

# HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the **Full Council Meeting** held on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 7.00pm remotely through Zoom.

**Present:** Cllrs Simpson, Knight, Crane, Winser, Lewis, Chicken (left meeting at 9.06pm), Fyfe, Downe, Alford, Shatford, Yakar-Wells.

Also: District Cllrs James Cole and Dennis Benneyworth – West Berks Council (left meeting at 8.00pm).  
Representatives from Newbury News, Penny Post and Adviser.

One representative from West Berks Foodbank (left meeting at 7.10pm).

One member of the public (left meeting at 8.10pm).

In attendance: Claire Barnes (Town Clerk), Jeff Ford (RFO), Sarah Hennessey (Deputy Town Clerk) and Sarah Chatters (Admin Assistant) (left meeting at 7.50pm).

The Clerk advised the meeting was being recorded.

**Police Report.** No report had been received.

**Presentation from West Berks Foodbank.** Jennifer Bartter is responsible for the running of the Hungerford end of the Foodbank, in particular the distribution centre at the Methodist Church. All the distribution centres had to close at the start of the pandemic but thanks to the appointment of a new project manager, the Foodbank was able to deliver to clients in their homes direct from the warehouse in Newbury. Special thanks go to Ted Angell and his team of volunteers at the Handybus who travelled to Newbury twice a week taking donations and bringing food parcels back to Hungerford. From April to date, 422 food parcels have been delivered to families in Hungerford and Kintbury. The initial demand in the area has now quietened. Details of the urgent items required by the Foodbank can be found on their website. Donations can currently be left at Tescos, Co-op and St Lawrence's Church.

Thanks were extended from HTC to all those at the Foodbank for the work they do in the community.

- 1. Note apologies for absence** – Noted from Cllr Hudson and District Councillor Rowles.
- 2. Declarations of interest** – Cllr Shatford – Item 11(a).
- 3. Approval of Minutes of the Full Council meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020, and outcome of actions** – *Cllr Knight proposed the minutes as a true record, seconded by Cllr Crane, 1 abstention (Cllr Shatford), rest in favour.*
- 4. To receive written applications for the office of Town Councillor and to Co-opt candidates to fill existing vacancies** – None.
- 5. Mayor's Report – (attached).** The report had been circulated. There were no questions arising from the report.
- 6. District Councillor's Reports – (attached).** The report had been circulated. Various grants are available from WBC for families and businesses who are in need due to Covid-19.  
District Cllr Cole and Cllr Downe met with a member of the Public Protection Partnership regarding the issue of pigeons on a particular property in the High Street. An update will be provided at the next H&T meeting.  
District Cllr Cole reported that WBC is undertaking a major new study into the future uses of Newbury Town Centre. The local community is urged to take part in a survey open until 17<sup>th</sup> January and available

at the following link <https://newburytowncentremasterplan.co.uk>. He requested that the link be circulated to as many people as possible. **ACTION:** Office to circulate on our usual social media channels. District Cllr Benneyworth reported that a positive meeting had been held last week with ward members, the Mayor and the JOG School.

The RFO advised the District Cllrs that HTC has requested that WBC remove the extra line that previously appeared on residents' Council Tax bills for the streetlight charge and for this charge to now be passed on to HTC.

**7. Health & Safety – Impact of Coronavirus**

**a) Any complaints or concerns.** As mentioned in the District Cllr's Report, HTC has received funding of £1,398 from the Members COVID Recovery bids for the majority of the items we requested. Hopefully, the balance of the funding, together with the grant from HTC, will be passed on to the John O'Gaunt School to support IT provision for families who are in need of it.

Cllr Downe asked District Cllr Cole to chase if there was any progress regarding some form of COVID marshalling activity in Hungerford. This was originally discussed with WBC just before the second lockdown and nothing has been heard since then.

**8. Consider resolution on actions arising from E&P working party meeting regarding planning application 20/01023/MDOPO (land south of Priory Road) – Cllr Downe.**

E&P committee previously submitted an objection to this application in June 2020 and Cllr Downe feels it is now appropriate for HTC to make a clear statement about our position on this, as a decision on the application will be made in the next couple of months by WBC Planning. A proposed motion and briefing notes had been circulated and are attached below. It was suggested the wording of the motion be amended to reflect the benefit to residents in West Berkshire, not just Hungerford, and to include reference to a recent RightMove report showing an increase in enquiries for Hungerford properties. *Cllr Downe proposed adoption of the motion and to include taking the following actions: to send a further objection to WBC planning department, to seek further activity from local residents on the WBC planning portal and to enlist the support of our local MP asking her to make her views known to WBC, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.*

Thanks were extended to Cllr Downe for all his hard work on this matter.

**9. Hungerford 2036 – Receive a report from the Project Team (attached).** The report had been circulated. There were no questions arising from the report. Cllr Downe advised there is a joint HTC/H2036 working party discussion to be held by zoom on the 17<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm to update the Council on the site evaluations. It would be helpful if as many Councillors as possible could attend.

