Notice of Meeting

Scan here to access the public documents for this meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission

Tuesday, 7th March 2023 at 6.30 pm
in Council Chamber Council Offices
Market Street Newbury

This meeting will be streamed live here: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/osmclive

You can view all streamed Council meetings here:
https://www.westberks.gov.uk/councilmeetingslive

Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday, 27 February 2023

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Gordon Oliver on (01635) 519486
e-mail: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at
www.westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire
COUNCIL

To: Councillors Alan Law (Chairman), Adrian Abbs (Vice-Chairman), Jeff Brooks, James Cole, Tony Linden, Steve Masters, Biyi Oloko, Graham Pask, Tony Vickers, Lynne Doherty, Ross Mackinnon and Howard Woollaston

Substitutes: Councillors Dennis Benneyworth, Jeremy Cottam, Carolyne Culver, Lee Dillon, Gareth Hurley, Owen Jeffery, David Marsh and Andrew Williamson

Agenda

Part I

Page No.

Sarah Clarke
Service Director Strategy and Commissioning

If you require this information in a different format or translation, please contact
Stephen Chard on telephone (01635) 519462.

West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

This page is intentionally left blank

OSMC – 7 March 2023

Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

This page is intentionally left blank

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 2022

Councillors Present: Alan Law (Chairman), Jeff Brooks, James Cole, Tony Linden, Steve Masters and Tony Vickers

Councillors Attending Remotely: Adrian Abbs (Vice Chairman), Richard Somner (Executive Portfolio: Planning, Transport and Countryside)

Also Present: Joseph Holmes (Executive Director - Resources), Sarah Clarke (Service Director (Strategy and Governance), Paul Coe (Service Director, Adult Social Care), Jon Winstanley (Service Director (Environment), Nick Caprara (Housing Strategy Development & Review Manager), Paula Goodwin (Service Lead HR) and Carolyn Richardson (Civil Contingencies Manager), Vicky Phoenix (Principal Policy Officer) and Gordon Oliver (Principal Policy Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Biyi Oloko, Councillor Claire Rowles, Councillor Lynne Doherty, Councillor Ross Mackinnon and Councillor Thomas Marino

PART I

29. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2022 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. Actions from previous Minutes

Members noted the updates on the actions from the previous Minutes.

The following comments were made:

Action 76 – It was suggested that the word 'currently' be added before 120 litres, to reflect the fact that stricter limits may be possible in future.

Action 79 – There was discussion as to whether this action should be closed since the Economic Development Team were struggling to identify the top 10 employers due to a lack of data. However, it was requested that the action remain open for one more meeting.

31. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Adrian Abbs and Tony Vickers declared an interest in Agenda Item 6, but reported that, as their interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

32. Petitions

There were no petitions to be received at the meeting.

33. Items Called-in following the Executive on 3 November 2022

Councillors Adrian Abbs and Tony Vickers declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 by virtue of the fact that York House was within their ward. As their interest was personal and not prejudicial or a disclosable pecuniary interest, they determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

The Commission accepted a call-in request submitted on 10 November to review the Executive's decision (EX4279) of 3 November 2022 concerning the freehold disposal of York House (Agenda Item 6). The call-in request had been submitted in accordance with Sections 5.3 and 6.4 of the Council's Constitution.

It was noted that provision had been made for a Part II discussion, but since the information was already in the public domain, this was considered unnecessary.

Joseph Holmes was invited to provide an overview of the proposed course of action in relation to the disposal of the freehold of York House:

- The report identified alternative uses for York House that had been considered and rejected by a range of service areas over an extended period of time.

- It was noted that any proposal would be require an appropriate business case.

- Given the lack of any firm proposals, the Executive had agreed to proceed with the disposal of the property.

Members who had submitted the call-in were invited to present their reasons and proposed alternative course of action. The following points were made:

- Members of Executive and OSMC had not undertaken a site visit to see the property – as a result, everything in the report had to be taken at face value.

- The property could potentially be used as accommodation for young care leavers and a local charity was looking for a property for this purpose. Members asked if this use had been considered.

- There was insufficient evidence in the report to provide assurance that all possible uses had been considered. Members had hoped this information would be provided in response to the call-in. It was assumed that the Executive would have seen this information, but if not, they would have had to make the decision on the basis of insufficient information.

- Members and the public needed to understand how the Executive came to the decision, and if all options had been considered. It was suggested that the report should have included a table of pros and cons for each option.

- The Education Service had expressed interest in using the property for a SEND Unit, but a business case had not yet been drafted. It was suggested that the disposal be paused to allow the business case to be developed and considered.

- Members challenged whether this was the right time to sell the property, since the property market was falling and there was a reduced chance of a quick sale at a high value.

- It was asked whether additional investment could be made to improve the value of the property. Also, Members wanted to know why the property had been allowed to deteriorate.

- It was noted that the property valuation of £700,000 was less than the much smaller property next-door.

OSMC Members were invited to comment and made the following points:

- It was noted that various options had been considered 4-5 years ago, but the market had since changed.

- The £700,000 valuation was as a development plot, and although the joint venture company had considered the site to be too small, Members thought it likely that the site would be bought and redeveloped to create a much higher value property.

- It was suggested that OSMC should consider the property in its current state and the issue of whether maintenance should be carried out should not be a matter for consideration.

Officers responded to the points raised as follows:

- The building had been empty for a long period of time and the Council faced significant financial challenges.

- It was not known whether Executive Members had visited the site. However, two Executive Members were on the Asset Management Group, which had considered alternative uses for the site.

- Various alternative uses had been considered and rejected.

- Officers were aware of the proposal to use it for young care leavers' accommodation, but no business case had been presented.

- It had been used briefly during the Covid pandemic by the Housing Team as an interim touchpoint for the Homelessness Service, and had been considered and rejected for use as a homelessness hub.

- Both the Joint Venture Company and Adult Social Care had rejected the site on the grounds of size.

- A tender had been put out for registered providers to utilise the site within the last year, but no interest was received.

- There had been interest in the site from the SEND Team, but no business case had been produced.

- There had been external interest from the Clinical Commissioning Group, which had subsequently been withdrawn.

- It was important to get best value from Council assets - having explored alternative options, selling the property was considered the best option.

- Increased borrowing costs meant that the value of a capital receipt to the Council had gone up by 50% in the last year.

- It was accepted that the residential housing market was cooling, but the benefit to the Council of selling now would outweigh any potential reduction in the sale price.

- It was accepted that the property may not have been maintained to the same standard as when last in permanent use in 2017.

- It was not considered worth investing in the asset, since the end use of the property was unknown.

- £700,000 was considered to be the minimum price set at auction and the market would determine the ultimate sale price.

During the debate, the following points were discussed:

- A question was asked as to whether formal reports were available that documented: discussions with potential end users, the extent to which options were explored, and the reasons as to why the site was considered unsuitable for the proposed uses.

- It was acknowledged that refurbishment of the property would require additional borrowing and the value of capital receipts was recognised, given the Council's current financial position, particularly if interest rates continued to rise.

- Since the property was not ready to live in, there was no point in refurbishing / decorating it.

- It was difficult to judge the right time to proceed with a sale.

- Putting the property on the market may force proposals that were on the back-burner to be brought forward.

- The call-in appeared to hinge around the assertion that the Executive had been given insufficient information to be able to make a proper decision. Summaries of previous proposals were provided in the report, but detail was absent, so key questions were around: how much trust the Executive put in the Property Team, and whether the Executive asked sufficient questions at the meeting.

- Officers could not recall if there was much debate on the item. However, it was noted that most of the work was done in advance, which meant that there were few questions at meetings.

- It was queried whether it could be considered 'best value' to work with a charitable partner who could make use of the property and lever in additional funding to deliver Council objectives rather than receive the best price at auction. Officers highlighted the Council's Social Value Policy, which was considered in procurement decisions in reaching a decision about which proposal offered best value.

- Members asked if putting the property on the market would preclude services from coming forward with new proposals. Officers confirmed that putting the property on the market would allow other organisations to engage with the Council and bid for the property who may not currently be aware of it. Council services would not be precluded from coming forward with suggestions, but the point was reiterated that the property had been available for some time, with no suitable business case identified.

- Officers were asked why the property had not been maintained to the extent that it was no longer habitable and refurbishment costs were now excessive. The Chairman stressed that this was not relevant to OSMC's decision and Members needed to consider the property in its current state. If Members wished to look at whether the Council was adequately maintaining its assets, that would have to be considered separately.

- It was suggested that there were other ways in which the Council could have asked the market to identify alternative uses for the site.

- Members noted that if the sale was to be conducted by auction, which would limit the time available for proposals to come forward. However, officers stressed that the decision about the disposal mechanism had not yet been taken.

- It was highlighted that all of the Council's temporary accommodation was full and a large number of families and individuals were being put up in hotels. It was suggested that savings could be delivered in excess of the £10,000 annual maintenance costs if York House was to be used for this purpose.

- The point was repeated about the lack of supporting information in the Executive report and it was suggested that information previously considered by the Asset Management Group should have been provided to OSMC in a Part II paper.

- Officers were challenged about the time required to produce a business case for the SEND proposal and Members asked if services had been given clear timescales for developing proposals. Officers noted that there had previously been multiple deadlines given, and each time, proposals were submitted at the last minute, which subsequently came to nothing.

- It was suggested that the report should be referred back to Executive for them to confirm why they considered the decision to be sound. Members recalled that there had been no questions at Executive around process, and so Executive had not demonstrated to the rest of the Council that the correct decision had been taken.

- It was highlighted that rigorous interrogation was not undertaken at Executive, but instead this was done at Asset Management Board and in discussions with the relevant Portfolio Holder. Therefore the call-in could be considered to be challenging the basis of how the Executive worked.

- Members who submitted the call-in felt that evidence missing from the Executive report should have been provided to OSMC so it could be reviewed this in public. However, it was highlighted that the matter was the subject of a call-in rather than scrutiny, and that commercial information would have to be considered in a Part II debate, which would not put the information in the public domain.

- It was suggested that additional information should be provided within all reports to Executive to show that issues had been fully considered rather than relying on the opinion of officers.

The motion to refer the matter back to Executive for further consideration was proposed by Councillor Jeff Brooks and seconded by Councillor Tony Vickers.

An indicative vote was taken, including Members attending remotely. This showed that the majority of Members supported the motion.

At the formal vote, the motion was rejected.

RESOLVED that the disposal of the freehold for York House would be implemented as set out in the report to Executive on 3 November 2022.

34. Customer Journey Task Group - Interim Report

Councillor James Cole introduced the Customer Journey Task Group Interim Report (Agenda Item 7) and summarised the key points.

Members made the following observations:

- The scope of the review was very large and that things were changing before the Task Group could report back.

- It was suggested that the Task Group should not look at the quality of particular services, other than the interfaces with customers, and that the Out of Hours Service, Contact Centre and website would be sufficient.

- The Out of Hours Service had been included following concerns about a couple of incidents, but it was acknowledged that this may over-extended the scope of the review.

- Some changes had already been made in response to early feedback from the Task Group.

- There was praise for the collaborative approach taken by the Task Group Members.

- Standards and working practices changed very quickly in website design.

- The way in which the Council interacted with its customers had changed over time and the Council needed to be responsive to changing expectations and needs and to take account of the fact that different people would use systems in different ways.

- The Council had developed the Business West Berkshire website, but initially there had been no links to and from the main Council website. This had exposed some silo-working within the authority.

- There were two Task Groups being run simultaneously and there was a need for additional officer resource to support the scrutiny function.

- Members expressed surprise that the Task Group had not been made aware of the Customer First Programme Board and Place Review from the outset.

- The Customer First Programme Board had an operational focus, while the Task Group was looking at more strategic issues.

35. Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group - Interim Report

Councillor Tony Linden Presented the Fees and Charges Task Group Interim Report (Agenda Item 8) and summarised the key points.

It was noted that they key thrust of the Task Group's Interim Report was the need for additional and more granular information to allow Members to make more informed decisions as to the appropriateness of proposed changes to fees and charges.

Officers highlighted that the Task Group would not present its final report until March 2023, which would be too late for recommendations to be incorporated into the 2023/24 fees and charges.

36. Appraisal Review

Paula Goodwin (Service Lead – Human Resources) presented the report on the Council's appraisal process (Agenda Item 9).

It was noted that the report had been requested to provide additional detail that had not been covered in the report to the previous report to OSMC on 24 May 2022.

Members made the following observations:

- The table showing the percentage of appraisals undertaken appeared to show a lot of red, which was a concern and was contrary to assurances given that the appraisal system was working well.

- It was suggested that appraisals should consider employee wellbeing, motivation and mind-set, as well as progress towards objectives and targets.

- Also, it was suggested that employees needed to be able to have ad-hoc meetings with managers.

- Assurance was also sought that appraisals were being written up.

- Employees needed feedback from managers about how they were performing.

- Employee morale could be affected by a range of factors such as cost of living and workplace bullying.

- Appraisal completions within the Director and Support (People) had gone from 100% in March 2021 to 33.33% in September 2022, which was a concern. Reductions in other service areas were also concerning.

- It was important to retain Council employees, since some services were using high numbers of agency staff, which was costly.

- Members had been made aware a few months previously that some officers had not had an appraisal for several years.

- A question was asked about the impact of Covid and home-working on the frequency and quality of appraisals.

- Appraisals should be a two-way process where appraisees should be able to say what they needed and officers should have access to training.

- The new system was not due to be procured until 2024, which seemed a long time.

- Detail was sought as to the number of staff subject to detailed supervision sessions.

- The tones used in the RAG ratings were difficult to distinguish by those who were colour blind.

- The previous report to OSMC had been indicated that the new framework would be implemented in September / October, but it had slipped to 2023.

- Previously, the Executive had been provided with appraisal data and this had shown some services with fewer than 30% of staff receiving appraisals. However, this had since improved.

Officers responded to the points made as follows:

- The RAG rating used in the table denoted the percentage of appraisals completed compared to previous years rather than performance against an absolute standard.

- Managers were required to have regular 1-2-1 meetings with their direct reports, and the 1-2-1 form included a section on employee wellbeing. Also, a Wellbeing Officer had been appointed who had made good progress on progressing the wellbeing agenda within the Council. Employees and their managers were being supported from a wellbeing perspective.

- The appraisal form included standards for competencies. However, a new behaviour framework had been agreed and would replace the competency framework next year. This behaviour framework included more soft skills.

- Managers and employees were expected to document appraisals quickly. Although there was no central repository for appraisals, it was believed that appraisals were being written up. Managers were asked to record when they had appraisal meetings within the HR / Payroll System. There was lots of internal communication to ensure that staff were reminded to do this.

- There was no evidence to suggest that appraisals had not taken place during the Covid pandemic. The data showed where an employee had an appraisal in the previous 15 months. (This had been extended to 18 months during the pandemic.) Staff were encouraged to come back to the offices and to have regular team meetings, 1-2-1s and appraisals on a face-to-face basis. The Council had started hybrid working in 2010, which was well before the start of the pandemic.

- The 2024 implementation date for the new HR and payroll system was because there was an existing contract in place. The system was in the process of being procured and would be implemented and thoroughly tested before going live.

- The RAG rating was in addition to the percentage figures.

- Some services had very small numbers of people, so the percentages could be significantly affected if only a small number of staff did not have appraisals.

- Officers did not have figures to hand for the number of staff subject to detailed supervision sessions, but these were mostly in Adult Social Care doe to the nature of their roles.

- The reason for slippage in the timescales for implementation of the new systems were related to resources within HR and changes to the priorities for HR, with a shift in focus to recruitment and retention.

37. Revenue Financial Performance Report Quarter Two 2022/23

Joseph Holmes presented the Revenue Financial Performance Report for Quarter Two 2022/23 (Agenda Item 10).

Members made the following points:

- Members asked for the table showing spend on agency staff to be included in the version of the report that was taken to Executive.

  Action: Include the agency spend table in the Revenue Financial Performance Report.

- The moratorium on recruitment in Planning would remain until the Place Review had been completed, which would not be until March 2023. Members wondered how long it would take for agency costs to be addressed.

- Housing was facing significant pressures in relation to temporary accommodation. Significant amounts were already being spent on hotel accommodation and demand and this was likely to increase due to cost of living increases. Members were aware of cases where residents had been evicted by landlords and rents had been put up by significant amounts.

- The financial position had improved, with a reduced level of overspend. However, reserves were being utilised. It was suggested that the report should include a table of reserves.

  Action: Include a table showing levels of reserves in the Revenue Financial Performance Report.

- Previously recruitment freezes had caused the performance of the Planning Development Management service to dip and Members were keen to avoid similar issues elsewhere this time.

- Announcements in the Autumn Statement would positively affect the Council's financial position.

- The tables on page 5 and 7 appeared to show an error affecting the totals.

  Action: Review the figures in the tables on pages 5 and 7 of the report.

Officers responded to the points made as follows:

- It was confirmed that there was no moratorium on recruitment to essential Planning posts and the Council was going to market to recruit to several Development

Management posts to replace the current temporary posts. This included Enforcement posts. Recruitment was also being undertaken for the Planning Policy posts. However, it was noted that the jobs market was challenging.

- The rising costs of temporary accommodation was a reflection of the current economic position. The Council was housing those it was able to and options for reducing demand and costs were being considered.

- The recruitment freeze applied to most posts, but recruitment was still underway for essential posts, including in Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

- The vast majority of earmarked and risk reserves would be utilised and the Council was in difficult financial circumstances. However, inflation was at a level that had not been seen for 40 years.

- It was hoped that by Quarter 3, Government funding in relation to Adult Social Care discharge would come through to support the financial position and reduce the call on reserves. The final settlement was expected around 21 December. However, there was currently a funding shortfall of around £15 million, which was substantially higher than any previous savings that the Council had delivered, and the additional funding would be significantly less than the shortfall.

38. Capital Financial Performance Report Quarter Two 2022/23

Joseph Holmes presented the Capital Financial Performance Report for Quarter Two 2022/23 (Agenda Item 11).

Members made the following points:

- The iCollege project had been delayed due to delays in appointing the contractor and accessing the site - this would be an issue for those students who were in alternative provision. Members wondered if there was any additional information on this project.

- The forecast underspend on the A4 Faraday Road improvements were noted and Members asked what this related to.

- Members asked about the cost of reprofiling £17.9 million of capital expenditure.

Officers responded to the points made as follows:

- The Council remained committed to the iCollege project. There was no additional information beyond what was in the report. It was noted that there were significant cost increases on all construction projects.

- The A4 Faraday Road scheme was linked with the Robin Hood Roundabout scheme. The Council was looking at enhanced active travel provision. The scheme was part-funded from S106 contributions from the North Newbury Development, but a bid for government funding had been unsuccessful. Highways was reviewing the schemes to see what could be delivered. The schemes needed to be progressed together for reasons of economies of scale.

- It was explained that capital financing costs were not applied until the next financial year. Reprofiling spend into next year would mean that the Council would pay less capital payments in 2023/24, but there would be an additional cost in 2024/25. The Council would normally put £600,00 into the budget for capital financing costs – this reprofiling would represent £428,000 based on current interest rates. However, this could change if interest rates changed in future years.

39. **West Berkshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (including North and East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme)**

Jon Winstanley (Service Director – Environment) presented the report on the Flood Risk Management Strategy and North and East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme (Agenda Item 12).

Members made the following points:

- Members had been impressed with the schemes that had been delivered.

- There was praise for the contribution to flood risk management of Stuart Clark who had passed away earlier in the year. There was also praise for Carolyn Richardson and other partners involved in the emergency response.

- However, it was suggested that the Council would need to devote greater resources to flood prevention in future. An impending National Infrastructure Forum report would highlight that most properties had a 60% chance of being flooded within the next 30 years (this was a national figure and further work would be needed to understand the local situation).

- Mapping of surface water flooding was improving.

- The Council needed more flood wardens and more local knowledge input to flood risk management planning.

- Ward Members were encouraged to attend their local flood wardens meetings.

- It was suggested that a future OSMC Task and Finish Group could look at the impact of the water cycle on the Council's activities.

- The Council needed additional staff resources devoted to flood risk management.

- Planning officers and planning committee Members needed better education on the water cycle.

- There was a backlog of maintenance work on sustainable drainage schemes and there was a risk that this responsibility would come to local authorities with no additional funding.

- The government expected that £56 million would need to be spent on flood risk management within the next 20 years.

- Most people did not know what surface water flooding meant, or the risk that they were exposed to, and that risk would only increase over time.

- West Berkshire Council needed to work with the Local Government Association to ensure that the Lead Local Authority Role was properly recognised and resourced.

- A variety of flooding issues had been raised in relation to sites within Basildon Ward. There appeared to be a public perception that local authorities had cut back on gully /drain clearing operations.

- Insurers had highlighted that flood risk was increasing.

- Clarification was sought as to whether the scheme at Blandys Hill was a Council scheme or a Thames Water scheme.

Officers responded to the points made as follows:

- The Council had a good Flood Risk Management Team and a new Team Leader would be appointed in due course.

- There had been a lot of work undertaken in relation to mitigation of surface water flooding, and mapping of flow paths.

- Groundwater also posed a significant risk and this was more difficult to address.

- The Council had been successful in securing funding and had done some good groundwork.

- Strategic flood risk assessments were carried out to inform the Local Plan.

- A Surface Water Management Plan was in place for key flood risk areas.

- The Local Flood Forums would help to identify where future efforts should be focused.

- Rainfall in November had been 210% of the average for the month, which had coincided with autumn leaves falling and it was suggested that this may have affected the public's perceptions regarding surface water flooding issues. The Council was responding to requests to clear gullies / drains and budget cuts were not considered to be the issue.

- It was confirmed that Blandys Hill was a West Berkshire Council scheme.

40. Health Scrutiny Committee Update

This item was not discussed as the Chairman of the Health Scrutiny Committee was unable to attend the meeting to present her report.

41. West Berkshire Council Forward Plan September to December 2022

The Commission considered the West Berkshire Forward Plan (Agenda Item 14) for the period covering September to December 2022.

Members had no comments in relation to items on the Forward Plan.

It was noted that from next year, the Forward Plan would look further ahead to allow OSMC to better plan its work programme.

42. Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme

The Commission considered its work programme for the remainder of 2022/23.

It was noted that an additional meeting was provisionally proposed for March 2023. This would be reviewed in the New Year to see if it was still needed.

(The meeting commenced at 18:30 and closed at 21:07)

CHAIRMAN   ………………………………………….

Date of Signature   ………………………………………….

This page is intentionally left blank

	Actions arising from previous OSMC Meetings
	OSMC is requested to consider the following list of actions and note the updates provided.

Ref No:	Date	Item/Action	Member/Officer	Comments/Update
67	06/09/2022	**Thames Water Activities:** Contact Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter and Jon Winstanley to arrange a meeting regarding the Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme	Richard Aylard / Nikki Hines	**In Progress -** Thames Water has re-affirmed that they will not be contributing to the Thatcham Memorial Fields Flood Alleviation Scheme. A meeting will be arranged to discuss other ongoing projects.
70	06/09/2022	**Thames Water Activities:** Arrange a meeting between Councillor Richard Somner and the Streetworks Team	Richard Aylard / Nikki Hines	**In progress -** A meeting has been offered, involving Cllr Somner and Thames Water's Streetworks Manager and Head of Regional Networks.
75	06/09/2022	**Thames Water Activities:** West Berkshire Council to add its weight to lobby central government to enact the relevant legislation to remove the automatic right of developers to connect to the sewerage network.	Councillor Richard Somner / Eric Owens	**Outstanding**
79	06/09/2022	**Economic Development Strategy - Operational Review** Investigate the KPI for engagement with the top 10 employers in the district.	Katharine Makant	**In Progress -** We have engaged with large companies in the areas including AWE, Englefield Estate and Newbury Racecourse to discuss topics around employment and development to see if there are projects that we could align on and better ways of working. Simultaneously, we have engaged with large employment parks including Greenham Business Park and Arlington Business Park. Work is underway to develop a business database to guide and assist our engagement, which may inform a KPI for 2023/24. We can identify certain employers which will be in the 'top 10' – but to create an accurate list we would need to know their total numbers of employees at the local level, which businesses do not publish – so we are considering other ways of approaching it. This includes working closer with our business rates and planning teams to engage on some current issues with our top employers in the next year.
81	29/11/2022	**Revenue Financial Performance Report Quarter Two 2022/23** Include the agency spend table in the Revenue Financial Performance Report.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	**Complete** (21/02/23) - This is now included in the quarterly reports
82	29/11/2022	**Revenue Financial Performance Report Quarter Two 2022/23** Include a table showing levels of reserves in the Revenue Financial Performance Report.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	**Complete** (21/02/23) - This is now included in the quarterly reports
83	29/11/2022	**Revenue Financial Performance Report Quarter Two 2022/23** Review the figures in the tables on pages 5 and 7 of the report.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	**Complete** (21/02/23) - This was amended.

Last updated: 27 February 2023

This page is intentionally left blank

OSMC – 7 March 2023

Item 4 – Declarations of interest

Verbal Item

This page is intentionally left blank

OSMC – 7 March 2023

Item 5 – Petitions

Verbal Item

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 6.

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Review

Committee considering report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Committee:	7 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	13 February 2023
Report Author:	Katharine Makant
Forward Plan Ref:	

1   Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the functioning of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and consider its effectiveness in terms of how well it is delivering for West Berkshire, noting that the functions of LEPs are changing following a Government review that concluded in March 2022.

2   Recommendation

This report is primarily for information. However, there is the opportunity to consider changes to our current ways of working with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP in order to inform its future role in West Berkshire and enable greater integration with the Council and its partners.

3   Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	The Council currently contributes £10,000 pa to the TVBLEP. An additional one-off contribution of £60,000 per local authority for 2022/23 was agreed by Berkshire Chief Executives to support the TVBLEP as it transitions into a new role linked to the Government's 2022 LEP Review.
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	None

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Risk Management:				None
Property:				None
Policy:				The Council's support for the TVBLEP is set out in the Economic Development Strategy Refresh 2021.
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		
Health Impact:		x		
ICT Impact:		x		
Digital Services Impact:	x			The TVBLEP seeks to improve digital infrastructure in the district in collaboration with partners in the pan-Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group (DIG).

Council Strategy Priorities:	x		The TVBLEP contributes to the following strategic priorities: • Supporting everyone to reach their full potential • Supporting businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Developing local infrastructure, including housing to support and grow the local economy
Core Business:		x	.
Data Impact:		x	
Consultation and Engagement:	Input has been sought from colleagues in the Environment Delivery Team and the Education Service as well as Economic Development Board.		

4   Executive Summary

4.1   This report sets out the background to the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and to the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP in particular.   It goes on to summarise and evaluate TVBLEP activities in West Berkshire – a more detailed evaluation is attached at Appendix B. The report ends by setting out the results of the 2022 Government Review, in which it signalled a new focus for LEPs linked to integration with its plans for local devolution.

5   Background

5.1   Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are non-statutory bodies responsible for local economic development in England.   Set up in 2010/11, they were intended to be business-led partnerships bringing together the private sector, local authorities and academic and voluntary institutions.   There are 38 LEPs in total, with boundaries designed to reflect functional economic areas.   LEPs can take varying corporate structures but all must have a private sector chair and the majority of board members must be drawn from the private sector.   A 2020 Government report found that the number of full time staff ranged from 0 (i.e. staff seconded from other organisations) to 520, with the median being 16.

5.2   LEPs were originally intended to be funded through leverage of private sector investment but over the years have had access to central pots of money to support their work locally, including the Regional Growth Fund and the Growing Places Fund.   Many have also received funding through Local Growth Deals and EU Structural Funds.

6   Supporting Information

Introduction

6.1   The Thames Valley Berkshire LEP (TVBLEP) is a company limited by guarantee, set up in 2011. It has 22 members of staff (as at 31 March 2022) and an office in Green Park, Reading. There are 14 Directors on the LEP Board, including the LEP Chief Executive, 8 from the private sector, 2 from the education sector, 2 representing local authorities and 1 representing the community. Council Leader Cr Lynne Doherty represents the Local Authority Leaders on the Board. Scrutiny is provided by the LEP Forum, which consists of 1 representative from each of the Berkshire local authorities, 4 business organisations and 1 community representative. Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development Cr Ross Mackinnon represents the Council on the LEP Forum.

6.2   From the officer side, TVBLEP is supported by the Berkshire Public Services Network (Chief Executive Nigel Lynn), the Place-making Board (Acting Executive Director, Place Eric Owens) and the Berkshire Economic Development Officer Group (BEDOG, Economy Manager Katharine Makant).

6.3   The wide-ranging activities of the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP are set out in a number of documents which are all available on its website, including the 2021 Recovery and Renewal Plan and the Delivery Plan for 2022/23.

6.4   Following its establishment in December 2011 the LEP received Government Core funding to provide a strategic economic view on transport and infrastructure. This was further enhanced with the LEP receiving an allocation of Local Growth Funds (£142m) (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (£7.5m) (GBF) to invest in transport and infrastructure in Berkshire. Both funds are now fully allocated and have closed.

6.5   A change of policy direction in Government in 2020/21 saw the move to centrally held funding for future infrastructure and transport projects open to local authorities to bid for in competitions. As such the requirement for LEPs to provide infrastructure and transport strategic support has been wound down and at the end of 2021/22 Government ceased requiring LEPs to deliver on this activity other than oversight and monitoring of LGF/GBF projects to completion.

6.6   In 2022/23 the local authorities agreed to provide additional funding for Berkshire LEP in order to continue 'business as usual' in line with 2021/22 activity. During this year Berkshire LEP has continued to provide strategic infrastructure and transport support using the funding provided for within the additional £300k funding received from the unitary authorities contained in a Service Level Agreement.

6.7   This section of the report presents an evaluation of Thames Valley Berkshire LEP's activities, including commentary on its delivery of these activities in West Berkshire. The full evaluation is attached at Appendix B, but a summary is set out below.

Central Co-ordination Role

6.8   The LEP provides the secretariat function to the LEP Board, LEP Forum and Place-making Board and attends and participates in the Berkshire Public Services Network

and BEDOG. The LEP also produces and reviews the Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan 2021 and the annual delivery and work plan. This work is fundamental to supporting the LEP's core business which is to drive economic growth.

6.9 Over the years, the LEP has played a vital programme management role in the securing and ongoing monitoring of projects funded by central government, such as Local Growth Funds (£142m across TVB), Growing Places Fund (£15m across TVB) and European Structural and investment funds (£25m across TVB).

Infrastructure and Place

6.10 The LEP has played a lead role in co-ordinating the Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum (BSTF) and the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB), making the case for investment in the kind of transport infrastructure needed to support and grow the Berkshire economy. Membership of the Forum includes the six Berkshire local authorities and the Transport Authorities (rail, highways, bus and air travel sectors). The LEP Forum appointed the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) as the competent body to a) prioritise and b) implement transport capital schemes on the LEP's behalf. Elected members represent the six local authorities and the LEP nominates representatives from the private sector. The LEP also represents the voice of Berkshire on the sub-national body Transport for the South East.

6.11 The LEP agreed three Growth Deals with the Government, worth a capital investment of £142.5m from the Local Growth Fund, to implement specific projects between 2015/16 and 2021/22. The LEP has funded five transport schemes in West Berkshire: Kings Road Link Rd in Newbury, new access roads for Sandleford, the new A339 junction for LRIE and Newbury and Theale Station improvements.

6.12 Infrastructure funding is no longer being delivered through the LEP. Instead, the government has set up new funding streams designed to support local economic growth, including the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. In the main, bids are submitted and administered by individual Councils although TVBLEP can provide support. West Berkshire Council submitted bids for Newbury Lido for the Levelling Up Fund in 2021 and 2022 but was unsuccessful, due in part to being designated a Priority 3 area in terms of deprivation. We were recently awarded £1m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and a further £598k from the Rural Prosperity Fund for projects including town centre regeneration, rural business support and community infrastructure. The advice from the LEP for our UKSPF bid was hugely valuable.

6.13 The Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group (DIG) works with telecoms operators including Virgin Media O2, City Fibre, Gigaclear and Openreach Ltd to improve broadband, public access wifi and mobile coverage across Berkshire, with the aim of securing a 'Connected Berkshire'. The DIG Team is based in West Berkshire Council and Chief Executive Nigel Lynn chairs the DIG Board on behalf of the Berkshire Chief Executives. Economy Manager Katharine Makant represents the Council on the Board.

6.14 The Council is leading on the £1.7m Full Fibre to Schools project, funded by the LEP through the Getting Building Fund, to improve digital connectivity in more than 80 locations across Berkshire including schools, GP surgeries and libraries. The scheme launched in early 2022, with Birch Copse Primary School in Tilehurst one of the first schools to be connected. The Council is also leading on a £500k Digital Connectivity

Digital Accelerator (DCIA) project using government funding to improve 4G and 5G networks, including the use of small cell technology on street lamps in Beenham.

Business Environment

6.15 The TVBLEP's Berkshire Growth Hub delivers business advice and supports small and medium enterprises[1] (SMEs) to achieve sustainable business growth. In the past, this included 121 clinics and structured programmes such as the High Growth programme (12 hours intensive support). These were well received but limited in scope, so the Growth Hub recently created a website to enable businesses requiring 'light touch' support to self-serve, allowing its business advisers to focus more intensive 121 support where it is most needed. Along with the other Berkshire local authorities, the Council through its UKSPF allocation is funding the Growth Hub to deliver a new programme for Business Start-ups, which launched this month. In 2021/22, 41 West Berkshire businesses were referred to the Growth Hub, of which 34 were start-ups and 7 were growing. In Q1 22/23, the Growth Hub responded to 47 enquiries from West Berkshire businesses, of which 11 were 'starting', 32 were 'running' and 1 was 'growing'.

6.16 TVBLEP runs a bespoke Funding Escalator programme which provides business loans and equity for high-growth SMEs in the form of an expansion loan scheme and short-term trade loan scheme. The programme is funded through the Growing Places Fund, a revolving (capital) loan fund worth £15m intended to stimulate economic activity. To date, the programme has supported 95 SMEs across Berkshire, including Newbury Mobility Ltd, Hogan Music and The Pot Kiln, Yattendon.

6.17 TVBLEP publishes the Berkshire Prospectus which includes three investment opportunities in West Berkshire – Newbury Town Centre and LRIE, Grazeley Solar Farm and Newbury Active Travel. It also responds on behalf of all Berkshire unitary authorities to Department of International Trade (DIT) enquiries regarding sector capability and supporting site/facility enquiries from 3rd parties. However, the value of this service to West Berkshire has been limited.

Employment & Skills

6.18 Through the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC), the TVBLEP operates the Berkshire Enterprise Advisor Network, enabling schools across Berkshire to be matched with an Enterprise Adviser, who is a local business person. 73 schools are now in the Network. It also operates Careers Hubs in five West Berkshire schools (The Downs, Little Heath, Willink, Brookfields and The Castle). Both these initiatives are aimed at ensuring greater employer engagement in education and better employment outcomes for young people. The LEP has been very supportive of our schools and has done great work for SEND young people and in providing labour market information.

6.19 Berkshire Opportunities is an online platform intended to provide a gateway into jobs, apprenticeships and training for the Berkshire workforce, including those leaving school with special educational needs or a disability (SEND). The platform aims to signpost to useful resources, careers and employability advice, highlighting priority sectors where

---

[1] An SME is defined as any organisation that has fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50m or a balance sheet total of less than €43.

there are recruitment shortages, including health and care and digital technology. It is difficult to assess the impact of the platform in West Berkshire.

6.20 As a key provider of further and higher education in West Berkshire, Newbury College has benefitted from £334k of the LEP Skills Capital Local Growth Fund for a Solutions Lab – a new learning space to enable the college's engineering apprenticeships to research, design and develop components for their employers. The LEP contributed £425k to establish University Centre, Newbury, which now offers degrees and professional qualifications including in digital technology, engineering and education. Most recently, the LEP provided £475k to fund a Renewable Resource Training Facility which aims to increase the number of qualified plumbers and engineers qualified to install energy efficient systems.

Intelligence and data

6.21 The TVBLEP carries out research and provides a range of regional economic, business and skills data which is helpful in providing contextual information for developing local economic policies and funding bids.

Carbon Net Zero

6.22 This is an emerging area of work by TVBLEP which could play a similarly valuable role as the Berkshire Local Transport Body and Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum currently do for transport. In 2021, the LEP commissioned a Research Gap Analysis of the Berkshire Carbon Net Zero strategies, which made a number of recommendations. The report is available here. The central organisation of this work is very much needed as no one local authority has the capacity to take it on.

6.23 Through the LEP and European Structural Funds, Berkshire businesses can apply for Low Carbon Workspaces grants to cut their emissions. Berkshire Labels in Hungerford and Hi-Fi Cinema in Aldermaston are among the businesses awarded grants.

7 Government Review of LEPs

7.1 The Government announced the outcome of the LEP review on 31st March 2022. Its letter and accompanying guidance explained that the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper marked a turning point in local growth policy linked to a new devolution framework. It stated that its priority in the LEP review was to balance the accountability of local growth institutions, its objectives on devolution and the need to retain a local, independent, business voice.

7.2 The Government's stated intention is to 're-wire' the system by integrating the role and functions of LEPs into its plans for devolution. Where devolved institutions do not exist in an area, the Government will continue to support LEPs (subject to future funding decisions) in order to ensure there is an independent business and stakeholder voice.

7.3 In Berkshire, high level discussions are underway but no decisions have yet been made on the future of the LEP. Therefore, it is expected that Government core/transition funding for the LEP in a reduced form and local funding of £10k per authority will continue for the financial year 2023/24, pending future funding decisions.

7.4 In June 2022, the LEPs announced that in future their focus will be on the digital economy, science and innovation and international trade, with a commitment to supporting the Government's UK Digital Strategy through the establishment of Digital Skills Partnerships.

8 Conclusion

OSMC is invited to review the information set out above and to provide comment.

9 Appendices

Appendix A – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix B – Evaluation of TVBLEP Activities in West Berkshire

---

Background Papers:

Link to Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership website
https://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk

Letter outlining Government guidance on integrating LEPs into local democratic institutions dated 31 March 2022 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-partnerships-integration-guidance

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☒
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: ALL

Officer details:

Name: Katharine Makant
Job Title: Acting Service Director for Development and Regulation (Planning, Economy and Emergency Planning)
Tel No: 01635 519186
E-mail: katharine.makant@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix A

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) - Stage One

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	N/A
Summary of relevant legislation:	N/A
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council's priorities for improvement? • Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes • Support everyone to reach their full potential • Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire • Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy Maintain a green district • Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships	Yes ☐ No ☒
Name of Budget Holder:	N/A
Name of Service/Directorate:	Development and Regulation
Name of assessor:	Katharine Makant
Date of assessment:	8 August 2022

Is this a …. ?		Is this policy, strategy, function or service … ?	
Policy	Yes ☐ No ☒	**New or proposed**	Yes ☐ No ☒
Strategy	Yes ☒ No ☐	**Already exists and is being reviewed**	Yes ☒ No ☐
Function	Yes ☐ No ☒	**Is changing**	Yes ☐ No ☒
Service	Yes ☐ No ☒		

(1) What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	Seek OSMC comments on the Annual Progress Report for Annual Progress Report on the Economic Development Strategy Refresh 2021
Objectives:	As above

Outcomes:	OSMC feedback
Benefits:	Improved monitoring and evaluation

(2) Which groups might be affected and how? Is it positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this?

(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation)

Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
All groups	More inclusion and equality	The EDS Refresh seeks to empower everyone to enter the workplace.

Further Comments:

(3) Result

Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	Yes ☐ No ☒

Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	Yes ☐ No ☒

(4) Identify next steps as appropriate:

EqIA Stage 2 required	Yes ☐ No ☒
Owner of EqIA Stage Two:	
Timescale for EqIA Stage Two:	

Name: **Katharine Makant**   **Date: 8 August 2022**

Evaluation of Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Activities

Project	Description of LEP activity	Comments / impact in West Berkshire
Central Coordination Activity		
TVB LEP Board and Forum	Lead the LEP Board and Forum, providing full secretariat responsibilities. Unitary Authorities are represented by an elected and non-elected (CEO) member, alongside the business, education and third sector representatives	Essential to coordinate LEP activities. The Forum provides oversight of the LEP, and challenges, scrutinises and ratifies decisions made or recommended by the Board. It has the power to 'call in' decisions if at least 4 Forum members apply to do so. Cr Lynne Doherty represents Berkshire Leaders Group on the Board and Cr Ross Mackinnon represents West Berkshire Council on the Forum.
Berkshire Public Services Network (CEOs)	Attend and participate.	West Berkshire Council is represented by Chief Executive Nigel Lynn.
Place Making Board	The Place Making Board was established to stimulate and support economic growth and raise productivity across Berkshire. It meets 10 times a year and the LEP provides the secretariat function.	West Berkshire Council is represented by Acting Executive Director, Place Eric Owens. A helpful group to discuss and coordinate a range of issues that can be better delivered if looked at across Berkshire and not individually by each authority. A good forum for bringing in relevant partners where helpful. **Delivery Partners**: Thames Valley Berkshire LEP, the six Unitary Authorities, One Public Estate (OPE) and selected partners.
TVB LEP Workplan	Produce an annual workplan that is signed off by the LEP Board. Quarterly updates reviewed by the LEP Board.	Essential to coordinate LEP activities. A workplan is a requirement for the business-as-usual functioning of any organisation.
Berkshire Recovery and Renewal Plan	Review the RRP implementation plan at least every 6 months and present to the LEP Forum and Place Making Board. Ongoing delivery of LEP items within RRP	The Recovery and Renewal Plan provides a useful strategic overview and repository of economic information for Berkshire as a whole – but there is limited follow up to align policies and actions between Local Authorities.

Programme management	Ongoing monitoring of government funded projects, e.g., Local Growth Fund, Getting Building Fund and European Social Fund projects and reporting to programme groups and government as required.	This is an excellent function of the LEP and means that individual authorities are not needing to report directly. It is also good for picking up on underspend in one area that could be used for another area. The LEP having the overview is really valuable.
Heathrow strategic groups	Attend groups as appropriate, representing Berkshire's interests. Including Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG) and Western Rail Link to Heathrow (WRLtH) (Currently on hold)	These have not been so critical for West Berkshire but can see the value for other authorities.
Infrastructure and Place		
Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum (BSTF)	Forum for sharing best practice across Berkshire. This forum provides a convening role in making the case for investment in the kind of transport infrastructure needed to support and grow the Berkshire economy LEP prepares papers and agenda for this group, with the formal secretariat function being carried out by Slough Borough Council (as the Accountable Body). Meets at least twice a year.	This has coordinated and delivered some excellent work over a long period of time. It is not only of huge value to the Officers but means that when one of the Delivery Partners is consulting on something or wants to engage with the Transport Authorities, they can do so through this group – saving on time, money and getting a much better outcome from the discussion. This group would not happen if the LEP (or something similar) did not coordinate, prepare agendas, invite speakers and produce notes / follow up on actions. It takes time, effort and knowledge to do this and the LEP have been brilliant at it. **Delivery Partners:** Six Berkshire Unitary Authorities, Network Rail, Great Western Railway, South Western Railway, Highways England, Reading Buses, Heathrow Airport and Department for Transport (DfT).
Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB)	Consists of 6 elected members from Berkshire authorities with LEP appointed private sector members. The work of the BLTB is informed by the BSTF and it oversees the independent scrutiny of decisions made here.	Cr Richard Somner represents the Council on the BLTB, with Cr Tony Vickers as reserve. This has been a necessary and valuable group for deciding on the allocation of funding for transport schemes / projects.

	LEP prepares papers and agenda for this group, with the formal secretariat function being carried out by Slough Borough Council (as the Accountable Body). Meets at least twice a year.	The involvement of private sector members has added a valuable dimension and perspective to the work and the decision making process. The decision to allocate many £millions across Berkshire could not have happened without the formal setting up of this group and the ongoing excellent management of it from the LEP. If there are further funding streams that will be available then this group will continue to have high value and is a model that could be replicated for other subject areas or a group that could widen its remit with other Members (LA and Private) joining it.
Transport for South-East	Contributes alongside neighbouring LEPs to the project to deliver greater and more accessible transport options for Berkshire. The LEP collaborates with stakeholders across the region but does not have a place on the board. LEP attends meetings to promote pan-Berkshire opportunities	The LEP's role with TfSE means that Berkshire's interests can be represented together and because we do this jointly we are only paying for one membership between the 6 authorities. If we were not coordinated in this way (supported by the LEP) we would all have to find a representative and pay the full amount individually (unlikely to be affordable given the current financial climate).
Capital Scheme monitoring	Manage the delivery of the remaining infrastructure capital projects. It will also track and monitor outputs and progress associated with completed projects and report these to relevant boards	This links with Programme Management above. In addition to the comments above being relevant here, this activity provides accountability for the £millions invested in the TVB area.
Berkshire Digital Infrastructure Group (formerly Superfast Berkshire)	Increased broadband coverage across Berkshire to 99.6%, completed Sept 22. Project Gigabit aims to increase speeds to 1GB to 85% of Berkshire by 2025.	The LEP in an informal partner to the DIG Programme and has been key in funding opportunities for Digital Infrastructure. 2 of our current projects are being funded by the MHCLG Getting Building Fund of 1.7M award, one of which is being led by the LEP (LoRaWAN). They are also key in assisting the DIG in defining and implementing our digital strategy.

	LEP prepares papers and agenda, with the formal secretariat function being carried out by West Berkshire Council	West Berkshire has benefited from Full Fibre to schools, LoRaWan winter gritting, 5G small cell deployment in Beenham.
Business Environment		
Business Environment Programme & Delivery Group	LEP provides the secretariat function, meets at least 3 times within the year.	
Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator	LEP manages the contract with the Funding Escalator provider, Finance Southeast, and sit on the Scrutiny Group. The long-term role of this fund is currently under review and may change in agreement with the LEP Board. Provide loan finance and mobilising funds to SMEs with 18 businesses supported in 2022/23	The Funding Escalator was an £11.3m business finance / loan scheme funded and managed by the LEP. It was essential for the LEP to manage this fund and it addressed a gap in provision of accessible finance for high growth businesses.
Berkshire Business Growth Hub	Front door for opportunities for business support in Berkshire. Increase signposting to SMEs to access funding and training with the aim to help 900 businesses by March 2023 Expanded with £20k of UKSPF funding from each Berkshire Local Authority to provide new programmes for start-ups and high growth 2023 to 2025.	The LEP's role in providing bespoke advice and guidance to businesses of a range of sizes and levels of establishment fulfils a key gap in provision across Berkshire and we view this as a very valuable function. This could not be replicated within West Berkshire Council, not least because the LEP have a uniquely strong expertise in this area, a level of impartiality, and a broader overview of the economic zone of Berkshire, its constituent industries and challenges. Furthermore by delivering this function across Berkshire the LEP achieve an economy of scale in terms of demand from businesses that could not be met if individual authorities delivered business growth advice exclusive to each district. A total of 41 West Berkshire businesses were referred to the Hub in 2021/22.

Department for International Trade (DIT) enquiries	Responding on behalf of all Berkshire unitary authorities to DIT enquiries regarding sector capability and supporting site/facility enquiries from 3rd parties. Inward investment for Berkshire currently coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce	This is in theory a valuable and necessary function, in order to ensure that the broad inward investment 'offer' of Berkshire is well aligned. However we have so far gained limited value from this – the Economic Development Team has not been made aware of DIT enquiries responded to by the LEP aside from coordination of a local incentive offer – which was limited.
Business Rates Retention Pilot	LEP managed the delivery of the Business Rates Retention Pilot for Berkshire Authorities	This was a pilot programme that ran from 2018-2019 in West Berkshire. Should other similar programmes emerge in the future then the LEP will have an important role to play to supporting applications for bids and project management.
Catalyst South	Represents the South-East in unlocking its economic power through boosting enterprise and innovation.	**Delivery Partners:** 6 LEPs (Coast to Capital, Enterprise M3, Hertfordshire, Southeast, Solent and Thames Valley Berkshire).

Employment and Skills

Careers and Enterprise Company/Berkshire Enterprise Advisor Network	LEP operated the CEC contracts until August 2022. Connects educational establishments with employers supporting 58 schools to be matched with an Enterprise Advisor	CEC is the national body to support schools/colleges to deliver careers education. Very supportive of schools and have done some great work for SEND young people and providing labour market information and the Careers Hub Schools network.
Skills and Advisory Panel and Delivery Group	Provide the secretariat function. Meets at least three times within the year.	*"Bring together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges... Help colleges, universities and other providers deliver the skills required by employers, now and in the future."* Vital secretariat work to support this group to fulfil their function. West Berkshire is represented by Newbury College and Mark Browne, School Improvement Team.
Berkshire Opportunities Portal	Gateway to jobs, apprenticeships, and further education for Berkshire residents.	Portal provides a good gateway to opportunities. Impact on West Berkshire is somewhat unknown but Newbury College is a delivery partner and Katharine

		Makant, Economy Manager was on the Steering Group. **https://www.berkshireopportunities.co.uk/** **Delivery Partners**: six Unitary Authorities, Careers and Enterprise Company, and the respective college of each area.
Intelligence and Data		
Berkshire Skills Report and Skills Priority Statement	Produced annually	Source of regional economic and skills data.
Business in Berkshire report	Produced annually	Source of regional economic and business data.
Thames Valley Monthly Economic Briefing	Produced monthly	Valuable source of economic data, but not essential.
Industrial Sector Propositions	Review and update at least 2 sector propositions per year providing information on sectors where Berkshire has a competitive advantage. As well as information on innovation spaces and the labour market.	The role played by the LEP in researching and presenting data and insights regarding Berkshire industries and wider economy is useful to help steer local priorities for work.
Annual Berkshire Prospectus	Promotes opportunities for investment in the region as well as areas for collaboration.	Promotes some of the inward investment opportunities, and ways in which West Berkshire is leading / cutting edge. 2022 Prospectus promotes Newbury Town Centre & LRIE, Grazeley Solar Farm and the Newbury North/South Active Travel route for investment. However we have received little feedback of the impact of this document on potential investors.
Lobbying Central Government	LEP has well established links into Government and Business Networks. Provides good intelligence and advantage to Berkshire for strategic decision making	
Bid support	LEP gives support on infrastructure and economic development funding bids – including UK Shared Prosperity Fund,	The advice from the LEP on our bid for UKSPF was hugely valuable. Through professional connections with individuals in Government departments the LEP has

	Land Release Funds and the Levelling Up Funds	been able to provide very useful insights into the priorities of funding and schemes, including the UKSPF and the now-defunct Investment Zones. This will continue to be valuable when future schemes come forward.
Net Zero Carbon		
Net Zero Task Force **As per the Service Level Agreement**	Provide secretariat and strategic leadership, which will meet at least four times per year	This is an emerging area of coordination which could play a similarly valuable role as the Berkshire Local Transport Body and Berkshire Strategic Transport Forum currently do for transport. The officer group is already proving hugely useful and will act as a forum for sharing best practice, developing joint work, joining together for funding bids etc. The fact that no officer group or joint Member engagement has been sustained until the LEP started to coordinate demonstrates that the central organisation of this is needed as no one Authority has the capacity to take this on.

This page is intentionally left blank

Customer Journey Task & Finish Group - Final Report

Committee considering report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Committee:	7 March 2023
Task Group Chairman	Councillor James Cole
Date Task Group Chairman agreed report:	13 February 2023
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 This report presents the work undertaken by the Customer Journey Task and Finish Group and their final recommendations.

1.2 Members of the Task Group would like to thank all of the officers and Members who gave evidence and supported this scrutiny review.

2 Recommendation

2.1 To consider the Task and Finish Group's final proposals as outlined in Section 6 of this report and agree whether these be referred to the Executive for consideration.

2.2 To agree that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission keeps the issue of the Customer Journey under review, with reference to the work of the Customer First Programme Board (or its successor), and invites annual updates on progress in implementing the report's recommendations.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in financial implications which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in HR

	implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
Legal:	There are no Legal implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted they may result in Legal implications which will be assessed in details if they are taken forward.			
Risk Management:	There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in risk management implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
Property:	There are no property implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in property implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
Policy:	There are no policy implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in policy implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.			
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The proposed decision does not have any impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics. However, if accepted, proposals may improve the customer journey for disabled customers.
Environmental Impact:		X		There are no environmental impacts arising directly from this report.
Health Impact:		X		There are no health impacts arising directly from this report.
ICT Impact:		X		There are no ICT impacts arising directly from this report. However, if accepted, proposals would lead to improvements in ICT provision and would deliver benefits in terms of the customer experience and also in terms of more efficient working practices. Proposals would also have implications for ICT, the Contact Centre and the Out of Hours Service.
Digital Services Impact:		X		There are no Digital Services impacts arising directly from this report. However, if accepted, proposals would lead to improvements in digital services that would deliver benefits in terms of the customer experience and also in terms of more efficient working practices.
Council Strategy Priorities:		X		There are no impacts arising directly from this report, but if adopted, the report's recommendations would help to deliver aspects of the Council Strategy related to the priority 'Ensure Sustainable Services through Innovation and Partnerships'.
Core Business:		X		Improving the customer journey is part of the core business of delivering services.

Data Impact:		X		There are no data impacts associated with this report.
Consultation and Engagement:	See full details within the report.			

4   Executive Summary

4.1   The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) established a Task and Finish Group to look at the customer journey across office hours and out-of-hours services.

4.2   The scope of the review was broken down into four main parts:

- Part 1: Out of Hours Emergency Contact Centre and Response

- Part 2: Office hours customer contacts

- Part 3: Office hours customer contacts (other local authorities)

- Part 4: Good practice and recommendations

4.3   The Group has met 12 times between April 2022 and January 2023 and considered a range of evidence.

4.4   The Task Group has identified a number of recommendations arising from this work, which are set out in Section 6 of this report.

5   Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1   The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) established a Task and Finish Group to look at the customer journey across office hours and out-of-hours services. Terms of reference were drafted with the help of senior officers, and the scope was broken down into four main parts as follows:

- Part 1: Out of Hours Emergency Contact Centre and Response

- Part 2: Office hours customer contacts

- Part 3: Office hours customer contacts (other local authorities)

- Part 4: Good practice and recommendations

5.2   The full Terms of Reference are provided in Appendix A.

Background

5.3 The Task and Finish Group met 12 times between April 2022 and January 2023. Members considered a wide range of evidence and interviewed key witnesses as shown below.

Table 5.1: Details of Task Group Meetings

Meeting Date	Focus of Meeting	Witnesses
14 April 2022	• Review of the terms of reference • Work planning	N/A
25 April 2022	• Out of Hours Service	Carolyn Richardson
17 May 2022	• Contact Centre • Digital Services	Sarah Clarke Gabrielle Mancini Sharon Ogden Phil Rumens
7 June 2022	• Interview with Chief Executive • Residents' survey • Engagement with town/parish councils • Draft member survey	Nigel Lynn Joseph Holmes Sarah Clarke Catalin Bogos
6 July 2022	• Member interview planning • Disabled customers/Adult Social Care data • Additional Out of Hours Service data	N/A
25 July 2022	• Member interviews	Cllr Alan Law Cllr Adrian Abbs Cllr Claire Rowles
9 August 2022	• Place Review – initial findings and next steps • Mystery shopping – scoping	Eric Owens Sean Murphy Anne Ewins
23 August 2022	• Adult Social Care presentation • Complaints data	Paul Coe
28 September 2022	• Review and work planning session	N/A
31 October 2022	• Member Interview • Environment presentation	Cllr Hilary Cole Jon Winstanley
21 December 2022	• Iese Review of customer demands and digitisation opportunities • Place Review - update • Planning Q&A	Sarah Clarke Eric Owens
24 January 2023	• Out of Hours Incident Reports • Out of Hours Mystery Shopping • Place Review – further update • Planning Q&A (continued)	Carolyn Richardson Eric Owens

5.4 An early focus of the review was the Out of Hours Emergency Service, and a preliminary report was brought to OSMC on 22 May 2022.

5.5   The Task and Finish Group was originally due to present its final report to the OSMC meeting on 6 September 2022. This was initially deferred to the 29 November meeting, but a further delay was subsequently requested. Reasons for the extended timescales included:

- **Scope of the review** – the wide-ranging nature of the review meant that it was impossible to complete it within the timescales originally set;

- **Member availability** – there was a need to change membership part-way through the review - Cllr Adrian Abbs replaced Cllr Lee Dillon on the Task Group from August 2022;

- **Death of Her Majesty the Queen** – officers involved in supporting the task group and providing evidence were involved in organising local events;

- **Place Review** – the timescale for completion of the Place Review had to be extended by several weeks to allow for additional consultation;

- **Leave** – Members and officers had consecutive periods of leave during September and October, during which time meetings could not take place.

5.6   In light of the resultant delays, it was agreed that the Task Group should provide an interim report to the meeting on 29 November 2022. This built on the previous report on the Emergency Out of Hours service and set out the Task Group's findings at that time. This final report sets out the Task Groups findings and final recommendations.

Findings

5.7   The findings of the Task and Finish Group are summarised below with reference to the questions contained in the Terms of Reference.

Part 1: Out of Hours Emergency Centre and Response

5.8   Currently, an Emergency Out of Hours response is provided to respond to a wide range of situations. The most common of these include the following:

- Major incidents

- Social care emergencies, safeguarding concerns or homelessness

- Highways issues (e.g. fallen trees or traffic light failure)

- Flooding of properties and roads

- Emergency repairs to Council-owned temporary accommodation

- Lost and found dogs

- Car park issues

5.9   The Out of Hours Contact Centre is provided by an external contractor. The current provider is not local to West Berkshire, so staff may not be familiar with the area and

may struggle to identify the location of issues being reported, or the knock-on implications of these issues. However, it is acknowledged that this can also be an issue even for West Berkshire Council staff. It is noted that the contract is currently out to tender.

5.10 Bracknell Forest Council provides the Emergency Out of Hours service for social care emergencies, safeguarding concerns and homelessness on behalf of all the Berkshire unitary authorities. This is a highly specialist service provided by senior social workers.

5.11 The Public Protection Partnership has a dedicated Animal Warden Team, which deals with lost and found dogs on behalf of West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest Council.

5.12 The Parking Team has an emergency duty officer on call to deal with emergencies such as customers being unable to get out of the Kennet Centre Car Park after the car park has closed.

5.13 The Out of Hours (OOH) Contact Centre is not intended to replicate the full range of Council services, or even the services provided by the Council's own Contact Centre, since the cost of this would be prohibitive. The services provided are mostly statutory requirements or are provided to mitigate the risk of serious harm to individuals or property. The Task and Finish Group considered that this was an appropriate and proportionate approach.

5.14 Incidents can only be reported to the OOH Contact Centre over the phone – there is currently no option to do this via digital channels. This reflects the fact that they are emergencies and ensures that Contact Centre staff can ask questions of clarification about the incident and its location.

5.15 The telephone number for the Out of Hours Emergency Contact Centre is different to the Council's main office hours' number. Customers may not know this and dial the wrong number. The out of hours' number is given in the pre-recorded message played when the main number is called outside of normal office hours. Based on personal experience of recent incidents, the Task and Finish Group noted that it can be difficult for customers to make a note of this if they have no means of writing it down. Alternatively, customers can look up the number on the Council's website, but this may not be possible if calling from an area with a weak mobile data signal. The Task Group considered that having an IVR option that the customer can select to be transferred to the relevant OOH service would be helpful.

5.16 Although, the telephone number for the OOH Emergency Contact Centre is provided on the website, it requires customers to click on the 'Report a Problem' page or scroll to the bottom of the homepage and click on the 'Out of Hours Emergencies' link. Members have suggested that a pop-up banner deployed using a times script be used to automatically display the number of the OOH Emergency Contact Centre outside of office hours.

5.17 Previously, the message about reporting specific emergencies outside of normal office hours was not prominently displayed on the 'Report a Problem' page of the Council's website. As a result, customers sometimes missed it and tried to report urgent matters via the website rather than to the OOH Contact Centre by telephone. Reports submitted

in this way are not picked up until the next working day, which could be too late for critical events. This issue has already been addressed by the Digital Team in response to the Task Group's feedback, with a more prominent message displayed in a contrasting colour at the top of the page.

5.18 The Task Group considered that the OOH Contact Centre should be promoted more widely (e.g. parish council websites, noticeboards, newsletters so residents are more aware of the service and can find the number easily. This would be beneficial for those who are not digitally enabled.

5.19 Members also suggested that search engine optimisation should be improved to ensure that the emergency out-of-hours number is automatically highlighted by a Bing / Google search. This has already been actioned by the Digital Team.

5.20 Customers calling the OOH Contact Centre are asked to select one of four options:

- Option 1 - to be redirected for concerns relating to social care for adults and children or homelessness

- Option 2 - to be redirected for lost or found dogs

- Option 3 - to be redirected to car park issues

- Option 4 - to be passed to a call handler for emergencies only

5.21 Statistics for the Out of Hours Service are provided in Appendix B. The initial pre-recorded message is quite long and takes just over a minute to complete. Statistics for the two year period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2022 showed that over 3% of calls were abandoned during the first 60 seconds. It would be logical to assume that in most of these cases, the caller had decided that the issue they were reporting was not an emergency.

5.22 Just over 1 in 10 calls were abandoned without the customer speaking to an operator. Nearly 70% of these were abandoned beyond the first 60 seconds after the pre-recorded message had finished, with around 40% abandoned after 3 minutes. This suggests that some genuine emergencies may have gone unreported, or the caller had delayed reporting the issue.

5.23 Call statistics for the OOH Contact Centre showed that 68% of calls were answered within 30 seconds, with 81% answered within 90 seconds. This is broadly similar to those for the Council's own contact centre (see below). However, it would be reasonable to expect a quicker response for customers reporting an emergency, since the consequences of a delay may be serious.

5.24 Some day-to-day variation in performance is to be expected. For example, call numbers increase following major incidents that affect large numbers of people. However, resources are usually increased in anticipation of additional calls arising from known events such as storms.

5.25 Currently, residents have no way of knowing if an incident has been reported to the OOH Contact Centre and is already being dealt with, since there is no way for the OOH

Contact Centre to post to the Council's social media account or the website. This means that the service may receive multiple reports for the same incident, which could add unnecessarily to call wait times for those who are reporting other incidents. The Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) Service Manager has indicated that repeat reports are not commonplace, but Members noted that repeats may be more prevalent for certain types of incident, such as those identified below.

5.26 Members of the Task Group highlighted recent incidents, where weaknesses had been exposed in the Out of Hours response, including:

- A persistent alarm at York House (a Council owned building) which rang for over 60 hours over a weekend.

- Incidents related to planning enforcement, where there had been perceived delays in obtaining and serving the appropriate enforcement notices.

5.27 Copies of incident reports for these events were requested so Members could be assured that lessons were being learned and changes implemented.

5.28 For the York House incident, a variety of issues were identified and a comprehensive action plan has since been put in place to address these. Processes have been reviewed, training plans put in place, property / contact databases have been updated / expanded, and interim alarm contracts put in place. The main issue was in relation to services not providing key-holder updates to the contact information in the manual, despite monthly prompts to do so. Members noted the challenge in maintaining databases as a result staff leaving / moving jobs, but considered that processes could be revised so HR captured this information. Also, it was noted that customers had been promised call-backs, but this had not happened. Call-backs are not normally offered, but Members felt that this would be appropriate where issues were on-going and had not been resolved within expected timeframes. Members noted that, with the exception of the call-back offers, the response from the OOH Contact Centre was as per the processes set out in the OOH Manual.

5.29 For the incidents requiring Planning Enforcement action during Bank Holiday weekends, it was noted that despite the lack of an out of hours service, officers from Planning and Legal had responded quickly. Relevant officers were named in the Out of Hours Manual, and informal processes had been put in place so managers knew in advance who would be available to respond. As a result, action was taken as quickly as on a weekday out of hours scenario, and officers were on site within a few hours. Members acknowledged that any delay was in part due to courts not being open at weekends. Officers considered that the number of incidents did not justify the additional cost of a dedicated out of hours service. There was some discussion about OOH response times. It was noted that even if Planning Enforcement Officers were not available to respond immediately, the Development Manager and other Enforcement Officers could be called upon if necessary. Overall, the Task Group was satisfied with the response, but felt that there would be some benefit in formalising some of the processes.

5.30 A further concern was in relation to the number of Emergency Duty Officers (EDOs) across the Council. Numbers have reduced over time as officers have left or have indicated that they no longer wish to perform the role. The Task Group felt that this must be addressed in order to ensure ongoing resilience and to reduce the burden on those

that remain. The Task Group also felt that it would be beneficial for Members to have contact details for the duty EDO.

5.31 Mystery shopping is not currently routinely undertaken to test the Emergency Out of Hours Contact Centre. This was done previously, but lapsed during Covid due to a lack of resource. The Task Group was keen to test the processes for both of the above scenario types. However, this requires careful planning to avoid mobilising services and incurring costs. Unfortunately, tests had to be cancelled on two occasions due to unforeseen issues. Also, with the tendering process underway it was considered not the best time to undertake such tests.

5.32 As an alternative, calls will be monitored more closely as part of a short period of additional oversight. Also, the voice message for the Out of Hours Contact Centre will be modified under the new contract to indicate that customers may be contacted for feedback and to be compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations.

5.33 Consideration was given as to where responsibility for the OOH Contact Centre should sit within Council and whether this should be managed by the Council's Contact Centre Manager, since that individual would have relevant expertise. However, it was recognised that the JEPU Service Manager would still need to be closely involved to ensure that processes were kept up to date and reviews carried out following major incidents.

Part 2: Office Hours Customer Contacts

5.34 Customers can currently contact the Council in a number of ways, including:

- In person

- By phone

- By email

- Using an online form

- Using the chatbot.

<u>Contact Centre</u>

5.35 Despite a shift towards use of digital communications channels in recent years, the Contact Centre is still the main point of contact for many customers. Advisors operate the Council's switchboard and the Contact Centre also offers in person, telephone and email customer service on behalf of a range of Council services under a service level agreement, including:

- Revenues

- Benefits

- Planning

- Streetcare

- Waste

- Children's Services

- Concessionary Fares

- Environmental Health

- Libraries

- Parking

5.36 Many of the above services have their own contact numbers, and residents are encouraged to use these to avoid double handling by the switchboard. However, this can be confusing for the customer, particularly where they have a need to deal with multiple services.

5.37 Contact centre advisors may be trained to answer queries for one or more of the above services. However, they generally deal with simpler, information-only queries. Calls that require technical advice are usually referred to professionals within the service. However, this excludes Revenues as the team discusses and sets payment arrangements, assists those in financial difficulty where cases have resulted in summonses and liability orders and discuss and agree Special Payments Arrangements. The team takes details of deaths, change of address, change of liability, change of payment methods as well as other general queries. These calls are rarely referred to the back office as reflected in the stats for resolution at the first point of contact. Also, Highways and Waste have information gathered and recorded.

5.38 Call volumes for the last two financial years are shown in Appendix C. This shows that the majority of calls were to the switchboard, Streetcare (including Waste), and Council Tax.

5.39 The table below shows how the Contact Centre's performance compares with some industry standard metrics[1].

Table 5.1: WBC Contact Centre Performance vs Industry Standards

	WBC Contact Centre	**Industry Standard**
First contact resolution	85-90%	70-75%
Call answering	75-83% of calls answered within 90 seconds	80% of calls answered within 20 seconds
Call abandon rate	5-9%	2-5%

5.40 Although these industry standards for key metrics include call centres of commercial organisations and relate to 2018, they still provide useful context. The figures show that the Council's Contact Centre performs well on first contact resolution, but less so on call

---

[1] Standards provided by callcentrehelper.com (2018 data)

answering and the call abandon rate, although it is recognised that this performance reflected the vacancy rate at that time.

5.41 As would be expected, there may be significant variations within these statistics, subject to: call volumes, the complexity of the queries received, and advisor availability. Metrics for Q4 2021/22 showed that nearly all calls to the switchboard were answered within 90 seconds, but for some services, such as Council Tax, this figure dropped to around 50-60%. Also, first contact resolution statistics varied significantly between services. Queries about Benefits and Council Tax were most likely to be resolved first time (typically 95% or more), but figures were much lower for queries to Children's Services and Planning (between 29 and 56%).

5.42 The Contact Centre's target for call answering was relaxed from 80% of calls being answered within 30 seconds to 80% being answered within 90 seconds following the loss of two FTE staff in order to deliver savings. (The Task Group discovered a previous set of contact standards from 2015 that set a target of calls to the switchboard being answered within 15 seconds.) This change had also affected the average wait time for customers arriving at reception, which had increased from 8 to 10 minutes.

5.43 The Council recently adopted a Customer Charter, which promises to answer switchboard calls within two minutes and return messages within 24 hours. The Task Group was disappointed not to have been consulted on this prior to adoption, given that officers were aware of the Task Group.

5.44 Customers who have telephoned the Council are not told what position they are in the queue, or how long it is likely to take to answer their call. Systems that provide this information are considered industry best-practice and were introduced to reduce customer frustration. If a caller knows that they are likely to have a long wait, then they can make an informed decision as to whether they should remain on the call or try again at a different time when there may be less of a queue.

5.45 The Contact Centre generally attracts a low level of complaints (<0.1%) and staff regularly receive compliments from customers. However, the service does not routinely undertake mystery shopper or customer satisfaction surveys. A paid-for system was used previously, but the results were difficult to extract and analyse, so this system was not maintained.

5.46 Members reported that when they had rung the contact centre, the advisors had not always included 'West Berkshire Council' in their greeting. This was considered important to reassure customers that they had dialled the correct number. This issue has already been addressed by the Customer Service Manager.

5.47 The Council currently has an outdated phone system with a manual switchboard. Customers who ask to be put through to an individual officer are frustrated when the officer cannot take the call. Key issues include:

- The switchboard operator is unable to see in advance if the officer is available to take the call, or if they are in a meeting / on another call.

- There is no option for the caller to return to the switchboard if the officer is unavailable. This is a particular source of irritation for some Members.

- There are no 'hunting groups' set up to divert the call to other team members if the first officer is unable to take the call.

5.48 The Council currently uses Openscape for voice calls. Most officers use this to divert their work number to their work mobiles and also to make calls through their work mobiles, even when in the office. However, some officers do not have work mobiles, which means that some calls end up leaving the Council's network entirely. Desk phones are available in the offices, but are rarely used by officers, particularly those who are used to remote working.

5.49 The Task Group learned that the Council was looking to implement a new phone system with an automated switchboard and an interactive voice response (IVR) system that would seek to address some of the issues identified above.

Website

5.50 Use of the Council's website has increased significantly in recent years, which has helped to relieve demand on other channels. Website traffic is around 2.5 times higher now than in 2015, while the number of calls to the Contact Centre has remained broadly unchanged. Online interactions are undoubtedly more efficient and therefore cheaper than other forms of customer contact. However, they are not appropriate for all forms of contact (particularly customers with complex enquiries) and not all customers are comfortable in engaging in this way or have the skills or technology to be able to do so. Therefore, a multi-channel approach is still needed.

5.51 Key functions of the website include:

- Finding information

- Reporting problems

- Booking systems for events and household waste recycling centre visits

- Application forms and other online forms

- Taking payments

- Logins for different customer accounts

5.52 The Task Group highlighted perceived weaknesses with the website's search functionality (as confirmed by the Member survey and interviews – see below). Currently, only around 4% of visits to the website involve use of the search facility. Feedback on the search facility is actively sought, but in Q4 of 2021/22, just 56 people provided feedback to say that they could not find what they were looking for (0.13% of searches). Where feedback was provided, search functionality was improved. However, it is recognised that the search function will never be as comprehensive as that offered by proprietary search engines such as Google and Bing, which generate around half of all visits to the website.

5.53 The website has been the subject of a recent review. As a result, it has a completely new look, and the structure was the subject of a public consultation exercise. This has

been designed to help users to navigate the site and find information more easily. Initial feedback suggests that this has been successful.

5.54 Customers use a variety of different devices to access the Council's website, which presents its own challenges in terms of ensuring that information displays correctly and functionality is maintained. Currently, 51% of visits to the website are by mobile phone, 43% by desktop PCs and 6% via tablets.

5.55 The Task Group highlighted some issues with the new-look website, particularly in relation to accessibility tools and the navigation menu not being visible at all times. Also, it was considered that navigation was not as good as it could be for mobile phone users. However, it was accepted that the website had been designed in accordance with government guidance, which may differ to best practice for commercial organisations, and accessibility tools are generally built into the browser rather than part of the website. Councillor Adrian Abbs is an expert on website and user interface design and provided the Task Group with a detailed set of observations which were passed to the Digital Team.

5.56 Recent website successes included the move to digital permits for the recycling centres, as well as delivery of several major projects to support the response to the Covid pandemic, such as the Test and Trace Fund applications and Covid Winter Grant applications. Also, a chatbot has been introduced, which can be used to answer frequently asked questions. Initially, this had very limited functionality, but an apprentice has recently been appointed to develop this. There may be potential to consider use of AI services to enhance the chatbot in future.

5.57 A key focus for the Digital Team is improving the integration of the website with numerous third-party applications and websites to create a seamless experience for the customer. This can be supported through use of APIs. Also, the Task Group welcomed the move to provide customers with a single login for different services, although there is still some way to go with this, with multiple logins still required for various third party systems that are currently accessed via the Council's website.

5.58 The Member Survey also highlighted issues with the Council's intranet and it was suggested that this could be improved to better direct Member queries. For example Members felt that it would be useful to have up to date organisation charts on the Intranet. The Digital Team confirmed that a review of the intranet was underway, with services being asked to review and update their content.

5.59 Another point highlighted by the Member Surveys was the fact that Members did not know how to use the ModernGov system. Provision of training would help to improve their customer experience and would potentially save officer time in dealing with queries relating to meeting agendas and minutes.

Provision for Disabled Customers

5.60 The Equality Act 2010 requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments to ensure as far as possible that people with disabilities can access the same services and facilities as someone who is not disabled. A person is considered to be disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse

effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. These adjustments could be made by:

- Changing the way things are done

- Changing physical features

- Providing extra aids or services

5.61 Facilities and services that the Council currently provides for disabled customers, include:

- Accessible offices

- Accessible public toilets and changing facilities

- Assisted bin collections

- Blue badge parking

- British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation via video relay for deaf customers visiting the contact centre

- Easy read versions of some documents

- Hearing loop in the Council Chamber

- Captions for live-streamed public meetings

- Social care and respite care for disabled adults, young people and children

- Transport assistance, including concessionary fares for public transport, and provision of accessible taxis

- Provision of the West Berkshire Directory, which contains information for disabled adults and their carers, and for young people, families and professionals supporting families with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

5.62 OSMC previously received a suggestion that there should be live BSL interpretation of public meetings. This would be very labour intensive and costly to implement for all meetings as a matter of course. There is currently no requirement on local authorities to offer this service and no requests for such a service have been received. As an alternative, it may be that BSL interpretations of public meetings could be provided upon request. Further guidance will be provided by Central Government on the back of the BSL Act 2022.

5.63 Irrespective of any future guidance, the Task Group considered that it would be appropriate for the Council to produce BSL videos about key services. Hertfordshire County Council was identified as an example of where this has already been done[2]. It

---

[2] https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/accessibility/british-sign-language-bsl-videos.aspx

is understood that Adult Social Care has looked at this previously, but has yet to progress it.

5.64 Similarly, considerations should be given to producing more 'easy read' versions of key documents and communications.

5.65 The Council has various forums for engaging with disabled customers, including the Learning Disability Partnership Board and Carers Support Group. However, the Task Group noted that the Disability External Scrutiny Board had lapsed following transfer of responsibility from the Council to Citizens Advice.

5.66 The Council also has contracts with Citizens Advice, Educafé, Eight Bells and Dementia Friendly West Berkshire which provide services, support and advocacy for disabled residents and service users.

5.67 The Council has recently undertaken a lot of work to inform its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and a consultant was appointed to progress this. A needs assessment has been completed which will sit alongside information from community engagement to form the evidence base that will help to inform priorities for further work, including improvements to provision for disabled residents and service users. This will be set out in a new EDI Framework, which is expected to be completed in summer 2023. Given that this work is progressing, there would be little benefit in the Task Group undertaking parallel engagement with disabled groups at this stage.

<u>Interviews with Council Departments</u>

5.68 The Task Group undertook interviews with a number of individual Council departments. These were selected on the basis of:

- Number of customer contacts

- Residents' Survey feedback (i.e. services where the highest proportion of residents consider that improvement are required)

- Complaints data

5.69 Additionally, the review took account of the needs of elected councillors. As well as being a unique category of customers in their own right, they also had key insights about other customer journeys gained from correspondence with local residents and businesses.

5.70 A survey was sent to all West Berkshire Council Members and nine responses were received. In addition, four Members indicated that they wished to raise particular issues related to the customer journey with the Task and Finish Group directly, so a series of interviews were arranged. The results of the Member Survey are shown in Appendix D.

5.71 On this basis the following Council departments were selected for further investigation:

- Adult Social Care

- Development and Regulation, and

- Environment.

<u>Adult Social Care</u>

5.72 The review focused on care management where customers' experience is based on Commissioning and Procurement, external providers, and health partners, as well as ASC staff. Initial customer contact is mostly via the Contact Centre, and the Housing Team is also involved as necessary.

5.73 The ASC offer is determined by the Care Act 2014 - duties include:

- To prevent, reduce and delay the need for support (e.g. through provision of advice, equipment and practical support, or acting to help those at risk of falls so they do not incur injuries that would require care).

- To provide information about services available in the community.

- To undertake assessment of clients' eligibility for long-term support or carers' eligibility for support.

- To review clients with existing services to ensure they were still effective.

- To ensure that there are sufficient independent care providers in the market.

5.74 Other duties are set out in the Mental Health Act and the Mental Capacity Act.

5.75 ASC uses a 'Three Conversations' model with customers:

1) Information, advice, or short-term practical support

2) Managing the situation for people in crisis

3) Arranging long-term support / care

5.76 This is important in terms of managing the cost to the Council but also in ensuring that customers get the right response.

5.77 The service has adopted a strengths based approach based on what the person can do for themselves and is person-centred, seeking to understand what the customer wants / needs. There is a good crisis response with practical interventions to stabilise customers. The aim is to help people to take responsibility and manage themselves wherever they can and to only provide long-term care when absolutely necessary.

5.78 For clients who lack mental capacity to engage in assessment / safeguarding processes, ASC provides an independent advocate where there is no suitable friend / family member – this can be a slow process due to the lack of available advocates.

5.79 There are also particular challenges when young people with learning difficulties transition into adulthood. Often parents find this difficult, since they are no longer central to the process. Members highlighted the importance of communications to ensure that clients do not feel disenfranchised.

5.80 The ASC Service is organised in three localities – East, West and Central - based on the geography of GP practices and communications with GPs is generally good. Officers considered that this works better than the previous model, with one team looking after all people in an area rather than having different teams based on the particular needs of the individual.

5.81 ASC performance is reviewed on a monthly basis, with a quarterly paper to Corporate Board. Key metrics provided at the time of the interview are provided below:

- For community referrals, around 90% of customers received information, advice, equipment, while less than 6% received long-term services.

- For hospital discharges, more people needed long-term care

- Just under 300 people were on an ASC waiting list, with 37% waiting for over 3 months, but the trend was broadly improving

- Annual care reviews were just below the 70% target, but this was not considered critical, since customers were already receiving care and the most common outcome was for customers to continue receiving care at the same level

5.82 The Council is expected to take appropriate action to 'manage the market' and ensure that the care available locally is matched to demand in terms of the type and capacity, and examples were provided of conversations that had taken place with providers. The Council has published a market position statement, which sets out current provisions and gaps, and has had discussions with providers on the back of this.

5.83 Care homes must register with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and meet their requirements. The CQC ensures that facilities are of an appropriate quality. Inspections flag any issues that the provider needs to address, and in exceptional circumstances, the CQC can close a care home. ASC's Care Quality Team talked regularly to the CQC about local providers, and as a care home provider the Council is also registered with and inspected by the CQC. Ratings are as follows:

- Notrees = 'good'

- Willows Edge = 'good'

- Reablement Service = 'good'

- Shared Lives Scheme = 'good'

- Birchwood = 'requires improvement'

5.84 There is a potential issue with 'capital depleted' individuals who place themselves in a care home and then run out of money. Numbers of 'capital depleted' clients are currently low (8-12 per year), but slowly growing.

