



Aldworth Parish Council

Minutes of the Virtual Annual Parish Council Meeting

Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7pm via Zoom

Minute ref: 001/050521/VAMPC

Members Present:	Cllr. Tim Chapman, Cllr. Kate Walters, Cllr. Donna Roach, Cllr. John Clark Cllr. Nick Williams (joined at 19:42)
Members Absent:	0
Officers Present:	Mrs Fenella Woods (Clerk & RFO)
In Attendance:	Cllr. Alan Law, 1 x Member of Public (joined at 19:42)
Meeting Start Time:	19.02pm
Meeting End Time:	19:58pm

- 001/21 Cllr. Chapman was **proposed** by Cllr. Clark and **seconded** by Cllr. Roach to be the **Chairman** for Aldworth Parish Council for the **Municipal Year 2021 to 2022**. All were **in favour**.
- 002/21 Cllr. Roach was **proposed** by Cllr. Chapman and **seconded** by Cllr. Clark to be the **Vice Chairman** for Aldworth Parish Council for the **Municipal Year 2021 to 2022**. All were **in favour**.
- 003/21 Cllr. Chapman and Cllr. Roach duly **signed** their 'Declaration of Office' forms and presented them to the camera. The Clerk will collect these and send to the Monitoring Officer at WBC.
- 004/21 Apologies were received from Cllr. Williams who was delayed with work, and who joined us later (19:42pm). Quorum was achieved.
- 005/21 There were no declarations received, nor any requests for dispensation to consider.
- 006/21 Cllr. Alan Law circulated a report prior to the meeting (see appendix 1). A wealth of information is available in the report regarding West Berkshire Council. Thank you to Cllr. Law for attending.
- 007/21 There were no questions or comments from members of the public.

- 008/21 The minutes of the meeting on 15th March 2021 were **approved** as an accurate record. They will be signed when safe to do so.
- 009/21 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2020 / 2021
- a) The Council went through the Internal Auditor's Report and were pleased with the comments. It was noted that no record of the previous clerk displaying the exercise of public rights on the noticeboard was in evidence. This will be **rectified** this year.
 - b) The Annual Governance Statement was **resolved** as an **accurate** record and the Chairman signed the documents and presented to camera.
 - c) Both the Accounting Statement and the Receipts and Payments Summary was **resolved** as an **accurate** record and the Chairman signed the documents and presented to camera.
 - d) All elements of the AGAR were **approved** by **resolution** and the Clerk will update the website and the noticeboard, and arrange the Certificate of Exemption to be sent to the External Auditor.
- 010/21 It was **agreed** to form a Staffing Committee to support the Clerk with her objectives and annual appraisals. Cllr. Chapman, Cllr. Roach and Cllr. Clark will be members of the committee. The first meeting will be scheduled for 7th June 2021 at 6pm. The Council **agreed** to the Terms of Reference for the Committee.
- 011/21 The Standing Orders were **reviewed** and **approved** for 2021 / 2022.
- 012/21 The Financial Regulations were **reviewed** and **approved** for 2021 / 2022.
- 013/21 The annual subscription charge for BALC / HALC / NALC was **approved** and the Council were **in favour** to split the cost of the Clerk's membership fee to the SLCC with East Ilsley Parish Council 50/50. The Clerk will advise if she wishes to take up the Principal Membership based on the ability to achieve 18 CPD (continuing professional development) points during the year.
- 014/21 The Direct Debits for 2021 / 2022 were **reviewed** and **approved**.
- 015/21 It was **agreed** to put the General Power of Competence on hold until the Clerk can check if Cllr. Roach (who resigned and then was co-opted back on to the council) can be included in the 'elected councillor' count.
- 016/21 The Asset Register was **reviewed** and **approved** as accurate for 2021 / 2022.
- 017/21 The Clerk received the revised insurance quotation from Came and Company after submitting the latest Asset Register. The cost is now £699.74 with a £50.00 admin fee. The increase is due to the office equipment not being added to the insurance by the previous clerk. All Councillors **approved** this payment to be made by 1st June 2021.
- 018/21 Policies
- a) Complaints Policy – **reviewed** and **approved**
 - b) Freedom of Information Policy – **reviewed** and **approved**
 - c) Data Protection Policy – **reviewed** and **approved**
 - d) Media Policy – **reviewed** and **approved**
 - e) Employment Policies (Anti-Bullying, Grievance & Disciplinary, Equality) – **reviewed** and **approved**.

