

Individual Decisions

The attached reports will be taken as
Individual Portfolio Member Decisions on:

17th September 2009

Ref:	Title	Portfolio Member(s)	Page No.
ID1757a	Ashampstead Parish Plan	Councillor Pamela Bale	3 - 34
ID1792	Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Post-Compulsory Education Awards	Councillor Barbara Alexander	35 - 49

Individual Decision

Title of Report:	Ashampstead Parish Plan		
Report to be considered by:	Pamela Bale	on:	17th September 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1757a		

Purpose of Report: To seek endorsement of the Ashampstead Parish Plan by the Council

Recommended Action: The Plan be formally endorsed by the Council as an important document

Reason for decision to be taken: Formal endorsement of the Parish Plan; the Plan having gone through the agreed processes with West Berkshire Council.

List of other options considered: None

Key background documentation: Ashampstead Parish Plan

Portfolio Member:	Councillor Pamela Bale
Tel. No.:	0118 984 2980
E-mail Address:	pbale@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Carole Ruse
Job Title:	Principal Policy Officer (Community Planning)
Tel. No.:	01635 519972
E-mail Address:	cruse@westberks.gov.uk

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 Since December 2008 Community Led Plans (or Parish Plans) have been formally endorsed by West Berkshire Council, via the Individual Decision process.
- 1.2 The endorsement of a Community Plan means that the Council commits to working positively with the community to realise the vision set out in the plan. This means that the Council will give approval or sanction, where it can, actions that have the support of the community and have been included in the Community Plan Action Plan. This is subject to the draft Action Plan having been circulated to the Council and its Partners by prior agreement and the actions discussed in consultation with the Principal Policy Officer for Community Planning.

Parish Planning In West Berkshire

- 1.3 West Berkshire Council, working alongside other key partners from the Local Strategic Partnership such as Community Action West Berkshire and the local community, has promoted the development of Parish Planning across the District.
- 1.4 The Council's success in pushing forward this work has been recognised nationally; firstly through the award of Beacon Status for the local authority in 2006 as part of the "Empowering Communities Improving Rural Services" theme and more recently through the successful joint local authorities bid to the national Beacon Peer mentoring fund, which the Council led, to further develop work in Parish Planning.
- 1.5 Parish (or Community Plans, as they are more commonly referred to), are key documents that set out a vision for how a community wishes to develop in the future. They contain an action plan that will help to realise that vision.
- 1.6 Community Plans are developed through a wide ranging consultation process with the local community. This helps ensure that the resulting plan reflects the needs and aspirations of local people. The Plans are therefore an important source of intelligence about the views and concerns of the community as well as highlighting specific actions that communities wish to see undertaken in their areas. This information plays an important part in shaping both service planning and delivery across the Council but is increasingly being used to inform Council strategy and policy development.
- 1.7 The process by which Community Plans are developed involves extensive liaison and engagement with service providers and statutory organisations, most especially the Council. This close involvement and dialogue helps ensure that officers are aware of the direction and aspirations of the community and can help develop meaningful and realistic actions.
- 1.8 This close engagement between the Council and the community at a very practical level helps to provide an excellent platform for improving relationships and communications between the local authority and the communities it serves.
- 1.9 A further benefit emerging from Community Planning is that it has helped bring communities and organisations together to focus on developing solutions to local

problems, for example; joint working on environmental issues, such as noise from the M4; establishment of a Citizen's Advice Bureau outreach point in the eastern part of West Berkshire and work on reduction of CO2 emissions.

- 1.10 This report (and the accompanying Community Plan) brings to Members' attention the contents of the Community Plan for Ashampstead along with the above accompanying contextual information about the basis and progress on parish planning in West Berkshire.
- 1.11 Ashampstead's Plan (Appendix A) includes projects covering the following areas;
- Improvements to Flowers Piece and the Pavilion
 - The Village Hall
 - Traffic and Highways
 - Activities for Young People
 - Concern about Crime
 - Planning and Development
 - Environmental Issues
 - Broadband and a Village Website
- 1.12 Comments from WBC Services that responded to the Action Plan can be seen at Appendix b.

Appendices

- (a) Ashampstead Community Plan and Action Plan
- (b) Comments from WBC Services on the Action Plan

Implications

Policy:	Parish Plans are an integral part of the Council's Vibrant Villages theme within the Council Plan.
Financial:	<p>£60,000 annual Parish Plan Grant Funding, where communities are able to bid for £5k in any one year towards funding items of capital expenditure on projects in their Action Plans.</p> <p>£35,000 Vibrant Village Grant Funding, where the Council has partnered with Greenham Common Trust to fund projects in communities. To bid to this fund communities do not need to have a Parish Plan, but very often projects do come out of the development of such Plans.</p> <p>Any of the actions in the Parish Plan that have financial implications for services will need to be addressed as and when those actions are moved forward and will be accommodated within existing budgets. These actions will be apparent usually at the time that Heads of Service see the Action Plans in draft, prior to endorsement and formal signing off by Individual Decision.</p> <p>If actions require additional resources these will be brought to Members for consideration in due course.</p>
Personnel:	There are no personnel implications at this stage
Legal:	There are no direct legal implications at this stage
Environmental:	Parish Plans often raise many local environmental issues and as such can play a very useful role in conserving and enhancing the environment at a very local level.
Equalities:	The consultation carried out in support of the Parish Plan helps ensure that all people have an opportunity to have their views and concerns heard.
Partnering:	Parish Plans are an excellent example of partnering between the local community and the Council.
Property:	No specific property implications. Any property related matters within the action plan will be addressed by the relevant service as and when the action is moved forward by the community in conjunction with the Council.

Risk Management: There are no direct risk management issues arising from the plan. As and when actions are moved forward any risk issues will be addressed by the relevant service area

Community Safety: There are no specific or direct Community Safety implications

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council: Councillor Graham Jones

Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman: Councillor Brian Bedwell

Select Committee Chairman: Greener Select Committee, Councillor Emma Webster
Healthier Select Committee, Councillor Carol Jackson-Doerge

Stronger Communities Select Committee, Councillor Irene Neill

Safer Select Committee, Councillor Quentin Webb

Ward Members: Councillor Barbara Alexander

Opposition Spokesperson: Councillor Jeff Brooks

Local Stakeholders: WBC, GCT, Safer Communities Partnership, Voluntary Sector.

Officers Consulted: All Senior Management within WBC

Trade Union: N/A

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:		
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ASHAMPSTEAD COMMUNITY PLAN

FOREWORD TO THE ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH PLAN

By David Mountain (Chairman, Ashampstead P.C.)

The Ashampstead Parish Plan gives local people the opportunity to engage with their fellow residents, community groups, service providers and others to set out a vision for how they would like their village or town to develop over the next 5-10 years.

It examines all aspects of local life and uses consultation with the community to provide the foundations for an action plan, which prioritizes local issues, identifies key partners for delivery and sets target dates for the completion of projects.

There are certain projects that will require a large input from outside agencies. There are some projects and ideas that require assistance, co-operation and organization through the Parish Council and there will be some projects that we will be able to create with the help of local parish participation.

There are many benefits to completing a Parish Plan, these include:

- West Berkshire Council uses Parish Plans to help determine how local services are delivered in your area. Parish Plans can create a real sense of community spirit and can reinvigorate local democracy
- A Parish Plan provides clear evidence of community needs and priorities
- A Parish Plan action plan provides the community with a defined list of community priorities,
- The completion of a Plan enables access to the Parish Plan Grant Fund and other funding streams which may otherwise be denied to us.
- Parish Plans can highlight innovative projects which need help from other agencies
- Parish Planning encourages partnership working
- Parish Plans strengthen the Town or Parish Council's relationship with the community
- Parish Plans are also used as a tool to complement and help deliver local planning policies (although they cannot override adopted planning policy)

The Parish Council fully supports the Parish Plan and will make every effort to assist in achieving the objectives of the plan.

