and Ethics Committee recently discussed an overhaul of the WBC Constitution and is setting up a cross-party working group to undertake a review. Having had a fair amount on involvement in amendments to the constitution (eg the revised members' code of conduct and the new social media protocol) I anticipate being involved.

Having recently discussed the SMPC Code of Conduct at an SMPC Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting I happened to speak to Sarah Clark (amongst other things the WBC Monitoring Officer) about it. She is keen to try to get a WBC template for a parish council code of conduct, gifts and hospitality policy and social media protocol, and suggested that this is something the working group might look at – her reasoning is that having a common set of principles will make dealing with any issues that arise (eg standards complaints), and offering training to parish councillors, far more consistent – at present what is a breach of one PC's code of conduct might not be a breach of another's.

External Bodies

I have been re-appointed to the AWE Local Liaison Committee and am now also a Governor for both the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. More acronyms to get my head around!

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.

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.

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.

Local Matters

Members' Community Bids

A reminder to all PCs that if you want a bid to be considered you will need to approach Geoff, Royce or me with details and confirmation of match funding (or all three of us for a large bid).

Ward visit by Nick Carter

Nick Carter (the WBC CEO, not the SMPC councillor!) has offered to visit WBC wards to discuss any issues – *“These are very much visits for me to listen, to you, see particular concerns or meet people you feel I need to hear from”*. Geoff, Royce and I have discussed this and our view is that the best way forward is for the parishes to identify issues of concern – say one each from BHPC and WPC, and two each from BPC and SMPC – and for us to then seek to arrange a mutually convenient date for Nick to visit and meet PC representatives to discuss the issues.

Please could Clerks or Chairmen get back to us with topics.

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System

In June the NHS announced that three new areas are to become 'Integrated Care Systems', 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 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.

Neighbourhood Planning

I have written before about the WBC HEELA (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) which will set out the sites submitted to the council for consideration for development as part of the local plan process.

On Monday (8 July) WBC wrote to neighbourhood planning teams to the effect that they were aiming for publication of the HEELA by September. At the behest of Cllr Ian Morrin (BPC) I drilled into this a little with Bryan Lyttle (WBC Planning and Transport Policy Manager).

Bryan has told us that the reason for the delay is to avoid publishing over the summer holidays in order to engage as many people as possible in the consultation. It shouldn't affect ultimate delivery of the plan.

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 (eg) the proposals for Grazeley.

Neighbourhood Action Group

I'll let individual parish representatives report back from the last NAG meeting, but Royce and I met with Cllr Debbie Fisher (WPC) and Cllr Nick Carter (the SMPC councillor, not the WBC CEO) recently to re-draft the NAG's terms of reference. If agreed, the new version formalises the NAG area as the parishes of Beech Hill, Burghfield, Padworth, Stratfield Mortimer, Sulhamstead and Ufton Nervet, and the membership as one parish councillor appointed by each parish, bar Burghfield and Stratfield Mortimer with two each, plus the WBC ward councillors for those parishes, plus representatives appointed by the police, plus anyone else co-opted (eg neighbourhood watch representatives).

Space Chase at West Berkshire Libraries

Children aged six 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. For more details, please ask in the Burghfield or Mortimer libraries.

Police & Crime Bulletin

The latest bulletin includes the launch of a Home Security Guide to help residents with a range of physical and digital security measures. There is also advice on how to avoid invalidating your home insurance through poor security and a checklist when going away – the guide can be accessed at www.thamesvalley.police.uk.

Roadworks

The latest Surface Dressing programme from WBC includes the following:

Beech Hill Road – from the junction with Grazeley Road to the district boundary, due on 26 July (1 day);

Longmoor Lane – the whole length, due on 26 July (1 day);

Unnamed road from St Catherine's Hill to Padworth Road – whole length, due on 20 July (1 day)

Unnamed road known as Mortimer Lane – from Beech Hill Road (/The Forehead) to the district boundary, due on 20 July (1 day).

Parishes

Burghfield

Planning application - land adjacent to The Hollies

I have had continued discussions with WBC Planning and the developer, in particular about the landscape buffer required by the WBC Development Plan policy to go between the site and the side/rear of The Hollies. There appears to be progress and I am waiting for finalised proposals from the developer.

Box Cart

Having been involved in getting some of the hedges cut back by WBC Highways for Box Cart and then marshalling the crossing point at Roselawn, I then found myself chasing up clearance of straw that had got

onto the carriageway and the various bits of signage all over (or so it seems!) the district. Congratulations once again to the Santas for a successful event!

Stratfield Mortimer

St John's Church car park

Chris Vidler (WBC's Senior Engineer (Traffic)) has emailed to the effect that the car park has been included in the current WBC works programme for further investigation, following a complaint about driver behaviour. The review should be completed by the end of the summer.

Bins blocking pavements

Following correspondence from Cllr Wells I have had assurances from the WBC waste team that they will emphasise to Veolia and its operatives that bins need to be returned off the pavement so that residents can get past!

Birch Lane

There has been yet further correspondence with residents and WBC and I am awaiting the promised response from WBC Planning Enforcement to a very specific letter on behalf of residents.

St Mary's Event

Having been involved on the periphery with my Mortimer Music Live hat on, many congratulations to the team for putting the event together (and for arranging such good weather!).

Wokefield

James Lane

Further to conversations at the last two PC meetings, and the email for Cllr Thorne last week, I have raised the issue of the state of James Lane with Highways – watch this space...

Graham Bridgman

10 July 2019