- 019/21 The S.137 expenditure (donation allowance) for 2020 / 2021 was **reviewed** and **accepted**.
- 020/21 The dates of the Ordinary Parish Council Meetings were set as:
Monday 19th July 2021
Monday 20th September 2021
Monday 15th November 2021
Monday 10th January 2022
Monday 14th March 2022
Monday 9th May 2022
Location: Village Hall, Aldworth
Time: 7pm
Staffing Committee – 4th June 2021 @ 6pm
- 021/21 It was **agreed** that the following Councillors would assume the responsibilities of:
Footpaths Officer: Cllr. Kate Walters
Traffic & Village Greens Officer: Cllr. Donna Roach
Digital Officer: Cllr. John Clark
Playground Officer: Cllr. Nick Williams
- 022/21 The Action Log for 2020 / 2021 was updated. Any outstanding actions will be moved to the new Log for 2021 / 2022 and we will continue to review at each meeting.
- 023/21 The Clerk presented the Council with 3 options to replace the old notice board on the Well Green. It was **agreed** that Option 2 was the best fit. Total cost: £1,397.91. It was agreed to source an installation quote from CJM services and to **apply for the Members' Bid** via Cllr. Alan Law to help fund the new noticeboard. We hope to receive 50% of the total cost from WBC.
- 024/21 It was **agreed** not to offer a donation towards a Covid memorial bench at the Downland Practice in Chieveley as not all residents of the Parish use that surgery, some go into Goring or Pangbourne.
- 025/21 The Clerk gave an update on the status of the Bank Account. There is nothing else to report that has not been covered in this meeting.
- 026/21 Matters for future consideration:
a) Cllr. Walters commented on the amount of dog waste bags being put in the hedges towards the Downs / Ridgeway. It was **agreed** that a new dog bin should be placed there. The Clerk will put together a proposal with the costs and this will be **added to the agenda for July**.
b) Flooding in Ambury Road needs to be looked at before the heavy rains return.
c) The small green triangle at the Church was partially fixed by Veolia but they would not fix it, all as a tractor had also driven over it (not their recycling truck). Cllr. Clark will speak with Cllr. Williams about how to maintain the rest of the triangle.
- 027/21 Our member of public present at the meeting advised the Council of her efforts to deal with the litter in and around her home. There seem to be vast amounts of litter dropped by walkers. The Council **expressed their appreciation** at her efforts and **thanked** her to looking after this area of the village. It was commented on that the litter was more noticeable since the verges had been cut back.

With there being no further business, the Chairman thanked all for attending. The meeting closed at 19:58pm.

Signed:

Position:

Date:

Actions from the Meeting:			
	Description	Assigned to	Completed
1	Collect Declaration of Office Forms and submit to WBC	Clerk	✓
2	Complete AGAR for 2020 / 2021 for the External Auditor	Clerk	✓
3	Pay Insurance before 1 st June 2021	Clerk / TC / NW	✓
4	Book the Village Hall for the planned meetings & look at Covid risk assessments to ensure safety	Clerk	Await to hear from Hall Team
5	Update Action Log and start new log for 2021 / 2022	Clerk	✓
6	Purchase new Notice Board and apply for Members Bid	Clerk	Deadline for Bid 23 rd June
7	Put together a proposal for the new Dog Bin ready for the July Meeting	Clerk	19 th July 2021
8	Complete the Flooding in Ambury Road Document for WBC	Clerk	Ongoing

Appendix 1



Parish Council Report for the period to 4 May 2021

Cllr Alan Law, Ward Basildon

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

Council

The Annual Meeting of Council was held virtually yesterday (4 May), having been brought forward from the original date of 11 May due to the rules on virtual meetings (more below).