INTRODUCTION

Ashampstead is a small rural community set in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with about 400 inhabitants. Its peace and tranquillity are its principle attributes and the main reason that residents choose to live here. Over the years it has lost its shop, village school, public house and post office. These losses have been countered by a very strong sense of community spirit and entrepreneurial substitution, good examples of which are the improvised "Ashampstead Arms" held once a month in the village hall and the letting of the village hall to a Montessori School. However, much of this depends on the dedication of a small decreasing band of volunteers.

The village demographics are changing. There are still a few families who are associated with working the land but these are being outnumbered by incoming young families. In time there will be a significant number of young people in the community who will need activity opportunities within the village. With this in mind, Ashampstead Recreational Trust (ART), which is responsible for the village hall and recreation ground, Flowers Piece, asked whether there might be a demand for a tennis court. Some people supported the idea but opposition by residents around Flowers Piece to any change was much stronger than support. In order to find out the general community wishes, ART proposed that a Parish Plan should be produced.

The Parish Council first considered a parish/community plan in 2004 and produced a draft which was circulated but was not acceptable to West Berkshire District Council as in drafting it; no one apart from the Parish Council had been consulted. In 2007, the Parish Council supported ART's proposal and encouraged a group of residents to see if there was a desire in Ashampstead to have a plan. A community meeting was held in May 2007 and the advantages of having a plan were explained in great detail by our local district councillor, the leader of Yattendon's parish plan steering group and Sarah Ward from Community Action West Berkshire. It was apparent that some residents could still not see what advantages a plan had. It was therefore agreed that the whole community would be canvassed to see if there was support for a plan. Despite a disappointing response, 34 questionnaires were returned, all except one were positive and a Steering Group of volunteers was set up in September 2007. Focus/working groups were set up under the chairmanship of a member of the Steering Group covering the environment, the village hall, traffic and highways, Flowers Piece, planning and development, community services particularly for the elderly, activities for young people and crime. Open House events were held in June 2008 during which residents could see what the working groups were recommending. They were able to vote for or against any proposal they felt strongly about and to add any comments of their own if they wished. Seventy four residents attended from every corner of the community and representing all age groups. The responses were very positive indeed and it was quite clear that there was a considerable support for the proposals in the plan. The Steering Group agreed that they would not go to the lengths of circulating another questionnaire and therefore unlike many parish plans, this plan does not include numerous pie charts and tables.

HISTORY

The lack of surface water inhibited permanent settlement in the earliest times but people used the surface flints to make blades on Ashampstead Common during the Middle Stone Age (about 5,000BC) and a couple of thousand years later in the New Stone Age

someone lost a polished stone axe near Slade Gate. No settlements of the Roman or Saxon periods have been found.

As the population grew after the 9th century, small woodland settlements expanded and cleared land to farm. Stubbles means newly cleared land. Ashampstead was part of Basildon Parish. The larger population justified a church to save a five mile walk to the parish church at Lower Basildon and one was built in the 12th century. It remained a dependency of Basildon until 1847.

Ashampstead manor is not mentioned as such in Domesday Book (1086). However, an unlocated manor called Ashden is listed. Ashden means valley where ash trees grow and this would describe the parish very well.

It is very probable that part of the Norman army marched up Bottom Road on their way from Winchester to Wallingford after the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

The population continued to grow. It is difficult to estimate numbers, but in 1086 there were probably around two hundred people in the parish. Even today the population is little over 300.

The majority of people lived by working the land. Most of the arable was in large Open Fields in which husbandmen (not farmers) held a number of scattered long narrow strips. In theory this gave a fairer share of the good and poor land. These started to be enclosed at an early date and was completed by the 17th century.

Deer parks were created on Ashampstead Common before 1240 and in Beche Park Wood in 1336. Many of our best bluebell coppices were enclosed in the same centuries. Some trees growing on their boundary banks may be 800 years old.

The population continued to expand but the agricultural technology did not. Farmers were forced to plough marginal land and steep slopes. This resulted in the creation of terraces cut into hillsides.

In 1300 the climate took a turn for the worse and people began to starve. In the winter of 1348-9 the Black Death entered Britain having devastated mainland Europe. It was a virus against which people had no defence and they died in thousands. The manor records of Basildon contain the entry 'this year no rents have been paid. All the tenants are dead'. The marginal land was abandoned and became woodland thus fossilising the terraces. They may still be seen in Long Croft Shaw and in other woods.

A thriving pottery industry existed on the western edge of Ashampstead Common between the 11th and 13th centuries. Its products have been found as far a field as Oxford and in Reading, Newbury and Wallingford.

Methodism gained a strong hold in the area in the 19th century. There were many more chapels than churches. Ashampstead parish had chapels at Ashampstead Green (1840), Quick's Green (1872) and Burnt Hill (1864). Only Burnt Hill survives as a chapel.

The Methodist movement led to demands for education. Between 1875 and 1877 money was raised by subscription, often from very poor people, and a school was built in

Ashampstead village on land donated by the Hopkins Estate of Tidmarsh. It served the community until it was closed in December 1971. It later became the village hall. During World War I the parish lost eight men killed and many more injured. During World War II the parish lost two men. A Homeguard platoon was formed and carried out patrols and exercises with other villages. In the build up to D Day on 6 June 1944 Ashampstead and Burnt Hill Commons were used as staging posts between the training areas and the channel ports.

After World War I the Local Authority built houses for rent on the eastern edge of Ashampstead village and at Stubbles. These were a great improvement on the old farm tied cottages. A second phase was built after World War II.

In 1971 the Rights of Common that had supported parishioners for a thousand years were given up in exchange for a written Commons Agreement with Yattendon Estate guaranteeing every parishioner of Ashampstead Parish unhindered access to both Ashampstead and Burnt Hill Commons.

The wheel continues to turn. More and more residents are running successful businesses from their homes in the parish. The redundant farm buildings at Childs Court Farm are now home to several new businesses including a steel fabricator – surely the equivalent of the old village blacksmith.

ENVIRONMENT

Ashampstead parish lies in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (AONB). Although very few parishioners work on the land or in the woods of the parish, the environment plays a large part in parishioners reasons for choosing the parish as a place to live and bring up their families.

Access. The parish has 47 Public Rights of Way and one Permitted Path. This richness allows walks to be designed which take in different terrains from open fields with wide horizons to the enclosed intimacy of woodland. The importance of maintaining and improving this network was made plain to the working group.

Tranquillity in terms of both lack of noise and lack of light pollution came high on parishioners' approval list. Desire for tranquillity around our homes is common across the whole of the AONB and measures to retain and improve it form an important part of our Community Plan and the AONB Management Plan.

Fly tipping. We will seek to provide re-cycling facilities beyond the current kerb-side collections thus removing part of the source of the problem. We will encourage the reporting of fly-tipping and will work closely with other bodies to identify and prosecute the culprits.

Local food production – gardening and allotments. We will support the production and use of local sources of food. Provision of allotment gardens will be considered and a corps of experienced gardeners will be recruited to offer advice and guidance to novices seeking to grow their own food.

Studying a locality leads to a greater awareness and sense of belonging. We will encourage and support local studies.

The Commons. The parish is blessed with eighty-one hectares (nearly 200 acres) of open mixed woodland seamed with a dense network of footpaths and bridleways, covered with trees of many species and ages and with a ground flora to gladden the eye and lift the spirits.

