



Parish Council Report for the period to 31 May 2021

Councillors Hilary Cole & Garth Simpson, Chieveley & Cold Ash Ward

West Berkshire Council

Meetings

Council

The next full meeting of the Council will be on 8 July at 19:00. It is anticipated that this will be the first physical full council meeting held since March 2020 (see more below) and items expected to be on the agenda include consideration of the public consultation plan for the Local Plan Review to 2036.

Executive

The next meeting of the Executive will be on 10 June and will review key accountable and performance reports for Q4 2020-21 as well as a refresh of the Economic Development Strategy in the face of Covid-19.

Meetings – The New Normal

For a more in-depth review as to the current legal position, and what WBC is doing to ensure it is legally compliant regarding public meetings, “hybrid meetings”, streaming, etc, please see last month’s report.

The First Experience

As set out last month, public meetings now must take place in person at a single, specified, geographical location, and being “present” at such a meeting involves physical presence at that location. The first such meeting held was that of the [Health and Wellbeing Board](#) on 20 May.

Because the Council Chamber could not accommodate all 21 members of the Board in a Covid-safe manner, there was only the minimum quorum of Board Members (four), plus a couple of officers, physically in the Chamber. All other Board members, other officers, and members of the public who had submitted questions, joined the meeting virtually. As necessary, an indicative vote of all Board members was held to guide the members in the room who then held a formal vote.

Next Steps

As reported last month, with the completion of air conditioning works, the Chamber will have a Covid-safe capacity of 18. As a result, all council committees should be able to function as (almost) normal, albeit with officers (Clerk, Zoom host and Legal excepted) for the most part on Zoom and, potentially (dependent upon the number already in the Chamber and the number wanting to attend), the public only allowed in for a specific item (eg for a planning application), with - most importantly - everything streamed to YouTube.

As also mentioned last month, the Council has invested in improved equipment for the Chamber to enhance the ability to stream meetings live via YouTube, and thus to further encourage public participation. Some meetings that are not subject to the requirement to be held in a physical location may therefore still be held virtually, but will still be streamed (eg the Local Outbreak Engagement Board).

Covid measures

The Council is responsible for ensuring that meetings are conducted safely and follow public health guidance regarding health, hygiene and social distancing.

All persons attending a meeting must:

- sign in to the meeting and certify that:
 - they do not have any Covid symptoms;
 - they have received a negative Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test (see more below – Community Testing) or Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test result within the last 24 hours;
 - no member of their household has tested positive for Covid within the last ten days;
 - they, nor any member of their household, have been told to self-isolate.
- sign in to the NHS app via the NHS Test & Trace QR code located in reception;
- wear a face covering when in the building, unless they are seated in the meeting or have a face covering exemption due to age, health or another condition;
- observe two metre social distancing where possible;
- where two metre social distancing is not possible:
 - observe at least one metre social distancing, with additional measures such as plastic screens; and
 - wear a face covering at all times, unless speaking in the meeting (to assist anyone who is lip reading);
- avoid physical contact such as hand-shakes etc;
- avoid sharing pens, documents and other objects;
- use hand sanitiser when entering and before leaving the buildings and any meeting rooms;
- abide by any signage or seating plans to help maintain social distancing.

Covid-19

Supporting Communities

As anyone who watched the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 20 May, referenced above, will know, we have stood down the Community Hub Core Group (to be stood up again if needed) and the Community Hub contact number will be subsumed into the WBC Contact Centre operation in a few weeks, with support given to ensure that Covid enquiries are handled appropriately.

This is alongside the development of the new “Community Alliance” (working title) to take up (in part) and build upon the good links and established liaison/communication lines with Parish and Town Councils and local community volunteer groups.

A reminder that some of the WBC activities during the pandemic are highlighted in a [booklet](#) prepared by the Council’s communications team.

The Roadmap Out Of Lockdown



17 May saw the third step on the roadmap out of lockdown. Most restrictions on meeting others outdoors have been lifted, and indoors the Rule of Six, or two households, applies. This provides some respite for the hospitality industry which has been adversely impacted to reopen albeit still with constraints.

Whether all (or at least most?) restrictions will be lifted on 21 June remains to be seen, with HMG currently watching the spread of the

Indian variant carefully and gathering data on the effectiveness of the vaccines in preventing further spikes in admissions to hospital.

Further information about the easing of lockdown can be found in the [Four Step Plan](#).

