

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES of the **Full Council Meeting** held on Monday 4th January 2021 at 7.00pm remotely through Zoom.

Present: Cllrs Simpson, Knight, Winsor, Lewis, Chicken, Fyfe, Downe, Alford, Hudson, Yakar-Wells and Shatford

Also: District Cllrs James Cole, Dennis Benneyworth, Claire Rowles – West Berks Council (WBC).
Representatives from Newbury News, Penny Post and Adviser.

One member of the public.

In attendance: Claire Barnes (Town Clerk), Jeff Ford (RFO) and Sarah Chatters (Admin Assistant).

The meeting was being recorded.

Police Report – (attached). The report had been circulated. The Mayor has asked for patrols to be stepped up following a spate of ASB in the town. The group responsible are known to the Police who are doing what they can to address the issue.

The Mayor expressed her condolences to the family of a local youth worker who sadly died last month. There is a fundraising page set up for the family.

1. **Note apologies for absence** - None
2. **Declarations of interest** - Cllr Yakar-Wells knows the co-option candidate
3. **Approval of Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council meeting of 7th December 2020, and outcome of actions** - *Cllr Simpson proposed the minutes as a true record, seconded by Cllr Knight, one abstention (Cllr Hudson), rest in favour.*
4. **To receive written applications for the office of Town councillor and to Co-opt candidates to fill existing vacancies** - A welcome was extended to Nick Schlanker. He was invited to attend a month of council meetings to give him the opportunity to get to know councillors and council business, particularly as we cannot meet in person due to Covid restrictions, which he accepted.

Nick gave a brief resume as follows: - He moved to Hungerford in March 2013 and over the last decade has worked with charities and been involved with three rough sleeper episodes. He is a trustee with West Berkshire homeless, has a background in health and has worked on several Covid schemes. He is a technologist by trade and is involved with the Town & Manor and Chamber of Commerce. Speeding in the town is a personal concern of his.

ACTION: Include this item on the February Full Council agenda.

5. **Mayor's Report** - The report had been circulated. **(attached).**
6. **District Councillor's Reports** – DC Dennis Benneyworth advised a report has been circulated. The deadline for CIL bids is 10th January which is very short. Money will be distributed to the best applications. Further information is available on WBC website. West Berks Council are setting their budget on 2nd March and applications need to go to the Executive meeting before that so there is unlikely to be any movement on the deadline. **ACTION:** DB will check and feedback Town Council's disappointment on the timing. The notification went to junk mail and was only received in December, when Town Council does not hold committee meetings, due to Christmas.

ACTION: Clerk to put together a summary on projects that suit.

DC Benneyworth announced Sovereign are looking to demolish the former care home at Chestnut Walk and build 8 units of shared ownership on the site. **ACTION:** Add to next E&P agenda. HTC can comment ahead of receiving a planning application. We may wish to express our views on the development being environmentally sustainable and consider the preferred type of social housing. DC Rowles has sent information on recycling bin locations. **ACTION:** Discuss at H&T.

7. Health & Safety –

- a. **Any complaints or concerns, including Impact of Coronavirus** – None reported.
- b. **Propose proceeding with Legionella risk assessment for the Triangle Field** – Cleaning of the tanks was carried out on 4th August. The office has not received weekly checks from the committee since September, but these are being completed by our maintenance man. *Cllr Simpson proposed delegating the arrangement of a Legionella's Risk Assessment to the office, seconded by Cllr Winser, all in favour.*
- c. **Receive report following Health & Safety visit - refer to attached** – It was agreed this should be discussed in part 2.

8. **Local Plan Consultation – Consider response from HTC** – The document is 250 pages long. Cllr Downe has provided some initial feedback. A response to the consultation needs to be drafted ahead of next Full Council in order to be agreed by the deadline of 5th February. **ACTION:** Add to the E&P agenda and extend the invite to all councillors and H2036 members.

