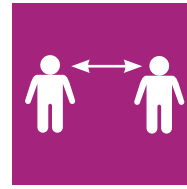


# Covid-19: Supporting Our Communities



# Introduction

It's true to say that this really has been a year like no other for our communities, and for the Council.

We're incredibly proud of the way local people have responded to the pandemic. Over the past year we've seen communities rally around to look after one another, and an outpouring of support for frontline services, particularly the NHS, and other caring professions. It is a long list but we extend our gratitude to the NHS, carers, community groups and all the key workers who have played their part supporting our communities so admirably over the past year.

At the Council we're proud to have played our part responding to the pandemic. From helping to coordinate the community response, supporting local businesses, to working with schools in delivering online learning, we've been busy working to support you. Every one of our teams has been affected and each has risen to the challenge magnificently.

Over the next few pages you can read more about some of our activities and achievements. As we look ahead with optimism for the coming months we wanted to reflect on just how much has been achieved by the Council and our communities, and tell you a little more about our longer-term plans for recovery.

West Berkshire is a superb place and its communities equally so. The future looks brighter now, and as we move forward we have every confidence that the district will bounce back and continue to be a great place to live, work and learn.



**Nick Carter**  
Chief Executive



**Cllr Lynne Doherty**  
Leader of West Berkshire Council

# Key Achievements



Community Support Hub established to support vulnerable residents



100% schools offered remote learning to pupils



Four community testing sites in operation

83% staff working remotely to continue service delivery



Created and adopted new strategies for the future, including our Environment Strategy



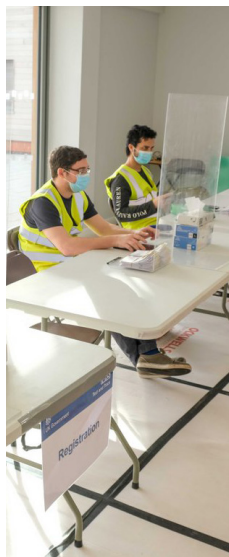
More than £40m paid in business grants

41,000 residents receiving weekly Covid e-bulletin



More than 70 meetings streamed live, and viewed 14,000 times

# Community Response



4,574 calls to the  
Community  
Support Hub

Community  
Support Hub  
created to support  
community  
groups, and  
the most  
vulnerable



Four  
community  
testing sites  
in operation

£371,000  
paid from  
Winter Grant  
Scheme

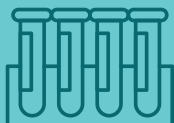


Supported the local  
foodbank by coordinating  
volunteers and deliveries



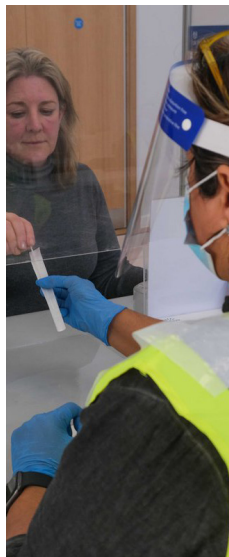
91 staff  
volunteering in  
Community  
Support Hub

3,721  
applications  
for COVID  
Winter Grant



6,000 people tested at  
Community Testing Sites

# Community Response



£200,000 for mental health support



479 residents contacted by Local Contract Tracing service



Transported key workers & children of key workers to school



1,323 applications for Test and Trace Support Payments



Self-isolation packs created

90+ community groups work with Community Support Hub



£292,000 spent on Free School Meal vouchers



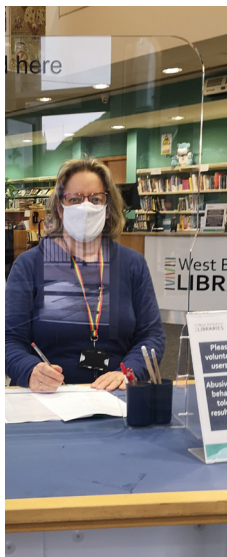
3000+ volunteers supporting the community response



# Supporting Residents



151,000 recycling  
centre visits booked  
online



104,000 items borrowed  
from libraries – and  
new Order and Collect  
service launched

Supported 43  
care homes  
offering  
support, advice  
and infection  
control training



900 doorstep  
deliveries by  
library staff



Library services moved  
online – including  
storytimes, book groups  
and code club