Local Infection Rates

At the time of writing the rolling weekly rate in West Berkshire is around 34 cases per 100,000, which (as was discussed in some detail at LOEB) is an increase over recent weeks. Our Public Health team is monitoring this carefully and tell us this is reflected in the small number of isolated cases which have arisen mostly within the school setting. It is reassuring to note that there has been no significant increase in hospital admission or deaths and children are rarely seriously unwell from the virus.



As previously referred to, local Covid information about 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](#).

Local Outbreak Engagement Board



LOEB continues to meet fortnightly and examine underlying trends. At its last meeting reference was made to the increase in cases of Covid as reflected above. The Board also heard from Greenham Trust about *Surviving to Thriving* and the *Community Physical Activity Fund* (more

below). LOEB will continue to meet for at least a few more weeks and these public meetings can be viewed on the WBC [YouTube](#) channel.

Vaccinations – National Position

This is an ever changing landscape with, at the time of writing, anyone aged 30 or over (or who will be 30 by 1 July) able to book their Covid-19 vaccine appointment.

The direct booking system can also be used as the NHS calls further age groups forward for vaccination (and see below).

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

Vaccinations – Local Position

It has been reported that a coronavirus vaccination clinic has been launched by Ascent Healthcare in the Kennet Centre in Newbury to take over the local vaccination drive in the centre and west of the district as the Newbury Racecourse site winds down services over the coming months, with booking online using the NHS booking system (ie the national service as opposed to the GP-led service that existed at the Racecourse).

Community testing in Newbury

The Highwood Copse Primary School Testing Site in Newbury closed permanently last week (25 May) and a mobile community testing site has opened at Newbury Library Car Park (Wharf).

Residents can either have a lateral flow device test* or collect lateral flow home testing kits from this new mobile testing site. There will be no appointment system and the site will operate on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday (closed on Wednesdays and Sundays).

*Lateral flow tests are free, rapid Covid-19 tests that everyone without Covid-19 symptoms is encouraged to take twice a week, 3-4 days apart. This is to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Community Testing - free home test kits

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

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

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

West Berkshire Mobile Community Collect



WBC are distributing lateral flow device testing home kits across the district with an [Updated timetable](#).

West Berkshire Mobile Community Collect is in operation from Monday to Friday, with a different specified route around the district each day.

Coronavirus Information on the WBC Website

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

Community Support Hub

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

Adult Social Care

Care Home Visiting Protocol

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

Local Economy

Support for Businesses

WBC is launching a new grant scheme designed to drive footfall in our high streets and shopping areas, and support our visitor economy this summer.

Businesses are invited to apply for Welcome Back Business Grants of £1k to £10k to be used to implement temporary changes or host celebratory events that will allow them to welcome additional visitors and encourage new footfall.



Some examples of what could be funded are: temporary tables and chairs that allow a business to seat additional visitors, gazebos to make use of outdoor space, or event activities that attract customers and celebrate reopening.

[Read more and apply for a Welcome Back Business Grant here](#).

The deadline for applications is 21 June, but proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis and WBC aims to respond to everyone by 2 July.

Education

Community Education Fund applications open until 7 June

The Community Education Fund provides funding for projects or courses that focus on widening participation in education for adults aged 19+ and families living in West Berkshire. A variety of projects are fundable, ranging from employability to skills training to health and wellbeing, and they can range from a single day to weeks in length.

Any organisation that provides education and training opportunities can bid for funding for their proposal, up to a maximum of £10k. This includes colleges, training companies, voluntary organisations, charities, housing associations, community groups, schools and nurseries.

West Berkshire Council is accepting applications for funding until next week (17:00 on Monday 7 June) – for more, and to make an application, see [Community Education Fund](#).

Active Walking and Cycling Proposals

WBC is committed to encouraging active travel by introducing more walking and cycling opportunities throughout the district and is taking action to help the public safely make walking or cycling trips part of their daily travel choices. To have a say on various small scheme proposals, help improve facilities and grow walking and cycling opportunities in West Berkshire, please go to [Have Your Say Today – West Berks AT Schemes](#) (by Friday 2 July).

Environment

Sign up to the WBC [Environment Newsletter](#) to keep up to date with up to date with progress on the Environment Strategy.

Great British Spring Clean campaign

In the past 12 months, many people have relied on their local parks and open spaces as somewhere to escape to, to exercise and to play.