9. **Consider bids for Community Infrastructure Levy grants between £10,000 and £100,000 for use towards local infrastructure projects to be implemented by 31 March 2022. Deadline for applications 10th January 2021** – discussed under item 6 see above

10. **Hungerford 2036** – Receive a report from the Project Team. (**attached**). Cllr Downe advised a drop-in Zoom session has been offered for those with any questions. District Councillors are welcome, and he will forward them the latest documents.

ACTION: Cllr Downe to confirm date, provisionally set for 13th January.

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

R&A - committee did not meet

F&GP – report attached

E&P – report attached

H&T – committee did not meet

12. Finance –

- a. **Propose authorisation of cheque run payments (circulated along with copies of invoices) for December** - *Cllr Winser proposed the cheque run of £25,372.26, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all 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 Simpson, all in favour.*
- c. **Propose Annual budget and Precept request for April 2021-2022** – The RFO confirmed he has had verbal confirmation that the streetlights will be incorporated into our Precept charge and not shown separately on the council tax bill. *Cllr Winser proposed the precept request of £306,689, a 1.17% increase on last year. (Noting that it will show as a 3.88% increase as the streetlights will be included rather than be charged separately), seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.* **ACTION:** Advise WBC the above and ask them to include an explanation of the change in the layout of the council tax bill. HTC also to advise residents if necessary.
- d. **Propose appointment of an architect for the Croft Field Centre improvement project (see report)** – Site visits were carried out by three different architects following their receipt of our brief. **ACTION:** *Cllr Simpson proposed appointment of Kennet Design, to proceed with the enhanced option including the build support, seconded by Cllr Fyfe, all in favour.*
- e. **Consider appointing IAP to provide a password service (see report)** – After discussion, *Cllr Downe proposed purchasing the password service for 4 users at £5 a month and reviewing this after a year, seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.* **ACTION:** Advise IAP.

13. **Any other Reports (3 minutes each) not to include any proposals** - None

PART 2

Confidential

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.

7. (c) **Receive report following Health & Safety visit - refer to attached – ACTION:** Clerk to arrange H&S training session for all and update F&GP of progress of H&S action list.
14. **Triangle Field management agreement - Agree process and consider appointment of solicitor – Cllr Winsor proposed moving solicitors to Victoria Hopgood, at Dickins, Hopgood and Chidley, to carry out work on Triangle Field lease and other work, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour. ACTION:** Clerk to appoint in writing and send on relevant paperwork.
15. **Receive Staff TOIL hours – RFO to report – All are below 5.75 hours.**
16. **Note resignation of employee no.4 and agree process for filling of vacancy – Cllr Simpson proposed accepting the RFOs offer to extend his leaving date until 30th June to allow time for a proper handover, seconded by Cllr Knight, all in favour.**

Meeting closed at 9.07pm

REPORTS

POLICE

HUNGERFORD TC UPDATE January 2021

Firstly the team would like to send our best wishes for a happy and healthy 2021.

As always the town has been lit up beautifully by Christmas lights. A special mention must go to Helen for the hilarious ending to the virtual Christmas light switch on. We have such a great town and the community is one we feel proud to be a part of.

COVID19 continues to dominate the news and our day to day policing. Due to the increasing numbers of Covid19 infections; at midnight on the 19th December, The whole of West Berkshire entered Coronavirus Tier 4.

Essentially this means **STAY AT HOME**.

There are few exceptions to this. These can be found on the Government's website. As I write infection rates are continuing to rise in West Berkshire as well as across the whole country. The Prime Minister is due to make another announcement tonight (4th Jan) in response to this. It is now more important than ever to adhere to the guidance. Remember Hands. Face. Space.

Over the Christmas period we received a few calls relating to people breaching the Covid19 regulations, however in the main our local community are abiding by the Tier 4 restrictions that have been placed upon us.

Over the last month we have had several varying reports of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. These are centred mainly in the area of The Croft and Hungerford Rugby club. We have dispersed youths from these areas and confiscated alcohol. These areas are being

regularly patrolled by the team, and going forward we will be continuing to work with HTC to look at ways to target harden.

At the beginning of November two house boats were broken into on the Hungerford section of the Kennet and Avon. Messy searches were carried out and one suspect has been arrested and an investigation is still ongoing.