**10. Committee reports (no more than 3 minutes per report)**

**R&A** – report included in Mayor's Report. No questions arising.

**E&P** – report circulated and is attached. No questions arising.

**H&T** – report circulated and is attached. No questions arising.

**F&GP** – report circulated and is attached. No questions arising.

**11. Finance –**

**a) Propose authorisation of cheque run payments (circulated along with copies of invoices) for November** – *Cllr Winser proposed the cheque run of £60,661.39, seconded by Cllr Simpson, one abstention (Cllr Shatford), rest in favour.*

**b) Propose Year to date accounts – refer to circulated Income/Expenditure Report** – *Cllr Winser proposed the year to date accounts, seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.*

**c) Propose renewal of current contract for H1 bus service from April 2021** – This year's cost for the service which runs on a Wednesday is £4,530. Requests have been received from members of the public for the service to run on a Friday instead. No costings for next year have yet been received from WBC. *Cllr Winser proposed delegation to the office to renew the H1 bus service if the cost is below £5k and to enquire if the day can be changed to a Friday, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.*

**d) To consider and agree a quote for the resurfacing works at Triangle Field as recommended by R&A – refer to attached report.** Cllr Simpson advised this item will be discussed under Part 2 matters below.

**e) Consider recommendations from F&GP for Annual budget and Precept request for April 2021-2022. (NOTE: Final proposals for precept and budget can wait until January 2021).** Preliminary figures had been circulated. No Band D figure has been received from WBC yet, so approval of the Annual budget and Precept request will be approved at FC in January. Cllr Simpson thanked the RFO for

all his hard work on this. She feels holding a separate meeting to discuss budgets outside of the individual committee meetings is beneficial.

12. **Request for Councillor profiles for display on website** – Cllr Simpson asked that if councillors have not already done so, please could they forward a profile of no more than 500 words to the Clerk. These will be uploaded to the HTC website.
13. **Any other reports (3 minutes each) not to include any proposals** – None.

Meeting closed at 8.15pm. Representatives of the press left the meeting.

## **Confidential Part 2**

The public and press may be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that publicity might be prejudicial to the public interest as per the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

14. **Triangle Field Management Agreement- Update following meeting on site** – There was a lengthy discussion following a site meeting this morning held between Cllrs Simpson, Winser and Fyfe and members of HRFC.  
*Cllr Simpson proposed to continue with the new proposal discussed at the working party meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020 with the existing lease up to 2029, with the possibility of a review of the length of the lease after 4 years depending on the situation at that time, seconded by Cllr Alford, one against (Cllr Fyfe), rest in favour.*  
**Item 11 (d) To consider and agree a quote for the resurfacing works at Triangle Field as recommended by R&A – refer to attached report.** *Cllr Simpson proposed acceptance of the quote from Brennan's of Wiltshire in the sum of £7,800 + VAT, seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.*
15. **Receive Staff TOIL hours – RFO to report.** TOIL hours and the number of holiday days staff have remaining were read out. A staff meeting will be arranged for the New Year.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm.

## **REPORTS**

## **Mayors Diary Report November 2020 – Cllr Helen Simpson & R&A - highlights**

### **Armistice Day**

Armistice Day was slightly different to the town's usual remembrance event. Luckily, all the usual wreaths were laid by the many organisations representing our community. Huge thanks to Derek & Di Loft who worked really hard to keep us safe and Covid secure throughout the service. Thank you also to Rev. Mike Saunders for conducting the service.

On 11/11/2020 I was delighted to read the Exhortation and the Kohima at the Bridge Street War Memorial. It was a huge honour to do so with others who came to pay their respects.

The war memorial garden makeover is coming along, it was nice to receive so many positive comments.

### **Christmas Community Video**

I'm sure most of you have seen the video that went out last Sunday as Hungerford became magical once again with our beautiful Christmas lights. The video has been hailed as the highlight of the year by many residents. YouTube views reached over 1700 with thousands more on Facebook. Not quite **viral** but maybe that's not such a bad thing in the current climate (pun stolen from John Downe).

I have been inundated with messages, emails and cards of thanks for bringing a little joy to the community following a challenging year.

Special thanks to Stuart March, Penny Locke and Claire Barnes for their dedication to this project, and to all the groups, clubs and charities that took part. Well done Hungerford!

### **Budget**

A finance meeting was held to look in detail at HTC's budgets and projects for 2021/2022. HTC has achieved so much this year despite the pandemic.

HTC's action plan is becoming more aligned to our budget, planning and preparing is key to the success of the projects we hope to achieve in the coming year. We hope to finalise the budget in early January. This is a huge undertaking for HTC's RFO each year and I'd like to mention how much Cllr's appreciate your detailed reports to help guide us through each year.

HTC's new website is up and running and looking really good, this type of project takes enormous number of hours behind the scenes, testament to the commitment of HTC staff. HTC is fully compliant to the latest guidelines and accessible for all users of our website.

### **WBC Leisure Strategy**

Cllr Knight and I held a zoom meeting with Paul Anstey at WBC to discuss the leisure strategy and possible opportunities to increase Hungerford's leisure provision alongside other towns in West Berks. Hungerford's inclusion to this strategy is hugely important and we wanted to showcase Hungerford's dynamic around leisure within the town.

This was a hugely successful first meeting opportunity and we were able to demonstrate some exciting future aspirations that could really benefit health and well-being within our community. Keith and I would like to thank Paul for his understanding of the town needs and enthusiasm for the ideas we shared at the meeting. We look forward to continuing the journey and seeing some of the ideas included within the overall leisure strategy for West Berkshire. This is a very exciting project!

Some of the ideas discussed included: Walking Paths/routes, Athletics Track, 4G pitches, cycling routes/paths, Skate park improvements, MUGGA, splash pad, Shared multiuser facilities.

This is just a snapshot of ideas we put forward to WBC.