WBC has pledged its support for Keep Britain Tidy's annual campaign and is asking all residents to do their bit and clear up the litter that can blight these places, as part of the Great British Spring Clean.

The campaign, which runs until 13 June, calls on the public to pledge to clean-up and help the charity achieve a million miles of litter-picking.

This year's campaign comes as the charity has reported a massive increase in the number of people who have started litter-picking during the various lockdowns. It has seen the number of #LitterHeroes grow by a third in less than 12 months.

If you are organising a community clean-up event for The Great British Spring Clean, WBC can provide [litter-picking equipment](#) to help you carry out your event. Please give as much notice as possible when requesting equipment and wait for confirmation before you advertise your event as equipment may not be available due to popular demand.

The Great British Spring Clean, now in its sixth year, brings together individuals, community organisations, businesses and councils to make a difference to their local environment. In 2019, more than half a million #LitterHeroes collected just under a million bags of litter, weighing around 4,308 tons.



Health and Wellbeing

Surviving to Thriving

As mentioned at LOEB, WBC and Greenham Trust have jointly set up a £200k 'Surviving to Thriving' fund to enable voluntary and community sector organisations in West Berkshire to apply for grants to fund projects aimed at helping improve the mental health and wellbeing of local residents impacted by Covid-19. The initiative means that smaller organisations have the opportunity to apply for funds to eg carry out their activities (possibly online), make one-off purchases or finance new initiatives. To date £93k has been awarded to 13 organisations and further applications have been received (but more are welcome).



Grants of £500 to £30k will be awarded for successful applications, with grant requests being made via [The Good Exchange](#) (Greenham Trust's online funding and fundraising platform). Applications will be reviewed weekly so organisations are encouraged to apply as soon as possible.

Community Physical Activity Fund relaunch

The Community Physical Activity Fund is about to be relaunched - a joint venture with Greenham Trust seeking bids from community groups, charities, schools, etc to promote physical activity, particularly in the most deprived LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Area - census data areas with a mean population of 1,500). More next time.

Walking for Health

The WBC Walking for Health scheme offers regular, led, walks for people of all abilities. The walking groups are friendly, welcoming and empowering, and a great opportunity to explore the outdoors, discover new places and meet new people. Specially trained volunteers are on hand to provide encouragement, support and make sure no one gets left behind.

It's easy to start walking. Walks are free and easy, ranging from 30 to 90 minutes, so they can easily be fitted in as part of your everyday routine. Some walks stop for coffee afterwards in a nearby cafe, a good opportunity to socialise and relax after the walk. For more information, please visit [Walking for Health](#).

Interested in volunteering as a Walk Leader?

As a volunteer Walk Leader you would be helping people in your community to get active and healthy, providing vital support that they otherwise might not get. As well as ensuring walks are friendly, safe and well run, Walk Leaders are also ambassadors showing people that walking can make a big difference to their lives. To find out how to become a volunteer walk leader, contact [Paul Graham](#).

Local Heritage Walks

West Berkshire has a wealth of heritage ranging from early prehistoric finds to remnants of the Cold War – these can be seen as archaeological sites, historic buildings and even the landscapes around us. These heritage assets make up the historic environment of the District, which can be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

These walks offer an opportunity to explore our local heritage as it exists in the landscape today and to gain a real sense of our past, while also keeping fit!

The walks are available [here](#) to download as pdfs, and include directions, a route map, description of heritage points of interest and links to where you can find out more.

Heritage Walking Trail - Second World War, Newbury

This trail was created in collaboration with Greenham Common Control Tower to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day in 2020 but it has evolved into a general memory trail of people, events and locations, around Newbury, from the Second World War era.

This walking trail is approximately 2.7 miles in length; it starts from the West Berkshire Museum (Wharf Street) and ends at Newtown Road Cemetery. It shows the location of significant sites in Newbury, and outlines their relevance to the Second World War.

Hard copy trail leaflets can be collected from [West Berkshire Museum](#) or [Greenham Common Control Tower](#) (click the links to check for opening hours).

Run Together

If you're new to running, or just out of practice, there are a number of running groups especially for beginners in West Berkshire to help you get off on the right foot. These are organised in partnership with [RunTogether](#).

The weekly sessions on offer are fun, friendly, and free of charge, taking place in parklands and open spaces. They're suitable for complete beginners or those who've been inactive for a while - you just need to wear some comfortable clothing and trainers to join in.

