

Shaping our District

Working together to make West Berkshire an even greater place in which to live, work and learn

West Berkshire
Council Strategy

2015-2019

Refreshed March 2016

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West Berkshire
COUNCIL

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*“Working together
to make West
Berkshire an even
greater place in
which to live,
work and learn”*

Foreword

*to adapt to the
changing world
we now live in*

“Despite our successes there is no room for complacency and many challenges remain.”

In 2015 we published a new Council Strategy covering the period 2015 to 2019. Although we deliver, or fund, hundreds of core or essential services the Strategy focused only on the priorities for improvement set out below:

- 1. Improve educational attainment**
- 2. Close the educational attainment gap**
- 3. Enable completion of more affordable housing**
- 4. Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements**
- 5. Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**
- 6. Support communities to do more to help themselves**

These priorities were supported by our overarching approach to ‘Become an even more effective council’.

Whilst from a financial perspective we have been challenged by changes in the Government’s funding model to local authorities, our strategic direction and our priorities for improvement remain the same, and we will continue to be the most effective and efficient we can. However, going forward we will have to do things differently; finding more opportunities to work with our partners and communities, reshaping what we do and how we do it and, in some cases, stopping doing things all together. The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the size of the financial challenge facing the council in more detail. Over the remaining time of this strategy we expect to have to find a further £21.8 million savings.

This annual refresh shows the progress we have made in delivering our priorities and the key things we planned to do.

The purpose of the Strategy is not to detail all the services that we provide, but to focus on areas where we need, and want, to improve. The broader range of services we provide are included in other strategic, or operational plans, such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



Roger Croft
Leader of the Council



Nick Carter
Chief Executive

Summary

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Our Vision:

“Working together to make West Berkshire an even greater place in which to live, work and learn”

Our Place

West Berkshire as a district will continue to grow and that growth will be at its highest for those aged under 18 and over 65. The impact of the Care Act will increase the number of older and vulnerable adults we will need to provide care for.

We have a strong local economy with high levels of employment but we cannot afford to be complacent. West Berkshire needs to remain an attractive place to do business, so continued investment in our infrastructure is vital. We also need to continue to ensure that our local workforce has the appropriate skills.

We will need more housing, in particular affordable housing, whilst at the same time protecting the natural environment that makes West Berkshire such a good place to live.

Our communities are well educated and we have good schools but attainment could be better. We need to be more ambitious for our young people.

Our Strategic Aims

We have set four strategic aims to support our vision:

- A.** Better educated communities.
- B.** A stronger local economy.
- C.** Protect and support those who need it.
- D.** Maintain a high quality of life within our communities.

Our Priorities for Improvement

We have identified six key priorities for improvement

1. Improve educational attainment.
2. Close the educational attainment gap.
3. Enable the completion of more affordable housing.
4. Deliver or enable key infrastructure improvements in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy.
5. Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
6. Support communities to do more for themselves.

Our Approach - A More Effective Council

As an organisation we have been told, and we know, that we have many strengths. Those strengths alone however will not see us through the coming four years because of the financial constraints. As we reshape West Berkshire we also need to reshape ourselves. In particular, we need to:

- encourage communities to do more for themselves recognising the council will have to withdraw from directly supporting some areas of activity where others can be more effective;
- find new ways of commissioning and delivering services;
- learn more from others;
- celebrate our achievements more effectively;
- develop a more modern and flexible workforce.