### **Croft Field Activity Centre**

Cllr Fyfe, Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and I met with three architects to discuss potential plans for the renovation project planned for the croft activity centre. I hope we can realise the ambitions of HTC and deliver the brief using secured S106 funding. This is a tricky building project as the building is old, poorly laid out and not at all environmentally friendly. The aim is to increase its hire capability and become DDA compliant, a condition we agreed to address when we took the lease from WBC. I wish sometimes we could call DIY SOS and watch our dream project become a reality for the community. Hopefully we can achieve some of our wish list and plan to do the rest in stages as budgets and grants allow. I know HTC is looking forward to this exciting new venture early next year.

### **Triangle Field**

Talks are continuing with HRFC, discussing the future hire agreement of this 15acre site for sport and leisure opportunities. HTC has received quotes for the car park resurfacing (next stage) and these will be discussed at tonight's FC meeting. HTC has and continues to invest heavily into this site, it's important to manage this facility and reach the sites full hire potential, becoming as cost neutral as we can as landlords, safeguarding this beautiful green space for generations to enjoy.

### **London Plane Tree – War Memorial**

HTC has now appointed a tree surgeon to lower the canopy of this substantial tree. Road closures will be required ensuring health and safety regulations are met. This work will be completed early spring.

### **Raised Bed – War Memorial site**

As part of the Bridge Street War Memorial renovation project, we are going to erect a raised bed which will hopefully receive future sponsorship and be kept and maintained by the Smarten-Up Hungerford team. The bed will be raised and wedged in shape to be visible from the pavement and passing motorists. I am hopeful we can design the town's roundel in flowers.

I'm finding it hard to believe I am half-way through my third term as Hungerford's Mayor.

I am thrilled to witness HTC's aspirations and projects being realised and to see a united council team striving to elevate the town's profile, ensuring we get a seat around the table for future investment strategies. Our Neighbourhood plan is also reaching an exciting stage and public consultations will start soon.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a better new year for us all. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our wonderful community.

Helen

## Parish Council Report for November 2020

Cllrs Dennis Benneyworth, James Cole and Claire Rowles

(West Berkshire Council, Hungerford and Kintbury Ward)

### West Berkshire Council

#### **Covid-19/Christmas**

Whilst there is disappointment that West Berkshire, with a relatively low (and reducing) transmission rate, has not returned to Tier 1 (medium), we must continue to be vigilant to ensure the infection rate continues to reduce. The decision on which tier each area goes into is based on an assessment of a number of factors, such as how quickly cases are rising or falling, case detection rates, the Cov+ rate per 100,000 of the population, the Cov+ rate per 100,000 of the 60 plus population, and the pressure on the NHS. WBC continues to help lead the local response to coronavirus - not least in helping the residents and businesses who have been most affected.

We have recently been reminded what a difficult and fragile balance this is and we have seen some larger localised outbreaks (an outbreak is two cases or more) at two sites in the east of the district - Ikea and Little Heath School.

You will be aware of the Christmas arrangements across the UK, with provision for up to three households to form 'bubbles' for up to five days between 23 and 27 December. This will come as welcome news for many but consideration should still be carefully taken for individuals and households with high risk factors (so although there may be some small cause to celebrate with a drop of fizz there is to be no bursting of the bubbles!). Keep up to date at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>.

The Council is supporting the NHS, which will be creating high capacity centres for the roll out of both mass testing and the vaccination programme over the coming months. Currently we expect this to be at Newbury Racecourse and may be coming as soon as mid-December. More details will follow on this as it becomes clearer.

#### **Covid Winter Grant Scheme**

WBC has just announced a new Covid Winter Grant, making £279k available for families and individuals in need of financial support. It will help pay for food, utility bills and other essential items, and provide Free School Meal vouchers for eligible children during the Christmas and February half-term holidays. The scheme will run from 1 December until 31 March 2021.

We know some people have it tougher than others right now, and that Covid has had a devastating effect for some families. People who have already come to us for help have said they never dreamed they would be in the position of having to ask for help towards essential items but Covid had changed everything for them. The last thing we want is for people to be struggling in silence so if you know of residents who need help do please get in touch with our Community Support Hub on 01635 503579.

To identify those most in need for the Scheme, the Council will work closely with professionals, statutory partners, Parish Councils, Citizens Advice West Berkshire, Newbury Resource Centre and other community and voluntary groups. DWP Job Centre Plus will also be playing an active role to support those newly in financial hardship, such as through a recent job loss.

#### **Local data**

Various statistics, including information about daily reported cases, current weekly rate, etc for all Berkshire districts including WBC can be accessed from the Berkshire Public Health [website](#).

## Community Support Hub

Our support hub can still be contacted on 01635 503579 if needed.

## Local Outbreak Engagement Board

A reminder that the Local Outbreak Engagement Board meets on alternate weeks in private and in public. Each fortnight there is a meeting to regarding current activities relating to Covid-19 in and around our locality. As with all of our public meetings, the meeting can be viewed live or at a later date via the WBC YouTube channel. Further information about the Board can be found [here](#).

## Test and Trace £500 Support Payment

Please see last month's report for more about this, but a reminder that anyone who meets the eligibility criteria and has been asked to self-isolate (on or after 28 September) will be entitled to make a claim once every 14 days, for each period of self-isolation required. All eligibility criteria must be met and supporting evidence provided. The scheme will run until 31 January 2021.