At the meeting we elected Cllr Clive Hooker as Chairman of Council and Cllr Rick Jones as Vice-Chairman, with a video shown of a ceremonial hand over of the chain of office recorded previously in the grounds of Shaw House. Congratulations to Cllrs Hooker and Jones, and many thanks to Cllr Graham Pask, the outgoing Chairman, who ended up serving two years in the Chair due to the impact of Covid on Council business.

The Leader of Council, Lynne Doherty, announced some changes to the Executive (further to those announced at the Executive meeting on 25 March) and the full list is set out below.

There were also some changes to membership of committees and a rotation of some Committee Chairmen, plus appointments to certain outside bodies (with the usual adjournment of the main meeting and series of “stand up then sit down” annual committee meetings replaced by a series of Zoom committee meetings after the main meeting).

In addition, we considered a refresh of the Council Strategy and new health scrutiny arrangements (more below), and a restructuring of the Place Directorate.

Executive

Amongst other items, the recent Executive meeting on 29 April approved the new Risk Management Strategy (subject to slight amendment) and the draft terms relating to the proposed agreement with Newbury Rugby Club in relation to the Sports Ground provision at their site.

The next meeting of the Executive will be on 10 June.

Meetings – The Remote Meeting Rules

As reported last month, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 cease to have effect on Friday (7 May) (hence the bringing forward of the Council’s Annual Meeting). The court action referred to last month was heard on 22 April and [judgment](#) was handed down on 28 April.

The judgment of the Administrative Court was that “place” in Schedule 12, LGA 1972 means a physical, not a virtual, place:

“Conclusion

- 89 *For these reasons, we conclude that the Secretary of State was correct in November 2016 and July 2019 to say that primary legislation would be required to allow local authority “meetings” under the 1972 Act to take place remotely. In our view, once the Flexibility Regulations cease to apply, such meetings must take place at a single, specified geographical location; attending a meeting at such a location means physically going to it; and being “present” at such a meeting involves physical presence at that location.*
- 90 *We recognise that there are powerful arguments in favour of permitting remote meetings. But, as the consultation documents show, there are also arguments against doing so. The decision whether to permit some or all local authority meetings to be conducted remotely, and if so, how and subject to what safeguards, involves difficult policy choices on which there is likely to be a range of competing views. These choices have been made legislatively for Scotland by the Scottish Parliament and for Wales by the Senedd. In England, they are for Parliament, not the courts.*
- 91 *Subject to what follows, the claim will be dismissed.*

Postscript

- 92 *After the judgment was circulated in draft, it was pointed out that we have not determined the question whether a meeting which is required by the 1972 Act to take place in person is “open to the public” or “held in public” if the only means by which the public are permitted to access it are remote. There was brief reference to the meaning of these phrases in submissions, but we were not asked to determine the question now raised. However, we have decided to permit the parties to address us separately on it in the light of our conclusions on the meaning of “meeting”, “place”, “present” and “attend” in the 1972 Act.*
- 93 *Accordingly, we shall give directions for the parties to make submissions on this point before making a final order in this case.”*

As also reported last month, there is a [call for evidence](#) by the Government seeking to understand the experience of local authorities regarding remote meetings. WBC is providing evidence of the success (as we see it) of our holding meetings remotely and, indeed, WBC has been singled out by the Local Government Association as an exemplar in the field.

Meetings – Physical, Hybrid or Virtual?

WBC is continuing to review how to hold public meetings in a Covid safe fashion, coupled with a desire to continue to stream our meetings via YouTube.

Hopefully we will be able to get back to “normal” meetings after 21 June, but in the interim the restrictions posed by the health and safety limits on the number of individuals a meeting room can accommodate in a Covid safe manner (for example the normal capacity of the Council Chamber is reasonably substantial, as anyone who has attended a District-Parish Conference will attest, but the fully Covid safe capacity is 18), and the desire to stream meetings (the Council Chamber is the room with the best facilities), mean that some meetings may look and feel somewhat different to pre-Covid.

We expect to publish fresh meeting guidance shortly.

