

HUNGERFORD TOWN COUNCIL

The Mayor
Cllr Helen Simpson
57 Fairview Road
Hungerford
Berkshire
RG17 0BP
Tel: 07920 110380
Cllr.helen.simpson@hungerford-tc.gov.uk



The Town Clerk
Mrs Claire Barnes
The Library
Church Street
Hungerford
Berkshire RG17 0JG
Tel: 01488 686195
townclerk@hungerford-tc.gov.uk
www.hungerford-tc.gov.uk

MINUTES of the **Full Council Meeting** held on Monday 1st March 2021 at 7.00pm remotely through Zoom.

Present: Cllrs Simpson, Knight, Winsor, Chicken, Fyfe, Downe, Alford, Yakar-Wells, Shatford and Schlanker.
Also: West Berkshire District Cllrs Claire Rowles (left meeting at 7.34pm), James Cole and Dennis Benneyworth (both left meeting at 7.48pm). Representatives from Newbury News, Penny Post and Adviser.
One member of the public (Rupert Mills).
In attendance: Claire Barnes (Town Clerk) and Sarah Hennessey (Deputy Town Clerk).

The meeting was being recorded.

The Mayor welcomed Rupert Mills to the meeting. He has expressed an interest in becoming a town councillor. Rupert introduced himself and gave a brief summary of his career. He was invited to attend a month of council meetings to give him the opportunity to get to know councillors and council business. His co-option will be added to the April Full Council agenda. **ACTION:** Include this item on the April FC agenda.

Police Report – (attached). The report had been circulated.

The Mayor spoke of the sad passing of Jack Williams; he will be a great loss to our community. Our condolences go to his family and friends. Jack's funeral will be held on the 10th March and the funeral procession will make its way along Church Street to the Church at about 12.00 and from the Church down to the Bear at about 1.00pm. If the community wish to observe the passing of the funeral procession, they are urged to maintain social distancing and not to gather in groups.
A minute's silence was then held to remember Jack.

FC20210041 Note apologies for absence – Councillors Hudson and Lewis.

FC20210042 Declarations of interest – None.

FC20210043 Approval of Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council meeting of 1st February 2021, and outcome of actions – No co-option to take place at this meeting due to the withdrawal of the candidate.

Cllr Downe was thanked for all his hard work on the HTC response to the WBC Local Plan Consultation which has now been submitted.

All other actions have been completed or are in hand.

Proposed: Cllr Winsor

Seconded: Cllr Downe

Resolution: To approve the minutes of 1st February 2021 as a true record.

FC20210044 Mayor's Report – The report had been circulated (**attached**). There appears to be a growing issue with litter throughout the town, and especially on Hungerford Common. The Mayor would like to ask everyone to be considerate while enjoying the town's open and green spaces and dispose of their litter appropriately, or take it home to dispose of properly.

FC20210045 District Councillor's Reports – DC Claire Rowles went through the main points of the District Council report (**attached**). There is good progress on the siting of recycling bins in the town. She advised the WBC Environmental Action Plan should be on the WBC website shortly.

DC James Cole is hoping Covid Marshalls will be present at the market on Wednesday. WBC is asking for local community support as volunteers may be required if there is a need to surge test for Covid-19. He will chase the PPP asking if there is any progress regarding the problem with pigeons at a property in the High Street.

DC Dennis Benneyworth has received training for lateral flow testing and advised there are sufficient numbers of volunteers in place for testing when schools reopen next week. He will chase information on which development the S106 money has come from.

Thanks were extended to our District Councillors.