Towards the end of November a large quantity of lead was stolen from the roof of Hungerford Primary School. An investigation is still ongoing and a suspect has been arrested.

In the last two weeks of December we have received a couple of reports of “pickpocket” type thefts of purse/ wallets whilst people are shopping in Tesco. Please be vigilant when carrying out your shopping and secure your personal items. We shall drop off some purse bells and security clips to attach to purses at Customer services for anybody that would like one.

In the early hours of New Year’s Day Officers were called to a fight outside the One Stop Fairview Road area. At this time I am unable to comment further on this incident.

Again I will highlight the need to officially report incidents to the Police, not just post them on social media as we do not have the resources to monitor these sites .It is important everything gets reported so that as a team we can identify trends/ problem areas etc... and be in these area .In basic terms if it’s not reported it’s not happening.

You can report online at <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk> .If it is urgent please continue to call on 101 (non-emergency) and 999 in an emergency.

If you would like to report anonymously you can do so via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or online at www.crimestoppers-uk.org.

Mayors report 4Th January 2021

Happy New Year

We start the new year with many of the constraints we had back in December, Hungerford had 23 confirmed Covid cases up to 29/12/20. The good news is Oxford’s vaccine has now been approved and should help with the constrains other vaccines held around temperature storage. **I think it’s important to remind the public that there is still, a very real need to adhere to Government guidelines**, keeping Hungerford’s numbers low and until we can once again be in calmer waters.

Being Santa

I was thrilled to personally deliver 4 food hampers to families in Hungerford who were chosen on my request by the wonderful Family Centre team. The Hampers were gifted by ‘One Stop’ in Fairview Road and I wish to thank them personally for donated the hampers and for allowing me to choose their recipients. Four families were completely delighted to receive them. It was such a lovely act of kindness and a real community feel good project.

Christmas Trees

I wish to thank Shield Electrics for their streamlined installations of the Christmas lights. The lights felt even more magical this year and were a very welcome pick me up for Hungerford residents and businesses. I would also like to thank Sarah Chatters and Cllr Rob Chicken for their efforts to ensure this huge project went smoothly.

Thank you to Hungerford businesses and residents who kindly donated, helping to fund the lights through the Good Exchange. All donations through the Good Exchange are matched funded, this really helps to stretch HTC’s budget for the Christmas Lights. Many of the light strings were in need of replacement and we also needed to replace the baskets that sit under the lamp-post trees. The good

Exchange application is still live and further donations can be made through <https://app.thegoodexchange.com/project/18428/hungerford-town-council/hungerford-christmas-lights-2020>. Thank you for your donations, I know finances have been stretched for many of the towns businesses and we really appreciate your continued support.

Lastly, I wish to thank Roger Ballard and Shield Electrics for receiving my distress call following the storm over Christmas, 6 trees had snapped and many more tipped over. They answered my call for help and came out at 7.30am to make good. Cllr Downe had also rescued the high street barriers which had also flattened in the storm. "Teamwork makes the dream work"!

West Berkshire Council Local Plan and Hungerford's Neighbourhood Plan

Every 5-10 years a Local Planning Authority (LPA) like West Berkshire Council is required to produce or update their Local Plan. The Local Plan sets out where and how land can be developed through a set of Planning Policies against which Planning Applications can be assessed and either approved to go ahead or be refused. Among many other things the Local Plan Policies can allocate major (strategic) sites for housing developments and specify general rules of where and how individual minor land use changes can take place. As part of the last iteration of the West Berkshire Plan for example the current Salisbury Road 100 dwelling site was allocated for housing.