Our Track Record

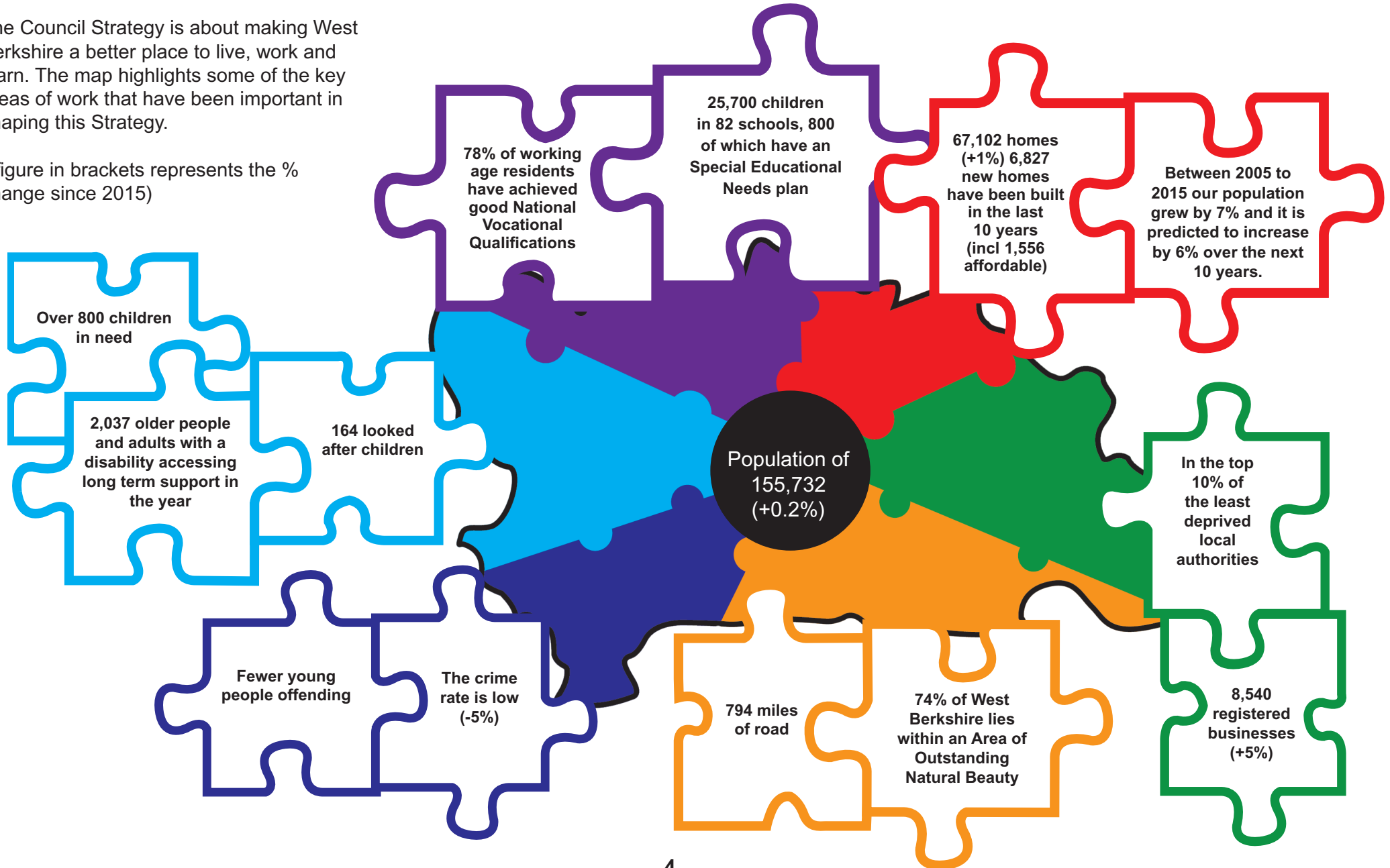
Since publishing our Council Strategy, we have:

- Completed Phase One of the Superfast West Berkshire Broadband Programme, increasing coverage in West Berkshire to 83%.
- Narrowed the attainment gap for our primary school children
- 62% of pupils have achieved 5+ A*-C GCSEs (incl. English and Maths)
- Invested £5.8m in our roads
- Established the social work academy and a programme to support newly qualified social workers
- Completed building projects at Little Heath School (sixth form block) and at John Rankin Infant and Junior Schools (expansion).

West Berkshire – The Place and its People

The Council Strategy is about making West Berkshire a better place to live, work and learn. The map highlights some of the key areas of work that have been important in shaping this Strategy.

*(figure in brackets represents the % change since 2015)



Our Vision, Aims and Priorities for Improvement

Vision Working together to make West Berkshire an even greater place to live, work and learn

Aims



Priorities for Improvement



The council provides a range of core services which it believes are essential for the communities of West Berkshire. These include:

- Protecting our children
- Maintaining our roads
- Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean
- Providing benefits
- Collecting Council Tax and Business Rates
- Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults
- Planning and Housing

Given the scale of the financial challenges that lie ahead it is impossible to guarantee that these services will be immune from cuts. We will however, seek to ensure that these services are delivered to a standard that is good for those who receive them.

Aim A Better Educated Communities



Why is this important?

We recognise that children and young people are integral to the future of the area and we have a responsibility to ensure that all of them are given the best possible opportunity to succeed and to enjoy growing up in a safe, secure, healthy and economically prosperous environment.

For an area as affluent as West Berkshire, our educational attainment should be much better and we have made this our priority.

We continue to work positively with all local academies and schools for the benefit of pupils across West Berkshire.