- FC20210046 Health & Safety – Any complaints or concerns, including Impact of Coronavirus** – The Mayor thanked District Councillor James Cole and the Town Clerk for sourcing hi-vis jackets for the Marshalls at the Wednesday market.
Cllr Downe mentioned that the number of Covid cases in Hungerford has dropped considerably for the first time since October. There are so few cases that the data for Hungerford is not showing on the gov.uk interactive map.
The recent H&S training which was attended by office staff and Cllrs Simpson and Winser was very useful. Thank you to the office staff for keeping HTC H&S compliant.
- FC20210047 2021 Census – Receive Report** – Census Day is 21st March. Between 3rd and 8th March, every household should receive, by post, a code to access the survey on-line. The survey can be done by paper form for those unable to complete it on-line. The Mayor advised if any residents require help and support, HTC can direct them to the census website and provide the helpline number.
- FC20210048 Hungerford 2036** – Receive a report from the Project Team (**attached**). Cllr Downe advised the project team has been working hard to produce information about the sites that have been put forward for the HELAA so that this can go to the public for consultation.
- FC20210049 Committee reports (no more than 3 minutes per report)**
R&A – no meeting has been held.
F&GP – report attached.
E&P – report attached.
H&T – no meeting has been held. Cllr Chicken advised he has been speaking to the station manager about installing secure cycle storage boxes at Hungerford Railway Station. The station manager is agreeable to this and it is hoped these will be in place shortly.
- FC20210050 Propose authorisation of cheque run payments (circulated along with copies of invoices) for February.**
Proposed: Cllr Simpson
Seconded: Cllr Knight
Resolution: To authorise the cheque run for February of £17,483.79.
- FC20210051 Propose Year to date accounts – refer to circulated Income/Expenditure Report.**
Proposed: Cllr Winser
Seconded: Cllr Knight
Resolution: To agree the year-to-date accounts as accurate with Month 11 Net Income over Expenditure £10,903 positive variance.
- FC20210052 Consider alternatives to Town Meeting to engage with public – promotion of Action Plan/Strategy and Annual report** – Refer to private report. Last year Councillors worked on a four-year Strategy document which it was hoped would be introduced at last year's Town Meeting. This document now needs reviewing to see if any of the items should be amended or removed. There will not be a Town Meeting this year, but the aim is to produce a long-standing document which will give a better understanding of HTC's roles, responsibilities, aspirations, constraints etc and which can be presented to the community. Quotes have been obtained relating to the production and distribution of the document and these will be discussed in the Part 2 meeting.
- FC20210053 Any other Reports (3 minutes each) not to include any proposals** – None.

Meeting closed at 7.56pm. Press and member of the public left.

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.

- FC20210054 Consider options for Hungerford S106 £60,000 expenditure** – Cllrs Simpson and Knight met with a representative from WBC to discuss WBCs Leisure Strategy and how Hungerford could benefit from this. Councillors were in agreement that Cllrs Simpson and Knight take this matter further with WBC.
- FC20210055 Triangle Field Management Agreement – Receive update** – The working party has reviewed the draft Heads of Terms and this has gone back to our solicitor for re-drafting. The ex-Triangle Field Management Committee has asked for FC approval regarding the TFMC bank account.
Proposed: Cllr Winser
Seconded: Cllr Simpson
Resolution: All funds received from the TFMC bank account, when closed, will be used to fund any projects at the Triangle Field.
- FC20210056 Consider grant application from Community of Hungerford Theatre Company** – The Theatre Company have requested a grant to cover the cost of the planning fees for their storage containers at the Triangle Field. They have proposed to start paying their monthly rent again from January.
Proposed: Cllr Winser
Seconded: Cllr Knight
Resolution: To reduce the Theatre Company’s monthly rent from the current amount to £40.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson
Seconded: Cllr Winser
Resolution: To offer a grant to the Theatre Company to cover the cost of the planning fees.
- FC20210057 Propose new candidate to fill RFO vacancy.**
Proposed: Cllr Winser
Seconded: Cllr Simpson
Resolution: To formally offer the position of RFO to the candidate with a start date of Thursday 4th March.
- FC20210052 Consider alternatives to Town Meeting to engage with public – promotion of Action Plan/Strategy and Annual report** – Councillors discussed the quotes and possible amendments to the Strategy document. **ACTION:** Town Clerk to circulate all documents relating to this matter and to arrange a meeting for all councillors, suggested date of Wednesday 17th March.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm

REPORTS

POLICE HTC UPDATE MARCH 2021

We are STILL in a National Lockdown. On the 22nd February the Prime Minister published his road map out of Lockdown which begins with schools reopening on the 8th March. The full details can be found on the Governments website.

There is now some light at the end of the tunnel and we will soon hopefully be able to enjoy the warmer/better weather with our family and friends– we just need to be patient and abide by the restrictions currently in place.

Although infection rates are decreasing we should not get complacent.

-STAY AT HOME - Control the spread of the virus

This is historically the time of year when we see an increase in certain rural offences – In particular hare coursing and with it the resulting criminal damage reports to crop, hedge rows and gates. In recent weeks we have received several calls of vehicles driving about in fields surrounding the town hare-coursing/ causing criminal damage and also further afield towards the South Oxon border.