Rights of Common were given up in 1971 in exchange for a legal contract between Yattendon Estate and its successors and Ashampstead Parish Council. This agreement is registered with the Land Registry and requires the Commons to be maintained as open woodland. It is a prime duty on the Parish Council to monitor and enforce the provisions of this agreement.

The parish shares in the management of the Commons via the Commons Committee consisting of representatives of Yattendon Estate, Ashampstead Parish Council and residents on the Commons. A Management Plan for the Commons was instituted in 1997. This cooperation has resulted in publications such as 'The Commons of Ashampstead Parish' and 'Veteran Trees for the Future'.

The Way Forward. Our Community Plan will be monitored and amended as circumstances change. However, we consider it essential to start by implementing the following policies in addition to those outlined above and detailed in the Action Plans.

- We will liaise closely with the farming and forestry community in the midst of which we live.
- We will seek to discuss and resolve issues which affect both communities.
- We will seek to improve our path network by negotiating Permitted Paths to bypass dangerous roads and to link existing paths.
- We will seek to make contact with environmental groups in surrounding parishes and with bodies such as the North Wessex Downs AONB; the Berks, Bucks & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust; The Pang Valley Project FWAG; The Friends of the Pang, Kennet and Lambourn Valleys; The Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers.

LANDSCAPE

Ashampstead parish lies on the dip slope of the Berkshire Downs. Its northern boundary lies a mile or so south of the crest of the Downs along which runs the Ridgeway. To the east lies the edge of the Thames Valley. The southern and eastern boundaries are less well defined.

The underlying geology is chalk, but the surface is covered by a variety of soils from calcareous soils, where the chalk is close to the surface, to heavy clay and flints and to acid sands and gravels. The highest point at 151 metres lies in the north east near Black Wood, and the lowest at 70 metres on the southern boundary at Slade Gate. There is no surface water other than man-made ponds. The valleys are dry, carved out by melt water during the ice ages. This lack of water has had a major influence on the history of the parish.

The vegetation is a mixture of large arable fields, small paddocks, ancient woods and coppices and commercial forestry plantations. Christmas trees are an important crop. Along the southern boundary run Ashampstead Common and Burnt Hill Common. These form a continuous belt of species rich woodland up to half a mile wide.

Settlement is dispersed over the parish. Ashampstead Village is the largest settlement and provides a focus, but there are small settlements at Ashampstead Green, Quick's Green, Hartridge, Stubbles, Ashampstead Common and at Burnt Hill. The architecture of the older buildings reflects local resources. There are a few half-timbered houses with thatched roofs, but most of the older houses are built with red bricks and tiles made with the local iron-rich clays and sands.

From the 1930's onwards groups of houses were built by the local District Council on the edge of Ashampstead village and at Stubbles. These were of standard utilitarian design. More recent houses reflect the wide variety of designs available, but, in general, are built with materials which sit well in the landscape.

The whole of this beautiful and fascinating parish lies in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. AONBs fulfil a similar role to National Parks. The designation requires them to '.... conserve and enhance natural beauty and take account of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities ... '. These duties are delivered mainly via West Berkshire Council, but there are important roles for voluntary organisations and individual parishioners.

TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAYS

The traffic and highways working group looked mainly at issues in the heart of the village. The working group was minded of two important factors. Firstly, the Parish Council is already working on many proposals and long standing problems of the highways and traffic in the community and their work is fully endorsed in this plan. Secondly, the rural character of the village should not be changed. Urbanisation by excessive signage, road markings and traffic calming measures should be balanced off against the effect on the village scene.

Traffic speeding through the village was seen as a major problem with the additional risk to children's safety being a worry particularly at the start and end of the school day. There are several ways in which we think this problem could be addressed such as extending the 30 mph zone and renewing existing signage which is now illegible. We support the initiative to link Yattendon, Hampstead Norreys and Compton by cycle path and would like to see Ashampstead also in this link.

We are not impressed by the standard of repairs carried out to the roads in the village. Patches don't last any time and the workmanship appears bad. Every action point was thoroughly endorsed by the community during the open house events.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

A working group of five met to discuss and take soundings in the parish on what services a small village can expect in practice. There are desirable services and activities that we

would like to happen, which cannot be provided either because in a small parish they cannot be economic, or because there are not enough people willing to organise them.

The “Tea and Chat” Club runs excellent monthly meetings with some outings; and organises Christmas parcels to single senior citizens. Setting up a gardening group was considered but there is insufficient interest. However, senior citizens would welcome more events being organised.

There are no problems with health and well-being/care in the home/support for the disabled and vulnerable. The GP surgeries and hospitals offer a good service including transport for those unable to get there and back themselves. There is a good record of neighbourliness to those in need.

Transport however is unsatisfactory: the problem is that there are too few users to make a proper service commercially viable. There is a daily bus into Newbury and discussions are being held about combining with Aldworth, which has a similar problem.

The library service is satisfactory.

Communications are on the whole good. The village magazine is good: parish council and ART meetings and minutes are reported. The notice boards are satisfactory. Telephone landlines are satisfactory. Reception for mobiles varies over the parish but all the parish is covered by at least one operator. Broadband cover, or lack of it, is unacceptable: some areas can get it and some can't, without any logical pattern. This is a problem, which needs to be resolved. It is thought it would be good to have a parish website, using the Greenham Common Trust server, controlled by a parishioner. It could hold the parish welcome pack and a diary of village events, as well as village history, etc.

Interests of home-workers and small businesses were considered. Known home-workers and self-employed have been emailed to see if they would like to form a village business group. Only 4 replied positively, which is not enough to form a quorum.

THE “VILLAGE” HALL

The building known generally as the Village Hall was erected in the late eighteen seventies as a consequence of the general demand for education by the Methodist movement. Between 1875 and 1877 money was raised by subscription, often from very poor people, and a school was built in Ashampstead village on land donated by the Hopkins Estate of Tidmarsh. It served the community for almost a hundred years until it was closed in December 1971 because of a shortage of pupils. It then had to be purchased from the Church Commissioners at the full market price even though the Church had only contributed £5 to its original construction. At the time this issue caused great bitterness in the parish.

To this day the building still displays all the signs of its heritage with a tarmac playground outside and what was once a large, lofty classroom, now the main hall, and a separate smaller room adjoining on the inside. Even the old school bell still hangs above the roof! Later additions include a “lean to” storeroom at the back, improved toilet facilities and a kitchen with fittings and a cooker that remain as a tribute to the 1950's!

Strictly speaking the hall should be called the Jubilee Hall as it was re-named in 1977 as a way to permanently commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee.

Now that the village has lost its pub and shop the number of gathering places is limited to the recreation ground, where good weather is a precursor for a satisfactory meeting, the church or the hall. Under these circumstances the building now plays host to events like the annual Christmas party, the monthly Ashampstead Arms pub and public meetings such as the open house events used to involve the parish in building the community plan. In addition to this it has, during the day, reverted to its original purpose and currently provides a home for the children attending the Montessori school.

Although the hall plays an active part in the life of the village it has the potential to play a far more pivotal role. However in order to achieve this potential it needs modernising, constant maintenance and general tender, loving care to bring it fully into the 21st century making it something we can be proud of and a worthy feature within the community. Only then can we build a broader spectrum of events and activities to enhance the life of the people who use this facility.

FLOWERS PIECE RECREATION GROUND & THE PAVILION

The Flowers Piece Recreation ground was gifted to the village for use by the inhabitants of the Parish of Ashampstead and the immediate neighbourhood thereof without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, including use for forms of recreation and leisure time occupations with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants.

The current facilities include a playground, the pavilion, a volleyball net, football pitch and general open space. Flowers Piece is currently used for village functions such as the Summer Party, walking, picnics, football, annual bonfire and fireworks, as well as kite flying and other leisure activities that the parishioners enjoy. The management of the recreation ground and the pavilion is carried out by both ART and the Parish Council. At present, the PC arranges and pays for the grass cutting and ART are responsible for the maintenance of the playground, pavilion and looking after the trees etc.