5.85 In terms of the mechanics of customer interactions, customers use:

- An online directory of voluntary and commercial services in their community

- Internet pages with advice and self-service forms

- A hardcopy care directory listing local providers

- Email

- Telephone

5.86 ASL has a dedicated number that routes customers via the Contact Centre. As mentioned previously, an automated switchboard that allowed customers to select the service they wanted could obviate the need for a separate number.

5.87 The Contact Centre provides an effective filter that removes non-ASC calls and is considered better than having a Front Door Team within ASC. After the initial call, customers are looked after by the relevant locality team.

5.88 Drop-in facilities are available at Market Street, Turnhams Green, Hillcroft and Walnut Close. The long-term aspiration is to have more of a High Street presence in eastern and central areas of the district, which would make it easier for customers to access information and advice. The Task Group supports this aspiration.

5.89 The Council contracts with a range of providers to deliver key services. Bracknell Forest Council is commissioned to provide an emergency out of hours ASC service, mostly for mental health crises, and allowed people to be assessed under the Mental Health Act. TuVida and CAB are commissioned to provide advice to local carers.

5.90 The Council is also part of a commissioning group (Berkshire Equipment Service) that contracts with NRS. The Council buys equipment directly from NRS or customers are directed to the service. NRS also offers a self-assessment service.

5.91 The task group asked about use of technology to support people to remain in their own homes. It was confirmed that while NRS provides and monitors motion sensors, many clients do not like them.

5.92 24/7 management cover is provided for the Council's own care homes, and also to support hospital discharge at the weekend.

5.93 In relation to domiciliary care, the in-house Reablement Service works with clients to build skills and manage their own lives successfully. The majority of care is commissioned through a range of providers. There is an accredited providers list and organised according to local geographical areas. It is acknowledged that there are not enough people doing care jobs and people living in remote areas are difficult to serve.

5.94 Members asked about the prevalence of modern slavery involving carers. While there is currently no evidence of cases in West Berkshire, it is acknowledged that this may go undetected. The Council has processes in place to handle modern slavery reports, but these are not owned by ASC. The Care Quality Team undertakes inspections (planned and unannounced) in addition to the CQC inspections. However, modern slavery is considered to be more likely in privately commissioned live-in care for individuals, which is not regulated.

5.95 Government reforms to Adult Social Care will have significant impacts, including a cap on care costs and the ability of self-funders to request that local authorities commissioned their care. Currently, most customers are given advice, information, support and short-term commissioned activity, with only a few receiving commissioned care. However, under planned reforms, many more customers are expected to ask the Council to commission their care, which will place significant additional demands on the service. Members noted that this could potentially impact on the customer experience unless capacity can be increased.

5.96 The ASC service is developing digital solutions to cope with the predicted increase in enquiries. The Council will be required to agree an independent personal budget for each client and the aim is to automate the process as far as possible. The Task Group highlighted that many older people are not online or are not confident using online services, and stressed that ASC services should not be digital only. This is recognised by officers and the intention is to build digital pathways for those who can use them, which will release capacity for face-to-face services for those who cannot.

5.97 Care Director (the care management IT system) is also being upgraded. This is key to modernising the service and improving efficiency, but is taking much longer than anticipated. It is hoped that the new version will be operational later this year.

5.98 Another key change will be the introduction of Care Quality Commission inspections of ASC services from 2023. This will provide a further check on performance.

5.99 Discharge from hospital is a key activity that affects the customer journey, with many people experiencing significant delays due to a lack of available care. ASC is in regular dialogue with the Royal Berkshire Hospital regarding hospital discharges. There are also link workers at North Hampshire and Great Western Hospitals. More recently, central government has announced additional funding to support hospital discharge.

5.100 The Task Group considered safeguarding issues. Statistics are reported quarterly to Corporate Board. In 93.7% of cases the risk is reduced or removed. However, in a small number of cases, customers do not want ASC to take action.

5.101 The Task Group asked Paul Coe about his main worries for the service. A key consideration for the service is the care delivered in the Council's own care homes, since that is wholly ASC's responsibility. Another key focus for ASC is tackling the waiting list, since that represents customers who need support, but are yet to receive a service. Members asked how waiting times compare to other local authorities. It was explained that there is not an easy way to work this out due differences in the monitoring methodologies. However, they are considered to be broadly similar.

5.102 The Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) is a statutory survey that is carried out every two years in accordance with national guidance. Results for 201/22 show that West Berkshire performs well in comparison with the England average. With the exception of Information and Advice Quality, West Berkshire is above the England average for all domains. Key actions being taken include provision of improved online services and updating the West Berkshire Directory in conjunction with Communities and Wellbeing.

5.103 The Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework measures highlights areas where performance has changed compared to previous years:

- 1B – The proportion of service users who feel they have control over their daily life has dropped, which is likely to be linked to the pandemic, particularly since the survey was sent out in January 2022 when the impact of the Omicron variant was being felt.

- 1L – The proportion of service users who report that they have as much social contact as they would like is up from last year but still down from pre COVID levels.

- 3A - Overall satisfaction with care and support is down slightly, but by less than 1%.

- 3D1 – The proportion of service users who find it easy to find information has improved and is above the England average, which is in contrast to feedback from the Carers' Survey.

- 4A – The proportion of users who feel safe has dropped by 7%, but this is impacted by issues wider than ASC.

5.104 A quick review of the qualitative responses to this question show that the majority of responses relate to:

- Concerns about falls / mobility

- Mental health and anxiety issues are causing people to feel unsafe (possibly heightened by the pandemic and fear of going out having isolated for so long)

- Customers' environment (going out alone, going out at night, poor relationship with neighbours, security of their home).

5.105 Work has been progressed through the Ageing Well Task Group to support older people during the pandemic. Subsequently, the focus has been on:

- Covid recovery, engaging residents who are isolated or at risk of falling to increase confidence to get out again;

- Exploring falls data in light of the pandemic and looking at ways to further reduce the risk of falling

- Encouraging residents back to physical activities & social connection

- Ensuring those who are housebound have opportunities to be active and connected

Development and Regulation

5.106 The main focus of the review was on the Planning Service and particularly the Place Review.

5.107 In undertaking the Place Review, the consultants had looked at the customer journey for both planning applications and policy, and had met with developers and agents, but not with individual applicants.

5.108 Calls to the Planning Service come in through the Contact Centre. With over 8,000 calls per year, it is one of the more high-volume services. However, it has one of the lowest levels of first contact resolution, which is linked to the technical nature of customer enquiries. Calls that cannot be resolved are forwarded to the Duty Planning Officer for consideration.

5.109 As a result of the Place Review, the Planning Service is changing its approach to planning applications. Applicants are no longer given informal advice and are encouraged to seek formal pre-app advice.

5.110 The focus is now on front-loading applications. Previously, effort was focused on the determination phase, where officers negotiated on applications post-submission. This could take months of work, and tied up a lot of resource. Also, it did not produce the best applications. The move towards greater use of pre-app advice is in line with national guidance. This will help to speed up the process and will give more certainty to applicants, thus improving their customer journey.

5.111 To support the revised processes, the Planning Service has updated its web pages and guidance. For minor applications, one minor amendment is permitted, while for major applications, one round of changes is permitted. After that, the applicant is offered the choice to withdraw or have the application refused at which point they can decide if they want to appeal the decision.

5.112 Members highlighted a particular application that had been rejected as invalid, and noted that the additional information sought had conflicted with information provided on the website. It was stressed that advice on the website needed to be correct. Officers confirmed that a new planning application validation checklist is being developed, which should address this point.

5.113 Members highlighted an example of a customer journey where installation of solar panels at an office complex had required a full planning application, and consequently the management company had considered this too complicated and costly and had decided not to proceed. The challenge of insulating older properties was also highlighted. Members suggested that the Planning Service could work with the Environmental Delivery Team to offer a different, more integrated service.

5.114 The Task Group cited another example where a business owner was seeking to convert an office to a sui generis use. Despite being a relatively simple change, the applicant had been deterred by the complexity of the planning system, the need to engage a planning consultant and the cost of the process. Members suggested that the Council should provide more help (e.g. guidance, webinars, videos) to give confidence to people making simple applications. Officers stressed that, although recommended, there was no requirement to engage a planning agent, they accepted that additional guidance could be provided, and they stated that costs of applications and the need for planning permission were determined by legislation, use class orders, case law, etc.

5.115 The Task Group highlighted emerging legislation that will require better developer engagement with local communities, and suggested that developers could be encouraged to use apps to engage with local communities. These apps could potentially be integrated with the Council's website (subject to Digital Team resource) to provide updates on major developments in the area. It was noted that Watford Borough Council's website had a tab linking to information about all major developments in the local authority - a similar functionality is proposed for West Berkshire. This will help customers to self-serve for information requests. Members suggested that information could also be pushed to customers.

5.116 Suggestions were made about areas where the Council's website could provide better support for customers (for example, provide links to where customers can purchase a map or pay for a planning application).

5.117 Officers highlighted that 50% of first applications were invalid and that some agents had used this as a validation process. Members highlighted an application that had been rejected as invalid, but the additional information sought had conflicted with information provided on the website. It was stressed that advice on the website needed to be correct. Officers confirmed that a new planning application validation checklist was being developed.

5.118 In relation to the 'important dates' tab on the Planning Portal, Members suggested that it would be useful to provide: the date the orange notice was posted, the closing date for objections, and the date for Member call-in.

5.119 Officers highlighted that they were working on a tool that would allow customers to see live updates of where their application was in the process. A well as improving the customer journey, this will help to reduce the number of incoming calls. The validation letter currently advises customers not to call before 21 days had elapsed to allow for consultation responses to be received.

5.120 Members raised issues with orange notices being difficult to read and hard to find, particularly for large sites or where they are erected in locations that residents might not usually visit. While content is determined by legislation, officers confirmed that the format could be reviewed. Orange notices are often a source of conflict and have occasionally been removed by disgruntled stakeholders. Case officers are asked to take photos to show when and where they have been put up.

5.121 The Task Group highlighted that other customers included neighbours of applicants and parish / town councils. Neighbours are no longer notified by letter of nearby applications. While residents can register to be automatically notified by email of nearby applications, this does not cater for the needs of residents who are not digitally enabled. Members suggested that residents could be sent e-newsletters that dealt with topics of interest, including applications in their area. However, they would have to opt in to receive this. This would have to be linked to a wider communications piece.

5.122 Members highlighted that parish / town councils have concerns about the planning applications process and how their views had been taken into account as part of the Place Review. Officers provided reassurance that parish / town councils had been surveyed and actions were identified within the Service Improvement Plan to address

issues raised. For example, reports will be amended to better show how parish / town council comments on individual planning applications have been taken into account.

5.123 The Task Group highlighted an issue with the length of time that parish / town councils were given to consider and respond to planning applications. Some parish councils only met every two months, so had to arrange a special meeting if they wanted to comment on a particular application. Also, residents often got in touch with their parish council late in the consultation period, and parish councils had previously been able to request an extension of the consultation period.

5.124 Officers provided reassurance that consultees were given 21 days plus up to a further 14 days at the discretion of the planning authority. Also, any consultee would still be able to ask for an extension of the time period for submission of comments, as under the existing system. Advice and support had been offered to parish / town councils about the new arrangements, and around half had taken up the offer.

5.125 It was also highlighted that there was a need to balance engagement with the time taken to process the applications. The changes introduced were considered to provide increased transparency in how the service dealt with parish / town councils.

5.126 It was acknowledged that responding to new guidance on Nutrient Neutrality Zones had caused delays to determination of planning applications and a lack of staff resources had also contributed to delays.

5.127 The Task Group highlighted that under the new system, applications are removed from the inbox once parish / town councils submit their comments, but the parish / town councils may want to make further comments. Assurance was provided that any party can make comments up until the point that the report is written, but they may not be able to do this through the system. The Task Group considered that additional guidance should be provided within the new system to clarify that comments out of time could still be emailed.

5.128 The Task Group considered the use of Planning Advisory Groups (PAGs), which allowed engagement with residents. These are used by other local authorities for major developments, sometimes after planning permission has been granted and where there was some flexibility in relation to detail. A common complaint amongst town / parish councils is that they had no involvement in developments post-approval. Developers are mostly interested in realising a financial return, and have little interest in the design of communal aspects of the development, while residents wanted to be involved in the design of these aspects. An example was given of a development in Hungerford where the Town Council was taking a lead on landscaping. PAGs could provide a useful mechanism to engage all relevant parties to ensure they had an input.

5.129 There was some discussion of the Community Infrastructure Levy system and processes used by the Council. The Member interviews had highlighted issues that had arisen in relation to previous planning applications and it was suggested that the Planning Service could be more proactive in highlighting to customers where information was missing from forms.

Environment

5.130 The Environment Department comprises the following services:

- Transport and Parking

- Network Management

- Asset Management

- Countryside Services

- Waste Management

- Environment Delivery

5.131 The Department does not have many customer-facing officers, and relies heavily on Contact Centre to deal with common enquiries and to filter calls.

5.132 Streetcare attracts the most Contact Centre enquiries of any Council service, which suggests that there may be opportunities to improve online information / services. The Department has a lot of information on the website, but little feedback is received from customers or the Digital Team. The Task Group suggested that the Digital Team could provide Google Analytics data for key Environment web pages. This would show where customers were arriving and how they were using the website. The information could be used to simplify and improve the customer journey. Also, the effects of changes to the website could be analysed. This is being actioned by officers.

5.133 Around 12,000 issues are reported each year via the 'report a problem' page on the Council's; website each year. Officers have identified various issues with system based on customer feedback, including:

- Difficulty in determining the correct option for reporting particular problems (e.g. flooding)

- There is no information to guide the user, which can make it more difficult to submit the report and for the user to provide subsequent updates.

- Unnecessarily complicated reporting pathways that resulted in more clicks than is necessary.

- Existing reports not being shown on the map, which can result in duplicate reports being submitted.

- A limited number of address points being returned for postcode searches.

- Clicking on the map can sometimes result in a message incorrectly being displayed to say that the location is not within West Berkshire.

- There is no option to attach photos of the problem.

- It is not linked to Volker's systems, so queries have to be closed when they are passed to the contractor.

- Customers cannot track progress with their reported problems

- There is only limited use of data for asset management purposes.

5.134 The Task Group explored a particular customer journey with officers where there have been difficulties in selecting the correct option and in submitting subsequent updates in relation to the reported issue. It was acknowledged that the front page is not interactive and the categories could be made clearer. It was suggested that the number of clicks could be reduced by having a range of problems on the front page with icons to provide visual clues to the customer, similar to the system used by Devon County Council. It was also suggested that help buttons could be provided to provide the customer with additional information about each option.

5.135 The 'report a problem' page is being replaced with a new proprietary system, which will address many of the above issues, giving an end-to-end customer journey. It will be also be linked to the Council's asset management system to allow customers to select individual items that are faulty. The new system has already been rolled out for potholes, highway, drainage and street-lighting issues and will be rolled out to Countryside, Transport and Parking later this year. Further improvements will be delivered when Volker Highways updates their system. The new 'report a problem' system will include a customer satisfaction tool and KPIs will be developed for this.

5.136 Members suggested that assets belonging to town / parish councils should be identified on the 'report a problem' system, and that customers could be informed of who they needed to contact if the asset did not belong to West Berkshire Council. This is being progressed and will be rolled out later this year.

5.137 Out of office hours, calls are handled by the Out of Hours Contact Centre. Also, duty Out of Hours officers are available for Highways, Parking and Transport. (The Transport Duty Officer is only required for public transport operating hours.) In addition, the Highways contractor has 24/7 cover as part of their contract. It was confirmed that there are sufficient numbers of officers available to provide cover.

5.138 Proactive communications with residents include the Environment Newsletter (4,200 circulation), project notifications, use of the One.network tool to highlight roadworks locations, use of the Commonplace consultation tool, and blogs for major works. However, Members considered that that the newsletter sign-up page was not easy to find on the website.

5.139 Various consultations have been carried out to seek residents' feedback. Areas of strong performance include: scheme specific consultation and engagement; customer facing transformation improvements; Environment Strategy engagement; and dealing with and keeping the customer informed about high volume, short duration service requests.

5.140 Areas where officers had identified communications could be improved included: providing proactive network management information (e.g. through the website, monthly newsletter, social media, etc); website content; mystery shopping; seeking customer

feedback; achieving a more consistent approach to customer service across the department; and managing longer duration enquiries.

5.141 The Council takes part in the National Highways and Transportation Network public satisfaction survey. This shows that West Berkshire's performance is slightly better than average.

5.142 The Task Group sought further information regarding involvement in the Parish Climate Forum. Around 16-17 parish councils regularly attend the Forum meetings, but engagement of local environmental groups is recognised as an issue. Members highlighted that parish councillors are often not involved in these environmental groups or do not have the mechanisms to disseminate information to them. It was suggested that Adoddle could be used to engage with these groups and the associated database could be used when organising climate events.

<u>Iese Review</u>

5.143 The Task Group received a presentation on a recent review undertaken by the Iese consultancy. This looked at:

- Customer demand

- How staff are able to resolve demand within current systems

- Potential options to strengthen the customer and staff experience.

5.144 The study focussed on Customer Services and Digital Services, but also on demand in Council Tax and Planning as high volume areas.

5.145 Key findings from the study included:

- 38% of the workload is considered 'failure demand', i.e. avoidable demand that arises due to a service not being delivered as expected, or through customer confusion.

- Almost half of failure demand (47%) is due to customer communications (e.g. customers wanting to check a status of a case or balance). Even when customers have accounts or want to do something online there may be ICT issues (13% of failure demand).

- 'Process' is another major failure demand category (31%), much of this is due to contractor performance (e.g. for waste) and submission of information for Revenues and Benefits and/or between departments (e.g. a house move).

- Even though the majority of contact (62%) relates to 'value demand' (i.e. valid demand that adds value to the customer), there are still 'waste processes' hidden within this, for instance the Customer Services Team playing a switchboard role (16% of all demand)

- Other examples of waste processes include sending customers hardcopy forms (9% of all demand) and confirming general policy that should be available on the website (17%).

- With a fully functioning customer portal much of the effort in the 39% of confirming statuses and balances and creating or updating cases could be removed through more effective customer self-service, although such a portal would come at a significant cost.

5.146 A number of opportunities for improvement have been identified:

- Increased automation will increase capacity to devote more time to vulnerable customers and those unable to self-serve, providing help and generalist guidance and ensuring that people are given warm hand-overs to specialists.

- Addressing failure demand will give Customer Services Advisors (CSAs) time to undertake work such as setting-up payment plans and other business support services

- CSAs spend 48% of their time passing demand on to other parts of the Council or leaving the next action with the customer. More should be done to ensure demand is resolved at the initial point of contact

- Process reviews could be undertaken to identify further triage and other type activities that the Customer Service Team could manage on behalf of services

- Improvements to telephony arrangements would ensure calls are not dropped when transferred from Customer Services to back office functions

- Some demand could be avoided through clearer and easier to find web information, a more effective customer portal and an automated switchboard system.

- Some demand is likely driven by the Council's tendency to offer-up phone numbers as a first contact option and a number of forms not being built into the website

- Some customer facing systems e.g. those for setting up payments or direct debits can be difficult to use and experience frequent outages and could be improved

- Back office systems also have similar issues, which causes issues for the CS Team

5.147 The Task Group welcomed the report. Members noted that some people would still struggle to fill out a PDF form online due to a lack of IT skills. However, for these people, customer advisors would be able to fill out the form on behalf of the customer, which would save on postage costs and would be quicker for the customer.

6   Proposals

6.1   This section sets out the Task Group's findings. Some of the issues identified have already been raised with officers and have already been actioned, are in progress, or are programmed. Others remain outstanding and it is recommended that these should be referred to Executive for further consideration. An indicative prioritisation system has been used to highlight the actions that the Task Group considers to be most important.

Part 1: Out of Hours Emergency Centre and Response

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead
1	In order to help the OOH Contact Centre to locate incidents reported by customers, they could consider using the 'What 3 Words' app to allow locations to be pin-pointed to a 3m x 3m square. This is already used by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and is particularly useful in locating a problem that is not at a particular address point. This is considered to be a quick win.	Medium	JEPU
2	When a customer calls the main Council number out of hours, there should be options that the customer can select so the call is transferred to the relevant OOH Service. This would mean that customers would not have to note down the number and redial.	High	JEPU and Contact Centre
3	A pop-up banner should automatically be generated on the Council's website via a timed script when the offices are closed. This would help customers looking for information about the OOH Contact Centre.	High	JEPU and Digital Team
4	Information about how to report emergency incidents out of hours should be disseminated via town / parish council websites, newsletters and noticeboards. Other opportunities should also be investigated, such as information on existing signage in public locations. This is considered a quick win.	Low	JEPU and Comms Team
5	Consider how social media could be used to disseminate information about emergency incidents to the public, e.g. with a feed to the Council's home page. This would help to inform residents that the OOH Service is aware of an incident, and to communicate related messages about diversion routes, and when the incident has been resolved. It is recognised that there would be an additional cost for this service.	Medium	JEPU and Comms Team

6	Consider formalising processes around Planning Enforcement arrangements (e.g. circulation of lists of officers who would be available over Bank Holiday weekends).	Medium	Development and Regulation
7	Take action to increase the number of Emergency Duty Officers to at least 10, and seek to maintain numbers at this level thereafter.	High (Complete)	JEPU
8	Consider giving the EDO number to Members, so they can get hold of the relevant person in the event of an emergency.	Medium	JEPU
9	Ensure there is provision for customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping exercises for the Emergency Out of Hours Contact Centre. This would help ensure that quality standards are maintained and the service meets customer expectations.	Medium	JEPU
10	Changes should be made to the Out of Hours Service Manual escalation process to ensure that customers receive a call-back from a senior officer in response to ongoing issues if they have not been resolved after a defined period of time.	High	JEPU
11	The option of having the Council's Contact Centre Manager managing the Emergency Out of Hours contract should be explored, since there are strong synergies between the two operations.	Medium	JEPU and Contact Centre

Part 2: Office Hours Customer Contacts

Contact Centre and Phone System

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
12	Consider cross-training more contact centre advisors so they are able to deal with a wider range of customer queries.	Medium	Contact Centre
13	Replacement of the Council's phone system should be prioritised and the new system should include an automatic switchboard with IVR, to allow people to self-serve in terms of selecting the officers or services that they want to speak to.	Medium (Programmed)	ICT
14	The new phone system should allow callers to be alerted if an officer is not available to take the call and to be given the options to: leave a message, return to	High (Programmed)	ICT

	the switchboard, or to speak to another officer (with appropriate 'hunt groups' set up).		
15	Callers to the Contact Centre who are placed on hold should be provided with information about their place in the queue, or anticipated wait time until their call is answered to allow them to make an informed decision as to whether to remain on hold or call back.	High (Programmed)	ICT
16	Mystery shopping and customer satisfaction surveys should be routinely undertaken to better understand how staff are performing, if scripts are being followed, and if the service is meeting customer expectations and standards set out in the new customer charter.	Medium	Contact Centre

Website

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
17	Consider revising the layout of the website, so that navigation menus are available at all times (i.e. through use of a mega-menu), and to optimise displays on all devices, particularly mobile phones.	Medium	Digital Team
18	Consider how customer journeys via the Council's website can be optimised to shorten the number of interactions.	High	Digital Team
19	The Council should run workshops to see if the report a problem page can be made easier for customers to use.	Low	Digital Team and Environment
20	There should be further integration of third-party applications within the 'My Account' system to help eliminate the need for multiple logins. Ideally, all existing logins should be identified and programmed for inclusion where OpenID login functionality is supported.	Medium (In progress)	Digital Team
21	All new IT systems should be rigorously tested to ensure they are not released with bugs, with sign-off required by service leads.	High	ICT
22	Provide organisation charts on the Council's intranet to make it easier for Members to find the appropriate officer to handle their queries.	High (In progress)	Digital Team
23	Provide more Member training on how to use Council systems including ModernGov and discuss with Members how they can be better used.	High (Programmed)	ICT and Democratic Services

Provision for Disabled Customers

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
24	The need for BSL interpretation of Council meetings should be reviewed once further government guidance has been issued in 2023.	Medium	Democratic Services and BCT Team
25	Produce BSL videos about Council services and easy read versions of key documents to make them accessible to as wide a range of customers as possible.	Medium	Adult Social Care and All Services
26	Consider what further changes need to be made for engaging and supporting disabled customers once the current Equality Diversion and Inclusion work stream has been completed.	Medium	BCT Team

Customer Service Standards and Training

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
27	Review the remit of the Customer First Programme Board or its successor. Members felt that this should be more strategic and high profile, and should be driving customer service improvements across the Council, including digital transformation. This should have stronger reporting mechanisms than at present. Also, opportunities should be taken to make better use of relevant Members' expertise (e.g. through membership of Customer First Programme Board or its successor).	High	Executive Directors
28	Members noted the new Customer Service Charter that clearly sets out the standards that the Council will deliver. This should be clearly displayed on the website and in Council offices so that customers know the standards that they can expect to receive. Training should be provided to ensure that all staff are aware of the Charter and how to best meet the needs of the customer. Performance against targets should be measured on an ongoing basis and reported corporately.	High (Programmed)	Customer Engagement and Transform-ation and HR

Adult Social Care

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
29	Develop a comprehensive communications campaign to recruit and train more independent advocates in order to address the current shortfall and reduce delays for customers.	Medium	Adult Social Care and Comms Team
30	Investigate the business case for developing a High Street presence in central and eastern areas of the district to support ASC and other services.	Low	Adult Social Care

Development and Regulation

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
31	Review how the Planning Service can work with the Environment Delivery Team to offer a more integrated service for customers who are looking to improve the environmental performance of their development (e.g. through solar panels, heat pumps, or insulation).	High	Development and Regulation and Environment
32	Consider what additional guidance could be given to support applicants making simple applications.	Medium	Development and Regulation
33	Investigate the use of apps to facilitate developers to engage with local communities, and consider how these could be integrated with the Council's website to provide updates on major developments in the area.	Low	Development and Regulation and Digital Team
34	Improve the Council's website to make it easier for customers to undertake routine tasks, such as purchasing maps or paying for planning applications.	Medium	Development and Regulation and Digital Team
35	Provide additional information about 'important dates' on the Planning Portal (e.g. closing date for objections and the cut-off date for Member call-in).	Medium	Development and Regulation
36	Amend the format of orange site notices to make them easier to read and to incorporate QR codes that link to the relevant application within the Planning Portal. (This would be a quick win.)	Medium	Development and Regulation

37	Regularly promote the service where residents can register to be notified of planning applications in their area, and consider using e-newsletter to tell people about planning issues and planning applications.	Medium	Development and Regulation and Digital Team and Comms Team
38	Consider the use of Planning Advisory Groups as a mechanism for engaging parish / town councils, local residents and other stakeholders on major developments.	Medium	Development and Regulation

Environment

Ref	Proposal	Priority	
39	All elected Members should be encouraged to regularly promote the 'report a problem' tool through local newsletters and magazines.	High	Members and Comms Team
40	Consider revising the 'report a problem' page to incorporate icons and help buttons to reduce the number of clicks and to better guide customers through the reporting process.	High	Environment and Digital Team
41	Consider how communications can be improved including: providing proactive network management information (e.g. through the website, monthly newsletter, social media, etc); website content; mystery shopping; seeking customer feedback; achieving a more consistent approach to customer service across the department; and managing longer duration enquiries.	Medium	Environment and Comms Team
42	Consider how engagement with local environmental groups can be improved, including via the Parish Climate Forum.	Medium	Environment

7   Other options considered

OSMC may choose to accept the Task and Finish Group's recommendations in full or in part, or amend the recommendations before putting them to the Executive. Alternatively, OSMC may choose not to put any of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations to the Executive if it considers that they are not appropriate.

8   Conclusion

8.1   The proposals outlined in Section 6 above have been agreed by the Task Group, based on the evidence presented. It is considered that these would help to improve various aspects of the customer journey. While some of these could be actioned relatively quickly, at minimal cost and with existing resources, it is recognised that others would have financial and resource implications and it would be unlikely that they could all be progressed. It is recommended that these be referred to the Executive for consideration, taking account of the priorities identified by the Task Group.

8.2   Given the importance of the Customer Journey to the Council, the Task Group also recommends that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission should keep this under review. This could be achieved through a Sub-Committee, or regular reports.

Lessons Learned

8.3   The Task Group has also taken this opportunity to reflect on the experience of conducting the review and to identify lessons learned that could be applied to future reviews.

8.4   The key lesson is that the scope of the review was too ambitious and wide-ranging. As a result, the timescale for the review had to be extended twice, which had implications for the delivery of other Task and Finish Group reviews that OSMC had programmed for the remainder of 2022/23.

8.5   It would have been helpful at the outset for the Task and Finish Group to have been made aware of existing parallel groups, such as the Customer First Programme Board, and relevant pieces of work such as the Place Review, since that may have helped to avoid duplication of effort and improve work programming. Knowledge of the work of the Customer First Programme Board would have helped the Task Group to have more tightly defined its focus and directed its attention. The Task Group could have contacted Executive Directors and Service Directors at the outset to understand what work streams were relevant to the review.

8.6   Best practice suggests that reviews by Task and Finish Groups should be completed within six meetings or less. However, where a review is found to be taking much longer than expected, it would be reasonable to have a break point (e.g. after 6 months) and report on the elements of the review undertaken to that point. This would provide an opportunity for the Task Group to take direction from OSMC.

8.7   It would have been easier to convene Task Group meetings if there had been 5 Members appointed to the Task Group, since this would have made it easier to achieve a quorum.

8.8   The Task Group would have liked to identify external parties with relevant expertise who could have been asked to give evidence on particular areas of interest to the Task Group.

9   Appendices

Appendix A – Customer Journey Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

Appendix B – Emergency Out of Hours Contact Centre Call Handling Statistics

Appendix C – Contact Centre Statistics

Appendix D – Member Survey Results

Background Papers:

'Customer Journey – Out of Hours', Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission, 24 May 2022.

'Customer Journey Task Group – Interim Report', Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission, 29 November 2022

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☒
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

Name: Gordon Oliver
Job Title: Principal Policy Officer
Tel No: 01635 519486
E-mail: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix

Review Topic: Customer Journey – inside and outside office hours, including out of hours emergency response.	**Timescale** Start: Apr 2022 Finish: Mar 2023*

Review Rationale:

West Berkshire Council strives to deliver the best possible customer experience regardless of the channel chosen to contact us and when they contact the Council.

On two occasions in the past year, elected members have highlighted issues relating to contacting relevant officers and the subsequent escalation process, which has led to OSMC seeking a review of both the Customer Services contact centre and the Emergency Out of Hours Service.

Some considerations of this review may be:

a. How do residents prefer to interact with the council?
b. What do residents expect and value when they interact with the Council as customers?
c. What is the experience of disabled residents when they contact the Council?
d. How can both Members and Officers understand and improve understanding of the customer's wants and needs?
e. What Council Services are provided out of hours and how are they provided?
f. How has our relationship with customers been impacted by the pandemic and subsequent new work styles?
g. How can we effectively link an improved customer journey with benefits to communities on the ground?
h. How can we use our customer service channels to improve community capacity, capability and participation?
i. Is customer experience consistent across all available channels?
j. Is there an organisation-wide commitment to good customer experience?
k. What best practice or learning can we gather from other local authorities?

Terms of Reference:

The Task and Finish Group will:

- **Part 1**: Out of Hours Emergency Contact Centre and Response

  Consider whether the Council's Out of Hours service offers an effective and consistent customer experience

This element of the review will be undertaken by:
- o Reviewing how customers can contact the council out of hours
- o Reviewing the Service areas deemed to require an out of hours response and how this is or could be provided
- o Reviewing the on call duty rota arrangements (including budgets) across the Council including those with authority to act on the councils behalf.
- o Reviewing how the Emergency Duty Officers escalate an emergency situation out of hours along with key stakeholders.

- **Part 2**: Office hours customer contacts

Review the customer experience, and how the Council's systems and customer service channels work, to understand if they are effective and delivering a positive and efficient service.

This element of the review will be undertaken by:

- o Holding facilitated meetings with the 5 highest contact volume departments or service areas to understand how enquiries are followed from initial point of contact in Customer Services to other areas of the Council.
- o Members will review performance reports for Customer Services, complaints reports, Residents Survey results and other data available in order to analyse effectiveness.
- o Mystery shopping activities will be undertaken (subject to budget availability) for a sample of standard queries / scenarios and for different user groups, including disabled users.
- o West Berkshire Council Members, external partners and local representative groups will be surveyed to understand their customer journey experiences and to uncover any relevant issues / concerns that have been communicated to them by residents / service users. Survey responses may be followed up with interviews where necessary to explore issues in more depth.

- **Part 3**: Office hours customer contacts

Consider whether systems and processes can be improved to enhance customer experience, whilst considering cost implications

This element of the review will be undertaken by having regard to the conclusions of part two and:

- o Members will review details of customer experience approaches from other local authority areas. (This information will be collated by the Service Lead - Customer Engagement and Transformation and the Performance, Risk and Consultation Manager.)

- **Part 4**:
  Highlight areas of good practice and make recommendations as to how improvements might be made

Members will collate their findings which will then form the basis of a report to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Review Membership: Councillor Adrian Abbs** Councillor Carolyne Culver Councillor Biyi Oloko	**Chairman:** Councillor James Cole
	Vice-Chairman: N/A
	Scrutiny Officer: Gordon Oliver

Information Required:

Contact centre call volume and answering data
Website visit data
Service level performance data
Interviews with officers from service areas within the scope of the review

Documents/Evidence:

Residents Survey outcome report (2020 and 2021)
Quarterly reporting for relevant service areas
SLA for out of hours service and scope for re-tendering

Witnesses: *(Who/Why?)*
Emergency Planning Manager
Performance, Research and Consultation Manager
Managers of services with highest number of customer contacts
Elected Members
External partners
Local representative groups

Measures Available

Suite of contact centre and website data including survey results, as outlined above

Desired Outcomes:

A report with a clear set of recommendations for potential improvements to improve the customer journey.

* An extension was agreed by OSMC in September 2022

** Cllr Adrian Abbs replaced Cllr Lee Dillon in August 2022

This page is intentionally left blank

OSMC Customer Journey
Additional Statistics re OOH Contact Centre
1 April 2020 to 31 Mar 2022 (2yrs)

Action	Number of calls	Notes
Calls Accepted and Handled	4480	
Abandoned Calls	522	
Total Calls	**5002**	Total in bound calls including abandoned calls. (This is different to the number of logs/cases due to repeat calls about same log/case etc)
Breakdown of calls handles		
IVR Emergency Duty Service Calls – Option 1	0	
IVR Car Parks Calls - Option 2	28	
IVR Dogs lost/found – Option 3	0	
IVR Emergency Calls –Option 4	4452	
Total Calls accepted and handled	**4480**	
Time to answer incoming calls		
Answered within 30 seconds	3032	68% of Handled Calls
Answered within 45 seconds	3218	72% of Handled Calls
Answered within 90 seconds	3620	81% of Handled Calls
Answered within 180 seconds	3966	89% of Handled Calls
Answered within 240 seconds	4138	92% of Handled Calls
Answered after 240 seconds	318	7% of Handled Calls
Abandoned Calls		
Abandoned calls within 30 seconds	98	The recorded message lasts 65 seconds so a number of calls drop off during that period - a 224 incoming calls (43%).
Abandoned between 30 – 45 seconds	44	
Abandoned between 45 -60 seconds	20	One consideration is that on hearing the message the caller decides it is not an emergency and drops the call, reporting the issue the next working day or on line.
Abandoned between 60 – 90 seconds (1to 1.5 mins)	62	
Abandoned between 90-180 seconds (1.5 to 3 mins)	88	
Abandoned after 180 seconds (over 3 mins)	210	
Abandoned Calls - Total	**522**	
Average time handling calls		
Average Call Handle Time (seconds)	145	

This page is intentionally left blank

Key Performance Indicators

KPI Yearly comparrison

West Berkshire
C O U N C I L
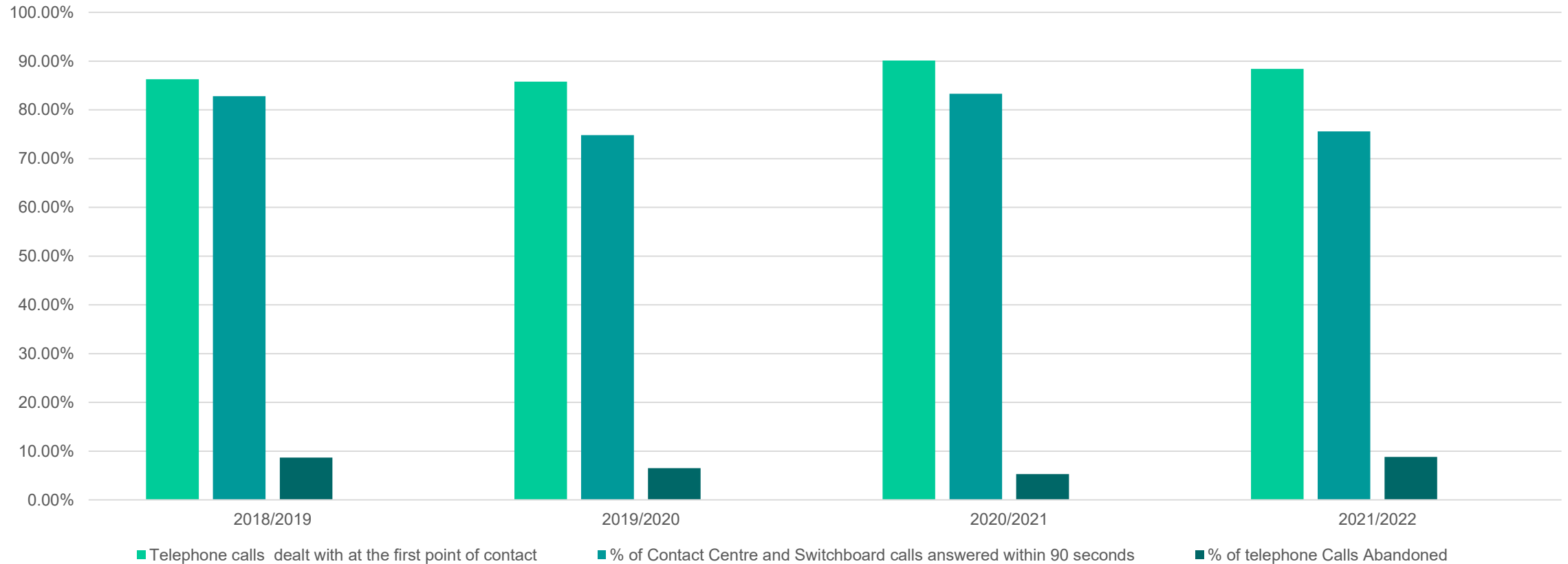
Demand by Service Area

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Benefits	12391	10206	8817	7460
Children's Services	12964	13273	8855	9386
Community Support Hub			4191	560
Concessionary Fares	1688	1183	718	2074
Council Tax	48278	44099	36530	41116
Elections			1013	
Emergency			315	288
Environmental Health	3321	2664	2031	1649
Libraries	3789	3904	3092	2776
Parking				7128
Planning	13764	11833	8778	8086
Streetcare (including Waste queue)	42514	36500	56027	45251
switchboard	115217	114686	107496	115691
TOTAL	253926	238348	237863	241465

West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

Recorded visits to Market St Reception

Reception Visits Recorded on Qmatic							
2019/2020				**2020/2021**			
	MSO				**MSO**		
Apr	1036			April	Closed		
May	987			May	Closed		
Jun	764			Jun	24		
July	978			Jul	136		
Aug	812			Aug	152		
Sept	883			Sep	184		
Oct	791			Oct	141		
Nov	675			Nov	122		
Dec	486			Dec	104		
Jan	718			Jan	50		
Feb	799			Feb	64		
Mar	659			Mar	113		
	9588				1090		

West Berkshire COUNCIL

Transactions processed and time spent

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Transcations Processed	286066	269814	256672	258728
Processing time Hrs	19264	19842	20436	19783

Daily Demand – example April 22

West Berkshire COUNCIL
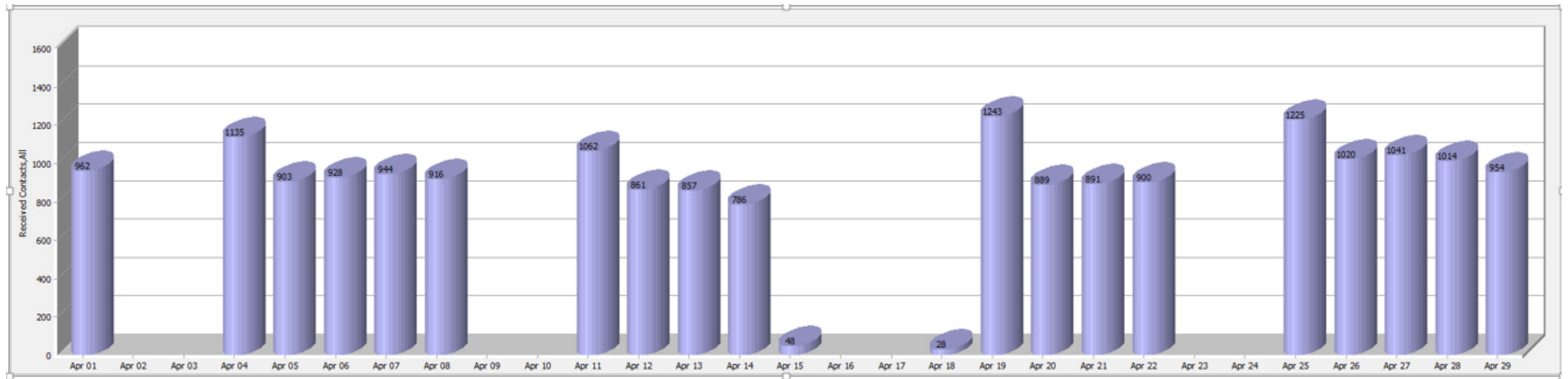
Hourly demand example w/c 04.04.22

total calls 04.04.22-08.04.22

Appendix D – Member Survey Results

Please indicate if you have you have used any of the following in the last 6 months, or if you would like to comment on any of the following

How would you rate the following aspects of the Contact Centre?
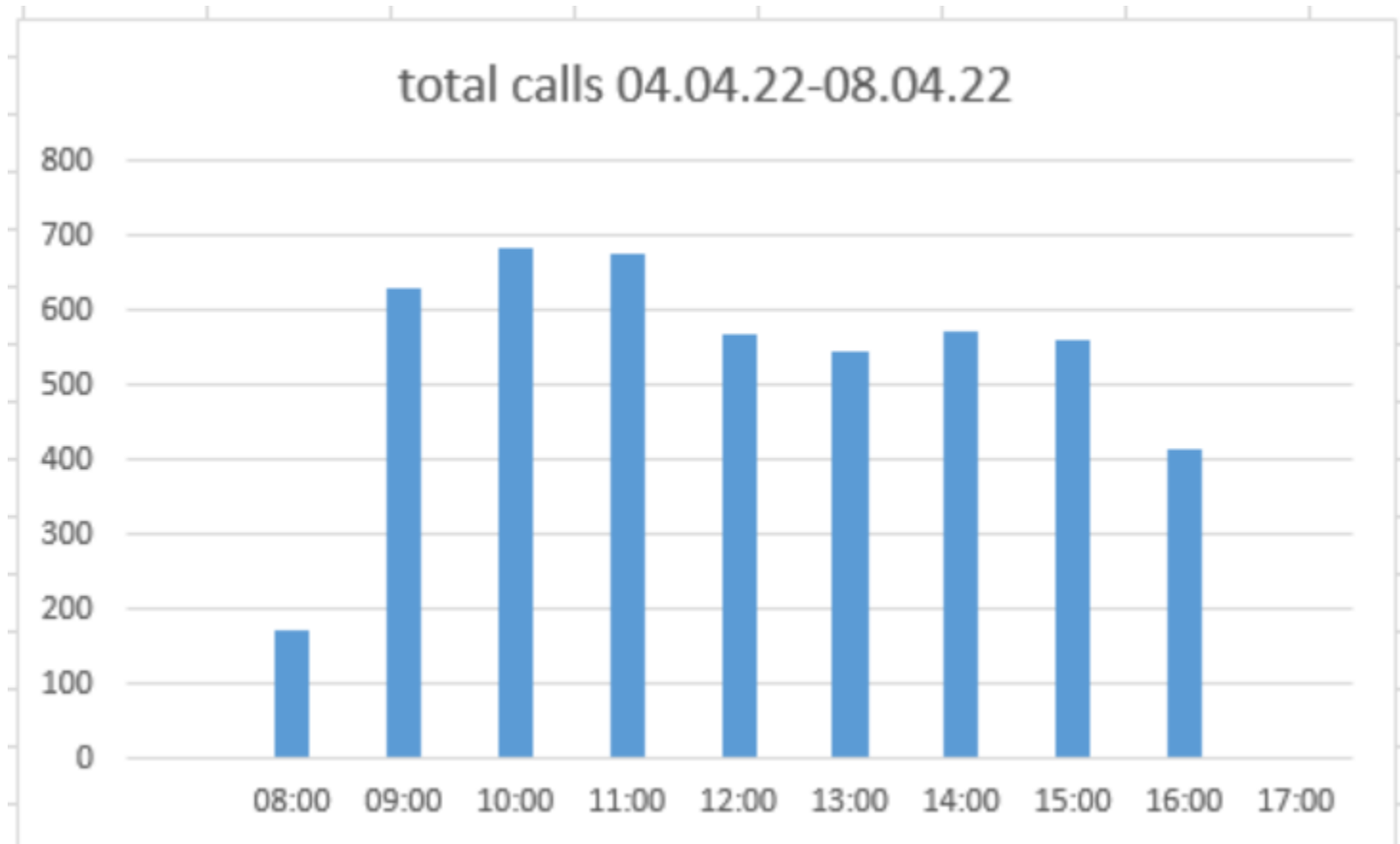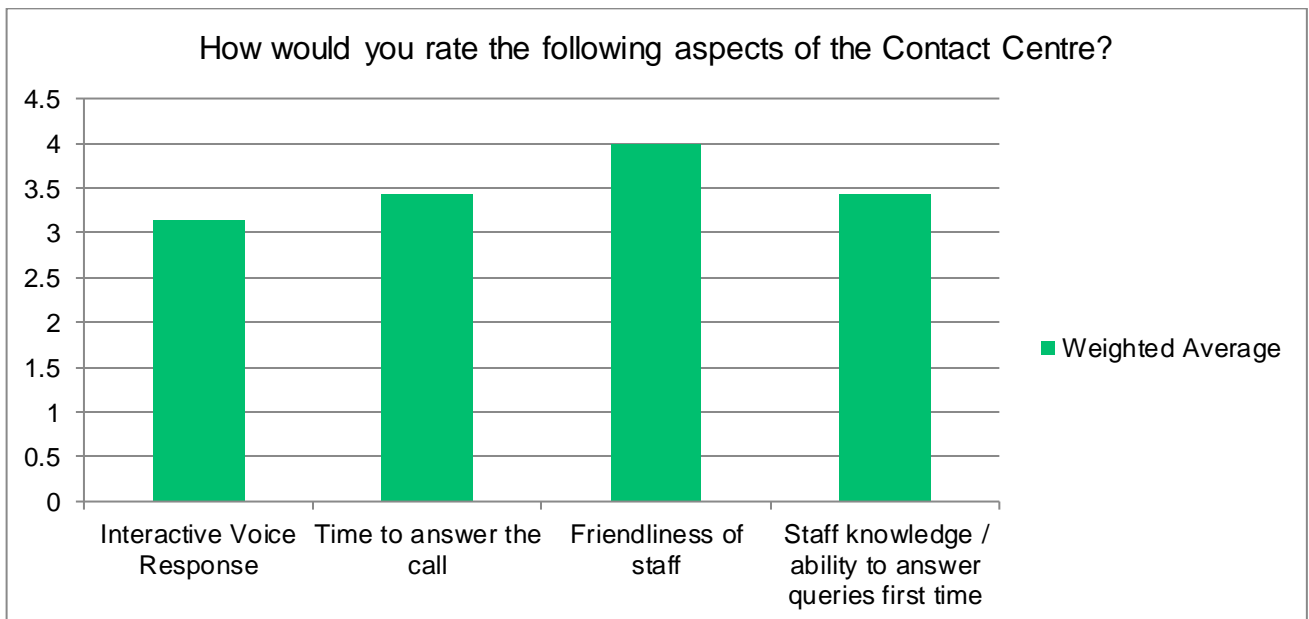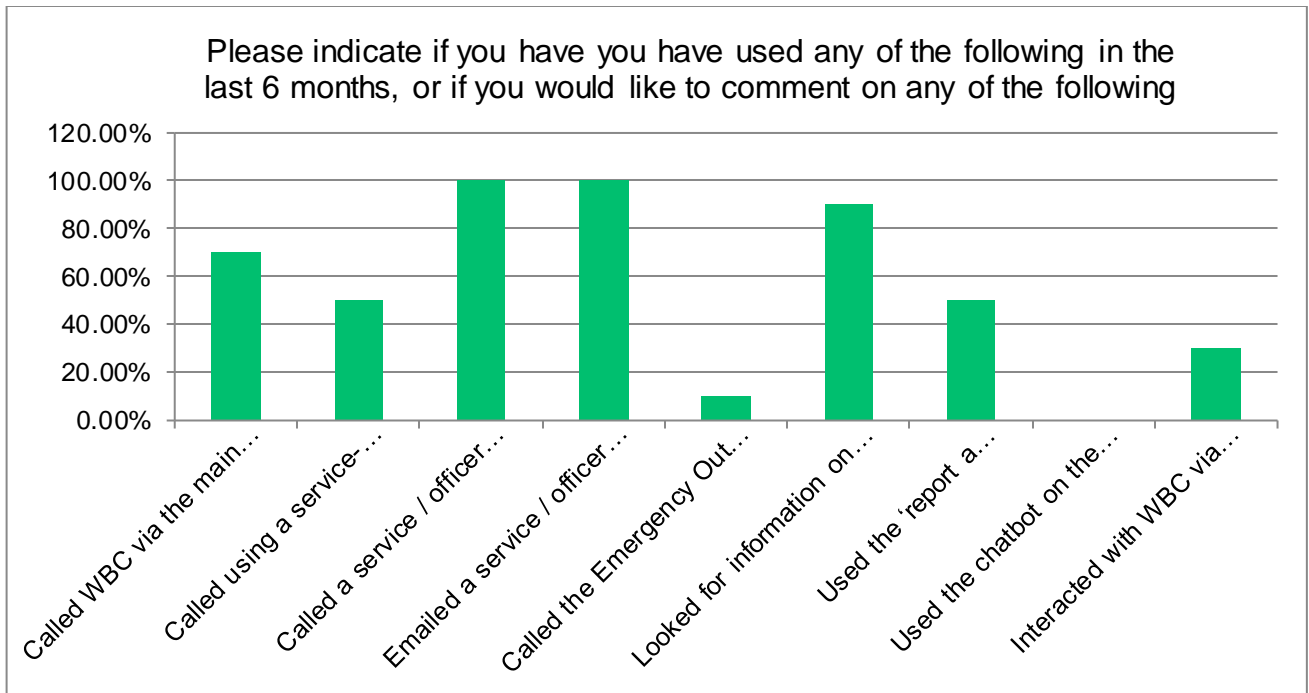
Which of the following services have you contacted in the last 6 months? Please select all that apply.
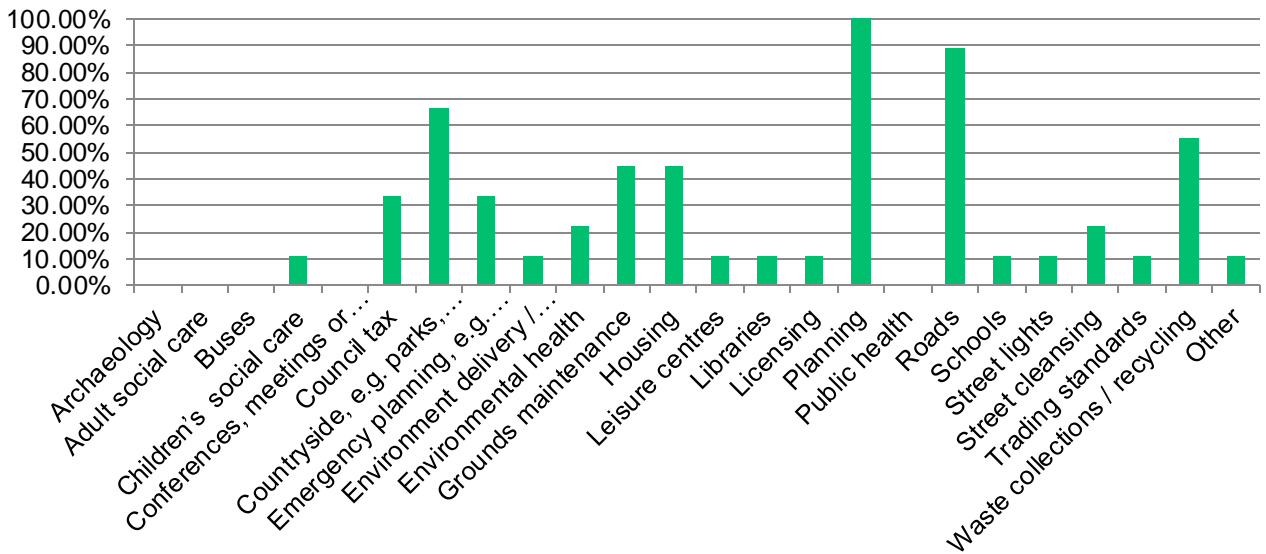
How easy was it to get in touch with the right person in the area you contacted?
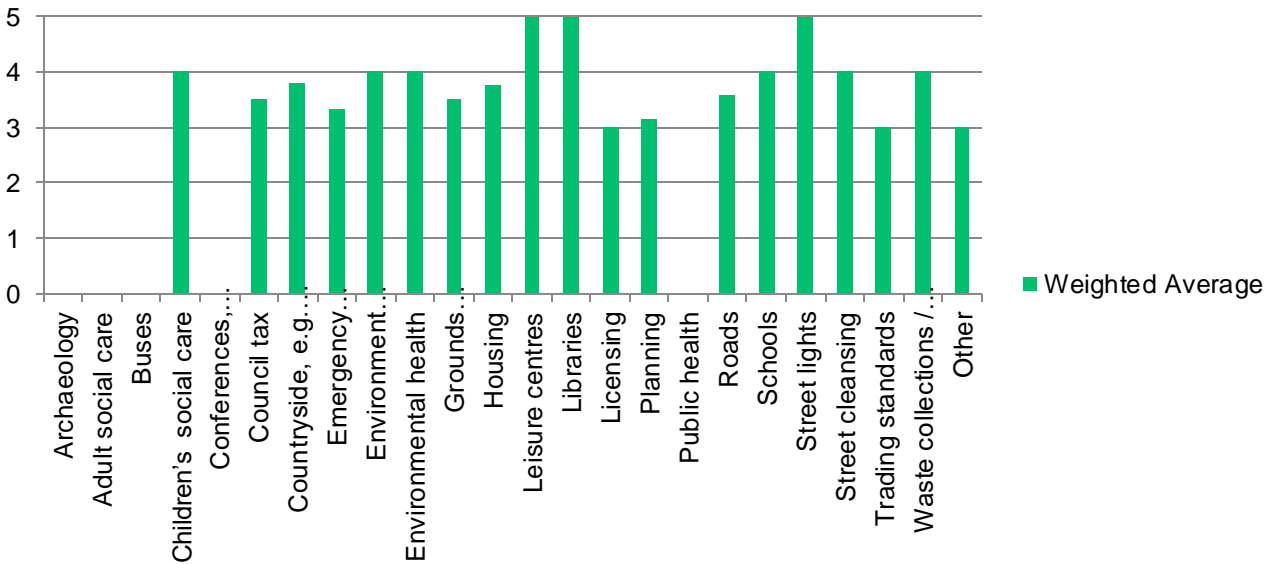
How satisfied were you with the timeliness of the response you received from the area you contacted?
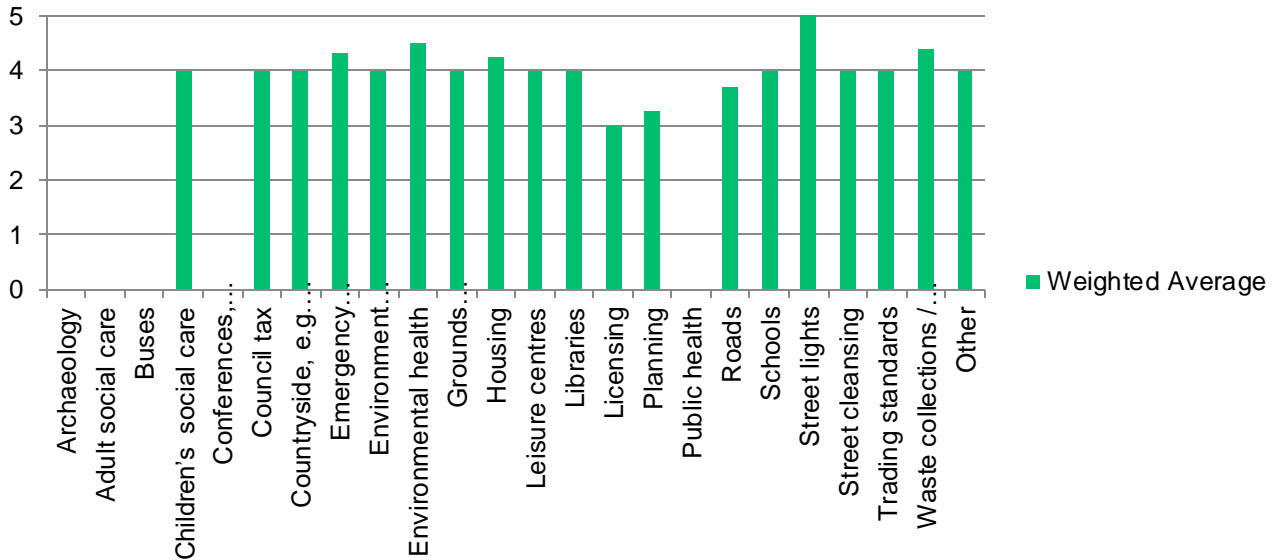
How satisfied were you with how your query was resolved by the area you contacted?
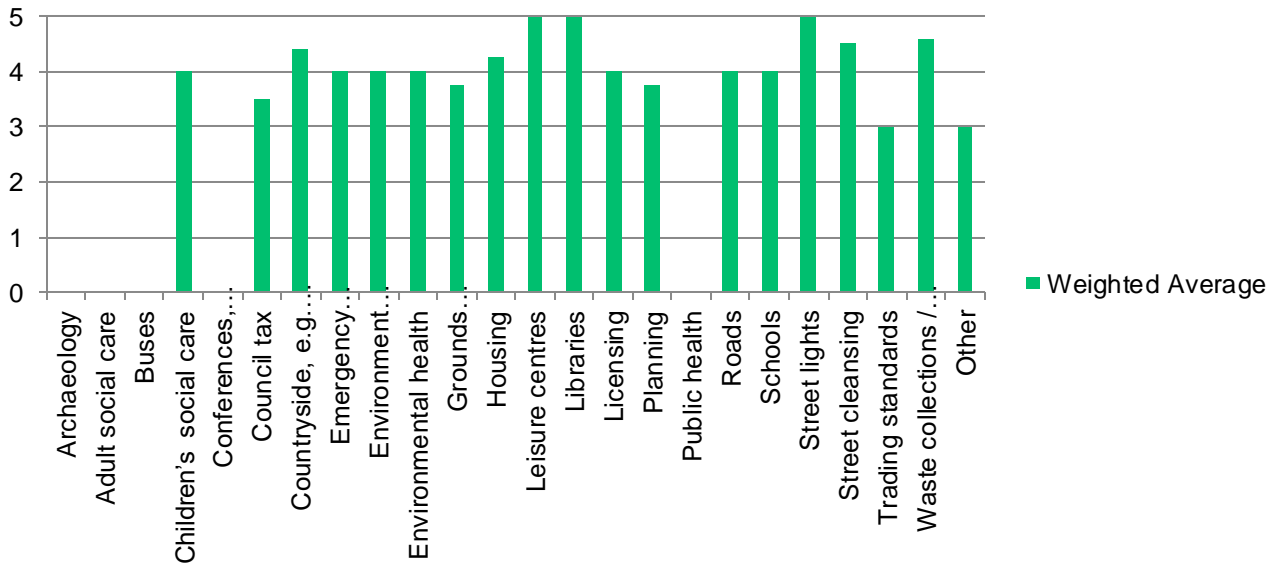
The phone system is being updated, how important do you think it is that the system has the following features?

Weighted Average for features:
- Single phone number for all services: ~2.3
- Automatic switchboard: ~2.3
- Ability to check an officer's availability before calling: ~2.3
- Hunt groups: ~2.9
- Ability to return to the switchboard if officer unavailable: ~2.5
- Ability to leave a message if officer unavailable: ~2.9
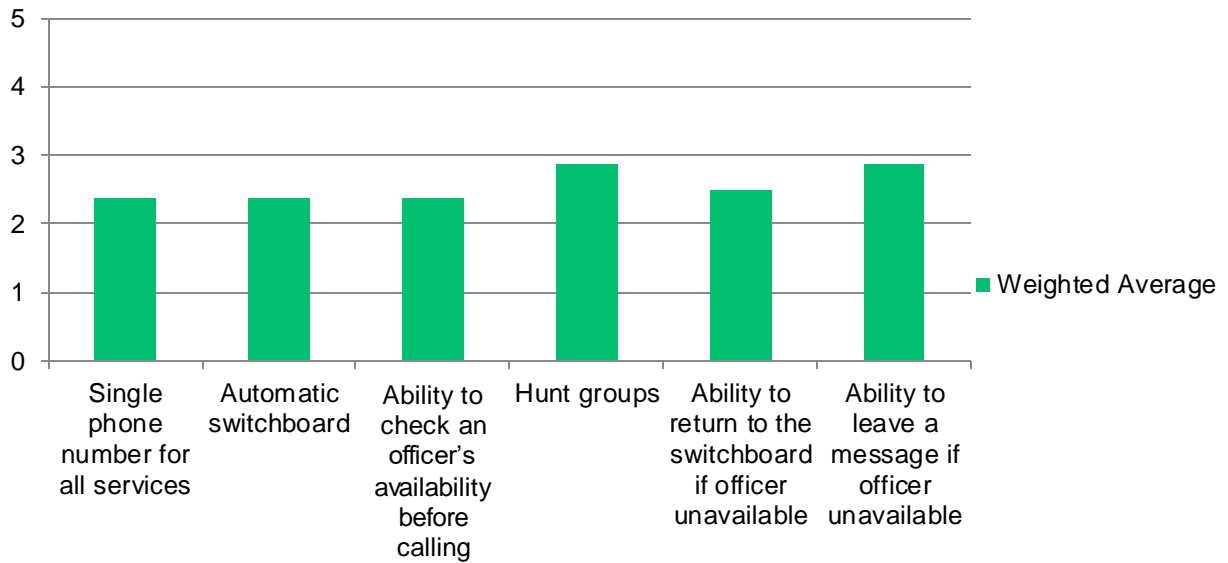
How would you rate the following aspects of the Emergency Out of Hours service?

Weighted Average:
- Information on the…: 0
- IVR system: 2
- Time to answer the call: 1
- Friendliness of the call…: 0
- Staff knowledge about…: 0
- Staff knowledge of the…: 0
- Action taken in response…: 0
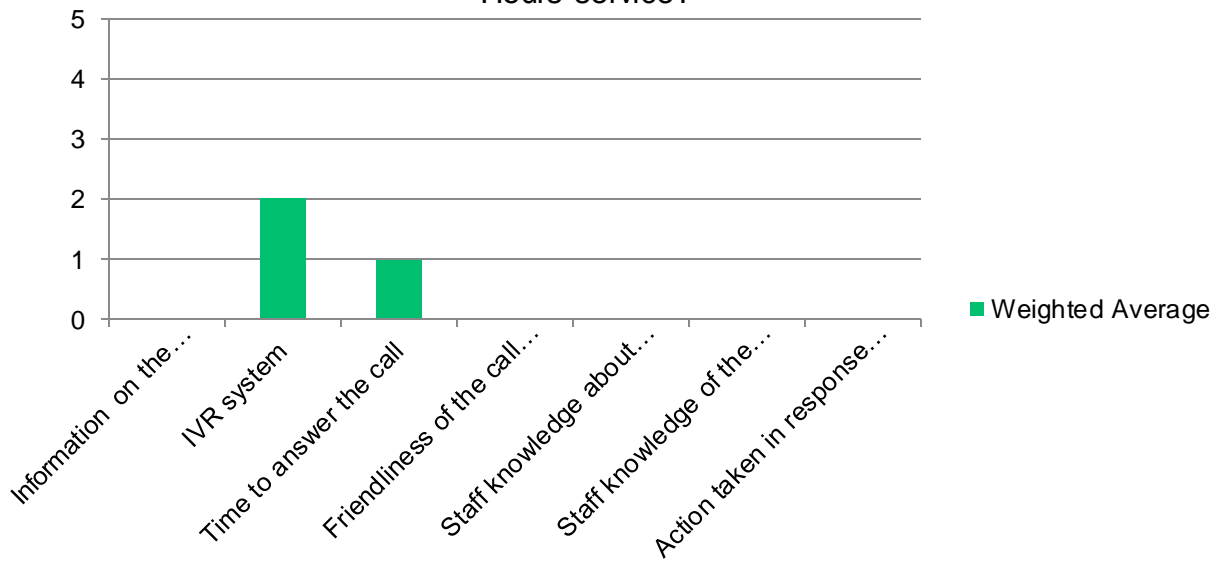
In general, how easy is it for you to find what you are looking for on the council's website?

Bar chart showing percentage of Responses:
- Very easy: 0.00%
- Easy: ~14%
- Neither easy nor difficult: 0.00%
- Difficult: ~86%
- Very difficult: 0.00%
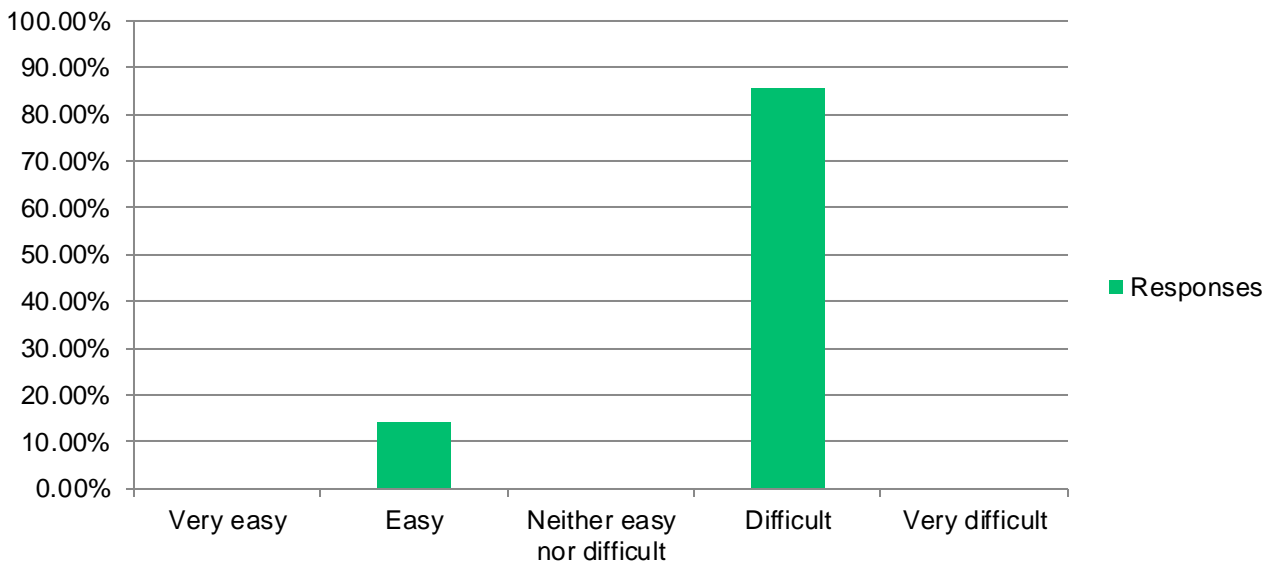
How often do you use the search function on the council's website to find the information you are looking for?

Bar chart showing percentage of Responses:
- Always: ~14%
- Usually: ~28%
- Sometimes: ~57%
- Rarely: 0.00%
- Never: 0.00%
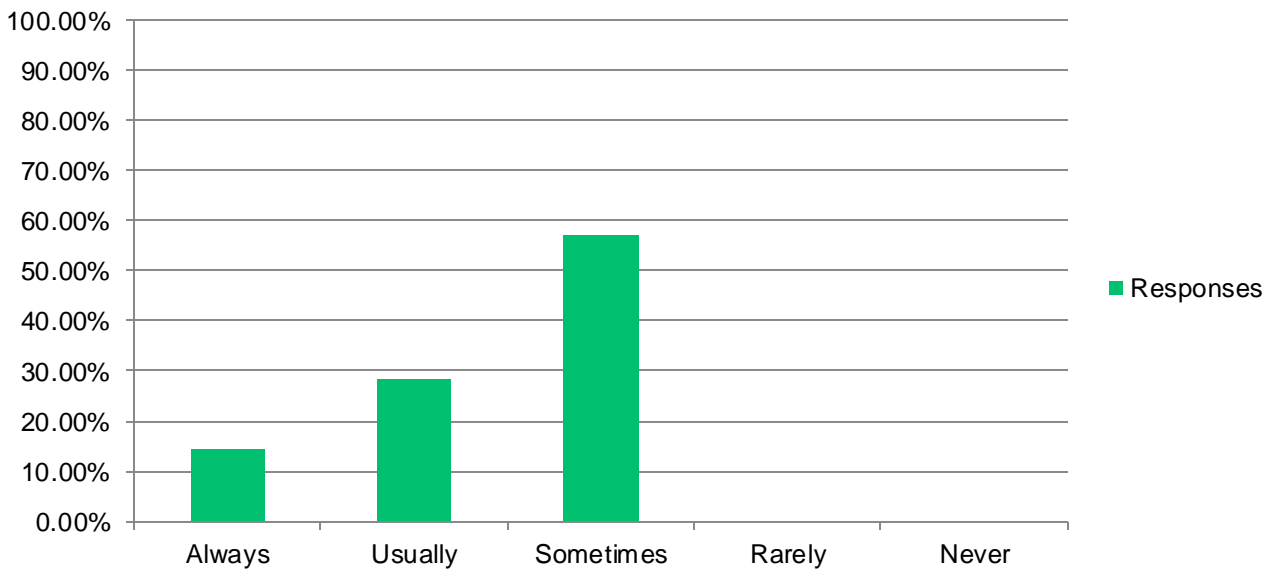
How would you rate the search function on the council's website?

A bar chart showing responses for the search function rating:
- Very good: 0.00%
- Good: approximately 14.00%
- Fair: approximately 14.00%
- Poor: approximately 71.00%
- Very poor: 0.00%

Legend: Responses
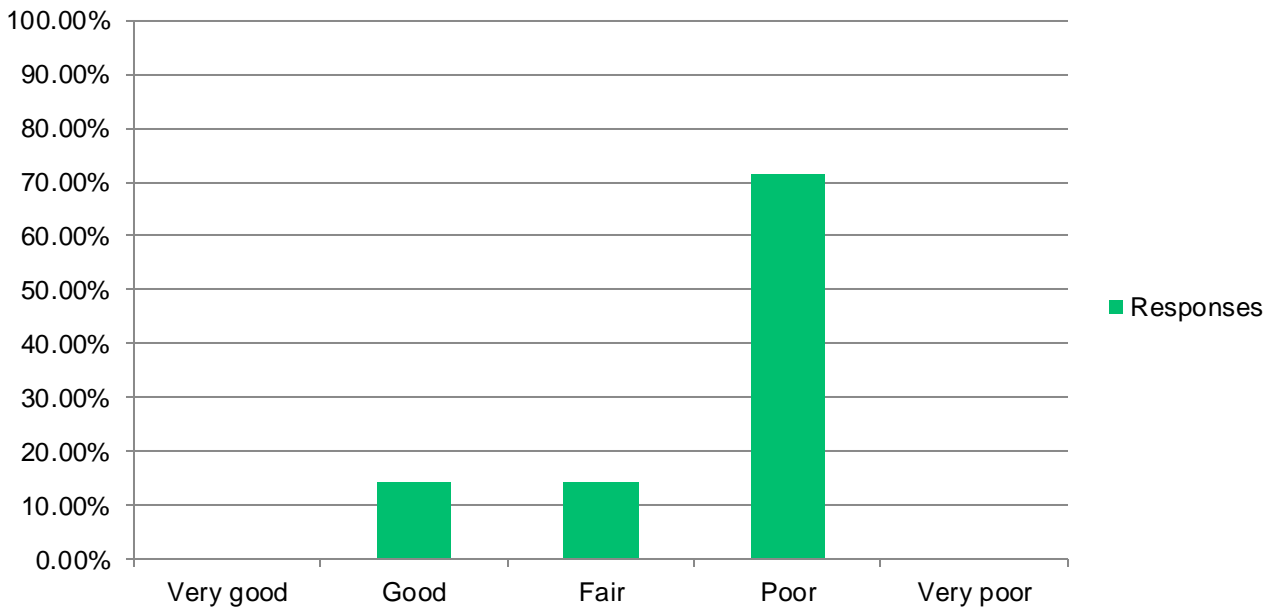
What do you do if you can't find the information you're looking for on the council's website? Please select all that apply.

A bar chart showing responses:
- Telephone the council: approximately 71.00%
- Email the council: approximately 71.00%
- Visit the council offices: 0.00%
- Use the Website feedback tab: 0.00%
- Use the Chatbot: approximately 14.00%
- Use Google or another search engine: approximately 57.00%
- Other: approximately 14.00%

Legend: Responses
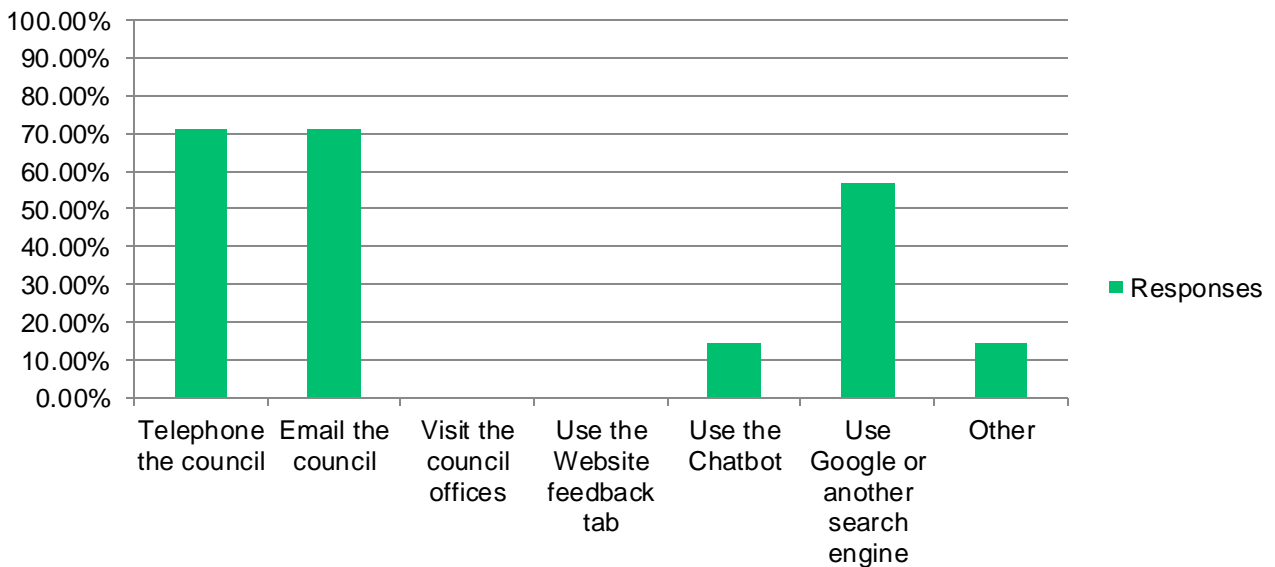
How would you rate the 'report a problem' function on the website?
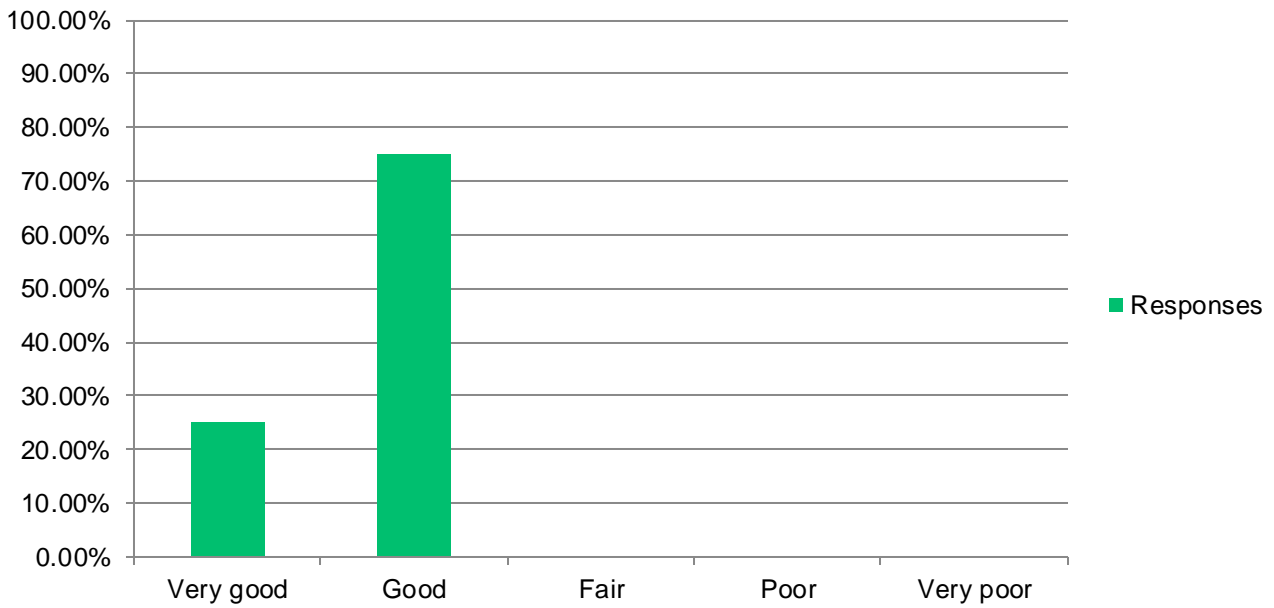
Which of the council's social media channels do you follow? Please select all that apply.
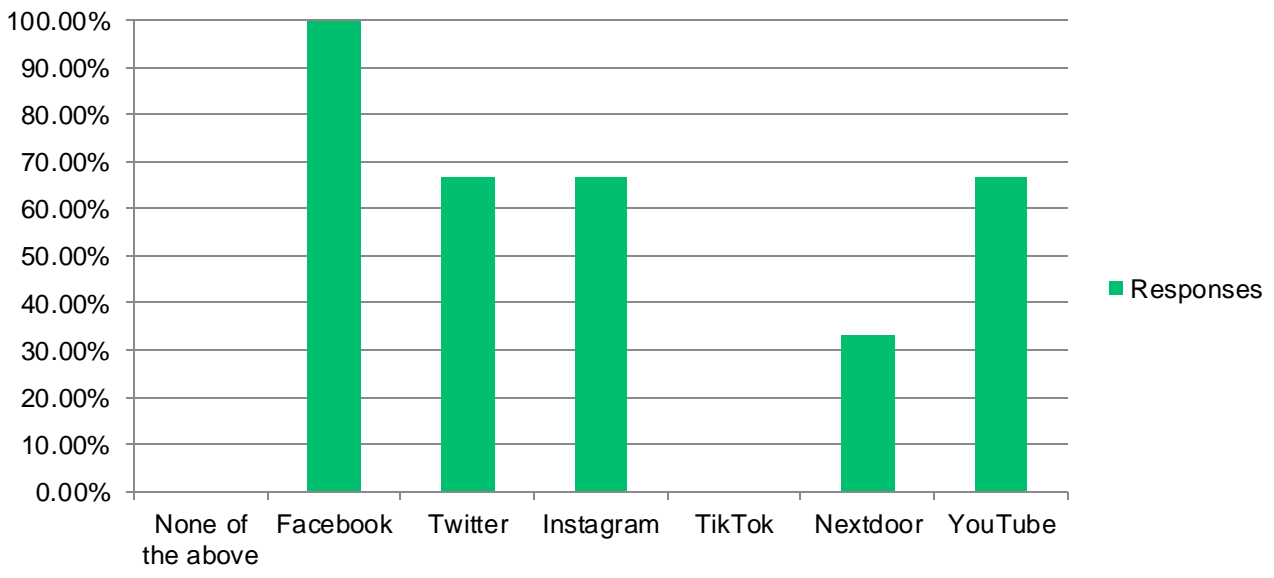
How frequently do you share information from the council on social media?