There has been a real drop in reports of anti-social behaviour, with nothing reported in February.

Overnight 8th February a vehicle parked in Prospect Road had two tyres slashed with what looked to be a knife or similar sharp object.

14th February the CO-OP on the High Street reported a shoplifting

24th February a Greenhouse in a garden in Moores Place had the windows smashed.

If anyone has information regarding any of the above please contact us.

It is with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Jack Williams. Jack was known to the longer serving members of the Hungerford team who have great memories of times spent with him listening to stories of days gone by and his knowledge of Hungerford was second to none. Rest in peace Jack.

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 or a crime is in progress

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

You can pass us information via or team email address: hungerfordanddownlands@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk, however this is not monitored 24/7 so do not use to report crime.

Mayors Report: Full Council March 2021

Jack Williams

I wish to express my sadness on hearing the news of former Mayor Jack Williams passing. Hungerford's 'Man of the Century' will leave a huge void in Hungerford's community.

I've been asked to attend the funeral and read the town's eulogy which is both an honour and huge privilege.

Hungerford Town Council wish to extend our deepest condolences to Jacks family and friends.

I will remember Jack fondly, his warmth, reassurance and guidance whilst attending civic events together, will always hold a special place in my memories. I know Jack will be reunited with his beloved Margaret. May you rest in peace Jack.

Chestnut Walk

Several Cllr's held a Zoom meeting with members of WBC to discuss proposals for the redevelopment of land on the old Chestnut Walk Care home site. HTC felt this space should be used as a showcase project, incorporating best build practice, a site which is built to a good environmental standard, which has a low carbon footprint, is both energy efficient and desirable. WBC has taken HTC's views and aspirations onboard, hopefully they'll come back with plans which will see this site redeveloped to a standard we all can be proud to showcase.

Health & Safety training

Staff, myself and Cllr Winsor attended two sessions of Health & Safety training on Zoom. This ever- changing topic feels a little less scary following these sessions, I have definitely learnt some valuable knowledge which I can draw upon and now better understand.

HTC Strategy document

Before Covid, HTC were working on a strategy document for the town, sharing achievements and aspirations with residents, giving the community an opportunity to feed -back and become more informed of HTC's roles, responsibilities, aspirations and planned projects. Initially I felt with just a few tweaks we'd be ready to present it (maybe in a different format to the one initially planned) to the town. I hadn't really taken on board the enormity or effects a year of Covid restrictions would bring. I believe it's impacted on so many aspects of

community life and may well have moved the goal posts for so many of us. I hope HTC can take the time to review our strategy and perhaps re-focus on projects we might not have considered important just a year ago.

Litter Pick

I've been receiving emails relating to litter within the town. I hope we will be able to organise a litter pick soon, in the meantime I've been asked to support individuals who have asked to collect litter as part of their daily exercise. I wanted to take this opportunity to ask the public to be considerate whilst out and about and request all litter is disposed of appropriately due to its negative impact on cattle, wildlife and the environment. We have so many volunteers who spend an enormous amount of time making the town look smart and welcoming. Let's all aspire to be more considerate whilst enjoying our beautiful green spaces.

Salisbury Road Development – Lancaster Park

We appear to be no closer to resolving the application to modify the type of affordable homes on this site. WBC cancelled their Western Area Planning Committee for February and the agenda has not yet been published for the March meeting. HTC will continue to push for news and information. I am hopeful MP Laura Farris will support HTC's objection and support the town's need for socially rented homes.

H2036 Public Report

Report to:

Full Council meeting 1st March 2021.

Agenda Item No FC20210029:

Report from Hungerford 2036

Current Activities

The H2036 Project Team met twice during February to complete the analysis of the "fact-checking" feedback from site promoters. This element of the work has now been taken account of within the individual site assessments and a further consistency check between site assessments has been carried out.

We will now be responding back to the individual site promoters with our comments and any changes we have made based on their feedback. We have concluded that it would be constructive to request some additional inputs to ensure that by the time we are able to conduct physical public consultations, we will have the most comprehensive information possible about each site.

Given the Government's "Road map" timetable we hope to be ready to engage with residents starting in May.