Our priorities for improvement

- Raise the attainment of all our children at every key stage – *specifically we are aiming to be in the top 10% of councils for every key stage by 2020.*
- Close the attainment gap for vulnerable pupils – *we are aiming to eliminate the current attainment gap between disadvantaged children and other children.*

Priorities for Improvement: Improve Educational Attainment and Close the Educational Attainment Gap

Key things we planned to do

1. Continue to develop our work with schools to improve outcomes for all children and young people.
2. Invest £70m in our schools.
3. Implement a West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy.
4. Increase safety, health and wellbeing support for children and young people in schools.
5. Ensure a good start for every child.
6. Develop outstanding leaders and governors in our schools.

Progress

- Fig 1 shows where the council ranked nationally for all Key Stages for Academic Years 2012/13 through to 2014/15.
- 82% of 11 year olds in West Berkshire achieved the Level 4 standard in all subjects, exceeding the national average (80%). Results show continued high attainment in reading and writing scores, but with more improvement needed in mathematics *fig 2*
- 62.4% of our 16 year olds get 5 or more GCSEs graded A* to C, including English and Mathematics. This is well above the national figure of 57% for state funded schools. We are in the top 25% of national rankings thanks to impressive improvement in recent years, but not all schools perform at this level. *fig 2*
- Delivered strong results for 5 year olds in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 7 year olds, improving on 2014 results, and consistently above average in key indicators. Teacher assessments for 7 year olds are now more accurate than prior to 2013 as a result of more rigorous LA training and better moderation of schools' work.

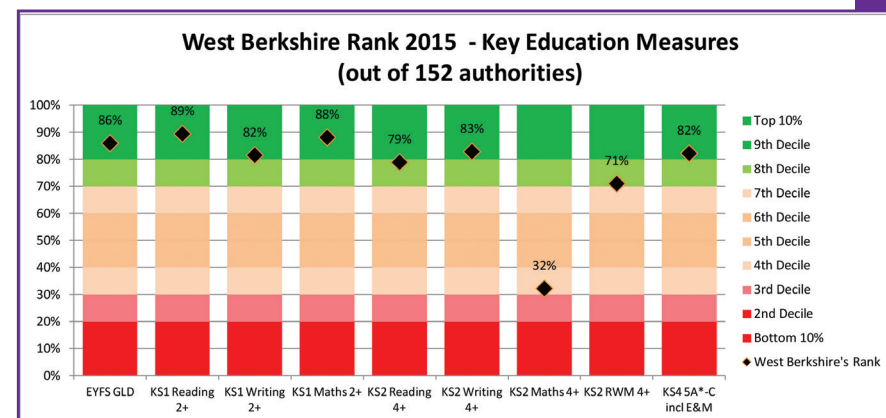
fig 1

Rank (out of 152):			
West Berkshire	2013	2014	2015
Foundation Stage (end of reception yr)			
Good Level of Development	11	22	22
Key Stage 1 (end of year 2)			
Reading level 2+	6	26	16
Writing level 2+	11	25	28
Maths level 2+	19	34	18
Key Stage 2 (end of year 6)			
Reading level 4+	35	12	32
Writing level 4+	23	22	26
Maths level 4+	74	53	103
Read/Writ/Mat 4+	55	24	44
Key Stage 4 (GCSE)			
5A*-C including English & Maths	65	27	27

Rank as percentage:			
	2013	2014	2015
Foundation Stage (end of reception yr)	7%	14%	14%
Key Stage 1 (end of year 2)	4%	17%	11%
Key Stage 2 (end of year 6)	23%	8%	21%
Key Stage 4 (GCSE)	43%	18%	18%

Years represent end of academic year, e.g. 2015 = results for 2014-15 academic year
 Note: DfE is changing the way attainment is measured from Summer 2016. Past data will no longer be comparable.

fig 2



Priorities for Improvement: Improve Educational Attainment and Close the Educational Attainment Gap

- In the primary phase, there has been further improvement in the key priority area of closing the educational gap for disadvantaged pupils. The gap for 11 year olds (Year 6) in the Level 4 standard in all subjects has narrowed from 29% in 2012 to 18.7% in 2015 (15% nationally) *fig 3*
- The educational attainment gap for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) pupils entitled to free school meals has closed from 32% to 28% . This is however still larger than the national gap and remains a priority for West Berkshire. It should be noted that cohort numbers are very small at 127 pupils out of 1962, meaning that slight variations can cause large percentage changes
- In the secondary phase, the educational attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils widened slightly for those gaining 5 or more GCSEs graded A* to C (incl. English and Maths) from 33.4% (in 2014) to 34.7% (in 2015). Improvements in closing the gap nationally have also stalled at 28.3% and there has been no trend of national improvement since 2012. This continues to be an area in which schools and the council are working hard to make improvements *fig 4*