Bar chart showing percentage of responses by frequency: Always ~33.33%, Usually ~33.33%, Sometimes ~33.33%, Rarely 0.00%, Never 0.00%. Legend: Responses.

Agenda Item 8.
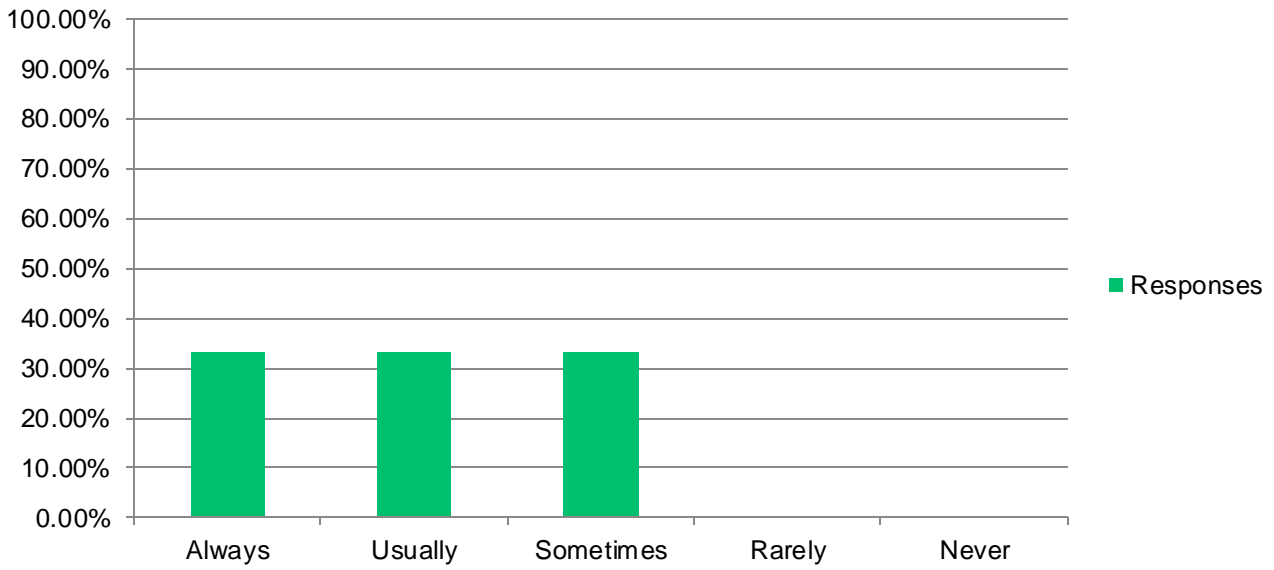
Libraries Review Report

Committee considering report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Committee:	7 March 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Howard Woollaston
Report Author:	Felicity Harrison / Jude Thomas
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4106

1 Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present the findings of the 2021/22 Libraries Review. This follow-up review sets out to ensure that the service remains fit for purpose and meets community needs after the library transformation work which took place in 2016/17.

2 Recommendation(s)

OSMC is invited to consider the work that has been undertaken to inform the future development of the Library Service, and to consider whether it wishes to propose any further work or suggest any changes to the report before it is presented to the Executive.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	If it is decided that additional investment is needed, this funding will be secured accordingly.
Human Resource:	As above, if it is decided that additional staffing is needed, funding will be secured accordingly.
Legal:	N/A
Risk Management:	The future of the Mobile Library service. Revenue gap relating to town and parish council contributions.
Property:	There could be potential implications for all libraries depending on which recommendations are progressed.

Policy:				Libraries Connected Universal Offers
	Positive	**Neutral**	**Negative**	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:	X			Any changes will be undertaken in line with the Council's Environment Policy and net zero carbon emissions target.
Health Impact:	X			A number of the recommendations specifically aim to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.
ICT Impact:	X			Dependent on which recommendations are accepted.
Digital Services Impact:	X			Dependent on which recommendations are accepted.
Council Strategy Priorities:	X			Ensure that vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes. Support everyone to reach their full potential.
Core Business:	X			Culture, Leisure, and Libraries.

Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	See detail below.			

4   Executive Summary

4.1   A review of the Library Service was undertaken in 2016/17, resulting in significant transformation of the Service. It was recommended, as part of the review, that the impact of this transformation was evaluated, after three years, to ensure that the Service remains fit for purpose and meets community needs. This exercise was delayed due to the Covid pandemic.

4.2   The follow up review has now taken place, and was conducted in three phases:

Phase 1: Community Needs Assessment and community engagement

Phase 2: LGA Peer Review

Phase 3: Compiling the Libraries Review report

4.3   Areas of priority have been identified through the review process, with recommendations made as to how to respond to priorities.

4.4   Proposed actions to improve and develop the Service to meet the future needs of residents are set out under each priority area.

4.5   The development of a new Library Service vision and action plan is proposed, aligning with national and local strategic priorities. This would clearly communicate the commitment to, and priorities for, the Service in the short, medium and long term.

4.6   This marks the beginning of a wider programme of engagement with stakeholders to turn the outcomes of the review into an action plan linking to agreed strategic priorities.

5   Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1   This report sets out the findings of the recent Libraries Review undertaken to understand the impact of the significant changes to the Library Service following the previous review in 2016/17. In doing so, it provides:

1. Details of the 2016/17 Libraries Review and the resulting changes to the service;
2. Context of other factors that have impacted on the service since the 2016/17 review;
3. Key findings of the current review;

4. Proposed priorities and options for the future service.

Background

5.2   West Berkshire Libraries currently operate eight libraries within the District, a mobile library and an At Home service. The libraries are situated in:

- Burghfield Common
- Hungerford
- Lambourn
- Mortimer

- Newbury
- Pangbourne
- Thatcham
- Theale

Percentage of Population using West Berkshire Council Libraries
© Crown Copyright and database rights 2022. West Berkshire Council 0100024151
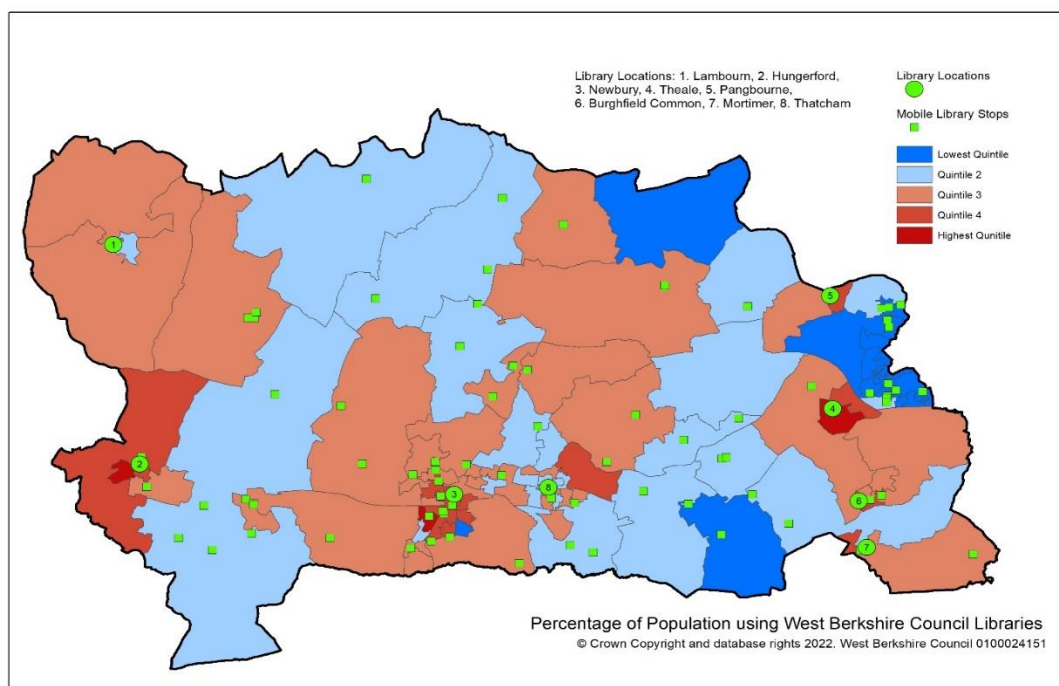
5.3   Geographically, Mortimer and Burghfield Libraries are three miles apart and there is a gap in provision in the north of the District, as shown in the diagram above.

5.4   In addition, there is an e-library offering access to e-books, e-audio, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

5.5   The libraries in neighbouring local authority areas are shown in the diagram below.

Neighbouring Library Branches

© Crown Copyright and database rights 2022. West Berkshire Council 0100024151
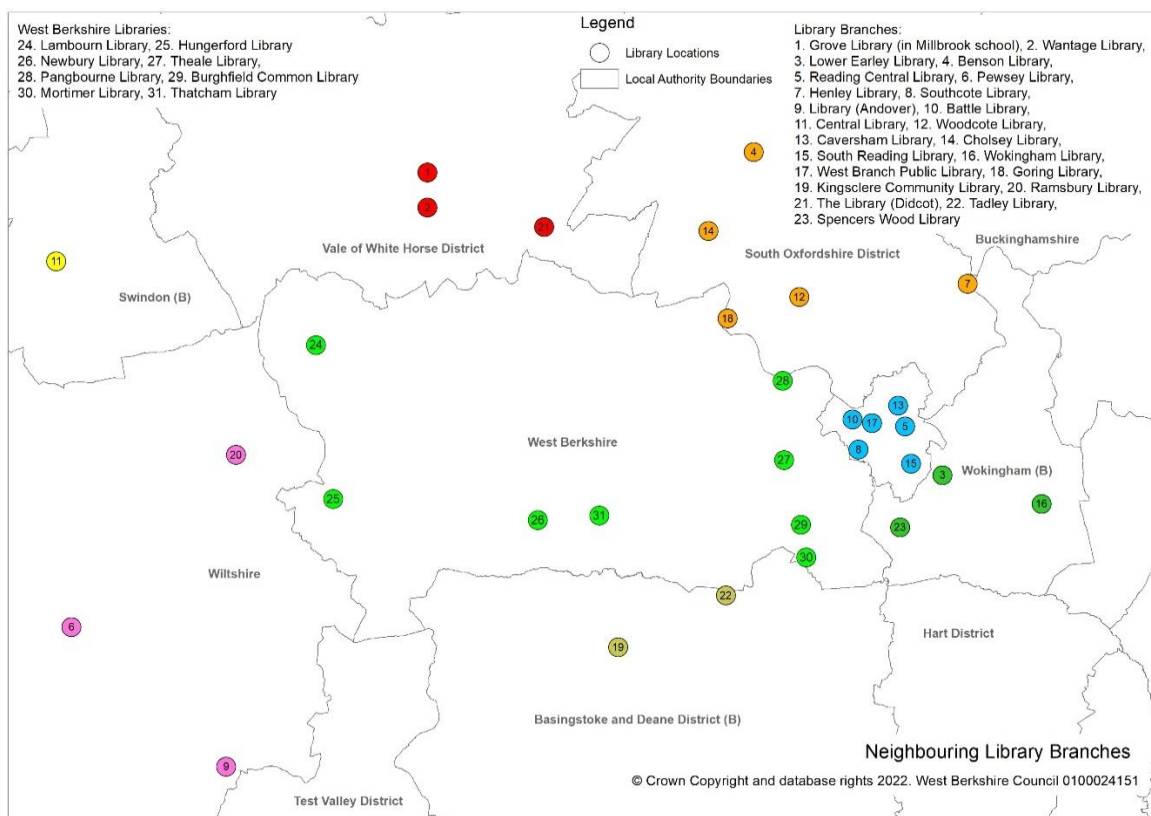
Libraries Review 2016/17

5.6 In 2016/17 West Berkshire Council conducted a review of Library Services based on an independent assessment of needs carried out by consultants *Red Quadrant*. The review resulted in major changes to the service which were implemented in 2017/18.

5.7 In 2017/18, the revised budget for the Libraries Service was set at £1,046,000, resulting in an annual saving of £690,000.

5.8 The outcome of the 2016/17 Libraries Review resulted in a level of library service that could not be met by the Council's service budget allocation alone. It was agreed that the £150k funding gap could be met by requesting that town and parish councils make a voluntary contribution of £1 per resident, based on the population of each parish, for the next 3 years.

5.9 One of the recommendations from the 2016/17 Libraries Review was that there should be a further review of the library service after three years. The purpose of the follow up review is to ensure the service meets the needs of residents, including any Covid-19 impacts, and delivers on wider outcomes across the Council and those identified in the new Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy and the Cultural Heritage Strategy.

Service remodelling following Libraries Review 2016/17

5.10 As a result of the Libraries Review in 2016/17, a decision was taken to make the following significant changes to the service:

- A budget reduction of £690,000

- A 42% reduction in library staff, from 42.11 to 24.32 FTE
- The closure of one library service point, at Wash Common, which is now run independently by the community.
- The reduction of the number of mobile libraries from two to one.

5.11 In response to this, the following transformation took place:

- A new operational model was established with volunteers supporting staff.
- A Community Hub was created at Hungerford Library.
- A commitment to more partnership working with local communities and town and parish councils, to include the introduction of a voluntary contribution of £1 per head of the population, from town and parish councils.
- The development of positive relationships with other Council services, in particular targeting Early Years and Education.
- A mini re-structure of the professional staff team to align with priorities.
- The West Berkshire Libraries brand was created.
- Significant capital investment for building improvements.
- The location of the WBC Public Protection Partnership at Theale Library to maximise income and secure the future of the library in the current location
- Capital investment in digital improvements; new public PCs, self-service kiosks, introduction of Libraries App.

Impact of Transformation

5.12 Demand / Performance

5.12.1 In the two years prior to the pandemic, library usage in the District increased, which is in the contrast to the gradual decline in library usage nationally. In 2019/20, there were 346,895 visits and 571,352 items borrowed. Visitor numbers have still not recovered to these levels, post pandemic. The pandemic, inevitably, disrupted patterns of library use, with periods of library closure. For this reason the 2020/21 library data has been excluded from this report as it would give a misleading impression of trends as visits and borrower numbers were greatly reduced. The Library Service is now in recovery and this is reflected in the data which we now have for 2021/22, when there were 201,657 visits and 553,903 items borrowed.

Library usage data trends:

Library Service KPIs/Measures of Volume	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22
Visitor numbers - physical visits	380,527	332,241	349,364	346,895	201,657
Number of library events held	*	*	2194	2248	776
Items borrowed including e-library items	619,146	539,473	534,968	571,352	553,903
Number of website hits	131,828	91,981	102,499	114,528	151,117
Volunteer hours	3,039	10,147	12,034	12,935	10,001

* Data not available

5.12.2 We have one remaining mobile library. Of a total of 670 'active borrowers' using this service in 2019/20, 313 used only the mobile library. An Active Borrower is someone who has borrowed at least one physical item in the preceding 12 month period. The existing diesel vehicle is 15 years old and reaching the end of its roadworthiness. The Mobile Library Service is perceived as essential by parish councils, but low usage, combined with the age of the vehicle, means that consideration needs to be given to how this service is delivered. In 2020/21, the usage of this service had further declined, with 486 'active borrowers' having used the service that year. Of these only 258 only used the Mobile Library Service which gives a more accurate reflection of demand.

5.13 Finance

5.13.1 The revised budget for libraries was set at £1,046,000 for the new Library Service, an annual saving of £690,000. As the existing level of library service could not be met by the Council's service budget allocation alone, it was proposed that the £150k gap should be met by requesting town and parish councils to consider making a voluntary contribution of £1 per resident, based on the population of each parish for the next 3 years.

5.13.2 The target for town and parish council contributions is based on £1 per head of population, which totals £150k. Contributions averaged £90k per year for the first three years which created an annual budget pressure/deficit of £60k. Since then voluntary contributions from some town and parish councils have decreased, and we anticipate more parishes may reconsider the level of their contributions in the future, increasing the need to explore alternative options.

5.13.3 The map below shows the contributions made by town and parish councils in the financial year 2021/22. It should be noted that those councils that do make voluntary contributions towards the library service varies each year. This impacts on the ability to plan services, and is a constant pressure on the revenue budget.

Voluntary Contributions towards the library service from West Berkshire Parishes 2021/22

* Library building costs have transferred to Hungerford Library and Community Trust in lieu of a cash contribution

© Crown Copyright and database rights 2022. West Berkshire Council 0100024151
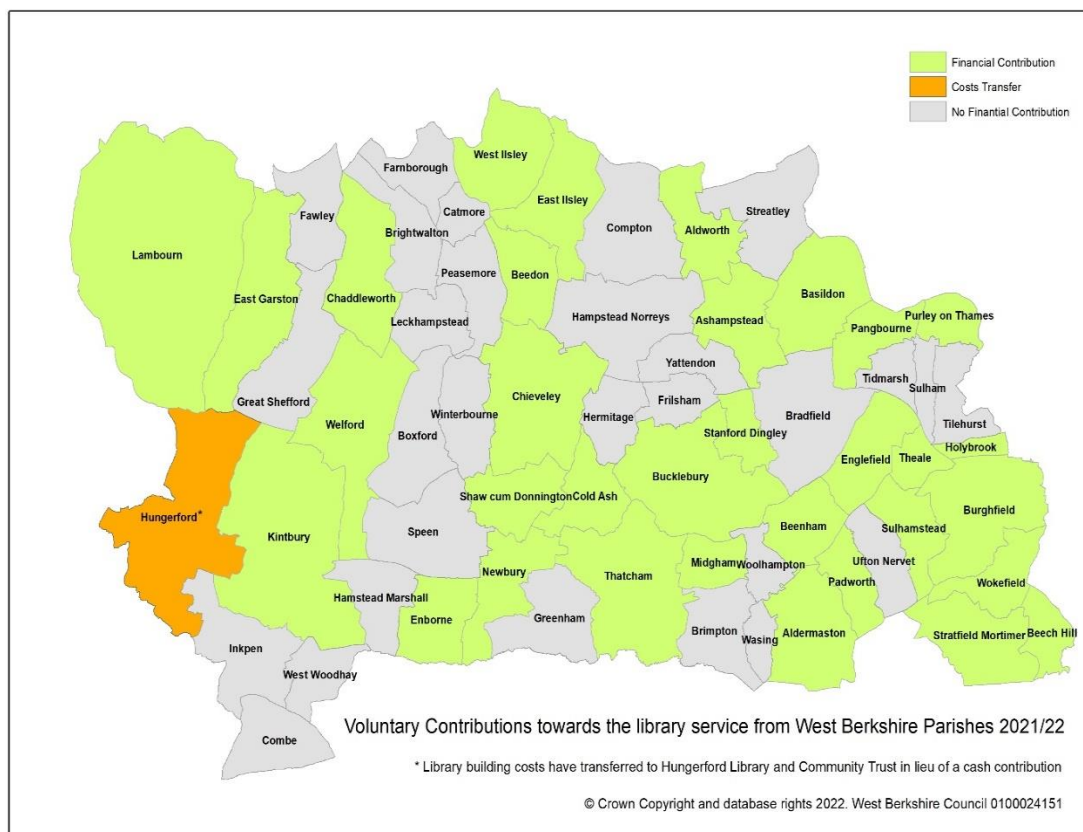
5.14 Staff / Volunteers

5.14.1 The new model relies on volunteer support and works particularly well in smaller branches, and where there is a volunteer organiser to prepare rotas, although it has been more difficult to integrate volunteers into the teams in larger libraries, particularly Newbury Library. This is possibly because there are a number of younger volunteers, fulfilling requirements for Duke of Edinburgh or university applications, resulting in a higher turnover. It has been identified that the role of the volunteer at Newbury Library would benefit from review.

5.14.2 A Volunteers Officer recruits and manages volunteers across Culture and Libraries and supports the volunteer organisers.

5.14.3 The staffing is so lean that casual cover is needed for every staff absence, and current staffing levels at Newbury Library are a cause for concern as they impact on the capacity to provide additional outreach services. As a result, outreach work has been targeted and aimed primarily at Early Years and Primary Schools.

5.14.4 The Newbury Library Manager post has been increased by five hours to full time, to create more resilience within the team.

5.14.5 There is a routine reliance on casual staff to be able to operate the service safely, in compliance with fire evacuation requirements, and this sometimes results in unplanned closures, if health and safety requirements cannot be met.

5.15 Digital

5.15.1 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding has been used to make investments in digital technology including new public PCs, self-service kiosks and introduction of Libraries App.

5.15.2 Further improvements are needed in the ICT infrastructure and back-office support so that library staff and users can make the best use of new ICT equipment.

External factors

5.16 Since 2016, a number of external factors have affected the nature of library usage and the type of services. Some of these are the continuation of long-term trends, such as pressure on housing and technology evolution. It is clear that Covid-19 has accelerated a number of these trends and has had a profound impact on health, deprivation, education and the workplace.

5.17 Population and Housing

5.17.1 The population of West Berkshire is forecast to remain stable over the next decade, with the 'over 65' population increasing by approximately 25%, the 'under 10' population falling by about 12%. One third of the population is classified as rural.

5.17.2 The Local Plan forecasts 4,500 new homes, principally in the Thatcham and Newbury areas, with 300 new homes in rural areas. The cost of housing, both owned and rented, has accelerated faster than inflation over the last decade. As a result, families and young people, particularly those on average incomes, tend to be living in smaller properties.

5.17.3 The growth plan indicates that the libraries are in the right location, but may need to be expanded, especially in Thatcham.

5.17.4 The continued high rurality means that current access challenges will remain and, with the population ageing, accessibility issues are likely to grow.

5.17.5 Smaller houses, combined with increased home working, may increase the demand for low-cost, quiet working spaces for both adults and secondary age children.

5.18 Technological evolution

5.18.1 Since 2016, consumer technology has been ever more focussed on mobile devices and applications. This trend, when combined with increased data speeds and volumes, has created a fully mobile capability for many, reducing even the need for PCs and connection to broadband. Most companies, service providers and users have fully embraced this trend, which has increased the 'digital divide' for those who do not have this technology and now find non-digital options increasingly

difficult to access. This trend can be seen in usage trends in our libraries, with declining hours of use of hardware.

5.18.2 The implication is that hardware use will remain important for a smaller number of otherwise digitally-excluded residents and that high broadband speed and suitable workspaces will be increasingly important.

5.19 Deprivation indicators

5.19.1 West Berkshire is a prosperous district, with low levels of relative deprivation. There are a small number of wards in Newbury and Thatcham with higher levels of deprivation. Areas of higher deprivation have good access to a library.

5.19.2 The rural areas (the west and north) have low overall levels of deprivation, but have limited local services and public transport connections, which impacts those without access to a car and those on lower incomes.

5.19.3 West Berkshire does have an education gap for disadvantaged children above the national average. While this is being addressed through strategies in Education and Family Services, there is a potential role for library services to play in supporting the drive to reduce the gap.

5.19.4 Library fines have been a long standing arrangement in public libraries, but they potentially impact disproportionately on those who are most vulnerable (financially or as a result of cognitive disability or mental ill health). They are a known barrier to people joining and retaining library membership. The fear of incurring fines and building debt with the Council is a reason often cited for not using the otherwise free library service.

5.19.5 An increasing number of other authorities have already removed this barrier for their residents, helping to reduce the widening gap of 'haves and have nots'. By removing library fines, WBC would be supporting its most vulnerable residents who may be at risk of poverty, giving them access to a wide range of books, information and digital access to enable job searches, benefit applications, study support, school readiness, and reading for pleasure.

5.19.6 The current income target for library fines is £28,490.

5.20 Covid-19 recovery

5.20.1 Aside from the direct impact of Covid-19 on closing services, it is likely that it will have a longer term impact in a number of areas.

5.20.2 While home working was on the rise pre-2020, many employers, including West Berkshire Council, are now embracing it more actively. Although this is proving attractive for many, it can be challenging for some people without an appropriate workspace at home, or where digital connectivity is expensive and/or limited.

5.20.3 There has been a rise in mental ill health and issues of social exclusion, even in the recovery stage, with those who are clinically vulnerable concerned about mixing in public areas while the virus continues to be common, even in a less dangerous form.

Libraries Service Review 2022 methodology

5.21 In carrying out this review, the Council undertook a number of engagement exercises, as detailed below.

5.22 Public, staff and volunteer surveys

5.22.1 An on-line public consultation exercise with library users and non-users, was carried out, between October and December 2021, with hard copy versions made available for those without internet access. A total of 896 responses were received. The majority of responders were library users, and in employment or retired/not working through choice, aged 65 and over, and identified as being White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.

5.22.2 Feedback and suggestion boards were also placed in some library branches and comments were taken into consideration.

5.22.3 Online staff and library volunteer surveys were carried out.

5.22.4 Online engagement sessions with town/parish councils took place in January 2022.

5.23 Community Needs Assessment 2022

5.23.1 In January 2022, consultants, Shared Intelligence, were commissioned to undertake a Community Needs Assessment which included interviews with representatives of community organisations and selected West Berkshire Council Service Directors, and a workshop with Library Service staff.

5.23.2 Information and feedback gathered through this engagement process, combined with library data analysis, informed the findings and recommendations in the Community Needs Assessment.

5.24 Local Government Association Peer Review

5.24.1 In April 2022, a Peer Review was undertaken by the Local Government Association, funded by Arts Council England.

5.24.2 The Peer Review provided an external, objective overview of West Berkshire Council's current Library Service, and recommendations in relation to the following priority area:

> *Based on the changing needs of the community which have been identified in our new Community Needs Assessment, how can we deliver the Library Service more efficiently in a largely rural area, including innovative ways in which to ensure access?*

5.24.3 The findings of the Peer Review have been documented in a separate report.

Key Findings of Review 2022

Public, staff and volunteer surveys

5.25 Liaison with selected community groups was undertaken, prior to commissioning Shared Intelligence to undertake the Community Needs Assessment.

5.26 Findings included that library fines were considered as being a barrier to some residents using the library service as people worried about missing the return date and being unable to pay the fine. Refugees/asylum seekers cited this in particular and, with the increase in numbers, this was considered of importance by organisations such as Educafe.

5.27 Increased understanding of, and support for, those with learning disabilities regarding access to the library service and provision of activities for these residents.

5.28 Public Survey Key Findings:

5.28.1 Responses to the public survey showed that a good quality library service, which is accessible to everyone in the community, is highly valued. The Library Service should be providing facilities and services which are designed to reduce social isolation, and should support health and wellbeing.

5.28.2 Engagement with children, young people outside of school through provision of young people focussed activities was also seen as important. Increased engagement with schools was a common theme, as was increased arts, culture and heritage activities.

5.28.3 Helping people who do not have access to digital technology and applications, or cannot use them, was also flagged up as being a priority. There were several comments about wanting a better e-library offer which suggested the need to explain factors such as the limitations of digital rights, and the reasons for the two different services.

5.28.4 There was also a deep appreciation of the 'At Home' service and the mobile library service by regular users. Some respondents stressed the need to prioritise the core service, providing a good selection of physical books.

5.29 Volunteer Survey Key Findings:

5.29.1 Some volunteers felt that they would like to have the opportunity to undertake a broader range of duties and believed they could do more to help paid staff. One example was they could undertake more tasks on Spydus, the library management system. In contrast though, some volunteers reported that they did not feel comfortable supporting customers with ICT queries because of a lack of experience and confidence.

5.29.2 Volunteers clearly recognised that low staffing levels were an issue and that this has an impact on the number of events and activities that can be delivered in libraries.

5.30 Staff Survey and Staff Workshops Key Findings:

5.30.1 Staff expressed concern about low staffing levels in the service, and how it impacted on their ability to help library users. They stressed the importance of creating opportunities for young people to gain experience of working in the Library Service through apprenticeships. More ICT training and career progression opportunities were also acknowledged as being needed, as there was felt to be a lack of flexibility within roles to allow staff to 'try' other work within the service.

5.30.2 A common theme was the need for increased support from ICT when equipment/networks were not working.

5.30.3 Many staff felt that library fines should be removed as they were a barrier which stopped people using the library service.

5.30.4 It was also felt that there was a need for a clear vision and improved communication within the Library Service.

5.30.5 In addition to the staff survey, workshops were held with a range of Library Service staff and the key findings are detailed below.

5.30.6 Staff felt that lower staffing levels had reduced capacity to develop and undertake work which could strengthen the service. This had also led to reduced delivery of cultural heritage outreach activities.

5.30.7 It was also felt that community engagement activities, particularly with rural communities, had been severely impacted with the reduction of staff delivering outreach work.

5.30.8 It was also reported that there was a lack of capacity to meet the increasing demand from library users for ICT support and assistance. This was exacerbated by the insufficient support for library ICT issues which required an understanding of the service and requirements.

5.30.9 Staff also reported that they were undertaking duties outside of their primary skill set and experience, with concerns regarding resulting impact.

Online engagement sessions with town and parish councils

5.31 The key findings from the on-line engagement sessions held with town and parish councils are outlined below:

5.32 Digital

5.32.1 Access to digital provision for all was considered to be a key element of the service requiring improvement, particularly support and training in using library PCs.

5.32.2 The need to be able access on-line services, particularly when access was not available at home, was also identified as important, particularly in rural locations.

5.32.3 The development of the Council's Digital Strategy was suggested to encourage use of e-magazines, e-books and digital formats, particularly for young people as a means of attracting them to use the Library Service.

5.33 Libraries as a community space

5.33.1 The importance of libraries as a place for people to meet others, in a safe space, reducing isolation and loneliness was acknowledged, but views were mixed as to whether this should be in a traditional 'quiet' library space or a more diverse community hub environment.

5.34 Mobile Library Service

5.34.1 Despite user numbers of the Mobile Library Service being low in comparison to town and parish council populations, it was considered to be an important service, and one which town and parish councils were currently prepared to support financially, recognising that it was a 'lifeline' for those people who did use it. It was suggested that the Mobile Library Service should offer a wider range of services, in response to the needs of residents, and that stop-off points should be reviewed and revised and the duration of stops extended to improve access and use.

5.34.2 It was acknowledged that, whilst other councils had abolished their Mobile Library Services, this was not supported by the parish and town councils of West Berkshire.

5.35 Voluntary Contributions

5.35.1 Feedback was split between those that understood the financial pressure upon the Council, and were willing to contribute, recognising the importance of the library service, and those that believed the Council had a duty to provide the statutory service, and that it should be funded by council tax contributions. Although in a minority, it was reported, that some thought the voluntary contribution represented a 'double taxation' and represented the Council "shirking their responsibilities".

5.35.2 It was raised that parish councils who make a voluntary contribution of £1 per head of population can feel a sense of unfairness, knowing that neighbouring parishes receive the same level of library service even if they don't make a contribution. It was recognised this would be a challenge to resolve.

5.35.3 There was a question over whether, in future, town and parish councils could justify the contribution if user numbers remained as they were. There was also a suggestion that, in making the voluntary contribution, parish and town councils had become 'stakeholders' and this gave them 'control over what happens', and this was seen as a benefit.

5.36 Increased engagement with schools

5.36.1 The value of increased working with schools was raised, including involving parents/carers with their children's use of the library to encourage their own use of it. A programme of regular school visits, from pre-school to secondary, was suggested, to encourage future use, as was a familiarisation programme for

secondary and sixth form students to assist them in using the library, and making the transition to further/higher education.

5.37 Post-Pandemic Services

5.37.1 Post pandemic requirements were discussed including that, with more people working from home, there may be greater demand for libraries to be used as work spaces, and hours of opening may need to be reviewed and revised to be more flexible.

5.38 Communicating what the Library Service has to offer

5.38.1 Increased use of social media and digital platforms, particularly to reach young people, was suggested as a way of raising awareness of the service, as was the use of parish newsletters and posters, although resourcing issues were acknowledged for the former. Promotion of activities and services through community groups was also suggested.

Community Needs Assessment 2022

5.39 The key findings of the LGA Library Service Community Needs Assessment (CNA) for West Berkshire, undertaken by Shared Intelligence, were structured around themes in the cross agency West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Vision for 2036 and are outlined below.

5.40 Realising potential

5.40.1 Although West Berkshire is a generally prosperous area, with high life expectancy, strong economic sectors and good employment, there are pockets of deprivation and a number of people with needs that are easily masked by the general picture. This is manifested through wide gaps in areas such as secondary school attainment; social mobility challenge, particularly for children; and gaps in the employment market, particularly for those with a learning disability or mental health illness. A further aspect of need in West Berkshire relates to refugee populations.

5.40.2 This points to a key role for libraries in helping to engage harder to reach children, young people and their families and in providing information about the full range of education and training opportunities, and making a wider range of foreign language material available.

5.41 Health and wellbeing

5.40.1. Overall population health in West Berkshire is good. However, the population is ageing at a faster rate than nationally, with forecast sharp growth in the over 75 population, and the gap between the healthy and overall life expectancies is significant. There are also high numbers of people with mental health problems and, reflecting the rural nature of the area, there are problems with limited access to public transport, public services and cultural facilities.

5.40.2. Health and wellbeing needs are, therefore, very important for libraries - libraries can help as sources of information, places for social connection and safe public spaces.

5.41. Employment and economy

5.41.1. Although West Berkshire's employment rate (aged 16 to 64) is higher than the equivalent figure for the south east region and England, and residents are highly skilled with the rate of education (NVQ4 level or above) higher than the levels for the south east region and England, there still exist clear employment and economic based needs, with eleven Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the three most deprived deciles nationally for education, training and skills. Underemployment is a challenge with people working fewer hours than they would like, or in roles not making best use of their skills. The pandemic has impacted on the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which employ 16% of local people, many of them young people, women or people from ethnic minorities.

5.41.2. The pandemic has also accelerated changes in patterns of work. A third of West Berkshire workers were able to work from home during the Covid-19 period and there is known to be a growing demand nationally for co-working space. The Economic Development Strategy, as refreshed in 2021, recognises the need to help start-ups and small businesses grow, including by providing incubator space and 'one stop shop' advice for new and viable small firms.

5.41.3. This suggests a role for libraries as a location for access to information about training, for delivery of training in smaller towns, and to be an environment that supports older and disadvantaged people looking to participate in the workforce. There are also implications for library space as a facility for workers otherwise based at home, and for small and start-up businesses.

5.42. Sustainability and quality of life

5.42.1. The *Health and Wellbeing Vision* includes a strong sustainability and quality of life agenda. This relates to more partnership working, increased links with cultural organisations and, as evidenced in the public survey, a desire to see libraries as places which have a strong cultural element including events, exhibitions, courses and classes.

5.42.2. There is a role for libraries in holding information and hosting events and exhibitions to engage people in and promote sustainable choices.

5.43. Cross-cutting themes

5.43.1. The CNA concluded that the generally prosperous nature of West Berkshire masks some pockets of disadvantage and the wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment and healthy life expectancy. The Covid-19 pandemic has further shone a light on needs in areas such as social isolation, including of carers and people with learning disabilities, and the number of people with secondary mental health needs. Drawing on this, four cross-cutting themes were identified that the Library Service can do more to support:

▪ **Engagement**. There is an important role for libraries to support wider efforts to address the difficulty of engaging hard to reach communities, through a focus on intergenerational learning and wider prevention work. Outreach work requires resource to keep refreshing relationships with key partners, such as schools, so approaches to marketing and the creation of staff capacity for engagement and community activities will need to be considered.

▪ **Access to information and services.** With a large rural area and increasing digitisation of public services, there is a need to promote digital inclusion. For libraries this means building offers of assisted digital support, particularly to older people and vulnerable groups, who lack the confidence to use self-service channels, or do not have access to suitable devices or reliable internet connection. Serving this need will also require more tailored support for public facing information technology equipment and creates a staff training need.

▪ **Community resilience.** Particularly in the context of an ageing population, there is a growing need for communities to identify and harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action. Libraries can support this by functioning as community hubs. This will need co-creation with communities and other public service organisations and requires consideration of factors such as whether a library building can be open outside of library opening hours for wider community uses.

▪ **Skills and employment**. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the pattern of work, creating a need to provide space and facilities to support home workers, micro businesses and job seekers. More widely, there are the challenges of younger people's social mobility and the participation in the labour market for older and disadvantaged groups. These issues can be supported with changes to the configuration of physical library space and equipment and by encouraging support networks, with partners to use libraries.

5.44. Library locations

5.44.1. Needs that affect the nature of the library locations were also identified. In addition to the 10,000 new homes built between 2000 and 2018, concentrations of new housing will be built in the next few years around Thatcham, Newbury, in the east of the District and in parts of the Downs area. The Health and Wellbeing Vision 2036 recognises the importance of creating a sustainable housing mix, including an increase in affordable housing, to help meet the challenge of attracting and retaining young people. Additional provision of residential care bed spaces for the ageing population, as well as adaptations to help older people remain living at home, are also required.

5.44.2. This has important implications for libraries; while the overall population level of the District is set to be stable into the 2040s, existing patterns of population will change and it will be necessary to adapt as these changes take place in the medium term. Space needs to be flexible. Points identified for consideration are laid out below.

5.44.3. **East.** There are four libraries relatively close together with varied patterns of use. The potential for partnership should be explored, to create more community hub style facilities that can promote engagement with the community.

5.44.4. **Newbury and Thatcham.** Masterplanning work in the town centres was identified as an opportunity to tailor library provision better to local needs including extending the current facility in Newbury in a way that would support the employment and skills agenda, and creating a new facility that can better meet needs in Thatcham; the current facility is considered to be poorly located and constrained by its small size.

5.44.5. **North.** A large area of the north and centre of the District is not served by a local West Berkshire library and active library borrowers mainly travel to Newbury or Pangbourne. Although deprivation levels are low in this part of the District, access to housing and services is limited, due to its rural nature, so opportunities to linking some library provision with a wider community hub idea were identified.

5.44.6. More detail of the findings of the Community Needs Assessment can be found in Appendix A.

Local Government Association Peer Review

5.42 The key findings from the LGA Peer Review of the Library Service are detailed below.

5.43 The recently completed Community Needs Assessment (CNA) provides a comprehensive analysis of library usage and demographics, and identifies cross-cutting themes which the library service should be well placed to address to help achieve wider priorities for West Berkshire. It provides a helpful body of evidence on which to base the current review.

5.44 A new West Berkshire Council Strategy will be launched following the May 2023 local elections. This provides an opportunity to position the library service to support delivery of Council priorities. There is political support in West Berkshire for the library service, and an understanding of its contribution towards the achievement of wider outcomes in the community. However, there is a keenness for the service to deliver more from within its existing resource base, including meeting the challenge of providing access to the service in a predominantly rural area.

5.45 There may be scope to secure additional capital funding. The peer team heard that the Council had an appetite to invest in buildings as part of a 'one public estate' approach to asset management across West Berkshire. This gives scope for more co-location and joined up service delivery with Leisure and other services, leading to greater engagement with library service users along with efficiency gains.

5.46 The Council has an ageing mobile library vehicle and recognises that decisions will need to be made around a replacement or alternative approaches. This gives an opportunity to re-think service provision to ensure an accessible and cost-effective service in rural areas.

5.47 There are opportunities to enhance the Libraries Services' engagement with other Council departments and external agencies. This should build on existing successes, such as that of the EduCafe in Newbury library in providing access to advice and

support for a range of communities and increasing footfall through the library; the role of library staff in helping to maintain contact with vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 pandemic; and the early work the Service is doing to promote the Health and wellbeing agenda. Such activities help to cement the perception of the Libraries Service as a potential solution to other services and partners' challenges in accessing residents and communities.

5.48 The report presents some options for consideration to build on the opportunities outlined above in providing strategic direction for the Libraries Service, including providing an accessible service in rural areas, increasing the usage and reach of the services and potential efficiency gains.

5.49 The Peer Review Challenge full report can be found in Appendix B.

Priorities

5.50 Giving consideration to the data and feedback analysis from all engagement exercises undertaken as part of the review, the key priorities, detailed below, have been identified.

5.51 Developing a clear Vision and Strategy for the Libraries Service

5.51.1. A Vision and Strategy for the Libraries Service should be developed, aligned with the West Berkshire Vision 2036 and the new Council Strategy due in 2023, the Cultural Heritage Strategy and the Leisure Strategy. There is also a need to develop the use of the library offer to deliver other Council agendas.

5.51.2. The Service should link more effectively with the Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers – Culture & Creativity; Reading; Information & Digital and, in particular, Health & Wellbeing.

5.52 Reviewing Library Locations and Opening Hours

5.52.1. As part of the master planning work in the town centres, the opportunity to extend provision in Newbury to co-locate services should be explored, to contribute to wider objectives including the employment and skills agenda. In Thatcham, the opportunity to create a new facility that better meet local needs, should be considered.

5.52.2. It is important that the potential for more partnership working and co-location throughout the District is explored, e.g. developing a dual use library facility with Willink School.

5.52.3. A large area in the north and centre of the District is not served by a library. There is a need to investigate, through consultation with stakeholders, whether library provision here could be linked to a wider Community Hub.

5.52.4. Libraries should be included in a Council overview of assets.

5.52.5. Reviewing library opening hours, where necessary, to fit in with community needs will enable better use of our library facilities. For example, supporting post pandemic changes in people's working patterns and the rise in home working.

5.53 Delivering the Service Effectively to Rural Areas

5.53.1. There is a need to review and clearly identify the purpose and outcomes to be achieved by the mobile or equivalent library service, providing access to library services in the more remote rural areas.

5.53.2. The current mobile library needs to be replaced with a vehicle which is more efficient to run. Consideration needs to be given as to whether this could be a more tailored 'enhanced' service linking in with parish councils who are making financial contributions towards our service.

5.53.3. Other possible locations for pop up libraries such as village halls, community centres and leisure facilities should be explored as alternative ways of delivering the service to our communities.

5.54 Digital Improvements and Inclusion

5.54.1. Linking into the Council's Digital Strategy and the Libraries Connected Information and Digital Offer, we need to ensure that our libraries provide quality information and digital support to West Berkshire residents. With a large rural area and the increasing digitisation of public services, there is a need to promote digital inclusion.

5.54.2. The Library Service needs to make it easy for people to find the materials, information, and technology they need. Community members are not always aware of the wide variety of materials and information that the library has in various formats. There is a need to increase awareness of all that the library provides for the community, which includes technology access at the library and at home, through remote services. This will enable individuals and communities to develop learning skills to find answers and inform life choices, as well as providing technology access that is vital to many community members.

5.54.3. Building offers of digital support to older people and vulnerable groups is important. There is also a need to evaluate how the pandemic has changed the requirements of our residents. For example, there is an increased demand for workspace in libraries and access to video conferencing software.

5.54.4. Improving and increasing communication and awareness of the Library Service and its offer is also a key priority. The Library Service should be more aligned with the Culture and Libraries brand. Embedding library events and activities into the Heritage website will enable more consistency in providing access to, and promoting events and activities effectively across the wider service.

5.54.5. Increased support from central ICT is vital to support the services we are currently offering in libraries such as access to public PCs, printing, photocopying, and scanning. The turnaround time for fixing faults is very often slow, which results in customer frustration

5.54.6. Continued capital investment is needed in technology to improve the services we offer e.g. Wi-Fi printing.

5.55 Developing Work with Schools

5.55.1. The Library Service has an important role in developing a reading culture, and a lifelong love of reading. Good links have been built with Early Years and primary schools through the very successful Bookstart programme and the Summer Reading Challenge.   There is now a need to improve links with secondary schools and develop a library user education programme.

5.56 Increasing Engagement and Inclusion

5.56.1. There is an important role for libraries to focus on engaging with hard to reach groups through community contacts.

5.56.2. There are already some effective library 'Friends' groups in existence, but they are not all constituted.   Working with existing groups to become constituted and developing groups where they do not currently exist will be advantageous. This will enable the Council to work in a greater capacity with these groups, and increase advocacy with parish councils as well as increasing a sense of community ownership of the library. This is also a way of accessing funding opportunities which are not open to local authorities.

5.56.3. There is a need to increase outreach provision with a focus on those areas where engagement with the Library Service is low and/or requires ongoing support to retain use e.g. Lambourn. This is dependent on increasing staff capacity.

5.56.4. There is also a need to increase the use of arts, culture and creative activity as a means of engaging new and existing library users.

5.56.5. Consideration to remove library fines should also be explored. Library fines have been a long standing arrangement in public libraries, but they potentially impact disproportionately on those who are most vulnerable (financially or as a result of cognitive disability or mental ill health). They are a known barrier to people joining and retaining library membership. The fear of incurring fines and building debt with the Council is a reason often cited for not using the otherwise free Library Service.

5.56.6. An increasing number of other authorities have already removed this barrier for their residents, helping to promote inclusion. By removing library fines, WBC would be supporting its most vulnerable residents who may be at risk of poverty, giving them access to a wide range of books, information and digital access to enable job searches, benefit applications, study support, school readiness, and reading for pleasure.

5.57 Developing Our Workforce

5.57.1. Providing a confident, competent, and resilient workforce and linking in to the WBC Workforce Strategy is a key priority. This can be done by ensuring that library staff are trained and upskilled, where necessary.

5.57.2. Recruitment and co-ordination of digital champions liaising with staff across the service to build capacity in the team and ensure that they are making the best use of new ICT equipment.

5.57.3. It is important to reframe existing staff roles, as and when the opportunity arises, to align with the Library Service's strategic vision.

5.58 Addressing the Gap in the Revenue Budget

5.58.1. The current funding model, which relies on voluntary contributions from parish and town councils in order to deliver a balanced budget, needs to be urgently reviewed. At the moment, the same level of service is delivered to the whole district, without consideration of whether or not a town/parish council has made a voluntary contribution towards the running costs of the library service. This level of library service provision is not sustainable without voluntary contributions being received, particularly in the more densely populated areas of the district where the equivalent of £1 per head of population is substantial. Closer and more effective partnership working with town and parish councils to confirm what they want from the library service, and how they can help us deliver it, is an essential part of future development.

5.58.2. Community Transfer of library buildings should be actively pursued where this would be appropriate.

5.58.3. In order to make most effective use of financial resources, further opportunities to capitalise spend on library stock should be explored. This has the potential to make savings on revenue spending in 2023/24.

5.58.4. The potential of accessing additional funding through fully constituted 'Friends Groups' is also a factor here.

Recommendations

5.59. Based on the findings of the Libraries Review, along with a recognition of the current economic climate, we believe that there is a need to make changes to our Library Service, and recommend that the following steps are implemented over the next three years.

Libraries Review Recommendations

Our work on the libraries review has highlighted the need to develop a vision for libraries which aligns with national and local strategic priorities, followed by a longer-term action plan to deliver the following outcomes:

1. **Innovative use of space across the district**. Seek co-location with community partners so that several services can be accessed in one visit, and explore the need for additional provision in the north of the district.

2. **Access to services**. Put in place locally accessible library services which meet the needs of local communities and reduce rural isolation.

3. **Inclusion.** Work more closely with communities/hard to reach groups to continually improve awareness of library services, and remove known barriers such as library fines to encourage residents to join and retain library membership.

4. **Improve links with secondary schools**. Encourage and support literacy and reading for pleasure, and promote independent learning.

5. **Digital Inclusion.** Enhance access to digital services in line with community needs, by providing access to equipment, the internet and enabling communities to improve digital skills and reduce digital poverty.

6. **Addressing the revenue budget gap**. Review the current funding model which relies on voluntary contributions from town and parish councils, and explore other funding opportunities available through library 'Friends Groups'.

5.59.1. The next stage will be to consult with a range of stakeholders to seek their views on these recommendations and how we can implement them. This feedback will enable us to drive forward improvements to the library service and produce a library vision and strategy. We are currently building a work programme which will confirm the timescales for this.

Financial Summary

5.60. The tables below shows the current revenue and capital budget positions for the Library service.

Revenue Budget 2022/23

Cost Centre Description	Original Budget	*Gross Operating Income Target	Planned Net Expenditure
Libraries Central Costs	266,310	0	266,310
Newbury Central Library	448,180	-77,880	370,300
Library Volunteers	19,020	0	19,020
Library Professional Services Team	107,150	0	107,150
Burghfield Common Library	36,180	-8,550	27,630
Hungerford Library	44,690	-5,890	38,800
Lambourn Library	39,070	-5,930	33,140
Mortimer Library	36,100	-8,170	27,930
Pangbourne Library	34,620	-8,460	26,160
Thatcham Library	55,330	-34,680	20,650
Theale Library	68,760	-35,510	33,250
Mobile Library and At Home Service	78,300	-2,310	75,990
**Library Stock Unit	83,880	0	83,880
Library IT Systems	100,900	0	100,900
Grand Total	**1,418,490**	**-187,380**	**1,231,110**

*Includes income from library charges, venue hire,
 rent and voluntary contributions from town and parish councils.
**Includes stock unit staff salaries, online resources, e-library costs including e-newspapers and e-magazines.

Capital Budget 2022/23

Cost Centre Description	Original Budget
Libraries Book Stock (physical items)	152,690
***Planned maintenance - library buildings	141,900
Grand Total	**277,420**

*** Includes £41k CIL funding for Thatcham Library building improvements project

5.61. The table below shows the proposed service developments for the next three years.

Opportunities for Future Investment in the Library Service

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Proposed service developments with cost implications	Capitalise expenditure on e-books and e-audiobooks in order to release revenue funding to achieve savings.	Increase opening hours at Lambourn Library by 4 per week (total opening hours would be 20). Consider the impact of removing library fines which are a known barrier to people joining and retaining library membership.	Create additional Assistant Librarian post to increase outreach provision.
Comments	E-books and e-audiobooks are now classified in CIPFA guidelines as 'intangible assets', which makes this a legitinate use of capital funding.	Community need in Lambourn identified for additional opening hours.	Would provide a focus on those areas where engagement is low or requires ongoing support to retain library usage levels.
Potential issues/risks	None identified.	Loss of income from library fines and charges.	None identified.

6   Other options considered

This report lays out proposals for how the Library Service could be developed. There is the option to maintain the service 'as is'.

7   Conclusion

In order to act on the findings from the Libraries Review, Members are requested to consider the recommendations laid out in this report.

8   Appendices

8.1   Appendix A – Community Needs Assessment

8.2   Appendix B – LGA Peer Review

Background Papers:

None

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☒
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: The Library Service covers West Berkshire District

Officer details:

Name: Felicity Harrison
Job Title: Culture & Libraries Manager
Tel No: 01635 503087
E-mail: felicity.harrison@westberks.gov.uk

Document Control

Document Ref:	EX4106	Date Created:	4.10.2022
Version:	V12	Date Modified:	20.01.2023
Author:	Felicity Harrison		
Owning Service	Culture and Libraries/Communities and Wellbeing		

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Change ID
1			
2			

This page is intentionally left blank

Library community needs assessment for West Berkshire

January 2022

Contents

Executive Summary

1.1 The report presents a community needs assessment for the library service in West Berkshire. Its findings will be an input into the process of reviewing the council's library service.

Libraries in West Berkshire

1.2 There are eight physical libraries in West Berkshire. Four (Pangbourne, Mortimer, Burghfield Common and Theale) are located on the eastern side of the local authority area. Three are along the Kennet Valley (Thatcham, Newbury and Hungerford) and one serves Lambourn, in the north west of the area. In addition, there is a mobile library service with 81 stops, an "At Home" service and the ability to borrow electronic items through the council's e-library.

1.3 In common with many library services, use has declined in the last 15 - 20 years, although the number of library visits and issues of stock have been stable or increasing following a library review in 2017. The Covid-19 pandemic inevitably disrupted patterns of use, with periods of library closure and restricted services. Libraries adapted and there was a huge growth, of 87%, in the use of e-library resources between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Many events were put online and the service introduced a new order and collect service. It is likely that the pandemic has accelerated trends towards greater use of online resources.

Detailed assessment of needs

1.4 The national Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers set out the role libraries can play to "connect communities, improve wellbeing and promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity". Recognising this role in supporting wider local action on social, economic and environmental wellbeing, the first part of the needs assessment has been structured around themes in the cross agency *West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Vision for 2036*.

Realising potential

1.5 West Berkshire is a generally prosperous area with high life expectancy, strong economic sectors and good employment. However, there are pockets of deprivation and numbers of people with needs that are easily masked by the general picture. This is manifested through wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment. It has a social mobility challenge, particularly for children. There are gaps in the employment market, particularly for those with a learning disability or mental health illness. A further aspect of need in West Berkshire relates to refugee populations where there is a growing cohort of Syrian and Afghan people.

1.6 This points to a key role for libraries in helping to engage harder to reach children, young people and their families and in providing information about the full range of education and training opportunities and making a wider range of foreign language material available.

Health and wellbeing

1.7 Overall population health in West Berkshire is good. On the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it ranks as one of the 20% least deprived districts in England for health. However, within this there are some important trends.

- West Berkshire has a population that is ageing at a faster rate than nationally, with forecast sharp growth in the over 75 population.

- The gap between its healthy and overall life expectancies is significant and there are gaps in life expectancies of around ten years between some wards.

- There are also high numbers of people with mental health problems. During the course of interviews with stakeholders for this assessment, a common theme was the extent of lower level mental health need and the requirement for emotional support.

- Reflecting the rural nature of the area, there are problems with low availability of public transport, of sparse access to public services and to cultural facilities. On the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), a majority of the population live in areas that are in the poorest scoring three deciles for "barriers to housing and services".

1.8   Health and wellbeing needs are therefore very important for libraries - libraries can help as they are sources of information, offer a place for social connection and safe public space.

Employment and economy

1.9   West Berkshire performs strongly on many local economic indicators. Its employment rate is 84% for people aged between 16 and 64 and is higher than the equivalent figure for the south east region and England. Many West Berkshire residents are highly skilled with the rate of education to NVQ4 level or above higher than the levels for the south east region and England. Nevertheless, there are clear employment and economic based needs:

- There is a particular challenge with underemployment - people working for fewer hours than they would like or carrying out work that does not make best use of their skills.

- 11 Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the three most deprived deciles nationally for education, training and skills – these are located around Newbury, Thatcham, Lambourn, Hungerford and in the Tilehurst South and Holybrook wards.

- The pandemic had a particular impact on the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which employ 16% of local people, many of them young people, women or people from ethnic minorities.

- The pandemic also accelerated changes in patterns of work. A third of West Berkshire workers were able to work from home during the Covid-19 period and there is known to be a growing demand nationally for co-working space. The *Economic Development Strategy*, as refreshed in 2021, recognises the need to help start-ups and small businesses grow, including by providing incubator space and "one stop shop" advice.

1.10   This points to the role of libraries as a location for access to information about training, for delivery of training in smaller towns, and to be an environment that supports older and disadvantaged people looking to participate in the workforce. There are also implications for library space as a facility for workers otherwise based at home and for small and start up businesses.

Sustainability and quality of life

1.11   The *Health and Wellbeing Vision* includes a strong sustainability and quality of life agenda. This relates to more partnership working, increased links with cultural organisations and, as evidenced in the public survey, a desire to see libraries as places which have a strong cultural element including events, exhibitions, courses and classes. There is a role for libraries in holding information and hosting events and exhibitions to engage people in and promote sustainable choices.

Cross-cutting themes

1.12   This needs assessment highlights how the generally prosperous nature of West Berkshire masks some pockets of disadvantage and wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment and healthy life expectancy. The Covid-19 pandemic has further shone a light on needs in areas such as social isolation, including of carers and people with learning disabilities, and the number of people with secondary mental health needs. Drawing on this, we have identified four cross-cutting themes that are of particular relevance as changing needs that the library service can do more to support:

- Engagement. Our research has highlighted the difficultly of engaging hard to reach communities and the headline indicator of this is the large secondary education gap. There is an important role for libraries to support wider efforts to address this, through a focus on intergenerational learning and wider prevention work. Serving this need will require consideration of approaches to marketing and how to create staff time for engagement and community activities. Outreach requires resource to keep refreshing relationships with key partners such as schools. Discussions with staff for this needs assessment highlighted their view that they do not currently have the level of resourcing needed for this.

- Access to information and services. With a large rural area and increasing digitisation of public services, there is a need to promote digital inclusion. For libraries this means building offers of assisted digital support, particularly to older people and vulnerable groups who lack the confidence to use self-service channels, or do not have access to suitable devices or reliable internet connection. Serving this need will also require more tailored support for public facing information technology equipment and creates a staff training need.

- Community resilience. Particularly in the context of an ageing population, there is a growing need for communities to identify and harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action. Libraries can support this by functioning as community hubs. This will need co-creation with communities and other public service organisations. It requires consideration of factors such as whether a library building can be open outside of library opening hours for wider community uses.

- Skills and employment. This is an area where the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the pattern of work, creating a need to provide space and facilities to support home workers, micro businesses and job seekers. More widely, there are the challenges of younger people's social mobility and the participation in the labour market for older and disadvantaged groups. These are factors that can be supported with changes to the configuration of physical library space and equipment and by encouraging support networks, with partners to use libraries.

Library locations

1.13 In addition to needs that affect the overall library offer, there are also changing needs that affect the nature of the library locations. West Berkshire's infrastructure development plan indicates concentrations of new housing will be built in the next few years around Thatcham, Newbury, in the east of the district and in parts of the downs area. This is in addition to the 10,000 new homes built between 2000 and 2018. The *Health and Wellbeing Vision 2036* recognises the importance of creating a sustainable housing mix, including a focus on increasing the amount of affordable housing and recognising the challenge of attracting and retaining young people. An additional aspect is extending provision of residential care bed spaces for the ageing population as well adaptations to help older people remain living at home.

1.14 This has important implications for libraries. While the overall population level of the district is set to be stable into the 2040s, existing patterns of population will change and they can expect to need to continue to adapt as these changes take place in the medium term. Space needs to be flexible. Points to consider reflecting the changing demography are:

- East. There are four libraries relatively close together with varied patterns of use. There is a need to explore the potential for partnership to create more community hub style facilities that can promote engagement with the community.

- Newbury and Thatcham. Masterplanning work in the town centres is an opportunity to tailor library provision better to local needs. In Newbury, there is an opportunity to extend the current facility in a way that would support the employment and skills agenda. In Thatcham, patterns of use indicate a need for more engagement in parts of its surrounding area. Staff report that the current facility is poorly located and its potential constrained by its small size – creating a new facility that can better engage people needs to be explored in the planning exercise.

- North. A large area of the north and centre of the district is not served by a local West Berkshire library and active library borrowers mainly travel to Newbury or Pangbourne. Modelling a potential catchment for a library in this area shows its level of need on most indices of deprivation is low. However, it is a rural area which ranks very poorly on access to housing and services. Through consultation with stakeholders, there is a case to explore linking some library provision with a wider community hub idea.

2   Introduction

Purpose of this report

2.1   The report presents a community needs assessment for the library service in West Berkshire. Its findings will be an input into the process of reviewing the council's library service.

2.2   Shared Intelligence has been commissioned to undertake the community needs assessment. The brief is to take a holistic approach to considering the needs of communities, including health, education and economic data as well as demographic information in relation to existing library locations. We have been asked to present a narrative that will enable the library service to:

- Assess how well the service meets the needs of residents - including any Covid-19 impacts on needs.

- Create options for:

    - A level of service that can better meet changing community needs with a similar amount of capacity and resource as at present.

    - A more ambitious vision for libraries requiring further capital investment to deliver increased engagement and positive, measurable outcomes for residents.

2.3   We should stress that this document is a needs assessment. It is out of scope to recommend how the service should meet the needs identified. However, our approach is that the assessment is informed by an awareness of how modern library services can serve a wide range of needs.

Approach to assessing community needs

2.4   In our experience, an effective needs assessment distinguishes between needs that local communities have (which library services can serve) and current patterns of use. Usage information provides a view of the accessibility of and demand for services currently on offer – but it does not on its own reveal insight about need for the various ways that libraries can support individuals and communities. Part of the brief for this work is to provide insight into the needs of the significant part of the population that does not use library services, but may stand to benefit from them.

Method

2.5   The needs assessment has been produced from three principal areas of activity:

Document review

2.6   We have carried out a literature review to understand the council's and wider local partnership strategies and associated evidence bases. References to source material are given throughout this document.

Data analysis

2.7   We have analysed several sets of data. This includes:

- Library use data, provided by the library service. This covers:

    - Borrower patterns.

    - Visitor data.

    - Data about active borrowers, their post code locations and ages.

- Index of Multiple Deprivation data.

- Information from West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment documents.

Interviews

2.8   We have undertaken interviews with senior officers in the council, at Service Director and Head of Service level and with representatives of four voluntary and community sector organisations who work with client groups with needs that may be supported by libraries. At the end of the interview process, we also carried out a workshop with senior library service staff. This served as a sensemaking session, to ensure the insights were informed by frontline experience.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on data continuity

2.9   This needs assessment was undertaken in autumn 2021, 18 months following the start of restrictions brought into address the Covid-19 pandemic. For a large part of that 18-month period libraries were either closed, or open with restrictions created by social distancing requirements. Some restrictions and behaviour changes persist at the time of writing. This has had an effect on continuity of data. For most data analysis, we have used 2019/20 as the most recent year of consistent data.

3 Overview of West Berkshire

3.1 West Berkshire is a small unitary local authority with a population of 158,465[1]. The district's principal towns are Newbury and Thatcham, which together have a population of 69,667. Additionally, 31,444 people live in the suburban area in the east of the district which adjoins the Reading borough. 57,354 are classed as living in the rural part of the district. This includes market towns such as Hungerford and Lambourn as well as small towns and villages. Overall, nearly 75 per cent of the district sits within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3.2 The census in 2011 found that 94.8% of the population were white, including 4.4% white non British or Northern Irish. 2.5% were Asian or Asian British, 0.9% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; 1.6% from mixed/multiple ethnic groups; and 0.2% from other ethnic groups. Using the same data, only two wards, Tilehurst South and Holybrook (87.4%) and Tilehurst Birch Copse (91.3%) had a percentage of white population less than 92%.

Population trends

3.3 West Berkshire's population is forecast to be stable in the medium term. 2030 and 2043 estimates show a level very similar to the present population[2]. However, there are dynamics within the population that indicate that there are likely to be changing needs and trends that will develop over next 20 years. These are:

- Ageing population and the balance of retired to working age people. In common with many areas, West Berkshire's population is projected to grow older. While this is a national trend, it is set to grow at a faster rate than nationally. Key data are shown in the table below:

---

[1] This is based on the mid year 2020 estimates from the Office of National Statistics, quoted on the council's website. Town and settlement populations are taken from the same source.
[2] Office of National Statistics projections from NOMIS (downloaded on 5 November 2021). The projection for 2030 is 157,677 and 2043 is 157,643.

		West Berkshire	England
Percentage aged 65+			
	2021	20%	19%
	2030	25%	21%
	2043	28%	24%
Percentage aged 75+			
	2021	9%	9%
	2030	12%	11%
	2043	16%	13%
Percentage working age (18 to 65)			
	2021	58%	60%
	2030	55%	58%
	2043	52%	57%
Ratio working age: retired age*			
	2021	1 : 2.9	1 : 3.2
	2030	1 : 2.2	1 : 2.7
	2043	1 : 1.8	1 : 2.4
* NB figures do not take account of the fact that the retirement age will reach 67 by 2028.			

Two points are important to note:

- o The growth in the over 75 population who often have the highest needs and are most vulnerable to isolation.

- o The drop in the ratio of the retired to working age population.

- Location of new housing. The council's Emerging Draft Infrastructure Development Plan3 identifies describes how the Local Plan Review anticipates future residential and mixed-use development in three areas. These focus on Newbury and Thatcham (around 4,500 units, of which 2,500 in north east Thatcham); the eastern area (around 800 units) and the North Wessex Downs (around 300 units). This needs to be seen in the context of a forecast stable population and the fact that 10,000 new homes were built between 2000 and 2018[4].

Context for libraries

A need to consider the important role libraries play in helping older adults remain active and independent and in offering groups and services that help to support carers.

A case for reviewing library service point distribution, to ensure it adequately reflects areas of increasing concentrations of housing.

---

[3] *Emerging Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan*, West Berkshire Council, July 2021.
[4] *West Berkshire Vision 2036*, West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

Prosperity, Index of Multiple Deprivation and rurality

3.4   West Berkshire is a generally prosperous area with high life expectancy, strong economic sectors and good employment, particularly in the technology sector and good connections through the Thames Valley corridor.

3.5   Using the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation[5], it is ranked 289 out of 317 English single tier and district councils in terms of deprivation. This means it is generally one of the least deprived areas in the country, on a range of data sets measured in small geographic areas (Local Super Output Areas, or LSOAs). 26% of its 97 LSOAs are in the 10 per cent least deprived.

3.6   However, there are pockets of deprivation and numbers of people with needs (such as mental health) that are easily masked by the general picture. There are two LSOAs in the most deprived three deciles nationally, located in the Newbury Greenham and Thatcham North East wards.
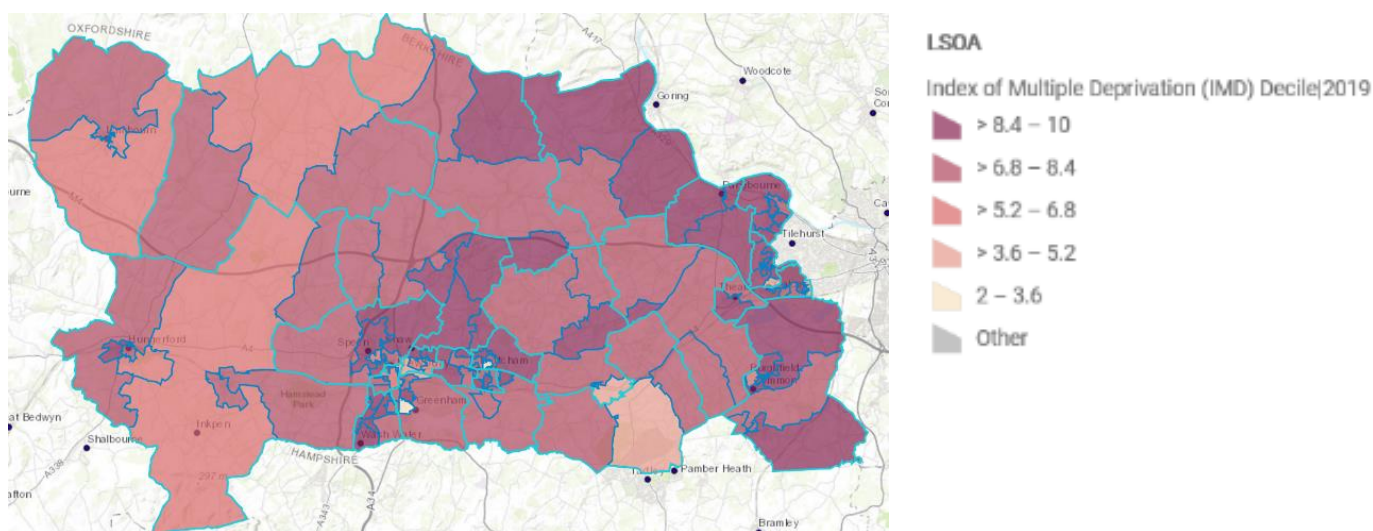
Figure 1: overall 2019 IMD decile distribution by LSOA (lower number and paler colour indicates higher deprivation)

3.7   The IMD contains a "domain" for "barriers to housing and services". This represents an area where the majority of the district's population are in the most deprived three deciles. This domain measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. It includes geographical barriers, relating to the physical proximity of local services, and wider barriers, including access to and affordability of housing.

---

[5] *Index of Multiple Deprivation*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019
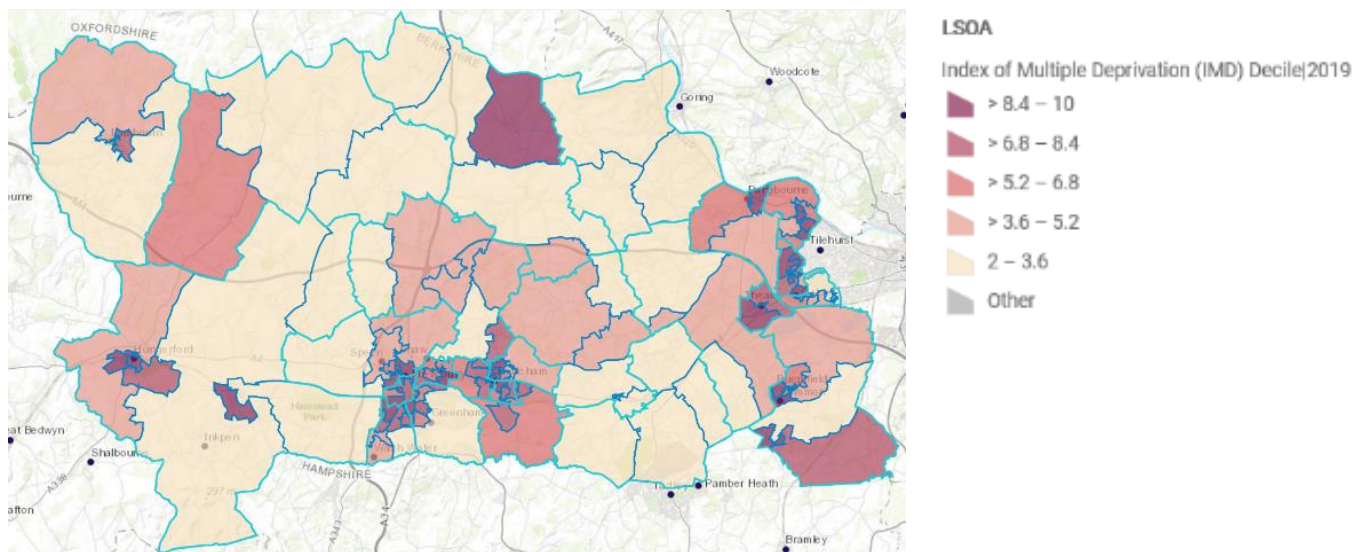
Figure 2: IMD 2019 - domain for barriers to housing and services

3.8   The level of barriers to housing and services reflects the rural nature of the area. Many of those living in the rural part of West Berkshire are in an area with a low density of population and challenges including low availability of public transport of sparse access to public services or the cultural facilities available in a major centre such as Newbury. On housing, the House Price Index for November 2019 indicated the average house price for first time buyers in England was £251,222 compared to £276,521 in West Berkshire[6].

3.9   We discuss in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.5 the significant secondary education attainment gap and young people's social mobility challenge in the area. This indicates that there are sections of the population who are hard to reach. In an area that is generally prosperous and with a vibrant technology sector, there is a problem with digital inclusion. While many people are very comfortable with finding information digitally and can afford devices and fast connections, a significant minority risk being left behind whether because of their age, ability to afford a suitable device, or not having the skills needed by employers.

Context for libraries

A need to consider whether and how effectively libraries engage harder to reach groups.

The role of libraries in providing a route to access information and services, in a rural context and for those who either do not have, or are not comfortable with digital access.

Budget and preventative services

3.10   In common with many local authorities, budget pressures have led to reductions in discretionary and preventative aspects of services. The libraries budget and staffing reduced in 2017 by 44%. Children's centres have reduced to three family hubs and direct youth provision has very substantially reduced.

---

[6] UK House price index - Land registry.

Context for libraries

Previous reductions in services are an important context factor for assessing community needs and how libraries may respond to them.

Covid-19

3.11   The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on isolation and also precipitated change in patterns of town centre use. By pushing so much activity online, including social connection, it has brought the issue of digital exclusion into focus.

Context for libraries

It is difficult to assess the long-term Covid-19 impact at this stage, but it sets an important context for the role of libraries in recovery and prevention.

4   Libraries in West Berkshire

4.1   There are eight physical libraries in West Berkshire. Four (Pangbourne, Mortimer, Burghfield Common and Theale) are located on the eastern side of the local authority area. Three are along the Kennet Valley (Thatcham, Newbury and Hungerford) and one serves Lambourn, in the north west of the area. In addition, there is a mobile library service with 81 stops, an "At Home" Service and the ability to borrow electronic items through the council's e-library.

4.2   Libraries offer a range of services. In addition to the core access to books for borrowing and reference, the service provides:

- Free access to wifi and computers.

- Self-service printing, photocopying and scanning.

- Talks on popular topics such as local history and the environment, including online versions of these since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Room hire.

- Free access to e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

- Local and family history resources.

- Audiobooks and e-audiobooks.

- Services for children including Storytime, Rhymetime, Code Club, craft events and other occasional events, many of which were delivered online during the pandemic.

- Book groups: titles available in book group sets of 10 copies (for an annual fee) and an online group set up at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Online access to reference resources, including access to academic and research journals and Britannica Online and GoCitizen, an online resource for candidates preparing for the Life in the UK test (British citizenship).

4.3   In common with many library services, use has declined in the last 15 - 20 years, although the number of library visits and issues of stock has been stable or increasing following the library review in 2017. Some trends are shown in the graphs below. One of these refers to the number of "active borrowers". An active borrower has borrowed at least one item of physical stock in the preceding 12 months. It excludes anyone who has only borrowed from the council's e-library.
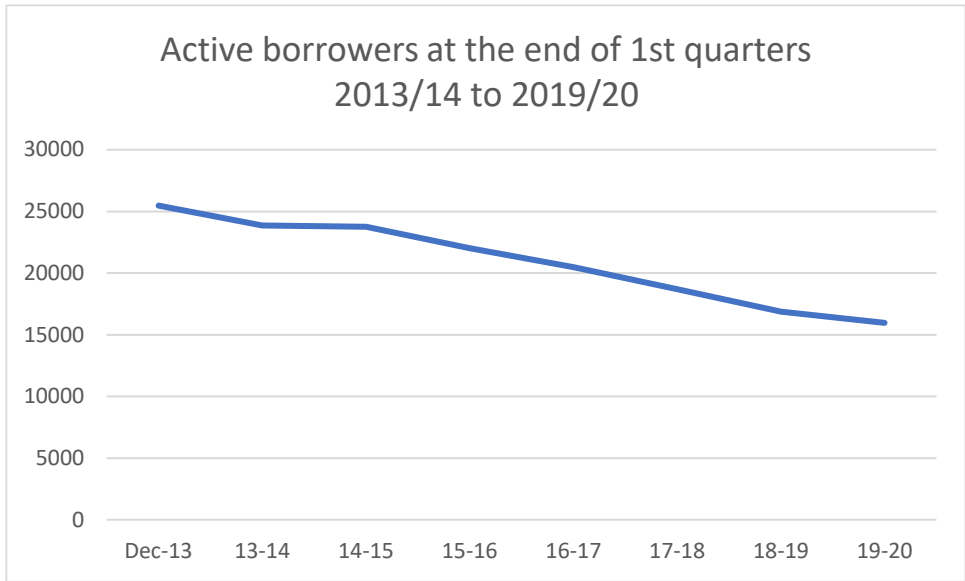
Figure 3: number of active borrowers measured at the end of the first quarter
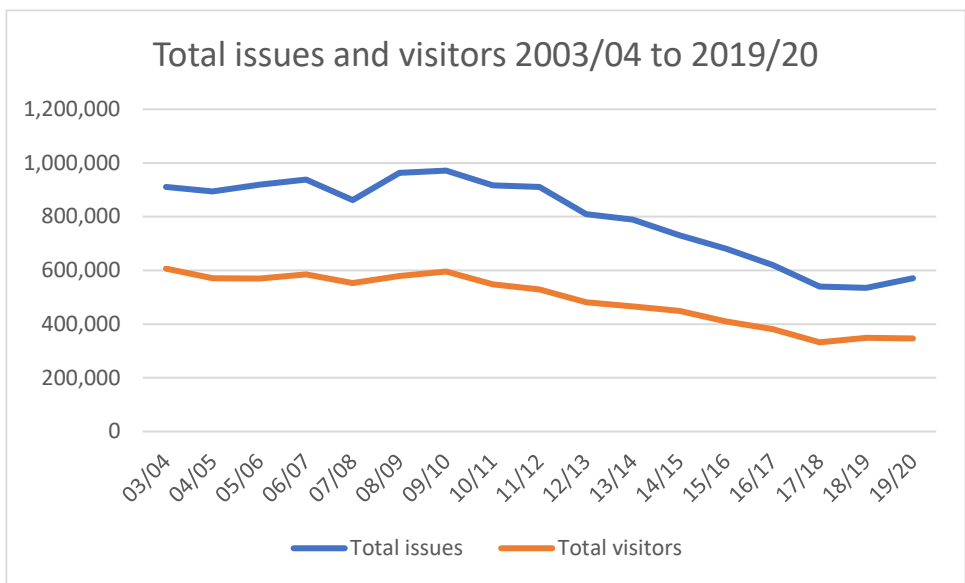
Figure 4: total number of stock issues and visits recorded by financial year. Note that this total stock issues figure includes e-library downloads as well as all online renewals.

4.4 The chart below is taken from CIPFA data and shows West Berkshire's relative position compared with other English authorities for the level of library visits per capita. Over the period 2010/11 to 2019/20, West Berkshire has shown an average level of decline. Only four authorities have seen growth in visits.
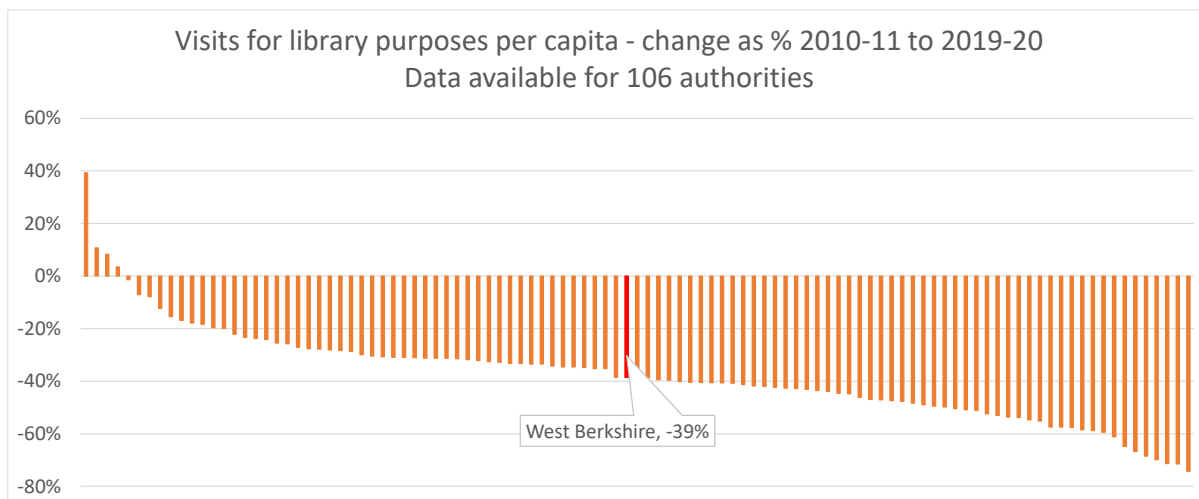
Figure 5: change in visits for library purposes per capita for 106 local authorities

4.5   A second chart shows the number of active library users per capita over the same period. West
       Berkshire has fared better than the majority, but its level of decline is still significant. Only five
       authorities have achieved growth.
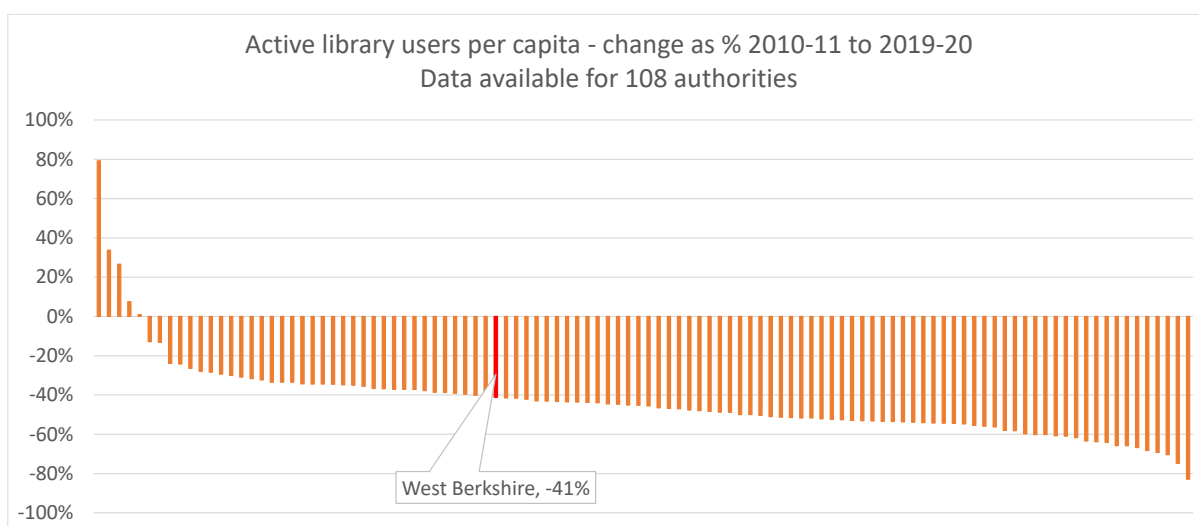
Figure 6: change in active library users per capital for 108 local authorities

4.6   Other characteristics and trends in West Berkshire library use are described below.

Age profile of West Berkshire libraries

4.7   Based on 2019/20 data for active borrowers, the age breakdown between junior and adult
       borrowers shows that children aged 10 or under are the proportionately largest group compared
       with the population of their age group. This dataset covers all borrowers using West Berkshire
       libraries, so covers some who do not live in the district. In the library profiles section, in Appendix I,
       we present some analysis based on borrowers with West Berkshire post codes. However, this is
       difficult to show on a whole authority level without double counting of the borrowers who use more
       than one library.