Signed: John Downe, Joint Chair H2036, 28/2/2021

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSE REPORT FOR FULL COUNCIL MEETING ON 1ST MARCH 2021

MONTH 11 INCOME & EXPENDITURE REPORT: FEBRUARY 2021

101 FINANCE:

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

102 ADMINISTRATION:

Net Income over Expenditure £2,225 below Budget. Underspent Year to date by £1,,269 with reduced office costs, mayoral expenses and Professional fees and a total of £2,530 non budgeted income. £1,398 income in January was the WBC Covid Grant to cover our line 4026 costs.

103 GRANTS & DONATIONS:

£183 below Budget. There are funds of £312 available year to date.

104 POOL HOUSE:

Net Income is still £433 below Budget.

105 CONTINGENCY:

No Expenditure 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. £4,708 available.

201 RECREATION & AMENITIES:

Net Income over Expenditure £701 below Budget.

202 WAR MEMORIAL GROUND:

Net Income over Expenditure £60 below Budget.

203 ST SAVIOURS:

Net Income over Expenditure £1,644 above Budget. Burial Fee Income of £1,568.

204 CROFT FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure £261 above Budget.

205 LIBRARY MAINTENANCE COSTS:

Net Expenditure £96 above Budget.

206 TRIANGLE FIELD:

Net Income over Expenditure £248 above Budget. Year to date £755 funds available.

301 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS:

Net Income over Expenditure £88 below budget, this was the Good Exchange Platform Fees . Year to Date Donations of £5,362 including the Good Exchange match funding.

302 HIGHWAYS:

Net Income over Expenditure £5,420 below Budget.

303 CCTV:

No Expenditure this month. Year to date £347 underspent.

304 TOURISM & ECONOMY:

No Expenditure this month.

Month 11 Net Income over Expenditure £10,903 positive variance.

Year to Date Net Income over Expenditure £37,032 positive variance.

Claire Winsor Chair of F&GP 25th February 2021

E&P Report

A Virtual Meeting of the Environment and Planning Committee

Monday 8 February 2021

EP2021009 Apologies for absence – West Berkshire District Councillor Claire Rowles.

EP2021010 Declarations of interest – None.

EP2021011 Approval of Minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2021

Proposed: Cllr Simpson. **Seconded:** Cllr Lewis

Resolution: To approve the minutes of 11th January 2021 as a true record.

EP2021012 Chestnut Walk, Hungerford – Update on the consultation on the redevelopment of the former care facility at this site following meeting on 4th February.

Cllrs Fyfe, Simpson and Downe, District Councillors Benneyworth and Cole and the Co-Chair of the H2036 Project Team met with representatives from Sovereign Housing and WBC.

Sovereign discussed the responses received from the public consultation and those submitted by HTC. Councillors feel that any development is dependent on the parameters that WBC (who own the site) has for the site. **ACTION:** District Councillor Benneyworth advised he will take this further with WBC and enquire what their plans for the development are.

EP2021013 Street Trading Consent for Dapao Takeaway – Consider application to trade Saturdays only from 17.00 until 22.00 from the parking site opposite The Plume, High Street, Hungerford.

Ellie Dickins (CEO of the Town and Manor of Hungerford) and Julian Dickins (Trustee for the Town and Manor) were present to comment on this application as the proposed site is on an area where Town and Manor own the market rights.

Proposed: Cllr Hudson. **Seconded:** Cllr Simpson

Resolution: To Object to the application for the following reasons:

- The location of the van on disabled parking spaces
- The potential for additional litter and possible exacerbation of the existing pigeon problem in the town
- As the location is on an area where Hungerford Town and Manor own the market rights, HTC seek clarification as to whether the licence needs to be issued by WBC or Town and Manor

ACTION: District Councillor Cole advised he will seek clarification from WBC Licensing Department regarding the issuing of a licence and whether a suitable fee is payable to the Town and Manor.

EP2021014 Planning Applications

a) 20/02993/FUL Eddington Mill House, Upper Eddington, Hungerford – John Willmott Detached Oak Framed Agricultural Storage Barn.

Proposed: Cllr Hudson. **Seconded:** Cllr Simpson

Resolution: To Object to the application for the following reasons:

- The impact on the public right of way
- The application has not demonstrated the need for a large agricultural barn
- Clarification is needed regarding the agricultural land use

- Concern over adherence to planning processes regarding the existing buildings on this land
- Inadequate information on several items within the plans eg. there is no indication of the existing ground level and the slope, there is no red line on the block plan
- Inconsistencies between the application form (open field within grounds of Eddington Mill House) and the design and access statement (land to the east of the main house).