500 young people  
directed to  
mental health  
support services



2,000 laptops  
delivered to  
families who  
need them



280 gifts for  
vulnerable residents  
in Christmas Giving  
appeal

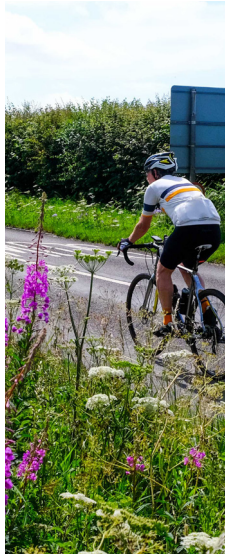


Schools provided lessons for key worker  
and special needs children on site

# Supporting Residents



**Holiday Activities  
and Food  
Programme run at  
15 schools**



**£495,000 for community  
groups to deliver  
local projects**

**£1m raised through  
climate change bonds**



**£619,000 for Active  
Travel Schemes**



**Community Champion  
Awards recognise  
14 groups and 32  
individuals**

**£253,000 to support  
rough sleepers**

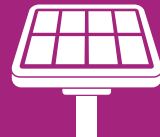


**Two new schools  
completed in  
Theale and  
Newbury**



**£1.7m awarded to  
bring full fibre to  
schools**

**Plans for  
£10m solar farm  
announced**



**£302,000 in financial relief to  
local bus operators for concessionary  
fares reimbursement**

# Supporting Business



**£40m of business grants processed**

**£4.25m Closed Business Lockdown Payments**



**20 temporary pavement licences issued**



**£6.8m Local Restriction Support Grant**



**47 grants totalling £94,000 paid under Christmas Support Payment**

**£1.9m Additional Restrictions Grants distributed**



**New town centre signage to support social distancing**

**Processed furlough scheme payments**

**Business rate holidays granted**

**Business support provided including information packs, webinars and virtual drop-in surgeries**



**Road closures in Newbury supporting social distancing during summer 2020**



# Communications & Engagement

2m views  
of Council  
tweets



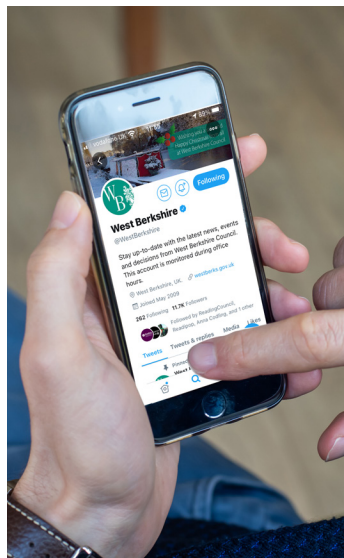
More than  
9,000,000 website  
page views



3m  
copies of  
e-newsletter  
delivered



205 Zoom  
webinars  
held with  
3,533  
participants



Four #AskLynne  
Facebook Live  
residents briefings  
with the Leader

Information  
leaflets sent  
70,000 homes



121  
consultation  
and  
engagement  
activities



National  
campaigns  
shared locally



Local Outbreak Engagement  
Board met regularly

# Covid-19: Our plan for recovery



Ensuring the district recovers from the effects of Covid-19 is a priority for the Council, and has been for some time. Last summer we began planning for life after the pandemic to ensure West Berkshire is able to renew itself after a turbulent year, and remains a great place to live, work and learn.

The response to Covid-19 has shown that our communities are tightknit, resilient and determined to help one another during times of crisis. The collective response to the pandemic was fantastic, and we want to build on this community spirit as we recover.

However, we also recognise that coronavirus has also had an adverse impact and that some residents have been more affected than others. We want to support the district in bouncing back and in particular to tackle any health, economic and learning inequalities which have been caused by the pandemic.

## Vision

To recover three of the core elements that make West Berkshire a great place to live; health, education and the economy, and to ensure a renewed and enhanced focus on our community, environment and engagement. Our Strategy is for everyone but in particular those most affected, now, and into the future by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

On the opposite page you can see the seven areas we will focus on in the coming months to support the district in recovering from the pandemic.

An updated Recovery and Renewal Strategy will be published on our website soon, and will provide more information about what we will deliver on each of our priority areas.

You can also receive updates on our progress direct to your inbox by signing up to our residents' newsletters at [www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp](https://www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp)

# Renewal



**To help the district recover from Covid-19 we will focus on the following seven areas for renewal:**

**1**

Recovering West Berkshire's health and social wellbeing to ensure we remain one of the healthiest places in the country, whilst at the same time doing more to address health inequalities.

**2**

Ensuring economic recovery and renewal, with a focus on those who have lost their jobs, notably the young, women and the disadvantaged; supporting those sectors most impacted by Covid-19; and ensuring we continue the journey of repurposing our Town Centres for the future.

**3**

Supporting our children and young people and our schools with a focus on the most vulnerable.

**4**

Taking the opportunity to work with our local communities to accelerate the delivery of our environmental objectives.

**5**

Enhancing our communications and community engagement.

**6**

Improving our customers' experience of us with an enhanced efficiency and openness in how we work and share information.

**7**

Seizing the positives from the pandemic but not forgetting those we have lost; those whose lives will be forever changed; and those who have supported our local communities during the pandemic, including our own staff.

# Keeping In Touch



We're proud to be part of the local community, and to be delivering services which will make our district a better place today, tomorrow and in the years to come. Keep in touch with us to find out about the work we are doing in communities across West Berkshire.

## Newsletters

Our e-newsletters give you our latest news, events and decisions direct to your inbox. As well as our weekly Residents Bulletin, you can also sign up for specific newsletters about our libraries, waste and recycling and business – and more!

Subscribe at [www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/SignUp)

## Social Media

Follow us on social media:



Over the past year we have achieved a lot, but we couldn't have done this alone. We want to thank all the partners who worked with us during the coronavirus pandemic, and helped support the residents and businesses of West Berkshire.