## Council Meetings

A reminder that links to all agendas and public meeting papers are [here](#), and all WBC public meetings are broadcast live on YouTube and recorded so that they can be viewed at leisure - [West Berkshire Council YouTube Channel](#). Guidance for anyone attending a remote public meeting (eg a parish representative at a planning committee) is [here](#).

## Executive

The Executive met on 19 November (a recording of the meeting can be viewed on the YouTube channel referenced above) and considered a number of papers including publication of the final draft of the London Road Industrial Area post public consultation and the closure of Walnut Close care home (more below). The next meeting of the Executive is scheduled for 17 December, with a proposal to adopt a new Housing Allocations Policy amongst other matters.

## Council

The next meeting of Council is on 3 December and papers will include the draft consultation of the district Minerals and Waste Local Plan and timetable for public meetings in 2021/22. There are also a number of responses to previous motions as well as new motions being brought. There is also a paper and proposal based on the recent (four-yearly) review of councillors' allowances by an independent panel. This will be the penultimate Council meeting of the fiscal year with the 2 March 2021 meeting seeing the setting of the Council budget for 2021/22.

## The Local Economy

Saturday 5 December is Small Business Saturday - a chance for us to celebrate the local shops, businesses and services which we enjoy here in West Berkshire. There are many ways you can support our small businesses and not just by shopping with them. Leaving them a review, mentioning them on social media or buying a gift card to use later can make a big difference to them. You could even shop online with local business and donate to the Council's Christmas appeals!

## Grants for businesses

Further grants are being made available to those businesses who have to close, as well as to some who are experiencing particular hardship as a result of the new restrictions.

### Local Restriction Support Grant

The [Local Restrictions Support Grant](#) will support businesses that pay business rates on their premises, who have been forced to close.

### Additional Restrictions Grant

The [Additional Restrictions Grant](#) is a discretionary grant administered by WBC to support businesses who have been affected by restrictions and who have not received other grant support, or require further assistance. Please refer to the [Local Restriction Support Grant queries](#) page for more information.

## Christmas

### Giving Tree / Community Santa Christmas Appeals

In addition to the annual Giving Tree Appeal for victims of domestic abuse, this year the Council is running Community Santa to recognise those in our communities who have had a particularly difficult time, perhaps through isolation or bereavement.

Nominations have been sought through our A2 Dominion partners for Giving Tree and Community Groups, and Adult Social Care for Community Santa.

This year 'gift tags' can be selected electronically via our event website page and the parallel schemes will run until 11 December. Due to the lockdown we are only able to accept online deliveries during office hours to the

Council Office at Market Street - more information is available on the WBC website at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/Christmas>.

### **Christmas cards for care home residents**

Care home residents love getting messages and cards through the post. During the first lockdown, local schools sent letters from the children which brought real joy and our homes welcome Christmas Cards from the public, particularly for residents who may not have loved ones to send letters to them.

People can send a card to our care home residents this year via any of our care homes: Birchwood in Newbury, Notrees in Kintbury, Willows Edge in Newbury or Walnut Close in Thatcham. Cards should be addressed to 'WBC Christmas Card Initiative' (we always quarantine envelopes to ensure that they are safe to handle when they are opened in our homes). Find the care home addresses here [Care Home Addresses](#) or visit our web page [Christmas Cards](#).

### **Education**

WBC, Newbury College Academy Trust (NCAT) and Feltham Construction Ltd have confirmed the completion of the building work for the brand-new Highwood Copse Primary School.

Having identified a need for additional primary school provision in the area, WBC selected NCAT to run the school, which has been built on the College campus. NCAT and the Council have been working together to ensure the provision meets the needs of the local community and have thanked Feltham Construction Ltd for their work in creating such an outstanding building.

Find out more about Highwood Copse Primary School, which will be welcoming its first Reception class (aged 4-5) intake in September 2021 at [www.highwoodcopse.co.uk](http://www.highwoodcopse.co.uk).

### **Children and Family Services**

A ground-breaking scheme to protect vulnerable children in West Berkshire is being hailed a success by an [independent evaluation](#) commissioned by the Department for Education.

Under the new 'Family Safeguarding Model', the number of children entering care has dropped by more than 40%. In the first year of the new model, 20 fewer children from West Berkshire went into care, a drop of 41%. In the second year, another 14 fewer children went into care, a drop of 29%.

The programme brings groups of professionals together under one roof to provide intensive support to parents whose problems with substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse put their children at risk of harm.

Based on the Family Safeguarding Model pioneered in Hertfordshire, teams of skilled professionals work together with families and with the support of a clinical psychologist to tackle the root causes of these issues.

Reports of missing young people within West Berkshire also dropped by 26% in the first year.

### **Kickstart**

WBC has submitted an application to HMG on behalf of local businesses which could see up to 60 new jobs created for under 25s through the 'Kickstart' scheme - in order to apply directly businesses must offer 30 new roles, so where smaller local businesses cannot offer so many roles WBC is acting as a gateway organisation, to bring together a group of employers and support them to create new roles.

The placement will offer six months of high quality paid work experience, and the council has partnered with West Berkshire Training Consortium to offer CV writing, interview and other workplace skills to every candidate, which will maximise their chances of finding long term employment.

The Council is taking a lead role by creating 13 internal Kickstart placements across teams such as Planning, Children's Services, Legal and HR. It will also continue to support as many businesses as possible to utilise the scheme and looks to submitting further applications on an ongoing basis.