fig 3

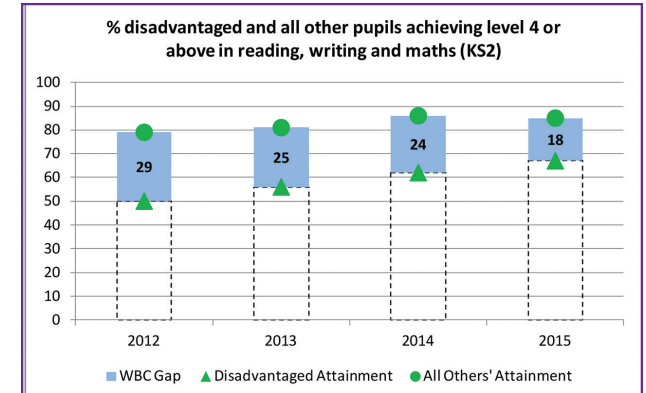
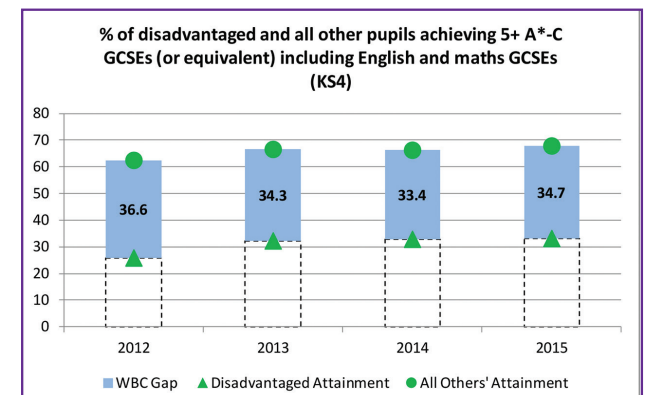


fig 4



Priorities for Improvement: Improve Educational Attainment and Close the Educational Attainment Gap

- Published a refreshed West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy that showed our progress against the previous strategy and identified areas of focus and key activities for 2015 -2017
- Provided training, coaching and support for middle and senior leaders, including Headteachers and governors, as part of the implementation of the School Improvement Strategy. This has enabled the key improvements made in the last three years. Increased training and support (high challenge, high support, evidence based practice framework called 'Restorative Practice' approach) for teaching staff in nine schools to better work with children and families who find engagement and attendance at school challenging
- Improved working with schools to promote emotional wellbeing in pupils, improve health and education for Looked After Children (LAC) and improve educational achievement of children that receive free school meals
- Focussed on safeguarding, including revision of the Model Schools' Policy; the Education service has received positive feedback regarding work around addressing bullying
- School building projects have progressed as expected, for example
 - Little Heath School (Sixth Form Block) –completed, official opening took place in autumn 2015
 - John Rankin Infant and Junior Schools (expansion) - completed
 - Kennet Valley Primary School (new classroom block) – expected to complete before Easter 2016
- Provided a new unit for secondary school pupils with autism

Updates

The majority of the key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, however some of them have been updated or developed to reflect progress already made or changes in circumstances. These are listed below:

- (Update) Implement the refreshed West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy for 2015-17
- (Update) Increase the percentage of school rated "Good" or "Better" through developing outstanding leaders and governors in our schools
- (New) Our disadvantaged children will have better results and will be closer to the results of other children

Aim B A Stronger Local Economy

Why is this important?

Having a good job, with a living wage and the resources to pay for the things you need is an essential requirement for a good quality of life, and improves wellbeing and sound health.

West Berkshire has traditionally had a healthy local economy and has now emerged strongly through the recent economic recession. The council has an important role in helping to create the conditions for private sector businesses to prosper and grow. Infrastructure, regeneration and ensuring that our workforce has the appropriate skills will be our focus areas over the coming four years.



Our priorities for improvement

- Enable the completion of more affordable housing – *we are setting an ambitious target of facilitating the completion of 1000 new affordable homes across the district over the coming five years.*
- Deliver or enable key infrastructure projects in relation to roads, rail, flood prevention, regeneration and the digital economy:
 - *In relation to roads, our target is to be in the top 25% of councils nationally by 2019 for the condition of our main roads.*
 - *For rail, we will lobby for the extension of electrification from Newbury to Bedwyn.*
 - *We will implement a five year flood prevention programme through local flood forums and with the support of local communities.*
 - *We will take forward the regeneration of the London Road Industrial Estate, Newbury Wharf and Market Street sites in Newbury and support the regeneration of Thatcham Town Centre.*
 - *We will ensure that at least 99% of West Berkshire households have access to superfast broadband by the end of 2017.*