Executive Membership

The new Executive roles are:

- Leader of Council and portfolio holder for District Strategy and Communications - Lynne Doherty
- Deputy Leader of Council and portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing - Graham Bridgman
- Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care - Jo Stewart
- Portfolio holder for Children, Young People and Education - Dominic Boeck
- Portfolio holder for Environment and Countryside - Steve Ardagh-Walter
- Portfolio holder for Finance and Economic Development - Ross Mackinnon
- Portfolio holder for Housing, Strategic Partnerships and Transformation - Hilary Cole
- Portfolio holder for Internal Governance, Leisure and Culture - Howard Woollaston
- Portfolio holder for Planning and Transport - Richard Somner

Committees

As mentioned above, there have been some changes to membership of committees and to Committee Chairmen, etc. An updated list will be on the [website](#) shortly.

Health Scrutiny

Health Scrutiny Committee

Prior to the creation of this new Committee at the Annual Council Meeting, health scrutiny had been allocated to the Overview and Management Scrutiny Commission. More focussed emphasis on health scrutiny was desired, due to:

- *the proposals for change in the Health and Social Care White Paper (changes to the structure of the NHS, putting Integrated Care Systems on a statutory footing, integrating Clinical Commissioning Groups at the system footprint, etc)*
- *the fact that both the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust and the Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust are preparing proposals and supporting business cases for redevelopment of their existing hospitals (or even construction of brand new hospitals) that will be going out to consultation in the coming months; and*
- *the importance of health matters having increased considerably as a result of the Covid pandemic (and the expectation that this will remain a key focus as we enter the recovery phase).*

So, the new Committee has been formed and will also link into health scrutiny at a system level as set out below.

BOB JHOSC

Yet more acronyms. At the Annual Meeting we also agreed to engage with the formation of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission for the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System (“BOB”) to conduct health scrutiny at a system level.

Council Strategy Refresh

The Council Strategy was agreed in 2019 to cover the four years to 2023 and this is a half time refresh to articulate the progress that has been made, and to introduce new or updated projects to support the delivery of the Council’s core business and priorities for improvement.

The refreshed Council Strategy builds on the enhanced strategic framework developed during the first two years of the Strategy (e.g., the Environment Strategy, the Economic Development Strategy, the Communication and Engagement Strategy and the Recovery and Renewal Strategy) and sets out the priorities for improvement over the remaining two years, reaffirming the commitment to continue the delivery of the core services that people in West Berkshire need and value.

The revised and refreshed Strategy will be available on the council’s [website](#) shortly.

Covid-19

Supporting Communities

There is no doubt what a difficult year we have all been through. However, tremendous work has been witnessed in our communities and Council staff have made strenuous efforts to respond to the needs of residents throughout the pandemic, over and above a huge amount of regular work.

You can see some of the highlights in a [booklet](#) prepared by the Council’s communications team.

Blossom in to Spring

As a Council we have thought deeply about how we could all reflect on those we have lost during the pandemic. Ornamental white cherry trees will be planted across West Berkshire in an act of remembrance of the 248 lives taken by Covid-19 since March 2020. Later in the year we will be working with parish and town councils, and with employers, to identify suitable sites – the WBC Countryside and Building Communities Together Teams will co-ordinate this project. We feel certain that there will be no shortage of volunteers across the district to care for these trees in the same way our communities have cared for each other in recent times.

The Roadmap Out of Lockdown

12 April saw the next step of the roadmap out of lockdown with the opening of non-essential retail; personal care premises such as hairdressers and nail salons; and public buildings, including libraries and community centres.

Indoor leisure facilities such as gyms could also reopen (but only for use by people on their own or in household groups).

Self-contained accommodation such as campsites and holiday lets, where indoor facilities are not shared with other households, were also permitted to reopen.

With the next step – on 17 May, if the tests are met - the government will look to continue easing limits on seeing friends and family wherever possible, allowing people to decide on the appropriate level of risk for their circumstances.

This means that most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of Six, or two households, will apply.

The Government has outlined the four tests of Pace, Efficacy, Pressure on the NHS, and Risk of Variants - further information about the easing of lockdown can be found in the [Four Step Plan](#).



Local Infection Rates



Berkshire generally continues to see a reduction in Covid-19 infection rates although there remain a small number of new cases being reported daily. At the time of writing the rolling weekly rate in West Berkshire is around 14 cases per 100,000 and has been relatively low for the whole of April.