West Berkshire is now in the process of a major update to their local plan which is intended to cover the period until 2037 although it is likely within that period that further rolling updates will be needed. On 11th December 2020, they formally issued a draft version of their new plan for consultation input from all those with an interest in the plan including residents of the district. The Consultation is open until 5th February 2021 at <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/localplanreview2037> although for anyone who wishes to comment, the easiest way to do it is here <http://consult.westberks.gov.uk/kse>

Since Hungerford is currently in the process of developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan through the Hungerford 2036 Project Team, the new Draft WBC Local Plan does not include any considerations of further sites for development in the Town. It does however, set a requirement for sites to be identified sufficient for an additional 55 dwellings over the plan period. The decisions about where those 55 will be delivered are in effect delegated to the Neighbourhood Plan assuming that in due course it is approved by a referendum of the town's voters. Early in 2021 the Hungerford 2036 Project Team will themselves be consulting with residents on the possible housing sites around the town that have been identified and assessed by them over the last 10 months.

A Virtual Meeting of the Environment and Planning Committee

Monday 14 December 2020

Update on planning application 20/01023/MDOPO following E&P working party meeting and FC meeting on 7/12/20 – Following actions proposed at the FC meeting, Cllr Fyfe advised a further objection letter from HTC has been submitted to the WBC planning portal, a request on social media has resulted in further activity from local residents with over 50 letters of objection now on the WBC planning portal, a letter has been sent to our local MP requesting her support to our objection. The committee felt it would be a good idea to keep reminding residents of our objection to this planning application in the hope more residents will submit objections to WBC planning portal.

ACTION: Office to repost our request on social media sites. Councillors were encouraged to share this post on their own personal social media pages and to submit comments (as a local resident) to the WBC planning portal, if they felt comfortable doing so.

Planning Applications -

- a) **20/02598/HOUSE.** 8 Salisbury Road, Hungerford – Mr and Mrs Stephen Thorpe
Replace conservatory with orangery on same footprint.

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

- b) **20/02603/HOUSE.** 6 Bulpit Lane, Hungerford – Mr and Mrs Simister
Single Storey Front Extension, Single Storey Side Extension, Single Storey Rear Extension.
Cllr Lewis proposed No Objection, seconded by Cllr Winser, all in favour.
- c) **20/02616/HOUSE.** Hayward Holt, Old Hayward Bottom, Newtown, Hungerford – Mr and Mrs Buckley-Sharp.
Single storey rear extension to outbuilding in the grounds of Hayward Holt.
Cllr Lewis proposed No Objection, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.
- d) **20/02617/LBC2.** Hayward Holt, Old Hayward Bottom, Newtown, Hungerford – Mr and Mrs Buckley-Sharp
Single storey rear extension to outbuilding in the grounds of Hayward Holt.
Cllr Winser proposed No Objection, seconded by Cllr Simpson, all in favour.
- e) **20/02867/FUL.** 9 Chilton Way, Hungerford – Mr and Mrs Barnett
Proposed replacement dwelling with associated alterations to access and parking.
Cllr Crane proposed No Objection, subject to: No construction deliveries between the hours of 8-9am and 3-4pm due to the school run; to maintain the cleanliness of the highway throughout the build; no construction work to take place before 8am and after 5pm on weekdays, and before 8am and after 1pm on Saturdays. Seconded by Cllr Lewis, all in favour.

Case Officers Reports – These were read out and noted.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm

**Alistair Fyfe
E&P Chair
3 January 2021**

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 4TH JANUARY 2021

MONTH 9 INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT: DECEMBER 2020

101 FINANCE:

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

102 ADMINISTRATION:

Net Income over Expenditure £385 above Budget. Underspent Year to date by £8,621.

103 GRANTS & DONATIONS:

£731 underspent to Budget. Year to date £4,562 Council Grant Funds available.

104 POOL HOUSE:

£90 additional Rent payment made this month due to Tenants deferred rent earlier in the year. Year to date £432 below Budget.

105 CONTINGENCY:

Expenditure of £2,255 this month. Year to date £15,745 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.

201 RECREATION & AMENITIES:

Net Income over Expenditure £336 below Budget.

202 WAR MEMORIAL GROUND:

£56 below Budget.

203 ST SAVIOURS:

Net Income over Expenditure £640 above Budget. Burial Fee Income £460 below Budget.

204 CROFT FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure £398 below Budget.

205 LIBRARY MAINTENANCE COSTS:

No Expenditure this month.