### **Adult Social Care**

#### **Care Homes**

WBC is working hard to ensure that residents in their care homes can stay connected with their relatives and friends during the coronavirus pandemic, and recently revised their care home visiting protocol to take account of Lockdown 2 and the latest Government guidance.

All of the council's care homes now have a dedicated room to allow visits to take place, each situated near the entrance of the building and set up with screens to ensure that everyone can see each other face-to-face whilst distancing safely. You can see the revised protocol here: [Revised Care Home Visitor Protocol](#).

HMG has also recently announced a rollout of lateral flow testing kits to care homes to allow more face to face visiting, subject to negative tests – we await supplies and training.

#### **Closure of Walnut Close Care Home**

The proposal to close the Walnut Close care home in Thatcham was given the go ahead at the Council's Executive meeting on 19 November.

WBC has sufficient and suitable spaces at the Birchwood care home, just under two miles away, to accommodate all of the residents from Walnut Close in a more modern setting with enhanced facilities such as ensuite bathrooms.

All of the care staff from Walnut Close are being offered like roles at Birchwood, so that there will be a continuity of friendly faces when residents arrive in their new surroundings, and there is no anticipation that there will be any need for redundancies. Moreover, the intention is that a currently empty wing at Birchwood will be re-named Walnut, and staffed by current Walnut Close staff, so there should be a little home-from-home for the Walnut Close residents moving in.

No moves will take place until after Christmas.

### **West Berkshire Directory**

A reminder that the directory – found [here](#) – holds a wealth of information about (eg) accessing support in local communities, help at home, leisure activities, financial guidance, care homes & voluntary organisations.

### **Transport and Countryside**

WBC has been awarded £495k from the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund, following the Council's bid to further develop a lasting, safe environment for walking and cycling. The grant is in addition to the £124k awarded in the first phase of allocations in July that went towards temporary active travel measures in response to the pandemic.

The latest Active Travel proposals for the next phase primarily consist of permanent measures to create and improve travel routes for cyclists and pedestrians on the A4 corridor within Newbury and Thatcham as well as a pilot School Zone/School Street Scheme in Calcot.

The proposals are designed to enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists; promote health and wellbeing; improve the environment, air quality and sustainability; and play a key role in Covid economic recovery plans. The proposed schemes have factored in resident feedback through previous community consultation. In addition, the Council will be launching a series of consultations starting in January 2021 so that residents can have their say on how each of the proposed Active Travel plans are implemented.

### **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.

### **Other Matters**

#### **Thames Valley Police – Local Area Commander**

Lindsay Finch, the acting LAC for West Berkshire, has decided not to apply for the permanent role which will be filled by Supt Zahid Aziz from 4 January 2021, with Lindsay reassuming her Deputy Commander role.

#### **AWE**

The MOD has triggered a successor arrangements clause in its agreement with AWE Management Limited such that AWE will revert to a direct Government ownership model as an arms-length body – with the transition anticipated to be completed by the end of June 2021.

### **Parish Matters**

We can report successful bids under the Members COVID Recovery bids:

Hungerford - Safety improvements for Town Council assets - £1,398

Kintbury - Improvements to Public Conveniences at Kintbury lock after increased lockdown usage - £756.92

We hope to apply the balance of our grant to some computers for recovery at John O'Gaunt School.

## **Item 8**

### **Hungerford Town Council – Proposed Motion re Salisbury Road Application**

**Motion text.....**



This Council is appalled and alarmed at the attempt being made by Bewley Homes, Wates Management and the owners of the land south of Salisbury Road to deprive Hungerford families of much needed social rented homes, preferring instead to extract every possible pound of profit for themselves.

They are seeking to exploit further the privilege they were granted through the planning system of building homes on this virgin AONB land and wish to renege on the formal contractual commitments they signed in 2017 in order to secure the planning consent for this site. Their application is a betrayal of the assurances they have given to the town at meetings over the last few years and confirmed in their 2017 press release.

As well as making our own objection to West Berkshire Council to refuse the application, we call on all residents to express their concerns in writing to West Berkshire Council regarding the future impact for families and young people in Hungerford. We will also be asking our MP, Laura Farris, to support our position with her own representation to WBC.

HTC's objections to this application are based on:-

1. The 28 social rented homes scheduled to be delivered by this development (but which would be eliminated by this application) are desperately needed in the town. West Berkshire Council Housing Department have repeatedly re-asserted this need throughout the application planning process for the site.

2. This land was originally put forward for development by the applicants in the full knowledge of the WBC affordable homes planning policies which mandate the total number and split between "social rented" and "intermediate" homes to be included. The outline and detailed planning applications were also submitted in this knowledge and the signed Section 106 included these clear mandated obligations. On the basis of the current permissions the construction is already well underway - again with the existing contractual obligations on social rented homes remaining in place.

3. For the majority of people in Hungerford, the ONLY redeeming feature of this development which make it even mildly palatable, is the additional new affordable homes it is to deliver and in particular the social rented dwellings.

4. As far as we can see from the figures publicly disclosed, the applicants are likely to make even more profit in 2021 on the development than they would have when they signed the contractual obligations in 2017. Therefore claims of insufficient financial viability due to changed economic circumstances are without substance.

*NB The above is entirely consistent with the HTC E&P consultation input in May 2020*

## **HTC Briefing Notes re Planning Application 20/01023/MDOPO, Land South of Priory Rd**

The following notes have been assembled to help inform Hungerford Town Councillors of the events and facts about this application which has not yet been decided by WBC. In the event of it being recommended for approval by officers it will go to the Western Area Planning Committee for a decision at which point HTC may wish to make a representation to the committee.