There was much discussion on this application, and it was noted that there are 8 letters of objection on the WBC planning portal. HTC requested our District Councillors call-in this application. *(Post meeting note: There are now 10 letters of objection so District Councillor Cole confirmed this application will be automatically called in).*

b) 20/03078/HOUSE 22 Westbrook Close, Hungerford – Ms G Paddock

Proposed single storey rear extension and associated internal alterations.

Proposed: Cllr Lewis. **Seconded:** Cllr Chicken

Resolution: No Objection.

c) 21/00012/LBC2 16 Charnham Street, Hungerford – Mr Ekrem Uka

Repairs to ceilings, replace two external doors.

Proposed: Cllr Simpson. **Seconded:** Cllr Lewis

Resolution: Support.

d) 21/00034/FUL North Hidden Grain Store, Newtown, Hungerford – Chilton Farms Ltd

Section 73A: variation or removal of condition 3 'use restriction military vehicles' of previously approved application 05/00900/FUL: Change of use of an agricultural storage facility to the storage of vehicles (B8 Use).

Proposed: Cllr Hudson. **Seconded:** Cllr Simpson

Resolution: To Object to the application due to: Too much inappropriate traffic on a narrow lane which will also impact on the bridleway.

e) 21/00110/HOUSE 14 Church Street, Hungerford – Mr Howlett

Proposed loft conversion, and single storey and two storey rear extension.

Proposed: Cllr Winser. **Seconded:** Cllr Chicken

Resolution: No Objection.

f) For information only:

20/03045/ADV Delta House, 4 Tealgate, Hungerford – Toolstation Ltd

Full set of amended plans received following the removal of one sign and the relocation of other signage.

This was noted – the committee had no comment.

g) For information only:

21/00031/AGRIC Stubwood Farm, Salisbury Road, Hungerford – Mr and Mrs R Kent

Application to determine if prior approval is required for erection of agricultural building.

Proposed: Cllr Fyfe. **Seconded:** Cllr Simpson

Resolution: HTC request a full planning application be submitted.

EP2021015 Case Officers Reports – These were read out and noted.

Meeting closed at 8.34 pm.

Alistair Fyfe E&P Chair

Parish Council Report for February 2021

Cllr Dennis Benneyworth, Cllr James Cole, Cllr Claire Rowles

Hungerford and Kintbury Ward

This report has been deliberately delayed to include an update on the WBC budget for 2021/22, passed at the full council meeting on Tuesday (2 March).

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

Council

Council met on 2 March to consider a number of things, but principally the Revenue Budget (and thus level of council tax), and the Capital Strategy and Programme, for the financial year 2021/22.

There is more about both below, but the headline news is that (excluding parish, Fire and Police precepts) council tax will increase by 1.99% and there will be no Adult Social Care precept in 21/22. According to

the [Daily Mirror](#), this makes WBC one of only five councils in England limiting rises next year to less than 2%. So far as the other unitary authorities in Berkshire are concerned, one is increasing council tax by 3.49% and the remaining four by 4.99%

Executive

At its meeting on 11 February, as well as considering the budget papers on their way to the council meeting referred to above, the Executive considered and approved a (cost neutral) restructure in the Strategy and Governance Service which will see 7.5 posts added to the staffing complement (21.5 posts are being created with 14 deleted).

The next meeting of the Executive will be on 25 March.

Remote Meetings

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](#).

With regard to remote meetings generally, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 cease to have effect on 7 May. There is a debate in local government legal circles about what “place” means in respect of place of meeting in Schedule 12, LGA 1972. There has been (or will be?) [an application to court](#) for a declaration that the existing legislation (ie once the meetings regulations fall by the wayside) allows for remote meetings without further primary legislation. WBC is currently looking at how hybrid meetings might be held.

The Budget

The WBC Revenue Budget and Capital Strategy for 2021-22, passed at the council meeting on 2 March, sets out the planned investment in the district within the context of the current pandemic.

As detailed above, the council tax increase has been limited to 1.99% without any increase in the Adult Social Care precept, and also without any cuts to essential services.

The budget treads a careful path between affordability, core infrastructure, and new investment to support our council strategies - the decreased (immediate) demand for adult social care services, due to Covid-19, alongside the extensive financial support from central government and the continued strong financial control of the council, means that we are able to support our residents' finances as well as investing in vital services.