206 TRIANGLE FIELD:

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

Public Report to:

Full Council meeting 4th January 2021.

Agenda Item No 10:

Report from Hungerford 2036

Current Activities

The H2036 Site Assessments are currently being “fact-checked” with their respective site promoters. We have asked for their feedback by 8th January.

The West Berkshire Council “Emerging Draft Local Plan Review” has been published for consultation until 5th February 2021. A major change from previous WBC Local Plans is that it does not include any new allocations of land for new homes. This is because our Neighbourhood Plan is being developed which, subject to the eventual local referendum, will fulfill this role. The WBC Plan sets a requirement for sites in Hungerford to be identified in the Neighbourhood Plan to deliver 55 additional dwellings over the plan period.

On 17th December at a joint HTC / H2036 working party discussion the H2036 Project Team updated the Council on the Site Evaluations, received their feedback and discussed consultation plans. The H2036 team would like any further feedback from members by the end of next week. An informal Q&A Zoom call has been arranged for 12/1/21.

After that we expect to be ready to engage with residents to seek their insights on our assessments.

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

Parish Council Report for December 2020

Cllrs Benneyworth, Cole and Rowles, Hungerford and Kintbury Ward

West Berkshire Council

Annual Review

Alongside this month's report is a review of 2020 from a WBC perspective by Lynne Doherty, the Leader of Council.

Meetings

Council

The next meeting of Council is scheduled for 2 March 2021 which will see the setting of the Council's budget for 2021/22 (more about this below).

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 for the final time this year on 17 December (a recording of the meeting can be viewed on the YouTube channel referenced above) and considered a number of papers including the London Road redevelopment, a revised Housing Allocations Policy, and financial and general performance.

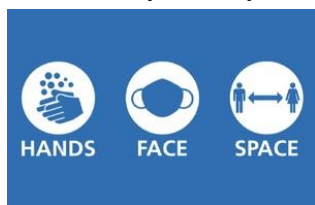
The next meeting of the Executive is scheduled for 14 January 2020. Items coming forward are expected to include new draft Leisure and Cultural Heritage Strategies.

Covid-19

Tier 4

***The information on this subject below is current at the time of sending, however, the Prime Minister's nationwide address this evening may alter advice...**

Last month's report noted a general disappointment that West Berkshire had not returned to Tier 1. To quote the March report "A month is a very short time in a pandemic" (and let's also recall February's report: "There have been no cases of coronavirus in West Berkshire at the time of writing. Planning is underway for any eventuality")!



As everyone will know, we are now in Tier 4 and a new strain of the virus has emerged in the South East, thought to be up to 70% more infectious than the previous strain. All of the indicators have been on an upward trajectory for some while – for example (with the caveat that all snapshots are only that), the West Berkshire rolling weekly rate of confirmed cases per 100,000 population was 68.2 on 24 November and 335.8 on 24 December.

The guidance is [here](#), but in general terms the move to Tier 4 means:

- Residents must stay at home, apart from limited exemptions (but support and childcare bubbles can still continue);
- Non-essential retail, indoor gyms and leisure facilities, and personal care services must close;

- People must work from home if they can, but may travel to work if this is not possible (for example in the construction and manufacturing sectors);
- People should not enter or leave Tier 4 areas, and Tier 4 residents must not stay overnight away from home;
- Individuals can only meet one person from another household in an outdoor public space;
- Those in Tier 4 areas will not be permitted to travel abroad apart from limited exceptions, such as for work purposes.

Vaccinations

It will be appreciated that the mechanics of Coronavirus vaccination are in the hands of the NHS, whether via hospitals and acute settings, Primary Care Networks, or individual surgeries (more about the Pfizer vaccine below). Care Home staff in West Berkshire are being prioritised for vaccinations, which started before Christmas - WBC's Adult Social Care team is working with relevant partners, including colleagues in the NHS and Public Health, to ensure that prioritised employees from council and private care homes as vaccinated as quickly as possible.

Local data

Local information about the daily reported cases in the district (and across Berkshire) can be accessed from Berkshire Public Health [website](#).