Priority for Improvement: Enable the Completion of More Affordable Housing

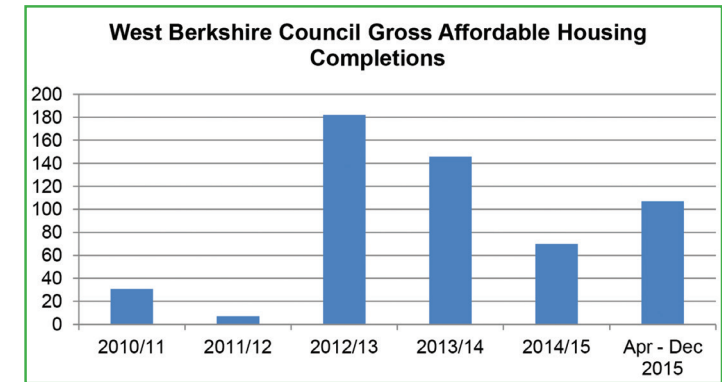
Key things we planned to do

1. Investigate new ways of delivering affordable housing.

Progress

- 107 new affordable houses have been built between April and December 2015 *fig 5*
- We currently have development with planning permissions that has the potential to deliver 3,308 units, of which 568 would be affordable (38%). In addition to this we have identified 844 affordable housing units in the Housing Site allocation DPD. This gives a total of 1,412 units 'in the pipeline'. It is currently forecast that 883 will be built in the next 5 years.

fig 5



Updates

The key thing we planned to do at the start of the Strategy has been altered to reflect progress already made.

- (Update) Pursue options to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing in the district. The local new affordable housing build could be impacted by the outcome of the Housing and Planning Bill 2015 – 16, currently making its way through the House of Lords.



Priority for Improvement: Deliver or Enable Key Infrastructure Improvements in Relation to Roads, Rail, Flood Prevention, Regeneration and the Digital Economy

Key things we planned to do

1. Invest £17m in our roads.
2. Seek to develop new partnerships with the private sector and local communities to enhance local infrastructure.
3. Keep our Community Infrastructure Levy policy under review.
4. Invest £5.2m in flood prevention schemes.
5. Support and develop Flood Forums.
6. Implement the Superfast Broadband Programme for Berkshire and West Berkshire.
7. Lobby the government for rail electrification to Bedwyn.

Progress

- Invested £5.8million in our roads, as planned, to January 2016
- Received approval for resources for three projects from the Local Enterprise Partnership:
 - Access road to Sandford (£2 million),
 - Access to London Road Industrial Estate (£1.9 million) and
 - Access to Sterling Cables (Kings Road) (£2.34 million)
- Developed partnerships to enhance local infrastructure, including:
 - The public/private sector, housing/residential led development scheme with Grainger PLC for the Market Street Redevelopment
 - The public/private sector partnership with St. Modwen PLC to deliver urban regeneration including increased employment opportunities and town centre residential housing at London Road Industrial Estate development
- Received the planning permission for provision of a new bus station as part of the Newbury regeneration project(H&T)
- Completed an Economic Viability Assessment in relation to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule
- *Fig 6* shows where the council ranked nationally for road conditions in 2014/15.

fig 6

Rank (out of 152 - All English Single Tier and County Councils):		Rank as percentage:
West Berkshire	2014/2015	2014/2015
Principal roads where maintenance should be considered	47	31%
Source: LG Inform		

Priority for Improvement: Deliver or Enable Key Infrastructure Improvements in Relation to Roads, Rail, Flood Prevention, Regeneration and the Digital Economy

Progress

- Progressed delivery of the programme of all the flood and drainage improvement schemes, which are on track to meet the agreed deadlines:
 - Winterbourne Flood alleviation scheme reached construction work stage (completion expected Sep 2016)
 - Purley Property Level Protection Scheme was delayed due to Environment Agency – now estimated to start in 2016/17
 - Great Shefford – feasibility study was completed and submitted to the Environment Agency
 - Delivered schemes on the ground such as Tull Way attenuation pond, which is underway
 - Reached the detailed design stage for a further attenuation pond at Dunstan Park Thatcham
- Supported, with partner organisations, five flood forums (Pangbourne, Lambourn, Newbury, Streatley and Thatcham)
- Completed Phase 1 of the Superfast Berkshire Programme with superfast coverage increased from 66% to 83% in West Berkshire and 92% overall in Berkshire. During phase 2 procurement, a promise by the contractor to provide superfast broadband to all our remaining premises was secured and we therefore decided to de-scope all of those that were destined to get only a basic broadband service and to spend the funding on delivering superfast broadband to all West Berkshire households.
- Wrote to local MPs and to Department of Transport as part of lobbying activity for rail electrification to Bedwyn

Updates

The key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, with the exception of the following:

- (Remove) Lobby the government for rail electrification to Bedwyn - will be continued by our MP.