WBC has received significant Government support during the pandemic, meaning that there can be continued investment in services, promoting the priorities set out in the Council Strategy, with key investments outlined in the budget including:

- £12.5m investment in the WBC Environment Strategy;
- £900k to introduce separate food waste collections;
- £40m investment in the People Directorate with a focus on Education projects;
- £11.9m for the Highways improvement programme;
- £500k allocated from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund 16 community bids for improvements, including a new Multi Use Community Hub in Calcot, a pond restoration in East Ilsley and several new and enhanced community halls.

Covid-19

The Roadmap Out Of Lockdown

With the early signs of spring beginning to show, residents are no doubt heartened by the Government announcement setting out the roadmap for the easing of lockdown, and the prospect of a summer with greater freedoms.

Whilst it is natural for us to wish to see normality returning with eagerness we must never the less continue to observe the current rules until the gradual relaxation commences which starts with our schools from 8 March. Meanwhile, and until a larger number of the adult population has been vaccinated we must all continue with Hands, Face, Space, to help protect others. Better days are coming...

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

Local Infection Rates

West Berkshire is seeing a sharp decline in infection rates although there remain a number of new cases being reported daily. The current rolling weekly rate is now down to just over 60 per 100,000 but is hoped to continue to decrease significantly over time.

As previously referred to, Berkshire local Covid information about the daily reported cases in the district (and across Berkshire), and the weekly per 100,000 rate (one of the principal factors in any decision making) can be accessed from Berkshire Public Health [website](#).

Vaccinations – Local Position

The Covid vaccination rollout is now being handled in two tranches – cohort 6 (those aged 16-64 with underlying health conditions) are being called to the PCN (Primary Care Network) hubs at Newbury Racecourse and Pangbourne, with cohorts 5 and 7 receiving NHS letters to go to the mass vaccination centres, such as the one that opened at the Madejski Stadium on 22 February.

It is anticipated that all over 50s will have been offered their first vaccine by the end of April, alongside the delivery of second doses within twelve weeks of the first.

If the pace and supply can be maintained the remaining adult population will have been offered vaccinations by the end of July. Further information regarding vaccination can be found on the Berkshire Public Health website [here](#).

Vaccinations – National Position

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

Community Testing

Rapid widespread testing – also known as lateral flow testing or community testing - is a key tool in the fight against Coronavirus. Lateral flow testing can identify people who don't have any Covid-19 symptoms (referred to as asymptomatic) and may be spreading the virus without knowing it.

During February the district has opened four sites where tests can be carried out for key workers, these can be found at Highwood Copse Primary School, Thatcham Rugby Club and sites at Hungerford Rugby Club and Burghfield Community Sports Association.

Around one in three people who are infected with Covid-19 have no symptoms and could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify people showing no symptoms will mean that positive cases can be found more quickly, helping to break the chain of transmission.

Testing is available to critical and keyworkers and those who have to travel for work or care for others.

However the Council is also inviting the self-employed and those in small businesses to get tested as well.

Testing is only for those without any symptoms - anyone who does have symptoms should book a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus, or by calling 119, or at [Lateral Flow Testing - West Berkshire Council](#).

Community Support Hub

Our [support hub](#) can still 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](#).

Covid Marshalls

In addition to Marshalls stationed at local testing centres (see above), six WBC Covid Marshalls started work across the district during February.

The Marshalls will undertake a range duties including advising and supporting members of the public and businesses to follow social distancing rules.

They travel across the district, working in shifts to cover seven days a week, using their local knowledge to cover priority areas such as supermarkets and other shops, markets, parks and open spaces. The cost will be met by Covid-19 funding provided to the Council by central government.

Coronavirus Information On The WBC Website

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

Winter Hardship Grant Scheme

Support continues to be available for residents who are in need of help with food, utility bills and other essentials - for more information and applications, go [here](#).

Financial Support for Businesses

West Berkshire Council is administering a further series of grant schemes to support local businesses that have been affected by the national coronavirus restrictions (and details of the new grant for Early Years Education Providers are set out below).

Information about eligibility, and how businesses who have not received support previously can apply, can be found [here](#).

'Surviving to Thriving' - £200k Covid-19 Mental Health Fund

WBC and Greenham Trust have each pledged £100k to set up a joint fund to enable voluntary and community sector organisations in West Berkshire to apply for grants of between £500 and £30k to fund projects aimed at helping improve the mental health and wellbeing of local residents impacted by Covid-19.