As previously referred to, Berkshire local Covid information about the daily reported cases in the district (and across Berkshire), and the weekly per 100,000 rate (one of the principal factors in any decision making) can be

accessed from Berkshire Public Health [website](#).

Vaccinations – National Position

Weekly reports on the vaccine rollout are being published by NHS [here](#), giving data at an Integrated Care System (ICS) level – in our case at the level of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (“BOB”) ICS. Additionally, Government data can be found [here](#).

Vaccinations – Local Position

The GP led vaccination centre at Newbury Racecourse is focusing on second vaccinations for cohorts 1 – 9 and will be closing in the next few weeks when that is complete. Arrangements are being firmed up about the location of ongoing community vaccination delivery in the week commencing 3 May, but is thought likely to be pharmacy based (but no official announcement has yet been made).

Anyone in cohorts 1 – 9 who have not yet been invited to receive their first vaccine are encouraged to either contact or register with a GP or [book direct](#).

The direct booking system can also be used as the NHS calls further age groups forward for vaccination.

Further information regarding vaccination can be found on the [Berkshire Public Health website](#).



Community Testing - free home test kits



Rapid widespread testing – also known as lateral flow testing or community testing - is a key tool in the fight against Coronavirus. Lateral flow testing can identify people who are asymptomatic and may be spreading the virus without knowing it (and is only to be used by people who don't have coronavirus symptoms).

Free home testing kits can be collected from our community testing centres, our mobile collect van (see below), and participating pharmacies – for more see [here](#).

Using this method for twice-weekly testing in the months ahead can help us all get back to normal.

West Berkshire Mobile Community Collect

WBC are distributing lateral flow device testing home kits across the district.

Community Collect is a government programme to make lateral flow device testing home kits available to families and households with children and young people at Primary or Secondary School, or College, including childcare and support bubbles.

West Berkshire Mobile Community Collect is in operation from Monday to Friday, with a different specified route around the district each day - the routes and timetable are available at the link above.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board

The Local Outbreak Engagement Board continues to meet fortnightly to update residents of the current activities relating to Covid-19 in and around the district (and beyond). Public meetings are available on the Council's YouTube channel and further information about the Board can be found [here](#).

Coronavirus Information on the WBC Website

The Council keeps up to date information for residents and businesses on the [website](#).

Community Support Hub

The WBC [support hub](#) can still be contacted on 01635 503579 if needed.

Local Economy

Support for Businesses

WBC has been focussing its efforts to distribute the new one-off Government Restart Grants to businesses in the district as quickly as possible. Grants up to £18k are being awarded to individual businesses that were forced to close due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Since the new scheme was announced in March, the Council has processed almost £6.5m worth of grants to businesses in the non-essential retail, hospitality, accommodation, personal care and leisure categories.

To make it simpler for businesses, the Council has automatically processed payments to those who have received a business grant previously. Any business that has not received a grant from the Council before, and believes they are eligible to receive one, should apply. Information about eligibility and how to apply can be found on the Council's [web page](#).

Education

Primary School Preferences

The proportion of children given a place at their preferred primary school has increased this year with West Berkshire Council allocating the first choice place almost 95% of cases.

Parents were told which school their children had been allocated in April. This 1,675 applications were made by the parents of children starting school in September 2021 - of these, 1,581 children were given a place at their first-choice school.

Choosing the right primary school is something parents think about very carefully so we're delighted to be able to offer most people their top choice of school this year.



in
year

Consultation on specialist education centre in Theale

Following a positive response to a consultation at the end of 2020 on a proposal to develop a specialist resourced provision for up to 42 secondary aged learners (aged 11 to 18 years) with complex social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), views on the development of the old Theale Primary School site at Church Street, Theale are now being sought via a [consultation](#) closing at midnight on Sunday, 13 June.

Active Walking and Cycling Proposals



Although the opportunity to comment on [our West Berks Active Streets and Calcot School Streets proposed schemes](#) to make streets safer for walking and cycling closed on 23 April, you can still find out more about what School Streets schemes are by clicking on the video link [here](#)

If you have any specific walking and cycling proposals of your own, please use the West Berkshire Active Travel Heat Map in our engagement platform to choose a location and add your suggestion in the comments by Friday, 2

July 2021: [Have Your Say Today – West Berks AT Schemes – Commonplace](#).