Community Support Hub

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

Local Outbreak Engagement Board

The Local Outbreak Engagement Board meets on alternate weeks in private and in public. Thus, each fortnight, there is a live broadcast meeting 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](#).

Winter Hardship Grant Scheme

A reminder that support continues to be available for residents who are in need of help with food, utility bills and other essentials. The £279k Covid Winter Grant Scheme offers one-off payments and has already paid out 525 grants totalling £136k. The scheme also includes Free School Meal vouchers to eligible five to 16 year-olds for both the Christmas and February half-term holidays. For more information and to apply to the scheme go [here](#).

Financial Support for Businesses

WBC is distributing a series of Government grants to hospitality businesses which have been still limited in how they may operate (and WBC has developed a new streamlined application process to ensure that businesses are more easily able to understand which grants they are eligible for and so that the Business Rates Team can process payments as quickly as possible):

- The Additional Restrictions Grant to eligible businesses which may or may not have had to close but which can demonstrate significant hardship as a result of local or national restrictions;
- The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) for businesses which were forced to close as part of the national restrictions from 5 November to 1 December;
- The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) for hospitality and leisure businesses which were able to open from 2 to 19 December but whose income is likely to be significantly impacted by the current restrictions;

- The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) for businesses which were required to close under Tier 2 restrictions from 2 to 19 December - this category will include pubs which do not serve food;
- The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) for businesses which have been forced to close as a result of West Berkshire's move to Tier 3 on 19 December;
- A flat rate Christmas Support Grant of £1k to pubs that can demonstrate that 50% or more of their income derives from the sale of alcoholic beverages. This grant will be match funded by WBC with a further £1k from council Covid funds to provide additional targeted support.

This funding is in addition to (i) the almost £30m of funding distributed to almost 2,200 local businesses earlier this year, (ii) the application of £38.4m worth business rate relief to 1,200 local premises, and (iii) a universal rates holiday to every local business, regardless of industry, in March and April.

2021/22 Budget

Local Government Financial Settlement

The draft 2021/22 announcements were delivered in a [speech](#) by the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP in the Commons on 17 December. We have yet to find out exactly what this means for West Berkshire, but budget preparation is underway (which must inevitably be based on a number of assumptions until final confirmation is received on the financial settlement post consultation).

The consultation upon the draft settlement runs until 16 January 2021.

Council Budget Simulator

The Council has to balance its budget and save a further £7.3m. If you fancy having a go at the Budget Challenge you can find the link to the budget simulator [here](#).

£500k Community Infrastructure Levy fund open for bids (closes 10 January)

WBC has opened the application process for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) grants of between £10k and £100k for use towards local infrastructure projects to be implemented by 31 March 2022. The guidance and application form are available [here](#) and the bid application closing date is 17:00 on 10 January 2021.

The successful bids will be funded from £500k set aside for this purpose from CIL received by WBC and will be on top of the 15% (or 25% if there is an NDP) of CIL that already goes to parish and town councils. The bidding process is open to community groups and other infrastructure providers/partners in West Berkshire, ward members, town and parish councils, and organisations that wish to deliver infrastructure that will benefit the residents and businesses of the area.

The proposed schemes must deliver the infrastructure requirements of the West Berkshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan and meet the needs of the adopted Local Plan. In addition the proposals must demonstrate how the projects will fit with the Council Strategy and the Covid-19 Recovery Strategy. The final bids will be proposed to Executive to be included as part of the 2021-22 budget.

Draft Local Plan Review 2020 - 2037

Members of the public are invited to have their say on the emerging draft version of the Local Plan Review 2020-37. The eight week public consultation period commenced on 11 December will close on Friday 5 February 2021. Residents, partners and other key stakeholders can read the draft Local Plan Review and provide feedback on the Council's [Local Plan Consultation Portal](#).

The emerging draft Local Plan Review sets out the vision that West Berkshire will be a welcoming place for business, provide residents with sufficient housing, and facilitate well-designed and sustainable development. The draft plan looks at future levels of need for new homes, employment and other land uses along with the associated infrastructure requirements. In line with published government policy, the Local Plan Review includes the requirements for new market, affordable and specialist housing, as well as Gypsy and Traveller accommodation.