West Berkshire libraries active borrower age analysis

	Age 0 - 10	Age 11 to 17	Age 18+
This age group as percentage of total West Berks general population	13%	9%	78%
This age group as percentage of total West Berks active borrowers	32%	8%	60%
Percentage of total West Berks general population in this age group who are active borrowers	24%	9%	8%
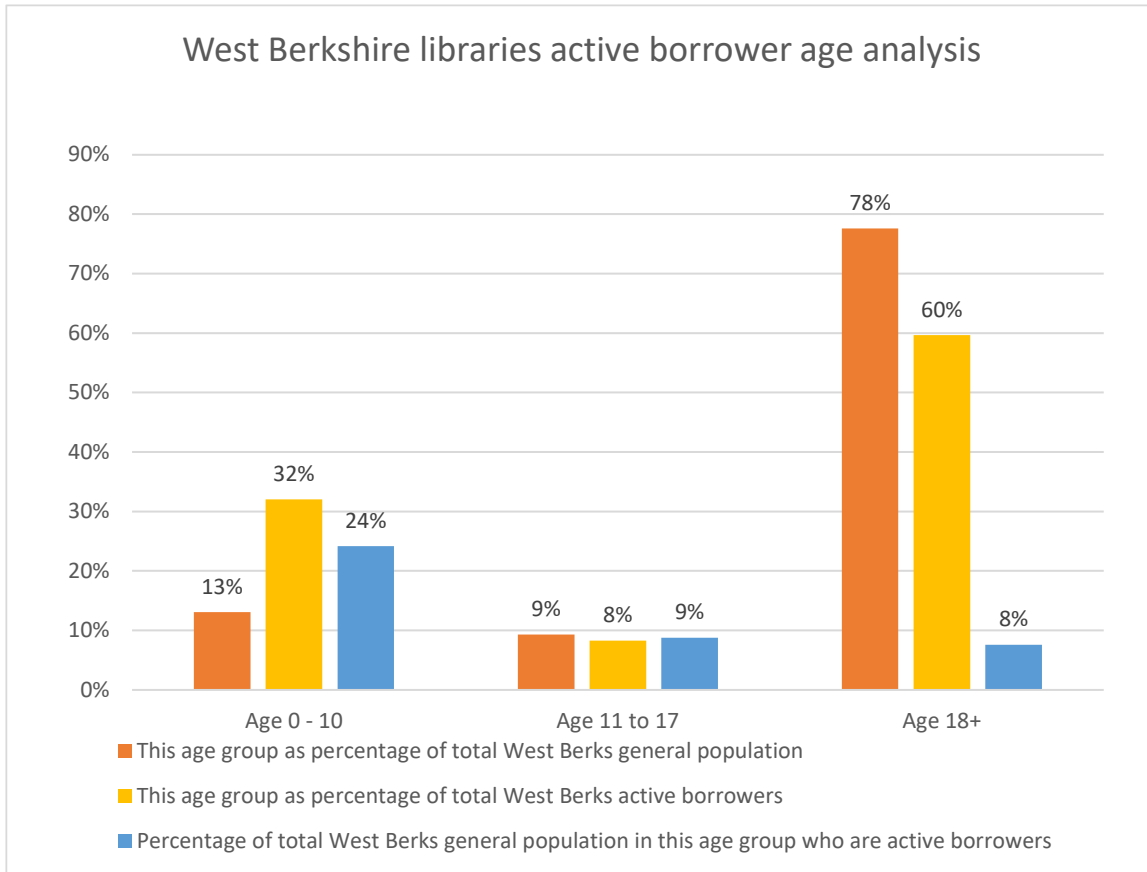
Figure 7: age analysis of active borrowers (including non West Berkshire post code borrowers)

Ethnic profile of library users

4.8 The library service no longer collects ethnicity information about its borrowers – this was discontinued in 2018 because of concerns about compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For this reason, we have not attempted an ethnic profile of library users. Some analysis on a per library basis was included in the 2016 needs assessment[7] based on the previously held data. This found the ethnic breakdown for each library was roughly similar to the areas they serve, with some variation around how well the "white other" group was represented. The analysis noted a much higher proportion of white other users using the then two mobile libraries than any static library. It is important to note, however, that these data were optional for customers to provide so do not present a comprehensive picture.

Use of electronic resources

4.9 The chart below shows the steady growth in downloading of electronic resources, such as eBooks.

---

[7] *West Berkshire Libraries Needs Assessment*, RedQuadrant, September 2016.

E-library downloads
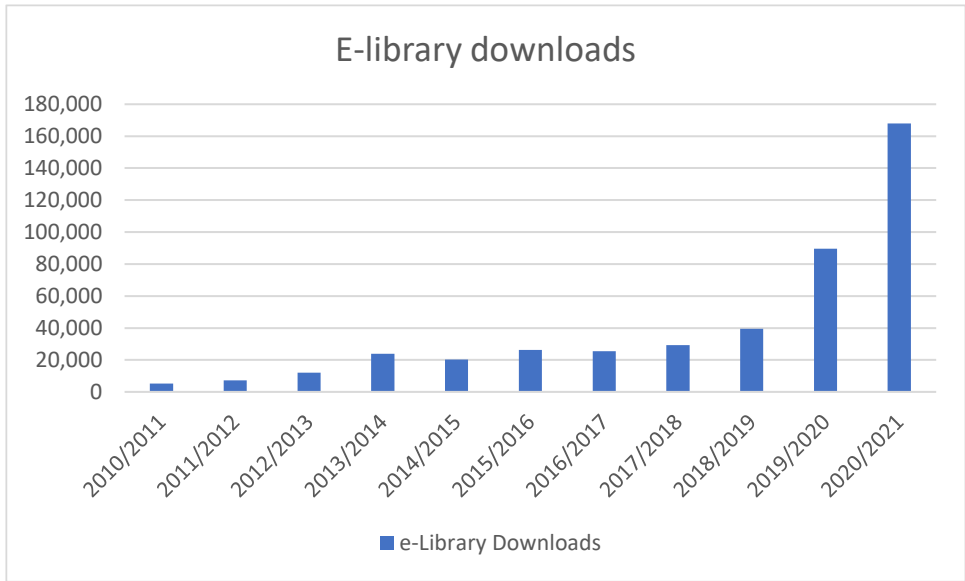
Figure 8: trend in e-library downloads

4.10 The upward trend was established before the Covid-19 pandemic, and then spiked during it.

4.11 The library service has recently introduced a libraries mobile phone app. This enables users to search the library catalogue and to renew and reserve books. It also provides access to the collection of free e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

Use of computers in libraries

4.12 The libraries provide wifi, some printing facilities, scanning and access to public computers. This is an important component of the total number of library visits. There has, however, been a decline in the use of public computers since 2015/16, as can be seen in the graphs below. There is now an increasing trend for customers to use their own mobile devices to work on, using the library wifi. The number of public computers available has therefore been reduced and they have been replaced with more study tables with USB charging points to meet demand.

No. of users of public PCs
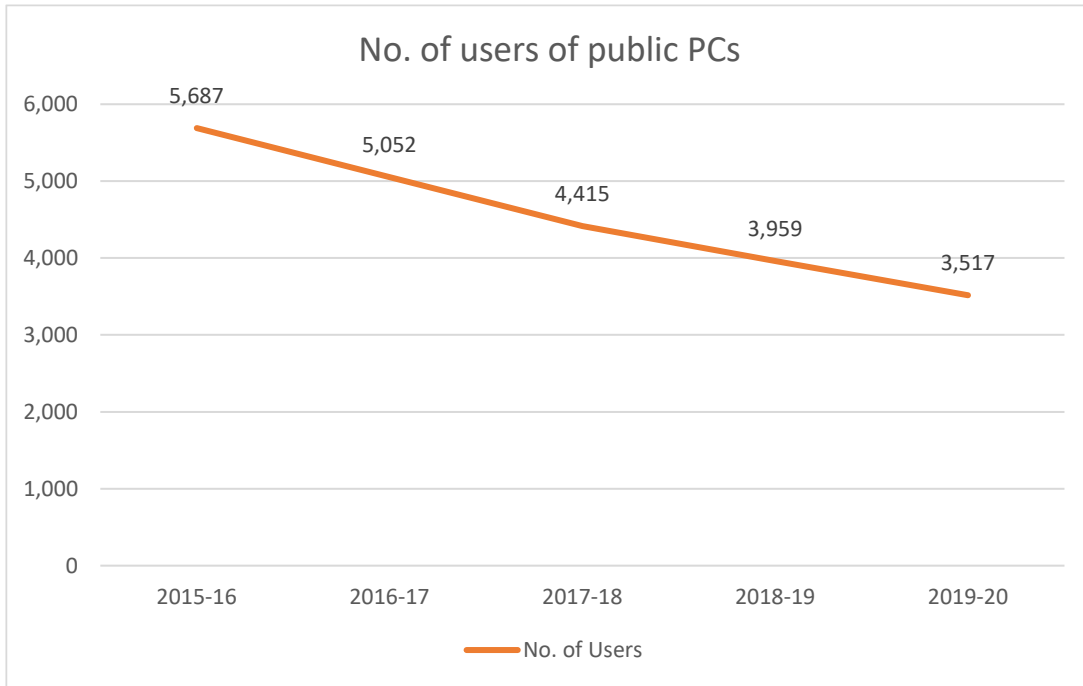
Figure 9: trend in number of users of public computers in libraries

Hours of use of public PCs
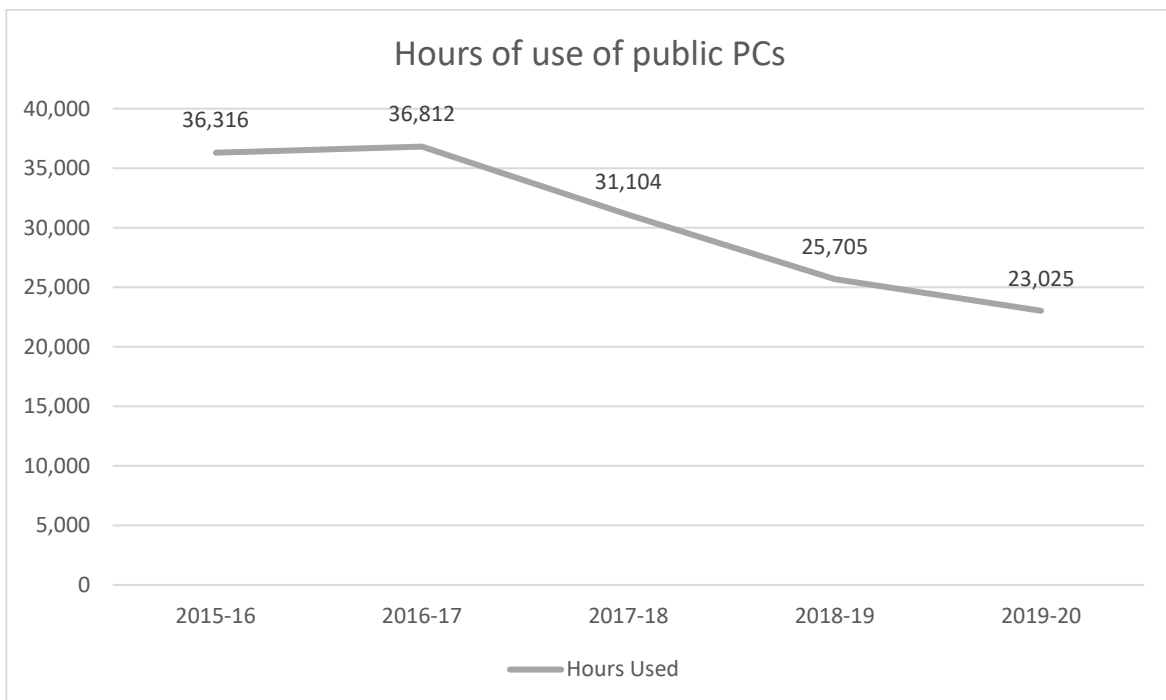
Figure 10: trend in total hours of use of public PCs

Mobile library and "At Home" service

4.13   There is one mobile library service (reduced from two in 2017/18). Use of the mobile service has declined sharply in the last decade, although the trend has been more stable since the consolidation to one service. The chart below shows the number of visits to the mobile service:

West Berks mobile library visits
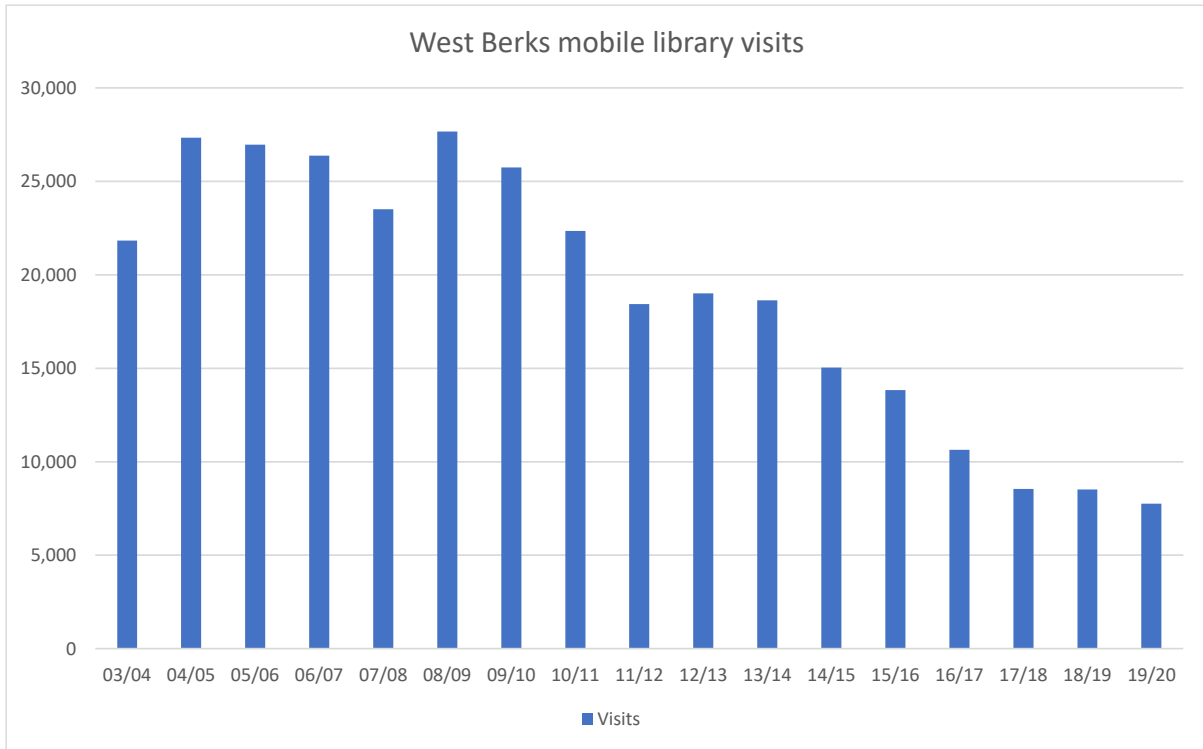
Figure 11: trend in number of visits to West Berkshire mobile libraries

4.14   While this is a smaller number of visits than that for any static library, its percentage of issues is the same (at 4%) as the libraries at Burghfield Common, Pangbourne and Theale.

4.15   An "At Home" service has operated since the late 2000s. This had 127 active borrowers in 2019/20. It is targeted at readers who find it difficult to visit their local library because of age or disability and is delivered by volunteers. The chart below includes the 2020/21 figure as the "At Home" service was important during the pandemic. The drop in visits reflects the government restriction that applied to the use of elderly volunteers which meant that the service did not operate during the first few months of the first national lockdown, resuming in May 2020.
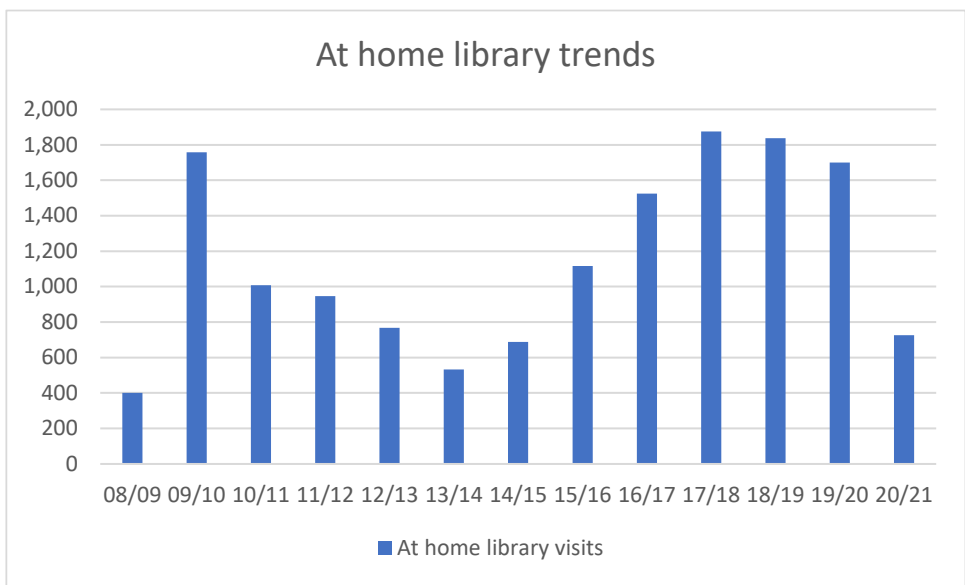
At home library trends

Covid-19 pandemic implications

4.16   The Covid-19 pandemic inevitably disrupted these patterns, with periods of library closure and restricted services. We have removed 2020/21 from most of the charts shown in this section as including it would give a misleading impression of trends as visits and borrower numbers were greatly reduced. As libraries adapted, there was a huge growth, of 87%, in the use of e-library resources between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Many events were put online and the service introduced a new order and collect service. It is likely that the pandemic has accelerated trends towards greater use of online resources. It is worth noting, however, that in the first four months of the 2021/22 financial year, over 1,900 new borrowers have been recruited, the highest for the equivalent period since 2015.

5   Detailed assessment of needs

Needs

5.1   This section aims to present a range of socio-economic data and analysis about West Berkshire which is relevant to a set of needs that libraries can help to support. In selecting the data for the purposes of a library needs assessment, our thinking has been influenced by the input of interviewees and also the Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers[8]. These set out the role libraries can aim to play to "connect communities, improve wellbeing and promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity".

5.2   The sections below have been structured under the five "hopes for the future" presented in the *West Berkshire Vision 2036*. This presents a vision for inclusive growth and a focus on sustainable achievement of outcomes for all of the people of West Berkshire. The hopes for the future are:

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire where everybody has what they need to fulfil their potential.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire where the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and backgrounds is good.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire that welcomes business, enterprise and industry into a productive, growing and dynamic local economy.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire with a housing mix with something for everyone.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire with beautiful, historic and diverse landscapes and a strong cultural offering.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire where everybody has what they need to fulfil their potential"

5.3   The focus of this theme is creating the conditions to ensure that everyone living in West Berkshire has the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to thrive. An important context factor for this is social mobility which has been area of weakness for West Berkshire for some time. The Social Mobility Commission's *State of the Nation 2017* report includes the concept of social mobility "cold spots" for the areas that perform worst on 16 areas of indictor, covering early years, schools, youth and working lives factors. It identifies West Berkshire as the 60th worst cold spot out of 324 local authority district areas in England[9].

Children and young people

5.4   On early years specifically, West Berkshire is the eighth worst "cold spot" area in England for social mobility. This reflects Ofsted ratings for nursery providers and also the district's relatively low

---

[8] https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/universal-library-offers (Accessed 16/11/2021)

[9] *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, Social Mobility Commission, November 2017

percentage of children eligible for free school meals who achieve a "good level of development" at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage[10]. This is shown in more detail in the Public Health outcomes framework data, which uses data from 2018/19.

Indicator	West Berkshire	South East	England
Children achieving a good level of development at the age of reception	74.6%	74.6%	71.8%
Children with free school meal status achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception	41.4%	55.4%	56.5%
Children achieving expected level in the phonics screening check year 1	81.8%	82.2%	81.8%
Children with free school meals status achieving the expected level in the phonics screening check in Year 1	57.0%	66.1%	70.1%

5.5   During the course of education, the attainment gap between the most and least well performing students is significant in West Berkshire. Data reported in 2017 shows that the difference begins at 3.1 months for early years (a relatively low gap) but rises to 25 months at secondary level, which is the tenth largest of English education authorities. The Health and Wellbeing Vision makes it clear that an important ambition for the area is that all its young people should be well-educated irrespective of the wealth of their parents.

5.6   This is also reflected in the economic development strategy which aims to promote a wide range of education and training opportunities, including T Levels and apprenticeships, to widen access.

Adults

5.7   The social mobility position for "working lives" is much stronger. West Berkshire is the 16th most socially mobile area, reflecting indicators to do with salary, house prices, occupation types and home ownership. Where the area performs less well is with gaps in its employment market. There are particular issues with employment of disadvantaged groups. The Public Health Outcomes Framework gave West Berkshire a "red" indicator for those with a learning disability in employment and "amber" for those with a mental health illness.

5.8   An important ambition for West Berkshire is that the workforce has the skills it needs and that anyone, regardless of their age, health or ability is given a chance to participate in the workplace. In interviews with stakeholders, we heard the view of the importance of intergenerational learning to tackle social mobility – encouraging parents to read with their children and the key role that libraries can play in encouraging this. This is discussed further in paragraphs 5.38 to 5.44 under *engagement*.

---

[10] Since 2014 free school meals have been universally available for children in reception, year 1 and year 2. The indicator reflects the requirement for parents to tell schools if they receive any of the qualifying benefits, which are used to trigger claims under the pupil premium scheme.

5.9   A further aspect of need in West Berkshire relates to refugee populations. There is growing cohort of Syrian and Afghan refugees for whom libraries can provide safe space, an opportunity to socialise or to obtain information.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- Activities and resources which support increased school readiness for pre-school children and their parents.

- Opportunities to strengthen reading (for pleasure and for study) and other attainment among school-age children.

- Activities to support family learning.

- Opportunities to access resources and support outside of regular school and work hours (e.g. weekends and evenings).

- Provision of information about the full range of education and training opportunities.

- Range of foreign language material available.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire where the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and backgrounds is good"

5.10   Overall population health in West Berkshire is good. On the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it ranks as one of the 20% least deprived districts in England for health. This is reflected in a higher than average life expectancy for men and women. It also ranks above the regional and national averages in other wider determinant of health indicators, such as the percentage of children in low income families and the percentage of people in employment.

5.11   Healthy life expectancy is higher than the England average. However, at 66.3 years for women (compared with a life expectancy of 85.2) and 68.2 for men (compared with a life expectancy of 81.9) it is clear that the extra life expectancy of people in West Berkshire is not necessarily one of healthy years.

5.12   There are also health inequalities. Life expectancy is 4.4 years lower for men and 5.2 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of West Berkshire than in the least deprived areas. The 2017 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on life expectancy and mortality highlights that there were gaps in life expectancies of around ten years between some wards[11]. The JSNA also highlights how multiple factors affect mortality including access to services, income levels and rurality and the Health and Wellbeing Vision identifies a number of actions which will help more people to live well for longer, including helping communities to support their residents and empowering individuals to take more responsibility or their health.

---

[11] West Berkshire Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Living Well: Life Expectancy and Mortality, 2017. The document uses ward boundaries that have been changed by a 2018 Local Government Boundary Commission report. In 2017, the largest gaps were:
- For males, between Victoria (75.3) years and Bucklebury (85.2 years).
- For females, between Thatcham North (80.6 years) and Birch Copse (90.2 years).

5.13　While health deprivation is relatively low, there are still significant numbers of people with needs. A key example is mental health. The JSNA on adult mental health was published in 2016. This cites a predicted instance of adults aged 18 to 64 with a common mental disorder of 15,077 and projected it as stable to 2030. Other indicators also illustrate the extent of mental health problems, including:

- Amber indicators on rate of emergency hospital admission for intentional self-harm (all ages) and hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people (aged 15-24 years).

- A red indicator on adults in contact with secondary mental health services who live in stable and appropriate accommodation[12].

- A sharpening of mental health issues from the pandemic. The council's *Recovery and Renewal Strategy*[13] describes clear evidence of increased referrals both for adults and children and young people.

5.14　During the course of interviews with stakeholders for this assessment, a common theme was the extent of lower level mental health need and the requirement for emotional support. Many of those in need are people who are not in touch with, or would not meet the criteria for statutory mental health support. This is an area where libraries can help as they offer a place for social connection or quiet time.

Social isolation and health and wellbeing

5.15　The Health and Wellbeing Vision 2036 highlights a growing concern about social isolation, particularly rural isolation, and its adverse impact on personal wellbeing. It contains an aspiration to ensure that all residents are given the opportunity to participate in their communities and can access the services they need. This is important for people of all ages, but the impact is particularly noted for young people and older adults.

5.16　Formal indicators do not make West Berkshire a particularly striking area nationally for social isolation or loneliness, but the numbers of people involved are still significant and constitute a local need:

- On the Public Health Outcomes Framework, 16.9 per cent of people over the age of 16 report that they feel lonely often / always or some of the time. This is lower than the regional and national average.

- West Berkshire has amber indicators for the percentage of adult social care users, and carers, who feel they have enough social interaction. This has been measured for the age groups over 18 and over 65. The rates are similar to the English average, but slightly worse for adult carers aged 18+.

5.17　During the course of interviews, we have heard how isolation particularly affects those who do not have access to private transport, in rural areas. In addition to teenagers and older people, this is a

---

[12] [Public Health Outcomes Framework at a glance summary](#), (2019/20 data).
[13] *Recovery & Renewal Strategy*, West Berkshire Council, May 2021

factor for young people employed in low paid but distinctive jobs in the horse-racing industry in the north west of the district.

5.18   There are around 750[14] people aged 14 or over on learning disability registers for West Berkshire. The gap in the employment rate between those with a learning disability and the overall employment rate is rated as red in the Public Health Outcomes and is 77.8%, compared with a national figure of 70.6%. This is a group where individuals often benefit from help in connecting to the internet and making job applications, but can feel uncomfortable in settings such as Job Centre Plus.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- The role of libraries as a place for social connection or offering quiet space to people experiencing mental health problems.

- A hub for information about staying healthy.

- Providing a location for social interaction, whether through events or being a location for groups to meet.

- Providing a comfortable and welcoming setting for people with learning disabilities who may need help with internet access or linking to the jobs market.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire that welcomes business, enterprise and industry into a productive, growing and dynamic local economy"

5.19   West Berkshire performs strongly on many local economic indicators. Its employment rate is 84% for people aged between 16 and 64 and is higher than the equivalent figure for the south east region and for England. A large percentage (59%) of employment is in senior managerial, professional or associate professional or technical roles. This is also higher than the regional and English average, as are average wage levels. The dominant industry by far for Gross Value Added is information and communication, which accounts for 29% of the total district amount[15].

5.20   The council's *Economic Development Strategy*, published in 2020 set out the need to move away from previous approaches which had centred on sustaining the conditions for prosperity. It stresses the need to tailor the strategy to deal with several challenges. These include some of those identified already in this document – ageing population, social mobility and participation in the labour market of older and disadvantaged backgrounds and those with mental health issues or learning difficulties to be given more opportunity to participate in the workplace.

5.21   It also highlights the additional challenge of underemployment. This manifests itself as people working for fewer hours than they would like or carrying out work that does not make best use of their skills. This reflects research from the Learning and Work Institute's Youth Opportunity Index,

---

[14] The NHS figure in October 2021 was 733.
[15] All figures accessed via the economy and employment section of the Berkshire Observatory (accessed in November 2021).

published in late 2018[16]. West Berkshire ranks first out of 150 local authorities for the employment rate of 23 to 28 year olds, but 142nd for net underemployment.

5.22   Generally, West Berkshire residents have good skills levels with 49.3% educated to NVQ4 or above (meaning some form of Higher Education) compared to 45.1% across the South East region and 43.1% for England. The district compares similarly favourably for NVQ levels 3, 2 and 1. The percentage with no qualification is low at 2.6%, compared with 4.8 at regional level and 6.4% in England[17]. This is reflected in the education and skills domain of the IMD, where 44 out of 97 LSOAs are in the three least deprived deciles nationally. However, 11 LSOAs are in the three most deprived deciles nationally. These are the paler areas on the map below, and are located around Newbury, Thatcham, Lambourn, Hungerford and in the Tilehurst South and Holybrook wards.
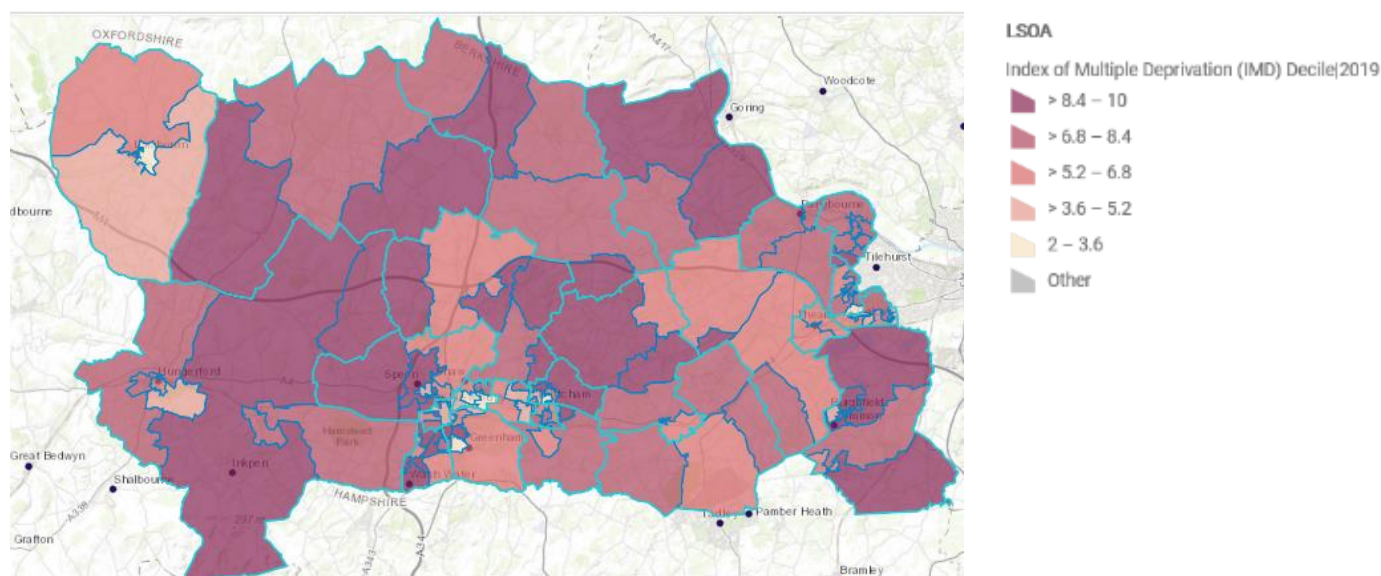
Figure 13: 2019 IMD – domain for education, training and skills

5.23   The Economic Development Strategy also has been updated in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic[18]. This notes the particular impact of the pandemic on the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which employ 16% of local people, many of them young people, women or people from ethnic minorities. It sets out the need for support to help those who have lost their jobs to securing long term employment.

5.24   This also highlights changes in patterns of work accelerated by the pandemic. This includes the trend to home working (one third of West Berkshire workers were able to work from home during the Covid-19 period). This is likely to have a long-term impact on the future use of commercial property, with a reduction in office space and to exacerbate strains on local high streets. Nationally there is a growing demand for co-working space as well as growth in creative micro-businesses that people run as a side activity. A local evidence base has not yet been assembled, but the strategy recognises the need to improve the available workspace in the district, and to help start-ups and small

[16] https://learningandwork.org.uk/what-we-do/social-justice-inclusion/youth-commission/youth-opportunity-index/ (accessed 16 November 2021).
[17] Data from the ONS annual population survey for 2020, accessed via NOMIS in November 2021.
[18] *Economic Development Strategy Refresh*, West Berkshire Council, June 2021

businesses grow, including by providing incubator space and "one stop shop" business advice service and website signposting.

5.25 Linked to this is the question of the health of town centres. The need for action to support town centres that are desirable for residents and visitors is noted in the Health and Wellbeing Vision. This was written pre-pandemic and was couched in terms of a response to the growth of online shopping. The trend has been sharpened by the pandemic. For example, the Covid-19 response survey conducted in summer 2020[19] asked how often respondents thought that they would visit their local town's high street when able, compared with before the pandemic. Only 54% responded "about the same, while 31% answered "less" or "much less".

Digital skills

5.26 The council's *Digital Strategy 2020-23*[20] commits it to playing an active part in ensuring those who live and work in West Berkshire are able to improve their digital skills. This directly refers to the aim of assisting people with Universal Credit and job applications, including by volunteers in libraries, as well as Citizens Advice. The strategy does not present local data about the extent of the need, but notes: "whilst the advancement of technology has brought many benefits, the UK Consumer Digital Index in 2019 found that one fifth of the UK population do not have foundational digital skills." The need to address this is further developed in the *Economic Development Strategy*, which identifies that there is a need for upskilling in the education sector and for providing a broader range of specialists in West Berkshire who are equipped to deliver the training that will address this.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- At least in the short-term, how to help those whose jobs have been affected by the pandemic and are looking for new opportunities and potentially new directions.

- Providing an environment that supports older and disadvantaged people looking to participate in the workforce.

- Being a location for access to information about training, and for delivery of training in smaller towns.

- Workspace, with facilities for workers otherwise based at home and for small and start up businesses. Linking this to the role of libraries in attracting people to town centres.

- Direct support with digital skills.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire with a housing mix with something for everyone"

5.27 This is important as a context factor for the libraries review. It includes a focus on increasing the amount of affordable housing. This recognises the challenge of attracting and retaining young people who in the past have reached university age and then left an area of generally high house prices. An additional aspect is extending provision of residential care bed spaces for the ageing population as well adaptations to help older people remain living at home.

---

[19] *Residents' Survey: Covid-19 – Headline Findings Report*, West Berkshire Council, July 2020
[20] *Digital Strategy 2020-23*, West Berkshire Council, November 2019

Points to consider in terms of library services

- The implication for libraries is that existing patterns of population will change and they can expect to need to continue to adapt as these changes take place in the medium term. Space needs to be flexible.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire with beautiful, historic and diverse landscapes and a strong cultural offering"

5.28 This area of aspiration creates a strong sustainability and quality of life agenda that libraries can help to support. This relates to more partnership working, increased links with cultural organisations and, as evidenced in the public survey, a desire to see libraries as places which have a strong cultural element including events, exhibitions, courses and classes.

5.29 West Berkshire has a number of rich cultural assets and a tradition of a large number of events and activities. However, the *Cultural Heritage Strategy*[21] notes that consultation has emphasised the difficulty many residents have in gaining access to these. There are strong links between arts and cultural participation and good wellbeing, so a priority theme of the Cultural Heritage Strategy is to improve access and participation, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including children from deprived backgrounds.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- Events and exhibitions to engage people in and promote sustainable choices.

- Linkage to the promotion of access and participation in arts and cultural activities.

Public engagement survey

5.30 A public engagement survey was carried out in late autumn 2021 as part of a review of the whole library service, including mobile libraries, the "At Home" service and e-library, regular activities for children and families, and annual events such as the Summer Reading Challenge. The aim of the survey was to collect feedback from the service's customers and from those who do not use libraries to assess potential changes to improve the service, and to develop the service in the future.

- There were 896 survey responses which represents 5.72% of active library borrowers based on pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20.

- 71% of responders were female.

- 63% were aged over 55.

- 91% were library users.

5.31 Some headlines from the survey are included here to give some additional context to the needs assessment.

5.32 In some ways the responses indicated that a lot of respondents primarily enjoy the "traditional" aspects of the library service - 57% said that book related services were the ones they used most. This may reflect the older demographic of the majority of those surveyed but there was also

---

[21] *West Berkshire Cultural Heritage Strategy 2020-2030*, West Berkshire Council

recognition of the value of digital services, information provision and events. However, some respondents were clearly not well informed about the breadth of the current offer - one noted "[I] didn't realise you provide so much!". 13.6% said that lack of awareness of services provided was a reason they had not used library services in the last two years and 16% said that had not used it as they did not think the service was relevant to them.

5.33   On balance, the responses show a good level of support for libraries playing a broader role as a community facility. There were several positive comments about the way that the Hungerford and Lambourn libraries work with their communities; good support for the role of libraries in providing digital access for some people; and positive response to the idea of services that connect vulnerable groups more to their communities and reduce isolation.

5.34   There was evidence, however, of a minority of respondents who felt that the service should prioritise what was perceived as a core task done well - providing access to books. Others voiced concerns about whether current buildings would have adequate space for more community focused activities, while some respondents were concerned about the impact on noise levels.

5.35   There were several messages about the current offer:

- A very high level of satisfaction with the current staff and service.

- There were several comments indicating a wish for a better e-book and audio-book offer, including a wish for more books and a better search / user interface. There are some practical limitations on these services - the comments suggest the need to explain factors such as the limitations of digital rights management and why there are two services to customers.

- There were several comments from people who would like longer or more flexible opening hours. This is likely to reflect the restrictions on getting to libraries faced by working age people or those wishing to visit with school aged children.

- There is a deep appreciation of the "At Home" service by its users and a set of very appreciative comments from regular users of the mobile library.

- There were several comments about a wish for closer working with schools - this was raised in responses to several questions so may indicate a small number of users to whom this is very important issue.

5.36   The responses clearly show the continued impact that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on people's library habits with several users explaining how they were still fearful of making visits to the extent that they had before March 2020.

Cross-cutting themes and implications for libraries

5.37   This section aims to set out some conclusions about the areas where libraries can support the needs identified. It draws on insights from the round of interviews carried out as part of this work and suggests some cross-cutting themes.

5.38   One of the themes of the interviews we carried out was the difficulty of engaging the disadvantaged communities in West Berkshire. Some interviewees had a perception that libraries are underused by residents in the more deprived areas who see them as serving a middle-class demographic. For example, while West Berkshire has a high participation rate for the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), there is a question about whether it reaches the children and young people who stand to benefit most. The chart below, based on 2021 data shows that the lowest rate of completion is in Lambourn, which has the most deprived library catchment area. Some responses to the staff survey also indicated that a lot of the children who sign up to SRC are not those who need most help with their reading.
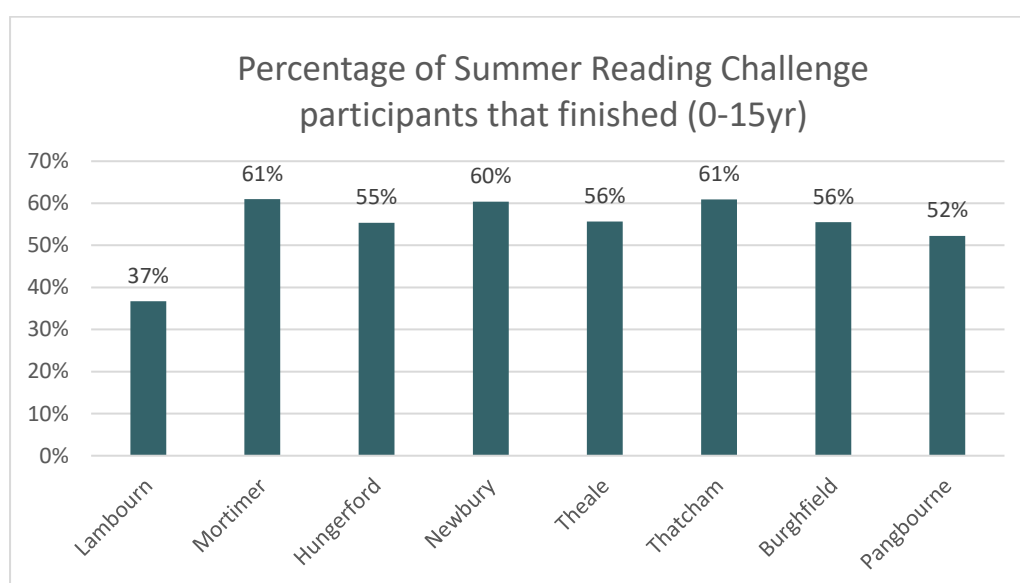
Figure 14: 2021 Summer Reading Challenge finishers by library

5.39   It is important to note that the Reading Agency has now released statistics for the 2021 Summer Reading Challenge. West Berkshire had the highest percentage reach in the South East of England, with 16% of 4-12 year olds taking part. This is due to a high level of engagement with schools which the library service has worked very hard to develop since 2017.

5.40   Identified needs include:

- While there are strong building blocks in partnership with children's services through the Bookstart and Imagination library schemes, there is a strong case for more linked activity, given the large attainment gap that opens up during secondary education. An important theme is the need to encourage intergenerational reading and learning.

- Greater dedicated resource for promoting library services. Education staff interviewed emphasised that much effort is needed to engage schools, constantly promoting and re-promoting library offers.

- Closer linkage of promotion of the library and education adult learning offers. We understand that there are practical limits on this created by the individual learning

record that needs to be maintained for formal courses, but there is scope for more shared marketing to help engagement.

- Looking at the role of the mobile library as a means of engaging communities. Can it be combined with other services as part of a wider mobile outreach service and targeted more at harder to reach communities and estates? See paragraphs 6.24 to 6.28 for discussion of the mobile library.

- Review of foreign language information and resources in libraries, including to reflect the growth of Syrian and Afghan refugee numbers.

- Review the approach to fines. This was a small factor in the public survey (7.4% of respondents identifying concerns about overdue fines as a reason for not using library services in the previous two years). However, anxiety about fines was identified by one voluntary and community sector representative, and several staff in their survey responses, as a barrier to some disadvantaged groups in becoming library borrowers.

Access to information and services

5.41 This is an important theme in the context of a district with a large rural area that has nearly two thirds of its LSOAs ranked in the three most deprived deciles nationally for barriers to housing and services. Public sector information and transactions are increasingly available only digitally, with limited face to face customer service points. Some facilities, like arts, are perceived as Newbury focused. It is increasingly challenging to provide bus services in rural areas.

5.42 In our interviews, we repeatedly heard concerns about digital exclusion and its implication for access to information and services. There are three dimensions – lack of access to devices, internet connection and digital skills. Examples given include people with mental health support needs who would like assistance in accessing housing support and information.

5.43 We also heard a lot of support for the concept of community hubs and the advantages of co-locating libraries with other public services or community facilities. This would mean building on the positive experience in Hungerford. The convenience of combined access for users was highlighted as especially helpful for people with learning disability or mental health needs.

5.44 Identified needs include:

- More tailored IT support and infrastructure at libraries. Staff are very clear that to enable libraries to address digital inclusion, they need IT support suitable for a public facing context. Currently computers are set up with the same restrictions as staff equipment meaning that support has to be called for any issue, including some software updates. There is only one part-time member of IT support staff with detailed knowledge of the library public access computers, leading to slow response times and frustration for the public. The council has invested heavily in libraries IT provision and the public access computers (hardware and software) in all libraries were replaced in 2019. There have, however, been problems with the implementation of the new equipment in terms of its integration with the bookings management system and printing. In 2019/20, 5,900 (7%) of computer hours were lost because of technical

problems requiring maintenance (compared with 83,700 available hours). In April to July 2021 over 2,000 hours have been lost. This is in addition to issues that do not warrant a full shutdown. Staff also report that the corporately procured multi-functional devices providing printing/photocopying/scanning facilities are not suited to public requirements, particularly in terms of photocopying. There is a strong need to allow members of the public to print via wifi from their own devices and with simple payment mechanism.

- Staff training to enable an "assisted digital" service to be offered more consistently.

- Consideration of the scope to establish more community hubs.

Community resilience

5.45 As local public service budgets have reduced in recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to meet rising demand. It is increasingly important that communities harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action.

5.46 According to the 2014 JSNA[22], an estimated 14,000 people in West Berkshire (9.3% of the population) provide unpaid care. The social care system would not be sustainable without their support.

5.47 We have highlighted the large instance of secondary level mental health problems. The JSNA *Living Well – Mental Health in Adults* [23] notes that excess under 75 mortality rate in adults with serious mental illness in West Berkshire was the highest in the South East region. Without strong community links, it can be hard to understand who may be isolated and at risk.

5.48 As in many areas, the Covid-19 pandemic led to a surge in community action. 25.3% of respondents to the 2020 Covid-19 survey said they had volunteered to help in their local community during the pandemic and 35.9% of respondents said they felt more connected to their local community than previously.

5.49 Library use has been shown to have a range of health and social benefits including socialisation and provision of respite for carers and new parents, improved health literacy through health drop-ins, and reduced loneliness and isolation especially for older people living alone. These benefits can be experienced by ordinary users and by library volunteers. A clear message from the interviews we conducted is that libraries have a contribution to make here and that a stronger contribution to community resilience requires co-design of the offer at a local level to reflect hyper local needs.

5.50 Identified needs include:

- Lambourn has an effective model of community co-design, based on the Lambourn Library Volunteer Group and the Friends of Lambourn Library. As well as mobilising extensive volunteer support, it helps to tailor the service to the local needs, linked to a low wage horse-racing focused economy. It also works to animate groups and provide

---

[22] *Vulnerable Groups – Carers*, West Berkshire Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2014
[23] *Living well – Mental Health in Adults*, West Berkshire Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2016

social interaction in an isolated community. Can this level of engagement be encouraged in other library locations?

- Establishing libraries as a location for "mental health first aid".

- Greater promotion of room hire opportunities, to encourage community groups to meet locally. This raises the question of whether the library building can be open outside of library opening hours (as is the case in Hungerford) to allow community access.

- The public survey showed some concern (about the risk of diluting perceived core purpose, about space and noise) in any broadening of library services. The tone of these comments strongly point to the need for co-production with communities about expanding any library's role.

Skills and the economy

5.51 Libraries have a well-established role in supporting skills development and employment. This ranges from computer "code" clubs for children, to the PC access which allows job seekers to make online applications or create CVs. However, changing patterns of work, and changing skills requirements, mean that there is potential for libraries to play a much greater role in economic support. The changing context includes:

- More people working from home, a trend greatly accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- A growth in micro businesses run from home, often in creative or craft sectors.

- Employers are particularly looking for business focused digital skills – not coding, but rather applied skills such as social media marketing and database use.

5.52 Identified needs include:

- Provision of more desk space for non office-based workers to use to work – for example young people who do not have study space at home.

- Provision of enhanced facilities for micro-businesses, for example 3d printers, and other facilities on the model of the "Makerspaces"[24] concept to encourage co-creation, sharing resources and knowledge, and networking.

- Building on these concepts, establishing libraries as a focal point for encouraging people into town centres. There are opportunities in the master planning exercise which has taken place in Newbury, and this opportunity is discussed in section 6.

---

[24] Government guidance on Makerspaces is at this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-and-makerspaces/libraries-and-makerspaces The concept of establishing them in libraries was included in the UK Digital Strategy, 2017.

6 Library locations

Purpose of this section

6.1 Part of the brief for this work is to analyse the location of libraries in relation to population and existing customers. The static library locations are long-established and it is important to review them, in a context where an average of around 500 new homes have been built per annum between 2006/07 and 2018/19 and several thousand more are expected in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

6.2 In order to support this analysis, we have created a set of library "catchments". We have matched postcode data for active borrowers for each library in 2019/20 to their LSOA. We have then identified for each of West Berkshire's 97 LSOAs which library is the most popular among its active borrowers. We have then allocated that LSOA to that library's catchment. The table at Appendix II shows for each LSOA the percentage of active borrowers using its most used library.

6.3 This enables us to assess the patterns of use for each library in relation to IMD scores and to understand the hinterland from which it attracts its borrowers. Two caveats about the method do need to be stated:

- Some post codes are not co-terminous with LSOAs. This means that some properties may exist both sides of a LSOA boundary. In such cases, the postcode will be allocated to one side according to its centroid. This means that our catchments cannot be 100% accurate around boundary thresholds.

- The strength of "popularity" of the most used library varies among the LSOAs. In some cases, it is very high (99%) and in others lower (the lowest is 37% - meaning that in such cases, it is just a couple of borrowers which determine the catchment allocation)[25].

- Catchment information and associated IMD average decile information are shown below. The IMD number indicates the average decile position on a 1 to 10 scale – a high number correlates with least deprivation:

Library catchment	Population of catchment	Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	Income	Employment	Education, Skills and Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment
Burghfield Common	7,675	8.4	8.2	8.6	7.6	8.0	7.4	6.6	7.6
Hungerford	9,470	7.5	7.0	8.3	6.7	8.7	8.2	6.8	4.7
Lambourn	4,245	6.3	5.7	7.3	3.7	7.7	5.7	4.0	5.7
Mortimer	5,816	7.7	7.3	7.7	7.7	8.3	6.7	6.0	3.7
Newbury	63,597	7.9	7.7	7.9	7.0	8.6	7.8	5.3	6.0
Pangbourne	18,751	9.4	9.0	8.9	7.9	9.4	9.2	6.6	8.3
Thatcham	28,307	8.1	7.5	7.6	6.4	8.3	8.2	6.3	8.2
Theale	20,589	7.9	7.7	7.9	6.0	8.6	7.8	4.9	8.1

---

[25] In one LSOA, E01016262, two libraries (Pangbourne and Theale) were of equal popularity and proximity. We allocated it to Pangbourne, but accept it could equally have been allocated to Theale.

6.4   Key points from this table are:

- Newbury has by far the largest catchment. More than double the number of the next largest, Thatcham. It covers 37 of the 97 LSOAs in the district, several of which are some distance from Newbury, including in the north of the area. This may reflect borrowers' work location or a willingness to travel to the library. The catchment scores low on barriers to housing and services, which is further evidence that it extends to some people in the rural parts of the district.

- Pangbourne is the least deprived catchment.

- Lambourn is the most deprived and is so on all domains, except living environment[26]. There is a noticeable gap between its score on education, skills and training and the next most deprived.

- It is noticeable that the two libraries that are closest to each other, Burghfield Common and Mortimer, have the second and third smallest catchment populations. Overall, and on the domains other than health and disability, education, skills and training, the Mortimer catchment shows more deprivation than Burghfield Common.

6.5   It is helpful to overlay library activity patterns on some of the key aspects of the catchment analysis.

Library	Population of catchment	Library opening hours per week (31 March 2020)	Total active borrowers for library	Active borrowers as % of catchment population	Library visits (2019/20)	Visits per hour open	Visits per head of catchment population	Index of Multiple Deprivation (catchment)	Barriers to Housing and Services (catchment)
Burghfield Common	7,675	19	957	12.5	18,206	958	2.4	8.4	6.6
Hungerford	9,470	26	1,076	11.4	40,175	1,545	4.2	7.5	6.8
Lambourn	4,245	15.5	455	10.7	11,085	715	2.6	6.3	4.0
Mortimer	5,816	19	558	9.6	12,876	678	2.2	7.7	6.0
Newbury	63,597	47	7,815	12.3	171,119	3,641	2.7	7.9	5.3
Pangbourne	18,751	22	949	5.1	19,388	881	1.0	9.4	6.6
Thatcham	28,307	33.5	2,346	8.3	41,021	1,225	1.4	8.1	6.3
Theale	20,589	23.5	1,082	5.3	23,562	1,003	1.1	7.9	4.9

6.6   There are limitations to this analysis – the library data is based on raw information about the particular library and will include some users from outside the defined catchment, although all active borrowers described here have West Berkshire post codes. Nevertheless, it indicates some trends:

- The lowest percentage of active borrowers per population catchment is at Pangbourne, the least deprived catchment. It also has the lowest number of visits per head of catchment population. Theale also has low rates of borrowing compared with the catchment population.

---

[26] The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Statistical Release of 26th September 2019 on IMD defines all the domains. "The Living Environment Deprivation Domain measures the quality of the local environment. The indicators fall into two sub-domains. The 'indoors' living environment measures the quality of housing; while the 'outdoors' living environment contains measures of air quality and road traffic accidents".

- Lambourn and Hungerford, are both in the higher half of percentages of active borrowers per population catchment. Both also score highly for the number of visits per head of catchment population. This may be an indicator of the strong community ownership or presence that they have (Hungerford operates as a community hub, supported by a charity, the Hungerford Library and Community Trust and Lambourn has active volunteer and friends groups, with good links to the racing community).

- Burghfield Common is the best used library in terms of active borrowers per population catchment.

- Newbury is the best used library, as would be expected from its position as the main library in the area and its large catchment. It is noticeable that it scores much higher than Thatcham on both percentage of active borrowers per population catchment and number of visits per head of catchment population.

6.7 Further trends about active borrowers can be seen in the series of maps below, which shows quintile analysis of the percentage of population in each LSOA that are active library borrowers at static libraries (based on 2019/20 data).
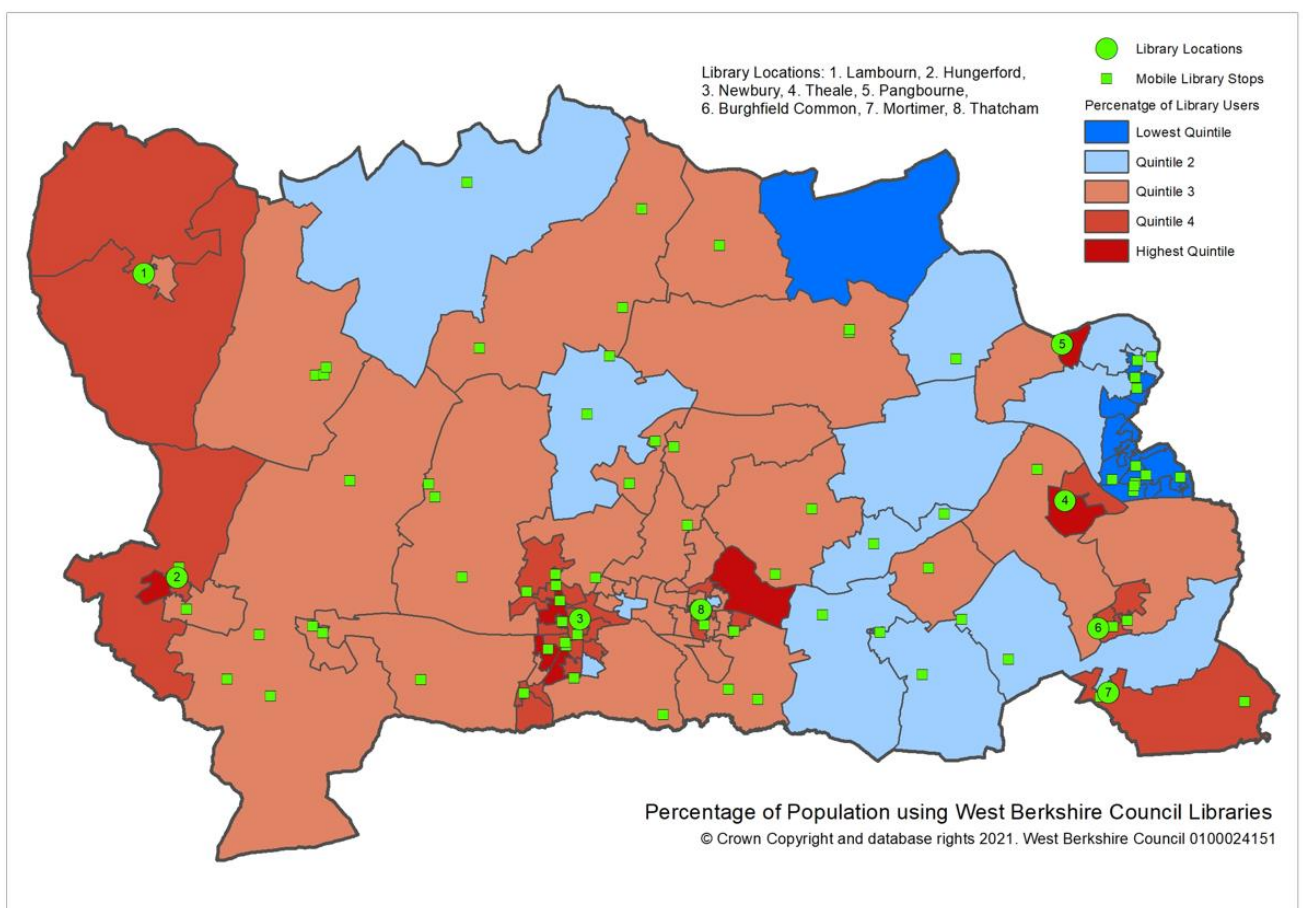
Figure 15: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (all ages)

6.8 This map shows:

- The density of borrowers is highest around library locations.

- The lowest quintile areas are relatively close to libraries in neighbouring authorities. These are Goring library for LSOA E01016257, which contains the parishes of Aldworth and Streatley; Reading Central and Caversham libraries, which are close to the block of low quintiles in the east of the area; and Tadley library in Hampshire, which is close to the Aldermaston area.

- There is some correlation between use and socio-economic conditions. The four most deprived LSAOs have use percentages at 6 or lower. These are in Newbury Greenham, Thatcham North East and in the Tilehurst South and Holybrook ward. However, there is a varied pattern among the least deprived LSOAs – 13 of those with the lowest 10% of deprivation have use percentages of less than 10%, while 12 of them have use percentages between 10 and 17%.

6.9 In order to test more the level of correlation between active borrowing and library use, we created the scatter chart, shown below. This plots the IMD score (a national measure) of each LSOA against its percentage of active borrowers:
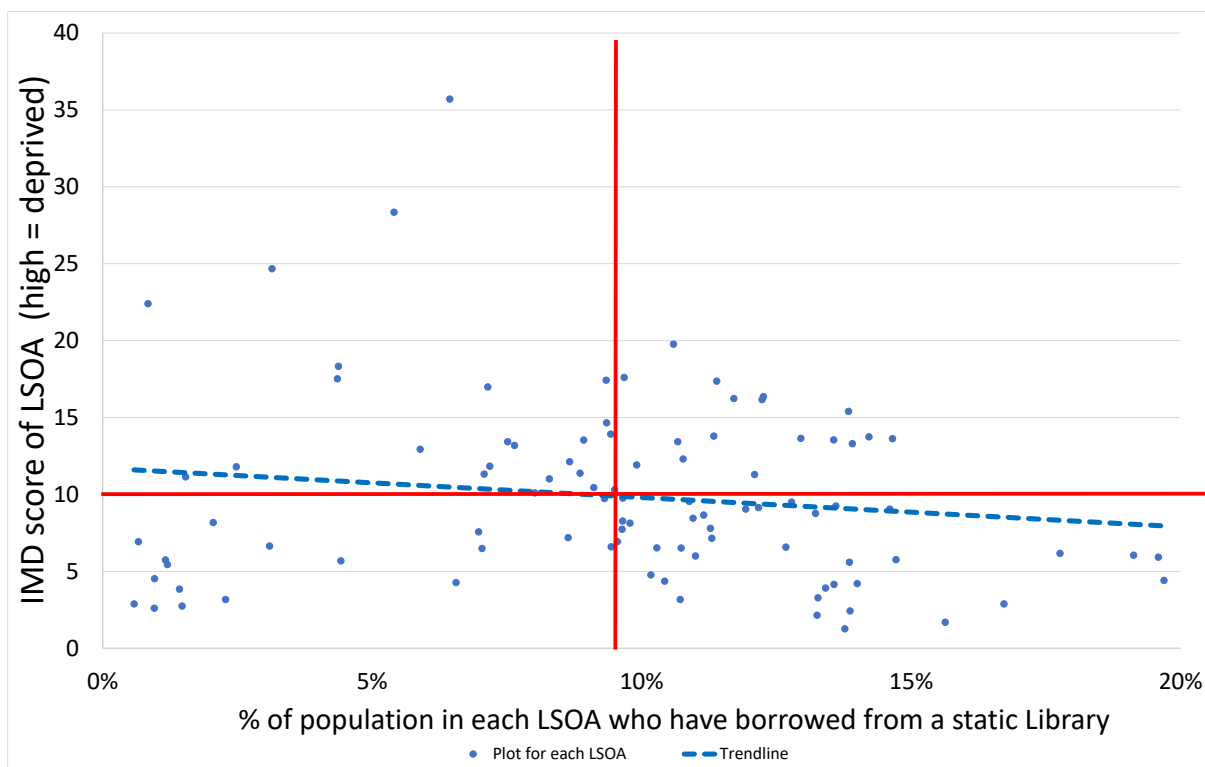
Figure 16: scattergraph of LSOAs by overall IMD rank and active borrower population percentage

6.10 This shows a slight trend towards least deprived areas (having lower IMD scores) being those where a greater proportion of people use libraries.

6.11 The trend is similar if we focus on the domain of barriers to housing and services. This indicates less library use in the more remote areas.
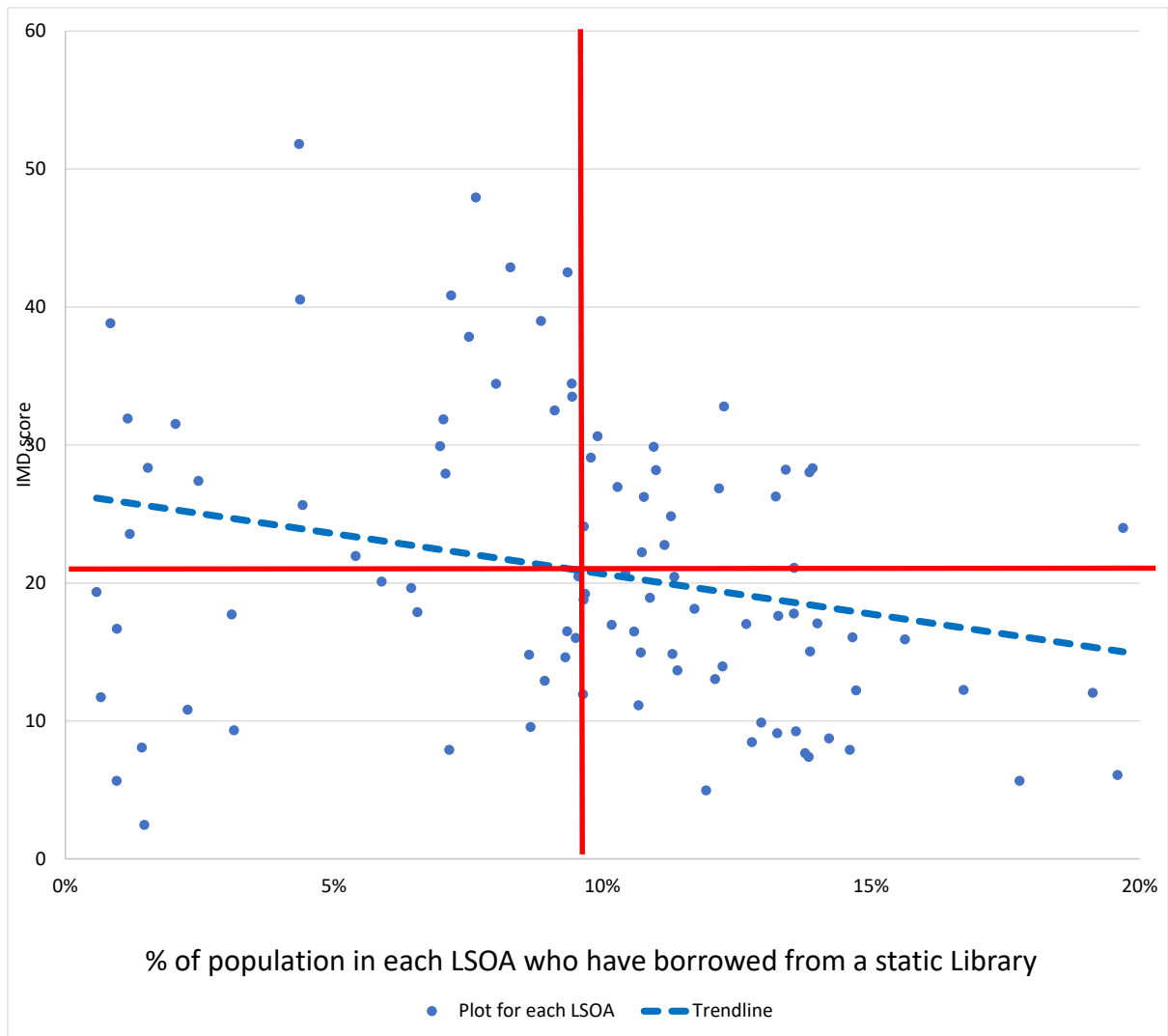
Figure 17: scattergraph of LSOAs by IMD barriers to services domain score and active borrower population percentage

6.12   Some further insights can be gained from maps for percentage of use based on age bands. Maps for junior users (0 to 17); adult users (18 to 74) and senior users (75+) are shown below.
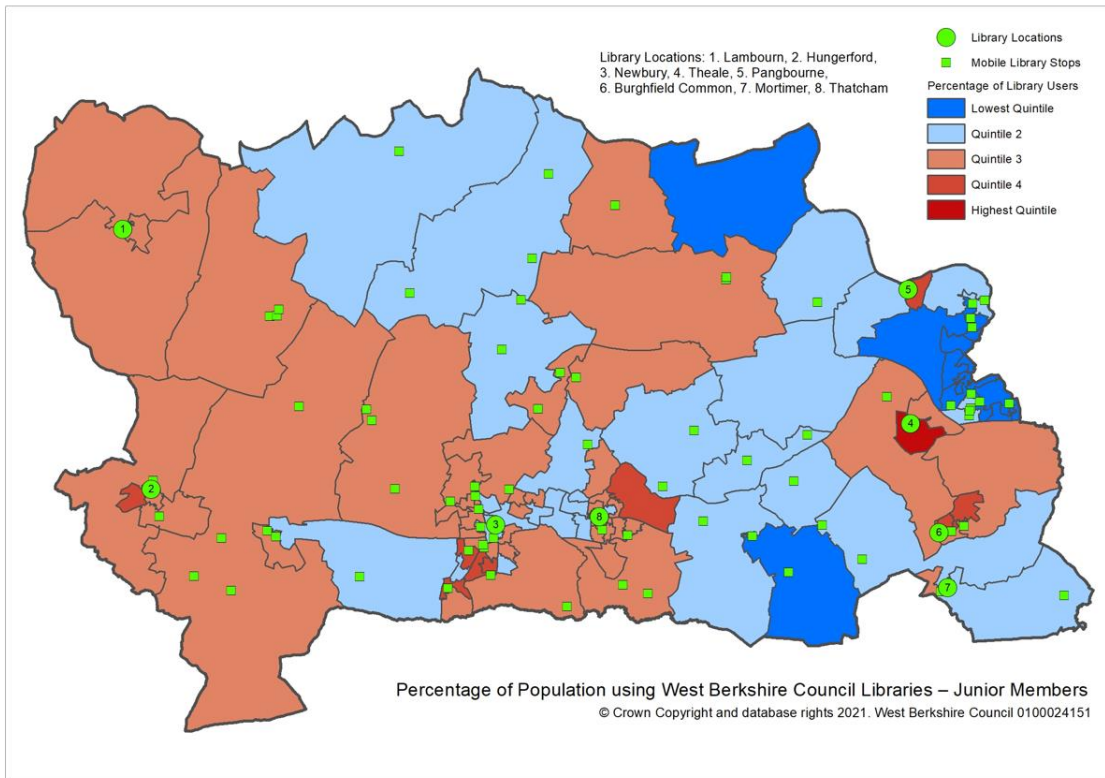
Figure 18: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (ages 0 - 17)
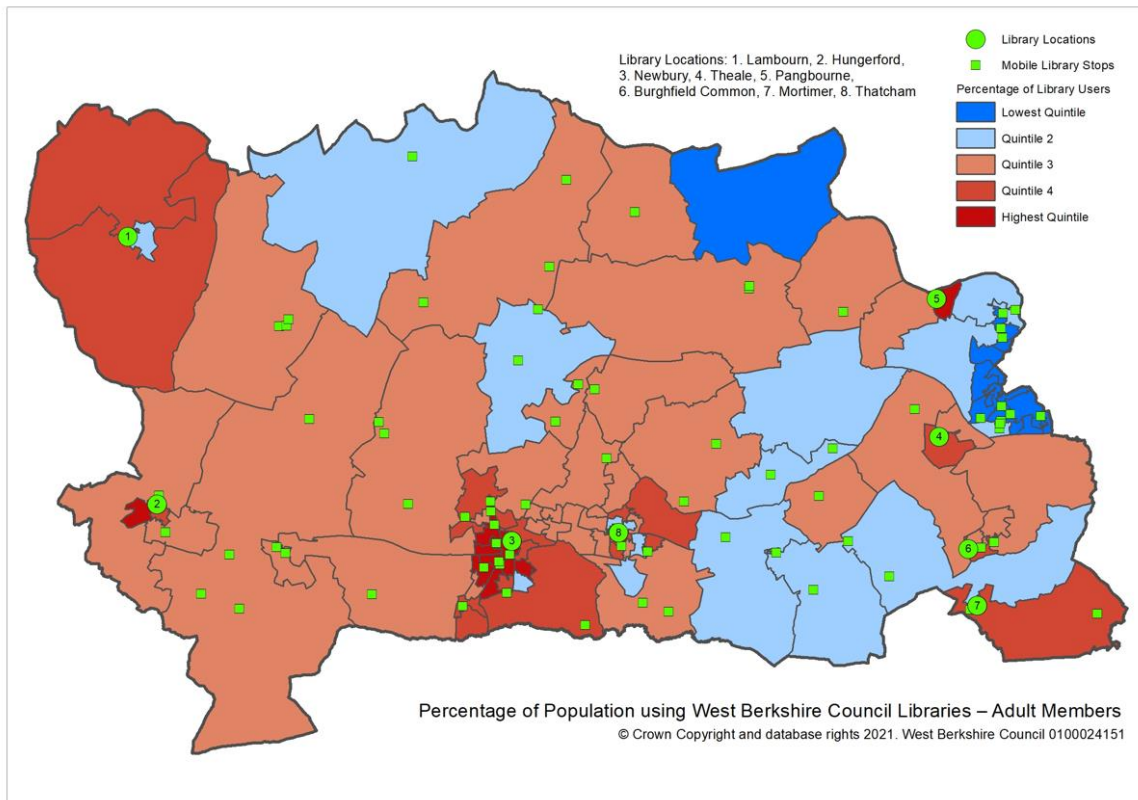
Figure 19: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (ages 18 - 74)
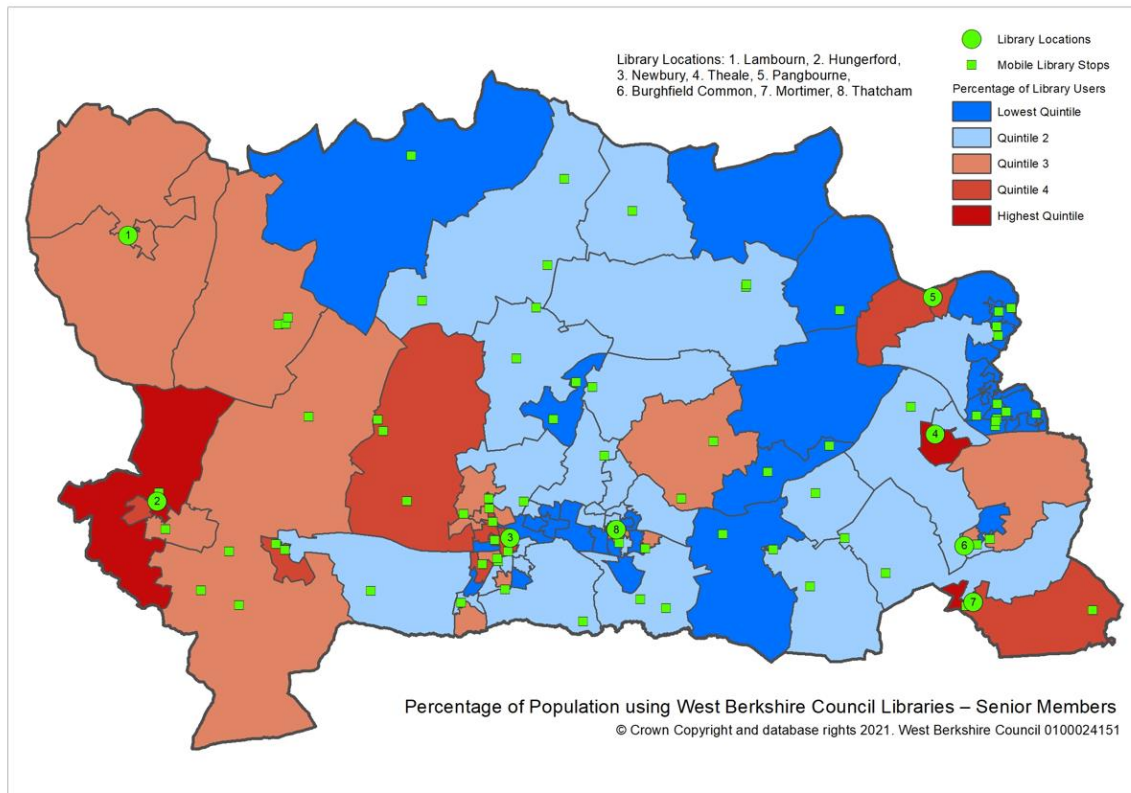
Figure 20: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (age 75+)

6.13   This highlights some additional points:

- In the Lambourn area, junior engagement is in the middle quintile and adult activity is high, except for the area immediately around the town. This LSOA (E01016306) is in the bottom 20% for education, skills and training and may point to the need for a focus on intergenerational learning (see paragraph 5.8).

- Low junior engagement around Mortimer.

- Newbury and Thatcham. A corridor running east of Newbury towards Thatcham and around Thatcham is in the lowest quintile for over 75s. Parts of this corridor also have low use among junior members. The reasons for this are not clear. The average deprivation level is at or only one decile below the West Berks average on most IMD dimensions, although it is two below on education, skills and training.

- There is a clear drop off in library use among over 75s in the more remote parts of the district, particularly in the north.

- The areas to the west of Hungerford and Newbury seem to be very effective at engaging over 75s. LSOA E01016326, which covers the Speen, Boxford and Winterbourne parishes also has very high engagement of the "At Home" service.

Page 167

The interviews and evidence review for this needs assessment have highlighted a mix of needs and opportunities. These are set out below.

Thatcham

6.14   Thatcham Town Council's Town Plan 2014 – 19[27] noted how recent growth in population in Thatcham had not been matched by equivalent growth in services and infrastructure. Library staff described to us how the library building is too small for the town's needs and is also unattractive and hidden from view. Some improvements are planned, including changing the entrance area to help combat anti-social behaviour and to provide an accessible toilet. The town council provides £24,000 funding per annum, which is contingent on improvements being made. With new housing development coming, the Infrastructure Development Plan identifies the need for new library / community hub building in the town. Our analysis would support this as a way to promote more engagement in parts of surrounding area, particularly in Thatcham North East and among older people in the corridor to the west of the town. The current masterplanning exercise underway in Thatcham creates an opportunity for a strategic discussion about location and how to link library provision to other facilities.

Eastern part of the district

6.15   The four libraries in this area show varying patterns of use. Burghfield Common and Mortimer libraries are geographically quite close to each other and there is a contrast between their level of use (Burghfield Common relatively high in relation to its catchment population and Mortimer lower). The Mortimer building has been refurbished in the last five years and has a covenant requiring it to be used as a library. We understand that previous discussions with the parish council about creating a community hub space are currently paused due to the pandemic. The analysis of use suggests that this should be explored again as a way of improving engagement and access. The Burghfield Common building is part of Willink school with a locked door between the public library and the school. Recent discussions with the school have identified an appetite to merge the public and school libraries, with the aim of making better use of the space and promoting use by all age groups. This is clearly an opportunity to build on the good levels of use of the public library and to promote more engagement with the community. Some works would be needed to the current library building - essential maintenance only has been carried out in recent years while discussions took place with Burghfield Parish Council about the potential of relocating the library to be part of a proposed community hub. These plans were not progressed because of a change of plan by the Parish Council.

6.16   Use of the Theale and Pangbourne libraries are both low in relation to the population catchments. Pangbourne has a village centre location, which is a good basis on which to build greater community engagement. Theale scores poorly on the IMD access to housing and services domain, suggesting that exploration is needed of how to connect the library more closely with the community, especially in the area beyond the main settlement. Note that parts of the Theale building have been converted to offices, which provides income to make the location sustainable.

---

[27] *Council Plan 2014 – 2019*, Thatcham Town Council, 2014

Western part of the district

6.17   Our analysis shows Hungerford to be a very popular library across age groups and it has by some way the highest number of visits per head of catchment population. This suggests that the hub model is highly successful for attracting local people to the building and that adapting this model should be considered in other locations.

6.18   Lambourn library is centrally located in the main high street. It is well used in terms of visits per head of its catchment population and has above average percentage of active borrowers from its catchment population. An area to consider is how to reduce the difference between the relatively low quintile adult library use in the LSOA immediately to the east of the town centre compared with the high quintile use in the rest of the catchment.

Newbury

6.19   Newbury library is in a purpose-built 20+ year old building, which has enjoyed good investment, such as recent upgrading of the lighting. The recent masterplanning exercise for the town centre, which has involved public consultation, proposes new community use for a car park area very near the library. This is a major opportunity for new physical space to be linked to different community uses. The economic development team see this as a way to address skills and small business support needs by creating co-working areas including with facilities for small creative, digital or craft businesses. Such space could also provide opportunities for culture and heritage related activity. Extended and more flexible space could also be an opportunity to address the sometimes contradictory needs for quiet space (for example to enable computer training for people with learning disabilities) and more lively welcoming areas for less engaged young people.

Northern part of West Berkshire

6.20   It is striking that the library locations mark out a horseshoe shape along the east side of the district, along the Kennet valley and then up to Lambourn. A large area of the north and central part of the district is not served by a static library, although there are mobile stops in most LSOAs. Some new housing is indicated in the infrastructure development plan for the North Wessex Downs area (see paragraph 3.3). In order to help assess whether there is a need for a library in this area, we have created an imagined catchment for a library site in this area – see map below:

6.21 The key data for this catchment, compared with the average of the eight identified existing catchments, is shown below:

Library catchment	Population of catchment	Total active borrowers	Active borrowers as % of catchment population	Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	Income	Employment	Education, Skills and Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment
Northern	11,252	766	6.8	7.9	8.9	9.4	8.3	9.7	7.7	2.9	3.7
West Berks average	19,806	1,905	9.4	8.1	7.7	8.0	6.8	8.6	7.9	5.7	6.9

6.22 It would be smaller than average but larger than the catchment population for Burghfield Common, Hungerford, Lambourn and Mortimer. The active borrowers expressed as a percentage of catchment population is based on use of the existing libraries and is higher than the figures for Pangbourne and Theale. However, the level of deprivation on most dimensions is lower than average. On employment, education, skills and training, and health, it would be less deprived than any existing catchment. However, it is noticeably more deprived on barriers to housing and services and living environment. Any future library provision could have a role in addressing this, particularly if it was closely associated with provision of access to other public services.