Due to varying reasons there have been several meetings held over the past two years about the use of Flowers Piece. As such comment has been taken from the results of these previous meetings and indeed tied into this plan. It is noted that the meeting held in September 2006 was attended by more than 40 residents, with similar numbers attending the meeting in 2007 and then again completing a questionnaire. There were several themes running through the three sets of data, and indeed these themes are included in this report. However, the general consensus from these meetings was that Flowers Piece should remain the same and that there should be no excessive development, if any at all. As such the main objective to be included in the Parish Plan should be to Protect the natural environment, avoid any building on Flowers Piece, and to ensure that it is maintained to be enjoyed or available to be enjoyed by the inhabitants of the Parish of Ashampstead

The Pavilion is a major part of Flowers Piece. However, it has fallen into disrepair over recent years, and is now almost beyond use. There are two options available:

- Replace it with something similar, with power but not water, which could again be used for storage and a changing room for football teams.
- Knock it down and build an open shelter with perhaps a barbeque site and seats, which could be used as a meeting place for young people.

Any action taken in this respect will of course be subject to full consultation with the residents of the parish.

The playground situated on Flowers Piece is well used and has in the past had safety concerns due to the slippery rubber matting around the swings, slide etc. This problem will be resolved in October 2008. No further work is needed beyond normal maintenance; however this element is extremely important and should be monitored carefully.

An open meeting to discuss the future of Flowers Piece resulted in the positive conclusion that the majority of the residents living in the parish want no change. Ideas for developing the recreation ground are as follows:

- Do nothing – although this is not quite as easy as it would appear as there is a vast amount of maintenance required in order to keep Flowers Piece as it is.
- Planting trees – to replace the chestnuts which have bleeding canker caused by dry summers but which may survive as a result of the wet summer we have just had

The action plan which follows will show that the removal of the dead and dying trees is a priority and indeed as is the removal of the stumps. The main action to be considered firstly is to research potential funding for any of the proposals.

Any further development of Flowers Piece must include a full consultation with the parish as a whole.

ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

There are approximately 75 children under the age of 18 in the parish. The Montessori pre-school held in the village hall offers an opportunity for some of the under 5s to get together, but as there is no parish school; the children attend a number of different state and independent schools. In addition, there are currently very few organised activities for young people in the parish, and as a result the children do not all know each other or get together socially as much as they might if there was youth club.

Previous one-off activity days such as the kayaking event in 2007 proved popular and we had a lot of good ideas from children, teenagers and parents of youngsters who attended the open days or fed back information to us in other ways.

There was interest in setting up organised groups and clubs of various groups of young people, in particular a youth club, restarting a toddler group, having a Sunday school and running more activities similar to the kayaking event. It was felt that there should be more sporting facilities in the parish but it was clear that more work needs to be done investigating these whilst involving all members of the parish in any decisions.

Other areas that were popular were using the village hall for sports, dance classes, film nights etc., providing transport for young people to sporting or other social activities in surrounding villages and towns and spending more time researching young peoples ideas via discussion groups or a youth questionnaire.

It is clear that parents and the young people themselves are keen to do more together but these activities do not run themselves and the biggest challenge for us as a community will be to find volunteers from the parish to organise these events.

It was significant that no one volunteered to be a member of the working group on this subject and therefore no group discussions took place. These findings are therefore based on a very small sample of the community whose views were sought individually.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Planning and Development tends to generate two levels of emotion within a parish, one being apathy until someone wants to paint their house bright pink then complete rage as to how this could possibly be allowed to happen and destroy a beautiful environment. The difficulty is seen as to how can we have a say at informing and influencing planning at the local level - The information set out has great potential to add to the local development plan, and has an important role in influencing formal planning processes. The information can be of benefit in two main ways:

- Guiding and influencing local development proposals;
- Contributing to the review of broader planning policy within development plans.

This is why it is very important that within a parish there is a clear view as to what the parish wants with regards to new buildings, existing buildings, extensions, businesses etc and also why it is important to ensure we also liaise with other parishes and influential bodies (Yattendon Estate, The North Wessex downs AONB) to ensure views are aligned. It is therefore important the parish has a clear view on what it sees as the needs moving forward.

CRIME

The following evidence was gathered:-

- police coverage is poor;
- fear of/or have experienced theft/burglary;
- a greater police presence would be very effective

It is clear that a majority of people, even in this rural parish, fear crime. Recorded crime in Ashampstead is very low. Even allowing for unreported crime, Ashampstead is not assessed to be a problem area for Thames Valley Police and West Berkshire Council. However, both organisations recognise the fact parishioners fear crime.

The Community Safety Officer is responsible for dealing with anti-social behaviour. Any issues regarding anti-social behaviour are sent to the Community Safety Officer by the Parish Council's Police Liaison Councillor. This is done on a secure online system.

During a meeting with the Parish Council's Police Liaison Councillor, the Chief Inspector of Thames Valley Police reiterated there is no possibility of the return of a permanent

police presence in the area. Instead, police presence is dictated on where problems are perceived to be occurring or will occur. In the meantime, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) will drive around the area and provide a visible presence within the parish.

The Parish is connected to the Police Community Messaging system whereby details of crimes and criminals are emailed to the Parish Council's Police Liaison Councillor so he can forward them on to parishioners. This system, working alongside Neighbourhood Watch, will only be successful if it gets the full support of parishioners.

All crimes should be reported to the police, and a reference number obtained so the police have accurate records of crime in Ashampstead. In non-emergency cases the number 0845 505505 should be used.

Regular liaison between the Parish Council and the Pangbourne Neighbourhood Action Group takes place. These meetings give the Parish Council's Police Liaison Councillor the opportunity to air the Parish's concerns directly to the police and other relevant authorities.

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Flowers Piece and Pavilion						
Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Greener	To protect the natural environment	Remove the dead and dying trees and replace them with specimens more suited to the environment after receiving advice from competent sources. Remember that the area is a conservation area	H		On going	ART
Greener	Ensure that it is maintained	Remove all the stumps and in future, as a matter of course any tree removal to include the removal of the stump	H		Q3 2009	ART
Prosperous	Available for recreation and leisure use	Provide picnic benches at the bottom end of Flowers Piece	M		Q4 2009	ART
	Safer	Continue to monitor the playground safety	H		On going	ART
Prosperous	Improve the conditions of life	Consider the options for the pavilion - as follows:	M		Q2 2010	ART/PC

					Repair and renovate for ornamental purposes				
					Remove it completely				
					Repair/renovate with the addition of water, electricity and toilets				
					Remove and replace with a more user friendly building with water, toilets and electricity				

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - The Village Hall							
Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners	
Prosperous	Preserve the hall as a facility mainly for the parish	do not compete with neighbouring village halls for "commercial" business	M	review annually	ART	WBC Healthy Active Parishes project	
Healthy		keep the "quiet" style of Church Lane and its immediate surrounds by not enlarging parking at the hall or encouraging increased amounts of traffic.	M	review annually			
Accessible		find new village based activities to use the hall	M	review annually			
Healthy	Focus on the funding and management of the hall	develop a business plan for the expenditure and income required to maintain the hall	H	Q2 2009	ART	CCB village halls advisor	
		use social activities as a way to provide funding as well as fun	H	review annually			
		make the hall (one of) the village charities	H	Q3 2009			
		build a larger group of people who are willing to run and help with social events	M	review annually			
		include "younger" people in helping with village activities	M	review annually			
Healthy	Promote co-existence between users of the hall	provide more and better storage around the hall to help with this?	M	2010	ART		
		Find a way to provide some smaller meeting rooms	L	TBA			
Safer	Improve the hall in the short term	maintain the building in a clean and tidy state. Be strong in doing this!	H	review annually	ART		
Greener		modernise the kitchen	M	Q3 2010			
		ensure the building is kept weather proof and secure --- obtain a professional survey	H	Q2 2009		CC for B	