The draft proposal extends the existing Local Plan from 2026 to 2037 to accommodate new housing needs as well as adopt environmentally-friendly development measures. This includes new policies for contributing to the health and wellbeing of residents, minimising the demand for energy, and protecting the water environment.

The draft plan also takes into account the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019, and seeks to have the majority of development in places that reduce car dependency. In addition, the plan proposes policies that seek to make the fullest contribution towards transitioning to a low carbon society.

The plan also proposes working with partners to conserve and enhance the district's heritage, local distinctive character of towns and villages, and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The draft supports the council's 2019-23 strategies for developing local infrastructure, including housing, to support and grow the local economy, as well as to maintain a green district. The plan also incorporates findings from reviews and consultations held since 2018.

One particular aspect of the draft that has changed since the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) is that the Grazeley Garden Settlement does not form part of the draft Local Plan - it did form part of the HELAA, but that did not translate into inclusion as a site within the draft Plan (more about this below). Indeed the draft makes explicit reference to the adverse impact of the AWE Aldermaston and (revised) AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zones (DEPZs) on development generally: *"In the interests of public safety, residential development in the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) of AWE Aldermaston and AWE Burghfield is likely to be refused planning permission by the Council, especially when the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) has advised against that development"*.

Leisure and Culture

Libraries

The new Tier 4 restrictions for managing Covid-19 mean that West Berkshire Libraries buildings will have to close again except for allowing limited computer use by appointment only.

Although library members will not be allowed to visit a library to choose books, they will still be able to reserve books via the online library catalogue and pick them up from any West Berkshire library, including the Mobile Library.

The libraries will also continue to offer the popular Order & Collect service where members who are not sure which book they would like to read can request that library staff select up to five books for them, possibly introducing them to new authors. Customers can telephone their local library to let staff know what sort of books they enjoy or visit the [library catalogue](#) online to place their order.

Library members are advised to please check library opening times before making a trip to collect the books they have ordered. Details of all current library opening hours, together with the Mobile Library timetable and closures for the Christmas / New Year period, can be found on the [website](#).

Customers who need access to library computers for essential use will be able to do so for up to 30 minutes per day by appointment only.

Christmas Appeals

A big thank you to the people of West Berkshire for helping WBC to wrap up Christmas for those in need. Due to Covid, the campaign which has often been Council staff-centric went online. This enabled even more of our residents to get involved and show their care and compassion for those in our communities who have had an especially difficult year.

We were delighted by the generosity, variety and thoughtful Christmas presents gifted for our Community Santa and Giving Tree recipients - several hundred gifts were received, sorted, wrapped and distributed across the district.

Health & Wellbeing Strategy Consultation

WBC works in close partnership with the NHS, voluntary sector and others to form the health 'system' in the district. Working together with the neighbouring local authorities of Reading and Wokingham a joint health and wellbeing strategy has been formulated for the next five to ten years, and the partnership is now engaging with residents to ensure that the strategy and subsequent plans fully encompass their needs and wishes, and begin to address inequalities in health and life-expectancy.

An engagement campaign has been launched, including an online survey supported by many focus group consultations. All local councils and community groups are invited to participate [here](#) - the survey is live until mid-January.

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

The Pfizer Vaccine

The issues with the storage and handling of the Pfizer vaccine have been widely reported and the following - extracted from a note by a Governor of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust - might be of interest in highlighting quite what a rigmarole it is.

“While volunteering at our local surgery during the first

three days of Covid vaccinations, I became aware of the considerable complexity of the preparation of the Pfizer vaccine preparation and the time constraints that this imposes on the throughput rates. It is far more complex and time consuming than the current flu jabs.

“In essence, the preparation process has a number of stages which need to take into account that each vial contains enough vaccine for five doses, that each dose then needs to be diluted with saline and most importantly that the vaccine is fragile and can be degraded by light, by time and by rough handling.