6.23 Most library users in this notional catchment currently are active borrowers at either Newbury (71%) or Pangbourne (20%). Part of the east of this notional catchment would also be relatively close to Goring library in Oxfordshire.

Mobile library service

6.24 Looking at data from 2019/20, the number of active borrowers from the mobile library was 682. This is lower than all the static libraries, expect for Lambourn (489) and Mortimer (579). Many of these

are also using other library locations. The table below shows the borrowers who have only borrowed from the mobile library, in comparison with the other libraries and services:

Library or service	Borrowers only using this service
Burghfield Common	487
Hungerford	649
Lambourn	296
Mortimer	299
Newbury	3,768
Pangbourne	620
Thatcham	928
Theale	477
WB Mobile	313
At Home	41
Web	131

6.25   As noted in paragraph 4.13, use of the mobile service has declined in the last decade, although the trend has been more stable since the consolidation to one service. The map below gives an indication of the pattern of use of the mobile library, showing quintiles for the percentage of the population in each LSOA that is using the service.
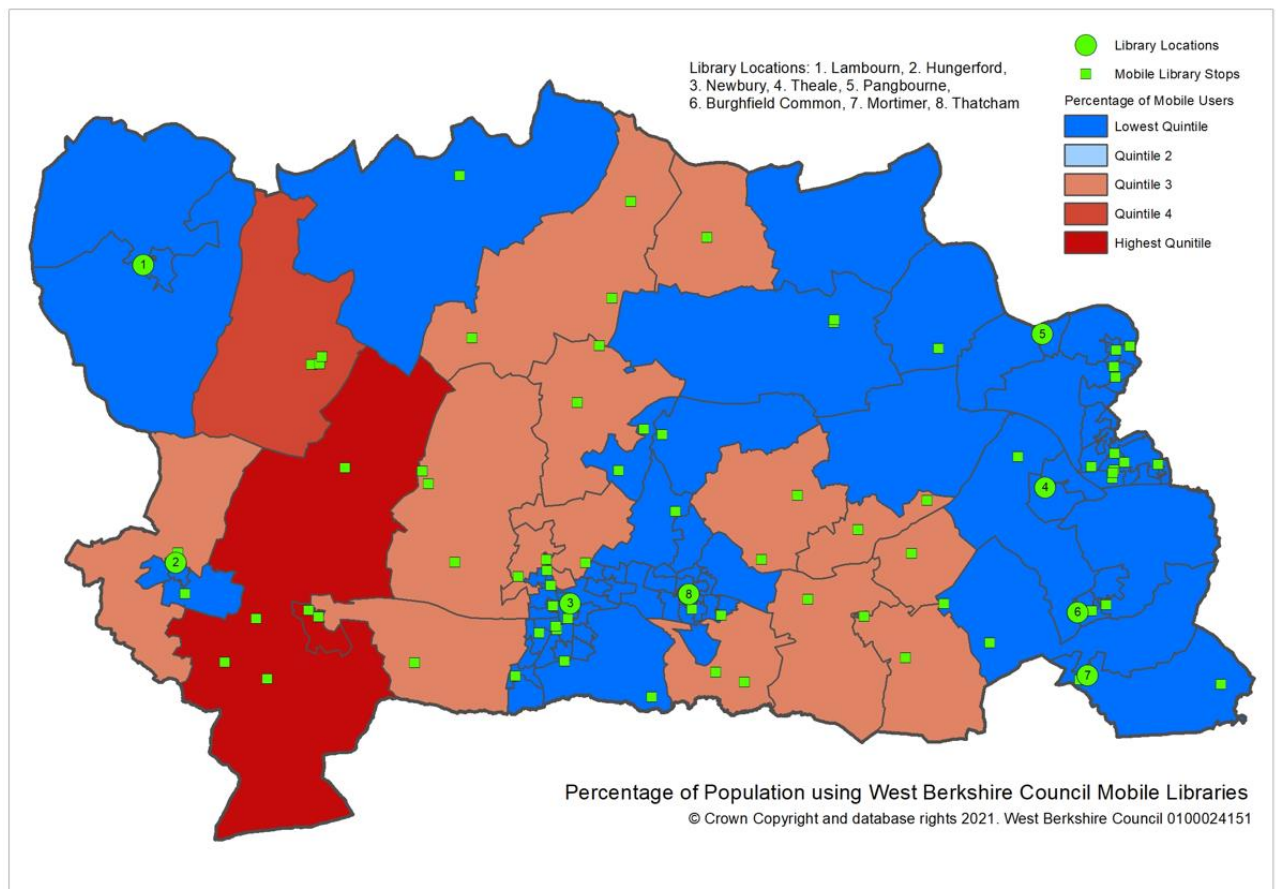
Figure 21: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (all ages)

6.26 Breaking the data down by age group shows that the service has greater take up by over 75s in some of the locations furthest from static libraries, as would be expected. 18 to 74 and under 18 use follows the overall pattern but with sparser use in some central and southern areas. In all cases, the low density of use in eastern areas is striking.
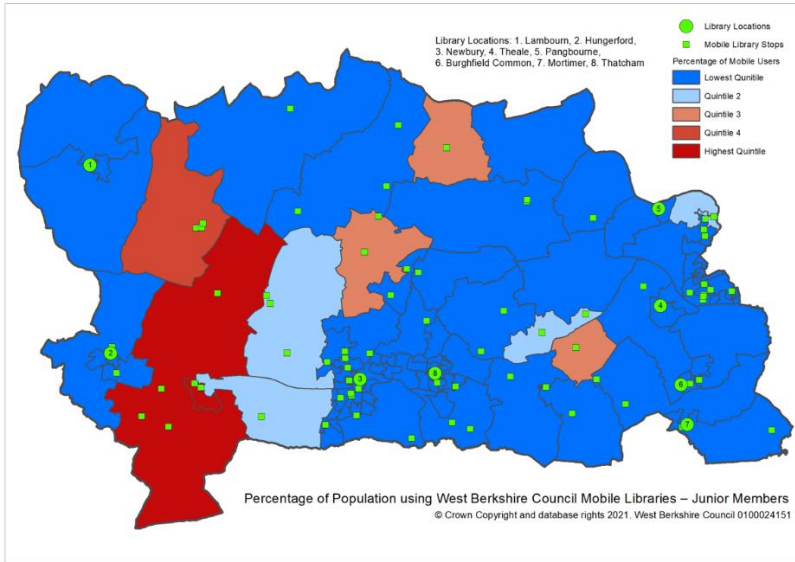
Figure 22: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (ages 0 - 17)
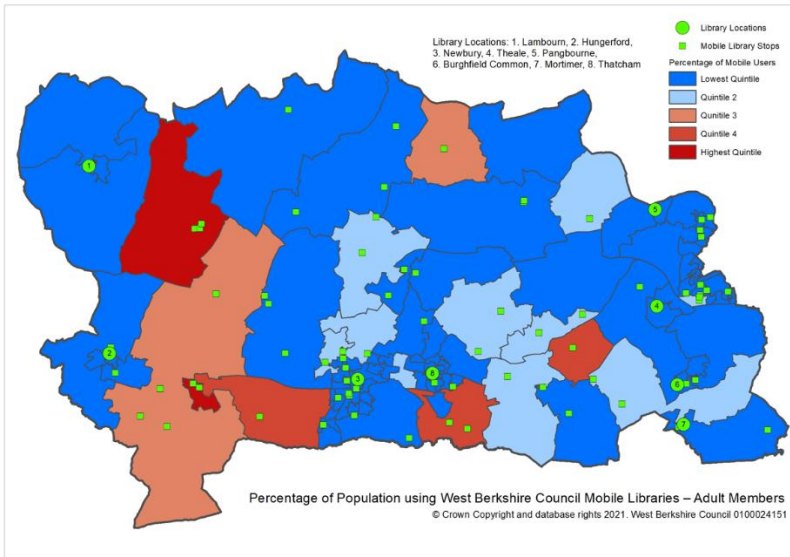
Figure 23: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (ages 18 - 74)
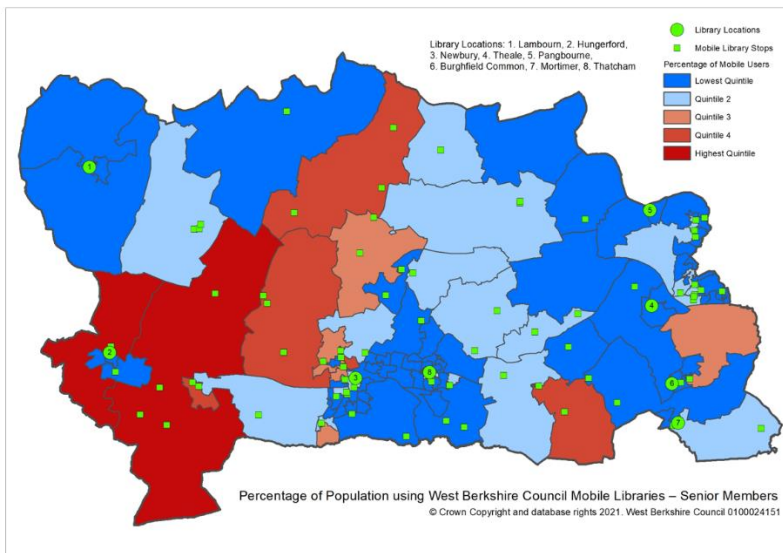
Figure 24: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (age 75+)

6.27   Our interviews identified an interest in exploring the wider outreach role of the mobile library and just over 30% of respondents to the staff survey identified the need for a little or a lot of improvement in the mobile service. One comment specifically talked about linking locations with schools, family hubs, community/day centres or leisure centres.

6.28   The current mobile vehicle is around 15 years old and is diesel powered. Age and sustainability considerations mean that it will need replacing in the short to medium term. We recommend that a feasibility study is carried out on the mobile service which should consider:

- The scope and appetite to link it with other local services, including advice and social prescribing.

- Customer engagement, about the balance of benefits between a mobile service and an enhanced "At Home" service.

- Assess the constraints created by narrow rural lanes – how far does this limit introducing a larger vehicle that could offer a blend of mobile council services?

- Review data about previous stops that have been targeted at, for example, schools.

7 Conclusion

7.1 This needs assessment highlights how the generally prosperous nature of West Berkshire masks some pockets of disadvantage. This is manifested through wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment and healthy life expectancy. It is also stark in employment, where the district ranks highest out of 150 authorities in terms of the employment rate for 23-28 year olds, but is 142nd for its net underemployment (the imbalance between the numbers of young people wanting to work more hours and the numbers wanting to work fewer). This needs to be set in the context of an area of ageing population and increasing imbalance between the number of retired and working age people and the challenges that creates for the sustainability of public services.

7.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has further shone a light on needs in areas such as social isolation, including of carers and people with learning disabilities, and the number of people with secondary mental health needs.

7.3 These trends point to four areas of important need in the district that the library service can do more to support:

- Engagement. Our research has highlighted the difficulty of engaging "hard to reach" communities and the headline indicator of this is the large secondary education gap. There is an important role for libraries to support wider efforts to address this, through a focus on intergenerational learning and wider prevention work. Serving this need will require consideration of approaches to marketing and how to create staff time for engagement and community activities. In order to gain results, outreach needs to be consistently delivered and regularly repeated and this requires resource to keep refreshing relationships with key partners such as schools. When community contacts leave, it is important to have capacity to develop relations with the new contacts to retain partnerships, and continue to provide a service which meets the needs of the whole community including "hard to reach". Discussions with staff for this needs assessment highlighted their view that they do not currently have the level of resourcing needed for this.

- Access to information and services. With a large rural area and increasing digitisation of public services, there is a need to promote digital inclusion. For libraries this means building offers of assisted digital support, particularly to older people and vulnerable groups who lack the confidence to use self-service channels, or do not have access to suitable devices or reliable internet connection. Serving this need will also require more tailored support arrangements for public facing information technology equipment and creates a staff training need.

- Community resilience. Particularly in the context of an ageing population, there is a growing need for communities to identify and harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action. Libraries can support this by functioning as community hubs. This will need co-creation with communities and other

public service organisations. It requires consideration of factors such as whether a library building can be open outside of library opening hours for wider community uses.

- Skills and employment. This is an area where the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the pattern of work, creating a need to provide space and facilities to support home workers, micro businesses and job seekers. More widely, there are the challenges of younger people's social mobility and the participation in the labour market for older and disadvantaged groups. These are factors that can be supported with changes to the configuration of physical library space and equipment and by encouraging support networks, with partners to use libraries.

7.4 While West Berkshire's population is projected to be stable in the medium term, it has seen considerable house-building in the last two decades and more is projected. There is a need to review the pattern of provision to reflect changing the demography:

- East. There are four libraries relatively close together with varied patterns of use. There is a need to explore the potential for partnership to create more community hub style facilities that can promote engagement with the community. The recent discussions with Willink school about joint use and reconfiguration of the Burghfield Common site creates an opportunity to explore this. The level of community engagement in the west of the area in Hungerford, where the community hub is supported by a charity, and Lambourn, which is supported with active Volunteer and Friends Groups, also provide models which could be tested in the east..

- Newbury and Thatcham. Masterplanning work in the town centres is an opportunity to tailor library provision better to local needs. In Newbury, there is an opportunity to extend the current facility in a way that would support the employment and skills agenda. In Thatcham, patterns of use indicate a need for more engagement in parts of its surrounding area. Staff report that the current facility is poorly located and its potential constrained by its small size – creating a new facility that can better engage people needs to be explored in the planning exercise.

- North. A large area of the north and centre of the district is not served by a local West Berkshire library and active library borrowers mainly travel to Newbury or Pangbourne. Modelling a potential catchment for a library in this area shows its level of need on most indices of deprivation is low. However, it is a rural area which ranks very poorly on access to housing and services. Through consultation with stakeholders, there is a case to explore linking some library provision with a wider community hub idea.

Appendix I – library profiles

This appendix presents short profiles of each library in West Berkshire. The intention is to bring together key library specific information as a reference to support the service review. Note that "issues" in the tables below refers to physical issues from the library concerned – it excludes e-library downloads and web renewals which are not attributed to a particular library.

For the socio-economic profile we have used an average of the national decile rank for each LSOA in the catchment as this offers both a comparative West Berkshire and national perspective. IMD data can be presented in different ways and the table in Appendix III shows the decile rank information alongside the average calculated score for each catchment.

Burghfield Common

Catchment map
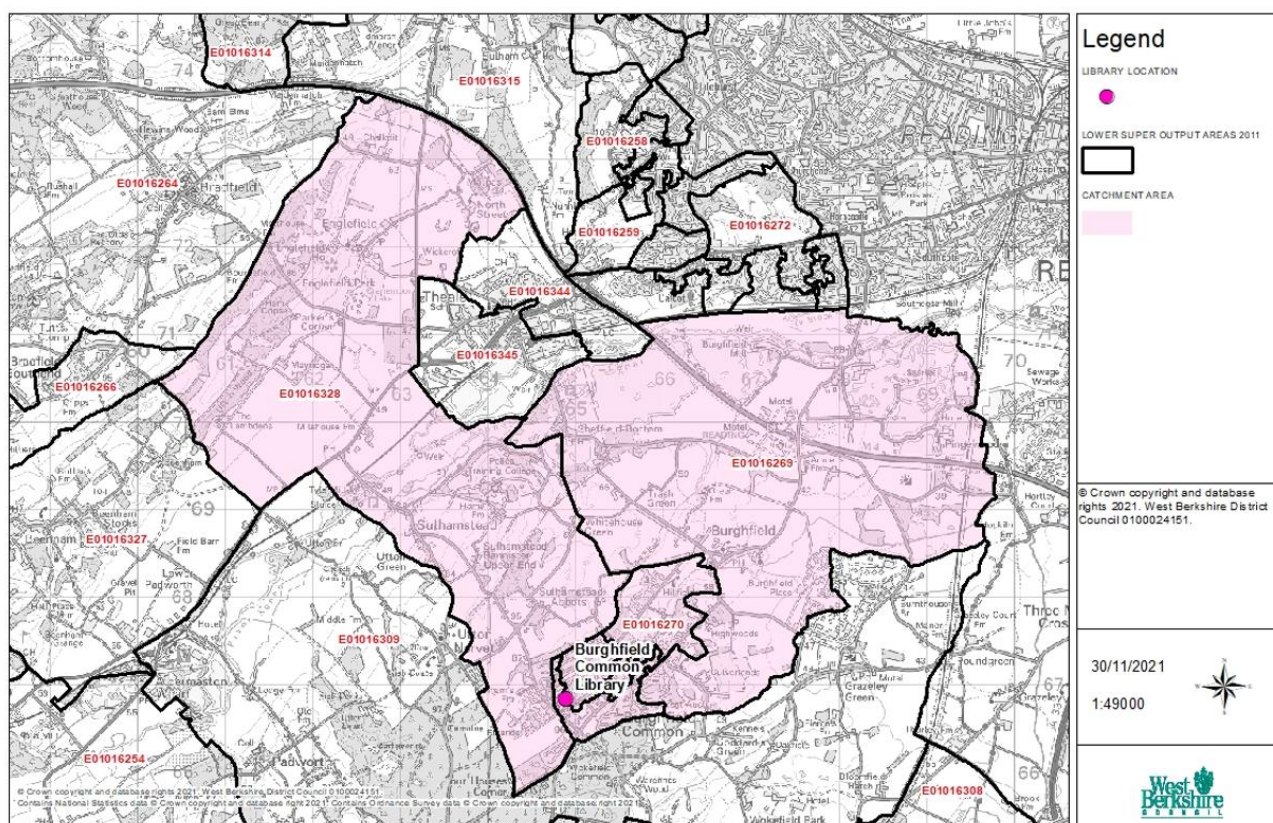
Library building

The library building is physically linked to Willink secondary school, but operates as a separate public library at the moment. The current building needs some attention as only essential maintenance work has been carried out for the last few years while discussions took place with Burghfield Parish Council about the potential for relocating the library to be part of a proposed community hub. These plans were not progressed because of a change of plan by the Parish Council.

More recently discussions have focussed on the possibility of a dual use library facility with Willink School.

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
7,675	1,008	18,206	21,801

Of the 1,008 active borrowers, 487 only borrowed items from Burghfield Common library. The most popular alternative location was Mortimer (109).

Burghfield Common has the highest percentage of active borrowers per catchment population. This is interesting, as it is also likely that some residents use Reading Library Services.

The library is open 19 hours a week and is busiest on Thursdays. Its busiest time for loans is between 3pm and 4pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
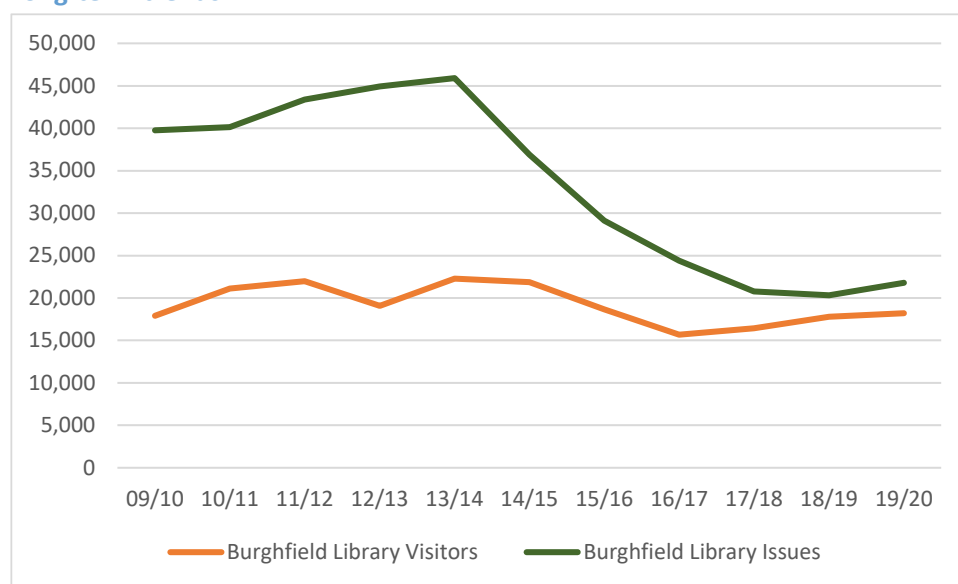
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 24%. This is slightly below average compared with the other libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have risen by 12% (it is one of four libraries to show an increase for this group).

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

Burghfield Common ranks as the second least deprived library catchment area in West Berkshire overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is slightly above average on all dimensions except for health and crime.

IMD dimension	Burghfield Common catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	8.4	8.1
Income	8.2	7.7
Employment	8.6	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.6	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.0	8.6
Crime	7.4	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.6	5.7
Living Environment	7.6	6.9

User age profile

- This age group as percentage of Burghfield Common catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Burghfield Common catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Burghfield Common catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers
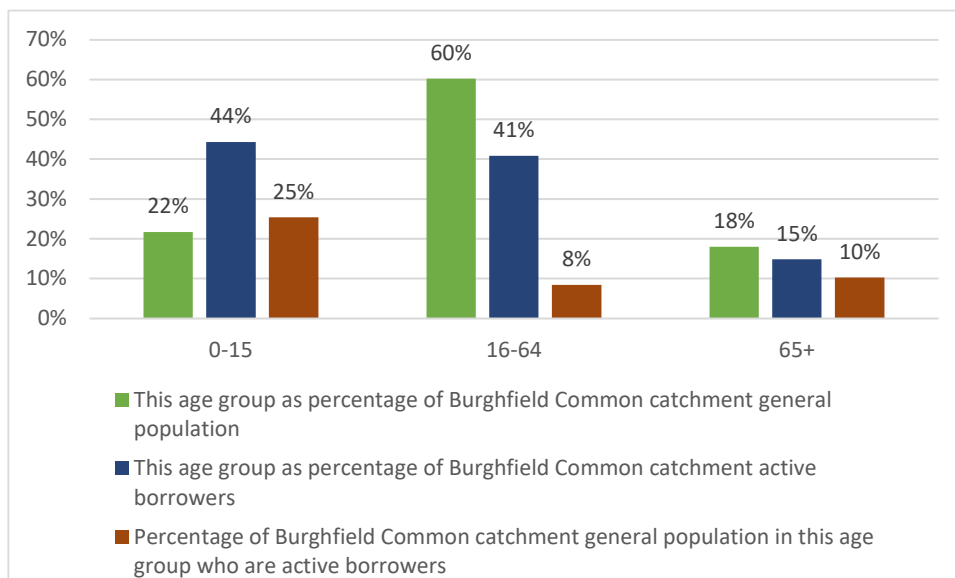
Hungerford

Catchment map
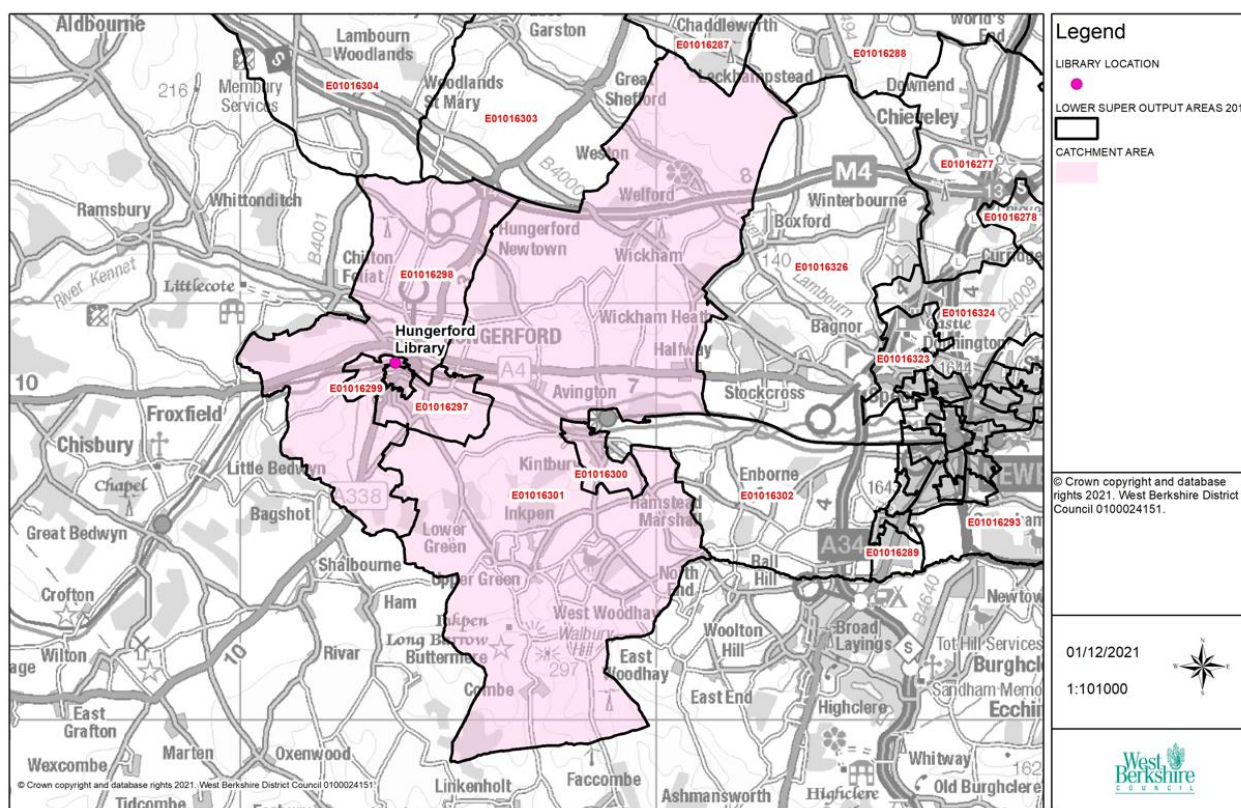
Library building

The library service now operates as part of the Hungerford Hub. The building is leased to the Hungerford Library and Community Trust and has been managed by them since 2018. It is used, outside of library hours, as a Hub for the people of Hungerford and the surrounding area and used to hold events such as workshops, talks and exhibitions. There is also a shop space for local artists and craftspeople to exhibit and sell their work. The space is also available to hire for local groups and individuals who need a small, comfortable space for their own events. This is a good example of how multi-purpose use in the right setting can work as a successful model.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
9,470	1,366	40,175	26,558

Of the 1,366 active borrowers, 649 only borrowed items from Hungerford library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (316).

The library is open 26 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays. Its busiest time for loans is between 10am-11am or 11am and 12pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
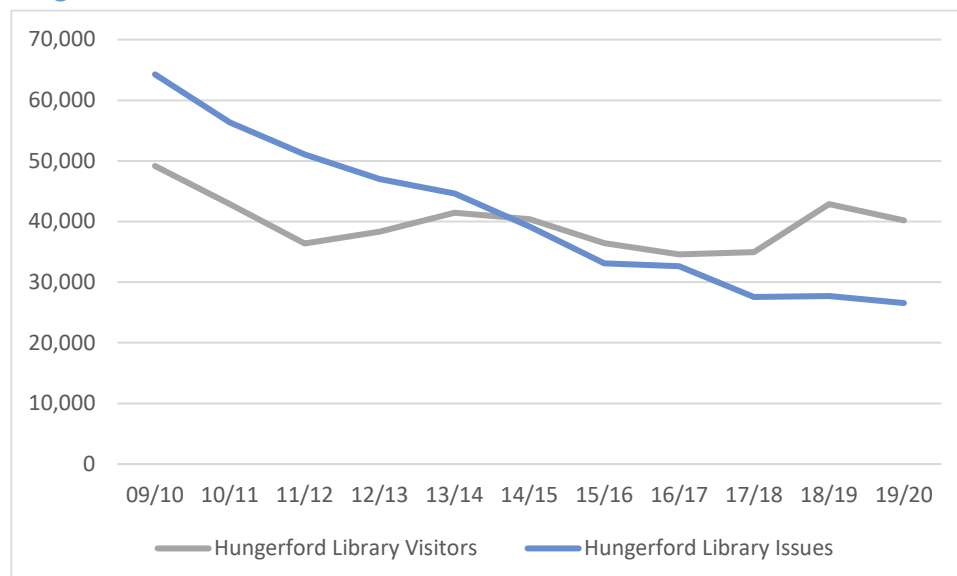
Long-term trends

Chart legend: Hungerford Library Visitors — Hungerford Library Issues

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows a drop over the period of 26%. This is slightly below average compared with the other libraries. Its issue rate for adults aged 20 to 69 has dropped less than other libraries – a drop of 9% compared with an average of 24%.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

On overall decile rank, Hungerford shows as a more deprived library catchment area compared with others in West Berkshire. However, it is important to note that this is strongly influenced by the living environment domain and to an extent by the income domain. On the others, it ranks close to or above average.

IMD dimension	Hungerford Catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.5	8.1
Income	7.0	7.7
Employment	8.3	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	6.7	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.7	8.6
Crime	8.2	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.8	5.7
Living Environment	4.7	6.9

User age profile

Legend:
- This age group as percentage of Hungerford catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Hungerford catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Hungerford catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	% who are active borrowers
Age 0-15	18%	37%	23%
Age 16-64	58%	39%	8%
Age 65+	24%	24%	11%

Lambourn
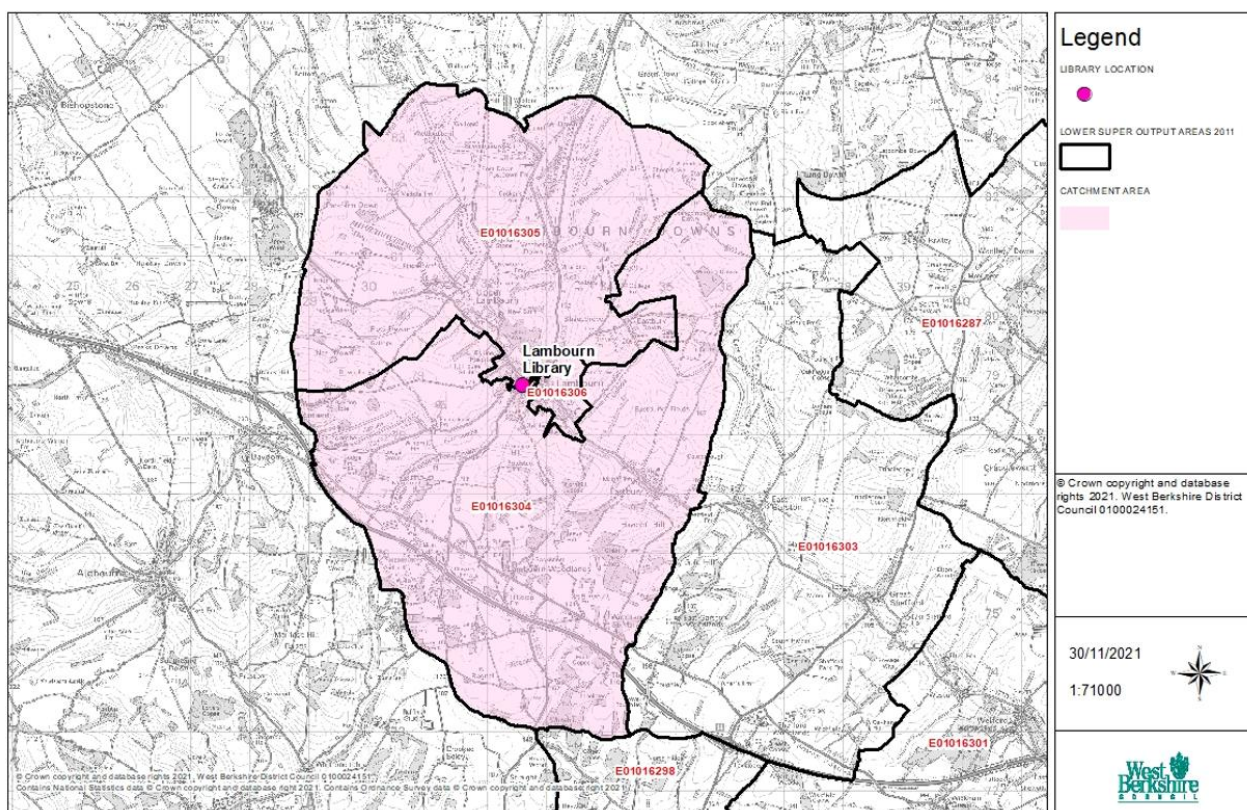
Catchment map

Library building

The library is centrally located in the main high street as part of a block housing two shops and four residential flats above. It is leased on a long-term basis at a peppercorn rent.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
4,245	489	11,085	9,501

Of the 489 active borrowers, 296 only borrowed items from Lambourn library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (55).

The library is open 15.5 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays, which is the day on which it is open for longest. Its busiest time for loans on a Friday is between 11am and 12pm and on a Saturday is also between 11am and 12pm.

Long-term trends
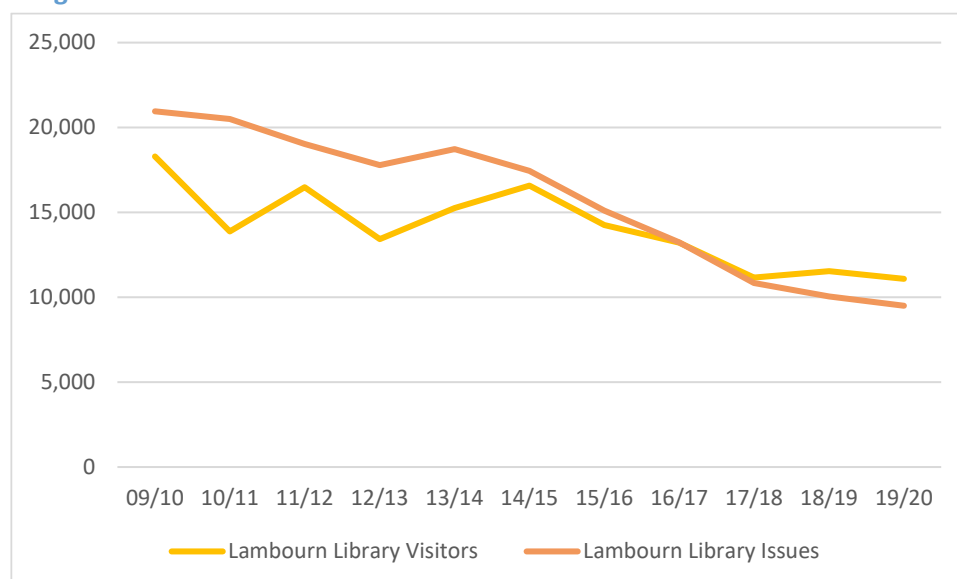
Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows a drop over the period of 40%. This is above average compared with the other libraries. The drop for the age group 11 to 19 has been noticeably sharp at 78%.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

The Lambourn library catchment area ranks as the most deprived on all IMD domains except living environment.

IMD dimension	Lambourn catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	6.3	8.1
Income	5.7	7.7
Employment	7.3	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	3.7	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	7.7	8.6
Crime	5.7	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	4.0	5.7
Living Environment	5.7	6.9

User age profile

Legend:
- ■ This age group as percentage of Lambourn catchment general population
- ■ This age group as percentage of Lambourn catchment active borrowers
- ■ Percentage of Lambourn catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

	Age 0-15	Age 16-64	Age 65+
General population	18%	60%	21%
Active borrowers	40%	36%	25%
Active borrowers in age group	23%	6%	12%
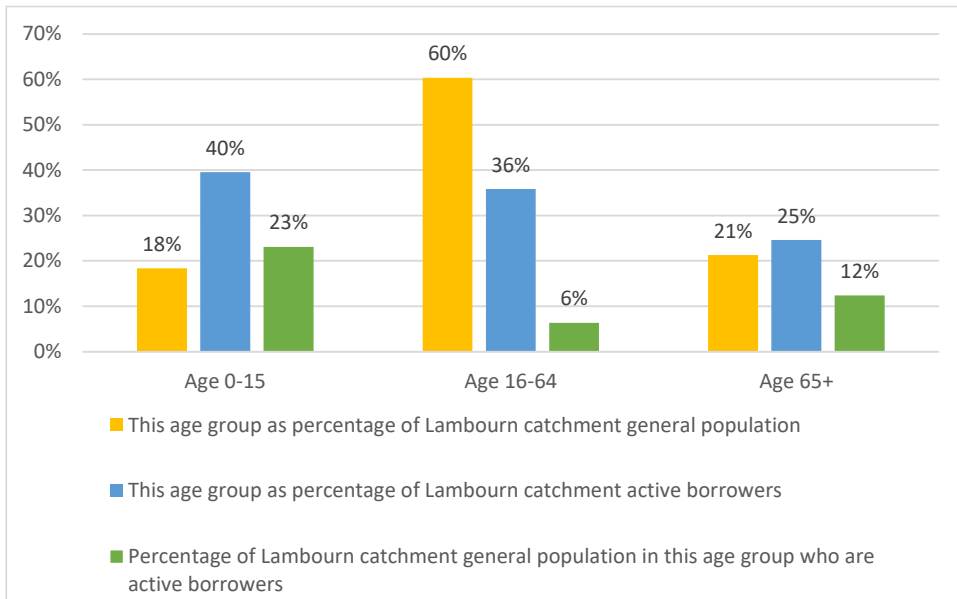
Mortimer

Catchment map
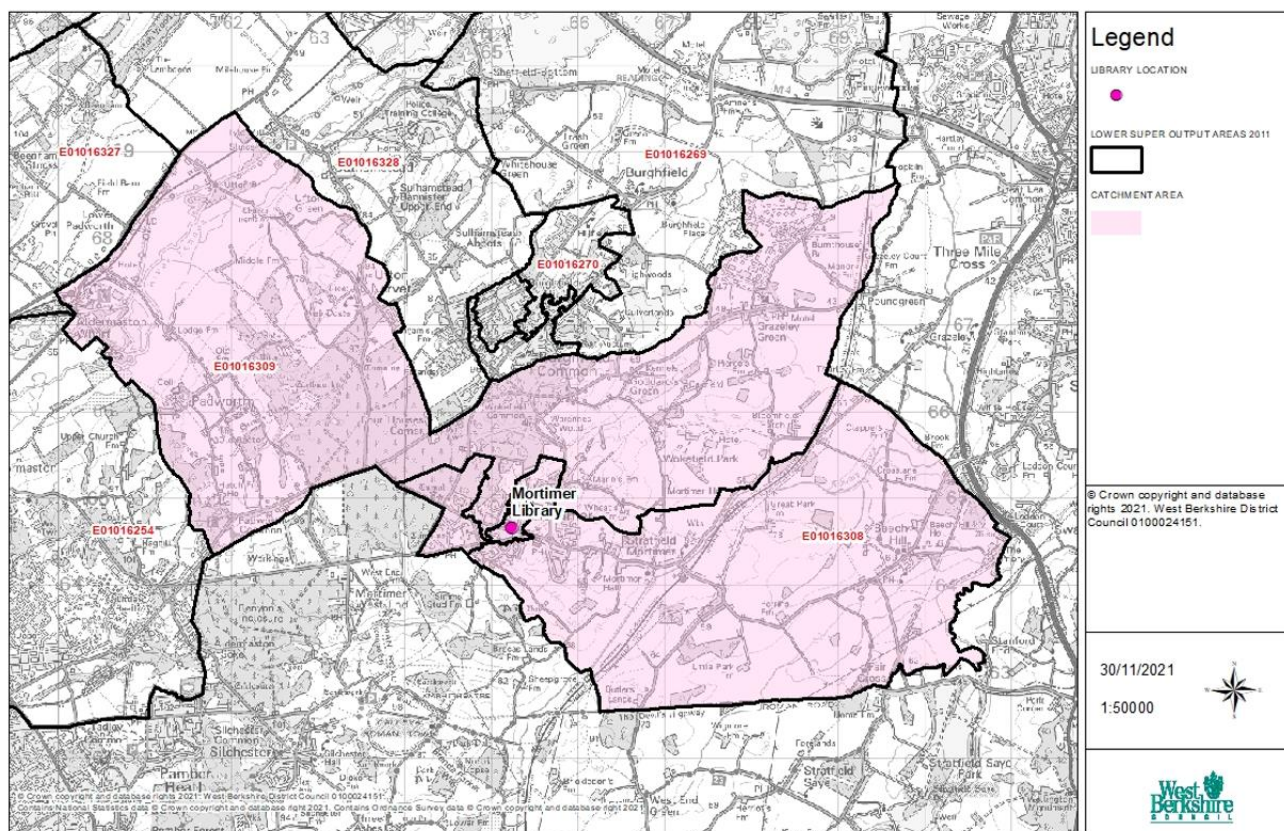
Library building

The library building was completely re-furbished in 2016, and is in a central location in the village. There is a covenant on the building stating that it must always be used as a library.

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council leases the conservatory at the rear of the building. There have been discussions about the Parish Council taking over the management and lease for the whole building, but negotiations have recently been paused because of the pandemic.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
5,816	579	12,876	12,469

Of the 579 active borrowers, 299 only borrowed items from Mortimer library. The most popular alternative location was Burghfield Common (109). It is also likely that some residents use Reading Library Services.

The library is open 19 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays. Its busiest time for loans is between 2pm and 4pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
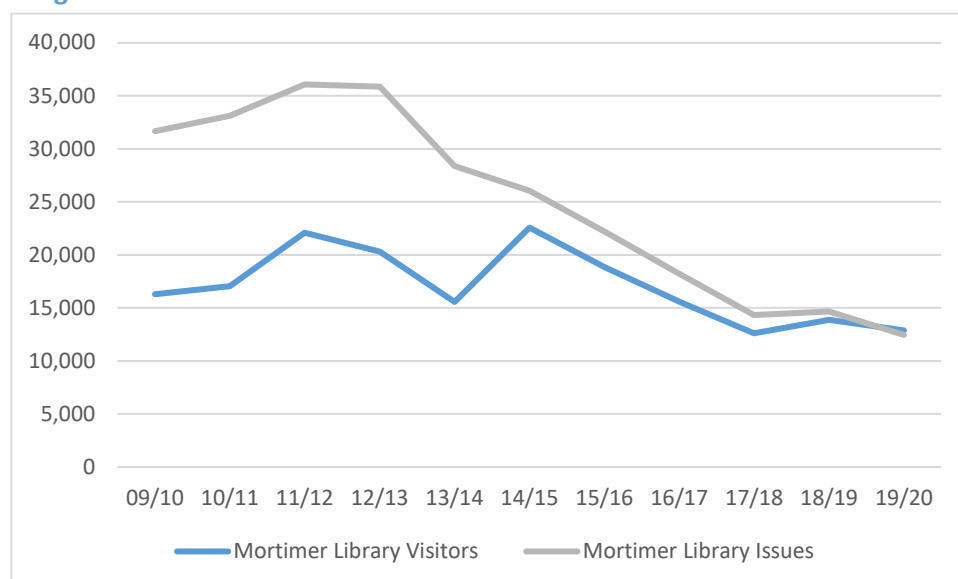
Long-term trends

Mortimer Library Visitors — **Mortimer Library Issues**

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 29%. This is very slightly above average compared with the other libraries. The drop for the age group 11 to 19 has been noticeably sharp at 79%.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

On overall decile rank, Mortimer ranks as the third most deprived library catchment area in West Berkshire overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is below the district average on most dimensions, but performs noticeably better on education, skills and training.

IMD dimension	Mortimer catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.7	8.1
Income	7.3	7.7
Employment	7.7	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.7	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.3	8.6
Crime	6.7	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.0	5.7
Living Environment	3.7	6.9

User age profile

Legend:
- This age group as percentage of Mortimer catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Mortimer catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Mortimer catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	Population who are active borrowers
Age 0-15	20%	31%	15%
Age 16-64	58%	41%	7%
Age 65+	21%	28%	12%

Newbury

Catchment map
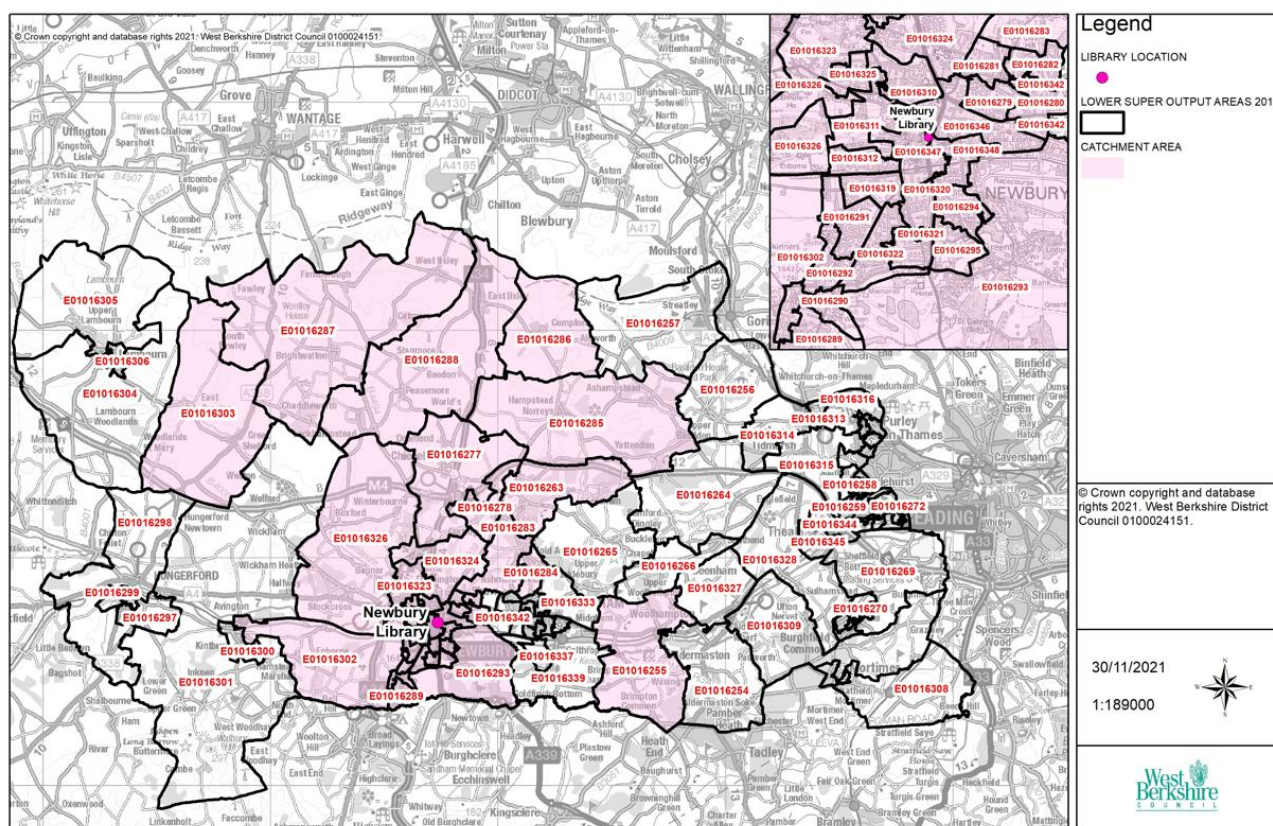
Library building

A purpose-built library now 20 years old which is one of WBCs flagship buildings and located centrally in the Wharf area of the town centre. WBC has made significant investment in the building, most recently installing energy efficient LED lighting.

There may be a possibility to extend in line with Newbury Masterplan and Cultural Heritage Strategy to include, for example, a makerspace or space for small and medium sized businesses to rent.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
63,597	8,816	171,119	170,458

Of the 8,816 active borrowers, 3,768 only borrowed items from Newbury library. The most popular alternative location was Thatcham (801).

The library is open 47 hours a week and is busiest on Saturdays. Its peak time for loans is between 11am and 12pm on most days though it remains busy well into the afternoons.

Long-term trends
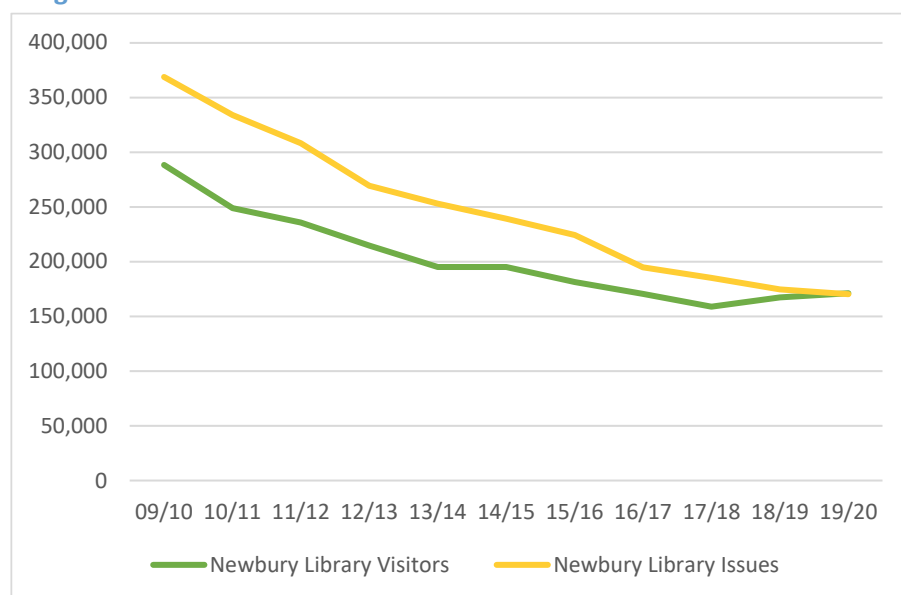
Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 34%. This is slightly above average compared with the other libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have remained stable.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

The Newbury catchment is close to the West Berkshire average on all domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. As the catchment covers more than a third of all the LSOAs this is to be expected.

IMD dimension	Newbury catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.9	8.1
Income	7.7	7.7
Employment	7.9	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.0	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.6	8.6
Crime	7.8	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	5.3	5.7
Living Environment	6.0	6.9

User age profile

Bar chart: User age profile

Age group	This age group as percentage of Newbury catchment general population	This age group as percentage of Newbury catchment active borrowers	Percentage of Newbury catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers
0-15	20%	38%	23%
16-64	61%	47%	10%
65+	19%	15%	10%

■ This age group as percentage of Newbury catchment general population

■ This age group as percentage of Newbury catchment active borrowers

■ Percentage of Newbury catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Pangbourne

Library building

The library is a small building which was a former fire station. It is a good location in the centre of the village.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
18,751	1,085	19,388	21,241

Of the 1,085 active borrowers, 620 only borrowed items from Pangbourne library. The most popular alternative locations were Newbury (71) and Theale (69).

Pangbourne has the lowest percentage of active borrowers per catchment population. This may reflect its relative proximity to Caversham and Reading Central libraries, and Goring, in the neighbouring local authority areas.

The library is open 22 hours a week. Its busiest day is Friday and it is busiest on most weekdays between 11am and 12pm and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays. On Mondays, it is only open in the afternoon and is busiest between 3pm and 4pm.

Long-term trends
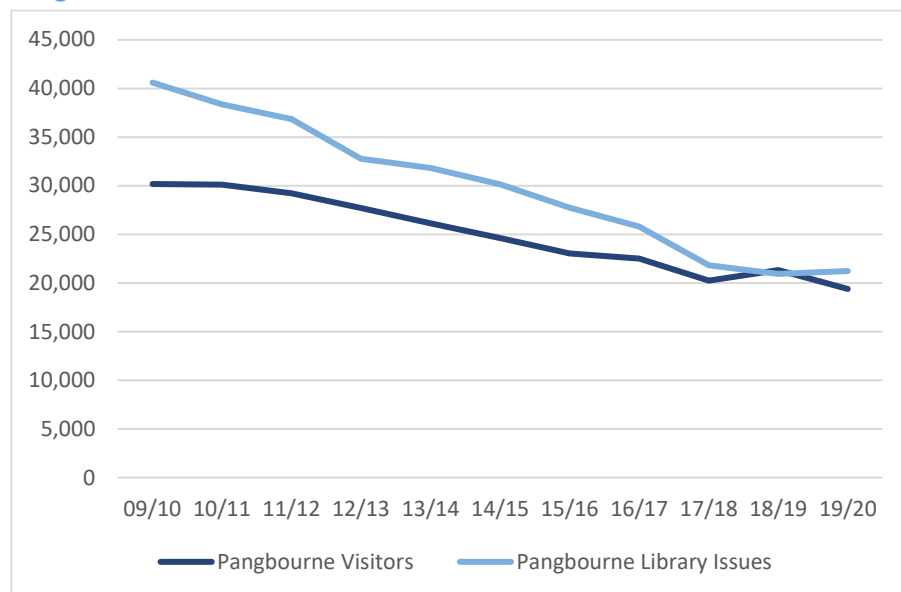
Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows a drop over the period of 22%. This is below average compared with the other libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have risen by 10% (it is one of four libraries to show an increase for this group).

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

Pangbourne library catchment ranks as the least deprived library catchment area in West Berkshire overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is above average on all dimensions.

IMD dimension	Pangbourne catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	9.4	8.1
Income	9.0	7.7
Employment	8.9	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.9	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	9.4	8.6
Crime	9.2	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.6	5.7
Living Environment	8.3	6.9

User age profile

	Age 0-15	Age 16-64	Age 65+
This age group as percentage of Pangbourne catchment general population	19%	59%	22%
This age group as percentage of Pangbourne catchment active borrowers	42%	38%	20%
Percentage of Pangbourne catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers	11%	3%	5%

■ This age group as percentage of Pangbourne catchment general population

■ This age group as percentage of Pangbourne catchment active borrowers

■ Percentage of Pangbourne catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Thatcham

Catchment map

Library building

The library was purpose built in the 1980s, but is now inadequate for a town the size of Thatcham where the population has rapidly increased. The location is slightly out of town and limited signage means that the building is hard to find as it is not on the main A4 and hidden behind a dental practice.

In 2021 a project commenced to make short term improvements to the building using capital funding. This involves the installation of an accessible toilet, and moving the entrance of the building to reduce anti-social behaviour.

In the longer term, the intention is to consider building a new larger facility as part of the Thatcham Masterplan and the need identified in the WBC Infrastructure Development Plan. This will provide an opportunity to consider co-location.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
28,307	2,403	41,021	45,745

Of the 2,403 active borrowers, 928 only borrowed items from Thatcham library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (801).

The library is open 33.5 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays. On most weekdays, its busiest time for loans is between 10am and 11am and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
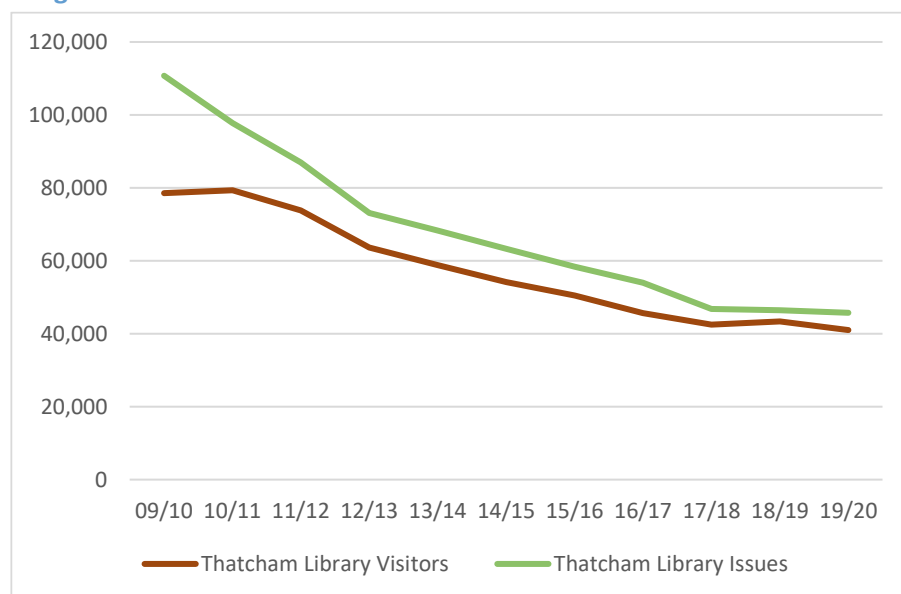
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 36%. This is slightly above average compared with the other libraries.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

The Thatcham catchment is close to the average on most domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is well above average on living environment, and a little below on education, skills and training, health and employment.

IMD dimension	Burghfield Common catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	8.1	8.1
Income	7.5	7.7
Employment	7.6	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	6.4	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.3	8.6
Crime	8.2	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.3	5.7
Living Environment	8.2	6.9

User age profile

- This age group as percentage of Thatcham catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Thatcham catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Thatcham catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers
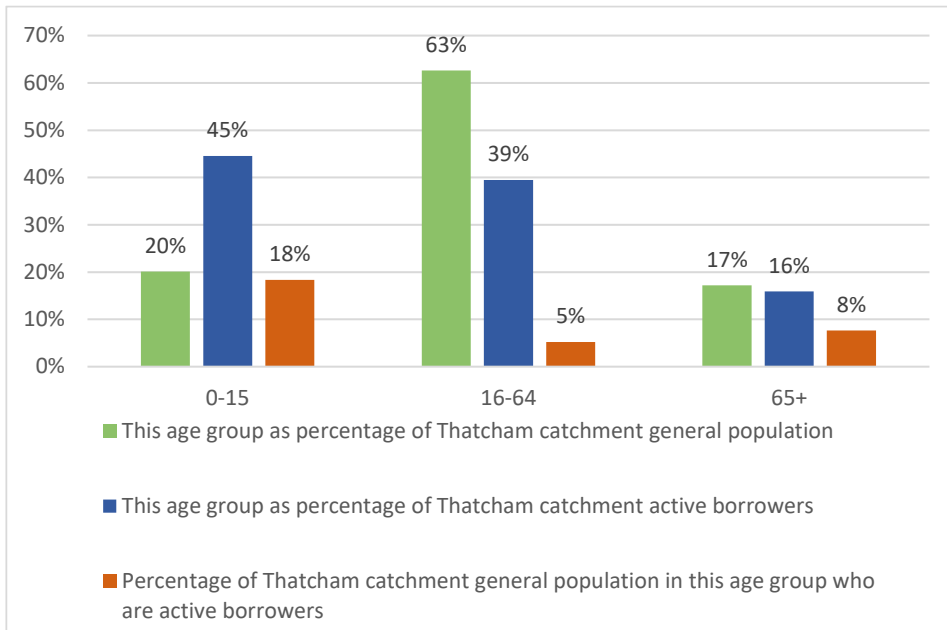
Theale

Catchment map
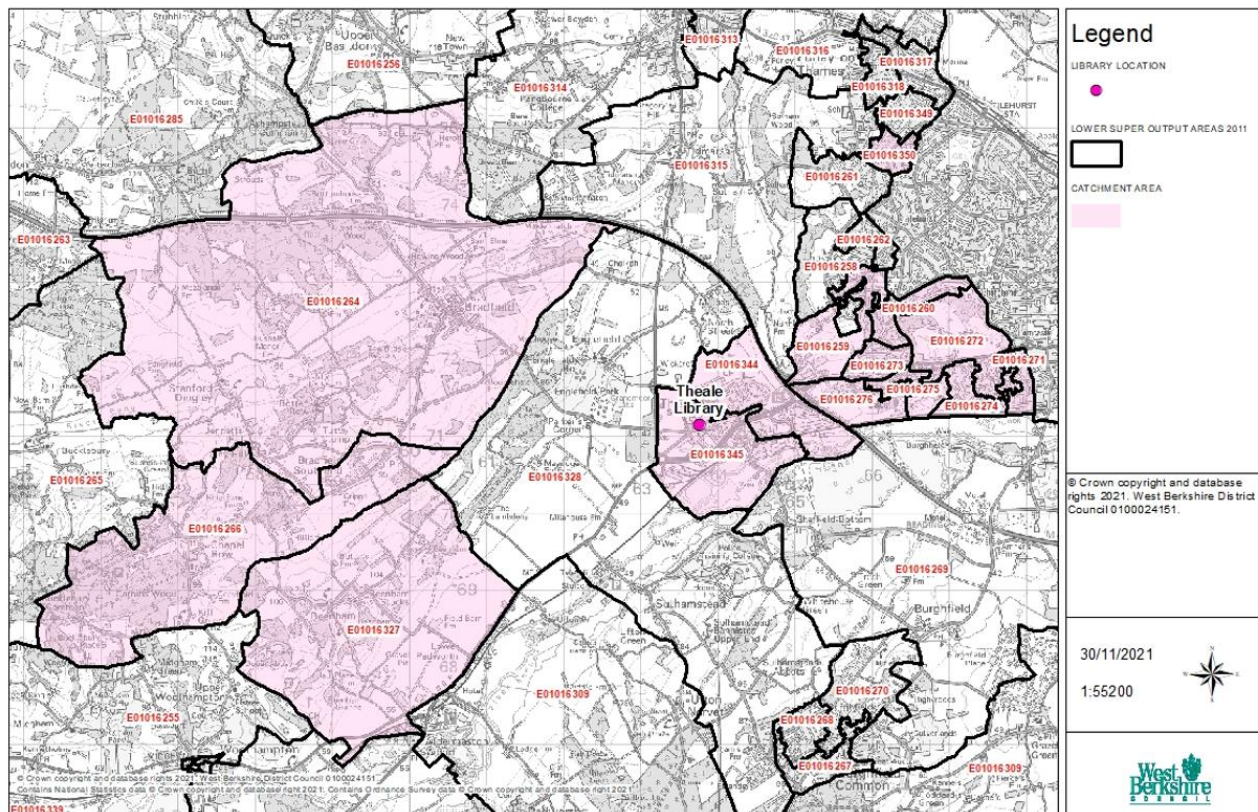
Library building

The library was a dual–use facility with Theale Green School until 2016 when the school withdrew from the agreement because of falling roll numbers. Initially there was a threat to the future of the library as the running costs for the building would have been too high just for the library.

To mitigate this, building alterations were made, and a suite of offices created in the part of the building formerly occupied by the school. These offices have been leased to the WBC Public Protection Partnership since 2017, therefore creating an additional income stream to make the current location sustainable.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
20,589	1,171	23,562	21,504

Of the 1,171 active borrowers, 477 only borrowed items from Theale library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (123).

Theale has the second lowest percentage of active borrowers per catchment population. This may reflect its relative proximity to Reading Central and Caversham libraries, which are part of Reading Library Services.

The library is open 23.5 hours a week and is busiest on Wednesdays. Its busiest time for loans is between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
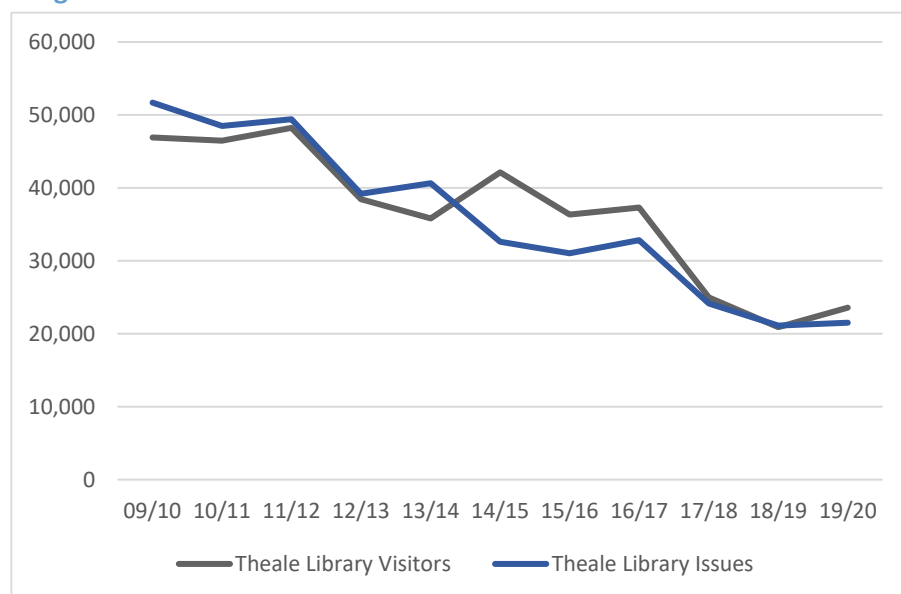
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 16%. This is the lowest of all the libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have risen by 25% (it is one of four libraries to show an increase for this group).

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

Theale library catchment is close the average on most of the Index of Multiple Deprivation domains. It is noticeably below average on education, skills and training and barriers to housing and services.

IMD dimension	Theale catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.9	8.1
Income	7.7	7.7
Employment	7.9	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	6.0	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.6	8.6
Crime	7.8	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	4.9	5.7
Living Environment	8.1	6.9

User age profile

Chart legend:
- This age group as percentage of Theale catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Theale catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Theale catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	Active borrowers within age group
Age 0-15	20%	48%	13%
Age 16-64	61%	39%	3%
Age 65+	19%	13%	4%

Appendix II – library catchments

The table below shows for each LSOA the percentage of active borrowers using its most used library. This determines which catchment each LSOA falls into.

LSOA	Most used library by LSOA residents	% active borrowers using most used library
E01016270	Burghfield Common	89.7
E01016267	Burghfield Common	85.1
E01016268	Burghfield Common	83.0
E01016269	Burghfield Common	82.9
E01016328	Burghfield Common	64.4
E01016298	Hungerford	87.0
E01016299	Hungerford	86.2
E01016296	Hungerford	81.3
E01016297	Hungerford	81.1
E01016300	Hungerford	50.5
E01016301	Hungerford	49.5
E01016306	Lambourn	91.9
E01016305	Lambourn	83.7
E01016304	Lambourn	74.8
E01016307	Mortimer	83.9
E01016308	Mortimer	76.8
E01016309	Mortimer	50.0
E01016320	Newbury	99.5
E01016346	Newbury	99.3
E01016288	Newbury	99.2
E01016312	Newbury	98.5
E01016289	Newbury	98.4
E01016311	Newbury	98.4
E01016319	Newbury	98.3
E01016322	Newbury	98.1
E01016291	Newbury	97.8
E01016294	Newbury	97.7
E01016310	Newbury	97.7
E01016290	Newbury	97.7
E01016292	Newbury	97.2
E01016293	Newbury	96.5
E01016325	Newbury	96.4
E01016347	Newbury	96.3
E01016321	Newbury	95.7
E01016348	Newbury	95.7
E01016279	Newbury	94.7
E01016323	Newbury	94.2
E01016324	Newbury	92.2
E01016287	Newbury	91.9
E01016326	Newbury	91.1
E01016281	Newbury	91.0
E01016295	Newbury	89.7
E01016280	Newbury	89.0
E01016277	Newbury	87.2
E01016282	Newbury	82.4
E01016286	Newbury	81.5
E01016278	Newbury	80.3
E01016302	Newbury	80.0

LSOA	Most used library by LSOA residents	% active borrowers using most used library
E01016263	Newbury	78.7
E01016285	Newbury	75.5
E01016283	Newbury	55.6
E01016284	Newbury	51.4
E01016303	Newbury	44.1
E01016255	Newbury	41.9
E01016313	Pangbourne	94.4
E01016314	Pangbourne	91.7
E01016318	Pangbourne	85.3
E01016256	Pangbourne	82.4
E01016316	Pangbourne	79.7
E01016317	Pangbourne	76.7
E01016349	Pangbourne	70.6
E01016315	Pangbourne	59.2
E01016258	Pangbourne	50.0
E01016257	Pangbourne	50.0
E01016261	Pangbourne	44.4
E01016262	Pangbourne	38.5
E01016332	Thatcham	77.2
E01016331	Thatcham	73.6
E01016335	Thatcham	69.1
E01016336	Thatcham	66.7
E01016329	Thatcham	66.7
E01016334	Thatcham	65.7
E01016330	Thatcham	64.6
E01016337	Thatcham	62.9
E01016343	Thatcham	61.8
E01016333	Thatcham	60.5
E01016340	Thatcham	59.9
E01016342	Thatcham	58.5
E01016338	Thatcham	56.9
E01016341	Thatcham	55.4
E01016339	Thatcham	52.1
E01016265	Thatcham	45.1
E01016254	Thatcham	37.3
E01016275	Theale	91.7
E01016276	Theale	90.9
E01016345	Theale	90.8
E01016344	Theale	90.8
E01016273	Theale	87.5
E01016274	Theale	81.0
E01016260	Theale	76.2
E01016272	Theale	75.9
E01016264	Theale	56.3
E01016271	Theale	54.5
E01016327	Theale	52.8
E01016350	Theale	52.4
E01016259	Theale	46.7
E01016266	Theale	38.1

Appendix III – IMD averages by catchment

The table below shows the average IMD decile ranks and scores for the LSOAs in each library catchment.

Library catchment	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (2019)		Income		Employment		Education Skills and Training		Health Deprivation and Disability		Crime		Barriers to Housing and Services		Living Environment	
	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score
Burghfield Common	8.40	8.14	8.20	0.06	8.60	0.04	7.60	10.10	8.00	-0.69	7.40	-0.54	6.60	17.75	7.60	11.60
Hungerford	7.50	10.89	7.00	0.07	8.33	0.05	6.67	14.04	8.67	-0.92	8.17	-0.67	6.83	17.99	4.67	26.38
Lambourn	6.33	15.70	5.67	0.09	7.33	0.06	3.67	28.09	7.67	-0.58	5.67	-0.09	4.00	25.87	5.67	18.71
Mortimer	7.67	11.25	7.33	0.07	7.67	0.06	7.67	7.64	8.33	-0.82	6.67	-0.26	6.00	21.20	3.67	27.11
Newbury	7.92	10.68	7.73	0.06	7.89	0.05	6.97	13.15	8.65	-0.92	7.76	-0.66	5.30	22.79	6.00	19.02
Pangbourne	9.42	5.51	9.00	0.04	8.92	0.04	7.92	8.26	9.42	-1.19	9.17	-1.03	6.58	17.11	8.25	9.22
Thatcham	8.06	9.68	7.47	0.07	7.59	0.06	6.35	15.07	8.29	-0.77	8.18	-0.68	6.29	18.49	8.24	9.35
Theale	7.93	10.47	7.71	0.06	7.86	0.06	6.00	16.01	8.57	-0.85	7.79	-0.70	4.86	23.59	8.07	10.79
West Berkshire Average	8.07	9.89	7.74	0.06	8.00	0.05	6.77	13.48	8.60	-0.89	7.92	-0.68	5.71	20.94	6.89	15.24
Northern (illustrative)	7.86	10.84	8.86	0.04	9.43	0.04	8.29	7.24	9.71	-1.31	7.71	-0.55	2.86	33.98	3.71	30.83

* Notes
Decile rank (1 is most deprived)
Score (higher numbers indicate more deprivation)

Page 203

Three Tuns House
109 Borough High Street
SE1 1NL

020 7756 7600

www.sharedintelligence.net
solutions@sharedintelligence.net

This page is intentionally left blank

Libraries peer challenge
West Berkshire Council

April 2022

Feedback Report

1.   Executive Summary

The Council's previous review of library services in West Berkshire (conducted in 2016/17) recommended that there should be a review of the library service after three years. The purpose of this review is to ensure the service meets the needs of residents, including any Covid-19 impacts, and delivers on wider aims cited in council strategies and plans. Phase 1 of the current review has now been completed, with the production of the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) by the consultants Shared Intelligence in December 2021. This peer challenge represents Phase 2 of the library service review. The findings of the peer challenge, along with the CNA, will inform the development of options for future service delivery for decision by elected members in September 2022.

The recently completed Community Needs Assessment (CNA) provides a comprehensive analysis of library usage and demographics, and identifies cross-cutting themes which the library service should be well placed to address to help achieve wider priorities for West Berkshire. It provides a helpful body of evidence on which to base the current review.

A new West Berkshire Council Strategy will be launched following the May 2023 local elections. This provides an opportunity to position the library service to support delivery of Council priorities. There is support from leading councillors in West Berkshire for the library service and an understanding of its contribution towards the achievement of wider outcomes in the community. However, they are looking for the service to deliver more from within its existing resource base, including meeting the challenge of providing access to the service in a predominantly rural area.

There may be scope to secure additional capital funding. The peer team heard that the Council has an appetite to invest in buildings as part of a 'one public estate' approach to asset management across West Berkshire. This gives scope for more co-location and joined up service delivery with leisure and other services, leading to greater engagement with library service users along with efficiency gains.

The Council has an ageing mobile library vehicle and recognises that decisions will need to be made around a replacement or alternative approaches. This gives an opportunity to re-think service provision to ensure an accessible and cost-effective service in rural areas.

There are opportunities to enhance the library services' engagement with other Council departments and external agencies. This should build on existing successes, such as that of the EduCafe in Newbury library in providing access to advice and support for a range of communities and increasing footfall through the library; the role of library staff in helping to maintain contact with vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 pandemic; and the early work the service is doing to promote the Health and wellbeing agenda. Such activities help to cement the perception of the libraries service as a potential solution to other services and partners' challenges in accessing residents and communities.

We present some options for consideration to build on the opportunities outlined above in providing strategic direction for the library service, including providing an accessible service in rural areas, increasing the usage and reach of the service and potential efficiency gains.

2.   Recommendations - suggested options for the way forward

The following are the main recommendations of the peer challenge, intended to help West Berkshire Council to develop future service options through the Library Service Review. There are further suggestions for improvement in the body of the report.

Strategic direction

a) Establish and share a clear vision and strategy for the library service, which supports the delivery of the refreshed Council Strategy from May 2023 and provides the basis for the development of a combined Culture & Leisure strategy for West Berkshire

b) Consider the location and future use of library buildings as part of a wider review of the Council's property assets, taking advantage of co-location with other council and partner services and informed by the evidence gathered in the Community Needs Assessment 2021

Providing accessible library services in rural areas

c) Consider further partnership working with Town and Parish councils, including more shared use of village halls and the use of 'pop-up' library facilities

d) Clearly identify the purpose and outcomes to be achieved by the mobile or equivalent library service to provide access to library services in the more remote rural areas of West Berkshire

e) As part of any review of the mobile library, consider the potential for alternative approaches to achieve these outcomes including a tailored home delivery service which is integrated with the existing At Home service and digital offers.

Increasing usage, including engaging and retaining current non-users of the library service

f) Ensure that libraries provide appropriate facilities and spaces for personal learning and flexible working

g) Consider additional service offers to increase the footfall through libraries, building on recent successes such as the Educafe and develop a clear strategy to promote the library service to these new visitors

Potential efficiency gains to re-invest in service delivery

h) Consider opportunities to make efficiency savings in the stock ordering, delivery and handling processes including the potential for stock delivery direct to branch libraries

i) Consider opportunities for cost savings and reduced environmental impact as part of the review of the mobile library service

j) Consider formally constituting Friends of Library groups so that they are in a position to bid for additional funding to support the delivery of library services

2

3.   Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

This peer challenge is part of a programme of on-line peer challenges of council's cultural and library services supported by Arts Council England (ACE) and provided by the Local Government Association (LGA). These challenges follow the recognised principles adopted across the LGA's range of peer challenges, both corporate and service specific. They are intended to help councils improve their cultural and library services and generate wider learning for the sector.

3.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge for West Berkshire were:

- **Julie Bell**, Interim Director – Education, Skills & Culture, Lancashire County Council (substantive role Head of Libraries, Museums & Culture)
- **Councillor Henry Higgins**, member of London Borough of Hillingdon Council (formerly Cabinet Member for Culture, Sport & Leisure)
- **David Armin**, LGA challenge manager

3.2 Scope and focus

The purpose of the peer challenge was to enable West Berkshire Council to develop options as part of its Library Services review. The Council has commissioned a Community Needs Assessment, now completed, and intends to use this alongside the findings of the peer challenge to develop options for the future of the library service for decision by elected members in September 2022, to be followed by an action planning and implementation phase. These options may range from refining the current service delivery model to ensuring best use of resources, and to a more ambitious approach to re-shaping the service to increase engagement and drive improved outcomes. All options will be evaluated in the context of the constraints of existing budgets and competing Council priorities for investment.

In particular, the Council asked the peer team to focus on the following issue:

- **How can we deliver the library service more efficiently in a largely rural area, including innovative ways in which to ensure access?**

- This should include consideration of:
    - awareness raising amongst current users of what the existing service offers
    - how to engage with non-users to encourage them to use and remain using the library service.

3

18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ   www.local.gov.uk   **Telephone** 020 7664 3000   **Email** info@local.gov.uk
Chief Executive: Mark Lloyd
Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

Page 208

3.3 The peer challenge process

The fundamental aim of each peer challenge is to help councils and their partners reflect on and improve their services and the outcomes they achieve for their communities. It is important to remember that a peer challenge is not an inspection, rather it provides a critical friend to challenge councils in assessing their strengths and identifying their own areas for improvement, along with opportunities to learn from practice elsewhere. The main elements this peer challenge were:

- A review of data and key documentation, including the Council's Community Needs Assessment

- Virtual meetings and interviews on 21st to 22nd April 2022. The peer team met with leading members and senior officers from the Council, managers from within the Library Service and from other services who work with the Library Service n West Berkshire.

- Discussion of emerging findings and potential service development options with managers from the Library Service and presentation of the team's key messages to leading members, senior officers and managers

By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing. The peer team would like to thank colleagues in West Berkshire for their assistance in planning and delivering the peer challenge, and for their engagement and openness during the process.

4

4. Feedback

Context

West Berkshire is a unitary authority with a population of 158,500 (2019). It is 272 square miles in area, which is over half of the geographical area of the historic county of Berkshire. Nearly three quarters of West Berkshire is classified as part of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). West Berkshire is predominantly rural area, with the market town of Newbury being the urban centre of the district. Getting public transport to library branches can be difficult, and this presents challenges regarding levels of accessibility to those who are not car owners or who do not otherwise have access to private transport.

In 2016/17 West Berkshire Council conducted a review of library services based on an independent assessment of needs carried out by consultants Red Quadrant. The review resulted in major changes to the service which were implemented in 2017/18. These changes included:

- 44% reduction in library staff.
- The introduction of a new operational model where volunteers support staff to deliver the library service.
- Closure of one library service point which is now run independently by the community.
- Reduction of mobile libraries from two to one.
- A commitment to more partnership working with local communities and town and parish councils

The Council considers that the transformation of the library service following the 2016/17 Library Review has been largely successful. In the two years prior to the pandemic, library usage in the district increased which is in the contrast to the gradual decline in library usage nationally.

The outcome of the 2016/17 Libraries Review resulted in a level of library service that could not be met by the Council's service budget allocation alone. There was a £150k funding gap, and it was agreed that this budget shortfall could be met by requesting that town and parish councils consider making a voluntary contribution of £1 per resident based on the population of each parish for the next 3 years. Contributions averaged 90k per year for the first 3 years which created an annual budget pressure/deficit of £60k. Since then voluntary contributions from some town and parish councils have decreased.

West Berkshire will seek to learn from the experience of other library authorities in sharing funding pressures on the library service with town and parish councils through other aspects of the ACE / LGA culture and libraries support programme, rather than through the peer challenge. However, this does demonstrate the continuing pressure on funding for the libraries service in West Berkshire which the peer challenge should take into account.

5

The current library service

The library service is run out of eight static libraries (the principal library being in Newbury) together with one mobile library and an At Home scheme. There is an e-library offering access to e-books, e-audio, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

The net budget for libraries for 2021/22 was £1,206,580. The library service is run by 46 staff (25.06 full-time equivalent posts) and 187 volunteers. The libraries budget is comprised of 65% for staff costs and 35% for services and premises costs. Some costs are centralised (for example book stock and IT systems).

In 2019/20 the library service had 15,648 active borrowers (who have been loaned at least one item in the preceding 12 month period). This equates to 9.88% of the West Berkshire population. (The Council considers the 2019/20 pre-pandemic active borrower numbers to give the most representative picture of library usage).

The 2021/22 Library Service Review

The 2016/17 Library Service Review recommended that there should be a review of the library service after three years. The purpose of the follow up review is to ensure the service meets the needs of residents, including any Covid-19 impacts, delivers on wider aims cited outlined in council strategies and plans, including the 2036 Vision for West Berkshire produced by the Health & Wellbeing Board, the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Berkshire West and the new Cultural Heritage Strategy.