Greener	Improve the hall in the longer term					examples of this could be:- link the two larger rooms with a flexible partition re-build the store room as a store and small meeting room an improved heating and hot water system eg solar panels but.....any of this will require serious help with funding	M	TBA	ART
							M	TBA	
							M	TBA	
							H	Q2 2009	

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Traffic & Highways						
Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Safer	Speeding traffic	Implement best acceptable measures to reduce speed of traffic through the community without changing the village character	H		Review Annually	APC/WBC
		Extend 30mph zone along Holly Lane from Casey's Farm to Layfields and Noakes Hill	H		Q3 2010	APC/WBC
		More frequent police speeding checks	H	Open Ended		APC/WBC
		Liaise with Yattendon Estate to control speeding farm traffic	H		Q4 2009	APC/WBC
		Renew weight restriction signs at both ends of Holly Lane	H		Q4 2009	APC/WBC
	Signage	Improve signage at Haw Farm	H		Q4 2009	APC/WBC
	Road Maintenance	Improve quality of repairs to all roads	H	Open Ended		APC/WBC
	Parking	Parking in the centre of the village at the cross roads when the Montessori School day starts and ends is indiscriminate and dangerous	H	Review Q4 2009		APC/WBC
Greener	Cycle path	Support initiative to link Yattendon, Hampstead Norreys and Compton by cycle path and get Ashampstead included in the scheme	M	TBA		WBC

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Activities for Young People

Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Healthy	Increase and encourage a range of sporting activities in the parish for young people in the parish	Research Problem of finding adults to run activities for young people	M	On going		
		This topic requires a lot of consultation with the various interested parties in the village to find out what if anything is required, who is prepared to run it and where would other resources come from	M	On going		

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Safer

Objective Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Safer	Improve co-ordination with & between Neighbourhood Watch schemes		2007	The Parish Councillor responsible for crime/safety liaison	APCC, TVP, PNAG, WBC
	Improve effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch scheme			The Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator	
	Improve perception of a lack of policing in the area		2007 onwards	TVP	APCC
				PCSOs	TVP
	Keep all parishioners informed of what criminal activity is taking place in the local area, and what they can do to avoid becoming victims		2007 onwards	APCC	APCC
	Use of The Leaflet.				TVP
	Use of NW coordinator.			NW coordinator.	WBC
	Use of Notice Boards.				DogWatch

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Planning & Development						
Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Greener	We will establish and maintain a Planning & Development database:	Defining criteria for data to be entered to database				
		Establishing the database	L	Q2 2010		
		Building up the history of previous disputes and restrictions to previous plans	L	Q2 2010		
		Maintaining the data moving forward	L	<i>on going</i>		
		Consider the potential to make a web based reference site	L	Q4 2010		
Greener	We will establish a Supplementary Planning Guide	Working with the local planning authority to have the Parish Design Statement accepted as a supplementary planning guide to the local development plan.	M		Q2 2010	
Greener	We will establish links with neighbouring Parishes	Establish cross parish agreement on approach to Planning & Development	M	Q2 2010		
		Maintain this link and consensus moving forward	M	<i>on going</i>		
Greener	We will take the environmental impact of development into account.	By working closely with:-				
		The Community Plan Environment Gp	M	<i>on going</i>		
		The Friends of the Pang Valley	M	<i>on going</i>		
		BBOWT (Berks, Buck & Oxon wildlife trust)	M	<i>on going</i>		
		The Woodland Trust	M	<i>on going</i>		

		The North Wessex Downs AONB	M					
Greener	We will work closely with other bodies which have major influences on the parish	By working closely with: Yattendon Estates Sovereign Housing West Berkshire Council	M M M				on going on going on going	
Prosperous	We will work closely with other bodies to improve the quality of the parish	Support groups seeking to reduce: M4 Noise Aerobatic aircraft Light pollution by excessive lighting	L L L				on going on going on going	
Prosperous	We will work closely with to encourage new & existing businesses to the parish	Define clear criteria on the parishes' view of which type of business to encourage Schools Public House (NB with restatuant) Village Shop Garage	M M M M				Q2 2010 Q2 2010 Q2 2010 Q2 2010	
Greener	We will work closely with All Working Groups	Sharing information on development proposals. Discussing the environmental impact of proposals. Ensuring the policies of the groups are aligned.	L L L				on going on going on going	

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Environment						
Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Stronger	Access	Preserve and extend access to our countryside by: Producing a condition survey of our existing Rights of Way and Permitted Paths. Planning and proposing additional paths. Setting up a system of Volunteer Wardens to monitor the network Publicising and promoting use of the network	H M H L	OPA + 6 months Open ended OPA + 3 months Open ended	Environment Team Leader (ETL) Parish Council (PC) ETL / PC ETL / PC	North Wessex Downs AONB (AONB)
Greener	Greener	Preserve and enhance our natural environment by: Supporting the Common's Committee Providing volunteers to maintain important sites such as the Churchyard, Leyfields Meadow and various sites on the Commons. Formulating a Hedgerow Policy. Recording our Ancient and Veteran Trees. Setting up links to other groups such as The Friends of the Pang Valley, BBOWT, The Woodland Trust, The North Wessex Downs AONB. Involving the Community in formulating and organising new projects to enhance the environment.	M M L M L L		ETL / PC ETL / PCC ETL / PC ETL / Woodland trust ETL / PC ETL / PC	AONB
Stronger	Stronger	Provide information about our Parish to encourage a sense of place and a feeling of belonging by: Organising Guided Walks to explore the Parish Researching special aspects of the Parish and providing printed and electronic publications. Organising talks by specialists on aspects of the Parish.	M L L		ETL ETL ETL	
Greener	Greener	Encouraging special studies such as Garden Bird Surveys, Ancient Tree Recording etc by providing expert support and means of publication.	L		ETL	
Healthy	Stronger	Record and conserve the special man-made features of our Parish by: Re-instating an bi-annual Beating of the Bounds to familiarise parishioners with their Parish. Making a photographic record of the Parish.	M L		ETL / PC ETL / Planning Team Leader (PTL)	West Berks Heritage Service (WBHS)
Stronger	Stronger	Starting a programme of oral-recording to make a permanent record of peoples memories of the Parish and its activities. This should not just be restricted to the older people but should also include families and young people.	L		ETL	WBHS

Greener	Greener	Monitor the existing environment by: Carrying out a 'heat loss' survey of Parish buildings. Encouraging re-cycling beyond the kerb-side collections. Working closely with the Planning and Development Sector	M M H	ETL / PC ETL / PC ETL	PTL / AONB West Berks Council (WBC) WBC
Greener	Greener	Promote tranquility by: Supporting groups seeking to reduce M4 noise. Seeking to restrict use of the Parish by aerobatic aircraft. Seeking to reduce Light Pollution by excessive lighting.	H H M	ETL / PC ETL / PC ETL / PC	AONB WBC / AONB AONB
Greener	Greener	Maintain an environmentally friendly and tranquil Parish by: Providing information and encouragement via Publicity, Talks by experts and publications. Encouraging the reporting and investigation of Fly-tipping. Working closely with the agricultural community to avoid spraying accidents near settlements. Working closely with the forestry community to avoid excessive damage to local woodlands during forestry operations.	M H H H	ETL / PC ETL / PC ETL / PC ETL / PC	AONB WBC / Environment Agency (EA) Landowners Landowners / Forestry Commission
greener	Healthy	Promote the use of local resources by: Encouraging local suppliers to use local produce. Encouraging the growing of food in gardens by organising competitions etc. Setting up a team of experienced gardeners as mentors for beginners. Providing land for allotment gardens	H M H L	ETL ETL / PC ETL ETL / PC	AONB WBC
Greener	Greener	Maintain the Parish distinctiveness by: Monitoring activity within the Conservation Area and in designated West Berkshire Wildlife Heritage Sites. Working closely with the Planning and Development Sector to avoid unsuitable development and designs. Considering developing a Parish Design Statement to guide future development.	H H L	ETL / PC / PTL ETL / PC / PTL ETL / PC / PTL	WBC WBC WBC