Aim C Protect and Support Those Who Need it

Why is this important?

Supporting the vulnerable, whether they are older people, adults with disabilities or children is at the heart of what the council is about. The council has very clear legal duties to support vulnerable people and it is where the majority of its resources are spent. It carries out these duties by working with partners through the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and Safeguarding Adults Board.

The implementation of the Care Act 2015 is likely to result in more people being cared for by the council. Population pressures and other factors will also increase the demand for social care in future years. We see safeguarding the most vulnerable in our communities as the most important thing we do and we have therefore maintained this as a priority.

The personalisation of social care and safeguarding adults empowers people to speak out, make informed decisions with support if necessary so that members of our communities can help each other.

Our priorities for improvement

- Good at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.



Priority for Improvement: Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Key things we planned to do

1. Ensure that it is easy for local people to refer their safeguarding concerns to us.
2. Where services are independently inspected they are rated at least 'good' and peer reviews of safeguarding rated highly.
3. We will see an increase in the number of people that are helped to remain living at home after a period of enablement.
4. Work in partnership with health, education, Police and voluntary and community sector organisations to improve safeguarding.
5. Improve the retention of good quality social workers through the establishment of a Social Worker Academy.
6. Implement an effective quality assurance programme for safeguarding services.
7. Improve our current training programme.

Progress

- Progressed in improving our Children's Services to achieve 'good' following the Ofsted inspection – the Department of Education acknowledged the good progress we have made and the strategies we have put in place to secure system-wide improvements.
- Our Home Care Service and all four of our adult social care residential homes are overall rated as 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with changes made in response to one care home which was previously judged as 'requires improvement on safety'
- Worked to make it easier for people to refer their safeguarding concerns and receive support:
 - Promoted and acted upon safeguarding as part of the community conversations, the work of Health Visitors and School Nurses, staff working in libraries, Trading Standards etc.
 - Prioritised safeguarding response at Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and increased multi-agency auditing of safeguarding cases
 - Commissioned a form on the council's website for reporting concerns about adult social care service providers to help focus support and scrutiny
 - Developed a public information video to increase awareness of adult and child protection and a set of easy-read documentation about adult safeguarding for people with communication difficulties
- Increased referral rates for children's safeguarding, and achieved a more timely response (in accordance to assessment timescales)
- Increased the number of people receiving telecare services and have reduced the number going into residential care. The challenge remains to achieve a higher proportion who are still at home 91 days after a period of reablement (to be monitored in service), especially since the cohort is very small.

Priority for Improvement: Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Progress

- Focussed resources and actions on priorities agreed by the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SAPB) that involves primarily statutory social care and health organisations covering West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham. We have established a Service Users Safeguarding Forum to promote safeguarding and work with organisations to determine what will keep people safe and training needs.
- Implemented multiagency training on child protection, core groups and the work with Health partners resulted in improved health assessment timescales for Looked After Children
- Delivered training in Making Safeguarding Personal to 55 staff members who undertake adult safeguarding cases
- Trained more adult social workers to be “best interest assessors” to ensure clients living in circumstances that amount to a deprivation of liberty are properly identified and protective measures are accounted for
Trained our own staff so that they can deliver Level 2 Adult Safeguarding training
Completed training needs analysis for Children and Families Services
- Completed an Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) peer review of adult safeguarding services in December 2015. The review commended the council on its relationships with providers and other partners

Priority for Improvement: Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Progress

- Established the Social Work Academy and a programme to support newly qualified social workers
- Adopted a quality assurance framework developed by the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SAPB) including a number of quality assurance tools that have been agreed across the partnership.
- Introduced a clear and effective Quality Assurance Programme for the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB), which has been review by the Department for Education (DfE) Improvement Advisors
- Progressed the development of Quality Assurance tools in Children's Services to ensure that quality services are delivered in a consistent way.

Updates

Many of the key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, however some of them have been updated or developed to reflect progress already made or changes in circumstances. These are listed below:

- (New) Continue to focus on improving our Children's Services, aiming to have the improvement notice withdrawn.
- (New) Continue to implement the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' approach by working with people to achieve their stated outcomes from the safeguarding process.
- (Update) Implement an effective quality assurance programme for safeguarding services for children and young people
- (Update) Sustain recruitment of qualified and experienced social workers and improve their access to more advanced/recent research intelligence and training for further professional development
- (New) Improve our approach to 'hearing the voice of the child' within the services and in the way we make our decisions
- (Remove) We will see an increase in the number of people that are helped to remain living at home after a period of enablement.