### **The Application**

This application seeks to change the previously approved affordable housing tenure split of 28 x Social Rented and 12 x Shared Ownership / Intermediate dwellings to all 40 being Shared Ownership. They make the case that due to changed economic circumstances the development is non-viable. After all developer costs and reasonable profits are accounted for, they say there is insufficient value left for the land owner.

### **The Background**

The West Berkshire Core Strategy Development Plan (2006-2026) was **finalised in 2012** and remains the current development plan. This includes the Planning Policy CS6 which states:-

#### **Policy CS 6 Provision of Affordable Housing**

*In order to address the need for affordable housing in West Berkshire a proportion of affordable homes will be sought from residential development. The Council's priority and starting expectation will be for affordable housing to be provided on-site in line with Government policy(48) .*

*Subject to the economics of provision, the following levels of affordable housing provision will be sought by negotiation:- On development sites of 15 dwellings or more (or 0.5 hectares or more) 30% provision will be sought on previously developed land, and **40% on greenfield land.***

It goes on to say....

*Proposed provision below the levels set out above should be fully justified by the applicant through **clear evidence set out in a viability assessment** (using an agreed toolkit) which will be used to help inform the negotiated process. In determining residential applications the Council will assess the site size, suitability, and type of units to be delivered.*

*The Council will seek a tenure split of 70% social rented and 30% intermediate affordable units, but will take into consideration the identified local need and the site specifics, including funding and the economics of provision*

In **May 2017** The West Berkshire Council Housing Site Allocations DPD was adopted which included the allocation of the **Land East of Salisbury Road**, Hungerford as Policy HSA18 for up to 100 dwellings.

In November 2016 Cala Management submitted their application (initially) for up to 119 dwellings on the site.

In **November 2017** the developer, land owners and West Berkshire signed a Section 106 Planning Obligation for the site which then allowed a revised application for 100 dwellings to be finally approved.

**The Section 106 Contractual Agreement committed the developer and land owners to provide the 28 social rented and 12 shared ownership affordable homes located embedded within the development.**

Once the S106 was agreed and signed, outline planning consent was granted for the site shortly afterwards.

In **July 2019** in response to the site layout and other details submitted by the developer (19/01406/RESMAJ), West Berks Housing reaffirmed the affordable housing numbers and tenure split required as previously specified and contracted in the S106. The detailed consent approved the same 28/12 split of the 40 affordable homes and that of the social rented dwellings there would be 4x 1-bed, 12x 2-bed and 12x 3-bed homes. (WBC Housing stated at the time that the social rented need was for 8-10x 1-bed, 8-10x 2-bed, 3-8x 3-bed and 1-3x 4-bed+ and a similar distribution of the 12 shared ownership homes)

In **April 2020** the subject application was submitted to WBC to change the affordable homes tenure split.

### Current Situation

The development is well underway now with several of the new houses up to roof levels and the show house near the entrance scheduled for opening by February.

The applicants have submitted a viability analysis on the development's finances. We have the management summary but not the main report (which has now been lodged as a freedom of information request). Economic viability of such a development is a valid planning consideration among other policy related matters.

The management summary shows that after all construction, marketing, legal and other developer costs including a profit of 17.57% for the developer are subtracted from the anticipated revenue from the market and affordable homes, there is £1.769M of Residual Land Value (RLV) – which is what is theoretically left for the land owners to receive.

The application argues (the basis for this is not disclosed in the management summary) that the minimum Benchmark Land Value (BLV) needs to be £5.05M and therefore the development as currently approved is claimed to fall £3.24M short.

### What is happening now?

The WestBerks Planning officer has commissioned an independent professional review, to be paid for by the applicant, of the applicant's Viability Statement. Once they have the resulting report the WestBerks Housing department will provide their consultation input to the planning officer on the applicant's request.

Based on these inputs, and the extant WBC Local Plan policies (CS6 etc), the planning officer will either refuse the application with his reasons or recommend it for approval by the Western Area Planning Committee. (it may still go to committee with a recommendation for refusal though).

There are currently (as at end November 2020) 30+ individuals objecting to the application on the portal (there are some duplicates)

### What are the implications of a Shared Ownership Affordable home tenure?

When a developer builds affordable homes their ownership (and the land on which they stand) is transferred to a Housing Association to be managed and, with the WBC Housing Department, provided with suitable occupants. The Housing Department can assign the home to a qualifying occupant who will need to raise from their own funds or a mortgage between 25 and 75% of the home's value. The part they don't buy will be rented to them at a rate which reflects the fact that they are now responsible for the building. The occupants can, over time, "staircase" their share up to 100% at which point they acquire the freehold (as I understand it). The home can then be sold on the open market once the Housing Association has been given the option to buy it. If it is sold on the open market it no longer forms part of the available affordable homes in the town.

### How Does Changing the Affordable Homes Tenure Increase Profit?

The Housing Association pays for these homes but the price they pay will be higher for shared ownership type (at approx 80% of market value) rather than social rented (approx 50-55% of open market value). This is how it helps to close the theoretical gap between RLV and BLV.

For example if the market value of the average affordable homes on this site is £350k, if the 28 social rented became shared ownership they would generate an additional...

$£350k * 30\% * 28 = £2.94M$  – which would then achieve close to the "desired" RLV – a total of £4.79M to the land owners. NB ALL figures are assumptions /best guesses.