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH ACTION PLAN - Community Services						
Objective	Topic	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners
Prosperous	Broadband to be available to every household, at areasonable speed	Find out who cannot get broadband	H	Q4 2009	D Kiggell	
		Establish what speed is reasonable	H	Q4 2009		
		Talk to BT	H	Q4 2009		
		Work with our MP	H	Q4 2009		
		Work with other parishes	H	Q4 2009		
		Talk to West Berks Council	H	Q4 2009		
Prosperous	Set up a village website	Work with the Greenham Common Trust	H	As Necessary	TBA	
		Find a site manager	H	Q4 2009		

<p>Planning and Trading Standards</p>	<p>Paula Amorelli Principal Planning Officer</p>	<p>I've had a look at the Housing and Development section. In general, I think that the Parish Council would best able to achieve their objectives by continuing to work with us through the LDF process, particularly as we develop the Core Strategy. I've noted the fact that they would like to do a VDS and would be happy to talk to them when appropriate.</p>
<p>Safer Communities Partnership Team</p>	<p>Susan Powell Safer Communities Partnership Team manager</p>	<p>An alternative action, instead of "improving co-ordination" would be "re-launch of the NW and NAG" This is because there is a lack of a co-ordinator for the Neighbourhood Watch, so a re-launch of NW and co-ordination with NAG might be more appropriate. Perception – TVP try very hard to line resources with intelligence. The perception of crime needs re-focussing. A better action might be "keeping people informed of what crime is or is not happening in the area". Also, "strengthening of the community message as to new actions to prevent crime. Also usage of the TVP website to see what is being done and levels of activity in the area. Parish Council should be receiving the SCPT newsletter and this is being strengthened. Contact team if needs be.</p>

Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Post-Compulsory Education Awards
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	17 September 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1792

Purpose of Report: To seek determination of policies regarding the Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Post-Compulsory Education Awards

Recommended Action:

1. To determine to take up the Discretionary Learner Support Funding allocated to West Berkshire Council for 2009/10 by the Learning & Skills Council
2. To approve the proposed policy for the use of West Berkshire's Discretionary Learner Support Fund for the 2009/10 academic year
3. To determine not to take up the power to make provision for Post-Compulsory Education Awards

Reason for decision to be taken: Statutory requirement to consider whether or not to provide Post-Compulsory Education Awards and policy required for the use of Learner Support Funds under the terms and conditions of accepting the designated Fund from the Learning & Skills Council.

Statutory: **Non-Statutory:**
Other:

Other options considered:

Key background documentation: The Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998
The LEA (Post-Compulsory Education Awards) Regulations 1999, as amended.
Learner Support Programme - Discretionary Funding Guidance and Requirements 2009/10
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-discretionaryfundingguidance0910-gn-16jun2009-v1-0.pdf>

Portfolio Member Details	
Name & Telephone No.:	Councillor Barbara Alexander - Tel (01635) 201320
E-mail Address:	balexander@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details	
Name:	Malcolm Berry
Job Title:	Parent and Student Advice Centre Manager
Tel. No.:	01635 519770
E-mail Address:	mberry@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

Policy:	The decision not to offer Post-Compulsory Education Awards since 2001/02 has created no adverse reaction from institutions nor potential applicants. The simultaneous approval of policies to administer available funds has only been seen as an improvement to providing assistance for VI Form access and retention.
Financial:	None - Recommended Actions will avoid additional budgetary requirements for providing discretionary assistance.
Personnel:	None
Legal/Procurement:	None
Environmental:	None
Partnering:	None
Property:	None
Risk Management:	None
Community Safety:	None
Equalities:	The proposed Discretionary Learner Support Fund policy has been designed to prioritise financial support to vulnerable individuals and those facing social and financial difficulties that may be in greatest need for assistance to help them access their sixth form studies. National research identifies a significant rise in levels of retention, achievement and attendance by those in receipt of this funding.

Consultation Responses

Members:

Leader of Council:	No comments received
Overview & Scrutiny Management Commission Chairman:	No comments received
Select Committee	No comments received

Chairman:

Ward Members: No comments received

Opposition Spokesperson: No comments received

Local Stakeholders: No comments received

Officers Consulted: No comments received

Trade Union: No comments received

NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:</p> <p>The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 Section 129 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 confers the power on LAs, should they wish to use it, to make Post-Compulsory Education Awards to new further and higher education students and to 16-19 year olds attending school. The Authority must determine which of the following three options under the regulations it wishes to follow:
- (1) To determine not to take up the power in any circumstances and not to make any provision for considering applications;
 - (2) To decide to exercise the power only in respect of certain groups or categories of students; or
 - (3) To decide to exercise the power generally and consider applications from all students – but still in accordance with its policies on eligibility.
- 1.2 Funding to make Discretionary Awards was withdrawn from the Standard Spending Assessment with effect from the 1999/2000 financial year. The full amount was withdrawn in 2001/02 and all budget removed in 2006/07.
- 1.3 Following the government's move in recent years to provide alternative funds for further and higher education support via the Learning & Skills Council's Learner Support programme, this authority has moved to the current position of not making provision for Post-Compulsory Education Awards. It has, however, continued to determine a policy to accept available funds for distribution to West Berkshire's school sixth form students facing financial hardship.
- 1.4 The Learning & Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for the allocation of Discretionary Learner Support Funds. It has designated £6,579 to be available for this authority to administer for sixth form students attending full-time courses at maintained schools, provided the LA agrees to terms and conditions and determines a policy for eligibility, within LSC guidance. Acceptance to the terms and conditions and adoption of a policy creates no financial burden for the LA other than for administration and up to 5% of the fund can be used for this purpose.
- 1.5 The aim of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund is to provide financial help to students whose access to, or completion of, education might be inhibited by financial considerations. It should be used to widen participation and contribute to an improvement in retention and achievement. Payments from the fund should be made according to individual need relating to costs of books and equipment, field trip costs, examination fees and other living and learning costs.
- 1.6 The proposed policy has taken account of consultation with local partners, best practice and guidance, locally and nationally, and experience of administering Discretionary Learner Support Funds in recent years. The policy has also been developed to integrate with other Learner Support provision from the LSC.
- 1.7 Recommended Action is similar to that taken by the Executive Committee for the 2008/09 year to enable the authority to make best use of all available funds to assist the access, attendance and retention of sixth form students in West Berkshire schools.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 To determine not to take up the power to make Post-Compulsory Education Awards for 09/10.
- 2.2 To accept the LSC grant of £6,579 (and conditions) for 2009/10 for Discretionary Learner Support Funds.
- 2.3 To adopt the proposed policy for the 2009/10 academic year for allocation of Discretionary Learner Support Funds (Appendix A).

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 Agree the financial support to be offered by West Berkshire Council to assist sixth form students in financial hardship with their studies for the academic year 2009/10.