Phase 1 of the current Library service review has now been completed, with the production of the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) by the consultants Shared Intelligence in December 2021. As part of their analysis, Shared Intelligence conducted interviews with relevant West Berkshire Council Heads of Service, representatives of community groups and services. In addition, the Council conducted surveys with the public (users and non-library users), library staff, and library volunteers.

This peer challenge represents Phase 2 of the library service review. The findings of the peer challenge, along with the CNA, will inform the development of options for future service delivery for decision by elected members in September 2022 (Phase 3). Following this, a Library Service Strategy and Delivery Plan will be developed to implement the agreed options (Phase 4).

The findings of the peer team are presented in the following sections and provide some reflections which should assist West Berkshire in developing options for future service delivery.

6

4.1 Opportunities to build on

The recently completed Community Needs Assessment (CNA) provides a comprehensive analysis of library usage and demographics, and identifies cross-cutting themes which the library service should be well placed to address to help achieve wider priorities for West Berkshire. These themes are:

- Engagement (especially to address the large secondary education gap)
- Access to information and services
- Community resilience
- Skills and employment.

The peer team consider the CNA to be a significant body of evidence which should be used to inform the development of options for the future of the library service, with the cross-cutting themes placing it in an appropriate strategic context.

A new West Berkshire Council Strategy will be launched following the May 2023 local elections. This provides an opportunity to position the library service to support delivery of Council priorities. The new Chief Executive, who joined the council within the last year, has a clear ambition for a joined-up Culture & Leisure strategy which needs to incorporate a clear direction for the libraries service. The 2036 Vision for West Berkshire also provides a helpful framework of outcomes to which the libraries service can contribute.

There is support from leading councillors in West Berkshire for the library service and an understanding of its contribution towards the achievement of wider outcomes in the community. There is also an appreciation that the library service needs to deliver value for money and that there will be greater priorities for increased investment of finite council resources. Councillors are looking for the service to deliver more from within its existing resource base, including meeting the challenge of providing access to the service in a predominantly rural area.

However, there may be scope to secure additional capital funding. The peer team heard that the Council has an appetite to invest in buildings as part of more of a 'one public estate' approach to asset management across West Berkshire. This gives scope for more co-location and joined up service delivery with leisure and other services, leading to greater engagement with more potential library service users along with efficiency gains.

The Council has an ageing mobile library vehicle and recognises that decisions will need to be made around a replacement or alternative approaches. This gives an opportunity to re-think service provision to ensure an accessible and cost-effective library service in rural areas.

There are opportunities to enhance the library services' engagement with other Council departments and external agencies. This should build on existing successes, such as that of the EduCafe in Newbury library (which the peer team understand is to be expanded into several other libraries) in providing access to advice and support for a

range of communities including the local black and minority ethnic population; the role of library staff in helping to maintain contact with vulnerable residents during the lockdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic; and the early work the service is doing to promote the Health and Wellbeing agenda. Such activities help to cement the perception of the libraries service as a potential solution to other services and partner's challenges in accessing communities.

4.2   Challenges to address

Leaders and managers need to build and sustain the confidence of library staff through the current service review and beyond. They have experience of previous reviews that have led to a reduction in resources, in particular staffing, due to wider budget challenges. This confidence will be aided by developing and communicating a clear vision and ambition for the future of the service and its role in supporting wider Council priorities.

The library service has made good and imaginative use of section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds to invest in new ICT equipment in libraries and wider provision of study spaces with USB ports so that visitors can make use of their own devices to access the internet etc. This has also included self-service machines to take out library books and access other resources. However, the peer team heard that staff feel some frustration about aspects of the ICT infrastructure and in particular the availability of back-office support so that library staff and users can make the best use of the new ICT equipment. The peer team recognise that the service has taken steps to provide more on-going support in the use of these ICT systems, which should be sustained and further developed if possible.

There needs to be something of a shift in mindset so that the library service is more willing to promote what it is doing to a wider audience, not just internal stakeholders within the service so that libraries potential as a service delivery partner is better understood by both other council services and external partners. The opportunities to highlight existing successes and potential to do more with other Council services and wider partners have been identified above.

The service can build on the progress made to deliver the Universal Library Offer. As promoted by Libraries Connected nationally this identifies the four key offers as Culture & Creativity; Reading; Information & Digital and Health & Wellbeing. Following the Covid-19 pandemic Health & Wellbeing has acquired particular importance, along with supporting children to catch up on missed education and development opportunities through support with reading and school readiness work (given the adverse impact on young children in particular). The service has focused on the important issue of school readiness, but the peer team believe there is scope to do more around wellbeing and the ICT agenda. The library service should build on its existing work with partners to achieve these aims, and could link more with colleagues in other services and volunteers to supplement its limited resources.

A key challenge will be to address the revenue gap whilst maintaining an accessible library service. The service should seek to generate savings through efficiencies to invest in front line, accessible services. It should also be mindful of the potential

8

revenue impacts of changes to service arrangements and policies which might exacerbate this gap. Opportunities should be taken to reframe the responsibilities of existing staff in support of efficiency gains where this is possible. The peer team understand that the service has taken advantage of vacancies when they arise to review the most effective use of a post.

4.3   The way forward – strategic direction

To take advantages of the opportunities presented to the service and to address the challenges being faced by West Berkshire's libraries, a clear vision and strategy is needed for the service. This needs to be well communicated so that it is understood and shared across all staff to ensure continuing commitment. The service strategy needs to align well with the Council Strategy due in 2023, the Cultural Heritage strategy and Leisure strategy and support the creation of a combined culture and leisure strategy in due course. This will provide the 'golden thread' from Council priorities to service delivery. The commitment of the Leader and Cabinet members to the library service as a vehicle to help drive forward wider council priorities will be facilitated by such strategic coherence.

It is estimated that about 80-90% of the population read and make use of books. It is well understood that those who read contribute to society and to our culture. This is what makes the library service important and its role in promoting print and digital literacy remains key. It falls to senior councillors to continue to give strong leadership so that the whole essence and ethos of the value of public libraries is recognised and maintained.

With this strategic framework established (as envisaged in Phase 4 of the Library Review), existing staff roles should be reframed as opportunities arise to align with the strategic vision for the library service. That vision should also enable more proactive collaboration with partners, both within the Council and externally. Enhanced partnership working could include greater use of volunteers to engage with specific groups or communities and establishing more Friends of Libraries groups with clear constitutions and terms of reference.

The peer team understand that there may well be a desire across the Council for a more corporate approach to property management. This presents the opportunity for the library service to be part of a wider review of assets with the potential to co-locate in more accessible locations for library users, and to engage with a wider market of potential users who are accessing other services through those locations. Librarians are information management professionals so they should be able to offer sign posting and access to other services and information as part of such co-location.

4.4   Future service delivery options – accessible library services in a rural area

The Community Needs Assessment (CNA) provides a strong analysis of existing users and the demographics of the communities served by Newbury and the seven branch libraries across West Berkshire. This has also highlighted the lack of a branch library to serve large parts of the north of the area (across the North Wessex Downs). The service has sought to help ameliorate this lack of provision by providing joint library cards with neighbouring authorities.

9

The CNA provides the evidence needed to review the provision of fixed libraries across West Berkshire. However, this needs to be aligned with opportunities to deliver alternative provision and decisions on other aspects of service delivery. The main factors here are:

- Potential for co-location with other council services (or other agencies);
- Partnership working with town and parish councils; and
- Decisions on the future of the mobile library service.

Further partnership working with town and parish councils should be explored. This could include more shared use of village halls, including the potential for 'pop-up' libraries provided at certain times of the week. More generally, flexible shelving can be used to release space in a library for creative, performance and other uses.

As noted previously, the Council needs to review its mobile library provision as the vehicle is ageing and will be in need of replacement. This review needs to begin by considering the outcome that the mobile library service is intended to achieve – this may well be access to library books and other library and information services in the more remote, rural areas of West Berkshire. A secondary objective could be social engagement for users of the service.

There may be different ways of meeting this need, such as envisaging a tailored home delivery service linked to on-line selection of books through amalgamation with the existing At Home service. This could be more cost effective and have a smaller environmental footprint than a large mobile library vehicle on which users select a book or service. This may be a more familiar concept to residents now given the experience of service delivery through the pandemic. Figures on use of the existing mobile library provided by West Berkshire show that of the 670 active borrowers using the service in 2019-20 (i.e. pre-pandemic), 319 only used the mobile. By inference, the remaining 351 were accessing the library service by other means too which could in turn be accommodated within a tailored home delivery approach. The Council would need to explain the purpose of any re-configuration of the mobile service to local communities and town and parish councils, and how the desired service outcomes are achieved by a different approach.

4.5 Future service delivery options – increasing usage, engaging and retaining current non-users

It is widely recognised that when the library service is delivered well, people love and use their libraries a great deal and can become ambassadors for the service to others. The key elements of a well delivered service are outlined below. Some or most of these elements may well be in place across West Berkshire's libraries – the peer team were not in a position to form a view on this – but the Council should ensure that the following are in place across all points of access to library services.

Buildings need to be attractive, safe, well stocked and welcoming for all residents and display attractive collections of stock. The books need to be clean, abundant, well selected and clearly laid out. They should provide facilities and flexible spaces for personal learning and flexible working which are clean, private, dignified and well equipped. The experience through the Covid-19 pandemic and the more widespread adoption of hybrid working

arrangements suggests a growing demand for flexible working spaces, which could help underpin the local economy and economic activity, including among more disadvantaged groups.

Libraries are an ideal resource to encourage children of all ages to find what they might enjoy reading. Popularity with children is a powerful way to market the library service, to their parents, other family members and beyond.

Libraries need to make sure their collections address the needs of all the cultures in their local community - at all ages and for all purposes. The success of the EduCafe in Newbury demonstrates how to meet these needs and increase footfall through the library by a different approach, which is now to be extended to other areas. The service then needs to ensure that these new potential users passing through the library become regular users through promotion of the wider service offer. Although West Berkshire has found the installation of hot drinks machines in some libraries to be unsuccessful, in the experience of the peer team the provision of café facilities offering coffee and cake etc. can increase visits to libraries and provide valuable social and community engagement. Friends of Libraries groups can be helpful partners in providing such café facilities.

The library service should continue to monitor and evaluate digital resources as they are required to maintain a modern library service, to provide appropriate accessibility and take account of any longer term trends emerging following the Covid-19 pandemic. The library website is an important resource as people have become accustomed to finding their reading material on the web. It should offer the means to find things quickly and provide information on the full range of library services, whilst maintaining a clear link to West Berkshire Council as the funder and responsible authority for the library service. West Berkshire's Libraries app is an important development to assist users in finding and reserving books and e-books, as well as monitoring their library accounts.

4.6   Potential efficiency gains to invest in service delivery

There is scope for efficiency gains that can support reinvestment in the library service. The following are suggested examples that flow from the previous analysis of service delivery options.

The Council could consider different arrangements for stock deliveries, with new stock potentially going directly to branches rather than initially to a central point for re-distribution. This may release staff time that could be directed towards other priorities. There will be further opportunities to continue to evaluate staff roles and reframe these so that they can be utilised for a specific or emerging needs as the service develops.

In terms of the mobile library, we have suggested that the Council consider a smaller, more cost-effective vehicle as part of a tailored delivery service. This vehicle (potentially a Transit van or similar) would have scope to be used for multiple purposes, more flexible in routing along narrow country lanes, be less expensive to run and have a lower carbon footprint. Wakefield Libraries provides an example in practice of how smaller vehicles have been used to replace a mobile library. With developing technology, adopting a smaller vehicle now offers the potential that such a vehicle could be electric, with the associated environmental benefits.

11

Friends of Library groups can be used to raise funds for additional investment in local libraries, alongside being a source of volunteer support. With an appropriate constitution to confirm their legal status and to operate a bank account, Friends Groups can access sources of funding which may not be open to councils. Lancashire County Council have experience of such arrangements and will be able to share an example constitution for a Friends Group.

4.7 Signposting to additional LGA support

The LGA has a range of free-to-access support, across the themes highlighted in the report. It is recommended that relevant strategic officers register for the programmes highlighted below:

Economic growth

- In July the LGA is running an economic growth round table. The topic is: supporting small businesses with digital skills – to join the waiting list email productivity@local.gov.uk
- A bank of economic growth case studies is available to access on the LGA economic growth web pages

Library and cultural improvement

Working with Arts Council England, the LGA is running an online senior officer leadership pilot, running between 6 June and 18 July 2022.

The pilot will support lead/senior officers for culture and libraries to:
- Develop a greater understanding of the role of cultural and library services in the future economic growth of the local area
- Develop skills to lead entrepreneurial thinking within their services and the confidence to apply those skills
- Build and strengthen their peer networks, share information, knowledge and expertise. The pilot will be attended by both library and culture senior staff supporting a unique opportunity for peer to peer learning across these specialisms.
- Develop a vision about how their services can contribute to tackling social challenges in the post-COVID context, for example, mental health challenges and social isolation
- Develop an understanding of change theory and how to apply it
- Refresh the tools and knowledge officers have to be cultural and library leaders through peer to peer learning.
- Learn from a wide range of inspiring case studies presented by LA peers and external speakers.
- Be more aware of the strategic work of ACE and the opportunities to work more closely
- Explore the potential for arts, culture and libraries to work with officer and political stakeholders to deliver across council agendas

12

- Access a learning pathway through the LGA (for officers who have taken part in a Peer Challenge or Recovery and Renewal Panel).
- Identify how to share their learning within the organisation and with partners

To find out more email cts@local.gov.uk

Digital

As digital services and systems have been mentioned within the recommendations, we are including signposting to further digital support offered by the LGA:

- Join the transformation and Digital Inclusion Networks as an opportunity for peer to peer learning and networking with other like-minded councils
- Find out more about a cyber resilience review:
- The LGA Cyber Security Programme is providing grant funding for a cohort of Chief Executives, Deputy Chief Executives and those who have been through the SOLACE Springboard and Total Leadership programmes, to improve their understanding of cyber security. The funding should be used to enrol on a university-led course for leaders. For example, Oxford University's Cyber security for business leaders programme, for which they have offered a discounted rate. We're currently taking expressions of interest from those wanting to enhance their understanding of cyber risk to enable better strategic decision making for a cyber-resilient future. Places are limited and will be funded on a first come first serve basis. For further information and for expressions of interest please email LGAcybersecurity@local.gov.uk

5. Next steps

We appreciate you will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions with your senior managerial and political leadership and partners in order to determine how the Council wishes to take things forward through its Library Services Review.

As part of the peer challenge, there is an offer of further activity and signposting to support you in taking forward the findings of the peer challenge. The regional Principal Adviser, Mona Sehgal, is the main contacts between your authority and the LGA. Her contact details are: mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk or tel. 07795 291006. Helen Hull, Adviser, is the specific point of contact in respect of the culture and libraries peer challenge programme. Her contact details are helen.hull@local.gov.uk or tel. 07825 531558.

In the meantime, we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide additional information and signposting about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform your ongoing consideration.

Fees and Charges Task & Finish Group – Final Report

Committee considering report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Committee:	7 March 2023
Task & Finish Group Chairman:	Councillor Tony Linden
Date Task Group Chairman agreed report:	3 February 2023
Report Author:	Gordon Oliver

1 Purpose of the Report

This report presents the work undertaken by the Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group and their final recommendations.

2 Recommendation(s)

To consider the Task and Finish Group's final proposals as outlined in Section 6 of this report and agree whether these be referred to the Executive for consideration.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in financial implications which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
Human Resource:	There are no HR implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in HR implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
Legal:	There are no Legal implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted they may result in Legal implications which will be assessed in details if they are taken forward.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Risk Management:				There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in risk management implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
Property:				There are no property implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in property implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
Policy:				There are no policy implications arising directly from this report, although if proposals are accepted, this may result in policy implications, which will be assessed in detail if they are taken forward.
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		The proposed decision does not have any impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics.
Environmental Impact:		X		There are no environmental impacts arising directly from this report.

Health Impact:		X		There are no health impacts arising directly from this report. However, if accepted, proposals may help to increase participation in leisure services which would have health benefits.
ICT Impact:		X		There are no ICT impacts arising from this report.
Digital Services Impact:		X		There are no Digital Services impacts arising directly from this report.
Council Strategy Priorities:		X		Setting of fees and charges is part of the core business of responsible financial management
Core Business:		X		Setting of fees and charges is part of the core business of responsible financial management
Data Impact:		X		There are no data impacts associated with this report.
Consultation and Engagement:	See full details within the report.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This report presents the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) to review fees and charges across the Council, together with a set of draft proposals. OSMC is invited to review the recommendations and consider whether these should be put to the Executive.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 At its meeting on 25 January 2022, OSMC agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider further options in relation to charging for West Berkshire Council's services. The following were highlighted as the key areas of focus for the Task and Finish Group and its subsequent recommendations:

- New proposals for Planning income;

- The Leisure Strategy and fees and income potentially arising from this;

- Other opportunities for commercial charging for services, particularly those provided by the following departments:

    o Development and Regulation

    o Communities and Wellbeing

    o Environment

5.2 In addition to exploring further opportunities for charging for Council services, the Task Group was also asked to consider the value for money of the fees and charges levied and the appropriate balance between affordability and income generation.

5.3 A copy of the Task and Finish Group's terms of reference is provided in Appendix A.

Background

5.4 The original intention was for the Task and Finish Group to report its findings to OSMC in September 2022. This would have allowed any recommendations to be incorporated into the budget reports to be taken to Council in March 2023.

5.5 Unfortunately, the Task and Finish Group was delayed in starting its review. This was as a result of the need to extend the timescales for the preceding Customer Journey Task and Finish Group, which meant that resources were not available for the Fees and Charges review. Also officer and Member availability over the summer period resulted in further delays. As a result, the Task and Finish Group was unable to conclude its work by the original deadline.

5.6 It is recognised that the resulting delay means that it will not be possible to consider any of the Task Group's recommendations as part of the 2023/2024 budget. However, an interim report was presented to OSMC on 29 November 2022, which set out some initial recommendations designed to improve Member understanding of and engagement with the Fees and Charges appendices of future Revenue Budget Reports.

5.7 The Task and Finish Group met five times between September 2022 and January 2023 to collect evidence for the review. Further details are provided in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Details of Task and Finish Group Meetings

Meeting Date	Focus of Meeting	Witnesses
15 September 2022	• Review of the terms of reference • Work planning	N/A
24 October 2022	• Planning Fees and Charges • Fees and Charges of Comparator Authorities	Eric Owens Jean Marshall
15 November 2022	• Leisure Fees and Charges	Steve Welch
8 December 2022	• Fees and Charges in the Resources Directorate	Joseph Holmes Andy Sharp Melanie Ellis

	• Fees and Charges in the People Directorate	Jo England Jonathan Martin Lisa Potts
17 January 2023	• Environment Fees and Charges	Jon Winstanley

Findings

Budget Report - Presentation of Information

5.8 The initial findings were based on a review of the Fees and Charges appendices of the Revenue Budget Report for 2022/23. Copies of these are included in Appendix B of this report. The Task and Finish Group also considered a selection of fees and charges reports from other local authorities.

5.9 Overall, Members considered that it would be helpful to have additional information within the Fees and Charges appendices of the Annual Budget Report in order to better inform decision making about proposed changes for the coming financial year. In particular, the following issues were highlighted:

- The level of income generated by each fee / charge and the amount of 'units sold' in previous years were not provided, so Members did not know:

  o how demand had responded to previous changes in fees / charges,

  o the relative importance of individual fees and charges to the Council's financial position; and

  o where they should best focus their attention when reviewing the proposed changes.

- It was not always clear if there was a statutory requirement to levy a fee / charge for a particular service, and if the Council had any say in setting the amount of that fee / charge, or if amounts were also set centrally.

- Information was not always provided within the report as to the justification for any changes to fees and charges, and for any variations in the level of proposed changes across the fees and charges levied by a particular Council department.

- Similarly, where a decrease or no change was proposed, it was not clear as to the reasons for this.

- The percentage change of each fee / charge relative to the previous year was not provided in all cases. This would allow Members to quickly scan changes and identify any outliers that merited further investigation.

- Where it was proposed to raise fees and charges in line with inflation, it was not clear as to why a particular measure of inflation had been chosen, i.e. CPI vs RPI.

- Information was not provided about how recently benchmarking of fees and charges had been carried out, or what the findings of the benchmarking had been.

- The reports did not provide an estimation as to the likely impact of variations to fees and charges on the amount of revenue that would be generated in the coming year – this must be known in order to be able to build future budgets.

Planning Fees and Charges

5.10 Eric Owens (Acting Executive Director – Place) and Jean Marshall (Interim Planning Services Lead) were invited to give evidence on Planning fees and charges.

5.11 Most Planning fees and charges are set by Central Government and they do not cover the full costs of processing applications. Local Planning Authorities are allowed some discretion in setting fees for pre-app advice and planning performance agreements (PPAs).

5.12 Historically, the service has prioritised applications that have statutory timescales over pre-apps. As a result, few developers have seen the value of paying for pre-app advice, with most choosing instead to submit planning applications and then negotiate on the details afterwards. This has led to lower levels of income from pre-apps than might be expected. Pre-apps brought in just £90,000 out of £1.3 million levied across the service as a whole in 2021/22. This approach also contributes to delays in determining applications and may result in poorer quality developments.

5.13 Members asked if there is a financial impact for non-determination of planning applications. It was confirmed that fees have to be returned to the applicant in the event of non-determination within the statutory timescales unless an extension can be agreed, but the Planning Service has strong measures in place to minimise this. Applicants can appeal for non-determination, but this is rare.

5.14 Officers explained that a different approach is being proposed whereby developers will be encouraged to seek pre-app advice. In future, if there are significant changes to an application following submission, then the applicant will be given the choice of withdrawing the application or having it refused, rather than engaging in protracted negotiations. This change in approach will deliver additional income from pre-app fees, reduce delays in determination of planning applications, and result in higher quality developments.

5.15 It was confirmed that the service regularly undertakes benchmarking of pre-app fees against comparator authorities.

5.16 PPAs are project management tools which the local planning authority and applicants can use to agree timescales, actions and resources for handling particular applications. They cover the pre-application and application stages, but may also extend through to the post-application stage. They can be particularly useful in setting out an efficient and transparent process for determining large and/or complex planning applications. Fees for PPAs can only be set at a level to recover costs. PPAs are not currently offered in West Berkshire as a matter of course, but this is something that the Planning Service is working towards.

5.17 Charging for Development Viability Statements is another area where the Planning Service has historically performed poorly, but officers provided reassurance that performance is improving and there is potential to increase income further.

5.18 Members asked about the potential for the Planning Service to sell specialist services to other authorities. However, officers explained that the service lacked the capacity to offer this, and there would be difficulties around marketing such a service.

5.19 The Task Group was informed that a 'Place Review' was underway at the time of the scrutiny review, which would provide further detail on the changes outlined above. The Members were content that this would help to address issues with past performance within the Planning Service, while also helping to drive income generation, particularly in relation to pre-application advice and planning performance agreements. No further opportunities for charging for services have been identified.

Leisure Fees and Charges

5.20 Steve Welch (Service Director – Communities and Wellbeing) was invited to give evidence in relation to fees and charges for Leisure Services, and potential opportunities around the implementation of the new Leisure Strategy and Leisure Contract. Due to the slippage in the Task and Finish Group's timetable, the scrutiny review was undertaken at the same time as the procurement of the new leisure contract.

5.21 The outgoing leisure contract has an annual management fee of £50,000. This generated 1 million visits to leisure centres and over £1 million of social value for the 12 month period to September 2022. The current operator uses a Charitable Trust model that generates savings on business rates and VAT.

5.22 The charging model for core services is set by West Berkshire Council - this covers activities such as swimming, gym classes, badminton and squash, amongst others. For remaining services, the Operator is free to charge market rates.

5.23 The West Berkshire Residents Card is used to offer discounts for service users, as well as to collect data on how people use the leisure centres. Further concessions are offered to those aged over 60, people with disabilities and those on low incomes.

5.24 Prices are reviewed annually and although they tend to increase in accordance with the Retail Price Index (RPI), the Council can increase or decrease individual prices by different amounts depending on its chosen priorities. Prices are managed through the leisure contract rather than being set in the annual Budget Report. Members felt that this should be highlighted in the Fees and Charges appendix to the Budget Report.

5.25 Members highlighted that some of the prices on leisurecentre.com were out of date or inaccurate. For the new contract, it was suggested that mystery shopping be undertaken on a regular basis to ensure that members of the public are provided with correct information.

5.26 Members noted from the fees and charges list that the current leisure offer does not appear to cover some popular activities such as yoga and Pilates. Also, it was suggested that other activities that are rising in popularity, such as racketball, could be promoted to make better use of squash courts. It was suggested that the new operator should take an evidence-based approach when setting their programmes in order to increase footfall. Officers provided reassurance that this would happen.

5.27 The new leisure contract is due to be considered by Executive in March 2023. As a result of improved national guidance / frameworks, this will be better structured with a different approach. The new leisure operator will be incentivised to improve performance through profit-share. However, it was noted that energy prices would represent a significant challenge if they remained high.

5.28 While the specifics of the new leisure contract could not be discussed with the Task Group, general principles are that: prices should be aligned to market rates; all sections of the community should have access to leisure facilities and health and wellbeing programmes; and the contract should contribute to the Council's objectives. In particular, there is an aspiration to encourage people who traditionally do not use our leisure facilities, but this has to be balanced with income. Core prices will cover the same activities as the previous contract, but the contract is open to innovation, particularly around driving increased use through concessions.

5.29 The Task Group learned that offering concessions has unintended consequences. For example the West Berkshire Card offers discounts to all residents regardless of income. Further concession are offered to over 60s, but people within this demographic may be relatively affluent. Members considered that the over 60s discount is outdated and the age limit should be increased in line with the national retirement age (currently 66).

5.30 Pricing of leisure services is not the only factor affecting participation rates - car ownership, public transport and social isolation are all factors. Members sought assurance that the new contract would have more emphasis on outreach programmes and sports development. This would help to increase both participation and fee income. Officers confirmed that this was being incorporated into the new contract.

5.31 The Council struggles to charge market rates for leisure services due to the aging nature of its facilities. However investment in the lido and Northcroft Leisure Centre will make a significant difference in terms of being able to generate additional income. Members highlighted the lack of a swimming pool in the east of the district, which means that residents use facilities in Reading instead. Investment in a new pool could help to encourage increased participation rates as well as boosting income

5.32 The Task Group asked whether there are any other opportunities to increase revenue (e.g. bundled services), and suggested that benchmarking could highlight some opportunities. Also, there was discussion about opportunities to better utilise public open spaces – a good example is Swinley Forest in Bracknell, which has a variety of facilities including the Lookout Discovery Centre, café, playground, mountain bike trails, and bike hub.

5.33 In addition to looking at Leisure Services, the Task Group touched on the operation of Shaw House. This currently runs significant programmes of resident-based activities, which are highly valued by the community, but are low-yield in terms of income. Members recognised that an appropriate balance is needed between a hard-line business strategy and community uses, and they felt that Shaw House should be considered in more detail as part of a future scrutiny review.

Environment Fees and Charges

5.34 Jon Winstanley (Service Director – Environment) was invited to give evidence on fees and charges levied by the Environment Service, which includes: Transport; Countryside; Waste; Parking; and Highways.

5.35 Income from Transport services is relatively modest. There are fees for bus services to call at Newbury Bus Station, provision of bus and coach stands, temporary bus stop closures, and concessionary bus pass replacement. Fees charged to bus operators are generally kept low due to the low operating margins.

5.36 The majority of income for Countryside activities relates to use of the sports pitches, particularly Henwick. Sports pitch fees are regularly benchmarked. Members recognised the need to balance income with participation rates.

5.37 The Task Group asked what advertising opportunities had been considered. Activity is industry led and is focused on bus shelters. Bus shelters have been devolved to town / parish councils, but there may be potential to have advertising at Newbury Bus Station. Advertising has previously been considered for public car parks, but the income would be marginal. Advertising around sports pitches has not yet been explored, but any provision would need to be carefully managed to ensure that content is appropriate.

5.38 Members considered that there is limited scope to increase fees and charges within Transport and Countryside, although tackling the shortfall in playing pitches across the district would result in additional revenue generation.

5.39 Income from Waste activities is mostly derived from the garden waste scheme, which accounts for £1.6 million of the total income of £1.8 million. The scheme has been a success with the number of subscribers increasing year-on-year. However, it was noted that subscription income does not cover the costs of the scheme. It is proposed that fees should increase in line with inflation for 2023/2024.

5.40 There was discussion about fees for bulky waste collection. These are set on a cost-recovery basis. There does not appear to be any correlation between increasing fees and the number of fly-tipping incidents, which the Task Group had highlighted as a potential concern.

5.41 Members asked if there were opportunities for profit share in relation to commercial waste contracts. It was confirmed that this had been considered and dismissed - there are too many constraints within the current contract, the contractor has no appetite to pursue this, and there are too many other providers competing for contracts.

5.42 The Task Group asked about use of the Household Waste and Recycling Centres by non-West Berkshire residents and the scope to vary the fee to attract more use. It was confirmed that the £7 charge is more than Hampshire County Council charges non-residents, but it has been set to cover costs. It was suggested that there may be scope to increase use of the West Berkshire sites by reducing the charge, but it was considered unlikely that the additional income would be significant.

5.43 The Waste Service currently derives a modest income for disposing of certain items, but Central Government may prevent local authorities from charging for disposal of DIY waste in future, which would have a modest negative impact on income.

5.44 Members had noted that other local authorities charged higher fees for wheelie bins. West Berkshire charges a one-off set-up fee of £27 for the garden waste scheme where a bin has to be provided. This fee is kept deliberately low to encourage participation. National frameworks are used to keep costs low, but fees will be kept under review.

5.45 In terms of Parking activities, car park charges account for the majority of income. Other significant revenue streams include: income from Parkway; penalty charge notices (parking enforcement); on-street parking charges; and season tickets.

5.46 The Task Group noted that parking revenues have only recovered to around 80% of pre-Covid levels. This is due to more people working from home and shopping online. Parking at rail stations and season tickets in Council car parks are significantly lower than before the pandemic.

5.47 Members asked about the potential for car parks to go cashless, since eliminating cash collections would save money. It was confirmed that cash payment has been retained, but most ticket machines offer contactless payment and payment via mobile apps. There is a transaction fee for payments on the parking apps, but this is absorbed by the Council, rather passing it on to customers.

5.48 Clarification was sought around difference in charges regimes for on-street parking across the district. Up to 30 minutes free parking is offered in roads around the edge of Newbury Town Centre where town centre car parks provide the closest access to the shops. This concession is not offered in Hungerford High Street, where the on-street spaces are closest to the shops.

5.49 Members suggested that on-street parking charges for Sundays be brought into line with other days of the week as had already been done with public car parks. It was confirmed that this will be recommended as part of the new Parking Strategy.

5.50 The Task Group noted that Wiltshire County Council had introduced parking charges for Blue Badge holders and asked if this had been considered for West Berkshire. It was confirmed that this will be considered as part of the Parking Strategy. However, the challenge is that Blue Badge permit holders can park on yellow lines for up to 3 hours, so introducing parking charges may simply displace parking to less suitable locations.

5.51 Members asked if there was potential to derive additional income from electric vehicle charge points. It was confirmed that while there was a small potential for profit-share, the potential for income generation was not considered to be significant. If fees were pushed too high, then there would be a risk of being priced out of the market. Also, income needs to be balanced against promotion of greener travel.

5.52 Highways income is derived from a number of different activities including: highway searches, traffic data, table and chairs licence fees, permit application fees and fines, temporary road closures, licence charges, coring and sampling inspections, storage, supervision of developer highway works, pre-app fees (highways and SUDs), street naming and numbering, and sewerage treatment property charges.

5.53 Benchmarking has shown that fees for highway searches and temporary traffic regulation orders are below those of comparator authorities, so it is proposed to increase these from 2023/2024. Also it is proposed to move to a flat rate for all temporary road closures to remove the incentive for contractors to claim the reduced emergency rate.

5.54 Members asked if town / parish councils and charities are charged for road closures for public events. It was confirmed that there is generally no fee for these events - there are relatively few requests, and they tend to be repeat requests that require minimal work. However, the Council reserves the right to charge should more complicated requests be received.

5.55 Fees for putting tables and chairs on the public highway were waived during Covid, but it is proposed that these be re-introduced from next year.

5.56 It was noted that the Council had been unable to charge for pre-app advice on highways and SUDs due to a lack of staff resource. However, as part of the Place Review, the Council is working with consultants and assessing the resource required to enter into Planning Performance Agreements and actively engage with developers on pre-apps.

5.57 There was some discussion around fees for supervision of highway works by developers. This fee is charged at 10% of construction costs and ensures that new highways are constructed to adoptable standards. However, developers are increasingly choosing not to have estate roads adopted, which incurs no fee. Members were concerned at the potential for management companies to go bust or seek to shirk their maintenance responsibilities. It was felt that the Council should have a policy to ensure that all new estate roads are constructed to adoptable standards.

5.58 The Task Group asked about charges for dropped kerbs and whether enforcement could be taken where vehicles were crossing the footway illegally. It was confirmed that there was an assessment fee of £150, with residents required to arrange and pay for the works themselves. The Council has taken action and usually engages with residents when undertaking resurfacing works.

Resources Directorate Fees and Charges

5.59 Joseph Holmes (Executive Director – Resources), Melanie Ellis (Acting Head of Finance & Property), and Jonathan Martin (Senior Accountant) were invited to give evidence on fees and charges within the Resources Directorate.

5.60 Members noted that the commercial property portfolio is the largest source of income, however due to government restrictions, local authorities are no longer allowed to invest in property. Land charges are also a key source of income, but removal of certain functions of land charges to central government, will take an estimated £125,000 away from the Council. Other significant areas of income within the Resources Directorate include reclaiming legal costs.

5.61 The Task Group asked about how fees and charges are set. It was explained that Land Charges fees are mostly set nationally, but the Council has discretion over certain aspects. Income from Council Tax and Business Rates summons has to be discussed and agreed with the Magistrates Court before they can be changed. These fees were

calculated on a cost recovery basis, which is set at £105.50 per summons. It was thought that the fee could be increased by £5, but this would need to be agreed with the Magistrates Court.

5.62 COVID-19's impact on services was examined. Most of the Resources Directorate's fees are in a good position and Land Charges have actually increased, because more people moved house as a result of the Stamp Duty reduction. Income from commercial property has been as expected. Legal and court costs have not recovered fully due to the Magistrate Court backlog, however these will eventually catch up and estimates suggested that court income will be £60,000 over the budgeted amount for the current year.

5.63 Members asked whether return on existing commercial investment could be enhanced. It was confirmed that properties could be enhanced where tenants had break clauses. However, if properties were sold, funds could not be reinvested into commercial assets without losing the ability to borrow from the Public Works Loan Board. However, capital receipts could be used to fund other capital schemes or fund transformation activity.

5.64 The current non-payment figures were examined and it was stated that the main issue within the Resources Directorate is around debt collection. Commercial property rent collection is in the high 90%.

People Directorate Fees and Charges

5.65 Andy Sharp (Executive Director – People), Jo England (Service Lead – Adult Social Care) and Lisa Potts (Finance Manager) were invited to give evidence on fees and charges within the People Directorate.

5.66 Schools Trading was identified as a significant area of activity. This covers services such as accountancy, payroll, IT, health and safety, property, legal and HR. Some services have high levels of buy-back, but income has decreased over time due to the formation of academies and competition in the market. However, HR contracts have been picked up recently following a competitor withdrawing from the market. A review of traded services found that West Berkshire Council compared well against neighbouring authorities. The offer is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is consistent with schools' needs. Areas such as accountancy and health and safety are performing particularly well. Members stressed that the Council needs to be competitive in its offer to academies and to consider the potential to increase market share. Members asked if services are offered to private schools and it was confirmed that they are. One area that Members did feel could be explored further was differential charging for traded services, including discounts for schools that buy bundles of services or the full range of services. Also, it was suggested that schools could be charged on a per-pupil basis rather than a flat rate for some services.

5.67 The Task Group asked about opportunities for increasing Adult Social Care fees. It was explained that this is a challenging area, since services are focused on vulnerable people. Also, increasing fees too much might make some customers eligible for funded care. Certain aspects of Adult Social Care are governed by the Care Act where Councils cannot charge more than it costs to provide a service. Proposed increases take account of inflation. Administration fees are already charged to those in the community and

officers confirmed that fees take account of all relevant officers' time and administration costs.

5.68 The main opportunities within the People Directorate were identified as being related to the Leisure Centres and Shaw House. Income potential is suppressed by the existing leisure contract and the relatively poor quality of local leisure facilities, which are older and more costly to operate, and less attractive to customers. Steve Welch had been appointed to maximise the benefit delivered by the leisure contract, enhance the commercial viability of the leisure centres, and increase income from Shaw House. Members highlighted that Shaw House had been considered 10 years ago and that Task Group had highlighted the potential to significantly increase income, but this had not been achieved.

5.69 Leisure and Culture income is at 80% of where it was pre-COVID-19, although this is also expected to recover, and Shaw House income is expected to have caught up by the end of the financial year.

5.70 The Commercial Board had considered a variety of schemes where they could potentially derive additional income. Although government intervention means that the Council can no longer do anything where its sole purpose would be to generate income, there are still opportunities. For example, the Board has looked at another council that has set up an adult social care company.

5.71 In terms of non-payment of fees, it was confirmed that Adult Social Care is aiming to catch up on its non-payment recovery – this activity was put on hold during Covid.

6 Proposals

6.1 The Task and Finish Group wishes to put forward the following proposals for consideration by the Executive.

Budget Report - Presentation of Information

Proposal #1 - To consider amending the fees and charges appendices of the Revenue Budget Reports in future years to provide Members with additional information to support decision making:

(a) Provide details of the level of income for each fee / charge in the preceding year and (if possible) the number of 'units sold' – where this is not possible (e.g. due to a lack of granularity in the cost centres used), revenues for groups of fees and charges should be provided.

(b) There should be a clear and consistent key used throughout the document to identify:

- o which fees / charges are statutory with levels determined by legislation;

- o which fees / charges are statutory with local discretion as to the levels;

- o which fees / charges are discretionary and in the Council's control.

(c)   There should be a short accompanying narrative to explain the rationale for any increments, decrements in fees / charges, or for keeping them unchanged – if there are variations within a group of fees / charges, the reasons for the variations should be made clear.

(d)   The percentage increase / decrease should be provided alongside the existing and proposed fees in all cases.

(e)   The reason for including a particular measure of inflation should be made clear, and if there is evidence of changes in costs that are unique to a particular service that are significantly different to the general inflationary figure, then consideration should be given to tailoring proposed increases / decreases accordingly.

(f)   All Council departments should be required to undertake benchmarking of fees and charges on a regular basis and the report should indicated when the latest benchmarking exercised has been completed in relation to each set of fees and charges.

(g)   The report should provide an estimation as to the likely impact of the changes in fees and charges on the level of future income.

The Task Group consider the above recommendations would be relatively simple to deliver and could be achieved with no significant financial, legal or resource implications.

Leisure Fees and Charges

Proposal #2 – Ask Leisure Service to undertake regular 'mystery shopper' exercises to ensure that online information about fees and charges provided by the new Leisure Services Contractor is up-to-date and accurate.

Proposal #3 – Review the West Berkshire Card concession scheme to ensure that discounts are appropriate and effectively targeted (e.g. raising the threshold for age-related discounts in line with the increase in state pension entitlement age).

Proposal #4 – Investigate the business case for investing in local leisure centres in order to make facilities more attractive and competitive with those in the private sector and neighbouring local authorities. This would allow for fees to be increased and would drive additional use and income.

Proposal #5 – Investigate the business case for constructing a new swimming pool to serve residents in the east of the district.

Environment Fees and Charges

Proposal #6 – Investigate the business case for additional advertising contracts at Newbury Bus Station and at Henwick playing pitches.

Proposal #7 – Seek legal advice regarding mechanisms to require that all estate roads be adopted in order to ensure they are built to an appropriate standard, while securing the appropriate inspection and supervision fees

People Directorate Fees and Charges

Proposal #8 – Thoroughly look at the area of Schools Trading to understand the current proportion of academies buying services from West Berkshire Council, and consider how the Council could gain a greater proportion of academy school spending on all services, as well as maximising opportunities within maintained schools. This should be presented as a future report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Proposal #9 – Consider the business case for bundling packages of traded services to schools, whereby schools taking all / multiple services are offered discounts, and for charging on a per-pupil basis rather than a flat rate where appropriate.

Cross-Directorate Fees and Charges

Proposal #10 – All Council departments should undertake regular reviews to identify additional opportunities to charge for services. Findings should be reported to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.

6.2 The Task and Finish Group also proposes that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission should review Shaw House operations to understand its financial performance in the context of the community benefits it delivers, and to investigate if there are opportunities to further enhance income generation.

7 Other options considered

OSMC may choose to accept the Task and Finish Group's recommendations in full or in part, or amend the recommendations before putting them to the Executive. Alternatively, OSMC may choose not to put any of the Task and Finish Group's recommendations to the Executive if it considers that they are not appropriate.

8 Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, the recommendation is for OSMC to accept the Task and Finish Group's recommendations in full and put them to the Executive for consideration.

9 Appendices

Appendix A – Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group Terms of Reference

Appendix B – Fees and Charges appendices of the Revenue Budget Report for 2022/23

Background Papers:

'Fees and Charges', Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission, 25 January 2022

'Fees and Charges Task and Finish Group - Interim Report', Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission, 29 November 2022

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☒
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☐

Wards affected: All wards

Officer details:

Name: Gordon Oliver
Job Title: Principal Policy Officer
Tel No: 01635 519486
E-mail: gordon.oliver1@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix A

Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix

Review Topic: Fees and Charges	Timescale Start: Aug 2022 Finish: Mar 2023

Review Rationale:

At its meeting on 25 January 2022, OSMC agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to consider further options in relation to charging for West Berkshire Council's services

The OSMC report highlighted the following as the recommended areas of focus for the Task and Finish Group:

    a. New proposals on planning income
    b. Leisure strategy and fees and income potentially arising from this
    c. Other opportunities for commercial charging in the Place Directorate

Some considerations of this review may be:

    a. What are the current fees and charges, how have they been determined, and do they deliver good value?
    b. What are the statutory constraints that affect the setting of individual fees and charges, and what scope is there to vary fees and charges from existing levels?
    c. How do West Berkshire's fees and charges and associated revenues compare to other equivalent local authorities?
    d. Are there any services that West Berkshire Council does not charge for, or does not currently provide?
    e. How do the levels of fees and charges affect demand for discretionary services and what are the likely impacts in terms of achievement of Council Strategy priorities?
    f. What do residents / services users think about current fees and charges in terms of their affordability and value for money?
    g. What is the appropriate balance between affordability and revenue generation?
    h. Are differentiated fees and charges appropriate for particular service user groups in order to address issues of access, affordability and equity?
    i. How have historic increases in fees and charges taken account of inflation, and which measure of inflation is most appropriate when determining increases?

Terms of Reference:

The Task and Finish Group will:

- **Part 1**: Proposals on Planning Income

  Consider opportunities for new fees and charges associated with all aspects of the Planning Service including, but not limited to: planning enquiries; pre-planning advice; planning applications; discharge of conditions; and S106 agreement legal fees. Also consider the value associated with existing fees.

- **Part 2**: Leisure Strategy Fees and Charges

  Review the existing fees and charges associated with services provided through the West Berkshire Leisure Contract with a priority of delivering value. Consider the potential to charge for additional services required to deliver the new Leisure Strategy and also consider the value associated with existing fees

- **Part 3**: Other opportunities for commercial charging

  Investigate potential additional opportunities to charge for services provided by the Place and People Directorates:
    - *Development & Regulation*
    - *Communities & Wellbeing*
    - *Environment*

  Also, consider whether there are opportunities to charge for services provided in the Resources Directorate

Members will collate their findings which will then form the basis of a report to be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

Review Membership:
Councillor Tony Linden
Councillor Jeff Brooks
Councillor Steve Masters
Councillor Biyi Oloko

Chairman: Councillor Tony Linden

Vice-Chairman: N/A

Scrutiny Officer: Gordon Oliver

Information Required:

Current WBC fees and charges
Current fees and charges of comparator authorities / competitors
Historic fees and charges
Trends in demand / service usage
Residents survey data
Inflation calculation methodology
Current rationale / strategy for fee changes

Documents/Evidence:

Residents Survey outcome report (2020 and 2021)
Quarterly reporting for relevant service areas

Witnesses: *(Who/Why?)*
Executive Director - Resources
Finance Manager
Service Director – Development & Regulation
Team Leader Development Control

Service Director – Communities & Wellbeing
Interim Consultant (Leisure)
Sports & Leisure Manager

Service Director – Environment
Waste Manager
Environment Delivery Manager
Countryside Manager
Asset Manager
Network Manager
Transport Services Manager

Other Service Directors and Officers as the Task Group considers appropriate

Measures Available

Suite of data sets as outlined above

Desired Outcomes:

A report with a clear set of recommendations on potential changes to fees and charges and a clear strategy for managing future increases.

This page is intentionally left blank

People Directorate Fees & Charges Proposals 2022/23

1 Adult Social Care

1.1 Councils have the power to charge for certain social care services, and are required to have a charging policy that is demonstrably fair and does not undermine the overall objectives of social care – that is, to promote both independence and social inclusion of service users. It is recognised that the level of fees and charges can have a direct impact on usage and take up, and in some instances work against the Council's social inclusion agenda by effectively discriminating against those who are less able to pay.

1.2 The Council's policy is therefore to charge service users an 'affordable' amount, which is uplifted by inflation each year where appropriate. However, where other local authorities, or Health organisations, are purchasing Council services on behalf of their service users, the charges made to these organisations are designed to reflect the actual costs of the service.

1.3 West Berkshire Council's Charging Policy for Adult Social Care services, introduced in 2015, states the individual will have one assessed charge for all services. All services will be added together before a service user is financially assessed.

1.4 The guidance allows for a prescribed list of allowances, for example, rent, mortgage, council tax, buildings insurance etc plus disability related costs, for example, community alarm system, extra heating costs that meet an individuals presenting care needs.

1.5 These allowances are then deducted from the total income to give an assessable income when an individual is receiving care in a non-residential setting.

1.6 From April 2012 any new or reviewed eligible individual requiring support from Adult Social Care receives this in the form of a Personal Budget through which they can arrange their support. As of 1st April 2011 individuals have been charged for each day they have booked at a Resource Centre and only in exceptional circumstances will charges be waived for non-attendance.

1.7 There are generally two types of charges – discretionary and statutory:

- **Discretionary Charges**

  Unless otherwise stated, the fee increase for 2022/23 is by the annual October CPI of 4.2%. The charge to other local authorities and Health organisations for places in West Berkshire Resource Centres will also be increased by 4.2% for 2022/23.

  Community Based Services will be charged at the actual cost of the service, including administration costs.

  Other Day Centre and Transport will be charged at the actual cost.

  Some fees have been increased by more than CPI to ensure that the cost covers the work being undertaken.

- **Statutory Charges**

  The method of assessing contributions from clients in long-term residential care is covered by section 14 of the Care Act 2014, the Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014, the Care and Support Statutory Guidance and the Council's ASC Charging Policy 2015.

  The charges to full cost payers in WBC Homes, and to other local authorities who access services run by West Berkshire Council, are based on current information in respect of cost and the estimated number of clients using the service. The proposed full standard charge for WBC Homes is to increase by 4.2%.

  Deputyship Fees are set by the Court of Protection.

Adult Social Care		
Description	**Fees 2021/22**	**Proposed Fee 2022/23**
Residential care independent sector homes - full cost per week *	Actual cost	Actual cost
Residential care WBC Homes - full cost per week *	Willows Edge £839 Notrees £839 Walnut Close – Home closed Birchwood £870	Willows Edge £874 Notrees £874 Birchwood £907
Nursing care WBC Homes - full cost per week *	Birchwood £870 excludes Funded Nursing Care	Birchwood £907 excludes Funded Nursing Care
Meals provided in WBC Resource Centres *	£5.30	£5.50
WBC Resource Centre outreach workers per hour *	£19.80	£20.60
WBC Transport - maximum charge per journey *	£8.90	£9.30
WBC Foot Care service regular appointment *	£21.40	Service ceased
WBC Foot Care Equipment *	£13.00	Service ceased
External day activities *	Actual cost	Actual cost
WBC Resource Centres - charge to other Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups per day - Older People - Learning Disability - Physical Disability	 £69.30 £112.60 £104.50	 £72.20 £117.30 £108.90
Charges to any organisation using WBC Resource Centres per day Greenfield, Hungerford & Phoenix	Actual cost	Actual cost
WBC Resource Centres - charge per day *	£49.80	£51.90
Administration fee for commissioning care for full cost clients *	£231 per annum	£241 per annum

Set up fee for deferred payers *	£151	£157
Administration fee for deferred payers *	£251 per annum	£262 per annum
Next of kin support administration following the death of a Deputyship client	£103.50 per hour	£107.80 per hour
Support in making a Lasting Power of Attorney application	£156	£163
Support in making a Deputyship application	£352	£367
Residential and Nursing care WBC Homes - charge the assessed contribution whilst in hospital if bed retained at the home *	Assessed charge	Assessed charge
Residential and Nursing care WBC Homes - charge the assessed contribution from date of admission even if client subsequently decides to leave the home during the review period *	Assessed charge from date of admission	Assessed charge from date of admission
Transporting clients from care homes to resource centres (charge to provider) *	Actual cost	Actual cost
Shared Lives – management fee *	£109.50 per week for a full time placement. £32.80 per week for an overnight respite session. £4.30 per hour for day support.	£114.10 per week for a full time placement. £34.20 per week for an overnight respite session. £4.50 per hour for day support.

Statutory Charge *

Resource Centre - Rental Charges						
	Fees 2021/22			Proposed Fees 2022/23		
Room	Daily Rate	Half Day Rate	Hourly Rate	Daily Rate	Half Day Rate	Hourly Rate
Phoenix Resource Centre						
Ground floor woodwork room	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	Not available		
External car washing facility	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	Not available		
Ground floor Theatre (with lighting and audio system)	From £87.70 to £153.50	From £45.90 to £82.20	From £21.80 To £39.40	From £91.40 to £159.90	From £47.80 to £85.70	From £22.70 To £41.10
Audience seating (setting up and taking down)	£82.20	£82.20	£82.20	£75.00	£75.00	£75.00
First floor Theatre office	£16.40	£16.40	£16.40	£17.10	£17.10	£17.10
Ground floor frailty and dementia suite (Lilac Lounge)	£60.30	£32.80	£12.10	£90.90	£47.70	£15.90
Ground floor physical disability suite (Sunshine Room)	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	£60.40	£30.80	£10.80
Ground floor sensory cooking room	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	£60.40	£30.80	£10.80
Ground floor sensory room	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	£60.40	£30.80	£10.80
Ground floor optimusic room	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	£60.40	£30.80	£10.80
Ground floor dining room	£87.70	£45.90	N/a	£91.40	£47.80	N/a
Ground floor dining room and kitchen	£98.60	£51.50	N/a	£102.70	£53.70	N/a
Ground floor small activity room	£28.80	£14.80	£6.50	£30.00	£15.40	£6.80
First floor Craft activity room	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	£60.40	£30.80	£10.80
First floor computer suite	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	Not available		
First floor Moving and Handling training room 1	N/a	N/a	N/a	£134.10	£109.00	£37.10
First floor training room 1 – room only	N/a	N/a	N/a	£67.00	£55.70	£19.30
First floor activity / office space - full space (large)	£114.00	£58.00	£20.80	Not available		
First floor activity / office space – (medium)	£87.70	£45.90	£16.40	Not available		
First floor Art room	£58.00	£29.60	£10.40	Not available		
First floor large meeting room without equipment	£36.20	£18.60	£7.60	£37.70	£19.40	£7.90
First floor large meeting room with equipment	£47.10	£22.90	£9.10	£49.10	£23.90	£9.50
First floor small meeting rooms	£21.80	£11.40	£4.20	£22.70	£11.90	£4.40
Accessible shower facility and personal care rooms	N/a	N/a	£9.80	N/a	N/a	£10.20

Statutory Charge *

	Fees 2021/22			Proposed Fees 2022/23		
Room	**Daily Rate**	**Half Day Rate**	**Hourly Rate**	**Daily Rate**	**Half Day Rate**	**Hourly Rate**
Hungerford Resource Centre						
Ground floor main activity room	£101.90	£51.50	£18.00	£106.20	£53.70	£18.80
Ground floor computer suite	£52.00	£26.20	£9.10	£54.20	£27.30	£9.50
Ground floor quiet room	£26.20	£13.60	£5.40	£27.30	£14.20	£5.60
Ground floor hairdressing salon	£26.20	£13.60	£5.40	£27.30	£14.20	£5.60
First floor meeting room 1	£52.00	£26.20	£9.10	£54.20	£27.30	£9.50
First floor meeting room 2	£52.00	£26.20	£9.10	£54.20	£27.30	£9.50
Accessible shower facility and personal care rooms	N/a	N/a	£9.80	N/a	N/a	£10.20

	Fees 2021/22			Proposed Fees 2022/23		
Room	**Daily Rate**	**Half Day Rate**	**Hourly Rate**	**Daily Rate**	**Half Day Rate**	**Hourly Rate**
Greenfield Resource Centre						
Atrium	£101.90	£51.50	£18.00	£106.20	£53.70	£18.80
Computer suite	£52.00	£26.20	£9.10	£54.20	£27.30	£9.50
Frailty and dementia suite	£76.70	£38.90	£13.60	£79.90	£40.50	£14.20
Physical disability suite	£76.70	£38.90	£13.60	£79.90	£40.50	£14.20
Learning disability suite	£52.00	£26.20	£9.10	£54.20	£27.30	£9.50
Optimusic / sensory room	£52.00	£26.20	£9.10	£54.20	£27.30	£9.50
Small office	£26.20	£13.60	£5.40	£27.30	£14.20	£5.60
Accessible bath facility and personal care rooms	N/a	N/a	£9.80	N/a	N/a	£10.20
Security opening and locking building at weekends	£18.60	N/a	N/a	£19.40	N/a	N/a

Hourly rate applies for bookings of between 1 and 2.5 hours, all bookings over this time duration are charged as a half day.

Statutory Charge *

2   Education: Family Hubs

2.1   The Family Hubs may enter into hire agreements in order to deliver services to children, young people, families and the local community. Family Hubs are non-profit making organisations and as such it is agreed that West Berkshire Family Hubs have a reduced charge for statutory providers for use of the Centres' facilities where they are delivering services for families with children 0-5 years that fall within the remit of Family Hubs e.g.
- Family Groups and contact visits held by Children Services
- Clinics and drop-in's held by Health Professionals

2.2   The Family Hubs started to charge for activity sessions provided to the general public in 2018/19. These activities are pre-booked via an online booking system. Activities are allocated to a pricing band, depending on their nature.

2.3   The Family Hubs increased the room hire charges for 2019/20, which is the first increase for a number of years. It has therefore been decided to not increase the charges in 2022/23 in recognition of the challenges our hirers have had since the Covid pandemic.

Family Hubs Fees and Charges (charges per hour)

Family Hubs						
	Fees 2021/22			Proposed Fees 2022/23		
Room Hire	Non profit Organisation	Profit Organisation	Statutory Services	Non profit Organisation	Profit Organisation	Statutory Services
East District - Calcot	£10	£20	£6	£10	£20	£6
Central District - Thatcham Park Lane	£10	£20	£6	£10	£20	£6

Note: contributions are accepted for Stay and Play activities towards refreshments.

Family Hubs Additional Fees and Charges (Out of hours)
**Charges after 6pm Weekdays and on Saturdays

Room Hire	Fees 2021/22		Proposed Fees 2022/23	
	**Caretaker Opening Charge	**Caretaker Waiting Time Charge	**Caretaker Opening Charge	**Caretaker Waiting Time Charge
1 Hour	£10.00	N/A	£10.00	N/A
2 Hours	£10.00	£7.00	£10.00	£7.00

3 Hours	£10.00	£10.50	£10.00	£10.50
4 Hours	£10.00	£14.00	£10.00	£14.00
5 Hours	£10.00	£17.50	£10.00	£17.50
6 Hours	£10.00	£21.00	£10.00	£21.00

Family Hubs Activity Sessions

	Fees 2021/22	Proposed Fees 2022/23
Band	£	£
A	£0 - £3	£0 - £3
B	£3.01 - £10	£3.01 - £10
C	£10.01 - £20	£10.01 - £20

Name of session/Group	Charging Band	Basis
All Stay, Play & Learn Groups	A	Per family per session
Messy Play	A	Per family per session
All Baby Groups	A	Per family per session
Post Natal Group	A	Per family per session
Family Learning Courses	B	Per learner per session
Paediatric First Aid	B	Per adult one off session
Baby massage	B	Per family per session
Little Stars	C	Per family per 6 week course

3   Education: Home to School Transport

The Standard Rate has increased by £36 per year from £804 (academic year 2021/22) to £840 (academic year 2022/23) to reflect increasing transport cost. The Rate represents £4.42 for a return journey per school day. The Rate applies across West Berkshire so that rural communities are not disadvantaged with a higher price.

Home to School Transport Fees and Charges

Home to School Transport		
Banding	Fees 2021/22	Fees 20212/23
Standard rate	£804	£840
Replacement bus pass admin fee	£15	£15
Rail pass admin fee	£20	£20

4   Communities & Wellbeing: Culture

Culture			
Description		**Fees and Charges 2021/22**	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23**
Shaw House			
		Fees and Charges 2021/22	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23**
Shaw House - Room Hire Charges:			
Registered Charity	per hour	£20 - £32	£20 - £32
Public Sector and Community use	per hour	£26 - £39	£26 - £39
Commercial use	per hour	£33 - £51	£33 - £51
Museum			
		Fees and Charges 2021/22	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23**
West Berkshire - Archaeological Archive Box Fee			
Fieldwork Fee This charge covers the fieldwork notification and processing of the Archaeological deposit and includes issuing of an accession number and subsequent administration. Non-refundable.		£50	£50
Deposit Fee This charge includes the provision of up to three standard size boxes and the ongoing care and management of the archaeological deposit. Non-refundable.		£101	£101
Additional Boxes			
Full Box 0.4 x 0.25 x 0.22m =0.022m3		£71	£71
Half Box 0.4 x 0.25 x 0.11 =0.011 m3		£31	£31
Quarter Box 0.4 x 0.125 x 0.11 =0.00275 m3		£20	£20
Eighth Box 0.2x 0.125 x 0.11 m= 0.00275m3		£10	£10
Sixteenth Box 0.1 x 0.125 x 0.11 m oe 0.2x0.63x0.11 = 0.001375m3		£0	£0
Skull Box = 1/2 Box 0.2 x 0.2 x0.25 = 0.012m3		£34	£34
Human Bone = 1 1/2 Box 0.6 x 0.25 x 0.25 = 0.039m2		£103	£103
Map Rolls per 100 grams3		£2	£2
Archive Box deposit charges		£0	£0
Full Box 0.4 x 0.075 x 0.27m =0.0081m3		£25	£25
Half Box 0.4 x 0.045 x 0.27 =0.0049 m3		£15	£15
Heritage Service - Use of Image Collection			
If supplied for private personal use only the image production fee is payable. Images supplied for publication incur both an image production fee and a reproduction charge.			
Image Production Fee			
Photo Print - up to A6		£5.20	£5.20
Photo Print - up to A5		£10.00	£10.00
Photo Print - up to A4		£16.00	£16.00
Laser Scan - up to A4		£5.20	£5.20

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Digital Scan - to CD		£16.00	£16.00
Digital Scan - to CD - Discounted rate for West Berkshire non-profit making organisations		Free	Free
Reproduction Charges			
Commercial Publication:			
Up to full page, B&W or Colour		£42	£42
Up to Full Page B&W or Colour - Discounted rate for the promotion of culture in West Berkshire		£15 one image; £5 for all subsequent images	£15 one image; £5 for all subsequent images
Cover (front or back)		£78	£78
Cover (front or back) - Discounted rate for the promotion of culture in West Berkshire		£30 one image	£30 one image
Local Publication		£16	£16
Local Publication - Discounted rate for West Berkshire non-profit making organisations		£15 one image; £5 for all subsequent images	£15 one image; £5 for all subsequent images
Academic Publication		£31	£31
Academic Publication, etc. - Discounted rate for West Berkshire non-profit making organisations		£15 one image; £5 for all subsequent images	£15 one image; £5 for all subsequent images
Magazine or Newspaper		£42	£42
Advertising or Brochure		£78	£78
Exhibition Use		£42	£42
Exhibition Use - Discounted rate for West Berkshire non-profit making organisations		£30 one image £10 for all subsequent images	£30 one image £10 for all subsequent images
Website (3 year use)	Per 3 Years	£78	£78
Website (3 year use) - Discounted rate for West Berkshire non-profit making organisations	Per 3 Years	£30 one image £10 for all subsequent images	£30 one image £10 for all subsequent images
Supply fee			
Image already in our catalogue and supplied in a physical format	Plus Postage	£15	£15
New photograph required taken in-house and supplied digitally	Per Object	£50	£50
New photograph required taken in-house and supplied in a physical format	Per Object, plus postage	£65	£65
Copying and laminating charges			
These charges are common with the library service			
A4 Photocopy b/w		£0.10	£0.10
A4 Photocopy colour		£0.60	£0.60

Description		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
A3 Photocopy b/w		£0.30	£0.30
A3 Photocopy – colour		£1.00	£1.00
Libraries			
Description		**Fees and Charges 2021/22**	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23**
Request Charges			
Items available in SELMS libraries		£3.00	£3.00
Overdue Charges			
Overdue Books for children	per day	£0.10	£0.10
Overdue Books for Adults	per day	£0.25	£0.25
DVDs	per day	£0.25	£0.25
Admin fee for debt recovery process		£12.00	£13.00
Printing and Photocopying charges			
A4 B&W		£0.10	£0.10
A4 Colour		£0.60	£0.60
A3 B&W		£0.30	£0.30
A3 Colour		£1.00	£1.00
Microfilm Copying		£0.20	£0.20
Other Charges for Library Services			
Lost Tickets		£3.00	£3.00
Reference and Research enquiry charges		NWN enquiries: £20 per half hour, (WB library members get first half hour free). Copying charges are additional and there is a £3 admin charge for postage.	NWN enquiries: £20 per half hour, (WB library members get first half hour free). Copying charges are additional and there is a £3 admin charge for postage.
Book group service (per annum)		£26	£27
Vocal Scores		£6 per month per set of 20 scores from SE region. (Loans in multiples of 20.)	£6 per month per set of 20 scores from SE region. (Loans in multiples of 20.)
Orchestral sets from SE region	per month	£15	£16
Play sets from SE region	per month	£6	£6
Hire charges			
U Cert DVDs	per week	£1	£1
Other Cert DVDs	per week	£2	£2
Room Hire			
Newbury Library - Carnegie Lounge (reduced rate available for charities/ local non-profit organisations).	per hour	£18	£19
Newbury Library - Advice point -small meeting room (reduced rate available for charities/ local non-profit organisations).	per hour	£10	£10
Theale Library (reduced rate available for charities/ local non-profit organisations).	per hour	£18	£19
All other libraries	per hour	£10	£10

Culture for the purposes above, includes the arts in all its forms, events and festivals, tourist attractions, the historic and "natural" landscape (buildings, places, open spaces), parks and gardens, libraries, museums and museum collections, local customs and folklore, the culture of food and the diversity of the people who live here.

Place and Resources Fees & Charges Proposals – 2022/23

1. Introduction

1.1 The starting point for the base budget for the 2022/23 budget build is that fees and charges should increase at least in line with inflation in order to maximise income accepting that:

- Fees and charges can have a direct impact on usage and take up.

- In some circumstances the Council is providing services in direct competition to the private sector. Where this is the case, price is likely to have a direct link with demand and it is important that the Council does not price itself out of the market. In some areas benchmarking has taken place to ensure West Berkshire can compete with other authorities.

- Raising fees and charges can in some instances work against the Council's social inclusion agenda by effectively discriminating against those who are less able to pay.

- For some services there is a clear expectation that fees and charges will reflect the costs incurred in providing the service; the Council may be subject to legal challenge if increases in fees and charges cannot be justified.

1.2 Statutory fees are not set by the council and may be subject to change during the year.

1.3 Fees below are correct at the time of publication, some may change during the year for operational reasons, subject to the appropriate authorisations.

2. Proposals – Place Directorate

2.1 Development and Regulation

(1) Housing

Temporary accommodation is charged in line with Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates which have not yet been released for 2022/23. Do It Yourself Shared Ownership (DIYSO) leases will be increased in line with the rate of CPI inflation as at October 2021 (4.2%); the rental costs of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation owned or let by West Berkshire Council are also to be increased in line with CPI.

The Council also charge for homeless households placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Households will need to claim Housing Benefit, or will be charged up to the amount Housing Benefit would pay, if they were eligible. In addition households will need to pay the ineligible charges, mainly breakfast. These charges are proposed to increase in line with inflation at 4.2% for 2022/23.

The Council may also charge applicants placed in emergency bed provision at Two Saints Hostel. Applicants are unable to claim Housing Benefit when placed in an

emergency bed. A charge of £1 a night may be made for emergency bed provision for people who are not employed and £5 a night for people who full or part time employment. However the process for charging for emergency accommodation at Two Saints Hostel is under review with a view to bringing the process in line with that for other types of temporary accommodation.

In some instances, the Council provides transport to temporary accommodation for households who have no other means of getting to that accommodation. The cost of providing the transport will be recharged, in full to the client.

The Council can assist with providing removals and/or storage for homeless applicants. The full cost of providing this service will be recharged to the client.

The Council can assist with securing cattery or kennel provision for homeless applicants in temporary accommodation, as pets are not permitted in temporary accommodation. The full cost of providing this service will be recharged to the client.

The Council provides repairs and maintenance to a small supply of temporary accommodation, including an out-of-hours service. In the event that a tenant or licensee uses the emergency service for a non-emergency repair, or fails to attend an appointment for a contractor to attend to a repair, a charge will be made to the tenant to cover the call-out costs. Where repairs arise as a result of neglect or damage caused by the tenant or licensee, or a member of their household, or a visitor to their home, the full cost of the repair will be recharged to the tenant or licensee.

Housing related support services will be charged at the actual cost of the service received.

For 2022/23 the council will charge an agency fee of 12% to any application for grants or loan where these are overseen and managed by the Home Improvement Agency.

Description	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Copy of housing assessment	No Charge	No Charge
Average rent for temporary accommodation per week	In Line with Local Housing Allowance	In Line with Local Housing Allowance
Do It Yourself Ownership rent (DIYSO) rent	0.5 % increase on individual contracts	4.2 % increase on individual contracts
Transport costs to temporary accommodation (TA)	Actual cost	Actual cost
Gypsy Traveller rent (Per week, per plot)	£94.00	£98.00
Home Improvement Agency (HIA) fee for private adaption work	12% of total cost of works to eligible clients	12% of total cost of works to eligible clients
Failed call out charges	Actual cost	Actual cost
B&B charging		
Ineligible Charges for Bed and Breakfast Accommodation		
Heating, lighting and hot water per week **per Family Unit****	£40.20	£41.90
Breakfast per person, per week	£3.50	£3.60
* Statutory fee		
** Family Units Include: Single person, Couple - no children, Couple with 1-4 children, Single person with 1-4 children.		

(2)   Development Control

Fees for planning applications are set centrally by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. For invalid applications, 25% of the set fee will be retained by the service after the 3rd failed attempt.

A new fee structure for Pre-application planning fees is proposed for 2022/23 to better reflect costs to the Council and nature of advice provided, as shown below. The more detailed charging structure for 2022/23 does not have a direct equivalent from 2021/22 and so no comparative chares are shown here.

	Fees and Charges 2022/23
Planning Applications	*Government set fees*
Invalid applications charge	*25% of Government set fee after 3 failed attempts*

Pre-Application Advice: Minor Operations		
Application Type	**Type of Advice**	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23 – including VAT**
Householder	Written Advice Only	£160
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£257
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£257
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£349
Adverts	Written Advice Only	£250
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£347
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£347
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£444
Works/Extns to Listed Buildings	Written Advice Only	£178
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£275
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£275
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£365

Application Type	Type of Advice	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23 – including VAT
General LB or Conservation Advice	Written Advice Only	£120
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£180
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£180
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£290
Change of Use (Land)	Written Advice Only	£178
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£300
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£300
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£406
Telecommunications	Written Advice Only	£186
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£283
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£283
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£396
Shopfronts	Written Advice Only	£221
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£294
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£294
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£366
Agricultural Notification	Written Advice Only	£222
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£444
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£444
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£554

Pre-Application Advice: Residential Development		
Application Type	**Type of Advice**	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23 – including VAT**
1 new residential dwelling	Written Advice Only	£240
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£300
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£300
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£380
	Advice in Principle only	£120
2-4 new residential dwellings	Written Advice Only	£480
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£540
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£540
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£640
	Advice in Principle only	£240
5-9 new residential dwellings	Written Advice Only	£960
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£1,080
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£1,080
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£1,300
	Advice in Principle only	£480
10-25 new residential dwellings	Written Advice Only	£1,680
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£1,860
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£1,860
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£2,020
	Advice in Principle only	£840

Application Type	Type of Advice	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23 – including VAT
26-49 new residential dwellings	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit	£3,300
	Advice in Principle only	£960
50-99 new residential dwelling	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit – Based on maximum of 30hrs work, additional hours charged at £150 per hour	Initial payment of £4,500
	Advice in Principle only	£1200
100-199 new residential dwelling	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit – Based on maximum of 30hrs work, additional hours charged at £150 per hour	Initial payment of £5,500
	Advice in Principle only	£2000
200-499 new residential dwelling	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit – Based on maximum of 30hrs work, additional hours charged at £150 per hour	Initial payment of £7,500
	Advice in Principle only	£2500
500+ new residential dwelling	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit – Based on maximum of 30hrs work, additional hours charged at £150 per hour	Initial payment of £8,500
	Advice in Principle only	£3000

Pre-Application Advice: Non-residential Development		
Application Type	**Type of Advice**	**Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23 – including VAT**
Less than 249sqm	Written Advice Only	£265
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£350
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	£350
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£496
	Advice in Principle only	£128
Between 250 – 499 sqm	Written Advice Only	£480
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£540
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£820
	Advice in Principle only	£240
Between 500 - 1000sqm	Written Advice Only	£960
	Written Advice after a Site Visit.	£1,080
	Written Advice with a follow up meeting – No SV	
	Written Advice after S/Visit + Follow Up meeting	£1,200
	Advice in Principle only	£360
Between 1000 - 2,499sqm	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit	£2,400
	Advice in Principle only	£480
Between 2,500 – 4,999sqm	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit	£3,300
	Advice in Principle only	£540
Between 5000 – 9999 sqm	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit	£4,400
	Advice in Principle only	£680

Application Type	Type of Advice	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23 – including VAT
Greater than 10,000sqm	Detailed Written Advice with meeting and Site Visit	£5,500
	Advice in Principle only	£810

Charge	Cost (including VAT)
Basic Enquiries Charge (including, but not limited to (i) planning history searches, (ii) advice on how to check our records to establish whether permitted development rights have been removed from a residential dwelling, (iii) general advice on the procedure for discharge of conditions or non-material amendments to existing permissions, (iv) advice on how to seek pre-application advice, fill out application forms and fees)	£50 - £150 (covers up to an hour of an Officer's time)

For more complex requests which will take more than one hour to complete, a bespoke fee will be agreed in advance based on the likely time taken and the level of experience of the Officer required to provide any such advice. |
| **General Planning Policy Advice** | £150 (covers up to an hour of an Officer's time)

For more complex requests which will take more than one hour to complete, a bespoke fee will be agreed in advance based on the likely time taken and the level of experience of the Officer required to provide any such advice. |
| **Ecology Advice** | £150 (covers up to an hour of an Officer's time)

For more complex requests which will take more than one hour to complete, a bespoke fee will be agreed in advance based on the likely time taken and the level of experience of the Officer required to provide any such advice. |

Senior Manager attendance	The involvement of a more senor manager to assist with negotiations where a request has been made by the applicant/agent and is not included in a Planning Performance Agreement. Development & Regulation Service Director - £200 per hour DM Service Manager - £150 per hour DM Team Leader - £100 per hour
Confirmation of compliance with a S106 /compliance with a notice	£150 (covers up to an hour of an Officer's time) For more complex requests which will take more than one hour to complete, a bespoke fee will be agreed in advance based on the likely time taken and the level of experience of the Officer required to provide any such advice.
Pre-Validation Checking Service: A technical officer will check the following for common errors, omissions or disclaimers: • Application Form • Certificate(s) • Location/Block Plan • Cil Form • Plan(s)	£60 (covers up to an hour of officer's time) Each additional hour charged at £60 • Householder, advertisement and prior notification applications – 1 hour • Minor and similar applications – 2 hours • Major and similar complex applications – 4 hours
Two Strikes – Invalid submissions (if an application is not validated in two successive submissions)	25% of Application fee
Charging for invalid applications (that have not been made valid within 28 days)	• Householder, advertisement and prior notification applications – £60 • Minor and similar applications – £110 • Major and similar complex applications – £250
Advice which is not covered by any of the above Categories	£150 (covers up to an hour of an Officer's time) For more complex requests which will take more than one hour to complete, a bespoke fee will be agreed in advance based on the likely time taken and the level of experience of the Officer required to provide any such advice.
Copy of Decision Notice, TPO, Appeal Decision Notice, Enforcement Notice	£30

(3)   Public Protection Partnership
The Public Protection Partnership (PPP) provides chargeable services on behalf of West Berkshire Council and Bracknell Forest Council. The proposed fees for 2022/23 have been agreed by the Joint Public Protection Committee and the relevant licensing committees of the two councils.

- All statutory fees and those linked to national schemes are based on fees published on 16 August 2021 and may be subject to change by Central Government or the management of the schemes.
- Statutory fees are as marked below.
- The chargeable hourly rate for PPP is £59 per hour (ph), which is unchanged from 2021/22.
- Fees for taxi and private hire vehicles, drivers and operators will be reviewed in January 2022 by the Council's Licensing Committee.