Requests for grants made via The Good Exchange (Greenham Trust's online funding and fundraising platform) will reviewed weekly so organisations are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

This partnership initiative is designed to enable not-for-profit organisations to carry out small, meaningful projects that can help mitigate the impact that Covid-19 has had on mental health and wellbeing in the district. It also means that smaller organisations will also have the opportunity to apply for funds to carry out their activities (possibly online), one-off purchases or new initiatives.

Education

Back To School

In line with the Government's recent announcements regarding the first stage of easing lockdown, schools will open to all pupils on Monday 8 March. As ever, safety is paramount and WBC is working hard with schools to ensure that appropriate measures and testing facilities are in place (see above on Community Testing).

The reopening of schools will be welcomed by children and parents alike, and a huge tribute needs to be paid to all the parents, grandparents, other carers and teaching staff who have worked tirelessly educating children at home and in school through the variety of teaching methods.

Young People Not In Education, Employment Or Training (NEET)

Young people have been among the hardest hit by the economic impact of Covid-19, but in West Berkshire the number of those counted as NEET remains low - with 97.5% of all of our young people in education, employment or training our figures are not currently only the highest in Berkshire but the highest in the whole of the South East.

Grant for Early Years Education Providers

Grants of up to £3k are available to Early Years education providers to help them with the challenges of the pandemic - all providers will have been contacted by WBC with details of the application process

Adult Social Care

Care Home Visiting Policy

Following the announcement that, from next Monday (8 March) every care home resident will be allowed one regular indoor visitor, permitted (subject to having a negative lateral flow test) to hold hands with the resident, WBC Adult Social care is awaiting publication of the full guidance in order to re-publish its [visiting policy and guidance](#).

Walnut Close Care Home

All the residents from Walnut Close have now moved to their new surrounding (see November's report), with most moving into WBC's Birchwood care home, and Walnut Close has closed.

Leisure and Culture

Newbury Sports Ground

The consultation referred to last month has now closed and there will be a report to the Executive later this month.

A summary of the responses and details of any decision taken will then be posted on the WBC website. If further steps to develop the new sports ground are then to be taken, there will be a need to apply for planning permission, in turn open to scrutiny and comment.

Libraries

West Berkshire Libraries are anticipated to reopen on 12 April subject to the Governments lockdown easing tests being met.

The easiest way to continue to borrow titles is via the apps BorrowBox and Libby, which can be downloaded from the Apple app store and Google Play store, and anyone with a Kindle tablet can download the apps from Amazon. Anyone who has these apps can then search for West Berkshire Libraries and login using their library card number and PIN (members can reset their library PIN [here](#)). Customers who need help with this can drop an email to the library, where staff will be happy to help:

library@westberks.gov.uk.

Customers who are not already members of the library can join online to get free, instant access to the e-library by [registering](#).

Residents are encouraged to check out the extensive programme of activities for children and adults, which will continue online, and follow the library Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages (@WBerksLibraries).

West Berkshire Lottery's Community Fund Awards Nearly £14k To Twelve Local Charities

WBC has announced that the West Berkshire Community Fund, standing at £13,957 as at January 2021, is being distributed to twelve local charities registered with the West Berkshire Lottery following application bids from these organisations. The awards were determined by an independent panel who meet annually to consider applications from eligible causes.

All of the successful bid applicants to the Fund are undertaking vital work for the community, including young people and the disadvantaged. The independent judging panel was delighted to award the community funding to these deserving organisations to support their services or facilities to improve the lives of others, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The successful applicants in the January 2021 round have been awarded as follows:

- 1st Theale & Calcot Scout Group - £1,500 in running costs, including the national scouts membership fee, to continue to offer participating children a varied programme of events and badges.
- Action for Pangbourne Toilets Charitable Trust - £500 to maintain the building and help towards the cost of the contract cleaners.
- Citizens Advice West Berkshire - £750 to continue providing Spending Diaries and financial capability support to clients who are now faced with a much smaller income due to the pandemic and desperately in need of budgeting advice.
- City Arts Newbury - £500 to offer free-to-access activities for children as part of its developing Community Outreach programme.
- Home-Start West Berkshire - £2,140 towards a new project called Preventing Poverty. This project will help enable a Family Coordinator to support 20-25 volunteers who are helping families to alleviate the stress that come when they can't make ends meet.
- Love Lane Pre-School, Donnington - £2,000 to develop further the school's outside learning area with the installation of an awning to protect the children from sun and rain as they learn and play outside.
- St Mark's Church of England Schools Association - £1,000 to provide the school with laptops to benefit all pupils and support them in reaching their full potential when used in the classroom environment.
- Swings & Smiles, Thatcham - £947 to help fund a tactile wall panel for children with special needs.
- Thatcham Park School Parents and Friends Association - £1,000 to fund a ramp from the school's main playground onto the playing field.
- The Downs School, Compton - £1,500 to create a therapeutic garden for pupils to meet with teachers and support workers in a safe open space, when feelings become too overwhelming and a therapeutic approach is required.