[Environment](#)

Carbon savings grants help schools to be greener

Carbon savings grants secured from the Government are being used to improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills, with the projects supporting our target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 as part of our [Environment Strategy](#).

Earlier this year, The Downs School in Compton was awarded a Government grant of £232k to be spent on decarbonisation projects to help the school be greener.

The funding was used to install 31 new aluminium windows across various buildings in the school, LED lighting to 80% of the school buildings, and solar panels to two buildings.



We congratulate The Downs School on completing this project in a tight timescale, especially as the work coincided with the return of pupils to school after the Covid-19 lockdown.

Carbon reduction projects worth nearly £0.5m secured for three schools and a community centre

WBC has secured a grant of £487k from the Government for further decarbonisation works. Projects have been put forward for schools in Hermitage, Hungerford, and Thatcham Park, along with Thatcham Family Hub, to benefit from the grant.

The work will include replacing existing heating systems with "greener" solutions such as air source heat pumps, solar electricity, LED lighting, and building management systems. Detailed design is underway and work is expected to be carried out over the summer of 2021 with a completion date expected by the end of September 2021.

Climate Change Bond Investors donate their interest to Wildflower Verges

1 in 6 people who invested in West Berkshire's ground-breaking Climate Change Bond liked the idea so much they have donated their interest back to the scheme.

The Council launched the country's first Community Municipal Investment last July, offering residents and community groups a unique way to invest directly in a greener future for the district. It supports West Berkshire Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency and is a key part of its [new Environment Strategy](#).

More than a hundred people who invested in the scheme chose to donate their returns back to the Council so it can be used on more green projects, rather than take the money.

West Berkshire has already used its CMI to **fully or partially finance** a number of green projects in the district, including:

- installing solar panels in six West Berkshire locations at a cost of £520k funded entirely by the bond;
- retro-fitting traffic lights at 17 locations with LED lights - the bond provided the £80k project cost which will offer energy efficiency benefits of 38207 kWh per year, equating to 21 CO₂ (t) saved (some subway lighting has been upgraded to LED too);
- replacing 217 steel lighting columns with fully recyclable aluminium at a cost of £200k - the new columns have twice the life span of steel columns, which will save around £20k per year in maintenance costs;
- developing the Council's local walking and cycling infrastructure plan – including a £100k upgrade to the Thatcham to Brimpton towpath in October 2020;
- £100k of habitat restoration and capital investment in our country parks through the Council's partnership with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT);
- tree planting and habitat creation as part of the Dunstan Park and South East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme costing £100k, to be completed this year.

The additional funds from the donation of interest are being used to support BBOWT's project to introduce wildflower verges on roads in the district. The money will go towards providing communities with wildflower guides so they can

be more engaged in monitoring the verges in their local area, boosting local knowledge which can then be used to inform future projects.

Sign up to our [Environment Newsletter](#) to keep up to date with up to date with progress on our Environment Strategy as we build these new projects.

HWRC Live Webcams

WBC residents can now view the recycling centres through new live site webcams. These webcams will give residents the opportunity to have a look at real-time site conditions before they set off on their visits. View them online: [Newtown Road Recycling Centre](#) and [Padworth Recycling Centre](#).

Rubbish and Recycling collection on Bank Holidays



Don't forget that WBC now collects rubbish and recycling on bank holidays.

If your normal collection day falls over a bank holiday, please ensure that your bin or recycling containers are out by 06:00 that day.

Planning, Transport and Countryside

Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan

Work has started on an improvement plan for public rights of way across West Berkshire. In order to ensure that the plan meets the needs of residents, we welcome your views. Please take our [online survey](#) to let us know:

- about your experience of using public rights of way;
- how important the network is to your health and wellbeing;
- if you've encountered any problems using public rights of way and whether your concerns were addressed.

The survey closes on 30 May.

Changes to West Berkshire's Community Transport Services

Community transport service Readibus has notified West Berkshire Council that they will cease to provide their transport services in Newbury and Thatcham.