LICENCES, REGISTRATIONS AND CONSENTS
Pre Application Advice
We provide chargeable pre-application advice for the following licences and consents:

License/Consents	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Gambling Act	£59 ph	£59 ph
Licensed Premises Notifications	£59 ph	£59 ph
Licensing Act 2003	£59 ph	£59 ph
Scrap Metal	£59 ph	£59 ph
Sex Establishments	£59 ph	£59 ph
Skin Piercing & Dermal Treatments	£59 ph	£59 ph
Street Trading Consents	£59 ph	£59 ph

Animal Licences

Animal Licences – (Class A – Fee Discretionary)			
***The granting fee includes initial inspection and mid-term inspection totalling 4 hours (unless stated differently). Inspections required beyond this due to additional visits, aborted visits will be charged at an additional fee. **Additional vets fee payable		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
NEW - Animal Boarding Establishment - combined (dogs and cats)	Application Fee	£236	£177
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£590	**£413 minimum**
RENEWAL - Animal Boarding Establishment - combined (dogs and cats)	Application Fee	£177	£148
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£531	**£384 minimum**
NEW - Animal Boarding Establishment - single species (dogs or cats))	Application Fee	£177	£118
	Granting Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£472	**£354 minimum**

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
RENEWAL - Animal Boarding Establishment - single species (dogs or cats))	Application Fee	£177	£89
	Granting Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£472	**£325 minimum**
NEW - Home boarder (midterm inspections to be charged in addition to revisits and aborted visit charges)	Application Fee	£118	£118
	Granting Fee	£153.85	Minimum 2 hours at £118***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£271.85	**£236 minimum**
RENEWAL - Home boarder (midterm inspections to be charged in addition to revisits and aborted visit charges)	Application Fee	£118	£89
	Granting Fee	£123.85	Minimum 2 hours at £118***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£241.85	**£207 minimum**
NEW - Home Boarder - Franchisee arrangers licence (excludes inspection fee per host)	Application Fee	£147.50	£118
	Granting Fee	£59	Per inspection at hourly rate
	Total Fee (minimum)	£206.50	**£118 + host inspection fee**
RENEWAL - Home Boarder - Franchisee arrangers licence (excludes inspection fee per host)	Application Fee	£118	£89
	Granting Fee	£59	Per inspection at hourly rate
	Total Fee (minimum)	£177	**£89 + host inspection fee**
Assessment of hobby host as part of a franchisee licence	Host inspection fee	£118	£118
NEW - Dog Day Care	Application Fee	£236	£177
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£590	**£413 minimum**
RENEWAL - Dog Day Care	Application Fee	£177	£148
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£531	**£384 minimum**
NEW - Dog Breeding Establishment (**excluding vet fee**)	Application Fee	£236	£177
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£590	**£413 minimum**

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
RENEWAL - Dog Breeding Establishment	Application Fee	£177	£148
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£531	**£384 minimum**
NEW - Dog Breeding Establishment (in domestic dwelling)**(**excluding vet fee)**	Application Fee	£177	£118
	Granting Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£472	**£354 minimum****
RENEWAL - Dog Breeding Establishment (in domestic dwelling)	Application Fee	£118	£89
	Granting Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£413	**£325 minimum**
NEW - Pet Vending / Sale of pets	Application Fee	£177	£118
	Granting Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£472	**£354 minimum**
RENEWAL - Pet Vending / Sale of pets	Application Fee	£118	£89
	Granting Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£413	**£325 minimum**
NEW - Animal for Exhibition	Application Fee	£236	£177
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£590	**£413 minimum**
RENEWAL - Animal for Exhibition	Application Fee	£177	£148
	Granting Fee	£354	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£531	**£384 minimum**
Riding Establishment - Inspections are carried out annually, regardless of the star rating or length of licence, by a qualified Veterinarian Officer. **Vets fees will be recharged separately.			
NEW - Main inspection fee, plus fee per horse **(**excluding vets fee)**	Application Fee	£177	£118
	Renewal Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£472	**£354 minimum****

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
RENEWAL - Main inspection fee, plus fee per horse (**excluding vets fee)	Application Fee	£118	£89
	Renewal Fee	£295	Minimum 4 hours at £236***
	Total Fee (minimum)	£413	**£325 minimum****
Fee per horse, for the first 10 horses		£15	£15
Fee per horse, for next 11-50 horses		£10	£10
Fee per horse, for every horse 51 & over		£8	£8
Other Fees			
Additional mid licence visit		-	£118
Variation to the licence fee (inclusive of one visit)		£224	£177
Replacement licence fee (lost or stolen paperwork, change of name, etc.)		£59	£30
Re-evaluation of star rating (inclusive of one visit)		£112	£118
Transfer due to death of licensee	Admin cost	£56	£30

Wild Animals and Zoos

	Duration	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Dangerous Wild Animal Consent	2 years	£460	N/A
Dangerous Wild Animal Consent – New (** excluding vets fee)	2 years	N/A	£472
Dangerous Wild Animal Consent - Renewal	2 years	N/A	£295
Zoo Licences (new & renewals) Periodical inspections (** excluding Vets Fees)	Up to 6 years	£2,066	£2,066

Explosives Licences – Statutory*

Description	Duration	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
New licence for explosives below 250kg Net Explosive Content (NEC) *	1 year	£111
	2 years	£144
	3 years	£177
	4 years	£211
	5 years	£243
Renewal of licence for explosives below 250kg Net Explosive Content (NEC) *	1 year	£55
	2 years	£88
	3 years	£123
	4 years	£155
	5 years	£189
New licence for explosives above 250kg Net Explosive Content (NEC) *	1 year	£189
	2 years	£248
	3 years	£311
	4 years	£382
	5 years	£432
Renewal of licence for explosives above 250kg Net Explosive Content (NEC) *	1 year	£88
	2 years	£150
	3 years	£211
	4 years	£272
	5 years	£333
Varying the name of licensee or address of site *		£37
Any other kind of variation *		Cost Recovery
Transfer of licence *		£37
Replacement Licence *		£37
Full year registration for sale of fireworks (capped fee) *		£500

Gambling Act 2005 – Statutory*

Description	Type	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Casinos (regional) *	New Application	£15,000
	Provisional Statement	£15,000
	Application with Provisional Statement	£8,000
	Variation	£7,500
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£6,500
	Annual Fee	£15,000
Casinos (large) *	New Application	£10,000
	Provisional Statement	£10,000
	Application with Provisional Statement	£5,000
	Variation	£5,000
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£2,150
	Annual Fee	£10,000
Casinos (small) *	New Application	£8,000
	Provisional Statement	£8,000
	Application with Provisional Statement	£3,000
	Variation	£4,000
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£1,800
	Annual Fee	£5,000
Bingo Clubs *	New Application	£3,500
	Provisional Statement	£3,500
	Application with Provisional Statement	£1,200
	Variation	£1,750
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£1,200
	Annual Fee	£1,000

Description	Type	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Betting Premises *	New Application	£3,000
	Provisional Statement	£3,000
	Application with Provisional Statement	£1,200
	Variation	£1,500
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£1,200
	Annual Fee	£600
Tracks *	New Application	£2,500
	Provisional Statement	£2,500
	Application with Provisional Statement	£950
	Variation	£1,250
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£950
	Annual Fee	£1,000
Family Entertainment Centres *	New Application	£2,000
	Provisional Statement	£2,000
	Application with Provisional Statement	£950
	Variation	£1,000
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£950
	Annual Fee	£750
Adult Gaming Centres *	New Application	£2,000
	Provisional Statement	£2,000
	Application with Provisional Statement	£1,200
	Variation	£1,000
	Transfer/Reinstatement	£1,200
	Annual Fee	£1,000
Lotteries & Amusements *	New Application	£40
	Annual Fee	£20
All licences *	Notification of change	£50
	Copy of licence	£25
Club gaming or machine permit *	New Application	£200
	Existing holder	£100
	Renewal	£200
	Annual Fee	£50
	Variation	£100
	Copy of licence	£15
Club Gaming or Machine Permit (holds a club Premises Certificate under Licensing Act 2003) *	New Application	£100
	Renewal	£100
Licensed Premises Notifications *		
To make available up to 2 gaming machines on premises which hold on-premises alcohol licence *	Notification of intention	£50
Gaming Machine Permit (more than 2 machines) on-premises which hold on premises alcohol licence *	Application (existing holder)	£100
	New Application	£150
	Annual Fee	£50
	First Annual Fee (payable within 30 days of date permit takes effect)	£50
	Variation	£100
	Transfer	£25
	Change of name	£25
	Copy of permit	£15

Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licences

Vehicle Licences		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Hackney Carriage Vehicle – New		£288	£266
Hackney Carriage Vehicle – Renewal		£288	£236
Private Hire Vehicle – New		£288	£266
Private Hire Vehicle – Renewal		£288	£236
Private Hire Vehicle with Dispensation - New		£288	£266
Private Hire Vehicle with Dispensation – New - Renewal		£288	£236
Temporary Vehicle Licence	Up to 3 months	£232	£236
Driver Licences			
Driver – New	3 year Includes initial tests, safeguarding and disability trainings	£271	£301
Driver –Renewal		£271	£272
Conversion of driver licence to another type	1.5hrs (inc retaking tests)	£80	£89

Private Hire Operators (PHO)

Private Hire Operator	Number of Vehicles	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
NEW Per vehicle calculation of 3.5 hours (at £59.00 hourly rate) plus an hour per year (years 2-5) for first vehicle, plus 15 minutes per additional vehicle per years (years 1-5) up to a maximum of 20 vehicles (2021/22 based on 4 hours initial vehicle)	1	£472	£443
	2	£545.75	£516
	3	£619.50	£590
	4	£693.25	£664
	5	£767	£738
	6	£840.75	£811
	7	£914.50	£885
	8	£988.25	£959
	9	£1,062	£1,033
	10	£1,135.75	£1,106
	11	£1,209.50	£1,180
	12	£1,283.25	£1,254
	13	£1,357	£1,328
	14	£1,430.75	£1,401
	15	£1,504.50	£1,475
	16	£1,578.25	£1,549
	17	£1,652	£1,623
	18	£1,725.75	£1,696
	19	£1,799.50	£1,770
	20	£1,873.25	£1,844
	20+	£1,873.25	£1,844

Private Hire Operator	Number of Vehicles	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
RENEWAL	1	£342	£325
	2	£413.25	£398
	3	£484.50	£472
	4	£555.75	£546
Per vehicle calculation of 1.5 hours (at £59.00 hourly rate) plus an hour per year (years 2-5) for first vehicle, plus 15 minutes per additional vehicle per years (years 1-5) up to a maximum of 20 vehicles (2021/22 based on 2 hours initial vehicle)	5	£627	£620
	6	£698.25	£693
	7	£769.50	£767
	8	£840.75	£841
	9	£912	£915
	10	£983.25	£988
	11	£1,054.50	£1,062
	12	£1,125.75	£1,136
	13	£1,197	£1,210
	14	£1,268.25	£1,283
	15	£1,339.50	£1,357
	16	£1,410.75	£1,431
	17	£1,482	£1,505
	18	£1,553.25	£1,578
	19	£1,624.50	£1,652
	20	£1,695.75	£1,726
	20+	£1,695.75	£1,726

Other Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Charges

Other charges		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Variation to PHO licence	To include reissue of licence with additional vehicle registration added plus extra fees for these for length of licence	£59	£59
Transfer of vehicle to new owner		£118	£59
Change of vehicle		£74	£74
Replacement Licence		£41	£30
Replacement Badge		£41	£30 + Badge Costs
Replacement Vehicle Licence Plate		£59	£30 + Plate Costs (£26)
Knowledge Test		£74	£74
Missed Appointment		£37	£30
Disclosure and Barring Service Check (DBS)		£89.50	£79
Change of address (PH & HC)		£14	£10.50
Backing Plate		£26	£26 at cost
Medical Exemption		£22	£30
Refund Processing Fee		£59	£30
Change of vehicle registration	Including	£57	£30 + sticker and licence costs
Pre-application advice, hourly rate	Min 1 hour	£59	£59
Disability Awareness Training		POA	Included in driver application fee
Safeguarding Training		POA	Included in driver application fee

Licensing Act 2003 – Statutory*

Premises Licence – "one off" fees set by statute based upon rateable value (RV) of premises (Class B – Statutory Fee)	Proposed 2022/23 Fee
Band A – RV up to 4,300 *	£100
Band B – RV 4,300 to 33,000 *	£190
Band C – RV 33,001 to 87,000 *	£315
Band D – RV 87,001 to 125,000 *	£450
Band E – RV 125,001 and above *	£635
Pre-application advice, hourly rate *	£59
Premises Licence – Annual Fee (Class B – Statutory Fee)	
Band A *	£70
Band B *	£180
Band C *	£295
Band D *	£320
Band E *	£350
Personal Licence - (Class B – Statutory Fee) *	£37
Temporary Event Notices (TENs) - (Class B – Statutory Fee) *	£21
Application for copy licence *	£10.50
Application to vary DPS/transfer licence/interim notice *	£23
Application for making a provisional statement *	£315
Minor variation *	£89
Application to disapply mandatory DPS condition *	£23
Pre-application work, hourly rate	£59

Petroleum Licences – Statutory*

Petroleum Licences		Proposed 2022/23 Fee
Not exceeding 2,500 litres *		£45
Not exceeding 50,000 litres *		£61
Exceeding 50,000 litres *		£128

Scrap Metal

Description		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Scrap Metal site –New	3 Years	£501	£472
Scrap Metal site - Renewal	3 Years	£501	£443
Scrap Metal mobile collector - new	3 Years	£267	£236
Scrap Metal mobile collector - renewal	3 Years	£267	£207
Scrap Metal - Variation of Licence		£368	£236
Scrap Metal - change of site manager		£68	£59
Scrap Metal - copy of licence		£11	£11
Scrap Metal - Change of Name		£36	£30

Sex Establishments – Statutory*

Description	Type	Proposed 2022/23 Fee
Sex Establishments - (Class A – Fee Discretionary)	Cinema *	min £3,100 to max £5,150
	Shop *	min £3,100 to max £5,150
	Entertainment Venue *	min £3,100 to max £5,150

Skin Piercing and Dermal Treatments

Description	Type	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Skin piercing Registrations (one off registration) - (Class A – Fee Discretionary)	Individual (4hrs)	£180	£236
	Premises (5hrs)	£282	£295
	Joint application (7hrs)	£451	£423
Pre-application work, hourly rate	Min. 1 hour	£59	£59

Street Trading Consents

Description	Type	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Street Trading Consents - (Class A – Fee Discretionary)	1 Week	N/A	£144
	Monthly Rate	£228	£241
	3 months	N/A	£642
	6 months	£805	£803
	Annual Fee	£1,378	£1,365
Variation fee		£91	£89
Pre-application work, hourly rate	Min. 1 hour	£59	£59
Refund for Street Traders	In the event that following consultation the application is refused or deemed withdrawn by officers, a sum of 50% of the application fee is payable as a refund. If the application is refused by a Panel, no refund of the application fee is payable.		

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Anti-Social Behaviour Act

Description		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Anti-Social Behaviour Act	High Hedges Fee (Class A – Fee Discretionary)	£1,206	£1,206

Dog Warden Services

Description	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Stray Dogs – not taken to kennel	£73	£73
Stray Dogs – taken to kennel	Fees based on charges & cost recovery. Vet fees separate as applicable	£73 plus Cost recovery and Vets fees separate.
Kennels cost	Recharge based on cost	Recharge based on cost
Dog fouling fixed penalty charge [Statutory] *	£75	£75
Miscellaneous stray dog activities e.g. taxi, relocating, microchipping	Cost recovery charged at £59	Cost recovery charged at £59

Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 – Statutory*

Scheduled Processes – (Class B – statutory Fee)		Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Standard Process *		£1,650
Service Stations (PVI &PVII *		£257
Dry Cleaners *		£155
Vehicle Refinishers *		£362
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant		£1,650
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant for the 3rd to 7th applications *		£985
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant for the 8th and subsequent applications *		£498
Substantial changes		
Standard Process *		£1,050
Reduced Activities *		£102
Annual Subsistence Charge (Statutory)		
Standard Process *	Low	£772
	Medium	£1,161
	High	£1,747
Service stations PVR2 *	Low	£113
	Medium	£226
	High	£341
VR and other reduced fees *	Low	£228
	Medium	£365
	High	£548
Dry cleaners/PVR1 *	Low	£79
	Medium	£158
	High	£237
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant	Low	£646
	Medium	£1,034
	High	£1,506
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant for 2nd permit *	Low	£646
	Medium	£1,034
	High	£1,506

		Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant for 3rd to 7th permit *	Low	£385
	Medium	£617
	High	£924
Mobile Screening & Crushing Plant for the 8th and subsequent permits *	Low	£198
	Medium	£316
	High	£473
Late payment charge *	If invoice issued & not paid within 8 weeks	£52
Transfer and Surrender		
Transfer *		£169
Partial Transfer *		£497
Surrender *		£0
Transfer Reduced fees *		£0
Partial Transfer Reduced Fees *		£47

Private Sector Housing

Description	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Inspection of Housing Premises for Immigration purposes (Class A – Fee Discretionary)	£402	£404
Enforcement Notices served under Housing Act 2004	£116	£118
HMO Licence NEW - assisted application	£1,204	£1,180
HMO Licence RENEWAL	£805	£79
Caravan Site Licences		
Site licence new (plus additional fee per pitch)	£440	£443
New licence additional fee per pitch	£14	£16
Transfer of licence	£186	£187
Alteration of conditions	£341	Hrly Rate
Annual inspection fee	£14	Hrly Rate
Enforcement action -per hour	£59	£59
Deposit, vary or deleting site rules	£117	£118
Mobile Homes Regulations 2020		
Application Fee – Fit and Proper Test (any application taking more than two hours to process will be charged at an additional hourly rate of £59/ph or part thereof)	£118	£118
Annual Check Fee – Fit and Proper Test	£59/hour	£59/hour
Where the authority has to assist with appointing a site manager the costs will be specified in the agreement between the parties		

Private Water Supplies (Statutory Cap)

Description		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Risk assessment	Every 5 years. Min. charge 1 hour, simple risk assessment and report typically 5 hours	£59/hour	£59 hourly rate
Sampling	Charge for a visit, taking a sample and delivery to the laboratory. Typically 2.5 hours	£59/hour	£59 hourly rate
Private water and pool samples	Includes cost of testing	£60	£59
Investigation	Carried out in the event of a test failure, can be substituted by the risk assessment - this does not include any required analysis costs.	£109	£118
Analysis – Regulation 10	Where a supply provides <10m^3/day or serves <50 people and is used for domestic purposes	£28	£28
Analysis of Group A Parameters		Cost of laboratory analysis will be recovered and will depend on type of suite being analysed. Customer will be advised of cost.	Hourly Rate + Laboratory Costs
Analysis of Group B Parameters		Additional parameters sampled less often to ensure the water complies with all safety standards - Hourly rate applies	Hourly Rate + Laboratory Costs
Hourly charge		£59	

Other Fees

	Hourly rate applies minimum of 2 hours	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Environmental Information Request - Individual, Non-Commercial	Hourly rate applies minimum of 2 hours	£118	£118 minimum
Environmental Information Request - Commercial and Government	Hourly rate applies minimum of 2 hours	£118	£118 minimum
Civil Actions (Class A – Fee Discretionary)		£118	£118 minimum
Safety Certification and administration	Hourly rate applies minimum of 2 hours	£118	£118 minimum
Pre-Application Advice, hourly charge		£59	£59

TRADING STANDARDS

Buy With Confidence

Description	Employee numbers	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Application Fee (set nationally by Buy with Confidence scheme)	1-5 employees	£125	£125
	6-20 employees	£167	£167
	21-49 employees	£208	£208
	50+ employees	POA	POA
Annual fee (set nationally by Buy with Confidence scheme)	1-5 employees	£250	£250
	6-20 employees	£375	£375
	21-49 employees	£500	£500
	50+ employees	POA	POA
Members before 2017/18 Annual Fee (Bracknell Forest legacy members only)	1-5 employees	£125	£125
	6-20 employees	£189	£189
	21-49 employees	£252	£252

** Administered by Hampshire County Council

Primary Authority

Description	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Primary Authority Work hourly chargeable rate	£59	£59 Hrly Rate
Annual charge - previous year usage 10 hours or less	£516	£531
Annual charge - previous year usage 20 hours	£1,031	£1,062
Anything likely to be in excess of 20 hours	Full recovery of costs - Individually assessed	Individually assessed

Support With Confidence

Description	Employee numbers	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Application fee	1-5 employees	£59	£59
	6-20 employees	£120	£120
	21+ employees	£300	£300

Weights and Measures

Description		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Weights and Measures Fees	Includes the cost of maintaining calibration of equipment annually (Based on ACTSO guidance)	£64	£64

Other Fees

Description		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Food export certificates	Full cost recovery based on hourly rate	£59	£59 minimum
Food Hygiene Rating Scheme rescore	2 hours	£118	£118
General Business Advice (Non-Primary Authority)	Hourly rate (first 30 minutes free)	£57	£59
Resident Request for Advice	Hourly rate	£57	£59

(4) Registration Services

Registration fees are largely controlled by statute. It is proposed to increase all other discretionary fees by 4.2%, in line with CPI inflation at October 2021.

Registrars			
		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Shaw House Ceremony Room	Tues- Fri	£266	£277
	Sat	£296	£308
Ceremonies at approved premises	Mon-Fri	£466	£485
	Sat	£496	£516
	Sun & Bank Holiday	£566	£590
Approved Premise Licence - any number of rooms		£2,136	£2,136
Celebratory Services - Baby Naming/Affirmation of vows - Shaw House	Monday to Friday	£262 VAT	£273 + VAT
	Saturday	£332 + VAT	£346 + VAT
Celebratory Services - Baby Naming/Affirmation of vows - At approved premises	Mon- Fri	£312 + VAT	£325 + VAT
	Sat	£373 + VAT	£389 + VAT
	Sun & Bank Holiday	£418 + VAT	£436 + VAT
Private Citizenship ceremony Mon to Sat		£123	£128
European Passport Return Service		N/A	N/A
Marriages & Civil Partnerships Booking Fee (non refundable)		£25	£26
Marriages & Civil Partnerships Cancellation Fee	More than 4 months before ceremony	Fees refunded minus £100	Fees refunded minus £100
	1-4 months before ceremony	50% refund	50% refund
	Less than 1 month before ceremony	No refund	No refund

(5) Archaeology

Historic Environment Record (HER)	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Research charges for staff time providing HER data	Hourly rate of £120 + VAT with a minimum of £75 + VAT for the first half hour	Hourly rate of £125 + VAT with a minimum of £75 + VAT for the first half hour
Providing archaeological information and advice for agri-environment schemes in line with nationally agreed service standards	Scale of charges, depending on the type of scheme and the area covered	Scale of charges, depending on the type of scheme and the area covered
A4 computer print out (b/w) HER report	£0.20	£0.20
A4 computer print out (colour) HER report	£0.60	£0.60
A3 computer print out (colour) HER report	£1.00	£1.00

2.2   Environment

(1)   **Car Park Charges** – There are no proposed increases for existing car park charges for 2022/23.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Newbury - Car Park Charges (Mon to Sun inc Bank Holidays):			
Newbury Station Multi-storey Car Park (Saturday & Sunday)	Up to 2 hours	-	£2.00
	Up to 4 hours	-	£3.50
	Daily Charge	-	£4.40
Newbury Station Multi-storey Car Park (Monday – Friday)	Up to 1 hour	-	£1.00
	Up to 2 hours	-	£2.00
	Up to 3 hours	-	£3.00
	Up to 4 hours	-	£4.00
	Peak daily charge (arrive before 10am) Ticket expires 23:59	-	£7.30
	Off Peak daily charge (arrive after 10am) Ticket expires 23:59	-	£4.40
Kennet Centre Multi-storey Car Park	Up to 1 hour	£1.50	£1.50
	Up to 2 hours	£2.70	£2.70
	Up to 3 hours	£3.90	£3.90
	Up to 4 hours	£5.20	£5.20
	Up to 6 hours	£7.20	£7.20
	Up to 8 hours	£8.70	£8.70
	Over 8 hours	£12.00	£12.00
	Evening Charge	£2.00	£2.00
Northbrook Multi-storey Car Park	Up to 1 hour	£1.50	£1.00
	Up to 2 hours	£2.70	£2.00
	Up to 3 hours	£3.90	£3.00
	Up to 4 hours	£5.20	£4.00
	Up to 6 hours	£7.20	-
	Up to 8 hours	£8.70	-
	Over 4 hours	£12.00	£5.00
	Evening Charge	£2.00	£2.00
Short and Long Stay Car Parks - Pelican Lane, West Street, 8 Bells, Market Street , Bear Lane, Central and Library	Up to 1 hour	£1.50	£1.50
	Up to 2 hours	£2.70	£2.70
	Up to 3 hours	£3.90	£3.90
	Up to 4 hours	£5.20	£5.20
	Up to 6 hours	£7.20	£7.20
	Up to 8 hours	£8.70	£8.70
	Over 8 hours	£12.00	£12.00
	Evening Charge	£2.00	£2.00
Short Stay Car Parks – Northcroft Lane and The Wharf	Up to 1 hour	£1.50	£1.50
	Up to 2 hours	£2.70	£2.70
	Up to 3 hours	£3.90	£3.90
	Up to 4 hours	£5.20	£5.20
	Over 4 hours	£12.00	£12.00
	Evening Charge	£2.00	£2.00
Long Stay Car Parks – Northcroft Lane West 08:00 am to 10:00pm	Up to 2 hours	£1.70	£1.70
	Up to 4 hours	£3.20	£3.20
	Over 4 hours	£5.20	£5.20
Long Stay Car Parks – Newbury Football Club and Market Street staff car park. Market Street (Saturday's only).	Up to 4 hours	£1.00	£1.00
	Over 4 hours	£2.00	£2.00
	no evening charge		
Goldwell Park	Up to 4 hours	£1.00	£1.00
	Over 4 hours	£2.00	£2.00
	No Evening Charge	Free	Free
Newbury Car Park Charges (Sunday) - All car Parks	Daily charge up to 6.00pm	Same as Mon to Sat	Same as Mon to Sat
	Evening charge from 6.00pm	£2.00	£2.00

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23	
Newbury on-street Charges (Mon to Sat inc Bank Holidays):				
Northbrook Street (west side) - either side of Albert Road Broadway (east side)- near Clock Tower Cheap Street (west side) Bartholomew Street	30 Mins	Free	Free	
	1 hour	£1.00	£1.00	
Kings Road West	30 Mins	Free	Free	
	1 Hour	£1.00	£1.00	
	2 Hours	£1.50	£1.50	
	4 Hours	£3.00	£3.00	
Newtown Road (north of St John's Road) West Mills	30 Mins	Free	Free	
	2 hours	£1.00	£1.00	
	4 hours	£2.00	£2.00	
Pelican Lane (west side)	30 mins	Free	Free	
	1 hour	£1.00	£1.00	
	2 hours	£2.20	£2.20	
Newbury on-street Charges (Mon to Sat inc Bank Holidays) continued:				
Newtown Road (south of St John's Road) -west side	4 hours	£1.00	£1.00	
	over 4 hours	£2.00	£2.00	
Catherine Road and Link Road	2 hours	£1.00	£1.00	
	4 hours	£2.00	£2.00	
	over 4 hours	£3.80	£3.80	
Station Road	2 hours	£1.00	£1.00	
	4 hours	£2.00	£2.00	
	over 4 hours	£3.80	£3.80	
Old Bath Road (south side) west of Leys Gardens	2 hours	£0.50	£0.50	
	4 hours	£1.00	£1.00	
	over 4 hours	£1.50	£1.50	
Faraday Road area	30 mins	Free	Free	
	2 hours	£0.50	£0.50	
	4 hours	£1.00	£1.00	
	over 4 hours	£1.50	£1.50	
Newbury On-Street Charges (Sunday)				
Standard daily charge of £1.00 at all locations where on-street charging applies. The 30 minutes free parking will be retained at all locations where it applies Monday to Saturday as will the £0.50 charge for up to 2 hours parking at the two locations where it applies (Old Bath Road and Faraday Road).		£1.00	£1.00	
Newbury Season Ticket Prices:				
Kennet Centre:	Per Quarter	£350.00	£350.00	
Northbrook MSCP:	Per Quarter	£350.00	£350.00	
	Per Annum	£1,150.00	£1,150.00	
Newbury "General":	Per Quarter	£350.00	£350.00	
	Per Annum	£1,150.00	£1,150.00	

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Out of Newbury Car Park Hourly Rates:			
Hungerford: Church St	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Up to 3 Hours	£1.70	£1.70
	Up to 4 Hours	£2.00	£2.00
	Up to 10 hours	£4.00	£4.00
	Over 10 hours	£10.00	£10.00
Hungerford: Station Road	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Up to 3 Hours	£1.70	£1.70
	Up to 4 Hours	£2.00	£2.00
	Up to 10 hours	£4.00	£4.00
	Over 10 hours	£6.00	£6.00
Hungerford High Street (On-Street)	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Up to 4 hours	£3.80	£3.80
	Up to 8 hours	£6.00	£6.00
	Over 8 hours	£10.00	£10.00
Pangbourne Station Road:	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Up to 3 hours	£1.70	£1.70
	Over 3 hours	£5.50	£5.50
Pangbourne River Meadow	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Up to 3 hours	£1.70	£1.70
	Up to 4 hours	£2.00	£2.00
	Up to 8 hours	£2.50	£2.50
	Over 8 hours	£5.50	£5.50
Out of Newbury Car Park Hourly Rates continued:			
Thatcham Kennet Leisure Centre - Monday to Friday 8:30 to 17:30	Up to 2 hours (no return within 4 hours)	Free - (a ticket must be displayed)	Free - (a ticket must be displayed)
	Up to 3 hours	£1.00	£1.00
	Over 3 hours	£10.00	£10.00
Thatcham Kingsland Centre	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Up to 3 hours	£1.70	£1.70
	Over 3 hours	£3.00	£3.00
Thatcham Gilbert Court	Up to 1 hour	Free	Free
	Up to 2 hours	£0.60	£0.60
	Up to 3 hours	£0.90	£0.90
	Over 3 hours	£2.00	£2.00
Thatcham Burdwood Centre	Up to 2 hours	Free	Free
	Up to 3 hours	£0.90	£0.90
	Over 3 hours	£2.00	£2.00
Thatcham Station (Monday - Friday)	Peak daily charge (arrive before 10am) Ticket expires 23:59	£3.40	£3.40
	Off Peak daily charge (arrive after 10am) Ticket expires 23:59	£2.00	£2.00
Thatcham Station (Saturday & Sunday)	Daily charge	£2.00	£2.00
Thatcham On-Street:			
Pipers Lane (Monday to Sunday at all times)	Up to 4 hours	£1.00	£1.00
	Over 4 hours	£1.50	£1.50
Ayleford Way (Monday to Sunday 8.00am to 6.00pm)	Up to 4 hours	£1.00	£1.00
	Over 4 hours	£1.50	£1.50
Theale Main	Up to 2 hours	£0.80	£0.80
	Over 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
Theale West	Up to 1 hour	£0.80	£0.80
	Up to 2 hours	£1.30	£1.30
	Over 2 hours	£5.50	£5.50

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Out of Newbury Season Tickets			
Hungerford	Annual	£425.00	£425.00
Pangbourne	Per Quarter	£160.00	£160.00
	½ year	£315.00	£315.00
	Annual	£500.00	£500.00
Theale	Annual	£160.00	£160.00
West Berkshire Residents Parking Permits		£30.00	£30.00
West Berkshire Visitor Parking Permits		£1.00	£1.00
Hungerford High Street (Zone HHS)		£70.00	£70.00
Park Terrace		£70.00	£70.00
Blue Badge (new application)		£10.00	£10.00
Replacement Blue Badge		£10.00	£10.00
Parking Dispensation	Per Day	£15.00	£15.00
Parking Suspensions	Per application	£15.00	£15.00
	Per 5m bay per day	£10.00	£10.00
Council owned EV Charge Points (these are the base charges and will be subject to increase/decrease in line with the Council's 2022/23 electricity costs).			
Slow (7kWh) Charger	per kWh		£0.25
Fast (22kW AC) Charger	per kWh	-	£0.30
Rapid (50kW DC) Charger	per kWh	-	£0.39
Overstay fee (for Rapid charger).	per hour after 2 hours	-	£10.00

(2) Licence Fees, Permits and Other Charges

Fees are charged for a range of services e.g. where Highway Authority approval is required to place items or to work on the public highway. These include vehicular crossings, skips, scaffolds, table and chairs on the highway, issuing permits for and inspecting utility operations, temporary or permanent traffic regulation orders. It is proposed to increase these charges by 4.2%, in line with CPI inflation at October 2021. Fees for Michaelmas Fair have been adjusted to reflect actual costs to the Council.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Tree Preservation Order		£27	£28
Michaelmas Fair		£3,020	£4,000
Public Rights of Way	Search fees	£75	£78
	Path order fees	£1,500-£3770	£1,530-£3,850
Statutory Declarations		£205 flat rate with rights to increase if the work required is onerous	£210 flat rate with rights to increase if the work required is onerous
Highways Act Charges:			
Land charges		£52	£54
Vehicular Crossing (S.184)	Approval	£150	£156
Skips on the Highway (S.139)	Initial fee	£46	£48
	per week	£54	£56
Scaffold/hoarding on the Highway (S.169/172)	Initial fee	£93	£97
	per week	£53	£55
Tables and Chairs on the Highway (based on number of Chairs) (S.115)	1 to 10	£233	£243
	10 to 27	£383	£399
	27+	£766	£798
Storing Materials on the Highways (S.171)	Initial fee	£87	£91
	per week	£29	£30
EV charging duct across footpath (S.171)	Approval		£153
Temporary Excavation in the highway (S.171)		£116	£121
Cranes, machinery, structure on the highway (S.178)		£168	£175
Per Necessary inspection		£63	£66
S142 Licence to plant in the highway		£139	£145

Permits under SI 2014 No. 3110 Highways, England and the Traffic Management (West Berkshire Council) Permit Scheme Order 2014 (Maximum Permissible Charge) These are maximum charges, pending consultation on changes to the West Berkshire Permit Scheme. 2021/22 fees are shown in brackets.	Main Roads			Minor Roads
Reinstatement category of street	0, 1 and 2	3 and 4		3 and 4
Street designated as traffic sensitive or not	All streets	Traffic sensitive at some times/locations		Non traffic sensitive at any time or location
Time and location of activity	Any time and location	Any part within traffic sensitive times / locations	Wholly within non traffic sensitive times / locations	Any time and location
Provisional Advance Authorisation	£105 (£77)	£105 (£77)	£75 (£62)	£75 (£62)
Major Works - over 10 days and all major works requiring a traffic regulation order	£240 (£199)	£240 (£199)	£150 (£125)	£150 (£125)
Major works - 4 to 10 days	£130 (£130)	£130 (£130)	£75 (£0)	£75 (£0)
Major works - up to 3 days	£65 (£65)	£65 (£65)	£45 (£0)	£45 (£0)
Standard Activity	£130 (£111)	£130 (£111)	£75 (£0)	£75 (£0)
Minor Activity	£65 (£52)	£65 (£52)	£45 (£0)	£45 (£0)
Immediate Activity	£60 (£47)	£60 (£47)	£40 (£0)	£40 (£0)
Permit Variation	£45 (£45)	£45 (£45)	£35 (£35)	£35 (£35)

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Other Licences and Charges:			
Licence to place advertising sign on public highway (A board or similar) in Newbury Town Centre		£55	£57
Streetworks licence (S.50 NRSWA)		£262	£273
Utility Works Inspection (NRSWA/TMA)		£55	£57
Fixed Penalty Charge (Utility Companies) NRSWA/TMA		£120/£80	£120/£80
Working on the highway without a valid permit		£500 (£300 if paid within 29 days)	£500 (£300 if paid within 29 days)
Defect inspection fee for third party apparatus		£68	£68
Permanent Traffic Regulation Order for Developer		£880 plus actual costs of signage, road markings, agency & advertising	£900 plus actual costs of signage, road markings, agency & advertising
Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders Section 14(1)		£891	£928
Emergency Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders Section 14(2)		£461	£480
Retrospective Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders Section 14(2)		£665	£693
Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders Section 16A where appropriate & Section 21 of PTCA		£81	£84
Cutting through signal loops and not informing LA		£505 plus cost of recutting loops	£515 plus cost of recutting loops
Tourist / Direction signs		£534	£556
Traffic Signs / Signals Equipment damaged by Road Traffic Accident or other event		10% of cost of repairs	10% of cost of repairs
Use of permanent Traffic Regulation Order for railway crossing works		£81	£84
Access Protection Marking (single standard width dropped kerb driveway)		£128	£133
Sewerage treatment property charge		£389	£405
Events/Promotions on the Public Highway		£120 to £1,210 per day	£120 to £1,235 per day
Cycle Training		£40	£42
Recovery and storage of unauthorised signs		£139	£145
Street Works Core Sampling - Charge per failed core test		N/A	£185 (this is an average cost - actual cost calculated from the Coring Advice Note published by SEHAUC

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Provision of Data:			
Highway search enquiries	One A4 plan covering 100 metres of highway	£52	£54
	Additional 100 metres	£14	£15
	Additional question	£14	£15
Provision of recorded injury accident Data		£145 + £47 per additional block of up to 10 accidents	£145 + £47 per additional block of up to 10 accidents
Provision of Traffic Data, per request per site:	data up to 1 year old	£139	£145
	data up to 3 years old	£111	£116
	data over 3 years old	£82	£85

Charges in relation to works occupying the carriageway during period of overrun			
Item	**Description of street**	**Amount (£) (each of first three days)**	**Amount (£) (each subsequent day)**
1	Traffic-sensitive or protected street not in road categories 2,3 or 4	5,000	10,000
2	Other street not in road categories 2,3 or 4	2,500	2,500
3	Traffic-sensitive or protected street in road categories 3 or 4	3,000	8,000
4	Other street in road category 2	2,000	2,000
5	Traffic-sensitive or protected street in road category 3 or 4	750	750
6	Other street in road category 3 or 4	250	250

Charges in relation to works outside the carriageway during period of overrun		
Item	**Description of street**	**Amount (£)**
1	Street not in road category 2, 3 or 4	2,500
2	Street in road category 2	2,000
3	Street in road category 3 or 4	250

(3) Public Transport

Use of public transport has been affected by the impact of the Covid pandemic. No increases are proposed for 2022/23 in charges to bus operators and passengers.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Charge per departure		£0.60	£0.60
Bus stands 0400-1800	up to 20 minutes	£0.00	£0.00
	20 minutes to 1 hour (max stay)	£1.20	£1.20
Coach stands 0400-1800	up to 90 mins (max stay)	£4.00	£4.00
Bus/coach stand and Bays B-F Mon-Sat 1800-0400 and all day Sunday	up to 3 hours	£3.00	£3.00
	over 3 hours	£6.00	£6.00
Additional charge for breaches		£25.00-£50.00	£25.00-£50.00
Temporary bus stop closure	Per stop	£150.00	£150.00
	Per pair of opposite stops	£180.00	£180.00
Provision of information at bus stops for services not subsidised by WBC	Per stop	£11.20	£11.20
Concession bus pass replacement fee		£16.50	£16.50

(4) Highways Development Control Fees

Fees are charged to developers for design checking, supervision and inspection of new roads under construction and off site highway improvements. The charges proposed have been benchmarked with other authorities. It is proposed to increase these charges by 4.2%, in line with CPI inflation at October 2021.

Highways Development Control Fees			
		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Street naming and numbering - Property name change		£87	£91
Changes to new addresses due to the development changing after the schedule has been issued.	Per plot	£87	£91
Street Naming and Numbering - New Developments	One address/plot	-	£87
	2 - 5 addresses/plots	-	£141
	6 - 10 addresses/plots	-	£252
	11 - 20 addresses/plots	-	£403
	21 or more addresses/plots	-	£20
Provision of Pre-Planning Application Advice			
Transport Assessment Scoping Note		£162	£169
Draft Transport Assessment		£549	£572
Provision of Private Access		£101	£105
Highway Advice for New Developments	Less than 5 Dwellings	£162	£169
	5 to 25 dwellings	£367	£382
	26 to 79 dwellings	£476	£496
	80 to 200 dwellings	£549	£572
	More than 200 dwellings	£621	£647
	0 to 249 sqm	£133	£139
	250 sqm to 999 sqm	£234	£244
	1,000 to 9,999 sqm	£367	£382
	over 10,000 sqm	£476	£496
Meeting charge	per hour per officer	£135	£141

(5)   Hire of sports facilities

Sports facilities at Henwick Worthy, Holy Brook, Northcroft, Moorside and The Diamond at Greenham. It is proposed to increase the charges for use of our sports facilities by 4.2%, in line with CPI inflation at October 2021.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22		Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23	
		Single Booking	Block Booking	Single Booking	Block Booking
Henwick Worthy Sports Ground:					
Cricket – 1st Hand Wicket (per match)	Adult	£104.60	£87.10	£109.00	£90.80
	Junior	£48.20	£40.20	£50.20	£41.90
Cricket – 2nd Hand Wicket (used grass)	Adult	£77.40	£64.50	£80.70	£67.20
	Junior	£37.60	£31.40	£39.20	£32.70
Cricket – Artificial Wicket	Adult	£69.60	£58.00	£72.50	£60.40
	Junior	£35.50	£29.60	£37.00	£30.80
Cricket – 2nd (Reserve) Artificial Wicket	Adult	Free	Free	Free	Free
	Junior	Free	Free	Free	Free
Football – Grass (per game)	Adult	£79.20	£66.00	£82.50	£68.80
	Junior	£38.80	£32.30	£40.40	£33.70
Football - Mini Pitch	Adult	£44.80	£37.30	£46.70	£38.90
	Junior	£22.40	£18.70	£23.30	£19.50
Rugby – Grass (per game)	Adult	£79.20	£66.00	£82.50	£68.80
	Junior	£38.80	£32.30	£40.40	£33.70
Rugby Training	Cost Per Hour	£21.50	£17.90	£22.40	£18.70
Use of Portable Lights	Cost Per Hour	£21.50	£17.90	£22.40	£18.70
Full Pitch Artificial Grass - peak	30 Mins	£42.90	£35.80	£44.70	£37.30
	1hr Only	£85.80	£71.50	£89.40	£74.50
	1hr 30mins (11 a side)	£128.80	£107.30	£134.20	£111.80
Half Pitch Artificial Grass - peak	30 Mins	£24.00	£20.00	£25.00	£20.80
	1hr Only (5 a side)	£48.00	£40.00	£50.00	£41.70
	1hr 30mins	£72.00	£60.00	£75.00	£62.50
Full Pitch Artificial Grass – off-peak	30 Mins	£20.00	£16.70	£20.80	£17.40
	1hr Only	£40.00	£33.40	£41.70	£34.80
	1hr 30mins (11 a side)	£60.00	£50.00	£62.50	£52.10
Half Pitch Artificial Grass – off-peak	30 Mins	£10.40	£8.70	£10.80	£9.10
	1hr Only (5 a side)	£20.90	£17.40	£21.80	£18.10
	1hr 30mins	£31.30	£26.10	£32.60	£27.20
Hardcourt Activities:					
Netball (per court per hr) (OUT OF ORDER AT TIME OF PUBLICATION)	Adult	£22.40	£18.60	£23.30	£19.40
	Junior	£11.20	£9.30	£11.70	£9.70
Tennis (per court per hr) (OUT OF ORDER AT TIME OF PUBLICATION)	Adult	£6.70	£5.60	£7.00	£5.80
	Junior	£3.60	£3.00	£3.80	£3.10
Basketball Hardcout and BMX Pump Track	Adult	Free	Free	Free	Free
	Junior	Free	Free	Free	Free
Moorside:					
Football - Grass (Per Game)	Adult	£66.30	£55.20	£69.10	£57.50
	Junior	£32.80	£27.40	£34.20	£28.60
The Diamond -Greenham:					
Football - Grass (Per Game)	Adult	£66.30	£55.20	£69.10	£57.50
	Junior	£32.80	£27.40	£34.20	£28.60
Holybrook Park:					
Football – Grass (per game)	Adult	£66.30	£55.20	£69.10	£57.50
	Junior	£32.80	£27.40	£34.20	£28.60
Northcroft Recreation Ground:					
Football - Grass (per game)	Adult	£66.30	£55.20	£69.10	£57.50
	Junior	£32.80	£27.40	£34.20	£28.60
Open space hire for coaching/ community use/festivals/other entertainment.		P.O.A		P.O.A	

Peak Rate – *Weekday evenings after 6pm and all day Saturday; Off-Peak Rate – Weekdays before 6pm and all day Sunday;* ***Block Booking****:10 games and over;* ***Schools Rate****: £19.30 Per Hour (£23.16 inc vat if applicable)*

(6)   Charges to Householders for Sewage Treatment

Approximately 150 properties, mainly in rural areas, are connected to small sewage treatment plants. These are the responsibility of West Berkshire Council to maintain, having previously been the ownership of Newbury District Council from when the housing stock was transferred to Sovereign Housing Association. The householders pay a fee to the Council which contributes to the maintenance costs.

(7)   Waste

Fees include bulky household collection, garden waste collection and provision of additional wheelie bins for garden waste collection. An increase to the garden waste service is proposed in line with inflation. No increases are proposed for other waste charges in 2022/23.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Special Collection Charges (Bulky Household Collection)	Normal (within 7 days)	£45	£45
	Within 7 days by appointment outside property	£60	£60
	Within 7 days by appointment inside property	£70	£70
Provision of wheelie bin		£27	£27
Collection of garden waste for year (scheduled) - for 1st green bin (new subscriptions or renewals).		£50	£52
Garden Waste service charge for 2nd to 5th green bins (For renewals only where one off set up payment has already been made).		£40	£40
Removal of fly tipping on private land		P.O.A	P.O.A
Removal of graffiti up to 2m² area		P.O.A	P.O.A
HWRC non-household waste charges:			
Soil and Rubble	Per 25L bag or equivalent/ single item	£2.50	£2.50
	Standard Car/Hatchback	£14.30	£14.30
	Trailer	£23.80	£23.80
	Small Van /Estate Car	£28.60	£28.60
	Transit van or similar	£95.20	£95.20
Plasterboard	Per 25L bag or equivalent	£2.10	£2.10
	Standard car / Hatchback	£12.90	£12.90
	Trailer	£21.40	£21.40
	Small Van / Estate car	£25.80	£25.80
	Transit Van or similar	£85.60	£85.60
Tyres	Motorised mini bike / motorised go-kart	£2.50	£2.50
	Standard tyre off rim (car/motorcycle)	£5.00	£5.00
	Standard tyre on rim (car motor cycle)	£7.00	£7.00
	Medium tyre off rim (large 4 x4 / large van)	£9.00	£9.00
	Medium tyre on rim (large 4 x 4 / large van)	£11.00	£11.00
	Miscellaneous tyres	£2.50	£2.50
Gas canisters		£6.00	£6.00
Charges for Non WBC Residents' Use of HWRCs	New charge per visit TBC	£7.00	£7.00

(8)   Sustainable Drainage Pre-Application Advice Fees

Fees for sustainable drainage advice and meeting charges are being introduced from 2022/23, as follows:

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
SuDS advice for Major sites (written responses only).	Up to 20 dwellings	-	£250
	Over 20 dwellings	-	£450
Meeting charge	Per hour per officer	-	£141

3. Proposals – Resources Directorate

3.1 Electoral Services

These charges are statutory and the Council has no discretion to vary.

3.2 Local Land Charges

Local Land Charges are set in line with legislation, which requires the Council only to recover costs incurred in service delivery. An increase of 4.2% in line with CPI at October 2021 is proposed for 2022/23 where appropriate.

	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
LLC1	£75	£54
Con29 PT1	£52	£78
Con29PT11	£26	£27
Additional Questions	£47	£49
Con29 additional parcel	£41	£43
LLC1 additional parcel	£56	£58

3.3 Legal Fees

Proposed recharges of staff time have been inflated by 4.2% for 2022/23, in line with CPI at October 2021. No uplift is proposed to other charges for legal services.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Managers	Hourly	£150	£156
Team Leader	Hourly	£142	£148
Solicitor / Barrister	Hourly	£137	£143
Legal Executive/Senior Legal	Hourly	£127	£132
Trainee Solicitor	Hourly	£107	£111
Landowners Statements		£1,140	£1,140
Registration of new town or Village Green by Landowner by Owner		No Fee	No Fee
Correction for the purpose of section 19 (2)(a) of a mistake made by the Registration Authority		No Fee	No Fee
Correction for a purpose described in section 19(2)(b)(C) or (e)		£200	£200
Correction for a purpose described in section 19(2)(d) - payable per register unit		£30	£30

3.4 Social Care Training

The Government provides funding for care sector training and we use this funding to deliver a comprehensive joint training programme for staff and people working in the private and voluntary care sector. Anyone can access the training. The grant funding enables charges to local and accredited social care providers to be subsidised, hence the lower rate fee. Charging is essential to make the funding go further and ensure people book on courses and turn up. An increase of 4.2% has been applied to these charges for 2022/23, in line with CPI inflation at October 2021.

The Department of Health requires Councils to work closely with its partners on joint training and to facilitate improved standards of care through training initiatives; therefore some joint training will have the same charges as the partners involved and will sit outside this charging policy.

		Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23
Adult and Children's			
Personal Assistants	Full Day	£45	£47
	Half Day	£27	£28
Private social Care and All Others	Full Day	£94	£94
	Half Day	£52	£54
Voluntary / Associated Social Care	Full Day	£52	£54
	Half Day	£27	£28
Corporate Courses			
Personal Assistants	Full Day	£45	£47
	Half Day	£27	£28
Private social Care and All Others	Full Day	£94	£94
	Half Day	£52	£54
Voluntary / Associated Social Care	Full Day	£94	£94
	Half Day	£52	£54
Foster Care Courses			
Personal Assistants	Full Day	£45	£47
	Half Day	£27	£28
Private social Care and All Others	Full Day	£94	£94
	Half Day	£52	£54
Voluntary / Associated Social Care	Full Day	£52	£54
	Half Day	£27	£28
Other Course for the Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector			
Associated Organisations	Full Day	£163	£170
Non Associated Organisations	Full Day	£422	£422

3.5   Council Tax Fees

Fees relating to recovery of unpaid Council tax are set in consultation with the Ministry of Justice. No increase in fees is proposed for 2022/23.

	Fees and Charges 2021/22	Proposed Fees and Charges 2022/23	
Summons cost	£57.50	£57.50	**
Liability Order cost	£50.00	£50.00	**
Penalty charge	£70.00	£70.00	*
Enforcement Agent compliance fee	£75.00	£75.00	*
Enforcement Agent visit fee	£235.00 + if debt is above £1,500 then 7.5% of the amount above £1,500 is added	£235.00 + if debt is above £1,500 then 7.5% of the amount above £1,500 is added	*
Committal fee	£330.00	£330.00	*

* level of fees / charge set by government

** level set by Local Authority.

Overview and Scrutiny Review Matrix

Review Topic: Covid and Recovery	Timescale Start: June 2023 Finish: TBC

Review Rationale:

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission has agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to look at lessons learned from the local response to Covid and the subsequent recovery. This will consider the perspectives of residents, service users and businesses.

The scope of the review will include:

- Local resilience and preparedness for the pandemic
- The Council's role in delivering public health and emergency support
- The Council's role in supporting local businesses
- The Council's role in supporting the education sector
- The Council's role in supporting the care sector

Terms of Reference:

The Task and Finish Group will consider the following:

- **Part 1**: Resilience and Preparedness for the Pandemic

  The Council's risk management and emergency planning, and general preparedness for a pandemic, including structures, governance, processes and protocols, as well as local stocks of personal protective equipment.

- **Part 2**: Public Health and Emergency Community Support

  The Council's role in relation to:
  - *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to residents*
  - *Identification and containment of local outbreaks*
  - *Supporting the local vaccination programme*
  - *Implementing the test and trace system*
  - *Identifying vulnerable residents*
  - *Delivering practical support to residents*
  - *Safeguarding and providing support for victims of domestic abuse*
  - *Provision of voluntary sector support*

- **Part 3**: Supporting Local Businesses

  The Council's role in relation to:
  - *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to businesses*

- o *Undertaking enforcement of Covid regulations*
- o *Providing business rates relief*
- o *Distributing grants*
- o *Preventing fraud*
- o *Undertaking checks / enforcement activity*
- o *Advising on plans for local events*
- o *Supporting economic recovery*

- **Part 4**: Supporting the Education Sector

  The Council's role in relation to:
  - o *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to schools*
  - o *Providing mental health support to staff and pupils*
  - o *Supporting the switch to online learning*
  - o *Assessing the impact on academic attainment*
  - o *Providing support to help pupils catch up on lost learning*

- **Part 5:** Supporting the Care Sector

  The Council's role in relation to:
  - o *Providing infection control training*
  - o *Disseminating Covid-related information and advice to children's homes, care homes, and domiciliary care staff*
  - o *Distributing PPE*
  - o *Supporting hospital discharge*
  - o *Providing mental health support to staff and residents*
  - o *Providing support to help isolated residents reintegrate*

Review Membership:	**Chairman: TBC**
5 Members (TBC)	
	Vice-Chairman: TBC
	Scrutiny Officer: Gordon Oliver

Information Required:
Governance arrangements
Information flows and blockers
Provision of advice, guidance, practical support and financial support
Effectiveness of measures implemented
Lessons learned and changes put in place
Experience of residents, businesses and service users

Documents/Evidence:
Residents Surveys
Covid Community Support Hub Evaluation Report
Berkshire Observatory Recovery Report

Witnesses:
Chief Executive

Interim Executive Director – People
Executive Director - Resources
Acting Service Director for Communities and Wellbeing
Acting Service Director – Adult Social Care Economy Manager
Acting Head of Children and Family Services
Emergency Planning Manager
Public Protection Manager
Economy Team

Metrics:
Levels of PPE
Covid infections (vs Berkshire and England)
Number of outbreaks
Number of care home deaths
Excess deaths during the pandemic
GCSE and A-Level grades
Demand and waiting lists for CAMHS
Number of furlough scheme payments processed
Number of business support grants processed
Number of business closures / new businesses created
Town centre footfall

Desired Outcomes:

Members will collate their findings which will then form the basis of a report to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 11.

2022/23 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	9 February 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	26 January 2023
Report Author:	Melanie Ellis
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4300

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets and provide a year-end forecast. This report is Quarter Three 2022/23.

2 Recommendation

2.1 To note the forecast £1m overspend. The overspend is after taking account of provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of budget setting, and amendments expected to be made before year end. Without this provision, the forecast would be an over spend of £7.7m.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	£1m forecast over spend, after taking account of provision in reserves/amendments. Without this provision, £7.7m over spend.
Human Resource:	None
Legal:	None
Risk Management:	Risks to next years' budget are included where relevant in the report. Where identified these will form part of the budget build process for 2023/24. Specifically this includes inflation risk being seen in care costs and energy.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Property:				
Policy:	No			
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		Y		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		Y		
Environmental Impact:		Y		
Health Impact:		Y		
ICT Impact:		y		
Digital Services Impact:		y		
Council Strategy Priorities:		y		Business as usual
Core Business:		y		
Data Impact:		y		

Consultation and Engagement:	Budget holders, Heads of Service and Directors.

4 Executive Summary

4.1 The 2022/23 net revenue budget of £144m was set in March 2022, using £140m of revenue funding and £4m of reserves. During the budget build, inflationary pressures were identified in demand led services. Not all of these pressures were built into the budget, with some being put aside in reserves to be called on should the pressures arise.

4.2 Inflation has increased further and at Quarter Three, budget managers are forecasting pressures across the Council totalling £7.7m. After factoring in utilising the reserves that were set aside to support this, and forecast amendments, the overspend is £1m.

Directorate Summary	Current Net Budget	Forecast Outturn	(Under)/over spend Quarter One		(Under)/over spend Quarter Two		(Under)/over spend Quarter Three					Change from Last Quarter
			Budget Manager Forecast	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation	Budget Manager Forecast	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation	Budget Manager Forecast	Provided in Earmarked Reserve	Provided in General Fund	Amend-ments	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
People	87,131	91,351	7,839	3,463	8,661	3,395	7,830	(2,830)	(624)	(156)	4,220	825
Place	31,398	31,776	1,347	(196)	1,702	126	1,201	(316)	(500)	(7)	378	252
Resources	11,816	11,407	241	(555)	(571)	(630)	(221)	(73)	0	(115)	(409)	221
Chief Executive	534	524	(15)	(25)	(5)	(11)	(10)	0	0	0	(10)	1
Capital Financing/Risk Mgt	14,740	11,596	(1,271)	(551)	(1,989)	(1,739)	(1,105)	(1,340)	0	(700)	(3,145)	(1,406)
Total	145,619	146,653	8,141	2,136	7,798	1,141	7,696	(4,559)	(1,124)	(978)	1,034	(106)

4.3 The People Directorate forecast overspend is £7.8m. This would reduce to £4.2m after use of reserves that were set aside leaving overspends of £1.4m in Adult Social Care (ASC), £1.3m in Children & Family Services (CFS), £1.1m in Education and £0.5m in Communities & Well Being.

4.4 In ASC:

- Long term services are forecasting a £2.8m overspend. There are higher client numbers, 1792 compared to 1753 modelled, due to higher levels of new requests for support and demand from hospital discharge. There is an increase in the cost of new client care packages, due to inflation and complexities. There is lower occupancy in our own care homes and clients have had to be placed in externally commissioned beds costing more.

- Short term services are £0.28m under spent due to the additional funding announced in November for Hospital Discharge. This funding will be used both against previously forecast and new expenditure.

- There is a £1.7m overspend in our care homes due to agency staffing requirements, a shortfall of income, high dependency clients, covid cases and energy costs.

- Use of reserves would reduce these pressures by £2.5m.

4.5 In CFS the over spend comprises £0.7m over spend in placements as identified in the model during budget build and £1.7m in Family Safeguarding teams due to agency costs. Use of reserves would reduce these pressures by £0.9m. There has been an £0.9m increase in the forecast overspend since last quarter. £0.2m is due to placement costs, £0.2m for Child Care Lawyers, £0.3m from agency costs and £0.2m from the pay award.

4.6 The Education £1.1m over spend is predominantly due to Home to School Transport, with more children with special needs requiring transportation. The Communities and Wellbeing overspend of £0.5m is due to income pressures in leisure.

4.7 The Place Directorate is forecasting an overspend of £0.4m. There is a £0.5m pressure in Development & Regulation (D&R) and a £0.1m underspend in Environment.

- In D&R there are agency pressures covering vacancies in the planning service and a shortfall of planning income. Housing is facing pressures from emergency and temporary accommodation. Forecasts and the pay award have increased the pressures from last quarter.

- In Environment, car parking/season ticket income has significantly reduced compared to pre-pandemic levels. There is £0.4m set aside in reserves for this, as it was identified as an expected pressure at the time of budget build, leaving an unfunded pressure of £0.45m. There are also pressures from solar energy income, street lighting, network management and maintenance. However, waste management is seeing increased levels of recycling income, reduced use of landfill and overachievement of garden waste subscriptions, and transport services have underspends from staff vacancies and overachievement of income.

4.8 The Resources Directorate forecast underspend of £0.4m has arisen from the agency rebate and commercial property income which are covering off agency costs in Finance & Property and ICT, and corporate building maintenance costs.

4.9 The Capital Financing forecast is an under spend of £1m from utilisation of short term borrowing and cash flow as opposed to longer term financing. Savings have also been achieved through the prepayment of pension contributions.

4.10 There is an underspend of £2.2m in Risk Management from £1.3m proposed release of the Outcomes Based Budgeting Reserve to support the pay award pressures across all services, £0.1m release from reserves that is no longer required, and £0.7m forecast benefit from a review of outstanding purchase orders.

4.11 The 2022/23 savings and income generation programme of £5.3m is 79% Green.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.2 The 2022/23 net revenue budget of £144m was set in March 2022, using £140m of revenue funding and £4m of reserves.

5.3 During the budget build, inflationary pressures were identified in demand led services. Not all of these pressures were built into the budget, with some being put aside in earmarked reserves to be called on should the pressures arise.

5.4 Inflation has further increased and we continue to see pressures across the Council, and are factoring in using the reserves that were set aside to support this.

Quarter Three 2022/23

5.5 The Quarter Three budget manager forecast is a £7.7m overspend, which after taking account of £5.7m provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of budget setting and £1m other forecast amendments, would reduce to £1m.

5.6 The forecasts by service are shown below:

	Current Net Budget	Forecast Outturn	(Under)/over spend Quarter One		(Under)/over spend Quarter Two		(Under)/over spend Quarter Three					Change from Last Quarter
			Budget Manager Forecast	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation	Budget Manager Forecast	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation	Budget Manager Forecast	Provided in Earmarked Reserve	Provided in General Fund	Amend-ments	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation	
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Adult Social Care	55,120	56,498	4,173	1,402	4,834	1,738	4,037	(2,000)	(523)	(136)	1,378	(360)
Children & Family Services	19,053	20,369	2,466	1,057	2,576	452	2,268	(830)	(101)	(20)	1,317	864
Executive Director	331	316	(7)	(7)	(31)	(31)	(15)	0	0	0	(15)	17
Education DSG funded	(444)	(444)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Education	9,860	10,955	707	582	955	931	1,095	0	0	0	1,095	164
Public Health & Wellbeing	600	600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communities & Wellbeing	2,611	3,056	500	429	328	305	445	0	0	0	445	140
People	**87,131**	**91,351**	**7,839**	**3,463**	**8,661**	**3,395**	**7,830**	**(2,830)**	**(624)**	**(156)**	**4,220**	**825**
Development & Regulation	6,895	7,391	430	(52)	794	155	643	(40)	(100)	(7)	496	341
Executive Director	215	226	0	(22)	10	10	11	0	0	0	11	1
Environment	24,288	24,159	917	(122)	898	(40)	547	(276)	(400)	0	(129)	(89)
Place	**31,398**	**31,776**	**1,347**	**(196)**	**1,702**	**126**	**1,201**	**(316)**	**(500)**	**(7)**	**378**	**252**
ICT	2,291	2,454	77	53	(35)	(35)	163	0	0	0	163	198
Executive Director	307	294	0	0	(11)	(11)	(13)	0	0	0	(13)	(2)
Commissioning & Procurement	827	432	(237)	(237)	(317)	(317)	(396)	0	0	0	(396)	(79)
Finance & Property	1,374	1,438	208	(194)	78	78	178	0	0	(115)	63	(14)
Strategy & Governance	7,017	6,790	193	(177)	(286)	(345)	(154)	(73)	0	0	(227)	118
Resources	**11,816**	**11,407**	**241**	**(555)**	**(571)**	**(630)**	**-221**	**-73**	**0**	**-115**	**-409**	**221**
Chief Executive	**534**	**524**	**(15)**	**(25)**	**(5)**	**(11)**	**-10**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**-10**	**1**
Capital Financing	14,610	13,636	(421)	(421)	(1,009)	(1,009)	(975)	0	0	0	(975)	34
Risk Management	130	(2,040)	(850)	(130)	(980)	(730)	(130)	(1,340)	0	(700)	(2,170)	(1,440)
Capital Financing/Risk Mgt	**14,740**	**11,596**	**(1,271)**	**(551)**	**(1,989)**	**(1,739)**	**(1,105)**	**(1,340)**	**0**	**(700)**	**(3,145)**	**(1,406)**
Total	**145,619**	**146,653**	**8,141**	**2,136**	**7,798**	**1,141**	**7,696**	**(4,559)**	**(1,124)**	**(978)**	**1,034**	**(106)**

NB: Rounding differences may apply to the nearest £k.

Impact on Reserves

5.7 Reserves that are forecast to be used during 2022/23 are shown below:

Reserve	Current Balance	Proposed Utilisation to support Q3 forecast 2022/23	Balance Remaining
	£m	£m	£m
Service risk reserves	4.50	-3.22	1.28
Outcomes Based Budgeting	1.34	-1.34	0.00
General Fund	9.41	-2.16	7.25
	15.25	**-6.72**	**8.53**

People Directorate

5.8   The Directorate forecast is an over spend of £7.8m. The over spend could be reduced to £4.2m by accessing specific reserves which were set aside for risks relating to inflation and demand that have arisen. The £360k change from last quarter is largely due to further use of reserves and hospital discharge funding.
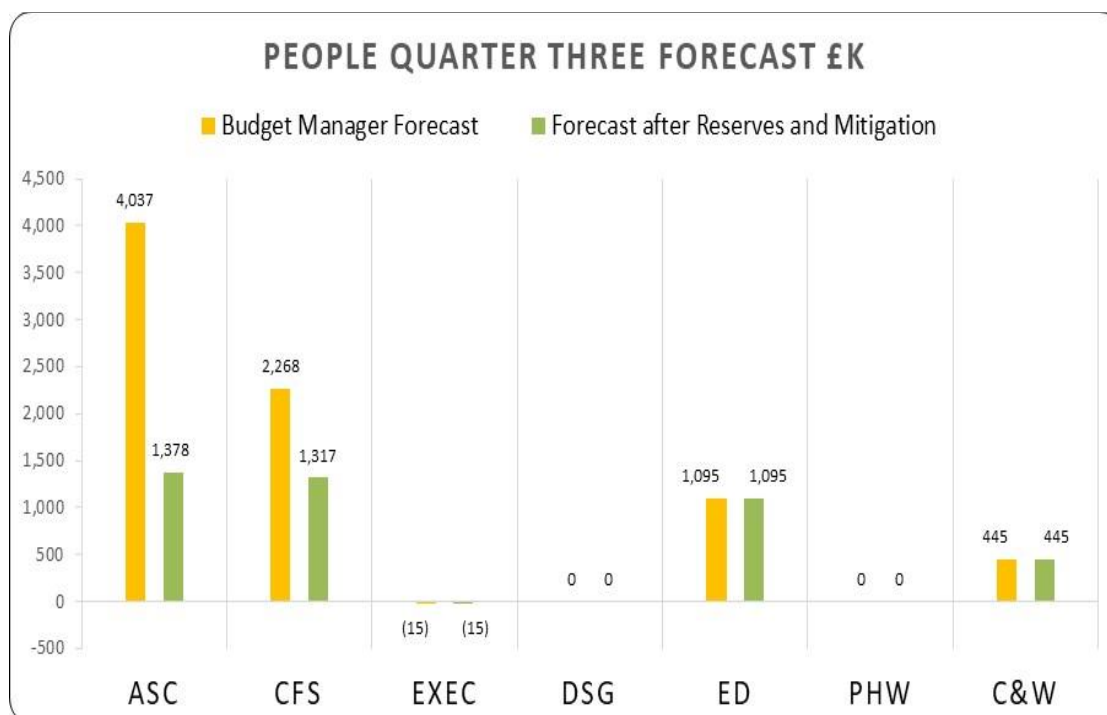
5.9   In ASC, the forecast over spend is £4m. The over spend could be reduced to £1.4m by using provisions that were made in the service risk reserves and against the General Fund for inflation and other risks identified during the budget build process, together with additional savings identified since the Quarter Three submissions.

5.10 Overall, the ASC forecast overspend has decreased by £360k since Quarter Two. The pay award of £1,925 (excluding on costs) created a new pressure of £750k and agency costs in care homes have increased by £374k. Funding of £1.2m was received in November for Hospital Discharge, and is being used both against previously forecast expenditure and new expenditure. A further £240k can be released from the risk reserve.

5.11 ASC long term services (LTS) are forecast to be £2.8m over spent.

- There are higher client numbers than modelled, 1792 compared to 1753. The rise in clients is attributable to higher levels of new requests for support, mirroring the national picture set out by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in their Spring Budget survey. This includes high demand from hospital discharge.

- There is an increase in the cost of new client care packages, due to current inflation (provided for in reserves), complexities and challenges in the external workforce market.

- There has been lower occupancy in our own care homes and clients have had to be placed in externally commissioned beds costing more.

5.12 Short term services are £0.28m under spent due to the additional funding announced in November for Hospital Discharge. This funding will be used both against previously forecast and new expenditure.

5.13 There is a £1.7m overspend in our own care homes due to a shortfall of income, agency staffing requirements, high dependency clients, covid cases and energy costs.

5.14 The service continues to take action to suppress market demand such as reinforcing the three conversations model suppressing the need for long term services, strategic review of in-house care home provision, use of technology enabled care and maximising external funding streams. Market Management is working with local providers to ensure supply and demand are better aligned and offering better value for money. Net weekly spend on long term services is carefully monitored. All requests for long term services are scrutinised weekly at Good Practice Forum by senior management to ensure Care Act compliance and also make best uses of resources. Staffing options are being explored with HR.

5.15 The ASC Model for long term services will be updated monthly throughout this financial year to inform the 2023/24 budget. The assumptions are reviewed and agreed by the ASC Financial Planning Steering group and reported at the ASC Financial Planning meeting on a monthly basis. The modelling produces a financial impact range between low cost, most likely and high cost. The model inflation is at 3.5%, reflecting increases expected in costs balanced against increases already in place.

The graphs below shows client numbers from April 2019 and net expenditure for Long Term Services.

Adult Social Care
Annualised client numbers for Long Term Services

Increase from 2018/19 to 2019/20 of 33 clients - 1643 to 1676

Decrease from 2019/20 to 2020/21 of 35 clients from 1676 to 1641

Increase from 2020/21 to 2021/22 of 56 clients from 1641 to 1697

December 2022 forecast to yearend is an increase of 110 annualised clients from March 2022 (1697 to 1807)

Includes an increase of a further 15 annualised clients by March 2023

Hospital discharges have increased by 53% compared to pre Covid levels with an additional 35% going onto a long term service.

Current Model forecast is an increase of 64 clients from 1807 to 1871

West Berkshire Council   Executive   9 February 2023

2022/23 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three

Adult Social Care
Net Expenditure for Long Term Services

£52,804,361

£49,005,227

£45,622,701

£45,369,017

£43,886,360

£42,090,060

£45,340,619

£41,669,360

£40,798,564

£40,564,723

£38,617,786

£37,857,600

£38,597,860

£35,890,650

£36,000,414

£34,960,468

£36,926,131

£34,927,030

2019/20 underspend of £930k
- CHC awards £370k
- Deceased above modelled
- Competitive care home prices and holding dom care   rates (APL)
- Overachievement of client income £342k

2020/21 underspend of £2.93m
- Lower client numbers (84 less than modelled)
- Excess deaths due to Covid (20% increase v 2019/20)
- Lower client contributions due to fewer clients
- Reduction in respite take up
- 110% increase in DP returns (£626k)

2021/22 overspend of £20k
Expenditure £1.337m / Income (£1.317m)
- Increased expenditure due to lower occupancy in our own care homes, therefore commissioning more external beds.
- Partially offset by higher total client contributions. Some impact from an increase to benefits, but no change to the Minimum Income Guarantee.

2022/23 forecast overspend of £3.9m
Expenditure £6.1m / Income (£2.2m)
- Higher client numbers than modelled & increased package costs (35% increase in clients moving onto a long term service through hospital discharges when comapred to pre Covid levels).
- Increased externally commissioned beds, due to lower occupancy in our own care homes.
- Partially offset by higher client contributions due to increased numbers.

2023/24 Budget requirement of £7.4m
- Most Expensive pressure of £11.2m
- Least Expensive pressure of £3.7m
Represents an increase / decrease of 5% on inflation and annualised clients.

– – Modelled Budget   —— Least Expensive   —— Most Expensive   ●— Forecast / Outturn   —— Budget

Page 299

5.16 In CFS, the forecast is a £2.3m over spend. This could be reduced to £1.3m with the use of the risk provision for residential placements and additional savings found post Quarter Three.

- There is a forecast £715k over spend in placements which was identified in the model during budget build and is fully provided for in reserves. Demand at the front door has increased by around 50% over the last year, in addition to increased complexity, mental health and emotional wellbeing needs. There is additional challenge of recent legislative changes and a national shortage of suitable residential placements. This is driving costs up.

- The Family Safeguarding teams are overspending by £1.7m due to agency costs. This has been required to cover vacancies, maternity leave and additional capacity. There are 21 vacancies across the East and West Teams and seven maternity leaves.

5.17 There has been an £864k increase in the forecast overspend since last quarter. £162k is due to placement costs, £225k for Child Care Lawyers due to a higher number of Child Protection Plans, £283k from increased agency costs and £210k from the pay award.

5.18 The service continue to effectively manage placements as part of the Children and Family service Accommodation & Resources Panel. There is a robust plan in place for some children to appropriately safely step down from costly residential care. Additional in house supports to foster carers (fostering hub, mental health team) will enable increasing numbers of children to live in lower cost 'In house' placements.

5.19 There is active recruitment taking place for qualified staff to fill vacancies. The national picture is one of acute shortage of social workers. There is ongoing work to refresh and reinvigorate the recruitment and retention package, and options are being explored for overseas social workers to relocate to the UK.

5.20 The model for placements has been refined and will be updated monthly. Client numbers and net expenditure are shown in the graphs below.

Children & Family Services annualised client numbers (excludes UASC)
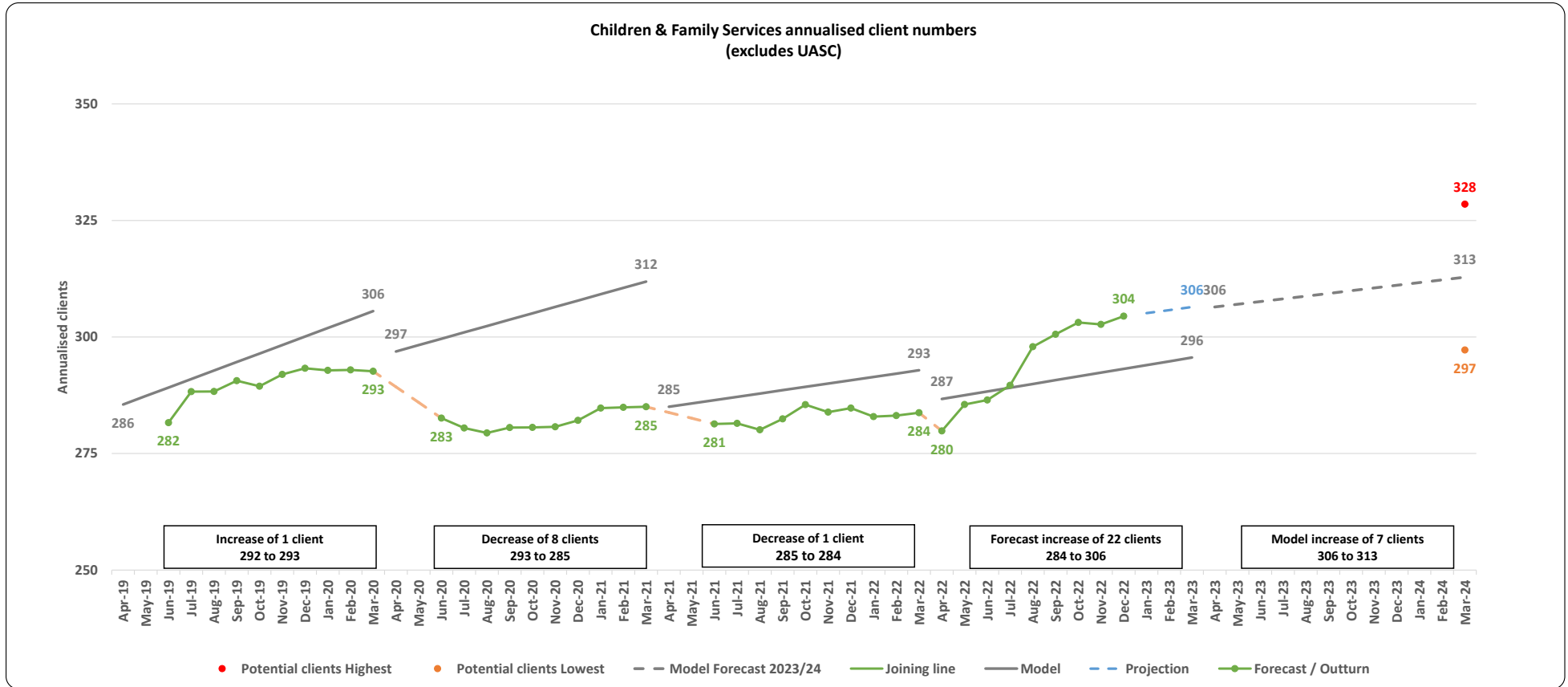
2022/23 Revenue Financial Performance Quarter Three

Children & Family Services Net Expenditure (excludes UASC)

£10,663,940

£9,934,850

£9,859,070

£9,799,459

£9,150,850

£9,085,260

£8,664,477

£8,397,850

£8,296,256

£7,949,850

£7,801,408

£7,621,980

£7,439,310

£7,383,470

£7,365,500

£7,218,575

£7,143,590

£6,878,753
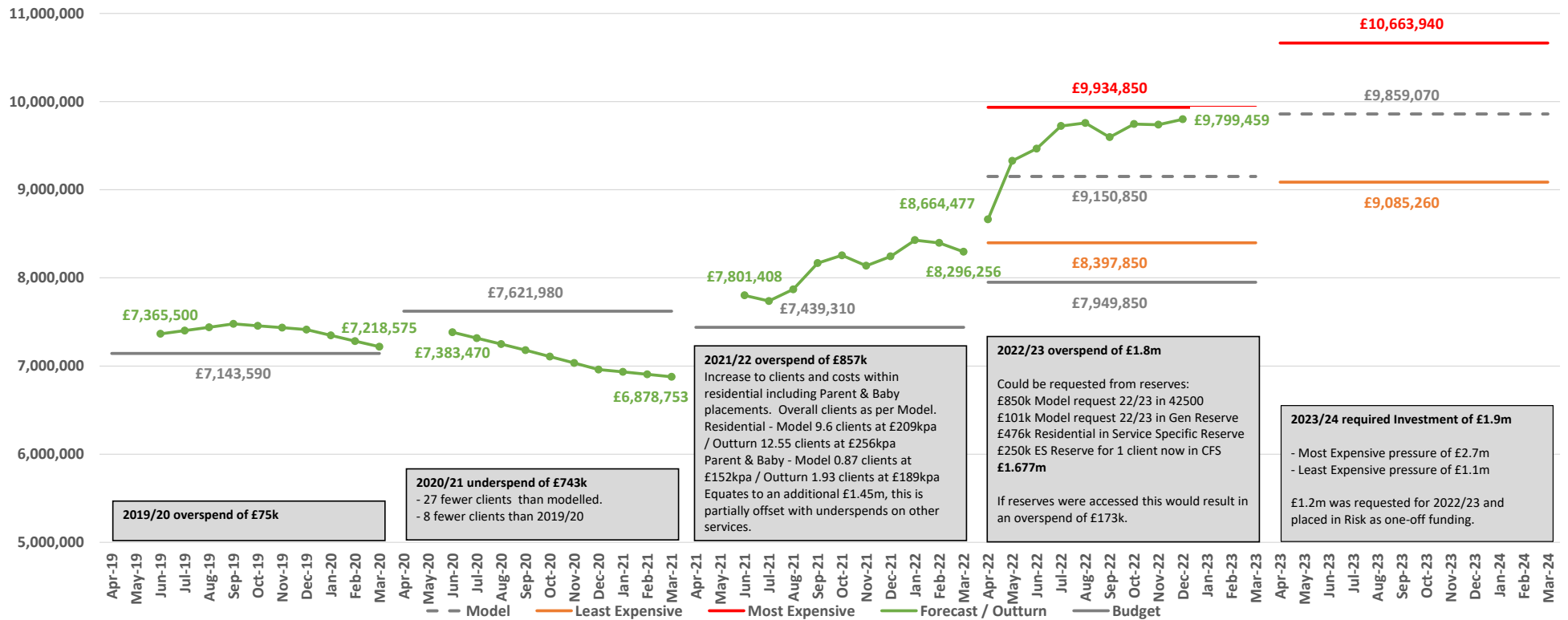
2019/20 overspend of £75k

2020/21 underspend of £743k
- 27 fewer clients than modelled.
- 8 fewer clients than 2019/20

2021/22 overspend of £857k
Increase to clients and costs within residential including Parent & Baby placements. Overall clients as per Model.
Residential - Model 9.6 clients at £209kpa / Outturn 12.55 clients at £256kpa
Parent & Baby - Model 0.87 clients at £152kpa / Outturn 1.93 clients at £189kpa
Equates to an additional £1.45m, this is partially offset with underspends on other services.

2022/23 overspend of £1.8m
Could be requested from reserves:
£850k Model request 22/23 in 42500
£101k Model request 22/23 in Gen Reserve
£476k Residential in Service Specific Reserve
£250k ES Reserve for 1 client now in CFS
£1.677m
If reserves were accessed this would result in an overspend of £173k.

2023/24 required Investment of £1.9m
- Most Expensive pressure of £2.7m
- Least Expensive pressure of £1.1m
£1.2m was requested for 2022/23 and placed in Risk as one-off funding.

Legend: Model — Least Expensive — Most Expensive — Forecast / Outturn — Budget

West Berkshire Council   Executive   9 February 2023

5.21 Education is reporting a £1.1m over spend. The over spend is predominantly due to a forecast pressure on Home to School Transport (HTST), which has increased since last quarter. The volatility of this service means that it is difficult to forecast but there are more children with special needs requiring transportation, limited spaces in Newbury schools, rising fuel costs and driver's wages all contributing to this year's overspend position.

5.22 Communities and Wellbeing is reporting a £0.4m overspend mainly due to income pressures in leisure. The increase from last quarter is due to the pay award.

5.23 The Public Health grant forecast is on line, and any variances to budget will be transferred to the Public Health Reserve at year end. There is currently an estimated £270k under spend which will transfer to the reserve. This is mainly due to staff projects being supported from COMF funding and underspends on joint arrangements held with other local authorities.

Place Directorate

5.24 The Place Directorate is forecasting an overspend of £1.2m against a budget of £31m. The overspend could be reduced to £0.4m by accessing reserves that were set aside during the budget build for specific pressures. Overall the overspend has increased from last quarter by £252k.

PLACE QUARTER THREE FORECAST £K

Budget Manager Forecast ■ Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation

	Budget Manager Forecast	Forecast after Reserves and Mitigation
D & R	643	496
EXEC	11	11
ENV	547	(129)
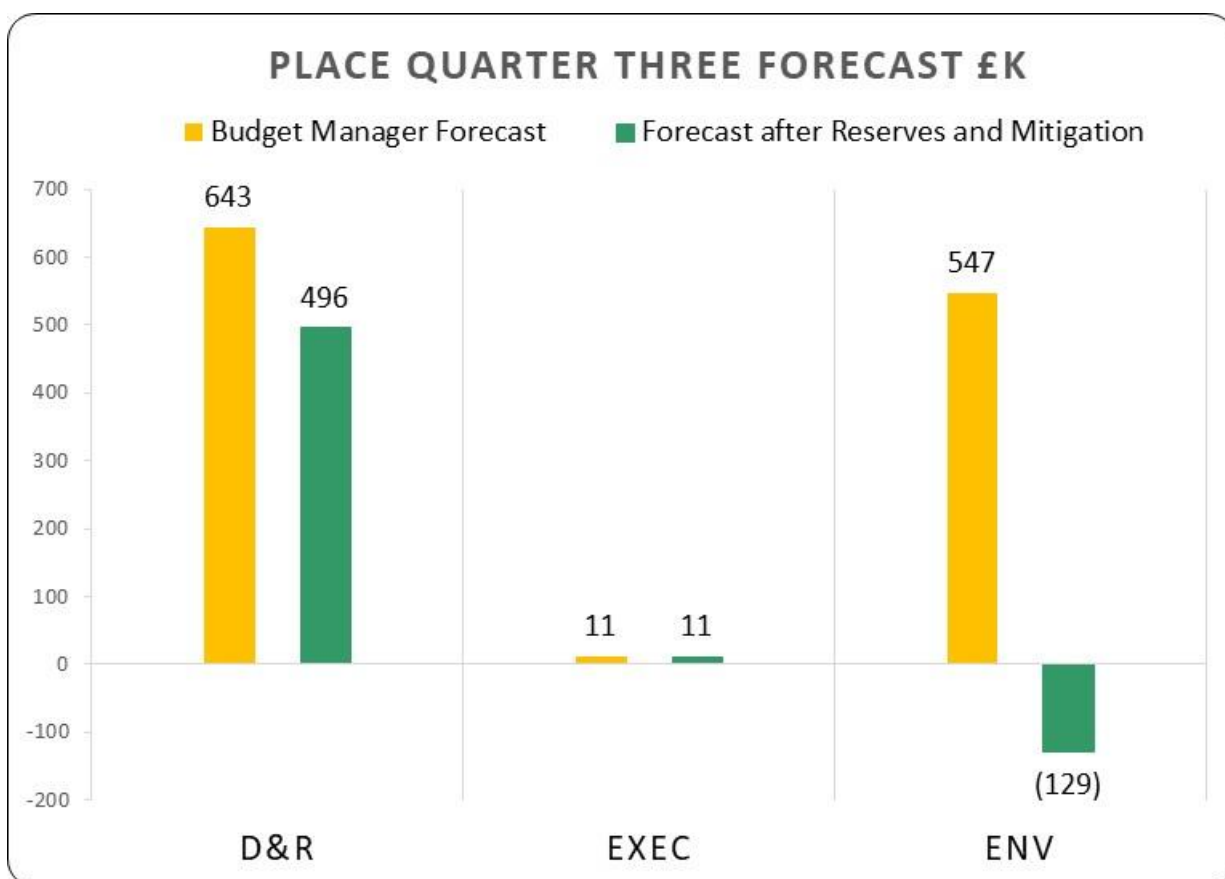
5.25 In Development and Regulation, there is a £0.6m forecast over spend, which could reduce to £0.5m through use of reserves.

- There are £409k of agency and consultant pressures in Planning from covering sickness and vacancies and the service struggling to recruit qualified permanent staff. Planning income is below target, with a pressure of £306k partly covered off by a £100k reserve. Minerals and Waste Examination has been delivered with a £139k underspend.

- Housing is facing £186k of pressures on emergency and temporary accommodation, £235k for Rough Sleeping Initiative and £60k funding pressures from restrictive grant conditions in the Household Support Fund. There has been a revenue saving of £160k against site management as the costs are capital in nature.

- There are underspends of £85k in Economic Development due to vacancies, capitalisation and delayed projects. Registrars have overachieved income by £30k and contributions towards time spent on migration schemes have saved £129k.

- The increased spend from last quarter is £341k due to the pay award, increased demand in housing, and a further downturn in planning fee income.

- The service continue to review agency requirements and monitor planning fee income opportunities.