- Time To Talk - £2,000 to use towards a digital transformation project to enable the charity's mental health counselling services for young people to continue to expand and become increasingly more efficient.
- West Berkshire Therapy Centre - £120 towards an annual Pro license for Zoom Conferencing to allow trustees to meet to discuss support the development and executing plans for trust members.

Local, not-for-profit organisations or groups who would like to sign up to raise funds for free through the West Berkshire Lottery are invited to visit [West Berkshire Lottery](#) for further information and to register.

Transport and Countryside

Active Travel

WBC has launched a set of draft measures to help the public safely make walking or cycling part of their daily travel choices, and is inviting feedback from the community to help shape these plans. The public consultations can be found at [Active Travel Consultation](#).

Designed to encourage 'active travel' by introducing more walking and cycling opportunities throughout the district, the draft proposals include:

- West Berks Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). This emerging draft transport policy is about making streets work for everyone, thus helping to make West Berkshire a better place to live, work and visit.
- Crown Mead Cycleways. The emerging LCWIP has identified the A4 as a primary route with high potential for increased cycle trips if appropriate infrastructure were to be provided.
- Western Avenue Cycleways. The A4 Western Avenue in Speen, Newbury has been identified as a high priority corridor for cycling and walking routes. The plan proposes permanent measures to create and improve travel routes for cyclists and pedestrians.
- West Berks Active Streets. These are various smaller scheme draft plans to help improve facilities and grow walking and cycling opportunities in West Berkshire including proposals for restricted access on Lawrence's Lane and Deadman's Lane in Thatcham and Theale respectively. In addition, if any resident would like to submit a specific walking and cycling proposal of their own, or comment on a location which falls outside of the currently identified schemes, they can do so via the Active Travel Heat Map within the West Berks Active Streets section of consultation portal.
- Calcot Schools Streets. This pilot School Zone/School Street Scheme is designed to make the streets around the schools safer and suitable for more walking and cycling, as well as improve the air quality.

The Crown Mead Cycleways and Western Avenue Cycleways proposals are each open for consultation until on Friday, 9 April. The remainder are eight week consultations that will finish on Friday 23 April.

With the exception of the LWCIP, the implementation of the Active Travel proposals will be funded through the £495,000 award 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.

With their emphasis on promoting health and wellbeing, maintaining a green district and enhancing sustainability, the proposals support the WBC Council Strategy, Environment Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Local Transport Plan and Covid-19 Recovery Strategy.

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

Census - March 2021

A reminder that the Census will take place on 21 March and that it is a statutory obligation to complete it.

The Office of National Statistics is leading the planning and delivery of the Census, with local authorities such as WBC being key beneficiaries of the resulting data.

WBC will be supporting the work to ensure that the Census 2021 is a success (defined by achieving a 95% response rate nationally whilst ensuring that no local area achieves a rate below 80% and, for the 2021 Census, to receive 75% of responses on line).

May Elections

Elections for the Thames Valley PCC and for town and parish council vacancies are to be held (delayed due to Covid-19) on 6 May 2021:

- Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner;
- Lambourn Parish Council (one seat in the Lambourn Ward and one seat in the Upper Lambourn Ward);
- Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council (three seats);
- Newbury Town Council Clay Hill Ward (one seat).

Polling Stations will be subject to stringent Government Covid safety measures to ensure electors can vote safely.

However, WBC is aware that many people will prefer to vote by post, particularly if they are vulnerable or shielding. [Applications for postal votes](#) must be received at WBC's Market Street office in Newbury by **5pm on Tuesday 20 April**.

If residents haven't registered to vote (eg if they have recently moved to the district) they will need to do so [here](#).

Residents can ensure that their electoral details are up to date by emailing vote@westberks.gov.uk