The dial-a-ride service will continue to operate in the east of West Berkshire - which includes Tilehurst and Calcot - for as long as possible.

West Berkshire Council is grateful to Readibus for the service provided, and whilst this is regrettable for passengers who use Readibus services in Newbury and Thatcham, we wanted to ensure that those passengers are aware that there are other community transport groups providing services for local residents who are unable to use public transport and need to attend medical appointments or make shopping trips.

Community transport groups operating in Newbury and Thatcham, include:

- Thatcham Volunteer Bureau, which operates a car scheme for residents living in and around Thatcham - including Cold Ash, Crookham, and Woolhampton (to book, call 01635 862306 between 10:00 and 12:00 Monday to Friday);
- Volunteer Centre West Berkshire (VCWB), which operates a Handybus and a car scheme within Newbury and the surrounding areas:
 - contact the Car Scheme on 01635 49004 between 10:00 and 13:00 Monday to Friday;
 - contact the Handybus on 01635 37111 between 09:00 and 13:00 Monday to Friday;
 - Contact Shopmobility on 01635 523854 between 09:30 and 16:00 Monday to Saturday.

Information on all community transport schemes operating in West Berkshire, along with details on other local groups, can be found [here](#).

Health and Wellbeing

Community Forum – Mental Health and Wellbeing in West Berkshire

On Friday (30 April), Greenham Trust along with Laura Farris MP hosted a Mental Health and Wellbeing in West Berkshire Community Forum.

The forum featured expert speakers discussing the challenges and opportunities faced across West Berkshire and also highlighted some of the resources available to help.

Adult Social Care

Care Home Visiting Protocol

A revised [Care Home Visitors Protocol](#) has been issued. The principal change allows up to two named visitors and babies and young children under the age of two years old by permission of the care home manager.

Leisure and Culture

Libraries



In line with the restrictions still in place, customers will be asked to wear a face mask (unless exempt), maintain social distancing, use hand sanitiser as they enter the library, and provide details for Test and Trace.

Details of all current library opening hours, together with the Mobile Library timetable, can be found on the website [here](#). Customers will be able to choose books and use library computers for up to one hour per day. Printing, scanning and photocopying services will also be available. Visitors will need to bring their library membership card with them in order to borrow books or DVDs and to use the computers. Visitors will also need their 4-digit library PIN, which can be [reset online](#) if needed.

The 'At Home' service delivers books and audiobooks to people who are currently self-isolating or unable to collect books from the library because of age, disability or other special circumstance. More details about this service can be obtained by calling 01635 519827 or emailing library@westberks.gov.uk.

In addition, residents can take advantage of the West Berkshire Libraries' new initiative giving customers access to 'Your Library in One App.' The free app is a quick and easy way for library users to search the catalogue, renew and reserve books and keep up to date with news from West Berkshire Libraries. Users will also have instant access to the extensive collection of free e-books, e-magazines, e-newspapers and e-audiobooks.

Customers who are not already members of the library can join online to get free, instant access to the e-library. Details can be obtained on: www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries.

Communities

Educafe wins bid to become West Berkshire's Diverse Ethnic Communities Support Agency

WBC has appointed Educafe as the district's Diverse Ethnic Communities Support Agency, following a comprehensive process conducted by the Council, Thames Valley Police and Berkshire West.

In line with the Council's "Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020 – 2030," the community engagement organisation will provide a voice for local diverse ethnic communities. The Council and its partners will work with Educafe to find the best ways to meet the needs of these communities.



bidding
NHS

The Council and Educafe share a common goal to ensure that residents from diverse ethnic communities are made aware of the support that the Council, NHS, local charities and other voluntary organisations can provide. This joint

aim is to help reduce health inequalities and address employment, racial and other inequalities. As part of their service, Educafe will operate a confidential Helpdesk that will direct people to the relevant service provider to meet their needs.

The Council will work in partnership with Educafe to enhance the knowledge and understanding of the wider community, agencies and public services so that they can provide the required support to the diverse ethnic community population.

Educafe will work directly with local providers to ensure that their services embrace different cultures and promote social inclusion, health and wellbeing through events, food, education and language support. There will also be opportunities for local providers to meet residents and inform them about their services at 'pop up' Community Cafés set up by Educafe.