Appendices

Appendix A - Discretionary Learner Support Funds: Financial Help for West Berkshire Sixth Form Students 2009-2010



DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS

**FINANCIAL HELP FOR WEST BERKSHIRE
SIXTH FORM STUDENTS**

2009-10

INTRODUCTION

There are a number of different forms of financial help available to students aged 16-19 on further education courses, including:

1. Discretionary Learner Support Funds
2. Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs)
3. Transport Support
4. Residential Support
5. Dance and Drama Awards
6. Childcare Support – Care to Learn

For more information about any of these schemes and other financial help for young people, please visit <http://moneytolearn.direct.gov.uk/> or call Connexions Direct for free help and advice on 0808 00 13219. This document concentrates on just one of these schemes: **Discretionary Learner Support Funds** and the policy for **West Berkshire school sixth form students**.

WHAT ARE DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS?

Discretionary Learner Support Funds are for students aged 16 and older. The purpose of the fund is to provide financial help to students whose access to, or completion of, education/training is inhibited by financial constraints or barriers. It is designed to help towards the ‘costs’ you may have when starting or continuing your course.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

Each Local Authority (LA) and Further Education Institution (FEI) is required to set their own policy for applications and payments of grants to eligible students. LAs are responsible for allocating funds to students in school 6th forms and similarly, FEIs must provide written policies for their students.

If you do not live in West Berkshire or are attending a further education college, please contact your own LA or college to find out what assistance is available.

HOW WILL THE FUNDS BE USED BY WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL?

The funding provided to West Berkshire Council for the academic year 2009/10 will be split into two parts – 95% and 5% of the total funding. The funds will then be allocated as shown below:

95% OF THE FUNDS

1. Awards to students facing hardship - as described in this booklet.
2. Remaining funding (over £50) will be returned to Thames Valley Learning & Skills Council.

5% OF THE FUNDS

1. Printing copies of this information booklet, application forms for students and posters advertising the scheme.
2. West Berkshire Council staff costs in administering the scheme.
3. Awards to students facing hardship - as described in this booklet.
4. Remaining funding (over £50) will be returned to Thames Valley Learning & Skills Council.

AWARDS TO STUDENTS FACING HARDSHIP

A. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

You can apply for a West Berkshire School Sixth Form Discretionary Learner Support Fund if you are:

- ✓ **Ordinarily resident in West Berkshire on 31 August 2009.**
(Applications from students who move into the area after this date may be made in exceptional circumstances).
- ✓ **Aged 16 or over on 31 August 2009.**
- ✓ **Enrolled on a 6th form course, funded by the Learning and Skills Council, of full-time further education at a maintained school.**
(Cases will also be considered exceptionally for students at independent schools, non-maintained special schools, Pupil Referral Units or further education colleges).

The main types of further education courses covered are: AS/A2-levels, AVCEs, GNVQs, NVQs, GCSEs and Basic Skills courses.

- ✓ **In good attendance on your course.**
You must meet your school's expectations for attendance and we will contact your school throughout the term to check on your attendance.
(Students who are enrolled but who are not attending due to ill health are still eligible to apply).
- ✓ **In need of support with learning costs** – See section B.
- ✓ **Facing financial difficulty** – See section C.

B. WHAT COSTS CAN I APPLY FOR HELP WITH?

If you are eligible you could receive financial support for the following costs incurred due to attending school:

- The purchase of essential books or equipment, including consumable items e.g. stationery, ink cartridges, computer discs.
- The purchase of essential clothing or uniform etc. as required by school policy.
- Essential field trips.
- Examination or registration fees (including re-sits) not normally covered within the schools remit.
- Travel and essential subsistence costs to attend Higher Education interviews/open days or work experience.

Authorisation of requirements and need for assistance will be required from your school and **it is essential for you to retain and submit receipts/tickets** etc or provide confirmation from your school that the event has occurred and the item has been paid for.

C. HOW WILL 'FINANCIAL HARDSHIP' BE ASSESSED?

West Berkshire's scheme is split into **two parts**:

1. A **Bursary Scheme** for students ineligible for an EMA but with a household income under £30,810.
2. An **Exceptional Circumstance Scheme** for students eligible for an EMA with exceptional circumstances.

For more details about 'EMA' see 'Other Financial Support and Useful Contacts'.

C1. BURSARY SCHEME

WHAT ASSISTANCE CAN I GET?

Your Household Income	Assistance Available
Income ≤ £20,817	1140
£20,818 ≤ Income ≤ £25,521	760
£25,522 ≤ Income ≤ £30,810	380
£30,811 +	-

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for the Bursary Scheme you will need to be:

- ✓ **Ineligible for an EMA but with a household income under £30,810.**
This is likely to be when:
 - The household income has dropped from £30,811 or more in the 2008/09 financial year to £30,810 or less in the 2009/10 financial year;
 - EMA residency rules make him/her ineligible for an EMA.

HOW WILL THE INCOME ASSESSMENT WORK?

The income assessment will work in much the same way as if you were applying for an EMA:

- **If you live with one or both of your parent(s) or legal guardian(s):**
The taxable income for 06/04/08 – 05/04/09 of your parent(s)/guardian(s) and their spouse or partner that you live with, from all sources is taken into account.*
**Where the LA is satisfied that income has dropped from £30,811 or more in the 2008/09 financial year to £30,810 or less in the 2009/10 financial year, a 'current income' assessment may be made.*
- **If you are not living with adults who are mainly responsible for you and do not receive income support:**
We would need to assess the application on the income of the parent(s)/guardian(s) and their cohabiting spouse/partner that are mainly responsible for you.
- **If you are Living with Foster Parents; Living in Care of the Local Authority; A Care Leaver; or Not living with adults who are mainly responsible for you and receive income support:**
We will regard your household income as NIL.
- **If you are a parent and have care of a child:**
We would need to assess your application on your income and any cohabiting partner or spouse.

WHAT EVIDENCE DO I NEED TO PROVIDE WITH MY APPLICATION FORM?

Eligibility Evidence

- An EMA refusal notice for 2009-10; **or**
- An explanation as to why you would not be eligible for an EMA.

Financial Evidence

You will need to provide evidence to confirm your taxable household income for the financial year 2008-09, this would normally be a Tax Credit Award Notice for 2009-10 showing your household income for 2008-09; **or if you do not have this**, please provide:

- P60s from employers showing earned income for 2008-09;
- A Tax Return and Tax Calculation showing self-employed income or income from renting/letting or property for 2008-09
- A P11D from an employer showing taxable benefits for 2008-09;
- A letter or benefits book completed by the relevant benefits agency (e.g. Job Centre Plus or the Department for Work and Pensions) showing the total taxable income support, income based job seekers allowance or other taxable state benefit received for 2008-09;
- P60 from companies showing private pension received for 2008-09;
- Bank/building society statements showing the interest received in 2008-09;
- Statements showing other investment with the interest received in 2008-09.

There may be other income sources that require verification.

Where only one Parent is Completing the Form

We need evidence that he/she is a lone parent. Depending upon the situation, examples include:

- Evidence of receipt of lone parent benefit
- Divorce Documents (Decree Absolute) or letters from a solicitor
- Court orders
- Relevant death certificate
- Evidence of receipt of Widow's benefit
- A copy of a current council tax bill showing receipt of a 25% discount for being the single occupier; **or**
- A letter from a professional person (e.g. teacher, doctor, solicitor) confirming the situation.

Living in Care, A Care Leaver or Independent and Receiving Income Support

You will need to enclose a letter when you return your application form, explaining your circumstances. E.g. a letter from:

- Your Local Authority confirming you are in care or are a care leaver; **or**
- Your local Job Centre Plus showing that you received income support.

C2. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCE SCHEME

WHAT ASSISTANCE CAN I GET?