Qualified run leaders lead a short run and are on hand in each session to offer advice, support and feedback, so you can progress whilst they help you adopt the best technique for success. The West Berkshire [Run Together timetable](#) has details of where groups meet or you can sign up online at [Run Together West Berkshire](#) (you will need to complete a [Health Survey](#) online prior to joining a session).

The sessions are a great opportunity to meet new people, make friends and enjoy the outdoors whilst improving your fitness. Running can help you lose weight as part of a healthy eating programme – the [Eat 4 Health website](#) page has further details of free weight management programmes in West Berkshire.

Be Active - Green Bags Scheme

Green Bags containing sports and activity equipment for all ages, abilities and tastes are available to hire at locations across West Berkshire.

They're a fun, and free, way to be active outdoors and make use of West Berkshire's parks and open spaces.

The bags include equipment for kwik cricket, badminton, rugby, hockey, rounders, football, frisbee and skipping, and can be hired by visiting, joining or getting in touch with the groups below:

- [Beech Hill Parish Council](#)
- [Northcroft Leisure Centre](#)
- [West Berkshire Mencap](#)
- [Berkshire Youth SPLAT Activity Sessions](#)
- [Shaw House](#)
- [Run Together West Berkshire](#)



Leisure and Culture

Shaw House

Shaw House will be reopening to the public every weekend and school holiday until Sunday 26 September. For all events at Shaw House see [West Berkshire Heritage Events](#).

Open Air Sculpture Exhibition

Between 11:00 and 16:00 until Sunday 27 June, the Orangery Lawn at Shaw House will be transformed into a free open air sculpture exhibition where you can discover artworks by acclaimed sculptors in the grounds of this lovely historic setting.

- Monday to Friday: Visitors will have access to the grounds only, although toilets will be available.
- Weekends: The House and grounds will be available. The shop and café will be open. The café will be running a take-out service.

Sculptures will be well spaced apart to allow social distancing in the grounds. All works on display will be available for purchase.

There is no need to book and dogs on leads are very welcome.

For more information about the exhibiting artists and their work please visit [alteredstatessculptures.co.uk](#).

Dressed for Shaw

Discover the history of Shaw House through an exhibition of period dress. Follow the trail through the House to see each handmade replica costumes and explore the changing fashions of the last 400 years. Admire the farthingales of the 1580's, the breeches of the 1640's, frills of the 1730's and the weathered wool of the 19th century.

This Exhibition is a wonderful visual display for everyone to enjoy; there will be interactive activities for younger visitors and detailed information booklets to purchase for those who want to learn more about Dressed For Shaw.

The event runs at weekends and school holidays until Sunday 26 September.

West Berkshire Museum

The Museum is now open every Wednesday - Saturday 10:00 to 16:00 and has wide collections of material used in exhibitions, educational activities, research and community projects, helping people to engage with their own individual and community history as well as that of West Berkshire.

As well as a wide range of material in the museum's collections covering art, science and history and culture, there are internationally important finds from the Mesolithic period of the Stone Age and nationally important collections of Egyptology and material from the English Civil War.

Libraries

The WBC Library Service has a wide range of exciting activities for all ages and abilities, including regular rhymetimes and storytimes, art and craft sessions, language cafes and LEGO and Code Clubs, as well as family history and IT help sessions, occasional talks and other special events. Visit the [West Berkshire Heritage website](#) to find out what is happening near you.

There are a number of [library book groups](#) - these are free to join and new members are always welcome. The service can also help new groups to set up (registered with a local library) allowing such groups to [borrow sets](#) of ten copies and [reserve sets online](#). The [list of book group sets](#) is updated regularly and details of current book group sets appear on the [library catalogue](#).

Communities

Safer Streets Champion

Street harassment is harassment in public areas such as streets, shopping centres, public open spaces and public transport. Street harassment can involve sexual harassment, including unwanted sexualised comments, provocative gestures or even being subjected to indecent exposure or touching by strangers.

WBC has created the Safer Streets Champion role in response to the recent spotlight on such harassment, following the murder of Sarah Everard in London at the beginning of March.

West Berkshire has a low rate of violent and sexual crime (below the national and regional average), but the Council wants people to feel safe, as well as be safe, when they go out.