Aim D

Maintain a high quality of life within our communities

Why is this important?

The council has four underlying principles which guide how it works;

- (i). **Helping you to help yourself**
- (ii). **Helping you to help one another**
- (iii). **Helping you when you cannot help yourself**
- (iv). **Promoting and acting in the interests of our local community**

The council recognises that many people see themselves more as part of their immediate local area rather than as part of an administrative area called West Berkshire. As a result our focus has always been on working closely with local communities and parish councils, recognising that local people know what is best for their own community. We will also continue to work closely with communities of interest such as carers, voluntary groups etc.

We intend to do more work in this area over the coming four years, not only because limited resources mean the council will be able to do less itself, but also because it is vital that we continue to unlock the potential resources that reside within our communities and identify the most effective way of delivering services.

Our priorities for improvement

- Support communities to do more to help themselves



Priority for Improvement: Support Communities to do More to Help Themselves

Key things we planned to do

1. Accelerate the delivery of local services for local communities by local communities.
2. Work with local communities to help people live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives and improve the health of the poorest fastest.
3. Provide additional resources to work with communities to enhance volunteering activities.
4. Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people.
5. Ensure the continuation of access to libraries across the district and opportunities to participate in leisure activities.
6. Develop opportunities to engage with West Berkshire heritage
7. Work with local people to develop and improve our community planning programme.

Progress

- Identified local needs and starting to deliver solutions as part of the community conversations in Lambourn, Hungerford and Thatcham (part of the Brilliant West Berkshire – Building Communities Together initiative).
- Continued discussions with Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)/ Parish Councils/local community groups are continuing to deliver the practical management of local countryside sites with the aim of having 2 sites to be under community management by Mar 2018
- Introduced the Voluntary Sector Prospectus, changing the way in which we commission services from the voluntary sector. Last year we commissioned outcomes on Helping People to Continue Caring (Carers Emergency Service and Flexible Services for Carers), Small Domestic Repairs Service and Supporting Vulnerable Adults to Access Employment. (CCH&S) (PH&W)
- Recruited 200 volunteers for activities in the Culture Service



Priority for Improvement: Support Communities to do More to Help Themselves

Progress

- Developed a new way of working in Adult Social Care Services, focussed on preventative work in order to support vulnerable adults and older people at the earliest opportunity aiming to maintain their independence and live within their communities.
- Promoted services provided by libraries through a new marketing officer. We are investigating self service for libraries to maintain low cost; Summer reading challenge for children was organised and completed in summer 2015
- Refined the guidance and process for the completion of a community plan with three communities already starting to use this approach and receive our support.
- Assisted Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council have progressed a Neighbourhood Development Plan and will be looking to adopt this following a successful examination and referendum

Updates

The majority of the key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same, however some of them have been updated or developed to reflect progress already made or changes in circumstances. These are listed below:

- (New) Grow community conversations via Brilliant West Berkshire partnership working
- (Update) Work with communities to enhance existing and develop new volunteering activities
- (Update) Ensure the continuation of opportunities to participate in leisure activities
- (Update) Investigate self-service provision and alternative methods of working to support continuation of access to libraries
- (Update) Support local communities in developing community plans, delivering key local projects and progressing with their Neighbourhood Development Plans
- (New) Further support youth employment and employee career development through apprenticeships and a graduate scheme

Our Approach & Values

Become an Even More Effective Council

Why is this important?

The 'Local Government Settlement 2016-17 and an Offer to Councils for Future Years' was announced in December 2015, making it clear that funding reductions will continue for at least the next four years at levels higher than initially forecasted.

Such a level of savings cannot be found by further trimming of existing services and a more radical reshaping of the council was started during 2015/16. This was driven by a review of what the council has done and wishes to do itself and a consideration of what might be best done by others, or possibly not done at all.

A review of the council was completed by the Local Government Association (LGA) in 2014. Following their annual visit in 2015, they confirmed that good progress has been made. The council has built on its strengths and addressed those areas identified as needing improvement, including operational processes, innovative practices and engagement with the public and our partners in a more open and transparent way.

Alongside our ongoing financial challenges, these areas of improvement continue to be the focus of our efforts to become an even more effective council over the coming years.

Our Values

We recognise that how we do things is as important as what we do. We have therefore established four values which reflect the culture we are seeking to create in the council.