5.26 In Environment, there is a £0.5m forecast overspend, which could reduce to an underspend of £0.1m by using reserves set aside as part of the budget process for pressures identified. The forecast has reduced by £89k since last quarter.

- The largest area of pressure is parking income which is seeing significant reductions compared to pre-pandemic levels both from car parks and season tickets amounting to £0.86m. There is £0.4m set aside in reserves for this, as it was identified as an expected pressure at the time of budget build.

- Other pressures include £172k solar energy income which is not achieving the expected levels of income based on current output of the installed solar panels, £167k increased costs from street lighting and £150k from maintenance requirements. However, there has been a £300k reduction in revenue expenditure as staff have been able to be charged to capital projects.

- In network management, there is a £152k pressure on supervision fees for Section 38 and 278 orders, a £160k pressure on the streetworks income target, but an overachievement of Traffic Regulation income. The overspends here are covered by a reserve.

- Transport services are seeing underspends from staffing vacancies and overachievement of income.

- Waste management are seeing increased levels of recycling income, reduced use of landfill and an overachievement of garden waste subscriptions leading to a favourable variance of £0.6m.

Resources Directorate/Chief Executive

5.27 The Resources Directorate is forecasting an underspend of £221k against a budget of £12m, and after use of reserves of £73k and amendments of £115k, the underspend would increase to £409k.
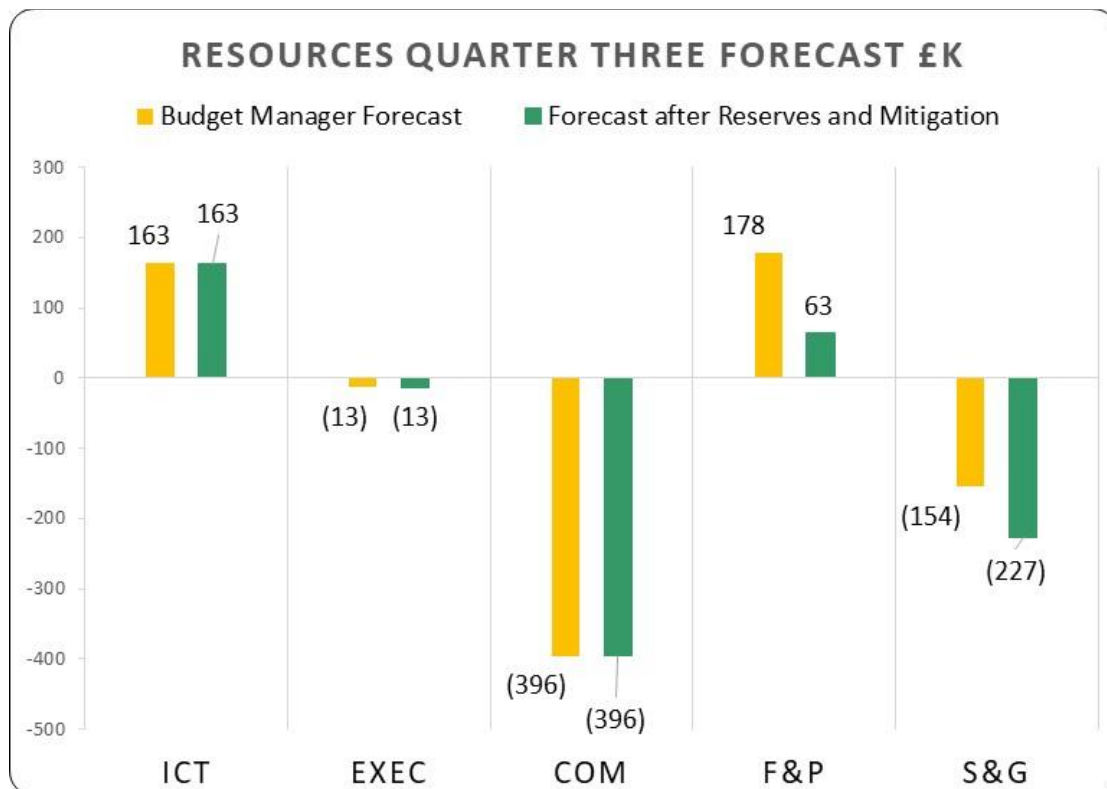
5.28 In Commissioning & Procurement, there is a £396k forecast surplus largely due to income from the agency contract rebate, as a result of the increased agency usage.

5.29 In ICT there is a forecast overspend of £163k. There are agency pressures of £150k in Telecoms and Applications teams to support corporate projects. Other pressures are from print and reprographic income, school income, cloud based storage costs and from WAN circuit requirements. There are staffing underspends and contributions offsetting some of the overspend and the impact of the pay award.

5.30 In Finance and Property, the £178k forecast over spend has arisen as follows:

- Pay award pressure of £120k.

- Temporary staff costs covering workload pressures in the Financial Reporting Team is expected to lead to an over spend of £138k. There are further agency pressures in Exchequer Services totalling £66k.

- Energy costs, repairs, maintenance and security in corporate buildings are causing a pressure of £262k.

- These pressures are offset by £200k overachievement on commercial property income, a £55k benefit from unutilised accruals, a £115k insurance claim, grant

---

contributions from migration schemes and income from the Health and Safety buy back.

5.31 Strategy and Governance is forecasting a £154k underspend, which could increase to £227k after use of reserves.

- In HR there are £147k savings from National Insurance, and in the Customer Services & Engagement Team there are £193k savings due to use of Transformation Funding.

- In Legal there are pressures due to Coroners Court increased costs £65k, land charges income of £60k and client disbursements £72k (covered by reserve).

- Audit are forecasting a £34k underspend from vacancies.

Capital Financing and Risk Management

5.32 The Capital Financing forecast is an under spend of £1m. Capital financing costs are lower than expected due savings on capital financing through utilisation of short term borrowing and cash flow as opposed to longer term financing. Savings have also been achieved through the prepayment of pension contributions.

5.33 There is an underspend of £2.2m in Risk Management arising from:

- £1.34m proposed release of the Outcomes Based Budgeting reserve (OBB) to support the pay award pressures across all services.

- £130k release of a provision from reserves that is no longer required.

- £700k forecast benefit from a review of outstanding purchase orders.

Employee and Agency Spend

5.34 At Quarter Three, total employee spend including agency was £54.8m against a budget of £51.5m, an overspend of £3.37m. The overspend has increased by £1.8m from last quarter. This is largely as a result of the annual pay increase for 2022/23 being paid and backdated to 1st April 2022 costing £2.1m. Provision was made in the budget for an increase of 2%, but the actual pay award was £1,925 per FTE, which equates to an average percentage increase of approximately 5.5%. Funds of £1.34m will be released from Earmarked Reserves to support some of the extra cost.

5.35 A recruitment freeze has been in place and savings have been identified from vacant posts totalling £292k since Quarter Two.

5.36 Within employee costs, agency spend to Quarter Three was £8.57m. Agency is 17% as a percentage of employee budgets.

Service	Employee Budget to Q3	Employee Spend to Q3 (including agency)	Over/ (under) spend		Agency spend to Q3	Agency as a % of Employee budgets
Chief Executive	382,613	389,804	7,192		-	
Adult Social Care	13,327,553	14,549,043	1,221,491		3,086,316	23%
Children & Family Services	6,631,350	7,233,607	602,257		2,145,927	32%
Communities & Wellbeing	1,475,528	1,376,463	(99,065)		-	0%
Executive Director - People	218,273	200,011	(18,262)		975	0%
Education	4,387,260	4,278,715	(108,545)		575,313	13%
Public Health & Wellbeing	1,313,505	1,849,202	535,697		60,021	5%
Executive Director – Place	150,015	149,736	(279)		-	0%
Development & Regulation	7,791,128	9,348,043	1,556,916		1,781,167	23%
Environment	4,545,060	4,549,491	4,431		160,891	4%
Commissioning & Procurement	1,022,460	1,051,360	28,900		-	0%
Executive Director - Resources	145,088	119,113	(25,975)		-	0%
Finance & Property	3,480,855	3,668,420	187,565		371,739	11%
ICT	1,720,800	1,741,939	21,139		129,406	8%
Strategy & Governance	4,867,245	4,325,107	(542,138)		262,416	5%
	51,458,730	**54,830,054**	**3,371,324**		**8,574,171**	**17%**

2022/23 Savings and income generation programme

5.37 In order to meet the funding available, the 2022/23 revenue budget was built with a £5.3m savings and income generation programme. The programme is monitored using the RAG traffic light system. The status is shown in the following charts:

2022-23 Savings and Income Programme £k

£564 11%

£546 10%

£4,190 79%

2022-23 Savings and Income Programme
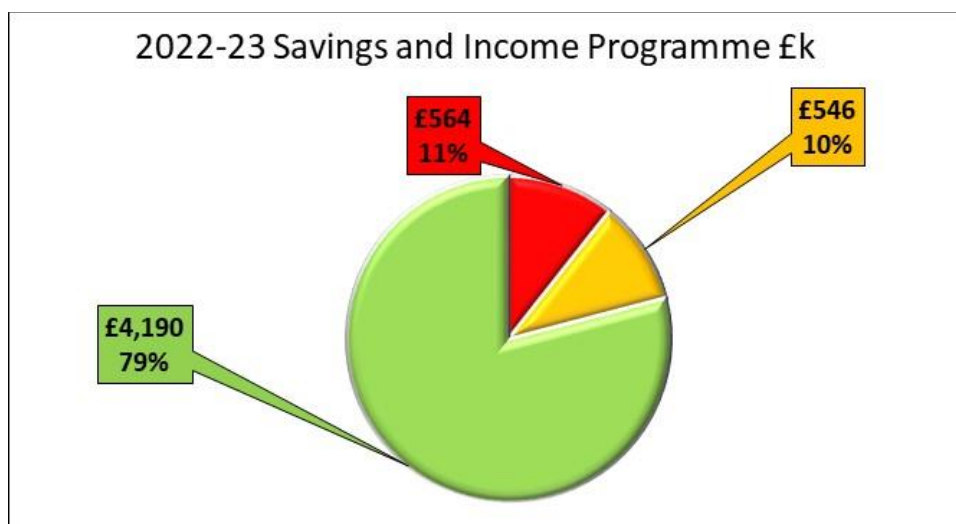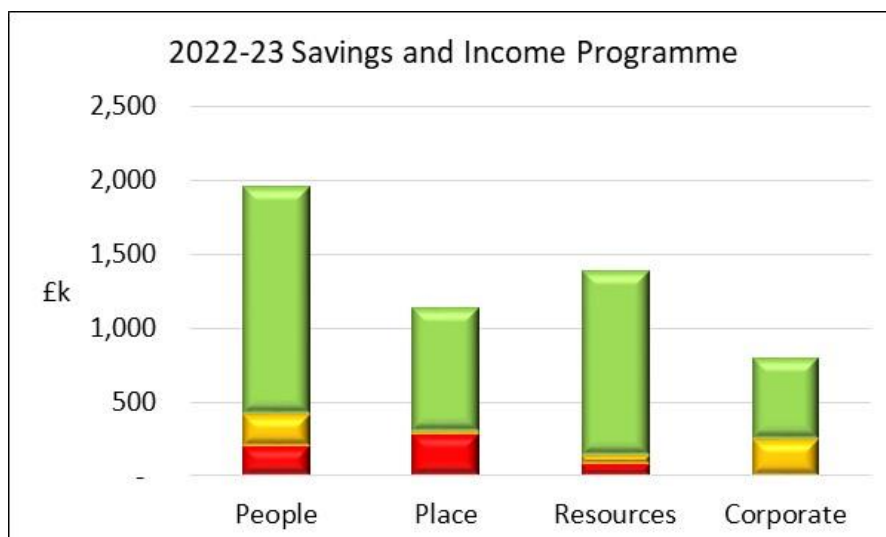
5.38 Red items are as follows:

- £36k for supported living in ASC due to delays in construction of a new Learning Disability service due to supply chain issues.
- £26k Resource Allocation System software and £43k for ASC digital pathway which will be implemented as part of Care Director V6 upgrade.
- £100k for ASC utilisation of the workforce reform grant. This is not achievable within the funding received and the conditions placed on the grants.
- £32k home improvement agency income, not achievable for private adaptation work.
- £100k for Environment in delivery of solar PV projects. An investment bid has been proposed for 2023/24 to realign unachievable income.
- £152k from Traffic Management income not being achieved.
- £75k from Timelord2 due to energy costs and project delay. Savings will be achieved in future years.

5.39 Amber items are as follows:

- £250k from Timelord reduced mileage: being reviewed.
- £133k for Children's staffing capacity savings due to high levels of demand.
- £42k for income from Northcroft leisure expansion.
- £40k traded income in Education.
- £15k temporary accommodation maintenance as the cost of materials have increased.
- £34k print and postage due to increased costs of paper and lack of external income.
- £32k from property disposals management cost savings, still awaiting sale.

Proposals

5.40 To note the year-end forecast £1m over spend, after taking account of provision that was made in reserves for specific risks at the time of budget setting and forecast amendments. Without this provision, the forecast would be an over spend of £7.7m.

6   Other options considered

6.1   None.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The 2022/23 financial year is presenting financial challenges for the Council due to inflation and demand. Provision that was set aside in Earmarked Reserves will be required to reduce the overspend by £4.6m, and £1.1m which was provided against the General Fund. The remaining overspend of £1m will further reduce the General Fund.

7.2 The £5.3m savings and income generation programme is forecast to be 79% achieved and will be reported on each quarter.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Quarter Three position

8.2 Appendix B – Budget changes

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	☐
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	☒

Officer details:

Name: Melanie Ellis
Job Title: Acting Head of Finance and Property
Tel No: 01635 519142
E-mail: Melanie.Ellis@westberks.gov.uk

Appendix A – Quarter Three position

| | Budget | | | | Forecasted Performance | | | | | | Net |
| | | | | | Expenditure | | | Income | | | |
	Original Budget 2022/23 £	Changes in year 2022/23 £	Funding Released from Reserves 2022/23 £	Revised Budget 2022/23 £	Annual Expenditure Budget for 2022/23 £	Annual Expenditure Forecast for 2022/23 £	Expenditure Variance for 2022/23 £	Annual Income Budget for 2022/23 £	Annual Income Forecast for 2022/23 £	Income Variance for 2022/23 £	Net Variance £
Adult Social Care	55,119,550	0	0	55,119,550	75,091,640	84,312,010	9,220,370	-19,972,090	-25,155,470	-5,183,380	4,036,990
Children & Family Services	17,972,860	1,011,000	68,930	19,052,790	21,230,460	24,210,230	2,979,770	-2,177,670	-2,889,710	-712,040	2,267,730
Executive Director - People	330,710	0	0	330,710	330,710	316,200	-14,510	0	0	0	-14,510
Education (DSG Funded)	-444,000	0	0	-444,000	120,241,660	118,053,030	-2,188,630	-120,685,660	-118,497,030	2,188,630	0
Education	9,891,580	-161,000	129,730	9,860,310	13,571,540	16,439,420	2,867,880	-3,711,230	-5,484,480	-1,773,250	1,094,630
Public Health & Wellbeing	-80,000	0	680,370	600,370	6,987,220	6,715,610	-271,610	-6,386,850	-6,115,240	271,610	0
Communities & Wellbeing	2,427,920	38,380	144,600	2,610,900	4,038,960	4,376,210	337,250	-1,428,060	-1,319,880	108,180	445,430
People	**85,218,620**	**888,380**	**1,023,630**	**87,130,630**	**241,492,190**	**254,422,710**	**12,930,520**	**-154,361,560**	**-159,461,810**	**-5,100,250**	**7,830,270**
Development & Regulation	6,598,320	-2,170	298,930	6,895,080	13,802,090	21,010,030	7,207,940	-6,907,010	-13,471,980	-6,564,970	642,970
Executive Director – Place	214,610	0	0	214,610	214,610	225,610	11,000	0	0	0	11,000
Environment	24,450,060	-243,630	81,700	24,288,130	35,782,780	35,875,190	92,410	-11,494,650	-11,039,610	455,040	547,450
Place	**31,262,990**	**-245,800**	**380,630**	**31,397,820**	**49,799,480**	**57,110,830**	**7,311,350**	**-18,401,660**	**-24,511,590**	**-6,109,930**	**1,201,420**
ICT	2,222,590	0	68,000	2,290,590	3,164,190	3,270,090	105,900	-873,600	-816,040	57,560	163,460
Executive Director - Resource	313,430	-6,000	0	307,430	307,430	314,980	7,550	0	-21,000	-21,000	-13,450
Commissioning & Procureme	744,880	34,250	47,950	827,080	10,388,820	10,440,570	51,750	-9,561,740	-10,009,060	-447,320	-395,570
Finance & Property	1,334,840	-33,210	72,700	1,374,330	32,917,850	33,238,780	320,930	-31,543,520	-31,686,120	-142,600	178,330
Strategy & Governance	7,022,660	-60,890	54,730	7,016,500	8,098,460	7,946,770	-151,690	-1,081,960	-1,084,350	-2,390	-154,080
Resources	**11,638,400**	**-65,850**	**243,380**	**11,815,930**	**54,876,750**	**55,211,190**	**334,440**	**-43,060,820**	**-43,616,570**	**-555,750**	**-221,310**
Chief Executive	533,970	0	0	533,970	533,970	523,970	-10,000	0	0	0	-10,000
Chief Executive	**533,970**	**0**	**0**	**533,970**	**533,970**	**523,970**	**-10,000**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**-10,000**
Capital Financing & Managen	14,610,470	0	0	14,610,470	14,730,470	14,546,930	-183,540	-120,000	-911,120	-791,120	-974,660
Movement Through Reserves	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Risk Management	850,000	-850,000	130,000	130,000	130,000	0	-130,000	0	0	0	-130,000
Capital Financing and Man	**15,460,470**	**-850,000**	**130,000**	**14,740,470**	**14,860,470**	**14,546,930**	**-313,540**	**-120,000**	**-911,120**	**-791,120**	**-1,104,660**
Total	**144,114,450**	**-273,270**	**1,777,640**	**145,618,820**	**361,562,860**	**381,815,630**	**20,252,770**	**-215,944,040**	**-228,501,090**	**-12,557,050**	**7,695,720**

Appendix B – Budget Changes

Service	Original Net Budget	Approved Budget B/F from 2021-22	Budget changes not requiring approval	FAGG approved release from reserves	Approved by S151 & Portfolio Holder	Approved by Executive	Budget C/F to 2023-24	Final Net Budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Adult Social Care	55,120							55,120
Children and Family Services	17,973		1,080					19,053
Executive Director	331							331
Education DSG funded	(444)							(444)
Education	9,892		(161)	130				9,860
Public Health & Wellbeing	(80)			680				600
Communities & Wellbeing	2,428		38	145				2,611
People	**85,219**	**0**	**957**	**955**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**87,131**
Development & Regulation	6,584		12	299				6,895
Executive Director	215							215
Environment	24,208		(1)	82				24,288
Place	**31,007**	**0**	**11**	**381**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**31,398**
ICT	2,223			68				2,291
Executive Director	313		(6)					307
Commissioning & Procurement	745		34	48				827
Finance & Property	1,340		(39)	73				1,374
Strategy & Governance	7,000		(38)	55				7,017
Resources	**11,621**	**0**	**(49)**	**243**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**11,816**
Chief Executive	**534**							**534**
Capital Financing & Risk	**15,460**		**(850)**	**130**				**14,740**
Total	**143,841**	**0**	**69**	**1,709**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**145,619**
Quarter One	**143,841**			**594**				**144,435**
Quarter Two	**143,841**			**552**				**144,987**
Quarter Three	**143,841**		**69**	**563**				**145,619**
Quarter Four	**143,841**							**145,619**
Total	**143,841**	**0**	**69**	**1,709**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**145,619**

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 12.

Capital Financial Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	9 February 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Date Portfolio Member agreed:	26 January 2023
Report Author:	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4301

1   Purpose of the Report

The financial performance report provided to Members reports on the forecast under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget. This report presents the forecast outturn position for financial year 2022/23 as at Quarter Three.

2   Recommendation

2.1   Members are asked to note the forecast outturn position on the 2022/23 capital programme.

2.2   In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members are asked to approve:

(a)   £7.3 million of planned expenditure to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 (project details in Appendix B).

(b)   £39k of Council funding (i.e. debt funding) proposed to be brought forward from approved expenditure for financial year 2023/4 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix B).

2.3   In respect of reprofiling of planned capital expenditure, members are asked to note:

(a)   £239k of external funding to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 into financial year 2022/23 (project details in Appendix B).

3   Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary

Financial:	At the end of Quarter Three, expenditure of £48.9 million has been forecast against a revised budget of £59.1 million, an overall forecast underspend of £10.2 million. £7.3 million of future expenditure is proposed to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24. £278k of funding is proposed to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 into financial year 2022/23.			
Human Resource:	Not applicable			
Legal:	Not applicable			
Risk Management:	A key ongoing risk is the potential impact of engaged suppliers to default on contractual obligations through financial difficulties. Budget Managers and Capital Strategy Group are closely monitoring these risks to highlight projects with potential suppliers of concern and where there is an ongoing risk of default and/or the potential to retender agreed contracts at potentially higher cost.			
Property:	Not applicable			
Policy:	Not applicable			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	**Commentary**
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		

B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X	
Environmental Impact:		X	
Health Impact:		X	
ICT Impact:		X	
Digital Services Impact:		X	
Council Strategy Priorities:		X	
Core Business:		X	
Data Impact:		X	
Consultation and Engagement:	Joseph Holmes, Executive Director for Resources, s151 Officer Capital Strategy Group (CSG)		

4   Executive Summary

4.1   The capital programme enables delivery of key Council schemes focused on supporting the approved Capital and Council Strategies.

4.2   At Quarter Three, expenditure of £48.9 million is forecast to be incurred in delivering against the approved capital programme in financial year 2022/23. The forecast expenditure of £48.9 million against an approved budget of £59.1 million, generates a forecast year end underspend of £10.2 million. Forecast planned expenditure by Council Strategy priority is detailed in the graphic below.

Financial Year 2022/23: Forecast Expenditure as at Quarter Three (£000s)

- Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships, £164.44
- Maintain a green district, £2,375.08
- Business as usual, £4,955.95
- Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes, £7,833.14
- Support everyone to reach their full potential, £8,303.64
- Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy, £25,226.01
- Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire, £89.00

4.3 As part of the forecast outturn position £7.3 million of future planned expenditure is proposed to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24, a detailed breakdown of which is included in Appendix B. This is comprised of £2.8 million of Council funded expenditure (i.e. to be financed through external borrowing) and £4.5 million of externally funded expenditure. A further £278k of funding is proposed to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 to enable completion of existing projects, details are provided in Appendix B. Quarter Three reprofiling will be processed as part of the 2022/23 financial year close down process.

4.4 In respect of financing the capital programme, as at 30th November 2022, the Council's total level of long term borrowing to fund capital spend stood at £188.8 million. The total level of long term borrowing forecast at 31st March 2023 is £186.9 million.

4.5 In respect of the economic outlook, the Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate by 0.5% to 3.5% in December 2022. This followed a 0.75% rise in November which was the largest single rate hike since 1989 and the ninth successive rise since December 2021. Recent economic instability has been reflected in significant increases to Local Government borrowing from the PWLB (Public Works and Loans Board), with rates for a 25 year annuity loan now on average at near 5% compared to an average of 2.5%. In a rising interest environment, the Council will face risks of increased cost on any new external borrowing undertaken to support delivery of planned capital works, in addition to general cost inflationary pressures. The capital programme approved by Council Committee in March 2022 was set with the expectation to undertake £14.5 million of new long term borrowing alongside £8.1 million of short term borrowing during 2022/23. During the current financial year officers have sought to mitigate risk through a strategy of not undertaking long term borrowing in respect of PWLB financing and, instead focusing on supporting delivery of the capital programme through short term borrowing and cash balances. The strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, in order to reduce risk and keep interest costs low is anticipated to continue until 31st March 2023.

4.6   Capital financing costs are incurred a year in arrears, hence the cost of financing 2022/23 capital expenditure will fall into financial year 2023/24. Current planning indicates that approximately there is a £46.3 million borrowing requirement in 2023/24 in support of capital expenditure, the waste PFI and maintaining minimum investment balances of £10 million.

5   Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1   Capital expenditure and its supporting financing have financial consequences for the Council for many years into the future. Expenditure is therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework.

5.2   The Prudential Code requires authorities to look at capital and investment plans in light of overall organisation strategy and resources to ensure that decisions are made with sufficient regard to the long term financing implications and risks to the Council. To demonstrate that local authorities have fulfilled these objectives, the code sets out a number of indicators, although the Code does not include suggested indicative limits or ratios. Local Authorities are to set their own limits and ratios, subject to controls under section 4 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Council's capital programme is a key driver of the treasury management activity.

Background

5.3   As at Quarter Three, total forecast expenditure against the approved capital programme of £59.1 million for 2022/23 amounts to £48.9 million, generating a £10.2 million underspend position.

5.4   The 2022/23 capital programme was agreed by Council in March 2022 with a gross expenditure budget of £65.6 million split between externally funded expenditure of £28.7 million and £36.9 million of Council funded expenditure (i.e. application of capital receipts and external borrowing). The repayment of principal sums and interest on loans used to fund capital expenditure are met from the revenue budget for capital financing and risk management. Included within the capital programme for 2022/23 was £20.3 million of expenditure reprofiled from the 2021/22 approved capital programme, with an additional £9 million of expenditure subsequently reprofiled into 2022/23 at the end of 2021/22. During the financial year budget changes may occur, mainly as a result of budgets brought forward from prior financial years, additional grants, s106 and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocations received in year or expenditure re-profiled in future financial years. As part of the budget monitoring process, the forecast year end position of the capital projects is reviewed and proposals for unutilised budgets to be re-profiled is reviewed by CSG. Appendix A provides a breakdown of budget changes as at the Quarter Three.

5.5   The Quarter Three forecast position is after £23.7 million of expenditure having been reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 in Quarters One and Two (£5.8 million and £17.9 million respectively). The graphic below details forecasting during financial year 2022/23 against the original approved budget as revised for reprofiling and other in year budget changes.

Financial Year 2021/22: Forecast Expenditure v Original and Revised Quarterly Budget (£000s)
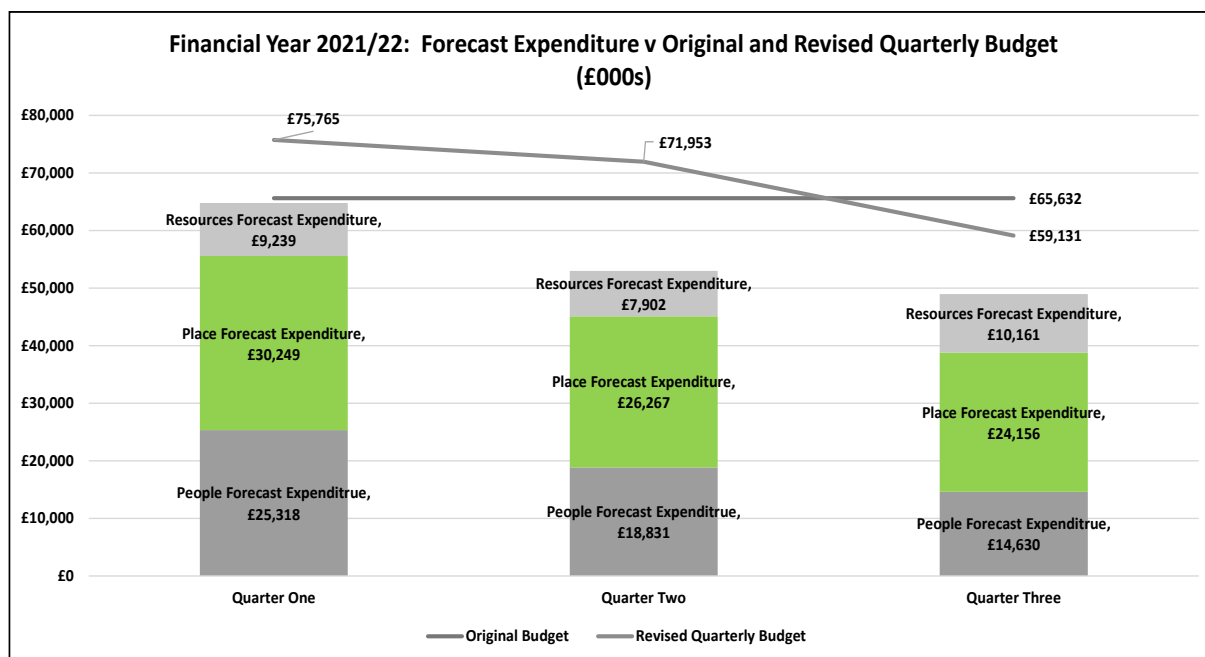
5.6 The trend for a reducing expenditure forecast and increased reprofiling throughout the financial year is not uncommon. Projects are subject to delays for various reasons – for example, delay in appointing contractors, planning negotiations and increased costs through inflation and restriction of accessible suppliers. The graphic below compares the current year forecasts against budget (line element of the graphic) to the quarterly position in financial year 2021/22 (bar element of the graphic).

Financial Years 21/22 and 22/23: Comparison of Budgets and Foreasting (£000s)
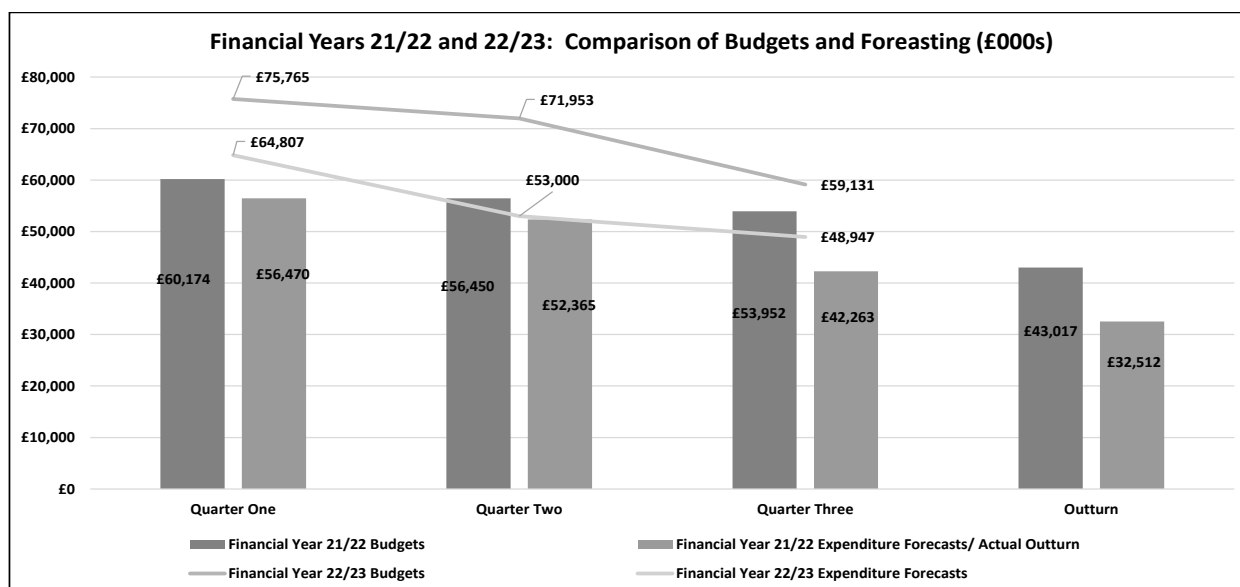
5.7 Reprofiling throughout the financial is incorporated into the annual capital programme budget setting process to ensure all capital financing assumptions remain robust and sustainable.

Financial Year 2022/23 Forecasting as at Quarter Three

The People Directorate

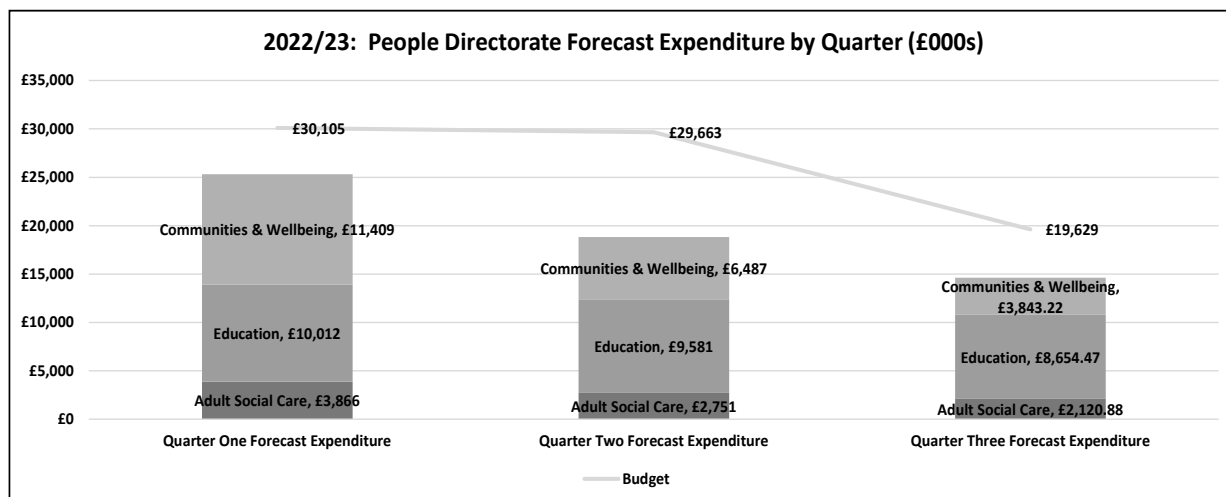5.8 The directorate is forecasting total expenditure of £14.6 million against a budget of £19.6 million. £4.2 million of the forecast underspend is proposed to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24 with £278k of funding brought forward from financial year 2023/24 to enable completion of projects ahead of schedule. The graphic below details forecasting during financial year 2022/23 against the original approved budget as revised for reprofiling and other in year budget changes.

2022/23: People Directorate Forecast Expenditure by Quarter (£000s)

Quarter One Forecast Expenditure: Communities & Wellbeing, £11,409; Education, £10,012; Adult Social Care, £3,866; Budget £30,105

Quarter Two Forecast Expenditure: Communities & Wellbeing, £6,487; Education, £9,581; Adult Social Care, £2,751; Budget £29,663

Quarter Three Forecast Expenditure: Communities & Wellbeing, £3,843.22; Education, £8,654.47; Adult Social Care, £2,120.88; Budget £19,629

5.9 Adult Social Care is forecasting a £1.3 million underspend with a proposal for £830k of planned expenditure to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24. The £830k relates to planned expenditure on the refurbishment of the Council's residential home asset base and modernisation works. £450k of unutilised Council funded budget relates to planned expenditure which is no longer anticipated on occupational therapy equipment and telecare. Both budgets are demand led annual budgets. Budget Managers have confirmed that sufficient budget is provided for financial year 2023/24 in the proposed capital programme and no reprofiling of funding is required from 2022/23.

5.10 Children and Family Services are forecasting a minor £9k underspend relating to property adaptation and accessibility works. This is a demand led budget and no reprofiling from 2022/23 into financial year 2023/24 has been sought by the service.

5.11 Education Services is forecasting a £1.1 million underspend with a proposal to reprofile £768k into financial year 2023/24. The £768k relates to planned expenditure on primary and secondary basic need projects, and the Brookfields expansion project which has slipped due to recruitment issues in the Property Services team. The i-college development which was delayed due to issues appointing a contractor. The Calcot Remodelling project which is delayed at the feasibility stage due to issues around external areas and potentially surplus land. £239k of allocated external funding per the approved capital programme is proposed to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 to support delivery of SEMH/ASD resourced provision in secondary schools. This project has incurred increased costs in 2022/23 due to an acceleration of the project in year. £570k of unutilised funding across a number of projects has not be identified for reprofiling by the service, inclusive of Council funding for completed projects: Speenhamland 2FTE project (£149k), Parsons Down rationalisation project (Phase 1 and 2 underspend £170k).

5.12 The Communities and Wellbeing Service is forecasting a £2.6 million underspend with a proposal to reprofile £2.6 million of planned expenditure into financial year 2023/24. The £2.6 million relates to £1.1million of Council funded planned expenditure on leisure centre modernisation and provision including a modular exercise studio in Hungerford (£105k) and playing pitch provision (£500k), and £1.5 million of planned expenditure on expansion of the Berkshire Records Office (funding split £1.2 million external funding and £300k Council funding). A further £39k of Council funding is proposed to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24 to fund expenditure on members' bids. Previously at Quarter Two the service had requested full reprofiling of the 2022/23 budget into 2023/24 as there was an expectation that works would not commence in the current financial year. The Quarter Three request is to reprofile back committed funding into financial year 2023/24.

The Place Directorate

5.13 The directorate is forecasting total expenditure of £24.2 million against a budget of £26.9 million. The £2.7 million forecast underspend is proposed to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24. The graphic below details forecasting during financial year 2022/23 against the original approved budget as revised for reprofiling and other in year budget changes.
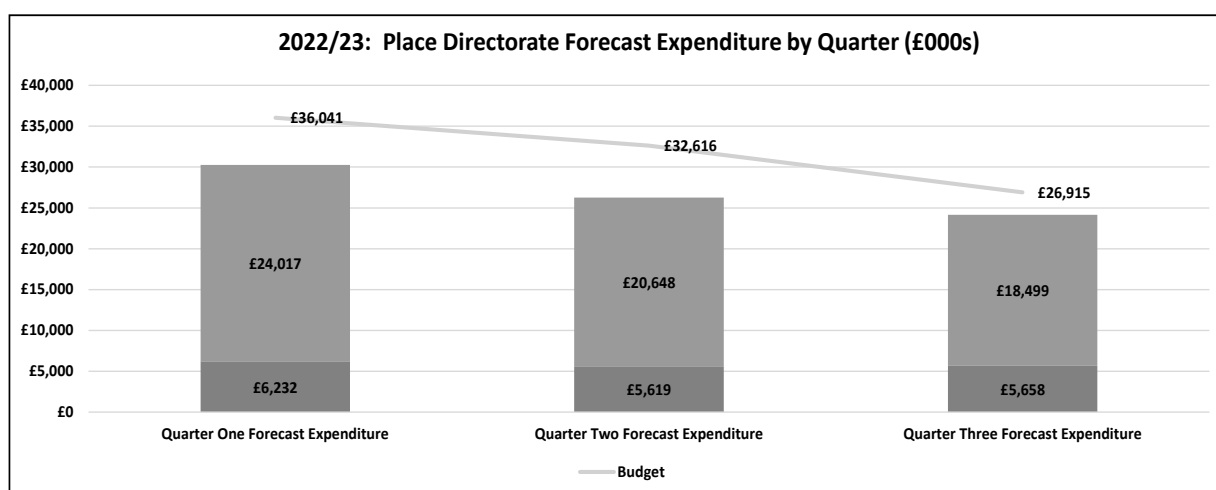
5.14 The Development and Regulation Service is forecasting an online position at Quarter Three with no proposed reprofiling of expenditure into financial year 2023/24. The service reprofiled £568k of planned expenditure into financial year 2023/24 at Quarter Two, reprofiling is detailed in Appendix B.

5.15 The Environment Service is forecasting a £2.75 million underspend with proposed reprofiling of £2.7 million. The £2.7 million of reprofiling is split between £2.4 million of externally funded expenditure and £271k of Council funded planned expenditure. The £2.4 million of external funding is inclusive of Newbury Rail Station Improvements (£1.5 million), Theale Station Improvements (£400k), and the Bus Service Improvement Plan (£434k). Theale and Newbury station improvement projects are subject to delays from third parties. The Bus Station Improvement Plan funding was awarded in January 2023, The Department for Transport have been advised that due to lateness of funding allocation design and delivery of the project has been delayed until financial year 2023/24. £271k of Council funded planned expenditure proposed to be slipped into financial year 2023/24 primarily relates to

the Solar Photovoltaics project (£116k) and natural carbon reduction measures project (£155k). The Solar project is delayed due to limitations in available asset data and requirement for further assessments. The natural carbon measures project is delayed due to dependencies on third party land. The £50k not proposed for reprofiling relates primarily to Council funded planned expenditure on the Faraday Road Open Space project (£40k) where the project scope has been reduced and funding is no longer required.

The Resources Directorate

5.16 The directorate is forecasting total expenditure of £10.2 million against a budget of £12.6 million. £320k of the forecast underspend is proposed to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24. The graphic below details forecasting during financial year 2022/23 against the original approved budget as revised for reprofiling and other in year budget changes.
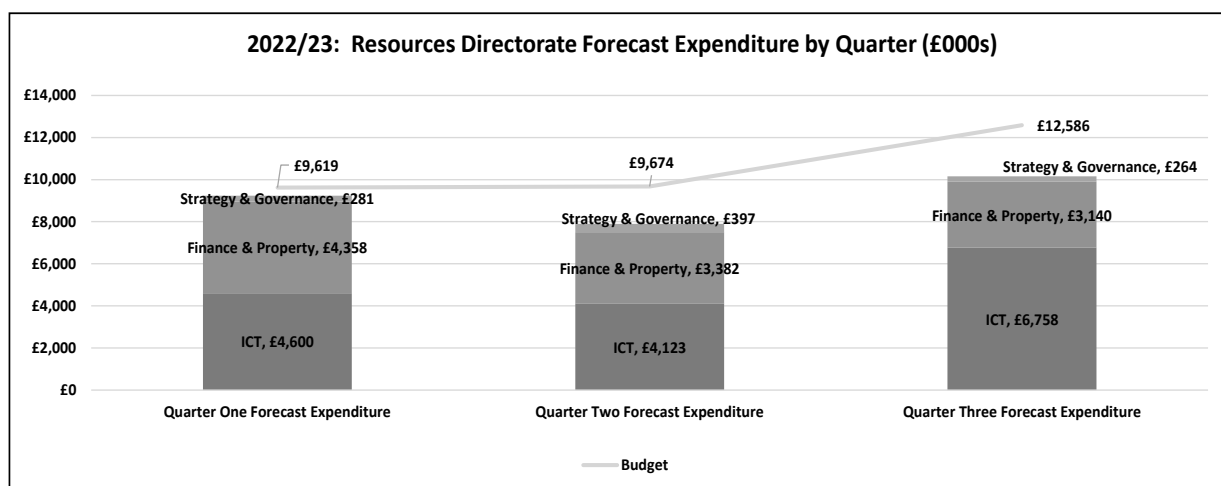

2022/23: Resources Directorate Forecast Expenditure by Quarter (£000s)

	Quarter One Forecast Expenditure	Quarter Two Forecast Expenditure	Quarter Three Forecast Expenditure
Strategy & Governance	£281	£397	£264
Finance & Property	£4,358	£3,382	£3,140
ICT	£4,600	£4,123	£6,758
Budget	£9,619	£9,674	£12,586

5.17 The ICT service is forecasting a £864k underspend and no proposal for reprofiling has been submitted by the service. The £864k primarily relates to planned Council funded expenditure on projects: Telephony (£402k), capital salaries (£252k) this saving is being driven by vacancies, and refresh of the MFD fleet (£200k). The service undertook a reprofiling of planned expenditure into financial year 2023/24 at Quarter Two, details of reprofiling is included in Appendix B. The ICT budget was increased at Quarter Three to include provision for delivery of Superfast Broadband (£2.9 million) and for a Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator project (£498k). Details of budget changes are included in Appendix A.

5.18 The Finance and Property Service is forecasting a £1.4 million underspend with a proposal for £230k to be reprofiled into financial year 2023/24. The £230k of proposed reprofiling relates to Council funded planned expenditure on the Enterprise Resource Planning project. This project has now been re-scoped with a focus primarily on a new HR/Payroll system and is currently at the procurement stage. The balance of unutilised funding in the current financial year (£1.18 million), relates primarily to planned Council funded expenditure on landlord fits out works (commercial property portfolio) that are no longer required (£970k), and Community Infrastructure Levy funding bids (£147k).

5.19 The Strategy and Governance Service is forecasting a £146k underspend with a proposal to reprofile £90k into financial year 2023/24. The £90k relates to Council funded planned expenditure on digitisation infrastructure projects. The balance of unutilised funding relates to Council funded project management where posts remained vacant until January 2023.

Proposals

5.20 As part of the Quarter Three budget monitoring review, £7.3 million of expenditure has been identified as unlikely to be incurred in the current financial year and is requested to be reprofiled into subsequent financial years. A further £278k of funding has been proposed to be brought forward from financial year 2023/24. Appendix B provides a breakdown by project of proposed reprofiling.

5.21 The funding of the proposed reprofiling into financial year 2023/24 is split between £4.5 million of Council funding (i.e. expenditure funded through external borrowing) and £2.8 million of external funding (i.e. external grants, S106 and CIL). The proposed reprofiling from 2023/24 into 2022/23 is split between £239k of external funding and £39k of Council funding.
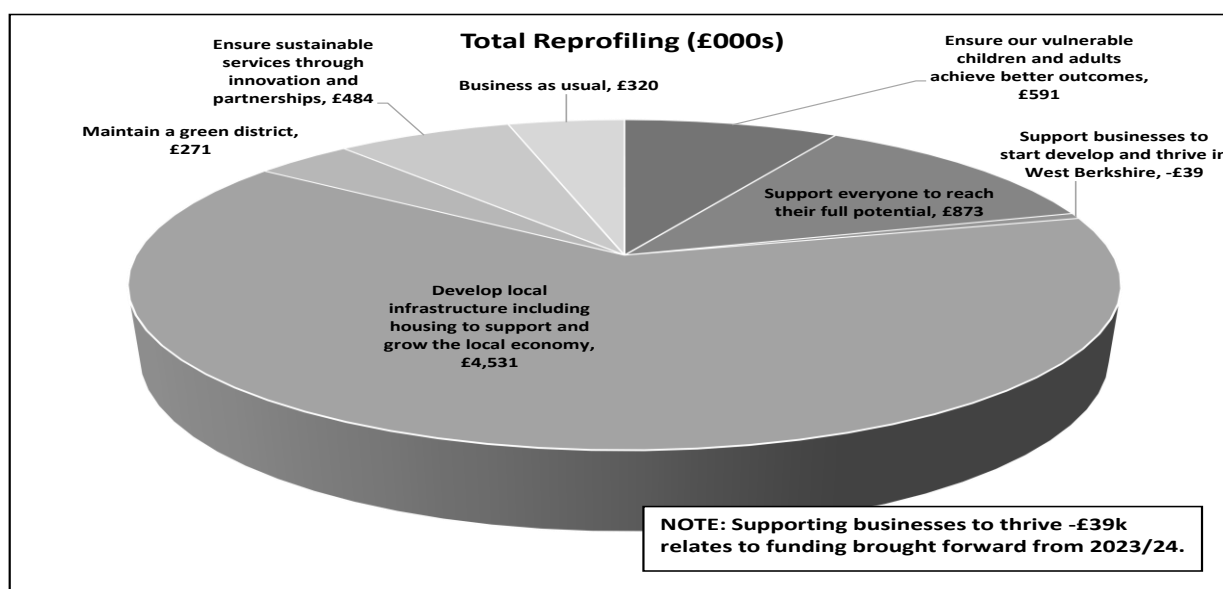
5.22 Post reprofiling the revised forecast outturn underspend is a £3.2 million underspend. Total planned expenditure in 2022/23 is forecast to be £48.9 million, of which £22.6 million is planned to be funded through Council borrowing. The costs of any long term financing through PWLB loans will be incurred against the 2023/24 revenue capital financing budget.

6   Other options considered

Not applicable.

7   Conclusion

7.1 The capital programme is subject to a number of financial risks. Construction inflation (currently forecast at 8 - 10% compared to an assumed level of 2%) potentially resulting

current contracts being subject to a reduction in scope to deliver within agreed financial terms and tender cost for new projects subject to significant increases. The scale of the programme itself is also dependant on sufficient resourcing both internally and externally being available to support delivery. During 2021/22 £27.8 million of expenditure was reprofiled into 2022/23 (including £9 million reprofiled at outturn), which equated to 58% of the original 2021/22 capital programme. Total reprofiling in 2022/23 at £31 million of which £20.6 million is Council funded equates to 40.9% of the Quarter One budget.

7.2 All capital expenditure must be financed, The Prudential Code requires authorities to look at capital and investment plans in light of overall organisation strategy and resources to ensure that decisions are made with sufficient regard to the long term financing implications and risks to the Council. A key indicator is the Council's Authorised Limit for external for debt which was approved at Council on 3rd March 2022, at £367.1 million for the current financial year. As well as the level of borrowing needed to fund capital expenditure, the Limit also allows for debt embedded in the Waste PFI contract and any temporary borrowing which is required for cash flow purposes during the year (up to a maximum of £24 million at any one time).

7.3 As at 30th November 2022, the Council's total level of long term borrowing to fund capital spend stood at £188.8 million. During financial year 2022/23 a strategy of not undertaking long term borrowing in respect of Public Works and Loan Board (PWLB) financing has been pursued, instead focusing on supporting delivery of the capital programme through short term borrowing and cash balances. The strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, in order to reduce risk and keep interest costs has minimised the impact of rising PWLB rates on the Council. The total level of long term borrowing forecast at 31st March 2023 is £186.9 million. Based on the Quarter Three capital expenditure position and the level of proposed reprofiling it is not anticipated that long term borrowing will be required in the duration of the current financial year. Major Council funded (i.e. debt funded) schemes reprofiled at during the financial year that have contributed to the revised borrowing position are:

(a) Downlands Sports Centre replacement and expansion, £2.9 million

(b) The Playing Pitch Action Plan, £4.4 million

(c) Renewable Energy Provision, £2.7 million

7.4 In August 2021 HM Treasury significantly revised guidance for the PWLB lending facility and CIPFA published its revised Prudential Code for Capital Finance and Treasury Management Code on 20th December 2021. To comply with the Prudential Code, authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return. This Code also states that it is not prudent for local authorities to make investment or spending decision that will increase the Capital Financing Requirement – "CFR" - (which represents an authority's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes), unless directly and primarily related to the functions of the authority. The 2022/23 capital programme was expected to increase the Council's CFR by £23 million to £304.5 million by 31.3.2023 based on the Council's draft 2021/22 financial statements and the approved capital programme. As at Quarter Three the revised forecast CFR based on revised planned capital expenditure is £287.1 million, increasing to £307.4 million in financial year 2023/24.

Balance Sheet Summary & Forecast	31.3.22 Actual £000s	31.3.23 Estimate £000s	31.3.24 Forecast £000s
Capital financing requirement	278,408	287,142	307,432
Less: Other debt liabilities *	(11,483)	(10,670)	(9,807)
Loans CFR	**266,925**	**276,473**	**297,625**
Less: External borrowing **	(191,848)	(186,891)	(181,974)
Internal borrowing	**75,077**	**89,581**	**115,651**
Less: Balance sheet resources	112,867	68,358	69,358
Treasury investments / (New borrowing requirement)	**37,790**	**(21,223)**	**(46,293)**

7.5 Capital financing costs are incurred a year in arrears, hence the cost of financing 2022/23 capital expenditure will fall into financial year 2023/24. Based on Quarter Three forecasting, the Council's Balance Sheet forecast indicates that long term borrowing will be required in financial year 2023/24. Current planning indicates that approximately there is a £46.3 million borrowing requirement in 2023/24 in support of capital expenditure and the waste PFI financing.

7.6 To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as the table above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of £10 million at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity. The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow. Councils are now required as part of in year reporting to publish the liability benchmark.

Liability Benchmark	31.3.22 Actual £000s	31.3.23 Estimate £000s	31.3.24 Forecast £000s
Loans CFR	266,925	276,473	297,625
Less: Balance sheet resources	112,867	68,358	69,358
Net loans requirement	**154,058**	**208,115**	**228,267**
Plus: Liquidity allowance	10,000	10,000	10,000
Liability benchmark	**164,058**	**218,115**	**238,267**
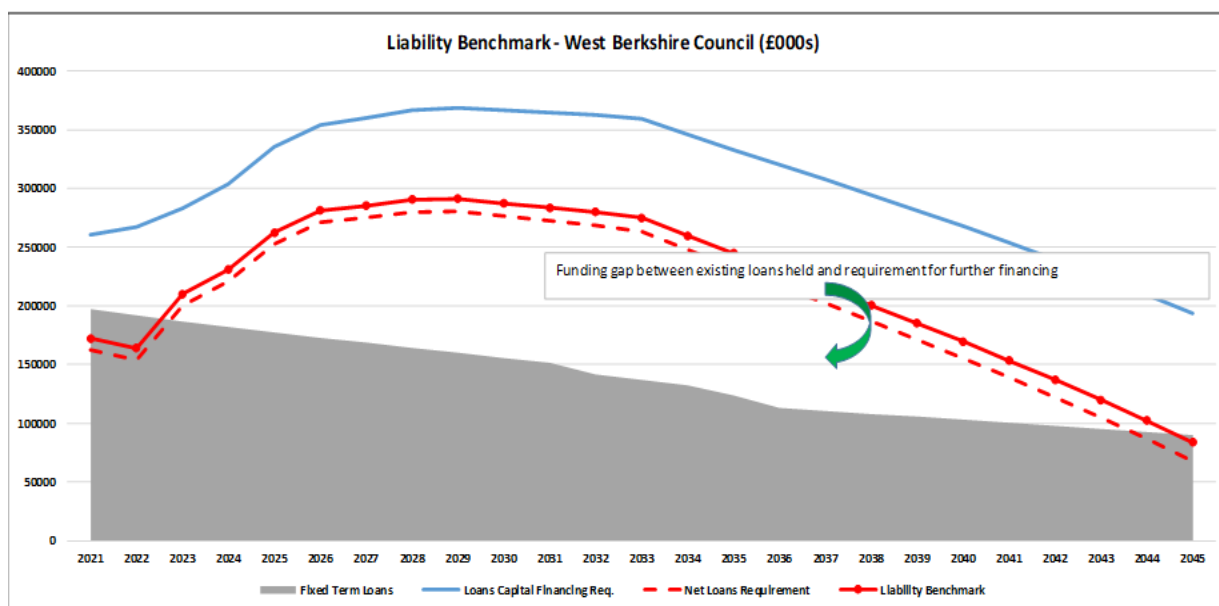
7.7 Based on the Council's CFR and the liability benchmark, the Council is long term borrower. The Council is required to ensure that capital financing is reasonable and affordable in the long term. Based on the Quarter Three expenditure forecasts the Council's forecast outstanding borrowing remains within the liability benchmark parameters.

Borowing & Liability Benchmark	31.3.2022 actual	31.3.2023 forecast	31.3.2024 budget
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Outstanding borrowing	191,848	186,891	181,974
Liability benchmark	164,058	218,115	238,267

7.8 Based on the performance indicators set out within this report the Executive Director for Resources and S151 Officer is confident that capital expenditure is affordable in the longer term.

8 Appendices

Appendix A – Budget Changes as at Quarter Three

Appendix B – Quarter Three Reprofiling Proposals

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: X

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval   ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	☐
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	☐
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months	☐
Item is Urgent Key Decision	☐
Report is to note only	X

Officer details:

Name:	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter
Job Title:	Chief Financial Accountant
Tel No:	01635 503225
E-mail:	Shannon.colemanslaughter@westberks.gov.uk

Capital Financial Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23

Budget Changes: As at Quarter Three Financial Year 2022/23

Service Area	Original Gross Expenditure Budget 2022/23	Budget Agreed by CSG to be Re-profiled from 2021/22	Agreed Reprofiling at Q1	Agreed Reprofiling at Q2	Agreed Reprofiling at Q3	Other Changes to 2022/23 Budget	Revised Budget for 2022/23	Explanation of Other Agreed Changes
PEOPLE DIRECTORATE								
Adult Social Care	3,022,170	785,850	0	(547,500)		148,000	3,408,520	£148k Increase to Care Homes PMP budget
Children & Family Services	20,000	10,000	0	(10,000)		0	20,000	
Education	13,023,530	1,138,950	(239,000)	(4,674,840)		474,890	9,723,530	£8,530 Salary Adjustment required as per agreement at CSG to balance estimates approved in March 2022 £293,690 Additional Budget Approved for SEMH Project at CSG £50,000 approved by CSG for Kennet School PDR Unit Remodelling Works £21,200 - for SEMH/ASD Resourced Provision Primary approved by s151 Officer & portfolio holder on 19/10/2022 £100k for Brookfields Expansion approved at CSG on 13/10/2022 £10k for Castle Gate Messy Play Area approved at CSG on 10/11/2022 £45,340 Salary transferred from Property Budget - Correction of post location approved by s151 Officer on 30/05/22
Communities & Wellbeing	11,104,120	656,350	(351,000)	(4,932,100)			6,477,370	
Total for People Directorate	**27,169,820**	**2,591,150**	**(590,000)**	**(10,164,440)**	**0**	**622,890**	**19,629,420**	
PLACE DIRECTORATE								
Development & Regulation	4,978,720	1,253,490	0	(574,500)			5,657,710	
Environment	26,744,120	2,974,750	(5,164,790)	(5,594,380)		2,297,550	21,257,250	£186,300 Increased budget approved for Separate Food Waste Collection Project (£96,540) Salary Adjustment required as per agreement at CSG to balance estimates approved in March 2022 £1.7m Addition DFT Grant Budget allocated to numerous budgets £21,750 for Winterbourne Byway 8 as approved at CSG on 08/12/2022 £446,040 for Bus Service Improvement Plan as approved at CSG on 15/09/2022 £15k for Car Park Maintenance £25k for Wild Flower Displays (CIL Funded)
Total for Place Directorate	**31,722,840**	**4,228,240**	**(5,164,790)**	**(6,168,880)**	**0**	**2,297,550**	**26,914,960**	
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE								
ICT	3,178,760	1,425,460	0	(428,950)		3,446,550	7,621,820	£17,190 for Superfast Broadband Project Management as approved at CSG on 08/12/2022 £2,995,490 for Superfast Broadband Project as approved at CSG on 08/12/2022 £(65k) moved from IT to cover new resource required in Strategy & Governance as approved by s151 Officer 03/10/2022 £498,870 for Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator Project as approved at CSG on 08/12/2022
Finance & Property	3,114,120	694,300	0	0		746,400	4,554,820	£691,130 - Timelord 2 Capital Funding - Budget was not increased as per Executive Agreement in July 2021 (£20,390) Salary Adjustment required as per agreement at CSG to balance estimates approved in March 2022 £45,340 Salary transferred from Property Budget - Correction of post location approved by JH on 30/05/22 £121k New Project for repairs to the Malt House, Great Shefford as agreed at CSG on 10/11/2022
Strategy & Governance	446,000	105,250	0	(236,700)		95,000	409,550	£30,000 for Youth Participation Project approved at CSG £55k for Digital Signposting Project £55k previously agreed at Q2 removed and £65k transfer from IT as above for Resourcing - as agreed by s151 Officer on 03/10/2022
Total for Resources Directorate	**6,738,880**	**2,225,010**	**0**	**(665,650)**	**0**	**4,287,950**	**12,586,190**	
Total Capital Budget	**65,631,540**	**9,044,400**	**(5,754,790)**	**(16,998,970)**	**0**	**7,208,390**	**59,130,570**	

Appendix B

Proposed Reprofiling at Quarter Three

Proposed Reprofiling of Planned Expenditure from 2022/23 into 2023/24

Budget Monitoring Period	Directorate	Service	Cost Centre	Project Title	Priority	Gross Expenditure Budget	Forecast Outturn at Q3	Underspend at Q3	Re-profiling Request	Externally Funded Re-profiling	Council Funded Value
Q3	People	Adult Social Care	86045	Modernising ASC	1	83,000	0	(83,000)	83,000		(83,000)
Q3	People	Adult Social Care	86051	Notrees Day Centre - Refurbishment	1	300,000	20,000	(280,000)	280,000		(280,000)
Q3	People	Adult Social Care	86052	Birchwood Care Home - Refurbishment	1	400,000	150,000	(250,000)	250,000		(250,000)
Q3	People	Adult Social Care	86053	Willows Edge - Refurbishment	1	250,000	45,000	(205,000)	205,000	(205,000)	
Q3	People	Adult Social Care	86055	Feasibility Study for ASC Care Home	1	30,000	18,000	(12,000)	12,000		(12,000)
Q3	**Adult Social Care Total**					**1,063,000**	**233,000**	**(830,000)**	**830,000**	**(205,000)**	**(625,000)**
Q3	People	Education	82277	Theale Primary Basic Need Project	2	177,080	9,560	(167,520)	167,520	(167,520)	
Q3	People	Education	82285	Highwood Copse	2	194,250	11,400	(182,850)	182,850	(182,850)	
Q3	People	Education	82319	i-college Alternative Education - East of Area	2	1,475,340	1,292,630	(182,710)	182,710	(168,540)	(14,170)
Q3	People	Education	82337	Calcot Schools Remodelling	2	136,480	45,540	(90,940)	90,940		(90,940)
Q3	People	Education	82341	Additional Places - Secondary Basic Need	2	145,960	88,890	(57,070)	57,070	(57,070)	
Q3	People	Education	82352	Brookfields Expansion	2	100,000	10,000	(90,000)	87,000	(87,000)	
Q3	**Education Total**					**2,229,110**	**1,458,020**	**(771,090)**	**768,090**	**(662,980)**	**(105,110)**
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85188	Leisure Centre Compliance & Modernisation	4	418,380	30,000	(388,380)	388,380		(388,380)
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85195	Expansion of Berkshire Records Office. Reading	4	1,447,450	0	(1,447,450)	1,447,450	(1,183,000)	(264,450)
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85196	Feasibility studies for options to deliver the Leisure Strategy	4	269,340	124,000	(145,340)	145,340		(145,340)
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85198	Hungerford LC - Modular exercise studio	2	120,000	15,510	(104,490)	104,490		(104,490)
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85199	Playing Pitch Action Plan	4	750,000	250,000	(500,000)	500,000		(500,000)
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85204	Shaw House outbuildings restoration	4	50,000	0	(50,000)	50,000		(50,000)
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	85122	Libraries Book Stock	6	152,690	102,690	(50,000)	50,000		(50,000)
Q3	**Communities & Wellbeing Total**					**3,207,860**	**522,200**	**(2,685,660)**	**2,685,660**	**(1,183,000)**	**(1,502,660)**
Q3	**People Total**					**6,499,970**	**2,213,220**	**(4,286,750)**	**4,283,750**	**(2,050,980)**	**(2,232,770)**
Q3	Place	Environment	81627	Newbury Town Centre Paving	4	66,930	25,000	(41,930)	41,930	(41,930)	
Q3	Place	Environment	81631	Newbury Rail Station Road Improvements	4	3,000,000	1,481,900	(1,518,100)	1,518,100	(1,518,100)	
Q3	Place	Environment	81671	Theale Station Improvements	4	400,000	0	(400,000)	400,000	(399,940)	(60)
Q3	Place	Environment	83110	Solar PV Initiative	5	167,910	45,000	(122,910)	116,368		(116,368)
Q3	Place	Environment	83130	Natural Carbon Reduction Measures	5	205,000	50,000	(155,000)	155,000		(155,000)
Q3	Place	Environment	81660	Environment Strategy - Minor Projects and Improvements	4	150,000	110,000	(40,000)	40,000	(40,000)	
Q3	Place	Environment	81677	Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP)	6	446,040	11,750	(434,290)	434,290	(434,290)	
Q3	**Environment Total**					**4,435,880**	**1,723,650**	**(2,712,230)**	**2,705,688**	**(2,434,260)**	**(271,428)**
Q3	**Place Total**					**4,435,880**	**1,723,650**	**(2,712,230)**	**2,705,688**	**(2,434,260)**	**(271,428)**
Q3	Resources	Finance & Property	87634	Enterprise Resource Planning System	7	240,500	10,000	(230,500)	230,500		(230,500)
Q3	**Finance & Property Total**					**240,500**	**10,000**	**(230,500)**	**230,500**	**0**	**(230,500)**
Q3	Resources	Strategy & Governance	87601	Digitalisation Infrastructure/ ICT Allocation	7	180,300	90,800	(89,500)	89,500		(89,500)
Q3	**Strategy and Governance Total**					**180,300**	**90,800**	**(89,500)**	**89,500**	**0**	**(89,500)**
Q3	**Resources Directorate Total**					**420,800**	**100,800**	**(320,000)**	**320,000**	**0**	**(320,000)**
Q3	**Q3 - Council Total**					**11,356,650**	**4,037,670**	**(7,318,980)**	**7,309,438**	**(4,485,240)**	**(2,824,198)**

Capital Financial Performance Report Quarter Three 2022/23

Proposed Funding to be Brought Forward from 2023/24 into 2022/23

Budget Monitoring Period	Directorate	Service	Cost Centre	Project Title	Priority	Gross Expenditure Budget	Forecast Outturn at Q3	Underspend at Q3	Re-profiling Request	Externally Funded Re-profiling	Council Funded Value
Q3	People	Education	82336	SEMH/ASD Resourced Provision - Secondary	1	2,907,260	3,146,260	239,000	(239,000)	239,000	
Q3	People	Communities & Wellbeing	87610	Members Bids	3	0	59,000	59,000	(38,880)		38,880
Q3	**Q3 - Council Total**					**2,907,260**	**3,205,260**	**298,000**	**(277,880)**	**239,000**	**38,880**

Quarters One & Two Information Only Reprofiling

Budget Monitoring Period	Directorate	Service	Cost Centre	Project Title		Gross Expenditure Budget	Forecast Outturn at Q1	Underspend at Q1	Re-profiling Request	Externally Funded Re-profiling	Council Funded Value
Q1	**Q1 - Council Total**					**12,245,850**	**6,069,660**	**(6,176,190)**	**5,754,790**	**(2,555,500)**	**(3,199,290)**
Q2	Place	Development & Regulation	80014	Sovereign Joint Venture	4	669,000	334,500	(334,500)	334,500		(334,500)
Q2	Place	Development & Regulation	87750	London Road Industrial Estate	4	850,500	695,000	(155,500)	155,500		(155,500)
Q2	Place	Development & Regulation	87756	Newbury Town Centre Masterplan	4	134,000	67,000	(67,000)	67,000		(67,000)
Q2	Place	Development & Regulation	86020	Temp Accommodation Refurbishment	4	31,620	20,000	(11,620)	11,620		(11,620)
Q2	**Development & Regulation Total**					**1,685,120**	**1,116,500**	**(568,620)**	**568,620**	**0**	**(568,620)**
Q2	Resources	ICT	87294	Network Infrastructure (Core Switches)	7	90,000	0	(90,000)	90,000		(90,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87319	Telephony Infrastructure (VoIP Outlying Offices)	7	20,000	0	(20,000)	20,000		(20,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87342	Maintenance of DR Facility	7	135,890	67,940	(67,950)	67,950		(67,950)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87343	Telephony Infrastructure (Unified Communications Core Infrastructure)	7	60,000	0	(60,000)	60,000		(60,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87344	Telephony Infrastructure (Unified Communications Software)	7	78,170	6,070	(72,100)	72,100		(72,100)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87354	Contact Centre Systems Enhancements	7	180,000	0	(180,000)	150,000		(150,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87356	Network/ App Performance Monitoring	7	20,000	0	(20,000)	20,000		(20,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87358	Upgrade of Print Room	7	25,000	15,000	(10,000)	10,000		(10,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87359	Web Filtering	7	16,000	0	(16,000)	16,000		(16,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87360	Backup / Security products for O365 data	7	25,000	0	(25,000)	25,000		(25,000)
Q2	Resources	ICT	87361	Building Data Warehouse Capability	7	50,000	0	(50,000)	50,000		(50,000)
Q2	**ICT Total**					**700,060**	**89,010**	**(611,050)**	**581,050**	**0**	**(581,050)**
Q2	**Q2 - Council Total**					**26,425,680**	**8,462,320**	**(17,963,360)**	**17,933,360**	**(3,302,010)**	**(14,631,350)**

This page is intentionally left blank

OSMC – 7 March 2023

Item 13 – Health Scrutiny Committee Update

Verbal Item

This page is intentionally left blank

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN 1 JANUARY 2023 - 30 APRIL 2023

The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

1. This document gives 28 clear days notice of key decisions which the Executive and Individual Executive Members or Officer expect to take.

2. The document is updated as required and is available to the public on the Council's website.

3. The Executive is made up of the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and seven Executive Members with the following portfolios:

Executive Leader of the Council District Strategy and Communications	Councillor Lynne Doherty
Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing	Councillor Graham Bridgman
Housing, Leisure and Culture	Councillor Howard Woollaston
Finance and Economic Development	Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Planning, Transport & Countryside	Councillor Richard Somner
Children, Young People and Education	Councillor Dominic Boeck
Environment & Transformation	Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter
Adult Social Care	Councillor Joanne Stewart
Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships	Councillor Tom Marino

4. Key decisions are those executive decisions which are likely to result in spending or savings which are "significant" in relation to the budget for the service or function in question, or in terms of the effect on communities living or working in two or more wards or electoral divisions. All contracts above £500,000 require a key decision in accordance with the Constitution.

5. The Regulations and the Council's Constitution provide for urgent key decisions to be made, even though they have not been included in this document in accordance with General Exception and Special Urgency provisions.

6. The Forward Plan will also contain details of intended review activity by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission and its Sub-Committee(s) or another body e.g. Task Group associated with the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission.

7. Copies of the Council's Constitution and agenda and minutes for all meetings of the Council may be accessed on the Council's website.

8. For copies of reports or other documents, and for detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Executive, individual Member or officer please contact the named Lead Officer for the item concerned.

9. For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please email executivecycle@westberkshire.gov.uk or by writing to the address below.

Publication Date: 1 January 2023

Shiraz Sheikh
Service Lead
Legal & Democratic Services
West Berkshire Council, Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury
RG14 5LD

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
12 Jan 2023	Key Accountable Performance 2022/23: Quarters One & Two	To provide assurance that the core business and council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-2023 are being managed effectively. To highlight successes and where performance has fallen below the expected level, to present information on the remedial action taken, and the impact of that action.	No	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
12 Jan 2023	Briefing Note - Social Value Policy	To provide an update on the Social Value Policy which was adopted by	No	Executive			June Graves	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		the Council at Executive on 18th November 2021						
12 Jan 2023	Council Strategy	Draft Council Strategy for consultation.	Yes	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
12 Jan 2023	Council Customer Charter	To present a formal public-facing Customer Services Charter.	Yes	Executive			Gabrielle Mancini	Open
	Corporate Landlord Model Feasibility	To discuss and make recommendation regarding the potential change to the way West Berkshire Council manages and maintains its estate through a Corporate Landlord Model.	Yes	Executive			Richard Turner	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
9 Feb 2023	North and East Thatcham Flood Alleviation Scheme	To gain approval to award the contract for the flood alleviation works following a full tender process.	Yes	Executive			Andrew Reynolds	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
9 Feb 2023	Energy Procurement Review	To report on the procurement route for the Council's energy for the current and 23/24 financial years and to present options and a recommendation on procurement route and products available for 24/25 onwards	Yes	Executive			Jenny Graham	Fully exempt Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
9 Feb 2023	Revenue Financial Performance Report Q3 2022-2023	To inform Members of the latest financial performance of the Council.	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
9 Feb 2023	Capital Financial Performance Report Q3 2022-2023	To present the Q3 capital financial performance for Members to note.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
23 Feb 2023	Experimental closure of Lawrence's Lane Thatcham and Station Road Newbury for Active Travel	To advise Portfolio Member of the consultation comments received during the 6 month experimental closure of the above two roads.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Planning, Transport and Countryside			Gareth Dowding	Open
28 Feb 2023	Schools Funding Formula 2023/24	To approve the school funding formula distribution for 2023/24.	Yes	Portfolio Holder: Children, Young People and Education			Melanie Ellis	Open
9 Mar 2023	Three Year	To see the	Yes	Portfolio			Andrew	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Highway Improvement Programme 2023/24-2025/26	approval of the Executive member for Transport and Countryside to implement the Draft Three Year Highway Improvement programme 2023/24-2025/26 and proceed with the 2023/24 Improvement Programme.		Holder: Planning, Transport and Countryside			Reynolds	
20 Mar 2023	Internal Audit Update Report Quarter 3 2022/23	To update the Committee on the outcome of Internal Audit work carried out during Quarter 3 of 2022/23.	No	Governance and Ethics Committee			Julie Gillhespey	Open
23 Mar 2023	Motions referred to Environment Advisory Group	To report to the Executive on the responses to a number of Motions that have been	No	Executive			Jenny Graham	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		referred to the Environment Advisory Group including actions taken and any recommendations						
23 Mar 2023	Building Maintenance Measured Term Contract	To gain approval to award the term contract for planned and reactive building maintenance works following a full tender process.	Yes	Executive			Sadie Owen	Fully exempt
23 Mar 2023	BBOWT Partnership Agreement Extension	To agree that the current Agreement is extended for a further 10 years in accordance with clause 2.1 of the Agreement	Yes	Executive			Paul Hendry	Open
23 Mar 2023	Review of the West Berkshire	To consider and where appropriate	Yes	Executive			Suzanne McLaughlin	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Council Contaminated Land Strategies	update the Contaminated Land Strategies for West Berkshire.						
	Leisure Strategy Delivery Plan	To present the plan for implementing the Leisure Strategy.	Yes	Executive			Jim Sweeting	Open
23 Mar 2023	Leisure Management Contract	West Berkshire Council is procuring an Operator Partner to manage, operate and maintain a number of existing leisure and community facilities together with a proposed new facility to replace one of the existing facilities. The Contract is intended to commence on	No	Executive			Jim Sweeting	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		1 July 2023 and to have a maximum term of 15 years.						
23 Mar 2023	Medium Term Financial Planning Update	To provide Executive with an overview of the financial planning position for 2023-24 and beyond	Yes	Executive			Melanie Ellis	Open
23 Mar 2023	Response to petition to Full Council on the 1st December 2022	To provide a response to the petition presented to the Council meeting on the 1st December.	No	Executive			Joseph Holmes	Open
23 Mar 2023	Treasury Management Strategy	To review the Council's management of cash-flow, borrowing and investments in the financial year 2022/23.	Yes	Executive			Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Open
23 Mar 2023	Town Centre	The report will	Yes	Executive			Sam Robins	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Place-Making Strategies for Thatcham and Hungerford	contain both Town Centre Strtegies, one for Thatcham and one for Hungerford, as annexes. The purpose is for Executive to review the Strategies and sign them off prior to publication.						
23 Mar 2023	Motion to Council - Defibrillators	To provide a response to a motion raised at Council on 8 July 2021.	No	Executive			Gordon Oliver	Open
23 Mar 2023	Newbury Sports Hub	Revised costs and seeking permission to sign DMA.	Yes	Executive			Jim Sweeting	Open
23 Mar 2023	Hackney Carriage Tariffs	To consider any objections and whether or not to modify the hackney carriage fare scale in light of	Yes	Executive			Moira Fraser	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		the objections received (and not withdrawn) during the consultation period.						
23 Mar 2023	Save the Readibus petition	To report on the receipt of a 1208 signature petition entitled 'Save the ReadiBus', which calls on the Council to 'review their decision on funding the ReadiBus service'	No	Executive			Jon Winstanley	Open
23 Mar 2023	Council Strategy 2019-23 Achievements		No	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
23 Mar 2023	Local Transport Plan Consultation	To notify the Executive of the initial public consultation that is happening on the Local	Yes	Executive			Alec Gore	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Transport Plan							
31 Mar 2023	Domestic Abuse Service Contract	To provide advance notice that Communiuty & Wellbeing and Housing Teams will be going out to re-tender for our Core Domestic Abuse Service. The current contract expires on 31st March 2023.	Yes	Andy Sharp - Executive Director			Catherine Greaves	Open
11 Apr 2023	Beech Hill Parish Plan		No	Portfolio Holder: Planning, Transport and Countryside			Jo Naylor	Open
25 May 2023	Contract Award - Domiciliary Care Approved Provider List	Contract Award	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Braithwaite	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
								authority holding that information)
25 May 2023	Contract Award - ASC Advocacy Services	Contract award	Yes	Executive			Karen Felgate	Open
25 May 2023	Contract Award - Extra Care Housing	Contract award	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Braithwaite	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)
25 May 2023	Contract Award - Baily Thomas House Learning Disability Respite Service	Contract Award	Yes	Executive			Rebecca Braithwaite	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
								authority holding that information)
25 May 2023	Quarterly Performance Report 2022/23: Quarter Three	To highlight successes and where performance has fallen below the expected level, to present information on the remedial action taken, and the impact of that action.	No	Executive			Catalin Bogos	Open
8 Jun 2023	Contract Award Berkshire Community Equipment Service	To award the contract for the supply/provision of the Berkshire Community Equipment Service to Nottingham Rehab Services (NRS) by calling off the Buckinghamshire County	Yes	Executive			Karen Felgate	Fully exempt Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		Council Single Provider Framework.						
8 Jun 2023	Proposals for developing the Housing Fund for displaced persons.	To approve the purchase of properties and note the proposals to develop WBC owned properties where appropriate, to deliver housing for displaces persons following the Housing Fund allocations to West Berkshire Council.	Yes	Executive			Joseph Holmes	Open
26 Jun 2023	Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023	To provide members with an overview of the Council's compliance with the CIPFA/SOLACE code of corporate	No	Governance and Ethics Committee			Joseph Holmes	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
		governance and to summarise overall governance in a statement for the year. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) provides both a summary of the activities and an action plan for the year ahead on how to continually improve governance.						
7 Jul 2023	Parking Strategy	Revised parking strategy for West Berkshire.	Yes	Executive			Ian Martinez	Open
7 Jul 2023	Contract award Berkshire Community Equipment	Contract award paper	Yes	Executive			Karen Felgate	Open

Decision Due Date	Title	Purpose	Key Decision e.g. Yes/ No	Decision Maker e.g. Executive Individual Decision Officer decision	Consultation e.g. Members including shadow exec members	Background Papers (All Papers are available for inspection via the Lead Officer)	Lead Officer e.g report author	Report likely to be considered in private (i.e., it contains confidential or exempt information)
	Service							
12 Jul 2023	Parking Review Amendment 32	To consider the responses received during statutory consultation	No	Portfolio Holder: Planning, Transport and Countryside			Sadie Owen	Open
12 Jul 2023	Parking Review Amendment 33	To consider the responses received during statutory consultation	No	Portfolio Holder: Planning, Transport and Countryside			Sadie Owen	Open

Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission Work Programme						
The following items will be considered in addition to Standing Items (Financial Performance (Quarterly), Key Accountable Performance (Quarterly), New Ways of Working Reviews (ad hoc) and Corporate Programme (annually/ on request)						Last Updated: 27 Feb 2023
	Item	OSMC Theme	Purpose	Lead Officer	Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member	Pre or post decision?
20 June 2023 (TBC)						
16	Equalities and Diversity Strategy	*Policy Effectiveness*	To review the draft Equalities and Diversity Strategy	Sarah Clarke / Sam Shepherd	Applies to all portfolios	Pre-decision
17	Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan	*Policy Effectiveness*	To review progress in implementing the Cultural Heritage Strategy Delivery Plan	April Peberdy / Felicity Harrison	Housing, Leisure and Culture	Post-decision
18	Covid and Recovery	*Corporate Effectiveness*	To agree Terms of Reference for a Task and Finish Group to look at the lessons learned in response to and recovery from Covid, from the perspectives of residents, service users and businesses.	Sarah Clarke	Leader of the Council	OSMC decision
14 September 2023 (TBC)						
28 November 2023 (TBC)						
27 February 2024 (TBC)						
21 May 2024 (TBC)						
Standing Items						
	Quarterly Capital Financial Performance Report	*Corporate Effectiveness*	Reports on the under or over spends against the Council's approved capital budget.	Joseph Holmes / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter	Finance and Economic Development	Pre-decision
	Quarterly Revenue Financial Performance Report	*Corporate Effectiveness*	To report on the financial performance of the Council's revenue budgets.	Joseph Holmes / Melanie Ellis	Finance and Economic Development	Pre-decision
	Annual Key Accountable Performance Measures	*Corporate Effectiveness*	To provide assurance that the core business and council priorities for improvement measures in the Council Strategy 2019-23 are being managed effectively. To highlight successes and where performance has fallen below the expected level, present information on remedial action taken, and the impact of that action	Joseph Holmes / Catalin Bogos	Internal Governance and Strategic Partnerships	Pre-decision

Key:
- Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes
- Support everyone to reach their full potential
- Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire
- Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy
- Maintain a green district
- Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnership
- Crime and Disorder Committee

This page is intentionally left blank