“It typically takes a well-trained team three minutes of very careful and precise work in aseptic conditions to produce five doses resulting in a maximum rate of administration of 60 doses per hour per team. The failure to handle the vaccine very gently during preparation and to keep it in the dark whilst being brought up to room temperature may well render the dose only partially effective. In three days we managed to do nearly 1000 vaccinations in about 17 hours largely between 11 am and 5pm whilst still keeping morning surgery in operation. The second booster vaccination will similarly take another 17 hours for the same cohort from Jan 5th to 7th. At any given time, in addition to traffic management, there were approximately 20 volunteers (involving nearly all PPG members) and staff working to register patients from 4 different practices (outside in gazebos) and to conduct them, in groups of 5 at a time, through the vaccination process and into the 15 minute observation area as well as a team of some 10 to 12 nurses doctors and pharmacists working inside the surgery preparing and administering the vaccine.

“This has major implications for care home residents as the vaccine needs to be administered very close to the aseptic room where it is prepared in order to minimise degradation arising from handling and time duration during transportation. Rightly or wrongly, I am concerned that political pressure to speed up the process or to deskill it will backfire and end up wasting huge sums of money if it results in vaccine being injected in sub-optimal condition. I believe that the Pfizer vaccine costs the NHS about £15 per dose compared to the Oxford vaccine at about £3 and is in limited supply. We can't afford to waste it.

“As a footnote, the requirement to observe patients for 15 minutes added an additional layer of complexity and significantly limits the choice of sites where the vaccine can be delivered. A very large room in an adjacent sheltered living facility with 15 socially distanced disinfectable chairs just about allowed us to cope with 60 patients per hour. By filtering out all patients with significant allergies we did not experience a single reaction from any of the nearly 1000 frail elderly patients that we vaccinated during this observation period.”

The AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine is awaited with interest!

Grazeley Garden Settlement

As mentioned above, the Grazeley project is not part of the draft WBC Local Plan currently out to consultation.

It is still within the Wokingham Borough draft Local Plan but quite recently the Defence Nuclear Organisation (part of the MoD) has formally objected to its inclusion given that the site is wholly within the revised AWE Burghfield DEPZ.

The Leader of Wokingham Borough Council and the Portfolio Holder dealing with their draft Local Plan have thus recently gone on record as follows:

“Earlier this year we consulted on a draft local plan strategy which proposed a garden town at Grazeley at its heart which included upfront infrastructure, strong public transport links and a truly long term contribution to meeting development requirements.

“Since then a legislative change has caused emergency planning requirements around the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield to be extended so that they for the first time include the Grazeley area. The Defence Nuclear Organisation, part of the Ministry of Defence, is now objecting to the Grazeley garden town proposal and is requesting its removal from the local plan.

“In light of the changed circumstances, we have started the process of looking at alternatives as the Grazeley garden town may no longer be achievable. We will consult on these matters when we know more.”

More recently, this from the Wokingham Portfolio Holder in response to a question raised:

“A recommendation on an alternative planning strategy will be reported to a meeting of the council’s Executive where approval to hold a consultation will be requested. Formal consultation will then be undertaken. Given the evidential requirements, it is anticipated that the report will be considered by Executive in the summer 2021. A formal change to the Local Development Scheme will be made in due course.”

Latest police officer recruitment figures

According to a recent Thames Valley Police bulletin, by the end of September TVP had recruited a total of 260 new police officers (against a target of 183 by the end of March 2021).

[Parish Matters](#)

Chestnut Walk Development Proposal

Hot off the press! Sovereign are now seeking to move on the re-development of this site and the provision of 8 affordable homes for shared ownership. Plans will be submitted to HTC and comments can be submitted by email to chestnutwalk@sovereign.org.uk

N.B. The Mineral and Local Waste Plan (MLWP) consultation (mentioned in the accompanying Leader’s Review of 2020) is now ‘live’. It runs up to 23:59hrs on the 15th February 2021.

Finally, Dennis, James and Claire wish a happy and healthy new year to you and your families and look forward to working with you throughout 2021.