Financial assistance towards the individual costs identified.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

To be eligible for the Exceptional Circumstance Scheme you will need to be:

- ✓ **Eligible for an EMA; and**
- ✓ **Undergoing a personal/domestic crisis or have other exceptional circumstances.**

This includes students who:

- are irreconcilably estranged from their parent(s)/guardian(s);
- are care leavers/living in care;
- are probationers;
- are undertaking basic education or English as a second language;
- have a disability (including those with a sensory impairment) or a learning difficulty;
- are medically ill;
- are living in refuge;
- are orphaned;
- are young parents; **or**
- are in receipt of benefits.

Other exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis.

WHAT EVIDENCE DO I NEED TO PROVIDE WITH MY APPLICATION FORM?

1. An EMA award notice for 2009-10.
2. You will also be expected to provide confirmation from a professional person outside your family who knows about your circumstances.
 - An advice worker, Connexions Personal Advisor, tutor, Head of Sixth Form or teacher;
 - Your doctor or educational psychologist, regarding your disability/learning difficulty/medical circumstances.
 - A recognised professional organisation e.g. Berkshire Women's Aid, West Berkshire Youth Offending Team.

D. HOW DO I APPLY?

All applications must be made on a West Berkshire School Sixth Form - Discretionary Learner Support Fund 2009/10 Application Form. Forms are available through your school or from the Student Finance Team, Education Services, Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 1BZ or ☎ 01635 519774.

The available Discretionary Learner Support Fund is limited. It may be exhausted before all applications have been received and/or considered. Applications may be refused if insufficient funds remain. Applications should not be delayed even if a definite place has not been offered or it is subject to examination results.

Applications will be considered by date order of receipt and therefore should be submitted as soon as possible and preferably by 1st December 2009. Applications received after this date may be considered at the discretion of the LA and a proportionate reduction may be applied if funds are low.

E. HOW WILL I BE PAID?

If you are awarded a grant for the Bursary Scheme, it will normally be paid in three termly instalments. Unless specifically stated, your award will be paid in the form of a crossed cheque, which will be sent to you via your head of sixth form as soon as possible after authorisation of expenditure has been received.

If you are awarded a grant for the Exceptional Circumstance Scheme, you will be reimbursed for the individual item(s) by cheque.

Asylum Seekers should declare if they are in receipt of Home Office funding. Whenever possible, West Berkshire will provide payment in kind for these students, rather than issuing cheques.

F. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Your application will be considered by the Corporate Director (Children and Young People) acting under delegated powers. Consideration will be on individual merits in the light of all relevant circumstances.

An approval letter will inform you of the levels of assistance being offered normally limited to the levels outlined above. Further assistance may exceptionally be offered at whatever level considered fit provided that funds remain. If you are refused an award, you will be informed of the decision by letter as soon as possible. This will provide a reason for the decision and the opportunity to appeal.

RETURN OF UNSPENT FUNDS

Any amount above £50 not spent by individual pupils must be returned to West Berkshire Council, as the LA is required to repay unused funds to the Government.

CONDUCT

A student must not have shown him or herself to be unfit to receive an award, in the opinion of the LA, because of his or her conduct. Any student found to be knowingly providing false information in the process of obtaining assistance or is convicted of defrauding the public purse may have their award terminated by the Corporate Director (Children and Young People), subject to the right of appeal.

G. WHAT CAN I DO IF I WANT TO APPEAL?

Appeals will be considered by the Parent & Student Advice Centre Manager at the LA, taking account of all individual circumstances of the case as presented by the appellant and following investigation.

If you wish to make an appeal, please request a CASE SAP1 within 14 working days of the date of the offer or refusal letter. Letters of support from third parties will be considered but will not be treated as an appeal on their own.

As applications are considered individually by the Parent & Student Advice Centre Manager, no reasons for refusal following the appeals process will be given, nor will your case be considered further.

H. WHAT CAN I DO IF I WANT TO COMPLAIN / COMMENT?

West Berkshire Council has in place a Customer Comment and Complaints Procedure. If you wish to raise a comment/complaint about the service provided, please contact the School and Governor Support Team, Education Services, Avonbank House, Newbury, RG14 1BZ, or ☎ 01635 519030.

I. WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE?

If you experience any of the following changes in circumstances you are required to inform the Student Finance Team immediately in writing:

- Any change of permanent home address or lodgings address.
- Any change in your or your household income during the year.
- Any decision to marry or terminate a marriage, during the year.
- Any intention to change course or withdraw temporarily or permanently.
- Any change of course.
- Any period of illness or absence.

Such changes may immediately affect an award.

J. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES: POLICY AND PRINCIPLES

West Berkshire Council aims to promote equality of opportunity for all residents of West Berkshire, irrespective of their race, nationality, ethnicity, culture, religious belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, geographical location or any other status. The Council has continuously strived to promote equality since its creation in 1998. Equality remains intrinsic to our core values of *respect* in all our relationships, *integrity* in everything we do, and *ambition* for continuous improvement.

Corporate Equality Plan 2007-2010

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

Student Finance Team:

Address: West Berkshire Council Education Service, Avonbank House, West Street, Newbury,
RG14 1BZ
Tel: 01635 519774
Fax: 01635 519048
Email: SLWood@westberks.gov.uk
Website: www.westberks.gov.uk/student_finance

OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND USEFUL CONTACTS

EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA)

EMA is a weekly payment of £10, £20 or £30 a week depending on your household income. The money is intended to help with the day-to-day costs when you stay on at school, college or training provider – such as travel, books and equipment for your learning programme.

Further information about the scheme will be available from your school, your Connexions Personal Adviser, or your new school or college. Application packs will be available from April 2009 from your school or you can request an application form to be sent to you directly from the EMA website www.direct.gov.uk/ema or the EMA student helpline 0800 121 8989.

WEST BERKSHIRE'S POST-16 TRAVEL SCHEME

Full-time students living in West Berkshire attending a maintained school or further education college aged 16-19 or continuing on courses started prior to their 19th birthday, can apply for transport assistance from West Berkshire Council. Eligible students will be issued with a bus or train pass or mileage allowance to enable them to travel from home-to-school or college for a termly charge of £105.

If you are struggling to afford the £105 termly charge, you can also apply for further assistance from West Berkshire's Post-16 Transport Partnership.

To request an application form or to find out more about the scheme, please contact the Education Transport Assessment Officer on 01635 519777 or visit www.westberks.gov.uk/school_transport.

OTHER FUNDING

There are many other sources of funding that may be appropriate for you including the following:

Students.....	What support could I get	Contact Details
...at Higher Education Institutions	Tuition fee support, maintenance loans & grants	Tel 0845 300 5090 www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance
...attending a college too far away for daily travel	Residential Support Scheme	Tel 0800 121 8989 www.direct.gov.uk/moneytolearn .
...with childcare	Care to Learn	Tel 0800 121 8989 www.direct.gov.uk/moneytolearn .
...aged over 19	Adult Learning Grant	Your college or the Adult & Community Learning Team Tel: 01635 519060
...over 18	Career Development Loans	Tel 0800 585 505 www.direct.gov.uk/cdl
..on dance or drama courses	Dance and Drama Award	www.direct.gov.uk/danceanddrama

You may also wish to contact the following for further advice on what support might be available to you:

BERKSHIRE CONNEXIONS SERVICE

Website: www.connexions-berkshire.org.uk

Reading Connexions Centre:

136/7 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EX

Tel: 0845 408 5004

Fax: 0845 408 5005

reading@connexions-berkshire.org.uk

Newbury Connexions Centre:

Mill Reef House, Cheap St., Newbury, RG14 5DD

Tel: 0845 408 5010

Fax: 0845 408 5011

newbury@connexions-berkshire.org.uk