### What is the Benchmark Land Value?

Under the latest “Planning Policy Guidance - Viability”, the Residual Land Value due to the land owners is supposed to be based on “Existing Use Value- Plus”; (one assumes this case takes as its basis existing agricultural land value as the EUV). The “Plus” part is intended to be a sufficient premium to encourage land owners to bring sites forward for new homes development. How much encouragement is needed seems to be highly subjective judgement! In a case such as this the premium would normally be some multiple of EUV. Best guess at the moment is that they have taken BLV to be approx 20x EUV – assuming EUV is in the region of £15k/acre – thereby generating the £5M total land value they claim “should” be achieved.

With a site well underway with development one might well argue that that the current land owner’s yield with existing affordable homes conditions is enough to bring the land forward and that their signatures on the Section 106 agreement attest to this.

Are there “New Economic Factors” since the S106 (November 2017) and the detailed consent (July 2019) – Has Anything Changed?

Building costs have increased since November 2017. This website (<https://costmodelling.com/construction-indices>) provides building cost indices by quarter and indicates that in the last 3 years construction costs have increased by 5.9%

However, according to the Nationwide Building Society house price tracking in the same period (<https://www.nationwide.co.uk/about/house-price-index/house-price-calculator#tab:HousePricecalculator>), house prices in the “Outer South East” have increased by 5.2%. If these percentages are applied to the Viability Statement figures for “Construction” and “Total Revenue” they show that the applicant will have experienced an increase in the gross profit from the project of £530,000 since 2017 rather than any sort of reduced profit to explain this application.

Regarding the 2021 prospects for marketing the new homes on this site, the property search website RightMove recently published an analysis of how buyers’ interests had evolved in 2020. This showed that Hungerford specifically is seeing more than double the rate of searches from pre-COVID (a 118% increase).

<https://www.getreading.co.uk/news/property/quiet-berkshire-town-revealed-top-19277860>

The conclusion therefore is that the new properties in Hungerford should be entering an active market and that, by some margin, they should be generating more, rather than less, profit for the applicants now compared to when the S106 agreement was signed. So what is the problem?

### Agenda Item No 9:

Report from Hungerford 2036

#### Current Activities

We have now reached a significant milestone in the project with completed HELAA and our own Hungerford 2036 Site Assessments on all the potential development sites put forward to WestBerks or direct to us.

The HELAA-type assessments we carried out have been verified and confirmed by WestBerks

We will now (during December) be asking site promoters to “fact check” the H2036 assessments against our criteria for their own site(s).

After that we will be ready in the New Year to engage with residents to seek their insights on our assessments. Also this month we anticipate that the WestBerks Local Plan Update Consultation Draft version will be published. As well as providing more guidance on future housing numbers across the district this will also provide a more secure basis for H2036 to review any planning policy areas where the Neighbourhood Plan for Hungerford might benefit from specific refinements.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December at a joint HTC / H2036 working party discussion the H2036 Project Team will update the Council on the Site Evaluations, receive their feedback and discuss consultation plans.

**Signed:** John Downe, Joint Chair H2036, 4/12/2020

### Report to Full Council

A Virtual Meeting of the Environment and Planning Committee

Monday 9 November 2020

#### Planning Applications -

a) 20/02401/LBC2

13 Bridge Street, Hungerford – Ms Julie Lloyd

Replacement windows.

*Cllr Chicken proposed No Objection, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.*

b) **20/02369/HOUSE**

147 Priory Road, Hungerford – Dr and Mrs Robin Dunn

Demolish conservatory, new orangery and porch, new windows and internal alterations.

*Cllr Hudson proposed No Objection, seconded by Cllr Winsler, all in favour.*

**Case Officers Reports** – These were read out and noted.

**Review of committee Action & Strategy Plan and budget setting for financial year 2021-22.**

**Budget setting:** It was noted there is no budget line for this committee as the only item that was previously included was an amount for legal fees.

**Action Plan:** The committee queried whether the completion target date for the Neighbourhood Plan referendum and completion of the project should be extended from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022. This was to take into account any delays due to the coronavirus pandemic. **ACTION:** Town Clerk to liaise with the H2036 project team and dates to be amended if considered appropriate.

**Empty premises in the town:** The committee agreed it would be useful to start working on this and to look at both commercial and private premises and whether the premises are currently empty or under-utilised. Cllr Yakar-Wells volunteered to start gathering information and will report back to a future meeting.

**Meeting closed at 7.34pm**

**Alistair Fyfe E&P Chair 9 November 2020**

[Report for - Highways and Transport Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020](#)

[Traffic speed monitoring](#)

Plans to monitor the traffic speed across the Common has been delayed until the first quarter of 2021 because the SID monitoring unit is currently not available. Speed monitoring in Sanham Green is not possible because the current speed limit there is 60mph. Also, the increased traffic through Sanham Green is thought to be short term and is due to the temporary traffic lights on the A338 at the south end of the Town.

[Update Hungerford Station improvements](#)

Since the last committee meeting John Downe and myself had a meeting with GWR, Network Rail, and West Berkshire to discuss the painting of the footbridge and to discuss ways forward on the other improvements to the station.

The meeting was very positive, and we have agreed to meet again in January.

[Installation of Recycle Bins in the Town](#)

It was agreed that we would purchase 5 recycling bins for the High Street, and purchase more if the use of these by the public proved successful. Other areas to site these bins, outside of the High Street, will also be considered for the future.