Pop-up ethnic market stalls will also take place throughout the year to support local ethnic community enterprises. These events will promote commerce as well as shine a spotlight on the rich cultures of diverse ethnic communities amongst the wider community.

Educafe will run a free six week Job Support Club and English for Work course for people who speak English as an additional language looking to start or return to work. The course will take place from 11 June to 18 July at Newbury Town Hall, with appropriate Covid-19 safety measures in place. Further information can be obtained [here](#).

Water Safety Partnership

WBC, Thames Valley Police, the Canal & River Trust, the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, South Central Ambulance Service and the NHS have come together to work on a Water Safety Partnership in West Berkshire.

The aim of the partnership is to work closely together to improve the safety of the waterway through the district for residents and visitors using the canals and rivers. It will also look at addressing the broad issues of water safety and river usage, working to raise awareness of the risks of waterways amongst communities most at risk and engaging with the public, private and voluntary sectors with responsibility for waterways.

Communications Channels

As well as Twitter there are also a number of Facebook pages which the Council uses, for example:

- West Berkshire Council;
- West Berkshire Community Support Hub Group;
- West Berkshire Libraries.

The WBC website also contains more about the CSH and useful information for residents and businesses:

Residents	https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-residents
Business	https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-business
Community hub	https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub
Broadcast meetings	West Berkshire Council YouTube Channel

Linked to all of these initiatives is the WBC Customer Service telephone line: 01635 551111.

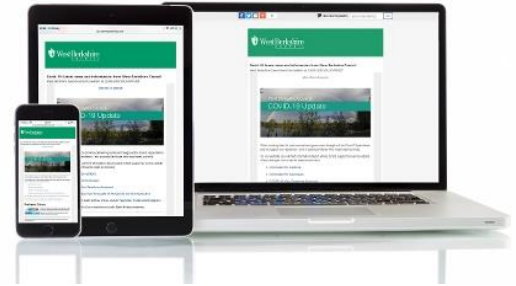
Newsletters

WBC news direct to inboxes

WBC has launched a new email subscription service to make it easier for residents to receive news and information about council services.

Residents can [sign up](#) to receive information on a range of topics - from general news to specific updates on Covid-19, the environment, waste and recycling and business news.

It's easy to subscribe - simply fill in your email address and select the topics you would like to hear more about. You can manage your preferences at any time through the link above or by following links in the emails you receive.



Other Matters

May Elections

It won't have passed anyone's attention that elections for the Thames Valley PCC and for some town and parish council vacancies are to be held (delayed due to Covid-19) on Thursday (6 May). A reminder that Polling Stations will be subject to stringent Government Covid safety measures to ensure electors can vote safely.

Statement in response to comments made by Unison West Berkshire following the death of the Duke of Edinburgh

The Council became aware late on the evening of the announcement of the death of The Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh of statements made by Unison West Berkshire on their social media.

WBC distanced themselves from them completely. Nick Carter, the Council's Chief Executive has taken the matter up with the Chairman of the West Berkshire Branch of Unison as well as their National office.

The Council's own response to the sad news of the Duke's passing were published on Friday both internally and to the wider community. Members of the public wishing to express their condolences can also send a message to the Royal Family at <https://www.royal.uk/books-condolence>.

Nick Carter announces retirement

Nick Carter, Chief Executive of West Berkshire Council announced his planned retirement in August this year. Nick has been with WBC for twenty three years, serving as Chief Executive for over fifteen of those. A cross party working group made up of the Leader, portfolio holders and opposition representation has met to profile the role of Chief Executive and recruitment is currently taking place.

RBH Trust - Governor Elections

The Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust will be having elections for nine Governors in June, including for one public seat representing West Berkshire and Borders.

Full details are at <https://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/open-elections.htm> - potential Governors need to be members of the Trust before they are eligible to stand in an election (but it's quick and easy to become a member – full details on the website).

Parish Matters

There were no significant Parish Matters I am aware of in recent week.

Members Bids

It is that time of year again. I've already communicated with the clerk re a possible bid for a new Parish Notice board. I await details.