These values are:

- **Respect**
- **Integrity**
- **Ambition**
- **Responsibility**

Our Approach

- Become an even more effective council



Our Approach: Become an Even More Effective Council

Key things we planned to do

1. Continue to deliver our core services to the agreed standard.
2. Retain and build on our strengths.
3. Reshape what we do and how we do it so that we can continue to live within our means.
4. Improve our partnership working especially with Health.
5. Develop a modern and flexible workforce where staff are recognised and valued.
6. Senior management will spend more time on strategic rather than operational issues.
7. Encourage more flexibility and innovation amongst our staff and foster ideas from the 'grass roots'.
8. Strengthen our leadership capability.
9. Get better at celebrating our successes and explaining our failures.
10. Make greater use of other appropriate information to help assess the cost and effectiveness of what we do.

Progress

- Established a Strategy Board to allow a focus on wider strategic issues
- Trained senior officers (Collaborative Architects) to work in new ways in order to generate ideas and identify solutions to help the council meet the strategic priorities
- Maintained our Legal Services as an economical service with a net cost of £6.02 per 1000 population. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Benchmarking Comparator Report 2015 confirmed that we remained in the lower quartile.
- Co-designed and funded the Emotional Health Academy with health sector representatives and schools
- Built a strong partnership with health, schools and other partners through the Healthy School post, funded by Public Health, and located and managed within the Education Service
- Successfully implemented the first phase of the Better Care Fund Programme, promoting greater integration of local health and social care services to offer better support for the most vulnerable.
- Produced a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in partnership with the other Berkshire authorities identifying our local housing need

Our Approach: Become an Even More Effective Council

Progress

- Procured a new social care case management system to support our social care workforce in working in a more effective way. Updated our service request system (known as ELMS Enquiry Logging and Management System) to make it more customer friendly and responsive, in addition to more efficient demand management
- Developed quality management systems within the Enforcement Group (Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Waste) which received ISO 9001 (quality management standard) accreditation
- Strengthened leadership capabilities within our schools.
- Improved outcomes for vulnerable families, through the innovative West Berkshire's Turnaround Families Programme (Troubled Families initiative). The programme has been successful, exceeding national expectations
- Introduced a new Care Quality (CQ1) procedure to allow anybody to report concerns about any adult social care service provider so that we can focus our support and scrutiny on providers perceived below required standards.

Updates

The key things we planned to do at the start of the Strategy remain the same.

Refreshed Key Things We Plan to do by Priority for Improvement

Improve Educational Attainment

1. Continue to develop our work with schools to improve outcomes for all children and young people.
2. Invest £70m in our schools.
3. Implement the refreshed West Berkshire School Improvement Strategy for 2015-17
4. Increase safety, health and wellbeing support for children and young people in schools.
5. Ensure a good start for every child.
6. Increase the percentage of school rated "Good" or "Better" through developing outstanding leaders and governors in our schools

Close the Educational Attainment Gap

1. Our disadvantaged children will have better results and will be closer to the results of other children

Enable the Completion of More Affordable Housing

1. Pursue options to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing in the district.

Deliver or Enable Key Infrastructure Improvements

1. Invest £17m in our roads.
2. Seek to develop new partnerships with the private sector and local communities to enhance local infrastructure.
3. Keep our Community Infrastructure Levy policy under review.
4. Invest £5.2m in flood prevention schemes.
5. Support and develop Flood Forums.
6. Implement the Superfast Broadband Programme for Berkshire and West Berkshire.

Good at Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

1. Ensure that it is easy for local people to refer their safeguarding concerns to us.
2. Where services are independently inspected they are rated at least 'good' and peer reviews of safeguarding rated highly.
3. Work in partnership with health, education, Police and voluntary and community sector organisations to improve safeguarding.
4. Sustain recruitment of qualified and experienced social workers and improve their access to more advanced/recent research intelligence and training for further professional development
5. Implement an effective quality assurance programme for safeguarding services for children and young people
6. Continue to focus on improving our Children's Services, aiming to have the improvement notice withdrawn.
7. Continue to implement the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' approach by working with people to achieve their stated outcomes from the safeguarding process.
8. Improve our approach to 'hearing the voice of the child' within the services and in the way we make our decisions

Support Communities to do More to Help Themselves

1. Accelerate the delivery of local services for local communities by local communities.
2. Work with local communities to help people live longer, healthier and more fulfilling lives and improve the health of the poorest fastest.
3. Work with communities to enhance existing and develop new volunteering activities
4. Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people.
5. Investigate self-service provision and alternative methods of working to support continuation of access to libraries
6. Ensure the continuation of opportunities to participate in leisure activities.
7. Develop opportunities to engage with West Berkshire heritage
8. Support local communities in developing community plans, delivering key local projects and progressing with their Neighbourhood Development Plans
9. Grow community conversations via Brilliant West Berkshire: Building Community Together partnership working
10. Further support youth employment and employee career development through apprenticeships and a graduate scheme

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