[Footpath improvements along the A4](#)

Councillor Fyfe reported that the state of the footpaths along the A4 from Hungerford to the county boundary near Froxfield were in poor condition. Due to the increasing numbers of cyclist, joggers, and walkers in the area this aspect of road maintenance is becoming more important, so it was agreed that District Councillor Rowles will investigate what can be done, and report back to us at our next meeting.

[Request from Canal and River Trust](#)

This Canal Trust has set up a scheme to encourage cyclists who are riding along the canal footpaths, to slow down when approaching and passing pedestrians. Their slogan is 'Stay kind, and Slow Down'.

[Pigeon Working Party](#)

Network Rail have agreed to install spikes on the metal beams which form the underside of the railway bridge crossing the High Street. More buildings in the High Street now have systems in place to stop pigeons landing and perching. Encouragement to other building owners continues.

[Active Travel funding](#)

Investigation on secure cycle boxes has shown that this type of cycle storage is an attractive option for commuting cyclists travelling by train, but not for short term use on the High Street. I have approached GWR Station Manager who has reported back that GWR with the Department of Transport have a policy that they will not allow cycle boxes on station platforms, due to health and safety concerns.

The other option for the Town Centre is a new cycle rack, and it was agreed that a proposal for this should be put forward to West Berkshire.

Cllr Rob Chicken, Chairman of Highways & Transport Committee

**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETING  
ON 7<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2020  
MONTH 8 INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT: NOVEMBER 2020**

**101 FINANCE:**

100% of the Annual Precept has been received to date.

**102 ADMINISTRATION:**

Net Income over Expenditure £340 above Budget. Underspent Year to date by £7,875.

**103 GRANTS & DONATIONS:**

No expenditure this month. Year to date £5,162 Council Grant Funds available.

**104 POOL HOUSE:**

Year to date £522 below Budget due to Tenants deferred rent earlier in the year. Additional payments promised by Tenant around the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month until the arrears are paid.

**105 CONTINGENCY:**

No Expenditure to date, Year to date £18,000 available due to monies transferred from the savings on the Swimming Pool annual payment due to Covid-19 closure, Line 4100.

**109 HUNGERFORD 2036 PROJECT:**

No Expenditure to date. £4,879 available. £3672 invoices on Cheque Run Payments for November.

**201 RECREATION & AMENITIES:**

Net Income over Expenditure £226 below Budget.

**202 WAR MEMORIAL GROUND:**

£9 below Budget.

**203 ST SAVIOURS:**

Net Income over Expenditure £55 below Budget. Burial Fee Income £169 above Budget.

**204 CROFT FIELD:**

Net Income over Expenditure £1,271 above Budget. A refund of £65 was made with no additional Income and Repairs & Cleaning costs combined £747 above budget.

**205 LIBRARY MAINTENANCE COSTS:**

Net Expenditure £8 below Budget

**206 TRIANGLE FIELD:**

No Expenditure this month, Year to date £1,145 below budget.

**301 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS:**

£22,714 Expenditure this month, £10,698 Funds available Year to Date. Year to Date Donations £1,483.

**302 HIGHWAYS:**

Net Income over Expenditure £1,229 below Budget. £788 Cleaning costs not included.

**303 CCTV:**

No Expenditure this month.

**304 TOURISM & ECONOMY:**

No Expenditure this month.

Month 8 Net Income over Expenditure £20,961 negative variance as Expenditure out of sync with Budget phasing.

Year to Date Net Income over Expenditure £685 positive variance.

Claire Winsor Chair of F&GP 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020

**Public Report to:** Full Council 07/12/20

**Agenda Item No 11(d):** Consider quotes for proposed repair work at the Triangle Field car park.

**Background** The Triangle Field is one of Hungerford's prime assets and the car park maintenance is the responsibility of HTC. Work was done in 2019 to improve the drainage at the entrance to the car park and an area around the entrance was resurfaced with a number of existing potholes throughout the car park filled in. The car park is well used by the Rugby Club, Theatre Group and others using the facilities and there are now several new potholes which need attention and need to be addressed for safety reasons. There is also an area by the side entrance door to the club house where there is insufficient drainage and water is collecting. At the R&A meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> November, the committee proposed the following works be undertaken to improve the car parking area, in line with our Action Plan:

- 1) To resurface the whole surface area from near the entrance gate to the end of the club house
- 2) To supply and install a drainage channel to prevent water collecting outside the side entrance door of the club house.

**Options (including quotations)**

Three contractors were approached

Brennan's of Wiltshire:  
Resurfacing – £7,500.00 + VAT  
Drainage Channel - £300.00 + VAT  
TOTAL: £7,800.00 + VAT

Apex Building & Groundworks Ltd:  
TOTAL: £15,960.00 + VAT

WB Groundworks:  
Still waiting for quote

**Objective**

Due to the sum of money involved, R&A proposed that the quotes be brought to FC for consideration.

**Reference to Action Plan**

Aim – To ensure the provision of adequate parking at HTC sites and to improve health and safety at community facilities.

**Available budget (£s) including cost centre** RFO has advised:

- Currently there is £7k in Triangle Field Changing Room budget in Earmark reserves, this could be reclassified to use for this project and replace in 21/22 budget if needed.
- As next budgets are currently being set, could take from next year's allocation now (needs to be agreed by Full Council).
- Could ask Full Council to use some/all of Contingency budget (£7.5k)

**Recommendation(s)**

The best option, based on the above information

**Signed** Deputy Town Clerk December 2020