The Safer Streets Champion, Cllr Claire Rowles, will work with West Berkshire communities to understand their concerns about street harassment and receive suggestions on how the issue should be addressed, including:

- Working in partnership with Thames Valley Police to explore a potential bid for Safer Streets grant funding.
- Working closely with the Public Protection Partnership, Thames Valley Police, Town Centre managers and others to challenge and rid the District of street harassment.
- Working with local MPs to seek further powers for the Police to be able to take appropriate action where street harassment is witnessed or reported.

West Berkshire Lottery Winner

West Berkshire Lottery has recently announced a new winner of £2k - the sixth person to scoop this cash prize in the lottery's weekly draw.

West Berkshire Lottery is an online sustainable fundraising solution provided by WBC with no upfront costs. The lottery is helping 132 local charities and voluntary organisations to diversify their fundraising streams and enable year-round fundraising in a safe, fun and effective way, having raised more than £130k for the local community since the lottery launched in March 2019.



Over £40k having been given away in prize winnings to players in the last two years, with lottery players able to choose a good cause to receive 50p out of each £1 ticket they purchase, and with an additional 10p from the ticket sale put into the local community good cause fund. For more see the [West Berkshire Lottery website](#).

Water Safety Partnership

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

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

Communications Channels

As always a reminder that 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.

WBC news direct to inboxes

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

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

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



Other Matters

Superfast Broadband

Work to connect more than 14,000 homes and businesses in West Berkshire to Superfast Broadband has now finished.

Since work began in 2015, WBC's partner Gigaclear has laid more than 435 miles (700km) of broadband fibre cables across rural West Berkshire thanks to a £1.8 million investment from the government, connecting both commercial and residential properties to its full-fibre gigabit capable network with coverage now at 98%.

The fact that the majority of West Berkshire residents and businesses in rural areas are now receiving superfast broadband means that Superfast Berkshire has put the district into the top tier of Ultra-fast Broadband coverage, behind only parts of London and Bournemouth.

Working and living in West Berkshire

WBC has a wide variety of interesting full and part-time roles advertised [West Berkshire Council - Jobs](#).

Cyber Security E-learning Package



National Cyber
Security Centre

The UK National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has recently released a [training package](#) to guide small organisations through the actions to prevent successful cyber-attacks against them.

The course is online, free, and focuses on five topics:

- Backing up an organisation's data correctly
- Protecting an organisation against malware
- Keeping the devices used by employees secure
- The importance of creating strong passwords
- Defending an organisation against phishing

According to the Government's Cyber Security Breaches Survey (2021), 38% of all micro and small organisations experienced an attack in the last 12 months. This training may help local businesses defend against this, and is especially suitable for organisations that do not have a dedicated IT department.

National Volunteers' Week

Volunteers' Week takes place this week (1-7 June). It's a chance to recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make to our communities and say thank you.

Volunteers' Week is supported and celebrated by small grassroots organisations as well as larger, household-name charities, who together run hundreds of activities across the UK. These activities showcase and celebrate volunteers and the contribution volunteering makes in our communities.



Volunteers' Week 2021 is a time to say thanks. It goes without saying that volunteers have played a key role in the pandemic response. During an exceptionally difficult year, people from all walks of life around the UK have taken the time to volunteer and make a huge difference to their communities – just as they do every year. This is a time for us to come together and thank all volunteers for their invaluable contribution.

Police and Crime Commissioner News

Following the election last month, Matthew Barber has been elected as PCC for the Thames Valley and his role officially began on 14 May.

He has announced his intention to publish a Police and Criminal Justice Plan with the following priorities:

- Strong local policing (recruiting more police officers, protecting local neighbourhood policing and driving down burglary, rural crime, volume crime and other local neighbourhood crimes)
- Fighting serious organised crime (cracking down on the threat from county lines drugs gangs to protect children from exploitation and abuse)
- Fighting cyber crime and fraud (investing in technology and resources needed to protect the public online)
- Improving criminal justice (supporting victims of crime, bringing more criminals to justice and reducing reoffending)
- Tackling illegal encampments (ensuring a fair but firm response to illegal encampments and reducing the effect on communities)

Parish Matters

Just a reminder that the Community Member Bid Scheme closes on 21st June, so time is running out for us to submit bids. Please let Garth or I know if you have any project which you would like us to submit a bid for

With best wishes: Hilary Cole & Garth Simpson

